Talk of the town : exploring the social site of local content production for community radio

© 2020 The Author(s)

Talk of the Town. Exploring the social site of local content production for community radio

by Josephine Fae Coleman

Thesis submitted to Birkbeck, University of London

in partial fulfilment of requirements for a PhD

in Film and Screen Media

October 2020

DECLARATION

I confirm that this thesis of 84,992 words is all my own work.

Signed:

        Jo Coleman

Date:

        19th October 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Talk of the town is a study of media production in the under-explored context of community radio in English market towns. The author employs a reflexive, practice-centric approach to focus on situated instances of the routine communication of meaningful local content on-air and online. Theodore Schatzki's social site lens enables an appreciation of broader influencing factors whilst examining arrays of activities unfolding within specific sets of operational arrangements. The methodology includes desk research, listening-in and two channels of fieldwork. A creative practice-as-research project entitled *Remarkable Harpenden* for a local internet radio station resulted in ten short audio features, one of which, *Green fingers*, is the subject of an exegesis. Reflection on this research output and the procedures entailed, including negotiation of technical issues and interpersonal encounters, informed participant observation and interviews for a case study at Radio Verulam in St Albans, and four snapshot studies: Vibe in Watford; Radio LaB in Luton; The Eye in Melton Mowbray; and Somer Valley FM in Midsomer Norton. Analysis of the findings reveals that the community radio personnel surveyed adhere to UK professional standards, paying attention to income generation, as they pursue the sector's goals enshrined in the voluntary provision of a broadcasting service representing local interests, airing local voices and contributing towards social gain. Programme planning and journalistic activities interweave with daily life, suggesting a reliance on existing social circles and networks of acquaintances for sourcing local news, portraying reactions to current affairs and showcasing artistic and cultural talent. Arising from these in-depth, experiential insights, recommendations are made relating to the importance of reflecting plurality in the values and vested interests conveyed by ensuring demographic diversity in stations. The nuanced understandings achieved demonstrate the value to media studies of not only the social site ontology but the innovative application of research through practice.

LIST OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

PART ONE – TALK OF THE TOWN

1 INTRODUCTION

At the time of writing, we hover on the brink of a new era for community radio in the UK: one in which the stations are being taken more seriously as local content providers. After a delayed start compared to other parts of Europe, North America and Australia, community broadcasting in the UK is now anchored in our culture. Licences are awarded by Ofcom,[1] and are for FM and AM frequencies attached to geographically delimited areas and communities of interest in particular coverage areas. Hence, I use the acronym LCR for 'local community radio' in this thesis. Many of these small, non-profit organizations, run largely by volunteers, have become so well-established that they are highly valued local institutions performing a public service-like remit to provide social gain (Ofcom, 2017, p. 7). Some operators are even poised to take advantage of forthcoming small-scale DAB (SSDAB) legislation by applying to manage their own multiplexes to ensure the future of local radio as well as the provision of diversity in the allotted community radio spectrums. The business opportunities that may arise are beyond the scope of this thesis, however, it is important now, more than ever, to subject the community sector to the sort of rigorous intellectual inquiry normally applied to mainstream media. I am challenging assumptions that because the engagement of volunteers in community radio production takes place on the margins, it must be alternative and does not deserve as much attention, or respect, as professional practice.

This thesis is a response to perceived tendencies in media and communications studies to overlook phenomena which are local in scale and scope. As Chris Atton has suggested there exist "those who might be tempted to dismiss community media as concerned with local trivia" (Atton, 2015, p. 7). As I proceed with the framing for my research, it will become clear that I concur with his argument that research on local community media does have wider significance for studies of media power since "amateur media practices may be embedded in everyday life practices" (Atton, 2015, p. 7). However, I see them as not only located 'in' but inseparable from, "broader political, economic, social and cultural contexts" (ibid.). I have

---

[1] Ofcom, the Office of Communications, was formed in 2002 to regulate communications services on behalf of the UK government. From 2003, it officially took responsibility for radio broadcasting. It is independent but has links to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and is answerable to Parliament.

therefore directed my research focus onto localized investigations of the technical tasks, organizational activities and social interactions carried out by volunteer community radio practitioners in relatively under-represented English market towns. By closely examining the situations and conditions under which these practitioners produce local content, I ask: to what extent are normative community radio values upheld, and how sustainable are they? How do the endeavours of LCR satisfy Ofcom's edict that they must cater for, empower and represent the interests of underserved audiences? I explore how the journalistic and other media practices associated with producing local content are entangled with the practitioners' interactions among their wider communities and their lives lived beyond the studio walls.

To gather insights and information to address these research questions, I studied a selection of community stations over a four-year period. This included 230 hrs of practice-as-research at a local internet radio station in Harpenden for first-hand experience of making local features: documenting and interrogating my own practice. I intended to evaluate how much the accumulation of knowledge and resources, through prior life experience and through residing in the locality, enhanced my ability to negotiate the specific practice-arrangements of that station. This meant that in subsequent fieldwork in five further radio stations, I would know better what to look for when observing and questioning other practitioners.

The contribution to knowledge of *Talk of the town* is threefold. Firstly, by focusing on locally situated performances of practice, I demonstrate the value of Theodore Schatzki's 'social site' concept to practice theory. This enables arrays of activities and the structures amid which they unfold, to be conceptualized from a multidimensional perspective and contextualized in time and space as social phenomena. Schatzki's acknowledgement that reflexivity plays a role in the unfolding of action, that the "mind is a medium" (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 50), reinforces the need to study routines and behaviour as influenced by manifold contingent surrounding factors, which is so important in any study of how organizations function.

Secondly, my thesis proffers an innovative methodological strategy for researching radio-media production, which is informed by a reflexive, practice-centric mindset. This involves incorporating alongside ethnographically oriented fieldwork a second channel or additional feed of creative practice-as-research. This model and mindset will be of use to practitioner-academics struggling to intellectualize their creativity and articulate their endeavours and findings as academic research. The approach may also encourage academics studying a particular field of practice to experience doing it for themselves to deepen their appreciation of what it entails.

Thirdly, I provide not only up-to-date information on community radio broadcasting in the UK but also share in-depth, experiential insights into the embodied practice of producing local radio content for, about, and with local communities. This is important because the media landscape and regulatory frameworks are rapidly evolving, so my research will help inform better stakeholder understandings of community radio's value in society and establish the importance of seeking ways to strengthen the sector's potential to rise to new challenges and facilitate sustainable production practice frameworks for its volunteers.

The thesis is organized as follows. In Part One, the literature review is presented in two chapters. In Chapter 2, I survey the literature on community and local radio studies and consider the theoretical framings applied to indicate what has inspired my doctoral inquiry and which gaps in the literature will be addressed. This leads to a discussion of the current shift towards conceptualizing media as arrays of practices and I develop an argument for applying Schatzki's social site ontology to my practice theory approach (Schatzki, 2002). These theoretical framings contribute towards my choice of research methods explained in Chapter 3, where I survey the literature on how investigations into media practice are framed and implemented, and develop my reflexive, practice-centric approach to information gathering. I then outline in detail how this mindset has been applied in my research.

In Part Two of the thesis, I present three chapters of empirical evidence yielded through the desk research and fieldwork. In Chapter 4, I recount my personal experiences as a practitioner when undertaking a voluntary internship at the online station in the town where I live. This project to produce local features for a series entitled *Remarkable Harpenden*, was designed, conducted and documented as an intellectual, academic exercise. It represents the first fieldwork phase in this thesis. I present the audio and the blog post of the edition, *Green fingers,* as creative outputs and focus on that example to illustrate how I went about sourcing, shaping and sharing local content. The findings from the second phase of fieldwork are divided into two more chapters. Chapter 5 conveys snapshot findings from visits and interviews conducted in four different studio environments at LCRs in market towns across England. These will be used to cross-check and compare with more in-depth participant observations and information gleaned from a fifth LCR, presented in Chapter 6.

Part Three of the thesis comprises two chapters. In Chapter 7, I discuss and interpret the findings and consider what they reveal about the ways volunteer radio practitioners represent the interests of their communities and what factors influence their practice. Though each instance is specific to a particular set of circumstances, I illustrate the commonalities of

performance patterns where sourcing, shaping and sharing locally relevant material is concerned. The concluding Chapter 8 clarifies the challenges involved in producing local community radio in the context of the UK model. I emphasize the importance of local media for communities and what the implications of my findings are for understanding the conditions under which community radio station volunteer practitioners produce their shows to benefit the public. My recommendations emphasize the importance of airing diverse practitioner and contributor voices on community radio, and the need for more government-backed support and investment in the sector. In relation to the value of a reflexive, practice-centric mindset in academic media research, I highlight how Schatzki's social site lens increases the levels of sensitivity and specificity achievable in situated inquiries on practice. I also encourage the incorporation of an element of practice-as-research to enhance and fine-tune the investigative process by adding experiential and subjective insights.

2 SITUATING TALK OF THE TOWN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Through this thesis, I aim to give the objects of my inquiry – production practices in LCR – and the subjective experiences of my respondents – being volunteer practitioners – the same level of academic attention that is normally drawn to mainstream scenarios populated with professional practitioners. Although my work is positioned in the burgeoning discipline of radio studies, I find this subfield to be informed by, and am myself inspired by, interdisciplinary discourses within media, communication and cultural studies. In this chapter, I consider a range of existing scholarship on radio and media to indicate what has inspired my doctoral inquiry, and which gaps in the literature will be addressed. To intellectually frame my study of LCR production in the UK, I begin by surveying the current literature on radio in media studies generally and on community radio globally. I supplement this with an overview of scholarship on the development of local and community radio in the UK.

I also take account of recent research on the digital technologies used in radio production and the aesthetic aspects of radio broadcasting which have a bearing on the underlying theme in my research: what radio delivers in terms of its socio-cultural role in reflecting and representing the attitudes, behaviours and interests of audiences; and engendering feelings of familiarity and belonging. This will illuminate why I understand 'producing' radio as sourcing, shaping and sharing audio material, and why I am open-minded about the visual and audio-visual materials that radio practitioners now routinely deal with and disseminate. What is understood by the term 'local communities' and what sort of content is deemed relevant and newsworthy to them as audiences served by LCR will be problematized through a consideration of literature on how communities are formed and served through media and through social interaction. This leads to a discussion of the current shift towards conceptualizing media as arrays of practices before I outline the rationale behind taking a more situated approach and the value of Schatzki's social site version of practice theory (Schatzki, 2002).

2.2 A HISTORY OF RADIO IN MEDIA STUDIES LITERATURE

Although my thesis does not examine media effects, I am interested in the potential for radio broadcasting to deliver societal impact. Radio's capacity for communicative influence was understood from its dramatic introduction into 20th century society as an electronic form of

mass media: an "organized means of communicating openly, at a distance, and to many in a short space of time" (McQuail, 2010, p. 4). Initially, there was much academic interest in the impacts upon audiences of the information and texts conveyed. In the 1930s, a social scientist at Columbia University in New York USA, Paul Lazarsfeld, investigated audience behaviours in the Radio Research Project. He sought empirical evidence to determine to what extent radio exerted power over consumer behaviour and attitudes. Joined by Robert Merton in the 1940s, he addressed fears concerning the ubiquity of mass media and their potential for societal manipulation. Discourse at the time held that mass media could influence people's views, making them more apathetic and less active in the world, being satisfied to learn about it through media representations instead (Lazarsfeld and Merton, [1948] 1975, pp. 497–501). Together the two sociologists argued that the power of the mass media for social change, lay more in persuasion than propaganda. People needed to be predisposed to taking an interest in a particular message. Changing basic attitudes only happened when "in conjunction with face-to-face contacts" (ibid., p. 512). They suggested that "the present role of media is largely confined to peripheral social concerns and the media do not exhibit the degree of social power commonly attributed to them" (ibid.).

That radio programmes can be culturally impactful has never been disputed. From an aesthetic point of view, the emotive power of radio broadcasting inspired early fascination in the creative potential of the 'blind medium' and the artistic aspects of producing programmes such as drama, documentaries and educational broadcasts (Arnheim, 1936; McWhinnie, 1959). The commodification of the arts through mediatization prompted commentary on the lowering of aesthetic standards. That classical music could be played over the radio, for instance, horrified some who feared it was detrimental to the maintenance of high cultural standards (Adorno, 1945). For others, the potential for democratizing the arts through their dissemination to the masses via a medium as easy and available as radio was progress to be celebrated (Benjamin 1968).

In the 1960s, with the emergence of a more critical approach to media-as-texts and audience effects, radio broadcasting as a field of academic research did not fare well against the more glamourous film and television studies (Hilmes and Loviglio, 2002). The relative ease of recording and gathering visual-based media materials to collectively, repeatedly scrutinize, and the ability to linger over paused film and television scenes and pages of magazine or newspaper reviews meant that interpreting the texts and testing audience responses was more reliable. Studying radio in the classroom did not take off to the same extent, partly due to the

medium being perceived as too evanescent (Starkey and Crisell, 2009, p. 1). The more impassioned radio researchers were not deterred, however, and radio continued to be considered and mentioned as part of broadcast studies more generally (for example, Scannell 1991). And as technology has advanced, so too has our ability to search for, store and study radio programmes as texts. In fact, it is suggested that innovations associated with digital technologies have contributed to the resurgence of academic interest in radio studies.

A definitive campaign to rebuild the field's academic status was mooted at the end of the twentieth century (Lewis, 1998, 2000). Initiatives to revive it included the launch of the North American-based *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* in 1992,[2] and the 1998 founding of the international, collaboratively-minded Radio Studies Network by Peter Lewis and colleagues.[3] *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media* and a biannual transnational conference emerged from that original network.[4] During an international radio conference held in 1999 at Cardiff, academics presented research on the theme of 'Radiocracy', highlighting the shared belief in the medium's enduring, democratic potential, discussing global variations in what was understood by the term 'radio' and the need to incorporate radiogenic technologies in conceptualizations. Andrew Crisell's subsequent three-volume edited collection *Radio* (2009) is a significant contribution demonstrating the breadth of academic work published on radio since the medium's emergence (Crisell, 2009). Crisell curated an array of scholarly literature ranging from Bertolt Brecht's utopian assertion of the two-way communicative benefits of wireless radio broadcasting (Brecht, 1932), to Richard Berry's discussion of the disruptive potential of podcasting (Berry, 06 in Crisell, 2009, p. 372), and Jo Tacchi's call for better theorizing of radio since the advent of digital 'radiogenic' technologies (Tacchi, 2000).

---

[2] Formerly *Journal of Radio Studies* from 1992 – 1997.

[3] Affiliated to the UK's scholarly association for Media, Cultural and Communication Studies (MeCCSA) since 2010.

[4] The 2018 conference held at the Italian campus of Australia's Monash University in Prato bore the theme 'Free Radio', inspired by the 1970s *Libertà d'antenna* movement "through which civil society and commercial organizations pushed for greater access to the media and forced an end to the state's broadcasting monopoly".[4] This indicates an abiding, unifying fascination amongst radio studies scholars with radio's potential to be a democratic force for social good.

2.3 RAISING LOCAL RADIO'S PROFILE IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY MEDIA CONTEXT

My reading for this thesis has indicated that in the same way radio has previously been overshadowed in media studies, so too are local phenomena often sidelined. In her book, *Understanding the local media*, Meryl Aldridge suggests that academic interest in local media, the press and broadcasting, is limited because academic careers are often lived out on an international stage and so attention is focused on national and global issues (Aldridge, 2007, pp. 1–3). There is brilliant and brave work being undertaken in high-profile crisis zone scenarios around the world. International development studies provide abundant evidence that local media and NGO-funded action research projects play a vital role in rebuilding communities through generating and promoting social interaction and participative media projects (Tacchi, 2003; Tacchi, Watkins and Keerthirathne, 2009; Heywood and Tomlinson, 2019). Such projects are more commonly funded and described in academic publications than any efforts made in the UK to research community radio domestically. Yet, I argue there is much still to find out about community radio production here that matters.

The rationale for this rests on the basis that even in the relatively affluent setting of this usually peaceful democratic country, everyday realities are shaped by and depicted in media representations. This "power to construct reality" and establish certain discourses as 'common sense' (Atton, 2015, pp. 1–2), differentially serves the interests of the country's people and populations. Mundane as the realm of 'everyday cultural production' in LCR contexts may first appear, and even if their activities are not overtly political, the ways citizens harness the power of media to express themselves and improve their lot warrants our critical attention (Atton, 2002, p. 73). As Couldry remarks, "the ethical issues of the local – the spaces of family, friendship, institutions – are also entangled in, and transformed by, the flows of media on all scales" (Couldry, 2012, p. 28).

My localized study of production activities in English market towns will add to a small corpus of media research on non-urban areas (including Bryant and Pozdeev, 2011; Hampton and Wellman, 2003; Postill, 2008; Silverstone, 1997; Miller, 2016). I hope my findings will have resonance for researchers working in foreign contexts. Cross-cultural comparisons and critical analyses of radio generally are already on the rise and the UK is certainly featured, as exemplified by David Hendy's *Radio in the global age* (2000) and Matt Mollgaard's *Radio and society: new thinking for an old medium* (2012) (Hendy, 2000; Mollgaard, 2012). Scholars meet regularly to present their work at conferences such as those organized by the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) and the Radio Research Section of

the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). My personal experience of such events, albeit limited at this stage, indicates that there is currency in the findings of very specific, geographically situated projects as well as a growing appetite for sharing best practice.

My reading has also indicated that radio is often marginalized in literature on community media. Because radio is a predominantly live medium, it is potentially more immediate, intimate and involving than television and the press, but still ephemeral and too easily taken for granted. *The Routledge companion to alternative and community media* (2015), contains just five out of 50 chapters concerned with radio including indigenous, pirate and prisoner (Atton, 2015). In Linda Fuller's diverse collection of perspectives in *The power of global community media* (2007), one of the contributors states that "community radio is largely dominant in participatory communication experiences worldwide" (Dagron in Fuller, 2007, p. 203), yet radio is mentioned only a few times in the entire book and apart from a single chapter with community radio in the title, the medium is relegated to near 'also-ran' status. Conversely, in *Making waves* (2001), a report for the Rockefeller Foundation, Alfonso Dagron collates stories of fifty participatory communication projects from across Latin America, Africa and Asia. There are entries on 22 radio stations, the oldest dating back to 1947 in Colombia. The editor is unapologetic in the foreword about favouring radio: "what matters most is the voice...the process of hearing about the lives and circumstances of the poor and excluded in words and terms that they themselves use. Radio, by nature, gives us the ability to 'hear' content, context, passion and pain" (Denise Gray-Felder in Dagron, 2001, p. 4).

A leading proponent of the subfield, Kevin Howley, discusses the complexity entailed in defining community media as being due to differing 'felt needs' of communities (Howley, 2010, p. 2). As Salvatore Scifo points out, the diversity is contingent on specific geo-spatial and socio-cultural variations, as well as "local political … differences … [and] their emergence at different moments in each country's history" (Scifo, 2014, p. 177). This multiplicity is illustrated in Rennie's collection *Community media: a global introduction* (2006), in which the community media entities are variously described as being about social engagement, reflecting alternative viewpoints, representing diversity, airing marginal voices, providing opportunities for the enactment of citizenship and facilitating local development, social improvement and education (Rennie, 2006).

In *McQuail's mass communication theory* (2010), Denis McQuail argues that the 'alternative media model' encompasses a range of non-mainstream media which may well have different

aims and origins but when it comes to supporting the rights of subcultures in society and even sometimes opposing state and industry regulations, they have shared values in common: emphasizing smallness of scale; grassroots organization; participation and community; and shared goals between producers and audiences (McQuail, 2010, p. 184). Olga Bailey, Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier embrace the plurality of alternative, marginal, non-mainstream media in *Understanding alternative media* (2008), by overlaying Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model onto existing categorizations (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). This takes into account the fluidity that exists between what they consider are identifiable as the three main categories of alternative media by virtue of their aims: non-confrontational community involvement; activist, counter-hegemonic; and facilitating participation in civil society. UK stations are mainly the first type: embedded within civil society, engaging out of necessity with the economy and national and local governments. Carpentier pursues this notion further with other colleagues to theorize community media, starting with AMARC's working definition and mapping out how stations are embedded within civil society, through engagement with the market and state (Carpentier et al in Fuller, 2007, pp. 219–235; Santana and Carpentier, 2010).[5]

Globally then there exists a variety of terms for community radio and media, with their own paradigmatic angles. Recently, there has been more attention paid to critical approaches, particularly where funding methods are at issue. Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs for instance focus on the potential for societal transformation through alternative media but perceive there are limitations associated with non-commercial funding, tending to restrict the size of operations. They argue that commercial funding could be encouraged as long as the media do not compromise and continue to be critical of dominant power structures (Sandoval and Fuchs, 2010, pp. 147–148). Mark Deuze too urges a more critical approach in researching what he refers to as ethnic or minority media. He acknowledges the relationship between increasing migration patterns across the world and participation in media production, suggesting there is an "emerging multicultural convergence culture" (Deuze, 2006, p. 271). He points out that engagement in minority media in the 'Western world' can represent an effort to distance or disconnect from other groups in society (ibid.), and that there is evidence of the practice achieving considerable commercial success (Deuze, 2006, p. 275).

---

[5] The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (*Association Mondiale Des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires*)

Such instances jar with Nicholas Jankowski's last item on his list of overarching general characteristics published in the article, 'Community media research' (2003). He sees electronic forms of community media as: sharing the objective of catering for, engaging and empowering local residents; keeping ownership and control in local hands; produced by volunteers; serving audiences in predominantly small, geographical areas; financed in essentially non-commercial ways (Jankowski, 2003, p. 8). In his chapter, 'Alternative and citizen journalism' in *The handbook of journalism studies*, Atton also points out that it is often assumed community media practice is conducted by amateurs, separated from the professional realm of mainstream activity (Atton, 2008, p. 265). He discusses Clemencia Rodriguez's research in Latin American on community media, celebrating those involved as citizens who "actively participate in actions that reshape their own identities, the identities of others, and their social environment, [through which] they produce power"(Rodriguez, 2000, p. 19 in Atton, 2008, p. 266). Atton notes that in her study of a community radio station in Chile, Rodriguez "approvingly quotes a respondent: 'It's more important to get five new people to participate than to get a thousand new listeners'" (Rodriguez, 2003, p. 191 in Atton, 2008, p. 267). It concerns Atton however, that citizen media should prioritize the empowerment of people for social and political gain over any commercial interests. He emphasizes instead that more research should be undertaken on the 'industrial practice' of alternative media as 'work' (ibid., p. 274). *Talk of the town* will be a contribution towards this end.

To sum up, there is no single overall methodology or agenda for studying this subfield but instead a multi-disciplinary pluralism in scholarship on how community media generally can be credited as having the potential to regenerate community (Jankowski, 2002, p. 34). Concluding his chapter, 'Creating community with media' in the *Handbook of new media* (2002), Jankowski calls for more critical key questions to be embedded in case study research models that assess causal relations between media and community structure, in order to provide evidence rather than purely anecdotal material (ibid., p. 45). I take inspiration from this and acknowledge the critically analytical approach of others including Carpentier who offers a framework for mapping radio stations' entanglement in civil society (Fuller, 2007, pp. 219–235; Santana and Carpentier, 2010; Carpentier, 2016). My research focus does not require quite such a critical, political theory approach, however I do find useful his analytical model for studying media participation, developed from the notion of a ladder of participation, from manipulation at the base up to citizen control at the top (Carpentier, 2016, p. 83). It has prompted me to bear in mind the multiple social, economic and political forces at work in community media. Yet, whilst he abstracts out positionality from the moments in which practitioners perform and

make decisions in the field of practice for later critical analysis, it is a theme inextricably woven through my research on radio production practices, as will be explained in the forthcoming methodology chapter.

2.4   COMMUNITY RADIO'S EMERGENCE AS UK'S LOCAL BROADCASTING SERVICE

Apart from official licensing documentation and reports from Ofcom, the Community Media Association (CMA) and Radio Regen's *Community radio toolkit*,[6] there are very few publications on community radio in the UK. Some theoretical work is emerging, (for instance: Moylan 2018; Zoellner and Lax 2017), and there have been some insightful case studies of the sector but these tend to be distributed across edited collections with a broader scope (Mitchell, 2000; Gordon, 2009, 2012; Howley, 2010). Another example is *What do we mean by local? Grassroots journalism – its death and rebirth* (2012) in which radio is referred to in several chapters. This means that across the British community sector, there is great scope for me and others to contribute more academic research projects and data collection on how media content is produced not just for but *with* and *by* its audiences as a means of expression. There has been a recent surge in multimedia journalism on web-based platforms for hyperlocal media (Bruns and Highfield, 2012; Rodgers, 2018); public funding has been made available to set up and research such operations. Hyperlocals are beyond the scope of my research, but it is a promising sign that attitudes towards the study of locally focused media practice in the UK are shifting.

The institutionalization of community radio took a long time in the UK. I take a view on this that radio broadcasting was monopolized at the outset by paternalistic forces who believed they were delivering radio programmes in the public interest, providing what any community needed to flourish: information, education, entertainment. In a sense, the BBC and then the independent local radio stations (ILRs), at least in the early days, represent previous iterations of broadcasting for social gain, albeit not conforming to the ideal of alternative radio being to allow 'ordinary people' to broadcast their own shows (Atton, 2015, p. 1). Descriptions of how amateurs tinkered with broadcast equipment in their back rooms and how the first British Broadcasting Company broadcast engineers experimented over the airwaves from a hut in Essex,[7] resemble realities experienced across today's community sector.

---

[6] http://www.communityradiotoolkit.net/about/ accessed 1/4/2020

[7] Set up as a commercial business in 1922, incorporated and chartered as public service broadcaster in 1926.

A former, and disillusioned Chief Engineer of the BBC, Peter Eckersley, published a book during the Second World War expressing his belief that radio should deliver artistic and cultural value and air more minority voices, in acknowledgement that different regions in the UK were home to people with specific ranges of life experiences, tastes and preferences (Eckersley, 1941). However, although local radio was technically feasible in the early decades, management resisted the move to a decentralized, multi-channel broadcasting system. Some staff saw the proposals for very local radio stations as a threat to the funding of existing specialist production departments and indeed looked down on them as too provincial (Bridson, 1971, p. 300). Eventually, the BBC accepted that there was a growing market for popular music and would need to respond to the government's intention to introduce licensing for ILR. Asa Briggs' documents how the BBC became a national network with specialist channels and regional opt-outs, and the eventual emergence of local stations as the independent sector was introduced (Briggs, 1995). In 1967, BBC executive Frank Gillard instigated an ambitious scheme to set up operations in every sizeable town after VHF/FM transmitters were installed to create extra frequency space for local stations within the existing BBC network. The number of stations was ultimately compromised due to the enormous set-up costs involved (Linfoot, 2011); today there are still only 39 across England.[8]

When Rachel Powell, at Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, wrote *Possibilities for local radio* in the mid-1960s, she criticized what she regarded as looseness and over-generality in the approach of companies who were registering interest in and lobbying for local independent radio licenses. Powell's research emphasizes the need for a "strong basis of local news and features of community interest" (Powell, 1965, p. 3), recommending "local-interest programmes produced locally for the locality" (ibid., p. 5). The ILR stations licensed from 1972 were initially required to deliver extensive public service output in a way that was 'curiously Reithian' (Street, 2002, p. 118). They soon found that niche local shows featuring 'meaningful speech', folk music and other cultural content could not compete with pop music (Starkey and Crisell, 2009, p. 9). Dependent as they were on building audience figures to maximize their income from both the sale of commercial airtime and Independent Broadcasting Authority funding, this obligation was progressively relaxed over the years (Starkey and Crisell, 2009, pp. 17–18; Stoller, 2010).

---

[8] How 'local' these county-wide stations are is a moot point especially when some cover more than one county, such as Three Counties Radio in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire: stretching the definition (the news team and the budget) somewhat.

By the end of the 1980s, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) had introduced the next solution to the provision of local radio services to communities around the country: short term, low power Restricted Service Licences (RSLs) for special projects, events, hospitals, student radio and other organizations. Some hoped to eventually become established as community radio operators once the regulatory framework was in place (Lewis and Booth, 1989; Lewis, 1998; Gordon, 2000, 2012; Mitchell, 2000). Thatcherist free market-inspired ideology also persuaded the IBA to award 'incremental' licences for specific religious, ethnic and cultural audiences: seen as a kind of community radio provision. The radio industry, at that time, was transforming into corporate investment opportunities. This led, writes Lewis, to a situation where those awarded incremental station licences to supply diversity programming for smaller geographical areas felt "forced to compromise their principles in mergers or take-overs" (Lewis, 1998, p. 5).

With the implementation of The Broadcasting Act 1990, restrictions upon commercial broadcasters began to be lifted. Cost-efficiencies continued and other structural changes due to mergers and acquisitions created regional and national networks. This led to reductions in the numbers of on-air presenters and newsroom staff and a feeling that the localness of the services was diminishing. Increasingly, stations were being administered and programmes networked across several frequencies from remote, centralized hubs with pre-recorded split-frequency 'bespoke bulletins' used for localizing reports (Crisell and Starkey in Franklin, 2006, pp. 20–21). Although a small number of commercial ILR companies still operate in the UK, their provision of local content according to Ofcom's 'localness guidelines' has reduced to conveying a sense of localness through such items as: news, travel and weather, what's-ons, interviews, phone-ins.[9]

Against this backdrop of local media retrenchment (Franklin and Murphy, 1998), the demand for very local radio provision persisted, manifested in the movement for community access broadcasting. The continued lobbying by groups such as CRA[10], later renamed Community Media Association (CMA), and the policies of a New Labour government resulted in the 2002 experimental Access Radio scheme, in which 15 stations were given short-term licences. This was developed into the regulatory framework still operating today for licensing community

---

[9] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/radio-broadcasters/localness last accessed 25/3/2020

[10] The Community Radio Association (CRA) was set up with European funding in Sheffield (Scifo, 2011)

organizations to transmit on AM or FM frequencies (Scifo, 2011). With a handful of special interest exceptions such as Christian stations and Gaydio, the enduring business model has been very local, not-for-profit community radio stations, staffed primarily by people who are perceived as amateurs (Scifo, 2011, 2016). Tens of thousands of volunteers have been involved year on year donating ten times that number of (hu)man hours (Ofcom, 2015). Not all the groups that satisfied the requirements on the application form, who managed to fill it in properly and could afford the £600 fee to be granted licences, then successfully made it onto the airwaves (Fogg, Korbel and Brooks, 2005, p. 35; Ofcom, 2019). Of those that did, many have found operating an LCR a financially precarious and physically draining experience (Buckley, 2008, 2011). For instance, there is an annual licence fee payable to Ofcom of £600, and payments to Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL) and Performing Rights Society (PRS for Music) are £2,000 or more each year depending on net broadcasting revenue.[11] Along with station facilities and broadcasting infrastructure costs, those are just the tip of the iceberg. Politically, there are challenges too. Bart Cammaerts has researched the role regulatory regimes play "in terms of stifling or promoting these [participatory] media" (Cammaerts, 2009, p. 3), and points out that it is hard for this community sector to legitimate its existence against the background of commercial and public service broadcasting (ibid., p. 15).

However, the situation has evolved. The community sector in the UK could now be viewed as the government's new approach to licensing local radio provision. Until recently my impression of LCR's status in the UK was that it is marginalized in the media industry and regarded with disdain in the market places it serves; echoing a point Howley makes in *Understanding community media* (2010) that "community media have been somewhat misunderstood and undervalued within academic circles and among the general populace" (Howley, 2010, p. 2). At the time of writing, an industry body representing commercial radio commissioned local radio expert David Lloyd to research the market. The published study describes the plight of the commercial sector in the face of what they consider to be an overly competitive and increasingly commercialized, non-local-sounding LCR sector.[12] In January 2020, there were 291

---

[11] https://www.ppluk.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/PPL-and-PRS-for-Music-Joint-Licence-for-Community-Radio-Summary-2019.pdf accessed 1/4/2020

[12] See https://www.radiocentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SMALL-SCALE-RADIO-IN-THE-UK-ONLINE.pdf

licenced community radio stations.[13] Clearly, in some localities at least, community radio in the UK has become a force to be reckoned with when it comes to audience share.

2.5 UNDERSTANDING WHAT RADIO DELIVERS FOR AUDIENCES

This thesis is not concerned with listenership per se, but I am interested in practitioner interactions with their listeners because those potentially generate radio content. Examining these will help me understand how the production activities and outputs are aligned with the needs and interests of the target audience. So, I do not entirely overlook how audiences engage in listening to radio programmes, but I acknowledge the challenges of analysing the consumption of radio programmes due to the 'arbitrariness' and 'secondariness' of this audio-only medium (Crisell, 1986, p. 213). It is possible to study the influence that a particular station, show or personality has on individual listeners using ethnographic techniques. Tacchi's article 'Radio and affective rhythm in the everyday' (2009) is a convincing example. She describes how radio listening can become an important part of daily ritual, even an emotional crutch, as "a domestic accompaniment … which … aids mood creation and maintenance" (Tacchi, 2009, p. 174). Scaling this up to study the impact of a station's output on a wider community would require a leap of faith that a larger volume of respondents would diligently listen as required: not impossible, but beyond the scope of this project.

The objects of my inquiry are the everyday and often taken-for-granted activities involved when practitioners create programmes with their local listeners in mind, if not with their direct participation. This relates to Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model that appears to balance the role audiences play in the production of meaningful discourse with that of the producers (Hall, 1973, p. 4). My research focuses on the techniques and technologies used in sourcing, presenting, or editing and packaging, material which is designed to resonate with targeted listeners in their catchment area. Certainly, the collective subjectivities of an LCR's audience are important to the practitioners because their aim is to cater especially for them. So, despite the consumption of media not being my research focus, I do need to understand enough about the effects of listening, in order to investigate the potential impacts of a radio station on listeners' daily lives.

---

[13] According to Ofcom, March 2020 marks the end of community radio licensing on FM or AM before new SSDAB licences are advertised. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence/radio-broadcast-licensing/community-radio accessed 24/1/2020

Useful insights in this regard, aligned to a phenomenological turn in media studies, are provided by Paddy Scannell in *Radio, television, and modern life* (Scannell, 1996), and drawn on by Shaun Moores in *Media/theory* (2005) and *Media, place & mobility* (2012). One of the abiding aspects of radio, and broadcasting generally, is the convention of following a strict timetabled routine. Programme schedules stipulate who is on-air, when and with what type of content. Radio stations offer a regular, cyclically repetitive diet of programmes and features from the immediate hourly news and other routine punctuations like adverts or travel updates, through to the weekly presenter schedules and the longer term annual calendar of highlights tying in with society's rituals like holidays and festivals. Moores cites Scannell in explaining the recursive nature of social life and the role that broadcasting plays in reproducing patterns and routines by creating for us the framework of 'dailiness' and 'eventfulness' (Moores, 2005, p. 9). This continuity is reassuring and brings comfort, as Moores explains, citing sociologist Anthony Giddens' notion of ontological security: "the knowing that there is continuity of self-identity and constancy in one's surroundings, confidence in the everyday world" (Moores, 2005, p. 11). Listeners develop their own rituals of listening and use radio to mark their time. Drawing on Scannell (1996), Moores sees the constant round of discursive exchanges and programme series delivered through the broadcast schedules as mediated 'places' that become taken for granted in the everyday lives of audiences (Moores, 2012, p. 32).

Another orienting effect a radio station's output can have on those who tune in is that it can transport them somewhere else. Moores builds on Scannell's 'doubling of place' concept of mediated experiences (Scannell 1996 in Moores, 2005, p. 12), to describe this pluralizing effect of media-related activities, interactions and experiences that unfold in virtual space but are always rooted in physical localities (Moores, 2012, p. 16). He points out that wherever a listener is located, they can feel as if they are experiencing other actual localities being invoked on-air as well as the imagined radio studio. This was Moores' own realization when he felt closer-to-home whilst listening to British radio programmes during the period he worked abroad in Australia. He was no doubt experiencing how, as described by Stephen Barnard in his book *Studying radio*, "the to and fro of radio talk provides a sense of location, a reassuring sense that the world still sounds the same" (Barnard, 2000, p. 184). Barnard also draws on Scannell (1996) when he states: "Radio lets the world in, but on the listener's own terms … [they] can connect without engagement or commitment" (Barnard, 2000, p. 105).

Returning to Moores, his explanation of how routinized media consumption can create or recreate in the mind of the listener, 'somewhere' they can 'go' to feel at home has been useful for shaping my approach to this research project on localizing content (Moores, 2012, p. 105). This way of thinking corresponds to my research focus on practice, regarding how practitioners attempt to create these on-air places. The imagined space of a radio programme becomes a familiar place for the listener to encounter by tuning in and engaging with the presenters. This resonates with the work of other media theorists using spatial terminologies to understand how the 'texture' of a "communicative space, material and symbolic" is constructed, and how such a "space is produced through a complex interplay between spatial practices, mediations and imaginations" (Falkheimer and Jansson, 2006, p. 18-19). Thus, we can think of place as a diverse social process, relational, somewhere in space to pause in as it becomes familiar to us (Ek, 2006, p. 51). For all the fluidity and mobility of contemporary everyday life, listening to the virtual spaces of radio programmes leads to the construction of meaningful places in the minds of audiences.

In his book, T*he stuff of radio* (1934), BBC producer Lance Sieveking describes radio as a 'machine': one which could achieve "sudden mental contact" between listener and broadcaster (Sieveking, 1934, pp. 111–112, 101). This notion has inspired scholars to contemplate the more elusive, affective qualities of the medium related to various forms of radio content that are creatively produced to elicit certain listener experiences: in the realm of radio drama for instance (Crisell 1986; Crook 2002; Hilmes 1997; P. E. Lewis 1981; Scannell 1986). Guy Starkey writes of the "symbiotic relationship between producers and audiences to make meaning out of radio broadcasts" (Starkey, 2004, p. 1). In his edited collection *Broadcast talk* (1991), Scannell explains that successful radio broadcasting often hinges on the personability of the on-air voices. Listeners "expected to be spoken to in a familiar, friendly and informal manner as if they were equals on the same footing as the speaker" (Scannell, 1991, p. 3). In the chapter written with Graham Brand entitled 'Talk, identity and performance', inspired by Erving Goffman's study of radio announcers in *Forms of talk* (Goffman, 1981), they describe how radio programmes convey a spirit of sociability and create a sense of a shared virtual space or 'discursive space' (Scannell, 1991, p. 223). Through an exploration of Tony Blackburn's radio presentation work, analysing studio scripts and transcripts of actual live transmissions as well as listening to recorded output (ibid., p. 201-226), they infer that within the institutionalized routines of programme schedules and templates, the presenter built up his own 'studio identikit' (ibid., p. 205). Blackburn set about

self-consciously 'thematizing' himself (ibid., p. 209) and setting the agenda for any communicative interactions with listeners to his show.

Whilst I consider the production of engaging and informative audio material as a primary function of radio, I am mindful of the added value of multi-media technologies. There has been a blurring of boundaries relating to audio-visual radio content production, and post-digital radio studies problematize definitions of 'radio' to explore music streaming, the remediating of broadcast audio and podcasting (Berry, 2016; Freire, 2008; Menduni, 2007). Radio studies is amassing academic status, instigated partly by this growth of intellectual interest in the disruptive potential of audio production for podcasts. Berry, for instance, is a leading proponent of podcast studies. He positions podcasting as a converged activity, somewhere in between the 'push' medium of traditional broadcast radio and the 'pull' medium of internet platforms (Berry, 06 in Crisell, 2009, p. 372). Berry points out that at the beginning of the so-called digital revolution in the late 1970s, the big question was "what business is radio in?" (Berry, 2014, p. 11). The question remains valid today because radio stations are increasingly in the business of creating and distributing various media content, including audio packages which they post and serialize as podcasts. Indeed, the question now on many media scholars' lips is an ontological one: "What *is* radio?". At the 2018 Transnational radio conference in Prato, the notion of 'radioness' (Lacey, 2009, 2013), and the cultural connotations (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998) or 'baggage' of the word radio (Dubber in Baade, 2018, p. 10) were very much at the core of discussions.

That radio *is* a business is clear, even for non-profit community stations operating on shoestring budgets. Listener numbers and hours listened are vital in order to maintain not only the reputation of a station and its credibility as a going concern, but the potential value of its airtime for sales income and other funding opportunities. Websites and social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are extensively incorporated into radio programming, engaging and reaching listeners (Bonini *et al.*, 2014). As is apparent from the publication that followed the 2009 ECREA conference, *Radio content in the digital age* (2011), radio and community do not just coincide, they coexist in virtual spaces: "community radio groups are already exploiting the opportunities of participation in the digitization of radio" (Gazi et al., 2011, p. 13). Online platforms are places where radio station presenters, producers and publicists interact with audiences by exchanging messages, sharing photographs and videos and live streaming from radio studios or events. They provide information sources for shows, news reports and

potential sponsors or funders, as well as being an additional advertising option. Hence, in my research for *Talk of the town*, I consider how output is shared online as well as on-air.

In these media-saturated times, internet platforms, software and apps enable us to listen to any station anywhere in the world, so that as Hendy has pointed out "[t]he global and the local are…intertwined by radio" (Hendy, 2000, p. 112). Locally derived and focused media content is potentially globally available but must also compete in the globalized market of news, information and entertainment services. 'Local' is no longer necessarily limited in reach by location and prefixes like 'trans', 'hyper' and 'ultra' are often used to reflect the extreme geographical extensions of online activity (Castells, 1996; Barnett, 2004; Metzgar, Kurpius and Rowley, 2011; Harcup, 2013; Rodgers, Barnett and Cochrane, 2014). With radio now streamed on internet and mobile devices rendering it ubiquitous, some argue it is even more a case of 'lean-back' listening (Baade, 2018).[14] This notion stems from the fact that a radio station may be playing in the background, but the supposed listener may not always be tuned in mentally or immersed in their listening.

The tuned-in but not really concentrating aspect of radio reception is ameliorated somewhat these days by the fact that most radio stations have a visual and interactive presence online through social media which has also introduced new ways of monitoring and assessing audience engagement, thus enabling more widely-informed radio inquiries. Research on radio has certainly benefited from these improvements, as the following methodological chapter will illustrate. What has not changed, I argue, is the centrality of the human element in radio broadcasting, the role of on-air and online personalities and the quasi-relationships that form between presenters and listeners. Though the term radio has been appropriated by streaming services that are purely curated collections of music, rather than the traditional format of presenter introducing and 'spinning' the discs, the idea that there is a live presenter involved persists. Presenter popularity based on personality is pivotal in programming for building audiences. Understanding the power to affect audiences is what motivates and shapes behaviour in broadcast studios and the institutions behind them.

---

[14] One of the arguments for podcasting to be a field in its own right rests on how listeners tend to use head- or earphones in order to concentrate and 'lean forward' to listen to audio, on their own terms.

2.6 IDENTIFYING THE COMMUNITIES AND SOCIALITIES OF LCR

One of my research questions is concerned with how the media activities associated with producing content targeted at local audiences are entangled with practitioner interactions and relationships with those same audiences. To direct this line of inquiry, and before I can begin to consider what 'locally-relevant' content means, I will explore meanings associated with the term 'local community'. Defining community is problematic. The notion resonates with aid agencies and other organizations working to achieve safe, stable societies around the world. Media ethnographers find that the term is a useful indicator of 'local meanings' that make sense for those they are researching, rather than an 'empirical social unit' with which to analyse them (Postill and Pink, 2012, p. 5). The feel-good connotations of the word have even led to scholars abandoning it as an analytical category. In her article, 'The myth of community studies' (1969), Margaret Stacey questions whether the concept of community is a useful abstraction at all for scientific sociological analysis. She argues instead for the "study of social relations in localities", whereby the organization – the structure and process – of social systems can be identified with an emphasis on interrelations in time and space (Stacey, 1969, pp. 140–41). This conceptualization fits my brief well.

My inquiry is concerned with both the social relations that are associated with the activities of an LCR and also those sets of relations that people are participating in locally and which become potential sources of programme material. This tendency to participate in social activities is termed sociality. Dictionary definitions suggest that there is a sociable, enjoyable aspect to this "fact of living together in an organized way as a society".[15] It occurs in various interactions and institutions, clubs, membership societies, schemes, projects and events. In his article, 'Localising the internet beyond communities and networks' (2008), John Postill uses the term in his conceptualization of community as "people, technologies and other cultural artefacts … co-producing new forms of residential sociality", manifested through a range of social and relational practices (Postill, 2008, p. 426). For him, this process can take on multiple forms within the same social field or locality, such as three of the distinct forms of residential sociality he uncovers in a Malaysian suburb: residents' committees, patrols and web forums (Postill, 2008, pp. 423–425).

Using this processual approach solves the problem of taking a place-based angle when identifying communities by their geography. It is conceivable for multiple socialities to exist

---

and overlap in one place and for people to engage in a number of socialities within the place where they live and beyond. Well-served by modern media communications and transportation links, most places these days are spatially and culturally complex. Rarely do we find somewhere that is saturated in a single cultural tradition, inhabited by people inspired by the same beliefs and driven by the same desires. The relative ease, frequency and extensiveness of mobility, whether physical or virtual via the internet, results in a host of different ways of experiencing the world and encountering other people within it (Urry, 2002, p. 263). In *Talk of the town*, I am interested in how the on-air and increasingly online activities of LCR contribute towards the formation and maintenance of social ties that are in some way related to the locality. This allows for an element of remote engagement between ex-pats and community stations back in their hometowns. But there is also ample proof that face-to-face communicative relations have not become redundant in a 'placeless culture' as Joshua Meyrowitz once predicted would result from new electronic media relations (Meyrowitz 1985, p. 8 in Moores, 2012, p. 8). Research has shown that online platforms and programs can even create opportunities for meaningful engagement and localized interactions (Urry, 2002; Hampton and Wellman, 2003; Gordon and de Souza e Silva, 2011). Arjun Appadurai sees the enduring existence and cultural importance of neighbourhoods as 'actually situated' communities, whether virtual or spatial, in which locality, "as a dimension or value", is variably realized (Appadurai, 1996, p. 179).

Where a locality is socially and culturally mixed and cannot be characterized wholly by a sense of shared identities and values, this has ramifications for media organizations trying to sustain delivery of services such as local journalism (Franklin, 2006, pp. 23–24). Serving too niche a market may not attract enough custom to generate sufficient income. Yet, there are theorists and practitioners who still believe that local media are just as essential as national and global media. "Life is global; living is local" states Aldridge (Aldridge, 2007, p. 5). She describes locality as "the arena for multiple forms of 'getting by' based on long-standing social networks…" (Aldridge, 2007, p. 11). Since global changes "cascade down" to impact on "real places … with differential outcomes" (ibid., p. 21), she argues that the media have an important role in facilitating informed debates that need local input (ibid., p. 19-20), particularly when national and international news have local ramifications due to the institutional and personal ties and connections that abound.

Local media must also take account of how places are experienced differently by different people, at least if the content is to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. According to

cultural geographer Doreen Massey, localities are so open now that any community or neighbourhood will have 'multiple identities' (Massey 1994 in Moores, 2012, p. 77). The permeability of locality calls for a global sense of place in Massey's view, requiring an "'outwardlookingness' ... a positivity and aliveness to the world beyond one's own turf" (Massey 2005, p. 15 in Moores, 2012, p. 81). Related to this is another concept which is useful in framing my inquiry, also discussed by Massey and Moores, which is how people may be rooted in and routed through a particular locality (Moores, 2012, p. 79). This idea was mooted by anthropologist James Clifford in *Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century* (1997) to distinguish between cultures based on "travel, movement, as opposed (conceptually as well as morally) to fixity and place" (Friedman, 1998, p. 733). Applying this to my research framework, leads me to consider how LCRs serve audiences comprising listeners who may or not reside locally to the station but are nonetheless interested in listening and invested in what is going on in that locality, because they may work or study in the vicinity, or pass through on regular journeys. Jankowski uses an alternative pair of terms to describe a similar phenomenon. People who are more engaged in local affairs are 'localites', and those who have a broader outlook and are socially active outside the locality who can be described as 'cosmopolitans' (Jankowski, 2002, p. 36). As mentioned in the previous section, such attitudes and behaviour shift along the continuum over time.

Producing and scheduling content to serve a heterogenous audience in a geographically demarcated community is therefore a challenge, due to inherent plurality and potential mobilities of any listeners and their differing requirements. But also, LCRs must compete with other available media, be those other forms and platforms offering locally targeted information or national and global news and entertainment providers. Audiences are increasingly fragmented amongst competing, niche and often politically biased content providers in the contemporary media landscape. In radio listening terms, more mobile sections of an audience will want to hear information that relates to travel and transportation services within, out of and into their locality. Fundamentally though, we must not lose sight of a most important aspect of radio broadcasting: what it does to fulfil the 'human need' for the comfort of hearing another human being's voice (Mowitt, 2011, p. 187).

Whose voices are aired is another aspect explored in my research. To what extent do the LCRs I study exhibit one of the core community radio values which is providing access to the airwaves for otherwise under-represented people? I will consider the status of volunteer radio personalities within their communities and whether that has any bearing on their role in the

stations and on their ability to call on information sources for compiling content for their shows. It is normally considered important that a community radio's target listeners can 'hear themselves', can relate to the speaker on the station or at least are comfortable with how they are being spoken to, in order to feel that the station is for them. Are they hearing local accents or turns of phrase that they recognize and can place as belonging to and representative of their neighbourhood? Alternatively, are they being treated to exotic voices or the sorts of accents that are absent from mainstream stations, but which bear cultural resemblances to their own ethnic or cultural roots? In her article 'Accented radio', Katie Moylan discusses this issue in relation to a Caribbean show on an LCR in Nottingham, near one of my snapshot case study stations (Moylan, 2018). Her findings establish the value of putting to air authentic voices. During my fieldwork, to what extent will I recognize "*accented radio* [as] a mode of cultural production … [enabling] transcultural articulation and community expression" (Moylan, 2018, p. 285)? I can apply this framing to interpret the voices I hear aired as indicative not only of where they might come from geographically, but of their particular ethnicity, faith, educational background and exhibiting, as Moylan puts it, "different degrees of currency, readability and social capital" (ibid.).

In relation to how community radio stations themselves are organized and populated, Donald Browne suggests there are three categories of community: the participants who are engaged in the programmes, such as interview guests and spokespersons; the team of staff and volunteers running the station; and the audience (Browne, 2012, p. 155). Savita Bailur, researching the emergence of community radio in India, understands that no community is a discrete entity: "communities, and therefore participation are dynamic … cognitive and performed" (Bailur, 2012, p. 92). Where the community as an active audience is concerned, listeners comprising people living or spending time in the locality served by the radio station, adopt the position of listener on a routine basis (Rao, 2010, p. 149). In her chapter, 'Embedded/embedding media practices and cultural production' in *Theorising media and practice* (Bräuchler and Postill, 2010), Ursula Rao sees culture as a constantly restructuring process, practices are tactical performances, 'ephemeral and situational' acts responsive to change, drama and contingency (Rao, 2010, p. 151). This correlates to an understanding of audience as resulting from performances of purposeful doings and sayings; as relational communities with an imagined sense of belonging generated through shared common interests, experiences and attachments (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998, pp. 115–6).

Thus, a local audience can be defined as those people in a spatial relationship with a particular locality taking on the position of listener from time to time; they are playing an active role in a 'social sonic space' (Blaakilde, 2018, p. 294). To cite Browne again, after decades of research in the field he concludes that "success comes from considerable diversity in their programme schedules and high levels of volunteer participation" (Browne, 2012, p. 166). Radio output can reflect what being part of a community means to the locals, and if programmed well will accommodate the interests of different sub-groups as they progress through different stages in life. An example Moores uses, writing about broadcast media consumption generally, is the difficulty one might have selecting preferred content when living at home with parents compared to if you had moved away (Moores, 2005, p. 22). This means a station offering a range of programme types from talk shows and coverage of local events like sport to various music genres can try to appeal to a range of people across the spectrum. To be inclusive, a station's offerings need to be extensive.

What listeners use radio for differs too. Where someone lives, who with, and how they spend their time affects how they fit the radio into their daily lives. My research interrogates how LCR practitioners become attuned to these patterns and respond to them in order to involve listeners in the delivery of appropriate programme material. Local media play key roles in how people engage with others in creating or recognizing meaningful community relations (Lynne Anderson in Mair et al., 2012, pp. 258–9). If media demonstrate "simple, local, community-connectedness", this can engage an outlet's audiences and make them feel they could be part of it too (Forde, 2011, p. 91). I aim to find out how LCR practitioners feel about their role, the assumed role according to the community radio ethos, in giving something back to society, helping to nurture a sense of community. Building strong social ties may not necessarily help to build strong neighbourhoods though. As Robert Putnam describes in *Bowling alone* (2000), there is a distinction between 'bridging' which he sees as outward looking and inclusive of diversity, and 'bonding' which is inward-looking and therefore exclusionary (Putnam 2000 in Gordon, 2012, p. 119).

To what extent LCRs in the UK aim to bridge or bond varies from station to station according to their geographical location and key conditions under their license which allows them to "cater for whole communities or for different areas of interest – such as a particular ethnic group, age

group or interest group".[16] As far as Ofcom is concerned, contributing towards social gain is a primary role of LCR; the stations must benefit their target communities through their operations. The five-year licences are renewed dependent partly on proving this is being achieved. Arguably, the benefits are more evident in relation to licences granted to different interest groups, be they ethnic, religious, age or lifestyle related. These tend to be targeted at populations in the UK's cities and larger conurbations and the catchment areas often overlap. For those licences awarded exclusively to geographical catchment areas, proving a station's role in providing any visible and measurable social benefits requires identifying the component populations within the community in question and assessing their differing, potentially conflicting needs.

2.7   ESTABLISHING A LINK BETWEEN LOCAL RADIO JOURNALISM AND SOCIALITY

I am investigating what sort of programme material is routinely distributed by LCRs that reflects and represents local community interests and how it is produced. Where there has been scholarship recently on media production procedures and environments, most focuses on television news or print journalism and the impact of digital technologies and online platforms. Radio is overlooked. As Anya Luscombe comments: "Radio news is often either lumped together with television as 'broadcast news' or, if mentioned separately, there is a concentration on analysing the output" (Luscombe, 2009, p. 6). An example is Emma Hemmingway's book *Into the newsroom,* which is a closely observed study of 'geographically and editorially local' news gathering in the BBC's Nottingham studios (Hemmingway, 2008, p. 59). Her focus is the handling of audio-visual content. More recent scholarship encountered in my review of literature on the application of multimedia technologies in news gathering includes Oscar Westlund's 'Mobile news: a review and model of journalism in an age of mobile media' (Westlund, 2013), and Kristy Hess' 'Shifting foundations: journalism and the power of the "common good"' (Hess, 2017). Whilst these have supplied useful insights on contemporary journalistic practice, and how to conceptualize it, neither give radio its due nor do they pay attention to how radio practitioners are using mobile, digital technologies and incorporating online platforms in their media activity. What such work does offer, is an understanding of the shift in journalistic thinking "from terms such as objectivity, responsibility and service to issues of legitimacy, morality, meaning-making and power" (Hess, 2017, p. 4).

---

[16] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence/radio-broadcast-licensing/community-radio accessed 12/12/2018

There is also a paucity of literature on news production in the LCR sector itself, so my findings will be a useful contribution to the corpus. From reconnaissance in the sector, I know that this gap in knowledge is partly a result of the practice not being very well established. Some stations prioritize journalism more than others, and some managers are better equipped than others to facilitate volunteers in producing local news programmes and segments. Bradford Community Broadcasting, for instance, have a daily news hour called, *Democracy Now!*[17] The Community Radio Awards established in 2016 to celebrate the sector's achievements, has a 'Speech and Journalism of the Year' category which attracts entries of a type that indicates a tendency towards news being featured in documentary form and discussed in talk shows.[18] So, there is evidence, albeit under-reported, that the sector's volunteer practitioners can deliver in ways that conform to the commonly held belief that the *raison d'être* of journalism is to hold the pillars of society to account. Yet this seems not to be their primary focus.

Claims are made in academia that nominally grassroots, community and local media represent a "'neo-Habermasian' commitment to communications" in the public sphere (Fuller, 2007, p. 5). Susan Forde concludes in *Challenging the news* (2011), that despite disagreements over what counts as alternative journalism, most see themselves as "independent of corporate interests and advertising pressures", free to oppose "existing power structures" and "sometimes not-for-profit … voluntary and/or amateur"(Forde, 2011, p. 79). She says news decisions are based on three key factors: "localism, activism and 'the scoop'" (ibid.). I do not perceive much radio activism happening in the UK's licensed community radio sector and will examine likely reasons for why the 'alternative voice' may be compromised when it comes to pursuing the normative news agenda of scrutinizing the activities of the authorities, corporations and other organizations. Research on funding methods has been conducted by Janey Gordon, who explains how community radio organizations often depend upon patronage, earning grants, selling advertising and sponsorship (Gordon, 2016). Salvatore Scifo goes as far as stating that community radio in the UK is partnered with the Government, officially acting "alongside the more general 'third sector', which includes civil society, community and voluntary organisations" (Scifo, 2016, p. 3).

To accommodate this apparent constraint or limitation in my study, I have broadened my understanding of news reporting to include 'softer' broadcast journalism practices. I borrow

---

[17] https://www.bcbradio.co.uk/schedule/   accessed 8/4/2020

[18] Past entries are listed here: https://communityradioawards.org.uk/   accessed 23/4/2020

this notion from Starkey and Crisell's *Radio journalism* (2009), where they remark on the shift "away from the 'broadcasterly' modes of reportage and documentary to more audience-focused discussions" that occurred with the introduction of national independent stations from 1990 (Starkey and Crisell, 2009, p. 19). I will investigate how community radio practitioners are knowingly or unknowingly following conventions of programming and production techniques that have been established over time to report on local affairs. I understand the types of programming through which local material may be conveyed as framed by Starkey's primary genre categorizations: speech packages; live sequences and phone-ins; music scheduling, formats and branding; magazine programmes; advertisements and trails; light entertainment; drama; documentaries (Starkey, 2004).

In every locality, there are stories which could become news, or as anthropologist Elizabeth Bird describes: "subjects of speculation and discussion in daily lives, the more dramatic and personal, the more memorable" (Bird, 2003, p. 23). Barnie Choudhury argues that "[l]ocal news is where every story begins and local media in the community are best placed to provide it" (Choudhury in Franklin, 2006, p. 213). The sorts of activities I will study as entailed in soft journalism include presenters conducting interviews with guest speakers, topical studio discussions among station personnel and listeners, and contributors phoning in with reports on sporting and other events, projects and campaigns. These are often broadcast live, which can save time and money, and have been widely adopted across the broadcast media, particularly by community stations. I propose that we might describe what the community sector offers by way of the coverage of local happenings as soft journalism. I acknowledge that this classification might perturb those in the profession and in academia who see 'soft' as the opposite of 'hard' news, and therefore as lowbrow and even un-newsworthy. A categorization for this type of news as 'general' has been suggested, as lying somewhere in between soft and hard: it is not sensationalist in terms of substance but it lacks immediacy (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky, 2010, p. 51). I argue however, that although the style of news presentation in LCR is perhaps more informal, even entertaining, and although the content discussed and presented may not be urgent or as time-sensitive as a hard-hitting piece, nevertheless the information and sentiments shared do have meaning, value and impact.

2.8 FRAMING THE RESEARCH: A TURN TO PRACTICE

Throughout the research process for *Talk of the town*, I will focus on localized instances of the technical tasks, organizational activities and social interactions involved in the production of local content on LCRs in English market towns. I am placing practices at the centre of my

theoretical framework. This approach chimes with the growing emphasis on practice in media studies, indicative of the recent turn that has occurred in the humanities and social sciences. As demonstrated in a comprehensive collection of scholarship *The practice turn in contemporary theory* (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001), practice theory is not a grand theory, but a conceptually-grounded perspective for understanding social life through identifying and analysing situated yet spatially-complex arrays of practices. In a subsequent publication, *Theorising media and practice* (Bräuchler and Postill, 2010)*,* Postill talks about the approach as a "body of work about the work of the body", emerging in the last third of the 20th century (Postill in Bräuchler and Postill, 2010, p. 11). He credits four prominent theorists who lay the foundations: Giddens, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and Pierre Bourdieu. Following Postill's introduction, an article written several years before by Nick Couldry, 'Theorising media as practice', is republished here to set the tone, establishing how a changing focus in media studies onto practices overcomes difficulties associated with seeking evidence of media effects on audiences, or situating and assessing the social consequences of media production accurately within political economy or cultural structures (Couldry, 2010, p. 37).

Of those early proponents, Bourdieu's conceptualization of fields of practice and associated concepts such as doxa, habitus and capital are particularly widespread in media literature, though not without adjustment. David Hesmondhalgh for instance, finds that Bourdieu's "lack of interest in large-scale production" is problematic for modelling cultural production (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 219). This can be addressed, he argues, by applying critical media theory to historicize media's intrinsic relationship with cultural production (ibid., p. 229). Couldry develops the conceptualization of 'the media' as a 'sphere of cultural production', meaning we can regard them as "a single field, or a collection of fields, (each) with a distinctive pattern of prestige and status and its own values", such as journalism (Couldry, 2003a, p. 657). Scholars of the news media have readily embraced the notion of 'the journalistic field'. Insightful work on Bourdieusian framing of journalism as cultural production includes Rodney Benson's. He illustrates the 'structural location' of journalism in social space (Benson, 1999, p. 466), and clarifies how "the focus on the mezzo-level of the 'field' offers both a theoretical and empirical bridge between the traditionally separated macro-'societal' level models of the news media, such as political economy, hegemony, cultural and technological theories, and micro-'organizational' approaches" (ibid., p. 463).

Inspiring sources for my research which draw on these ideas include Scott Rodgers' study of a Toronto newspaper, which he describes as "an *expression* of the journalistic field, one that has

often possessed symbolic capital as a medium representing, mediating, and speaking for and to the city as public, market, and material environment" (Rodgers, 2013, p. 73). Rodgers uses Bourdieusian field theory and concepts such as habitus strategically, as a "heuristic for thinking through how journalists' practices in and in relation to urban spaces are at once structured and structuring" (ibid., p. 61). Habitus is in fact regularly applied to research on media production practices, to frame understandings of power relations and influence, describing how embodied dispositions or propensities are socially conditioned and subconsciously performed rather than consciously enacted. It is used it to explain how practitioners enact behaviour which might be "experienced … as spontaneous or instinctive", whereas in fact it is actually prescribed by "a particular case of possible dispositions emerging from generative power structures", as cited by Tim Markham in his study of how British war reporters conduct their work in risky crisis zones around the world (Bourdieu, 1977 p. 72 in Markham, 2011a, p. 568). There are critics of Bourdieu who feel that that he is "excessively deterministic", and that habitus denies actors their agency (Adams, 2006, p. 515), making it "difficult to know where to place conscious deliberation and awareness in Bourdieu's scheme of things" (Jenkins 1992, p. 77 in Adams, 2006, p. 515).

Bourdieu's notion of fields and agency are useful though for conceptualizing a world which is increasingly experienced as saturated by media. A symbolic power lens is applied to account for the transcendent, pervasive nature of media across porous boundaries between fields. The media not only reflect reality but create it (Couldry, 2003a, p. 655). They are seen as disseminators of "symbolic, expressive, informational communication" (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008, p. 101), in ways that create representations of the social world, reflecting what 'is' in the world, to act as a filter, construct reality and "naturalize...certain dimensions, categorical features and facts" (Couldry 2012, p. 85). Media usage performs an environmental role "in the formation of social, civic and moral space" (Silverstone, 2007, p. 5). On a local, lived-in level "[m]edia 'use' has become so intertwined with other activities that we can no longer treat it in isolation from other factors of our experience" (McQuail, 2010, p. 7). Thus, as everyday lives unfold, the interactions taking place and understandings that are forming are influenced by what messages are conveyed by the media and how they are received and perceived.

Couldry has pointed out that the "'practice'-based research paradigm in sociology" evolved out of, and can serve, an increasing interest in the "specificity of local experience" (Couldry, 2010, p. 40). Quoting Bird, he emphasizes that "media are firmly anchored into the web of culture,

although articulated by individuals in different ways" (Bird 2003, p 2-3 in Couldry, 2010, p. 40). He outlines Ann Swidler's understanding of culture as two types of 'publicly observable processes' or practices which are routine and unthinking activities, and discourse, referring to what a 'system of meanings' enables people to say (Swidler 2001, p. 74-75 in Couldry, 2010, p. 41). Couldry suggests that 'principles or ordering' may be preferable terms to system, since he suggests that where there is discourse there is also self-reflexivity, but he accepts Swidler's analysis of practice theory, applying it to media studies to focus on what people do and say in relation to media. Whilst Couldry accepts that individuals may operate on autopilot according to inculcated social or socialized norms, he is also interested in how life in a media-saturated world feels. A solution for this is to draw on Schatzki's work which makes it possible to conceptualize how people's understandings play a role in their actions.

2.9 ADDRESSING THE SPATIAL ASPECTS OF PRACTICE THROUGH A SOCIAL SITE LENS

Schatzki is a key inspiration for my application of a practice theory lens. Along with Sherry Ortner, he is significant in the second generation of practice theory. Ortner's article 'Theory in anthropology since the Sixties' has been described as germinal in that she explicitly calls for the opposition between structuralist and individualist approaches to be resolved, and to focus attention more keenly on the human body within cultural and historical contexts, emphasizing the lived experience (Ortner, 1984). Schatzki has responded to this call and other practice theorists' observations to develop and refine his own social theory of practice, an addition to what he calls "at best a family of accounts" (Schatzki, 1997, p. 283) . He sees practices as organized arrays of activities, conceiving of 'the skilled body' as not simply where activity and mind meet but where the individual and society converge (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 3). This is not to say that society can be fully explained as the product of what a large number of individuals think and do. Indeed, Schatzki challenges the proposition that "social phenomena can be both decomposed into and explained by properties of individual people" (Schatzki, 2005, p. 466). It is not the people but the social orders in which their activities are organized that are pertinent. He understands "social systems, institutions, and structures, for example 'economy', 'state', and 'kinship'" as resulting from these activities and the associated "interdependencies and sedimentations" (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 54).

Schatzki has built on Giddens' notion of 'structuration', Foucault's focus on apparatus and discourse (Schatzki, 2002, p. 22), and Bourdieu's field theory, and returns to the earlier ideas of philosophers Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein (Schatzki, 1997, 2010; Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001). Giddens' structuration theory clarifies an understanding of the

duality of structure, "the structural properties of social systems" being "both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize" (Giddens, 2013, p. 25). Foucault's notion reworked into Schatzki's conceptualization is that people learn to self-discipline by being subjected to power and therefore possess a certain degree of agency within their structural constraints, (Schatzki, 2002, p. 50). Schatzki is mindful of Bourdieu's logic of particular domains of practice, constituted by a combination of types of capital, such as economic, symbolic or social, and his notion of habitus. Yet, whilst acknowledging this tacit dimension to practice, in that people spontaneously follow a course of action, Schatzki also emphasizes the importance of sense-making and intelligibility in such scenarios (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 75–81).

He argues that when people pursue what has become established over time as a practice, they also consider their actions and make decisions because they accept and appreciate the perceived value in doing so. Their performances of practice are influenced by four factors. There are shared common understandings as to what a particular practice is and what doing it means. These understandings develop over time as "webs of memory and expectation [which are] determining activity" (Schatzki, 2010, p. 19). Practice relies on the possession of know-how and practical skills to carry out the requisite actions and activities. There are rules and guidelines specific to any practice (Schatzki, 2002, p. 87), and performances are subject to a teleoaffective structure, being the generally-accepted and emotionally-affecting course of action:

> *A set of ends, projects, and affectivities that, as a collection, is (1) expressed in the open-ended set of doings and sayings that compose the practice and (2) unevenly incorporated into different participants' minds and actions.*   (Schatzki, 2002, p. 80)

Where humans are concerned, Schatzki conceives of identity as "bound holistically together with relations and positions" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 19). Thus, identity is formed and reformed through spatial and other "components and aspects" and cannot be reduced to a single, fixed meaning. For Schatzki, one's chief identity is what you principally think yourself to be, but a multiplicity of "ephemeral subject positions accumulate" around social activities (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 53–54). He does not necessarily see actors competing for status and capital in the way that Bourdieu does, so that over time cultural norms are reinforced and perpetuated. For Schatzki, a person's mind is not responsible for their behaviour, but it does organize their doings and sayings. In his chapter 'Practice mind-ed orders', he argues that the mind is "a central dimension" to how "social order is established within the sway of social practices" (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 50). Practices self-organize and self-propagate as

manifolds of activity anchored in individuals, (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 8), so that they and their associated material infrastructures and other ordering arrangements are a "convoluted, shifting, and variegated mass" (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 152–3). Rather than accepting the nature of fields as designed to reinforce the natural social order, in Schatzki's world view, activity, change and contingency are the only constants (Schatzki, 2011, p. 23).

A practice is influenced by and influences material arrangements amid which it unfolds, "linked through a tangle of causal, spatial, intentional, and prefigurational relations"(Schatzki, 2002, p. 46). This interest in the material arrangements that impact upon practitioners' performances ties in with a concurrent call in academia to pay more attention to physical infrastructures and other materialities in media and communication studies. David Morley maintains that we should study media and other aspects of the social world by contextualizing "the continuities, overlaps, and modes of symbiosis between old and new technologies" (Morley, 2009, pp. 114–5). This shift in emphasis has also coincided with a so-called spatial turn (Falkheimer and Jansson, 2006), emerging alongside the practice turn. Indeed, I argue that Jesper Falkheimer and André Jansson's stated mission asking, "how communication produces space and how space produces communication" (ibid., p. 9), could be improved by using the phrase 'communication *practices'*. Such a focus on practices in their material environments provides an additional dimension to studies of the social world based on identifying the (trans)formation of meanings and meaning-making processes previously identified as core concerns by the earlier qualitative (Jensen and Jankowski, 1991) and ethnographic turns in cultural studies.

Schatzki has developed the notion of social site, or 'site of the social', which is "a mesh of practices and material arrangements" where - and when – practitioners act (Schatzki, 2005, p. 472). They conduct their practice amid the shifting interrelationships which unfold between "four types of entity: human beings, artefacts, other organisms, and things" (ibid.). He describes how "particular chains of action and particular teleological commonalities and orchestrations" comprise a practice through which lives hang together (ibid.). His abstraction of material arrangements as layouts or locales of social orders is not dissimilar to Bourdieu's domains or fields of practice. Bourdieu's theory has required some modification involving a retro-fit of his ideas on reflexivity and positionality, by contemporary sociologists such as Matthew Adams in 'Hybridizing habitus and reflexivity' (Adams, 2006, p. 516). Whereas Schatzki's social site ontology for examining the conscious as well as the pre-conscious actions involved in practice, is, in my opinion, already fit for purpose.

Though one may seek to impose a structured order onto a dynamically unfolding practice, this cannot be achieved. Schatzki allows for relations and norms to metamorphose as the site boundaries shift over time and space and the routinized, aggregated and hierarchically organized "bodily doings and sayings" of humans (Schatzki, 2002, p. 73), transcend spatial boundaries rendering the site of any media-related practice as "always already" entangled in other spatially-complex contexts (ibid., p. 106). Schatzki conceives of "practices as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity" (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 2). What people do and say in the face of particular circumstances and understandings necessarily involves reacting to "one another's actions or to changes in the world" as well as to "such occasional occurrences as breakdowns" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 97). He advances a philosophical argument that the context of practice has multiple aspects, including 'site', 'texture' and 'contexture'. The first term, site applies simply to "where things exist and events happen" (ibid.). Texture is understood as the feel of that place, somewhat homogenous, like the weave of a fabric. The third term, contexture, accounts for the dynamic complexity of that context where and when everything is unfolding, comprising of multiple different elements. Here, Schatzki lists activities and events, identities, histories and what he calls 'obviousness' (Schatzki, 2002, p. 63). He applies this multidimensionality of the contextural aspect of a context to his social site ontology thereby establishing that studying a practice requires an examination of the broader practice-arrangements.

Schatzki emphasizes the interweaving of practices. Basic, 'dispersed' practices weave through the activities and routines of people across various sites through which they pass. These are tasks bound together by what he lists as general understanding: basic actions like "describing, ordering, questioning, reporting, and examining" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 88). 'Integrative' practices are more "complex entities joining multiple actions, projects, ends, and emotions" (ibid.). Thus, for my inquiry I take the practices and arrangements that volunteer practitioners engage in as the units of analysis, to explore what it is that connects an LCR to its geographical community. I focus on the practitioners' behaviours and attitudes, their stated intentions and perceived outcomes, the routines and technology usage relating to their radio production tasks, as well as the wider contexts, infrastructures, conventions and rationales that impact upon this work.

2.10 CONCLUSION

This review of literature has established a set of parameters for my research, contextualizing my subject matter across a number of specialisms. I see radio production through a media sociology lens, but technological aspects matter too, because of their impact on how the

industry's production practices and audience consumption patterns have evolved. This statement is significant, because one of the objectives of my research inquiry is to amplify the significance of volunteer radio practitioners in local community contexts. I see an opportunity here, by virtue of the practice-centric lens, to raise the profile of unpaid practice and qualify it for inclusion in the academic corpus of scholarship on radio production practices. The work on community media I have surveyed reveals also that the undeniable advantages of the radio/audio medium in community media work tend to be underplayed, or at least consistently portrayed as also-rans. Highlighting the situated interactions involved in producing local content for community radio, indicates that there is more at stake than simply what community radio sounds like. It is as much about what the interrelations on-air, online and off-air mean to people.

Even though my thesis is not closely examining audience responses to radio output, I have surveyed literature on communities to understand how people form associations with each other through shared interests or things in common. The notion of place-based sociality has arisen as something to be explored through investigating LCRs up-close and in-situ. My interest in the journalistic activities conducted in those scenarios has been prompted by the minimal presence of UK case studies. From personal experience, I know there is a great deal of local reporting being achieved albeit most often in what I term a 'soft' form. My research on how LCR volunteers cover what is going on in relatively under-represented English market towns will put on record that the sector is worthy of academic study alongside the mainstream news services.

The framework for my examination of these production practices has been informed by a body of work on practice theory, primarily focussing on the work of Schatzki, with references to Bourdieu. I find that Schatzki's manner of spatially and temporally contextualizing complex arrays of practices provides new ways of understanding not only the situatedness of practice in the everyday of social worlds but specifically how media usages are entangled therein. His concepts are not often explicitly cited in media studies literature, even when his ideas could more than adequately be employed to conceptualize the temporal and spatial situatedness of media practices as entangled with unfolding social phenomena (as exemplified by Rodgers et al., 2014). To counter this, I am foregrounding how his approach is ideally suited to my research aim since those people performing the practice I am studying can be viewed as inextricably and intimately entangled amongst the communities they serve. However, my contribution to theoreticians lies not only in the conceptual realm but the practical implementation of

research. In the following chapter, I review the literature on methodological approaches and develop an information-gathering strategy appropriate for my inquiry. Drawing again on Schatzki and Bourdieu, but combining the work of Donald Schön, I develop a reflexive, practice-centric mindset. The heightened sensitivity my approach allows and the richly textured evidence it yields will enable me to consider what factors influence how volunteer radio practitioners set about representing the interests of their communities.

3 DESIGNING A METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The practice theory approach discussed in the previous chapter has become an established framework in media research, but it is noted often that there has not been much progress in its refinement (Hui, Schatzki and Shove, 2017). Schatzki's social site framing has informed my strategy towards data-gathering, however, his theorizations of practice are more philosophical and tend not to concentrate overly on methodology. His use of desk research and fieldwork is implicit in much of his work. In this chapter, I contribute my own, more explicit formulation of a practice theory informed research model, as a step forward in this respect which will be of use to other scholars in their media inquiries. I explain how an element of reflexivity is important for studying a complex, constantly evolving nexus of practice-arrangements. Inspired by a heightened sensitivity to phenomenological concerns, my aim is to achieve a richly textured understanding of how practitioners perform (Scannell, 1995; Markham, 2011a; Moores, 2014).

I have surveyed literature on qualitative research pertaining to ethnographic case studies and explain how I have fine-tuned my reflexive, practice-centric mindset to seek nuanced insights on contemporary media production. I have already indicated that evidence of the impact positionality has on performances in the social sites of practice will be sought, but I also argue that it is important to critically reflect upon one's own positionality in those sites as an academic researcher. To implement this, I will draw on Bourdieu's work on reflexivity in sociological research. In addition, in order to fully appreciate media practices as relational, communicative activities carried out in spatially-complex environments, I suggest that it is important, where possible, to theorize the experience of the academic as media practitioner. I make a case for integrating hands-on practice-as-research into academic investigations of creative practice. A review of literature reveals what I perceive to be a lack of rigorous coherence when it comes to theorizing the iterative, inductive, often convoluted processes involved. I demonstrate how Schön's strategy for self-reflection during performances of practice, when applied to the social site practice-centric framing, remedies this. I then proceed to clarify the objectives of my research programme for *Talk of the town* and outline its implementation.

3.2 Applying Reflexivity to Qualitative Research

Schatzki's two incongruent case studies from the U.S.A. in *The site of the social* (2002) – the socio-religious organization of an 18th century Shaker herb industry in New Lebanon and the modern-day Nasdaq cyber stock market system – demonstrate how his site-focused social ontology lens applied to desk research can inform 'social investigations' and enable the creation of "multiscalar description[s] of human coexistence" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 266). In a subsequent article, 'The sites of organizations' (2005), Schatzki explains his how social ontology can be applied to the analysis of organizations. Midway through listing aspects of practice-arrangements and how to identify them, he adds:

> *Incidentally,…[this] requires considerable 'participant observation': watching participants' activities, interacting with them (e.g. asking questions), and – at least ideally – attempting to learn their practices. The names participants use for their activities are an important clue for identifying existing practices and bundles*
>
> (Schatzki, 2005, p. 476)

His later essay, 'Where the action is' (2011) includes a clarification of the flat ontology lens that he also advocates for the "analysis of the constitution of large social entities such as corporations, economies, and sociotechnical regimes" (Schatzki, 2011, p. 2) . He professes to "a bias toward the small" (ibid., p. 3), endorsing a tighter focus on localized, situated phenomena whilst remaining alert to how these segue into wider-spread patterns, even global occurrences amid more complex constellations of practice-arrangement nexuses. This means that what others might dismiss as 'micro-scale' is not overlooked. He understands that practice-arrangements unfolding on this smaller scale are extendible slices of the same phenomena unfolding on the larger, macro level (Schatzki, 2011, p. 21). Thus although the social site framework does not provide a general explanatory theory as such, the approach can provide descriptive and illustrative accounts usefully revealing "basic characters, compositions, and structures" (Schatzki, 2002, p. xvi).

In his 2010 book, *The timespace of human activity*, Schatzki still does not provide much detail on methodological matters although he draws heavily on empirical examples as well as what one can only assume is personal knowledge of the Bluegrass horse-rearing scene in the U.S. state of Kentucky, which is also home to the University where he works. However, in his chapter 'A primer on practices' in (2012), he is more explicit about the presence of the researcher in the field, when he advocates that in order to "uncover the world of practice"

(Schatzki, 2012, p. 23), the investigator "has no choice but to do ethnography, that is, to practice interaction-observation" (ibid., p. 24). He explains that this is because although practices may have material consequences, they are more "ethereal", "spread out over space and time" and their organizations are abstract (ibid.).

Schatzki argues that we need to be "attentive and reflective" to acquire familiarity and knowledge of the social site we are investigating. We can only properly understand "the subjects' lives and worlds" and find out more detailed information about their "temporalspatial infrastructures", contexts, histories and even potential futures by conducting interviews and oral histories with those we are studying, and by "hanging out with, joining in with, talking to and watching" them (Schatzki, 2012, p. 25). He recommends using statistical evidence to provide overviews of social affairs and points out that desk research and analysis of secondary sources is also useful for becoming familiar with a lexicon: learning the meanings of words and phrases for different activities that constitute a practice. This is a theme that he develops further in his chapter 'Sayings, texts and discursive formations' in (Hui, Schatzki and Shove, 2017), in which he highlights the role that language plays through its "structuring significance for social life" (Schatzki, 2017, p. 140). Despite this later attention to methodology, I feel that he still does not problematize the researcher's role sufficiently.

3.2.1   Being present in the social site

To redress Schatzki's cursory discussion of methodology, I have drawn on a range of literature pertaining to the relevant aspects of qualitative research: ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation; researcher positionality and creative practice-as-research. Participant observation is sometimes elided with ethnography but is nonetheless a qualitative research method in its own right. Engaging this way, through immersion in the everyday social lives being studied, generates situated observations that help to understand 'natural' human behaviour. My fieldwork has been inspired by anthropologist Sherry Ortner, an early proponent of research on practices. She emphasizes how important it is for the researcher to be located in the context being studied: "it is our location 'on the ground' that puts us in a position to see people not simply as passive reactors to and enactors of some 'system', but as active agents and subjects in their own history" (Ortner, 1984, p. 143). This strategy positions the researcher in the social site being studied and enables the researcher to feel the vibe, to be there in the field, experiencing the objects and subjects of research in situ: "collecting data in 'natural' settings" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 4). So, when the researcher is amid the array of practice-arrangements being studied, they find themselves as part of what ethnographer Leigh

Star calls an 'assemblage' of resources and routines, an invisible infrastructure, a sort of 'backstage mess' (Star, 1999, p. 385).

Thus, whilst aiming to derive accurate impressions of my research participants' production practices through ethnographically oriented research, I tried to create as little disruption as possible in their everyday lives. I regarded the social sites in a Schatzkian manner, with which Star's work corresponds. By highlighting the relational and ecological aspects of the infrastructure as "part of human organization" (Star, 1999, p. 380), Star establishes categorizable properties or dimensions that prompted me to appreciate that though they may appear 'unexciting' and comprise "previously neglected people and things" (ibid., p. 379), such aspects as embeddedness, transparency, 'learned' behaviours and 'conventions of practice' (ibid., p. 381) are all valid evidence. This perspective indicates the need for interdisciplinarity in media research, especially thinking like a geographer to understand the spatial complexities of organizations, phenomena and related experiences (Adams, 2011; Adams and Jansson, 2012), not to mention the potential for the circulation of media-related practices across multiple sites (Rodgers, 2013). In this spirit and in order to sensitize myself to my participants' performances, I take inspiration from Goffman's micro-sociological analysis of behaviour and routines (Goffman, 1959). I find his theorizing of socialized responses to settings and circumstances corresponds well with Schatzki's site of the social conceptualization.

Along with the phenomenological, practice and spatial turns which this thesis responds to, as discussed in the previous chapter, there has been a reflexive turn in the social sciences and humanities, especially in relation to qualitative research methods and analysis. In their chapter 'Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: researcher as subject' (2002), Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner illustrate their approach to researching human respondents and writing up the texts to display "multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Ellis emphasizes that researchers are "inside what we are studying" (ibid., p 743) and shares Bochner's call for a "more personal, collaborative, and interactive" researcher-respondent relationship (ibid., p. 744). Academic interest in everyday, lived experiences has grown in media and cultural studies, and there is a greater reliance and belief in the validity of locally, and even individually, specific interrogations. Bird describes media as "a kind of cultural frame" but rather than use audiences as units of research, she focuses on individuals because they are each "active, selective makers of meaning" (Bird, 2003, p. 3) Although her work is in reception studies, I relate to her "ethnographic way of seeing" which entails getting close enough to those being studied so as to understand "what their

experiences and activities *mean to them*" (Bird, 2003, p. 8).

It has become more acceptable in research to follow an inductive route that considers all accounts of life and experience to be subjective, or "situated in particular contexts" (Silverman, 2006, p. 291). Performances of activities which are organized into a practice will respond in differing ways to the dynamic conditions and varying spatial and geographical contexts of everyday life (Falkheimer and Jansson, 2006; Adams, 2009). The social world cannot be explained on a universal scale, as Daniel Miller and Don Slater find in their investigation of local and diasporic internet use by Trinidadians (Miller and Slater, 2000). They argue that 'particularism' is necessary as a "firm basis for building up the bigger generalizations and abstractions…solid grounding for comparative ethnography" (Miller and Slater, 2000, p. 1). This ties in with Schatzki's argument that we must appreciate how "human activity is fundamentally indeterminate", contingent on as-yet unknown combinations of occurrences in time and space (Schatzki, 2002, p. 232). Ethnographic research into how phenomena are experienced and therefore made meaningful in particular places can form a basis for illustrating the wider picture, providing a "clearer picture of how the culture works" (Fetterman, 2009, p. 545). But it is important to acknowledge the limitations and accept that if findings are too specific or localized, they cannot be used to generalize. One should hesitate to repeat the claim once made by geographer David Seamon that a single group of research participants "reflect human experience in its typicality" (Seamon, 1979 , p. 23 in Moores, 2012, p. 60).

3.2.2   Newsroom ethnographies

There has been a recent revival of newsroom ethnographies, as documented by Simon Cottle (Cottle, 2007), and a growing tradition of applying Bourdieu to theorizations of newsroom procedures. As previously discussed, there are parallels between my research agenda and the growing body of literature on media production inspired by Bourdieu's ideas of capital, habitus and doxa (Schultz, 2007; Markham, 2008; Rodgers, 2013; Hess, 2017). For instance, in an article 'The journalistic gut feeling' (2007), Ida Schultz presents her findings from an ethnographic study exploring journalistic practice at national broadcasters in Denmark. Informed by Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, Shultz identifies this approach as a second wave of newsroom ethnography which takes a 'news ecology' perspective bridging between organizational structures, political-economy and cultural analyses (Cottle, 2003, p. 19 in Schultz, 2007, p. 191). She also cites Rodney Benson's attitude, that this approach to what she calls the 'meso-level of journalism' (Benson and Neveu, 2005), ''offers both a theoretical and empirical bridge between the traditionally separated macro-'societal' level models of the

newsmedia. . . and micro'organisational' approaches'' (Benson, 1998, p. 463 in Schultz, 2007, pp. 191–192).

From the literature, it also appears there is a trend towards applying actor network theory (ANT), developed initially by Bruno Latour, to investigate the role of technologies in news and media sites. It employs a myopic and open-ended research strategy which allows non-human 'actants' and objects as much agency as humans: the value being that it addresses the materiality of media organizations and their infrastructures. However, whilst testing the approach in her ethnographic study of "[w]orking practices, technologies and definitions of local news" (Hemmingway, 2008, p. 129), Hemmingway finds that she has to modify the framing somewhat. She has identified 'nouse' (*sic*) as an actant in the newsroom, quoting a respondent who describes it as "instinctive knowledge of how to get right to the heart of a story, to recognise a story" (Hemmingway, 2008, pp. 194–195). She categorizes this as performative, as power: currency exchanged between actors, even though she admits it would not count as something that could be textually inscribed in the original ANT model. She resolves this by claiming that ANT has "outgrown its progenitor" (ibid., p. 202).

I prefer Schatzki's conceptualization of agency and activity, which acknowledges the role played by nonhuman entities which are involved in the social *orders* that hang together in the practice-arrangements (i.e. social sites of practice), determining human action (Schatzki, 2002, p. 71). The all-encompassing social site framing enables the study of how practitioners come to possess and exercise the practical understanding necessary in order to carry out the doings and sayings of a practice: the knowing how to do something, to identify, prompt and respond to its unfolding (ibid., p. 77). I have adopted Schatzki's ontology to consider shared understandings, the knowledge and skills accrued over time, sets of rules, guidelines and protocols and the influence of the teleoaffective structure on performances. Those other non-human and artefactual actants are significant, but positioned within, and dynamically constitutive of, the practice-arrangements of the social site. Schatzki's framing does enable a micro-social, fine-grained ethnographic account of events but it also facilitates an understanding of activities and practices through a phenomenologically inclined study of practices as contextualized and contingent behaviours.

3.2.3   The value of case studies

As touched on earlier in my discussion of qualitative research methods, the extrapolative potential of case study findings is limited. In an article on the status of case studies as social research (2008), Malcom Tight's survey of the term's widespread usage in the literature leads

him to declare that "the surrounding terminology of 'case study' not only adds little of value, but actually gets in the way" (Tight, 2010, p. 337). He goes as far as suggesting that the term be abandoned in favour of describing such projects as "small-sample, in-depth" studies (Tight, 2010, p. 338). If we are honest about their scope, these do have value simply because they allow for 'a detailed examination' of phenomena (ibid.). The remedy, he suggests, seems to be 'clear labelling' and academic rigor (Tight, 2010, p. 337). For instance, he lists what one of the most cited authors on the topic, Robert Stake, considers are the 'conceptual responsibilities' to take into account when conducting this type of inquiry, including: being clear about the object of study and the research questions; looking for patterns and being open to alternative interpretations when developing assertions (ibid., p. 332).

Thus, the case studies I present in this thesis are more than just examples of performances of radio production practice in the community sector. They have been conducted systematically, to provide what Stake calls a "personal and particularized" report on each case (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 449) . The findings I will present have been informed by my personal lived experience as well as desk research, in-the-field observations and one-to-one interviews, which is why I qualify them as ethnographically oriented. It is partly a result of this too-often-occurring elision between the terms 'case study' and 'example' elsewhere in academic and grey literature that leads to the case studies approach being criticized for "excessive reliance on a single observer, lack of systematic data collection, insufficient distinction between researcher and object of study" (Bell and Newby 1972, p 17 in Jankowski, 2002, p. 44). I have responded to this critique by undertaking several ethnographically oriented site-specific investigations. The extent of this fieldwork was prompted by a perceived need for breadth and depth, as recommended by Nancy Baym. She finds, albeit with reference to the study of audiences, that multiple forms of data collection carried out during an extensive period of fieldwork amount to much more than just "brief forays in the field coupled with individual and group interviews" (Baym 1999 p. 18–21 in ibid.).

One advantage of the case study approach lies in the potential relatability of findings, in that rather than representing any sort of generality, it is possible for similarities to be recognized, prompting benefits for others in corresponding fields (Bell, 1993). It can be argued that just as a case study must be contextualized beyond its immediate setting in order to fully appreciate what the findings mean in the general scheme of things, so too may it have a resonance beyond its original scope. For instance, in *Theorising media and practice*, Debra Spitulnik's chapter 'Thick context, deep epistemology' recounts a fieldwork investigation into how young

men listen to radio in a Zambian marketplace (Spitulnik, 2010). She finds that applying a practice-centric framework to analyse particular patterns of activity can lead to a deeper enquiry and provides what she calls a 'thick context' to situated practices. She argues that the 'wide-angle' lens allows a researcher to "make claims about typicality, variation and causality", by situating and contextualizing observed practice and generating what she terms "ethnographic texture" (ibid., p. 107). But Spitulnik also points out that at the same time, it helps to challenge any preconceived labelling of a core practice. She resists resorting to master narratives, calling for more open-ended, less boundaried interrogations of what behaviours mean, demonstrating how hidden meanings may be uncovered by taking a critical epistemological stance.

3.2.4   Researcher positionality

Studying how and what people do to make certain things happen in a field of practice requires continual negotiation between the researcher and people in the fieldwork site, from gaining access to arranging interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 4). When theorizing the researcher's role in an ethnographic study, how those negotiations pay off and what perspectives she gains are central considerations. Sarah Pink argues that it is essential that the researcher remain objective and self-aware that she "exists in an intersubjective relation" with the people she is studying (Pink, 2008, p. 179). A researcher is always 'emplaced' and so her task is to ask what her role is "in the constitution of that place" (Pink, 2008, p. 193). As Schön puts it: "The phenomena that [the inquirer] seeks to understand are partly of his own making; he is in the situation that he seeks to understand" (Schön, 1991, p. 151). Incorporating this sensitivity in my fieldwork, I would aim to engage reflexively, transparently and responsibly with the volunteer practitioners who I encountered in the stations and amid the associated practice-arrangement contexts.

I see this urge to interrogate relationships and relationality as equating to Bourdieu's call to contemplate positionality. As well as acknowledging the limited generalizability but resonant potential of ethnographic case studies, one must be sensitive to the subjectivities involved. Bourdieu says objectivity in research is not totally achievable, therefore we need to acknowledge that and be self-critical and reflexive regarding one's own status or position, prejudices, pre-conceived ideas and potential subjectivity as a researcher when we study others (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Critical inquiry into the "social conditions of production" means examining not just the lived experience of "a subject of objectivation", but how that subject – and understandings of it – have actually come about, due in part to relative

positions in social space, in the 'field', and in the 'scholastic universe' (Bourdieu, 2004, pp. 90–95). It is important to accept that both the researcher and the researched have agency, hence the value of reflexivity in academic studies is that it "closes the illusory gap" between them (Etherington, 2004, p. 32). Being reflexive about one's relative positionality enables recognition of the paradoxical relation between observing yet participating at the same time (Ortner, 1984, p. 134).

Thus, as Bird has noted, it is a postmodern necessity to put the ethnographer at the centre of the ethnographic endeavour (Bird, 2003, p. 16), although 'the other's voice' remains more important (ibid., p 17). In any case, we cannot avoid research findings being refracted through the personal identity of the researcher (ibid., p. 20). This is especially important when conducting ethnographically oriented academic inquiries in the field when the researcher is also a practitioner investigating their own field of specialized practice. Possessing a priori knowledge, a purely academic understanding, of a particular field or social site of practice no doubt has intellectual value. However, I argue that sympathy or indeed empathy which is embodied already by a researcher with practical experience of acting within that field is useful for achieving heightened sensibility and sensitivity during investigations. Experience-based knowledge affects how well the researcher negotiates the site, its doxa and the participants but also how she will identify what counts as evidence and once gathered, how she will treat, analyse and interpret it. It may also impact upon how she chooses to present and disseminate her findings. If the researcher's previous experience is revealed, as ethical standards might require, it is bound to affect how the research study participants in that social site regard and treat the researcher and how they perform in front of her.

3.3   CREATIVE PRACTICE-AS-RESEARCH

Encouraged by the turn to practice in the humanities and social sciences, I decided to go through the process of producing local content for community radio myself in order to seek evidence and create new knowledge. As Ellis and Bochner argue "[t]he investigator would always be implicated in the product. So why not observe the observer?" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 747). There is a growing enthusiasm in the academy for intellectualizing artistic and creative research, to conceptualize not only the meaning of artefacts but their making, to experiment with the practical processes involved in their crafting. The approach is becoming more prevalent in radio studies. One inspiring piece of research from Australia is Mia Lindgren's doctoral thesis *Journalism as research: developing radio documentary theory from practice* (Lindgren, 2011). She argues that introspection during creative practice research contributes

not just to "an awareness of emotions, thoughts and behaviours" but to "a more structured reflection on practice during the analysis and writing stage" (Lindgren, 2014, p. 175). Her use of non-traditional research outputs (NTRO) challenges the so-called 'tyranny of text' since the audio medium has proven capable of "functioning as an alternative to the privileged written text that dominates scholarly work" (Makagon and Neumann 2009, p. xii in Lindgren, 2014, p. 172). For instance journalistic texts are recognized as legitimate research outcomes by the Australian Research Council since 2012 (Lindgren, 2014, p. 173).

That radio as a creative media production practice can be applied as a methodological tool in both the implementation and presentation of academic research is increasingly a topic in academic literature (Bacon, 2006, 2012; Lindgren and Phillips, 2011; Lindgren, 2014; Phillips, 2014). Technological innovations involving the digitization of data creation, handling and distribution amid an increasingly connected Web 2.0 world have changed the ways we use, experience and archive media products, and thus how we can research them. In *Recording culture: audio documentary and the ethnographic experience* (2009), Makagon and Neumann show how closely aligned journalistic methodologies are with data-gathering approaches which are considered more academic, for instance the ethnographic method used when spending time with the people you are studying (Makagon and Neumann, 2009). As well as taking notes during interviews and fieldwork, audio recording, if not video recording, has become commonplace. This ensures improved accuracy in that digital recordings then exist for transcription purpose and cross-checking information gleaned from the field (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2015).

In Australia, the facilitation of creative practice research, especially in radio and audio documentary production, is well developed, as seen in the work of Lindgren and others (McHugh, 2010; Lindgren and Phillips, 2011; Bacon, 2012; Lindgren and McHugh, 2013). In the UK however, the policy towards how academics submit their creative practice outputs when reporting to the higher education funding bodies' Research Excellence Framework (REF), and how they are assessed in terms of impact, is still evolving. Part of the problem is the need to strengthen the intellectual robustness of creative practice as research in the eyes of the academy. There is no single paradigm, nor is there an "easy set of descriptors" for the approach (Rust, Mottram, and Till 2007). This poses challenges in relation to UK academics submitting work to the REF, which in its 2014 overview report stated that Higher Education institutions (HEI) in the UK should "do much more to assist excellent practitioners who move into the academy to make the transition in developing the research articulations of their work"

(Research Excellence Framework, 2015, p. 100). It continues: "there are too many instances where the sector still has difficulty distinguishing excellent professional practice from practice with a clear research dimension" (ibid.). There is only a limited consensus in UK academic institutions on how the artefacts of practice research should be included in a thesis submission, whether it is acceptable to replace a certain amount of text with some artistic or performative creation and if so, what proportion is appropriate.

Reaching any consensus is a slow process as John Adams and Julian McDougall demonstrate in *Revisiting the evidence: practice submissions to the REF* (2015) with a list of practitioner-academics who feel their work problematically '"fell between two stools" – being neither theoretical enough nor resolved enough as practice' (Adams and McDougall, 2015, p. 106). In a report carried out by Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive, called *A review of practice-led research in art, design & architecture* (2007), the authors express that practice-led research is not a method or methodology per se, but an activity used in research and therefore its contribution to the inquiry should be made explicit. Where 'an artefact' has been created through a 'purposeful process', the knowledge associated with said artefact is considered more significant than the artefact itself (Rust, Mottram and Till, 2007, p. 13). This uncertainty trickles down to the doctoral students who, on the one hand, are being encouraged to explore and push the boundaries of their craft and intellectual understandings of it, and on the other hand, feel under pressure to conform to academic norms of thesis presentation (Coleman, 2017). There are solutions proposed. Rachel Hann, for instance, calls for a second wave of practice research based around the archiving and sharing of 'portfolios of evidence' as peer-reviewable 'good practice' (Hann, 2015). In an article, 'Bursting paradigms', artist and activist Sophie Hope proposes a 'colour wheel' to help understand the differences between the diverse disciplinary approaches to how creative practice is used in academic research. She designs a spectrum that uses primary colours and how they mix to make secondary shades, illustrating how the often-confusing matrix of different approaches overlap (Hope, 2016).

3.3.1   Schön's contribution to research on practice

My contribution to the developing field of research on and through practice is a reflexive, social site version of practice theory. Incorporating Schön's ideas, much-cited by practitioner-academics, means I achieve a balance between individuals and structural contexts and avoid overly prioritizing either. Schön's *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action* (1983), was written as a response to a crisis of confidence in public institutions in the USA at the time. His aim was to intellectualize situations of practice and demystify expertise to create

an alternative way of thinking about the "workaday life of the professional" (Schön, [1983] 1991, p. 49). The central tenet of his theory is that thinking through the performance of tasks carried out as one's practice enables self-critical analysis, potentially leading to improved competency, better responses to changing circumstances and higher professional standards. He critiques the traditional, positivist approach to research as inadequate for appreciating the element of artistry and the 'practical knowledge' involved in professional practice and argues that the benefit of reflection-in-action is that it "tends to focus interactively on the outcomes of action, the action itself, and the intuitive knowing implicit in the action" (Schön, [1983] 1991, p. 56).

Schön's understanding that "[w]e are agents-experient…at once the subjects and the objects of action" (ibid., p. 346) is a call to be reflective-in-the-moment. There is clearly some correspondence here with Bourdieu's later work which is acknowledged by a citation of *The reflective practitioner,* (republished in 1991), in a footnote of Wacquant and Bourdieu's *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (2004). Schön's ideas have aspects in common with Schatzki's understandings, for instance they both draw on pragmatist John Dewey's thoughts regarding the indeterminacy of situations and how meanings of entities are derived through usage. Schön describes the "varied topography of professional practice" to visualize two levels: the high ground where research-based theory and technique can be used; and a swampy lowland of "confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution" (Schön, 1991, p. 42). Schön uses this to justify why self-reflection is important to analyse the iterative artistry of one's practice: a strategy often employed in creative practice-as-research. 'Messy' social realities viewed from this perspective lend themselves to in-the-moment, in-situ explorations which are at the same time entangled amid the amorphous social site (O'Reilly, 2005 p. 170 in Postill and Pink, 2012).

3.3.2   Conceptualizing reflections on practice

This blurredness around definitions of research on and through practice motivated me to find a suitable conceptual framing so that I could robustly incorporate my own experiential knowledge into the research process. Some creative practice-researchers in academia achieve this by employing and promoting Schön's conception of reflection-in-action as a research paradigm (see for example: Aziz, 2009; Haseman and Mafe, 2009). Schön even identifies the reason why articulating and justifying creative practice is difficult: stemming from the dichotomies that exist between 'hard' scientific knowledge and the 'soft' knowledge of "artistry and unvarnished opinion" (Schön, 1991, p. xiii). He points out that the "workaday life of the professional", as with everyday life, is too unpredictable, characterized by 'implicit knowing', a

"feel for the stuff with which we are dealing" (ibid., p. 50) and too "dependent on tacit recognitions, judgements, and skilful performances" to be theorized with positivistic models. I wanted to use what I learned about the practice through my own performative experiences and reflections to construct, not a hypothesis so much as a template to inform further inquiries into the practice at other stations.

The learning through doing approach is similar to anthropologist Tim Ingold's belief in "thinking through making" to "resolve the opposition between the theoretical and the practical" (Ingold, 2013, p. 15). He does not use the term 'data' for any findings, as he understands it to be "knowing from the inside" (ibid., p. 5). Thus, qualitative terms such as insights, knowledge and understandings ought to be given appropriate credit for being meaningful in academic research. As Lindgren argues, when we "extract theory from practice" we must present it in such a way as to achieve the status of "legitimate academic research" (Lindgren, 2014, p. 178). If one pursues creative practice as a form of academic inquiry with a view to 'making meaning' from this experience (Murray and Lawrence, 2000, p. 28), we must use reflection and reflexivity as a strategy to inform and react to how our practice unfolds.

One might have assumed there was already a natural alignment here with the conceptual framework of practice theory, but there is little evidence of a widespread adoption of this theoretical media-as-a-set-of-practices approach amongst creative practitioner-researcher academics. It is used in some quarters, as evident in collections such as *Practice as research: context, method, knowledge* (Barrett and Bolt, 2007). Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt are certainly applying and advocating the ideas of Heidegger, Bourdieu and Foucault in their studies of creative arts and they both consider the knowledge that emerges as 'situated' (Barrett and Bolt, 2007). For Bolt, practice as research is "reflexivity at the praxical knowledge level", a process of coming to know the world through the handling of materials (ibid., p. 34). Barrett explains that creative research "operates not only on the basis of explicit and exact knowledge, but also on that of tacit knowledge" (ibid., p. 4). She also stresses the importance of reflexivity, positionality and relationality in this approach.

Like Barrett and Bolt, I understand the researcher in creative practice as the practitioner whose embodied knowledge, skills and experience result in contingent, situated performances of a particular practice, all aspects of which are under examination as focal points in an inquiry. If research on everyday life is messy then research on creative practice is especially so (Haseman and Mafe, 2009). Research on and using creative practice is iterative, cyclical and unpredictable (Smith and Dean, 2009; Edmonds and Candy, 2010; Hope, 2016). It is not a linear process. Out

of it may emerge both anticipated and unanticipated findings. I find this aspect of the creative research paradigm dovetails well with Schatzki's social site concept in which happenstance, contingency, open-endedness and metamorphosis are all significant factors. A practitioner may not know where their research may lead them nor when it will end, and their proposition or theory often emerges inductively as they proceed through an open-ended field of interest rather than being spear-headed by a single hypothesis.

I see the potential here for Schatzki's ideas to supplement and advance the field, for I question whether simply identifying as a reflective practitioner is a sufficiently robust approach. If findings lack wider theoretical contextualization, there is a risk of falling into the trap of navel-gazing, albeit in the pursuit of best practice, rather than rigorously contributing new academic knowledge. I argue that applying a reflexive, practice-centric lens establishes how to approach the autoethnographic aspect of practice-as-research, so that one's general understandings, accumulated skills and experience, the teleoaffective structures and other organizational arrangements engaged with, are taken into account. Practitioner-research in and with media and radio can contribute new knowledge to the disciplines because it enables one to be reflexively situated in the field of inquiry as the researcher, positioned in relation to the research objects and where the activities are taking place. This 'where' means spatially in virtual and physical terms but also as far as context is concerned, it means at a point in time or along particular procedural lines, as well as in relation to the positions and statuses of other entities in the social site.

3.4 THE RESEARCH STRATEGY, OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Data gathering for my research was conducted between 2015 and 2018. I conducted desk research and listening-in throughout to complement the fieldwork which was conducted in two phases. Over five months from July 2017, I logged 230 hrs of practice-as-research at a local internet station, reflexively interrogating my own practice. The first-hand experiences I had of sourcing, shaping and sharing content meant that when observing and questioning other practitioners in the subsequent fieldwork, I would have a clearer idea of what I was looking out for. I intended to evaluate, in my case, how much the accumulation of knowledge through prior experience of working in local radio and through residing in the locality, enhanced my ability to successfully negotiate the specific practice-arrangements of NR and gain access to organizations and potential interviewees in the area. I would then further explore this line of inquiry in the research conducted in five other radio stations in English market towns. This second phase of the fieldwork data-gathering process was undertaken in 2018. I documented

60 hrs of observations and encountered 38 volunteer producers, presenters and administrative staff, 24 of whom I interviewed.

Mindful of the importance of achieving validity, impartiality, reliability, and repeatability (Silverman, 2006), I incorporated a degree of the recommended triangulation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 183), by carrying out inquiries in six radio stations. Equally aware of advice to use mixed methods combining qualitative with quantitative elements (Yin, 2009), I gathered statistical data on the LCRs and catchments areas surveyed to illustrate gender and other cultural balances. I was seeking to understand how LCR volunteers perform according to what makes sense in view of their vested interests in the social site: how they routinely or contingently responded to the dynamic conditions relating to the station and how their activities there were entangled with other social sites of activity in their everyday social, domestic and professional lives. Practitioners counted among my research objects, along with the technologies and routines they used to produce local content. They were also my research subjects, and as such were treated ethically and non-judgementally. I looked for intangible, invisible evidence of the understandings, agreements and organizational configurations which gave them, along with their social contacts, access to the airwaves. I interrogated how media production practices were planned and carried out with the aim of engaging with, (re)presenting, reinforcing and (re)producing the conditions for socialities in communities.

In my inquiry, desk research commenced first and was ongoing throughout. It included listening live to the selected stations and programmes on FM on the radio, just as Goffman did "informal note-taking from broadcasts" when researching for his essay on 'Radio talk'; though he also found that tape recordings and LPs also worked well (Goffman, 1981, p. 197). I too used recordings, but thanks to digitization, was able to efficiently access, store and analyse copious amounts of audio content through online streaming via my smartphone, computer or tablet with the option of listening again and accessing some of the material as podcasts. Tuning in to the targeted stations enabled me to become familiar with the various shows, presenters, regular contributors, types of features, and overall programming approaches. This was how I identified which potential interview participants noticeably included local content in their shows. I kept an A4 logbook for each station in which I made notes of the dates and times of day, what I was doing whilst listening and comments about the style and substance of the programmes. I also engaged on social media with LCR volunteers as well as CMA council members and other researchers in the field prior to, during and following the site visits.

For ease of access, the LCRs selected for my research lay in and around my home in

Hertfordshire or along routes I was already scheduled to travel. My home office doubles as one primary research site since it is where I have previously carried out freelance radio reporting work and conducted much of my practice-as-research for the local internet station Nickey Radio (NR) in Harpenden. There is one other main research site, Radio Verulam (RV) in St Albans, that I have been involved with to varying degrees over a twenty-year period. The four other LCRs researched as snapshot studies were: Vibe 107.6 FM in Watford; Radio LaB 97.1 FM at the University of Bedfordshire in Luton; 103 The Eye in Melton Mowbray; Somer Valley 97.5 FM in Somerset. My aim was to study those stations with a view to identifying the practice-arrangements at play in each social site involved in the coverage of local current affairs: local news, events and culture. Due to the specific contextual circumstances of LCR in the UK, as described in Chapter Two, I expected to find a range of production activities that might count as 'softer' forms of journalism which are more suited to and sustainable across the community sector (Starkey and Crisell, 2009).

I looked for what was entailed when volunteers were 'doing radio', in other words producing and curating content for broadcast, streaming and other online outlets, thereby contributing towards what I understand as performances of cultural production: reflecting, re-presenting and shaping meanings derived from the everyday socio-political, ethnocultural landscape and so forth to engender a sense of community through encouraging engagement, networking and other socialities. My focus on speech-based and local content meant targeting those types of programmes over specialist music shows. It was the arrays of journalistic activities involved in researching and gathering information on local happenings, inviting guests and regular contributors into the studios and conducting outside broadcasts that interested me. I would explore how practitioners arranged interviews with event organizers, venue managers, artists and performers for magazine-style and topical talk shows and features. What was considered to be of interest, useful and enjoyable enough to be aired and shared as programme and social media material would likely vary from practitioner to practitioner: the more variation, the more connections to identify beyond the social site of each station. Many such aspects analysed in this LCR study were hidden or masquerading as something else. Tasks such as corresponding with potential guests might be described as 'administration' or 'communication', but these activities are part of the interwoven integrative practices involved in running an LCR and featuring the local. My observational notes and the narratives I collected were cross-referenced in order to distil the patterns of behaviour, attitudes, routines, rule-following and so forth in the provision of locally relevant material.

3.4.1 Researcher identity and gaining access

Poised to embark on my fieldwork, I possessed a strong sense of being part of a number of meaningful social networks, where there was evidently what Putnam terms "density of associational life" with the potential for "mutual reciprocity … collective action, and the broadening of social identities" (Putnam, 1995, p. 76). Putnam's use of the term 'social capital' to describe this phenomenon, relating to levels of civic engagement once feared to be waning in American institutions and communities, is referred to again in the follow-up article 'Still bowling alone? The post-9/11 split' (Sander and Putnam, 2010). Putnam's interest in the potential for social capital to make people "happier and healthier" which ultimately "improves economic productivity" (ibid., p. 9), has a different emphasis to Bourdieu's notion of how capital is embodied in actors in a field of practice. However, I see an overlap between interpretations, and I reflexively acknowledge that how I engaged locally, how I was perceived and what contacts and skills I possessed, all contributed to social capital that I could trade on. My status enabled me to establish new contacts, gain access and elicit information, although my industry experience was something that I had to be careful would not jeopardize the objectivity of my inquiry.

Before building the ongoing trust of my respondents, by carefully inserting myself into their respective social sites, I had to gain access to each station community and establish my credibility as a researcher and radio practitioner. When I approached the stations to request access for conducting fieldwork for *Talk of the town*, I presented myself not just as a PhD student but as someone with decades of personal experience in local radio production across all sectors, commercial, BBC and community. I was already involved on the margins with NR and RV, but to approach the volunteers who did not know me, I drew their attention to my status as local resident and member of local creative arts groups for over 20 years. With the other stations, if I was not already familiar with them by living locally, I built on connections through mutual acquaintances. I was conscious that my position in the field of radio and in the wider social environment would affect my ability to access the research sites and address the participants. On the one hand, it might impress management enough to get me in, but on the other it might intimidate or influence the participants. I tried to mitigate the latter, mindful of Goffman's notion of presenting a 'front' (Goffman, 1959), and Bird's strategy of 'impression management' (Bird, 2003, p. 14). I aimed to build rapport and elicit meaningful insights from my encounters by sharing my experiences with them, to earn their trust and instil confidence.

I bracketed out any personal opinions and preconceptions that might have unduly influenced

my observations and information gathering. I needed to achieve a balance between what I knew and what I was yet to find out, to be open to other ways of doing things: to draw on my embodied understandings when of value but be prepared to suspend this awareness when necessary. For instance, my career in radio means that I appreciate such conventions as running strictly to time; timeliness and timetables are of the essence. Stations operate on a 60-minute cycle, usually with the national news at the top of the hour. Practitioners come to know instinctively how much you can say in 20 seconds and learn to count backwards when working out how much time they have left before the next item on the playlist. In the community sector, perhaps I would discover different behaviours and divergent tactics, so I needed to avoid taking conventions for granted or making any assumptions or presumptions over the practice of others. I would not be blinkered to what may be uncovered through my research.

Another aspect of being an experienced radio producer is that I am also a keen listener, I am a lifelong fan of BBC Radio 4 and enjoy radio drama as well as eavesdropping on intellectual discussions. These personal tastes had to be set aside when I conducted my research, because I was studying and practising in a different sector with differing sets or resources. Being an early career academic researcher with a Masters dissertation on the history of dramatized radio documentaries, I have an interest in how action, emotions and meanings are conveyed in sound, through the use of carefully-worded dialogue, convincing sound effects and acoustic soundscapes (Arnheim, 1936; Douglas, 2000; Crook, 2002; LaBelle, 2006; Ahern, 2011; Hendy, 2013). This sort of content is rarely achievable and heard on LCR because it takes a certain set of skills and inclination, not to mention the time available to work on it. So, although I am intimately familiar with multi-layered, high production value radio content, and the operational procedures involved in making it, it would not be appropriate to judge my research participants and their journalistic and other production abilities by my own standards. In any case, I wish to explore whether LCR production practices diverge from mainstream norms, or perpetuate what Moylan describes as the process by which media "reproduce and reinforce a dominant and reductively singular 'British' subject position" (Moylan, 2018, p. 284).

3.4.2   Outline of the practice-based fieldwork exercise: *Remarkable Harpenden*

Drawing on Schön's prescription for improving professional practice through reflection-in-action, I participated in the creative process myself in order to understand it better before scrutinizing others' performances. The aim was to make sense of my lived experience of making local radio features: to portray myself and my position in that world, and interactions within it, as organized around those activities (Muncey, 2010). Through my experimentation

within a social site of local radio broadcasting, I collected evidence, insights and information for analysis. Mindful of Ellis and Bochner's "systematic sociological introspection" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 737), accurate documentation of my project was vital. I inventoried the devices and equipment I used and took photographs of visual-based materials generated in the planning of the features as part of my data collection. I endeavoured to catalogue my experiences in a handwritten field journal, noting down ideas, action points, intentions and my reactions to occurrences during production. Other material included: correspondence records from emails and notes written up after phone-calls regarding setting up the agreement with the radio station and arranging interviews with local contributors, clarifying details and ongoing negotiations regarding dates and locations of field visits; the contractual agreement, information and consent forms with a receipt section and my contact details; production logs; reflexive, diarized notes kept during the editing and post-production stage.

There were also hours of interviews stored in audio files, transcribed into text documents and incorporated into storyboards and the ten edited features. Text documents for the blogs, screenshots of social media posts and reactions on Mixcloud, Facebook, Twitter were also saved. All this information was backed up regularly onto memory sticks, a portable hard drive as well as saved to a personal cloud account. As evidence, it was cross-referenced, digitized and archived, and later subjected to objective and critical analysis, making use of a database programme to do some rudimentary coding in order to thematize the findings and isolate some core themes for further analysis. These interim findings informed the design of a framework for interview questions and an observational checklist which I used in the subsequent fieldwork phase. Certain issues cropped up which I bore in mind when investigating other LCR volunteers' radio production activities. These included: the value of good contacts and serendipity, the use of the internet and social media in sourcing contributors and stories; ensuring diversity; keeping the authorities on side.

3.4.3   Researching the production practices of volunteer practitioners

After the NR project, I undertook several months' worth of fieldwork in five other LCRs. These inquiries were informed by the *Remarkable Harpenden* production experience, but also several years' worth of extensive desk research and networking in the sector, which included attending and note-taking at Community Media Association (CMA) conferences, workshops and networking events. Listening to audio artefacts produced by my respondents and monitoring other texts such as their public social media exchanges yielded fine-grained information to supplement evidence derived from interviewing and observing them in action. I consider

station output as artefactual, both culturally-shaped but also with the potential to shape culture through its symbolic power (Couldry, 2003c, 2012). Analysis of their radio programmes was inspired by the notion that radio presenting is a socio-linguistic discursive and interactional practice (Goffman, 1981; Berland, 1990; Scannell, 1991). Digital internet resources enabled me to access virtual aspects of the radio station research sites remotely. I easily sifted through their websites and social media, reading documents such as programme schedules, publicity materials, press releases, station guidelines and training manuals for evidence of any self-generated explications of station protocols, practices and programme-planning techniques. I sought evidence of 'signposting' on-air to establish a live and local context: "an atmosphere of local involvement" (Berland, 1990, pp. 188–189).

Liveness is one of the celebrated assets of radio broadcasting. Scannell describes it radio's "sense of existing in real time – the time of the programme corresponding to the time of its reception" (Scannell, 1991, p. 1). However, he points out that this is an accomplishment that requires use of the right technologies, and "should not be confused with immediacy" (Scannell, 2003, p. 72). Couldry sees liveness as part of the ritual by which the media establish their power (Couldry, 2003b, p. 2), and elsewhere refers to the enduring social impulse to check in with others and the mediated world in real time (Couldry, 2012, p. 23). Crisell too describes how broadcast liveness can satisfy a human desire to feel one is in the company of others (Crisell, 2012, p. 6). Other than noting when practitioners pre-record programmes or features to sound 'as-live', so as to convey the 'up-to-dateness' of the station's output, any deeper investigation of the *meaning* of liveness is beyond the remit of this thesis.

3.4.4   Interviews and correspondence

Taking the case study route, I conducted an extensive programme of one-to-one interviews in the selected LCRs. My first approach to potential respondents was made by email after I had received the authorization in writing from their station managers. I was transparent about my own personal and professional background and my research agenda. I drew up an information sheet and informed consent contract for participants to see in advance and sign, indicating whether they were happy to be named or not (Appendices 10.1, 10.2). Even where my respondents indicated that they were happy for their name to be used in my writing up of the material, I would use my discretion with any potentially sensitive information.[19] Of those

---

[19] One of 13 contributors to the NR features, one of the research participants in the other LCRs and one of two primary informants requested anonymity - making three in total.

practitioners I approached to be surveyed, a sufficient number responded positively. In total I met 37 volunteers and practitioners, recorded 24 semi-structured interviews and observed over half of those respondents in action.

Themes and aspects of interest that arose through my own production practice were incorporated into the framework of questions I drew up to guide the interviews and also reflected in the design of the observation checklist (Appendices 10.3, 23610.4). I informed the respondents in advance of broadly what I wanted to know, including a little about their personal and professional backgrounds but asked that they avoid any pre-scripting of answers. I was interested in where they had trained, how long they had been involved with their station, the sector and the industry. I enquired about what equipment, software and devices were used and how the respondents organized their production tasks, whether they operated within fixed routines or found themselves carrying out random acts reacting to contingency and changing circumstances. By inviting each participant to talk me through an example of how they produced a show or feature, I hoped to find out how they felt about and thought through the practical work expected of them in their respective stations and whether they reflected on it at all.

Generally, I aimed to meet them face-to-face ideally in the radio stations, and on a one-to-one basis in order to have an initial conversation during which I could build trust and assure them that, if circumstances so required, their comments could be 'off the record'. Apart from one or two noisy scenarios, I was able to conduct most interviews in quiet venues. The important consideration in my mind was that each respondent was in a familiar place where they felt comfortable so that I could conduct the conversation in a more or less 'naturally-occurring' situation (Silverman, 2006, p. 94). As with the auto-ethnographic NR project, I kept fieldnotes during these visits. I made inventories of devices, equipment and furniture, drew diagrams of the internal station and studio layouts as well as the immediate surroundings of the stations and took photographs of the participants if they agreed. Additional insights were sourced through my communications with them by email and social media. My field notes, reflective journal, correspondence and audio files were digitized and archived into a searchable database.

3.4.5 Participant observations at Radio Verulam

The insights gleaned from all the interviews across the five stations would complement information contained on the observational checklists that I used separately when shadowing and watching practitioners in action at RV and when helping at special events and reporting for

them from outside broadcasts. Interviews would reveal respondents' versions of the facts, narratives on their practice and opinions about how arrangements at their respective stations impacted upon their performances. Though reflexive critique might help to ascertain the underlying nuances of what was shared with me during those one-to-one interactional encounters (Fontana and Frey in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Markham, 2011, 2008), observing practitioners could potentially reveal what they themselves were not aware of in terms of how they produced local content in those contexts.

Applying Schatzki's site ontology approach meant that although I would be watching the practitioners at work, I was actually looking out for arrays of tasks, activities and interrelations involving various combinations of objects and devices, protocols and systems, unfolding dynamically within the LCR sites. Systematic documentation would aid contemplation of how their activities and relations appeared to shape and were shaped by the material and infrastructural contexts within and through which they were acting. How were they planning their programmes, sourcing content and arranging for guests to come into the studio and so forth? I sought evidence of their acknowledgment and adherence to the procedures of the station, its rules and protocols as well as to the more universalized conventions and codes of conduct such as Ofcom's Broadcasting Code.[20] I also wanted to gauge the extent to which their performances were aligned to a teleoaffective structure of volunteering in the LCR context, how their activities made sense in the wider scheme of things. So, I listened and looked out for signs that the practitioners were acting in accordance with what Schatzki explains is the accepted means to an end to which they were committed, through their own goodwill. Did they appear to knowingly be acting according to normative 'means' to achieve the 'ends' of helping to nurture local socialities? The notes compiled through the observation checklists would be subjected to sifting for common themes and analysed for significant insights.

Situated as I was, amid the complex, procedural settings, I observed as the practitioners performed activities such as making telephone calls and checking social media, arranging meetings, writing scripts, selecting music and other audio, booking interviews. I looked out for what procedures, devices, platforms, programs and apps were commonly used when they prepared, produced and presented programme material. I listened out for what sayings were circulating within that social site, what information, procedural updates and other

---

[20] Constantly updated at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/132073/Broadcast-Code-Full.pdf accessed 7/5/2019

communications were read, written, voiced and shared amongst its members. Tuning in to the goings-on in each social site helped me learn their language which is key to understanding a culture (Jenkins, 1978). Or, as Spitulnik writes, the lingo of a sub-culture comprises 'common reference points', expressed through the use of practice-specific specialist terms or acronyms (Spitulnik, 1996, p. 163). How an organization articulates and accounts for itself is crucial to learn too, through the sayings and texts it produces for external purposes like promotional, marketing, lobbying, recruitment literature and in the case of radio stations, their broadcast material and other media content produced. Background research into what is said and written about an organization by third parties also creates an impression, for instance, market reports and news articles.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described how a practice-centric mindset informed the design of my methodological strategy to closely examine how radio practitioners produce local content in LCR contexts. Applying Schatzki's social site framework guided which phenomena I would focus on. My intention was to discover how the material arrangements of the stations as well as intangible arrangements affected performances. This included the extent to which the values of community radio held sway over the routine production activities in the stations researched. By concentrating on situated instances, I would witness how the volunteers conformed to industry protocols and their own station Key Commitments and guidelines, as well as how they pursued the sector's remit to produce locally-relevant content with input from their local communities.

The addition of a reflexive lens, informed by Bourdieu and Schön, involved critically reflecting on my performance as both a radio practitioner and academic researcher, and yielded personal, subjective insights into the processes and interrelations at play. In Part Two which follows, I commence by presenting an account of how the *Remarkable Harpenden* series was made, and an exegesis of the NTRO to demonstrate how my self-critical reflections-in action fed back into the creative process. It will become clear that implementing this practice-as-research strategy yielded richly textured empirical evidence of the entanglement between journalistic and other media production practices with sociality. My active immersion in the field during the participant observations required reflexivity to remain conscious of the impact my presence might be having on the respondents. To take account of my positionality, I objectified myself as researcher in those social sites too and have endeavoured to accurately portray other practitioners' performances in the ensuing chapters.

PART TWO – EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

4   PRACTICE-AS-RESEARCH, REMARKABLE HARPENDEN

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of my creative practice-as-research project, *Remarkable Harpenden*, an audio series that I produced for the town's former local internet station, NR. The aim was to examine and evaluate my performance amid that particular set of practice-arrangements, following Schön's advice to reflect on professional practice in a way that is not normally done under routine practitioner circumstances. I documented my work as an auto-ethnographic exercise, so throughout the following exposition is woven a thread of reflexivity highlighting my dual perspectives as practitioner and as academic researcher. The insights gleaned through my production experiences informed the design of my subsequent fieldwork research in five other LCRs looking at how the arrangements at a station impact upon producers' and presenters' activities as they strive to feature local content in the programmes they are working on.

The creative outputs for *Remarkable Harpenden* were ten audio features, a blog, a Mixcloud page and promotional social media posts. The samples of practice I am submitting with this thesis as artefactual evidence are the audio feature *Green fingers* and my *Remarkable Harpenden* blog. These objects will be referred to and analysed later in this chapter. When you see the headphones symbol in the text   you will be invited to listen first to a short sound montage, then the feature itself, which are both available online. Later, at this symbol for spectacles   there is opportunity to read a blog post.

First, I will introduce the town of Harpenden and its internet-only community station, NR. There will be a brief account of my acquaintance with one of the station's few volunteers and of her experiences as an unpaid radio practitioner. In the second part of this chapter, I provide the exegesis of *Green fingers*, interspersed with dialogue boxes revealing some of my reflections documented during the process. These have enabled and framed further critical reflection-on-practice: upon how I accessed and negotiated the practice-arrangements of NR and what my encounters in that social site, in relational terms, say about producing local radio content as a volunteer.

4.2 NICKEY RADIO, LOCAL INTERNET STATION FOR HARPENDEN

Harpenden is a small, picturesque Hertfordshire commuter town of around 30,000 inhabitants, lying just south of post-industrial Luton and the Bedfordshire border. It lies several miles north of its district centre, St Albans city, and is surrounded by Metropolitan Green Belt and farmland. If one were to visit the town, it might seem a world apart from other more urbanized parts of the UK. There is very little ethnic diversity. According to 2011 census information provided by the UK Office for National Statistics and charted colourfully by the website 'citypopulation.de',[21] the population of Harpenden is 93.1% White, 3.3% Asian, 1% Black, and the remaining 2.1% is described as Mixed/multiple, leaving 0.5% Other (Appendix 10.5). In terms of nationalities too, the majority population in the town is British: 85.2% of residents hold a UK passport, with 1.3% holding Republic of Ireland, 2.4% EU, 4.7% have 'Other' whilst 6.4% do not have a passport. The striking presence of numerous churches indicate that Christianity is by far the most popular religion, affirmed by 70.3% of the respondents, the next largest group being 26.0% claiming no religious belief, 1.4% declared they were Muslim, 0.8% Hindu, 0.6% Jewish, 0.3% Sikh, 0.3% Buddhist and 0.3% Other.

As far as local radio is concerned, Harpenden is located within the transmission catchment area for neighbouring station Radio Verulam (RV, also researched for this study), as well as BBC Three Counties Radio (public service radio for Beds, Herts and Bucks), and Heart FM (commercial radio for Herts, Beds, Bucks and Northants). Harpenden does not have its own licensed station located in and specifically targeted on the town. Hence internet station NR, named after The Nickey Line, a local site of historic interest, was established by a small group of community radio practitioners as a pilot project with a view to applying for an analogue licence from Ofcom, should one become available.[22] This is a common strategy among hopeful community radio operators. I found the prospect exciting, and it explained why there was no NR building or studio hub anywhere: being such early days for the station, the financial and administrative infrastructure was not yet in place.

---

[21] http://www.citypopulation.de/php/uk-england-eastofengland.php?cityid=E34003511 accessed 26/4/2019

[22] Nickey Radio no longer serves Harpenden. The station has been rebranded and relocated to a coastal town in Kent. Readers are advised to avoid visiting the original website: when last visited in May 2020, the domain appeared to have either been compromised, or changed ownership, and carried inappropriate material.

The operation was relying on a handful of volunteers, managing between them to run it from their homes. The small team running NR sourced a great deal of content from remotely located presenters, so the operation did not appear at first sight to fit a conventional radio station model. However, as my thesis progresses, it will become clear that such spatial complexity of practice-arrangements in radio organizations, enabled by digital technologies, is not so unusual. Consequently, I conducted my production activities in various non-studio spaces around the locality. The member who acted as my informant for this research project dealt with me via phone conversations and emails. He asked to be anonymized, although I have kept digital records of our exchanges, including private notes to myself speculating upon the potential complications that might arise due to inter-station rivalries.

NR was not-for-profit, music-based and operated independently without an Ofcom licence but with the required music licences (PPL PRS Ltd, 2019). The station's web pages conveyed the bare minimum of evidence to demonstrate that the station was, notionally at least, located in Harpenden (Fig. 1). Alongside general information about the radio station were some photographs of the town, a short history of the area along with several adverts for Harpenden charities, local businesses and a Twitter feed by local newspaper, *The Herts Advertiser*.

Figure 1 Archived screenshot of NR's homepage, April 2019

4.2.1   Negotiating research access

I was first introduced to NR by a long-standing acquaintance who I knew through another LCR. Since 2013, I had been asked once or twice a year to report on local events for the station such

as public meetings and political hustings, Christmas pantomimes and summer carnivals.[23] This work was always carried out on a voluntary basis, based on the understanding that it was a community station with no funds to pay freelance reporters. I also voiced, for free, many of their local 'what's on' promotional trailers, station identification drop-ins ('idents'), for instance, a whispered "Nickey Radio!" and this community announcement for the local writing group (Fig. 2).

[TOP:] What's on in Harpenden, with Nickey Radio.

Harpenden Writers meet on the first Friday morning of every month at The Friends' Meeting House, 12 Southdown Road, Harpenden. They gather to hear talks by established writers, editors and journalists, take part in workshops and readarounds with constructive feedback and have friendly chats about writing over coffee & biscuits. For membership details and more information search for Harpenden Writers.com.

[TAIL:] To share your local group news on Harpenden's community radio station, contact us on nickeyradio.net

---

Figure 2 Example of a community announcement I wrote and recorded for NR

My ongoing relationship with the station as reporter and voiceover meant that I had relatively straightforward access in order to conduct my practice-as-research project. Nevertheless, to clarify my agenda, protect my interests and the intellectual property of the audio artefacts I was to produce, I drew up a Voluntary Agreement establishing the terms of engagement for a "radio features producer internship", co-signed by the Treasurer of NR (Appendix 10.6). This document was prepared after discussing my ideas at length with my informant and outlined how I intended to spend three months volunteering to make between eight and ten short audio features about Harpenden, conveying "a sense of this unique place through describing its history, culture and environment; involving and representing (adult) members of the local community". I explained that I would draw up a list of potential non-time-specific themes and would be liaising with community groups and organisations.

4.2.2 Identifying gaps in the programme schedule

I felt that my intervention was much needed if the station were to sound as local as it claimed to be and as representative of the range of community voices as it sought to be. I was

---

[23] Examples of my reports are available at https://www.mixcloud.com/josephine-coleman/jo-coleman-for-nickey-radio-on-harpenden-societys-public-meeting-about-the-st-albans-local-plan/ accessed 13/5/2020

relatively familiar with the style of the station's output but in preparation for my project, I conducted concentrated listening-in sessions, a more concentrated 'leaning in' to listen procedure, as described in the previous chapter (Baade, 2008). I determined that most of NR's output was automated music in shows called 'Hit Mix', 'Lunchtime Chill', 'Mellow Mix', 'Chillout'. Consequently, it was easy to drift into secondary listening during such shows although hearing my own voice on the pre-recorded drop-ins and trailers would usually rouse my attention again. I also noted that the station output was dominated by half a dozen male voices. The incumbent presenters routinely contributed pre-recorded content from private studio spaces or from recording booths elsewhere. My informant explained that, just as I had been emailing him my small audio packages as MP3 audio file attachments over the years, these remotely-located presenters were able to send their larger audio files over by mail on memory sticks or uploading the files to Dropbox so that the volunteer programme director could update the playlist schedules on his computer. Consequently, most of these shows were neither locally produced nor locally focused. In fact, some were even globally syndicated shows by presenters such as U.S.A. based Tom Fallon, UK-based Sean Bell and Mark Gale.

In terms of gender diversity, NR appears to have had just two female presenters. According to a 2014 programme schedule which I had archived, five times a week there was *Nickey Daytime with Liz*, Monday through Friday, and another woman, Sylvia, presented a specialist rock and blues hour three times a week. The total number of programmes at that time, including those which were automated, was 59. A quick tally revealed that eleven men were named as presenting 30 of them. By the time of my internship in 2017, Sylvia was the sole female presenter and the only presenter across the schedule actively featuring local material and guests, even though she lived in a village over ten miles away. She was producing and presenting two pre-recorded shows which contained face-to-face and phone-in interviews: *About Harpenden* and *The Classic Rock Show.* The latter featured tracks and interviews with rock musicians, some internationally renowned but *About Harpenden* featured local townsfolk and events and was NR's only locally generated programme.

This paucity of local content provision, diversity and gender balance would be addressed by my project. I would select people to talk knowledgeably about aspects of Harpenden to increase the variety of voices on-air with different accents, age and ethnicity characteristics. My intended series of short speech-based features would complement Sylvia's weekly community show, by injecting additional locally sourced and focused content. At the same time, they would stand out for being more imaginatively produced. The features would be less time-

sensitive, more repeatable: useful schedule-fillers for a station that I perceived needed to broadcast much more locally focused material.

One of the reasons why I selected NR for my practice-as-research was because my informant assured me that I would encounter minimal interference or additional demands on my time from other volunteers, which would most likely happen in a larger station. I valued having a free rein to be creative: time and space to play. I felt comfortable producing the features on my own and assumed I would not need assistance or input from anyone else. When negotiating my internship, I was encouraged by my informant to give Sylvia a wide berth. As the station's only female presenter and primary local engagement volunteer, she was "a bit sensitive", he said. I gathered that she was territorial, protective of her pivotal roles at NR. She had not been recruiting new volunteers and was apparently paying the consequences. Clearly, my informant did not want to risk my involvement with the station having a disruptive impact on the existing, delicate arrangements and understandings within the small organization. I interpreted this as perhaps due to the extent of my experience in the radio industry that may potentially have undermined Sylvia's confidence or overshadowed her achievements in some way. Being led by my twin instinct as a public relations person, I was intending to promote my features to help raise the profile of the radio station and ingratiate it with its local community. This also might have been deemed as overlapping with Sylvia's role as the station's marketer.

Consequently, I did not meet Sylvia until near the end of my internship in 2017. My informant had a change of heart and decided to encourage her to invite me to a town meeting to help cover an important District-level planning issue. We got on well and began an email correspondence, but she was reluctant to be interviewed for my research. During 2018, she asked me to join her to cover a further town meeting concerning the contested development of the local hospital, the Red House. I turned down her follow-up request for me to cover expansion plans at London-Luton airport, partly for family reasons and partly because I would have been committing not only to attending more events, but to hours more of audio editing, which I would not be able to fit in to my schedule. By then, I was conducting fieldwork in other LCRs.

By October 2018, Sylvia had left NR to join another community station and was happy to be interviewed. She explained that she had lost "that good feeling factor". I learned how she had first joined hospital radio in nearby Luton as a volunteer in 2008, after a spate of family bereavements. Leaving a stressful job in sales administration, she began fundraising, then trained as a presenter. Volunteering meant she could apply her marketing and business skills

and it was an opportunity to acquire new competences. After a stint at Radio Verulam in St Albans she had joined NR to take on fundraising and public relations. Her main role had been to build relationships with local charities, businesses and event organizers through offering them opportunities to be interviewed on air. Her enthusiastic engagement with the local community, both on-air and on Twitter, and the occasional local ads, trailers and what's ons, was the only evidence of the public interaction we might expect on a local radio station. One of her achievements in this voluntary role at NR had been to secure a room at the Town Council offices where she could conduct radio interviews. She had also successfully applied for Council funding for new equipment and raised money through a local supermarket token collection scheme. Sylvia had become synonymous with NR, in the minds of those who came to know her. During my interview with her, she explained:

> *I think my presence in Harpenden has grown quite dramatically…having done sales for many, many years you think outside the box, don't you? It's just taking an interest in what you're doing…I think, being a 110% honest, when I started there it was just playing music…When I left there, it was a big part of the community.*
>
> (Sylvia, NR)

Sylvia was the point of contact when some issue, event or campaign required airing and sharing. Left to my own devices, I would have reached out to her in the early stages of my project, even asked her for recommendations of who to approach to be in my features. I would have tried to earn her trust and win her support. She could have introduced me to key people in the community, and to the listeners by interviewing me on her show about my project and promoting the features on air. Instead, I had felt rather like an interloper, anxious not to step on her toes. When interviewing people who were already 'her' contacts such as the Town Clerk and the Mayor, I compensated by name dropping Sylvia in acknowledgement of her core position at the station. After her departure, re-runs of my *Remarkable Harpenden* features became the flagship local content on the schedule (Fig. 3). So that by Spring 2019, the only female voices were those on commercials, community announcements and trailers and station idents, including my own voice.

Nickey Radio Schedule							
	Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**	**Saturday**	**Sunday**
6:00 AM	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Backchat
7:00 AM	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	↓	Hit Mix
8:00 AM	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	LiveWire	Gary Jackson
9:00 AM	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
10:00 AM	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	David Dunne Triple Dee Show
11:00 AM	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
12:00 PM	Lunchtime Chill	Lunchtime Chill	Lunchtime Chill	Lunchtime Chill	Lunchtime Chill	↓	80s Mix
1:00 PM	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
2:00 PM	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Hit Mix	Mark Gale A Kick Up The Decades	↓
3:00 PM	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
4:00 PM	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Remarkable Harpenden	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	Remarkable Harpenden	Remarkable Harpenden followed by Hit Mix	80s Mix	Gary Jackson Dark Side Of The Moon
5:00 PM	↓	Sean Bell's Club Classics	↓	Sean Bell's Club Classics	↓	Sean Bell's Club Classics	↓
6:00 PM	Tom Fallon Motown Memories	The S.J.L. School Show	↓	Tom Fallon Motown Memories	Tom Fallon Motown Memories	Hit Mix	Tom Fallon Motown Memories
7:00 PM	UK USA Rock & Soul Connection	UK USA Rock & Soul Connection	Gary Jackson	Hit Mix	David Dunne Triple Dee Show	↓	UK USA Rock & Soul Connection
8:00 PM	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	Saturday Night Party	↓
9:00 PM	Gary Jackson Dark Side Of The Moon	Hit Mix	Sean Bell's Club Classics	LiveWire	Hit Mix	↓	90s at 9
10:00 PM	↓	↓	David Dunne Triple Dee Show	↓	↓	David Dunne Triple Dee Show	David Dunne Triple Dee Show
11:00 PM	Mellow Mix	Sean Bell's Club Classics	↓	Sean Bell's Club Classics	↓	↓	↓
12:00 AM	↓	Mellow Mix	Mellow Mix	Mellow Mix	Mellow Mix	Mellow Mix	Mellow Mix
4:00 AM	Chillout	Chillout	Chillout	Chillout	Chillout	Chillout	Chillout

Figure 3 Archived screenshot of the programme schedule for NR, Autumn 2018

4.3 PRODUCING REMARKABLE HARPENDEN

I started documenting the production process in mid-July 2017. I wanted to tell Harpenden's story through the voices of people living and working there and had a good idea how to go about it. After discussions with my informant, we agreed my features would reflect Harpenden's rich historical heritage and celebrate its contemporary cultural life. An ulterior motive was to help further embed the radio station as a useful ally or resource in the minds and plans of the community's movers and shakers, and so the features were designed to be more promotional than critical. As a radio practitioner working with a medium highly valued for its potential for immediacy and liveness, spotting newsworthy opportunities becomes second nature. However, for this project, there was no point referring to some opportunity about to happen, when by the time the piece aired, it would already have happened. I also wanted to avoid what I remembered from my time as a BBC radio journalist, which was more time-consuming research to producing rigorously edited audio that was usually time-sensitive and with a potentially shorter shelf-life. I wanted to provide NR with longer-lasting content. I also consciously chose to avoid focussing too deeply on sensitive political issues, such as ongoing local planning disputes. I wanted to portray the positive side of life in Harpenden.

Putting such a spin on a locality's affairs goes against the grain of conventional journalistic documentary which would require a more objective or even investigative approach. My decision to avoid unearthing or investigating contentious news stories and holding public bodies to account was based partly on the desire to avoid stirring up conflict between NR and the various community bodies I would be encountering. I was not intending to volunteer on a longer-term basis for NR after my internship, so it would be unfair to instigate anything and then leave the under-staffed station in the lurch. I knew my approach would not be unusual in the community sector context since my desk research surveys indicated that it lacked resources for the provision of sustained local news services or much investigative reporting.

4.3.1   The technologies used

I kept a note of which devices I used for the various activities and where these activities took place. This was so I would be able to compare my access to resources and my ability to use them with the performances of other practitioners I would be studying in the following stages of my fieldwork. Initially, I went out on recording recces around Harpenden, listening out for wild track and other found sounds. I usually took my portable digital audio recording device, a Zoom, with me but there were times when I used my Samsung smartphone and the
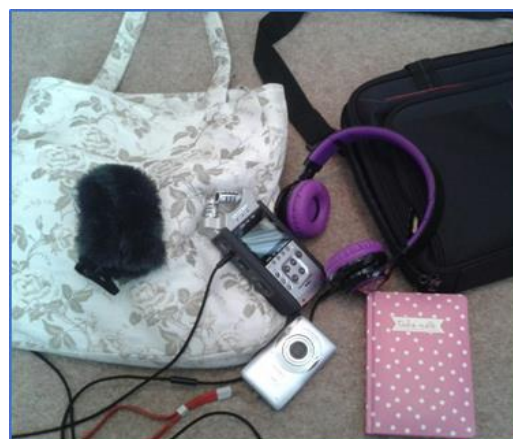
Figure 4 The typical kit I took out to interviews and field recordings

'Voice Recorder' pre-loaded software. I also downloaded an app that makes broadcastable recordings, 'WavePad Free' (Fig. 4). Relying on these handheld devices meant I could be mobile but I had to keep an eye on the battery life and available memory as well as try to avoid recording outdoors in inclement weather like wind and rain or in noise-polluted, poor sonic conditions.

The convenience of being able to quickly and discretely record outweighed those risks and I appreciated the ease with which I could transfer the sound files by connecting the devices directly to my desktop, inserting the SD cards or, with my phone, sending the audio by email. As well as sounds, I would need photographs too that would represent some of the remarkable aspects of Harpenden that I would find contributors to speak about. I used my digital camera for its higher quality images as well as my smartphone, which was also handy

for accessing Facebook and Twitter, sending and receiving emails, and occasionally searching the internet whilst in the field. This image of me (Fig. 5) about to head out for a walk to capture field recordings was my first official day on the assignment with NR, but I presented in a similar way to my interviewees. I wore a name badge indicating my affiliation to the station and carried spare consent forms in case my contributors had mislaid their original or if I encountered anyone else who might be interested or concerned about what I was doing. Upon returning from fieldwork missions, I would upload the photo files from the camera and annotate which places and people they were associated with.

Figure 5 The researcher-producer geared up to head out into the field, 31/7/2017

I was gathering sounds, photographs and information from places already familiar to me, based on my lived-in knowledge of the town gleaned over more than two decades of residing there. I had drawn a mind-map to think about what aspects of the town I felt would be most interesting to target (Fig. 6). After doodling a microphone on the sheet of paper, I posed myself three questions: what makes a town a meaningful place for its residents?; how do residents begin to feel a sense of belonging to where they live?; and how or why might they not? I noted down some places that I thought may play a role in people feeling at home where they live, such as: churches and other places of worship, halls and meeting houses for all manner of clubs, societies and groups, pubs, schools, sports facilities, library, heritage sites, parks, local footpaths. The process prompted ideas of who might be good to approach for interview. I began to imagine different versions of Harpenden life as represented through the words of local voices, interwoven throughout several features, taking the 'long view', a sort of historico-geographical perspective. In hindsight, this decision made early on greatly complicated my project. I was going to mix different voices together to create thematized features, rather than simply produce several straightforward interviews focusing on the interests and viewpoints of each contributor.
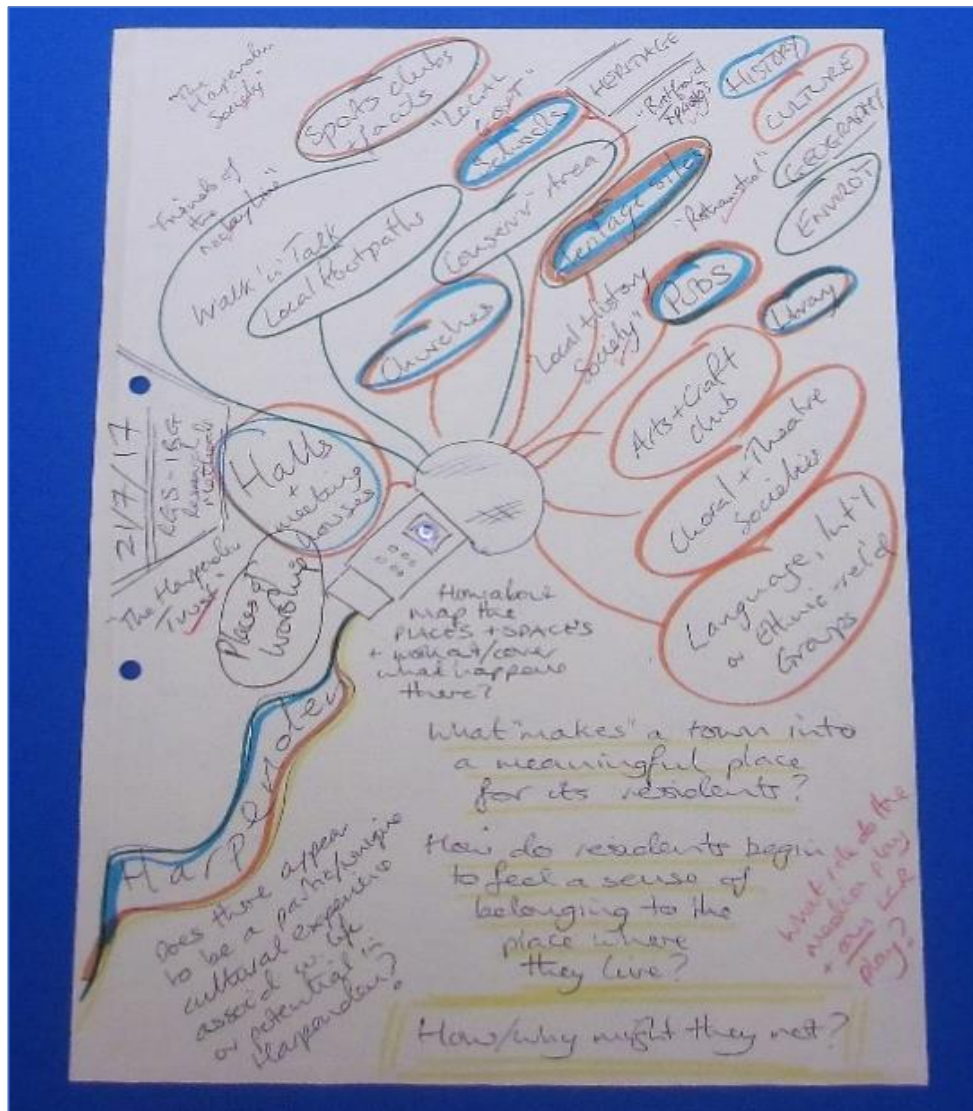
Figure 6 Mind mapping potential themes

4.3.2   Seeking out topics

I began background reading and online research into Harpenden. Printed matter included: the local newspapers, *The Hertfordshire Advertiser* and *St Albans Review;* magazines, *Forum* (Harpenden Town Council's Quarterly Newsletter), *Hertfordshire Life*, *Prime* (Hertfordshire), *Discover* (Hertfordshire), *Living* (South West Herts) and *Horizons* (News from Hertfordshire County Council); tourist guides and directories, *What's On* (Harpenden, St Albans, Wheathampstead, Redbourn and surrounding villages) and *Harpenden Now;* leaflets, booklets and flyers such as the Harpenden & District Local History Society Town Trails and the Town Council's *Harpenden Official Guide.* Any that were not delivered free through my door were all 'freely available' from places like the Town Hall, supermarkets and the local library. I reflected that there was an endless supply of information about a locality and the goings-on, and began

to think through how this might apply to the sector as a whole. This was the beginning of a framing for my future fieldwork (Fig. 7). I found I was able to easily access these sources of information having the opportunity and resources to travel to and enter such places. I am fortunate also in that I have access to domestic broadband and dependable computer and communications equipment due to working from home as a freelance writer/broadcaster. I used my laptop and desktop computer to conduct web searches using Google for homepages and other online sources of information on local groups. If any had Facebook pages or groups and Twitter accounts that I could join or follow I did, and thus began engaging with the members. This was a strategy to introduce myself if I did not already have a connection in that circle.

FIELDWORK JOURNAL - REFLECTIONS ON PRODUCING THE NICKEY RADIO DOCOS. 14th Sept 2017

I really feel that I am only scratching the surface of what could be covered in the docos – really – when you think about how many stories here are to be told in the this town – how many different experiences there are of it right now – not to mention the past histories…I think if the community stations were able to immerse themselves or capitalise on their contacts, get everyone to network with a view to interviewing people about the place, the activities projects etc there would in fact be an endless supply of material.

Figure 7 Extract from fieldwork journal, 14/9/2017

4.3.3   Establishing connections

I was confident that, as a long-standing member of several community groups such as Harpenden Writers and other groups like church and a local network of school parents, I had enough existing mutually-trusting relationships to draw on when sourcing stories and potential contributors. Being known in these circles as someone who had served on committees as chairperson, membership secretary and publicity well as a radio practitioner, and a former BBC one at that, acquaintances regarded me as imbued with a certain integrity and competence. However, I also sought advice in the initial planning stage from my local mentor, Patricia. Astute and inspiring, she is both a corporate consultant and an active, community-spirited resident. Over lunch in her favourite café, she offered suggestions of topics and contacts. She had lived in the town since 1986 and was very involved in her parish church, had been a 'school mum' and member of several societies including the local history society. I trusted her recommendations because of the high social capital attached to her through being so well-plugged into local organizations. For that reason, I decided it would also be worth recording an interview with her as a contributor for my features.

I started formally approaching other potential contributors by the end of July 2017, usually by email, private messaging on social media or phone calls. Interviews began towards the end of August. Everyone I approached was involved in a local club or organization that had ongoing projects or a forthcoming scheme that they wanted the public to know more about. So, for most contributors, there was a tangible and timely benefit in spending an hour or so with me to be interviewed. My features would go some way to achieving their agendas and potentially enhancing their reputations within their respective circles. I ensured that I was transparent in all the information I provided to my contributors so that they understood I was recording an interview with them to make a radio feature as part of academic research. In broadcasting, consent can be verbally given, but it was important that my interviewees understood and trusted the purpose of my inquiry and what I intended to do with the audio recordings as research outputs. I drew up an information sheet and a consent contract with a receipt section that I signed for them to retain along with my contact details along with some outline questions so that they could prepare for the interviews, and a consent form (Appendices 10.7, 10.8). Mobile phone numbers were often exchanged, once a date and time for their interview had been arranged in case there were any last-minute changes to plan.

One of the topic suggestions my NR informant made was The Nickey Line, a popular local footpath and cycle route. I found a brochure and map for the seven-mile former railway line from the Town Hall information point. When I looked it up online in August, I discovered that a local group of volunteers, Friends of the Nickey Line, were organising an 'Autumn Walk, Berries and Nuts' the following month. The walk leader, Geoff, would be talking about folklore and hedgerows. I could imagine recording him pointing out various wonders of nature and sharing his knowledge as we strolled along in the fresh air. My production schedule would not allow for me to record an interview, edit and air it in time to publicize the walk. Nor did I want to commit to attending an entire 2.5-hour public event. Instead, I decided to ask for a private tour which I would incorporate into a feature about the town's green spaces. Geoff's contact details were included on the publicity, and I recognized him as being the husband of one of the Harpenden Writers I knew. The couple had already encountered me in my capacity as a radio reporter. When I covered election Hustings in Harpenden in April 2015, they were amongst the vox pops I recorded. Rather than phone, I chose to email him through his wife, affirming our existing connection outright. He was happy to cooperate in the interests of raising awareness for the Friends group, attracting new members for their working parties and potentially donations for the upkeep of the route as a valued public amenity.

Information in newspapers, community newsletters and online searches provided further examples of why residents thought Harpenden was a pleasant place to live. Certainly, proximity to the countryside and the abundance of well-tended green spaces in and around the town made it attractive. I determined that the large number of allotments might be a story. As luck would have it, I discovered the National Allotments Society was to hold a nationwide open day. I hoped to arrange with a local branch to attend and record goings-on and vox pops. They might have been happy for the general publicity, on the understanding that the interviews were being recorded for use some time afterwards. It took longer to make contact than I had anticipated so I missed this event, but I had found out on the Town Council website that allotments came under their remit so this became one of several topics I planned to ask them about. I had already emailed a community liaison officer at the council introducing myself and explaining my arrangement with NR. I asked if I could visit to conduct interviews about some of the spaces and amenities they managed in Harpenden. I was put in contact with Carl, the Town Clerk and the Lady Mayor, Rosemary, via her secretary. Because of my three month long production timeline and to enhance the shelf life of the features, I explained that this would not be their opportunity to promote a specific forthcoming event, rather, I would interview them about examples of on-going or recurring activities in the town and schemes in general.

The allotments feature was taking shape in my mind. I could imagine recording someone at work on their plot, getting some evocative sounds al fresco. I approached people I knew on Facebook who I thought had allotments. This proved to no avail, so I had to approach them 'cold', introducing myself by describing my professional background and academic intentions. My initial point of contact with East Harpenden Gardening Club was their chairperson. I phoned the number on their website and we had a brief conversation about my radio research. I emailed clarification, signing off in a way that established my status and the institutions I belong to. I needed to impress in writing rather than rely on being recommended by a mutual contact (Appendix 10.9). I thought it was important to convey that I was not a student with a project that could be easily dismissed, but an experienced individual with a serious offer. As it turned out, trying too hard to impress backfired, when the programming at NR turned out not to be quite so professional. The club was planning a recruitment campaign and had spare plots available to rent so they were keen to participate. Their aim was to build a good reputation, boost membership numbers and public awareness of their activities.

Earlier that year they had set up a Facebook page which was beginning to play a significant role in their publicity, as is common among organizations and groups using social media platforms, Not only signed-up members but the public too were encouraged to contact them, to post comments and ask questions. They routinely published photographs from the plots, like bulbs strung up, strawberries cropping, children's scarecrows and wheelbarrows for sharing pot plants (Fig. 8).
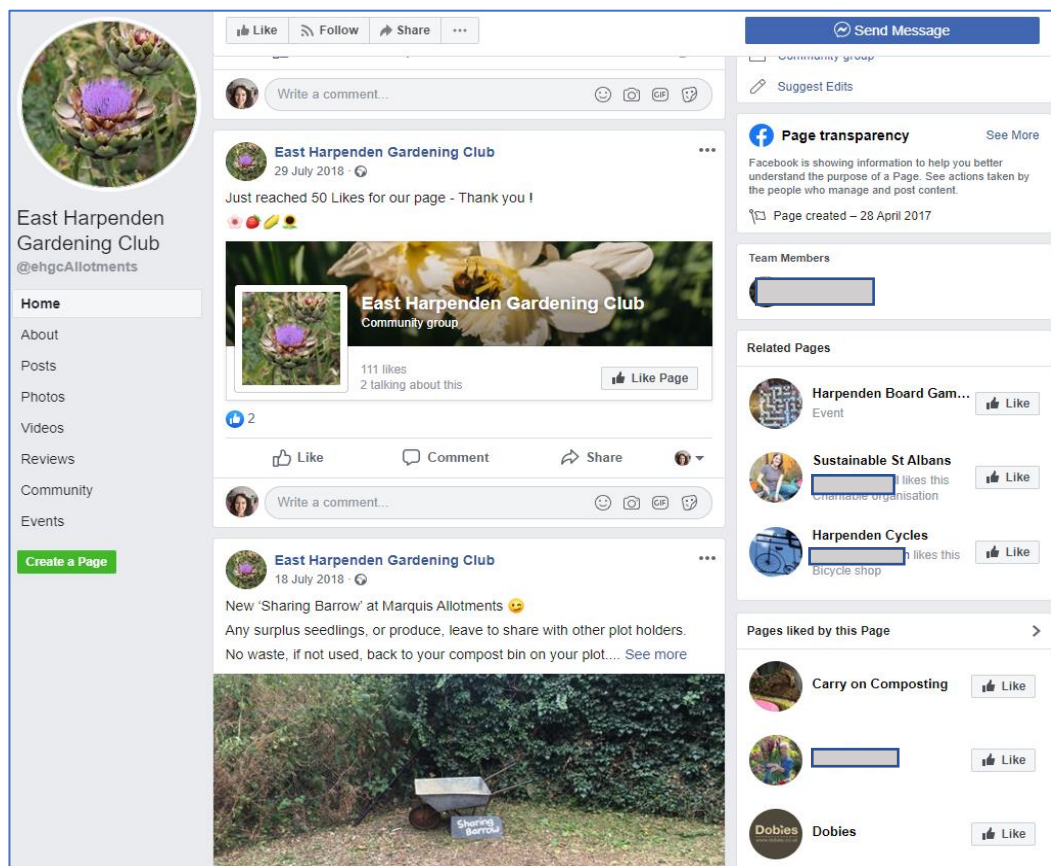
Figure 8 Screenshot of East Harpenden Gardening Club's Facebook page, July 2018

This self-promotion is important for clubs, businesses, organizations, charities and community groups to keep ticking over, to stay in the mind's eye and in word of mouth circulation. Such platforms are ideal news and information source for finding ideas and content to use on-air. They are also useful places in which to share information on radio features and shows and to post links to the audio, as I would find during the course of my project. They could see how my feature would fit in to their marketing plan, but this also rendered them particularly sensitive about my coverage of their club. As I will expand upon shortly, they had assumed they would be invited to pre-approve what was broadcast and have access to the audio for their own use.

4.3.4   Balancing contributor voices

Of the 13 people I eventually recorded interviews with, I already knew six of them and the other seven I became acquainted with through the process: six were men and seven were women, ranging in age from 18 to nearly 90. I tried to reflect a little diversity in the selection of voices and opinions to be representative of the population. Bearing in mind the demographic statistics of Harpenden outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the single Asian voice I recorded and an Eastern European (Katerina who appears in *Green fingers*) are sufficient to be representative of the local population. I worked the hardest to gain the trust of Mr Shah, who I targeted not only because of his Asian heritage but because he was considered a pillar of the community: a trusted purveyor of newspapers and magazines and a reliable source of word-of-mouth news. I felt it was worth the effort to meet with him several times, build his trust and explain my project. It was always a challenge to catch him on a break from running his busy news store, but after he accepted my invitation to take part, I hand delivered the paperwork and eventually interviewed him. It was important to me that I had his input on my series to demonstrate, through the presence of his name and heavily Indian-accented voice, that the town is home to a small, engaged ethnic minority.

Except for an accent from the North of England (Steve, *Green fingers*), the remaining voices I included in my features were examples of what one might call 'Estuary English' or otherwise local accents like Emma from the local food bank, and Carl and Geoff who also appear in *Green fingers*, and received pronunciation or 'The Queen's English'. I would describe my own narrator voice as well-spoken, suited to speech radio. When in my late twenties, I was told I sounded too posh to present pop music radio. I remember feeling quite offended, but soon found my niche learning to present talk show programmes. My presentation style developed over the years and I progressed to producing packages from 30-second trailers and 60 second news reports to three-minute or longer documentary features. I aspired to BBC Radio 4 standards, but I fitted in at local BBC.

Though I am now totally comfortable speaking into a microphone, I have not forgotten how nerve-wracking it felt at first. I recognize that people can be nervous and unsettled when faced with a microphone, so in my project I made sure to put my contributors at ease. I asked them to forget they were being recorded and to focus on talking to me. For the same reason, I resisted photographing my contributors, when ordinarily for publicity purposes, I might have done so. People can be shy about being captured on camera, even though they tend to be much more aware of what they look like, in the mirror and film, than what their voice sounds

like. It is always interesting to watch people listen back to audio recordings of their own voices. More often than not, they cringe with embarrassment and utter: "Is *that* how I really sound?" The task for many a broadcast reporter is to reassure people when they take part in a radio interview that they will sound 'just fine' to help overcome their lack of confidence in how they will come across. My Zoom audio recorder was often a talking point that helped relax my interviewees. They were surprised at its compactness and how even with my headphones included, the entire, broadcast-standard kit was portable in a small handbag.

Having been given the opportunity to reflect in advance on the specific knowledge that I was interested in, my interviewees were asked to use full sentences when answering my leading questions. I was aiming to record their narrative rather than our two-way conversation. This proved harder than anticipated in some cases, and I had to repeat the questions and often ask for more detail.

Where interviews took place varied from contributor to contributor. Sometimes I hosted, other times I was invited to their homes or place of work such as the Town Hall. Using production log sheets that I drew up (Appendix 10.10), I kept records for each contributor I planned to interview detailing: the date; time; location; and an assessment of any likely health and safety or production issues and possible solutions. This might sound over-the-top, particularly in the domestic surroundings of my own study, but when having guests (with whom I was already well-acquainted) to my home to interview, I would have to ensure my pets did not cause any disruption, or set off allergic reactions. Efficiency, timekeeping and comfort is no less a concern when work is being done on a voluntary basis and you are relying on the goodwill and availability of unrecompensed contributors.

When recording on location there might a host of practical complications and potential risks to consider such as: noisy building work in the vicinity, loud machinery being operated nearby such as a lawnmower, or hubbub from a crowd of people. Even if recording indoors one may encounter phones ringing, creaky furniture or loudly ticking clocks. On two instances, both used in *Green fingers* which you will hear shortly, I met people to interview in the open air. The risk assessments I made for those sessions noted a need for contingency in the case of inclement weather; wind and rain are not kind to on-location audio recording. The recording with the allotments' representatives took place on a cold, damp Sunday afternoon. We met in a church car park adjacent to their site. There was a children's party taking place in the church hall and the main road was busy. Steve and Katerina showed me around the plots, and I

attempted to keep up with them whilst holding the microphone as close as possible to the mouth of whoever was speaking about their allotment lifestyle.

The sonic challenges I faced that day required additional editing during the post-production process. Fortunately, I was able to insert an extra track of cheerful bird song, serendipitously recorded whilst out walking my dog along the neighbouring Lea Valley walk. It was especially useful to mask awkward cuts made to the dialogue during the edit, which had left noticeable jumps in the underlying traffic noise. I thought of this sympathetic enhancement of the soundscape as authentic texturing mixed with a little artistic licence. Likewise, with Geoff's interview on the Nickey Line, we had arranged to meet on a weekday morning at Roundwood Halt, near one of the local schools. I attempted a 'walk and talk' with my Zoom. It yielded an evocative recording of tree-inspired folk lore tales accompanied by sounds of other users on the public path that day, a busy school playground at breaktime and a construction site along the way.

4.3.5   Shaping the narratives

By the second week of October, I had all 13 interviews 'in the can', to use a time-honoured phrase, which now usually means on a digital memory stick, saved in a computer's hard drive and backed up in the cloud. I had started transcribing the first few interviews in September 2017 and decided to work through them all so that I would become more familiar with the content, the personalities of my contributors, anecdotes and any issues raised. I then returned to my mind-mapping and picked out key themes that I could shape individual features around. I settled on: Significant Events and Gatherings; Charities; Clubs and Societies; Memorials; Growth and Investment; Parks; Open Spaces; Landmarks; Benefactors; Local Businesses (Fig. 9). I then considered which of my

Figure 9 Assigning voices to the themed features

contributors had the most to say about various topics pertinent to themes, and what might be of interest to the NR audience. Each contributor was coded by colour and border/no-border so that I had a visual of where their respective audio was assigned. Having transcribed and time-coded the audio interviews, I was able to efficiently search for key phrases and stories to build narratives rather than repeatedly listen through hours of audio. This ensured an efficient way of sorting whose voice, views and anecdotes could be in which themed features and then locating those segments for use in ten separate storyboard documents. I copied and pasted whole paragraphs of time-coded audio from my contributors, found using the word search function. This is a technique I do not recall using before in producing news reports or short features, so in a way I was experimenting with how to build interwoven narratives from multiple sources. I would have a series of ten with 13 voices and over 13 hours of material to select from. I aimed to spread the interviewees' contributions between those features in a balanced fashion.

I constructed a Production Matrix (Fig. 10), to keep a record indicating who was in which features and whose voice was heard first and whose was last. I was taking into account how positioning would add subtly to the prominence of one voice over another and wanted to avoid too much favouring of one or two voices over the others. By the end of this stage, the middle of October, I had what I felt were catchy and descriptive titles: *Café culture; Charity begins at home; Developers' delight; Fields and yields; Fresh air and fun; Green fingers; Join in and enjoy; Leafy legacies; Marvellous memorials; Parks with perks* (which later changed to *Stables and stalls,* preferring sibilance to mic-popping p's).

PRODUCTION MATRIX to indicate which interviewees appear in which feature and who leads and ends each one. Drawn up at end of text storyboarding phase – 14/10/2017

NAMES of feature → / Interviewee ↓	FIELDS & YIELDS	LEAFY LEGACIES	JOIN IN & ENJOY	DEVELOPERS' DELIGHT	PARKS WITH PERKS	MARVELLOUS MEMORIALS	FRESH AIR & FUN	CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME	GREEN FINGERS	CAFÉ CULTURE
PATRICIA YATES			ENDS			LEADS				ENDS
MARGARET PRATT	(green)			LEADS						
ROGER PLUMB	LEADS/ENDS	(green)				ENDS				
JEAN GARDNER					LEADS			(green)		
MARGARET GREGORY		LEADS/ENDS								
ROSEMARY FARMER			LEADS		ENDS			LEADS		LEADS
GEOFF BUNCE							(green)		LEADS	
CARL CHEEVERS		(green)	ENDS				ENDS		ENDS	
OCANON							LEADS			
EMMA DALTON								ENDS		
NITIN SHAH										(green)
STEVE & KATERINA									(green)	

Figure 10 Matrix of contributors

Thinking through the themes and discussing my ideas over the phone and in emails with my NR informant, we brainstormed a name for the series itself. It needed to have a good 'ring' to it, to sound appealing on-air, suit the station style, indicate what the series was about, and look impactful on my blog webpage. Through that dialogue, I came up with *Remarkable Harpenden* and to convey more detail, I used the sub-heading *Tales of our town*, a phrase resonant with the title of my thesis. We also agreed that I would need to produce a suitably attention-grabbing introductory segment, or 'intro', to lead into each feature. Again, my NR informant contributed by supplying a dozen sample musical jingles to choose from, which he deemed suitable for the station yet also would mark my features as being out of the ordinary. I asked a colleague who volunteers at another community radio station to voice an opening credit for me over the score I selected. In the meantime, I had the idea to add a montage of sounds collected on my field forays. This, I imagined, would convey everyday life in the town. Listening through my raw sound files, I identified and shortlisted audio extracts that I considered were resonant of the themes covered by my features: an agricultural, countryside location; open spaces and parks and different usages of them like football, dog walking; wildlife and conservation; development, retail and general busy-ness; clubs and gatherings and social hubs; historical and heritage sites. Please now listen to the MP3 file entitled *NR Remarkable Harpenden SFX Intro*.[24]

The sounds I eventually decided to mix in my multi-track motif montage were the following: a train coming in to the railway station, with the beeping of carriage doors and the "This train terminates at…" announcement; Sunday morning ringing of the Bells at St Nicholas Church; a boys' football match at Rothamsted Park with the coaches shouting, the supporters applauding and a whistle in the distance; the natural sounds of birds and squirrels along a footpath; the buzzing of bees from my garden; and the sound of builders scraping gravel from the pavement. I had intended it to be atmospheric, since I had tried to convey the quietness of the town's green spaces in juxtaposition with the excitement and bustle of other activities that take place there. And I was at pains to be ethical, for instance by not taking liberties and exposing young footballers' names recorded at the match I was watching. Those minutiae are probably

---

[24] https://soundcloud.com/sidneyite/nr-remarkable-harpenden-sfx-intro/s-r3E1IKfxTbh accessed 13/5/2020

unnoticeable to the casual listener, but the result is an instantly recognizable melee of sounds, which when merged with the musical intro and voiceover would be an alert to the imminent transmission of another feature in the series.

4.4 THE NTRO: REFLECTIONS ON THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The post-production and editing procedure I carried out was the same with all ten features, but since I have submitted only *Green fingers* as the sample audio artefact for this thesis, I will describe how I went about shaping that specific feature. I began by creating a storyboard in a word document table, using transcribed interview text alongside the time codes. I inserted sections from different interviewee contributions to fashion a meta-dialogue in an initial attempt to create an overall narrative. Once this was completed, I copied and pasted the relevant audio segments into a 'new project' on Audacity. This was my audio editing programme of choice because not only is it free and widely used in educational and community media circles, but it is considered broadcast-standard. I kept the storyboard word document open during the audio editing so that I could refer to it and delete sections when necessary, with the tracking changes facility on, and even change the order of some sections. As I listened through the material sequentially and started making changes, I was then able to quickly check that the narrative still flowed and made sense on the page first, before making the necessary cuts and other alterations to the audio file. I learned that this was quicker and more efficient in the long run than repeatedly listening through the audio interviews, working out and highlighting which bits to keep, where to move them to and so forth.

It was important to me that my contributors would hear the features and be impressed not embarrassed. I wanted them to feel a sense of pride at having been involved in my project highlighting some of the virtues of living in the town. I was motivated to make professional-sounding audio and be as thorough as time and technology allowed. I always use headphones to edit, as you get much closer to the sound, although it is also a good idea to test listening to a piece in the way your audience might if they are driving or doing housework. I worked seated at my computer, headphones on, using a mouse to control the visual tools of the Audacity editing software. This was a highly satisfying, immersive, creative process and I spent hours engrossed in it, sometimes editing until the early hours. Being my own commissioning editor on this project, with no hard and fast deadlines, I found disciplining myself quite hard. It was not only achieving the quality I desired but the quantity of material I was working with that was slowing me down. The project lasted two months longer that the original deadline I had stated in the internship agreement, end of October.

Although I had not intended for my voice to appear in the features, after manipulating the order of many contributor statements into more appropriate places in the narratives, I had to include some of my questions as segues to improve the flow (Fig. 11).

	~~gardeners and always fancied having one~~
07:30	SM but when we arrived, we were face with almost like a jungle – so we've taken these 3 plots on and basically just cleared the whole thing out – dug them over last year and I know this is just an audio but you can see this is quite a lovely area to be in – we have got: lots of lovely flowers, we've got chard, kale, the last of the courgettes, there's still some on there – yeah there's still some on
09:20	~~KF It's funny because if we have somebody who wants to rent an allotment we take them always to this end – and we say you know 'in a year or two – it could look this – so obviously then the people are then more enthusiastic and it's quite nice actually~~ [JC I'll take a photo of one of your courguettes -] [SM So we actually created – it's a bit of a jungle up here - you can see the river as well –] KF well you call it jungle now - but before it was, you could not see anything – it is last year when we start clearing it, isn't it? You couldn't see those trees, there is plum trees and elderflower, ~~you could not see them – so Steve would come and start hacking all the weeds and everything, the brambles down and suddenly you have orchard here, and some old sheds and stuff.~~ 10:03 KF – and this is what Steve created – this beautiful view of the river – SM what I didn't mention as well is the wildlife – we've got herons in the river there -I've even got photos of them walking around the site here -it's just a fantastic place, not only is it healthy in terms of digging over – but just, it's just a really calming place
27:30	~~KF But it's nice we experiment with different veg and flowers – and you walk around –~~ I walk here with a cup of tea quite often and just look – what everybody's doing ~~and because every plot could be different, different soil, something different could grow and it's nice because we walk about it and somebody else will try it and we'll see if its working or not and if you're doing it on your own without knowledge and doing it on your own, sometimes it doesn't work –~~ you need encouragement of the others if you know someone is already here doing some digging and weeding and you think that I will do it as well – it encourages – that's good actually
4:04	[Can you take us to your plot – or plots KF Well actually we can start here-] this is one of mine and this is part of the recreation – so we have tables and lots of herbs, and we like pickling so this was for pickles - little greenhouse - ~~and like I said, every year I take on some other plot this I took last year – are~~ flowers, cucumbers you can't see now and artichokes and on the smallest plot courguettes, peas perigonon flowers on the end and of course beetroot to make nice beetroot borsch – and pickle some beetroot So you eat all the food yourself or do you share it We share it – ~~I definitely share it with some of my friends family and sometimes other plotholders, as I said they're nice and they can have some, as well so that's what we do~~ Sometimes when we have a BBQ here and we just can pick some vegetables and chuck it on the grill and we can straightaway have the benefit of the vegetable
08:09	SM [But we've even got a river view here –]

Figure 11 An edited section in the storyboard for Green fingers

I also wrote narrator scripts and links using text from the interview transcripts, which I then voiced myself for insertion into the projects. Below is the first draft of the *Green fingers* script, which I also used as the basis for the online descriptions, blogs and social media posts which accompanied the airing of each feature (Fig. 12).

DOCO SCRIPT: Green Fingers

INTRO:

RH_INTRO JINGLE into SFX

I'm Jo Coleman bringing you tales of our town, this is Remarkable Harpenden – Green Fingers

SEGUE 1: Harpenden was once a small farming village – the economy, modest as it was, relied largely upon the success of local harvests. Now, a bustling commuter town, we still find ourselves amongst green and pleasant surroundings and there's much evidence of how members of the community play a role with their own green fingers.

SEGUE 2: As well as Batford Springs Volunteers, there's another group helping to maintain Harpenden's countryfied townscape - Friends of the Nickey Line. I went to meet committee member Geoff Bunce, for a taster of one of their guided tours.

SEGUE 3: Yes – there's nothing like a bit of fresh air to clear away the cobwebs…and so I wondered what other ways local residents can benefit from working on the land, managing various types of vegetation… the plot holders on Harpenden's allotments must be experts. The Council's Carl Cheevers again.

SEGUE 4: The more closely I look, the more examples I find of where putting in the effort to work on projects with and for others, pays dividends – not only for those involved but for the community at large, as Carl at the Town Council fully appreciates.

OUTRO:

You've been listening to Remarkable Harpenden with me, Jo Coleman. I hope you found that feature interesting. To hear more of them, you can go to Nickey Radio.co.uk

MUSIC fades out!

Figure 12 Narrator's script for Green fingers

After cutting the contributors' stories down to more focused narratives, linked with occasional segues from myself as narrator, the final touches to the audio were sound effects and musical underscores from copyright free online sources, helpful for keeping production costs to a

minimum. To deliver some content as promised, I decided to hold five titles back, including *Green fingers*, giving myself chance to finish editing whilst the first batch of five were being aired. However, those features were twice as long as the 5 -7 minutes I had originally intended to produce. For one thing, my evocative montage lasted 19 seconds. I convinced myself that this was satisfactory, that I had creative freedom on this liberally managed station. I emailed my informant to ask if packages of around 10 minutes would be acceptable (Appendix 10.11). This was an important question, but I listed other matters arising, confirming the titles. In hindsight, I suspect insufficient attention was paid to all that detail and neither of us imagined what complication might ensue when it came to scheduling the features. After receiving a short reply along the lines of "OK, sounds good", I carried on. I released the features in alphabetical order, except for *Leafy legacies* which I sent in place of *Fresh air and fun,* to tie in with the book launch for Harpenden Writers' anthology. The first five features were saved in MP3 format onto a memory stick which I delivered by hand with an accompanying information sheet to my informant's home on 1st November. I rejected his offer of allocating a full hour of programming to them, which would have been excessive, and I feared that the impact of each would be lost. I asked instead that they be rolled out into the daytime music shows, one by one, or in pairs over the weeks, rather than flood the airwaves.

I quickly noticed the features were not being played on-air very often at all, and when I did hear them, they felt too long. The leeway had not done me any favours. Clearly, those initial features could not be easily accommodated into the music-based NR playlist. The imperative to shorten, and a degree of objective distance, helped me to be stricter with the cuts on the second batch, so for example, *Green fingers* was more tightly edited from over 13 to around 8 minutes. One of the changes involved cutting Carl's closing remarks leaving Steve's voice ending the feature before my outro. Another tough decision was to remove Geoff's stories about oak and ash trees. After delivering the remaining, shortened features, I contacted the interviewees to thank them for their time and informed them when theirs was likely to be aired. Fortunately, not many of them followed up on when exactly they could hear their features, apart from the representative of Friends of the Nickey Line and the Chairperson of the local allotments' society. As will be described below, this led to an awkward situation and a potential falling-out with the latter over when her members could listen to the audio and whether the committee should have had the right to sign it off before its airing. In hindsight, setting myself tighter production deadlines in the first place and being more mindful of the need to keep the length of my pieces down, would have saved me several days' worth of extra editing.

I embarked on further cutting of entire sentences from my contributors' interview segments on the storyboard. At one point in my production notes, I reflected "I have so much material left over: it's criminal!" (Ongoing Production Notes 17th Nov 2017). Further reflections revealed how distance from the recordings helped me to identify extraneous details, repetitive text and even my own "pedantic dribble" that could be removed from the narrative (Fig. 13). The final piece had a shorter, less academic-sounding narrator introduction and my hook for the listener was to ask: "So, what role do the people of Harpenden play?" Before reading my reflexive analysis of the final version of *Green fingers*, please listen to it now for yourself. As is so easily done and now routine in contemporary digital audio production, the feature has been made available online. [25]

🎧

4.4.1   A close reading of the text, *Green fingers*

In this section I will analyse the audio text, *Green fingers*. I treat myself objectively as the reporter, at the same time supplementing observations with reflexive commentary from my subjective perspective as producer. To undertake the close reading, I listened intently to the MP3 recording on the computer in my study, both with and without earphones. I am used to listening to speech radio as it is my preferred genre. What I understand by the term 'audio feature' is informed by my tastes, experience and academic research. I recognize in *Green fingers* some tried and tested industry conventions of radio documentary that I had used instinctively but were also prompted by the need to make creative decisions and to

GF: ON-GOING PRODUCTION NOTES. 25th November 2017

NB I was definitely over-ambitious with this project: in mixing the people into features: rather than sticking to a one-to-one … could do that next time (potentially though: not as gripping?) E.G. On my overlooking of useless repetitive stuff! On Geoff's bits at 08:46, he repeated 'bramble spreads' several times! And even if someone tells you 'something is absolutely fascinating' it may not be!!

Edit and shorten my links! THINK about how I can tackle the edits if need to avoid clumsy segues! Good opportunity to remove some of my more patronising comments on this edit. Again - It's handy to CUT my pedantic dribble!

BTW - I do have a different relationship with the words/text of the recorded interviews for broadcast …I need to not get too attached to stuff!

Figure 13 Extract from Production Notes diary, 25/11/2017

[25] https://www.mixcloud.com/josephine-coleman/remarkable-harpenden-green-fingers/ last accessed 11/5/2020

accommodate the newly-reinforced maximum length. For example, it is clear I had asked contributors to introduce themselves 'for the tape' and used that audio in the mix.

At the outset, the 'majestic' classical music and tone of the male voiceover 'importantly' introducing the feature seems a little absurd. That was my acquiescence to the NR informant's programming tastes. Once the sound montage plays, and we hear the female voice formally introduce the feature, I feel more comfortable and acknowledge the piece as being my handiwork. The montage aims to establish the bustling feel of the town, although I suspect the complex layering is too opaque for the casual listener. With an 'audible' smile, which is a common technique used in the industry to sound upbeat and friendly, my narration provides a potted history of Harpenden. Referring to "green and pleasant surroundings", I ask what role the townsfolk play. This segues into Carl introducing himself as Town Clerk and establishes the fact that NR had privileged access to local gatekeepers, giving the feature - and the series - some authority. Carl talks knowledgably about significant community projects, Harpenden in Bloom and the new building, boreholes and boards at the nature reserve in Batford Springs. These projects form part of his portfolio in terms of managing the amenities and assets of the town using funds from residents' taxes. If the listener has not heard of the schemes or been aware of the council's involvement, then this has been a good opportunity for Carl to promote them. I wonder at this point why we do not hear the questions that must have been posed to him. As a strategy, I recall that it made for a lot of time-consuming creative cutting and pasting to create the impression that he was extemporizing and not being steered by the reporter's agenda.

The second voiceover segues into Friends of the Nickey Line (see the script for the voiceovers in Fig. 8). Geoff is introduced to the listener as a local folklore expert, about to give a taster of his guided tour of the Nickey Line. My voice does appear in this section, conveying the walk we took together as I recorded. We can be heard striding along the route and encountering other people as Geoff explains the route and shares his tales. What is not immediately evident to anyone but me is the audio texturing that appears at certain points to cover awkward cuts and joins in the edit which I needed for sonic and narrative purposes. For instance, I added a track of my own dog barking whilst walking elsewhere in Harpenden, to layer and make more sense of the initial exchange with the dogwalker.

In the third narrated link, we hear a little laugh in my reporter-style voice as I pick up on the theme of fresh air and move on to the subject of allotments. This was – I confess, as producer - an acknowledgement of the contrived nature of the segue. It was also meant to demonstrate

how much the reporter relishes hearing about those folklore tales even though she may not necessarily believe in them and it serves to lift Geoff's somewhat dry delivery. Carl returns to air, sharing his authoritative overview of the two local allotment clubs and the council's duty to preserving them. Then we are transported directly to one of them. Katerina introduces herself at the Riverside allotments. The listener would not know that there was ever a fourth voiceover segue intended. This works quite smoothly. Katerina's eastern European accent illustrates a little ethnic diversity and when Steve joins in to talk about his hard graft on the plots, his accent indicates that he is from further afield too. His observation that nobody talks to each other could be construed as a cultural dig at people 'down South'.

From the background sounds, we know this recording is taking place outdoors, somewhere near a busy road. Again, the listener can not necessarily tell that I enhanced the soundscape to counteract inconsistent traffic noises which had made a few of the edits sound jarring. This was achieved by adding a track of birdsong recorded from a recce on the nearby Lea Valley, nearby enough to be authentic. Katerina's anecdotes of frequenting her plots with a cup of tea, learning from others, tending to her plants and anticipating the pickles she would make with her harvest convey a bucolic way of life. Likewise, Steve's closing observation on the community spirit generated through conversations over common interests serves as a recommendation for taking on an allotment as a lifestyle choice. The take-away message for the listener is that by investing time and energy in sociable activities, one can enhance everyday experiences of neighbourliness and community life. My outro voiced as friendly, yet professional-sounding narrator ends the piece promptly, encouraging the listener to stay tuned to NR so that they might enjoy hearing more "tales of our town".

Overall, and in hindsight, I question whether the NR audience necessarily appreciated the care taken to not only source a diverse range of voices representative of the town's population, but how thoughtfully those opinions and anecdotes had been interwoven. Something has been lost through the post-production: the sense of liveness and immediacy that hosting a roundtable discussion with several contributors at a time might have provided instead. On comparing the final audio version with the storyboard, the changes made to its form remind

me of other aspects of production that I should have been prepared for, implemented or considered during the process. Note my realization, as I reviewed again my reflective notes, (Fig. 14), that I had spent far too much time on the editing. Having a free rein to be creative turned out not to be the opportunity I had expected. Had I been collaborating with a fellow producer, my features might have been more efficiently edited and streamlined from the outset.

4.4.2   Airing the features online

It had always been my intention to make the features available as if they were podcasts on my Mixcloud account after two or three months of being aired in rotation on NR's online feed. However, I had not anticipated that I would need to do so as soon as the middle of December. In the first week of December, my NR informant had told me that the second batch of features had been scheduled into their system to be played after the news at about ten minutes after each hour. I heard *Green fingers* for myself during the automated breakfast show on 8th December 2017. So, I excitedly informed the contributors that they could listen in and hear it aired regularly. However, Geoff from Friends of the Nickey Line emailed on the 11th to tell me he had been listening and not heard any *Remarkable Features* at all. By mid-afternoon on the 12th, I was being chased on email and text not only by Steve from the allotments but also by his club chairman (Appendix 10.12). They were very keen to hear their piece because in their minds, being on the radio had become part of their publicity campaign.

Although this keen interest to hear the features aired was indicative of the engagement that making the series had generated amongst the people I interviewed, at that point I felt that we were letting them down. NR was failing to keep its part of our arrangement and I was not delivering on my guarantee to the contributors. I phoned my NR informant on the 12th to share my concerns and he assured me that the features had been programmed to play out

> ***REVIEW OF REFLECTIVE (IN ACTION) AND REFLEXIVE (ON ACTION) ON-GOING PRODUCTION NOTES'. 15th July 2018***
>
> This comment – I think is directed at me and the 'me' doing the volunteering!
>
> *"A thought for later consideration: How to rein it in…how to handle volunteers? Well-meaning though they may be!!"*
>
> So – yeah – how much direction do you give them. How much feedback or teamwork can a volunteer expect or are they happy to receive – if they're like me they like to do their own thing – with the ball they are thrown! Although help and assistance might have been on hand if I was working on one of the RV shows would I have wanted that? I do more or less do what I'm asked/told by Phil when I do packages for him…! I am capable of following direction! Honest!

Figure 14 Excerpt from Review of Reflective Notes, 15/7/2018

frequently during the station's automated web-streamed broadcasts. With me still on the line, he observed the computer to ensure the system was working. It became apparent however that the scheduling programme kept 'throwing out' my features instead of playing them. We discussed possible reasons and decided that it was because the tracks were longer than the usual music tracks and that perhaps there needed to be more time made available for my features by deleting music already lined up in each hour on the playlist. "The machine's fault is at the hands of the programmer", my informant explained. The required manual adjustment was to drag and drop a feature to the top of the list and force play at the top of the hour. Below is a screenshot of the website for the 'RadioDJ' playout system that NR use to schedule their output (Fig. 15). Everything works on a tightly timed hourly rotation in between the news on the hour and is usually consistent so long as nothing extraordinary is required to happen. Since this software is free, saving users several thousands of pounds (sterling), one might interpret that it is rather basic and not as versatile or dependable as a more expensive alternative.
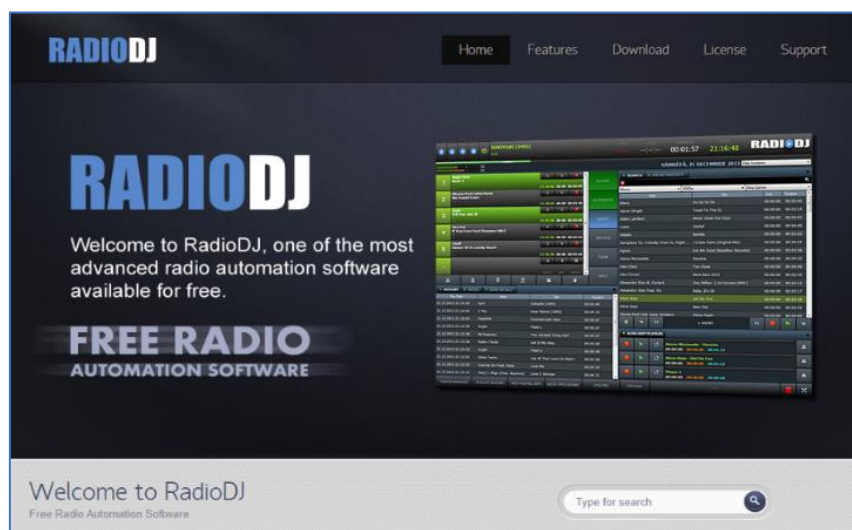
Figure 15 Screenshot of the website for 'RadioDJ' playout scheduling system used at NR

4.4.3   The Remarkable Harpenden blogs

The original plan had been to use social media activity to promote my work to a wider audience by creating publicity for NR through people reacting to content and sharing links. Because of the technical hitches at the station's end, I found that my additional research output, the WordPress blog and associated Mixcloud account, became significant elements in how my features were disseminated. I used Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness of those online places as alternative platforms to Nickey Radio where the features were available (Figs.

16 and 17). I uploaded the series onto Mixcloud, tagged with the terms: audio feature; local podcast; and Harpenden. I reordered the episodes for release over several weeks to accommodate any specific occasions that the organizations featured were involved in. For instance, I hoped to help boost sales of Harpenden Writers' anthology in *Join in and enjoy* and draw attention to the fundraising Christmas appeal mentioned by that year's Mayor in *Charity begins at home*.
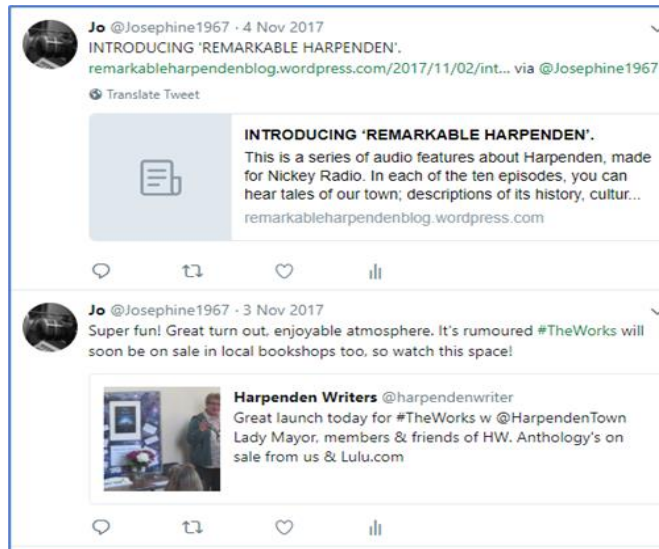
Figure 16 Screenshot of my Twitter post regarding the RH blog, 4/11/2017

Figure 17 Screenshot of my Twitter feed, 13/11/2017

My blog was designed as an illustrative accompaniment to the audio features, providing an experience of the remarkable town of Harpenden (Fig. 18). Please now read the short article for *Green fingers* (Appendix 10.13) or visit my WordPress page and click on the photograph of the courgettes.[26] ᗝᗝ

Figure 18 Screenshot of Remarkable Harpenden WordPress blog, homepage

Each blog post was a promotional outline of an audio feature. Written in a conversational style, I reused sentences from the template narrator scripts (Fig. 12). The production matrix (Fig. 10) indicated which contributors I needed to mention and organizations and events to tag. It also prompted me to think about which websites I should include as hyperlinks in the text for readers to click on, facilitating the further circulation of information. I used photographs taken on my sound gathering recces with others from my private collection to complement each themed feature. The choice of images was based on how eye-catching I thought they would be for online circulation, with an eye on shareability. I also wanted them to appeal to, and please, the contributors. In the case of *Green fingers*, Steve was proud of his new crop of courgettes and of the work he had done clearing the land and improving the wildlife environment. Katerina's flourishing plots deserved spotlighting too. The view I used of Leyton Road represented the town centre and the town council's offices. The black Labrador and the child pictured in the next image are mine, portraying the family-friendly environment

---

[26] https://remarkableharpendenblog.wordpress.com/2017/12/23/green-fingers/ accessed 12/5/2020

down at the River Lea. Then my choice of a snow-covered Nickey Line image felt appropriate for the December posting of the blog rather than the autumnal views that I photographed at the time of the interview. Those images from Geoff's folk tales trail are posted elsewhere in 'A sense of locality' and 'Fresh air and fun', the latter being the second feature that Geoff appeared in. At the foot of this and each blog post, I had credited NR, promoting awareness and encouraging listenership to the station by going to their website,[27] then I provided the Mixcloud link to click through to hear the feature.

Figure 19 Screenshot of Green fingers post on Mixcloud, 13/13/2019

There were no comments registered on the Mixcloud page for *Green fingers*, but there was proof that people had been listening (Fig. 19). Since no information about listener numbers or hits to the website was forthcoming from NR, this was all I had. As of 13th December 2019, there had been 27 total plays for 77 minutes, indicating that people were not listening all the way through. I have not further explored how I could have produced the features more appealingly or discovered a more appreciative audience, but certainly having production advice at the time from experienced colleagues familiar with the target audience might have

---

[27] I have since removed links to the NR website which is no longer owned by the station.

helped. Had my involvement with the station continued I may have improved the features, tried to increase public awareness and generate conversation around them, even re-use the material. However, my active engagement effectively ceased within months of the internship so that I could focus on the next stage of my fieldwork.

A benefit of controlling my own web presence for the features was that I could effectively re-release them via my blog by posting reminder messages on social media to where the audio was reliably available when local events were taking place, such as during the Riverside Allotments open day. This promotional activity had the potential to continue beyond my project to help sustain the community connections made through the making of the features (Fig. 20). I found I could exploit existing social media contacts and local event publicity to draw attention to my features. I also made use of my access as publicity consultant to the

Harpenden Writers' social media platforms to like and share the tweets that I was posting on my personal accounts to promote the local content I had produced (Fig. 21). As a visitor on other social media profiles, by liking, following and sharing, one can make one's presence known. I directly posted weblinks on the Facebook pages for the allotments club and Friends of the Nickey Line commenting: "The feature you're in is being broadcast right now! So, tune in…". I hoped their members might notice then 'like' and 'share' the link. Using this tactic, I kept up a high profile during the months following the airing of my features in the hope that more people would listen, either on NR or via my blog and Mixcloud.
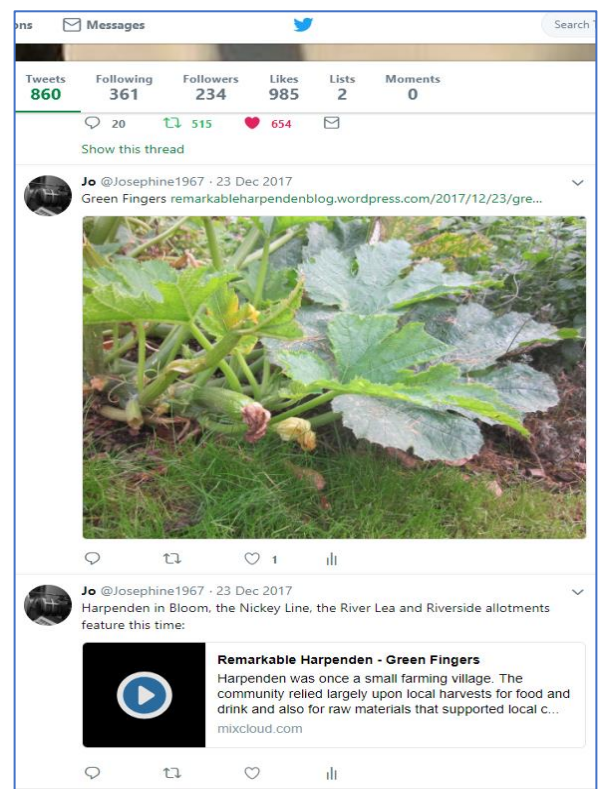
Figure 20 Screenshot of tweet for Green fingers, 23/12/2017

Figure 21 Tweet for Green fingers with tags and name dropping, 8/12/2017

4.4.4   Building and sustaining community relations

As I mentioned earlier, before Sylvia left NR, she started inviting me to report on local town planning issues and cover other town events. She even began to credit me for my reporting (Fig. 22). In hindsight, I regretted not meeting Sylvia sooner. She might have embraced my series and helped it be properly dealt with as far as the programming was concerned. I feel NR could have done more to promote them. Through doing so it would have been publicity for the station and potentially brought in new listeners. My aim, after all, had been to raise public awareness of the station and give a better impression of their local coverage and engagement in the town. I did begin to experience spin-offs from making the series. I was approached by Patricia, one of my *Remarkable Harpenden* contributors, to report on the Advent soup and carol lunchtime services at the town centre St Nicholas Church. Her initial request was for NR to do an outside broadcast so that parishioners who were unwell, unfit, or unable to get to church could listen and enjoy the Christmas celebration. NR, being a very small outfit, was not geared up for that, so instead I recorded the proceedings as best I could on my Zoom, edited it, recorded a short explanatory top and tail and arranged to have it played out on-air and posted on the NR webpage. In return, the church mentioned NR in their pew sheet and publicized when the carols would be broadcast.

Figure 22 Screenshot of one of Sylvia's Twitter posts for NR, April 2018

This mutually beneficial arrangement exemplifies the cumulative impact on social relations that can be developed by local radio producers networking in their community. NR and I were invited to be involved again the following year, but my links with the station were increasingly tenuous. I agreed to make a promotional trailer stating when the soup and carols were taking place. The original recording of the carols was again featured online and streamed on air several times around Christmas.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have recounted in detail how I produced ten audio features for a local online radio station. I documented myself carrying out a range of basic activities, which when combined, form the integrative practice of producing radio content. The production practicalities I encountered and documented have inspired the drawing up of a range of phenomena to look out for and inquire about in the subsequent participant observations and interviews with other practitioners in the sector. Reflecting back on my practice through the social site lens helped me focus beyond the minutiae of artistic and practical decision-making

and to consider the meta-narrative. I realized that social connections played a significant role in how I was able to gain access to local movers and shakers in order to gather news, information and other material. I had proved to myself that sourcing potential programme material about Harpenden's environmental, historical and cultural aspects, including news and information about residents, organizations, events and happenings could to some extent be achieved through secondary and desk research. However, gathering locally relevant content that would resonate with the potential audiences also required exploiting existing and building new social, face-to-face connections. I tapped into existing communicative channels, relationships and socialities for that purpose, and I could see potential for those relations to continue, if sustained and expanded upon.

This point in the thesis marks the transition between the two channels of fieldwork designed to explore the journalistic and other media practices associated with producing local content on community radio. Having undertaken a project myself, I was equipped with a wealth of knowledge and understandings that I used to construct a framework for systemizing my inquiries in the other stations. I had developed a heightened sensitivity to what was involved and would seek to find out if other volunteers experienced and conducted the practice in similar ways in their different local contexts. The following chapters present the evidence gathered from other LCRs in market towns. I closely examined the situations and conditions under which the practitioners were producing local content. Snapshot studies of four stations will be presented first and used to cross-check and compare with more in-depth participant observations in a fifth station. This case study-style approach enables me to illustrate commonalities of performance patterns where sourcing, shaping and sharing locally relevant material is concerned.

5 SNAPSHOT CASE STUDIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present four snapshot studies of community radio stations in Watford, Luton, Melton Mowbray and Midsomer Norton. Each involved desk research, remote listening-in and a single site visit for interviews. They will be introduced with an overview of license commitments, geographical and demographic contexts, station and studio layouts, my first impressions of how the volunteers were organized, and their media outputs, including online. Based on key areas of inquiry resulting from my reflections on the practice-as-research project at NR, I interviewed practitioners concerning how they ensured their stations sounded local. I was interested in whether locally based volunteers tended to be oriented towards aspects of local life in which they already had an interest and were themselves involved or acquainted with people who were. My findings highlight ways that the stations were localized: news provision, sports coverage, music and talent promotion, advertising, and volunteer recruitment.[28]

5.2 VIBE 107.6 FM, WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE

Station slogan: "Radio Made in Watford!"

Watford has a population of around 97,000, based on 2017 estimates. It is a market town with a history of beer-making and printing: industries connected to the surrounding agricultural land. It thrives today both as a commuter town with motorway, rail and Underground connections to London and as a commercial and light industrial centre. In frequency licensing terms, Watford is served by BBC Three Counties Radio and the ILR Heart, but the town is so close to London that competition from the capital's urban stations and their signals is strong. Vibe has a pronounced urban feel and is the district's only community station, licensed since 2011. The Key Commitments state that the station is aimed at, and "is the voice of", 13-25-year olds living in the greater Watford area. Although I was told during interviews that listeners in their 40s and older are also served. Other stated aims are that speech output is mainly "community news and information, interviews and features, discussions, and

---

[28] A sampling of quotes from respondents and findings from these snapshot visits and the RV fieldwork appear in my chapter 'Situating journalistic coverage: a practice theory approach to researching local community radio production in the United Kingdom' (Coleman, 2020).

programmes showcasing local talent and events."[29] The station is licensed to provide a minimum of eight hours of original programming, live or voice-tracked to sound live, and a minimum of 13 hours a day of output produced locally within its transmission area (Fig. 23).[30]
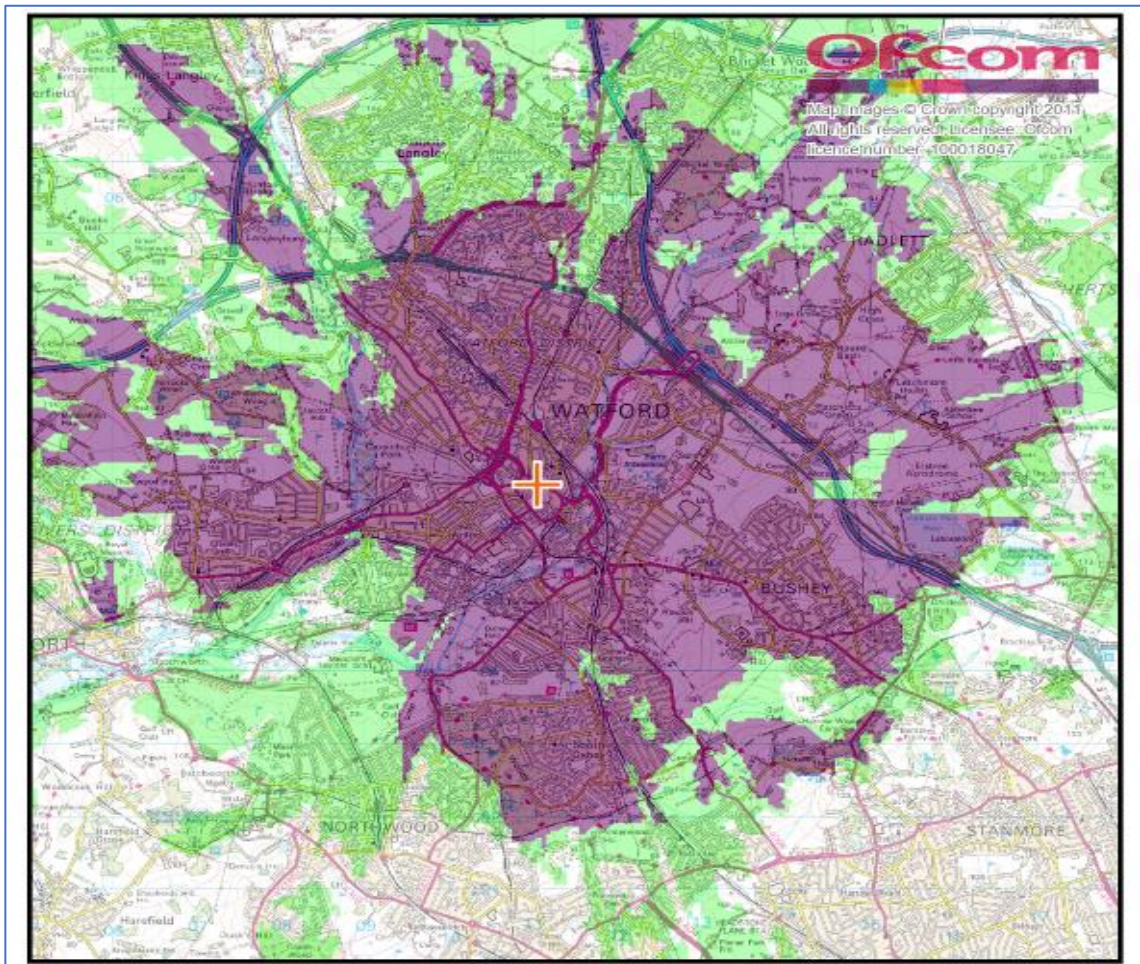
Figure 23 Transmission area map for Vibe 107.6 FM, 2011

Desk research I conducted on diversity amongst volunteers and staff at Vibe was straightforward due to presenter headshots being published on the website alongside the programme schedule. Age wise, they collectively reflected the target demographic, but their gender and ethnic mix did not. I noted that only 10 women were named as presenting just 14 shows each week, whereas 16 men presented 31 out of the total 62 shows (the balance being automated music). Also, at the time of my study in June 2018, only three volunteers were of BAME origin whilst, according to the 2011 Census, Watford was home to over 25,000 BAME

---

[29] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr000216.pdf accessed 9/8/2019

[30] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/mcamaps/cr000216.pdf accessed 12/5/2020

residents, accounting for around 28% of the local population (Appendix 10.5). Of the eight interviews I conducted at Vibe, only one was with a woman, the female member of the three-strong part-time paid staff team, and all respondents happened to be white. In the time that passed between my field visit and writing this chapter, the station acquired three more male and three more female volunteer presenters, the latter being BAME. This has doubled the visible ethnic diversity of the station to an improved six out of 32 (nearly 19%). I did not notice any physically disabled members of the organization on the day of my site visit or on the webpages, but the building is modern and accessible with lifts, wide corridors and doorways which would not preclude volunteers with accessibility needs.

5.2.1 Station visit

Vibe was the most technologically up to date of the stations I visited. It was located on the second floor of a Local Government office building, bearing the sign 'Watford Community Housing', where a variety of community service organizations and charities were based. After signing in with the building's receptionist at a security desk, I was given a visitor badge, then greeted by Vibe's Station Manager, Howard, who escorted me upstairs. I was made welcome and shown around the spacious and light-filled open-plan office where I met and shook hands with several young men and the female marketing manager, who made me a coffee. On one wall of the office (Fig. 24), were four large boards. The first displayed a montage of photographs from large public events that the station had been involved with. Evidently, station members organized the annual Fireworks Display in Watford's Cassiobury Park and had hosted stage entertainments at the celebrations for Watford Football Club going up into the Premier League in 2015. Two white boards were used to chart advertising schedules and update clients' airtime packages. Details included the duration of each company's advert, frequency of transmission and whether they had paid. The fourth board along that part of the wall was a large local area map dotted with pins showing where all the listeners who won on-air competitions came from. Many pins and notes were affixed in the north of the map towards St Albans and Harpenden, corroborating what I have noticed, that there is a strong FM signal for Vibe in those areas, particularly along the M1 motorway.
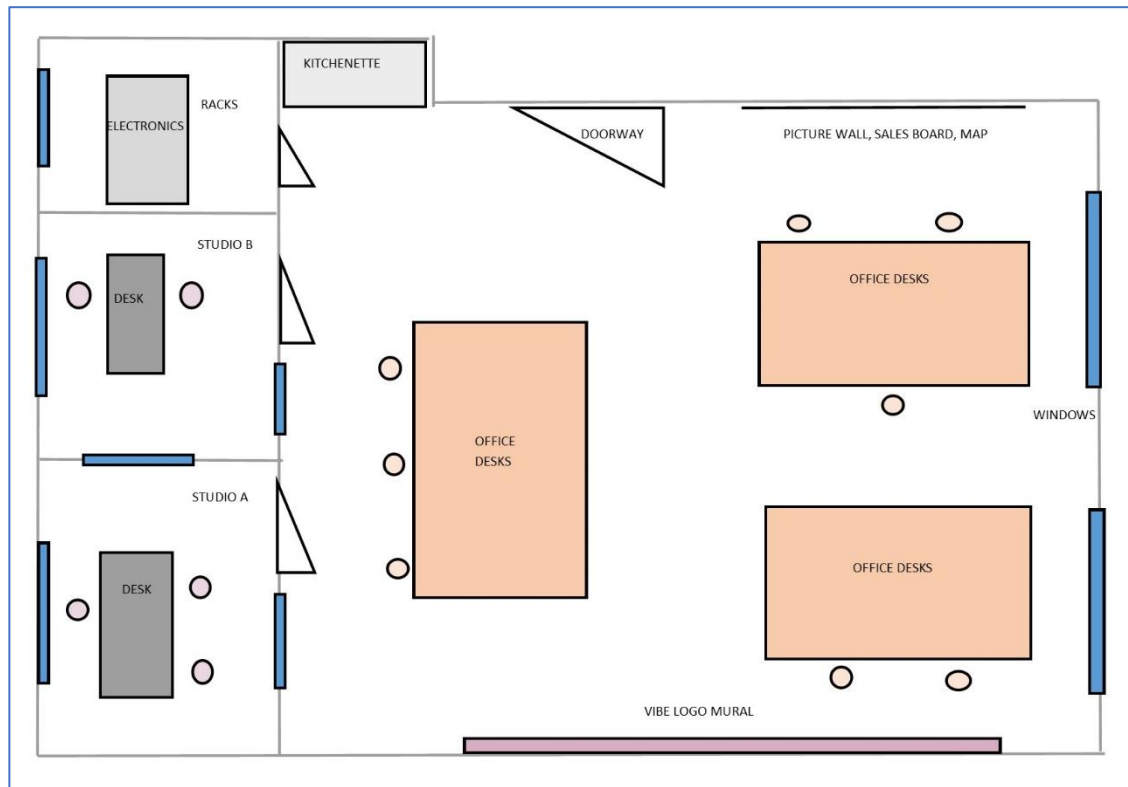
Figure 24 Vibe 107.6 FM station layout, based on my sketch and photographs (not to scale)

My tour of the station continued, starting in the neatly arranged racks room where Howard talked me through the logistics of transmitting station output via a satellite dish on the roof to the antenna on top of the YMCA building in the nearby shopping centre complex. The station's audio output was broadcast on the analogue FM frequency but also streamed live on the internet. The Vibe team had just spent several weeks overhauling both broadcasting studios, fitting state-of-the-art digital equipment and software, adjustable console desks with stools to allow them to stand whilst presenting live or recording voice-tracked links for their shows. Howard proudly explained how the new equipment would provide the volunteers with a more contemporary experience of radio broadcasting. Touch screen technology and the 'Zetta' playout system are industry standard in the mainstream commercial sector, to which most Vibe volunteers aspire. Another new piece of kit was the phone system that monitored calls coming into the studio (Fig. 25). Station protocol when listeners phoned in to enter competitions or otherwise contribute to on-air proceedings was to record conversations off-air and edit them before broadcasting. Quick, easy digital editing software has helped this advance on the traditional, industry-wide seven second delay adjustment, or 'profanity button', that safeguards against anything libellous or profane being broadcast (Fleming, 2010, p. 149). Funding for Vibe's new studio equipment was sourced through council and lottery

grants and awards and Howard was hoping to sell their old analogue gear to another community station to raise money to invest in a new piece of software, such as Adobe Audition editing software and associated licences. He also hoped to purchase equipment to do outside broadcasts (OBs) from places around the area, instead of relying on phoned-in reports back to the studio or recording on-location interviews for later transmission.

There was no stream of income from station volunteers; they were not required to pay to become members. They would be consulted by management on matters that might concern them, but otherwise they took no operational responsibility. I observed that the busy, young presenters benefited from flexible working arrangements, by virtue of digital technologies. Voice tracking was used frequently on the station enabling the pre-recording of tightly timed personalized links, continuity updates, introductions to music tracks and banter that were then uploaded into the playlist on the playout system. Volunteers could prepare an entire three-hour show in just one hour or less, on a day and at a time to suit them, rather than being by constrained by the actual programme schedule. This explained how I was able to take over Studio A on the day I visited to conduct seven interviews, while the remaining Studio B was still being worked on by a volunteer engineer. Tuning in to the station might not reveal this fact straightaway unless you knew what to listen out for, what was missing. For instance, there would be no features encouraging listeners to phone in because there was no presenter actually there.

Figure 25 Studio A at Vibe FM, with the new touchscreen playlist and phone-in software

5.2.2 Online engagement

The multipage, dynamic website appeared to be a key element in Vibe's local offering to Watford. I heard that even when transmitting voice-tracked shows, the presenters scheduled social media posts to run alongside their shows, enabling online engagement to appear live and monitored. The listen again facility for the station's output was limited to podcasts from

specialist local music show, *Raw Vibes,* and a selection of occasional interviews previously been conducted on air with local sports people and bands or celebrities visiting the area.[31] I was told there was no demand for repeats of shows full of listenable, upbeat contemporary music (CHR), complete with adverts and a previous day's presenter chat and outdated information on traffic, travel and weather conditions. The website had multiple pages including a sizeable news portal with local at the top, sports, national, entertainment, business, weather and other news sections below. I read a page promoting how to advertise on-air and another listing vacancies for volunteer presenters, production assistants and producers. Significantly, applicants had to be over 18, living in Watford or a neighbouring borough. One role for a Breakfast Presenter emphasized the need for appropriate skills *and* professional experience, even though the role was voluntary. But the budding presenters were clearly making the most of their opportunities on Vibe as evidenced by all the female presenters' glamorous social media profiles on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Along with many of the men, they used social media platforms to promote Vibe and portray their lively media careers. Presenting at Vibe in '#Watford' was but one string to their bow.

5.3   RADIO LAB 97.1 FM, UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE, LUTON

Station slogan: "Your Luton. Your Music."

The economy of Luton was once based on the crafting tradition of hat-making; its local professional football team is nicknamed "The Hatters". But as the home of a large Vauxhall Motors factory, car production dominated for most of the twentieth century, lending the town a reputation for being more akin to a northern industrial city. The M1 runs close by, one of the country's major airports, London Luton is there as well as three railway stations linking London with Bedford and the Midlands. Outside the London Boroughs, Luton has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the country, with 45% of the town's residents being BAME, based on the 2011 Census results (Appendix 10.5). The population in 2017 was nearly 215,000. This richly-multicultural population is served by several local radio stations: the two mainstream, regionalized local stations, Heart FM (adult contemporary music) and BBC Three Counties Radio (speech-based with music); and three Ofcom licensed CR stations Inspire FM, Diverse FM and Radio LaB.

From my desk research at the time, two of the CR stations did not appear to be organized around the type of local content production I was studying in pursuit of my objectives, which

---

[31] http://www.vibe1076.co.uk/radio/interviews/   accessed 5/8/2019

involved exploring how the full range of social and cultural interests within a geographical area were represented and reflected through station output. Inspire FM emerged out of Radio Ramadan Luton, an RSL held since 1997 for broadcasting during the holy month and was awarded a full community licence in 2010. As a station specifically targeted at the Muslim community of Luton, Inspire broadcasts contemporary nasheeds, world music, lectures and recitations from the Quran, community news and information, often not in English. Diverse FM has been licensed since 2007. In 2010, the team won lottery and European Funding to set up a community media and training programme for disadvantaged youths and migrants and has since earned The Queen's award for Voluntary Service. However, in early 2018 the website looked inactive with no recent updates on station news since 2012, only one person was named as contact and the programme schedule was all music with minimal speech content. Radio LaB (Radio Luton and Bedfordshire), on the other hand, did look suitable for my purposes.

This student-led radio station for the University of Bedfordshire has been operating with an Ofcom licence since 2010 (Fig. 26).[32] The station began as Luton FM, a Restricted Service Licence (RSL) for media students in 1997. Radio LaB's Key Commitments document states that the station is for: "young people in Luton in education and beyond" with "features [also] for people over the age of 55", and "a mix of programming including new and local music and coverage of cultural and social issues".[33] As with the other stations I researched, and the majority across the sector, the staple output is music, in this case, 'alternative' and other specialist genres as well as local musicians. The older audience is catered for by the *Gold Breakfast* show and inter-generational outreach projects involving local institutions such as nursing homes. Looking for clues as to the ethnic diversity amongst Radio LaB's presenters, I found the station website and associated social media platforms provided only limited information. Some student volunteers were more active than others on social media, posting photographs and videos of studio activity. There did appear to be good mix of volunteers from BAME backgrounds. There was no evidence of students with physical disabilities being involved at that time, but the studios were easily accessible. At the time of the interviews in May 2018, the schedule published online indicated that out of a total of 39 programmes each week, nine women presented nine shows, whereas 23 men presented 27. Of the four student

---

[32] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/mcamaps/cr000197.pdf accessed 12/5/2020

[33] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr000197.pdf accessed 24/11/2019

managers, two were female and two male. At the time of writing up this thesis, a year later and with a new student intake, there were 12 young women presenting 10 shows and 18 men doing 20 shows: a slightly improved balance.

5.3.1   Station visit

To access the station, I first contacted the licensee and station coordinator Terry, who was employed by the University in the School of Culture and Communication. He supervised the
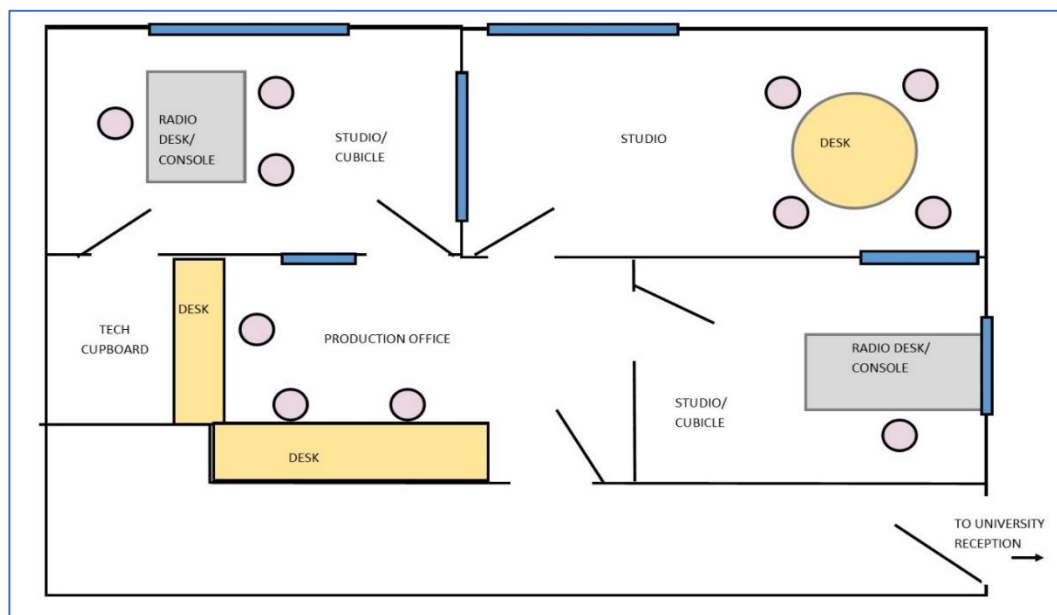
Figure 26 Radio LaB studio layout based on floorplan provided (not to scale)

final-year students involved with the station as managers for their special project option. The students would be graded on how well they operated the station and organized their fellow volunteers. I interviewed Terry and student manager, Jack, to ascertain how each regarded and contributed towards the practice of featuring the local on the radio station. I found the station's small suite of offices on the ground floor of the Luton town centre campus and accessed through a fire door requiring a security code to open from the corridor outside. Within, lay a small administrative area with desk space for about three people on computers with large monitors suitable for audio editing (Fig. 27).

There were several framed certificates and awards propped up on the desk against the wall. Despite or perhaps due to the inevitable high turnover of volunteers at Radio LaB, some of whom are journalism students, the station has been cited for many awards such as 'Most Improved Station' at the 'I Love Student Radio Awards 2016' and 'Highly Commended' in the 'Best Community Outreach' category for a project with Luton Sixth Form College and Age Concern Luton. At the time of writing, Radio LaB had won the Gold award in the CMA's 2019

Speech & Journalism of the Year section, with a student piece entitled, 'Autism & It's Possibilities' (*sic*). There were three promotional posters about the station's 20th anniversary pinned on one of the walls alongside a radio-controlled analogue clock, and a large whiteboard wall planner on the other, upon which was handwritten and updated the programme schedule, day by day for the week, with the times of day and generic show names down the left hand column. The other two walls featured large rectangular, sound-proofed windows, each looking in on a studio, and three doors leading to studio spaces. The larger, main broadcasting studio, used for round table discussions and performances, overlooked a part-paved, part-grassy communal area outside (Fig. 28).

Figure 27 View of the Radio LaB studios across a central courtyard

5.3.2 Online engagement

Radio LaB tended to broadcast music-based shows live or as live, and used Canstream, a service of the CMA, to stream output online. If listeners missed the initial transmission of a show, they could 'catch up' online. I found Radio LaB's website to be quite small, with a few pages of basic information but the Twitter feed was live and there were links to other social media accounts. From interviewing Jack, I discerned that he was very active on social media publicizing the station, its volunteers and the various programmes as well as to build a profile for himself (Fig. 29). He presented a 'Formula One' show followed by 'Drivetime' on Mondays, a weekly news show on Fridays and a music documentary show on Sundays, which looked at how the classic albums by the likes of Led Zeppelin

Figure 28 Jack at the controls in Radio LaB's main studio

and Bob Dylan were created. As part of the marketing strategy to engage with audiences at the University and across Luton, Terry told me that the station had Instagram and Snapchat accounts as well as Facebook and Twitter with around 3,000 followers at that time. The volunteers were encouraged to post online whilst they were broadcasting and there was a tablet in each broadcast studio, already logged on to those accounts. Terry added that they were asked to sign and agree to conform to the station's social media policy, to ensure that they did not post anything even on their own social media accounts which might reflect badly on the station. Afterall, they had a reputation to be proud of. The station has a number of high-profile alumni, such as Dan Prior (Absolute Radio) and Matt Fisher, Melvyn Odoom and Rickie Haywood Williams (all at BBC Radio 1).

5.4   103 THE EYE, MELTON MOWBRAY, LEICESTERSHIRE

Station slogan: "It's all about you!"

103 The Eye serves the Vale of Belvoir from studios in and around Melton Mowbray, northeast of Leicester and southeast of Nottingham (Fig. 30).[34] The area is predominantly farmland, famous worldwide for its Stilton cheese and pork pies. In the Key Commitments document for the station, the aim is stated as "broadcasting a service with a strong local focus and an inclusive range of programming".[35] The station volunteers are bound by this document and their licence, in common with many LCRs, to produce "original output for a minimum of 70 hours per week" and transmit "locally-produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day", live or voice-tracked, with the aim of facilitating "discussion and the expression of opinion…and the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it".[36] The Eye was one of the first LCRs to be licensed by Ofcom and the first to go to air in 2005. The licence for that frequency in the area has since been renewed twice for the original, award-winning team to continue operating.[37]

My interpretation of The Eye's programme schedule was that most shows were original and locally made. There were some repeats across the schedule, which would not qualify towards their minimum hours and the station appeared to use some high-profile syndicated shows to

---

[34] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/mcamaps/cr000012.pdf accessed 12/5/2020

[35] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr000012.pdf accessed 14/8/2019

[36] Ibid.

[37] https://www.commedia.org.uk/news/2015/11/103-the-eye-10th-birthday/ accessed 6/5/2019

supplement its output, such as the *Sixties Vinyl Countdown* with Roger Day, Mark Stafford with *Stafford's World* and *Live Wire* on selected evenings.[38] I later learned that they rely on such free material to fill slots that they have been unable to find volunteers for. The range of music featured on the station spanned the 1950s through to the current day.
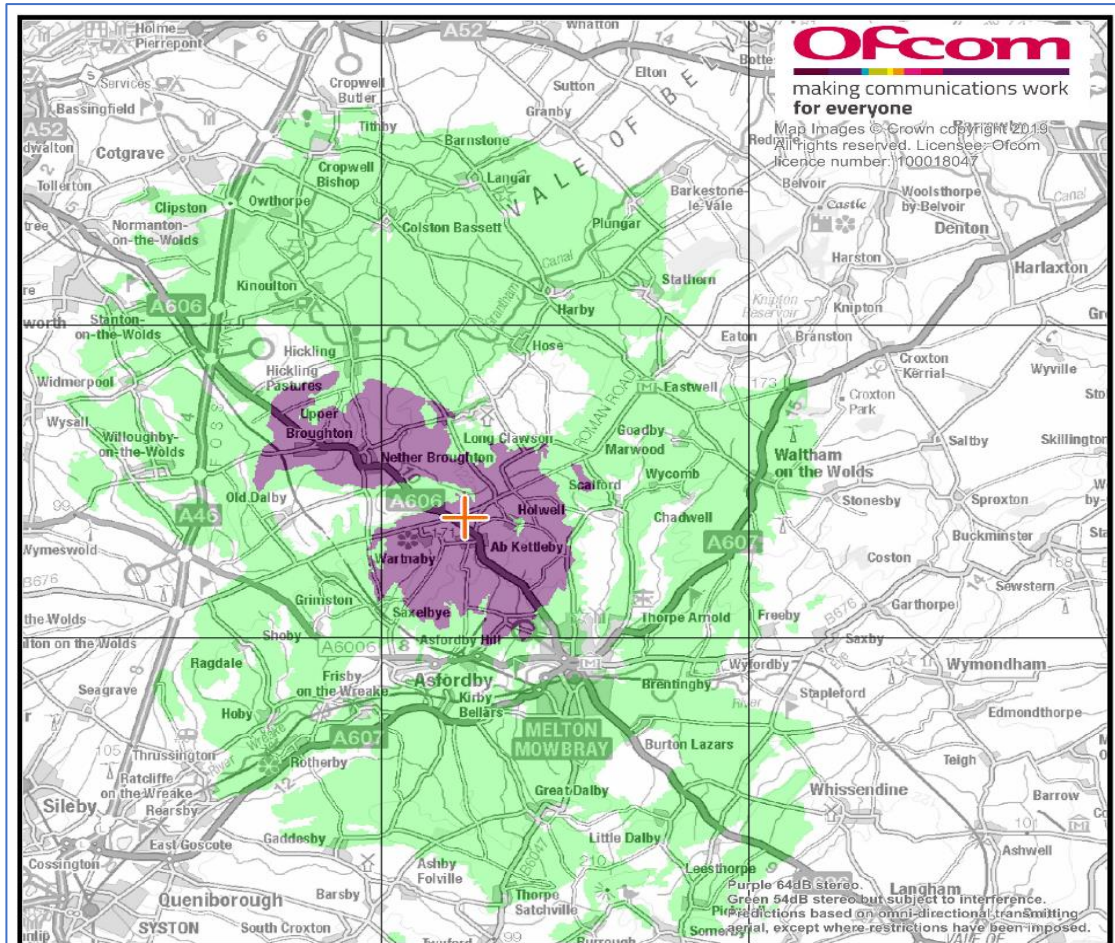
Figure 29 Transmission area map for 103 The Eye, 2019

Close as Melton Mowbray is to the city of Leicester, which boasts one of the most ethnically diverse and culturally mixed populations in the country, the market town where the station is based is 97.2% 'White' (Appendix 10.5). It was clear from the website photo gallery that only a very small minority of over 60 volunteers was BAME: Devon, a former volunteer, worked with local school children contributing a regular programme called CROC FM; and a local woman, Ling, presented *The Tuesday Treat*.[39] During her interview, managing director Christine maintained that the largest ethnic group locally was the Polish community, who arrived after

---

[38] https://steveosborne.info/live-wire/ accessed 6/5/2019

[39] http://www.103theeye.co.uk/presenters.htm accessed 6/5/2019

the second world war and were since joined by a new generation after Poland joined the European Union in 2004. As for gender balance, there were 49 men and 16 women pictured on the gallery of past and present presenters. At the time of my visit in April 2018, the programme schedule indicated a total of 59 show slots on the station (including repeats). Of those that clearly bore the names of presenters, only 10 women presented or co-presented nine shows, whereas 34 men presented or co-presented 48. The following year, during the writing up of this research, there were nine women identified on the programme schedule as presenting 11 of the shows.

I felt that there was no deliberate bias in staffing here, it was simply a product of the availability of people living locally who had the time and energy to spare, the inclination to volunteer and the confidence to drive a studio desk and present on LCR. Studio accessibility was not a bar to participating, as I heard that it was commonplace for programmes on The Eye to be produced in the comfort of volunteers' own homes, in their studies or spare rooms doubling up as satellite studios and either pre-recording programmes to email or deliver on memory sticks or streaming them down the line as live feeds.

5.4.1 Station visit

My visit to this station in Melton Mowbray was arranged opportunistically, as I was attending their annual networking day for fellow CMA members and community radio managers, held every April in the town's Council offices. Having met station founders Christine and Patrick the year before at the same event, I volunteered to help them tidy up after their community radio colleagues had departed, in exchange for being able to conduct an interview with them back at base. I was surprised to be led to their home which lies in a residential area of Melton Mowbray rather than the industrial unit indicated on Google maps, where their transmitter was situated. I parked on their drive alongside two other cars, then walked around the side of the house, along the edge of a garden to the studio at the rear (Fig. 31).

A young volunteer, Jonny, was finishing the last hour of the sports show. It turned out during the interview that one of the advantages of the studio being in the management duo's home was proximity to the kitchen for presenter and guest refreshments. Patrick brought me out a cup of tea and a slice of cake. The usual protocol around taking food and drink into the studio seemed more relaxed here compared to other stations I visited. Christine explained that they were aware their volunteers sometimes came in to do shows after a day's work and had not had chance to eat. They simply asked people to keep drinks away from the studio desk and equipment, "We don't want greasy fingers all over the desk," she said.
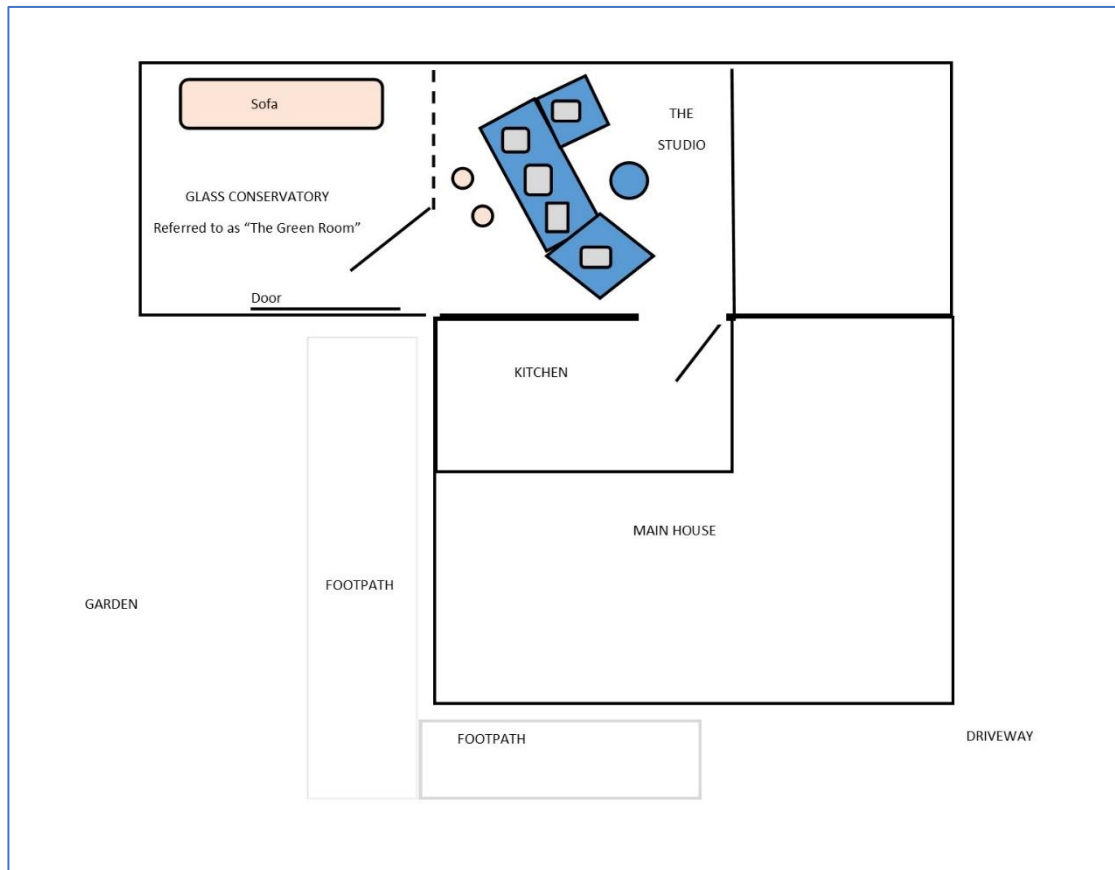
Figure 30 Layout of 103 The Eye, based on my field sketch (not to scale)

The casual way Patrick conversed with me and Christine through the open doorway as we were settling into the studio spoke volumes not only about how their domestic life is geared around the running of the station, but how they have successfully domesticated the radio station. Patrick was in and out, putting the kettle on and washing up mugs in the kitchen, then checking the control panel and logging into Facebook back in the studio. I could imagine them behaving in a similar way when hosting guests during a live show. I noticed from listening to the station that, when presenting, Patrick seemed to converse with 'us', the listener, at some distance away from the microphone without using headphones. Detecting this extra space between the voice of the presenter and the mic as it reached my ears disrupted my preconceived notion of where the presenter ought to be in the traditional, soundproofed studio. Whether this was indicative of poor practice is beside the point in this context; they heartily welcomed others into their home from where they coordinated an entire radio station providing 24/7 music, conversation and information.

This small studio was well-equipped with several screens each with a keyboard and one control panel spread out along a waist-high, half-hexagonal desk, three large microphones,

three guest chairs and an adjustable office chair for the presenter (Fig. 32). There was one dedicated phone line into the station and one handset. If a show was being presented in one of their remote studios, then the line would be diverted to that other studio. There were multiple framed certificates, awards and the occasional humorous poster mounted all around the room, a large digital clock on the wall facing the front of the desk and a whiteboard wall-planner to the left. A whiteboard affixed to the wall between the kitchen looked heavily used where names were regularly being wiped off and new entries written over them. The days of the week were listed on the left, starting with Saturday, and across the top were columns divided into hourly time slots from 6 am (6-7 am was blank) and stretching into the early hours. Patrick, aka 'Crackers', presented the Sunday breakfast *Community Focus* programme and the weekday breakfast shows, so his name was prominent. Christine's name appeared just once on Thursday afternoon, although she admitted that she was always on hand should presenters encounter a problem and not be able to do their show. She was adept at standing in at the last minute. She and Patrick both told me they would do anything to avoid automated programming during daytime hours.

Figure 31 The studio HQ of 103 The Eye

I was interviewing the couple on a Saturday evening when they would usually be tidying up and cleaning the studio in preparation for the week ahead. After the sports show had ended, they took a remote feed and would later play out pre-recorded shows for the remainder of the evening allowing Patrick to check all the equipment. I was left with the impression that this couple were totally dedicated to the station. Christine was very modest about her commitment, describing herself as "being on a sabbatical" from work. I sensed she was always there in the background, organizing and planning. Neither she nor Patrick drew a salary from running the radio station, none of the volunteers were paid nor did anyone receive commission from recommending new advertisers onto the station.

5.4.2   Online engagement

The station website was basic and static. It contained several pages of information about the station and the area covered: photographs of local places of interest and activities that presenters had been involved with; the programme schedule; event listings; and information on how to advertise on air. The broadcast output of The Eye was available online as well on FM. The link to the 'listen live' stream was on their home page, although this did not always work in my experience and I found other streams such as TuneIn preferable. The volunteers were highly active on social media, primarily Facebook and Twitter. There was a public Facebook group for listeners where individual volunteers could post promotional messages about the station and its shows for the listeners and public in general. The presenters were also part of their own online community realized through a closed Facebook group, which helped to encourage the family atmosphere with Christine and Patrick in charge, as relatively liberal 'parents'. Through this platform, I was informed, the volunteers offered each other friendly advice and moral support, heartily welcomed new presenters with friendly emojis and GIFs and shared show or event updates. They posted pictures of themselves presenting and reporting in studios and entertaining crowds from their roadshow trailer at local fairs, races and carnivals. They planned regular socials like the summer BBQ in Christine and Patrick's garden just outside the station and the Christmas party at which were handed out long service and Presenter of the Year awards.

5.5   SOMER VALLEY 97.5 FM, MIDSOMER NORTON, NORTH-EAST SOMERSET

Station slogan: "Live in Northeast Somerset and Bristol!"

Somer Valley FM is based in the town of Midsomer Norton and covers the rural constituency of northeast Somerset, with a population of around 70,000 (Fig. 33).[40] The area's coal-mining past has created a mini conurbation with Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Westfield at the epicentre with a population of around 21,000, plus a number of surrounding villages, some town-sized, including the curiously-named Peasedown St John, Coleford, Stratton-on-the-Fosse and Farrington Gurney. The station was launched online in 2008, in association with the area's schools and technical colleges, to generate interest and recruit volunteers. They won an Ofcom licence and started broadcasting on FM in 2009. The station streams online and is part of the Ofcom pilot scheme for small-scale DAB, which extends its reach up to 15 miles away to Bristol and Keynsham.
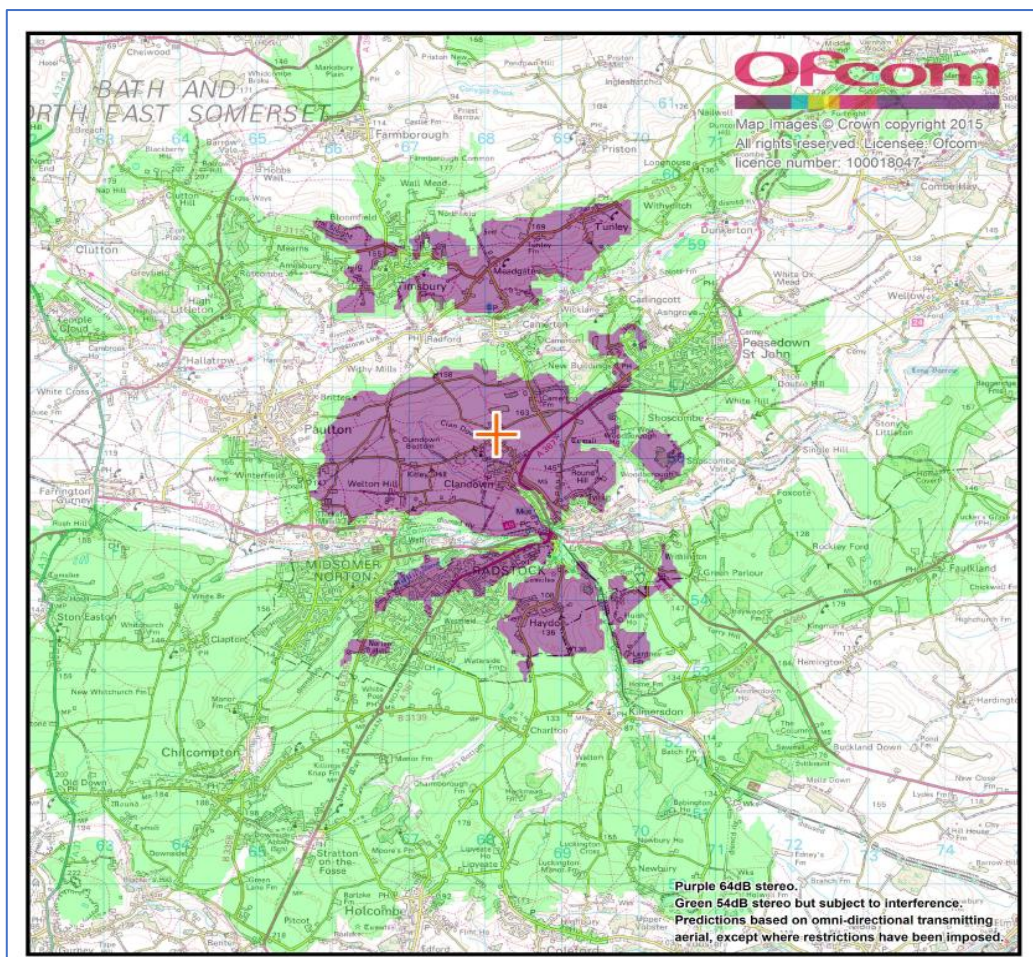
Figure 32 Transmission area map for Somer Valley 97.5 FM, 2014

---

[40] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/mcamaps/cr000113.pdf accessed 12/5/2020

The Key Commitments stipulate that the volunteers are committed to producing at least 70 hours of original programming each week, and at least 13 hours a day should be locally produced.[41] The music on the station is a mix of easy listening, chart music and some specialist genres. Programmes include speech output such as news and sports, local information, discussion and arts features. At the time of my fieldwork during 2018, there were around 100 volunteers. Of a total of 49 shows each week, only five were presented by seven named women, whereas there were 25 named male presenters responsible for 24 shows plus six repeats, thus dominating the airwaves. I interviewed the manager of the station (also a director on the board) and met his assistant, another white male. Indeed, all presenters on the website appeared to be white, reflecting the low ethnic diversity in the area. The population of Midsomer Norton, according to the 2011 census is 98.1% white, hence reducing the likelihood of having any cultural diversity on the LCR from the pool of potential interested parties/talent (Appendix 10.5).

5.5.1   Station visit

The radio station is based in a 'wheelchair compliant' two-storey building at one of the secondary schools in town.[42] I made my way via a footpath leading from the school carpark down one side of the site, to a small fenced-off corner plot. When Dom showed me around, I noticed the suite of rooms included a sizeable administrative office area with desks and a selection of awards displayed. Studios were light and airy, with a contemporary feel. Wooden tables had been adapted to hold up-to-date equipment such as the control panel with three microphones, computer with keyboard, a monitor for the playout system (Fig. 34). In the larger studio there was room for a small round table for guest panels and trainees to sit around, or that could be removed to accommodate larger groups or musicians, choirs and bands performing live. There was a sound proofed window between the main Studio 3 and a smaller production studio, as well as double-glazed and openable windows looking out onto the perimeter of the school boundary. On the studio walls was a large screen displaying a digital clock as well as indicators for when the mics and the studio are live, a small whiteboard, a fire drill information poster and an A4 photograph of the studio control panel in the exact configuration in which it should be left at all times.

---

[41] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr000113.pdf
accessed 27/11/2019

[42] https://www.somervalleyfm.co.uk/get-involved/training/ accessed 11/5/2020
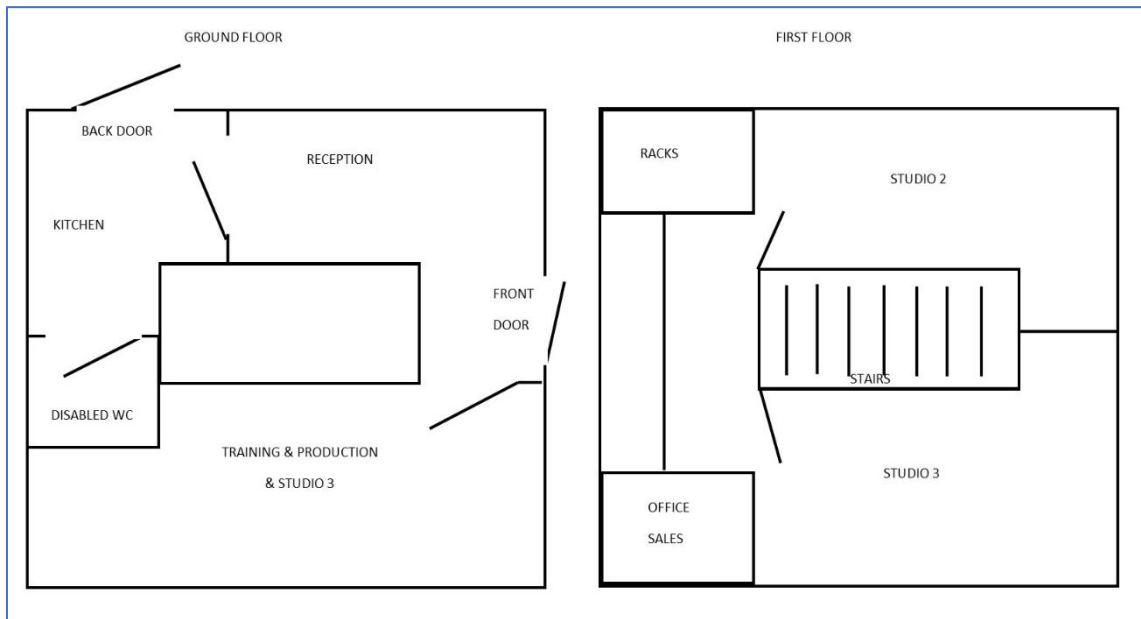
Figure 33 Layout of the Somer Valley studios, based on a sketch by Dom (not to scale)

5.5.2   Online engagement

The Somer Valley website looked contemporary and informative but their Facebook page was their principal outlet for social media public and provided a multitude of videos, ranging from short clips recorded on smartphones showing presenters in the studio simply greeting the audience and promoting their show to longer clips of guest interviews, even a small choir performing their entire repertoire on-air. Other videos demonstrated the sorts of events that the station volunteers participated in or reported from such as election result announcements, markets, fairs and other social functions. There was also a Twitter feed for the station, which was connected to and viewable on the Facebook page, providing easy communication for

listeners. Listeners rarely phoned in, although Dom recalled one instance when an irate message was left on the answer machine because the station had gone off the air for a short while. The technical hitch was sorted promptly and reported to Ofcom as protocol requires. When Dom returned the complainant's call it was clear that his workplace could only receive that one radio station, so he and his colleagues depended upon it. When it went off air, it felt like a disaster to them. Dom (Fig. 35) was heartened by the interaction because it showed how dependent listeners were on the output.

Figure 34 Dom at the main studio console, Somer Valley FM

122

5.6 THE PROVISION OF LOCAL CONTENT

The over-arching theme of this thesis is how featuring news, information and entertainment in the interests of local people, is achieved by practitioners in community radio station contexts. In these snapshot studies, I was interested to learn what my respondents considered to be locally relevant and resonant, and what it meant to be providing it. One graduate volunteer at Vibe explained what had first drawn him to the station as a sixth former:

> *You'd hear those Top 20 songs…other songs as well and also you heard a local angle which…was fascinating for me, being a local boy myself. It's great to hear local stuff on the radio cos it automatically gets you involved in something and it piques your interest. Travelling locally especially going to school along very busy roads, it would tell you what ones are looking extremely busy which is obviously very helpful. But the other thing is during the links, presenters would be talking about local stuff that would be happening at the weekend, whether it be something like a local sports event, whether they're talking about Watford Football Club or...other sorts of local events, so something's happening in the town next week or the council are doing something with the fireworks…And that for me is [most] interesting.* (Chris, Vibe)

I asked another young but long-serving Vibe volunteer, Nathan - born and raised in the area - how he thought the station was positioned in the town. He described it as a hub for the community.

> *What Vibe does is, it takes the content of what's happening in and around Watford and it puts it through the voices of the people in the town. As opposed to a [newspaper] journalist who's come from London, or is in London and writing about a town that he doesn't even live in. So yeah, Vibe, I suppose in a small sentence, is the voice of Watford.* (Nathan, Vibe)

A veteran of the station, and of community broadcasting generally, is breakfast presenter, Lee, who has lived in Watford for around 50 years. He told me, "I was born in a house 70 yards over there, so, my school was at the top of the road." He found it easy to talk about 'local stuff' which would include, he said: "What I've done the day before...where I've been." If he visited a shop in the area and heard Vibe playing in the background, he would do a 'shout-out' next time he was on-air and thank them for listening. Lee also admitted to enjoying a certain amount of celebrityhood locally:

A friend of mine's got a garage…I was with him a few weeks ago and was just chatting away and a woman come in to get her car. I saw her glance at me, and I didn't think no more of it…And I was midway through a conversation with my friend and she said to me, she said, "Oh excuse me. Are you on the radio?" And I was embarrassed because you don't, on the radio you don't realize that people see you. Because of how the world is now and social media etc and I went "Yeah I am". And I said, "Do you listen?" And she said, "Yeah, me and the kids listen on our way to school. We love it."…They choose to listen day in, day out to me on the breakfast show. I'm quite humbled by that, I will say. (Lee, Vibe)

Lee told me he had "a good feel" for what was going on in the local area because he often drove around and spoke to a lot of people. If he encountered temporary traffic lights on his way to the studio, he could talk knowledgably and with more feeling about the tailbacks when doing his regular traffic and travel links. Asking listeners to contact him on the station phone or even on his personal mobile with traffic updates was a way he encouraged their interaction, passing messages on to help others. When I pressed him on whether he thought the information was always correct, he chuckled, "I do trust my sources, yeah."

A prominent provider of traffic data to the radio industry is INRX, which uses satellite navigation systems fitted into high-end motor cars. Other formal sources are available and the community stations I researched mostly use websites and Apps on computers or smartphones to source information on the roads and public transport including railways and airports. The same applies to finding out about weather conditions. There are various internet platforms that supply the information but also the IRN newswire provides weather updates and forecasts. It must be added that it is not always possible for radio presenters to look out of a window to assess the weather. The studios I visited with windows were Vibe, which had views over the town and Radio LaB - not that the weather featured to any great extent in student-produced content. At Somer Valley and The Eye there were windows overlooking green spaces whereas Radio Verulam, which I discuss in the following chapter, had only a skylight.

Like Vibe and the other snapshot stations, The Eye had developed a sustainable and reliable local information service over the years it had been operating. There was a structured approach to keeping listeners up to date. My listening-in research indicated that on the Breakfast Show, Traffic News was talked up before the Sky News and then read live straight after the bulletin by the presenter, which was usually Patrick. A second traffic bulletin was presented at around twenty minutes to the hour. Local weather was a regular, sponsored

feature at the top of every hour, just after the traffic news on the peak time shows at breakfast and drivetime and occasionally on other shows in the schedule. In between these spots, advert breaks and music tracks, various station jingles were played, many name-checking villages and areas served by the station.

With such deliberate localizing of information appearing to be a common strategy, I asked Dom at Somer Valley why it was important. He posed the following question: "Could we just pick up Somer Valley FM and dump it in another part of the country?" He replied, "No!". As far as he was concerned, everything they transmitted was made by people who lived and worked in the Somer Valley area. The station contributed to the music culture, sports culture and the heritage of the residents. He gave an example of their strong relationship with Radstock Museum, a nationally recognized museum for mining, through which they helped to address the historic polarization between rival pit communities. Likewise, as will be elaborated in the following section, Dom found that providing local content required taking the initiative by training volunteers in the communications and media skills required to source information and shape it into local news bulletins and What's Ons. As for social media, he argued it made interacting and engaging with audiences much easier:

> *It's about hitting a resonance isn't it? That's what we're doing in radio anyway. We're social media, we're trying to engage our audience to participate cos community radio's really the voice that empowers a community.*　　　　　　　　　(Dom, Somer Valley)

5.6.1　Journalistic activities and story gathering

The value of social connections and local networks cannot be overstated in the gathering of programme material. The volunteers I interviewed varied in the extent to which they knowingly conducted journalistic activities when sourcing content. Taking Chris at Vibe as an example, when we met in 2018, he was completing a Masters, having graduated with his first degree in multi-media journalism. He was freelancing as a journalist and producer at the local BBC station. Thus, he had an advanced skillset. He had been with Vibe since 2015 and was allowed a lot of creative freedom. He told me that he and his producer, Sam, were both "local boys" with similar interests. Although the traffic and travel news dominated *Vibe Drive,* they aimed to intersperse the music with "interesting stuff" and entertaining conversation. During the week, Chris would keep an eye on the local newspaper websites, not only *The Watford Observer*, but the St Albans and Hemel Hempstead papers too. If there was an interesting story, he continued to research for more details. Every day, he would constantly check social

media for stories relevant to people living and working in Watford and southwest Hertfordshire. Listeners were encouraged to send in stories and tips too. He would create lists of links and notes to follow up on his laptop at home and printed out a list each week to take with him into the studio. He described himself as "old-fashioned" for relying on sheets of paper, but I suggested that this is still considered best practice in professional circles. He usually spent two hours before each show looking through the playlist lined up on the system to see what songs were coming up. He would find interesting information on the artists and write it up in a script.

Another young volunteer I met at Vibe with a radio background was James, a programming assistant. One of his roles was to produces *Raw Vibes,* a 'new music' programme showcasing local talent. James started volunteering in radio at 13 when he joined Radio Stitch in North Tees Hospital. At 16, he moved to Zetland FM, a new community station in Redcar and Cleveland to be their online news and action desk editor. Since starting on a radio-related course at university, he had been freelancing with companies like the BBC and Soho Radio, doing "lots of bits and bobs" as he put it. Still a student when I interviewed him, he described how he had joined Vibe two years previously, to help produce a show that a friend was presenting. Since then he had developed a clear understanding of how the station worked at striking the balance in fulfilment of Ofcom's terms of service:

> *It's making sure we get Watford first, so that's making sure that we have our local sport, weather, travel - when we have it. We have one or two links an hour that's about something local, whether that's our readouts that we have on a sheet of paper about local events going on, whether it's just, you know, Watford FC have released a new football kit.* (James, Vibe)

Vibe's part-time, paid Programme Controller, Ryan, was always on hand to support volunteers who did not have the same confidence when identifying newsworthy stories. He explained how he sourced local news items, or national stories with local resonance, from Twitter, local and national newspapers, hard copies and websites, to check out, write up and pass on as content for the presenters to use in their shows. He added:

> *And at the same time, it's up to us as well to be a bit journalistic about it. If we're out in the community, generally just shopping or we hear stuff through word of mouth, it's about chasing that up as well, to make sure that it's: one - true; and two - good enough local content to send out.* (Ryan, Vibe)

As for the main news bulletin on the hour, Sky News produced these for IRN, which also provided a wider news service covering sport, entertainment and as Ryan explained, was built into their internet system so that:

> *When we type in IRN.co.uk, there's a net newsroom and that has all the stories coming through. Because we're a music station we're not really focused on breaking news. Obviously, there's times when we've had to respect the news. So, for example, if there was a terrorist attack, we'd strip back content and just introduce songs then come out of it. But we would never do any political news because it's just not our sound. It's just best to stay clear.* (Ryan, Vibe)

Another station well-placed for attracting and benefiting from nascent journalistic talent on its airwaves was Radio LaB. Terry explained that they host News Days as part of The Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC) accredited courses for broadcast journalism students, at the end of which students experienced going live on-air by linking up from a training studio elsewhere in the University to present their final bulletins. He said, although the department had an IRN subscription for the journalism students to practice with, using the feeds and taking audio clips, the radio station itself did not take the hourly bulletins. Historically, it was not something the student managers had wanted for volunteers on the station were not always studying journalism or interested necessarily in news reporting. Each year, with a new cohort and fresh student managers, Terry encouraged the volunteers to build relations with local organizations, as well as with the University's own press department. Terry recalled:

> *We had one particular year where every time the university had a speaker come in, be it, I don't know John Bercow…Ed Balls came in once I think, but the press team…would automatically speak to the studio manager… cos it looks good on them to have a student do everything. They trusted him and he would come and record things which went out on Radio LaB. And at the end of the year he had this amazing repertoire of interviews which was highly impressive.* (Terry, Radio LaB)

Radio LaB student manager, Jack, was responsible for four shows a week, one of which featured a local news slot, *Luton Buzz.* He researched topical stories from the area using press releases, local press and news websites or Facebook and would directly approach venues such as the Grove Theatre and the Hat Factory. He liked to include what he referred to as "soft news" and conducted "feelgood interviews" covering items like charitable good deeds, upcoming events and wildlife rescues. Part of the half-hour show would include a more serious

round-up of "all the big news stories … what's going on in the government", put together by students he was helping to train. Past projects included coverage of elections and an NHS blood donor campaign involving on-location interviews and reporting using an OB kit. He worked six days a week on the station. "I treat [it] like a job", he said. A Team Viewer account on his phone and computer enabled remote access to the studio system, so he could resolve certain technical problems when elsewhere. He also recorded his own shows at home using a studio mic into Audition on his computer, editing as necessary before uploading to Microsoft Onedrive then into the Myriad cart for scheduled broadcast.

In terms of bringing in new talent at The Eye, the station had an arrangement with two local secondary schools where young presenters were trained in broadcasting from the age of 11. The schedule showed one school team did a programme each week and the other fortnightly. As for adult recruits, Christine told me that some joined with radio experience, so needed little instruction. She explained their best tactic for getting new volunteers was to invite people with "good radio voices and a good radio presence" who had previously been to the studio as guests and enjoyed talking on-air. Trainees would sit in with another presenter to observe and eventually be invited to co-present until they had the confidence to present their own programme. Christine emphasized that they also gave instruction on Ofcom rules and the legal aspects of broadcasting, such as swearing, impartiality, election period protocol and product placement, for those incorporating conversation and information-sharing discussions into their shows.

Christine had previously worked as a journalist in the local area, building up many community contacts, whom she continued to network with in order to source information and secure guests to take part in their flagship show every Sunday, *Community Focus.* Patrick told me:

> *We will bring in all the local people…the Leicestershire county councillors, anybody who's doing anything of any importance in the community in the borough. We will really go and get in depth with it won't we, [Christine], in what's going on, you know. We're not what we call a hard news station. When I get people in and there's a hard news story going, we don't, we're not Jeremy Paxman, we don't go for the, you know, for it. We just kind of talk generally about things. I mean OK when you get the councillors in, yeah, it can get a little bit hot at times, but nothing serious about that. It's just the way it goes. We're all still friends afterwards.* (Patrick, The Eye)

As producer for that show and for the station overall, Christine said they arrange interviews with guests during the week if they are unable to attend on the Sunday. She would set them up with presenters who interviewed them on-air and Christine would "edit the more interesting interviews", take out the music and schedule them to be replayed on Sunday mornings. Patrick then reminded me of a comment made at a networking event regarding community radio not gathering hard news: "People join the community radio stations and they all want to do the presenting music side of it. Very rarely do you get anybody come who wants to do the news gathering side." Christine added:

> *Speech-based programming is much more labour-intensive, and difficult to produce than just bunging a few songs on. Now when Patrick does the* Community Focus *programme, he measures how good the show was by the number of songs that he's played. Because when he's doing an interview and the interview starts to flag a bit [he'll put on a track] but if it's good interview with plenty of content he can keep going and talking.*   (Christine, The Eye)

The Eye team received news leads via email from various sources and occasionally still by post. The station was on mailing lists for both local and national press releases. Amongst the more well-known public figures visiting the area whom they had interviewed were Terry Waite, Simon Weston and Edwina Currie. Word-of-mouth conversations yielded intelligence too, since Christine and Patrick attended a lot of events and were well-known in the town, as were, they pointed out, some of the other presenters who were "really into the community side of the station". They encouraged organizers of charity fundraisers and quizzes, sponsored rides and races, amateur theatre productions, campaigns and other community initiatives across the catchment area, to send them details for inclusion in the '103 The Eye Local Events Diary for the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Area' webpage. This diary was a good source of potential interviewees for *Community Focus* and Christine used this information to pre-record What's On bulletins which she refreshed daily, for the presenters to use on weekdays at quarter past each hour. On Saturdays, she said, so many events would be happening that the presenters were encouraged to live read the announcements themselves.

As at Vibe and Radio Lab, presenters at The Eye would refer to stories in the nationals but local newspapers featured prominently. Christine told me about her station's strong relationship with local press across the region. They had won *Melton Times* business awards in the past and helped to publicize the scheme with on-air promotions. Several titles allowed the station's presenters to use headlines and read a few paragraphs of published stories from the paper

itself or from the website, provided they credit the source paper. On the *Breakfast Show*, Patrick would feature different papers: Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays it was the *Grantham Journal* which covered a large part of the Vale of Beauvoir; on Thursdays, the *Melton Times* and *Loughborough Echo*; and on Fridays, *Rutland Times*. When presenting *Drive Time*, Christine would use the *Melton Times* and the *Newark Advertiser* and its offshoot, the *South Notts Advertiser*.

Dom at Somer Valley pointed out that, unlike a lot of LCRs, his station had a strong relationship with their local print and online media entities. The station ran regular media skills training courses. Each morning at 9:30 am, trainees would begin by looking for local news stories, from second-hand sources like local newspapers and the BBC website. Stories were selected and then they wrote scripts to create two-minute news bulletins, typically comprising three stories plus the weather. Occasionally, Dom or his assistant Luke would conduct interviews with local organizers and promoters of events such as art exhibits, theatre shows and entertainments and encourage other volunteers to do the same and develop their interviewing skills. Dom was also clearly proud of the relationship he had developed with the local BBC for Bristol and Somerset. He had in the past worked as a professional broadcaster on the BBC and in the commercial sector. The station had been commissioned to deliver a weekly hour-long programme featuring Somer Valley highlights, and occasionally other very local community content would be used elsewhere in the BBC schedules. Though he loved the idea of sending reporters out to cover events, Dom said their resources would not stretch to that other than when, occasionally:

> *People might pile into the back of my car and we'll all turn up. We have an OB unit and we were given some funding some time ago through a commission through the local council, and we've brought a Comrex system [for] several thousand pounds. It means we can broadcast on the hoof. And I think that's very much part of our strategy and involvement is to be seen out … we wanna be at lots of things and we generally are.*
>
> (Dom, Somer Valley)

5.6.2   Covering sport

At Vibe, presenters might be forgiven for treating Watford as a one-horse town in sporting news terms, considering the ongoing success of its premiership football team. Being music based, there was no sports programme as such, but a range of local football clubs were often mentioned, including Boreham Wood FC. Producer Chris recounted how, during the play-offs when that team were vying to move up to the UK Football League, he and Vibe colleagues had

conducted a series of live reports which they posted on social media. They followed the team through the build-up to matches, interviewed the manager and chairperson on important issues like the cost of tickets for the Wembley game. Demonstrating not only local knowledge but empathy for the fans and listeners, Chris clarified:

> £40 it was … to go and see three games, but still for a Boreham Wood fan that's still quite a lot of money and Boreham Wood you know, prides itself on the fact that it sells reasonably priced season ticket for fans to go and watch football.   (Chris, Vibe)

Other local sport covered on Vibe included golf, boxing and athletics. Lee, one of the station's founding members, told me he tried to focus on local sport when presenting the breakfast show. He acknowledged that he benefited from being well-connected locally and had proudly been following and reporting on the progress of young, local sportsmen and women, such as two golfers who had reached the European Tour and a local runner who came 4th in a world championship. Lee told me how he would "have them in" for on-air interviews even before they were successful. He considered these sporting personalities as part of the station community and this patronage was reflected on social media, "which the local area really buys into", he assured me.

The Eye's Breakfast Show had a regular timeslot for sports news. At ten minutes past the hour, they would play a recording of a report read by a reporter in the Sky newsroom that had been downloaded earlier from IRN website. The station also had a Saturday afternoon sports programme, *Sports Eye,* which was their most complex, demanding show for gathering and sharing contemporaneous information. On the day I observed *Sports Eye*, Jonny was deputizing for the regular presenter. He was the only other volunteer considered capable of the role and demonstrated an impressive level of competence, despite my presence in the studio. He was able to join in with us talking about the station, and every now and then would say, in a professional tone: "Here we go!" as an indication that our conversation had to pause. At one point he said "Just gonna blag it here…" and chatted with the audience until it was time for his next item.

Jonny was using printed off word documents of useful match facts, like current form and recent results, to inspire conversation between music tracks and live reports. He told me he routinely pre-recorded interviews with players, football managers and coaches, often visiting their clubs to do so. He kept an eye on a screen for social media updates on matches. Results from different clubs were posted on Twitter and Facebook and the show had its own

dedicated Twitter account. Sometimes the studio phone was used for receiving reports from places like West Bridgford, the City Ground where Nottingham Forest played. Another computer screen was for IRN's national sports news from grounds further afield and the final scores. Their newswire service was available so the presenter could fade across to it live, or record a report and edit clips if necessary, for transmission during the live show. Attention to timing was crucial in this programme. In the last half hour, I watched Jonny take two IRN feeds of match reports, including the classified results 'down the line'. Heading towards the Sky News at the top of the hour, he also had to allow enough time for the weather update in his countdown. He handed the studio over to Christine and she lined up the programme to follow, which was to be broadcast from a presenter's remote studio "just up the road".

5.6.3   Featuring music and culture

As well as local sport, I noticed a common way of localizing the sound of a station was to showcase local music and talent. The Eye had a commitment to featuring local musicians. Sometimes music recordings were sent in and other times performers played live in the studio. Christine was proud of an award-winning jingle, "Showcasing local talent" which they had made themselves. Meanwhile, at Somer Valley, Dom had found that what initially drew people to volunteering on community radio was a passion for their favourite music: community radio provided a great outlet. He told me that the region had a rich music history and hosted many festivals. Presenters who reviewed local bands and hosted them coming into the studio to perform live, or interview the promoters laying on band nights were reflecting local culture and generating valued content. There was even a locally based music label company called Jelly Records who had their own show broadcast on three local stations, including Somer Valley.

Vibe's flagship local music show was *Raw Vibes* described on their webpage as:

> *Jam packed with music written, produced and performed by you! The show celebrates the unsigned music scene in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and North London with live sessions, interviews, gig listings and more make so sure you listen in every Sunday from 7:00 pm…You can get your tracks added to the Raw Vibes playlist by sending an MP3 of your track (radio edits only) and a bio to rawvibes@vibe1076.com and we will be in touch.*[43]

---

[43] http://www.vibe1076.co.uk/radio/raw-vibes/ accessed 26/4/2018

Co-producer, James, described how they tried to make the show "an appointment-to-listen" experience by creating a buzz around it. They would insert a track from a new artist that was particularly good into the playlist for the breakfast show and ask the presenter to comment and promote that more could be heard on the forthcoming edition of *Raw Vibes*. James explained:

> *Our area's slightly expanded recently, so we go Hertfordshire* and *London just because there's a lot of talent in London. We're 20 minutes from London on the train and it's one of the biggest music scenes in the world and there's lots of people that want to break through. We get lots of artists from Watford. One the last week, went to the Watford School and College just over there, so it's a two-way benefit. It's in our Ofcom terms of service that we have to have a 'new music' show and policy. So, it ticks that box.*   (James, Vibe)

The show's other producer, Josh, told me it was this show that drew him to volunteer at Vibe. He was studying music and business at University and had started doing artist management but decided to join a friend at Vibe as a fall back. Volunteering at the station had helped him get work at a new station Love Sport in London, but he continued to work on his passion by helping on *Raw Vibes*. He helped introduce improvements like shortening the artist interviews to minimize the chance of listeners becoming bored. The show, he said, was a good opportunity for performers who had not been on the radio before or were looking for more exposure. As well as seeking out potential guests through music sites online, Josh was also able to approach musicians directly when he encountered them performing in Watford because he lived locally.

The show was usually broadcast live, but if the artists arrived at the studio and announced that they did not have much time, an interview could be pre-recorded and uploaded to the system. Performances and interviews were videoed and posted on social media, sometimes reaching around 1,000 people, I was told. Sometimes, the producers tweeted a poll to gauge listener preferences and they usually received 15 or 20 tweets or shares. The musicians would give the show a CD or sent their tracks as MP3 via email. I asked whether they had a local music policy for the station's general output but was informed that there used to be a '*Raw Vibes* track of the week' feature but it was pulled due to the logistics of enforcing fellow volunteers to stick to it.

In Luton, Radio LaB students occasionally hosted musicians in the studios and recorded live performances to post online on Facebook, as part of the interview experience. The station also had a dedicated local music show. Terry described it to me as one of their "best examples of programmes which feature local content." It was presented by a non-student volunteer, who DJ'ed as 'Rebelyous'. He pre-recorded his *HOH Show,* featuring one-hour of local urban music, in batches for transmission on Monday evenings. Evidence on social media demonstrated that he brought a wealth of intercultural talent to the airwaves. The show opened with the jingle "Your Luton, your music", followed by several similar drop-ins in multiple languages before he launched into an upbeat mix of music, conversation and live performances.

5.6.4 Selling airtime

Attentive listening-in to these four local stations over the fieldwork period, and occasionally since, indicated that they all carried advertising for local businesses. I wondered how these community stations knew the size of their audiences and set the prices for their rate cards. It would cost almost £9,000 to subscribe to a RAJAR survey which was out of their reach. I noted on the CMA message boards and other social media channels, at networking events, workshops and on conference panels, a host of alternative, innovative ways that LCRs estimated how many people were listening and engaging with their output. One tactic was when service engineers in motor garages were asked to check which radio station clients' car radios were tuned in to. Another was volunteers conducting their own street surveys. For instance, Radio LaB commissioned a survey in October and November 2017 which supplied figures that could be reasonably extrapolated to indicate an audience profile.[44] With the proviso that these were figures only for the licensed target area but allowing for people outside the primary target age range (18-29 years), it was estimated that in the postcodes LU1 to LU6 "weekly listenership [was] between 3,605 and 15,056."

When it came to arranging advertising on Radio LaB, it was down to Terry as station coordinator and staff member, to arrange any campaigns with local organizations. He did not believe that students were in the best position to sell adverts. He told me he had recently sold airtime to a trampoline park in Luton that was trying to attract students, and Enterprise Rent-a-car had a graduate scheme. He had negotiated 'contra' deals involving airtime, such as advertising Bedfordshire Police's recruitment campaign in return for a police liaison officer

---

[44] https://radiolab.beds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Exec-Summary-Radio-LaB-Listening-Figures-Report-2018.pdf accessed 11/8/2019

giving up his time to come into the studio and talk to students for radio projects if they needed a police voice. Adverts would be scripted, voiced and produced in-house by Terry's students and included in their portfolio of production work.

Where stations could be more certain of engagement statistics is through their online platforms that complement and supplement their on-air output: sharing information on likes and shares and so forth of social media posts and competition entries. James at Vibe told me:

> *Our record on one show – this was because it created a lot of social media buzz amongst people – was about 800 consecutive listens from individual logins…that's 800 different devices with Vibe on. I don't know what our kind of resting rate is, but that's our peak.* (James, Vibe)

Vibe was one of the stations carrying regular commercials, and the most professional sounding. There was also a 30-second spot advertising the opportunity to buy airtime, announcing that a campaign cost just £10 a day or £1.99 per play. For that, you would have over 30,000 active listeners a month across South West Hertfordshire. The Marketing, Sales Administration and Funding Executive (Ms C) informed me that all the available advertising slots were full with local clients such as a fish and chip shop in Croxley Green village, a Hertfordshire-based family-owned vehicle dealer and the historic Watford Palace Theatre. They limited the output to two commercial breaks an hour, each comprising five adverts, to avoid sounding too much like commercial stations which dedicated up to five minutes per commercial slot. She explained that they wanted to avoid the risk of "people switching over because they're bored of listening to, you know, advert number seven." Airtime sales were so successful that Ms C's part-time salary was paid out of that income. The fee they charged covered the use of professional production companies, so production values were high. The entertaining scripts were intelligently written by Howard, the station MD, based on information supplied by the client to highlight their key message. I was informed:

> *We know which [agencies] are better for which type of client…[or] if a client has been with us before and wants a new advert but wants the same voices we might have to go to that particular production company because those voice artist only work within that area…and…can do [the right] accents.* (Ms C, Vibe)

Ms C was used to dealing with advertisers who were multinational companies as well as local clients who had been advertising on Vibe since the beginning, several years before. As she pointed out, the station had the advantage where local businesses were concerned:

> *I think they like the fact that they've got that personal touch … all of us live locally, they*
> *know that we know about their business initially, before they've even contacted us and*
> *so we can then say, "OK, because you're this type of business, we can go down this*
> *route". And give them lots of different of options to tailor it whereas they wouldn't get*
> *that anywhere else.*   (Ms C, Vibe)

Other revenue-generating methods using airtime was the sponsorship of regular features such as the traffic and travel reports and local weather, or even entire shows such as *Vibe Drive*. Advertisers could buy airtime packages that included the use of banner adverts on webpages which then linked back to the client's website. Other value-added promotions included web articles about the business and highlighting exclusive offers using voucher codes. Programme assistant, James, mentioned a further promotional method in use on Vibe was the presenter readout, which might involve a financial arrangement that Howard as Station Manager would organize, perhaps for a competition with prizes sponsored by a client, like theatre and cinema tickets or shopping centre and restaurant vouchers. The station often publicized charitable causes and fundraisers too, for free. The breakfast presenter on Vibe, Lee, once abseiled down the side of community housing apartment block in aid of The Peace Hospice, a Watford-base charity. Although this was a personal initiative, Lee tied it in with the radio station to raise awareness and promote the hospice.

The Eye's on-air advertising was handled by Christine, whose role as managing director included looking after the financial aspects:

> *We do have an accountant who looks at the books at the end of the year, but I do the*
> *day-to-day bookkeeping, invoicing, selling advertising and that's the sort of the*
> *commercial [side], if you like, in inverted commas. Cos we're not a commercial station,*
> *we're a not-for- profit but [that's] the income generation side of it.* (Christine, The Eye)

She explained that her main priority was to keep the programmes going in order to meet their commitment to Ofcom. The station benefited occasionally from grants, a local community lottery scheme and donations such as a new computer that was paid for with the proceeds of the local firefighters' Christmas collection in recognition of their broadcasting of fire safety

messages. But the biggest challenge was to raise enough income to pay the bills, so selling airtime to local businesses like pubs and restaurants, garden furniture warehouses, other household stores, sports clubs and motor garages was important. Most adverts were produced in-house, voiced by the presenters or sometimes by the clients over stock audio library music beds.

Somer Valley listed its advertisers, sponsors and supporters on its website, with their logos running along the bottom of the homepage. At the time of my research, there was another webpage illustrating three different tiers of advertising options: Bronze, Silver or Gold, with prices ranging from £316 for a two-month on-air campaign, including production of £90, to £1,020 for a six-month campaign, web credit and social media mentions as well as free production for the first advert. Speaking as station manager, but with experience on the CMA's board, Dom was insistent that the sector needed to resource itself better. He reported that, in 2009, the average turnover of a community radio station in the UK was around £74,000. Seven years later, according to the available data, that had dropped to just above £50,000. He added:

> *The biggest liability to any community station is going to be one of two things. It's either going to be salaries [or] premises. If you're completely volunteer-oriented it's gonna be premises. Salaries will take you very quickly north of £20,000 and that would be just a part-time…I'm afraid there are stations that are handing back their licences because they cannot generate the revenue and I think it's something as a sector we need to be very, very concerned about.* (Dom, Somer Valley)

Dom outlined Somer Valley's multi-revenue source stream model, which he argued made good business sense: "[We're] actually providing very valuable services", he said. Everything his station did had commercial potential, which was a realistic approach to survival, especially since there were increasing numbers of LCRs competing for a share of Ofcom's Community Radio Fund. Two rounds of applications were held each year for a chance to be awarded a share of just £400,000 from DCMS coffers. Grants would be considered for covering 'core functions' such as accounting administration, volunteer management and outreach activities, but not anything relating to capital expenditure, expenses or running costs (Ofcom, 2018a, p. 2).

5.6.5   Recruitment and training

Taking an entrepreneurial approach at Somer Valley, Dom ran radio production courses for secondary school pupils who would be awarded nationally recognized certificates

acknowledging skills gained through volunteering. Dom described other traineeships at the radio station, run through the Somer Valley Education Trust which he had set up as part of an employability scheme run with Bath College, the area's local further education provider. The scheme had raised £37,000 and some of that money was used to commission Somer Valley FM to deliver services to achieve a range of "employability outcomes and measurables goals" for the target beneficiaries. Dom saw the training projects as providing communications and media skills training "to open up life opportunities for people who are having a tough time". Through the charity, the station also offered projects for adults with learning difficulties, autism or typically Asperger's, and adults in recovery from addictions.

Trainees would typically spend three to four days a week at the studios and a day at college. They were not paid but some could claim attendance allowance or benefits. Although Dom would not call it journalism training per se, he clarified that no one's work would be aired unless it was compliant with the Broadcasting Code and with the traditions and ethos that went with news broadcasting. The key aim was to boost self-esteem and confidence to help candidates present themselves better at job interviews. Dom told me he believed in facilitating the career aims of the trainees and volunteers at the station. He explained that if someone wanted to be a print journalist, they could learn how to write articles that Dom would "sink into the local press". When I consulted Dom about the future of LCR, he replied:

> *I could name you many, many people right round the country in their own style but achieving the same thing – driving forward community broadcasting for the benefit not only of the radio listener but of the community as well. But that needs to give way to something else…as the organization matures…If it is to sustain and survive and grow it's got to be about a community, recognising the value of having its own dedicated broadcaster.*   (Dom, Somer Valley)

Vibe's primary aim was also to provide media skills training but with more ambitious, industry-specific intentions: to train and nurture new radio talent in a competitive marketplace. After learning the basics, trainees could shadow presenters, progress through reading the weather, then news reports to full programme presentation. From my desk research and interviews, I noticed that recruits continued to volunteer there even after gaining industry jobs in London and elsewhere. Ms C commented: "Most them do have full-time jobs because otherwise they can't come and volunteer, because they can't afford to." This commitment to the station was enduring; something about that community of volunteers had them hooked. I suspected that since Vibe's volunteers lived locally, it made sense to them as broadcasters, to continue giving

their time to their local community station. And as James pointed out, new digital technologies helped:

> *Quite a lot of people have day jobs, other commitments, so voice tracking is a good fallback option and on shows ultimately where live isn't 100% necessary…you can still get the kind of the topics we cover, gossip and bits happening on Watford. You can look…and say "Oh – this weekend is this happening!"* (James, Vibe)

Howard philosophized:

> *It falls into two camps. One is those that are investing in their career and their CV… you're gonna have to invest some time and effort in where you want to go…At the other end of the scale, you'll meet…those guys [who] wanna do broadcasting. Probably this is as good – this is what it is for them… it's a passion and a hobby…or it's the fact that they just want to be engaged with the local area.* (Howard, Vibe)

One sentiment that I detected throughout my field research was pride. Practitioners were proud of the role their stations played in their local communities. Ryan from Vibe summed it up:

> *[W]e're here to be…the voice of the community…we're obviously the local radio station…and I think we offer our listeners a very positive sound for them to…tune into us for a while and then for the clients that advertise on the station, I feel that they're very proud of the fact that they've got a community station like us to obviously sell their business in the area…And with the flagship events…we're doing a bit of outreach…we're a trusted source in the community…for music or local content and I think we should be proud of that.* (Ryan, Vibe)

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented context and background to four LCRs and what I discovered about how volunteers carried out activities to include content in their shows which established their station's localness. This statement, however, needs qualifying. Through interviewing the practitioners, I heard what they wanted to tell me about their practice: what they deliberately decided to say or unthinkingly revealed as we conversed. Skilled as an interviewer might be, or think they are, at getting information out of people, it is not enough to just ask people about what tasks they routinely carry out as they perform a particular practice. Observing

practitioners at work in the context within which their practice unfolds will yield further insights, even aspects which are unacknowledged or taken for granted by the subject of the inquiry. The interviews I conducted at a sixth LCR, Radio Verulam, were supplemented by participant observations which provided more in-depth detail for subsequent analysis. Those findings are presented in the following chapter.

6   EXPLORING RADIO VERULAM, ST ALBANS

Station slogan: "The radio station for St Albans."

6.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains selected findings from my fieldwork at Radio Verulam (RV), which provide a detailed illustration of how the station's practitioners were routinely sourcing, shaping and sharing content relevant to their local audiences. There will first be a brief account of my past involvement with the station, its history, catchment area and local population in St Albans, Hertfordshire. I explain how I re-established my relationship with the management through a pilot interview so that I could gain access to the studios to conduct observations and interviews with the other volunteers. I will outline the physical layout and organizational arrangements then share what I discovered from desk research and listening-in about the look and sound of the station. I will describe what I perceived, and what the practitioners told me, about the importance of conveying a sense of localness and providing local coverage by talking about happenings in the locality and playing out pre-recorded content, including adverts for local businesses and organizations. Building on this evidence, I further explore how the station was localized through output generated by what I describe as 'soft journalism' (based on Starkey and Crisell, 2009, p. 19). I develop the argument that sourcing local content is not only achieved through, but dependent upon, the exploitation of socialities and social capital. I will proceed to highlight four exemplary special-interest programmes which support this: *The Parents Show*; *Verulam Sport*; *Environment Matters*; and *The Parsons Knows*.

6.2   BACKGROUND

I first encountered RV in 1996. The small team at Verulam Community Radio Limited had started operating a radio service on the community access channel at the West Herts TV studios at Telecential (later NTL), the cable TV provider based in Hemel Hempstead. I had just moved to Hertfordshire after a two-year sabbatical in the U.S.A. during which I had volunteered and received training in broadcast presentation and production. It made sense to continue back in England. I knew from experience that volunteering in local media would be a good way to make friends and contacts in the area and keep my hand in the broadcasting industry whilst taking time out of the workplace to raise a family. I began volunteering at West Herts TV where I met Phil, RV's mid-morning presenter. We reached an arrangement whereby I would phone him in the radio studio once a week and deliver a local newspaper review, summarizing that week's top stories.

In November the following year, Phil and the team, including founding chairman, Clive, relocated the studio desks and other broadcasting equipment to rented office premises in another part of Hemel Hempstead. Soon, I was presenting the weekday lunchtime show, then the Saturday afternoon sports show. By the time I left in 2001 to join the local BBC,[45] RV was broadcasting 24 hours a day on cable and online via their own station website with a team of twenty presenters. They won the licence to broadcast on 92.6 FM in 2006, one of the first awarded by Ofcom, and relocated to St Albans.[46] The station's Key Commitments were published online:[47]

> Radio Verulam…enables local people to become radio broadcasters, and helps local
> community, charitable, social and voluntary organisations to promote themselves and
> attract new volunteers. Output is designed to appeal to listeners of all ages and
> backgrounds living in the St. Albans area.
>
> (See also RV Key Commitments in Appendix 10.14)

Ofcom stipulates minimum amounts of local content that LCRs must broadcast. For RV, this means that each week, out of the 91 hours of locally produced material transmitted, at least 40 hours must be original output. This is achieved through several speech-based programmes scheduled on weekday evenings and many of the daytime programmes which feature magazine-style interviews interspersed by RV's music mix of contemporary hits and older popular music from the last four or five decades. There are weekly niche shows too featuring varieties like Jazz and Big Band, appealing to more eclectic tastes.

Technically, RV broadcasts to a transmission area of 5-10 km radius from their St Albans transmitter, (indicated by the purple zone) although 15 miles is achievable and with internet streaming, they potentially have an international reach (Fig. 36).[48] The transmitter is located on the tower of a church in the city centre, a short walk from the radio studios and close to the historic marketplace. Built upon the ancient Roman ruins of Verulamium, St Albans has its own cathedral, the Abbey, marking the site where England's first Christian was martyred. Within

---

[45] I began freelancing at Three Counties Radio, where I trained to become a broadcast news journalist. I also presented the Saturday night show and Sunday religious programme.

[46] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_Verulam accessed 29/11/2019

[47] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr000090.pdf accessed 1/5/2019

[48] http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/mcamaps/cr000090.pdf accessed 12/5/2020

the London commuter belt, the population is currently around 147,000. The St Albans City and District, which administratively incorporates the neighbouring town of Harpenden, has one of the most vibrant local economies in the county of Hertfordshire with 9,375 business enterprises. The local workforce is highly skilled, with more than half (56.6%) of residents educated to degree level, compared to 38.6 % in the rest of the UK. The District Council has recently published a new Economic Development Strategy to maximize opportunities for future growth in sectors such as enviro-tech and green science.[49]
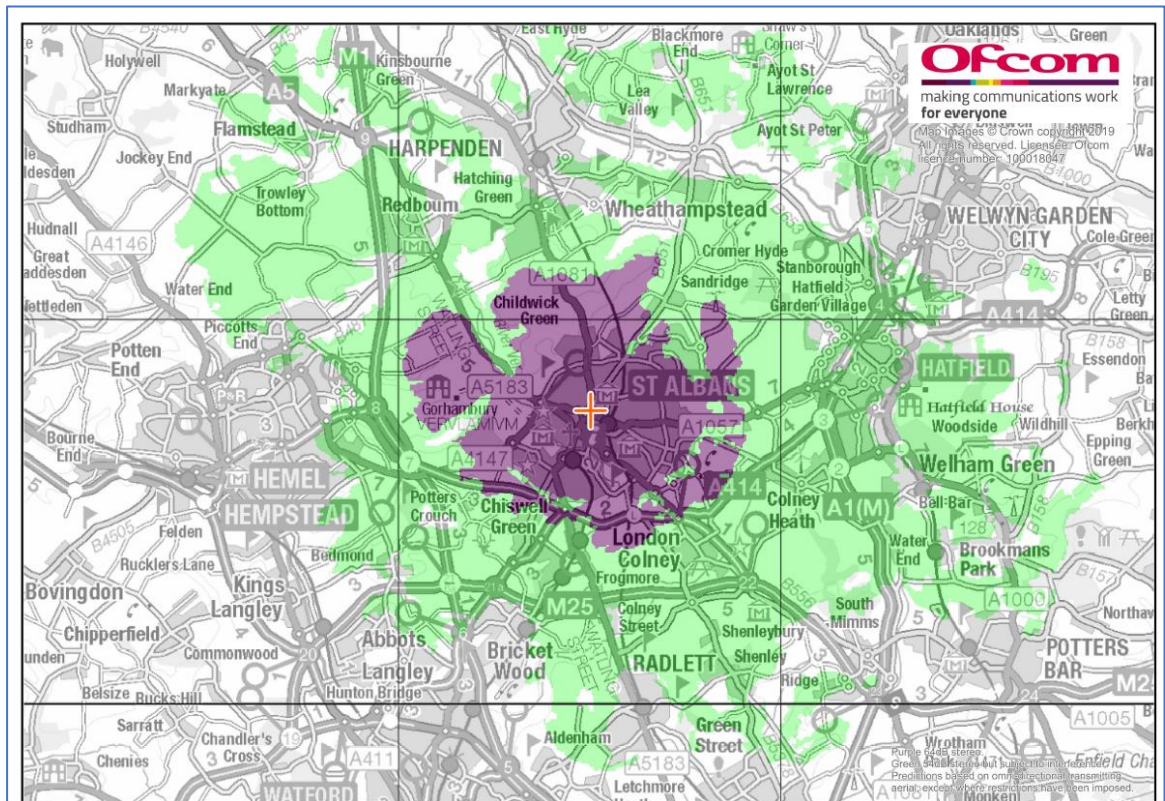
Figure 35 Transmission area map for Radio Verulam 92.6 FM, 2019

According to the 2011 census, 88% of residents in St Albans were categorized as 'White'. This is comparable to statistics for the county of Hertfordshire as a whole, which has around 1.2 million residents, 86.7% of whom (in 2011) were White (Appendix 10.5). These figures are fairly representative of the overall ethnic diversity statistics for England and Wales, which indicate that of the population, around 56 million at the time of the last census in 2011, 86%

---

[49] https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/press-room/items/2018/October/2018-10-02-new-economic-development-strategy-for-st-albans-district.aspx accessed 29/4/2019

identified as White, with 7.5% Asian, 3.3% Black and 3.2% Mixed/Multiple and Other.[50] The demographic profile of the town is relevant because it is generally accepted that a local CR should represent the interests of people in the locality. By this measure then, the composition of the volunteer practitioner body as well as the broadcast and online content produced ought to reflect the multiplicity of the community served. As I will show below, there remained room for improvement at RV.

6.3 RE-ESTABLISHING CONTACT

I had stayed connected with Phil over the years since leaving RV for the BBC. When other community groups I belonged to wanted publicity for events or projects, I would email him to arrange live phone interviews. He would contact me from time to time asking for help covering local events by reporting back to the studio from locations or recording interviews and producing short features. Both of us lived locally so we would occasionally encounter each other around town and catch up on each other's news. It was Clive though, still a leading member of the RV management board, whom I formally approached to discuss the possibility of conducting participation observations at the station, now located in yet another rented space, this time above a café in a Victorian building near the centre of St Albans (Fig. 37).

Figure 36 Radio Verulam's town centre base; a small sign directs visitors via the café

---

[50] https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest accessed 29/4/2019

After re-establishing contact with Clive at a CMA event, I arranged a pilot interview with him to demonstrate my intentions and build trust to gain access to the station's volunteers. It was a market day morning in November 2015 when I met up with him and Klaudia, a young student of Polish descent, whom he was mentoring on a show they presented together called *The Generation Gap*. They were having their routine Wednesday morning planning session in the café downstairs, over a drink and a slice of cake. Once they had decided what topic would form the basis of discussion in their hour-long programme, inspired by that week's news and social media trends, they agreed what their arguments would be. They then headed upstairs into the station and took over the larger studio B which they had booked for their usual two-hour session (Fig. 38).
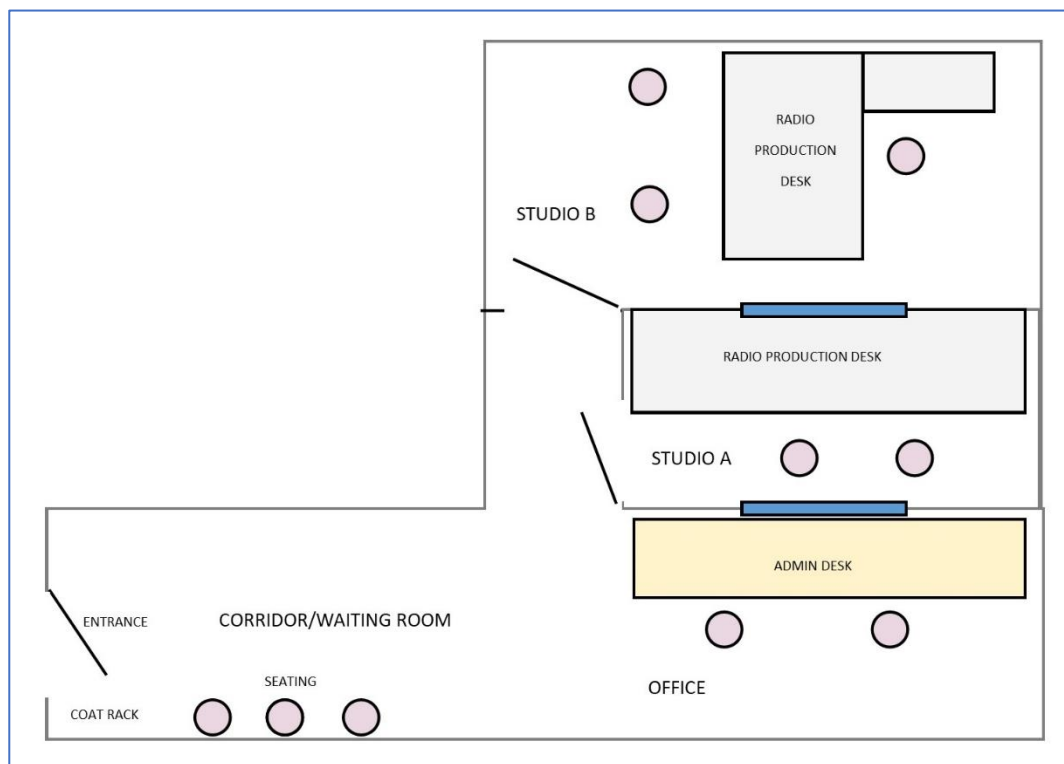
Figure 37 RV's station layout, based on my field sketch, February 2018 (not to scale)

I looked on as they settled at the controls, deciding who would drive the desk. They selected several music tracks to suit the theme and lined up a handful of promotional trails and short station idents to play out. It was a speech-based programme, so they could be freer from the 'clock' that applied to other shows. They recorded two 28-minute segments direct into Myriad, the computer system, which they saved and uploaded ready for broadcast and streaming the

following evening[51]. They then updated their Twitter and Facebook pages with that week's theme and replied to any conversations that had cropped up.

I noted that they did not go out of their way to talk about St Albans or give local examples to back up their arguments: they exhibited a more worldly attitude. Clive's view was that the station's location *in* St Albans, staffed by volunteers living locally was enough evidence for the audience to make it feel local. In fact, the presenting duo told me they often attended public events across the district along with other RV volunteers to do live reports and take part, becoming familiar faces in the area. In the months following that first interview, Clive invited me along to a series of outside broadcasts and street festivals where there was RV presence. I even joined in as reporter, phoning the studio with live updates for broadcast. This was useful as I became acquainted with more volunteers and began to draw up a list of who I wanted to interview.

Because I was most interested in how specifically local content was featured, I targeted those presenters whose shows were clearly more concerned with local happenings and events, issues, campaigns and projects. Going through Clive gave my research project legitimacy and lent me credibility as a researcher. He forwarded my letter of introduction and request for interviewees in January 2018 on the station's intranet (Appendix 10.15). I received a handful of responses, so I followed up my invitation using station email addresses published online for the presenters. Once I had commenced the fieldwork, I gathered momentum and through referrals, made new acquaintances to interview and observe.[52] Between January and April 2018, I met and observed 12 female volunteers and 11 males. I recorded interviews with five of those women and seven men, either in the compact studios and office space or somewhere nearby of their choosing.

6.4   First Impressions: Access and Engagement

Clive was clearly proud of the station's progress made since my involvement in the early days and had good reason to be. The public profile of the station was much higher, the output

---

[51] Note that all radio stations take it for granted that broadcast output is streamed simultaneously online.

[52] There were several people who never responded to a direct request for an interview, for reasons unknown. Although some clues may be inferred from interviews conducted with their colleagues relating to lack of spare time, confidence and/or interest in my research.

sounded professional, the website looked slick and regularly updated and there appeared to be a sizeable number of volunteers supporting the organization. Clive was confident that RV was achieving its aims: "My concept was always that Radio Verulam should obviously have local voices, a variety of them. I think we've got that now". On closer scrutiny though, I found that diversity among RV's volunteers was not as broad as it could be. There was not a webpage gallery of presenter photographs alongside programme listings, so I explored RV blogs, Facebook and Twitter. From subsequent fieldtrips to the station and station-supported events around town, my overall impression was that the profile of RV's volunteer staff was mostly white. Whilst there were presenters of Irish, Polish as well as South American descent, a specialist Reggae music show and a French language programme each with a single BAME team member, cultural diversity was barely representative of St Albans as a whole. I identified only four volunteers as BAME, which for a pool of around 100 volunteers ought to be closer to 12.

I noticed also that there was no wheelchair access to the studios. The first floor was reached by a narrow, poorly carpeted staircase which would deter older, infirm participants and people with disabilities from volunteering or contributing as studio guests. I did not encounter anyone at the station with special access requirements but would imagine that in order to facilitate getting such a contributor's input on air, they would be telephoned from the studio, or a reporter could interview them downstairs in the café or somewhere more accessible. During a later conversation with one of my respondents, it transpired that recruiting and retaining new volunteers was an ongoing challenge for the station. The logistics were fraught with difficulties.

At the time of my fieldwork, they were trying to recruit a paid part-time office manager to manage that side of things. A previous volunteer manager and director of the station recalled holding training sessions when 16 or 17 people had booked but only six or seven turned up. Out of them, he said, only one might convert to volunteer status. He had once conducted a phone survey of 20 community stations around the UK to see what approach they used for volunteer recruitment and training. He found that some charged a deposit for booking onto a training course which was not refundable if subscribers failed to attend. Another strand of training he had undertaken for the station was the provision of radio and media skills training for local residents. The absence of a lift excluded a section of the public however and the physical lack of space in the radio station meant that anyone needing a carer to accompany them could not participate. He felt he did not have the experience, training or expertise

himself to deal with people who had special needs, learning or physical impairment, such as children excluded from school who or people might not easily be sat in front of a computer. In his view, the station needed bigger premises, with a larger desk area and several computers.

Being near the centre of St Albans, there was very little parking, so volunteers, guests and contributors who lived too far away to walk or cycle, needed to drive in and pay at the busy car parks or use public transport. Either way, if spending more than two hours at the station, one would get little change from £5. This indicated one of the material costs of volunteering for the station. There was also an annual membership subscription payable to the station, one respondent told me it was £100, and no one, apart from board directors, could claim back routine expenses like petrol money and parking, bus or train fares, let alone babysitting costs, refreshments or other sundries.

As for gender balance, I listened for audible clues and looked for visible ones by studying the programme schedules. Comparing the list when I visited in November 2015 with that in 2019, the gender imbalance was consistent. In 2015, there was a total of 68 named programmes, such as *Verulam in the Morning with Phil Richards*, *Out and About with Diana Garratt*, *The Polish Programme with Klaudia*, *The Country Hour with Michael Hingston* and *Faith Alive with Elspeth Jackman*. I counted a total of 14 women presenters listed as fronting just 13 programmes, and yet there were 23 men fronting 49 of them (including repeats). By 2019, there had been changes to the schedule, for instance there was no specialist Irish music show but there were only half the number of women presenting compared to men: 26 men and just 13 women, albeit one was the flagship breakfast show host.[53]

In comparison to UK radio industry data, these localized statistics might seem a little disappointing. According to employment figures in Ofcom's report *Diversity and equal opportunities in radio,* published in June 2018 (Ofcom, 2018b), the industry comprised 51% women and 49% men.[54] Of the BBC's employees 49% were women and 51% were men, and in the commercial sector 53% of the workforce were female and 46% male. However, on the RV

---

[53] In February 2020, Clive informed me about their new presenters: joining Kerry on the Breakfast rota were Tara (a Vegan market stall holder), Laura (local church worker), Claire (retired Police constable) and Natasha (local singer-songwriter); afternoons featured Zara and Faye; Drivetime was presented by Gemma (one day a week); and they had launched a new food programme with Ren (UK's top Polish cookery expert).

[54] These figures include the workforce across all departments, including off-air roles.

website, which contained multiple, informative and picture-rich pages, there was no lack of photographic evidence of female volunteers. So, whilst a programme schedule can be an indication of who is voicing the shows, one should not overlook the mix of people involved alongside them and behind the scenes: producers and studio assistants; trainees; management; and administrative volunteers and staff who also contribute to the character of a station and its output, whether in terms of broadcast material, online content, community relations and event organization. Although white male presenters did dominate station output at times, overall RV was portrayed on-air and online as a welcoming, gender-balanced community of broadcasters and contributors with wide-ranging interests.

6.5 LOCALIZING RADIO CONTENT

During my listening-in to RV, I regularly heard presenters do 'shout-outs', dedicating tracks to people encountered, as well as mentioning sights witnessed since their last show or along the route to the station that day. They would talk about local places, events or businesses they had been to. This casual local place-namedropping was happening during exchanges with the listener or whoever was in the studio at the time. These accompanied the pre-recorded station trailers that mentioned various towns and villages across the catchment area, scheduled into the system for regular playout, such as: "In St Albans, Redbourn and Harpenden, we are Radio Verulam." I had heard Clive remind Klaudia, possibly for my benefit, to use them every half hour with a station tagline or announcement every 15 minutes.

The station's taglines were statements like "We love St Albans" and "We are the radio station for St Albans": firmly establishing the location and remit. The on-air advertisements were mostly local too, so the specificity of place was further emphasized by the frequent reminders of where to find the most trusted solicitor in town, the cosiest public house in the county or the best nursing home for one's ageing parents. Presenters would refer to published and internet listings for happenings like school fairs, sports fixtures or library talks, when prompted to do so by the system or their own show schedule, and as handy fillers in case of a timing miscalculation or other contingency. They used competitions and quizzes to feature local trivia too. For instance, Jonny, the Sunday lunchtime presenter, collected arrays of questions on his smartphone, enough to last him the entire year and beyond, all about famous local people or well-known buildings and interesting facts with a local angle. His intention was that those details would resonate with listeners or pique their interest.

Real-time (or recently voice-tracked) announcements were scheduled during each programme hour: local weather updates and forecasts; and traffic and travel reports. On hearing these, the listener would know they were tuned into a local station. This information could be important to them for getting around the area and planning their day. Laminated clock charts were lying on top of the CD deck in the smaller Studio A, used for training (Appendix 10.16). The clocks were a template for trainee presenters, guiding them through the hour: a weather update for 20 or 30 seconds into the IRN's 'Sky News' on the hour; followed by an advert break; into 'Your fabulous show' with further ads and 'Commercial Partner' sponsor's messages at 20 minutes past and to the hour during peak shows with additional travel updates during breakfast; and one ad break on the half hour during off-peak shows.

As for what these shows consisted of in terms of the speech content amid varying proportions of music, finding a balance between local happenings and general or national and global news was paramount. Clive explained during the pilot interview:

> *Radio Verulam is doing more like Radio 4, in a sense – except that it's local. But it's doing a variety of things. So, for instance, if you tune in now, you hear music and so on. If you tune in in the evenings, you might hear us talking or you might hear some other serious programme…*The Parents' Show *is a classic one…*Outspoken*. [Those] are mainly speech programmes…So to some extent, I think possibly, people might tune in to Radio Verulam for particular programmes, or particular presenters…because…you know [they're] good*.   (Clive, RV)

Our mutual acquaintance, his long-term colleague and RV studio manager Phil, in a later interview elaborated:

> *Pandering, if you like, to the community radio ethos, we would have lots of interviews – all local ones - but then you'd probably find that you'd lose a lot of your audience. So, you gotta get a balance – you do a little bit of that, but you've got to have a lot of music in there. If you don't have balance, and you only have all the local bits you probably won't have a very big audience – and then you've got a problem because you can't sell the advertising and then you've got a problem cos you can't run the station.*
>   (Phil, RV)

Another long-standing volunteer, Jonny commented:

I think the way Radio Verulam is going at the moment … is a good model where from 6 in the morning to 7 at night, it's this radio station that plays music but has local links but is quite slickly run. And then from 7 o'clock in the evening, you've got all these wonderful, more bespoke local shows that can actually have a platform, which unfortunately radio nationally is squeezing out. (Jonny, RV)

6.6 LOCAL ADVERTS

Being one of the community stations that Ofcom allowed to earn up to 50% of their income from the sale of airtime, meant that developing good relations with the business community was important:

Local businesses…know who we are, and they give us a bit of this and things like that… we do help them cos we promote them, directly often and obviously we like them to pay for advertising, which some of them do, but a lot of them get free publicity from us which is fine, because you know that's what we're doing – we're helping the local community. (Clive, RV)

When listening-in, I heard a 'workplace of the week' feature on the breakfast show. This was an effective way of introducing organizations to the station and to the idea of paying for an advertising campaign. Offering competition prizes was another tactic I heard, such as a meal-for-two voucher provided by a restaurant, or tickets to sporting events. Such gifts to the station guaranteed on-air and online publicity for the donor.[55] At least four of the respondents in my research occasionally sold airtime to clients and received small commissions in return. The station had in the past employed an agency and part-time promotions staff to arrange the sale of on-air advertising, but at the time of my research there was no single member with that specific designation. There were no more than a dozen advertisers with campaigns running at the time of my fieldwork. Regular features such as the traffic and weather updates were sponsored by local firms, as were most of the main programmes. *The Parents Show*, for instance, was sponsored by Neves Solicitors, bringing in £2,000 a year to the station. This income stream helped to cover the station's outgoings, which I discovered could amount to over £30,000 each year.[56]

---

[55] There are pages acknowledging the station's advertisers and sponsors online at https://www.radioverulam.com/supporter/page/5/ accessed 10/11/2019

[56] Record available at https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/02828195/filing-history accessed 30/1/2020

6.7   JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE IN PROGRAMME PRODUCTION

A supplementary question came up often during my fieldwork interviews and participant observations: "Do you consider what you're doing here as journalistic?". It was very much on my mind and I noted that some volunteers were more journalistically inclined than others. Many conducted activities as part of their radio production routines, such as fact-finding, interviewing and writing up stories, without appreciating them as being tasks associated with journalism or reporting per se. Rather, it was the need to have something to talk about on-air that was the driving impulse to be alert to what was going on, not only around the catchment area but in the radio station. The desire to present a great show every time, to sound 'good' on-air, to come across as plugged in to the local community, seemed paramount. It was in a presenter's interest to get involved, connected and keep their ear to the ground and eyes peeled for who was doing what locally: hosting at venues, producing arts and crafts shows or festivals, orchestrating campaigns and so forth.

One of more news-focused, current affairs presenters I met was Pat Newland, a local businesswoman and former local government councillor. Each season of her magazine-style evening series, *Days of our Lives,* would last several weeks. She would line up expert guests and pre-record a number of short interviews with each of them, on topics she had researched online, invariably using websites of the local newspaper, *The Herts Ad*, and the local BBC. She would pick up on national issues then find a local focus. Sky News was a reliable online resource for national or international features of interest including celebrity news and sports updates. Using these media sources to gather programme material appeared to be widespread practice amongst my interviewees. Where presenters had producers or studio assistants, they tended to delegate to them the task of writing up and reading stories on-air.
Information was also sought through face-to-face and online engagement. Presenters and producers relied on their existing social networks as well as direct approaches to the station through emails, press releases and online. They had learned to build up lists of well-connected contacts and reliable information sources. Denise's approach for instance, was common:

> *Some of it's word of mouth, some of it because I'm involved in so many local events*
> *myself…the rest of it is Facebook, social media.*   *(*Denise, RV)

Another useful resource was the station's Community Noticeboard on the website, a user-friendly and colourful platform for listeners and other stakeholders in the wider community. It was a calendar where anyone could post event details and booking information. The

presenters talked to, and messaged each other, shared tips and regularly checked the station's shared Google Drive, to see what their colleagues were planning to talk about on their shows, so they could tell the listeners in 'coming up later announcements' (CULAs).

I detected in the station a general air of opportunism, an openness to serendipity and taking up leads. A forthcoming football match fundraiser provided not only an event to talk about and promote on the RV website, but an opportunity to invite their spokesperson into the studios. I observed the young sportswoman being interviewed about a book she had written on mental health and coping with suicidal tendencies on *Verulam Sport*. She described how her own mental health had improved immensely through playing team sports like football. The conversational, almost confessional, feel to the interview struck me as a good example of soft journalism. Then there were the two occasions when I was interviewed by presenters who clearly considered my presence at the station interesting enough to share with their audience. On the first occasion, when observing Richard on *Verulam in the Morning*, his resident psychotherapist, an acquaintance of mine as it happened, had cancelled so he asked if I would step in to talk about my research instead: why I was, as he put it, "lurking in the Radio Verulam studios". The tables were turned again when Jonny pre-recorded an interview with me for his Sunday lunch show: "We're going to welcome into the studio in a second, Jo Coleman, local media expert and radio person, after Sigrid", he announced. After the song ended, we chatted for several minutes about my research into local radio. He asked intelligent questions about the history of community radio and the industry in general.

In the main, the volunteers seemed well-informed about adhering to industry regulations. They had read the radio station handbook and been trained to follow protocol when putting together programmes. For instance, they were aware of how important it was to avoid libel and defamation, the use of swear words and causing offence. And ensuring verbal consent prior to interviews with adult contributors, or from the parents and guardians of minors, was understood as simply a positive reply to the question: "Are you happy for this to go out on-air?" The presenters had been taught, and improved upon through repeated performance, how to construct and conduct interviews, to put guests at ease and encourage their contributions whilst reigning in the more verbose. They had become adroit at deciding whether it was appropriate to share their own opinions bearing in mind the station's best interests, both on-air and online with social media postings.

6.8 THE PARENTS' SHOW

One of the station's flagship speech-based programmes I identified as journalistic was *The Parents' Show on Radio Verulam.* In the 2018 Community Radio Awards,[57] it won Gold in the category 'Speech and Journalism of the Year'. Broadcast live on Thursday evenings 8-9 pm, it was produced and presented by a small, committed team of local volunteers, with two friends at its core, Lydia and Kathy. They were uniquely qualified to do this, not only through acquiring the appropriate technical know-how but by virtue of being mothers themselves, plus, as I will describe, they each had useful social connections and professional experience in the pertinent fields.

6.8.1 Sourcing material through networks

Lydia and Kathy brought an impressive combination of knowledge and skillsets to the show. Lydia had worked in media development for non-government organizations (NGOs), the International Press Institute in Vienna and The Freedom Forum. During her interview, she told me that her latest role at The Media Diversity Institute involved the development of projects in post-conflict areas to help promote diversity in, and the use of the media to lessen inter-ethnic tension. This was one of about ten part-time jobs, she added. In terms of social media, Lydia's Facebook page stated that she "manages Radio Verulam's The Parents' Show" page as did Kathy's. Kathy described herself as a criminologist and academic researcher in childcare psychology, parenting and education at the University of Hertfordshire. She also ran her own educational consultancy,[58] and, as stated on her Twitter profile, was an "expert on evidence-based approaches to parenting, keynote speaker, author @bloomsburybooks and presenter on award-winning @parentshow".

Lydia joined RV to volunteer in 2008 whilst pregnant and was asked to develop an Irish show, *The Emerald Hour*, which she did with Kathy who had initially joined the station wanting to present a crime show. From interviewing both volunteers separately, I could imagine how their friendship, innate knowledge and love of Irish music and culture lent their show much entertaining authenticity. After two years of enjoyment producing the Irish show, they created the more serious-minded *Parents' Show*. They both had young children at the time and felt there was a real need for parents to have support for being a parent. They launched the show

---

[57] Organized independently by a member of the CMA to promote and encourage best practice in the sector.

[58] Since completing my research, Kathy has gone on to sponsor the St Albans Drive programme.

with a publicity campaign, [59] and even arranged a high society-style launch party in 2011, featured in the glossy *Hertfordshire Life* magazine.[60]

Where sourcing programme ideas was concerned, their approach was organic. Kathy explained to me that her research for the show was conducted through her everyday professional routines: sourcing content "from the ground up" through her work with parents and the global network of contacts in her field. She and Lydia both moved in professional circles, alert to the big issues of the day, and were living the life of a parent, listening to their friends, family and listeners. They aimed to be a valuable resource for the parenting community locally. Topics ranged from "eating disorders in children, autism, imaginative play for young children, adoption, puberty, school selection, weaning and family finances"[61], as well as a weekly events guide.

> *We're all mums and … the learning process never stops. We constantly have issues that we're trying to understand. So for example, right now critical thinking is something that's in my head, media literacy, because I see my son trying to understand what's the truth and what's not the truth and so I'll do a show about that.*   (Lydia, RV)

When I pressed Lydia on how they balanced local coverage with expertise on specific issues, she explained that they aimed for at least 50% local content. Sometimes they could locate an expert "on our doorstep", but they were prepared to interview people from abroad too if necessary. She recalled:

> *We've been spectacularly lucky…people really are very, very kind and make time to speak on air. It's brilliant…For example, we did one on sleep, and the best person that we could find to speak was in America. So, we battled the time difference and got them on.*   (Lydia, RV)

Other times, they would do purely local shows, especially during holidays like Easter when they featured family activities in the area.

---

[59] https://www.hertsad.co.uk/news/education/parents-invited-to-join-in-st-albans-radio-show-1-676000 accessed 19/7/2019

[60] https://www.hertfordshirelife.co.uk/out-about/places/new-radio-show-for-parents-launches-in-st-albans-1-1921567 accessed 19/7/2019

[61] https://www.radioverulam.com/show/the-parents-show/ accessed 19/7/2019

Community is the most important thing. I don't think it necessarily always has to be from the community to be relevant to the community, but it should always be for the community. I think that's what we believe, sometimes we go further afield, sometimes not. (Lydia, RV)

I wanted to know how effective they were at reflecting the diversity of the local community in their programming. The team were in touch with every one of over 100 schools in the area through the Alban Teaching School Alliance, as Lydia elaborated: "giving them a voice, making them feel like it's their local station". Staff were responsive to requests for teachers, even Heads to go along for interviews as well as getting students on-air. Lydia lived in a part of St Albans which she smilingly described as "beautifully diverse". Although she was not a Muslim, she said she tried to support the Islamic community by reaching out to support fundraisers for Syria and so forth, gathering people and prizes.

I kind of want to do so much and I'm very interested in lots of different things, so I think between Kathy and Seema, we're pretty much tapped into the community just because we love it. And I think it probably stems from being Irish and being used to living in a place where you know people and I think we try to recreate that here as much as we can, because it makes us feel at home, you know. (Lydia, RV)

6.8.2   Planning the programmes

I learned that Lydia and Kathy held production meetings once a month. They also communicated via email and made the most of being together in the station on Thursday evenings. They would plan each week's line-up and suggest people to contact for timely topics. Lydia created running orders on Google Docs. Scripts were prepared and printed out onto A4 paper to use during the broadcasts and interview questions usually shared with guests a week in advance, "just to make them feel more comfortable" explained Kathy. She often asked experts to suggest what they should be discussing, though admitted to "going off piste and just chucking in a few other questions." Over the years they have gained confidence and are more accomplished, so setting out planned timings and interview questions had become less detailed and rigid. Kathy felt she and Lydia were so used to each other that they hardly needed scripts. They could just signal to each other across the desk. They relied on their studio assistant, Seema, to meet and greet guests, take publicity photographs to share online, post tweets and live stream interviews on Facebook.

Kathy emphasized their preference for liveness; pre-recording would be a last resort if they were trying to secure a VIP. Lydia said that 40% of the guest interviews were by phone or occasionally Skype, and 60% took place at the station, in Studio B:

> *It's pure laziness on my part, it's just that I have that [Thursday evening] slot carved out and it's just live, just suits me so much better cos I feel like I'm doing the job twice if I go and hire a studio and go in and do a pre-record.* (Lydia, RV)

Kathy agreed that the pre-recording process would be time-consuming administratively, and it might involve editing. She said she did not like using Audacity, the software commonly used by station volunteers, claiming not to have the technical capability:

> *In an ideal world, I wouldn't touch the mixing desk…I'm a massive fan of outsourcing…doing everything is exhausting and really nerve-wracking and it's just a personal decision that it's not my thing. I don't want to do it.* (Kathy, RV)

As well as the live broadcasts, there was often a great deal of material shared online. I saw from desk research that the two producers were connected with multiple other RV presenters and routinely wrote, shared and liked posts about the station and local happenings such as charity events, as well as more personal announcements. The show's Facebook page carried a wealth of photographs, videos, hyperlinks to other websites and podcasts posted after the transmission of every show going back in time. They also used the platform to promote upcoming shows, with photographs and topic hashtags, asking for contributions from the audience, requesting questions for the special guests coming into the studios. Lydia explained how useful they find Facebook Groups and Pages, like local Mums' and Parents' networks:

> *There's a lot of conversations [on Facebook]. A lot of them are really silly, a lot of them are very serious and so we sometimes get ideas through that. We use Facebook extensively to kind of continue the conversation – amplify our voice, give it another dimension and we've recently started using Facebook live.* (Lydia, RV)

Routinely, editing the shows into podcasts had been carried out by another local parent, although at the time I met them, he was about to leave. They were hoping to establish a training scheme with one of the local secondary schools to cover those tasks. Their social media campaigns, such as this one calling for new team members, would often be supported with press releases published in the local newspaper (Fig. 39).

They told me they had a "great partnership" with *The Herts Advertiser.* Both presenters

engaged in its annual School Awards: one presented onstage whilst the other was reporting

live from the venue. They would build up to the ceremony three weeks in advance by getting

all the finalists on-air, including

children nominated for

achievement awards. The fact that

the radio show's official sponsor,

Neves Solicitors, sponsored those

Awards too made the arrangement

mutually beneficial. In fact, over

the years, Lydia and Kathy have

developed a business partnership

outside of the radio station,

running workshops and talks for

parents and carers about children's

learning, well-being and

development.[62]

Figure 38 Screenshot of a Twitter post seeking a new team member, February 2018

6.9 VERULAM SPORT

Another show on my shortlist to study was *Verulam Sport*. I had singlehandedly produced and

presented a sports show, *Saturday Sidelines,* when volunteering on Verulam Radio in the late

1990s and early 2000s, so I was especially interested to observe the programme two decades

on. Still broadcast live on Saturday afternoons, between 3 and 6pm, much had changed,

reflecting the progress the station had made in terms of volunteer numbers and how the

internet has revolutionized information resources. For one thing, my local sports news was

always a week out of date since I sourced material from the local weekly newspapers.

Whereas, the current RV team had won Silver in the 2017 Community Radio Awards 'Sports

Show of the Year' category for live coverage of St Albans versus Carlisle United in the FA Cup. [63]

It sounded like the producers and contributors participated in various sport-related activities

---

[62] http://www.keystoneworkshops.co.uk/about/ accessed 19/7/2019

[63] At the time of writing, the production team have won Silver for 'Best Sports Show' in the Community
Media Awards, 2019.

outside the radio station and that their connections with players and supporters were a major source of content.

6.9.1   The sports show set-up

One of the *Verulam Sport* team is Ian R. He was one of the first volunteers I interviewed. We met on a Wednesday morning, a busy time at the station with Phil finishing the morning show in Studio B and Clive arriving with Klaudia to record *Generation Gap*. I chatted with them in the corridor and office area, drinking a coffee Ian had bought me from the café downstairs. I felt quite at home and could sense the buzz of excitement that being around live broadcast studios generates, even though this small suite had no external windows, only a skylight in the office area. Ian had booked the small studio next to the main Studio B for us to retreat into. I learned that Ian had been with the station since 2010 after moving to St Albans with his wife. They had no children, so when he retired Ian had time on his hands and started volunteering to meet people in the community. He was a director of the station for four years and then volunteer manager before focussing on weekend sports, reporting from home or on location.

An additional role as studio assistant for the *West Herts Drivetime* show (WHDT) meant Ian would be in the station every Monday to do traffic updates and pre-record a week's worth of *Hot Topics,* quirky news bulletins sourced from the internet. He delivered pre-recorded local sports roundups for the breakfast show, Monday through Friday and live updates for *The Solid Gold Music Show* on Saturday mornings and *The More Music Saturday Afternoon* as well as *Verulam Sport.* He covered "whatever sport is happening locally" for St Albans and neighbouring towns like Hemel Hempstead and Borehamwood, home of a national league football team:

> *People want to know what's going on there as well, and also the teams right down to Spartan South Midlands league division one level, so teams like Hatfield Town, and Welwyn Garden City, London Colney, Colney Heath, the local rugby, also Oaklands Wolves basketball and in the summer, obviously cricket. Whatever information I can pick up, then that's what I'll put the report together on.*   (Ian R., RV)

Ian recounted how he had started out by contacting multiple local sports organizations, trying to set up a regular reporting system whereby they sent him a weekly paragraph to read out. This did not result in any fruitful long-term relationships. Instead, he resorted to using online message boards for eyewitness accounts and Twitter feeds of sports clubs and the *Herts Ad* as

his main sources, as well as *The Non-league Paper*[64]. He acknowledged that without this technology it would be extremely difficult to report sports news that was not out of date. Ian also volunteered for St Albans football club, the Saints, as chair of the supporters' trust and match day organizer responsible for making sure enough there are enough people staffing turnstiles and selling programmes. He was clearly well-connected there so could easily find people to interview whether at the ground or at away matches. He had reported from as far afield as Grimsby. Another role he had with the club was to ensure the matchday announcer was there: his RV colleagues, presenters Danny and Jonny were on the roster.

To file live match reports, Ian sometimes used the Luci Live OB software on a smartphone, enabling remote connection directly with the studio. However, he confessed he preferred to phone in on his mobile which he found more straightforward. On Sundays, at home in his living room, he would spend 40 minutes preparing a short bulletin based on the weekend's matches, recording it using a studio quality mic onto his computer using Audacity and Dropbox. He often received positive feedback on his reports from local fans who listened to RV. He said people also appreciated it when he interviewed opposing club team members and fans, sharing snippets of information that had not been widely known, which he described as "a bit of a coup!" Ian was proud of the station's ability to get managers and players on-air:

> *They're used to dealing with the media so they're quite easy to deal with. Probably the best example I'd give is, I was standing in the football ground after the last football match of the season and I was talking to Tony Rice on* Verulam Sport *and I said "Well. Tom Bender's just won Player of the Season" and as I said it, he walked around the corner of the stand and I just gave him the phone and said "Tom, would you like to talk on live radio?"…And he spent five minutes talking on the phone to Tony on-air about winning player of the season and how he saw things have gone and how they might be in the future - it was a great piece of radio and as I say, the guy just did it straight off.*
>
> (Ian R., RV)

I had also contacted the presenter Tony Rice who had been involved in *Verulam Sport* for two years, and fully producing it since October 2017. He worked in a local public relations company, specializing in broadcast media. Tying him down to a date for interview prior to observing the live show proved challenging. He postponed me twice, saying he needed time to train up a new sports producer on the show and to inform his team about my research for

---

[64] https://www.thenonleaguefootballpaper.com/ accessed 17/7/2019

their consent. I gathered that there were usually at least two studio helpers and a raft of correspondents from various locations around the county or further afield in the case of away matches. When we did meet in the carpark at the rear of the café on Good Friday, he encountered a problem accessing the building which was unexpectedly empty. Tony had assumed, as had I, that the Breakfast Show we heard that morning was going out live.

He had planned to pre-record two sport-related phone interviews in the other studio. He routinely recorded interviews in advance with people from the sporting community, like club managers and saved them for the appropriate airing opportunity. However, on this occasion, Tony had not realized that it was a half term. He admitted that he usually found the door open whenever he came to the station. With no experience of this happening before and no contingency plan, he did not know where to turn. Tony texted and phoned a couple of station volunteers he was friends with, neither of whom could help. He seemed reluctant to disturb and inconvenience anyone else for what was not going to be a live broadcast anyway, and he decided to postpone his recording. We called off my interview too and agreed to rearrange a Saturday afternoon observation instead.

6.9.2   Preparing the matchday line-up

When I finally had the opportunity to observe Tony in action, my first impression of a lack of confidence was overturned by how impressively he dealt with the organized chaos of the live sports programme. He told me that he usually arrived at the station an hour before going to air, to pre-record scene-setting reports from various grounds. I watched him record a pre-match build-up report in Studio B at 14:10 pm with Jo, the roving reporter at Watford Football Club. He used his smartphone to call her first, she asked him to wait two minutes then he rang her from the studio phone. Once connected, he pressed record on the desk, introduced her and worked his way through three scripted questions, starting with Watford's recent poor form. The report ended with Jo confirming that she would update the audience later. Tony numbered the pre-record with a 5-digit code and saved it straight into the system, overwriting the requisite cart, or file, in the allotted time slot. Shortly afterwards, while Tony was texting someone else, the studio phone rang. The call was for the presenter in Studio A broadcasting the show that immediately preceded *Verulam Sport*. It was Ian R. calling with the St Albans City 'Team News' report, live from Clarence Park, during which he gave crowd numbers and went through team sheet. Ian would later be calling Tony four times with match updates and the scores. Other regular correspondents I would hear that day included a mix of fans, coaches and

commentators from Old Albanians rugby club, London Colney football clubs and other sports team like Benika Mavericks netball club.

Tony briefed his assistant (SA) in the studio and showed her an A4 print-out listing what he had lined up with timings for the phone-in links and studio guests. He encouraged her to contribute a news item to the show, so she chose a story about the St Albans Striders taking part in the London Marathon. She tentatively read straight from the paper into the mic for Tony to record, crediting the *Herts Ad* as the source. Tony livened up the piece by adding at the end: "It's your show, contact us". He listed ways of getting involved: "Call, text, tweet, email!" He uploaded this pre-record for later transmission then checked that SA had the right contact numbers for the reporters to facilitate their phoned-in reports. She left the studio to take a seat in the office, minding one of three telephone handsets in the station. Tony told me there was only a single line: "So, you don't really want listeners phoning too! When your reporters are supposed to be calling in!"

Half an hour before going live, Tony joined SA out in the office. He sat at the computer checking through the scheduled playlist in the system and ensuring every item of the 3-hour programme was in the right place around the news, adverts, station jingles, and there was a competition giving away tickets to a Golf Sixes event he needed to plug. He removed multiple music tracks so that he could accommodate his pre-recorded reports and interviews and free up the intended time slots for any live calls. Just before returning to Studio B, Tony wrote out a crib list for himself of the station's phone number, email address and Twitter handle as well as the CULAs for that evening, so that the information would be in front of him as useful fillers.

6.9.3   Delivering the results

When Tony returned to the studio, he became concerned about the Myriad playout system and sought help from another presenter, who happened to be in the station at the time. I learned later that his usual co-presenter/producer on the show, Matthew, was not in because it was his birthday. Tony needed help re-setting the desk onto 'Live Assist' and selecting the correct programme '3-6 Verulam Sport'. I noticed when observing other presenters that they were often nervous about taking live control of the studio when the previous show had either been playing automatically from the system or coming from the next-door studio. It required total concentration to make sure they came out of the news cleanly and put themselves on air. The slickness of how a presenter achieved that was indicative of professionalism.

Once Tony felt in control, he energetically introduced the programme and read aloud what was coming up. He held his printed-out timetable like a script in one hand, gesticulating with the other. He listed the people he would be speaking to on sports-related and topical issues. He called this 'vocalizing'. As the hours passed, he relied on his smartphone to text correspondents and monitor Twitter for match updates and used information sourced online from local press websites as well as BBC Sport and other internet searches. He also used IRN's Sky News sports service to access match reports from national and international sporting events. Each time SA had a reporter on the line to put through, she popped through the door of the studio, soundlessly waving a sheet of paper to catch Tony's attention (Fig. 40). She had folded it to reveal only one name, so he would know which caller she was about to connect to the studio.
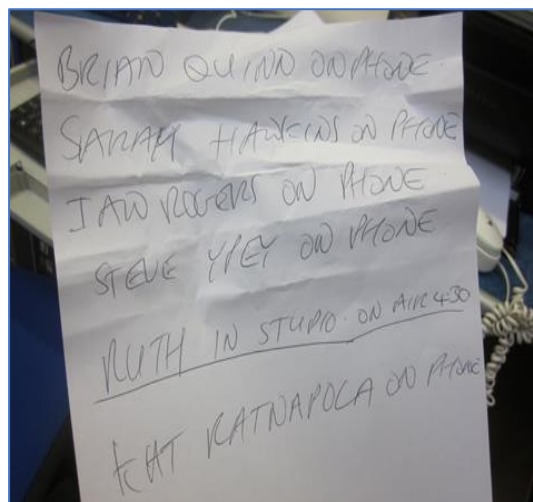
Figure 39 Studio assistant's call sheet for Verulam Sport

Despite the organized timetable he had started out with, it was clear that Tony was accustomed to being mentally agile during this intense three-hour period. He had to alter the order of items depending on which correspondents were available and what was unfolding at the respective sporting venues. He was adept at filling airtime with news and background to that day's games if the next phone call or studio guest was delayed. I could see that his show was way behind schedule, but he kept up the conversation with the listener. "Any minute now!" could be his catchphrase, and he made what he called one or two "judgement calls". For instance, he announced he would play a promised interview the following week instead and he had to delay by 20 minutes a live studio interview with the young footballing author. When they eventually started talking, he interrupted to seamlessly accommodate a couple of full-time reports as well as an advert break and the news as they rolled into the third hour of the show. This type of live show based on constantly unfolding news provided by multiple remotely located correspondents requires a certain skillset and confidence, bravado, to pull off successfully. That these volunteers carry out the requisite journalistic tasks so competently under the given, relatively under-resourced circumstances of the CR sector seems to demonstrate that there is not much that can be described as 'unprofessional' about them.

They, like many of their practitioner colleagues, are driven not by being paid, but by a heartfelt passion for the topics they cover, on a medium they believe in.

6.10 ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

During my fieldwork, I was particularly impressed by another speech-based programme, *Environment Matters,* as further illustration of how the personal interests of volunteers contribute profoundly to the nature of content aired. Introduced as "the show that brings you news on issues of sustainability and the environment from around the district and from further afield", this was broadcast and streamed 'as live' at 7pm every Wednesday. The 15-minute feature formed part of the *Local Life* programme. Each week, the presenter lined up three interviews that she would conduct in a single hour's session, routinely booking herself into Studio A on Monday afternoons. She described herself on a personal Twitter account as "Professional gardener. Into food, sustainability, cycling." I can attest to the latter, for when I was waiting to meet her at the radio station one cold, damp February afternoon, she arrived on her bicycle in full Lycra cycling garb.

6.10.1 Gathering intelligence through participation

Desk research revealed that presenter, Amanda, was well-placed as an environmental activist and campaigner to produce this show. An internet search on her name yielded several pages of weblinks relating to her work reporting on RV and her interest and connections with local environmental interests. She had built up quite a record. For instance, she was pictured in a local newspaper article for her involvement as member of a St Albans group associated with the charity Friends of the Earth, in a climate emergency petition to be presented at a St Albans District Council meeting.[65] This was a joint appeal with Sustainable St Albans, another high-profile local charity that she belonged to and whose annual festival and other projects she helped promote by liking, re-tweeting and sharing on social media and regularly covered on *Environment Matters* through interviews, mentions and reading out notices. Though, she did not cross-reference herself as a RV producer and presenter on her personal Twitter account, preferring instead to use a separate account to promote the show, @RV_environment, she was clearly committed personally and very publicly in raising the profile of green issues.

---

[65] https://www.hertsad.co.uk/news/st-albans-climate-emergency-petition-1-6130152 accessed 9/7/2019

On Facebook, there was more cross-over between the presenter's personal life and the radio show. She described herself as 'managing' the *Environment Matters on Radio Verulam* page, @environmentmatters. She used these platforms to help find local instances of environment-related stories and seek perspectives and opinions of residents and experts. As well as engagement with existing contacts and the public, there were interactions with other RV She liked and shared posts from the many Facebook 'friends' who also volunteered at the station, as well as items on noteworthy events and campaigns she had noticed locally and beyond, that she wanted to share with the online audience. Through these social connections she enjoyed privileged access to interview high profile people for RV, such as when she encountered the Green Party's Caroline Lucas at a local political event (Fig. 41).[66]
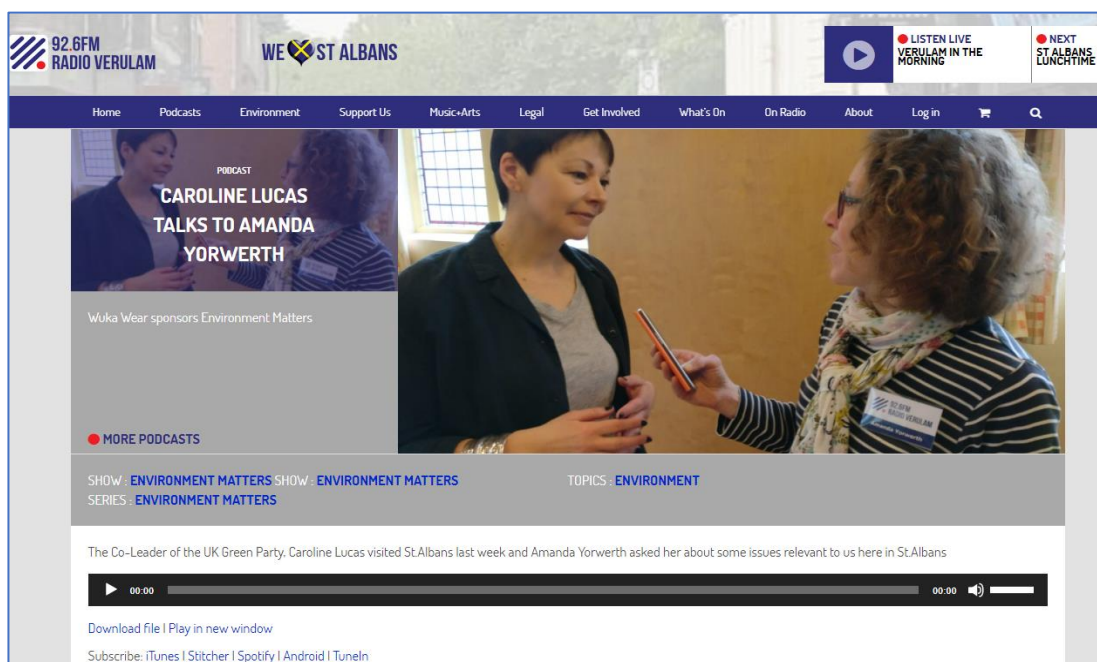
Figure 40 Screenshot of the RV webpage featuring Amanda's interview with Caroline Lucas

Topics covered on the show ranged from air pollution and plastics to vegan cuisine and wildlife. One ongoing story regarded the recent closure of a £27 million eco-tourist attraction called Butterfly World in St Albans, launched by Sir David Attenborough in 2009.[67] A primary concern for conservationists and butterfly experts and lovers had been that the meadows, once carefully maintained to optimize the butterfly habitat, were no longer being tended. A member of the campaign group Save Butterfly World, John Horsfield, was interviewed on the

---

[66] https://www.radioverulam.com/podcast/caroline-lucas-talks-to-amanda-yorwerth/ accessed 8/11/2019

[67] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-35082789 accessed 11/7/2019

show three times between June 2017 and May 2018. Being an elderly user of a mobility scooter, John would not have been able to access RV's first-floor radio studios, so they spoke over the phone. I listened to the audio posted online and concluded that Amanda had a professional, but friendly manner. She posed questions efficiently and followed up on points made. She enacted a more informal, magazine-style approach rather than taking a hard news angle. She was encouraging but stopped short of joining him in condemning the corporate vested interests that were putting butterflies at risk.

Although she had employed journalistic skills in researching the story and conducting an interview about it, she had not interviewed anyone with an alternative argument. Nor had she interviewed the owners of the site, a civil engineering firm, which would be attempted in mainstream news coverage. This show was essentially a mouthpiece for those in the community, including many in her social circle, who cared about achieving sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyles.

6.10.2   Disseminating news and views

The Butterfly World interview had been written up in a blog for the RV website with the title, "No. We don't give up easily in St. Albans". Along with the backstory, there was a supplementary plug for an art exhibition which would raise awareness and money for the campaign. Amanda had plugged further initiatives for the cause on-air since and interviewed John twice in the run-up to the launch of a new Butterfly World campaign, which he called Butterfly World 2.0, allowing him to post public updates on RV's *Environment Matters* FB page. In theory, there was scope on the show's online platforms for members of the community to comment with contradictory views, but it had not attracted any.

On the RV website, Amanda's station email address was listed, along with the hyperlink to the podcasts made from her shows. There were one or two posts each week promoting the shows, detailing which guests were on and what they would be discussing. The photographs used with the post to attract attention were always eye-catching images, sometimes logos from posters or fliers of the events, or featured campaigns and guests occasionally pictured with the presenter. A dozen recent shows that had been broadcast and repackaged as podcasts were listed. Clicking through from there to a podcast platform such as Spotify revealed a fuller list of shows. All were about fifteen minutes long with catchy single sentence titles indicating the content and the date they were originally broadcast. Other platforms where they were available include iTunes, Android, TuneIn and Stitcher.

This compact, all-talk radio programme was clearly well-respected amongst the RV team. Modest as she was, the presenter's name was on many volunteers' lips. She was recommended a number of times as someone worth approaching for my research. It was clear that her colleagues found the online resources relating to *Environment Matters* useful for providing local content to talk about in their own shows. Her passion for the environment that fuelled the show spilt over into day-to-day operations of the station too. I heard a conversation between two respondents about whether they should introduce RV-branded canvas bags to replace their promotional balloons: a topic Amanda had tackled them on.

6.11 THE PARSONS KNOWS LOCAL MUSIC

Another person of influence at RV and in the community was the producer and presenter of local music show, *The Parsons Knows*. Other respondents described her as a "go-to person" with "a finger in every pie". My simple opening question to her, "So, do you have a role or a title [at Radio Verulam]?" was answered with pride:

> *I do, I have several…From the top down, I'm a director, I am volunteer manager, I'm social media manager, I help – this isn't really a title – but I'm part of the day-to-day operations management team until we find someone else to do it. I'm a presenter, and I do lots of other things you know, that come up within … outside broadcasts, whatever. But I guess they all come under one of those various guises.* (Denise, RV)

Several more roles occurred to her as the interview proceeded, including selling sponsorship and general advertising. There was an obvious convergence of her multiple responsibilities at the station with her business interests, a dovetailing of her volunteering and professional interests. Bearing the framing of my research in mind, I will outline here aspects of Denise's status in the overlapping social sites within which she operated that undoubtedly enhanced her ability to exploit the resources available to her.

6.11.1 Self-promotion and building connections

One of the unique selling points of St Albans is the considerable number of pubs in the district, including one of the oldest in the country, 'Ye Olde Fighting Cocks'. In the face of crippling business rates and declining patronage,[68] many pubs have diversified into live music venues.

---

[68] Problems facing UK pubs are well-documented, see for example
https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/economy-business/economy-economy/last-orders-the-decline-of-pubs-around-the-uk/ accessed 8/11/2019

Local gig organizer and band promoter, Denise, was approached to join RV in 2014 for her wealth of knowledge and contacts, to help build the radio station's local music offer. She had gone on to produce and present multiple series and strands of radio programmes since. She told me:

> *I do a variety of things but mainly it's all around music so I'm a live music promoter, I host music events so I'm a compere on stage. I manage bands and mentor local bands. I'm operations manager for a small record label. I run social media accounts for some people from time to time. I also work on video shoots as a stylist – music videos. Um, what else do I do? Oh, I'm also a trustee of a local charity, called Crescent – yeah – which is around the corner. Um – what else? And various other things that come – you know – a booking agent.* (Denise, RV)

She already had technical skills from operating sound desks and public speaking in her day job which equipped her to be useful at setting up for the live events that RV were invited to report on or even host across the town. I suggested to Denise that much of her work was public relations too and she agreed:

> *Because most of my gigs are local, I host … the big stage in the summer for the street festival, I've done Christmas lights switch-ons, you know, various other charity events and what not, I guess people think that they probably know me as it were…everybody knows I'm involved with Radio Verulam, and that's my whole thing. For me, it's not really, much as I enjoy the actual radio, for me, it's always been the community aspect of a radio station, what's it got to offer the community, getting people involved. That's much more what it's about for me, yeah.* (Denise, RV)

She had built up an impressive social media profile not just for the station but for herself, and I detected a degree of resentment amongst her RV colleagues for how she appeared to use her involvement to further her career. Though she was not alone in benefiting from the volunteering, others I spoke to insisted that transparency was vital. The show's sponsor which Denise had arranged was 3Ms music. As was evident from this screenshot of the company's 'About Us' webpage,[69] Denise also ran their social media and had taken this opportunity to cross-promote her show and the radio station. She even used her own cartoon profile picture which is her personal brand across all platforms, including her own website, describing herself

---

[69] https://3msmusic.com/about-us/ accessed 15/7/2019

as a "community champion" and the CEO of PK Promotions, with the strapline "The Parsons Knows – The Queen of the local radio scene!" (Fig. 42)

6.11.2 Curating the music scene

Denise was plugged into the local music scene and kept abreast through word of mouth and social media as well as through her own active involvement working with local bands and venues. As for guest bands invited onto the show, she told me she knew three out of ten as friends or through previous projects, but there were more musicians approaching her than she could accommodate. Despite squeezing two or three guests within the two hours, "one playing live and two just calling in for a chat and playing a recorded track", shows were booked up two months in advance. On the evening I was observing *The Parsons Knows*, the presenter in the studio beforehand took great care to calculate the timings of the changes he made on the system in the last half hour of his show, commenting that he had to make sure there was no overrun when she took over the studio and the station output. "So that Denise doesn't tell me off", he said.
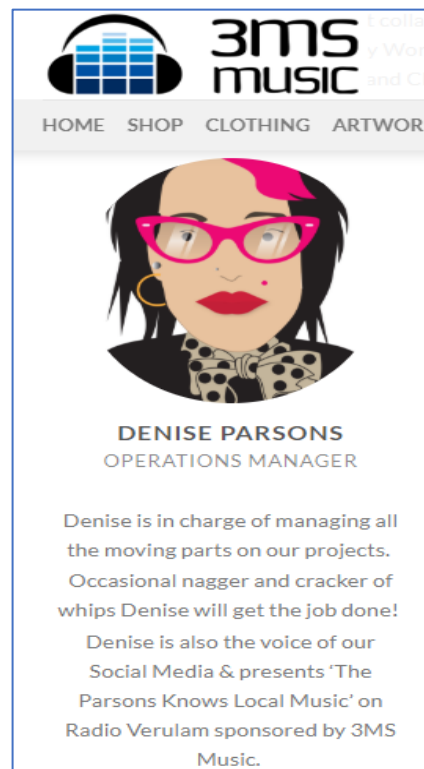
Figure 41 Screenshot of Denise's staff profile on the 3MS webpage

As one of the team responsible for the sound of the station, Denise's role was official curator of local music for the station. The local music obtained through the contacts she made at gigs that she attended, promoted and often organized, was uploaded onto the system and all presenters were supposed to play at least one local track an hour. Denise's strict scheduling of local music had proved hard to instil, and in her own words: "Unfortunately some presenters delete them, that's an ongoing battle at the moment." My listening-in desk research verified that this must be happening, and interviewees told me as much in the conversations I had with them; they preferred to fine-tune the playlists themselves. The practitioners routinely spent time removing pre-loaded tracks that the Music Controller had lined up, to set time aside for interviews or replace with their own selection of music to suit a theme or make a point for their show that day. There were other presenters recording their shows from home studios with no access to the RV music logs where the local tracks were pre-set, so they simply lined

up their own playlists, according to their own tastes bearing in mind the station's easy listening style.

During my observation, Denise arrived at the studio at 5:30pm and sat at the computer in the office making changes to the playlist on the system. She would only play music by local musicians from St Albans, Hertfordshire and occasionally London. Her regular studio assistant was Matthew, the same volunteer that helped on the sports show. He arrived fifteen minutes before going live. One of his roles was to read out the hand-written gig guide that Denise gave him. He would meet and greet the guests for interviews and help rearrange the studio furniture to accommodate bands and their live performances. When asked if putting together *The Parsons Knows* would qualify as journalistic, Denise agreed. Producing the two-hour show involved research about the bands she interviewed and their music. Although she wrote for an online fanzine called *In the Club* for a band called *The Tuesday Club*, she found that there were no music magazines and very little in the local newspapers, there were a few online blogs and gig guides. Email was a primary method of communication enabling bands to contact Denise, send her information and the tracks they wanted her to hear and play on-air.

I gained the impression that Denise knew her guests well since they discussed personal matters and exchanged views on venues, local charities, and other radio stations off mic. The interviews she aired with the musicians focused on the tracks being featured and the music business more generally: how to release new material; publicity; progressing up the ladder; handling social media; and tips on how to make money on Spotify by asking your fans to play your track on repeat for a week. Denise's weekly outpourings of advice on releasing and promoting music, managing reviews and so forth exhibited a wealth of experience and insider knowledge. Matthew busily posted on social media throughout the show, taking photographs of Denise with the musicians in front of the RV banner. After the show, Denise would select highlights for him to edit into shorter features to share as podcasts on Mixcloud and TuneIn, along with the best shots taken.

Denise also managed the Gig Guide on the station website which she asked all presenters to refer to and read out from. Many did so, but after listening-in, I felt this was happening too often. The listings were useful fillers but obscured other events in the area which might suit other tastes. In exercising her administrative power when trying to establish such ground rules, Denise's dictatorial style would be hard to ignore, though I did encounter pockets of resistance. Having read emails from her, watched her presenting live and interviewed her face-to-face, I found her to be assertive, extrovert, not one to 'mince their words'. But this was her

style and she meant well. She had the interests of the station and of local musicians at heart, even as she kept her own income stream flowing and maintained her reputation as local music guru. Denise had a good deal at stake in RV and she revelled in the positive outcomes.

6.12 MANAGING THE ON-AIR TALENT

One of my last interviews at RV was with the Chairman, Nick. He was interested in who I had spoken to and which shows I had observed. During our conversation he commented: "[I] always tell people, 'It's not YOUR show it's the radio station's show!'" I could see how this attitude might strengthen the management's resolve that no one should be indispensable. It was in their best interests to organize the station in such a way that its operations could be sustained when anyone stopped volunteering for whatever reason. And yet, when I suggested a publicity idea to Nick that involved profiling the station's volunteers on Facebook, he replied:

> *Yes, yes that would be gold dust for us, because we probably don't know everything about everybody. I think it's a great idea, plus if it's in audio we could stick [them on] Facebook one by one and say, 'Did you know about Amanda?' kind of thing.* (Nick, RV)

I found that most of the presenters I met automatically referred to each other's programmes as if they belonged to those colleagues; they would differentiate "their show" from "my show". On one level, who these people were in the local context, and the value they brought to the station was significant. But there was clearly a tension between needing to encourage practitioners' engagement and commitment to their roles whilst enforcing the notion that too much emotional investment or self-interested ownership of their shows should be avoided.

Whilst I encountered members of the RV community who had joined to make new friends by doing a hobby that at the same time gave something back to society, some were very dedicated to their programmes and took them very seriously. I know from broader exposure to community radio that it is common for volunteers to hold a long-standing ambition to become a professional radio disc jockey (DJ), presenter or producer. This was the case for a handful of volunteers at RV. The younger studio assistants were there to gain radio production experience or to further hone skills for a media career yet to unfold. Older volunteers too had industry aspirations. In a follow-up audio message, Tony expressed a long-held desire to get professional work in sports broadcasting. I met three volunteers who already had professional experience in the industry, two have whom had become joined RV partly because they had

time on their hands as freelancers, such as Phil and Kerry. But they were motivated, like most of their fellow volunteers, by a powerful desire to contribute to the community.

Kerry, a single parent of two had joined the station two years previously. She had been a co-presenter on the breakfast show of a local commercial radio station, and had since co-founded a parent support group, The National Teen Trust. She had been invited in as one of several guests to contribute to a special International Women's Day programme on RV in 2016. She enjoyed herself so much that she decided to volunteer with the station on a more permanent basis, hosting the weekday breakfast show. During my research period, she had won a freelance contract to be a TV reporter for the Motocross season. Undoubtedly the fact that she was still broadcasting, albeit on community radio, enhanced her CV. She also occasionally sold advertising packages on RV, for which she received a small percentage commission.

I sensed that an industry grounding gave certain volunteers an advantage and higher status within the hierarchy of the organization. The men I interviewed who had been initiated into radio through training at Hospital Radio had all held station management or training roles at RV. Clive, Phil, Jonny and Nick. Nick, for instance, had started out at 15 years old and developed an ear for high broadcast standards, and a keen understanding of the difference between presenters and DJs. He argued:

> We're all presenters here…our evening presenters are most definitely presenters, because they are presenting often quite speech-based shows – so they are not really disc jockeys – erm, unless it's a specialist '80s show or something like that.   (Nick, RV)

Another media professional at RV was music teacher, Phil who had previously presented on independent local radio and local BBC stations. He continued to do freelance radio interviews and ran his own company suppling and operating PA equipment and party discos. He told me that he was inspired from an early age by listening to pirate station Radio Caroline and wanted to be the next Tony Blackburn. He simply loved presenting music and did four shows a week: a weekday one with music and interviews, *Verulam in the Morning;* and music-based weekend shows, *Saturday Breakfast Mix, Sunday Morning* and *Sunday Golden Hour*.

6.12.1 In-house training

However well-experienced the recruits, training on the station's equipment and in its protocols was a requirement of becoming an active member. Lydia, who joined in around 2010, recalled:

The system was different when I started, which was quite a while ago. So, I literally would sit in the studio and somebody would do the desk, showing me week by week, how to take over the reins. And then I took over the reins! But training has become better and better at Radio Verulam. It really is much slicker, the equipment is much better, you know. It's moved on a lot. (Lydia, RV)

Improving skills and motivation amongst the volunteers when it came to presentation, journalistic tasks and even helping publicize the station was clearly an ongoing challenge. I discovered that training could cause strife amongst the membership. At the time of my fieldwork, the management had organized some mandatory sessions to 'up-skill' everyone, rather than rely on volunteers to decide for themselves whether and how often to access the multiple resources and training opportunities provided by the CMA and other organizations, such as *The Community Radio Toolkit*.[70] Nick wanted to introduce an accreditation system whereby the presenters would be required to fulfil certain obligations and attend training workshops. Previously they had used schoolteacher Jonny's method of conducting a series of workshops and shadowing, after which trainees would produce a 30-minute generic radio programme in the studio, which would be assessed by himself and Nick, giving 'EBI' (even better if) and 'WWW' (what went well) feedback. Turn-out to the training sessions was low and the volunteer staff who had invested their own time planning a course of workshops were cross and disappointed. Emails were sent admonishing those who did not attend, and I gained the impression that the recipients resented being treated in a high-handed fashion and being told about their training needs by those presuming to know better. There appeared to be a lack of mutual understanding between the volunteers who produce and present the shows that fill the programme schedule and the volunteers with additional management responsibilities.

6.12.2   Hobby vs. voluntary work

During my conversation with sports reporter, Ian R., the subject of 'burnout' cropped up: how easy it can happen in community volunteering. He told me that initially he had relished the responsibility and being busy at RV, but he had received more emails in the last three to four years than he ever did when working. He talked about how stressed and anxious he had become, and how easy it is to take voluntary roles and hobby committee positions too seriously. He observed how, in any club or voluntary association, "You always find two or three

---

[70] https://www.communityradiotoolkit.net/ accessed 31/7/2019

people doing all the work." Another presenter, Diana, who produced and presented *Out and About,* talked about this with me too and demonstrated just how busy she was through her hurriedness to get in and out of the station on a Friday. Diana was a long-term volunteer on the station. She used to be on the board with responsibility for publicity. As a retired further education teacher having trained initially in chiropody, she shoehorned her voluntary work producing and presenting the weekly show on RV into her life as a carer for an elderly parent and grandchildren. She promoted a range of cultural events in the district through live studio interviews with a mind to encouraging attendance by the fit but also keeping local housebound residents entertained. She was very much on a "doing good" mission and found the benefits were that it felt good to give back to the community and kept her mind active. "There's no room for complacency", she said. Having to work to a weekly deadline and handle all the hardware and software meant she had to keep her wits about her.

Likewise, Amanda's briskness with pre-recording the weekly *Environment Matters* features impressed upon me how busy many of the volunteers are, and how efficient and organized they need to be to fit everything into their busy diaries. Everybody I encountered was making a similar commitment to turning up and delivering programmes for the station. "Is it work, then, or a hobby?" I asked Clive.

> *Oh, it's absolutely a job. I mean there's no question of it. And it's not just me, obviously. I mean there's a lot of people who've spent you know a lot of time and effort. And you know…in the early days, we had to get past the point where a lot of people treated it as a bit of a hobby, and obviously, particularly when you've done hospital radio before, that's kind of more of a hobby, yeah. So, you know it's not a hobby, we're quite serious about this and that's why obviously the quality of what comes out of the radio and so on has to be a really important thing to think about. You can't mess around and play around.* (Clive, RV)

Some volunteers, however, persisted in calling it a hobby, Kathy even resented listeners mistaking her volunteering for a career.

> *Sometimes it annoys me that I am so well-known for the radio, cos it's my voluntary job, it's a hobby. You know, I'd rather they knew me for what I did in my professional life. "You're Kathy the radio presenter!" Well, I do that as a hobby! So, people get very - it all gets very conflated.* (Kathy, RV)

6.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an account of the practice-arrangements at RV, the community radio station for St Albans, revealing that although the material infrastructure was in some ways lacking, the managers aspired to operate along professional lines albeit relying on unpaid staff. RV was situated in a leased set of rooms in a centrally located historic building. Although there was no formal arrangement with the fellow leaseholders of the privately-run café below, it did provide a pleasant meeting space for planning programmes and hosting contributors and advertisers. The downside was lack of free parking and poor accessibility to the first-floor studios, presenting barriers to participation. Although I found there to be a predominance of white male, middle-aged presenters, I noticed that there were women with considerable influence and held in high regard amongst the station community team and was assured that the gender balance was improving. It must be said though, that ethnic and differently abled diversity was lacking.

The ongoing project to provide a professional sounding radio station using amateur practitioners involved monitoring standards and implementing training programmes: measures which I detected were resisted and resented by some volunteers. It was clear that the practitioners were very dedicated to their shows and their production teams, to the special interests or good causes they represented and to their audiences, but their commitment to the radio station came at a cost. This cost was a combination of financial with physical and emotional: the subscriptions paid to join the station and the money paid to attend and participate as well as additional costs such as babysitting; and the sheer time and effort required to constantly produce consistently good quality output and keep up the communications with contributors and audiences. Nevertheless, the volunteers appeared to be loyal to the station and proud of their work, identifying it as contributing to the greater good. As well as this moral intent, journalistic intent was exhibited by some, whilst implicit in the work of others. Trusted sources varied from word-of-mouth, to social media and the press and although the station remit was to be local to St Albans, national and international news was never far away.

Part Three will analyse these insights in more detail, along with information gleaned from the previous two chapters. My intention was to understand how the LCR practitioners negotiated the arrangements and circumstances they found themselves as they worked to produce local content. The evidence points to the importance of exercising social connections and nurturing relationships with listeners, fellow volunteers and other stakeholders involved with the

stations and communities at large. This builds towards demonstrating that the practice of featuring locally sourced and locally focused content is entangled with place-based socialities thereby contributing towards social gain goals in the target communities.

PART THREE – ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

7   ANALYSING THE EVIDENCE

7.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the information I have gathered regarding the production of locally relevant content through my own creative practice at a community radio station, and from desk research and fieldwork at five other LCRs in English market towns. The aim was to apply a rigorous intellectual framing to pursue the following lines of inquiry: to what extent are normative community radio values upheld and how sustainable are these activities?; how do LCR endeavours satisfy Ofcom's edict that they must cater for, empower and represent the interests of underserved audiences?; and how are the journalistic and other media practices associated with producing local content entangled with the practitioners' interactions among their wider communities? Drawing on Schatzki's social site ontology (Schatzki, 2002), I studied the arrays of activities amid the prevailing physical and intangible infrastructures and relational understandings. These findings are not aimed at generalizing, rather they illustrate instances of the practice and are indicative of broader patterns since applying Schatzki's flat ontology lens too allows for each singular social site to be understood as a slice of a larger constellation of practice-arrangements.

I acknowledge an element of subjectivity alongside objectivity in how I have identified the research objects and how I will interpret the highly site-specific, contextualized information. My practice-as-research project on NR served two purposes. Not only did it demonstrate how creativity in professional practice can be intellectualized but it provided experiential insights into embodied practice which informed further investigations. The experiences I had finding stories and contributors for my features provided insights into what was involved and the sorts of challenges one could expect to encounter when making local radio content. Reflecting on the knowledge and know-how that I had drawn on, consciously and tacitly, to adhere to conventions in pursuit of the goal that had been established, prepared me for what to look out for in the social sites I went on to research. In particular, I was interested in the extent to which involvement in local clubs or groups and the perceived social capital that practitioners embody by association with particular organizations, enables access to certain voices and institutions in a community. Learning from the procedures I had undertaken, notable aspects and issues arising, I drew up observation charts and an interview framework to guide my

fieldwork in the five other LCRs. These resources meant that I could systematize my explorations of the situations and conditions under which volunteer community radio practitioners carried out the technical tasks, organizational activities and social interactions involved in producing local content.

First, I consider the impact that UK licensing has on enactments of community radio in the UK. I contextualize how volunteer practitioners source, shape and share content to serve local interests and view those findings in relation to other accounts in the literature. Then I critically examine what is entailed in featuring or representing local voices and how well this is achieved both in my own practice and in the other LCRs. I assess the tension between volunteering in LCR as a hobby and the pursuit of professionalism according to industry protocols. Next, I proceed to discuss how radio practitioners and audiences alike take for granted the medium's digitally enabled convergence with the visual and how online engagement has become so integral to a radio station's activities. I also weigh up the benefits of having a local hub and being active in the locality. Here again, I bring my own practice under the spotlight alongside that of my respondents. I then discuss the journalistic aspects of the practice of producing local content. Finally, I analyse the evidence in relation to the notion of 'the skilled body' (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 3) in how experience, status and social involvement in the locality combine to influence what topics and which local voices are put on air. I interrogate how certain practitioners became part of their radio station communities by virtue of having been identified or perceived as attractive, suitable and useful, based on what roles they played in their daily lives and where they were positioned in wider communities, and what they gain from volunteering.

7.2 DELIVERING ON A COMMITMENT TO LOCAL BROADCASTING

Through the nuanced insights I gained during my creative practice-as-research, and my enhanced access to the LCRs to conduct interviews and participant observations, I was in a privileged position to perceive aspects of how the practitioners were producing local content that might otherwise go undetected. I was equipped not only with the usual fieldwork-documenting regalia, but with a keener sense of the everyday 'implicit knowing' involved in the practice (Schön, 1991, p. 50). At the same time, I aimed to minimize refracting the findings, so that 'the other's voice' of my participants remains prominent (Bird, 2003, p. 17). I listened to shows, read online posts, watched half of them presenting and asked them all about the ways they involved their audiences, engaged in the communities and localized their shows. I noticed how the practitioners tended to conform, as I had done, to industry conventions from

how they spoke on-air to how they edited audio packages. They were also keenly aware of the three core licence obligations placed on them by Ofcom. Firstly, the majority of programmes should be made locally; secondly, the content should be focused on satisfying the interests and tastes of their target audience; and thirdly, a station's activities should contribute towards social gain by addressing a community's needs. As well as those generic aims, the stations had their own Key Commitments specific to their designated market. The station operators must demonstrate that they are pursuing them, or they risk losing their licence when renewal comes up after the statutory five years.

Each respondent shared an understanding of the social importance of what they were doing through their radio work, how their roles in providing a local radio service for the targeted communities fitted into the grander scheme of things. In this respect, the programme schedules I surveyed, apart from NR's, indicated that they more than met these standards, supplying an abundance of locally produced shows. Each case studied has provided a detailed, 'in-depth' report (Tight, 2010, p. 338), which although is specific to a particular social site, a situated set of circumstances and group of people, coalesces to form part of a constellation of practice-arrangement nexuses (Schatzki, 2011, p. 21), representing the national effort to deliver information and entertainment to the country's residents. This finding ties in with my assertion that LCR practitioners' work is no less significant than professionals in the media landscape: it is just performed on a smaller scale, with a more focused scope and with less resources.

Listening-in demonstrated that most of the LCR shows were transmitted live, although some were routinely pre-recorded for later broadcast by local presenters out of convenience. My research suggests that even if presenters pre-recorded a programme, they generally aimed to do so under live and timed conditions, delivering their material in a manner as if they were doing it live for a co-present audience. Thus, the celebrated liveness of the medium persists. Radio is dialogic, across the dial. The intimacy and personality of the programmes and the presenters contributed to making station output enjoyable and entertaining as well as informative, creating a sense of community to which the listener was warmly welcomed.

7.3 SERVING LOCAL INTERESTS

My research has demonstrated that these LCRs are rooted in the communities they represent. The presenters aimed to sound like they were in the midst of everything going on, offering a diet of relevant news updates and other useful, or even trivial but entertaining information

related to what was going on, who was doing what, why and how in their locality. This mission still makes sense today as it did when the UK government began drawing up the ILR regulatory framework in response to demand for better local radio services and more "local-interest programmes produced locally for the locality" (Powell, 1965, p. 5). As in my own practice, it was normal for the practitioners I met to peruse local press, publications, social media and websites for content and contributors. They liked to bring local people into the studios to interview on their shows or did so over the phone. This evidence confirms the notion that even when communications are occurring on virtual media platforms, they can still encourage real time conversation if not lead to meetings and events taking place in physical localities involving face-to-face contact (Urry, 2002; Hampton and Wellman, 2003; Gordon and de Souza e Silva, 2011).

My findings also support what previous scholarship has illustrated, that communities are often involved in, affected by, and interested in happenings beyond their immediate locality since people travel and have business or family interests elsewhere. Massey's notion of 'outwardlookingness' serves as a reminder that locally-relevant content can include information from elsewhere (Massey 2005, p. 15 in Moores, 2012, p. 81). The stations I studied catered for their local audiences by bringing them national and international news items and putting it into perspective. The stations took their news bulletins feed from Sky's IRN service. Headline stories often inspired conversation in the studio and between presenters and their audiences. Local angles became subjects for discussions and phone ins or themes for social media threads to engage the listeners.

My respondents knew, through correspondence and socializing, that their shows were listened to in a range of environments, in various ways and for different reasons. Thus, I can corroborate the literature about audiences listening to the radio arbitrarily in the background, (Crisell, 1986, p. 213), or as 'domestic accompaniment' (Tacchi, 2009, p. 174). I have not undertaken a reception study here, but the level of listener participation experienced and reported to me by the practitioners does indicate that there was concentrated listening going on too. Valuing the existence of 'discursive space' (Scannell, 1991, p. 223) in contemporary broadcasting, the presenters firmly felt that they were in a conversation with others when they went on-air, and aimed to highlight things they had in common and cared about, such as places and people in the locality. The added value of live radio is hearing information exchanged about issues, events and opportunities direct from the mouths of those at the heart of the stories. It adds authenticity, engenders familiarity and over time, trust. Listeners would

declare how useful or entertaining they found the shows, demonstrating a loyalty and dependence that verifies how the constancy of radio broadcasting schedules brings people much comfort (Moores, 2005, p. 11).

The presenters had the interests of their listeners in mind as they planned and delivered their shows. They routinely included references to local places in interviews and during on-air chatter between records, reminding the listener of the neighbourhoods served. Arguably, a presenter might not have to do this casual scene-setting and place-name dropping, because in each station system, there was a stock of promotional trails, jingles and drop-ins conveying station ID and frequency, mission statement and localities served, as well as local adverts. However, it sounded more authentic when the station presenters enhanced the output by demonstrating their own local knowledge, based on their day-to-day experiences in the area and familiarity with the places and people they talked about. As Lee at Vibe told me:

> *I will always talk about the local stuff – you know, could be what I've done the day*
> *before. Talk about the next morning, or where I've been, you know. Coming from*
> *round here just makes it so much easier for me.*   (Lee, Vibe)

Chris, another volunteer at Vibe made this clear when he explained what had drawn him to the station as a teenager:

> *During the links, presenters would be talking about local stuff that would be happening*
> *at the weekend, whether it be something like a local sports event…Watford Football*
> *Club or something…also just other sort of local events…happening in the town next*
> *week.*   (Chris, Vibe)

The discursive ease of radio talk renders programmes an efficient vehicle for local government members and representatives of other institutions and businesses to inform people about campaigns and important happenings. As Chris added:

> *I think we provide a great service to the community. And the council seem to think we*
> *do – [slight laugh] you know, and I don't think there's any higher praise than that*
> *really.*   (Chris, Vibe)

I have proved that producing local content for an LCR involves active engagement on the part of station members not only in that organization, but in all manner of enterprises around the catchment area, requiring their attention, if not physical presence. This points to the role of a

radio station as a publicity medium and sometimes a catalyst for the instigation of public events ranging from cultural exhibitions, music performances and charitable stunts to business projects and promotions. The interviews I conducted revealed how practitioners enacted their radio roles in their respective everyday lives, how their activities were woven through physical places and virtual spaces, overlapping and merging with other roles they had in the world. Not only were the practitioners carrying around media devices and other physical objects for use in their radio work, but the identity of community radio broadcaster, their programme's focus and the station's mission had become embodied within them. Their day-to-day activities were profoundly influenced by those understandings and the teleoaffective structure of their practice (Schatzki, 2002, p. 87). The effects rippled out around them as they carried out their "social relations in localities" (Stacey, 1969, pp. 140–41). The steps they took to build networks of useful contacts in the local area, to source information and publicize their shows and station were themselves a form of community building in and about a geographical place. This reinforces my argument that LCR production is a form of 'residential sociality' (Postill, 2008, p. 426).

This also validates Browne's definition of three types of community in relation to community radio: contributors; listeners; staff and volunteers (Browne, 2012, pp. 153–73), but I suggest they are interlinked in the social site. The practice-arrangements involved in producing local content extend well beyond the station building into the surrounding neighbourhoods where they overlap with other social sites. One especially well-integrated programme I came across was the 15-minute feature, *Environment Matters* on RV. The presenter Amanda imparted information on topics such as climate change and recycling and encouraged a local community response to global issues. She conducted on average three short interviews with different experts and community representatives each week, recorded as-live in the smaller of the two studios at the St Albans radio station. This show indicates that a type of activism that is still possible on LCR in the UK, and also illustrates how global issues can be successfully tackled on a local station (Aldridge, 2007, p. 5). Amanda's colleagues were very supportive of her work, mentioning forthcoming editions and past podcasts, but she was the sole producer and presenter. Ironically, she seemed so indispensable that it is debateable whether her niche project could be sustained if she ever stopped producing.

It is no secret that creating a sustainable LCR operation is a challenge. Financial pressures aside, having enough motivated competent volunteers is crucial. A collaborative community spirit within the stations is important, but the doors to new recruits from the wider community

should be kept open, not only to ensure new practitioners can be trained as potential replacements and introduced to existing networks of contacts but they can bring in new contacts too. I encountered situations where a station faced losing an entire slice of the programme schedule because they lost that volunteer who had a particular interest or specialist knowledge and, more importantly, access to certain people and organizations. The university station, Radio LaB was accustomed to volunteer turnover, being primarily a student-led station with new intakes each year, but other station teams comprising skilled, experienced volunteers who also possessed useful social capital in circles of special interest like The Eye's sports show faced problems of continuity when presenters were not available.

7.4 AIRING LOCAL VOICES

The inspiration and driving force behind the community radio movement in the UK was the notion of providing popular access to the airwaves. It eventually emerged as a legitimate solution to the ongoing problem of how to deliver viable very local broadcast services. By then, what was understood by the term 'minority voices' had become much more inter-cultural and ethnically-mixed than when that first disillusioned BBC engineer criticized the corporation for not reflecting Britain's regional variation (Eckersley, 1941). The mission of localized engagement has been transcribed into the legislation, requiring stations to address the best interests of their target communities through enabling them access to the airwaves. The stations I surveyed conform to an alternative model of non-confrontational community involvement, embedded within civil infrastructures of the economy and the authorities (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008), anything more radical or activist is all but absent in these legitimated social sites because of the Broadcasting Code.

Upon closer examination however, my findings challenge the assumption that the interests of a local community, when taken as everyone residing in or conducting business within a notional 5-10 km geographical radius, can be adequately catered on an LCR when one takes into account the 'multiple identities' of the population concerned (Massey 1994 in Moores, 2012, p. 77). If an LCR is to represent the interests of otherwise unheard voices on-air, the station team should be made up of those minority voices. Citizens at grassroots level should have opportunities to air and share their news and views, through 'participatory communication' (Dagron in Fuller, 2007, p. 203). I found this was achieved to different extents from station to station. During interview, Clive at RV admitted:

We did have a bit of a problem with a whole bunch of basically white, middle-aged, middle-class men at the station, which happens everywhere as well, so we did actually push to get more women, younger people and ethnic minorities. We haven't got too many of those. Do you [Klaudia] count as ethnic minority? [laughs] Probably not.

(Clive, RV)

Klaudia was a young student of Polish descent, brought up locally but had not yet applied for British citizenship. In good humour, she agreed with her mentor that she was setting an example to the younger generation and to other young women but was not a minority: "No, I went to Loreto. Come on! Do you know what I mean?" By referring to the well-regarded Roman Catholic secondary school she had attended, she was identifying with the white, Christian majority in the district. In terms of ethnic diversity, the Vibe team was only 19% BAME compared to the town's population at 28%, falling short of what it should be on paper. Radio LaB appeared to match the town's 45% and although The Eye and Somer Valley were the least ethnically diverse places, The Eye did have two BAME presenters. All the stations I surveyed demonstrated a prevailing male majority in their teams.

No one I spoke to in the stations expressed any concern over these membership profiles, and all declared that they worked hard at building meaningful community relations and nurturing a sense of 'connectedness' with their local population as a core strategy (Forde, 2011, p. 91). The practitioners I met, including managers, came across as genuinely community spirited. They also took pride in striving for an appealing sound and seemed conscious that they were competing with the BBC and commercial stations for listeners. Their unique selling point (USP) was their provision of very local content, by local people. Notionally, they were offering an alternative service to the mainstream, but the evidence suggests that the aspiration to sound slick and professional contributed to a set of understandings and local protocols that meant there still remained under-represented sections of community. This brings into question whether Habermas-inspired notions of a public sphere carry much weight in these social site of local content production (Fuller, 2007, p. 5). Though the intention was there, my findings suggest only limited 'transcultural articulation' of 'cultural expression' was achieved (Moylan, 2018, p. 285).

I noted in the account of my own practice in Chapter Four that when listening-in to NR, hearing my own voice piqued my interest, which suggests that hearing voices that resonate with one's own has an attention-grabbing effect. The opposite effect is also possible, when a listener is put off by a voice, or accent, that they do not recognize or relate to. As exemplified through

Green fingers, I produced the *Remarkable Harpenden* series to help NR appear and sound like it was engaging more with its locally situated audiences. Curating a collection of short features voiced by people with various vested interests in the local area was my strategy for taking an interest in and reflecting the interests of the community. I selected topics and voices that I felt would resonate with locally invested audiences. My approach to sourcing locally relevant content was opportunistic but also pragmatic from a time-management perspective.

I wanted to achieve some diversity mirroring the make-up of the local population so I strove to record interviews with as wide a range as possible from my known pool of contacts: from Mr Shah, a popular but self-effacing middle-aged Asian shopkeeper to confident and articulate, elderly members of the writers group, and a local sixth-former. It was by chance that my cold-calling approach to the allotments society presented Steve who had moved down from northern England to commute to London and enjoyed gardening on the allotments in his leisure time and Katerina, who had recently relocated from Eastern Europe. In hindsight though, I had sought out like-minded people, facilitating the airing and sharing of views not too divergent from my own.

On reflection, *Green fingers* and the other features in *Remarkable Harpenden*, said as much about me and my take on the world as they did about the people whose tales I shared. I meant well in the decisions I made regarding who to approach as contributors, like the woman running a local Food Bank, with whom I had only a tenuous link. But those people I ended up including in my features were to an extent self-selecting too, they had to agree to being interviewed by me, which required on their part an acceptance of what it involved. I benefited from the positive relationship Sylvia had already developed with the Town Council and with the Mayor to gain access to them for interviews. The work Sylvia had put in establishing the station as a credible local broadcaster paved the way for me. I was able to portray myself as a reporter with access to the corridors of power, at least in the local context. The town clerk, Carl, appeared in six of the ten features, and the Lady Mayor in four. Her monologue on the pride she takes in the community resonated with the overarching theme of my series:

> *I think the first thing to be proud of is the level of community togetherness, the level of community volunteering, the level of people that do get involved in the town in a very wide variety of ways…it's all these people who all give something back to the town and who are very important in making the town what it is…I'm very proud of the fact it is a town that people take a pride in living in.* (Rosemary, interviewee on NR)

My fieldwork in the other LCRs demonstrated that the people attracted to volunteering in those social sites took great pride in their towns too. I found that where there were more lines of communication feeding in and out of an LCR, and content was sourced through these interrelations, the more chance there was that different communities within the population of that locality were being reached. *The Parents Show* and *Verulam Sport* on RV were two good examples of how several volunteers were engaged in the planning and delivery of regular programmes. *The Parents Show* team seemed to fill the airwaves each week with a variety of new voices on topics and concerns arising amongst local parents, families and people working with children. With extensive contacts throughout the community at schools and other organizations, both Kathy and Lydia also belonged to professional networks of expertise. The consultancy they ran together outside the station demonstrated how the social site in which they conducted their programme production for RV was entangled with their other activities and socialities beyond the radio station.

The Parents Show team were adept at keeping up with both locally and globally trending topics, presenting a balance of content. They encouraged listeners and locals to share first-hand experiences, be they triumphs or catastrophes, at the same time as consulting leaders and service providers to share important information, explaining issues or facilitating access to useful resources. Occasionally expert voices were not based locally, but the producers deemed it necessary, since their priority was to source and share the best advice possible for their audience. This was also the approach of the *Environment Matters* producer too: to source and share news and insights from local people was the point of the programme, but to achieve context and seek accurate, trustworthy reports sometimes required accessing fresh experts who were not local.

RV's sports and local music shows on the other hand, seemed to favour more familiar voices from stables of regular contributors. Though the *Verulam Sport* team checked social media and message boards extensively and would encourage listeners to send updates on club news and matches, they relied heavily on the same rota of trusted correspondents to report credible and accurate information week after week. On RV's *Parsons Knows* show, Denise was contacted by more musicians from the area than she could accommodate but although she consciously aimed to support the local music scene and encourage new talent, she routinely featured bands already known to her. This way, she could feel confident that the live studio interviews and performances would be a consistently high standard. The local music show on Vibe appeared to take more risks with the bands they put on-air, inviting performers from

Hertfordshire and London to submit an MP3 by email. This was, however, the extent of public voices being routinely aired on Vibe, apart from when listeners were recorded phoning in and winning on-air competitions or vox pops were recorded at local events and the occasional interviews were broadcast with local sportspeople and celebrities.

For the team running Vibe, their primary licensed obligation was to recruit and train young, aspiring radio broadcasters from the local area to present music-based radio shows. Beyond that, it seemed to me that their commitment to providing speech output was delivered in the form of community-focused presenter banter, trailers and ads for local businesses, events and projects with a webpage set aside for publishing articles on local cultural events and other news. Whereas my impressions of both Somer Valley and The Eye convinced me that both LCRs prioritized localness over professionalism when recruiting voices on air. This is not a polite way of implying that their output sounded less accomplished, more a commendation that they encouraged socio-demographic diversity and allowed volunteers to present shows naturally.

7.5 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The station managers I met professed to being keen to monitor on-air broadcasting standards. Of course, one needs to bear in the mind the possibility that they were performing for my benefit, to ensure that I was impressed with their operation. The LCRs I studied followed conventions of mainstream broadcasting, conforming to the Broadcasting Code by observing certain protocols and avoiding certain words and behaviours that might lead to licence suspension, fines, or in the worst-case scenario criminal prosecution if reported. Apart from any concern over the reputational and financial damage that might ensue following a lapse in on-air etiquette, there was a commercial incentive too. I heard compelling arguments to support the idea that contributing to social gain includes support for local economies. An LCR can be an important word-of-mouth publicity engine not only by offering free mentions with their 'what's on' features but as an accessible and affordable means of promotion for businesses and commercial enterprises, as well as charities and not-for-profit organizations with advertising budgets. Ofcom allows many community stations to earn up to 50% of their income from the sale of airtime and sponsorship packages. This partly explains why RV and Vibe sounded more professional than one might expect from an alternative, community access sector. Their management teams were motivated to build loyal audiences so as to raise the value of their station's airtime and online spaces for selling advertising. As Phil at RV had

commented, if you "can't sell the advertising … you've got a problem cos you can't run the station".

Being 'listenable to' was also important to LCR teams for attracting other forms of investment through funding, be that by applying to local councils, government or charitable award schemes, local lotteries and community fundraisers. Being reputable made a difference when LCR volunteers were looking for donations of equipment, space for studios, or hoping for invitations to attend high profile local events to boost their stations profile and create further opportunities. Examples included NR's Sylvia being permitted to record interviews in the Town Hall and to attend and report on public meetings, Vibe FM being entrusted with organizing Watford's annual Fireworks event on behalf of the Town Council, and RV presenters being invited year after year to host local awards ceremonies such as for the newspaper and the Mayor's Pride. Herein lies a tension between pursuing the community access mission and optimizing standards to attract income to sustain that activity.

For LCR volunteers, a balance needs to be struck between the time committed and results achieved in programming terms, as far as impact on the audiences is concerned and the amount of personal satisfaction generated. Other considerations might include the patience of one's family and friends when there were other aspects of everyday life that need attending to. My practice-as-research project became all-consuming. I often worked into the late evening, particularly when I was editing because I find it such an absorbing activity. Most of the volunteers I spoke to had neither the opportunity nor the incentive to do the same. On reflection, it is not a sustainable way to do a hobby, even if one regards it as a charitable way to contribute to the local community. Efficiency is paramount, no doubt this explains why live or recorded-as-live interviews are preferred over creatively producing multi-track audio features. The practitioners I met were more than capable operating the desks themselves as well as planning and preparing content, arranging guests and so forth. In most cases, especially on the daily and specialist shows, they had volunteer assistants whose voices also occasionally appeared on-air and contributed to online outputs of the stations.

7.6 ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND MULTIMEDIA OUTPUT

My evidence indicates that LCR is not simply on-air radio broadcasting; it is as much about online visual and audio-visual media content provision as it is about transmitting analogue signals. Rather than detracting from the radio service, web pages and social media supplement and complement the practice both on the production side and dissemination. Actively staying

connected with the audiences can fuel a show and an entire station. Despite being an online-only station, NR's website was the smallest, least content-filled and interactive in my research corpus. Had the group running the station benefited from more volunteers to manage their online platforms and social media, they might have developed a virtual community hub, similar to that of RV, which has since earned the station praise and recognition.[71] Overall, the lack of volunteers at NR limited not only the number of locally-produced and locally-focused shows but constrained engagement with potential listeners and proved ultimately to be a disadvantage: the station having ceased broadcasting by 2019.

When I made *Remarkable Harpenden* in 2017, the material arrangements at NR meant that I had no option to present a live show. My personal stock of recording equipment was only suitable for one-to-one interviewing rather than group conversations. And in any case, I had decided to produce audio features that could be used on the station for some time after I had moved on. I was effectively a remote reporter, on a short-term assignment acting under my own initiative and under my own roof. I had the necessary resources and devices such as an audio recorder, a smartphone and a computer connected to the internet with editing software. With these tools, I was able to perform like others in the sector to provide coverage and produce features remotely, outside of the radio station studios. For the collection of voices I curated to share different perspectives on the town's assets, I recorded interviews in a variety of locations: my home, the Town Hall, contributor's homes and offices, and on location on pathways, in parks and allotments.

I used written text and photographs alongside the streaming and posting of my audio features because I knew that online interaction would be important for marketing purposes. The WordPress blog I wrote and the Facebook and Twitter promotional activity I did, demonstrate that visuals are important aspects of LCR. Naturally, I hoped that listening to the features without any accompanying images would convey an impression of the town and could construct, in the mind's eye of the listener, fairly well-defined representations of the settings and activities covered. But I found images useful for illustrating the themes of each feature and potentially attracting people to listen to the content. Hence, I did not regard the use of photography as detracting from the value of the audio offering, but as a complementary tactic. Comparing NR with the other stations I studied, it was obvious that being present and active

---

[71] In 2019, RV won Silver in the Community Radio Awards for their website in the 'Innovation' category.

online made a station appear more approachable to listeners and both enhanced the listening experience and facilitated face-to-face encounters in the studios and at public events.

Online platforms also provide useful analytics from activity for measuring engagement with the content. For instance, Terry at Radio Lab reported that their Facebook page had 3000 followers as did the Twitter account. James from Vibe explained how they exploit social media to create a buzz around their weekly local music show and encourage listeners to make an appointment to listen. He explained:

> *What we can monitor is the live streams and the live listens and I think our record on one show – this was because it created a lot of social media buzz amongst people was about…800 individual listens at one moment in time – so that's 800 different devices with Vibe on.*   (James, Vibe)

I recently googled the list of Ofcom licensed stations and established that every LCR in the UK has its own website. Online platforms for radio are ubiquitous, in both senses. The stations in my study all had multiple pages of information online, including: history and other official information such as contact pages and their licence agreement; the current programme schedule; profiles of the presenters, often with portraits of them in action; galleries of photographs showing outside broadcast and other promotional activities out and about in the local area; What's On listings, event diaries and blogs. In addition, they provided a streaming or 'listen live' service from their homepage. Once aired, entire shows were available online in regularly updated Listen Again sections or edited into more compact versions of presenter interviews with guests and contributors and uploaded as more enduring podcasts. Most sites carried live links to Twitter accounts and other social media platforms. As Dom at Somer Valley said:

> *Probably in line with most other community stations at this point in time, Facebook is our principle outlet for social media and it's the best way on interacting with the station.*   (Dom, Somer Valley)

Through my research, I have verified how the affordances of digital technologies exploited by radio stations give listeners as well as practitioners flexibility in time and space. Most of my respondents described using mobile digital technologies to send on-location reports or conduct outside broadcasts live from local events. Many were able to produce audio at home, from short links to recording whole shows. The presenter also took into account how listeners

were engaging with their content and how to increase and enhance that engagement. Where their audiences were located, what they were doing and where they were going when engaging in the output did not rely solely on their being within reach of the transmitter or within earshot of a radio set. It is now feasible to tap into local stations from afar and whilst on the move. The LCR presenters in my research regularly reminded their listeners of the various ways they could hear the station and their favourite shows. They would list tuning in options on traditional radios, online, smartphones and smart speakers and there were frequent promotional trails declaring the same. During listening-in research across the case study stations, I heard presenters mention and make dedications to listeners from well beyond their respective catchment areas. Jonny on RV wished someone working in London's Covent Garden a happy birthday. In several of my interviews with the selected practitioners, I was told of audience members from abroad who interacted with their shows and listened online. Student Klaudia on RV's *Generation Gap* told me excitedly about fans of the show who contacted her on social media from abroad. When I joined her to watch Richard present the *Mid-Morning Show*, I noticed on-going social media and email correspondence with listeners in France to whom he made dedications.

The online interactions I observed between radio station representatives and audiences seemed to engender the sort of relationship-building that might delight sociologists concerned by the impact of digitalization on community relations (such as Wellman and Hampton 1999; Hampton and Wellman 2003). My findings corroborate academic literature regarding the increasing importance of online and digital communications in the production and delivery of radio services (Bonini et al. 2014; Zoellner and Lax 2017). Relationship-building and content sourcing becomes focused on online activity platforms. Internet and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, What's App and Dropbox offer visual and textual opportunities for engaging with and contributing to the radio output. These Apps and the websites of my case study LCRs provided additional places and pathways for the performance of interactive behaviours and social actions that were encouraging and enabling communities within the target populations to engage with their programmes, as well as enabling practitioners to source ideas, inspiration and interviewees for their programmes.

7.7 LOCATION MATTERS

My evidence supports the literature that for community broadcasters, just as for professionals in the industry, digital production and storage technologies enable spatial and temporal versatility in where and when radio work can be conducted to create virtual spaces of

community participation (Gazi, Jedrzejewski and Starkey, 2011, p. 13). Online interactivity had clearly become essential for conducting information-gathering. However, being sociable still required face-to-face exchanges at public events. Such physical interaction was just as important to the practitioners for attuning themselves to the goings-on in the neighbourhoods around them. I noted in my case studies that the more often station staff went out and about and were personally involved in local events, as well as maintaining their presence on social media, the more conversations were taking place which generate content for on-air features. LCR members were engaging in organized socialities, associations and groups, participating in social conversations, helping to implement projects and arrange events. Notionally, a range of different walks of life within and weaving through the locality could thus be represented on-air through those relationships that built up around the LCR with each and every one of its volunteers.

Therefore, whilst practitioners at the local stations I studied interacted online with their audiences, and enjoyed the sociability of the conversational environments they created with their live on-air shows, I argue there is a further aspect of creating a community of and for local audiences. For that, it was also necessary to have studio buildings in or near the town centre, providing opportunities for listeners to meet the station staff and personalities. Significantly, the social site of NR, where I chose to conduct my initial practice-as-research exercise, had no station building with live radio studios. This meant that the material infrastructure required to make the radio streaming service possible, including hardware and software, equipment and devices used by the small NR team, was distributed amongst their homes, offices, garages or sheds. There was no single place where the station was situated where listeners could gather. This created more pressure to attend and report on events and circulate with the public to promote the station.

Sylvia, the member of NR who I interviewed after my internship had ended, was the only practitioner involved in that social site who tried to create such opportunities for physical interaction. She had ambitions to promote the station locally and further embed it in the community but ultimately found that it was too much to undertake on her own. With only half a dozen members, the NR team relied on remote producers to supply specialist music shows as content, which severely limited their ability to convey localness through their output. Added to the absence of a physical hub in the locality, this severely constrained any potential for listeners, contributors, advertisers and other supporters to engage.

This lack of a communal space also impacted upon the possibilities for face-to-face engagement between me and the other volunteers. Collaborative relationship-building and mutual promotion amongst the station's remote programmers and presenters was more complicated, if not negligible in my project. This hindered the promotion and scheduling of my *Remarkable Harpenden* series on the station, as illustrated through the example of *Green fingers*. I did not have a particular show for which my audio was bound, and I lacked the agency to influence how my contributions were programmed into the schedules and the system. The arrangements at NR presented a scenario in which a community of actively interacting practitioners had failed to materialize. I had no camaraderie with other presenters involved with the station to create a buzz and an appointment to listen to the features I had made. Had I collaborated with Sylvia sooner, she might have interviewed me on her show to introduce my series to the listeners. It may then have accommodated better on the station with her additional on-air and social media promotions of it. When I encountered the failed transmission of my features due to a technician's error, it was ultimately the result of inadequate inter-personal communication. This relational instance involving the mishandling of technology had an impact which rippled out into my wider practice-arrangements (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 100–101). It disrupted the impression of professionalism I had given my contributors and I lost face when I let them down.

7.8 JOURNALISTIC ELEMENTS

The information yielded by my fieldwork serves to highlight that journalistic activities are being carried out in the social sites of LCR local content production, even though this is not much evident in the literature. My research has indicated the constraints on news gathering capability in the LCR that create a dependency on the coverage of general news (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky, 2010, p. 37). Practitioners tended to react and respond to already published or broadcast news stories rather than reveal or follow leads to explore tip-offs and raise issues themselves. It seemed to be the exception rather than the rule that a reporter would be sent out to cover a story. My respondents at The Eye delighted in recounting the time when sports presenter Johnny had heard about a murder in Melton Mowbray and attended the scene. Since he happened to be available, not at work, he was able to stay with the unfolding story all night and report back to the station. It was a national news story, and they had their own representative there. I argue that although the style of news presentation in LCR is perhaps more informal, even entertaining, and although the content discussed and

presented may not be urgent or as time-sensitive as a hard-hitting piece, nevertheless the information and sentiments shared do have meaning, value and impact.

My investigations into how the volunteers searched for topics, happenings, news and campaigns, proved that they were often following industry conventions and implementing journalistic skills, even if they were not self-aware of this aspect of their routine practice. The presenters I encountered all possessed a degree of the 'nous' (or '*nouse*') required to find something newsworthy to share; there was a shared notion of what counted as a story and how to shape and present it (Hemmingway, 2008, pp. 194–195). As Ryan from Vibe put it:

> *It's up to us to be a bit journalistic about it and if we're out in the community, generally just shopping or we hear stuff through word of mouth, it's about chasing that up … to make sure that it's 1) true and 2), it's good enough local content to send out.*

(Ryan, Vibe)

It was clear from my research that some LCR practitioners had more journalistic training and experience than others. There is more to being journalistic than just sourcing news items. There are conventions and codes for how newsworthy material is shaped, by which I mean prepared for broadcast by planning and conducting interviews, editing and presenting appropriately to convey information accurately and impartially or objectively and fairly. In my case, I had been trained and worked for several years in radio news production and presentation. LCR volunteers receive initial training when recruited to put together reports and programmes, a process that often includes pre-recording and editing interviews, but few go on to specialize in news reporting per se.

The stations I investigated each had former or current freelance broadcasters and journalists on their volunteer teams. At Somer Valley, Dom and his assistant trained young people to take stories from the press and script them for news bulletins. Radio LaB benefited from University staff on hand as well as student practitioners starting out on media and journalism courses at the University. Locally relevant material for programmes was sought and sifted, edited and packaged using journalistic newsgathering methods. Respondents would watch or read other media sources, local and international, broadcast, printed and online newspapers, magazines and relied heavily on social media for story ideas. For instance, Lydia from the RV *Parents Show* explained that Facebook was a useful platform on which guests would approach them. It also enabled the team to reach out to community resources on pages and groups like parent networks to follow up local incidents. The LCRs were on mailing lists for public relations and

news agencies, and other local organizations and practitioners also communicated directly with existing contacts in the community such as government officials, businesses, charitable organizations and societies, leisure and entertainment spaces and educational establishments.

Many of the daytime presenters I met would approach local newspaper editors who allowed their published content to be shared, either by headlines and articles being read out on air or links to their news feeds posted on the station website. In the case of RV, a press reporter was invited in weekly to contribute to the drivetime show. The presenter of *Outspoken* on RV recounted how she modelled her news review on the BBC's Andrew Marr Show: she would have a guest in to discuss some of the things that were in the local news that week. However, whilst my findings provide evidence that the practitioners recognized a 'scoop' (Forde, 2011, p. 79), and had a sense of what mattered to the audience, they had limited resources to follow stories up. They had to rely on efficient lines of communication to find content. Being journalistic meant being alert and observant, keeping an ear to the ground and eyes peeled for a story to use in broadcast conversations or interviews, often complemented by online articles and social media posts. Purely the fact that a presenter, known to the radio audience as being local, was discussing a matter made it less general and offered some context and perspective.

When experts and spokespersons were brought into the studio or interviewed over the phone, useful information was shared which was relevant to the local audience that may have appreciated the engagement to help come to terms with the ramifications of a national or even global turn of events.[72] Jack for instance at Radio LaB took on the national shortage of blood donations and made a feature out of that. Amanda at RV made it her business to raise awareness about the importance of taking local action to protect the environment and avoid further damaging the delicate balance of earth's ecosystems. None of the LCRs I studied had a newsroom to assist in this work. This is the case for most stations in the sector. They are not sufficiently resourced to fund and sustain a news service with skilled and experienced personnel. Their main news and updates on breaking stories are supplied by IRN's national bulletins at the top of the hour supplied by Sky News (Niblock and Machin, 2007). The annual subscription is around £300[73]. Serendipity played large a role in content sourcing, as when I

---

[72] As I write, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically disrupted the everyday lives of citizens around the world. Community Radio stations are doing their utmost to provide up-to-date tips and advice and generate a sense of togetherness and solidarity whilst reassuring their listeners through maintaining continuity of their broadcasting schedules, wherever possible.

[73] http://a-bc.co.uk/radio-news-providers-comparison/ accessed 29/4/2020

ended up being interviewed on RV. Such opportunistic instances were often grounded in proximity, word-of-mouth and social media networking within known circles. I detected that there might be an inadvertent propensity to block out alternative points of view

My post-production process for *Remarkable Harpenden* differed from that experienced routinely by most of those I interviewed and observed in the other LCRs. I had the luxury of being able to set my own deadlines and allowed myself plenty of time for editing. In style terms, I produced features that I would want listen to, based on my current listening habits as a fan of the intelligent speech-based BBC Radio Four: well-enunciated vocal delivery, at a measured pace, of intellectual discussion with a dose of creative audio artistry. I hoped that the features would also interest those people I imagined might hear them once I publicized the series amongst my social circle and the contributors themselves as well as their families, friends and acquaintances. The labour-intensive way I put together the features would put off most volunteer practitioners. It only felt worth it for me since the process was part of my research. The reality of LCR is that time is scarce.

The issues I covered in my practice-as-research project were topical, but I avoided time-sensitive matters so that the features would have a longer 'shelf-life'. I did not want to cover anything too 'hot' and investigate or expose anything contentious going on in the neighbourhood. This was partly because I did not want to risk embarking on a time-consuming, longer term investigative reporting project that might involve an in-depth fact-finding exercise around, say, the hotly-contended and ongoing planning application process involving a new secondary school in the town. The other, related reason behind taking a 'softer' view on town life was because I live there, I wanted to establish and safeguard my reputation for being an approachable, trustworthy and impartial local radio broadcaster rather than a scandal-seeking newshound. The stakes felt real for me because I was local, identifiable and accountable.

7.9   SOCIAL STATUS AND CONTENT BIAS

In this final section of analysis, I discuss a factor which became evident through my own practice-as-research experience and which I have found also occurs in the other LCRs. My findings indicate that someone's experience and positionality within the wider constellation of a practice, and the social status they have earned in the community and elsewhere in life, play pivotal roles in how they achieve access to a station community and onto its airwaves. These embodied, accrued experiences impact upon what practitioners and contributors bring to their radio practice in terms of a range of understandings, sensibilities. Such common sense also

196

informs what they perceive deserves coverage on air. I argue that there is more to a voice and the persona that comes across on-air and online, than meets the eye and ear. A voice conveying information, beliefs and opinions, emotions, humour may belong to one person, but it reflects their status and stance within the social site and indicates their positionality within wider discourses of society. Incorporating Bourdieu's notion of positionality, we can reflect on "all kinds of positional coordinates, such as gender, level of education, class origins, residence, etc." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 143). I suggest that just such a reading of the on-air voices I surveyed in my research reveals room for improvement in the levels of diversity represented on individual stations in the LCR sector.

An important matter arising related to the arrangements and relations impacting upon the performances of LCR volunteers and others who contributed to station output was the cost involved. Practitioners were investing not only their time, contacts, knowledge and skills to support their local community station but there were real financial costs involved. This potentially ruled out lower income recruits and community voices. Conducting any socio-economic analysis of volunteers was beyond the remit of my research, but in terms of the range of people recruited to station teams as on-air presenters, I did find that there was an imbalance between genders: male voices outnumbered female. From my observations, I did not feel that the women were any more intimidated than the men by the studio technologies, the broadcast equipment and other hardware and software routinely used in their production work. They were taught to handle what was necessary and there were others on hand to assist if they became concerned about any malfunction. What I did find however, was that the female volunteers had other responsibilities in their domestic lives that were more difficult to juggle when additional demands were place on their time by the radio station management. For instance, the extra training sessions at RV were problematic for anyone with children or caring duties.

In my own practice, I was privileged. I benefitted from easy access to people, places and information sources. I had the freedom, the physical ability, time and means of transport to travel. This ease of mobility in accessing certain people and places both for my feature-making project and the academic research also depended on how I was perceived in relation to the professions I represented – in this case, radio news production and academia. Learning of my affiliations would inform my programme contributors' and research participants' expectations of how I would conduct myself during our encounters. My approach was to indicate my history of working with BBC local radio as a strategy to gain access and trust: capitalizing on the fact

that the institution is generally held in high esteem, at least at the local level. Likewise, I met people who had heard of my University, Birkbeck, and were suitably impressed by its international reputation. I am certain that perceptions of my positionality in the neighbourhood, academia and broadcasting in general, facilitated my endeavours, especially since most of my activities relied upon social interaction.

Self-critical reflection on my NTROs indicates that I displayed a degree of unintentional bias in my feature-making towards the coverage of what felt familiar, trusted, important, relevant. I chose to cover aspects of the town that resonated with me: elements of its cultural, historical and environmental character that I personally appreciate and consider worth celebrating. This was, if not deliberately selfish or pragmatic, then a subconscious manifestation of the cultural tastes as determined by my class, as Bourdieu would classify (Bourdieu, 1984). I did attempt to bring in a range of views and locally invested voices of people that were not necessarily in my immediate social circle. Critical analysis of my features however indicates that I produced a bucolic impression of the town, conforming to the vested interests held by perhaps only a certain privileged section of the community. The values portrayed in *Green fingers* are recognisable as traditionalist, a stance upheld by The Harpenden Society, an association of residents set up to protect the heritage of the town against too much development and modernization. On the whole, this group is comprised of middle-aged and elderly residents, and I was acquainted with a dozen or more members; some I knew as neighbours and others through involvement in community groups and activities. The most significant implication of this fact for my feature-making was that the people I contacted in order to compile a list of interviewees shared a similar world view to myself. Those contributors appreciated the opportunity to be featured on local radio, even if they were not likely to listen themselves. They realized that to have their views, opinions and beliefs aired relating to projects and campaigns they were involved with would be good publicity and might even boost their social status in return.

So, the choices I made of subject matter, local voices and production style were highly subjective, dictated largely by my own tastes and what seemed to make most sense to me at the time. This 'common sense' was no doubt influenced in part by my prior experience working in mainstream media. I inadvertently reproduced normative 'British' values in my media outputs (Moylan, 2018, p. 284). I found no evidence in my case studies either to suggest that "diverse approaches to production practice" were undertaken (ibid., p. 285). Rather, the regulatory framework forming the intangible arrangements within which the wider licensed

community sector operates, would seem to discourage it. When considering the practice of other LCR producers and presenters, they were enabled in delivering a local service effectively by being well established in their communities as upstanding citizens. Having a network of acquaintances who could be drawn upon as a resource and willing to affirm one's good reputation opened doors to potential contributors and sources of news and information. Not all producers and presenters knowingly relied upon their own social capital in this way, but exploitation of the symbolic capital of their station was explicit.

Through the research, I discovered what other roles the volunteers held in other local organizations. Some clearly had a good deal of social capital and were connected with other well-regarded institutions with their own symbolic capital, such as schools, local newspapers, theatres, environmental and welfare lobby groups. The places they knew, and who they knew was just as important as what they knew. The volunteers brought to bear their innate knowledge and understandings. Their personalities shaped the practice they engaged in and influenced the sound of the station they were contributing to. I may have taken for granted the degree to which social capital was exploited in their production practice, if I had not noticed its pivotal role through auto-ethnographic research on my own creative practice. The practitioners were not necessarily aware of it when they habitually performed their roles, day after day, week after week, and consequently they would not have articulated it to me.

My observations and interviews encouraged the practitioners to weigh up their commitment to the station with the social value of their endeavours. They found this a positive experience, as they were prompted to stop and think about why they habitually did certain things in certain ways as part of their production routines, even when responding to new situations and unexpected occurrences. Some seemed very self-aware already of how they were trading on their own social status to source content, such as the shows on RV featuring local music and parenting issues. Others seemed slower to realize that their own and their station's social or symbolic capital was enhanced through their activities. Amanda's activity featuring environmental current affairs represents the significance of the social/symbolic capital of a person who pursues specialist interests and performs various roles in the community which interweave across the social sites of her everyday life.

As other academic research has proven, time-pressed practitioners are often too preoccupied with getting the job done to reflect on the minutiae of how and why they are doing it (Schön, 1991; Niblock, 2007; Lindgren, 2011). My research has found, and it is important to acknowledge, that there is a temptation - indeed a tendency - in the context of LCR, to cover

items on-air that one is personally already, or only, interested in and to invite people into the studio with whom there is a common interest. With time and availability being such limited resources too, efficiency is of the essence, so approaching an existing social contact provides the confidence that it will be relatively easy to arrange and conduct an informative and entertaining, broadcastable conversation. Using Browne's concept of the three communities of community radio, we can infer that the downside of this approach is that if a radio station team of staff and volunteers rely on a routine pool of participants (Browne, 2012, p. 155), and neither community is particularly diverse, then collectively they may not do enough through their output and associated activities to ensure that all corners of the heterogenous audience community are reached. There is a risk that bonds are built so tightly that bridges and connections across sub-communities cannot also be constructed and maintained (Putnam, 2001).

7.10 A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Through participant observation and interviews, I enacted an "ethnographic way of seeing" which helped me understand my respondents and appreciate what their experiences of producing local content for community radio meant to them (Bird, 2003, p. 8). I was open to learning how the volunteers were differentially enabled, equipped and resourced and how the social site in which their practice was entangled, folded into their daily lives. Through my encounters in the field, I inferred that how they felt about and routinely performed their roles was affected by their subjective perceptions of their station's mission, their personal motivation for doing it, as well as their stake in the local area served. I sensed a host of personal motivations which I sorted approximately into practice categories (Appendix 10.17). I use these only to illustrate a pattern that I noticed through my research that indicates a stage-of-life basis for framing volunteer relationships with LCR, rather than to rigidly pigeonhole any one practitioner. Indeed, several of my participants fall into more than one category.

Being a member of an LCR can be regarded by some as a hobby, one which happens to incorporate that commitment to the sustained performance of radio production-related tasks for the benefit of others in the community. Membership offers opportunities for continued learning and artistic expression and to make new acquaintances, offering opportunities to build social capital through taking on public roles or leadership positions. Denise, for instance, who produces and presents the local music show on RV, had come to the attention of station management for organizing music events in St Albans. She was head-hunted for her social/symbolic capital and for her specialist knowledge. She remained active and committed

to the music community and to the charities that she supported, over and above the radio show. In fact, she was able to exploit the radio show and associated media channels to further her personal business interests.

Volunteering in LCR is undertaken in practitioners' spare time, and those I studied seemed to feel it was important that they should be able to enjoy themselves. In most cases their involvement made them feel good about themselves. Giving something back to the community was a big draw to those who were retired or already established in a career with the time and flexibility to offer their experience and specialist skills. However, my findings resonate with the argument of media theorists seeking to establish the value of unpaid labour. Hesmondhalgh and Baker for instance, discuss the precarity experienced by freelance creatives who may find themselves unwaged but no less skilled to emphasize that this dichotomy need not exist (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Although the sector may be staffed primarily by volunteers seeking personal fulfilment, they are not unprofessional in their skillsets or their approach to the work they undertake. Indeed, for some, it can be a means of enhancing one's employability. Training opportunities in a community broadcasting environment enable entry into mainstream careers by offering not only specialist skills like media production, journalism and presentation but various other transferable skills such as dealing with publics. This counts as social gain too. A high value is placed on LCR's potential for providing services whereby local people who found education challenging, have mental health problems or struggle with showing or feeling empathy towards others, may be taught useful skills with which to secure employment elsewhere. My research found that this was the case for Somer Valley where members work on specific media skills and instructional schemes with disadvantaged children and young adults, for which they can apply for grants and funding, so helping to sustain the provision of radio output as a by-product.

Volunteering for a successful, increasingly high-profile local radio station is attractive to the station's members because it lends them symbolic capital. The glamour of working on radio, the pleasure derived from being involved in the entertainment industry, the satisfaction of being involved in a local media organization that can cover local affairs is well worth the pain. A few of them have even achieved what could be deemed pseudo-celebrity status, at least in their relatively limited local arenas. Denise at RV, for example, told me she is often invited to host stages at large public events. The motivational positions taken with regards to the practice affected the ways in which the practitioners responded to the teleoaffective structure

of the social site, which explains some of the conflicts and tensions that arise when mismatches occurred regarding expectations and levels of commitment.

There were many volunteers who, for various reasons, were motivated to dedicate over 30 hours each week to their shows. Some I met had been involved in community radio since the 1990s, several were volunteering in hospital radio before that. They had become emotionally involved with their station, which created conflict and resentment especially when balancing management expectations against the members' availability and limited resources, like spare time, money and useful acquaintances. Examples provided by the more in-depth research at RV included instances when volunteers were expected to assist at outside broadcasts and attend on-going training workshops which made them feel unduly pressurized by the management. It seems paradoxical to me now, trying to equate the management's stated position, discouraging 'ownership' of the shows when I have evidence of the extent to which many of the presenters were intimately and inextricably entangled and implicated in the current iterations of the shows they produced.

The situation at RV regarding poorly-attended training sessions revealed the complexities of corralling a loosely-connected group of people who, although they frequented the same studios, shared the same equipment to perform similar radio production activities, had become used to coming and going at different times on different days. To gather them together for face-to-face meetings was almost impossible. By committing to attend workshops, the volunteers feared they would be opening themselves up to criticism, encouraged to change their ways and adjust to new routines and systems with a view to improving performance. I also observed how easy it can be to offend people when trying to express one's frustration with them. No one at RV at that time was a paid member of staff, bound by legal contract with the expectation of an annual review directly linked to keeping their job or winning a performance-related bonus. Consideration of how to manage and motivate volunteer staff is beyond the remit of this thesis, nevertheless it goes without saying, the challenges are significant.

How explicitly aware my respondents were about how their volunteering in LCR impacted on their own lives and life in general varied, but I found that when I questioned my participants about their practice, they valued the opportunity to reflect upon and to articulate their role. At the end of my 30-minute interview with Ryan at Vibe, he thanked me for making him think carefully about his work. He was clearly heartened by the opportunity and his final comment was:

Because I'm from the area, Watford and Hemel originally, I'm proud to be here and
proud to do a good job because I know that if I've got friends or family or who else in
the area anyone who says they've heard of Vibe, it always seems to be quite positive
feedback and…it's nice to be involved here, yeah.   (Ryan, Vibe)

There were noticeable differences between stations because each social site had its own
unique contextually specific set of practice-arrangements. How it made sense for volunteers to
produce locally relevant content for and with local audiences varied from station to station,
according to their licensing documentation, target area demographics and Key Commitments.
Through all my dealings with the wider LCR community however, I have found that there is a
shared sense of purpose and meaningfulness throughout the sector informed partly by what
the practitioners understand is laid down by Ofcom, partly by exposure to the proceedings of
and relating to the CMA, and partly by the conversational spaces in which practitioners discuss
their practice in the studios, at networking events or online.

An aspect that the tiny team at hubless NR had in common with the other LCRs is that the
people running it belonged to the community sector and were similarly inculcated in the ways
of the wider radio industry. The team at the fledgling station aspired to an Ofcom licence, and
in anticipation, produced and sourced output that they disseminated along conventional lines,
with timetabled programme scheduling and presentation formalities adhering to the
Broadcasting Code. This was self-evident from listening to the output. I was not privy to the
private intranet communication platforms that any of my researched stations ran, but I do
belong to a number of Facebook forums and there is much evidence there of how issues are
introduced and debated, sometimes hotly, as the sector is not without its internal wrangling. It
is beyond the remit of this thesis to go into too much detail, but the sorts of items that come
up include how to respond to Ofcom consultations and DCMS pronouncements, what can be
done about signal interference from pirate stations and what rights and support the CMA
should be lobbying the government for.

7.11 CONCLUSION

My analysis of the information and evidence yielded by my research for *Talk of the town* has
brought forward aspects of production practice in LCR which support my assertion that the
engagement of volunteers is worthy of attention as contributing to the wider media landscape
of cultural production in society. For each station studied, I considered how the voices of
practitioners, contributors, supporters, sponsors, listeners and other involved parties were

aired, their messages communicated, and their interests shared on-air and online. I realized through my own practice-as-research that my interpretation of who and what seemed interesting and worthy of being featured was subjective, and that one of the strengths of community radio is participative collaboration in programme-making.

I have demonstrated that the LCR volunteers I studied were interacting virtually and in close physical proximity with people who lived or worked in the target area, as well as with experts and commentators from beyond who possessed knowledge or offered something material which was deemed to be in the community audience's interest. Thus, the practitioners sourced, shaped, shared and promoted a constant flow of entertaining and informative content on-air and online. In doing this, they were also helping create and sustain the conditions for community-building through place-based sociality. This pressure to deliver on their licensed commitments meant that the core operational strategies had to be taken seriously. So, although many volunteers in community stations sign up to have fun by meeting new people, playing their favourite music and enjoying the kudos of being on the radio, the volunteering aspect means that the commitment to join involves sacrifices and becomes a more selfless act.

The evidence suggests that when a station is situated locally and its volunteers spend time attending events making themselves accessible to the public, the likelihood is that these practitioners are more open to hearing their news and views and attuned to what is in their listeners' best interests. However, two related issues arise here. The first is that a local population comprises a multiplicity of sub-communities with diverse needs and cultural tastes. Secondly, I have found that the way LCRs are operated may lead to content bias in terms of which local voices and interests are represented. When putting together a programme schedule, LCRs need presenters and contributors with something to offer other than time and enthusiasm. They value expertise in other fields *and* good community connections. Hence, personal motivations of practitioners vary and are differentially accommodated as they negotiate the arrangements of the social site through their distinct iterations of the practice.

I have shown that there were practitioners with charismatic personalities, bringing their own combinations of special qualities to the airwaves, and many had extensive social networks which they drew on for sourcing programme content. The benefits they experienced of their participation varied and I found that the pressure to commit so much time and creative energy to meeting objectives for contributing towards social gain led to the potential for conflict. What this means for the sector will be asserted in the following, final chapter when I conclude

the thesis with a discussion of what it means to produce local radio content through the prism of UK LCR in English market towns. I will also outline the value of the social site lens in practice theory as I advocate the resulting reflexive, practice-centric approach for researching media production practices.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I share my conclusions and recommendations derived from this detailed investigation into the ways local content is sourced, shaped and shared on community radio. The findings are localized, providing nuanced insights into how the practice-arrangements of LCR social sites in English market towns are experienced and negotiated by community radio volunteers. These examples help to contextualize the unique character of the UK model amid the global constellation of community radio operations. I will confirm how the practice-centric perspective enabled me to develop the notion that radio production practice is at once a situated, but spatially complex set of media tasks involving a certain array of technologies as well as a dynamic set of social activities. I will then explain the additional benefit of applying reflexivity to researching prevailing practice-arrangements, particularly when incorporated with conducting creative practice-as-research in the field under examination. Then, I consider the implications of my findings for understanding the conditions under which community radio stations operate and their role in place-based socialities. I emphasize the importance of local media for communities and the challenges facing LCR in the UK. I will conclude by promoting the value of a reflexive, practice-centric mindset in academic media research and then sharing my recommendations for building resilience in community radio, relating to the importance of ensuring social diversity on-air and the need for more government-backed support and investment in the sector.

8.2 A PRACTICE-CENTRIC UNDERSTANDING OF RADIO PRODUCTION

Talk of the town has been a socio-cultural exploration of the media production-related doings and sayings unfolding in particular community radio station contexts. My research into how locally relevant content is provided for local audiences was conducted through desk research, fieldwork and through my own creative practice-as-research. My desire was to intellectualize this knowledge through a research focus on the activities and routines involved, responding to a turn to practice in the academy (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001; Bräuchler and Postill, 2010). I found the multidimensional perspective of Schatzki's social site ontology (Schatzki, 2002, 2010, 2011) neatly encompassed the inter-disciplinary direction my research was taking whilst accommodating some of Bourdieu's conceptual ideas (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990), and accommodating the non-media-centric approach favoured by Moores (2012), so that I could place more importance on material conditions as called for by Morley (2009). In

addition, I drew on cultural geography to consider the spatial aspects of practice, inspired by theorists such as Massey (1995) and Adams (2009).

I was concerned with, on the one hand, material infrastructures that included the physical layouts and geographical locations of the studios and practitioners' access to resources. On the other hand, I was interested in the intangible logistical arrangements, interdependencies and relational understandings involved in station activities, which influenced such aspects as the demographic profile of station membership and the diversity of on-air voices. I studied people as agents embodying and enacting certain attitudes, beliefs and ways of doing and saying things: objectively positioned relative to each other and with different vested interests in the social site of the practice. I analysed their roles performed under certain circumstances and according to particular understandings, as contexturalized in the site of the social within which they were practising. Each practitioner carrying out the activities in those sites and situations amounted to more than the sum of their bodily parts. Each was a social actor, socialized through a lifetime of experiences and exposure to the world around them, reacting and responding to the shifting conditions and arrangements. I was able to identify the practice of featuring local content and how it was achieved in several sites sharing common characteristics and functionality within the sector constellation.

My experiences and the findings have reinforced the notion that radio broadcasting is an act of communication. Whether created through music or conversation, entertaining diversions or informative news reports, the interactional and discursive opportunities that are generated by and in relation to radio programmes convey a spirit of sociability (Goffman, 1981; Berland, 1990; Scannell, 1991). This intangible aspect of the practice was manifested in the teleoaffective structure of the social sites and influenced practitioner enactments of their role. The sense of rapport, togetherness and bonding over the airing of shared concerns and interests occurred both in virtual and physical settings. The essence of what counted as local was not compromised by online presence, indeed I observed how localness and particularity of place were thrown into sharper focus when place-specific information was actively sought out, whether nearby or from afar (Moores, 2012). Evidently, the essence of what counts as radio endures too. The structured timetables of programmes, repeated day after day or week after week still determine how radio stations organize their content, providing that reassuring sense that life goes on (Scannell, 1996). Radio, through on-air and online outputs, as well as through off-air activities, continues to be an intimate and involving means of communication, interwoven with the social relations surrounding it.

207

8.3 THE VALUE OF INCORPORATING A REFLEXIVE MINDSET

Due to my on-going occupation as a radio practitioner, including as a former volunteer in LCR, I already had an understanding of not only what would be involved in the production, presentation and promotion of radio but what featuring content relevant to one's listeners requires in terms of time and other resources, and why it matters. The reflexive lens added to the practice-centric perspective enabled attention to be paid to experiential and phenomenological aspects, as well as to ethical researcher behaviour (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). It helped me achieve a more self-aware and positionality-sensitive mindset when both planning the methodological strategy and then interpreting the insights and data collected to contextualize these sorts of activities. I would be an insider but would aim to take an objective view on what I was undertaking and what I observed. I understood that, as both practitioner and researcher, my ability to act, move around in and communicate with other agents in the field was enhanced by my ability to access the necessary resources.

The critical reflection upon my own practice-as-research enabled me to articulate the impact of my positionality in terms of embodied skills, experience, knowledge and social capital, mobility and access to certain social circles. This meant that I could make better sense of my agency in the NR internship where producing the *Remarkable Harpenden* series was concerned. This mindset was further shaped by Schön's reflection-in-practice model (Schön, 1991), so the reflexive element worked a second level. I could consider my own productivity, artistry, achievements and failures in the face of the shifting circumstances and conditions of the social site that was the context of my practice. The features I made counted as artefactual research outputs too, NTROs, qualifying as empirical evidence. The reflexive, practice-centric lens thus provided a means of taking account of understandings and patterns of behaviours where rules, conventions, attitudes, feelings and expectations, as manifested through content produced.

This same lens was applied to the performances of the other practitioners I observed and interviewed, enabling me to identify, contextualize and study their journalistic practices as not only featuring the local but cultivating socialities. It was important as well to take account of the impact my research had on the participants. As practitioner-researcher, combined with my identifying as local resident in four out of six of the case studies, I was imbued with a certain social status which impacted upon my relationships with the participants as I conducted my inquiries. How I presented myself influenced how I was perceived by others. I was able to exercise a certain level of legitimacy and credibility to access certain people, places and

information. In gathering my evidence, I was up-close and personal, often in very intimate studio spaces. Yet I felt at home, amid familiar settings and benefited from a heightened sensitivity regarding what it means to people performing the arrays of media-related and sociable radio production activities in those contexts.

My questioning gave respondents the opportunity to reflect on their work, even to take some pride in it. Practitioners do not necessarily intellectualize the work they do sourcing content through networking as exercising the power that can be attributed to their social capital, but they do acknowledge the bearing that their own social status and the reputation of the station can have on their access to people and places to gather information. The site-specific, richly contextualized evidence yielded insights into their subjectivities and illustrated the everyday realities that are representative of the kinds of challenges that face the LCR sector's practitioners. Interpersonal relationships and the bearing of social and symbolic capital on issues were manifested through instances of interplay between conflict, friction and precarity with teamwork, goodwill and complicity.

Building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships appeared to be crucial and living up to the expectations of others therefore was important. The participants were attuned to what their activities were expected to achieve in terms of their station's Key Commitments: what it made sense to do, under a specific set of circumstances, in order to best pursue those ends. Thus, I got to the heart of what the volunteers were doing and developed a feeling for how important it was to them. These insights into the emotional and psychological effects of this work helps to understand the impact that practical and logistical problems have on the practitioners. The presence, absence or mode of functioning of technologies and other material objects have an influence on the practice-arrangements under which the practitioners perform. For instance, technical disruptions are not only frustrating, but they can also be embarrassing, disheartening and potentially damaging to the reputation of the presenter or the station when they occur. I found this when I had problems with the transmission of the *Green fingers* feature and noticed how presenters would call on each other for technical help from time to time.

8.4 ENACTING SOCIALITY THROUGH PRODUCING LOCAL RADIO CONTENT

My findings support the existing literature in that a sense of community is generated and sustained between LCR station members (Browne, 2012), albeit one that experiences tension and conflict. The radio practitioners in my study cared deeply about their volunteering. There

was a discernible teleoaffective structure associated with doing LCR: they were affected and moved by what they were doing in pursuit of the end goal, and their moods and how they were feeling about themselves also influenced their practice. They were motivated to work together, in contributing something positive to other people's lives by bringing them entertainment or information over the airwaves. This was not driven by any overt desire to abide by community radio's enduring utopian vision of increasing democratic access to the airwaves for all (Brecht, 1932), so much as enact the role of producer/presenter in adherence to their station mission statement and goals. What made sense for them to do and say was organized by an appreciation of their station's purpose, a complex 'pool of understandings' and a set of rules that could not be separated from the material settings and social orders within which they coexisted (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, p. 50). How they acted at a given moment and under given circumstances, was partly informed by their subconscious and partly by thinking through a conscious decision.

The evidence in my thesis demonstrates how it was understood that carrying out journalistic and communicative activities associated with sourcing and shaping information on local happenings, as well as on local impacts and reactions to national and global news, required engagement with contributors, regular participants and the audience. Thus, the three communities of community radio that Browne discusses (Browne 2012), are interwoven, enacting a form of residential or place-based sociality (Postill, 2008). Station output could be used to promote and publicize other socialities, groups, organizations and their goings-on in the area, especially those needing more local support such as charities and community projects. This indicates that the radio stations, as social sites of media production, were performing the role that Ofcom required of them: to deliver "community benefit" (Ofcom, 2017, p. 7). The increased use of online platforms served to enhance this sociality. This was especially true for the licensed stations based within the localities they served, as per the regulator's statutory guidelines (ibid., p. 11). Their members played active roles in other local organizations, increasing the likelihood of face-to-face encounters with the public. Featuring locally derived and relevant content not only reflected but helped to sustain and even contribute towards constructing community-enhancing sociality practices: building on trust to build more trust, tapping into pride to augment pride in a locality.

The interactions entailed in practitioners' ongoing searches for locally relevant programme content and their desire to build audiences prioritized the sourcing of more guests and featuring new voices, helping local people and organizations to promote themselves. Here,

however, is where particular care ought to be taken to ensure a bridging rather than bonding community building motivation, an openness of mind and awareness of barriers to entry into the LCR social site. As I observed and conversed with practitioners in the field, it became clear that their interactions were also informed by their personal life experiences, which influenced who they were interested in dealing with and talking to, and what they considered newsworthy. The ongoing relationships they formed through producing their own shows with regular contributors and via the channels of communication they established and followed up on to engage with listeners, tended to reflect their own world views, whether on local issues or international current affairs. Volunteers produced radio in their own time, and they had an expectation that they should enjoy doing it. I sensed that they were unlikely to put themselves in situations where they might feel uncomfortable, or risk the security of the station, for instance by inviting someone they did not know into the studio for an interview when they were on their own at the station. They preferred to deal with their own known, trusted sources: friends, friends of friends, and acquaintances. They aimed to create convivial gathering places on the airwaves and online: where they relished spending time and that they felt made some sort of contribution to society, as they knew it.

Thus, when we consider what is at stake for a volunteer in the social sites within which their everyday life unfolds, we can begin to understand how important it is for them to feel that their programme resonates with people whose opinions they value. If practitioners' understandings of the world are subject to their own social site conditioning, and if they limit their networking and content-sourcing activities to their own social circles, then diversity or multiplicity of voices on-air may be compromised. This tendency for their activities to be more about bonding than with bridging is understandable and even acceptable in stations which cater for specific sub-groups of the population such as ethnic communities in urban settings. However, for LCRs serving general, nominally age-specific populations in geographical areas like the market towns I studied, the phrase "particular community" deserves careful attention if stations are to achieve the sector's statutory objective of building "better understanding … and the strengthening of links within it" (Ofcom, 2017, p. 7). Station teams must not lose sight of how all sub-groups in that target audience are going to be catered for. I found there was not much emphasis on taking steps to ensure diversity of on-air voices, but neither did I detect any conscious discrimination. For instance, if ethnic minorities were represented from across a station's geographical area, it happened organically, through information and contacts accessed in their existing networks. It is as important to have diversity within ongoing series of programmes, as it is across the weekly schedule because one must appreciate there is a

multiplicity of different interest groups in a target audience. So, it is essential that an LCR's membership and production teams be representative of the target audience in their geographical catchment area, so that collectively the volunteers can set out to achieve their station's Key Commitments by tacitly reflecting *all* social groups between them.

Recent figures published by Ofcom indicate that there are now over 25,000 volunteers[74] in licensed community stations compared with just 13,000 employees across both BBC and commercial mainstream radio.[75] As already discussed, the sector consists of a wide variety of operators, each licensed for 5-year terms, broadcasting to allocated transmission areas notionally delimited by the reach of analogue signals, but available beyond via the internet, with SSDAB about to create new market opportunities. There are similarities across the licence holders' Key Commitments documents applied in multiple ways by unique groups of people to the unique sets of circumstances of each operation. Thus, from a macro perspective, government policy and Ofcom regulations have created an environment where broadening choice and distinctiveness is possible (Ofcom, 2017, p. 6). However, my research has challenged the extent to which plurality can be routinely achieved in terms of the socio-cultural diversity achieved within the stations.

Just as media (re)creates reality, so radio has the potential to achieve a normalizing of the unfamiliar by broadcasting ranges of voices on-air so that we become accustomed to all sorts of accents. Whereas one might expect LCR to be creating the opportunities for this multi-tonality to be realized, I discovered that many of my participants were in fact influenced by, and therefore aspired to, the professional standards they heard achieved by mainstream presenters. The market town stations in my study often sounded like BBC and ILR services, rather than conveying an impression of individuality or marginality. This suggests that there exists in community broadcasting in the UK, a shared understanding which diverges from the traditional, or utopian, notion of alternative, participatory media practice. Ofcom standards of performance through presenter behaviour must be observed, so LCR management teams are motivated to reduce the risk of contravening broadcasting standards and libel law (Chantler and Hollins, 2018). This creates a tension between the ultimate aim of widening access to the

---

[74] Surmised from figures provided at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence/radio-broadcast-licensing/community-radio accessed 20/3/2020

[75] https://www.statista.com/statistics/383593/radio-broadcasting-employment-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/ accessed 1/10/2020

airwaves so that stations sound representative and resonate with community interests, and the procedural objectives of ensuring they are listenable to and as compliant as possible.

Through online resources, social media networking and workshops, LCR practitioners share best practice so there is scope to learn from each other's successes and failures in pursuit of high-quality broadcasting, albeit in most cases on a shoestring budget. As a result though, this sector's practitioners do not have the same grassroots freedom as independent media activists such as podcasters and pirate operators, who are able to push the boundaries and rebel in the music played and language used on air. This may be a factor discouraging certain voices from seeking access or accepting invitations to take to the airwaves in the licensed sector. Important issues therefore remain to be addressed: how are the voices of every subgroup within a local community to be heard over the airwaves if they do not mix in the 'right' social circles?; and how are those who cannot afford the money or the time or who do not have the freedom to volunteer on LCR empowered by the medium?

8.5   INVESTING IN THE LOCAL

My research was locally focused but has wider relevance and value because it was contextualized within national and global dimensions. Critically analysing the material has enabled me to make connections between localized instances and the broader sphere of cultural production, considering also political economy aspects of the contemporary media ecology. Any local entity is all too easily marginalized on various levels, in terms of funding and investment and ways of thinking about personnel and practices. The pattern of progressive delocalization of mainstream media seen in the UK and North America as creating local news vacuums is a testament to this (Franklin, 2006; Rodgers, 2013, p. 73). Yet, people do care about the places in which they spend their lives and are invested in them, albeit to different extents. We inhabit this world as social beings in localized settings so there are multiple reasons why local relations become significant (Aldridge, 2007). Often an interest in local affairs is a stage of life related phenomenon, as is what media you are interested in. As Moores points out, your personal circumstances such as where you are living, still at home with parents or away and independent, can change listening habits (Moores, 2005, p. 22). If you were starting a family in an area you would want to know where the local doctors' surgery was, where the local schools and playing fields were. There are benefits in joining groups and building networks that do not merely provide friendship and moral support but are information and practical resources hubs. When you are elderly, although your interest in world affairs may not wane, your mobility will and so the opportunity to take part in local activities becomes attractive.

Even in a digitally-connected world, the arrays of activities we engage in often still involve face-to-face or person-to-person communication, in material settings and locations within and through which we carry out our daily routines. There is an enduring felt need for local media in the field of news and broadcasting which serves to challenge any fears or claims regarding the inconsequentiality of local happenings (Franklin, 2006). Indeed, there has been a growing hyperlocal response to the changes in ownership, deregulation and de-localization of local newspapers and ILRs, manifested in entrepreneurial, small-scale, geographically targeted online news and entertainment services. Where these operations perform as internet radio stations, they do so outside Ofcom's regulatory framework although they are considered as part of the UK's network of community media providers by the CMA. My findings demonstrate that radio stations, on-air and online, continue to play a positive role in serving and promoting place-based interrelations. From Ofcom's perspective, the community sector is best placed to perform this role in the UK and it is regulated accordingly to broadcast original, locally produced content from studios based within their assigned catchment areas.

A further concern which my findings raise, is how well the voluntary workforce in LCR is equipped to deliver in terms of filling the gap in local news provision. For the licensed stations to do their part, primary issues need to be addressed including how to find workable routines for the volunteers in order to sustain their commitment, nurture the relationships and interactions relied upon to produce speech-based, journalistic content for radio programmes and online platforms, and to facilitate their participation in and reporting on local happenings. My desk and field research suggest the core commonality among these not-for-profit broadcasting organizations is that the regulatory framework encourages practitioners to conform with hegemonic structures and professional codes of conduct. Only well-behaved voices are welcome on LCR, hardly fitting the theoretical model of community access broadcasting whereby all the disenfranchised, marginalized and perhaps those disillusioned members of society too, are provided an opportunity to air their views and challenge authority freely.

LCRs have in fact become part of a significant third sector economy in the UK, providing multiple opportunities for people, motivated to make a difference, to get involved in non-profit organizations and invest time and effort, often at their own financial expense, to help others. This saves the country's institutions and government a great deal of money, aligned to the government policy on assigning responsibility for a range of community amenities upon the shoulders of the communities themselves. As stated by The Ministry of Housing,

Communities and Local Government, the aim is "to create great places to live and work, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area".[76] Community radio can support such initiatives and help promote good causes, if not orchestrate projects initiated to achieve those essential aims identified in different parts of the UK and targeting various sections of the population.

The tension here though, in addition to the afore-mentioned challenges involved in recruiting, training, managing and maintaining motivated teams of volunteers, relates to the precarity of the sector, already facing hardship in terms of financial sustainability. There is no government subsidy; operators must even pay a raft of licence fees annually. The modest fund managed by Ofcom of around £400,000, is only sufficient to support a small proportion of stations' projects.[77] It makes sense, therefore, for station teams to build and sustain mutually beneficial relationships with local businesses. From the outset, when applying and competing for an LCR licence, the aspiring operator needs to possess the wherewithal or have access to the requisite resources including not only knowledge of community broadcasting but how to fill in application forms convincingly. In practice, this means that community radio in the UK is much more than an organic form of participative media. Grassroots groups need leaders with experience, connections and influence. Social status is therefore a prerequisite, along with the actual monetary capital financial backing to invest in the studios and all the technical equipment as well as to pay for the upkeep of those material structures.

Once established, it is in the interests of a station to capitalize on its members' connections in the locality. I found that featuring the local was done in ways which exploited not only the station's symbolic capital but its volunteers' social capital. The soft journalistic activities undertaken in sourcing and sharing programme content required and produced connections with and between listeners and contributors as well as other local stakeholders such as the council authorities and businesses. Programme making not only reflected the social affairs and socializing opportunities in stations' target localities but helped build and sustain them too. The motivation to build listenership numbers and loyalty was partly driven by the desire to prove the contribution of a station to its community but partly by the need to increase the

---

[76] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government accessed 26/6/2019

[77] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/33300/guidance-notes.pdf accessed 15/10/2020

value of its prime asset: airtime. LCRs offer affordable advertising options for organizations to reach local markets. Again, this commercial aspect may not match utopian, or indeed academic, notions of what community radio should be, but the reality for stations is that they are competing for income in a neoliberal and commodified media landscape, and in some cases sound very much the same as the mainstream broadcasters.

The sector relies heavily on the goodwill of its voluntary labour force and each station benefits from mutually beneficial arrangements with other bodies in its local economy to fulfil licence obligations. However, many stations also depend on income derived from selling advertising and sponsorship to local organizations. Reliance on the health of local economies is key to LCRs' success, and in the interests of sustainability, they are better off promoting what is good, where is good and who is good, in terms of happenings and productivity in the locality. LCRs need to maintain good relations, feather their nests with positive relationships and promote conditions for consensus building. If this involves avoiding too much confrontation with local gatekeepers, it potentially compromises practitioners' willingness to tackle contentious issues or investigate hard news stories, even if the ability and resources are available.

To sum up then, LCRs in the UK are positioned in their marketplaces as being 'more local' than the mainstream stations, rather than as 'alternative' in the activist or community access sense. They actively strive to achieve more professional than amateur broadcast standards in order to compete with other media for audiences and local advertising income, thereby potentially limiting grassroots participation. Operators of licensed community stations must weigh up how authentic and rooted in a community they want to sound; they need to find a balance between what entertainment and information they think their audiences and investors want to hear, with what will sell to local businesses. The greater the numbers of listeners tuning in and engaging online, the greater the potential for attracting support, investment and funding from local organizations which entrust their reputations to the station.

8.6   CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I argue that these commercial and regulatory factors put pressure on the practice-arrangements of LCRs and risk compromising the community access spirit. Stations are permitted to sell airtime which in theory provides income to help sustain studio infrastructures, incorporate technological innovations, maintain acceptable broadcast standards and workforce morale. However, the perceived need to increase standards of professionalism, particularly where presenter comportment and journalistic integrity are

concerned, might be reflected in whose voices are put to air and whose are not. Added to this, the vast majority of LCR practitioners are not paid for the radio and related media work they do at those stations, yet they play an important role in generating and sustaining local socialities. Their preparedness to do this should not be underestimated or taken for granted. They give their time and energy and there are real financial costs associated with their volunteering. Admittedly there are benefits too, doing radio can be immensely enjoyable and can provide opportunities for personal advancement.

My recommendations are aimed first at station operators and practitioners delivering community radio services and secondly to those institutions who expect those teams to conduct responsible media practice. The power of radio lies in the power of the presenters to connect with the listener and the potential for programming features to convey meaningful information and entertainment that engenders familiarity. LCR practitioners present versions of local realities when they make decisions regarding the sourcing, shaping and sharing of information on-air and online. Station teams control what gets talked about and how it is framed on their media channels. They determine whose voices are heard in the discursive arenas. Those conversational spaces that build up around each programme can become familiar, meaningful places for listeners to frequent through listening and engaging. This fact calls for particular care to be taken when inviting contributors onto the programmes. Presenters and producers should be discouraged from relying too much on featuring people from their existing social circles. LCR management teams should beware of recruiting volunteers in their own image and aim to be more strategic. This means not only being broadminded in ensuring a range of interests are covered in the programme schedules and aiming to improve diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender, disabilities, age, but being open to featuring the heterogeneity of all those whose lives are invested in the locality.

Related to this is my recommendation pertaining to the ongoing regulatory framework for LCR. The sector requires bolstering with increased funding support and subsidies so that practitioners can continue to pursue their goals relating to social gain through producing radio with and for the communities in their target localities. The community sector is now being taken more seriously as local media provider by the public as well as the DCMS and Ofcom, but I feel it is important that we do not lose sight of its community access roots. Local newspapers and the few remaining independent local commercial radio stations are struggling to stay

afloat and the future of the BBC's local network also hangs in the balance.[78] So, although entrusting the provision of local media to the people themselves to organize and fund once seemed like a rational neoliberal move to make, for LCR operations to realistically be part of the answer to the diminishing ability of the mainstream to report on local affairs, they need government help.

My findings indicate that further research and action are required for enabling sustainable volunteering patterns on LCR in the future. This is especially relevant where there remain sections of society who are excluded from this activity because even if they are being broadcast to, they cannot afford to join in and do the broadcasting themselves. This warrants adjustments that might include making more funding available for operational grants and facilitating the payment of volunteer expenses. We should do more to avoid perpetuating a media system in which only those who can afford to participate can access the airwaves and have their voices heard. The focus on practice as the unit of analysis in this study has revealed that performances of media and journalistic production by volunteer practitioners are not that dissimilar to those of mainstream professionals. On the one hand, this motivates me to echo the call for LCR, as a form of alternative media, to be researched as 'industrial practice' (Atton, 2008, p. 274). This would facilitate comparative studies across sites and sectors, rendering a more accurate picture of the radio broadcasting landscape in this country and potentially further afield. On the other hand, the implied necessity for professional standards in community radio coverage of local news, views and cultural expression for representative purposes concerns me. Of course, understandings such as moral frameworks and impartiality are important, but not at the cost of setting the bar too high.

8.7 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In conclusion, my study into the social site of LCR production practices has yielded deep insights for critical evaluation that stimulate an ethical anxiety and require a regulatory response. The work of community radio is deemed important and feels important to the people who do it, in their own time and at their own expense. This nuanced set of understandings has been attained through the theoretical framing and methodological strategy that I developed for this research. Thus, I have contributed to the corpus on community radio studies, a detailed study imparting in-depth, experiential findings on the embodied practice of producing radio content in English market towns. To media studies

---

[78] As I write, the entire BBC licence-fee funding structure is under review.

generally, I have contributed a new inter-disciplinary paradigm for researching media production.

The reflexive, practice-centric approach using Schatzki's social site lens and incorporating a practice-as-research element in the fieldwork meant that I experienced for myself what it feels like to participate in the practice I was studying. It facilitated the detection of more nuanced aspects of creative media practice that are often taken for granted or overlooked in media theory. By physically engaging in the practice, and reflexively so, one gets to the heart of what is entailed, so that one can better understand its practitioners and write about their performances with authority. This way of doing research and thinking is intellectually robust enough yet malleable for the study of media as creative and cultural practices and phenomena. The framing enables a fuller appreciation of how media and radio usages are integrated into the social lives of audiences and practitioners, and how their paths through everyday life are interwoven through the social sites of content production.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abercrombie, N. and Longhurst, B. (1998) *Audiences: a sociological theory of performance and imagination*. London: SAGE Publications.

Adams, J. and McDougall, J. (2015) 'Revisiting the evidence: practice submissions to the REF', *Journal of Media Practice*, 16(2), pp. 97–107. doi: 10.1080/14682753.2015.1041803.

Adams, M. (2006) 'Hybridizing habitus and reflexivity: towards an understanding of contemporary identity?', *Sociology*, 40(3), pp. 511–528. doi: 10.1177/003803850663672.

Adams, P. C. (2009) *Geographies of media and communication: a critical introduction*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Adams, P. C. (2011) 'A taxonomy for communication geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 35(1), pp. 37–57.

Adams, P. C. and Jansson, A. (2012) 'Communication geography: a bridge between disciplines', *Communication Theory*, 22, pp. 299–318.

Adorno, T. (1945) 'A social critique of radio music', *The Kenyon Review*. Available at: https://www.kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/weekend-reads/t-w-adorno-656342/ (Accessed: 4 December 2018).

Ahern, S. (2011) *Making radio: a practical guide to working in radio in the digital age*. 3rd ed. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Aldridge, M. (2007) *Understanding the local media*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press (Public Worlds).

Arnheim, R. (1936) *Radio*. London: Faber & Faber.

Atton, C. (2008) 'Alternative and citizen journalism', in Wahl-Jorgensen, K. and Hanitzsch, T. (eds) *The handbook of journalism studies*. Routledge, pp. 265–278.

Atton, C. (ed.) (2015) *The Routledge companion to alternative and community media*. Routledge.

Atton, Chris. (2002) *Alternative media*. London: SAGE Publications.

Aziz, T. (2009) 'Shifting the frame: from critical reflective arts practice to practice-based research', *Journal of Media Practice*, 10(1), pp. 69–80. doi: 10.1386/jmpr.10.1.69_1.

Baade, C. (2018) 'Lean back: Songza, ubiquitous listening and internet music radio for the masses', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 16(1), pp. 9–27. doi: 10.1386/rjao.16.1.9_1.

Bacon, W. (2006) 'Journalism as research?', *Australian Journalism Review*, 28(2), pp. 147–157.

Bacon, W. (2012) 'An innovative direction in academic journalism', *Pacific Journalism Review*, 18(2), pp. 153–165.

Bailey, O. G., Cammaerts, B. and Carpentier, N. (2008) *Understanding alternative media: issues in cultural and media studies*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Bailur, S. (2012) 'Who is the community in community radio?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(17), pp. 92–99.

Barnard, S. (2000) *Studying radio*. London: Arnold.

Barnett, C. (2004) 'Neither poison nor cure: space, scale, and public life in media theory', in Nick Couldry and McCarthy, A. (eds) *MediaSpace: place, scale and culture in a media age*. London, UK: Routledge, pp. 58–74.

Barrett, E. and Bolt, B. (eds) (2007) *Practice as research: context, method, knowledge*. London, UK; New York, USA: I. B. Tauris.

Bell, J. (1993) *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Benjamin, W. (1968) *Illuminations: essays and reflections*. Edited by H. Arendt. New York, USA: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Benson, R. (1999) 'Review. Field theory in comparative context: a new paradigm for media studies', *Theory and Society*, 28(3), pp. 463–498.

Berland, J. (1990) 'Radio space and industrial time: music formats, local narratives and technological mediation', *Popular Music*, 9(2), pp. 179–192. doi: 10.1017/S0261143000003895.

Berry, R. (2014) 'The future of radio is the internet, not on the internet', in Oliveira, M., Stachyra, G., and Starkey, G. (eds) *Radio: the resilient medium. Papers from the third conference of the ECREA Radio Research Section*. Sunderland: Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies, pp. 3–16.

Berry, R. (2016) 'Podcasting: considering the evolution of the medium and its association with the word "radio"', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 14(1), pp. 7–22. doi: 10.1386/rjao.14.1.7_1.

Berry, R. (2018) '"Just because you play a guitar and are from Nashville doesn't mean you are a country singer": the emergence of medium identities in podcasting', in *Podcasting: new aural cultures and digital media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 15–33.

Bird, S. E. (2003) *The audience in everyday life: living in a media world*. New York; London: Routledge.

Blaakilde, A. L. (2018) 'The becoming of radio bodies', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(3), pp. 290–304. doi: 10.1177/1367549417708437.

Bonini, T. *et al.* (2014) 'Radio formats and social media use in Europe – 28 case studies of public service practice', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 12(1–2), pp. 89–107. doi: 10.1386/rjao.12.1-2.89_1.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a theory of practice*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The logic of practice*. Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2004) *Science of science and reflexivity*. USA: University of Chicago Press. Available at: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/S/bo3630402.html (Accessed: 3 August 2017).

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: Polity Press.

Bräuchler, B. and Postill, J. (2010) *Theorising media and practice*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn.

Brecht, B. (1932) 'Radio as a means of communication: a talk on the function of radio', *Screen*. Translated by S. Hood, 20(3–4), pp. 24–28. doi: 10.1093/screen/20.3-4.24.

Bridson, D. G. (1971) *Prospero and Ariel: the rise and fall of radio*. London: Gollancz.

Briggs, A. (1995) *The history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom: volume I. The Birth of Broadcasting*. OUP Oxford (History of Broadcasting in the U. K. Vol. I).

Browne, D. R. (2012) 'What is "community" in community radio? A consideration of the meaning, nature and importance of a concept', in Gordon, J. (ed.) *Community radio in the 21st century*. Peter Lang, pp. 153–173.

Bruns, A. and Highfield, T. (2012) 'Blogs, Twitter, and breaking news: the produsage of citizen journalism', in Lind, R. A. (ed.) *Produsing theory in a digital world: the intersection of audiences and production in contemporary theory*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., pp. 15–32.

Bryant, P. and Pozdeev, N. (2011) 'Programming community radio within a fractured suburbia: an action research study of access and programming participation of urban sub-cultures', in. *International Association of Media and Communications Research Conference*, Istanbul, Turkey. Available at: http://www.iamcr.org/ (Accessed: 14 October 2018).

Buckley, S. (2008) 'Community broadcasting: good practice in policy, law and regulation', in *UNESCO for World Press Freedom Day*. *UNESCO for World Press Freedom Day*, Mozambique: World Association for Community Radio Broadcasters.

Buckley, S. (2011) *Community media: a good practice handbook*. Paris, France: UNESCO.

Cammaerts, B. (2009) 'Community radio in the West: a legacy of struggle for survival in a state and capitalist controlled media environment', *International Communication Gazette*, 71(8), pp. 635–654.

Carpentier, N. (2016) 'Beyond the ladder of participation: an analytical toolkit for the critical analysis of participatory media processes', *Javnost - The Public*, 23(1), pp. 70–88.

Castells, M. (1996) *The rise of the network society*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Chantler, P. and Hollins, P. (2018) *Keep it Legal*. Independently published.

Coleman, J. (2017) 'A reflection on practice-related research – the case of radio journalism', *Journal of Arts Writing by Students*, 3(1–2), pp. 131–139. doi: 10.1386/jaws.3.1-2.131_1.

Coleman, J. F. (2020) 'Situating journalistic coverage: a practice theory approach to researching local community radio production in the United Kingdom', in Gulyas, A. and Baines, D. (eds) *The Routledge companion to local media and journalism*. 1st edn. Routledge (Routledge Media and Cultural Studies Companions), pp. 343–353.

Cottle, S. (2007) 'Ethnography and news production: new(s) developments in the field', *Sociology Compass*, 1(1), pp. 1–16. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00002.x.

Couldry, N. (2003a) 'Media meta-capital: extending the range of Bourdieu's field theory', *Theory and Society*, 32(5–6), pp. 653–677. doi: 10.1023/B:RYSO.0000004915.37826.5d.

Couldry, N. (2003b) *Media rituals: a critical approach*. London: Routledge.

Couldry, N. (2003c) 'Media, symbolic power and the limits of Bourdieu's field theory'. MEDIA@LSE Electronic Working Papers. Available at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/working-paper-series/EWP02.pdf (Accessed: 16 April 2018).

Couldry, N. (2010) 'Theorising media as practice', in *Theorising media and practice*. Berghahn Books, pp. 35–54.

Couldry, N. (2012) *Media, society, world: social theory and digital media practice*. Cambridge: Polity.

Crisell, A. (1986) *Understanding radio*. London: Methuen.

Crisell, A. (ed.) (2003) *More than a music box: radio cultures and communities in a multi-media world*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Crisell, A. (2009) *Radio. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies* (3 vol). London: Routledge.

Crisell, A. (2012) *Liveness and recording in the media*. Palgrave Macmillan (Key Concerns in Media Studies).

Crook, T. (2002) *Radio drama: theory and practice*. Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203006276.

Dagron, A. G. (2001) *Making waves: stories of participatory communication for social change. A report to the Rockefeller Foundation*. New York, USA: Rockefeller Foundation.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds) (2000) *Handbook of qualitative research*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE Publications (Handbook of qualitative research).

Deuze, M. (2006) 'Ethnic media, community media and participatory culture', *Journalism*, 7(3), pp. 262–280.

Douglas, S. J. (2000) *Listening in: radio and the American imagination, from Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern*. Times Books.

Eckersley, P. P. (1941) *The power behind the microphone*. London: J. Cape.

Edmonds, E. and Candy, L. (2010) 'Relating theory, practice and evaluation in practitioner research', *Leonardo*, 43(5), pp. 470–423.

Ek, R. (2006) 'Media studies, geographical imaginations and relational space', in Jansson, A. and Falkheimer, J. (eds) *Geographies of communication: the spatial turn in media studies*. Nordicom, pp. 45–67.

Ellis, C. S. and Bochner, A. (2000) 'Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: researcher as subject', in *Handbook of qualitative research*. 2nd edn. London: Sage, pp. 733–768.

Etherington, K. (2004) *Becoming a reflexive researcher: using ourselves in research*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Falkheimer, J. and Jansson, A. (eds) (2006) *Geographies of communication: the spatial turn in media studies*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

Fetterman, D. (2009) 'Ethnography', in *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*. 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., pp. 543–588. doi: 10.4135/9781483348858.

Fleming, C. (2010) *The radio handbook*. Routledge.

Fogg, A., Korbel, P. and Brooks, C. (2005) *Community radio toolkit*. Manchester: Radio Regen.

Forde, S. (2011) *Challenging the news: the journalism of alternative and community media*. Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Franklin, B. (2006) *Local Journalism and Local Media: Making the Local News*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Franklin, B. and Murphy, D. (eds) (1998) *Making the local news: local journalism in context*. London: Routledge.

Freire, A. M. (2008) 'Remediating radio: audio streaming, music recommendation and the discourse of radioness', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 5(2), pp. 97–112. doi: 10.1386/rajo.5.2-3.97_1.

Friedman, J. (1998) 'Routing roots and rooting routes: a cosmopolitan paradox', *Current Anthropology*, 39(5), pp. 733–734. doi: 10.1086/204798.

Fuller, L. K. (ed.) (2007) *The power of global community media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Gazi, A., Jedrzejewski, S. and Starkey, G. (eds) (2011) *Radio content in the digital age: the evolution of a sound medium*. Bristol, UK; Chicago, USA: Intellect.

Giddens, A. (2013) *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration*. John Wiley & Sons.

Gilbert, N. and Stoneman, P. (eds) (2015) *Researching social life*. 4th edn. London; California; New Delhi; Singapore: SAGE Publications.

Goffman, E. (1959) *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Penguin Books.

Goffman, E. (1981) *Forms of talk*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gordon, E. and de Souza e Silva, A. (2011) *Net locality: why location matters in a networked world*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Gordon, J. (2000) *The RSL: ultra local radio*. Luton: University of Luton Press.

Gordon, J. (ed.) (2009) *Notions of community: a collection of community media debates and dilemmas*. Bern; Oxford: Peter Lang.

Gordon, J. (2012) *Community radio in the twenty-first century*. New York: Peter Lang.

Gordon, J. (2016) 'How community broadcasting is funded: a useful resource for community broadcasters', *Journal of Community, Citizen's and Third Sector Media and Communication*, (8).

Hall, S. (1973) 'Encoding and decoding in the television discourse', in. Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: principles in practice*. 3rd edn. New York, U.S.A.: Routledge.

Hampton, K. and Wellman, B. (2003) 'Neighboring in Netville: how the internet supports community and social capital in a wired suburb', *City & Community*, 2(4), pp. 277–311. doi: 10.1046/j.1535-6841.2003.00057.x.

Hann, R. (2015) *Practice matters: arguments for a 'second wave' of practice research*, *The future of practice research*. Available at: https://futurepracticeresearch.org/2015/07/28/practice-matters-arguments-for-a-second-wave-of-practice-research/ (Accessed: 9 December 2018).

Harcup, T. (2013) *Alternative journalism, alternative voices*. London; New York, NY: Routledge.

Haseman, B. and Mafe, D. (2009) 'Acquiring know-how: research training for practice-led researchers', in Smith, H. and Dean, R. (eds) *Practice-led research, research-led practice in the creative arts*. United Kingdom, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 211–228.

Hemmingway, Emma. (2008) *Into the newsroom: exploring the digital production of regional television news*. London: Routledge.

Hendy, D. (2000) *Radio in the global age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hendy, D. (2013) 'Representing the fragmented mind: reinterpreting a classic radio feature as "sonic psychology"', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 11(1), pp. 29–45. doi: 10.1386/rjao.11.1.29_1.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006) 'Bourdieu, the media and cultural production', *Media, Culture & Society*, 28(2), pp. 211–231. doi: 10.1177/0163443706061682.

Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. (2008) 'Creative work and emotional labour in the television industry', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7–8), pp. 97–118. doi: 10.1177/0263276408097798.

Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. (2011) '"A very complicated version of freedom". Conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries', *Variant*, (41).

225

Hess, K. (2017) 'Shifting foundations: journalism and the power of the 'common good'', *Journalism*, 18(7), pp. 801–816. doi: 10.1177/1464884915627149.

Heywood, E. and Tomlinson, M. (2019) 'The contribution of citizen views to understanding women's empowerment as a process of change: the case of Niger', *Feminist Media Studies*, pp. 1–17. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2019.1642230.

Hilmes, M. (1997) *Radio voices: American broadcasting, 1922-1952*. University of Minnesota Press.

Hilmes, M. and Loviglio, J. (eds) (2002) *Radio reader: essays in the cultural history of radio*. London; New York: Routledge.

Hope, S. (2016) 'Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research', *Cultural Trends*, 25(2), pp. 74–86. doi: 10.1080/09548963.2016.1171511.

Howley, K. (ed.) (2010) *Understanding community media*. London: SAGE Publications.

Hui, A., Schatzki, T. and Shove, E. (eds) (2017) *The nexus of practices: connections, constellations, practitioners*. London; New York: Routledge.

Ingold, T. (2013) *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. London: Routledge.

Jankowski, N. W. (2002) 'Creating community with media: history, theories and scientific investigations', in Lievrouw, L. A. and Livingstone, S. (eds) *Handbook of new media: social shaping and consequences of ICTs*. 1st edn. SAGE Publications, pp. 34–49. doi: 10.4135/9781848608245.

Jankowski, N. W. (2003) 'Community media research: a quest for theoretically-grounded models', *Javnost - The Public*, 10(1), pp. 5–14.

Jenkins, E. (1978) 'The new ethnography: language as the key to culture', *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 10(1), pp. 16–19. doi: 10.1080/00091383.1978.10569327.

Jensen, K. and Jankowski, N. (eds) (1991) *A Handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*. London; New York: Routledge.

LaBelle, B. (2006) *Background noise: perspectives on sound art*. Continuum International (Music and sound studies).

Lacey, K. (2009) 'Ten years of radio studies: the very idea', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 6(1), pp. 21–32. doi: info:doi/10.1386/rajo.6.1.21_4.

Lacey, K. (2013) *Listening publics: the politics and experience of listening in the media age*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Lazarsfeld, P. F. and Merton, R. K. (1975) 'Mass communication, popular taste and organized social action', in Schramm, W. (ed.) *Mass communication*. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, pp. 492–512.

Lehman-Wilzig, S. N. and Seletzky, M. (2010) 'Hard news, soft news, "general" news: the necessity and utility of an intermediate classification', *Journalism*, 11(1), pp. 37–56. doi: 10.1177/1464884909350642.

Lewis, P. E. (ed.) (1981) *Radio drama*. Longman Publishing Group.

Lewis, P. M. (1998) 'Radio theory and community radio', in *Meeting 3: Theory and Methodology in Local Radio and Television Section*. *Local Radio and Television Section, IAMCR*, Glasgow.

Lewis, P. M. (2000) 'Private passion, public neglect: the cultural status of radio', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3(2), pp. 160–167.

Lewis, P. M. and Booth, J. (1989) 'Serving neighbourhood and nation: British local radio', in *The invisible medium: public, commercial and community Radio*. London: Macmillan Education UK, pp. 89–114. doi: 10.1007/978-1-349-19984-6_6.

Lindgren, M. (2011) *Journalism as research: developing radio documentary theory from practice*. PhD. Murdoch University. Available at: http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/5858/ (Accessed: 6 November 2018).

Lindgren, M. (2014) 'Radio journalism as research: a Ph.D. model', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 12(1), pp. 169–182. doi: 10.1386/rjao.12.1-2.169_1.

Lindgren, M. and McHugh, S. (2013) 'Not dead yet: emerging trends in radio documentary forms in Australia and the US', 35(2), pp. 101–113.

Lindgren, M. and Phillips, G. (2011) 'Conceptualising journalism as research: two paradigms', *Australian Journalism Review*, 33(2), p. 73.

Linfoot, M. (2011) *A history of BBC local radio in England c. 1960 - 1980*. PhD Thesis. University of Westminster.

Luscombe, A. (2009) 'Radio journalists and how they describe their written copy', *Journal of Media Practice*, 10(1), pp. 5–15. doi: 10.1386/jmpr.10.1.5_1.

Mair, J., Fowler, N. and Reeves, I. (eds) (2012) *What do we mean by local? Grassroots journalism – its death and rebirth*. Bury St Edmunds, UK: Abramis.

Makagon, D. and Neumann, M. (2009) *Recording culture: audio documentary and the ethnographic experience*. Thousand Oaks, U.S.A.: SAGE Publications.

Markham, T. (2008) 'Journalistic ethics as field strategies: a particular case of the possible', in. *Media@lse Fifth Anniversary Conference: Media, Communication and Humanity*, London, UK. Available at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/ (Accessed: 22 August 2018).

Markham, T. (2011a) 'Hunched over their laptops: phenomenological perspectives on citizen journalism', *Review of Contemporary Philosophy*, 10, pp. 150–164.

Markham, T. (2011b) 'The political phenomenology of war reporting', *Journalism*, 12(5), pp. 567–585. doi: 10.1177/1464884911410016.

Markham, T. (2011c) *The politics of war reporting*. Manchester University Press.

Massey, D. (1995) 'The conceptualization of place', *A Place in the World*, 4, pp. 45–77.

McHugh, S. (2010) *Oral history and the radio documentary/feature: intersections and synergies*. PhD. University of Wollongong. Available at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/3255.

McQuail, D. (2010) *McQuail's mass communication theory*. 6th ed. Los Angeles, Calif.; London: SAGE Publications.

McWhinnie, D. (1959) *The art of radio*. London: Faber & Faber.

Menduni, E. (2007) 'Four steps in innovative radio broadcasting: from QuickTime to podcasting', *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 5(1), pp. 9–18. doi: 10.1386/rajo.5.1.9_1.

Metzgar, E. T., Kurpius, D. D. and Rowley, K. M. (2011) 'Defining hyperlocal media: proposing a framework for discussion', *New Media & Society*, 13(5), pp. 772–787. doi: 10.1177/1461444810385095.

Miller, D. (2016) *Social media in an English village*. 1st edn. UCL Press. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1g69xs1 (Accessed: 8 May 2020).

Miller, D. and Slater, D. (2000) *The Internet: an ethnographic approach*. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Mitchell, C. (2000) *Women and radio: airing differences*. London; New York: Routledge.

Mollgaard, M. (2012) *Radio and society: new thinking for an old medium*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub.

Moores, S. (2005) *Media/theory: thinking about media and communications*. London: Routledge.

Moores, S. (2012) *Media, place and mobility*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moores, S. (2014) 'Digital orientations: "ways of the hand" and practical knowing in media uses and other manual activities', *Mobile Media & Communication*, 2(2), pp. 196–208. doi: 10.1177/2050157914521091.

Morley, D. (2009) 'For a materialist, non-media-centric media studies', *Television and New Media*, 10, pp. 114–16.

Mowitt, J. (2011) *Radio: essays in bad reception*. 1st edn. University of California Press.

Moylan, K. (2018) 'Accented radio: articulations of British Caribbean experience and identity in UK community radio', *Global Media and Communication*, 14(3), pp. 283–299. doi: 10.1177/1742766518780180.

Muncey, T. (2010) *Creating autoethnographies*. London: SAGE Publications. doi: 10.4135/9781446268339.

Murray, L. and Lawrence, B. (2000) *Practitioner-based enquiry: principles for postgraduate research*. London; New York: Falmer.

Niblock, S. (2007) 'From "knowing how" to "being able"', *Journalism Practice*, 1(1), pp. 20–32. doi: 10.1080/17512780601078829.

Niblock, S. and Machin, D. (2007) 'News values for consumer groups: the case of Independent Radio News, London, UK', *Journalism*, 8(2), pp. 184–204. doi: 10.1177/1464884907074803.

Ofcom (2015) *10 years of community radio in the UK, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news*. Available at:
http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/news/community-radio-at-10/ (Accessed: 12 May 2015).

Ofcom (2017) *Notes of guidance for community radio licence applicants and licensees*. London, UK: Ofcom. Available at:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/101860/Community-radio-guidance.pdf.

Ofcom (2018a) *Community Radio Fund - Guidance Notes*. Available at:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/33300/guidance-notes.pdf.

Ofcom (2018b) *Diversity and equal opportunities in radio. Monitoring report on the UK radio industry*. Ofcom. Available at:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/114829/Diversity-in-radio-2018.pdf.

Ofcom (2019) *Ofcom Tariff Tables 2019/20, Ofcom*. Available at:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/141899/tariff-tables-2019-20.pdf.

Ortner, S. B. (1984) 'Theory in anthropology since the Sixties', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26(1), pp. 126–166.

Phillips, G. (2014) 'The production-based PhD: an action research model for supervisors', *Quality Assurance in Education*, 22(4), pp. 370–383. doi: 10.1108/QAE-10-2013-0043.

Pink, S. (2008) 'An urban tour: the sensory sociality of ethnographic place-making', *Ethnography*, 9(2), pp. 175–196. doi: 10.1177/1466138108089467.

Postill, J. (2008) 'Localising the internet beyond communities and networks', *New Media and Society*, 10(3), pp. 413–31.

Postill, J. and Pink, S. (2012) 'Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web', *Media International Australia*, 145(1), pp. 123–134. doi: 10.1177/1329878X1214500114.

Powell, R. (1965) *Possibilities for local radio*. Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University.

Putnam, R. D. (1995) 'Bowling alone: America's declining social capital', *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1), pp. 65–78. doi: 10.1353/jod.1995.0002.

Putnam, R. D. (2001) *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY; London: Simon & Schuster.

Rao, U. (2010) 'Embedded/embedding media practices and cultural production', in *Theorising media and practice*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 147–168.

Rennie, E. (2006) *Community media: a global introduction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Research Excellence Framework (2015) *REF 2014: Overview report by Main Panel D and Sub-panels 27 to 36*. Research Excellence Framework 2014. Available at:
https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/panels/paneloverviewreports/ (Accessed: 22 August 2017).

Rodgers, S. (2013) 'The journalistic field and the city: some practical and organizational tales about the Toronto Star's New Deal for Cities', *City & Community*, 12(1), pp. 56–77.

Rodgers, S. (2018) 'Digitizing localism: anticipating, assembling and animating a "space" for UK hyperlocal media production', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(1), pp. 73–89. doi: 10.1177/1367877917704495.

Rodgers, S., Barnett, C. and Cochrane, A. (2014) 'Media practices and urban politics: conceptualizing the powers of the media–urban nexus', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32, pp. 1054 – 1070. doi: 10.1068/d13157p.

Rust, C., Mottram, J. and Till, J. (2007) *Review of practice-led research in art, design and architecture*. UK: Arts and Humanities Research Council. Available at: https://shura.shu.ac.uk/7596/1/Pactice-ledReviewNov07.pdf.

Sander, T. H. and Putnam, R. D. (2010) 'Still bowling alone? The post-9/11 split', *Journal of Democracy*, 21(1), pp. 9–16. doi: 10.1353/jod.0.0153.

Sandoval, M. and Fuchs, C. (2010) 'Towards a critical theory of alternative media', *Telematics and Informatics*, 27(2), pp. 141–150. doi: 10.1016/j.tele.2009.06.011.

Santana, M. and Carpentier, N. (2010) 'Mapping the rhizome: organizational and informational networks of two Brussels alternative radio stations', *Telematics and Informatics*, 27(2), pp. 162–176. doi: 10.1016/j.tele.2009.07.003.

Scannell, P. (1986) '"The stuff of radio": developments in radio features and documentaries before the war', in *Documentary and the mass media*. London: Edward Arnold, pp. 1–28.

Scannell, P. (ed.) (1991) *Broadcast talk*. London; New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Scannell, P. (1995) 'For a phenomenology of radio and television', *Journal of Communication*, 45(3), pp. 4–19. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1995.tb00741.x.

Scannell, P. (1996) *Radio, television, and modern life: a phenomenological approach*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Scannell, P. (2003) 'The Brains Trust (1941): the management of live-to-air talk on radio', in Cottle, S. (ed.) *Media Organisations and Production*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 72–98.

Schatzki, T. R. (1997) 'Practices and actions: a Wittgensteinian critique of Bourdieu and Giddens', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 27(3), pp. 283–308.

Schatzki, T. R. (2002) *The site of the social: a philosophical account of the constitution of social life and change*. U.S.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Schatzki, T. R. (2005) 'The sites of organizations', *Organization Studies*, 26(3), pp. 465–484. doi: 10.1177/0170840605050876.

Schatzki, T. R. (2010) *The timespace of human activity: on performance, society, and history as indeterminate teleological events*. Lanham, MA, U.S.A.: Lexington Books.

Schatzki, T. R. (2011) 'Where the action is (on large social phenomena such as sociotechnical regimes)'. Sustainable Practices Research Group, ESRC. Available at: http://www.sprg.ac.uk/uploads/schatzki-wp1.pdf.

Schatzki, T. R. (2012) 'A primer on practices', in Higgs, J. et al. (eds) *Practice-Based Education: Perspectives and Strategies*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers, pp. 13–26. doi: 10.1007/978-94-6209-128-3_2.

Schatzki, T. R. (2017) 'Sayings, texts and discursive formations', in Hui, A., Schatzki, T. R., and Shove, E. (eds) *The nexus of practices*. London; New York: Routledge, pp. 126–140.

Schatzki, T. R., Cetina, K. K. and von Savigny, E. (eds) (2001) *The practice turn in contemporary theory*. London; New York: Routledge.

Schön, D. A. (1991 [1983]) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Schultz, I. (2007) 'The journalistic gut feeling', *Journalism Practice*, 1(2), pp. 190–207. doi: 10.1080/17512780701275507.

Scifo, S. (2011) *The origins and development of community radio in Britain under New Labour (1997-2007)*. PhD Thesis. University of Westminster.

Scifo, S. (2014) 'Communication rights as a networking reality: community radio in Europe', in Padovani, C. and Calabrese, A. (eds) *Communication rights and social justice: historical accounts of transnational mobilizations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 164–179. doi: 10.1057/9781137378309_10.

Scifo, S. (2016) 'Funding the "third way" of radio broadcasting in Britain', *3CMedia. Journal of Community, Citizen's and Third Sector Media and Communication*, 8. Available at: https://www.cbaa.org.au/3cmedia (Accessed: 22 October 2018).

Shingler, M. and Wieringa, C. (1998) *On air: methods and meanings of radio*. London; New York: Arnold.

Sieveking, L. (1934) *The stuff of radio*. Cassell.

Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. SAGE Publications.

Silverstone, R. (ed.) (1997) *Visions of suburbia*. London: Routledge.

Silverstone, R. (2007) *Media and morality: on the rise of the mediapolis*. Cambridge: Polity.

Smith, H. and Dean, R. T. (eds) (2009) *Practice-led research, research-led practice in the creative arts*. Edinburgh University Press (Edinburgh University Press Series).

Spitulnik, D. (1996) 'The social circulation of media discourse and the mediation of communities', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 6(2), pp. 161–87.

Spitulnik, D. (2010) 'Thick context, deep epistemology: a meditation on wide-angle lenses on media, knowledge production and the concept of culture', in *Theorising media and practice*. Berghahn Books, pp. 105–126.

Stacey, M. (1969) 'The myth of community studies', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 20(2), pp. 134–147.

Star, S. L. (1999) 'The ethnography of infrastructure', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(3), pp. 377–391. doi: 10.1177/00027649921955326.

Starkey, G. (2004) *Radio in context*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Starkey, G. and Crisell, A. (2009) *Radio journalism*. London: SAGE Publications.

Stoller, T. (2010) *Sounds of your life: the rise and fall of independent radio in the UK*. New Barnet, UK: John Libbey.

Street, S. (2002) *A concise history of British radio, 1922-2002*. Tiverton, UK: Kelly Publications.

Tacchi, J. (2000) 'The need for radio theory in the digital age'', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3(2), pp. 289–298.

Tacchi, J. (2003) 'Promise of citizens' media: lessons from community radio in Australia and South Africa', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(22), pp. 2183–2187.

Tacchi, J. (2009) 'Radio and affective rhythm in the everyday', *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*, 7(2).

Tacchi, J., Watkins, J. and Keerthirathne, K. (2009) 'Participatory content creation: voice, communication, and development', *Development in Practice*, 19(4/5), pp. 573–584.

Tight, M. (2010) 'The curious case of case study: a viewpoint', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 13(4). doi: 10.1080/13645570903187181.

Urry, J. (2002) 'Mobility and proximity', *Sociology*, 36(2), pp. 255–274.

Wellman, B. and Hampton, K. (1999) 'Living networked on and offline', *Contemporary Sociology*, 28(6), pp. 648–654. doi: 10.2307/2655535.

Westlund, O. (2013) 'Mobile news: a review and model of journalism in an age of mobile media', *Digital Journalism*, 1(1), pp. 6–26. doi: 10.1080/21670811.2012.740273.

Wright Mills, C. (1956) 'The mass society', in *The power elite*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 298–324.

Yin, R. (2009) '"How to do better case studies"', in pages 254-282, *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*. 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781483348858.

Zoellner, A. and Lax, S. (2017) 'On-air and online: social media and local radio production in the UK', *MedienJournal*, 39(2), pp. 5–18. doi: 10.24989/medienjournal.v39i2.65.

10 APPENDICES

10.1 INFORMATION SHEET PROVIDED TO ALL RESPONDENTS

(Sent by email directly to those who responded to the initial invitation)

‘Talk of the Town’. A study of production practices in local community radio

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study on production practices in local community radio.

The thesis I hope to submit for my PhD is entitled ‘Talk of the Town’. I’m exploring how local community radio stations contribute to community building through their production practices. My aim is to identify and analyse what steps are taken to produce and present locally-relevant, locally-sourced or generated news, information and entertainment.

I am studying what is involved when making radio programmes; how you employ certain skills and equipment as well as the interactions that take place. To do this I will shadow you to watch and document the planning and production processes. I will make notes and use an observation chart to keep track of activities. I would also l like to take occasional photographs, subject to your permission.

Please note, it may take me several visits to collect enough information, but I will be as unobtrusive as possible and will do my utmost not to disrupt your programme-making or create any distractions. You may end the observation/shadowing at any time, should you no longer wish to continue.

I may ask to record an interview with you about your production/presentation work. There will also be a short questionnaire that I will ask you to ‘fill in’ in audio form and submit to me digitally.

I will respect your privacy, particularly in terms of any personal details that may be shared with me during my observations. You can choose whether to be named or anonymised when the research is written up and published in my thesis, related publications, conference presentations and on other public platforms. Any arising intellectual property belongs to me.

Please sign the Consent Form attached and indicate how you prefer to be named or referred to when my research is eventually written up.

If you would like more information, please email me on xxx or call me on xxx

Many thanks and best wishes

Josephine Coleman

CONSENT FORM

Being a participant in an academic research study for 'Talk of the Town', a doctoral research project by Josephine Coleman, Birkbeck College, London

I, [*name*   ] have read and understood the Information Sheet given to me by **Josephine Coleman** [THE RESEARCHER], outlining her research study on production practices in local community radio.

I hereby grant permission to THE RESEARCHER to spend time with me to observe and document, in the manner described, how my radio programmes and features are planned, put together, presented and promoted.

I realise this may take place over several observational visits to the station, or out on-location/elsewhere and that I can end the observation/shadowing at any time.

I understand that I can choose whether to be named or anonymised when the research is written up and published in THE RESEARCHER'S PhD thesis. And that this content may also be used and referred to in other academic publications, conference presentations and on other public platforms.

I agree that any arising intellectual property belongs to THE RESEARCHER.

SELECT AS APPROPRIATE:

> a) *I am happy that my name(s) may possibly be used in any materials produced.*
>
> b) *I wish to remain anonymous.*

DATE: . . . .   NAME: . . . .

SIGNED: . . . .

CONTACT DETAILS: . . . .

. . . .

. . . .

10.3 LIST OF QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INTERVIEWS WITH LCR VOLUNTEERS

QUESTIONS FOR PRODUCER/PRESENTER (used for all LCRs surveyed)

RADIO STATION: . . . .

PRODUCER/PRESENTER: . . . .

NAME OF SHOW: . . . .

DAY/TIME OF BROADCAST: . . . .

1) How long have you been involved with this radio station?

2) What is your current role and have you had other roles here?

3) Did you train here to use the studio?

4) Have you been involved with other radio stations elsewhere?

5) Where did you come up with the theme of this current show?

6) What is your inspiration?

7) What is your aim, with this programme?

8) Where do you source the content from?

9) Do you present the show live in the radio station or pre-record it there/elsewhere?

10) How much interaction is there with your audience?

11) Do you know how many people listen?

12) What sort of following do you have – mostly local? Or further afield?

13) Who would you say are your priority – local or internet (global) audiences?

14) Do you live locally?

15) Do you belong to other community organisations or interest groups?

16) What would you say is the main MISSION of the station?

17) How do you and the other volunteers follow this mission?

18) Are there station-specific protocols to follow and if so, how are these circulated?

19) Please tell me what you know about the involvement of the station in other local organizations.

20) How do you promote your show and the station itself?

Two bonus questions:

1) How do you feel your show benefits the wider community?

2) And what is the benefit to you, what do you get out of the work you put in here?

10.4 OBSERVATION CHECKLISTS

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION – STATION: VOLUNTEERS:								DATE:
DECLARED OVERALL ACTIVITY/PROJECT (PROGRAMME, FEATURE)								
	READING			MESSAGING (writing to people)			PHONING	
	DEVICE OR FORM PHONE, COMPUTER, BOOK, NEWSPAPER, ETC	PLATFORM FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE, WEBSITE, PUBLICATION, EMAILS ETC	CONTENT NEWS, CELEBRITY GOSSIP, LOCAL EVENTS ETC	DEVICE PHONE, COMPUTER, NOTEPAPER, ETC	PLATFORM FACEBOOK, WEBSITE, EMAIL, TEXT ETC	PURPOSE INFO GATHERING, ARRANGE MEETING OR INTERVIEW	DEVICE PHONE (LANDLINE) MOBILE, COMPUTER	PURPOSE INFO GATHERING, ARRANGE MEETING OR INTERVIEW

TALK OF THE TOWN Fieldwork observational research. Josephine Coleman, Birkbeck. 28/02/2018   SHEET 1

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION – STATION: VOLUNTEERS:								DATE:
DECLARED OVERALL ACTIVITY/PROJECT (PROGRAMME, FEATURE)								
	WRITING (scripting)			CONSUMING OTHER MEDIA BROADCASTS			MEETINGS	
	DEVICE & PLATFORM PHONE, COMPUTER, NOTEPAD	FORM/ITEM TYPE SCRIPT, CUE SHEET, REPORT, UPDATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, BLOGPOST ETC	CONTENT NEWS, TRAFFIC & TRAVEL, LOCAL WEATHER, SPORTS NEWS, CELEBRITY GOSSIP, LOCAL EVENTS ETC	DEVICE SMARTPHONE, COMPUTER, RADIO, TELEVISION ETC	PLATFORM YOUTUBE, WEBSITE, CHANNEL, FREQUENCY ETC	CONTENT SOUGHT or PURPOSE INFO GATHERING ETC	VENUE CAFÉ, OFFICE, VIRTUAL (SKYPE?)	PURPOSE INFO GATHERING, RELATIONSHIP- BUILDING, SELLING ADS/SPONSORSHIP, EVENT ORGANISING ETC

TALK OF THE TOWN Fieldwork observational research. Josephine Coleman, Birkbeck. 28/02/2018   SHEET 2

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION – STATION: DATE:

VOLUNTEERS:

DECLARED OVERALL ACTIVITY/PROJECT (PROGRAMME, FEATURE)

RECORDING INTERVIEWS & OTHER PRE-REC. ACTIVITY			EDITING AND OTHER POST-PRODUCTION TASKS			PRESENTING (LIVE or AS-LIVE)	
DEVICE PHONE, COMPUTER, ZOOM, ETC	PLATFORM APP OR PROGRAMME, SOFTWARE	CONTENT NEWS, INFORMATION, INTERVIEW, PERFORMANCE, LOCAL EVENTS ETC	DEVICE PHONE, COMPUTER, ZOOM	PLATFORM APP, PROGRAMME, SOFTWARE	PURPOSE ON-AIR CONTENT, PROMO ETC	DEVICE STUDIO, COMPUTER PHONE LANDLINE/MOB	CONTENT or PURPOSE THEME OF SHOW, ROLE OF CONTRIBUTORS

TALK OF THE TOWN Fieldwork observational research. Josephine Coleman, Birkbeck. 28/02/2018

SHEET 3

10.5 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARTS, FIELDWORK MARKET TOWNS

Country of Birth (C 2011)	
UK	26,966
Republic of Ireland	294
EU (other)	782
Other country	2,198

Ethnic Group (C 2011)	
White	28,161
Asian	1,000
Black	308
Arab	40
Mixed/multiple	649
Other ethnic group	82

Religion (C 2011)	
Christian	19,692
Muslim	395
Hindu	212
Sikh	70
Jewish	178
Buddhist	81
Other religion	73
No religion	7,292
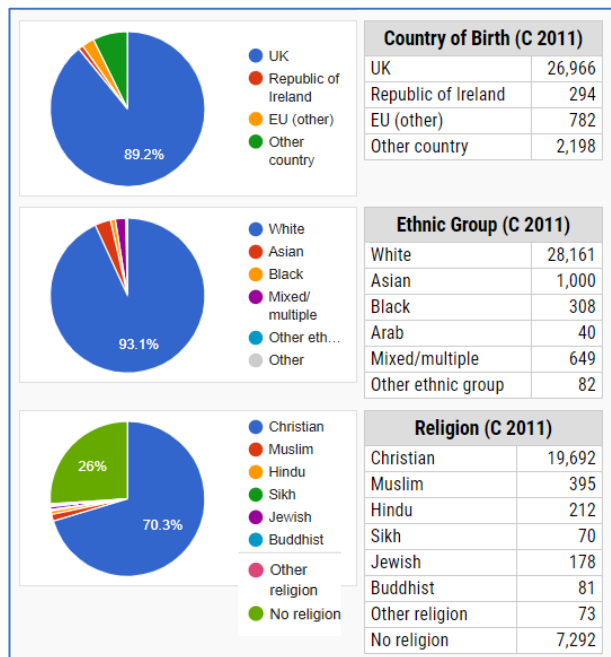
Population Statistics for Harpenden, taken from the 2011 Census, published online by citypopulation.de

Country of Birth (C 2011)	
UK	121,715
Republic of Ireland	1,698
EU (other)	4,961
Other country	12,290

Ethnic Group (C 2011)	
White	124,380
Asian	9,011
Black	2,388
Arab	459
Mixed/multiple	3,904
Other ethnic group	522

Religion (C 2011)	
Christian	83,988
Muslim	5,167
Hindu	1,777
Sikh	303
Jewish	1,664
Buddhist	615
Other religion	435
No religion	36,278
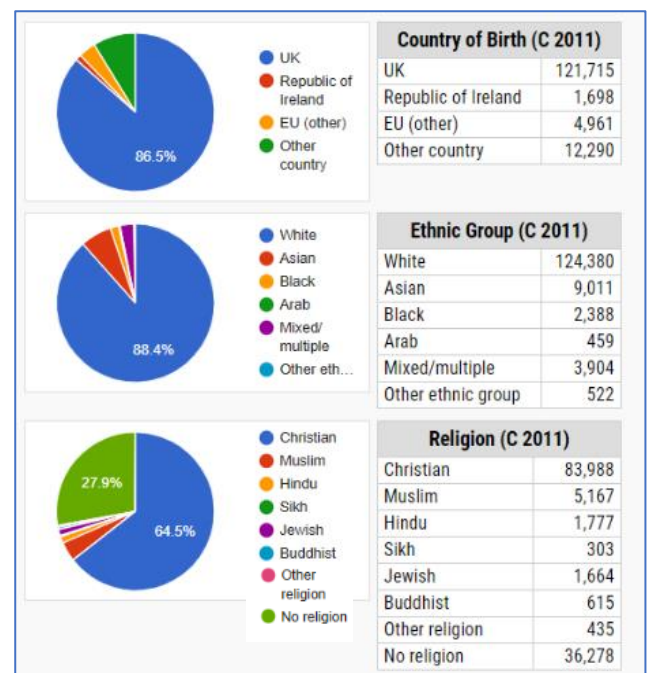
Population Statistics for St Albans taken from the 2011 Census, published online by citypopulation.de

Country of Birth (C 2011)

UK	67,993
Republic of Ireland	1,483
EU (other)	5,460
Other country	15,365

Ethnic Group (C 2011)

White	64,946
Asian	16,170
Black	5,229
Arab	294
Mixed/multiple	3,104
Other ethnic group	558

Religion (C 2011)

Christian	48,891
Muslim	8,905
Hindu	4,348
Sikh	566
Jewish	1,023
Buddhist	659
Other religion	489
No religion	19,330
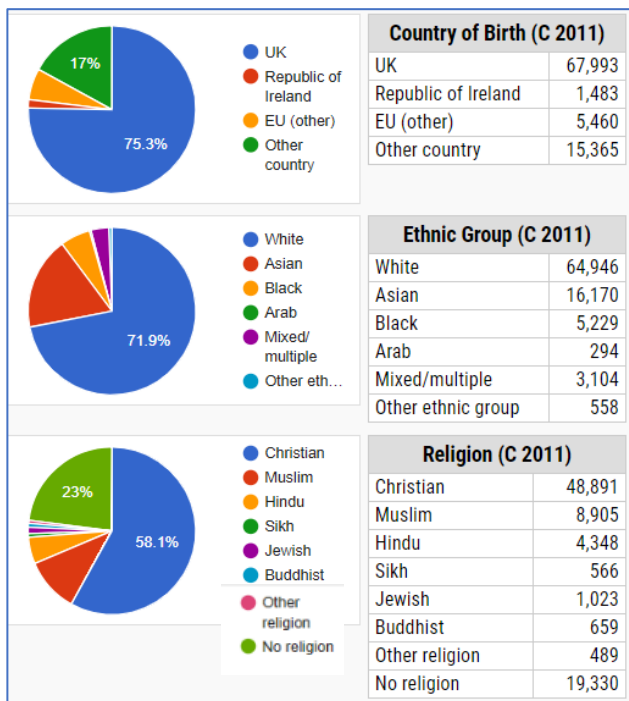
Population Statistics for Watford, based on the 2011 Census, published by citypopulation.de

Country of Birth (C 2011)

UK	140,329
Republic of Ireland	4,754
EU (other)	13,813
Other country	44,305

Ethnic Group (C 2011)

White	111,079
Asian	60,952
Black	19,909
Arab	1,646
Mixed/multiple	8,281
Other ethnic group	1,334

Religion (C 2011)

Christian	96,271
Muslim	49,991
Hindu	6,749
Sikh	2,347
Jewish	326
Buddhist	652
Other religion	898
No religion	33,594
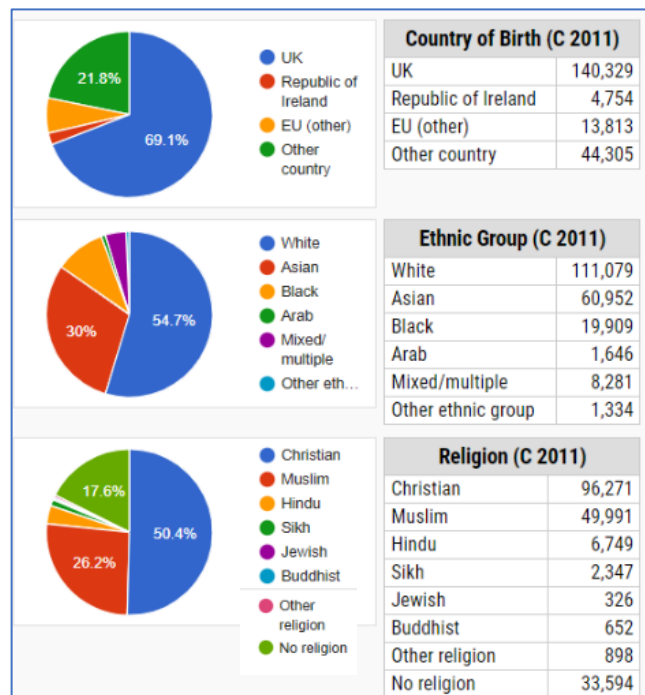
Population Statistics for Luton, based on the 2011 Census, published online by citypopulation.de

Country of Birth (C 2011)

UK	25,421
Republic of Ireland	133
EU (other)	992
Other country	612

Ethnic Group (C 2011)

White	26,404
Asian	400
Black	70
Arab	3
Mixed/multiple	259
Other ethnic group	22

Religion (C 2011)

Christian	17,998
Muslim	33
Hindu	170
Sikh	38
Jewish	3
Buddhist	64
Other religion	100
No religion	6,996
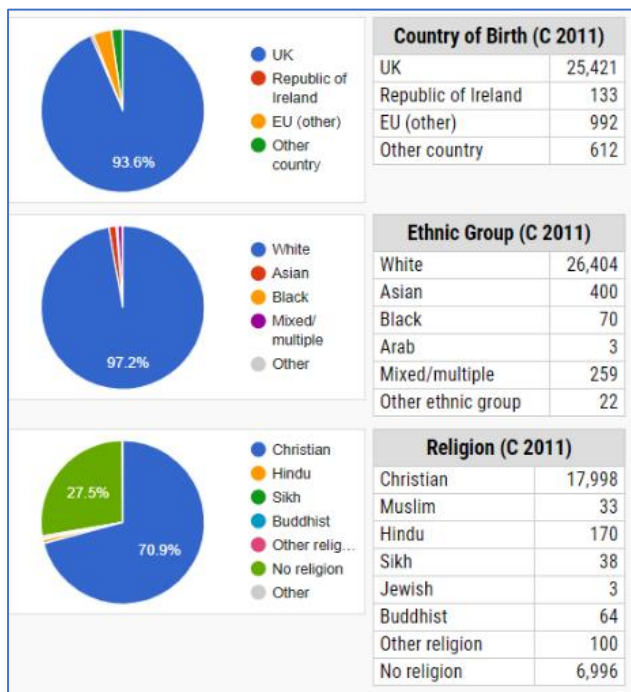
Population statistics for Melton Mowbray based on the 2011 Census published online by citypopulation.de

Country of Birth (C 2011)

UK	11,972
Republic of Ireland	30
EU (other)	171
Other country	242

Ethnic Group (C 2011)

White	12,183
Asian	99
Black	28
Arab	13
Mixed/multiple	76
Other ethnic group	16

Religion (C 2011)

Christian	7,785
Muslim	25
Hindu	10
Sikh	9
Jewish	7
Buddhist	18
Other religion	44
No religion	3,454
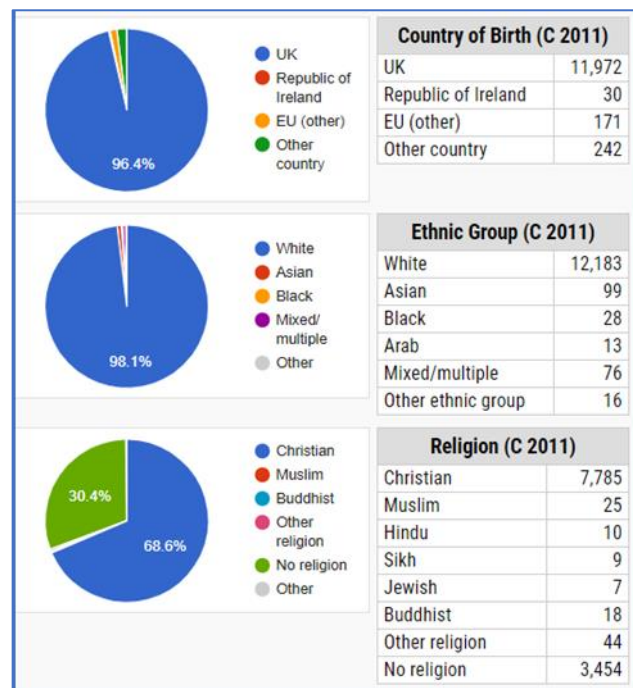
Population Statistics for Midsomer Norton based on the 2011 Census published online by citypopulation.de

10.6 INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT WITH NICKEY RADIO

RADIO FEATURES PRODUCER INTERNSHIP - VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is made on the {insert date} BETWEEN:

(1) Intern: Josephine Coleman, doctoral research student, Birkbeck College, London

(2) xxx, Treasurer and Secretary of NICKEY RADIO, Harpenden

xxx agrees to this placement of Josephine Coleman as a volunteer intern in accordance with the terms of engagement below. There is no contractual obligation between her and NICKEY RADIO, she will not be paid for the placement, nor will expenses be provided.

Effective start date: 31st July 2017

Effective end date: 20th October 2017

Location: Harpenden (home-based and on-location)

Anticipated work schedule during the 12 weeks of your internship: 8-10 hours per week

Expected work activities and timescales for completion:
During the course of 3 months at the station, as volunteer RADIO FEATURES PRODUCER, Josephine will research and produce a number (8 - 10 max.) of short (5 - 7 mins.) audio features about Harpenden. The aim is to convey a sense of this unique place through describing its history, culture and environment; involving and representing (adult) members of the local community, where appropriate.
The audio collection will be complete and ready to air at the end of the placement. Josephine will not be available to work on other radio projects during this time.
The project will entail: familiarisation with the station's programmes; finding out if there any specific ideas for features that need researching; drawing up a list of potential pieces that can be produced which are non-time-specific, for broadcast/podcast at any time in the future by the station; liaising with community groups and organisations to create these features.
Along with detailed production log sheets, Josephine will also keep a journal of her experiences of getting acquainted with the station, the other volunteers and with people and organisations in the local community that are encountered through the various research activities in making the features. These written records will ultimately contribute towards her analysis of local community radio production practices for a PhD thesis.

Expected learning outcomes/ skills developed:
The value to NICKEY RADIO is that, at no cost to the station, there will be produced for broadcast and podcast, a collection of between 8-10 features about Harpenden, which the station has the right to air and post online for as long as they see fit. JOSEPHINE COLEMAN, as an experienced researcher, journalist, marketing and public relations professional, will be attributed as the producer of the features, and will share ownership of them, for use online in blogs and other social media, as well as inclusion in her thesis. The features may also be referred to and presented at academic events and in future publications.

NB. NICKEY RADIO may not use this material for commercial gain, but excerpts can be used in compilations or other promotional activities.

Contact: xxx
Email address:
Tel No:

Expenses:
It is understood that Josephine will not be reimbursed for any travel expenses incurred to and from locations visited as part of the research for and recording of interviews for NICKEY RADIO. Nor are there funds available to recompense her for time spent editing the programmes.

Health and Safety:

During the placement, it is understood that Josephine is required to:

- take reasonable care to avoid injury to herself and to others

- not interfere with or misuse any equipment provided

- report any accident or injury immediately to the relevant authorities

As a freelance producer, she will take reasonable care of her own health and safety, and undertake in consultation with NICKEY RADIO and Birkbeck College where appropriate, risk assessments, identifying measures to be taken to control any identified risks.

Confidentiality:

During and after the placement, Josephine will maintain the confidentiality of NICKEY RADIO data and information where such information is not already within the public domain and is indicated or understood to be confidential. Any data recorded for academic research purposes will be subject to the Data Protection Policy and ethical research codes as endorsed by Birkbeck College. Consent Forms will be used when recording interviews with members of the public and their representatives.

Liability: I acknowledge that there is no public liability insurance policy cover in place for this placement.

Signed _____   **Date:** _____

{   Insert name/ job title   }

For and on behalf of NICKEY RADIO

Signed _____   **Date:** _____

{   Insert name   }

The Intern

[Josephine Coleman, 10/8/2017]

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROJECT: TALK OF THE TOWN

I am studying for a PhD in media studies, at Birkbeck College in London, looking into production practices in local community radio. This involves an examination of what's involved when making radio programmes about a particular locality and for its residents.

At present, I am making a series of short audio features about Harpenden for Nickey Radio to broadcast and post online on their website. I hope to create a 'sense of locality', aiming to get across the character of our town through descriptions of its history, culture and environment. I will be combining on-location sounds with the voices of those who frequent a particular place or have detailed knowledge of it.

Ultimately, the series will form a valuable part of my thesis submission, and may be used and referred to in future academic presentations and publications.

There is a Consent Form attached. Please could you read it carefully and sign, prior to your interview?

Many thanks for your cooperation,

Yours sincerely,

Josephine Coleman
email: xxx….ac.uk

10.8 CONSENT FORM FOR CONTRIBUTORS

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

CONSENT FORM

To allow the broadcast, online posting and publication of documented interviews and recorded audio/audio-visual/photographic material, featuring the named participant(s)

I, [*name*   ] hereby grant **Josephine Coleman**, volunteer features producer for

Nickey Radio, the right to record my likeness/voice/performance and/or the likeness/voice/ performance of

my group, work or exhibition [*name/title*   ] in connection with the production

and distribution of programme material to be transmitted and published online. I understand that this material

may also form part of the content submitted by **Josephine Coleman** in her PhD thesis, under the auspices of

Birkbeck College, University of London. This means that it may be used and referred to in academic

publications, conference presentations and other public platforms, such as blogs. I agree that, in such

instances, any arising intellectual property belongs to Josephine and/or Birkbeck College.

   DELETE AS APPROPRIATE:
   a) *I am happy that my name(s) may possibly be used in any materials produced.*
   b) *I wish to remain anonymous.*

I understand that the recorded material will not be used directly for commercial gain, but excerpts may be

used in compilations or other promotional activities for **Nickey Radio**.

DATE: . . . .   SIGNED: . . . .

CONTACT DETAILS: . . . .

. . . .

✂ ────── cut here
          - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

CONSENT FORM RECEIPT

Thank you for signing the above Consent Form to allow the broadcast, online posting and publication of documented interviews and recorded audio/audio-visual/photographic material in which you have participated. You have agreed to grant me, **Josephine Coleman**, volunteer features producer for **Nickey Radio**, the right to record you for the production and distribution of programme material for Nickey Radio. This material may also form part of the content submitted in my PhD thesis, under the auspices of **Birkbeck College**, University of London, therefore any arising intellectual property rights belong to myself and them.

You ***have/have not*** requested to remain anonymous. Many thanks, Josephine Coleman
       SIGNED/DATED:

LISTEN: xxx   FOLLOW: @Josephine1967
EMAIL: xxx   READ: jocolemanhome.wordpress.com

</div>

10.9 EMAIL TO CHAIR OF LOCAL ALLOTMENTS CLUB

On 30 September 2017 at 11:46, jo coleman <xxx> wrote:

Dear ▉

Thank you for talking with to me earlier... Here is some more detail about what I am doing, for you to share with the committee.

Basically, I'm a mature PhD student in media studies at Birkbeck College in London. My research is focussing on production practices in local community radio. Having lived in Harpenden for over 20 years, I have decided - as part of my research - to volunteer as a features producer with local online station Nickey Radio.

I've been interviewing people in Harpenden on topics which will convey the town's history, culture and environment. My aim is to make a series of short audio features for Nickey Radio to broadcast and post online on their website. Ultimately, the series will form part of my thesis submission, and may be used and referred to in future academic presentations and publications.

I am really keen to have a section on the allotments in Harpenden and so would like to invite someone to be interviewed by me. I imagine it would take no longer than 30 minutes. I would like you to talk about the following:

A brief background on the allotments in Harpenden...how is it that we have so many, compared with other similar sized towns in the UK?

How the East Harpenden Gardening Club operates: in relation to the Town Council and the National Allotment Society etc.

What happens in the shop.

What it's like to develop and nurture your own allotment.

What the soil is like here.

I am approaching the end of my interview period, prior to the editing phase, and so would really appreciate a reply soon, please. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Many thanks

Jo

Josephine Coleman

Doctoral Student/Associate Tutor
Film, Media and Cultural Studies
Birkbeck College, London

Chair: MeCCSA Radio Studies Network

10.10 PRODUCTION LOG SHEET

<u>**NICKEY RADIO FEATURES – PRODUCTION LOG TICK SHEET**</u>

Name of programme/item				Date first approached			
Name of interviewee and organization				Contact Details			
INFORMATION PROVIDED	Introduction to Research letter		Outline questions		Consent Form	CC'ed BBK email	
DETAILS OF INTENDED INTERVIEW				Consent Form signed, received and filed		Y / N	Date
Date and Time							
Location				Anonymity requested?			Y / N
RISK ASSESSMENT List any health & safety issues and practical solutions		**ISSUE/PROBLEM**		**SOLUTION**			
INTERVIEW FILE NUMBER OR NAME				EDITING START DATE			
				EDITING COMPLETE?		<u>Y</u> / N	
RAW MATERIAL DURATION		SAVED AS					
		LENGTH		1ˢᵗ TX DATE			
MATERIAL USED IN OTHER FEATURES?		<u>Y</u> / N					
OTHER INFORMATION							

Jo sounds really good, speak soon   Tue, 17 Oct 2017 at 22:27

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

-------- Original message --------
From: xxx
Date: 17/10/2017 3:52 p.m. (GMT+00:00)
To: xxx
Subject: Nickey Radio features project

Hi ▇

I hope all is well and that you had a good summer.
I can't believe it's nearly October half term already!
I've been busy going out and about around Harpenden – and here's my update.
It might be good to talk at some point, if you can?

13 local people have been interviewed for my series including:
Madam Mayor, Cllr Rosemary Farmer
Town Clerk, Carl Cheevers
Members of Harpenden Writers, the History Club, Friends of the Nickey Line
Archivist from Rothamsted Research
Local shop manager
Food bank manager
Representative from Riverside Allotments

I have created a total of 10 features which each contain a mix of voices and commentaries, narrated by myself.
I propose to call the series 'Remarkable Harpenden - tales of our town'

The individual titles are:
CAFÉ CULTURE
CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME
DEVELOPERS' DELIGHT
FIELDS & YIELDS
FRESH AIR & FUN
GREEN FINGERS
JOIN IN & ENJOY
LEAFY LEGACIES
MARVELLOUS MEMORIALS
PARKS WITH PERKS

Although I thought I would be producing very short audio features, they are coming in at between 10 and 12 minutes. Is this OK? Will you still be able to place these within the computerised daytime programme schedule? I also have an idea for a Blog about the features – and to encourage more listening to them as podcasts. So, could each individual audio feature also be posted on the Nickey Radio website somewhere, along with a link to my blog?

My proposed Intro to these self-contained features will be:
SFX/AUDIO MOTIF under/into "I'm Jo Coleman, bringing you tales of our town, this is Remarkable Harpenden - Café Culture*" SFX/MOTIF FADES. [*one each per title]

My proposed Outro is:
"You've been listening to Remarkable Harpenden with me, Jo Coleman. For more information, go to Nickey Radio.co.uk"

Speak soon 😊

Best wishes, Jo

10.12 CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING TRANSMISSIONS OF *GREEN FINGERS*

On Friday, 8 December 2017, 09:30:18 GMT, <xxx….ac.uk> wrote:

Hello Katerina and Steve. My features are now being circulated – randomly – on Nickey Radio. I have just heard the one you are both in, Green Fingers. I hope that the station schedulers will also be able to give me a more specific programme slot at some point, so that we know when to settle down and tune in...there was mention of perhaps a weekend hour or so, to be set aside. I will keep you posted. Best wishes, Jo

From: Steve 09 December 2017 11:19
To: xxx; xxx; xxx….ac.uk
Cc: Chair, EHGC Allotments
Subject: Re: RE: Request for an interviewee for my radio features series on Harpenden

 Jo. Thanks for the update. If you do hear when it will be on we can publicise it to our members. Do you have a copy of the feature we could listen to? We could re post it on Twitter/Facebook after the airing. Regards, Steve

On Monday, 11 December 2017, 11:22:06 GMT, <xxx….ac.uk> wrote:

Hi all. I have new information, my Remarkable Harpenden features have been scheduled for transmission after the news, on the hour, at around ten minutes past. Christmas has come early. You are in 'Green Fingers'. http://xxx

Jo

steve xxx…co.uk>

To: xxx, xxx, xxx….ac.uk

Cc: Chair, EHGC Allotments

11 Dec 2017 at 12:53

Jo. Thanks. Do we have a specific date and time ? I can't find any mention on the Nickey Radio website. Steve

11 Dec 2017 at 12:58

Hi Steve, It's all rather basic, I'm afraid. They have a bare minimum of volunteers, and a schedule which is primarily automatically played out. It's such early days for them. My contact this morning said my features are being 'played out a lot, after the news at ten past the hour'... Frustrating, I know. But it's all 'stuff' to be written up eventually. Like I said, I've been giving them a head start and then I will do my own thing using my blog and posting the features as podcasts which you'll be able to hear whenever you like!

Text conversation with chair of allotments society, *12/12/17*.

[Beginning with my text following a missed call at 15:11 and voice mail message (█ [the chairperson] is following up Steve's repeated email requests for a private preview/copy)

Hi █. I've just been on to chap at Nickey Radio and he's checked the logs. Green Fingers, featuring Steve and Katerina, is next scheduled for 3:28pm this afternoon. Other times on rotation with the other 9 features, tend to be off-peak, 12 mins past the hour. :) Jo

15:54: Hi Jo, Been listening since 3.15, nothing yet tho, just music on a roll, no talking at all I'm afraid :(█

16:03: Me too :(Sorry. He was on the system when I phoned & told me he could see when my features went out today (6:12, 9:12, 11:12) But I missed them. He helpfully offered to 'drop' Green Fingers in at 3:28 to appease me! Maybe he wasn't able to make last-minute change! What a chapter for my PhD! Jo

16:05: I notice they play the hourly news about 10 mins late, is there a delay or something?

16:09: Yes. Welcome to the world of Internet community radio! They take the feed from Sky from the hour before! Oh - maybe our feature will go out at 4:28...goodness knows. I didn't think it would all be this challenging, I have to say. I'm pushing to post all 10 features online on their website or a blog....

16:22: Are you not able to just forward us a recording (which we would not pass on or use obviously) so we know the content and the context the Allotment part sits in within the whole article? I did expect us to have some form of sign off before use to be honest. I'm very aware I did not come back to you on your original comment re you felt we had a lot of Allotments here compared with other towns, not really so, our sites are quite small, therefore less plots available.

16:30: There's no contentiousness in my features. So don't worry on that score. I'm not doing the investigative journo thing. It's not usual to give previews/sign-off to contributors. And if the digital mp3 is out there I lose control of it. I'm afraid at this point, it's a case of waiting for the NR tx/posts.

16:35: Ok, no worries, sure they will post in the end :) Think they're all just curious / keen to hear it. We are having a Farmers Market stall to promote the club on Jan 28th so maybe they can plug that nearer the time too. All the best, █

10.13 COPY FOR USE IN BLOG ON *GREEN FINGERS*

<u>REMARKABLE HARPENDEN BLOG: GREEN FINGERS</u>

Contributors: Committee member of Friends of the Nickey Line, Geoff Bunce; Harpenden Town Council Clerk, Carl Cheevers; and from East Harpenden Gardening Club, Riverside Allotments plot holders Katerina Filipova and Steve Millington.

Harpenden was once a small farming village. The community relied largely upon local harvests for food and drink and for raw materials that supported the local craft economy such as straw plaiting. Now, a bustling commuter town, we still manage to maintain a green and pleasant environment and there's a lot of evidence of green fingers at work.

In this programme I talk to locals who clearly appreciate not just the health-giving properties but the social benefits of working on the land, in the fresh air. Harpenden Town Council Clerk, Carl Cheevers explains the council's role in supporting local groups in their conservation work, in particular The Batford Springs Volunteers.

Carol also talks about the scheme which keeps the town looking floral all year round, Harpenden in Bloom.

Committee member of Friends of the Nickey Line, Geoff Bunce, shares some Celtic folk tales inspired by what we find along the old track.

And two members of the East Harpenden Gardening Club, Katerina Filipova and Steve Millington, show me around their plots at Riverside Allotments, along the banks of the River Lea.

This feature was first broadcast in November and December 2017, on Nickey Radio.

It is now available to listen to on Mixcloud.

PHOTOS:

TAGS/LINKS: The Batford Springs Volunteers; Friends of the Nickey Line; Harpenden Town Council – Harpenden in Bloom; East Harpenden Gardening Club

http://www.ehgc.org/

http://www.ulvg.org.uk/

http://www.nickeyline.org/

http://www.harpenden.gov.uk/harpenden-in-bloom

https://www.mixcloud.com/josephine-coleman/remarkable-harpenden-green-fingers/

10.14 RADIO VERULAM'S KEY COMMITMENTS DOCUMENT

Key Commitments
Licence number: CR000090
Service name: Radio Verulam
Licence area: St. Albans (as shown in the licensed coverage area map)
Frequency: 92.6 MHz

Description of character of service
Radio Verulam is a service for the residents of St. Albans. It enables local people to become radio broadcasters, and helps local community, charitable, social and voluntary organisations to promote themselves and attract new volunteers. Output is designed to appeal to listeners of all ages and backgrounds living in the St. Albans area.
The service broadcasts:

• Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are: popular music from the 1960s onwards. Specialist music genres and music from local musicians also feature.

• Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: national news, local and community news and information, local sports, events diary, interviews, discussions, informative features.

• Over the course of each week, programming is broadcast in English, with some segments aimed at under-represented communities such as foreign language speakers, ethnic minorities and older people.

• The service provides original output(1) for a minimum of 40 hours per week.

• The service provides locally-produced output(2) for a minimum of 91 hours per week.

The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.
The service provides a range of community benefits (social gain objectives mandated by statute) for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:

• the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion,

• the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and

• the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service.
The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.

1 Original output is output that is first produced for and transmitted by the service, and excludes output that was transmitted elsewhere before. Original output can be live or voice-tracked. Repeat broadcasts of original output do not count towards the minimum requirement.
2 Locally-produced output is any output made and broadcast from within the service's licensed coverage area. It may include all types of local production.

[June 2007. Revised November 2011; August 2016; October 2016; December 2017]

10.15 LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO RADIO VERULAM VOLUNTEERS

<u>Invitation to participate in 'Talk of the Town': a study of production practices in community radio</u>

Dear Radio Verulam Member,

I would like to invite you to participate in my research study on production practices in local community radio. Please see the details below and feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

After many happy and satisfying years working and volunteering in local radio, I am now studying for a PhD at Birkbeck College, so that I can become a University lecturer in media studies. The thesis I hope to submit is entitled 'Talk of the Town'. I'm exploring how local community radio stations contribute to community building through their production practices. My aim is to highlight and help further strengthen the significance of the voluntary sector in both the media industry and academia.

As part of my fieldwork this Spring, I'm hoping to spend time with Radio Verulam presenters and producers, watching how programmes are planned and put together. I'm especially keen to observe the different approaches to featuring local information and material.

I would like to learn where and how programmes are prepared, but I realise this may be in volunteers' homes, so I will respect privacy in such cases. But at the very least, I would like to be in the station (though not necessarily in the studio!) when shows are being presented or recorded. It would be useful too if I could go out and about on-location, where appropriate.

It may take me several visits with each participant to properly understand the processes and routines involved in producing their programmes, but I will try to be as unobtrusive as possible.

My main research methods will be making notes and taking the occasional photograph. When the opportunity arises, I would also like to conduct interviews with individual volunteers about the programmes and their involvement with the station.

I will ask each of my participants to sign a form, indicating their informed consent to being included in my research, choosing whether to be named or anonymised when it is eventually written up. My fieldwork at Radio Verulam will form part of the content submitted in my PhD thesis and may also be used and referred to in academic publications, conference presentations and on other public platforms.

If you are interested in being a part of my research, or would like more information, please email me on ▮▮▮▮ac.uk or call me on ▮▮.

Many thanks and best wishes

Jo Coleman

10.16 RADIO VERULAM TRAINING CLOCKS
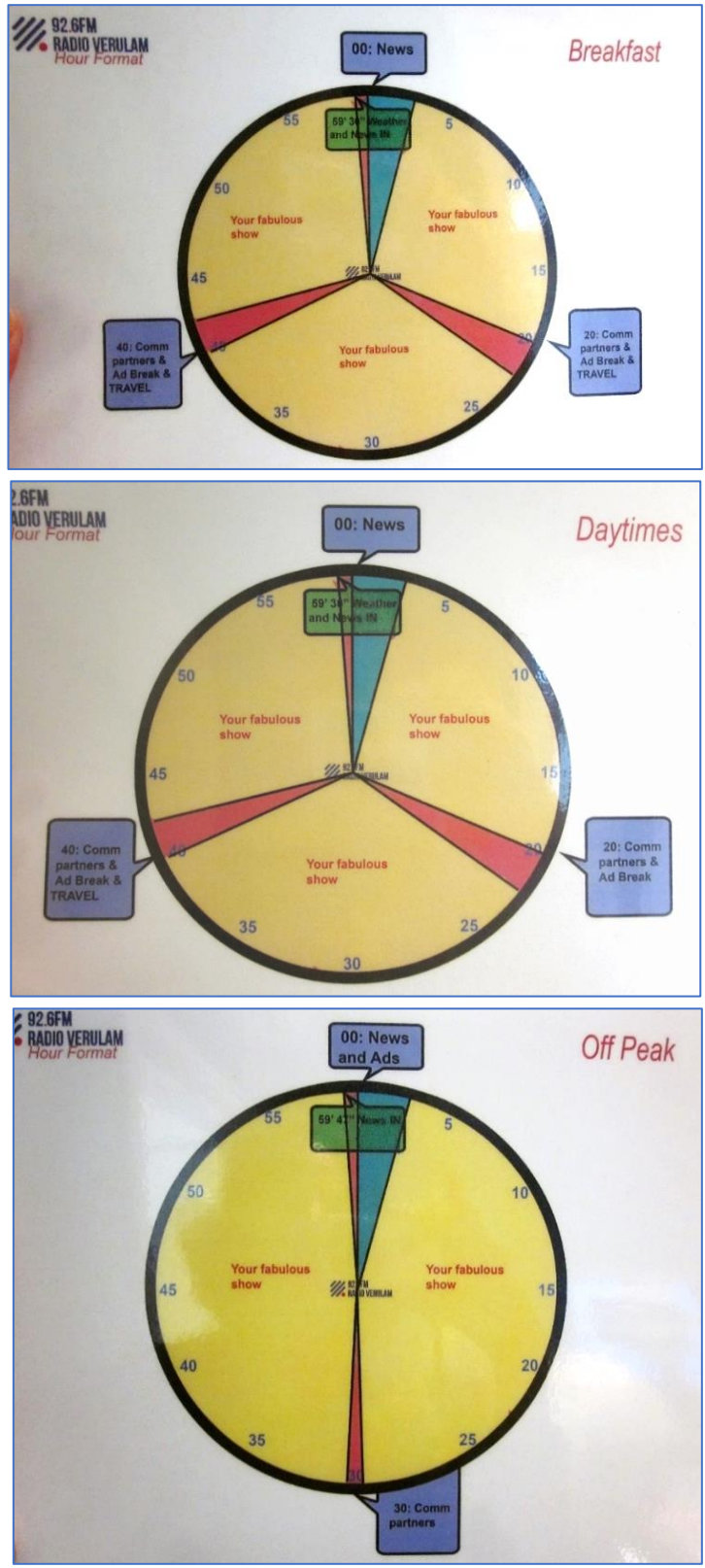
10.17 RESPONDENTS IN *TALK OF THE TOWN*: PRACTICE STATUS

STATION	PARTICIPANT	CATEGORY
RV	Klaudia	3
	Ian C. (with Clive N.)	4 (3)
	Amanda	3
	Diana (with Jenny F.)	3 (3)
	Ian R.	3
	Kerry (with Jenny H.)	2,3,5 (3)
	Richard	4
	Kathy	3
	Danny (with Harrie)	1,3 (1)
	Denise (with Matthew)	2,3 (1)
	Lydia	2
	Clive G.	3,4
	Phil	2,5
	Pat	3
	Jonny	1,4,5
	Nick	3,4
	Tony (with PA)	1,2,3 (3)
Vibe		
	Howard *	3
	Chris	1,2
	Lee	4
	Ms C *	5
	Ryan *	1
	James	1,2
	Josh	1,2
	Nathan	1,2
Radio LaB		
	Jack	1
	Terry *	2,5
The Eye		
	Christine	3
	Patrick	4
	Jonny	1
Somer Valley FM	Dom *	3,5
Nickey Radio	Sylvia	3
	Jo	1,3,5

PURPOSE OF INVOLVEMENT IN LCR (key)	
1. a route into the profession	
2. supplementary to one's existing day job in media/communications	
3. incidental (got into radio when looking for a way to contribute to the community)	
4. making up for missed opportunity or continuing a teenage hobby	
5. a way for former media/radio professional to keep their hand in	
*Denotes drawing a salary ( ) indicate the Studio Assistants	