"On the margins": a qualitative analysis of independent hyperlocal news through a subcultural lens

by

Carol Arnold

Canterbury Christ Church University

Thesis submitted
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2019

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank *Canterbury Christ Church University* for funding this doctorate and providing me with such an amazing opportunity. Specifically I want to thank my top notch supervisory team: Professors Shane Blackman, Ágnes Gulyás and Adrian Holliday, whose insight and constructive feedback helped me shape this project. A 'blanket' thank-you to everyone in the Graduate School who has helped me to reach this point. Particularly those involved in *CCCU's* excellent Researcher Development Programme. They inspire and open post-graduate eyes to limitless possibilities.

  I am most indebted to Shane Blackman whose expertise and support allowed me to 'breath life' into this thesis - responding to texts and emails at all hours with wise words and plenty of encouragement. Also Dr Andy Birtwistle for mentoring me through the most difficult stages of the doctorate.

  Particularly grateful thanks go to the independent publishers who allowed an insight into their world by patiently donating their time to speak to me. In no particular order they are: David Wimble, James Hatts, Vijay Jain, David Shafford, David Jackman, Daniel Ionescu, John Cook, Jamie Summerfield, Rachel Howells, Richard Gurner, Sean Kelly, Annemarie Flanagan, Sue Choularton, William Perrin, Richard Coulter, Emma Cooper, Richard Drew, Gary Brindle, Paul Breeden, Michael Casey, David Prior, Emma Gunby, Martin Johnston, Adam Cantwell-Corn, Pat Gamble, Dave Harte and Simon Perry. To this list neds to be added Emma Meese, Kathryn Geels and Douglas White, whose contributions provided different angles and added valuable perspective to the data.

  Thanks go to Tracy Austin for proof reading and correcting the 'typos' in the thesis in lightning quick time, like the superb English teacher that she is. I'm hoping that the experience hasn't put her off doing her own doctorate. Any mistakes that remain are all my own work. Also to my dear friends Kim Hodges and Julia Hobden who have provided calming words when I have needed them most.

 Last and most importantly thanks to my family for coming on this journey with me – it hasn't been an easy few years. My husband Bill, son David and daughter Juliet have had to endure me working constantly, while littering our home with piles of academic books and journal articles. It has been particularly trying for Bill with three of us studying. There has been a steady stream of deadlines for exams and assignments in our house, due to variously: GCSEs, A Levels, a US college scholarship and most recently two UK

undergraduate degrees in addition to my post-graduate studies. Bill has been tormented by 'phantom' fears that he must have an essay to hand in! At times 'going back to sea' to his day job, as a Master Mariner, has provided some respite from the relentless studying happening at home. The one who has taken it all in his stride is 'thesis dog' Max, our Border Collie, who has been my constant companion throughout the writing up period – how I wish I could sleep that soundly. There has also been sadness too. When we started this journey my dad Jack Wicken and Bill's mum Molly Arnold were still with us, with their towering personalities. They saw the start but regrettably not the finish, nevertheless their lives were brim-full with experiences. So to the future, onward and upward!

This doctorate is dedicated to my family: Bill, David and Juliet with love. Now this thesis is written… more time for making memories!

Abstract

This thesis adopts a little used subcultural lens for a qualitative investigation of selective UK independent hyperlocal publishers. Drawing on the biographical tradition of Robert Park of the Chicago School and the subsequent work on subcultures, it gives voice to 27 independent operators whose narrative of their everyday publishing activities evidences a variety of themes.

These include the emergence of independent hyperlocal publishing as a result of a crisis in mainstream local newspapers. This crisis was the result of a combination of factors: the disruption of the internet, centralisation strategies which distanced local newspapers from communities and finally the effects of the economic downturn. The thesis considers how independent publishers, operating on the margins of the local news ecosystem, have retrieved and repurposed aspects of the mainstream and put them to good use; frequently reinventing working practices discarded by the 'parent culture'.

Changes to the research field during the study period are also included to show a sector both organising and professionalising itself, while re-negotiating its relationship with mainstream organisations. This is in line with the notion that subcultures can 'travel' (Hebdige, 2014: 9) as they evolve. To contextualise narratives, three further interviews were included with representatives of philanthropic organisations which have helped independent publishing gain a foothold in the local news ecosystem.

The thesis includes a high degree of autobiographical inscription by acknowledging the journalistic background of the author. The overall research strategy is a subjective, inductive approach based on the feminist tradition of open-ended, one-to-one interviews. The methodological approach is Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Birks and Mills, 2015).

Contents

Chapter 3: Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture

Chapter 4: Participants' professional background and their motivation for independent hyperlocal publishing

Chapter 5: "I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism

Chapter 6: No longer "Nano-scale"? Evidence of hyperlocal operations emerging from the margins

Chapter 7: Conclusion

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

This study of 27 internet-era independent ultra-local news publishers was prompted by my own experience as a local newspaper reporter during 1980s and 90s. Having observed the changing local news ecosystem in the internet-era, I was aware that newspaper ownership was becoming more corporatized (Ramsay and Moore, 2016). Economies of scale were leading to the closure of district offices and the creation of news hubs, with reporters based many miles from the communities which they covered (Franklin, 2006; Fowler, 2011; Mair *et al,* 2013); often as a result of local media mergers (*Office of Fair Trading*, 2009). A new breed of community news provisions, called hyperlocals, therefore caught my eye – precisely because they appeared to be doing exactly the opposite. Their coverage was excessively local, either purely online or often also in print, and more importantly the people creating them retained a physical presence in their communities. Both excessively local coverage and physical presence in the community had been pre-requisites of local newspaper reporting in my day, when journalists were assigned a 'patch' of the circulation area and expected to know everything that was happening there.

In 2010 the UK was in the grip of an economic downturn and local newspapers seemed to be closing every week, blaming falling advertising sales due to a double whammy of the internet and recession. I was curious when, against the backdrop of doom and gloom in the mainstream press, a hyperlocal print magazine opened in my own neighbourhood and it was popular – a real talking point among the locals. As a journalist two things struck me, firstly it was in print a format which the mainstream media was abandoning at an alarming speed (Ponsford, 2012), secondly there was plenty of advertising on its pages. This latter point was in contrast to the national media rhetoric of falling ad sales (Street Porter, 2009). In view of the crisis, I expected my neighbourhood hyperlocal to be a short-lived addition to the local news ecology. Contrary to my expectations, three years later *The Looker* was still 'free' and appearing fortnightly in my local supermarket, where its advertising laden pages continued to fly off the shelves.

Curiosity about these new 'hyperlocals' prompted my decision to investigate them for a radio documentary for my undergraduate degree in *Film, Radio and TV Studies* (*FRTV*). I discovered that there were around 400 independently run hyperlocal provisions scattered around the UK; often being launched in places where the local newspaper had

closed (*Openly Local,* 2012; Harte, 2013). As part of my research, I signed up for the 'World's first community journalism *MOOC*' (*Massive Open Online Course*) (Scarbrough, 2014) to learn more about who these community journalists were and how they operated. Being the internet era, all of them had an online presence but some also published printed newspapers; a medium that mainstream local newspaper publishers were discarding (Franklin, 2006; Street Porter, 2009; Tait, 2013:8; Turvill, 2015). Nevertheless, it was not the platform that independent publishers were using, that interested me, so much as the culture of their working practices. The most up-to-date research into hyperlocal publishing at the start of the study (Williams *et* al, 2014: 12) found that around half of participants' self-identified as journalists or had worked in mainstream media, suggesting that many hyperlocal operators were media professionals turning to this form of publishing. Factors taken into account when devising the research questions, were the reasons for participants' becoming independent publishers and their professional background. The following research questions therefore evolved:

RQ: 1: What are the professional backgrounds of key personnel responsible for the

     operation of a range of UK hyperlocal provisions?

     RQ: 1.1: What are their motivations for becoming involved in independent

        publishing?

RQ2: What are the working practises of the independent publishers?

     RQ2.1: Do they work alone?

     RQ2.2: Do they live in the areas for which they generate news?

RQ3: How have their provisions changed throughout the field research period?

RQ4: As independent media outlets, what is their relationship with mainstream media?

Because of a grounded theory approach I wanted to keep the research questions as open as possible to allow themes to emerge from the data; Melanie Birks and Jane Mills (2015: 22-23) warn about the dangers of tainting the research if theoretical concepts are imposed at an early stage of a study. Through my critical research on the literature I

became aware of two concepts that would later shape my approach within the PhD to both my research questions and the empirical data collection. These were firstly the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (*CCCS*) approach to subcultural theory derived from Phil Cohen's work (1972) and secondly Dick Hebdige's idea of 'repurposing' (1979). During the data analysis it became more apparent that these theoretical insights were highly relevant as a critical framework to interpret the qualitative data of local news production. The decision to explore them took place at the theoretical coding stage as I made sense of the data which had been generated. So, although the topic emerged from my reflection about internet era independent operators appearing to adopt similar working practices in the community as myself, during the 1980s and 90s, my interest was prompted by journalistic curiosity rather than awareness of particular theory. As a result of my subsequent methodological shift towards a more qualitative and biographical focus in both my research techniques and data interpretation I found that the work of *The Chicago School* in particular Robert Park's experience of being both a journalist and newspaper editor made sense in relation to a study on hyperlocals. In turn, the relevance of *The Chicago School* style of data analysis lead me to the work of Emile Durkheim whose work on the division of labour and the collective conscience are featured in Park and Burgess's edited collection (1921) *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*.

These new hyperlocal provisions were clearly outside of the mainstream which suggested that they were operating from the margins so subculture eventually dictated the theoretical direction. This decision was further emphasised by the discovery that independent operators were replicating both physical closeness and focus on excessively local news, customary during my time as a 'patch' reporter. This indicated subcultural themes of marginality, retrieving and repurposing. The crisis in local newspapers' (Radcliffe, 2012: 16; Pennycook, 2015: 15-16; Harte, 2017: 132 to 143) also resonated with the observation that subcultures evolve as a result of crisis in the mainstream (Cohen, 1972: 22 ;1980: 82). These factors combined to suggest a subcultural approach to my study.

Subcultural approaches are generally associated with the study of youth culture and framed as resisting 'adult' or 'parent culture' (Cohen, 1972, Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006; Jenks, 2005; Williams, 2011; Blackman, 2014). While there was no suggestion that hyperlocal publishing was part of youth culture, there was evidence to

show that people involved in independent publishing may have migrated into the space from the parent culture of mainstream media (Williams *et al*, 2014: 12). Subcultures are continually evolving and can 'travel' (Hebdige, 2014: 9), so given the length of time over which data was to be collected, the study needed to establish how participants' provisions changed during the study period.

Because of the subcultural lens, it was important to differentiate between internet-era independent hyperlocal publishers and online hyperlocal sites started by mainstream operators; the latter having been started in order to monetise an ultra-local audience rather than in response to local need (Baines, 2012: 155; Thurman *et al*, 2012). In subcultural terms there is a difference between these two types of enterprise because independent operators represent the subculture, while mainstream newspapers represent the parent culture (Cohen, 1972: 22; 1980: 82). A more nuanced distinction also needs to be made, between pre-internet independent publishing and internet-era independent publishing. Having worked in local newspapers I was aware that during the pre-internet era there were many family owned independent operations, indeed I worked for two of them: The Kent Messenger Group and Guthrie Newspapers Ltd. For the purposes of this study, remaining pre-internet independent operations will be categorised as part of the mainstream, since they originally distributed using a pre-internet medium (Miel and Farris, 2008; Metzgar *et al*, 2011). I am investigating internet-era hyperlocal start-ups, which have been enabled by Web 2:0 interactive tools, so this is the definition of independent publishing which will be used in this study. There is a full discussion and definition of the term hyperlocal in Chapter 1 (*Literature review: applying a subcultural lens to hyperlocal*).

The same chapter also introduces the theory which will be applied to analyse the data in the empirical chapters. This study takes an overarching subcultural approach based on the work of the *Chicago School of Sociology* at the beginning of the 20th Century (Park and Burgess, 1925/1967; Bulmer, 1984; Lindner, 1996) and the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (*CCCS*) at *Birmingham University* in the 1970s (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006). Marginality is a key feature of subcultures (Blackman, 2014) and dates from the work of Robert Park at *The Chicago School of Sociology* in the 1920s (1928). The Birmingham scholar's work identified themes of 'resistance' to mainstream culture (Hall and Jefferson, 2006), relationship with the 'parent culture' (Cohen, 1972) and repurposing of mainstream

style and objects by subcultures (Hebdige,1979) in their work on youth culture. It was academics Kirsty Hess and Lisa Waller who suggested applying subcultural theory to hyperlocal operations to 'generate new insights' into the culture of 'excessively local' news creation (2016). This study therefore extends this approach and applies other theoretical perspectives primarily reciprocal journalism (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al*, 2017) and mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Aron, 1967; Hughes et al 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Reciprocal journalism provides an understanding of the relationship between participants' and their communities and also between each other. While Durkheim's *The division of labour in society* (1893/1984) provides a deeper understanding of the relationships between participants'. Both provide evidence of the retrieval and repurposing process at work, as does 'zine' culture (Worley, 2015), in relation to the print format. Other literature applied in the empirical chapters is alternative media (Atton, 2002; Forde, 2011) to show how some alternative organisational structures have been adopted by hyperlocals. Also organisational technology (Küng, 2008) to examine how technological advances have worked in favour of the hyperlocal subculture and from media economics Picard's theory of 'service' and 'craft' production modes (2014) help understand the continuing change in the parent culture.

The methodological approach to this doctorate has been heavily influenced by the biographical tradition which dates back to another journalist turned academic Robert Park (Lindner, 1996; Blackman, 2014). As explained my background was responsible for the choice of topic, also for both the interactive interviewing (Ellis *et al*, 1997) and the more journalistic writing style. On this basis a strong degree of autobiographical inscription (LeMenager & Hebdige, 2013) is present in the thesis, this is explored fully in Chapter 2 (*Methodology: the influence of autobiographical inscription*). This chapter examines the methodological foundation for the thesis, which is based on a Grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Birks and Mills, 2015) to try to avoid the preconceptions of a hypothesis and allow findings from the data to emerge through repeated coding of the raw data. The research setting was the UK hyperlocal sector which at the start of the research period comprised 408 sites listed as active (Harte, 2014). Due to the size of the sector manageability was a consideration and the emphasis was on depth rather than breadth, so eventually 27 operators situated in England and Wales were selected for investigation. It was a qualitative study gathering the views of research participants' in two rounds of open-

ended interviews between summer 2015 and 2017. There were also three interviews of members of philanthropic organisations which have supported hyperlocal operations, to provide an overview and evidence of travel within the sector; also to provide supplementary data to provide a longitudinal element. The interviews were largely conducted by telephone, due to the geographical spread of the operations and because that format suited some participants' better than face-to-face interviews.

   Chapter 3 (*Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture*) is the first of the empirical chapters and describes the crisis in the parent culture of mainstream local newspapers' which led to the emergence of an independent hyperlocal subculture. It also uses my positionality statement (Savin-Baden and Major; 2013: 68-83), supported by primary and secondary sources, to show how the culture of mainstream local newspapers' has changed during the 1980s and 90s. This is to provide evidence of the 'socially cohesive elements' that have been destroyed in the parent culture (Cohen, 1972: 23), with their retrieval and repurposing discussed in the chapters 4, 5 and 6. This chapter also acts as a benchmark for the hyperlocal sector at the start of the research period, based on empirical research by academics Andy Williams, Steven Barnett, Dave Harte and Judith Townend who conducted the only large academic study of the UK sector *The state of hyperlocal community news in the UK: findings from a survey of practitioners* (2014). Evidence of the hyperlocal sector at the start of the study provided evidence for later chapters so that it was possible to see how the subculture changed during the research period (Hebdige 2014).

   Chapter 4 (*Research participants' professional background and their motivation for independent hyperlocal publishing*) was in response to research question one to discover the professional background of operators and their motivations for becoming involved with independent hyperlocal publishing. Williams *et al* (2014: 12) suggested that around half of the operators in their study were media professionals. Given the large number of local newspaper closures and subsequent redundancies (Ponsford, 2012) the research questions sought to discover how many of the interviewees had migrated from mainstream media to the hyperlocal sector. Establishing this and understanding their motives, would shed light on whether elements of marginality (exhibited as redundancy), resistance or antagonism existed in relation to the parent culture.

Chapter 5 (*"I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism*) responds to research question 2 and provides evidence of research participants' working culture. The accounts provide evidence of retrieving and repurposing socially cohesive aspects of the parent culture that had been discarded by the mainstream. This included 'footwork journalism' and the 'investment of time' required to maintain 'a prolonged and continual presence in the place' which Hess and Waller suggest is an essential part of being local (2016: 197).

Chapter 6 (*No longer "Nano-scale"? Evidence of hyperlocal operations emerging from the margins*) provides evidence to answer research question 3 and addresses the relationship between the independent hyperlocal subculture and the mainstream local newspaper parent culture, from the point of view of research participants'. Themes explored in this chapter are participants' feelings of marginalisation, particularly those in online only operations, who are excluded from accessing the statutory advertising available to legacy newspapers. This chapter also provides evidence of other themes of resistance and antagonism between parent and subculture and shows how the subculture has travelled during the research period. By the end of the study the subculture had been reframed as independent community publishing with its own representative body the *Independent Community News Network* (*ICNN*) and gained access to mainstream initiatives such as the *BBC Local News Partnership*. But, remained marginalised in other respects.

Chapter 7 (*Conclusion*) reviews the empirical evidence and concludes the discussion by setting out the findings and recommendations for both future research and policy change. The research provides evidence of a small band of independent operators retrieving and repurposing aspects which have been lost in mainstream media; primarily the offline reciprocal engagement with the community which comes from having an embedded reporter. It offers a snapshot of a resilient group of independent operators most of whom are optimistic about the future. There was often evidence of antagonism between independent operators and the mainstream media, with rare examples of co-operation. Several operators were relying on their operations for their fulltime employment, while others in atypical work patterns, were treating them as a reliable income stream. Most of them needed to generate income from their sites, particularly those who were working fulltime. They were building strong, enduring relationships with their communities and between each other. The

print platform was proving to be as resilient as they were and was being repurposed by a number of operators. The debate around print in this thesis is neither about whether print is dead, nor that it should be viewed in terms of an opposition between print and online delivery platforms. The participants' in this field occupied a world of diversity and utilized whichever platform best suited their needs at a given time. If they had adopted print it was not out of misplaced nostalgia, but because it was good for business. The intention of this study was to provide further evidence of the culture of independent publishing in the internet-era. Every story is different, but also the same as they are linked by subcultural themes of marginalisation, resistance, retrieving and repurposing. Participants' also share attributes of resilience and agility as they doggedly go about the day-to-day business of community news creation. There was also a strong collective theme emerging from the data, with participants' supporting each other in both contractual and non-contractual ways.

I argue that independent publishing should be supported as part of a move to diversify local news production in the UK, to guard against narratives of exclusion whereby whole communities are prevented from having a voice. Tangible forms of encouragement should be available for local news providers who display physical closeness to the communities which they represent; a position from which they are better able to articulate local needs. Specifically, independent operators should be able to access statutory advertising, from which many are excluded, and currently forms an informal subsidy for mainstream local newspapers'. The research that I present here, seeks to contribute to the wider discussion around hyperlocal news creation both in the UK and wider world.

Chapter 1: Literature review: applying a subcultural lens to hyperlocal

1:1 Introduction

This thesis is underpinned by the biographical tradition dating back to the work of Robert Park on marginalised communities (1915; 1928) during the golden era of *The Chicago School* in the 1920s (Bulmer, 1984). The overriding approach is subcultural, this will be used as the lens through which to view the challenges faced by research participants' as they produce excessively local news. The theoretical approaches outlined in this chapter will be employed in the empirical chapters to analyse participants' relationships with their communities, each other and the mainstream media. Subcultural approaches are generally associated with the study of youth culture and framed as resisting 'adult' or 'parent culture' (Cohen, 1972, Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006; Jenks, 2005; Williams, 2011; Blackman, 2014). Considering excessively local news production from a subcultural angle is a little used theoretical approach and has been proposed by Kirsty Hess and Lisa Waller to: 'generate fresh insights, theoretical perspectives and research questions that can expand and enrich our understanding of the hyperlocal and its role in society' (2016: 93-74).

In the first section I will examine what is meant by the term hyperlocal, which needs to be explored and contextualised in terms of this thesis. The second section will consider subcultural theory including themes of marginality (Park, 1928), the relationship with the parent culture (Cohen, 1972), resistance (Hall and Jefferson, 2006), retrieving and repurposing of aspects of the parent culture (Hebdige, 1979) and Emile Durkheim's 'division of labour' (1893/1984) to identify participants' working practices.

The discussion surrounding the subcultural activities of hyperlocal operators, dips into several theoretical fountains of which reciprocity: 'the giving of benefits to another in return for benefits received' (Molm, 2010: 119), is a key concept and this will be discussed in section three. Reciprocity is identified as being an important component in both community building and creating solidarity (Molm *et al*, 2007). Seth Lewis, Avery Holton and Mark Coddington have extended the concept of reciprocity to journalism (2014), their work provides the foundation for identifying and exploring different forms of reciprocity, *direct, indirect* and *sustained*.

Section 4 will discuss the literature surrounding other independent media subcultures 'zines' (Worley, 2015; Kempson, 2015) and 'alternative media' (Atton, 2002; 2003; Forde, 2011; Curran, 2003), to identify what may assist an exploration of hyperlocal. The issue of precarity which is usually linked with non-mainstream media will also be considered.

Section five will look at how both parent and subcultures are not 'set in stone' and continually evolve. Changes in the role of journalists in the 21st century will be discussed so they can be considered when analysing the working practices of hyperlocal operators. Technology has also played a role in the media evolution and this section will also consider the impact of different innovations and the changing media ecosystem introducing aspects of organisation theory and media economics to the discussion.

1:2 Defining the term hyperlocal

The first task of this literature review will be to explore what is meant by the word hyperlocal since it is a contested term (Metzgar *et al* 2011: 773); with Harte *et al* stating that 'definitions of the term "hyperlocal" remain elusive or divisive even among practitioners' (2019: 8). The term is disliked by many operators (Williams, *et al*, 2014: 7) but since it has been widely used by the academic community (Price, 2010; Baines 2010; Metzgar *et al* 2011; Thurman *et al*, 2012; Radcliffe, 2012; Williams *et al,* 2014; Harte *et al*, 2019) a discussion about what constitutes hyperlocal operations is necessary.

The key areas on which attempts to define hyperlocal have focussed are: geographical size, the online platform and independence from mainstream media and these themes will be explored. Considering the 'vagueness of the hyperlocal label' (Williams *et* al, 2014: 4), it is helpful to begin with more generalised observations before focussing on the detail. William Perrin, founder of UK hyperlocal advocacy group *Talk About Local*, suggests that the term is a metonym rather than a 'literal label' similar to using "the press" to describe a particular media subset (Williams *et* al, 2014: 7). Williams *et al* propose that: '"hyperlocal news" might be better understood as referring to an emergent generation of community journalists, and perhaps their approaches to news production' (2014: 13) which aligns with the cultural approach of this thesis. The term hyperlocal originated in the USA (Williams *et* al, 2014: 7) and Jan Schaffer, in survey-based research on 500 US sites, called them: 'a form of "bridge" media, linking traditional forms

of journalism with classic civic participation' (2007:7). Elsewhere, hyperlocals have been described as 'hybrid' local news operations which combine elements of 'alternative newspaper movements' with 'the interactive and broadcast abilities of Web 2:0' (Metzgar *et al*, 2011: 774).

In a report on the UK hyperlocal sector carried out for innovation charity *Nesta* by Damian Radcliffe (2012), the definition of hyperlocal was limited to two themes: geography and platform. Radcliffe settled for a broad description, saying that hyperlocals provided: 'online content pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community' (2012: 9); a definition that was subsequently picked up by *Ofcom* (2012). This explanation appears to confine hyperlocal operations to online services operating in small geographical areas, although Radcliffe qualifies this by stating that: 'hyperlocal can mean a whole town or city' (2012: 9). Harte indicates that such a 'stripped-down' description presents the term hyperlocal as an 'empty vessel' available to both commercial and non-commercial providers alike (2013). This observation introduces the issue of hyperlocals as independent and from commercially-driven legacy mainstream media. The existence of hyperlocal operations as a possible subset of mainstream media is subsequently explored by others. Kantar Media and Nesta (2013) emphasise this distinction between what they perceive as 'traditional' hyperlocal and 'native' hyperlocal. The former: 'includes online services provided by organisations with a background in local broadcasting, local newspapers and local authorities' whilst the latter are: 'independently owned hyperlocal news sites and blogs' (Nesta and Kantar Media 2013: 3).

For US researchers Emily Metzgar, David Kurpius and Karen Rowley, being independent from the mainstream was central to an understanding of hyperlocal operations. In their paper *Defining hyperlocal media; proposing a framework for discussion'* (2011), what they call hyperlocal media operations (HLMOs, their abbreviation) are 'indigenous to the web' meaning that they are 'web-native media' organisations whose first distribution channel is the internet (Metzgar et al, 2011: 781). This separates them from mainstream legacy media, which are recognised as operations which:

> Originally distributed using a pre-internet medium (print, radio, television), and media companies whose original business was in pre-Internet media, regardless of how much their content is now available online (Miel and Farris, 2008: 36).

This is a particularly important point for this study because the subcultural angle needs to establish a parent culture from which the subculture has evolved. Those organisations that originally distributed in a pre-internet medium therefore represent the parent culture. Metzgar *et al's*, definition for HLMOs is therefore relevant for this study:

> Hyperlocal media operations are geographically-based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organizations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement. (2011 :774)

Their focus therefore emphasises geography and platform, also introducing the notion of content which should be 'community-oriented', 'original' and 'promote civic engagement.' This appears to rule out aggregating sites which 'pull' content from original producers; what Robert Picard has called a 'service mode' of operation which will be discussed later in the chapter. Hyperlocals have been labelled 'Topic niche' because of the narrowness of their focus and their diversity (Harte, 2017: 14). In most cases 'the topic is a small geographical area' which essentially boils down to: 'the representation of communities via the internet' (ibid). This notion of 'topic niche' is valuable when exploring the diversity of operations which have been labelled hyperlocal. For the purposes of this thesis, operations such as *The Bristol Cable,* which is an activism site focussing on a marginalised community in Bristol, therefore satisfies the criteria for coming under the banner of hyperlocal because it is geographically based and produces original content which promotes civic engagement. It also covers a city which as Williams *et al* state is permissible: 'The term hyperlocal should not be understood too literally – most sites cover geographical areas akin to small towns or city suburbs' (2014: 4).

 Kirsty Hess and Lisa Waller in their paper *Hip to be hyper: the subculture of excessively local news* (2016) do not limit themselves to: 'a narrow understanding of hyperlocal as "indigenous to the web"' since they acknowledge that: 'very, very local news is as old as humankind' (2016: 196). They propose a content and cultural approach when positioning hyperlocal as this: 'provides scope to examine a set of news practices across the full spectrum of media from online, to print, radio, television and social media' (ibid). They break the word into its constituent parts and propose that in the context of local news 'hyper' means "excessive" (2016: 197). Their cultural approach to defining 'local' recognises the importance of: 'geography – the physical site – in discussions about space and place and its relationships to local news in a globalized world' (2016: 197):

> We contend that to be local is to have a grounded connection with, and understanding of, a physical place and its social and cultural dimensions that is practical and embodied. Importantly, it involves an investment of time, requiring that one maintain a prolonged and continual presence in that place. (Hess and Waller, 2016:197)

The independence of hyperlocal operators from the mainstream is integral to Hess and Waller's understanding of hyperlocal operations. Their use of subcultural theory, which will be discussed later in this chapter, highlights the metaphorical distance between mainstream media and hyperlocal operators. Harte *et al* state that: 'Hyperlocal producers are very much embedded in their neighbourhoods' (2019: 125). This contrasts with Hess and Waller's observation that: 'Many 'traditional local media publications have become "local" in name only' (2016: 198) indicating that such mainstream operators have ceased to satisfy the 'investment of time' over a 'prolonged' period of time which is central to the definition they propose (2016: 197). Applying this distinction to hyperlocal therefore appears to exclude mainstream operators. This is confirmed by the 'inclusion criteria' for the *Local Web List* (2015) which provides a database of hyperlocal operations in the UK and categorically states that it is not: 'intended to be a list of websites of major local newspapers' (*Localweblist.net*, 2015). The database became the most comprehensive list of hyperlocal websites when in 2015 it was updated, by *Talk About Local* with financial support from *The Carnegie Trust*, superseding the voluntary sign-up *Openly Local* (2012). While *Openly Local* (ibid.) included mainstream sites, *The Local Web List* rejected them stating: 'If you are a big corporate trying to register dozens of new template sites then please contact us first as that isn't quite in the spirit of things' (*Localweblist.net,* 2015). Independence from mainstream news organisations has therefore become synonymous with hyperlocal operations, to the extent that Harte *et al*, note: 'There is a conscious departure from the term "hyperlocal" towards more widely understood descriptors of news such as "independent" and "community" (2019: 8).

  Mainstream operators have so far failed to capitalize on the 'hyperlocal phenomenon' (Hess and Waller, 2016: 204) because arguably they no longer satisfy the requirements of embeddedness to which independent hyperlocal operators can lay claim (Harte *et al*, 2019: 125). Viewing hyperlocal from a cultural perspective provides a better understanding of why commercial legacy media operations have so far found it so hard to break into the hyperlocal space. Attempts by mainstream media organisations to monetise hyperlocal operations in the UK will be discussed in Chapter 3 (*Biography and*

"churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture).

As a final point in this discussion, the *Independent Community News Network* (*ICNN*), launched in 2018 to represent internet-era operations which sit outside the mainstream, defined the term 'hyperlocal' for its admission's criteria (Abbott, 2018a) and steered clear of using the word in its title. The 2018 report carefully navigates the difficult waters which surround this contested term by noting that: 'While the majority of our titles are geographically 'hyperlocal', other members represent communities of interest' (Abbott, 2019: 6). Harte *et al* note that there is a: 'conscious departure from the term 'hyperlocal' towards a more widely understood descriptors of news such as 'independent' or 'community' (2019: 8).

1:3 Independent hyperlocal publishing: as a contemporary media subculture

Academic literature concerning hyperlocals in the UK has tended to focus on issues such as plurality of news sources (Barnett and Townend, 2014), democratic deficit (Moore, 2014; Williams, Harte and Turner, 2014; Howells, 2015), business models (Naldi and Picard, 2012; Cook and Sirkkunen, 2014) or the functioning of the Habermasian public sphere (Habermas,1986; Howells, 2015; Harte, 2017). Considering hyperlocal news production from a subcultural perspective has been proposed by Kirsty Hess and Lisa Waller (2016: 194), to open-up the discussion about these provisions and 'generate new insights.' Hess and Waller state that using a subcultural lens:

> Shifts the focus from politics, business models and economic sustainability that tend to dominate the literature in this space, to help identify the aspects of social and cultural life that mainstream media do not or cannot fill, generating valuable perspectives on the future of news and the importance of excessively local in this globalized world. (ibid: 206)

They conceptualise the independent hyperlocal journalism as a 'news subculture' (2016: 194) and position it: 'in the context of non-normative and marginalized practices' in relation to contemporary mainstream media. As previously stated, by positioning hyperlocal in terms of 'content and culture' Hess and Waller's approach does not limit the conversation to the online platform (2016: 196). This is especially relevant as in the largest study of UK hyperlocal operations: *The state of hyperlocal community news in*

the UK: findings from a survey of practitioners (2014) authors Andy Williams, Steven Barnett, Dave Harte and Judith Townend discovered that print, for many years the staple of mainstream local news, is an increasingly popular platform for UK independent hyperlocal publishers (2014: 29).

1:3:1 Resistance to and repurposing of the parent culture

Initial scholarship around subcultures was inspired by Robert Park's work at the *Chicago School* (1925; 1928) studying the marginal status of immigrants in Chicago, at the beginning of the 20th century. Lindner suggests that Park's most significant contribution to sociology (1996: 154) is the concept of 'the marginal man' (Park, 1928). Marginality is a concept which is has gained currency in subcultural studies and is a theme which was identified following data collection for this study, which will be discussed later. Jenks, suggests that the state of 'marginalisation, is if anything, enhanced' by applying the subculture label to a section of society (2005: 130). This doctorate also selectively engages with Park's theory of human ecology (Lindner, 1996: 108-114) to position the local media ecology within which the hyperlocal sector is situated.

  By the 1970s scholars at the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (*CCCS*) at *Birmingham University,* dubbed the *Birmingham School,* were focussing their subcultural lens on 'contemporary' post-war youth culture. Both the *Chicago School* and *CCCS* gave priority to the 'collective' in cultural studies (Blackman, 2005: 1) which has particular relevance in terms of hyperlocal, since it tends to be used as a collective term; with various studies grouping disparate provisions under the heading (Kurpius *et* al, 2010; Baines, 2010; Radcliffe, 2012/2015; Metzgar *et al*, 2011; Williams *et al*, 2014). The Birmingham scholars identified themes such as 'resistance' to mainstream culture (Hall and Jefferson, 2006), relationship with the 'parent culture' (Cohen, 1972) retrieving and repurposing of mainstream style and objects by subcultures (Hebdige,1979). In *Resistance through rituals* (2006), first published in 1975 as a collection of the working papers by members of the *CCCS,* editors Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson state that: 'Subcultures, then must first be related to the "parent cultures" of which they are a sub-set. But, subcultures must *also* be analysed in terms of their relation to the dominant culture' (2006: 7, original italics). This will form the analytical approach of this thesis, to compare and contrast mainstream practices, both past and present, with those of independent hyperlocal operators.

The relationship between the cultures will also be considered given that J. Patrick Williams reflects that: 'Subcultures are predicated on their antagonism towards, or rejection of, certain aspects of mainstream/dominant culture' (2011: 14). This often leads to a contrary or difficult relationship and Phil Cohen (1972) metaphorically uses the difficult parent/teenager relationship to capture the 'generational conflict' (1972: 22; 1980: 82) that exists in interactions between mainstream and subculture. He coined the term 'parent culture' to represent the dominant/mainstream and in his 1970's study of working-class communities in London's East End highlighted how internal conflict or crisis within the mainstream/parent culture led to the 'generational conflict' from which various youth subcultures emerged in opposition:

> It is perhaps, not surprising that the parent culture of the respectable working class, already in crisis, was the most 'productive' *vis-à-vis* subcultures; the internal conflicts of the parent culture came to be worked out in terms of generational conflict. (Cohen, 1972: 22 ;1980: 82)

Cohen therefore established that subcultures emerge from a parent culture in crisis, this is a theme which can be utilised in the analysis of hyperlocal operations which have emerged in the wake of the well documented crisis in mainstream local news production (Franklin, 2006; Lewis *et* al, 2008; Fowler, 2011; Nielsen, 2012; Ramsay & Moore, 2016; Ramsay *et al*, 2017; Williams, 2017). He also identified that subcultures: 'all represent, in their different ways, an attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture' (1972:23; 1980, 83). This 'retrieval' of aspects of mainstream practices will also be a useful analytical tool, given that Williams *et al* indicate in their study (2014) that both advertising and the print platform, recognisable in the mainstream, are being utilised by independent operators.

Another aspect of Cohen's work that will be useful in the study of hyperlocal is his reflection that the study of the subculture can also reveal hidden aspects of the mainstream: 'It seems to me that the latent function of subculture is this: to express and resolve albeit "magically", the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture' (1972: 23; 1980: 83). When discussing those who participate in youth subculture, J Patrick Williams identifies that the roots of marginalisation may begin when mainstream cultural members push them: 'further away from mainstream structures of opportunity' (2011: 11). This may be relevant to hyperlocal which lacks 'institutional support' (Williams *et al*, 2014: 4) compared with mainstream local media, which David Baines states receives 'many flavours' of subsidy, including 'statutory advertising' (2013: 205). Ultimately though subculture is an abstract concept, Williams identifies it as a

'*cultural phenomenon* [original italics] that refers to a set of shared values and beliefs, practices, and material objects' (2011: 38). Cohen too states that subcultures are 'symbolic structures' (1972: 23; 1980: 83), this is why themes derived from topics as diverse as the *Chicago School,* researching early 20th century immigrants in Chicago, to the *CCCS,* considering 1970's skinheads, punks and teddy boys, may be applied to internet-era ultra-local news publishing. Nevertheless, the symbolic nature of subcultures makes them difficult to 'pin down' so Hall and Jefferson's definition is useful:

> Sub-cultures must exhibit a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from the 'parent' culture. They must be focussed around certain activities, values, certain uses of material artefacts, territorial spaces etc. which significantly differentiate them from the wider culture. But, since they are sub-sets, there must also be significant things which bind and articulate them with the 'parent' culture (2006: 7).

However, they caution that some subcultures are more clearly visible than others. At one end of the spectrum are those with a 'clear, coherent identity and structure' while others are 'loosely-defined or milieu within the parent culture' and do not inhabit a distinctive world of their own (2007:7). Hyperlocal would appear to reside at the 'loosely-defined' end of the continuum, because as previously stated there is not even a universally agreed definition of hyperlocal let alone a 'classical' type of operation. As a collective noun the term describes a cluster of independent ultra-local news operations described as a metonym (Williams *et al*, 2014: 7); what Harte *et al* describe as the 'heterogeneity of this cultural form' (2017: 164) whereby hyperlocals are 'different' both from each other and in terms of their relationship with the 'parent culture' of corporate owned mainstream operations.

There is also a temporal dimension to be considered in the emergence of subcultures in terms of their resistance to the hegemony of a particular era. Hall *et al* (1980) at *CCCS* attribute Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony as having 'played a seminal role in Cultural Studies' (1980: 35), but before pursuing this discussion, it is necessary to define hegemony. Hebdige in *Subculture: the meaning of style* describes the concept as:

> A situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert "total social authority" over subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by "winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural." (1979: 15-16).

Hegemony is therefore usually exercised subliminally by the dominant culture and with the tacit consent of the dominated culture; resistance to this status quo is therefore implicit in the development of subcultures (Blackman, 2014). Hebdige indicates that:

'punk was a resistance to late capitalist spend-and-burn disposability and waste' (2014:
22). Ken Gelder is referring to the hegemonic situation in operation, when he indicates
that his book *Subcultures; cultural histories and social practice* is: 'speaking up for
subcultures in the context of a neo-conservative cultural and political shift in the
contemporary landscape' (2007: 30). Hebdige highlights the current hegemony: '…since
1979: of neo-liberal corporate norms and values – the attempted installation on a global
scale of corporate normativity' (2015: 6). Indeed, throughout the research period the
'neo-liberal' hegemony of major media corporations increasing domination of local news
production was very much in evidence (Williams and Franklin, 2007; Ramsay and
Moore, 2016; Ramsay *et al*, 2017). Williams *et al's* findings suggested resistance to
mainstream local news organisation among independent operators: 'Many hyperlocal
producers, however, do not identify as journalists (and many are critical of mainstream
local news and have a very ambivalent relationship with it)' (2014: 10).

1:3:2 A 'make-do-and-mend' culture

Despite this resistance to both parent culture and hegemony, Hebdige's work uncovers
how subcultures appropriate certain aspects of the parent culture and repurpose them
for their own use. In his work on youth culture, *Subcultures: the meaning of style,*
Hebdige demonstrates how items of clothing which had an 'original' preferred meaning
in the mainstream were 'appropriated' and reassembled in a way to subvert their original
meaning (1979: 104). This is demonstrated through the concept of *bricolage,* a term
taken from the work of the structural anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966), which:
'expresses the alternative and often improvisational uses to which commodities are put
by certain groups' (Gelder, 2007: 90). Lévi-Strauss (1966), observes that the person who
works in this way: 'The 'bricoleur' is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks'
(1966: 17). Phillimore *et al* add that: 'Bricolage is frequently viewed as being associated
with originality and innovation, and the act of bricolage as embodying individual agency
and consciousness' (2016: 7). Bricolage has therefore been associated with innovation
and entrepreneurialism (Baker and Nelson, 2005). Deuze places bricolage at the heart
of digital culture: 'On the World Wide Web, bricolage is evident in the ways in which we
click, publish, and link our way online' (2006: 70).

> We can also observe how bricolage simultaneously consists of repurposing and
> refashioning the old while using and making the new. Again, bricolage as an

18

emerging practice can be considered to be a principle component of digital culture, as well as an accelerating agent of it. (ibid: 71).

The concept of bricolage, is a conceptual tool for theorising entrepreneurial situations (Baker and Nelson, 2005) and is used: 'in a range of fields particularly around subculture, enterprise and institutions, and environments of scarcity' (Phillimore *et al*, 2016).

  In Hebdige's work at *CCCS* on youth style, the focus is issues such as the: 'theft and transformation' of 1950s *Savile Row* Edwardian style clothing by teddy boys and the motor scooter by mods; the latter: 'originally an ultra-respectable means of transport' which the mods repurposed as a: 'menacing symbol of group solidarity' (1979: 104). Hebdige has drawn parallels between his *CCCS,* 1970's, research into punk with his more recent work; the *Desert Studies* project at the *University of California Institute for Research in the Arts* (*UCIRA*):

> The recycling bricolage economy of '70's punk is standard mainstream practice in the high desert where there's very little industry beyond the military and mining, hence very little money, and where regularized forms of barter and swap-meet model of exchange figure as the norm…The cost of bringing spare parts up from Palm Springs "down below" is, in general, so exorbitant that mechanics, like their counter-parts in Cuba, forced to adapt to long term trade embargos, become expert at patching and repurposing: extending the life of manufactured goods way beyond their built-in obsolescence retirement dates' (2013; 2014: 21).

The 'bricolage economy' or 'make-do-and-mend' culture of the desert to which Hebdige refers, resonates with the UK hyperlocal world where funding is in short supply and precarious is a situation often used to describe the sector (Radcliffe, 2015; Harte *et* al, 2016; Williams and Harte, 2016; Tenor, 2018). The 'patching and repurposing' culture of bricolage appears to be evidenced by participants' in the Williams *et al* (2014) study, many of whom operated on a hand-to-mouth existence. The academics found that participants' in the study made use of open source blogging software as well as other 'freely available online tools' (2014:10), they also adopted aspects of mainstream media such as advertising and free-distribution printed editions. Unlike 1970's youth culture, desert dwellers and independent hyperlocal operators have adopted and repurposed aspects of the mainstream out of practical economic necessity. In terms of UK hyperlocal this also applied to the retrieval and repurposing of print, where Williams *et al* discovered that operators: 'find the large guaranteed audience of a free print run easier to sell to local advertisers than internet advertising' (2014: 29). This appears to be at odds with Deuze' observations about bricolage at the heart of digital culture (2006: 70-

71), although since the development of reprographic technologies I would argue that print is largely a digital product – it just so happens that the end product is an analogue. It is therefore digital technology with a 'retro feel'. Print is also a medium that has frequently been taken up by alternative media producers (Atton, 2002: 38), a situation which will be examined later in the chapter.

In terms of this immediate conversation bricolage is considered as part of a subcultural approach, and as a theoretical approach subculture is not without its critics. Chris Jenks (2005) provides a historical account of the development of the subcultural field, in *Subculture; the fragmented social,* and concludes that: 'the concept has run its course' (2005: 145). At best he appears unconvinced by the concept and at worst dismissive: 'In one sense, what may be deduced from my argument throughout this work is that the concept never really had any mileage, in anybody's hands' (2005: 131). His main criticism appears to be that much 'subcultural' work is under theorised:

> [T]he idea has largely been employed as a convenience; as a place from which to stop theorizing. The invocation of the designation 'subculture' is a strategy that the theorist can adopt in order to give up on commonality and integration to focus on difference and diffusion. And this movement from the general to the particular, the macro to the micro has been a trend much applauded in certain areas of sociology in recent years (ibid).

He identifies subcultures as the: 'new signifier of difference' (ibid: 145), this is a reference to the semiotic approach which underpins Hebdige's (1979) book *Subculture: the meaning of style.* Jenks nevertheless provides a useful approach for the subcultural study of contemporary hyperlocal via Emile Durkheim's *Division of Labour in Society* (1893/1984) since the use of semiotics (de Saussure, 1974; Barthes, 1977), to identify visual similarities and difference, is of limited use for a subcultural study of 'hyperlocal' where 'difference' is not displayed by a visual sense of style. Jenks argues that:

> The two forms of solidarity, may be treated as metaphors for different ways of being in the world, different ways of seeing and understanding the world, and thus for different sociological approaches to the world. (2005: 25)

Table 1:1 is an abbreviated version of Jenks' outline of mechanical and organic solidarity, focussing on aspects that can be utilised for the analysis of hyperlocal operations; but leaving out aspects which refer to concepts such as deviancy which are usually applied to subcultures but are not relevant in this situation.

The factors that Jenks outlines will be applied to hyperlocals at the analysis stage to identify if individual operations are closer to the mechanical or organic forms. Although the organic division of labour description of 'egoistic' which suggests a selfish, self-

interested motivation when linked with 'primary orientation for social action' needs adjustment for analysis of hyperlocal operations. This adjustment takes into account that independent publishers may be moving to hyperlocal operations in response to changes in the parent culture which have left them marginalised, for instance by redundancy, or to supplement their income in atypical work circumstances. Independent publishing may therefore be a result of financial necessity. Contrasting terms of 'not-for-profit' is therefore much closer to the mechanical solidarity description, while the 'commercial approach' tends toward organic solidarity.

Table 1:1 Durkheim's mechanical and organic solidarity (Jenks, 2005: 28)

Mechanical solidarity	Organic solidarity
Predominant in more simple societies	Predominant in more advanced societies
Characterised by homogeneity, likeness	Characterised by heterogeneity, difference
Social bond based on resemblance	Social bond based on interdependence
Strong collective consciousness	Collective consciousness dispersed through the division of labour
Primary orientation for social action – altruistic	Primary orientation for social action – egoistic
Pervasive doctrines – conservative	Pervasive doctrines - innovative
Assigned social roles and status: roles communalized	Assigned social roles and status: roles individualized
Individual experience of collective life through consensus	Individual experience of collective life through divergence

Jenks has laid out a set of 'binary oppositions' to indicate the 'two different ways of seeing and ways of being in the world' (2005: 27). But, I would argue that life is not that 'cut and dried' and the two categories should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. The participants and their provisions are unlikely to fit neatly into Jenks' classifications, some may even demonstrate aspects of both forms of solidarity; especially given the diverse range of provisions which are covered by the term hyperlocal (Radcliffe, 2013a: 185-199; 2015). Those participants' who displayed a commercial approach could still be aligned with mechanical solidarity if they displayed an altruistic, non-exploitative mindset as they went about their business of community news production. Those involved in commercial operations may display a strong 'conscience collective' (Giddens, 1978: 25;

21

Hughes *et al,* 2003: 165) which is the essence of mechanical solidarity. Anthony Giddens indicates that Durkheim's term 'a conscience collective' can be translated (from the original French) as either 'collective consciousness' or 'collective conscience' although he indicates that neither are particularly accurate renditions (1978: 25). While Hughes *et* al (2003: 165) favour 'conscience collective', Jenks uses the term 'collective consciousness' (2005: 28) as does Aron (1967: 21-33) so for the purposes of this thesis the terms will be considered interchangeable. Whichever term is used, its purpose is to make explicit that feeling of 'collectivity' which affects individual members of a particular group and causes them to co-operate. Aron defines 'collective consciousness' as: 'the body of beliefs and sentiments common to the average of the members of a society' (1967: 24). Subcultures themselves are arguably linked by a collective feeling.

  Cleary Durkheim's model (1893) requires contemporary interpretation because his concept of mechanical solidarity was devised more than a century ago, with an agrarian community in mind and society has moved on since then, so his ideas need to be adapted for the 21st century. Something that is ubiquitous in modern society is the presence of contracts and this at first glance appears to make Durkheim's mechanical/organic solidarity theory problematic. However, Aron indicates that he had considered this problem:

> Durkheim does not deny that in modern societies an increasing role is indeed played by contracts freely concluded among individuals. But this contractual element is a derivative of the structure of society and, one might say a derivative of the state of the collective consciousness in modern society… Modern society is defined first and foremost by the phenomenon of social differentiation, of which contractualism is the result and expression. (1967: 29-30)

The presence of a contract therefore should not negate the feeling of collectivity that exists within a group of people. Aron observes: 'Even in the society which authorises each man to be himself and know himself, there is more collective consciousness present in the individual consciousness than we imagine' (1967: 33). Giddens agrees that the transition from the 'traditional society' of mechanical society to the modern order of organic solidarity does not require 'the complete eradication of the *conscience collective*' (Durkheim/Giddens, 1972: 6). Later in this chapter the presence of contracts, either formal or an informal understanding (Harte, 2017: 167), will be discussed in relation to direct reciprocal negotiated exchange situations.

  Williams *et al* make multiple references to the working practices of practitioners and as previously stated refer to them as: 'an emergent generation of a primarily digital

community of local new producers' (2014: 8). The academics state that: 'almost half of our participants have journalistic training or experience working in the mainstream media' so the working culture of hyperlocal operators is an important focus for this thesis. Durkheim's division of labour theory (1893/1984) provides an important theoretical lens for viewing independent hyperlocal operations and will now be discussed further.

1:3:3 'Division of labour' in the larger operations

The larger independent operations which formed part of this study, Hyperlocal Today, Local Voice Network Ltd, NeighbourNet and Stonebow Media, each involved a number of people working with a degree of interdependence. These relationships were analysed in the empirical chapters in terms of how operators apportion various duties using Durkheim's division of labour, into 'mechanical' and 'organic' solidarity; to provide another theoretical device for understanding hyperlocal from a subcultural angle. Durkheim's theory argued that while mechanical solidarity existed where:

> Human beings were engaged in essentially similar activities, organic solidarity could develop from spontaneously arising consensus between individual actors who, just because they were engaged in different roles and tasks, were dependent on one another' (1984: xv-xvi).

He suggested that this was an evolutionary process where: 'the relatively simple societies of the past had given way to the more complex world of an elaborate division of labour' (ibid). Arguing that modern division of labour serves the function of increasing solidarity because it: 'could create bonds between autonomous individuals just as enduring and persistent as those that earlier had linked members of societies with mechanical solidarity enveloped by a common consciousness' (ibid: xvii).

  Jenks makes the comparison between Durkheim's work and that of Ferdinand Tönnies (1957), the latter made the connection between 'community' *Gemeinschaft* and 'society' or 'association' *Gesellschaft* to describe social bonds. The former is the notion that 'communities' are 'made up of individuals whose total identity is proscribed by the sentiment of the collectivity' in line with mechanical solidarity (Jenks 2005: 20). While the term 'society' or 'association' corresponds to organic solidarity where individuals are: 'united through a reciprocal and rational agreement of interest… much more the characteristic of the market or division of labour' (ibid). In his reference to 'the market' Jenks indicates that there is an economic imperative to 'Gesellschaft' which 'results, in

part, from a development into complexity' (2005: 20). Tönnies' classical interpretation of community appears to provide clearer boundaries than exist in reality, for a term that is difficult to define. Raymond Williams indicates that the meaning of community varies depending on the century under discussion (1976/1983: 75-76). As he observes the word has been 'in the language' since the 14th century when it was applied to 'common people' as opposed to 'those of rank', but since then: 'has become established in a range of senses' (ibid). From the 18th century it was applied to 'the people of a district', but also was imbued with 'the quality of holding something in common, as in **community of interests**, **community of goods**' (ibid author's emboldening). Zygmunt Bauman indicates in *Community: seeking safety in an insecure world* that community is an abstract concept stating that: 'whatever the word "community" may mean' it is as much a 'feeling' of being part of something (2001: 1).

> What that word evokes is everything we miss and what we lack to be secure, confident and trusting. In short 'community' stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us - but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess' (2001: 3)

The description which would probably be closest to the layman's idea of a community is Phil Cohen's where, arguably in the spirit of Tönnies, he links community with village (1972: 28). Although it should be noted that he is talking about urban villages in the East End of London and the solidarity that characterises 'traditional working class communities' when he makes this observation:

> A village can be defined as a community in which all social activities are equally accessible to all the inhabitants, and institutions are simple undifferentiated structures; although social divisions exist, they remain sublimated to the loyalties to the locality; due to its isolation and low density the village operates a rigidly defensive solidarity, a structured exclusion of anything or anyone outside its immediate perceptions. (1972: 28)

Hess and Waller approach the community issue from a slightly different angle, focussing on the term 'local' because it indicates something more tangible:

> Being local is practical and embodied. Like community, local is a belief, not a tangible reality… and to be "local" means different things to different people, depending on where in the world their feet are planted. (2014: 199)

The 'localness' of which Hess and Waller speak involves both geography and a temporal aspect, an investment of time: 'requiring that one maintain a prolonged and continual presence in that place' (2014; 197). Presence in a place is implicit in Tönnies definition, for him: 'community was the basis of social integration and expressed traditional face-to-face relations of a non-contractual nature' (Tönnies, 1957 in Delanty, 2010; 5). This

definition will be at the heart of this thesis, since working practices which involve face-to-face reporting will be identified in Chapter 5 (*"I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism*) as part of the subcultural approach to identify aspects retrieved and repurposed from the parent culture. Face-to-face reporting is classified as offline direct reciprocal engagement in reciprocal journalism theory (Lewis *et al*, 2014: Harte *et al*, 2017) which will be discussed in the next section. The non-contractual nature of the relationship identified by Tönnies is also important since it equates to 'unilateral' engagement (ibid) which is particularly valuable in building trust.

In the following section Durkheim's suggestion that modern division of labour can increase solidarity between 'autonomous individuals' also has important implications in this discussion, particularly in relation to the notion of 'bilateral or negotiated exchange' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232). This form of reciprocal exchange is considered to be less valuable in terms of creating solidarity because there is an agreement in place therefore the exchange is not voluntary. Yet Durkheim may hold the key to uncovering solidarity in division of labour situations, this has implications for understanding the way that hyperlocal operators work collectively.

1:4 Reciprocal engagement: on several levels

A theoretical strand that will be employed as part of the subcultural approach is that of reciprocal journalism because it concerns the 'journalist-audience relationship' and uncovers the process of building relationships between local news producers and their audience. In *Reciprocal journalism: a concept of mutual exchange between journalists and audiences* (2014) Seth Lewis, Avery Holton and Mark Coddington state that community journalism is about 'connectedness and embeddedness' (ibid: 232). They suggest that community journalism is a good place to identify reciprocal journalism in practice: 'because of its distinct closeness to local or niche audiences' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 230). This closeness between independent hyperlocal operators and their audience is identified by Hess and Waller, in their definition of local as: 'an investment of time, requiring that one maintain a prolonged and continual presence in that place' (2016 :197). The theoretical framework of 'reciprocal journalism' introduced by Lewis *et* al (2014) provides a useful tool to identify cultural practice both online and offline; although Lewis *et al* concentrate on online examples. Their framework has been used by Dave Harte, Andy Williams and Jerome Turner in their paper *Reciprocity and the hyperlocal*

journalist (2017) to identify examples of reciprocal engagement in the largest empirical study, to date, of the UK hyperlocal sector (Williams *et al*, 2014). Harte *et al's* paper is particularly useful because their analysis is extended to include not only: 'internet and social media communication', but also 'real-world activities of hyperlocal publishers in their communities' (2017:160). They uncovered examples of hyperlocal journalism reviving 'disappearing journalistic norms' in the case of 'local beat reporting' (ibid:173). This suggests the presence of the subcultural indicator of: 'retrieving socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture' (Cohen, 1972: 23). But first though, a discussion about the concept of reciprocity and the framework by which it is applied to journalistic situations.

Lewis *et al's* framework is based on the work of Linda Molm who explains that reciprocity which equates to the 'giving of benefits to another in return for benefits received is one of the defining features of social exchange and, more broadly, of social life' (Molm, 2010: 119). Sociologists have recognised the importance of reciprocity for many years and Molm has concentrated on an aspect called 'reciprocal exchange', a situation where 'actors perform individual acts that benefit another… without negotiation and without knowing whether or when the other will reciprocate' (2010: 119-120). Molm with colleagues David Shaeffer and Lisa Collett underline the process which underpins reciprocity, with 'instrumental value' providing a 'material capital' benefit and 'social value' providing 'symbolic capital':

> The symbolic or communicative value is the value conveyed by the act of reciprocity itself, over and above the instrumental value of the benefits provided... While the instrumental value of reciprocity enhances the individual utility of the recipient, the symbolic value of reciprocity can enhance both the individual utility of the recipient and the social solidarity of the relationship. (2007 :200)

Symbolic value is therefore of particular interest, in terms of the relationship between hyperlocal journalist and audience, because of the community-building potential of enhancing 'social solidarity'. While the instrumental value benefits the recipient because they gain either goods or a service; symbolic value can be an indicator of the strength of the relationship because there is no guarantee of a reciprocal benefit. Such symbolic exchanges can, therefore, show that: 'high levels of trust, mutual regard and feelings of commitment' can exist' (2007: 200).

Molm *et al* (2007; 2007a) note that reciprocity can be either *direct* or *indirect*:

> When reciprocity is direct, the recipient of a benefit returns a benefit directly to the giver (A gives to B and B to A). When reciprocity is indirect, as in generalized forms of exchange, the recipient does not return a benefit directly to the giver, but

to another actor in the social circle (A gives to B, and B reciprocates indirectly by giving to C, who in turn gives to A). (2007: 200-201)

Lewis *et al* took this concept (2014) and mapped it onto a journalism scenario but, to these two forms, added another category *sustained* reciprocity which they state: 'Encompasses both direct and indirect reciprocity, but does so by extending them across temporal dimensions' (2014: 235). They make the point that both *direct* and *indirect* reciprocity can occur 'nearly immediately' particularly in the online world but: 'do not necessarily exist longer than that' (2014: 235). They suggest that: 'in order to reach its fullest expression, reciprocity must operate in an environment in which relationships that operate on and continue to foster trust are maintained over time' (ibid). They indicate that 'building such community is a difficult task with a significant long-term pay off' (2014: 235).

1:4:1 Direct reciprocity

In order to recognise the different forms of reciprocal exchange so that they can be applied for analysis purposes during the empirical chapters, it is important to take a look at them more closely. There are two distinct forms of direct reciprocity the first is 'bilateral, negotiated exchange' where there is an agreement or contract in place, although Harte *et al* indicate that this could be: 'just a clearer sense that information gathered would be used' (2017: 167). In this situation A and B give to each other on agreement (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232). The second form is unilateral, informal reciprocal exchange: 'where nothing is expected in return, but something is often given' (Harte *et al*, 2017: 167). It is the unilateral/informal exchange that is the usual focus of reciprocal journalism because the risk of 'not getting anything back' from a direct exchange, provides ample opportunity to 'demonstrate and develop trust and social bonding' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 233). In this scenario 'A gives to B, and B gives to A, but *without* any guarantee of something in return' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232).

  Lewis *et al* describe direct reciprocity as: 'a basic building block of online community' (2014: 233) and provide examples of journalists engaging in direct reciprocity when they *retweet* each other's content on *Twitter* (2014: 233). Harte *et al* noted that most of the operations they examined were web-based: 'usually using free blogging platforms like *Wordpress* or *Blogger* that have functions for reciprocity built in (that is, comment functions or share/like buttons that connect to social media services)' (2017:167);

although their interviews revealed that the majority of exchanges took place on social media (ibid). All but one of the hyperlocal producers they interviewed were resident in the locality covered by the hyperlocal so Harte *et al* also provide examples of off-line, direct, unilateral exchange.

> Some producers have a very deliberate real-world newsgathering routine which involves walking a self-described unofficial "beat" taking in local high streets, making themselves visible within communities… Often, the gathering of stories happens not in a deliberate way but from accidental everyday reciprocal exchanges as hyperlocal publishers go about their everyday activities. (2017:168)

The academics describe how interviewees hear about stories as a result of face-to-face conversations as a result of being physically present in the community:

> Such tip-offs, rooted in real-world, face-to-face exchange, were once a staple of local newspaper beat reporting, but have become more rare since the above-referenced large-scale withdrawal of professional journalism from so many UK communities. (2017: 169)

They also identify another form of direct reciprocal exchange which is the labour given by volunteers, in exchange for 'gaining new or honing existing, skills' or because they were 'assumed to be benefitting emotionally from the act of contributing' (ibid). As previously stated the unilateral/informal reciprocal exchange is generally the focus of reciprocal journalism, but for this thesis the bilateral/negotiated form will also be important. This is because the research includes participants from the organisations Hyperlocal Today*,* Local Voice Network*,* NeighbourNet and Stonebow Media*,* all contain more than one title and numerous personnel. Therefore, a contractual situation exists between participants, so the bilateral/negotiated variant will help to uncover aspects of their 'in house' reciprocal exchange relationships.

1:4:2 Indirect reciprocity

While direct reciprocity enhances individual relationships, indirect reciprocity is generalised in nature and represents a one-to-many scenario. Lewis *et al* describe the generalised, networked, nature of indirect reciprocity as: 'the bedrock of social networks' (2014: 169). But it is a situation where often: 'the beneficiary of an act returns the favour not to the giver, but to another member of the social network' (Lewis *et al*, 2014, 234). In this scenario 'person A gives to person B, who gives to person C, and so on' (ibid). Harte *et al* refer to their research participants whose: '*Twitter* and *Facebook* networks play host

to a continuous, noisy conversation about everyday living' (2017:170). They indicate the use of *hashtags* 'to gather and collate news' on subjects as diverse as riots and lost pets (ibid), offering an example of a hyperlocal publisher using *Twitter* to counter emerging myths about the extent of rioting in their locality:

> Unable to rely on mainstream media for a true picture of what was happening, the hyperlocal publisher drew on local volunteers, as well as trusted local eyewitnesses on social media, to provide their own verification. (2017: 171)

Lewis *et al* indicate that it is indirect reciprocity which is therefore responsible for creating a sense of community:

> Though participants in a network of indirect reciprocity are often unaware of precisely how the reciprocity reaches them in that network, indirect reciprocity has been shown to be more effective than direct reciprocity in producing social solidarity, social unity, and trust, as participants begin to see themselves as more of a collective identity (2014: 234).

As previously stated, Lewis *et al* add an extra classification to Molm *et al's* (Molm, 2010; Molm *et al*, 2007 and 2007a) concepts of unilateral and generalised exchanges, that of *sustained* reciprocity.

1:4:3 Sustained reciprocity

This additional category is comprised of direct and indirect exchange but requires either or both of these acts of reciprocity to be evidenced over a substantial period of time. Harte *et al* state that sustained reciprocity:

> Marks the apotheosis of reciprocal communicative exchange in communities. Direct and indirect reciprocal acts can often be immediate and fleeting, but sustained reciprocity can only be achieved when relationships of exchange can be sustained over time, and in ways that ensure a steady stream of continued acts of mutual goodwill. (2017: 164-165)

They indicate that the concept of sustained reciprocity allowed for the inclusion of exchange relationships which extended beyond 'journalistic initiatives' and moved, often physically, out into the community. Such community enterprises included:

> A school uniform exchange service using *Facebook* to connect families wishing to swap clothes their children had grown out of, avoiding expensive purchases; social media calls to audiences to (successfully) help local victims of a house fire replace belongings and find temporary accommodation; and smaller instances of matching individuals with common community resources such as wheelchairs. (2017: 172)

These examples of embeddedness in the community: 'Would not be possible without deep and lasting relationships of direct and repeated indirect mutual exchange repeated over time' (ibid:173). This links directly with Hess and Waller's continued presence in the community over a prolonged period of time (2016 :197). Reciprocal journalism therefore: 'allows the researcher to consider hyperlocal journalism as a cultural practice that has as much to do with place-making as it does to do with journalism' (ibid). These three forms of reciprocal journalism, direct, indirect and sustained, were applied at the analysis stage to uncover the exchange relationships which exist between independent operators and their communities and also between each other particularly in contractual situations.

Reciprocal journalism also helps identify retrieving and repurposing of aspects of independent hyperlocal such as face-to-face or footwork journalism; socially cohesive practices which are disappearing from the mainstream (Cohen, 1972: 23). Another aspect of mainstream local journalism which has been arguably retrieved and repurposed by independent operators is the print platform, although arguably print has always played an important role in alternative media (Atton, 2002). Therefore, the next section will consider how print has a long history in promoting marginalised voices.

1:5 The evolution of media subcultures

The adoption of print by increasing numbers of hyperlocals (Williams, 2014: 27) is essentially the latest incarnation in a long history of independent print subculture which dates back to the pamphleteers. The birth of journalism traces back to the invention of movable type in the 15th century, an event which democratised publishing in much the same way as Web 2.0 technologies have for the 21st century. Prior to the invention of movable type all books were hand written or copied by scribes therefore, due to the laborious method of production, books were scarce. At the time of Gutenberg's 'invention' in 1450 there were an estimated 30,000 books in Europe and according to Richard Collins: 'nearly all of them bibles' (Collins, 2006: 72). This meant that the Church represented the 'mainstream' in terms of 'publishing' and the available books promoted its world view (ibid: 73). Movable type or print technology 'dramatically lowered the marginal cost of producing additional copies of a written work' and by 1500 there were an estimated nine million books in Europe (ibid: 72). The introduction of printing also meant that for the first time in history exact copies could be produced. Such functionality meant that independent and cheaply produced pamphlets, often containing subversive

content, could be produced in large numbers leading to the democratisation of knowledge. In his book *The pamphleteers; the birth of journalism, emergence of the press and the fourth estate* James Oliver states: 'The pamphleteers of the 1590s were the original investigative journalists, and often as inflammatory' (2010: 24). The pamphlet proved an important platform for 'the unmasking for hypocrites, diatribe, spat and counter-spat, long-running religious controversy, secular satire in the case of social reform, and even revolutionary manifesto' (ibid: 17). The timeline of the pamphleteers spans from 1549 to the first decade of the 19th century, after which Oliver reflects: 'The importance of the pamphlet is eclipsed with the emergence and explosive growth of the periodical press' (ibid: 18). But he asserts:

> Along a mighty timeline, from Gutenberg to the present, a direct link is traceable from pamphlet to web page, with the twin spectres of propaganda and censorship haunting these media in the long struggle between free expression, with its tendency towards nonsense, and political power, with its inclination to lunacy and tyranny. As such, these aspects of society appear to be made for each other' (ibid: 37).

The pamphlet may have been eclipsed by the periodical press, but independent printing continued as a subculture. Chris Atton said that: 'On both sides of the Atlantic, working-class organizations and communities have been producing their own media for at least the past two centuries' (2002: 2).

1:5:1 Zine culture

Atton indicates how alternative media create spaces for alternative voices: 'the community, the contrary and the subversive' (2002: 1) are the subject of his book *Alternative media*. Locating his study in the 1990s, he attributes the 'explosion of fanzines and zines since the 1980s' (2002: 3) as the reason for a rise in independent and small-scale publishing during that era. Punk's resistance to the hegemony and drive for self-expression spilled out of music into dress and self-publishing. Matthew Worley's paper *Punk, politics and British (fan)zines, 1976-84: 'While the world was dying, did you wonder why?'* contextualises the political content of 1980s punk fanzines (2015: 80). He traces the history of fanzines back to the: 'home-made magazines produced by science-fiction fans in the US and Britain from the 1930's' (2015: 80) and indicates that the printed output surrounding punk quickly 'transcended their "fan" prefix' (ibid: 78). Atton defines 'zines' as 'self-edited, self-financed and self-published serials' which:

> [G]o beyond the fan writing to cover an extremely wide spread of subjects, including politics, the personal (perzines), "fringe culture", and issues surrounding sexuality and sexual practices and life at work. At both levels of generality, almost any niche magazine could be considered a zine. (2002: 58)

Clare Cook and Esa Sirkkunen have describe journalistic start-ups as niche (2015) and, since Williams *et al* (2014: 27) indicate that printed material is part of the hyperlocal repertoire, zine culture helps to shed light on the way that hyperlocal operates in a subcultural sense. Worley states that the zines of the 1980s: 'spanned a subterranean web of alternative media through which dissenting voices and formative political opinions could be addressed and discussed' (2015: 79-80). Of particular interest are the themes of resistance to mainstream media: 'Fanzines offered a creative space to contest and circumvent what *Cobalt Hate* described in 1980 as the "bullshit ridden" coverage of the weeklies' (ibid: 81). Worley indicates that: 'zines offered a very real alternative to the established music press, covering bands and scenes dismissed by *NME* [*New Musical Express*]' (2015: 84). As well as challenging the 'institutionalized music industry' 1980's zines, provided a lens to view grassroots punk culture (ibid). 'Zines' evolved from dissatisfaction with mainstream media, in a situation which resonates with the grassroots nature of hyperlocals. Although, Hess and Waller caution against aligning punk zines too closely with internet era independent publishers: 'Hyperlocal news is not the radical or flashy style often associated with subcultures (as far as content goes, hyperlocal is excessively ordinary). Although it does share some synergies with "anti-authoritarian" zine culture' (2015: 202).

  Punk zines very much reflected the bricolage nature of the subculture, with pictures and headlines, cut and pasted from other papers to create anarchic paper montages which were both aesthetically and politically challenging (Worley, 2015). Spelling mistakes were left uncorrected and hastily assembled pages were often out of order, Hebdige noted that: 'The overwhelming impression was one of urgency and immediacy, of a paper produced in indecent haste, memos from the front line' (1979: 111). In terms of the wider cultural situation Worley comments that punk emerged at a 'distinct historical juncture' when 'significant socio-economic, political and cultural change undoubtedly did take place' (2015: 89). This linking of the micro level with larger historical, macro forces (C. Wight Mills, 2000; West, 2016: 19) is as applicable to the emergence of independent hyperlocal operations in the internet-era of the new millennium, especially in the light of the 2008 recession and wider socio-political situation. Hebdige indicates the situation thus:

> [W]ith long-term jobless figures rising in tandem with the prohibitive cost of higher education, with financial insecurity, political instability and governmental dysfunction epidemic on a global scale, with a growing chasm separating the uber haves from the have-nothing-much to speak-of underclass, with ever direr predictions concerning the future of the planet and the non-viability of our modus operandi as a species, the kids today are clearly not alright. (2014: 4)

Guy Standing's work also highlights this marginalised 'precariat' section of society which exists in a permanent situation of precarious insecurity (2016) underlining subliminal societal tensions.

In broad terms, 'Zine' can therefore be understood as an umbrella term for 'niche' magazine, a description which resonates with small scale independent hyperlocal publications. 'Zine culture' is identified as a subculture by Michelle Kempson in her paper '*I sometimes wonder whether I'm an outsider': negotiating belonging in zine culture* in which she describes the output as 'independent, not-for-profit publications' (2015: 1081). She adds that zines are: 'predominately circulated via subcultural networks and represent a convenient way to exchange information within these contexts' (ibid). This insider/outsider status to which Kempson refers is a feature of subcultures and Hess and Waller use a similar argument to suggest why mainstream media have failed to commercially exploit hyperlocal sites, describing them as: 'outsiders trying too hard to fit in' (2015: 200).

In a situation reminiscent of the effect of moveable type, technology played its part in the democratisation of print for the production of zines. The punk movement 'relied on the photocopier' which made it possible to quickly and easily reproduce pages, it: 'enabled editors to paste up and print their own publications, which they did in their hundreds' (Atton 2002: 38). With technological improvements have come web-offset printing and digital typesetting which have brought the costs of both large and small print runs within the reach of grassroots operations (ibid.), developments which will be discussed later in the chapter. Atton reflects on print's continuing appeal: 'Despite what many pundits will have us believe, the printed page is far from moribund – nowhere does it appear more vigorous than in its alternative manifestations' (2002: 3) a situation which appears to be reflected in the presence of print in independent publishing (Radcliffe, 2012a; BBC, 2013; Ponsford, 2013; Ponsford, 2014; Ponsford, 2016; Coulter *et al*, 2018).

Hess and Waller indicate that while print still has a presence in driving readership to the digital product it is not reliant on it: 'The internet is used to publicise zines and reach out

to others, but they are not dependent upon digital technology to survive'(2015: 202) which provides an interesting lens through which to view Williams *et al's* findings that print products are being used to subsidise online activities (2014: 29).

1:5:2 Organisational structures of alternative media

Printed matter, therefore, has a long tradition in zine culture and alternative media. While Atton, Worley and Kempson provide similar explanations of what constitutes a zine, alternative media is a contested term. For example, while Hess and Waller contend that hyperlocal differs from alternative community media because: 'The latter is often constructed and united by cause and seeks to affect change, especially in the political sphere' (2016: 207). Susan Forde has a contrasting more flexible approach, making only a distinction between 'mainstream' and 'non-mainstream' media for her explanation of alternative media. Indeed, she uses the terms 'independent' and 'alternative' interchangeably throughout *Challenging the news; the journalism of alternative and community media* (2011: 2) to describe the journalists working in this way. There is, no clear distinction between alternative media and independent hyperlocal. In fact, when analysing a hyperlocal news blog in Leeds Tony Harcup suggests that applying labels such as 'alternative journalism' and 'hyperlocal journalism' are not helpful because expectations may be quite different depending where in the world they are applied (2015:16). Even in the UK he says: 'such labels can cover numerous different forms and practices. They do not form a uniform "sector" any more than mainstream media are all the same' (ibid). Atton's use of the term "Native reporting" appears to support this view since he suggests that it should:

> Define the activities of alternative journalists working within communities of interest to present news that is relevant to those communities' interests, in a manner that is meaningful to them and with their collaboration and support.' (2002: 112)

Such a description could also be applied to the practical reporting activities of independent hyperlocal journalists, since William *et al* discovered that: 'many community news operations are participatory and collaborative efforts' (2014: 33). Atton's broad definition of alternative media is useful though, since it emphasises the marginalised position of all non-mainstream media which is:

> Crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production. They are to do with organizing media along lines that enable participation and reflexivity. (2002: 4)

He does provide more identifiable traits of alternative media that can be usefully applied for analysis purposes in the data chapters of this thesis. Atton identifies the organisational structures of alternative media, noting that this form of journalism: 'is as much concerned with how it is organised within its sociocultural context as with its subject matter' (2002: 10). This section will, therefore, identify organisational structures of alternative media, to make them easier to identify.

Atton (2003: 42-43) identifies three clear types of organisational structure: 1) The organisational hierarchy that replicates the mainstream press with an owner/editor overseeing a production staff; 2) A non-hierarchical organisation where individuals have equal control and all decisions are made collectively; 3) The loosest type, where roles are not fixed and everyone is involved in all levels of production. He stresses that the latter organisational form is favoured by 'new social movements' centred on activism (ibid.). He states that grassroots media, in particular politically motivated examples, prefer radical forms of organisation, particularly the collective; but that this sort of organisation comes at a cost, because collective methods of organisation and production frequently prove unwieldy, leading to difficult decision making and often precipitating the collapse of alternative media projects. He suggests that:

> Alternative media projects that flourish tend to be the ones with a small committed collective that is responsible for the day-to-day running and planning of the publication, leaving a larger pool of contributors free from this administrative burden (2003: 54).

In terms of subcultural theory, 'alternative media' can be shown to be both resisting and generally organised differently from the mainstream; although there is evidence that the first structure is borrowed from the parent culture. There are other elements of retrieving aspects of the mainstream (Cohen, 1972). Forde in *Challenging the news; the journalism of alternative and community media* indicates: 'Mainstream organisations, particularly commercial ones no longer see the economic benefit in investigative journalists delving 'behind the story' (2011: 63). She stresses that in-depth journalism is something which alternative journalists: 'strongly identify as one of their key roles in society' and is becoming more important as mainstream newsrooms scale down and become 'disseminators' rather than 'gatherers' of news (ibid). She notes:

> Numerous periods in history, and in modern times, feature mainstream, working journalists writing for alternative publications who find the agenda of the mainstream far too limited but who must work within it to survive. (2011: 54)

Suggesting that alternative media journalists are not all activists or amateurs: 'but that in fact some of them are ordinary "professional" journalists who move between mainstream and alternative journalism' (2011: 54) working in an 'atypical' way. Forde identifies that in the alternative media world there is tension between commerciality and loss of integrity: 'Lack of commercialism is part of the very nature of alternative journalism and its producers, but there are contemporary examples defying this trend' (2011: 54). Atton concludes that:

> Many alternative media products are poorly financed, relying on largely donations and voluntary, unpaid labour to survive – a restrain that is only overcome by advocacy media, such as the *Big Issue,* which is better placed to attract prominent financial backers through its promotion of an issue that is less radical, through a medium that is more professionally produced. Organisationally, the controls on advocacy media resemble those of mainstream media. (2003: 53)

James Curran reflects that alternative media are usually started by journalists without business experience, who tend to concentrate on editorial content at the expense of marketing and promotion. Through no fault of their own, they often have difficulty securing adequate distribution. Undercapitalization frequently undermines quality, causing alternative ventures to be short-lived. (2003: 232). He dubs it the: 'rags-to-failure saga of alternative media production' (2003: 228) referencing issues of precarity and sustainability in operations outside the mainstream which will be discussed in the following section.

1:5:3 Precarity vs resilience: glass half-empty or half-full?

The subcultural approach provides a new lens to view hyperlocal to get away from the usual debates, one of which is sustainability. Part of the sustainability argument is the issue of precarity, with its negative connotations. Precarity has often been a default comment concerning the outlook for UK independent hyperlocal operations (Radcliffe, 2015; Harte *et* al, 2016: 247; Williams and Harte, 2016: 290). It has been recently used by Carina Tenor in *Polis: hyperlocal after the hype* (2018) and needs to be put into context. The notion of precarity links both UK hyperlocal operations and Hebdige's *Desert Studies* community, which he describes as: 'a culture out of next to nothing, a culture in which the conditions of extreme precarity, to which more and more people on the planet are now exposed, is nothing new; it is simply how things are' (2013). His reflections on widespread precarity are generally relevant to the field of journalism (not just hyperlocal operations) where 'atypical' working conditions, which are neither

36

permanent or fulltime, are increasingly prevalent in the form of temporary work or short-term contracts (*International Federation of Journalists,* 2006).

Writing on the concept of precarity, Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter (2008: 51) highlight 'precarity as the norm' while Guy Standing identifies precarity as being at the root of a new widespread social class in *The Precariat: the new dangerous class* (2016). So, if precarity is indeed the norm, then using it as an indicator of the sustainability or otherwise of independent operations seems less significant. Williams *et al* state that: 'The sector is quite fluid one, with some sites starting up and then closing in quick succession while others have now been operating successfully for several years' (2014: 9). The academics also draw attention to some 'high-performing' sites with 'significant audiences' (ibid: 25), which indicates an overall mixed rate of success; which common sense would suggest, could be the case in any era, in any field. When a number of small businesses start trading, it is unlikely that all of them are going to succeed. 'Precarity' therefore seems an irrelevant yardstick with which to gauge hyperlocal operations, when, as Standing suggests, it is a situation to which large numbers of the population are exposed (2016). Indeed, corporate mainstream local media operations have experienced their fair share of precarity (Franklin, 2006; Lewis *et* al, 2008; Fowler, 2011; Nielsen, 2012; Ramsay & Moore, 2016; Ramsay *et al*, 2017; Williams, 2017) which will be discussed in a later chapter.

Sustainability is another term overdue to be 'retired' according to Hebdige, he said in interview with Stephanie LeMenager that he had stopped using the word:

> It's now as empty and exhausted as a supermarket "organic"- part of a vocabulary of green retail-friendly euphemisms: the you-can-have-your-cake-and-eat-it words. I quite like "resilience" though it does sound a bit like a cleaning product or a *Navy Seals* video game. What I like about the world "resilience" is that, while it posits the ability of systems to survive and bounce back from traumatic stress, it also contains the idea of "recoil" (i.e., it retains a residual connotation of alarm and revulsion at the fact we've let things get into this state in the first place)' (2013).

While Hebdige was clearly not referring to internet era independent local news production when he made this statement, the word 'resilience' nevertheless provides a welcome, and less negative, alternative angle from which to view UK hyperlocal provisions. If precarity is a glass half-empty, resilience is the half-full scenario, and the latter seems an equally important consideration when viewing hyperlocal publishing in the light of Williams *et al's* findings:

The UK community news sector is well-established, and dominated by players who have achieved a degree of longevity (nearly three quarters or our sample of 183 producers have been producing news for over three years, and nearly a third for more than five years). (2014: 4)

The figures above suggest a degree of resilience - tenacity even - in independent hyperlocal publishing which will be explored in the empirical chapters.

1:6 Not set in stone: parent and subcultures evolve

As previously discussed, subcultures have a relationship with the mainstream. They are born in the mainstream but both resist and borrow from the mainstream. They also evolve like the mainstream. Subcultures do not remain set in stone, much like the theory itself which is adaptable to different approaches and has been likened to a chameleon:

> The concept of subculture is a chameleon theory which possesses different and opposing definitions, from its use as a deficit model to describe 'subnormal behaviour' to its use as a concept to express resistance, vitality and consumer choice. Further the concept of subculture possesses an ability to change its hue according to the sociological paradigm, but it also retains elements of the previous approaches. (Blackman, 2004: 104)

This adaptability makes it valuable for the application to local media situations, while retaining elements of the approaches applied to youth studies (Hebdige, 1979) or London working class culture as in the work of Phil Cohen at the CCCS (1972). Cohen first identified how subcultures can become absorbed into mainstream culture in his paper on the working classes in London's East End; the area provided an 'unofficial reception centre' for a succession of immigrant communities in flight from religious persecution or economic depression' (1972: 9). Cohen noted that they did not assimilate into the dominant indigenous culture but that as each subcommunity became 'an accepted, but differentiated part' of the community, new subcultures came along underneath: 'The outsiders become established, become insiders, by dissociating themselves from an even more conspicuous set of outsiders. Perhaps it is a natural human tendency to draw the line under your own feet' (ibid: 10).

Reflecting on his 1979 book, 35 years later, Hebdige made reference to how punk subculture had become absorbed into common culture via music and dress (1979: 16). He also indicated that hegemony is a 'moving equilibrium' and just as dominant culture is subject to change so aspects of subculture can move towards the mainstream:

> One of the arguments I made in *Subculture*… is about the cooptation and domestication of otherness. Subcultures, I argued, may start out as nano-scale,

marginal, in opposition to the projected 'mainstream' but they get parent culture, processed and reframed by the market and the media. That is how they travel, get disseminated, rendered comprehensible and, at the same time, neutralized: absorbed into the vernacular of 'common culture.' (2014: 9)

This suggests that neither parent culture or subculture are 'set in stone' and, since both are continually evolving, new subcultures can develop. In the empirical chapters it will be important to look for evidence of evolution of UK hyperlocal operations evolving and creating their own 'mainstream'.

1:6:1 Changes in mainstream journalism practice

Since understanding the working practices of independent operators is at the heart of this thesis, it is necessary to take a broader look at journalism practices so that differences may be identified. This section will therefore include some of the debates surrounding journalism in the 21st century to be applied at the analytical stage. It is beyond the remit of this thesis to go into detail about the transition of journalism in the internet-era (Peters and Broersma (eds), 2013 and 2017; Franklin, 2014, Deuze and Witschge, 2018) which has emerged in the 'convergence culture' (Jenkins, 2006) world. It is, nevertheless, important to identify the different cultures around industrialised versus post-industrialised working practices. Deuze and Witschge identify the 'newsroom' as 'the dominant form of employment and organization' for journalists during the 20th century (2018: 169). Karin Wahl-Jorgensen observes that this led to: 'routines and controlled forms' of news work (2009: 25) which privileged those within the mainstream. In the post-industrialised era Deuze and Witschge contend: 'The cultures of production and consumption increasingly converge in new creative processes (in journalism exemplified by trends towards more user-centred design, audience interactivity and citizen reporting)' (2017: 122). Journalism is no longer largely what Wahl-Jorgensen terms 'newsroom-centric' (2010):

> "[P]ost-industrial" journalism (as embodied in an increasingly distributed workforce consisting of individual entrepreneurial journalists, freelance editorial collectives and a worldwide emergence of news start-ups), the 'new' newsroom is fragmented, dispersed, networked and therefore anything but stable. (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 124)

News creation is no longer the exclusive preserve of: 'a particular professional group such as journalists employed at news organisations' according to Deuze and Witschge, because of the shift to the culture of a 'redactional society' one in which: 'editorial

practices are required for anyone's survival in the digital age' (ibid: 117). They draw on the concepts of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000) and 'liquid journalism' (Deuze, 2007; 2008) to highlight the fluid situation of journalism in a post-industrial world:

> Where individual practices are part of a profoundly precarious context governed by *permanent impermanent* industry (where continuous reorganisation, managerial reshuffling, buyouts, lay-offs and innovations are the norm), working environments (where the place you work and the people you work with are constantly changing) and career (where one's job-hopping trajectory is unpredictable to say the least). In order for journalism to adapt its practitioners have been pushed to develop new tactics, a new self-conception and new organizational structures – while older structures, routines and definitions (of news values) persist. (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 115-116)

This is a particularly relevant reflection given the earlier discussion about precarity being the norm (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008; Standing, 2014; 2016) for many people - including it appears journalists. Bauman's concept of liquid life in modern times identifies: 'A society in which the conditions under which its members act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines' (2000: 1). This concept of a fast-moving society in which people struggle to orientate themselves is not a new idea, C. Wright Mills expressed a similar sentiment in 1959 in *The Sociological Imagination*:

> The very shaping of history now outpaces the ability of men to orient themselves in accordance with cherished values. And which values? Even when they do not panic, men often sense that older ways of feeling and thinking have collapsed and that newer beginnings are ambiguous to the point of moral stasis. (1959/2000: 4)

This description of a fast-moving world where people try to re-orientate themselves, suggests that this not an issue confined to the internet-era. Nevertheless, Deuze and Witschge's identification that journalism is in a post-industrial era is extremely relevant since they draw attention to the: 'way of working and being at work' of many journalists (2018). This is confirmed by the findings of a study by the *International Federation of Journalists* (2006) which found that globally increasing numbers of journalists were working in an 'atypical' way either as freelances or on short term contracts. Looking for 'atypical' trends in the working lives of research participants, whether media workers or not, will be a worthwhile exercise at the analytical stage. This has particular relevance for independent hyperlocal news operations since roughly half of the participants in Williams *et al's* study had media training or experience and: 'many are current or former professional journalists striking out on their own as local news entrepreneurs' (2014: 9). Their research also identified that most community news producers worked part time

(ibid: 5) suggesting that many of their participants were journalists working in an 'atypical' way.

  Deuze and Witschge reflect that: 'the emergence of the enterprising professional in journalism is a relatively recent phenomenon, coinciding with the breakdown of the wall between the commercial and editorial sides of the news organization' (2018: 175). They reflect on the ability of journalists to: 'self-organise and maintain their discipline as a profession without formal boundaries' (2017: 120) which are desirable traits for those starting up their own business. Media economist Robert Picard, though, suggests that the 'professionalization' of journalism is a major hinderance to those setting up as entrepreneurs, because it has isolated them from commercial decisions (2010). He relates how 'professionalisation' of the role was a response to 'hyper commercialisation' resulting in low standard of newspapers in the late 19th century (ibid.). The results of professionalisation were training, professional societies for journalists and editors, codes of ethics and conduct; which Picard reflects improved industry practices, working conditions and social standing. But, he identifies two areas where 'journalism 'took a wrong turn':

> Professional journalists were taught and accepted that they should worry about the journalism and leave the business to itself. Second, journalists, along with other employees, decided to seek improvement to their compensation and working conditions through unionization – thus becoming the adversaries of management rather than partners in the management of news organisation. (2010)

The lack of commercial 'nous' he claims has impacted on journalists' ability to create successful entrepreneurial businesses. He and Lucia Naldi coined the term 'formational myopia' to highlight how previous professional experience influences new startups.

> We posit the concept of "formational myopia" in new enterprises and believe that the previous knowledge, experience, and practice of entrepreneurs influences their startup enterprises in the new industries. Formational myopia results from the experiences and perceptions of those with a work background in a previous industrial form … constraining the vision of the requirements and necessities of an enterprise in a new industrial form. (2012: 76)

Clare Cook and Esa Sirkkunen also draw attention to this issue indicating instances where: 'professional newspaper practices with high personnel costs are being transferred' to new start operations (2015 :64), in their study of online business models. This concept clearly has implications for independent operators as a greater range of skills are required to run a community news operation than just content; the cost of producing content has to be balanced against income. Naldi and Picard frame

'formational myopia' as a negative consequence, because they apply the concept to journalists from industrialised setting who have been excluded from commercial decisions (2012). However, since not all hyperlocal operators are journalists (Williams *et at,* 2014: 12), independent operators from other professional backgrounds may arguably bring valuable transferable skills to their hyperlocal publishing activities.

  In the internet-era there is more appreciation of the need for business and sales skills, rather than purely journalistic, as the roles of: 'content, sales and marketing are converging' (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 123). The emergence of 'the enterprising professional' in journalism (ibid.) underlines the need for a large skill-set and identifying such requirements will be the focus of Chapter 4.

1:6:2 The role of technology: helping media subcultures to flourish

The role of technology in the birth of journalism was considered earlier in this chapter and it should be emphasised this thesis does not take a technological determinist stance; by attempting to claim that technology drives societal change. James Curran in *Media and the making of British Society c. 1700-2000,* states that the: 'technological determinist tradition is seductive, stimulating but ultimately simplistic' (2002: 135) because: 'it pays too much attention to the technology of communications, and too little to their content and processes' (ibid). While Raymond Williams in his analysis of the impact of television, in *Television, technology and cultural form*, is equally critical of this approach because it isolates technology from other factors (Williams, 1974: 9-14). Chris Bissell, meanwhile, proposes that there is a reciprocal relationship between technology and society (2006: 8-47). This stance acknowledges that technology has had an important role to play in media innovation and in allowing subcultures to flourish. This is reflected in the previous discussions about the impact of the invention of moveable type on the democratisation of knowledge and the role of the photocopier in the production of punk zines. More recently photocomposition and 'web off-set litho' technologies which emerged in the 1970s have been adopted by subcultures. By the 1980s reprographic technologies repurposed from the mainstream were being used by alternative publishers, a situation which Atton states: 'Made them, if not financially independent, at least technically independent' (2002: 38). The advent of technology has therefore helped independent producers publish in various formats. The following discussion will assess

how recent technology and innovation has arguably worked in favour of internet era independent operators.

  There is a strand of media management theory named 'organisational technology' concerning the relationship between technology, organisations and innovation (Schumpeter, 1934; 1942; Küng, 2008: 129) which appears to indirectly suggest that hyperlocals are better positioned to utilise both Web 2.0 and print technologies more efficiently than mainstream media. This section will suggest that because of their start-up nature and flexible business models hyperlocals have benefitted from technology changes in a way that traditional or 'incumbent' (Küng, 2008) media have been unable to. A second discussion will examine how a combination of the theoretical concepts of 'disruptive innovation' and 'discontinuous innovation' could explain why an increasing number of UK independent operators appear to favour print; a format often dismissed as 'old technology' and one which many mainstream local newspaper publishers are exiting.

1:6:3 Discontinuous and disruptive innovations influence a changing media ecosystem

Since this thesis takes the stance that there is a reciprocal relationship between technology and society (Bissell, 2006), there is another theoretical strand which provides a useful analytical tool. Organisational technology (Küng, 2008: 129) takes a balanced view that technology when combined with other outside factors drives change. Theorists propose that technological evolution follows a cyclical pattern with long periods of relatively minor change being punctuated by occasional technological discontinuity which disrupts entire sectors (Abernathy and Utterback, 1978; Tushman and Anderson, 1986; Tushman and Smith, 2002; Küng, 2008). Various types of technological change are identified: 'incremental innovations' where an industry is in equilibrium and change involves on-going adaptation; 'architectural innovations' which allow existing products to be modified and directed at new markets; 'discontinuous innovation' which represents a break with existing systems and 'disruptive innovations' which are disruptive to established market structures but not technologically disruptive (Küng, 2008: 134-137). The last two of these changes are relevant to this research because they have arguably disrupted the mainstream destroying the advantage of 'incumbent' mainstream local

newspaper organisations, feeding the growth of an independent subculture in local news production.

Competency destroying transformation or 'discontinuous innovation' is the most dangerous for mainstream operations (Tushman and Anderson, 1986; Küng, 2008: 35) because they can make the skills obsolete by which an industry has gained competitive advantage. In fact, Küng states that: 'Incumbents who do manage to extend their leadership positions across technology transitions are the exception rather than the rule' (2008: 137), a reflection which has significant implications for the parent culture of mainstream local media operations.

Gutenberg's invention of movable type is a relevant example of discontinuous innovation, rendering the carved wooden blocks of the print media sector of the time obsolete. A relevant 'discontinuous innovation' in contemporary print media, which actually initially benefited the mainstream by delivering massive cost-saving benefits to the publishing industry, were computerised newspaper publishing systems or desktop publishing (DTP) software which began to emerge in the 1980s. It allowed pages to be assembled onscreen and transmitted direct to printing plates (Küng, 2008).

The arrival of the software initially worked to the advantage of mainstream newspapers, allowing owners to dispense with print workers and incorporate their duties into the job role of journalists. With journalists responsible for page make-up there was a massive cost saving for mainstream media organisations. But deskilling of the process opened-up print publishing to those outside the mainstream. As previously stated reprographic technologies were increasingly taken up by alternative media producers. Atton suggests: 'What offset litho was to the publishers of *Oz* and *IT,* the photocopier was to the punk movement of the late 1970s' (2002: 38). Subcultures were thus able to cheaply access print technology which had previously been the preserve of the mainstream.

The second transformation 'disruptive innovation' is less dynamic but has provided a greater stimulus to independent operators because of its unsettling effect on mainstream media. The 'disruption' in question is to existing markets, and such innovations are not disruptive in the technological sense like discontinuous innovations (Küng, 2008: 136). Disruptive innovations transform an existing market or sector by simplifying, and opening up to a less skilled consumer, what were once complicated processes. Christensen (2018) who coined the phrase, describes 'disruptive innovations' as 'innovations that make products and services more accessible and affordable, thereby making them available to a larger population.' He explains:

Disruptive innovation describes a process by which a product or service initially takes root in simple applications at the bottom of the market – typically by being less expensive and more accessible – and then relentlessly moves upmarket, eventually displacing the competitors. (Christensen, 2018)

Because they take root at the bottom of the market, large organisations are prone to overlook the potential threat from disruptive innovations, because they are busy targeting more lucrative income streams. Christensen suggest that the innovation: 'then relentlessly moves upmarket, eventually displacing established competitors' (ibid). Although previously mentioned as a discontinuous innovation, Lucy Küng highlights that DTP systems also comes under the 'disruptive' heading because they lowered the cost of entry to the publishing business (2008: 136). She explains that: 'the early versions could not match the output of traditional publishing systems with their high quality printing presses and skilled layout and design' (ibid.). However, she continues: 'As the market grew and economies of scale emerged, desktop publishing systems became more sophisticated and came to overtake traditional publishing systems' (2008: 136).

She also singles out free newspapers as another example of a disruptive innovation. When free newspapers first appeared in the 1970s they were used by mainstream local newspaper organisations to increase revenue, providing a guaranteed circulation which could be sold to an advertiser (Franklin, 2006; 150-161). With their less sophisticated layout and generic content, heavily reliant on public relations handouts, they were not considered to be a threat to traditional paid-for titles. In the new millennium the equilibrium has shifted, many paid-for local newspapers have been accused of relying on agency supplied press releases rather than producing original content (Williams and Franklin, 2007; Davies, 2008; Lewis, et *al,* 2008; Howells, 2015). Küng said: 'At present, paid for newspapers and free ones co-exist. But there is a clear threat that eventually the free tabloids will move upmarket into the paid newspaper's domain' (2008: 136). As previously stated Williams *et al* indicate that free distribution print is increasingly popular among independent hyperlocal operators (2014: 29).

Without doubt the most disruptive innovation to mainstream media has been the 'invention' of the World Wide Web in 1989 by Sir Tim Berners-Lee. But although it has been disruptive to market structures, it has also been 'discontinuous' because it is 'competence destroying'; allowing non-professionals access to professional publishing tools, far more sophisticated than the photocopies used for punk zines. Like DTP, the web initially benefitted the mainstream allowing cost savings, it was not until around 2005 that innovative business ideas, utilising freely available digital tools, began to

disrupt the business models of mainstream local newspapers. Huge damage was wrought by start-up businesses such as *Craigslist* (Brock, 2013: 93-94) introducing an online advertising model which undermined local newspaper classified advertising sales. Williams *et al* speak of the 'creative destruction on traditional news outlets wrought by Web 2.0 services, such as blogging and social media' (2014: 10). The flipside is that freely available online tools and relatively cheap technology such as computers and camera phones encouraged low-cost publishing (ibid.) by those outside the mainstream. Disruptive innovations have therefore advantaged non-mainstream media producers by providing the means of access to: 'simple applications at the bottom of the market' (Christensen, 2018). Independent publishers also utilise free distribution print (Williams *et al*, 2014: 29) which indicates the subcultural aspect of appropriating aspects of the mainstream (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige,1979). Küng states that in general terms:

> Technological innovations tend to supplement rather than replace, previous technologies. The previous medium is not destroyed, but progressively undermined, more often than not slipping down the food chain with lower revenues and market share' (2008: 128).

This appears to support Atton's claim that print is 'far from moribund', particularly in the non-mainstream media world.

  Another aspect of organisational technology theory which appears to work in the favour of independent producers is the life-cycle of technologies. In the early stages, technologies are in a fluid state during which the entry level is low, gradually this moves to a rigid state where entry becomes more difficult and expensive (Küng, 2008, p. 130). Independent hyperlocal operators are currently able to take advantage of low-entry costs to gain access to digital publishing during the 'fluid state' of the current online technology transition. Küng explains how technology transitions benefit agile new starts at the expense of mainstream 'incumbents', because the latter are required to dismantle some aspects of the 'rigid' structures which they have established, to support a large business, even if those particular aspects are functioning well: 'This is counter-intuitive and hard to do – so the organisation is effectively trapped by its success' (2008, p. 138). Williams and Franklin highlighted the problems involved in adapting to a changing technology in their paper *Turning around the tanker; implementing Trinity Mirror's online strategy* (2008). Taking a technology and innovation point of view has provided another angle on the relationship of independent hyperlocal operators with the parent culture of mainstream local media. This provides an additional angle to understanding the relationship between independent hyperlocal operators and the mainstream parent

culture. The next section will provide a media economics angle to underpin the claim of hyperlocal as a subculture.

As demonstrated by the work of the *CCCS,* subcultures result from changes in the parent culture (Cohen, 1972, Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006; Blackman, 2014), it is therefore important to consider the disruption in the mainstream which has prompted the emergence of the UK hyperlocal subculture. The evolution of the UK local media landscape around the turn of the 21st century will be examined in Chapter 3 (*Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture*). However, before embarking on that discussion it is important to consider the work of media economist Robert Picard who has identified a significant underlying shift in the culture of mainstream news production. In *Twilight or new dawn of journalism? Evidence from the changing news ecosystem* (2014) he suggests that as the industrialised model of journalism diminishes, traditional news production is being divided into two streams. Evidence suggests that while mainstream organisations tend towards one form, the abandoned mode is being 'retrieved' by independent operators. Picard calls these two distinct cultures 'service mode' and 'craft mode' (2014: 491). Traditional news companies are favouring the 'service mode' which is: 'more focused on distribution rather than gathering and producing news' (ibid). Such findings appear to reinforce Forde's view that commercial mainstream organisations no-longer see the economic benefit of investigative journalism and are becoming: 'disseminators rather than 'generators' of news (2011: 63). Picard indicates that independent operations are becoming the generators of news. He observes:

> A craft mode of news production has emerged. Although this is a long established form of production, it is novel to contemporary news production. In this mode, news is produced by individual entrepreneurial journalists and small-scale journalistic cooperatives that emphasize the uniqueness and quality of their news. Journalists working in this craft mode are focusing on special topics such as climate or defence, employing specialized techniques such as investigative or data journalism, or serving smaller localities as general news providers. Most are providing news directly to consumers, but some provide their materials to companies that practise the service mode of news provision. These journalists act as suppliers and partners in a business relationship that is very different from that of freelance journalists in the twentieth century. (Picard, 2014: 491)

What Picard identified as a craft mode is therefore relevant to how independent hyperlocal providers operate. He observes that this long-established form of news generation was formerly an integral part of the mainstream, which suggests that independent operators are retrieving and repurposing what has been discarded by the

parent culture (Cohen, 1972: 23; Hebdige, 1979). Picard's observations about 'service' and 'craft' modes of production were therefore used applied during data analysis.

1:7 Conclusion

The overall focus for this study is subcultural, so historical themes of marginality, resistance, retrieving and subsequent repurposing of aspects of the parent culture were discussed in this chapter (Cohen, 1972, Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006; Williams, 2011; Blackman, 2014). The 'make-do-and-mend' 'bricolage' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966) lifestyle associated with subculture (Hebdige 1979; 2014) is also at the heart of digital culture (Deuze, 2006: 70) and was also identified for use during data analysis.

  The two primary theoretical approaches discussed, to be applied in the empirical chapters 3-6, were reciprocal journalism (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al*, 2017), which reveals different forms of social exchange and Durkheim's theory *The division of labour in society* (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) to identify solidarity between operators. Durkheim's work allows analysis to continue where reciprocal journalism ends, in creating a better understanding of the collective relationships between operators by applying the aspects of 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity' to the data.

  The zine culture (Worley, 2015; Kempson, 2015) and the organisational structures of alternative media (Atton, 2003: 42-43) assist analysis by underlining the subcultural credentials of independent hyperlocal operations. Meanwhile organisational technology theory (Küng, 2008: 129) offers insight into the role of technology in the evolution of both parent culture and hyperlocal subculture; suggesting that technological change has benefitted independent operators. Finally, Picard's identification of the changing culture of news production into 'service' and 'craft' modes, identifies two distinct styles. He suggests that the mainstream has moved away from being generators of news to become disseminators in a 'service mode' culture, leaving independent operators to retrieve the 'craft mode' which has been lost in the parent culture.

Chapter 2: Methodology: the influence of autobiographical inscription

2:1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the methodological grounding for an interdisciplinary, selective study of independent local media operations; which emerged in the internet-era and are collectively known as hyperlocals (Ofcom, 2014: 51). This is a qualitative study of 27 independent operators producing such output, who are situated in different parts of England and Wales and responsible for often contrasting styles of provisions. One-to-one interviews with the hyperlocal operators generated the bulk of the primary research data. Additional data was also generated from three interviews with representatives of non-profit organisations, which have supported the sector.

Engaging with Park's theory of human ecology (Lindner, 1996: 48-64) to theorise the local media ecology, the thesis considers how the research field has changed since the research started. This feeds into Hebdige's suggestion that subcultures can start out 'nano-scale, marginal in opposition to the projected mainstream' and subsequently 'travel' (2014: 9).

The research methods have been influenced by my approach of using a subcultural lens, which emerged from the *Chicago School of Sociology* (Palmer, 1928; Blackman, 2014: 497). The first section of this chapter outlines how these subcultural themes helped generate the research questions. The methodology also embraces biographical research methods (Merrill and West, 2009; West, 2016) such as autoethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; 2007; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).

The second section will discuss the influence of biographical methodology, an approach which emerged from the *Chicago School of Sociology* during the early 1920s (Park, 1928; Blackman, 2014: 298). In particular issues of autobiographical inscription (LeMenager & Hebdige, 2013) in the doctorate will be discussed. Descriptions of the research setting and an explanation of how the sample was chosen is contained in the third section, followed in section four by how the data was interpreted. The final section will explain how themes were coded.

2:2 Research context and questions

The research context was framed by the subcultural approach and the need to generate data to explore the subcultural themes identified in the theoretical framework. The research setting needed to be large enough to generate sufficient data to address the research questions and achieve a thick description (Geertz, 1973). With 408 sites listed as active (Harte, 2014) at the start of the research period, manageability was also a consideration. Eventually 27 hyperlocal entrepreneurs, operating in different parts of Britain, were selected for investigation; concentrating on depth rather than breadth. The selection process for the study subjects is explained in the third section *Research setting and sample.*

As outlined in the theoretical framework, researchers at the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* proposed that subcultures must first be related to a dominant parent culture of which they are a sub-set, they must also be analysed in terms of their relation to the dominant culture (Hall and Jefferson, 2006: 7). Local legacy newspapers represent the parent culture in relation to the hyperlocal subculture and, as in any 'generational relationship', the subculture exhibits signs of resistance and antagonism towards the parent culture (Cohen, 1972: 22). These were factors that needed to be borne in mind when designing the research questions.

The *CCCS* researchers also identified that subcultures emerge as a result of a crisis in the parent culture (Cohen, 1972: 22). Evidence of this crisis was widely available (Williams and Franklin, 2007; Engel, 2009; Fowler, 2011; Siles and Boczkowski, 2012; Nielsen, 2012) so secondary research was appropriate. In order to understand issues of marginality at the beginning and end of the research period it was necessary to position the UK hyperlocal sector at the start of the field research. The largest empirical study of the sector *The state of hyperlocal community news in the UK: Findings from a survey of practitioners,* by academics Andy Williams, Steven Barnett, Dave Harte and Judith Townend, was published at the start of the research (2014) so this was adopted as a benchmark. Williams *et al* (2014: 12) suggested that around 50% of operators were media professionals, so, given the large number of local newspaper closures and subsequent redundancies (Ponsford, 2012) the research questions sought to discover how many of the interviewees had migrated from mainstream media to the hyperlocal sector. Establishing this and understanding their motives, would shed light on whether

elements of marginality (exhibited as redundancy), resistance or antagonism existed in relation to the parent culture. This informed the first research question.

RQ: 1: What are the professional backgrounds of key personnel responsible for the

operation of a range of UK hyperlocal provisions?

RQ: 1.1: What are their motivations for becoming involved in independent

publishing?

In order to establish themes of retrieving 'socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture' (Cohen, 1972: 23) and establishing how these were being repurposed (Hebdige, 1979; 2014), it was necessary to understand the working practices of independent operators. Because of my own experience I knew that during the pre-internet era local newspapers were located in their communities as a result of district offices (Howells, 2015) and thus maintained 'a prolonged and continual presence in that place' (Hess and Waller, 2014; 197). It was therefore important to find out whether operators lived in the areas which they served. Since Durkheim's (1893/1984) division of labour was an important theoretical device for analysing subcultures, the second research question was expanded to discover whether participants worked alone or in partnerships.

RQ2: What are the working practises of the independent publishers?

RQ2.1: Do they work alone?

RQ2.2: Do they live in the areas for which they generate news?

Hebdige argues that subcultures may start out as marginal or nano-scale but subsequently become 're-framed by the market and media' (2014: 9). Drawing on an empirically sound benchmark for the UK hyperlocal sector (Williams *et al*, 2014), at the beginning of the field research, provided the opportunity of comparing and contrasting the starting position with that by the end. Given that the sector was described as: 'quite a fluid one, with some sites starting up then closing in quick succession while others have been operating successfully for several years' (Williams *et al*, 2014: 9), the third question provided a longitudinal dimension to understand how provisions had changed during the

research period and identify those which had expanded, those who continued at the same level and if any had closed.

RQ3: How have their provisions changed throughout the field research period?

In longitudinal terms a fourth research question, was needed to probe the relationship with mainstream media both at the start and end of the field research. The fourth question therefore explored the theme of resistance to the parent culture.

RQ4: As independent media outlets, what is their relationship with mainstream media?

The data collection was conducted over a two-year period between the summers of 2015 and 2017 with interviewing and observation as the primary research tools. A first phase of interviews was conducted in 2015/16, a second phase followed in summer 2017 to investigate themes which had arisen from the coding and gather data about how the hyperlocals had evolved between researcher contact. This process is explored in detail in section four. The coding process and subsequent distillation of themes to categories which formed the chapters of the thesis is explained in section five.

2:3 Research methods: towards autobiographical inscription

In this thesis the research methods employed were open ended, conversational interviews with a degree of ethnographic inflection. The research design is qualitative with the research strategy rooted in the early work of *The Chicago School* (Bulmer,1984; Blackman, 2014: 498) and the 1970s *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* or '*Birmingham School'* (Hall *et al*, 1980). The intention of using a qualitative approach, was to gather the views and opinions of hyperlocal operators via open-ended interviews in the hope of gathering rich data. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson suggest that participants' accounts are important: 'for what they may be able to tell us about those who produced them. We can use what people say as evidence about their perspectives, and perhaps about the larger subcultures and cultures to which they belong' (1995: 125). Due to my biographical background as a journalist, I wanted to focus on the operators' narratives and allow my research participants' to tell their story. My viewpoint aligned

with that stated by Linden West: 'A statistical sample is always an abstraction, from which contextual detail is erased' (2016:38) so I was keen to establish context to quantitative data that already existed (Williams *et al¸*2014). I was anxious not to constrain the study with a hypothesis so broadly adopted a Grounded theory approach to try to avoid preconceptions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Birks and Mills, 2015).

There is a high degree of autobiographical inscription in this thesis since it evolved from my former career as a local newspaper journalist. The initial topic idea of studying the working practices of hyperlocal operations was inspired by my background, as discussed in the *Introduction*, since I noticed that independent ultra-local 'reporters' appeared to be embedded in their communities and engaging with them in the same way as I had in the early 1990s. A journalist undertaking academic study of community is not a new development. In the early 1920s Robert E. Park of the *Chicago School of Sociology* was a former newspaper journalist and editor, turned academic, who studied communities in Chicago; his approach was detailed in *The City; suggestions for investigation of human behaviour in the urban environment* (1925). It was this experience as a journalist which made him focus his attention on the urban community (Lindner, 1996; Polsky, 1967: 126; Blackman, 2005: 3); Rolf Linder suggests that the style and direction of Park's work: 'ultimately owes its origins to the reporting tradition' (1996: 3). Lindner suggests that his approach was characterised by: 'progressive development from experience to knowledge' (ibid. 154) adding: 'Park's work is much closer to what we understand today as biographical research' (1996: 134). Park's contribution marks the beginning of the biographical research approach and the term subculture also dates from this era (Blackman, 2005: 3-4). Blackman (ibid.) discovered that the earliest references to subculture were made at the *Chicago School* during Park's era by Vivien Palmer; in *Field Studies in sociology: a student's manual'* which refers to subcultural groups (1928: 73).

In interview with Stephanie LeMenager, (2013) former *CCCS* researcher Dick Hebdige suggests that: 'There's a strongly marked autobiographical inscription in "Birmingham School" cultural studies.' He proposed that personal trajectory influenced the direction of his academic work, particularly in terms of a: 'foundational concern with place.' His formative years: 'inside British metropolitan youth subculture' subsequently led to his research into punk subculture in the 1970s (LeMenager and Hebdige, 2013):

Growing up in a working-class extended family household in southwest London, not far from the Kings Road and Worlds End, site not only of Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's SEX and Seditionaries boutiques in the '70s but of the Chelsea Drug Store and Mary Quant's Bazaar a decade earlier, I got to witness the emergence of everything from mod to psychedelia to punk first hand' (ibid 2013)

The same was true of Park whose 'autobiographical inscription' was his life prior to 1898 as a city reporter and editor in: Detroit, Denver, New York and Chicago. In my case the 'foundational concern with place' was at the ultra-local end of the scale - the community of Troon in Ayrshire, Scotland, where I worked in the late 80's to mid-90's as a community reporter. This accounts for the 'autobiographical inscription' in my choice of topic. Personal trajectory led each of us to our particular topic areas, as is the case with all research, bringing a degree of subjectivity to any project.

  The second way in which autobiographical inscription is present in this thesis is my insider view of how communities were reported during the industrialised era of local newspaper journalism; the proposed parent culture. My position is one of ethnographic insider/outsider (Hammersley and Atkinson pages, 2007: 86-87). I had insider knowledge of traditional journalism practices in the former industrialised newsroom setting, particularly how communities were reported during that era. Yet, in relation to internet era community journalism I was an outsider. Unlike Rachel Howells (2015) and David Harte (2017) I did not have first-hand experience of running an independent hyperlocal operation, so I was not automatically: 'presumed to be an advocate for the sector' (Harte, 2017: 57). This allowed me a degree of subjective distance from the operators. In *Ethnography; principles in* practice, Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson observe that those defined as insiders or outsiders likely: 'have access to different sorts of information' which the researchers caution exposes them to: 'different kinds of methodological dangers' (2007: 87). They particularly warn against: 'the danger of personally identifying with such members' perspectives, and hence failing to treat these as problematic' (ibid. 88). They cite *CCCS* researcher Paul Willis' ethnographic study of working class adolescent boys (Willis, 1977) as potentially flawed because he: 'treats them more or less as spokesmen for the working class' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 88). Managing my empathetic relationship with the participant, was particularly important during this study for two reasons: firstly, many interviewees were fellow journalists and secondly such a small sample could never be representative of all hyperlocal operators.

My experience of local newspaper reporting during the 1980s and 90s is not a definitive view. Rather, it is my personal experience which is represented in the positionality statement (Savin-Baden and Major; 2013: 68-83) in Chapter 3 (*Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture*). I use this autoethnographic process of drawing on my own experience to connect with the research context (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013: 68-83). The statement outlines my own biographical position, it shows the professional trajectory which led to my research and therefore sheds light on my ontological and epistemological position. My positionality statement is also treated as primary data, it is my personal view of community reporting in the pre-internet era. I acknowledge that this representation may not fit with every local newspaper journalist's impression of working practices during that era, therefore do not pretend to be a spokesman. Although I present secondary research to suggest that many of my contemporaries shared similar experiences. It is on this basis that I propose certain working practices, prevalent in the era, have been retrieved and repurposed by contemporary independent hyperlocal operators. This concept of appropriation is central to the subcultural theoretical approach of retrieving and repurposing from the mainstream (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1997).

My background as a journalist is also embedded in this thesis both in terms of approach and the presentation style. Journalistic style underpins the presentation of the empirical chapters (3-6). There I introduce the topic, set up the argument by way of participants' personal accounts and weave my theoretical interpretation through the narrative. Secondary research is used sparingly and only when necessary. The intention being that the research participants' shape the chapters, thus amplifying their voice. My journalistic background attracted me to a Grounded theory approach because I wanted to allow participants' voices to drive the direction of the thesis, rather than being constrained within the parameters of a hypothesis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This also informed the choice for many of my headings, for chapters and some sub-headings, to use quotations from participants' in order to amplify their voices; this is a journalistic as well as academic technique providing additional focus and agency. 'Autobiographical inscription' is therefore apparent through the choice of Grounded theory as the methodological approach.

My background also posed problems when choosing a suitable research strategy. My undergraduate degree was in a humanities subject, so, as a Film, Radio and TV Studies graduate I was unfamiliar with social sciences methodological approaches. The

dichotomy between the humanities approaches to which I was accustomed and the social science expectations of my chosen doctoral topic area was encapsulated perfectly by Merrill and West:

> There is a potential tension between orientations informed by the humanities and the social sciences. In the humanities, more importance can be attached to what may be unique and subjective and there is less pre-occupation with the general or structural (2009:105).

Managing subjectivity is always a consideration with qualitative research (Holliday, 2016: 1-22). This was particularly troubling for myself, as a former professional journalist, since at the start of the research period the most up-to-date survey of the sector (Williams *et al:* 2014: 12) suggested that 48% of hyperlocal operators were either journalists or media professionals. This meant that there was potential for a high degree of reciprocity during the interview stage (Oakley, 1981; Cotterill, 1992), in the form of sharing knowledge and experience.

For a long time, I wrestled with the problem of how much to 'exclude myself' from my research. My research dilemma stemmed from my notion of objectivity which was shaped within my professional background. Objectivity is one of a triumvirate of concepts instilled in trainee journalists, along with 'accuracy' and 'impartiality', in which 'objective truth' is distilled down to:

> Something that can be backed up with evidence, verified, and demonstrated to be the case… Objectivity for journalists has been defined as even-handedness, separating facts from opinion, and minimising the journalist's own views or prejudices (Harcup, 2015: 77).

Having strived for objectivity throughout my journalistic career it was a shock to discover that a more broadly-based qualitative approach valued subjectivity and encouraged researchers to 'Portray people as constructing the social world' and are 'themselves constructing the social world through their interpretations of it' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 10-11). More specifically, the approach I was drawn to was subjective and inductive where the material was allowed to lead the researcher; this is the opposite of testing a pre-established theory, the approach linked to academic objectivity. I became aware that a qualitative biographical approach ends with a hypothesis rather than starts with one. In *Using biographical methods in social research* Barbara Merrill and Linden West discuss the subjective, inductive approach to research when considering the influence of *The Chicago School of Sociology* on biographical methods (2009: 22). Awareness of Park's work at *The Chicago School* during its 'Golden age' of

1914 to 1933 (Lindner, 1996: 199; Bulmer, 1984) convinced me that my journalistic roots should become integral to the research.

Autobiographical inscription (LeMenager and Hebdige, 2013) is evident in my interviewing style which is a relaxed journalistic participatory style with a high degree of reflexivity. Reciprocity was implicit in the feminist interviewing style advocated by Ann Oakley (1981: 30-59) where the interviewer was 'allowed' to answer questions asked by the interviewee; for myself this represented a major breakthrough. Early in my research I had read Carolyn Ellis and colleagues (Ellis, Kiesinger and Tillman-Healy, 1997: 119 – 149) account of interactive interviewing and wondered how on earth I would be allowed to incorporate such a technique into my practice. Since I was interviewing people who worked in local media, many of them journalists, I was loath to stick to a rigid script. Feminist approaches provided the answer and interview procedures will be dealt with in more detail in section 3:4. In her discussion about power relations when interviewing journalists, Ursula Plesner considers situations where: 'researcher and researched share a professional background to some degree' (2011: 472).

> In research projects where researchers and their participants share professional background, for example, negotiations often replace a researcher-imposed dialogue, and the circulation of shared or common vocabularies subverts an orderly division between researcher's vocabulary and interviewee's vocabularies. (ibid.)

Plesner states that when:

> Both the researcher and the research participant bring interests to the table that both sides are familiar with, and although these interests may sometimes conflict, the terms of the negotiation are not foreign to the participants, and their conditions are, in principle equal. Under such circumstances, I want to say, we are not studying up or down but *sideways*. (ibid)

The concept of 'studying up' concerns interviews with high status voices, more powerful than the interviewer and who may attempt to manipulate the situation; while 'studying down' is where the interviewee may be marginalised and not able to fully understand the research context and its consequences (Plesner, 2011). This study, therefore represents a studying sideways situation, where the interview was a 'negotiation' which included 'giving reflexivity back to the actors' (ibid: 472). Interviewees were as likely to ask me questions, as I they.

The interviews themselves represented an opportunity to explore the lightly studied area of hyperlocal operator's relationships with legacy media, providing a 'bottom up' view of the local media ecology in response to research question three. In *Mapping*

changes in local news Julie Firmstone (2016: 929) treats journalists as: 'authoritative sources of opinion on the impact of recent changes, threats and opportunities faced by local news media.' Most of the journalists interviewed, had worked in mainstream media and told stories about cuts, redundancies and a reduction of journalistic coverage. Although when interpreting this material allowances had to be made for potential bias, since several journalists were disillusioned by the local media sector and others who were running hyperlocals were victims of redundancy, voluntary or otherwise. Nevertheless, comments on how working practices had changed provided important material from a historical standpoint, about the crisis in the mainstream and to indicate socially cohesive aspects which had been lost. Their perspective is particularly relevant as a counter-balance to the public relations material and high-status voices that are privileged in local media commentary (Lewis *et al*, 2008; Howells, 2015).

 West (2016: 36) states that auto/biographical forms of research encourage storytelling and create: 'a good enough space for people to share experience'. My open-ended interviewing style encouraged several former journalists to go beyond my semi-structured, micro-level questioning of hyperlocal activities and recount their former experiences working in legacy media. This provided meso level data which both historicised their own environment, shed light on recent working practices within mainstream media and the crisis in the parent culture. Biographical methods encourage an interdisciplinary exploration capturing the spirit of C. Wight Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (2000: 5) which emphasises the importance of connecting big historical trends with subjective experience (also West, 2016:44).

 In order to answer the research questions, eventual interview questioning was structured around these topics:

- What was the professional background of the interviewee?
- What was their motivation for becoming involved with the hyperlocal?
- Describe their working practices, including whether they lived on the patch?
- Was anyone else was involved in the hyperlocal and, if so, were they paid or volunteers?
- Did the operator retrieve aspects of the 'mainstream' such as advertising or a print product?
- How would they describe the relationship with local mainstream media?
- Describe the scope of the operation at the start of the data collection, how had it changed by the second interview?

The following sections will explain how the methods worked in practice, beginning with the construction of the research setting.

2:4 Research setting and sample

Constructing the research setting, to generate sufficiently rich and abundant data to address the research questions, was a more linear decision-making process than determining the research strategy. The types of research sampling employed to access the data were, mainly purposive and snowball, with some opportunistic sampling. The first consideration was to provide geographical boundaries for the chosen topic area, as hyperlocal media is a worldwide phenomenon whose scale is difficult to quantify. For ease of data collection, the decision was made to limit the study to the UK and ultimately that was restricted still further to provisions in England and Wales. In *Filling the news hole? UK community news and the crisis in local journalism,* Andy Williams, Dave Harte and Jerome Turner cautioned about the absence of a comprehensive list of UK hyperlocals (Nielsen, 2015: 207). The *Openly Local* website (2012), used for the large 2014 content analysis of the sector (Williams *et al*, 2014) was voluntary sign up so not exhaustive. Nevertheless, at the time of constructing my research setting this was the most accurate collection of data available so I consulted it. In addition, there were sites which had reached my attention during the literature review stage and I included four of these, since to provide a historical contrast with earlier studies.

Table 2:1 Hyperlocal operators interviewed

No.	Interviewee	Hyperlocal name	Location
1	David Wimble	*The Looker*	Romney Marsh, Kent
2	James Hatts	*London SE1*	London
3	Vijay Jain	*Dartford Living*	Kent
4	David Shafford	*Dartford Living*	Kent
5	David Jackman	*Everything Epping Forest* *Everything Harlow*	Essex
6	Daniel Ionescu	*The Lincolnite*	Lincoln, Lincolnshire
7	Jon Cook	*A Little Bit of Stone*	Stone, Staffordshire
8	Jamie Summerfield	*A Little Bit of Stone*	Stone, Staffordshire

9	Dr Rae Howells	*Port Talbot Magnet*	Wales
10	Richard Gurner	*Caerphilly Observer*	Wales
11	Sean Kelly	*ChiswickW4*	London
12	Annemarie Flanagan	*Ealing Today* *Acton W3*	London
13	Sue Choularton	*Wimbledon SW19*	London
14	Will Perrin	*Kings Cross Environment*	London
15	Richard Coulter	*Filton Voice*	Bristol
16	Emma Cooper	*Keynsham Voice* *Bishopston Voice* *Henleaze and Westbury Voice*	Bristol
17	Richard Drew	*Frome Valley Voice* *Yate and Sodbury Voice*	Bristol
18	Gary Brindle	*Downend Voice* *Fishponds Voice*	Bristol
19	Paul Breeden	*South Bristol Voice: two editions.*	Bristol
20	Michael Casey	*Your Thurrock* *Your Harlow*	Essex
21	David Prior	*Altrincham Today*	Greater Manchester
22	Emma Gunby	*West Kirby Today*	The Wirral, Merseyside
23	Martin Johnson	*Stockport Today*	Greater Manchester
24	Adam Cantwell-Corn	*The Bristol Cable*	Bristol
25	Pat Gamble	*West Bridgford Wire*	Nottingham
26	Dr Dave Harte	*Bournville Village News*	Birmingham
27	Simon Perry	*On the Wight*	Isle of Wight
28	Emma Meese	*Centre Manager, Centre for Community Journalism*	
29	Kathryn Geels	*Programme Manager Destination Local, Nesta*	
30	Douglas White	*Head of Advocacy, Carnegie UK Trust*	

From a research point-of-view it would have been easier to have chosen exclusively hyperlocal operators in the South-East of England, but my subjective knowledge of local media cautioned against this for two reasons. The dominant presence of the KM Media Group, where I trained as a journalist, influenced the local media ecology by creating a narrowing effect in terms of diversity. Also, in line with many other local media organisations, The *KM Group* appeared to have cut costs and centralised during the recession, but unlike some news organisations elsewhere, had retained its flagship titles. So, in Kent, there appeared to be less evidence of hyperlocals 'filling the gaps' left by retreating legacy media; as discussed by Williams *et al* (2015: 203-223). *Openly Local* (2012) listed very few hyperlocals in Kent, but *Dartford Living* was the most prominent, so after a successful approach to the operators was duly included. *The Looker* which covered the Romney Marsh area in Kent was not listed on *Openly Local,* but as it was the provision which had first attracted my attention to the hyperlocal phenomenon I was keen to include it.

 Thereafter, I extended the study area to England and Wales so that operators of a greater range of provisions could be approached and thus provide more diverse data. This enabled me to collect a more varied sample. Local newspapers in other areas appeared to have been more heavily affected by the 2008/9 recession (Fowler, 2011; Mair *et al,* 2013) with evidence of a lack of plurality caused by local newspapers closing (Barnett and Townend, 2014). The potential for democratic deficit (Moore, 2014; Williams, Harte and Turner, 2014; Howells, 2015) was particularly acute in Wales, with its high penetration of London-based news. In response to the large number of local newspaper closures *The Centre for Community Journalism* (*C4CJ*) was established in 2013 by *Cardiff University* to support local journalism. *C4CJ* has actively promoted hyperlocal provisions not only in Wales, but both the UK and worldwide with its first *Massive Open Online Course* (*MOOC*) in 2014 (Scarborough, 2014). After contacting *C4CJ,* I decided to extend the geographical boundary of my research beyond England to include the organisers of two Welsh provisions among a total sample size of 27 hyperlocal operators. Originally, I had planned to investigate fewer provisions, but after data collection began it became obvious that my strategy would not produce sufficient data. Following the first six interviews it was apparent that many hyperlocals only had one or at most two operators, so the sample size needed to be enlarged in order to generate sufficient data. Eventually I established the numerical limit as: 27 hyperlocal operators, with two rounds of interviewing, plus three additional interviews with

representatives of meso layer organisations which had supported the sector: Emma Meese, Kathryn Geels and Douglas White (see appendix 1).

The overall concept behind the sample was purposive, to interrogate specific theoretical interests (Merrill and West, 2009: 79), with the primary consideration that interviewees should be involved in the operation of an 'active' independent hyperlocal provision. As well as choosing interviewees from across England and Wales, the aim was to interview hyperlocal operators from different professional backgrounds rather than just choosing those with a media background. The eventual sample included 20 media professionals of whom 15 were professional journalists. Of the remaining seven who had not previously worked in media production, several brought with them transferable skills including website construction expertise, business or advertising expertise. In a number of cases, it was possible to establish a broad background of hyperlocal operators, either by visiting the websites of the provisions or connecting with individuals via the social media site *LinkedIn* (https://www.linkedin.com) where an online curriculum vitae (CV) was available.

A second sampling criterion was to select representatives of not only online-only provisions but also some which produced a printed product; once again with a view to generating qualitative data. I was keen to include those with printed products for two reasons (a) Radcliffe (2012b) advised hyperlocals not to rule out print as a medium because it was attractive to ultra-local advertisers, (b) I had extensive knowledge of the print medium (see positionality statement) and was intrigued to see whether it had been retrieved and repurposed in the same way that the punk subculture adopted the photocopier (Worley, 2015). My subjective knowledge told me that 21st century print was far more affordable than when I had published my own niche magazine *Dressage* in 1984, because technology changes had rendered several expensive processes obsolete. Typesetting, 'paste-up', colour separations and transportation of the artwork to the printers had disappeared from the production process and print was cheaply accessible to anyone with a computer, professional page make-up software like *Adobe InDesign* and an internet connection.

In all but one case, it was possible to establish in advance of contact whether a provision also produced a printed edition. In most cases, as well as a physical presence, the digitally produced pages were also made available online. The most common way of achieving this was via a link to the digital publishing platform ISSUU (https://issuu.com/). Only the *Caerphilly Observer* did not upload a digital version of the paper to the website.

A third sampling criterion to include only provisions which had existed for more than five years was subsequently discarded since this would have excluded some dynamic new ventures such as *The Bristol Cable* and Hyperlocal Today thus potentially limiting the richness of data.

  Although the overall strategy was purposive, there was a degree of snowball sampling which led to the selection of some interview subjects (Bryman, 2012: 427). Speaking to David Prior at *Altrincham Today* led to me interviewing Emma Gunby and Martin Johnston; who both ran franchise operations in the Hyperlocal Today media group*.* Likewise, contacting Richard Coulter and Emma Cooper, founders of Local Voice Network Ltd, led me to interview Richard Drew, Gary Brindle and Paul Breeden, franchise holders of titles in the group. Interviewing James Hatts of *LondonSE1* led to Sean Kelly joint-founder and commercial manager of *Chiswick W4,* the oldest title of the NeighbourNet group. This interview also precipitated snowball sampling but not in the way first envisaged. I had intended to interview the *ChiswickW4* editor, Anne Flaherty, but she did not respond to emails, telephone calls or *LinkedIn* requests, so eventually the sample took an opportunistic turn and I contacted the editors of three other NeighbourNet sites. Annemarie Flanagan (*Ealing Today and ActonW3*) and Sue Choularton (*WimbledonSW19*) were both willing participants. Rachel Howells (*Port Talbot* Magnet) suggested Michael Casey (*Your Thurrock* and *Your Harlow*) who both recommended that I interview Simon Perry of *On the Wight.* But as well as the snowballing aspect there was also a degree of opportunistic sampling with Simon. After weeks of trying to contact him by both by email and *LinkedIn*, I eventually met him at the *Hyperlocal representative body: consultation event* organised by *C4CJ* (Scarborough, 2016), a face-to-face request led to an interview a week later.

  In terms of this study there was never any intention to assume generalisability, clearly 27 interviewees from 408 active sites (Harte, 2014) is a relatively small sample. Indeed, Rolf Lindner cautions about a vulnerability of Park's work, which he states was also evident in his journalism, of a: 'tendency to make rash generalisations from specific observations' (1996: 43). The intention of this study was to provide an opportunity to understand the working practices of a selection of hyperlocals thus 'giving voice' to a small number of operators. I do not claim that the sample is necessarily even representative of the majority of hyperlocal operations, but it provides relative depth in the study of a small selection. Radcliffe (2012; 2015: 15) warns that due to the dynamic, 'grassroots' nature of the sector: 'there is no such thing as a typical hyperlocal site; and

no such things as a typical hyperlocal publisher.' But there is a strength and potential generalisability of the research because of its qualitative depth. The interactive nature of the encounters reveals both the interviewees' own biography as well as their views on independent publishing and mainstream local news organisations which may coincide with others.

2:5 Interpreting the data

Interviewing was the primary form of data collection with a total of 27 hyperlocal operators questioned mainly by telephone during two rounds of data collection. Contact was made with research participants prior to the data collection period by either email or *LinkedIn* when my biographical background as a former journalist was detailed. Having gained their agreement to be a research participant, the data collection was conducted over a two-year period between the summers of 2015 and 2017 and the interviews recorded and transcribed. Conference reports were used as additional sources of data, to provide topics for interviews and to contextualise the hyperlocal sector in relation to the overall local media ecosystem and show how it had evolved. The final event was the *Building the future of community journalism conference* in January 2018, when the representative body for the sector was launched; the *Independent Community News Network* (*ICNN*). Press reports, during 2018, were included during the writing up period of the thesis. In the empirical chapters when a participant's quotation is used, the notation I:1 or I:2 followed by the date it took place identifies whether it is from the first or second interview. For those participants where one interview was held, only the date is stated. This is to clarify at what stage during data collection the statement was made.
  The first interviews were conducted in 2015/16 and the transcriptions returned to the interviewees shortly before the second interview in summer 2017. The first interview focused on a list of themes (See appendix 3), rather than set questions, with a view to addressing the research questions and identifying themes as part of the Grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Birks and Mills, 2015). The interview began with me asking how the interviewee had become involved with the hyperlocal. This open-ended approach meant that on most occasions very few prompts were required, from myself, for the interviewee to 'tell the story' and arrive at the topic areas that I was pursuing. While they were speaking, I would simultaneously make notes in a journalist's notepad adding prompts to myself to pursue a particular line of

questioning in response to something they had said, or if they had not covered a particular theme. I also interjected if something needed clarification, or when the conversation floundered. During the interview process participants' would often refer to my background as a journalist and this would lead to a reflexive conversation about practices or experience with legacy media, particularly if we had a shared professional background (Plesner, 2011: 471).

Audio recordings were transcribed and the transcripts returned to the recipients shortly before the second interview; this enabled interviewees to refresh their memories by reading what they had said the previous year. They were then able to see how the hyperlocal had evolved and could to update me on the changes. Transcripts of the second interviews were returned to the participants in autumn 2017. There were four exceptions to this practise Martin Johnson, Jamie Summerfield, Dave Harte and Will Perrin. *Stockport Today* was already at the point of closing when the first interview was conducted since Martin had been offered a full-time job and had decided to take it, the interview nevertheless generated useful data and confirmed the messiness of qualitative research (Holliday, 2016: 99). Likewise, Jamie Summerfield of *A Little Bit of Stone* announced during the first interview that he too was leaving for a lifestyle change. Therefore, second interviews were not conducted with either of these participants because they had left the hyperlocals by the time the second interviews were conducted. The remaining two were reducing their hyperlocal activities and had already provided information to satisfy the research questions. During the first interview Dave Harte (2017) suggested that he would try and find a new operator for *Bournvillevillage.com*, having completed his doctoral study of hyperlocal his professional focus was changing. By email he advised that he had not updated the site for some months but had not found another operator. William Perrin founder of *Kingscrossenvironment.com* said during the first interview that the site was in a less active phase of its life and was just 'ticking over' with occasional contributions. A year later he did not respond to an email request for a second interview and in January 2018 closed the hyperlocal advocacy group *Talk About local* (TAL).

At the outset, an ethical decision had to be made and participants' consent gained, whether to anonymise the them and reveal sensitive information, or conversely to name them and not use anything sensitive. After much deliberation, I decided not to anonymise the participants because I considered that in such a small and varied sector, where so many people knew each other, it would be almost impossible to avoid

identifying them. Even if I did not name the interviewee, much of the information divulged in the interview could inadvertently lead to identification. The views of many interviewees were also openly published, therefore interviewees were given complete control over the transcripts and could redact anything. These were not personal interviews of vulnerable people of the type conducted by Merrill and West (2009) and several had been quoted publicly talking about their operations (Coulter, 2013; Jackman, 2013; Ponsford, 2013; Cook, 2018; Coulter *et* al, 2018). Although, several interviewees took me into their confidence and told me sensitive material 'off the record'; a journalistic term to indicate that they didn't want the quotation published. I respected their wishes, as I had in similar circumstances as a journalist, and redacted the passages concerned. I appreciated their confidence in telling me sensitive material, such as costings for their operation, because even though 'not for publication' it provided useful contextual material to help me position my research.

 The second round of interviews investigated themes which had arisen from the coding (explained in 2:6) of the first interview to discover how the research area had changed. The focus of these interviews began by asking each individual where they thought their hyperlocal was currently positioned in terms of the local media ecology. There were changes which had occurred in local media at both the meso and macro level between the first and second interviews, on which I sought their views. The first of these was the appointment of *IMPRESS*, the *Independent Monitor for the Press*, as the only government recognised regulator. This organisation had attracted the membership of a number of hyperlocals, despite being largely shunned by the mainstream media who were supporting a rival regulator *IPSO*, the *Independent Press Standards Organisation* which, critically, was not officially regulated.

  A second area of questioning surrounded the launch of the *BBC Local Democracy Reporter Scheme* to which several hyperlocals had applied. The third area of questioning was to seek views on a new representative body for the hyperlocal sector the *Independent Community News Network* (*ICNN*) which received its 'soft launch' in August 2017.

  Both the representative body and the *BBC* scheme took a year to reach fruition. I was present at a consultation meeting in July 2016 at *Cardiff University*, organised by the *Centre for Community Journalism* (*C4CJ*) which sought input from operators for both schemes (Scarbrough, 2016). I eventually attended the launch of the *ICNN* in January 2018. These initiatives highlighted changes in the local media ecology, vis-à-vis the

sector's relationship with mainstream media, which fed into the theme of marginality. During the data collection periods, I also attended hyperlocal conferences and conducted interviews with three representatives of meso level organisations, that had provided support to the sector: Kathryn Geels of *Nesta*, and Emma Meese of *C4CJ* and Douglas White of *Carnegie Trust UK.*

Initially the intention was to conduct face-to-face interviews wherever possible, but the geographical spread of the provisions made this unviable on the grounds of cost and time. The provisions were spread across hundreds of miles with *Port Talbot* in *Wales*, *Manchester* in the north-west, *Lincoln* in the north-east and *The Isle of Wight* on the south coast being at the most extreme points (see *Appendix 1*). Also, as it transpired, many of the respondents had full-time jobs in addition to their hyperlocal commitments so telephone interviews suited them better. Eventually only four interviews were face-to-face: both interviews with David Wimble, first interviews with David Shafford and James Hatts. The remainder were recorded telephone interviews. Vijay Jain, David's partner on *Dartford Living,* was geographically close enough to meet face-to-face but he expressed a preference for a telephone interview because it fitted better with his work commitments.

Telephone interviews have traditionally been a widely used research tool for quantitative surveys and Robert Groves provides a summary of telephone survey methodology identifying its strengths and weaknesses (1990). His focus on telephone surveying of domestic households, means that many of the scenarios he envisaged involving : 'coverage error, nonresponse [*sic*] error, sampling error and measurement error' either do not relate to my research strategy or refer to problems that were 'of their time' such as coverage error arising from households without access to a telephone (1990: 237); a situation that seems barely credible in the current 'mobile' era. However there are aspects that remain relevant such as establishing the "authority" of the requester, Groves suggests that such authority was 'typically communicated by advance letters' (1990: 225). In my case this was done via email or *LinkedIn* messaging. He suggests that being granted an interview in response, may depend on the exchange relationship between the two parties : 'The concept of "reciprocation" is similar to the basic tenets of social exchange theory whereby interaction would be preferred with actors who have previously provided some benefit to the subject' (1990: 225). My previously discussed 'insider' status (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 86-87) as a journalist, may have conferred some 'authority' as did the status of the university I was

representing; although it is a testament to the participants' altruism that they were prepared to donate their time to further my research.

One of Groves' primary discussions about the limitations of telephone interview strategies concerns 'reduced channel capacity', or the: 'smaller set of messages that can be communicated in the medium than in face-to-face communication' (1990: 226). Novick, (2008) and Irvine (2010) indicate that there is an implicit bias against telephone interviewing for qualitative research because of the absence of visual cues. Both they and Groves identify this as a weakness, because non-verbal cues are credited with aiding communication, conveying subtle layers of meaning and considered important for building rapport (Irvine, 2010:1). Although, Groves suggests the presence of: 'no increased errors in the quality of communication of verbal material in the audio-only condition' (1990: 227). Irvine also indicates:

> Projects which seek relatively simple or descriptive data may not require immersion in the participants' environment or a level of rapport that encourages personal revelations or extended reflective accounts (2010:6).

This was a situation which I considered reflected my research, I was not seeking information of a deeply revealing, personal nature so establishing non-verbal communication with participants was less critical. Although I would dispute Irvine's assertion that that establishing rapport in a telephone interview situation is difficult. On several occasions interviewees voluntarily offered sensitive information about advertising income; confident of the professional relationship we shared as journalists they also told me information 'off the record' which I subsequently redacted from transcripts.

There was also a degree of autobiographical inscription (LeMenager & Hebdige, 2013) in this method, since during my career as a journalist the majority of interviews were conducted via the telephone. It could be that the degree of openness from my participants', was possible because the majority of them were also either journalists, media professionals or business people (see *Chapter 4: Participants' professional background and their motivation for independent hyperlocal publishing*) and like myself were comfortable with conducting interviews via the telephone. For example, Emma Cooper was former head of telesales advertising at the *Bristol Evening Post* so telephone communication was natural to her. Vijay Jain's work involved a lot of conference calls and as stated he requested a telephone interview. Mobile phones are ubiquitous among the professional community and they are more comfortable with

telephone communication; this arguably makes it easier for contemporary researchers to establish rapport via the medium.

Novick suggests that: 'telephone interviewing must employ highly structured, closed ended questions' (2008; 4) although in a journalistic setting the opposite is true. My interviews were 'negotiations' (Plesner, 2011), in the journalistic convention, as opposed to structured interviews specifically because I was pursuing an open-ended questioning policy. This conversational style allowed interviewees to fully explore an issue; the encounters thus produced more diverse data than I could have predicted. In my experience the absence of visual clues in telephone interviews would make structured interviews more problematic, because interrupting an interviewee to ask a predetermined question proved difficult without the benefit of eye-contact. There were several occasions where I was forced to 'talk over someone' to change the direction of the interview, because it was entering a sensitive area or one which did not relate to my research questions.

The acknowledged benefits of telephone interviews are their flexibility, cost effectiveness and ability to conduct interviews across a large geographical area (Groves, 1990; Musselwhite *et al*, 2007; Novick, 2008; Irvine, 2010). Without the flexibility of the medium, I consider that, some of the interviews would not otherwise have taken place, because of the demands of journalism on the respondent's lifestyles. Groves identifies that: 'telecommunication is a substitute for travel' (1990: 224). For example, the second interview with Emma Gunby (October 10, 2017), who also ran a social media marketing business, took several weeks to arrange. On the afternoon we were scheduled to speak, she had to report on a major breaking story for her hyperlocal *West Kirby Today*. After frantic exchanges of emails and texts, we had to rearrange the interview at the last moment. Richard Coulter, who has several freelance roles, spoke to me on both occasions between meetings and Michael Casey spoke to me while out in the community covering reporting jobs; there was an hour's break in the first interview because he had to conduct an interview himself.

In terms of measurement error Groves proposes that the 'quantity of the response is reduced on open questions' in telephone interviewing when compared to face-to-face scenarios (1978: 259; 1990: 234); because of the faster pace to telephone interviews. He suggests that this is due to the: 'elimination of extraneous conversation which sometimes occurs in face-to-face interviews' (1978: 259).

I did not find that the open-ended style of my interviewing curtailed the opportunity for discussion and would agree with Novick (2008: 4) that telephone interviews do not have to be short. I allowed the length of interviews to be dictated by the participant and their availability. My first interviews ranged between 15 minutes for Emma Cooper and Daniel Ionescu to more than an hour for Rachel Howells and Richard Gurner.

Since I was conducting a qualitative open-ended interview, rather than following a pre-determined script, I was happy for the length of the conversation to be dictated by the respondent. I was acutely aware that they were donating their time and I considered that the value of the interview hinged on the quality of the data rather than the quantity.

The second interviews were all shorter because their purpose was to update the original situation, so topics such as professional background did not have to be re-examined. As stated, all interviews were set up by prior to contact, either by email or *LinkedIn,* at a time to suit the participant and I was happy to reschedule at short notice if the pre-arranged time and day did not suit them. Interviewees were sent a copy of the transcript and in a few cases quotes were anonymised, either because the interviewee had been speaking 'off the record' or they were divulging what I considered to be sensitive information.

Feminist approaches underpinned the interview encounter because, as predicted, there was a large degree of reciprocity (Oakley, 1981; Cotterill, 1992), with interviewees also asking me questions which I answered. David Wimble asked me if I knew that newspaper pages were printed in blocks of four; I assured him that as a former 'stone sub' who oversaw newspaper production at printing sites, I was familiar with printing processes.

Simon Perry was interested to know about my experience of the difficulty of securing national advertising, while working on equestrian magazines, and we discussed the subject quite extensively. Also, since many of the research participants' were of similar professional background to myself, communications between us at times lapsed into a form of 'newsroom shorthand' with regard the working practices of legacy media, particularly print; an example of Plesner's 'shared common vocabularies' (2011: 471). Paul Breeden, *South Bristol Voice*, appeared to have only one franchise but had followed a traditional legacy media of creating initially two and latterly three editions using the same masthead; a concept with which I was familiar since it was prevalent during the 1980s and 90s.

The day-to-day working practices of Annemarie Flanagan, Sue Choularton, Michael Casey, David Jackman, Emma Gunby and Paul Breeden were all very familiar to me as a former reporter. Paul Breeden was also heavily involved in the *National Union of Journalists* (*NUJ*), of which I was an active member between 1979 until starting my doctoral studies in 2014, so I pursued that angle in my questioning with him. During interview, Rachel Howells also mentioned sitting through a never-ending series of *NUJ* 'chapel' meetings: 'So we'd been sitting in these union meetings for what felt like decades, but probably more likely to be about two or three years.' This was a situation I could empathise with having taken redundancy from Guthrie Newspapers Ltd in 1994 and endured a similar 18-month lead time to actually leaving their employment. After transcriptions were made of each interview, the material was coded to provide themes, a process which will be explained in the following section.

2:6 Coding for themes

The initial interview topics listed in Appendix 3 were kept purposely broad to allow diverse data to emerge from the respective encounters. After the first round of interviews had been transcribed, an initial coding was carried out following Grounded theory techniques (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Birks and Mills, 2015) using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (*CAQDAS*) software *NVivo*. The coding process did not follow a rigid structure, to allow as many themes as possible to emerge from the data in keeping with the overall ethos of allowing the data to 'speak' rather than looking for specific traits. This generated a problem though, since digitally coding every line of every interview in several ways, produced such an abundance of codes I was faced with an over-generation of categories. Linden West experienced a similar problem (2009: 136), but whereas he was overwhelmed by tangible piles of paper my over-abundance of material was at least digitally produced and thus contained within the computer. Nevertheless, I had discovered one of the recognised flaws of using *CAQDAS*, primarily that narrative flow can be lost because of the fragmentation of the textual material caused by the exaggerated 'code-and-retrieve process' that the software makes possible (Bryman, 2012: 592). Such fragmentation generated by the *CAQDAS* software can also cause loss of context and produce a distancing effect from the data (ibid.). This was happening to my coding, as the number of 'nodes', increased exponentially. From the initial coding I generated 30 'nodes' and within those a further 45

secondary 'nodes' to reflect more nuanced meanings. The conversational nature of the interviews, and therefore diversity of themes explored in the encounters, no-doubt contributed to this abundance of codes.

  While acknowledging that the original 30 codes could have eventually been conflated to a much smaller number of categories, I nevertheless decided that it would be easier to take a step-back from the computer screen. I returned to the original source material and coded manually, as I felt that the nuances in the original audio had been lost. I listened to the audio recordings to reconnect with them, adopting what West terms: 'an overarching gestalt or unifying form, so as to make better sense of the fragments' (2016: 43). An intermediate coding (Birks and Mills, 2015; 95) produced a series of general categories listed in *Table 2:2*. The category 'random quotes' was an acknowledgment of messy reality (Holliday, 2016: 99) and provided a safety net to gather together quotations that did not fit neatly elsewhere.

Table 2:2 Categories which emerged from intermediate coding; subcultural themes are in italics.

1. **Professional background and motivation for involvement in hyperlocal:** to address the first research question (RQ 1 & 1.1) *marginality and resistance.*

2. **Marginality:** This included coding for alternative media practices including volunteer labour and identified the not-for-profit models, to apply *mechanical solidarity*. The theme also linked to local mainstream media comment where participants made references about redundancy or exclusion in relation to the activities of legacy providers (RQs 1, 1.1, & 4).

3. **Business instinct:** Following on from the previous theme, this identified commercial models which could be compared with mainstream media models which had achieved scalability. Where there were multiple titles or several people working together, once again with a view to understanding *retrieving and repurposing, negotiated exchange, also organic solidarity*.

4. **Advertising:** The degree to which the hyperlocal embraced advertising, how comfortable the interviewee was selling advertising or whether they relied on a dedicated sales person. This was part of the investigation into working practices (RQ 2) and how participants' were *retrieving and repurposing* aspects of the mainstream.

5. **Help from meso level organisations:** whether the hyperlocal was a beneficiary of either voluntary or paid-for help and evidence of hyperlocal operators assisting each other (RQ 2.1). *This fed into various themes of marginality, negotiated exchange, mechanical and organic solidarity.*

6. **Evidence of embedding**: which included whether operators lived on the hyperlocal 'patch' they were covering and their views of how the provision was received in the community. *Sustained presence in place and mechanical solidarity* (RQ 2.2).

7. **Changes to provision between interviews:** Added for the second round of interviews *travel'*(RQ 3).

8. **Future direction for the hyperlocal:** To include plans either short or long-term to get indications of the *'travel'* within the sector (RQ 3).

9. **Comments on local mainstream media:** this concerned the participants' experience with the mainstream from the position of hyperlocal operators. *Themes of marginality, resistance and local media ecology* (RQ 4).

10. **Local media ecology, past and present:** This was where those interviewees who had previously worked in mainstream media, themes of *crisis, resistance, relationship with the parent culture.* (RQs 1 & 4).

11. **Print references:** This identified the reasons for and against adopting a printed product and identified with the themes of *retrieving and repurposing*.

12. **Random quotes**: Comments that did not fit neatly into other sections but referenced related concepts or were particularly enlightening. All themes.

The intermediate coding fed into the second round of interviews, ostensibly to find out what had changed in the intervening year (see appendix 3). Additional data from the second interviews was applied to the intermediate coding categories. It was after the data collection was complete and at the theoretical coding stage (Birks and Mills, 2015: 119) that the empirical chapters began to take shape. Applying the subcultural lens provided the unifying form, with subcultural themes applied to the intermediate categories. These themes were: marginality (Park, 1928), relationship with the parent culture (Cohen, 1972), resistance (Hall and Jefferson, 2006), retrieving and repurposing of aspects of the parent culture (Hebdige, 1979), how subcultures 'travel' (Hebdige, 2014: 9), sustained presence in place (Hess and Waller, 2016: 197), mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984).

Autobiographical inscription is present in my journalistic writing style which favoured readability. I also used the accepted format for numbers which is to 'write out in full' between one and nine, then use figures from 10 upwards. My approach was to embrace a neutral writing style in order for the data to 'speak'; theory and analysis are then woven through the narrative. Rather than sticking to the rigid categorisation of the coding

stages, when designing the thesis presentation, I allowed the coded material to emerge in the empirical chapters where it would work to best effect. The data clearly needed to be historicised to identify the crisis from which the hyperlocal subset had emerged, this was the role of the first empirical chapter (Chapter 3: *Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture*). This presents primary data from interviewees and my own positionality statement, combined with published secondary data to set the local media scene. The theoretical codings of: crisis, relationship with the parent culture, marginality and resistance all feature in this chapter.

Chapter 4 provides primary data in response to RQ1 and RQ1;1, where interviewees recount their professional backgrounds and motivations for becoming involved with hyperlocal operations. The theoretical codings of marginality and resistance are woven though the data in this chapter along with my analysis. This chapter also provides answers for RQ 2.1 and RQ 2.2, outlining the type of provision with which participants' were involved and whether they worked alone and lived in the area for which they generate news. It introduces coding emerging from Durkheim's *Division of labour in society* (Durkheim, 1893/1984) to identify how participants' relate in terms of mechanical and organic solidarity. It also taps into coding for reciprocal journalism to reveal the presence of negotiated exchange relationships (Lewis *et* al, 2014: 232 Harte *et al,* 2017: 167).

Chapter 5 (*"I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism*) also provides answers for RQ2, by presenting data about the day-to-day working practices of participants. Theoretical coding of retrieving and repurposing along with reciprocal journalism are particularly in evidence here. While Chapter 6 (*No longer "Nano-scale"? Evidence of hyperlocal operations emerging from the margins*) engages with the theoretical codings of marginality and travel responding to RQ3. These indicate how the independent hyperlocal sector moved during the research period, yet by the end remained on the margins. It also provided answers for RQ 4, exploring participants' relationship with the mainstream.

2:7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the research design and methods to address my research questions and provide data for a select number of independent hyperlocal operations.

The research design is qualitative and the intention of the study has been to uncover subcultural themes discussed in Chapter 1 (*Literature review: applying a subcultural lens to hyperlocal*) and the research questions were framed with this in mind.

The research methods were open ended interviews to gather the views of 27 independent UK hyperlocal operators. The data was primarily collected via telephone interviews, with some face-to-face, conducted over two rounds between 2015 and 2017. There were additional interviews with three members of meso organisations, which had assisted the sector to provide context. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, with the transcripts returned to participants' who had control over what was used. Participants' names were used, since several of them had been published openly talking about their operations; occasional quotes were anonymised due to sensitive content.

The methodology embraced biographical research methods (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; 2007; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Merrill and West, 2009; West, 2016; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) and is influenced by the early work of the *Chicago School* (Park, 1928; Blackman, 2014: 298) and *CCCS* (Hall *et al*, 1980). In particular, there is a strong element of autobiographical inscription (LeMenager & Hebdige, 2013) acknowledged due to the researcher's journalistic background. This inscription is present in the interviewing, writing and presentations styles of the study.

A Grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) informed each stage of the research: the research questions, the data collection and analysis stages. The data was coded in three stages producing initial, intermediate and theoretical codings. The intermediate coding informed the second round of interview questions and the analysed data provided the material for the empirical chapters. Since the main research tool was interviewing, and the research paradigm broadly qualitative, the data collected was therefore the product of a constructivist setting shared by interviewer and participants, where interaction has taken place to produce the research data.

Chapter 3: Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture

3:1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the reasons for the emergence of independent hyperlocal as a news subculture, in the wake of the much-documented crisis in mainstream local newspapers (Williams and Franklin, 2007; Engel, 2009; Fowler, 2011; Siles and Boczkowski, 2012; Nielsen, 2012). As previously discussed in Chapter 1 (*Literature review: applying a subcultural lens to hyperlocal*), subcultures emerge from a 'parent culture' in crisis and retrieve 'socially cohesive elements' that have since been destroyed (Cohen, 1972: 23; Williams 2011; Hess and Waller, 2016), so it is important firstly to understand what has been lost in the parent culture and why. Since this thesis will propose that local newspapers represented the 'parent culture' in question, it is important to map the landscape of their culture both before and during the emergence of independent hyperlocal operations.

  The first section of this chapter will therefore start in the pre-internet era between 1979-1994 and discuss the organisation of local newspapers during that period. This section will be part positionality statement (Savin-Baden and Howell Major; 2013: 68-83) to cover my own experience as a staff journalist during that era as a 'patch reporter' (Howells, 2015: 179), court reporter, sub editor and editor working in local newspapers and niche magazines. This is in keeping with the biographical tradition of research championed by Robert Park at *The Chicago School* at the start of the 20th century. As well as providing a first-hand account to accompany secondary research, as a positionality statement it will establish the researcher's ontological and epistemological position, and how experience has shaped my approach to the study. The second section will consider the changes to mainstream local newspapers during the internet era, from 1995 to the end of the field research period; the corporatisation of local news organisations, the effect of the internet on business models and the damage wrought by the financial crisis on their operations. The third section will map the emergence of

hyperlocal independent news operations in response to the crisis in local newspapers and provide context for the data chapters.

3:2 Positionality statement as primary research

This section will look at local newspapers in the pre-internet era of 1979 to1994 to establish a benchmark for later discussion about how local news gathering was traditionally organised and how it has changed. Central to this discussion will be my positionality statement, which represents primary research outlining my experience of local news reporting and production in the final years of the pre-internet era. It will help identify aspects of the 'parent culture' which existed during this era that have subsequently been revived and repurposed by independent hyperlocal operators. It will also contextualise later discussions, in section two, by showing where the 'mainstream' was situated at the start of a 40-year period and underpin examples of how it has changed.

  The period in question has been selected because it is the era during which I worked mainly as a staff journalist during what has been identified as the 'newsroom centric' industrialised era of local news production (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009; Picard, 2014; Deuze and Witschge, 2018). For a period in the mid-80s I edited my own independent niche magazine, *DRESSAGE*, so my experience could be described as entrepreneurial journalism (Rottwilm, 2014; Harte *et* al, 2016: Wagemans *et al*, 2016; Singer, 2017), yet also encompasses aspects of 'zine-culture' or 'alternative media' (Worley, 2015). The period in question begins in September 1979 when I started as a junior reporter at the Kent Messenger Group (Now KM Media Group) and finishes in October 1994 in Ayrshire, Scotland, when as a senior reporter/sub-editor I took redundancy following a buy-out of Guthrie Newspapers Ltd by the Romanes Media Group; this group was in turn purchased by Newsquest Plc in May 2015 (Ramsay and Moore, 2016: 47). In a move that was characteristic of the era, my new employers were looking to cut costs by replacing senior journalists with juniors as part of an 'economies of scale' restructure. As Peter Cole remarks: 'Cost-cutting is not restricted to economic downturns; it is a constant fact of life …many weekly papers are produced by newsrooms consisting mostly of trainees' (2006: 82). At this point I would like to state that my redundancy in 1994 was welcomed and I thus have 'no axe to grind'. I moved back to Kent from

Scotland, started a family and observed the changes that took place in local news production from 1995 onwards from a safe and detached distance.

The period of my positionality statement offers insight for my research because in many respects the 1980s and early 90s were the end of an era. Media economist Robert Picard states that 'For more than a century news has been produced within an industrial mode of production' (2014: 491). This industrial mode of local news production, epitomised by print media, was the default throughout my career in local newspapers and is reflected in my subjective narrative. Hand-in-hand with this industrial process was a high level of what Seth C. Lewis calls 'professional control' (2012: 837). As he reflects:

> For much of the twentieth century, both the business model and the professional routines of journalism in developed nations were highly stable and successful enterprises because they took advantage of scarcity, exclusivity, and control. (ibid: 838)

At that time the route into journalism was controlled and 'the newsroom' was the dominant form of employment and organisation (Deuze and Witschge, 2018: 169). In 1979 trainee reporters were employed from the local community, often straight from school, and became 'indentured' as apprentices (Mair, 2013: 21- 26). As part of the professionalisation of the role trainees were sent on *National Council for the Training of Journalists* (NCTJ) college courses to learn news writing, law, public administration and shorthand. During the industrialised era trainees learned the trade of reporting from senior staff, initially 'shadowing' them to Magistrates court, council, inquests and on press calls; then after the NCTJ training graduating to reporting alone. For most of my time at the family owned independent Kent Messenger Group (now KM Media Group)*,* I worked at the Ashford office which produced two paid-for papers, the mid-week paper *Tuesday Express* and the flagship weekly title the *Kentish Express* (KE)*,* which was heavily editionalised with targeted local content; a process that Küng calls 'zoning' (2008: 37). There was a large editorial staff: editor, deputy editor, news editor, chief reporter, 10 reporters, four sub-editors, two sports reporters and four photographers, the paper was printed 25 miles away at *KM* headquarters at Larkfield, near Maidstone. As well as general reporting duties, I also had my own 'patch', Tenterden about 12 miles from the KE office. Initially I lived outside the circulation area but then moved to between Ashford and Tenterden. There was also a large non-editorial staff which included advertising staff. By the time I left in 1983 the number of employees had shrunk by about a third and we had moved to a smaller office.

Former local newspaper editor David Jackman writes of making 'press calls' several times a week either in person or over the phone to police and fire stations (2013: 249), which was customary in local journalism in the 1980s. Peter Cole sums up the vital lessons that were instilled during this workplace training: 'the importance of accuracy, of knowing and interesting the audience, of maintaining contacts who would tell them things. And they would learn the crucial importance of trust' (2006; 75). The emphasis on face-to-face reporting in the community during this era cannot be over-stated, offline reciprocal journalism (Lewis *et al,* 2014) was a daily occurrence. As part of the pre-internet strategy of ultra local coverage, journalists worked in district offices, situated on local high streets where members of the public could walk-in off the street and submit news stories by speaking to a reporter (Jackman, 2013: 247-252; Howells, 2015: 179-185). They could also pay for an advert, buy photographs, bring in a letter to the editor or even complain face-to-face about a published news item. Reciprocal exchanges between journalists and the community that reinforce mutually beneficial relationships, is a concept that forms part of the theoretical frame work (Lewis *et al,* 2014; Lewis, 2015; Harte *et al,* 2016) and I maintain that during my career there was evidence of these relationships existing at the ultra-local level. Although as Peter Cole recounted such a close relationship with the audience could also backfire, it meant that if a story caused offence there was nowhere to hide:

> Unlike their here-today-far-away-tomorrow counterparts on the national press, they [reporters] would know that if they upset a member of the local community by getting it wrong, or sometimes by getting it right, he or she would be on the phone to the editor or at the front desk the next day complaining and saying 'I'll never talk to the reporter again'. It was a tough grounding, and while it could hardly be described as glamorous it instilled the basic skills and realities of reporting life. (2006:75)

In her PhD thesis, *Journey to the centre of a news black hole: examining the democratic deficit in a town with no newspaper* (2015), Rachel Howells found that the closure of district offices was a turning point for local journalism and signalled the withdrawal of journalists from the community (2015: 281- 286). Offline reciprocity appears to be alive and well in internet era independent hyperlocal operations according to Harte *et al* who discovered that like pre-internet reporters: 'hyperlocal publishers engage with people offline through embedding themselves in everyday places in their communities' (2016: 172).

3:2:1 Unionisation as professionalism

A key element of professionalism and control apparent during my career was the unionisation of labour (Lewis, 2012). When I started as a junior reporter the *National Union of Journalists* (*NUJ*) national strike of 1978/79 had just finished (Engle, 2013: 31), and there was still an air of tension at Larkfield where the KM papers were printed; the strike was referred to in hushed tones by senior journalists. Writing in the 2009 *British Journalism Review, Financial Times* columnist Matthew Engel remembers:

> The printers and executives went in: the papers came out; and there was no discernible effect on circulation, which continued to drift gently but not alarmingly downwards. But from then on management attitudes did seem to harden. (2009: 57).

Modernisation of print-production processes had taken place in local newspapers throughout the 1970s, unlike the nationals where hot-metal was still the norm (Guy, 2012). Widespread industrial unrest was a feature of the late 70s and the early 1980s, culminating in Rupert Murdoch's defeat of the *Fleet Street* printers in the Wapping dispute of 1986 (Littleton, 1992). Afterwards printers on the 'nationals' had to modernise and accept new production methods that had been commonplace in local newspapers for up to a decade. This discontinuous innovation (Küng, 2008: 134-140) was initially beneficial to the newspaper owners, because they could maximise profit by switching many of the printers' roles to journalists. But in effect this was the start of digitalisation and the competence-destroying effect that would evolve into desktop publishing (DTP) and open up cheap access to print for non-professionals in the internet era.

3:2:2 Finding my niche: independent publishing 1980s style

By the time of the Wapping dispute in 1986, I had left KM and was working on equestrian magazines. While at *KM* there was strict demarcation of labour because of unionisation: journalists wrote or subbed pages, photographers took pictures, advertising reps sold advertising, the circulation department ran promotions and printers oversaw the printing process of the newspapers. As an independent editor-publisher of *DRESSAGE,* I found myself multi-tasking, taking on all-of those roles like today's hyperlocal publishers (Williams *et,* 2014); ironically Deuze and Witschge describe this style of entrepreneurial journalism as a 'relatively recent phenomenon' (2017: 123).

DRESSAGE was a monthly, 28-page, equestrian magazine covering a niche topic. In production terms comparisons can be drawn between the expensive, labour intensive printing processes of the era, versus the relatively cheap printed products accessible to current internet-era independent publishers as a result of technical innovation (Küng, 2008: 134-140). In printing terms, the 1980's was the bridge period, between labour-intensive hot metal processes and the digital desk-top-publishing (DTP) internet eras. The introduction of reprographic technologies made DRESSAGE possible, if not viable, as with many other alternative media publications. As Atton states it: 'Made them, if not financially independent, at least technically independent' (2002: 38). Digitisation has removed that last barrier. As well as conflating the creation process of pages to camera-ready-artwork stage, digitisation has also removed the distribution expenses of transporting those pages to the printers. Both David Jackman (2013: 248) and I remember the couriers required to shuttle copy, pages, photographs and adverts to the printers. For *DRESSAGE* the pages were typeset in Ashford, Kent, and the printing took place in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, with the artwork transported by overnight courier. Transportation of physical copy was a significant expense before the internet; but still cheaper than a local printer.

 In true subcultural style I borrowed ideas from the mainstream, specifically the free-distribution print model which as Küng notes is a disruptive innovation, disruptive to established market structures (2008: 136-137); which she predicted that could eventually move 'into the paid-for newspaper's domain' (ibid: 137). It should be noted, that free-distribution print has also been adopted by an increasing number of hyperlocals (Williams *et al*, 2014: 29). *DRESSAGE* therefore relied on advertising to generate income, based on the attractiveness of its high demographic readership known as an ABC1 audience.

 In the pre-data protection 1980s, I had been *given* the mailing list of the *British Horse Society* (BHS) dressage and eventing groups, so my circulation list was carefully targeted. The problem that I had not envisaged was the difference between selling local advertising and national advertising. On a local newspaper 'ad reps' would leave the office and sell directly to advertisers. In a national advertising scenario, display ads were booked by large agencies, who made their decision on an annual basis and wanted to see a new publication perform for a year before booking advertising; this meant a long wait for any display advertising. The first two advertising managers I employed were, like myself, used to local ad-sales and struggled to sell anything; although a small amount of

classified advertising came in unsolicited. Eventually I appointed a London agency with national advertising experience, but by then the money had run out and the magazine ceased trading. I refer to this experience because most of my research participants were relying on local advertising to fund their hyperlocals and academics Andy Williams, Steven Barnett, Dave Harte and Judith Townend discovered that many hyperlocal operators found the 'large guaranteed audience of a free print run easier to sell to local advertisers than internet advertising' (Williams *et al*, 2014: 29). At the interview stage I had lengthy discussions about the differences between local and national advertising with both Simon Perry and Sean Kelly, this topic is explored in Chapter 5 (*"I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism*).

Following *DRESSAGE*, I became *Features Editor* on a new-launch equestrian magazine *The Horse Weekly* (HW), based in Leamington Spa. It was launched by a major publishing house, in opposition to the market leader *Horse and Hound*, amid much expensive fanfare in 1985. I was in a solely editorial role but observed an experienced advertising department, make the same mistake as myself (at *DRESSAGE*) in failing to appreciate the difficulty of attracting national advertising. The magazine folded at the end of a very costly six months.

I returned to Kent as a court reporter for an agency based at *Maidstone Crown Court*, providing copy for national, regional and local news organisations; both newspaper and broadcast. The work that I did, has parallels with the *BBC Local Democracy Reporter Scheme,* launched in 2017, (*BBC*, 2018) to provide court and council coverage where market failure has led to these public institutions not being reported. The *BBC* scheme will be discussed in in relation to hyperlocals in Chapter 6 (*No longer "Nano-scale"? Evidence of hyperlocal operations emerging from the margins*).

3:2:3 'Patch' reporting: deeply embedded in the community

After a sabbatical in Australia my partner and I moved to Ayrshire in Scotland, in 1988, so that he could take up the role of *Troon Lifeboat Second Coxswain.* In terms of ultra-local reporting this is the period in my career which has most informed my interpretation of internet era independent hyperlocal publishing. I became a senior reporter/sub editor for the *Ayr Advertiser Series* with responsibility for the *Troon Times* (TT). We lived in Troon and were very much embedded in the community, with Bill on the lifeboat crew

and myself a member of the *Troon Ladies Lifeboat Guild* committee. The six years I spent on the TT*,* between September 1988 and October 1994, I attribute to igniting my passion for community reporting which motivated my research. This close connection with the community resulted in the subcultural perspective and the choice of reciprocal journalism as part of the theoretical framework, that I have chosen for this research (Lewis *et* al, 2014; Lewis 2015; Harte *et al*, 2016a).

 The *Advertiser Series* was part of a family owned independent group Guthrie Newspapers Ltd*,* with the printing hub at Ardrossan 25 miles away. The office was in the centre of Ayr and the staff comprised an editor, deputy editor, chief reporter, four reporters, sports reporter and photographer. On the advertising side there was an advertising manager, assistant ad manager, three ad reps and a receptionist. In 1988 reporters were still using typewriters with carbon paper; computerisation took place at the beginning of the 90s. With them came a 'new-tech' agreement negotiated by the NUJ which meant that myself and other sub-editors took sole responsibility for copy which was 'keyed-in' once; the company therefore saved money on both typesetters and proof readers (Küng, 2008: 134-140). Computerisation had arrived and, although it was a pre-internet era, the company benefitted from the 'incremental innovation' (Ibid: 134) of being able to transmit copy through the telephone lines; a 'communications gateway' computer, connected a dedicated phoneline transmitted stories once an hour to the printers. It was a costly solution but meant that copy could be transmitted direct to the printers which reduced the courier runs: although photographs and page plans still had to be physically transported to the printers.

 As previously stated, it is the community reporting aspect of this era which I remember with affection. I lived in the circulation area and due to my involvement with the lifeboat had a 'grounded connection' with as well as 'prolonged and continual presence in that place' (Hess and Waller, 2016: 197). My personal involvement with the lifeboat also probably conferred a degree of 'social capital' and the 'symbolic value' of trust that accompanies an institution which is at the heart of a community (Molm *et al*, 2007: 200). I personally covered town council and parish council meetings, usually in the evening and would visit the town Police station once a week, sitting down over tea and biscuits (and sometimes cake) with the sergeant to go through the crime reports. I also phoned him twice on 'deadline day' to check whether there was any late news; these are both examples of offline direct reciprocal exchange. He was a keen fund raiser for a local children's hospice and as part of our ongoing, sustained, reciprocal exchange, I would

arrange coverage of cheque presentations and other events at the voluntary funded hospice. These examples introduce an aspect of indirect reciprocity, since there was arguably a benefit to the community; the hospice was voluntarily funded so this received a boost and the town's people were alerted to petty crime in the town and thus could be vigilant - stealing car stereos was the petty crime 'of the day' and there were various hotspots in the town where vehicles were particularly vulnerable. Similarly, I would speak with the two district councillors each week and they would alert me if anything *Troon*-related was to be discussed at district council meetings or give me quotes for stories I was writing – not always favourable to the council. Reciprocal exchange with public officials is less straightforward than with members of the public because there is an element of bilateral or negotiated exchange. As Harte *et al* indicate there is a: 'sense that information gathered would be used' (2016: 8/167) and although no actual contract existed we were clearly 'using each other'; they needed the publicity in order to be seen to be doing their jobs, as elected public representatives, and I needed to produce copy which was relevant to my audience. It also represents a grey area between offline direct and indirect reciprocity, since there was arguably a degree of community benefit from the information they provided. There was also 'symbolic value' in the exchanges because they would tell me things 'off the record' (on the understanding that I would not publish) indicating that there was a degree of trust in the relationship, which went beyond the negotiated exchange.

Far more straightforward were the 'tip-offs' from members of the public, 'contacts', who would tell me either face-to-face or telephone me about newsworthy stories. These are examples of, unilateral/informal direct exchange because my 'contacts' were not 'getting anything back' from the act, in what is an acknowledged opportunity to demonstrate trust and social bonding in reciprocal exchange (Lewis *et al*. 2014: 233; Harte *et al*, 2016: 167). Harte *et al* found 'extensive evidence of direct unilateral exchange in newsgathering practices of hyperlocals' (ibid). I would contend that I achieved a sustained reciprocity situation with the community, in Troon, because my reciprocal exchanges with both public officials and members of the public were maintained over the five-year period that I was covering the town. I was embedded in the sense of being part of the 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Although it would be difficult to compartmentalise many of the offline exchanges into the Lewis *et al's* categories (2014) because real life is 'messy', it is

84

sometimes difficult to know where direct reciprocity ends and indirect reciprocity starts. I would suggest that it is easier to categorise online reciprocity since exchanges are dictated by the platform, *likes, hashtags* etc., while there are many more layers to the offline relationship, particularly when the journalist is embedded.

  In his doctoral thesis, one of Dave Harte's findings was that 'the embedded hyperlocal practitioner's lack of objectivity can result in greater civic value' (2017: 196), he suggests that 'even the professional journalist feels the weight of the civic discourse and can end up in a less critical place' (ibid). In response to this, I would state that as a journalist who was embedded, there was more of an emphasis on providing balanced coverage of the town, including what has been termed 'positive' (Dickens' 2015) and even 'banal' (Turner, 2015) stories rather than focussing on those which would have formed the traditional criteria of news values (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017). I didn't shy away from difficult or unpleasant stories on 'my patch', but they were balanced by 'ultra-local' coverage that could be of no value to anyone outside the town. As a journalist I would never say that I was less than objective (although as indicated I would keep confidences on ethical grounds) it being one of what Deuze and Witschge call the: 'five ideal-typical values [that] give legitimacy and credibility to what journalists do: public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics' (2017: 121). But from a methodological stance, this is a subjective view so is therefore unreliable. The fragility of the reciprocal journalism relationship was evident after I ceased to be the *Troon Times* reporter, for the last year of my employment, when I was more desk-bound as a sub-editor. A young ambitious reporter, who did not live in the town, and was motivated by what he could sell to the nationals took over as 'patch reporter'. The sustained reciprocal exchange that I had built up was not automatically transferred. Far from it, I discovered that contacts would still telephone me rather than trust him, while the police sergeant and both parish and district councillors were openly critical of his sensationalised coverage of the town.

  Others who worked directly on the TT alongside me were a freelance photographer who lived in the town, he supplied pictures for the paper and was another good source of 'tip-offs'. The TT ad rep was equally embedded, she was a committee member for the *Ladies Rotary Club,* a notable local singer who performed at *Burns Suppers* and the wife of a bank manager in the town. The TT also benefitted from weekly village correspondent's copy. Village correspondents were very much at the bottom of the 'content' food chain and I have seen little reference to them in academic literature. They were contributors to local newspapers and produced the most parochial of local 'news'

content on a lineage basis, being paid per published word. The content is both granular and often banal, a feature often cited as a feature of internet-era hyperlocal coverage (Baines, 2010; Turner, 2015; Harte *et al*, 2019: 3). Both the *KM Group* and the *Advertiser Series* employed village correspondents, but it would require further research, which is outside the remit of this thesis, to establish the extent of their historic use in the local news sector

I have included the underlying activity of trade unions, because as previously suggested, there was an on-going dialogue throughout my career between unions and employers about the speed of introduction of new technology. It is also relevant because Rachel Howells and Paul Breeden talked about the trade union involvement in interview. Throughout my career I was aware that the print publishers I worked for benefited from what Küng (2008: 124 to 143) calls incremental innovations. As explained in Chapter 1, these create advantages for legacy operators (incumbents); Fax machines, which I first encountered at *Horse Weekly*, replaced couriers who shuttled copy between district offices and the printers. Later the 'comms gateway' at the Ayr office achieved the same function more efficiently, transmitting numerous stories in a single key stroke. Photo-composition and web-offset presses allowed newspaper owners to reduce the number of printers, early DTP software meant journalists could direct key copy replacing more jobs. The eventual transition to full direct-input, so that journalists controlled the manipulation of copy from first-key until camera-ready stage occurred immediately after I took redundancy in 1994.

Until the new millennium legacy operators largely benefitted from technological change allowing them to cut costs, consolidate their position and mask the decline in a mature industry. Küng said: 'Mature markets have been in decline for decades and strategies such as changes to format, redesigns and promotional offers have served to slow rather than reverse this' (2008: 35). This might help explain why local newspaper organisations were unprepared for the discontinuous and disruptive change created by the arrival of the internet, which will be discussed in the next section.

3:3 Crisis in the mainstream: the internet era from 1995 onwards

Here I will briefly examine the period between 1995 onwards which has been a very turbulent era for mainstream local news production, as a result of the well documented

crisis in legacy newspapers (Franklin, 2006; Lewis *et* al, 2008; Fowler, 2011; Nielsen, 2012; Ramsay & Moore, 2016; Ramsay *et al*, 2017; Williams, 2017). By the start of the research period, in 2015, the local news landscape had changed dramatically and this transformation is important in the light of Cohen's findings that that subcultures emerge as a result of a crisis in the parent culture (1972: 22; 1980: 82). This section will consider the conditions that led to the emergence of a hyperlocal media subculture in the UK in response to that crisis.

  A turbulent era began with what John Mair terms the 'merger mania' of the 1990s (2013: 26), in *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, this was followed by the disruption of the internet to the advertising-based business model and then compounded by the 2008 recession which put advertising revenues under further strain (Fowler, 2011). But as with any crisis it is no single problem which ultimately causes catastrophe, instead it is the precise timing of a combination of factors. The effects of increasing consolidation, the internet and the recession added to other more deep-rooted problems, both longstanding and more recent, to challenge the business model of local legacy newspapers. Newspapers are a mature industry (Küng, 2008: 35) and circulations have been in decline for many decades, as societal changes and newer technologies like TV and radio have chipped away at their previous dominant position as a news source (Howells, 2015: 23-29). Circulations continued to decline during an era when local legacy newspapers were increasingly owned by large corporations (Williams and Franklin, 2007; Howells, 2015; Ramsay *et al,* 2017) whose 'economies of scale' business strategies put profit above editorial quality and distanced them from the communities which they used to serve. Although Ramsay and Moore cautioned that: 'anxiety about the concentration of ownership in the local press is also longstanding with consolidation having persisted in fits and starts since the middle of the 20th century' (2016: 4). Nevertheless Bob Franklin observed that early in the new millennium: 'Local newspapers are increasingly a business success but a journalistic failure' (2006: 4).

  Before continuing the discussion about what has caused the decline of print in local news media, it is important to stress that the platform itself is not redundant technology. Print is a mature technology (Küng, 2008: 35) but it has evolved in response to technological changes over the past 40 years, reducing the entry requirements in terms of both the costs and level of professionalisation. By the new millennium print had effectively become a digital product with a 'retro look'. The photocomposition and direct

87

keying software, that allowed the legacy organisations to cut printers and thus costs, had evolved into affordable desktop publishing (DTP) software. This rendered them a discontinuous innovation which as Küng states are dangerous to established companies or 'incumbents' because: 'They lowered the cost of entry to the publishing business, allowing new institutions and individuals to enter the publishing field' (2008: 136). Cheaply available DTP software, that did not require professional training to operate, could produce pages to the 'camera ready' stage and the only industrial process that remained was the physical process of putting ink on paper.

  At the start of the new millennium, print was far from a redundant medium because of its ability to attract local advertising (Williams *et al*, 2014: 29). As *Press Gazette* editor Dominic Ponsford said free-distribution print is still: 'a pretty effective medium' for carrying ultra-local advertising (2014) and many hyperlocals were utilising it for revenue (Radcliffe, 2012a; Ponsford, 2013; Williams *et al,* 2014; Radcliffe, 2015; Ponsford, 2016). The problem was that the business models of increasingly corporate owned legacy local papers could no longer extract from the platform, the 30% profit margins of the early internet era to which they and their shareholders had become accustomed (Engel, 2009: 59; Fowler 2011; Tait, 2013: 5-17). It was their business models that no longer worked for print, not the medium itself which had been undermined; a sentiment that was echoed by Richard Sambrook when closing the *C4CJ Building the future of community journalism* conference (Abbott, 2017e). The most popular panel discussion at the conference was *Why print is (far from) dead* and two of the panellists were research participants Richard Coulter (*Local Voice Network*) and Richard Gurner (*Caerphilly Observer*) (Coulter *et al*, 2018). New forms of communication technology do not extinguish old ones, rather the relative importance of the older platform changes forcing them to: 'evolve and adapt' (Küng, 2008: 83) and: 'new technologies are layered on top of the old' (Brock, 2013: 89). The evolution of the print platform and its adoption by independent hyperlocal operators is evidence of 'retrieving and repurposing' (Hebdige, 1979) of these technologies by a media subculture; in much the same way as punk zines used the photocopier (Worley, 2015) and alternative media utilised reprographic technologies. As Chris Atton put it: 'What offset litho was to the publishers of *Oz* and *IT,* the photocopier was to the punk movement of the late 1970s' (2002: 38).

  A combination of factors combined to undermine the print medium in local news production, and lead to the crisis from which a hyperlocal subculture emerged. The following section will examine those factors.

3:3:1 What went wrong? Local newspapers' tale of woe

The internet era has been a turbulent one for local legacy newspapers, with a number of circumstances both recent and long-term contributing to their woes. Drawing on secondary research, I will now provide a review of the sector, focusing specifically on three changes: the appetite for mergers and consolidation since the 1990s; the disruptive influence of the internet on the advertising platform and the effect of the 2008 recession on revenues.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to carry out detailed analysis of statistics, but it is important to understand the position of the local newspaper landscape in terms of the degree of consolidation. In 2015 The *Media Reform Coalition* reported that six publishers (Johnston Press Plc, Gannett UK (Newsquest Plc), Tindle Newspapers Ltd, Local World Ltd, Trinity Mirror Plc and Archant Ltd) owned 80% of local newspaper titles. This represented 'more than four times the number of titles published by the remaining 56 publishers' (2015: 8). By 2016 this had consolidated further, following the transfer of Local World Ltd titles to Trinity Mirror Plc, to five publishers (Trinity Mirror Plc, Johnston Press Plc, Newsquest Plc, Tindle Newspapers Ltd, and Archant Ltd) accounting for 80% (Ramsay and Moore, 2016: 6).

Consolidation of the media is not a new phenomenon (Howells, 2015) but arguably the 'profits before product' (Williams, 2006: 83-92) scenario which has seen large-scale editorial cutbacks (Tait, 2013: 6) and distanced local legacy newspapers from their communities is a recent development. To understand how this situation has arisen it is necessary to consider the era of consolidation which started in the 1990s (Mair, 2014: 26). To put the term into perspective, Franklin observes that: 'In 1996, ownership of one-third of all regional newspaper companies changed hands' (2006: 8-10). Mergers continued during the new millennium, as newspaper groups organised themselves into regional monopolies to deliver economies of scale (Tait, 2013: 5-17). The era of mergers and consolidation of local newspapers was initially driven by the availability of cheap borrowing during the 1990s and the promise profits of huge profits, Richard Tait said that: 'They enjoyed near monopolies in their markets and achieved margins most businesses could only dream about' (ibid: 6).

When operating conditions became more difficult, after 2005, a 'management strategy of cost cutting' kept profits high (Williams and Franklin, 2007: 10). Strategies to boost profits involved closing district offices (Howells, 2015: 179-185), moving reporters and

advertising staff out of the community, creating centralised sub editing units and printing facilities. Then as the situation became increasing difficult with titles closing and huge staffing cuts, what followed was a reduction in: 'the range and quality of editorial content' (Franklin, 2006: 10) with news gathering and reporting practices altered to favour lifestyle and entertainment led copy (Williams and Franklin, 2007: 10). This indicates some of the 'socially cohesive elements' that were being destroyed in the 'parent culture' (Cohen, 1972:23; 1980, 83).

  Legacy organisations also over leveraged themselves with their unfettered borrowing, increasing pressure for high profits to service the debt. In 2014 Ashley Highfield, then Chief Executive of regional newspaper group Johnston Press Plc, stated on Radio 4's Media Show (2014) that the group's debt had been reduced to £300M, having been as high as £700M as a result of acquisitions and mergers. In 2004 the same company had reported profits of 35 percent (Franklin 2006), this revenue level continued in 2005-2006 representing: 'a profit margin more appropriate to a gold rush' according to Matthew Engel (2009: 59). Newspaper owner's response to falling profits was to close titles and cut-staff to keep profits high, Mair observes that 'Merger mania' has damaged the industry more than it realised' (2013: 26). Local newspaper closures since the 2008 recession have been the subject of much debate among both academics and media professionals, (Fowler, 2011; Siles and Boczkowski, 2012; Nielsen, 2012; Mair *et al*, 2013). Statistics indicate the scale of decline, research suggest that since the mid-1980s around 600 local papers have been lost, Franklin states (2006: 4) that in 1985 there were 1,687 local papers and during the remainder of the pre-internet era this dropped to 1,284 in 1995. At the beginning of the new millennium the largest companies were earning annual profits of 30% or more which is arguably why between 1995 and 2005 the number of local papers barely changed. The total remained stable during the early internet era up until 2005, with a total of 1,286. Research by the *Media Reform Coalition* shows that by 2015 this had dropped to '1,122 distinct local papers published at least once a week' (2015: 8). The most up-to-date figures by industry publication *Press Gazette* reported in March 2018 (Kakar, 2018) that a further 40 papers had closed in 2017. The business models of legacy newspapers were based on the advertising revenue model (Howells, 2015: 12-14) and in addition to a historical decline in newspaper advertising particularly since the 1990s (ibid: 23), there have been two more recent disruptive factors - the internet and recession. Those at local legacy newspaper organisations, assumed that falling income from print advertising would be replaced by

revenue from digital advertising (Brock, 2013: 95); Richard Tait quotes Ashley Highfield (Johnston Press Plc CEO) as saying: "We will flip the model to digital first" (2013: 7-8). Despite such optimism, Ramsay and Moore state that it has not been that simple: 'Revenues from local print display and classified advertising, that were falling prior to the advent of the web, have fallen faster since and have not been matched by the rise in revenue from digital advertising' (2016; 4). George Brock indicates that the: 'deceptive stability of the four decades before 1990' was part of the reason that news organisations: 'failed to grasp the threat and the opportunity of the internet' (2013: 85). Küng's observations on discontinuous and disruptive innovations are particularly relevant here, because as she notes it is unusual for: 'incumbents to maintain their leadership positions across technology transitions' (2008: 134-137). The internet represented both innovation types, being both competency destroying (discontinuous) allowing other operators to enter the field as well as disruptive to established market structures. For local newspapers the most destructive aspect has been the disappearance of classified advertising, the reliable small ads placed by the public and paid for 'up-front'. Classifieds have been described by Rupert Murdoch as "Rivers of gold" (Plunkett, 2005); such was their importance to the business model of local and evening newspapers (Brock, 2013: 93-94). The San Francisco based *Craigslist,* started in 1995 as an email list of events which then expanded to a website taking job and property listings, provided the model which: 'was varied or imitated across the digitally connected world' (ibid.). Key advertising like property and cars began to migrate online in the early part of the millennium, away from local papers to new dedicated online sites such as *eBay, Autotrader* and *Zoopla*. Legacy organisations reacted too slowly to this trend, arguably because they were so profitable. Between 1995 and 2004 profits were high, with local newspapers: 'the only medium to increase advertising expenditure year on year for more than a decade' (Williams and Franklin, 2007: 14). It was in 2005 that local newspapers began to feel the effects of the internet on advertising revenues, a trend that has continued (Howells, 2015: 25). Research participant Paul Breeden was working on a mainstream regional daily newspaper and he remembers the impact:

> Paul Breeden: People that were, by then, starting to advertise their cars online when they wanted to sell a car. Job ads were starting to go online and estate agents were finding that people were looking for houses online. And all those three areas were massively profitable advertising markets and the biggest part of those markets has all been taken away from the regional publishers. (I:1 12/07/2016)

Added to the pain inflicted by innovative internet start-ups, the legacy organisations also lost advertising to social media because of the precise audience segments they can offer. As predicted by Martin Moore in 2015 a lot of local advertising has been lost by local newspapers to the 'US behemoths', social media companies such as *Facebook* and *YouTube* who can carefully target an online audience. Brock observed that: 'Twenty years after the internet disruption began, a few advertising-supported models are succeeding. But they tend to be start-ups with low costs' (2013: 95). This view is underpinned by organisational theory which suggests that in the early stages of technological innovation the entry level is low (Küng, 2008, p. 130); providing a seedbed for digital subcultures.

In 2008, an already precarious situation worsened when revenue was significantly affected by the economic downturn, with both circulations and advertising revenues of legacy newspaper, reducing further. Ágnes Gulyás notes that in 2009 advertising revenue dropped by 14.1 percent and in 2010 a further six percent (2013: 124), but she cautions that these figures need to be viewed in relation to previous recessions. She proposes that a sudden drop in advertising revenue is customary during periods of recession citing the *Office of Fair Trading* figures (*OFT*, 2009):

> Advertising revenues of local newspapers have always been cyclical, falling sharply at times of recessions. For instance, advertising expenditures in local newspapers declined by 22 per cent during the 1974-1976 recession and by about 17 percent during the 1979-1981 recession. (Gulyás 2013: 124)

She indicates long-standing structural change as being at the heart of the revenue problems experienced in the second decade of the millennium, rather than solely the 2008 recession (ibid: 123-130). As previously stated there are a complex set of challenges including technological developments as well as changes in the relationships with their audience (Gulyás and Hammer, 2013:144). Harcup and Cole state that it's wrong to blame the rise of the internet for legacy local newspaper's woes (2009: 9). Writing in the 2009 *Journalism Review,* Matthew Engel delivers a far more brutal assessment: 'Britain's local newspaper groups compounded their problems by their ill-judged expansion of the past few years and decades of editorial neglect before that' (2009: 61). Tait also blames flawed business strategies which allowed borrowed money to finance 'take-overs' resulting in subsequent 'cost-cutting' which: 'took precedence over any strategic planning to face the challenge of online media' (2013: 6). He observes:

> The irony is that many local newspapers still make money. But in many cases they no longer make enough money both to service the interest on the significant

debts which many groups ran up in the years of consolidation and meet the unrealistic expectations of shareholders that the exceptionally high profits of the past could continue forever. (ibid: 7)

It is therefore, incorrect to cast the local newspaper industry 'parent culture' purely as a victim of circumstance. The response to its declining fortunes impacted heavily on local news coverage because of the cuts which were inflicted on frontline staff, which will be discussed next.

3:3:2 The price of change: Job cuts, 'churnalism' and retreat from the community

Statistics of newspaper closures give little indication of the collateral damage in terms of job losses and the effect on the quality of content. There were estimated to be around 8,000 journalists working in local and regional newspapers in 1996. By the time of its 2004-5 annual review *The Newspaper Society* reported that this had increased to 13,000 (Williams, 2006: 91). Between 2005 and 2016 *Press Gazette* estimated the total had halved (Cox, 2016). It is not just the scale of title closures and job losses; the distribution of the remaining local papers across the country and the quality of their output, due to staffing cuts, have also caused concern. Statistics from the *Media Reform Coalition* show that by the end of 2016, 45% of local authority districts were served by a single publisher and the majority of the UK, 58%, was not served by a local daily newspaper (Ramsay *et al*, 2017). There have also been claims of the 'hollowing out' of local news content in many remaining legacy papers (Tait, 2013: 5; Bell, 2017) as the percentage of originally sourced editorial, along with its range and quality, decreases with journalistic numbers (Franklin, 2006: 10). During the mergers era the journalists that remained were moved to centralised hubs, away from the communities, to allow economies of scale; this affected the quality of journalism (Franklin, 2006: 10) and has led to a decline in local and regional news coverage (Harte *et al*, 2019: 43-64). In interview research participant David Jackman's contrasted the reciprocal exchange working practices of pre-internet media with the current situation:

> David Jackman: They closed the office that I was in in Epping, so there's no district base. Unless they sit in [coffee shop] or somewhere with a laptop, they've got no office in the district.

David Jackman: They've got one photographer, but they cover all the way out to Watford, all North London. So like all the other papers now really, they all rely on people to take their own photos and send them in or they nick them off [social media]. The paper's subbed in Weymouth in Dorset so there's no local contacts.

In the good old days, you had an office in Epping High Street and people would come in and put their births, marriages and deaths stuff on and all that sort of thing and all the little small ads, that doesn't happen now because you look at the jobs pages, there's nothing in there. I suppose you put your ad online now, but there's no personal contact or anything. The fact that reporters never go to events or meetings or anything, the public never get to see who they are or to get any liaison between them. (I:1, 11/04/2016)

His account indicates that even advertising has been affected by the centralisation strategies, which have physically moved newspapers away from their communities. But these centralisation strategies have had a more insidious effect on editorial coverage. Award winning investigative journalist Nick Davies, who uncovered the phone-hacking scandal while at *The Guardian* (Ponsford, 2016a), highlighted the problem of 'churnalism' in *Flat Earth News* (2008). Writing in *Press Gazette* he recounted the result of a young provincial reporter's work diary:

> In his working week, he turned out 48 stories – and yet he spent a total of only three hours out of the office and spoke face to face to only four people. That is churnalism.
> No reporter who is producing nearly 10 stories every shift can possibly be doing their job properly. No reporter who spends nearly 95 per cent of the time crouched over a desk can possibly develop enough good leads or build enough good contacts. No reporter who speaks to so few people in researching 48 stories can possibly be checking their truth.
> All local and regional media outlets in Britain – print and broadcast – have been swamped by a tide of churnalism. The scale and quality of coverage has been swept away. (2008a)

Davies' account indicates the importance of direct reciprocity in local news gathering techniques, the building of exchange relationships which are at the heart of reciprocal journalism (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 233; Harte *et al*, 2014: 169). In their paper *A compromised fourth estate,* academics Justin Lewis, Andrew Williams and Bob Franklin also highlight the increase of 'agency copy' as: 'desk-bound journalists […] develop an increasing

reliance on pre-packaged sources of news deriving from the PR industry and news agencies' (2008: 1).

The decline in both quality and quantity of local news has led to a range of concerns that have been debated in the academic world, these include lack of plurality and the effect on democracy (Barnett and Townend, 2014; Moore, 2014; Firmstone and Coleman, 2014; Howells, 2015; Ramsey and Moore, 2016; Ramsay *et al*, 2016; *National Assembly for Wales*, 2017a; Harte *et al,* 2019: 55). In some areas this had led to the emergence of 'news black holes' where reliable news is unavailable (Howells, 2015; Harte *et al*; 2019: 65-88). Research participant Rachel Howell's said in interview:

> Rachel Howells: News blackholes are really serious [...] the things that I found out doing my thesis are kind of quite disheartening really. It's a really good case for saying how important that local journalism is to local communities because when they don't have it, it's all just rumour and speculation. Obviously, I'm still on [social media] seeing a lot of that stuff unfolding, but there was a police helicopter over [place name] on Sunday afternoon and by Monday morning, I think I had seen every potential possible ramification of that.
> There were people being libelled. They said it was a drugs raid. They said it was a terrorist attack. They said it was a stabbing and there was a murder and the police were there. The rumours that just flew around. They were saying they were scumbags. They were druggies and people were being named and shamed on that as well.
> So, that's what happens in the absence of proper local journalism breaking news for those communities when something's happening. They've got nowhere to turn for that trusted news source, so they make it up, it's really awful. (I:2, 5/7/2017)

There is also very little news that 'escapes' from areas without reliable coverage, so news from local communities only sporadically filters through to national media organisations. As Engel observed:

> One senses that the national flow of news has slowed to a trickle. Rarely, now, do local reporters unearth some nugget from a contact and start the process by which it is polished into a page lead in the *Mail.* There just aren't enough reporters. (2009: 61)

Lack of a reliable local news source was tragically demonstrated by the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 which exposed what Emily Bell called: 'the failure of accountability

reporting on local communities' by a 'hollowed-out' local media (2017). Warnings about the potential for a fire had been posted in blogs by the *Grenfell Action Group* on 10 occasions in the previous four-and-a-half years (Harte *et al¸* 2019: 1); but without a functioning local media, the resident's pleas fell on deaf ears. Grant Feller started his career as a journalist on the local paper that covered Kensington and Chelsea in the pre-internet era, he said in *Grenfell and the lost art of reporting: making news before it happens:*

> And this is why – purely from a journalistic point of view – the Grenfell fire was such a tragedy […] It was a tragedy because I'm utterly convinced that journalists could – and should – have prevented it. I know that back then, 26 years ago, we would have seen that story before it happened. (2018)

These accounts indicate what has been lost in journalistic terms from the parent culture, during the internet era, the reduction in numbers of local journalists and their physical retreat from the community which means that face-to-face encounters with the community are rare. This has reduced the opportunity for offline direct reciprocity and the 'tip-offs' that can result from them. Despite the local media's retreat online, the *Grenfell Tower* tragedy indicates that reciprocal journalism was even absent in the virtual space, or the community's blog would have been followed up.

This suggests that Picard's notion of a 'service mode' of production (2014: 491) is closer to the truth, since the *Grenfell Tower* blog provided an opportunity for original journalism. Picard notes that traditional news companies are 'more focused on distribution than gathering and producing news' (ibid) which follows on from Davies's remarks on 'churnalism' (2008a) and Lewis *et al's* observations of reliance on 'agency copy' rather than original news generation (2008: 1). There have been other indications in the UK trade press of this focus on '*churnalism'* along with accusations of widespread use of 'clickbait' [stories whose primary purpose is to drive traffic to a website] journalism in corporate-owned titles (Mayhew, 2016; 2016a; Sharman 2017b). In 2013, *Press Gazette* reported that David Montgomery, former chief executive of Local World Ltd*,* outlined his vision for the future of weekly newspapers. He said they would be created by one person "skimming online content" and described the current role of the journalist as being: "entrenched in the industrial age as a medium grade craft". He used terms such as "content harvesting processes" to describe the work of his staff who were called "content managers" (Ponsford, 2013a).

This section has provided an indication of how the parent culture of mainstream local newspapers has changed in the internet-era and will offer context for the retrieving and

repurposing activities of independent operators throughout the thesis. Research participant Pat Gamble (*West Bridgford Wire*) provided an independent hyperlocal operators' perspective of how the mainstream had shifted: 'They're syndicating things that people aren't interested in and you understand that the business model's got a problem and they've got to do that, but all it is, is leaving this void that we can just go into' (I:2 13/09/2017). Pat's reflection suggests how the mainstream's move to a service-mode of production has allowed the 'craft mode of production' to be inhabited by 'individuals' and 'small-scale' operators 'serving smaller localities as general news providers' (Picard, 2014: 491).

3:3:3 Inside the mainstream: accounts of those who left

The discussion will now be extended to other research participants who have witnessed this shift from inside mainstream organisations, having formerly worked in local newspapers. In *Mapping changes in local news* Julie Firmstone (2016: 929) treats journalists as 'authoritative sources of opinion on the impact of recent changes, threats and opportunities faced by local news media.' This thesis will adopt the same stance, while acknowledging the potential for bias in the views of those who previously worked on legacy local papers. Their perspective is particularly relevant as a counter-balance to the public relations material and high-status voices that are often reflected in media reports of the local newspaper sector.

  Three members of the Bristol based hyperlocal franchise group the Local Voice Network worked on the *Bristol Evening Post*, subsequently renamed the *Bristol Post* in 2012. In interview they indicated the confusion created by the internet and the scale of job losses at their old paper. Paul Breeden, was a journalist at *The Post* when the first wave of redundancies started in 2005.

> Paul Breeden: There was something like 190 journalistic jobs in that building and three titles and all for Bristol and the surrounding area in 2005, which is when they started the first big wave of redundancies, and I'm trying to get an accurate count but there's now a handful, literally a handful of journalists, 20 or 30.
> So, it's an enormous change and the public doesn't realise this, except that they're continuing to switch off the products that those companies are making. They're continuing not to buy them and the circulation in that period has only gone one way. (I:1, 12/07/2016)

As an active *NUJ* member, who speaks at the annual conference, he tracked the job cuts closely and his account indicates the upheaval at the paper: His colleague, Richard Coulter, a director at the *Local Voice Group,* held roles as assistant editor and chief sub editor at *The Post* between 2000 and 2011, he witnessed the confusion that the internet created to the editorial operation and the lack of 'strategic planning' in response to the internet (Tait, 2013: 6):

> Richard Coulter: I was privy to a lot of the meetings about this, that their digital strategy was a bit 'make it up as you go along' and they lurch from one… allow people to comment, don't allow people to comment, give it away for free, paywalls. And they're just lurching about not exactly very sure what to do but the problem is, the horse has bolted because everybody expects it for free now. (I:1, 27/05/2016)

The third *ex-Post* employee Gary Brindle worked at the paper for 30 years and his redundancy highlights another cost-cutting strategy used by regional newspaper groups of outsourcing work abroad:

> Gary Brindle: I used to be Production Manager at the Bristol Post and basically what happened with the advent of technology, my role became redundant because everything was moved to India, which I was in control of. So that was about eight years ago that I was made redundant. (I:1, 14/06/2016)

All of these statements reflect the shift in a parent culture responding to crisis during the internet-era. Another research participant was Richard Gurner, who prior to starting the of the *Caerphilly Observer*, worked at a Newsquest Plc paper in the South of England. He became increasingly frustrated by the lack of offline reciprocity allowed in the internet era newsroom and the emphasis on agency copy (Lewis *et* al: 2008: 1; Howells, 2015: 179-185):

> Richard Gurner: Instead of being sent out and about to make contacts and do some proper footwork journalism, I was increasingly being chained to a desk, rewriting press releases and not being able to go out and speak to people face to face. Little things like there might be a community event going on in the patch […] and it was a case of, 'Can I just nip down there for an hour, newsdesk?' 'No, we can't spare you. You have to stay and do down page copy. (I:1, 06/05/2016)

As Richard indicates the working practices of local journalists has changed, which indicates a cultural shift in working practices in the mainstream. This ties in with Robert Picard's theory that a 'service' production mode is emerging in traditional news companies, where they focus on distribution rather than 'gathering and producing news' (2011: 491); highlighting the changed priorities of mainstream organisations. He added that the 'craft' mode of production concentrating on the 'uniqueness and quality of news' has been left to entrepreneurial journalists and small-scale organisations including those serving 'smaller localities as general news providers' (ibid). This theorisation by Picard provided further clues to a shift in the parent culture. He said that many traditional organisations have moved towards a 'service' production mode (2014: 491), this has altered the news values which often prioritise soft news or entertainment because they drive 'click throughs' on an organisation's website; known as 'clickbait' (Mayhew, 2016; 2016a; Sharman 2017b). News values are a set of loosely defined criteria which prioritise certain categories of news, influencing what gets published and the 'treatment' it receives (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; 2017). In their updated taxonomy Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill found that: 'organisation's desire to have their output widely shared on social media may be impacting on selection decisions' (2017: 1482). They also noted that: 'for online news, the pressure to obtain clicks and shares will also influence decisions about what news to select, as well as news treatment' (2017: 1483). Whatever the reason, Richard found himself getting: 'a little bit cheesed off with how the news agenda was being set on the paper' (I:1, 06/05/2016):

Richard Gurner: So, for example, it would be a case of I might come up with a story, pitch that to the newsdesk and then the newsdesk would go into conference. They would pitch it to the Editor and then through some sort of process of debate, the story would come back to me and say 'that story you're working on, it's not this now, this is the new angle.' And it would be a case of well, it's not… and then having to be confronted with that sort of dilemma really, where it's like 'I know that's not the story' and basically, being asked to do the impossible, to stand up a story that I know wasn't there. (I:1, 06/05/2016)

This topic of how independent hyperlocal operators view the local legacy media will be discussed again in Chapter 6 (*"Nano-scale" no longer? Evidence of hyperlocal operations emerging from the margins*) but at this stage the final word goes to Richard Coulter who reflected on the problems faced by regional daily papers:

Richard Coulter: I think there's a reason why the regional press is struggling. Obviously, they've cut down their resources, but I think most people perceive it as expensive to buy it every day and I think people don't want to make the effort to go and get it every day, and the regional press give all the content away for free anyway on their websites. So they're almost doing everything that's not going to work.[...]
They don't have the resources to go into the communities anymore, so they do a lot of centralising – endless court stories and things like that. But they don't spend any time in the communities, so there's that kind of disengagement going on and I think people are used to getting things for free. So right from the beginning, our model was - it'll be free and it'll be delivered to every letterbox so you get it whether you like it or not. And that seems to work. (I:1, 27/05/2016)

This suggests not only the absence of engagement caused, by the process of centralisation and the emphasis on one type of news story, but also the weakness of the paid-for print model versus free-distribution print. Küng indicated that free distribution print was a disruptive innovation and predicted that it could encroach on the paid-for newspaper's domain (2008: 136). Since the mid-1970s free newspapers have been used by mainstream local newspaper groups to keep circulations buoyant, peaking in the early 90s and declining in the new millennium (Cole and Harcup, 2010: 98), so Richard Coulter's account suggests a retrieval and repurposing of this previously important feature of the parent culture.

  This chapter has so far focussed on establishing the crisis-hit mainstream local newspapers as the parent culture, with particular reference to how news reporting practices have changed. Two research participants' also provide accounts of reciprocal exchange relationships that they consider have been lost, in the parent culture, in relation to local advertising sales; this represents a direct negotiated exchange relationship (Harte *et al*, 2017: 167). Williams *et al* note that many hyperlocal operators are 'critical of mainstream local news and have a very ambivalent relationship with it' (2014: 10) and there have been few partnerships between local legacy media and independent operators (Radcliffe, 2012; 2015). However, two research participants' formed working collaborations with legacy media operations. The first was Michael Casey, whose *Your Thurrock* site was in partnership with Local World Ltd between 2014 and 2016. He believed that his site would benefit from local advertising sold via its *Essex Chronicle* title. As a professional journalist, selling advertising was not part of his skill-set

and he hoped that the tie-in would be to both of their advantage: 'To be fair, I thought the Local World thing would crack it. I didn't think it was that difficult.' he said (I:1, 06/05/2016). But during the entire partnership no ultra-local advertising came in via the legacy operation, which had cut the number of ad reps and centralised its ad-sales to take advantage of economies of scale. Michael said that to make it work:

> Michael Casey: You need to be hyperlocal with advertising as well. That's what I've learned. That is to say if you're in Hertford or Tunbridge Wells, you may as well be in Bangalore or Beijing. That's what we've learned. It's really hard anyway, but they [advertisers] need to see somebody. Not just somebody ringing up - you could be anybody. (I:1, 06/05/2016)

The second participant to work with a mainstream operator on a specific project was David Jackman, who ran the hyperlocal sites *Everything Epping Forest* and *Everything Harlow*. He had a tie-in with Archant Ltd to provide copy and pictures for a 64-page A5 glossy 'coffee table' magazine, which they printed every month and delivered door-to-door. The tie-up had finished by the time of the first interview in 2016 and the problem was lack of advertising.

> David Jackman: To be honest, they didn't really put that much emphasis on going out selling adverts for it and in the end, they decided to stop it because they said they couldn't generate enough adverts for it. But while it was going it was really successful. I wouldn't have thought there was any problem in getting the adverts that they did, but it was almost like an afterthought, I think. They had an ad rep part time on it and they kept changing staff so there was no continuity with it, so sadly that stopped. (I:1, 11/04/2016)

Archant had also centralised its operation and, as David explained, ad-reps tasked with selling 'into the magazine' weren't even based in the district; they were from Ilford [around 15 miles away]. Both of these accounts suggest that the hyperlocal tie-ups in question were marginal enterprises from the perspective of the mainstream organisations; they appear to have been under-resourced with the independent operators making the greater contribution. Operating in a position of marginalisation is an element of subcultures and one which Hebdige's desert dwellers also experience, both physically and metaphorically (LeMenager, 2013).

There is little scholarship available on ultra-local advertising sales so the research participants' views, although limited and anecdotal, are a useful contribution. They paint

a picture of a similar cull and centralisation of advertising job roles as journalistic ones; which is counter-intuitive given that local legacy newspapers rely on an advertising revenue model (Howells, 2015: 12-14). In terms of advertising most independent hyperlocal operators are also retrieving from the mainstream because as Williams *et al* discovered this is the most common funding source (2014: 29).

3:4 The emergence of a hyperlocal news sector

In 2012 the UK regulator *Ofcom* recognised the emergence of the hyperlocal sector in its *Communications market report,* describing it as 'evolving rapidly' and providing an opportunity to reach local audiences. Optimistically predicting:

> It has the potential to support and broaden the range of local media content available to citizens and consumers at a time when traditional local media providers continue to find themselves under financial pressure (2012:103).

The only large academic study of the UK sector *The state of hyperlocal community news in the UK: findings from a survey of practitioners* (2014) was conducted by academics Andy Williams, Steven Barnett, Dave Harte and Judith Townend. It was a collaboration between two *Arts and Humanities Research Council* funded projects *Media, Community and the Creative Citizen* project at *Cardiff University* and the *Media, Power and Plurality* project at the *University of Westminster.* It provided the most accurate indicator of the developmental state of the UK sector at the start of my field work.

When Williams *et al* carried out their research, an official register of sites didn't exist, so they used the voluntary sign-up *Openly Local* directory, curated by *Talk About Local* (*TAL*), which was the only 'reliable central source'. The researchers conducted a survey of operators and for the sample they targeted 455 members of the *TAL* mailing lists, a further 216 sites listed on *Openly Local* and advertised the survey on blogs and *Twitter* accounts. The survey was carried out between December 5, 2013, and February 24, 2014 and generated 183 responses, a third of the original target population of 496 (2014: 6).

In June 2013 (Harte: 2013) there were 632 local sites listed, but that only 496 were active, with 133 dormant. Not surprisingly considering the number of dormant sites Williams *et al* found that 'The sector is quite a fluid one, with some sites starting up and then closing in quick succession while others have now been operating successfully for several years' (ibid: 9). Nevertheless, 73 percent of respondents had been operating for more than three years and 32 per cent for more than five (ibid: 9). During the empirical

chapters this study will be used as a benchmark for independent hyperlocal operations and the data will be compared and contrasted with their findings.

Williams *et al* established that advertising was the principal funding mechanism for the hyperlocal operators who took part in the study, 'followed by self-funding and grants' (2014: 29). They indicated that:

> Numerous bodies, including Nesta, the Technology Strategy Board, the Carnegie UK Trust, and Co-operatives UK have provided funding for UK hyperlocals in recent years under various initiatives, and some community news providers have taken advantage of start up, and business support, grants administered by local authorities. (ibid)

Independent operators therefore did benefit from institutional support, although as previously indicated from the point of view of mainstream local media their position appears to be marginal. This position of marginality is evident in this statement, made in interview by research participant Kathryn Geels who was programme manager of *Destination Local* the *Nesta* initiative which provided grant funding for hyperlocals both before and during the field research period. She explained her strategy:

Kathryn Geels:	So I think [her predecessor] originally had this idea of setting up a grant funding initiative to encourage hyperlocal publishers and traditional press to work together but the more and more time went on, I made the executive decision that that wasn't actually going to be beneficial to hyperlocal publishers. Because if you're giving grant funding to traditional press, they're just going to use it for their own advantage and hyperlocal publishers probably wouldn't see a long term benefit in that kind of partnership. (23/05/2016)

Her response indicates the marginalised position of hyperlocals at the start of the research period and the tension between parent culture and subculture. She said that there had been some tie-ups between mainstream and hyperlocals: '*The City Talking* in Leeds, which entered into a partnership with Johnston Press Plc, which was the first of its kind in the UK for a hyperlocal and a regional publisher to join forces.' But these unions have been rare. Antagonism is a feature of subcultures in relation to the parent culture (Hall and Jefferson, 2006) and this tension between hyperlocals and mainstream operators will be explored further in the next section. This will consider how some mainstream operations attempted to exploit the hyperlocal sector and why their attempts failed.

3:4:1 A hyperlocal subculture: only independent operations need apply

At this stage the distinction needs to be made between hyperlocal sites established by legacy media and those established by independent operators. It is important for this study that a distinction be made between franchise operations established by legacy media operations and those established by independent operators. This is because there are research participants' involved in two independent franchise operations and the negotiated exchange relationships between these operators is a focus of this study. It is the independent operators that this thesis will propose comprise the subculture, precisely because they are outside the mainstream parent culture.

  Attempts by legacy media to monetise the ultra-local sector have so far failed, suggesting that only independent operators can call themselves hyperlocals. Hess and Waller suggest that mainstream operators lack the '"secret knowledge" that comes with being a part of a subculture—the very essence of what it means to be local' (2016: 204). Which is ironic, given that the ultra-local sphere was once "owned" by legacy local papers (Mair, 2013: 21) but as this chapter has demonstrated the parent culture has since abandoned that space.

  Sensing that there was an advertising market to be monetised, several commercial legacy media operations have nevertheless tried to regain traction in the hyperlocal space. The first, and least outright commercial, to try was the UK national newspaper *The Guardian* run by the Scott Trust Ltd which with its editorial ownership structure, is designed to free editorial coverage from commercial pressures (*The Guardian,* 2015). 'The Guardian Local Pilot' which ran for two years, closed in 2011 with the company stating that it 'was not sustainable in its present form' (Pickard, 2011). Although the project did not continue it provided a valuable legacy, the launch editor Sarah Hartley subsequently became managing director of *Talk About Local,* the hyperlocal advocacy group that was instrumental in promoting the sector and providing training for independent publishers. She subsequently became a manager at *Google News Initiative Innovation Fund.*

  Other ventures into hyperlocal by 'traditional' news organisations have been commercially driven. Web-based hyperlocals are a seductive prospect for legacy media with their commercial ethos, because as David Baines identifies: 'They promise the elimination of many production costs and all distribution costs inherent in print, and the

employment of audiences in content production at little or no cost' (2012: 155). This exploitative mindset frames local communities as:

> Markets, and commodities to be sold to advertisers. The conception and identification of a 'community' by media corporations may be determined not by the community's own sense of identity and the space it occupies (materially and conceptually), but by the manner in which that community-commodity can be packaged and sold. (Baines, 2012: 154)

The largest UK operation to be the focus of academic study was the Local People network of 154 sites which went live in 2009 (Thurman, 2011: 2). Started as a franchise by it was passed into the ownership of Local World Ltd (Harte, 2017: 15) which in 2016 was taken over by Trinity Mirror Plc [this became Reach plc, 2018]. Initially around 100 paid community publishers from a journalism background were employed to curate content on the sites (Thurman *et al*, 2011: 7). This figure was subsequently reduced to 75 in 2012 with the remainder of the paid jobs disappearing in 2013 (Harte, 2017: 15). Thurman *et al* who researched the Local People sites described them as 'a commercial local news network that leverages economies of scale' (2011:2) and although Northcliffe Media Ltd claimed the sites had a 'bottom up approach' the researchers found that they shared a template and aggregated content from the organisation's other digital properties (ibid: 3). The researchers concluded that 'no-community-driven objectives were used as the basis for the sites' and requirements for the hyperlocals were based on assumptions rather than asking people (ibid: 7). In Thurman *et al's* view the operation compared unfavourably with hyperlocal initiatives from independent publishers and, unlike the independent initiatives, there was no public engagement. The academics were critical of the 'commercialization of content' which they likened to filling the 'space between advertising' (ibid. 8).

Baines conducted another case study of a rural hyperlocal launched in a partnership between *Northumberland County Council* (*NCC*) and a media company in 2009. He observed a lack of consultation with the communities from the start: 'the project was thus conceived, top-down' (2012: 160). He commented on the media organisation's exploitative view of community journalism: 'The company saw 'collaboration' essentially in terms of the community producing content for the site' (ibid). He concluded: 'the sites were designed primarily to meet *NCC's* political and Media Company's corporate needs, not the community's' (ibid: 163).

Each of these studies suggests a lack of reciprocal engagement with the community by the mainstream media organisation and an attempt to impose a generic style of

hyperlocal operation on a community. Steven Barnett and Judith Townend found that the most successful hyperlocal ventures have been independent and found little evidence of success in attempts by media companies to roll out hyperlocal identical sites across the UK:

> Hyperlocal journalism may have more chance of audience and advertising success if it is "artisanal" rather than "mass-produced", is based on a close relationship with a local audience, and is driven by residents' passion, rather than a "cookie-cutter version stamped out by an assembly line". (2014: 6)

Hess and Waller maintain that the reason why mainstream media has not succeeded in the hyperlocal sphere is that 'subcultures appear to be resistant to massification' (2016: 203). Rem Rieder wrote in *USA Today* (2013) about a similar failure of *AOL's Patch* hyperlocal franchise in the States, reporting that: 'economies of scale don't work in the world of hyperlocal news.' He interviewed an independent publisher who succinctly summed up the problem stating: 'you can't Amazon local news' (Rieder, 2013).

  Hess and Waller suggest that major media players who tried to capitalize on the hyperlocal phenomenon were 'trying too hard to fit in' and therefore lack empathy (2016: 194). Cohen's analogy of generational conflict and the difficult relationship between parent and teenager (1980: 82) is also appropriate here; as is Hebdige's observation of Punks, Teddy boys and Mods repurposing items of clothing from the parent culture (1979: 104). Teenagers repurposing their parents clothing can equal style; but the reverse is not usually true. To draw on Hess and Waller's analogy, the parents would just appear to be trying too hard to fit in (2016: 204).

3:5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to establish the culture of mainstream local newspapers and how working practices have changed since the end of the 1970s; since this thesis proposes that local newspapers represent the parent culture of an independent UK hyperlocal subculture. As Cohen proposes that subcultures emerge from a parent culture in crisis (1972: 22 ;1980: 82) the purpose of this chapter has been to understand the scale and reasons for this crisis in local newspapers.

  The first section outlined the pre-internet era to establish working practices on local newspapers. My positionality statement provided primary research material for this section, which was supported by secondary accounts. The section proposed that offline reciprocity existed in ultra-local situations and what was known as 'patch' reporting was

the norm (Howells, 2015: 179-185). Local newspapers also had much closer direct reciprocal relationships with their communities due to the existence of district offices (Jackman, 2013: 247-252; Howells, 2015: 179-185).

The second section reviewed the factors which have contributed to the crisis in the parent culture. These included the negative effects of economies of scale business strategies on journalistic output as a result of policies of mergers and centralisation since the start of the internet era. To this was added the effect of the internet which has been disruptive to established market structures (Küng, 2008: 136-137) and the subsequent economic downturn in 2008 which further eroded the advertising base of local newspapers.

The final section established the position of the independent hyperlocal subculture at the start of the research period, as a marginal player in the local news ecosystem, with a tense relationship with the parent culture. This section also underlined that 'hyperlocal' is a term that should only be used in connection with independent operations, even if they contain several titles, and are operating as a franchise group. This follows the failure of several mainstream organisations to colonise the sector, with generic sites, in order to monetise the ultra-local audience. This chapter therefore serves as a benchmark for the following empirical chapters, offering evidence of the 'socially cohesive elements that have been destroyed in the parent culture' (Cohen, 1972: 23; Williams 2011; Hess and Waller, 2016).

Chapter 4: Participants' professional background and their motivation for independent hyperlocal publishing

4:1 Introduction:

This chapter will introduce the 27 research participants and their motivations leading to their involvement with hyperlocal publishing. The accounts reflect participants' situations when first interviewed, unless otherwise stated, and will be analysed for subcultural themes. The themes are: 'resistance' to mainstream culture (Hall and Jefferson, 2006), retrieving and repurposing aspects of the mainstream, particularly those socially cohesive elements which have been lost (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige,1979) and marginality in relation to the mainstream (Park, 1915; 1928). To better understand the relationships that operators have with each other, reciprocal journalism theory (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al*, 2017) and Durkheim's theory of *The division of labour in society* (Durkheim, 1893/1984) will also be employed for analysis purposes. Durkheim's theory of mechanical and organic solidarity (ibid.) will help reveal participant's implicit motives for independent hyperlocal activities in addition to those contained in the narratives. Durkheim's theory is discussed in Chapter 1 (*Literature review: applying a subcultural lens to hyperlocal*)*,* however, at the start of this chapter it would be helpful to include a summary of mechanical and organic solidarity. Raymond Aron provides an explanation:

> Mechanical solidarity is, to use Durkheim's language, a solidarity of resemblance. The major characteristic of a society in which mechanical solidarity prevails is that the individuals differ from one another as little as possible. The individuals, the members of the same collectivity, resemble each other because they feel the same emotions, cherish the same values, and hold the same things sacred. The society is coherent because the individuals are not yet differentiated.
> The opposite form of solidarity, so-called organic solidarity, is one in which consensus, or the coherent unity of the collectivity, results from or is expressed by differentiation. The individuals are no longer similar, but different; and in a certain sense… it is precisely because the individuals are different that consensus is achieved. (1967: 21)

Identifying these two forms of solidarity sheds light on how independent operators demonstrate 'collectivity' in their working relationship; notwithstanding the existence of

contracts in a number of situations. It is this evidence of collectivity which I will attempt to reveal.

Evidence was presented in Chapter 3 (*Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture*) that the hyperlocal sector has emerged from the crisis in mainstream local media. The largest empirical study of the UK hyperlocal sector revealed that half of the participants' surveyed had received journalistic training (Williams *et al,* 2014: 4), so for this study it was important to establish how many of the participants' had media backgrounds and whether they had migrated from the parent culture. Responses were also sought to provide data about how many of the operators were: journalists working in atypical circumstances on the margins of the mainstream *(IFJ*, 2006; Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 120); moving between mainstream and alternative news organisations (Forde, 2011: 54) or active citizens (Williams *et al*, 2014: 9).

At this stage it should also be indicated that embeddedness, particularly living in the hyperlocal area, corresponds with mechanical solidarity. Most of the interviewees in the 2014 study lived in the hyperlocal area (Harte *et al,* 2019: 117) and embeddedness in the community is central to Hess and Waller's definition of local as: 'an investment of time, requiring that one maintain a prolonged and continual presence in that place' (2014: 197). This embeddedness is also implied by Lewis *et al* who suggest that community journalism is a good place to identify reciprocal journalism: 'because of its distinct closeness to local or niche audiences' (2014: 230). Evidence in this chapter will therefore provide a response to research question one:

RQ: 1: What are the professional backgrounds of key personnel responsible for the operation of a range of UK hyperlocal provisions?

> RQ: 1.1: What are their motivations for becoming involved in independent
>
> publishing?
>
> RQ2.1: Do they work alone?
>
> RQ2.2: Do they live in the areas for which they generate news?

The first section establishes the professional backgrounds of the research participants' and is accompanied by a *Table 4.1* which lists them alongside the name of their hyperlocal title and whether they work fulltime or part time on the provision. The second

section will investigate the motivations for participants' becoming involved in hyperlocal publishing and whether they were founders of their operations. This section is sub-divided into two sections: the first examines those producing a single title, while the second part looks at multiple outlet operations.

4:2 Professional backgrounds of operators

Here I will establish the professional background of research participants who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Below is a table 4.1 which lists participants and their professional status, alongside the titles they produce and whether they work fulltime or part time on the provision. From the table it is possible to see that the hyperlocal operators who participated in this study are from diverse backgrounds, most are also working on their provisions part time as a mix of work. Williams *et al* found that hyperlocal producers rarely work full time on their titles (2014: 11) and this proved to be the case for the small sample of research participants; of which the majority self-identified as journalists. In total 16 worked part time and 11 full time on their provisions. Although several who identified as working part time, were using the hyperlocal as a significant income stream as part of a portfolio of related work. Meanwhile, 11 participants' considered their operations reliable enough to be their main income stream.

Table 4:1 : The professional background of research participants'

Interviewee	Professional background	Hyperlocal	Full/part time
David Wimble	Director *Radio Waves* providing onboard entertainment systems to cruise ships.	*The Looker*	Part time
David Shafford	*Highways Agency* Traffic Officer and web designer.	*Dartford Living*	Part time
Vijay Jain	Global Marketing Manager for flood modelling software.	*Dartford Living*	Part time
James Hatts	Community journalist: started *London SE1* while a student.	*London SE1*	Full time
Richard Gurner	Journalist local and regional media.	*Caerphilly Observer*	Full time
Rachel Howells	Journalist and academic.	*Port Talbot Magnet*	Part time

Daniel Ionescu	Founded Stonebow Media Ltd after graduating a with degree in Journalism.	*The Lincolnite, Lincolnshire Reporter, Lincolnshire Business*	Full time
David Jackman	Journalist, former local newspaper editor.	*Everything Epping Forest, Everything Harlow, Everythinglocalnews*	Full time
Sean Kelly	Founder *NeighbourNet Ltd.* Formerly worked in City of London financial sector.	*NeighbourNet.com, Chiswick W4*	Full time
Annemarie Flanagan	Freelance journalist, former senior broadcast journalist with the *BBC.*	*Ealing Today, Acton W3*	Part time
Sue Choularton	Freelance journalist and copywriter. Former Assistant Editor *Teletext.*	*Wimbledon SW19*	Part time
William Perrin	Political adviser and private consultant to technology companies.	*Kings Cross Environment,* founder of *Talk About Local*	Part time
Jamie Summerfield	Journalist and PR consultant.	*A Little Bit of Stone*	Part time
Jon Cook	Technical solutions analyst.	*A Little Bit of Stone*	Part time
Richard Coulter	Journalist, former assistant editor *Bristol Evening Post.* Joint founder of Local Voice Network Ltd and director of PR service *Local Voice Media.*	*Filton Voice*	Part time
Emma Cooper	Former Head of Advertising (telesales) at *Bristol Evening Post.* Joint founder of Local Voice Network Ltd.	*Keynsham Voice, Bishopston Voice, Henleaze and Westbury Voice.*	Full time
Richard Drew	Freelance broadcast journalist, presenter and commentator.	*Frome Valley Voice, Yate and Sodbury Voice*	Part time
Gary Brindle	Graphic designer and former production manager at *Bristol Evening Post*	*Downend Voice and Fishponds Voice*	Full time
Paul Breeden	Former journalist at *Bristol Evening Post*	*South Bristol Voice, two separate editions.*	Full time
Michael Casey	Former local newspaper journalist who provides freelance content to *BBC,* national and international media organisations.	*Your Thurrock and Your Harlow*	Full time
David Prior	Former local/regional and **PA* Journalist, founder Hyperlocal Today Ltd. Also runs business website *Prolific North*.	*Altrincham Today*	Part time

Emma Gunby	Former *PA journalist who runs social media management company *Neon Fox Marketing* alongside the hyperlocal.	*West Kirby Today*	Part time
Martin Johnston	Marketing and PR professional, gave up hyperlocal to take on a full time role in June 2016.	*Stockport Today*	Part time
Adam Cantwell-Corn	Law graduate, jointly founded *Bristol Cable* after leaving university.	*Bristol Cable*	Part time, Fulltime by 2nd interview
Pat Gamble	Former transport and logistics manager.	*West Bridgford Wire*	Full time
Dave Harte	University lecturer and researcher.	*Bournville Village. com*	Part time
Simon Perry	Digital entrepreneur and journalist.	*On the Wight*	Full time

*_PA_ – Press Association

The predominance of journalists was also reflected in Williams *et al's* study, where half of their participants' had received journalistic training (2014: 4). At this stage it is important to consider what is meant by the term 'journalist' in the internet-era. During the pre-internet era the role of journalist was clearly defined due to a high degree of professional control. Broadly speaking, school leavers trained at local newspapers via the 'indenture' (apprenticeship) system and news was routinely created within an industrialised setting (Franklin: 2006: 74). As digitization has converged the roles of producer and consumer, the professional identity of journalists in the post-industrial era is challenged (Deuze, 2008). Deuze and Witschge observe that news creation is no longer the exclusive preserve of: 'a particular professional group such as journalists employed at news organisations' (2017: 117). Drawing on the concepts of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) and liquid journalism (Deuze, 2007; 2008) they highlight the atypical working practices of many journalists (Deuze and Witschge, 2018). They suggest that the professional life of many journalists in the 21st century is one of 'permanent impermanence' due to the effects of continuous reorganisations in mainstream media organisations where buy-outs lead to 'lay-offs' and regular 'job-hopping' (2017: 115-116). They also draw attention to the convergence of roles of content, sales and marketing which has led to: 'a gradual breakdown of the wall between the commercial and editorial sides of the news organisation' (2017: 123) and the

requirement for entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, in this thesis, and given the contested nature of the role, a journalist will be considered to be those who self-identify as such.

  In order to answer the first research question, the professional backgrounds of those who have at some stage worked in the parent culture will be identified. In alphabetical order, journalists who have previously worked on regional/local newspapers in editorial departments were:

> Paul Breeden: *Western Daily Press*,
> Michael Casey: G*rays and Tilbury Gazette*,
> Sue Choularton: *Western Daily Press* also *Assistant Editor Teletext*,
> Richard Coulter: *Bristol Evening Post*,
> Emma Gunby: *Liverpool Daily Post, Liverpool Echo* also *Press Association*,
> Richard Gurner: *The Argus, Brighton*,
> David Jackman: *West Essex Gazette*,
> David Prior: *Liverpool Daily Post, North West Enquirer* also *Press Association*.

To this list were added those with journalism training from other backgrounds:

> Richard Drew: freelance broadcast journalist, presenter and commentator,
> Annemarie Flanagan: broadcast journalist *BBC* TV and radio,
> Rachel Howells: *The Big Issue, Cymru* and poet,
> Daniel Ionescu: technology writer *PC World*,
> Simon Perry: *Digital Lifestyles* magazine.

Those with media/journalism training but who have tended towards public relations and marketing were:

> Martin Johnston,
> Jamie Summerfield.

Two other former *Bristol Evening Post* employees not in the editorial department but indisputably 'media professionals' were:

> Gary Brindle: Pre Press Manager, *Bristol Evening Post*,
> Emma Cooper: Head of Advertising (telesales) *Bristol Evening Post*.

Those on the outer edges of mainstream media were:

> James Hatts: community journalist, had operated *London SE1* for 18 years.

> Dave Harte: university lecturer, PhD researcher in hyperlocal media and a former columnist for the *Birmingham Post*

> David Wimble: businessman with a broadcast background in community and internet radio.

The remaining participants' from non-media professional backgrounds were:

> Adam Cantwell-Corn: law graduate,
> Jon Cook: technical solutions analyst,
> Pat Gamble: transport and logistics manager,

Vijay Jain: flood software modeller,

Sean Kelly: City of London financial sector,

William Perrin: political adviser and private consultant to technology companies,
David Shafford: traffic officer and web designer.

Of the original 27 interviewees, there were only seven who could be identified as coming to hyperlocal publishing from a non-media background. Although such a description is immediately problematic because William Perrin had a long-standing involvement with hyperlocal, alongside his full-time roles as a political adviser and private consultant to technology companies. As founder of both *Kings Cross Environment* and the hyperlocal advocacy group *Talk About Local* (*TAL*) he had been one of the driving forces in establishing the sector. He had been involved in training community journalists, organising *TAL* conferences where hyperlocal operators could physically meet and assisted Williams *et al* in sourcing the sample for their empirical research in the sector (2014). His *LinkedIn* personal statement described him as 'Working at the cutting-edge of technology, media, data, public policy and philanthropy' (*LinkedIn.com*).

Pat Gamble's background was not in media but as he said in interview: 'I'd got business management and people skills. So, no sales skills, but I'd obviously got transferable stuff' (I:1 12/05/2016). What Pat calls his 'transferable stuff' of business management and people skills resonates with Deuze and Witschge's observations (2017: 115-130) about the desirability of having a range of skills, rather than purely journalistic, when starting an entrepreneurial news venture. Therefore, the 'transferable stuff' could be construed as an advantage, since it potentially offers a more commercial approach to the hyperlocal operation. In fact, Picard (2010) asserts that the working practices of traditional journalists can be detrimental when starting a news enterprise, because in the industrial setting they were isolated from commercial decisions. Naldi and Picard caution that journalists who have worked in mainstream organisations may be constrained by 'formation myopia' (2012; Cook and Sirkkunen; 2015) because they are used to being part of a large staff with interdependent trades. Industrialised settings demonstrate a high degree of organic division of labour, with income generation from advertising sales and newspaper cover price dealt with by specialist workers (Durkheim, 1893/1984).

For an entrepreneurial venture, business skills were therefore an asset and participants' who possessed them were: Sean Kelly, David Shafford, Pat Gamble and David Wimble. For an online news site, software skills were important and participants'

with those professional skills were: Jon Cook, Vijay Jain, Simon Perry and David Shafford. Both Daniel Ionescu and Sean Kelly formed business partnerships with people who were 'IT' experts, while Richard Coulter formed a business partnership with advertising expert Emma Cooper. These are examples of interdependence present in organic division of labour scenarios (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28) and where there is also a bilateral/negotiated (Lewis *et* al, 2014: 232 Harte *et al,* 2017: 167) exchange relationship in place.

  In terms of reciprocal journalism, where the relationship being analysed is that between publisher and audience, informal exchange is generally considered more valuable because 'there is a risk of not getting anything back'; it thus offers greater potential to demonstrate the development of trust and social bonding (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167). By this measure, negotiated exchange, where there is a form of agreement or contract in place is inferior. However, Durkheim provides a means to explore negotiated exchange relationships, between people working together on hyperlocal enterprises, and understand how solidarity is created via division of labour situations (1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). In the following section there will be a discussion about the motivations for participants' becoming involved in independent hyperlocal operations and the exchange relationships they have formed during the process, both informal and negotiated. Durkheim's mechanical solidarity also provides a lens through which to view the 'common values and beliefs' which constitute the 'conscience collective' or 'collectivity' of independent hyperlocal publishing (1893/1984; Aron, 1967: 21; Hughes *et* al, 2003: 163-164).

4:3 Participants' motivations for hyperlocal publishing

For manageability, this section will be subdivided into two parts, the first will consider the operators of single title provisions, while the second will look at the motivations of operators who have multiple titles or are part of umbrella organisations containing multiple titles. In addition to identifying aspects of reciprocal journalism (Lewis *et* al, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) and division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28), subcultural themes of resistance (Hall and Jefferson, 2006), marginality (Park, 1928) and borrowing aspects of the mainstream (Hebdige, 1979) will be explored.

The subcultural view discussed in Chapter 3 is that internet era independent hyperlocal publishing has emerged from a parent culture in crisis (Cohen, 1972) and exists on the margins of the mainstream (Park, 1928). Mainstream local newspapers were proposed as the parent culture, while independent hyperlocal publishing was represented as potentially exhibiting subcultural themes of antagonism or resistance in its relationship with the parent culture (Hall and Jefferson, 2006). Yet, despite this, at times, difficult relationship it retrieves and repurposes of parts of the parent culture (Hebdige, 1979), particularly socially cohesive aspects which have been lost (Cohen, 1972). In the following two sub sections each hyperlocal operator will be introduced with selected biographical factors. *Figure 4:1* provides a diagram of reciprocal journalism to help understand where bilateral negotiated exchange relationships feature. The different aspects of direct and indirect reciprocity are shown above a dividing line, which represents a membrane. If the sustained presence of both of those forms of reciprocal engagement is in place, reciprocal engagement can pass through the membrane to achieve sustained reciprocity and the development of trust; indicated below the line.

Figure 4:1: Reciprocal journalism in action

Direct reciprocity

Benefit potentially returned to the giver

One-to-one engagement

Unilateral/informal:

Voluntary: nothing expected but often given
(an opportunity to demonstrate trust)

Bilateral/negotiated:

Formal contract or agreement: an
understanding (relationships visible
through mechanical or organic solidarity)

Online:

Social media: liking/sharing
Website: direct calls for participation

e.g. franchises, partnerships,

Offline:

(Face-to-face or telephone)

Attending meetings

Making 'contacts'

Footwork journalism

Crowdfunding
A voluntary response to an *informal online*
appeal for funds which leads to a form of
bilateral/negotiated agreement
Leading to a donation or pledge

Indirect reciprocity
(one-to-many)

Benefit paid forward; not returned to giver
One-to-many engagement
Contributes to community building

Online :   Offline:
Social media,   social media surgeries
Local networks   workshops
Traffic and travel info

Acts of *direct* or *indirect* reciprocal exchange over a significant period of time leads to:
Sustained reciprocity
Lasting friendships, collective trust, engaged communities

4:3:1 Operators producing a single title

David Wimble - The Looker: Kent

From a subcultural point-of-view David Wimble's motivation for founding _The Looker_
resonated with both the subcultural theme of resistance to and retrieving from the
mainstream. He had launched his hyperlocal as a fortnightly print magazine (_Appendix 5_
_& 6_), a format which the mainstream was moving away from. He explained:

> David Wimble: The Looker started five years ago almost to the week, when I
> complained on a   local radio station, that I was the DJ on,
> that the local newspaper… so called local newspapers… didn't
> have any local content in them. I complained to the editor, who
> I was interviewing, and he said that you couldn't make a local
> newspaper work as you couldn't generate enough advertising
> revenue to cover the costs and not only that… that there
> wouldn't be enough news. So, I said that I would start one,
> forgetting that I was dyslexic.
> He said that he'd give it four editions, it could never be more
> than 12 pages. It's never been less than 24 pages. It's been as
> many as 44 pages… and it's been running every two weeks for
> the last five years. (I:1 23/06/2015)

The Looker was named after the shepherds who tended flocks on Romney Marsh
(Watkins, 2009) from the middle ages to the early part of the 20th century; for much of
that time sheep were the main occupants of this geographically marginal area. David
was a lifelong resident of _The Marsh_, so he had clearly maintained a: 'prolonged and
continual presence in place' (Hess and Waller, 2016:197). Despite displaying strong
evidence of mechanical solidarity, both in embedding and motivation, when first
interviewed David was producing _The Looker_ using elements of organic division of
labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984). He employed two paid part time staff (an advertising
manager and a credit controller) in a bilateral/negotiated exchange situation, yet also
relied on a group of volunteers which (including his father who wrote for the magazine) in
what Harte _et al_ identify as direct reciprocal exchange relationships (2017: 169). There
was also an online presence, via website and social media platforms, but the print
edition was the primary product. However, David's primary motivation was altruistic

(Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28), he was unhappy that the community in which he lived was not being properly covered by the mainstream local newspaper.

  Williams *et al* found that many hyperlocal operators were motivated by giving 'a little bit back to their communities' (2014: 9) and David displayed a strong mechanical solidarity inspired community spirit or 'conscience collective'(Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). He was a long-term supporter of the *RNLI* (*Royal National Lifeboat Institution*), having previously worked for them, had run a community radio station and served as a local councillor. As a businessman he demonstrated a degree of organic solidarity and strived to make the magazine profitable, but there was a tension with his community duty: 'My community hat has cost me thousands over the years and there comes a time when you have to stop wearing it' (I:1). He displayed an emotional investment in *The Looker*, that went beyond financial motivation, admitting: 'I'm very, very protective of it'. This had provided the resilience to keep going through difficult times, during the previous five years, when he had needed to dip into personal funds:

David Wimble:	I'm quite community minded, for me almost as much as the money is when you see someone and they go "Oooh, we like your 'so-and-so' in the paper". My ego loves it, I think, [...] when I went down the road the other day and someone said "Oh, you're the guy who does The Looker! Yeah, we like that"... that's almost like somebody giving me a £20 tip for my ego. (I:1)

This quotation indicates David's place in the 'conscience collective' (Durkheim, 1972: 3-9), the fact that fellow community members liked the paper is in many respects reward enough for him. There was nevertheless a tension with his business instincts and it was always the intention to make the magazine profitable. However, at first interview he was still drawing his primary income from his other business; *Radio Waves Media* providing onboard radio for cruise ships. This is a situation that Harte identifies as one of formal cross-subsidy (2017: 182). David was aware that any money he made from the hyperlocal, in 2015, did not cover his time and that he was both self-exploiting and cross-subsidising *The Looker* from his other business. Particularly as the negotiated exchange relationships (Lewis *et* al, 2014; Harte *et* al, 2017) with two part-time employees, meant he was paying them before himself. He also employed freelance journalists, when he had to go away on business, but otherwise stories were written by

himself and volunteer community members. The volunteers represented direct reciprocal exchange relationships.

David Shafford and Vijay Jain - Dartford Living: Kent

Sixty miles away in north Kent Vijay Jain and David Shafford were also running *Dartford Living* for their local community, publishing a monthly A5 magazine (*Appendix* 7) and online content alongside their day jobs. Neither partner in *Dartford Living* had journalistic experience but they both had relevant educational qualifications. David's degree was in business information technology, although his primary income was a *Highways Agency Traffic Officer*. The flexibility of the 'day job' allowed him to both work on the hyperlocal and run a freelance web design business; being involved in the hyperlocal meant he could put into practice what he learnt during his degree. Business partner Vijay Jain's degree was in marketing and his full-time job 'running flood modelling software' underlined his IT credentials. Much of Vijay's work involved conference calling, so communication skills were part of his repertoire as well as IT and marketing. David said that Vijay worked from home, which allowed him flexibility for *Dartford Living*, and had: 'permanently got a phone attached to his head because he has to do the conference calls with work, it's just depending what time his conference calls are going on as to when he can speak' (I:1 10/12/2015).

 Neither was the founder of the hyperlocal although Vijay had been involved for 'about eight years' at the time of the first interview, in 2016. It had grown from a newsletter started to provide information about local baby and toddler groups, a topic area on the margins of local news coverage and rooted in the culture of mechanical solidarity. Vijay bought the newsletter for a 'small fee' after it started 'expanding too quickly' for its founders: 'There were too many local businesses that wanted to advertise, too many groups that wanted to get information' (I:1 4/01/2016). Originally it was called *DA1 Living,* corresponding with an early definition of hyperlocal as covering a single postcode (Radcliffe, 2012; 2015; *Ofcom*, 2013). The town of Dartford covered two postcodes, DA1 and DA2, so the name was changed to *Dartford Living* to reflect the wider coverage.
 Vijay had had three business partners since buying the title, he explained that the first was 'terrible with deadlines… and if you're running a magazine, deadlines is a critical

point' (I:1). His first partner: 'sold his share to a lady called Sam who was on board for a few years and then David took over' (I:1). David was a volunteer on the website for about six months in a situation of informal direct reciprocal exchange (Harte *et al,* 2017: 169). The relationship changed to a bilateral/ negotiated exchange situation when David bought his share and formed a limited liability company with Vijay (ibid). They retained the local information driven purpose of the magazine and the mechanical solidarity culture of the hyperlocal, with several pages still devoted to mother and toddler groups. Turner notes that such banal information: 'is for many residents, key to an everyday understanding to their neighbourhood' (2015: 48). As Harte *et al* reflect: 'the banal is where indirect reciprocity practices are most in evidence and perhaps works to build community more effectively than other story genres' (2019: 142).

Because of their backgrounds, in business and marketing respectively, *Dartford Living* was not a journalistic enterprise so much as a 'go-to' information source for the local community and businesses: 'I think we're there to make people aware of the stuff that's going on in the local community and maybe have some of the meaningful discussions about the local community without getting too political or anything else' David said (I:2 16:6/2017).

Their embeddedness and motivation displayed the altruism of mechanical solidarity, although in terms of division of labour there were aspects of organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). David took care of the web design and advertising side of the operation, while Vijay oversaw editorial and social media content. David indicated the interdependence of organic solidarity extended to helping each other out when required: 'If I couldn't do something, all I'd have to do is let Vijay know and he'll try and take it over as well. A couple of times I've been trying to do something, and he'll say - "tell me and I'll do it"' (I:1). This suggests both the 'social bond based on interdependence' and 'collective consciousness dispersed through division of labour' aspects of organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28).

Vijay explained that neither of them took an income, it was a not-for-profit community project with, in 2016, around 30 volunteers involved in writing and delivering the magazine; further evidence of direct reciprocity (Harte *et* al; 2017: 169). But while not wanting to make a profit, David said that getting something to cover their time would be welcome:

David Shafford: We don't make any money out of it as in profit for ourselves… We never really set out to do that, it's something we both wanted to do for the local community. When I took it over it was… obviously we're exploring other revenue streams, still not to get ourselves loads of money but obviously we've put so much work into it would be nice to get a little bit back, because it takes up a heck of a lot of my time and also Vijay's time. (I:1)

This indicated the same tension experienced by David Wimble between community mindedness and the need to earn a living. Both operators were cross-subsidising from their primary jobs, although there was an additional element of cross-subsidy working in David's favour - thanks to his involvement the hyperlocal he had picked up work for his web-design business. Although neither operators were paid for their efforts, the 'barter' economy, something which exists on the margins of society, was working in their favour with advertisers offering them discounts on goods and services. Harte found evidence of hyperlocals engaged in the bartering system in his research (2017: 182). At *Dartford Living* there was other evidence of the generalised form of community building indirect reciprocity, most commonly found in online social media communities. *Dartford Living* had a very strong social media presence, but in addition David and Vijay organised free networking evenings, providing opportunities for local businesses and charities to meet in what is an example of community building offline indirect reciprocity.

James Hatts - London SE1: South East London

By far the longest running hyperlocal in the study was *London SE1,* which had started in 1998. Like *Dartford Living* it had also evolved away from the initial concept although it was still in the original ownership. Owner operator James Hatts explained:

James Hatts: We started this in 1998 and I was still at school. I was still doing my A Levels at the time. My father had a background in journalism and he had been producing a monthly What's On Guide for the Square Mile, so across the river, that was jointly funded by the City of London Corporation and also by the churches in the Square Mile and basically, it was about things for people, office workers in the City, to do in their lunch hour. (I:1 22/03/2016)

The Hatts family who lived in the hyperlocal area started a hyperlocal website to run alongside the monthly magazine, providing community news. Fast forward 20 years and the monthly printed publication had disappeared and by the time of the first interview, in 2016, *London SE1* was online only. James had been a community journalist in the area all his adult life, he was therefore embedded exhibiting a prolonged presence in the place (Hess and Waller, 2016:197). His was a mechanical solidarity, not-for-profit, community driven approach to the hyperlocal: 'I'm not driven by sales and business. I'm driven by news and community' (I:1). Professionally James had not migrated from local newspapers, his publishing background was on the margins of mainstream media and his degree, in history and Spanish, was not media related. The 'resistance' he displayed was not to legacy media, but to local authority policy decisions which affected his home patch. What motivated James was the monitorial aspect of the work (Harcup, 2015), keeping a check on authority. That monitorial role had clearly increased in response to changes in the structure of local legacy media because he felt that he was responsible for providing continuity in coverage: 'The reporters [from the local newspapers] covering the beat here, are never here for more than two years, three maximum' (I:1). This gave him the 'advantage' over the reporters from an organic solidarity organisation, because of his embeddedness he had what he termed a longer 'institutional memory':

James Hatts: And when something happens and you realise it's not the first time that the council's promised this or announced that, whereas someone who wasn't around three years ago won't remember that this is nothing new and won't apply the same cynical view to it. (I:1)

James was deeply embedded in the community and his approach was very much that of a 'native reporter'; a local grassroots journalist: 'whose work enables the entire community to come together' (Atton, 2002: 112-117).

James Hatts: We've been going 18 years. I think for the first ten years, yes, there was a lot of change but by and large, nobody lost out somehow. Everyone kind of benefited or it felt like that, but what's happened in the later period, and it's not exclusively a phenomenon round here, it's true of the whole of Central London, but what began to happen then in the second phase of change was much more polarising.

James Hatts: One of the big changes of the last five / six years has been some of the kind of super- prime property development you're now seeing here.
So, I think the sense of community in the area is under pressure for all sorts of reasons and as private rents go up and it's become a much more desirable area, that's squeezed people out, pushed people out to the suburbs ever more, it's depressing actually. And whereas ten years ago, I was fairly upbeat about the area, I'm now quite kind of... I still love the area and it's the area where I grew up and all the rest of it, but I'm much more troubled by a kind of combination of policy and omission, local government and London government have allowed Central London to become. (I:1)

The community building value of James' approach was reflected in his *Twitter* following which he claimed was: 'the largest of any local news site, almost in the world – 40,000 and a bit' (I:1). Indirect reciprocity is at the heart of social media (Lewis *et* al, 2014:169) because of its generalised one-to-many scenario which creates social solidarity (ibid: 234). James worked full time on the hyperlocal, although, what he termed his lack of 'sales instinct' meant that the hyperlocal's financial situation was insecure:

James Hatts: When I graduated, I said I'll give it a year, see if I can do something with this. Can we turn it into a viable business and then 12 years later, I'm still here and still don't have a proper job and still broke. But, on the other hand, it's an incredibly fun job and we've got one of the best news patches in the country. (I:1)

The longevity of the site and his continued enthusiasm despite the lack of financial incentive, indicates the presence of 'resilience' (Hebdige, 2013). The hyperlocal had evolved from an initial *What's on Guide*, printed by the family under the business name of *Bankside Press,* until it was closed in July 2014. It therefore represents one of a number of small-scale marginal publications started in the 1990s, the rise of which has been attributed to the 'explosion' of 'zines' after the 1980's (Atton, 2002: 3). James welcomed the diversity of the subculture and felt that people should resist the urge to 'categorise things', that there ought to be a 'definitive model'. He liked that there were so many different approaches but: 'yet you can go to an event like the *Talk About Local*

thing and still have things in common, even with people who are doing things so differently, but there's still that core thing' (I:1). James was referring to a 'conscience collective' shared by hyperlocal operators (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes et al 2003).

Simon Perry - On the Wight: Isle of Wight

On the Wight was another long running site and one which has been a focus of attention over a number of years having been a *Talk about Local* and *Guardian Local* award-winning site in 2010 (Hartley, 2010; Harte *et al,* 2019: 159), praised by *Nesta* in 2012 (Radcliffe, 2012: 16) and a case study for *Carnegie UK Trust* in 2015 (Pennycook, 2015: 15-16). Most recently Dave Harte featured the site as a case study for his doctoral thesis (2017: 132 to 143). He described it as: 'The 'fictive' hyperlocal publisher […] long cited by Nesta and others as fulfilling an ideal about what hyperlocal can achieve' (ibid: 134). Simon Perry and his wife Sally set up *Ventnor Blog* in 2005 shortly after moving to the Isle of Wight from London, focusing on the island's cultural side. They subsequently relaunched it as *On the Wight* (*OTW*) when managing the blog's forums became so time-consuming, turning what was a hobby into a business; on which they both subsequently worked fulltime. Simon said in interview that when they moved to the island starting the blog was a natural progression: 'We'd been blogging for many years before that in a personal capacity and it just seemed to make sense to do a blog about us moving to the Isle of Wight, of what we found when we got here' (I:1 08/08/2016).

 OTW is online only and since becoming the Perry's full-time employment, there had been a commercial imperative. Simon admitted that having started out providing a free 'resource that might be useful for people', a form of indirect reciprocity, they had not reaped the benefit when turning the website into a business. With indirect reciprocity: 'the beneficiary of an act returns the favour not to the giver, but to another member of the social network' (Lewis *et al*, 2014, 234), so the lack of benefit for the hyperlocal is unsurprising. They had effectively moved from mechanical solidarity, with its strong collective consciousness and altruistic approach, to organic solidarity which Jenks (2005: 28) indicates as 'egoistic'; although there is no suggestion of self-interest in Simon's motivation other than the need to earn a living. Simon contrasted their initial

altruistic status with the more pragmatic organic solidarity approach of Daniel Ionescu (*The Lincolnite*): 'Probably one of our mistakes early on was, "if we help people out, they'll help us out" and that isn't the case. Whereas he sort of approached it as, this is a business and I'll do what's right for the business' (I:1). The resource the Perrys' created was well received by their audience, but Simon observed: 'thinking that people will be generous in return is delusional, as has become clear over the years. People are very willing to take, but not give' (I:1). Their situation illustrates a limitation of an indirect reciprocal exchange relationship, in real terms, it may benefit the community more than it benefits the provision. The hyperlocal may gain trust or *symbolic value*, but that does not necessarily convert to income or *instrumental value*. They had considered a print option but after looking at the pros and cons had ruled it out:

Simon Perry:	Well, we used to laugh about it and we then thought maybe we should, because it was clear that that was a way to draw… advertisers are a lot more relaxed by seeing their ads in a physical bit of squashed tree than they are online and sales are easier because of that, so it has made us reconsider that over the years.
	We looked at doing an alternative version, which was a folded A4 that was going to be coming out on Thursdays to give people a view of what was going on over the weekend, sort of a news summary sheet I guess. We looked at that, designed it up and had some interest in it but economically it wouldn't work.
	We did some financial projections on it and decided to shelve it. We're unhappy about it because it looks so good but better to have done that than committed to it and then end up losing money on it. (I:1)

Although they demonstrated the embeddedness of mechanical solidarity, the Perrys' operation evidenced organic division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). Despite having journalistic training Simon was largely responsible for selling advertising, the commercial and 'IT' aspects of the business; whereas Sally concentrated on content creation. *OTW* was a journalistic site, which was behind its award-winning status (Hartley, 2010) since it displayed the potential for hyperlocal to 'fill the gap' left by the crisis in local newspapers (Radcliffe, 2012: 16; Pennycook, 2015: 15-16; Harte, 2017: 132 to 143). This resonated with the subcultural themes of the provision responding to crisis and retrieving socially cohesive elements that have been destroyed (Cohen, 1972: 23). Keeping the hyperlocal operating had not been easy, despite its award-winning

status. An indication of the resilience shown by the Perrys' is contained in Harte *et al's* observation: 'While there are clear signs of the enterprise maturing and stabilising after ten years (by 2016), Sally Perry has been recorded as saying: "It's been a real struggle really"' (Harte *et* al, 2019: 158). They had received support from meso organisations, resulting in collaborations with *Carnegie UK Trust* in 2015 and taken part in a *Nesta* analytics survey in 2016, both of which had brought income to the site and were negotiated exchange relationships with an instrumental outcome.

Jamie Summerfield and Jon Cook - A Little Bit of Stone: Staffordshire

Moving to a new area was also the motivation for Jamie Summerfield and Jon Cook's involvement with *A Little Bit of Stone (ALBOS)*; they wanted to use their professional skills to integrate themselves in the community and provide a focal point for news. The implicit motive for their co-operation in the subsequent hyperlocal, therefore, evolved from a mechanical solidarity 'conscience collective' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972:5; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28).

Jon and his family had moved to the canal town of Stone in Staffordshire, from Brighton and, while in the preliminary stages of setting up a community website, he discovered *ALBOS.* Jamie had started the site a few months earlier, in August 2010, because he wanted to create a 'trusted and professional news website for Stone' (26/04/2016). The pair subsequently met, and a partnership was formed: 'We both had something to bring – me the technical skills and Jamie the journalism skills' Jon said (I:1 27/05/2016); outlining the division of labour, which at the beginning of the research period also included six volunteers. This situation indicated two types of direct reciprocal exchange relationships, the informal kind with their volunteers and the negotiated version between themselves.

Both Jon and Jamie had other work commitments, cross-subsidising their involvement with *ALBOS.* Jon worked full time as an IT solutions specialist while Jamie was combining freelance communication work with maintaining the site. In 2015 they ran a *Crowdfunder* which raised £15,380 (https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/alittlebitofstone), it paid for Jamie to work two-and-a-half days on the hyperlocal and funded a new website . Crowdfunding represents a form of unilateral/informal direct reciprocal exchange, because the appeal is made to the audience via a website, but a response is not

guaranteed. While direct or indirect exchange in reciprocal journalism is generally linked with a symbolic response, creating trust or community cohesion, the *Crowdfunder* prompted an 'instrumental' response from the audience; because of its monetary value. There was a degree of negotiated exchange because the monetary pledge represented a form of contract. Indirect reciprocity would have resulted in the benefit being passed to another member of the community, not returning it to the hyperlocal. The income meant that Jamie could pursue his journalistic ideals, which were derived from the mainstream parent culture:

> Jamie Summerfield: I think I've written over 3,000 stories for the site now and it's all very, very journalistic really. I try and cover it as I would when I was more of a mainstream journalist really but just with a twist really. It's much more rooted here, in a way. (26/04/2016)

Leading up to the first interview Jamie had also been involved, along with in *Nesta's* six-month analytics project which finished in February 2016. It had been funded so he had been able to immerse himself in the project and he spoke enthusiastically about how it had adjusted his priorities of content creation for the site:

> Jamie Summerfield: I think it's helping us – it's helping me – to focus a lot... the kind of mission statement of A Little Bit of Stone has always been that if it happens in Stone, it'll be on the site. So anything goes but, as I mentioned earlier, just that constant growth and expectation to do more and more and more, I kind of reached the point where now I'm focusing on the things that work best really. (26/04/2016)

Considering his enthusiasm for the site it was a surprise when at the end of the interview Jamie confided that he would be leaving the hyperlocal three months later.

> Jamie Summerfield: Yes, and it's been great, it really has and I'm kind of leaving on a high really. It's strange, it's just been such a huge part of my life for a long, long time now. So, I just want to open some other doors and do some other things now. So, it's exciting and scary and I hope the site will just go from strength to strength, that it'll just be different. (26/04/2016)

The injection of money from both the *Crowdfunder* and the *Nesta* project, a negotiated exchange with an instrumental outcome, paid Jamie's wages for only a finite period and it was after these initiative had finished that he decided to move on. This development

resonated with the resilience/precarity themes which surround hyperlocals and atypical journalism practices generally. Deuze and Witschge have drawn attention to the situation of journalists in the context of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000; Deuze, 2007; 2008) where atypical working conditions are represented by short term contracts in a 'permanent/impermanent' industry (2017: 115-116). By the time of writing up the thesis, Jamie's *LinkedIn* profile showed that he was working fulltime in a public relations role. Williams *et al* found a 'generally encouraging' picture of hyperlocal operations, from their research, but some of the responses were a 'reminder of the precarious nature of many community news sites' (2014: 32) with changing personal or professional circumstances identified as a potential threat to community news projects.

Jon Cook:	Yes, Jamie broke the news to me in February that he was off. He has left previously so I think it was 2014, he'd just burned himself out basically. So, he wanted to walk away and then I kind of said to him, have a sabbatical, have a break. I won't be happy unless you have at least six months off because he just couldn't keep it up, basically. So, we did manage to cope. We kept it running. We've got a good team of volunteers and they're still involved with… we've just got some new ones. So, we will continue to do that when Jamie goes again, this time for good. (I:1)

Jon, who was cross-subsidising his involvement in *ALBOS* from the more stable position of a fulltime it job, was committed to continuing the site, but would be relying more on the direct reciprocal engagement of volunteers to continue operating.

William Perrin - Kings Cross Environment: Central London

A philanthropic narrative was the primary motivation for William's involvement in hyperlocal publishing, which was consistent with Williams *et al's* findings that: 'Many who run their own sites have day jobs… and want to give a little back to their communities' (2014: 9). For William, *Kings Cross Environment*, covering the district of that name in central London, was a totally non-commercial endeavour, relying on the direct reciprocal exchange of volunteering. Mechanical solidarity was at the heart of *Kings Cross Environment*. He set up *Kings Cross Environment* in 2006 because the community, where he lived, lacked a central point to exchange information.

William Perrin:	The line I tend to take is that it's a form of community work and in the same way that if you're driving around members of the school soccer team, or you're offering to drive a minibus and maybe you'll fill up a tank of petrol for them out of your own pocket, or you'll give your own time to the Scout troop, my community work is me giving my time. It's just a modern way of doing it and I spend… it only costs me £100 cash a year and I pay that out of my own pocket as a community thing and that's all it's ever been, but it's very powerful for that. (25/04/2016)

His motivation for the site indicated a dissatisfaction with the coverage of the mainstream local press: 'Back then, the media didn't cover *King's Cross* at all, unless someone had been murdered' (25/04/2016). Technological innovations also meant that starting a website provided: 'a handy way of doing my community work more efficiently.'

William Perrin:	Blogging engines were starting to mature. So at the suggestion of a friend, I set up a blog on Typepad and it just took off really quickly because people could see that sharing information that others could see in an online format was enormously powerful, and far better than traditional community printed newsletters or newspapers that had to be photocopied and stuffed through doors; which is very hard to do in an area of high social deprivation because you're stuffing it through doors in some very objectionable places at times that you don't want to be in, really. So, the web is a very good way of doing that. Then in 2007/8, the website played an instrumental role in a major local campaign involved with the regeneration of King's Cross. This area up here has been substantially regenerated now. (25/04/2016)

He references the community building potential of online provisions, where the generalised exchange relationship of indirect reciprocity exists (Molm *et al*, 2007; 2007a; Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al*, 2017). Because of his professional background as a senior Civil Servant in the Cabinet Office the hyperlocal had to be non-political. This provided the neutral place where solidarity and trust could develop.

William Perrin:	Because I'm a Civil Servant, when I started the site, I couldn't have the site taking political positions. So, I banned comments on local politics. I wouldn't have it, I just didn't let them through, and that worked really well because it provided a neutral space which the people who were good at social action realised was very valuable, as long as they posted neutral information to it. So, at peak I had about six contributors and now down to three. (25/04/2016)

William said that it 'became a really important force' in the neighbourhood in 2007/8 allowing the residents to 'use the website to gain enormous leverage' in the planning process during redevelopment: 'because we could process information faster than *Network Rail* could or the property developers could'. He explained that the site carried on growing until about 2011 when it plateaued; with the redevelopment of the area complete the need for the site started to fall away:

> William Perrin: William: So now its audience is lower every day. It is in a different stage in its lifecycle. It's not a commercial product. It doesn't have to produce an article every day to pay anyone or to attract an advertiser. So sometimes it can go two or three weeks without an article being posted on there and sometimes there's three or four in a couple of days, according to local need, and really that's where it is. (25/04/2016)

Because of the not-for-profit status of the site, direct reciprocal engagement was evident in terms of volunteer contributors, while the community building outcomes provide evidence of indirect reciprocity.

The example of *Kings Cross Environment* feeds into the precarity/resilience discussion, indicating that the reason for declining output of hyperlocal websites is not necessarily negative. It may not indicate failure, but that the site has reached a certain stage in its lifecycle, where it is no longer required to be as active. This also justifies the qualitative approach to the research, because a quantitative study is less likely to be sufficiently nuanced to pinpoint the social reasons behind an apparent decline. Mechanical solidarity may help reveal why some hyperlocals are short-lived, they exist for as long as they are needed by the community during periods of great change or challenge.

Dave Harte - Bournvillevillage.com: Birmingham

The hyperlocal provided both a hobby and an adjunct to his research for *Birmingham City University* academic Dave Harte. Dave was candid about his initial motivation for online hyperlocal publishing, he liked 'messing about on the web.' He was living in *Bournville Village* in Birmingham, the village established by the Quaker George Cadbury for his workers (Dawkins, 2015), and joined the site when it was a year old. It was

established by journalism graduate Hannah Waldron in 2009 while looking for full time work. Dave was interested in blogging and getting involved 'in the civic digital space'; William Perrin acted as go-between, introducing him to owner/operator Hannah. When she left after a year, to take up a job at *The Guardian,* Dave agreed to take over the community news site. Soon after he started running the site, at the beginning of 2010, the *Cadbury* take-over by *Kraft* became national news: 'So I immediately had a huge story on my doorstep' (18/05/2016). The takeover was the subject of a lot of the early stories, but essentially Dave's hyperlocal activities were a 'hobby' borne out of a desire for: 'little web projects to play with' (18/05/2016). Like William Perrin, the costs of running the site came out of his own pocket and, since he was cross-subsidising from fulltime work, experimentation was part of the enjoyment:

| Dave Harte: | What's good about it is if it breaks, because I've messed about so much, it doesn't matter too much. I don't believe people are hanging on its every word. I'm not convinced of its public service role and so if I break my toy, for whatever reason, then I won't get up in the middle of the night to fix it, I'll deal with it in due course. (18/05/2016) |

Within 12 months of taking over the *Bournville Village* site it had assumed a different significance for him professionally. He became involved in the *Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities* project; which eventually led to his involvement with the largest empirical study of the sector (Williams *et al*, 2014) and to him researching hyperlocal for his PhD. This provided biographical inscription in terms of his choice of doctoral topic (Hebdige, 2013) and a degree of motivation for continuing *Bournville Village*:

| Dave Harte: | I think one of the reasons I continued is because I am writing in this space because actually when I interviewed people for my PhD, it was useful because I was the guy writing in this space. It gave me an 'in' as a practitioner rather than just a researcher. I was a researcher, I was a participant, so it was easier in that sense. So professionally, it has been useful. (18/05/2016) |

Operating the hyperlocal as a practitioner provided an 'insider account' perspective (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 86-87) in respect of both understanding and gaining

access to the research field. His subsequent doctoral research was: *An investigation into hyperlocal journalism in the UK and how it creates value for citizens* (2017: 57).

Dave Harte:	Citizen journalists are always heroic and I was interested more in the dabblers, the people who do it because they like messing about for other reasons and, in effect, my own research has shown if they are messing about or dabbling, they don't talk about it in that way. They talk about it within that heroic context. They see themselves as community leaders almost. Whether that's the truth or not, I don't know. So, I didn't find very many people like me who would say well, I just like messing about on the web. (18/05/2016)

Dave's observation suggests that citizen journalists see themselves as part of the 'conscience collective'(Durkheim, 1972: 3-9) within a community. By the time of the first interview (18/05/16) his relationship with the hyperlocal had evolved as his lifestyle changed. He had moved out of *Bournville Village* to an adjoining Birmingham suburb, so was no longer embedded. Data collection for the doctoral research had finished and he was writing the thesis prior to submission. He was also involved with another, busier, Birmingham hyperlocal so his posts to the Bournville site had decreased as the demands on his time increased: 'I'm on an average of maybe three posts a month but that's fine. I'm not burdened by a business model that requires me to push lots of output out' (18/05/2016). He was planning to review his relationship with the hyperlocal after completing the PhD. In addition to any community value, the site had helped both Dave and his predecessor Hannah Waldron further their careers.

Pat Gamble - West Bridgford Wire: Nottinghamshire

For Pat starting *West Bridgford Wire* was the realisation of a teenage dream, having been rejected by mainstream local media at an early age. He always wanted to be a journalist and recounted writing to newspapers when he left school applying for reporting jobs and being rejected; he ended up with a career in transport and logistics management. After moving to West Bridgford, in Nottinghamshire, he found it difficult to find out local news so in 2012, while out of work for six months following redundancy, began investigating hyperlocal operations. He thought about taking out one of the

commercial franchises, offered by mainstream local media, but eventually opted to set up his own *Wordpress* site. He went back to work but continued posting six or seven items a month he said in first interview: 'I thought this is great fun. I actually loved it.' Then with the support of his wife who has a 'senior NHS job' he eventually made the site his full-time occupation in 2015: 'We both thought this could be a pension.' Pat worked on the site fulltime and in the initial stages there was a degree of cross-subsidy from his wife's work, but by the time of the first interview he was generating an income:

> Pat Gamble:　　　　　Yes, and it probably about matches my take home pay in a career, but I haven't got the company car and the health and the pension. So it needs to double, but I just have fun all day but I work very hard. (I:1 12/05/2016)

Pat had emerged from a marginal position (Park, 1928) both professionally, having been rejected as a teenager by mainstream media, and in terms of covering an area which had been marginalised by the parent culture. There was a further period of marginalisation when he was made redundant which provided the opportunity to research creating a website. When he finally entered the hyperlocal field, he chose to remain on the margins by starting his own independent site rather than applying for one of the commercial franchises. As previously stated, Pat had 'transferable' skills of 'business management' and 'people skills' from his career in transport logistics. The fact that he was making a living from the site, following an initial period of cross-subsidy, contrasts with the narrative of precarity that surrounds hyperlocal (Radcliffe, 2015: Harte *et al*, 2016; Williams and Harte, 2016; Tenor, 2018; Harte *et al*, 2019: 181). Pat's situation therefore appeared to contradict the perceived precarity of hyperlocal operations (ibid) and his views on this topic were revealing: 'I was fed up of them all going on about how: "it can't work"' (I:1). Negative reports almost put him off launching *West Bridgford Wire*:

> Pat Gamble:　　　　　I did look at it for a couple of years and I must have spent six months and the minute I designed it, still thinking I'll never launch it, it won't work because if you do read all the studies on UK hyperlocal, then there's no way you'd do it because nobody says it'll work, they're all negative. I'm not suggesting that they're deliberately negative because it depends what you define as working. They probably mean it can't sustain an office with ten people. It probably can't. (I:1)

He was irritated that reports about independent publishing tended to focus on failure such as: 'Saddleworth News and Pits 'n' Pots that have stopped operating and everybody else that's stopped operating.' He felt that negative reports on the hyperlocal sector were potentially limiting its growth. Pat was operating from a position of mechanical solidarity, displaying both embeddedness and a 'conscience collective' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972 3-9).

Richard Gurner - Caerphilly Observer: South Wales

The Caerphilly Observer was set up by journalist Richard Gurner initially as a website in July 2009 while working 200 miles way in Brighton in Sussex. Richard was 'Caerphilly born and bred' but was working as a journalist on The Argus, in Brighton, when he decided to launch a news website covering his home town. There were several motivations for his decision to become an independent publisher:

> Richard Gurner: Being just frustrated and not being able to do the news that I wanted to do and then also just frustration as well at the lack of any sort of information about what was going on back home in Caerphilly. So, I started on the [legacy title] newspaper back in 2004 and that was at a time when journalists really weren't expected to update on a regular basis. But then fast forward five years in 2009, that was still the case; the website wasn't really being updated that often. And so, it was a case of - I can't be the only one trying to find out information about what's going on in Caerphilly.
> So those were the first two elements and then the third element then was really a case of I don't know much about the internet and I don't know how websites are put together, and I don't know anything about search engine optimisation and meta tags and all that sort of stuff, and I figured I need those skills for the future. (I:1 06/05/2016)

Richard's frustrations indicate the subcultural theme of resistance to changes in the parent culture discussed in Chapter 3 (*3:3:2: The price of change: Job cuts, 'churnalism' and retreat from the community*) where the stories he was covering no longer corresponded with his journalistic ideals and was compounded by the marginalised

coverage of his home town. It also demonstrates the 'conscience collective' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972: 3-9) that he shared with his home community.

> Richard Gurner: I loved my time in Brighton, loved my time with the *Argus* generally but it's just the way the industry's going and the workloads and the frustrations of not being able to do the journalism that I think people deserve, to be honest. (I:1)

As with Dave Harte there was also an element of professional improvement linked to starting the website. Richard identified that the skills required would be useful in terms of future employability; a response to the post-industrial journalistic world where 'permanent impermanence' is the norm (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 115-116).

Because of his links with Caerphilly, Richard was initially able to run the website remotely from 200 miles away, he explained in interview one: 'It was a case then of getting my old contact book out and giving people a call' (I:1). He operated on the margins, keeping the website secret from his employers: 'Obviously I'd just set up in competition with a Newsquest title in Wales' (I:1). The website continued to grow, then in 2011 Richard and his wife moved back to Caerphilly to be closer to family: 'All of a sudden, this little website of mine had to start paying for itself' (I:1). He cross-subsidised the hyperlocal from freelance work, while building an audience for the website. Then in 2012 he secured a grant from *Caerphilly County Borough Council's* rural development programme towards the printing costs of a fortnightly newspaper (*Appendix 8*) which launched in May 2013.

Richard was one of a group identified by Williams *et al* as: 'former journalists striking out on their own as local news entrepreneurs' (2014: 9) or what Deuze and Witschge term 'enterprising professional' journalists (2017: 123). After moving back to Caerphilly in 2011 to run the website he said (I:1) : 'I was all very clued up on the editorial side of things, the business side of things, the commercial side of a media operation' but he admitted to being 'a little bit clueless' about advertising. Fortunately, for Richard, a former colleague Jan Withers had been made redundant from the advertising department of the local newspaper, she became the 'driving force' for the advertising side. Theirs was a social bond based on interdependence, which is a feature of organic solidarity. Although his motivations for starting the hyperlocal were much closer to altruism and the 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984;

Durkheim/Giddens, 1972: 3-9). By the time of the first interview Richard was working alongside two salaried staff, who were in direct bilateral negotiated reciprocal exchange situations. He was fulltime as editor with the help of a fulltime reporter and a part time advertising rep. Jan had retired, but, was: 'always still at the end of the phone for a bit of help and advice' (I:1), an example of a direct bilateral negotiated exchange situation which had evolved into one of sustained reciprocity. The *Caerphilly Observer* won the 'Independent Community News Service of the year 2017' at *Wales Media Awards* for the second year running (Wales Media Awards, 2017).

Rachel Howells - Port Talbot Magnet: South Wales

The Port Talbot Magnet, in South Wales, was jointly founded by journalist and academic Rachel Howells with a group of fellow journalists. It is the second hyperlocal in the study from Wales, which has been particularly badly affected by the decline in local legacy newspapers (*Welsh National Assembly*, 2017). The founding of the *Port Talbot Magnet* emerged as a result of resistance to the actions of the parent culture following the loss of the socially cohesive local paper (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979). The town lost its local paper in 2009 when Trinity Mirror Plc closed *The Port Talbot Guardian*, this led to Rachel and a group of colleagues establishing *The Magnet* as she explained in her doctoral thesis:

> It appeared at the time that the industry was spiralling downwards, and there seemed little hope of any improvement. We decided it was time to act. We set ourselves up as a workers' co-operative, with the aim of supplying the newly opened news gap (Howells, 2015: 2).

Rachel was referring to herself and a group of six journalists all based in Swansea, which is about 10 miles from Port Talbot. They were all members of the Swansea Branch of the *NUJ* who had either been made redundant or were suffering reductions in work following cuts to freelance budgets; they had therefore been marginalised by the mainstream.

Rachel Howells:	We'd been sitting in these union meetings for what felt like decades, but probably more likely to be about two or three years.

Rachel Howells:	And all we were hearing about was cuts and job losses and people having disputes with employers because their shift patterns were changing or their budgets were being cut or working conditions were changing. And the feeling amongst the branch really was that it was only going to go downhill from here and that all this amazing local talent in the world of local journalism was being lost to the industry and to the local community. So, we decided that we wanted to do something positive about it. (I:1 27/04/2016)

The Magnet therefore emerged from the crisis in the mainstream in response to the closure of *The Guardian,* as she said: 'a kind of news blackhole opened-up in front of us.' Their motivation indicates resistance to the actions of the parent culture in the face of 'the destruction of socially cohesive elements' (Cohen, 1972: 23) and an attempt to retrieve some of those elements.

  Rachel explained: 'We set up the website, we started covering the news on a rota basis as volunteers, working with the community' (I:1). In 2013 they received a £10,000 grant from *Carnegie UK Trust* to launch a print edition of the *Port Talbot Magnet* (*Appendix 9*). Significantly, in subcultural terms, the hyperlocal operators in question were not local (Hess and Waller, 2014: 197), all lived in Swansea about 10 miles away; although they did have a base in the town. Their original status was closer to a 'mechanical division of labour' (Durkheim,1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28) because the solidarity was 'characterized by homogeneity' it was a 'social bond based on 'resemblance' of occupation; where there was 'a strong collective consciousness' and the 'roles were communalized' (Jenks, 2005: 28). Yet this apparent mechanical solidarity was undermined by a lack of embeddedness of the journalists, who all lived outside the town. This contrasted with the more organic division of labour at the *Caerphilly Observer* and *A Little Bit of Stone* where the 'social bond was based on interdependence' of people with different skills (Jenks, 2005: 28), but the operators lived in the community.

  News provision in Port Talbot was at the heart of Rachel's doctoral thesis '*Journey to the centre of a news black hole: examining the democratic deficit in a town with no newspaper*' (Howells, 2015). In similar circumstances to Dave Harte, operating *Port Talbot Magnet* as a practitioner provided an 'insider account' perspective for Rachel (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 86-87). She said that the PhD 'came along' within a year of starting the *Magnet* and the synergy between the two: 'kept me, really, tied to the

project, not unwillingly' (I:1). The hyperlocal contributed professionally for Rachel, but as a volunteer she was cross-subsidising her labour from freelance and academic work. At the time of the first interview the number of members had shrunk to herself and three others, as original colleagues found paid work.

Adam Cantwell-Corn - The Bristol Cable: Bristol

The Bristol Cable is an independent operation that has attracted media attention both because of its co-operative status as a 'community benefit society' and because of its campaigning journalism on behalf of those currently marginalised by both the media and society (Reid, 2014; Harris, 2016). Unlike the other operations, it was not telling the stories of a small geographical community, it was focussed on excluded communities in a city. *The Cable* was founded in 2013 by Adam and fellow Sussex University undergraduates, Alec Saelens and Alon Aviram, who had backgrounds in community activism (Reid, 2014). They moved to Bristol after leaving university, because of the 'quality of life' the city offered. Their vision for the publication was sparked by resistance to mainstream output, Adam stated: 'We're trying to bring these two elements of journalism and community action together to create a new publication for Bristol, and hopefully beyond, that can provide what the local press should be doing' (Reid, 2014). *The Bristol Cable* is the result of an altruistic (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28), idealistic mindset of wanting to promote high standards of public interest journalism and 'hold people to account' (Harris, 2016).

  None of the trio had media training and the community benefit society indicates a 'conscience collective'(Durkheim, 1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) of mechanical solidarity underpinning the project. Nevertheless, in an organic division of labour situation they sought help from those with complementary skills, promoting a social bond through interdependence (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). Adam explained: 'We have been able to garner a lot of support from journalists across several publications and various organisations to really help us to develop our skillset and our editorial expertise' (I:1 17/05/2016). *The Cable* members had also worked with the *Centre for Investigative Journalism* at *Goldsmiths, University of London* to hone their skills. Their motivation is more than just to produce a quarterly magazine, they had an education and training mission.

Adam Cantwell-Corn: Within our legally constituted entity as a community
                       benefit society, the requirement is that all profits are put
                       back into the community objectives, which is publishing
                       and education and wherever possible, which is now
                       becoming more possible[...] is paying people.
                       And that's always been the aim of the Cable, is to not be
                       another volunteer led organisation but to actually try to
                       pioneer a different model for funding and for producing
                       media. (I:1 17/05/2016)

Adam and his colleagues launched a *Crowdfunder* in 2014, raising £3,344
(https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/thebristolcable/) to extend their workshop programme
and launch the print edition (*Appendix 13*). As stated in relation to *ALBOS,* crowdfunding
is unilateral/informal direct reciprocal exchange, because the appeal is made to the
audience, but a response is not guaranteed. Whereas indirect exchange in reciprocal
journalism leads to the paying forward to another member of the community,
Crowdfunding prompts an 'instrumental' response from the audience for the provision, a
'material capital' benefit (Molm *et al*, 2007: 200). The money from this *Crowdfunder* also
benefitted *The Cable's* community education and workshop programme which
represents an offline example of community building, indirect reciprocity. *Bristol Cable*
therefore falls between mechanical and organic solidarities as a hybrid model. The
operation's primary orientation is one of 'social action' and it is therefore an altruistic
organisation with a degree of communalization of roles, which are features of
mechanical solidarity (Jenks, 2005: 28). The model also includes aspects of organic
solidarity with a 'social bond' based on both 'difference' and 'interdependence' and with
a 'collective consciousness dispersed through the division of labour' (ibid).

  Although a small sample, the participants' in this section display the diversity of small
hyperlocal enterprises, with no two the same in terms of professional background of
operator or motivation for their involvement. *The Bristol Cable* differs the most, indeed its
members do not consider it a hyperlocal (Graham-Dillon, 2018), because its editorial
focus is campaigning journalism for marginalised communities as opposed to providing
small geographical ones with valuable but often banal information (Turner, 2015; Harte,
2018; Harte *et al*, 2019: 89-113). It also differs in terms of scale, since there are multiple
people involved in its operation yet there is only a single title. *The Cable* has been
included, since for the purposes of this thesis, hyperlocal is synonymous with

independent internet-era publishing that differs in scale and output from the mainstream. By including Bristol in the title, *The Cable* also includes a geographical focus.

The motivations of research participants', in terms of their 'primary orientation for social action' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28), varied between the purely altruistic of William Perrin, using his hyperlocal as a way of doing his community work, to those with a profit motive such as Pat Gamble and Richard Gurner. Jenks categorises a profit motive 'orientation' as 'egoistic' (2005: 28), terminology which suggests a degree of selfishness. Their profit motive was not a question of selfishness, these operations had become commercial because each participant was working on the provision fulltime and needed to pay themselves rather than cross-subsidise from other work. The approach was therefore pragmatic, acknowledging the need to earn a living, while displaying evidence of shared values and beliefs among independent operators (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). This was particularly evident at *The Bristol Cable,* which as a community benefit society was an altruistic model and their 'conscience collective' extended to paying people a fair wage for their services (Durkheim, 1893/1984;1972: 3-9; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Adam stated the intention was to pay people rather than exploit them via the direct reciprocity of volunteer labour. *The Bristol Cable* was 'highly commended' in the 'Best Local/Regional News Site' at the 2017 *Online Media Awards* (2017).

4:3:2 Multiple title operations

All participants' in this section displayed a commercial approach to their hyperlocal activities even if the resulting income formed part of an atypical journalistic lifestyle. Here each of the participants' is involved in the publication of more than one title. This indicates a more sophisticated operation and, in many cases form of interdependence, corresponding with Durkheim's organic solidarity (1893/1984); which is 'predominant in more advanced societies' (1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). The increased sophistication is evidenced by more examples of research participants' working in a bilateral, negotiated exchange situations (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167) and a 'collective consciousness dispersed through the division of labour' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28).

David Jackman - Everything Epping Forest and Everything Harlow: Essex

David Jackman was one of the 'current or former professional journalists striking out on their own' to which Williams *et al* (2014: 9) refer, having recalibrated his professional life following redundancy. David worked for the same local newspaper group in Essex for 21 years, starting as a junior reporter in 1987 and rising through the ranks to eventually become editor. By the start of the recession the titles he edited were all owned by Newsquest Plc and he was made redundant during a cull of local titles. He used the opportunity to start his own three websites on which he worked full time:

> David Jackman: Everybody said you want to start your own paper. I thought well, I can't do that because of the costs of print and advertising and all the rest of it but thought perhaps I could do a website, and I didn't want to lose all the news contacts and other contacts that I'd had in the area. So, a website seemed a good idea. I started it the month after I left the paper, after I was made redundant and, basically, it's just grown and grown.
> I started the Harlow one about a year later. But the Epping Forest one's the most successful, based on the fact that I probably knew more contacts there than Harlow when I started it. (I:1 11/04/2016)

Having been marginalised by the mainstream, David utilised the sustained reciprocal engagement built up, over 21 years, to forge a new career. Although he lived in Harlow, he chose to start his first website in Epping Forest where he had most contacts indicating that reciprocal engagement was strongest; suggesting that being embedded in an area is about more than simply living there. He operated from a position of sustained reciprocity with the community, achieved after years of direct and indirect reciprocal engagement generated through acts of face-to-face reciprocal journalism. Following the success of the first two provisions, David started a third complementary website, *Everything Local News.*

> David Jackman: I jumped on the fact that with fewer reporters, papers aren't going out and covering events themselves and they're all losing their photographers as well, [...] So, basically, now it's me being press officer for about ten schools and a few charities and Eleanor Laing, the MP for Epping Forest.

David Jackman: So, basically, I'm their press officer, so if they've got an event that's worthy of coverage, however sort of newsy/photographic it'll be, I'll send out a press release on their behalf which goes to all the papers. But in addition, each client, so that's every school, every charity that I do, has got their own email address that I manage. (I:1 11/04/2016)

This was a new innovation for him, providing a 'news service' for local schools and organisations. This represents a negotiated reciprocal exchange situation between himself and community organisations, resulting in instrumental value for David. This new provision has evolved as a result of the symbolic reciprocity or trust resulting from his sustained investment in the community. David was operating from a position of mechanical solidarity.

Michael Casey - Your Thurrock and Your Harlow: Essex

Essex-based journalist Michael Casey was another of those branching out on his own, for him operating an online hyperlocal was the realisation of a personal ambition. In 2008 he decided he wanted to try 'a project on my own' describing it as 'Just one of those things, an itch I wanted to scratch' (I:1 06/05/2016). Michael emerged from a local newspaper background in Thurrock, Essex, and his motivations for independent publishing indicated frustration with the old-fashioned approach to mainstream local newspaper coverage: 'The whole tone of language and presentation seemed very stuck in almost the 1950s in the way, the language and speaking to people, and I wanted to do something maybe a little bit funkier' (I:1).

There was also a professional desire to acquire new skills such as blogging, filming and editing; after he witnessed journalists filming an interview during a press call in Northern France. He bought an *Apple Mac* and *iMovie* which allowed him to edit video and with his newly discovered skills started *Your Thurrock* in 2008. Like David Jackman, Michael also lived in Harlow, Essex, likewise his first hyperlocal was not in his home town; instead he started in Thurrock, 27 miles away in 2008 (Yourthurrockfilms, 2016). This was the news area he had worked as a reporter on the *Thurrock Gazette* and had many contacts, suggesting embeddedness. He started a second site *Your Harlow* in his home

town thanks to a £10,000 *Carnegie UK Trust* grant in 2013; a form of direct reciprocal negotiated exchange relationship with an instrumental outcome for the hyperlocal. Michael was a single owner/operator working fulltime on the hyperlocals, identifying himself as 'one person, who works very hard' (I:1). But he was quick to acknowledge the support of his wife - 'the common-sense department' - and numerous contributors who all played a part 'was Steven Spielberg on his own?' (I:1) he commented:

> Michael Casey: You build up such a large group of contributors, whether it's Janet from the Women's Institute to Mr Perrin, the blogger, 83 years of age who once a month, he goes and asks one question to Thurrock Council and funnily enough, in Harlow there's Mr Hoad, who once a month asks a question to Harlow Council, and I'm sure everybody will say we have Mr Jones and Mr Brown. I love that. I love that idea and that's my community, but I am the human hub and the curator, the collator, etc., that's what I do. (I:1 06/05/2016)

Michael's use of contributors indicates volunteer labour which is a form of direct reciprocal exchange (Harte *et al*, 2017: 169) his references to 'my community' and his role as 'curator' indicate the embedding of mechanical solidarity. He was the only research participant to have entered into a lengthy negotiated exchange relationship with mainstream media, having been in partnership with Local World Ltd between 2014 and 2016. The partnership came to an end when Local World was bought by Trinity Mirror Plc (now Reach Plc*).*

Daniel Ionescu - The Lincolnite, Lincolnshire Business and Lincolnshire Reporter: Lincolnshire

Daniel Ionescu graduated in journalism from the *University of Lincoln* in 2010 into a media industry ravaged by cuts to jobs and titles at the height of the crisis in local newspaper journalism (Franklin, 2006; Lewis *et* al, 2008; Fowler, 2011; Nielsen, 2012; Ramsay & Moore, 2016; Ramsay *et al*, 2017; Williams, 2017). As the crisis in the mainstream deepened he and two friends, one a journalist and the other a web designer, started their own online hyperlocal, cross subsidising their time on the provision with freelance work:

Daniel Ionescu: We decided to start a little project called The Lincolnite
which would test the waters and see how people would react
to a new local news website. We basically had a lot of
experience from our university days. We ran the student
newspaper and we wanted to create something without the
student stigma which would kind of like serve the city.
At the time, we had a daily local newspaper covering the
county and it was like today's news tomorrow type of thing.
They were holding everything back for the next day's edition.
So, we came along to bring today's news today. I think just
over a year after we launched, the paper changed to weekly
so from there, we started to have an even higher increase in
readership. And fast-forwarding to today when we reach
about half a million people a month with our website. (I:1
25/04.2016)

By the time of the first interview, Daniel was the only remaining founding director at
Stonebow Media Ltd. In an example of organic division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984;
Jenks, 2005: 28) he had formed a partnership with Dean Graham who contributed
complementary business skills in digital innovation and marketing. In 2014 they
increased their independent publishing activities to include a weekly digital business
magazine called *Lincolnshire Business.* The original hyperlocal covered the city of
Lincoln, Daniel said that the decision to expand had been because advertisers were
looking to reach businesses outside the city. This is a situation which indicates direct
reciprocity, although since there is instrumental value involved and a business
relationship this would suggested a degree of bilateral/negotiated engagement. They
had also expanded into events as well launching *Lincolnshire Business Sector* and
Lincolnshire Digital Awards which are examples of community building offline reciprocity,
similar to *Dartford Living*. Although with Stonebow Media the events were run with a
view to creating instrumental value for the company. Daniel indicated the organic
division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28) that existed at Stonebow
Media, which employed 10 fulltime staff in addition to himself and Dean.

Daniel Ionescu: I mainly look after the editorial team and a part of the
advertising management, the managing the accounts,
keeping in touch with people with our biggest clients, key
clients, besides the editorial duties and I also look after our
semi-automated job board. Dean looks after the incoming
stream of clients, new business and he's also looking after
our events manager and they work together on the range of
events we have. But, of course, being a small company, I still
get to try my hand at most things. (I:2 23/06/2017)

Other members of the team included professional journalists, a photographer, editorial staff, a designer and an events manager who worked together as specialists:

   Daniel was one of an emerging group of enterprising professional journalists (Deuze and Witschge, 2018: 197) who had started his operation in the wake of the crisis in the mainstream. As Simon Perry previously noted Daniel's approach was pragmatic, he did what was 'right for the business.' Indeed, Williams *et al* (2014: 20) identified *The Lincolnite* as 'one of the most successful community news startups in the UK'. At the start of the research period plans were at an advanced stage to start a third publication called *Lincolnshire Reporter* as a daily news website covering the whole county, this had been launched by the second interview. In 2017 *Lincolnshire Reporter* was nominated for 'Best launch' and *The Lincolnite* for 'Best local/regional website' at the *Online Media Awards* (2017).

Richard Coulter, Emma Cooper, Gary Brindle, Richard Drew and Paul Breeden - The Local Voice Network: Bristol

The Local Voice Network Ltd is a Bristol-based operation with multiple titles (*Appendix* 12) run as a 'grassroots' independent franchise operation; as distinct from the 'top down' franchise operations set up by mainstream operations (Baines, 2012; Thurman *et al*, 2012; Barnett and Townend, 2014).

   At the time of the first interview there were five members of the group responsible for a total of 10 hyperlocal titles between them. Richard Coulter and Emma Cooper were founders and joint directors of the Network with each running their own hyperlocal titles. The franchise evolved as a direct response to the crisis in local newspapers (Radcliffe, 2012: 16; Pennycook, 2015: 15-16; Harte, 2017: 132 to 143), when both Richard and Emma took redundancy from the *Bristol Evening Post* on the same day and met by accident in the lift.

> Richard Coulter: It was a bit of a stroke of luck. So, we decided to meet up because I thought well, I can do a magazine but I don't know much about advertising. So, we started the Filton one and much to my surprise, advertisers were interested, even though we didn't have a magazine to show them. So, we started from there with a small 16-page magazine in October 2011 and we built that one up, and after two or three months, it had expanded up to 32, and then 40, 48 pages. (I:1 27/05/2016)

Richard understood the importance of forming a business partnership with someone who had complementary advertising skills, to produce a commercial product. The *Voice* concept evolved from a publishing trend he had observed while working as Assistant Editor at *The Post* :

Richard Coulter: I'd seen all these local news magazines or local magazines around the city and in other places, and the thing I noticed was that they were absolutely rammed full of adverts. So, it felt to me that there was a commercial viability about them. Now what they didn't have was much in the way of what I thought was good content and some of them don't have any content at all, and then some of them would be a few advertising features and maybe a couple of photographs but largely they were advertising booklets.
So, I thought maybe our USP could be we take the commercial viability of these publications but do it in such a way that there's a reasonably good show of local relevant hyperlocal news. So, I left the Post and I took redundancy so I was able to experiment for a few months with the thing and I decided to set one up. (I:1)

Following the success of *Filton Voice* (*Appendix 11*), Emma decided to start a title where she lived in Keynsham. The second hyperlocal confirmed that the formula appeared to be working, Richard said that the Keynsham title was: 'Even more successful than Filton. It's a bigger place, there's more businesses' (I:1). Six months later she started *Bishopston Voice* followed by *Henleaze and Westbury Voice,* in neighbouring areas. As her number of titles increased, Emma realised she needed help from someone with artwork skills and approached another former colleague Gary Brindle:

Emma Cooper: I had somebody in to help me with the artwork side, because really my knowledge is quite basic, and we spoke to somebody who'd actually been with us at the Evening Post in the past who was working for himself in the actual design side, and he decided to do one himself as well. So that's really how the licencing side started. So, we took people on who wanted to do a newspaper within their own areas. Obviously myself and Richard would be there to help, provide artwork and knowledge and mentoring. (I:1 07/06/2016)

147

Gary was a former colleague of both Emma and Richard, who had been working for the *Bristol Evening Post* for 30 years, when his job as production manager was outsourced to India. Having been marginalised by mainstream local media, Gary worked as a graphic designer. He ended up designing boxes, a job he didn't like, so decided to go freelance:

> Gary Brindle: I saw on Facebook that Emma had started the publication, I think it was the Bishopston one or the Keynsham one at the time, and I just phoned her up and said "if you want anything doing, then just give me a shout". So, she went, "I'm desperate, I need ads designing". So, I went and worked with her, this was just approaching Christmas and she turned to me and said, "This is something you could do. Why are you just doing this? Why don't you think about doing your own publication?" We sat down and thought about it and decided to take the plunge. So that's how it came about really, it was because I was designing Emma's ads sat over there, listening to her on the phone, saw what she was doing and I just thought, actually I could do this. (I:1 14/06/2016)

He started *Downend Voice* in 2013 and *Fishponds Voice* two years later in 2015. Gary chose to start his first hyperlocal in an area of Bristol where he didn't live, a decision that was a combination of local knowledge and commercial nous. It was his wife who suggested Downend because she originated from the area: 'The thought behind it was that I needed a high street and that was why I chose Downend and incorporated Staple Hill into that. So, yes, I knew quite a bit about the area' (I:1). Gary started the second title because two ladies investigating starting a franchise in Fishponds pulled out at the last minute. He said: 'I thought at that time, there's been such a lot of research gone into it, it makes sense to actually grab it and do it myself.' He persuaded one of the original duo to sell advertising for him: 'She said yes, and she still does now' (I:1).

Emma reflected that after the *Downend Voice* the franchise: 'Really started spiralling' (I:1). A third publisher joined the *Voice Network*: Richard Drew a broadcast journalist, presenter and commentator. His circumstances were different, he had been living abroad and came back to live in the Bristol area. He was searching for a regular, part time project, to provide a constant income and allow him to carry out his broadcast work. Before discovering the *Voice,* Richard had tried his own magazine: 'I'm licking my

wounds after trying to do a glossy round here, which lost a lot of money, a lot of outlay. Whereas this model is a good model because the outlay is probably minimal and you've got back up' (I:1 14/06/2016). Richard's description about 'having back up' indicates the presence within the group of both a: 'social bond based on interdependence' and: 'collective consciousness dispersed through the division of labour' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). Richard Drew's professional life consisted of an 'atypical' work pattern comprising serial short term contacts as a sports presenter and commentator; he commentated at the Rio Paralympics shortly after the first interview in 2016. He was looking for a long-term project to fit in with his 'atypical' work situation when a friend at *The Post* put him in touch with Richard Coulter.

<blockquote>
Richard Drew: I had a conversation and it struck me that it might be something that could be a long term thing in terms of looking after your pension and stuff like that, but also something that would keep me busy and keep me engaged whilst I wasn't doing other stuff. So that's how it started basically. (I:1 14/06/2016)
</blockquote>

He started *Frome Valley Voice* in 2013, in the area where he lived, then in 2015 added a second title *Yate and Chipping Sodbury Voice* in an adjoining area. They proved a good fit with his commentating work, which was financially better rewarded but a less reliable income stream than the hyperlocal: 'At least this is a constant' (I:1). As well as the embedding, resulting from living in *Frome Valley,* Richard employed a local embedded journalist, with good contacts but marginalised by the mainstream, to provide content: 'She was the 'South Glos' reporter for *The Post,* so she comes up with stories for both papers' (I:1). Because of his broadcasting commitments, the interdependence aspect of the *Voice Network* was particularly appealing to Richard:

<blockquote>
Richard Drew: Initially I did it all, and I learned how to put the paper together and I learned how to do everything really, and then it became clear that it was probably better not to do that. So, Gary, who does the Downham Voice and Fishponds Voice, he's a graphic designer by background. So, he puts the paper together and obviously a lot of the advertising is sold throughout. So, a lot of advertising comes via Emma because obviously she's a full time sales person, so she sells across them all. I do sell advertising but I'm not out there aggressively looking for advertisers. I think if it was a full time job, it would be a bigger paper. And Gary puts the papers together for me. (I:1)
</blockquote>

There was an instrumental element to the interdependence, because members also paid each other for work. Therefore, secondary bilateral/negotiated exchange agreements existed between colleagues, in addition to the primary franchise contract.

  Paul Breeden was the remaining member of the *Voice Network*, being the last to join the *Network* before the start of the research period. He was a journalist on a sister paper to *The Post* and he knew Richard Coulter. Paul took redundancy in 2008 and for the next seven years did a variety of jobs including freelance editing, lecturing and running a property maintenance business. Although working outside mainstream media, he maintained his active involvement with the *National Union of Journalists* (*NUJ*) and continued to work for those within it. He launched *South Bristol Voice* in 2015, producing two editions with the same masthead; a practice repurposed from the mainstream which Küng describes as 'zoning' (2008: 37).

> Paul Breeden: I thought Richard and Emma had a great idea and I spoke to him about it many times over the next couple of years. And it got to the point where I said I was going to do it but I never managed to extricate myself from my other business interests and eventually decided that I just had to do it, as I needed to find out whether I could make it work or not. Because I couldn't live with not knowing. (I:1 12/07/2016)

Paul was embedded in the area of his news operation, although it meant he was well informed it made him careful about what he published:

> Paul Breeden: There's a downside to it – and I do literally live in the middle of my area and it's a fairly small area, so I'm not going to do anything that… I wouldn't say I don't want to upset people… but I don't want to go out of my way to do it. Whereas on, say, if you're working on a city-wide paper or something a bit more remote, something that's perhaps not based in the immediate area, it will obviously have a lot more staff and a lot more people to hide behind.
> I'm not saying journalists get blasé but they're less worried about offending people and I have to think all the time about whether I'm going to do that and whether it's worth doing that, presenting something that puts someone in an unfavourable light. I think even more about that than I have done before. I'm not talking about… obviously you don't want to libel anyone ever, but I'm not in the business of presenting stuff that's anodyne and boring, but you do have to think about what might cause offence. There's an extra layer of pressure in that you're also dealing directly with the advertisers. (I:1)

'Connectedness and embeddedness' was the reason Lewis *et al* single out community journalism as a good starting point for observing reciprocal journalism in practical situations (2014: 232). Paul's reflection identifies the difference in 'distance' between a reporter working on a regional or city-wide media organisation and that of community journalists. The latter enjoys a 'distinct closeness to local or niche audiences' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 230) but such embedding can be uncomfortable for those who have come from larger media organisations. It also underlines the mechanical solidarity ethic of the community reporter, compared to the organic solidarity of reporters from larger papers who are not embedded.

Richard Drew expressed similar reservations about physical closeness to the audience: 'People are interested in what's going on around them, so it works, it definitely works – although whether it's wise to do it in the middle of where you live is another matter' (I:1). Harte *et al* indicate that their reservations are not unfounded, they note that for hyperlocal operators: 'The proximity to audience can result in uncomfortable encounters for those who cover crime' (2019: 118). Peter Cole indicates the fine line that a journalist, physically situated in the community, navigates between reporting the news and preserving 'the crucial importance of trust' (2006: 75). He said that when local district offices were the norm a local reporter would feel the wrath of a disgruntled member of the public:

> Unlike their here-today-gone-tomorrow counterparts on the national press, they would know that if they upset a member of the local community by getting it wrong, or sometimes getting it right, he or she would be on the phone to the editor or at the front desk the next day complaining (Cole, 2006: 75).

In her 2015 doctoral study Rachel Howells found that 'district offices were significant resources for both reporters and local people' (2015: 180) and that election turnout in Port Talbot: 'declined from around the time the district offices closed' (2015: i). Building trust is at the heart of reciprocal journalism and is in its most developed form as 'sustained reciprocity'; where there is a 'sustained and continually growing relational trust and goodwill' (Lewis *et al* 2014: 235). The maintenance of trust is therefore a long-term objective and one which could potentially be undermined at any time. There is an additional challenge for independent publishers, running commercial organisation, particularly if they have been professional journalists. As Picard indicates (2010) professional journalists have been traditionally isolated from commercial decisions, which distanced them from advertisers. The relationship of trust between an

independent publisher and their community is therefore further complicated, as Paul Breeden notes, by the extra pressure of dealing with advertisers.

Informal exchange relationships are generally the focus of reciprocal journalism, because of their potential to foster relationships in the community; from which the creation of trust can emerge (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al*, 2017). The franchise arrangement at Local Voice Network provides an opportunity to witness solidarity emerging from a negotiated exchange situation (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232). There was a contractual agreement which linked each publisher to the network but beyond that members displayed both a 'social bond based on interdependence' and a 'collective consciousness dispersed through division of labour' (j, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). There was a symbiotic relationship between the members of the group, which comprised three journalists, one of them broadcast, a graphic designer and an advertising expert. Beyond the negotiated exchange relationship with the *Network,* there were other bilateral arrangements between the members of the group who bought and sold services from each other. This particularly benefitted Richard Drew, the freelance presenter and commentator, who worked part-time on his publications and frequently needed 'cover' when he was away on assignment. Having at first tried to do everything himself, he realised that rather than learning skills he didn't possess it was better to contract out different aspects of the production process and concentrate on what he was good at.

The *Network* was characterised by 'heterogeneity' or difference, which is a feature of Durkheim's organic solidarity (1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28), this was underpinned by the sophisticated organisation of the group which had progressed beyond the simpler organisational structure of mechanical solidarity (ibid). Naldi and Picard cautioned that journalists who started independent news operations could be hampered by 'formational myopia' (2012), if they imported high-cost industrialised working practices from mainstream news organisations which then hampered the independent operation. This could happen because the traditional isolation of journalists from commercial decisions in industrialised settings (Picard, 2010). The Local Voice Network had not been hampered by formational myopia (Naldi and Picard, 2012; Cook and Sirkkunen, 2015), the focus was clearly on creating 'news and information that had value' (Picard, 2010) thus providing members with an income. Certain operational aspects of the parent culture had been adopted: the advertising revenue model (Picard, 2002; 139-154; Howells' 2015: 12-19) and the interdependence of different trades. Richard Coulter's senior position at *The Post* meant he was more exposed to the commercial side of the

business and he appreciated the need to team up with an advertising expert, to complement his journalistic and business skills. Having formed a business partnership with Emma Cooper, who possessed these skills, she then teamed up with Gary Brindle who had the design skills that she lacked. By the time of the first interview she had a sizeable staff:

> Emma Cooper: Well, for me personally, not including distributors and just the editorial and people like that, then you're looking at probably seven to eight people in our operation, but then you've got in total I'd probably say at least 18 people, and that's not including distributors when it goes up to 50 / 60 / 70 people. (I:1 07/06/2016)

Richard Drew was dependent on support from other members of the network, particularly Emma and Gary, so that he could carry out his primary employment as a presenter/commentator.

 The *Network* emerged as a result of the crisis in the parent culture. As four members had previously worked for one mainstream employer, there were common values and beliefs which translated into a shared understanding of a certain collective way of working, suggesting mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). Paradoxically this way of working displayed as 'collective consciousness displayed through the division of labour' which was a feature of organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). This suggested that the 'heterogeneity' and 'interdependence' aspects of organic solidarity (ibid.) may have been retrieved and repurposed from the parent culture.

David Prior, Emma Gunby and Martin Johnston - Hyperlocal Today: Greater Manchester/Merseyside

The Hyperlocal Today franchise was a much newer project than The Local Voice Network, and differed because it was online only, whereas the *Voices* were primarily print products. Its founder was David Prior who started his journalistic career at the *Press Association* and then moved to newspapers: *The Liverpool Daily Post* and *North West Enquirer* where he focused on sport:

David Prior:	My experience with print journalism sort of led me to think that it was a dying industry really and the kind of thing that, no matter how good your paper was, it would probably still sell fewer copies the next day. So that was all a bit demoralising and so I took a little bit of a deliberate kind of... I took a sidestep into PR and ended up in digital marketing and worked in PR and marketing for about, it ended up being three or four years I think. (I:1 12/05/2016)

Then a bike accident made him review his career path: 'I knew that my strengths lay in journalism and that's what I still enjoyed the most' (I:1). His reaction to this crisis in his life was to set up as a freelance making 'a vow that I would only work in online journalism, I wasn't interested in print' (I:1). He got a part time job editing a business news website *Prolific North* and in 2014 set up a hyperlocal *Altrincham Today* in his home town in Altrincham in Greater Manchester:

David Prior:	I suppose it was partly out of frustration with my own local paper and knowing that I could do a better job and to me, it was just blindingly obvious where it was going and you only need to look at a handful of forecasts to see that really, unless the model was rethought, the whole thing was just going to go under. And I suppose just out of that, I thought I wonder if I could set up my own website ... but run it on a smaller patch than my local paper was [...] People think a local paper covers a fairly small patch but actually in relative terms, it covers a fairly large patch in the sense that it covers a cluster of neighbouring towns that are only really related because they're next to each other. They're not really related because they have any great affinity between them. (I:1)

David's frustration at the output of the local newspaper and his decision to set up in opposition displays elements of resistance (Hall and Jefferson, 2006) to mainstream output. He also identified the lack of embeddedness of legacy local papers which he felt were trying to cover an area that was too large. *Altrincham Today* was well received by the community, but he wanted to make it more easily accessed by people on the move, so redesigned the site to an easily replicable 'mobile first' model. The format was so 'user friendly' that in 2015 he rolled it out as the franchise model Hyperlocal Today. At the start of the data collection period he had eight franchise holders: 'I want to organically grow it and hopefully the time will come where it can step up a level.' He still edited the business website alongside his other commitments, to *Altrincham Today* and the franchise business, in an atypical working pattern that drew from several income

steams (*AFJ*, 2006). He also had negotiated exchange relationships with other specialists:

David Prior:	Yes. I've got various contractors. I've got the web team that built the site, they handle all the technical stuff. I've got an advertising freelance person. I've got a freelance graphic designer. So, they all just come in as and when is required, basically. (I:1)

David had found a very 21st Century solution to providing the necessary skills to optimize his use of *Google DoubleClick* advertising services. He employed someone who used to work for the company on a freelance basis: 'He just handles all the setting up the campaigns and reporting and all the rest of it. He lives in Hyderabad so we just communicate by *Skype*. Found him through one of the freelance work sites' (I:1). This evidenced a very imaginative approach to organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972: 3-9; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28), David had introduced heterogeneity and created a 'social bond based on interdependence' with someone thousands of miles away who he had never met.

The second Hyperlocal Today title, *West Kirby Today,* in West Kirby, on the Wirral Peninsular in Merseyside, was launched in January 2016 by Emma Gunby and business partner Mark Thomas, a former editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post* (http://westkirby.today/about/). In late 2015 Emma was running her own social media marketing website (*Neon Fox Marketing)* and Mark was semi-retired. They had worked at the *Press Association* and knew David. Mark was looking to do some freelance PR and marketing work and approached Emma for advice. Emma said that a conversation over a coffee began with them talking about the crisis in local newspapers and the cuts to local news, this then led to them 'bizarrely' talking about an American TV series called *The Newsroom*:

Emma Gunby:	It's all about news and what is news in the digital age and we both really loved this series and got talking about that, and at the end of it we were kind of like, we'd really love to do something, a back to basics, very, very local news. […] I said do you know David Prior's doing this really interesting project, and we got talking about that and we just called him. So, it was literally very fluid. We had a debate about local news. We knew David, we got in touch and we were like this is exactly what we want to do. Then it went from there. So, *Altrincham Today* had been his first site, which he obviously runs himself and then we were the second to actually launch. (I:1 14/06/2016)

Their desire of wanting to do 'back-to-basics, very, very local news' suggests themes of retrieval of socially cohesive elements (Cohen, 1972) and resistance to what was on offer in the mainstream (Hall and Jefferson, 2006). The decision to start a hyperlocal stemmed from a conversation about cuts in local news provision, which suggests resistance to the type of output from the mainstream (ibid.). There was also evidence of shared values and beliefs in their motivation for hyperlocal publishing, in line mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28).

Emma ran a social media marketing company alongside the hyperlocal, so possessed journalistic, marketing and business skills; for Mark, *West Kirby Today* was a retirement project. They were particularly keen on the project because David had already done the groundwork, setting up the IT and creating a generic design for the sites:

Emma Gunby: That massively appealed to us because I think the thing that Mark and I love is being journalists and we know that that's what we're good at. We like finding the stories, writing stories, interviewing people and actually everything that goes around that. Making sure the IT systems work and your branding and all of that kind of stuff, that's not the bit that we love and are passionate about, which we think actually is really key for these kinds of hyperlocal sites.
You've got to have that passion first, why you're doing it which is informing the local community of stuff that really, really matters to them. So, all we had to do is, it's pretty simple to use. David taught us how to use the system and then from there, it was just literally all we needed to do was go and find the stories and then it's really simple to use from there. (I:1)

The desire to work as part of a collective operation was as strong with Emma and Mark as it was with the *Voice* members. Therefore, by the time of the interview there was a contract in place and a degree of heterogeneity and interdependence between operators (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28) although it was less developed than at The Local Voice Network. Having all worked for the *Press Association* (*PA*) there was a degree of solidarity due shared heritage, suggesting mechanical solidarity (ibid), a negotiated reciprocal engagement situation in respect of the franchise agreement (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167).

The third member of the group to take part in the study was Martin Johnston who launched *Stockport Today,* in Stockport, Greater Manchester, soon after Emma and

Mark in March 2016. However, by the time of the interview (21/06/2016) he had given up the franchise to start a full-time job, the week after the interview. This situation reflects the messiness of research and acknowledges that it is equally important to explore those hyperlocals which have ceased operation. Martin took on the franchise in his home area, Stockport, because he wanted something to run alongside his other occupation working part time at a local radio station. After running the website for three months a fulltime marketing and communications job offer came 'out of the blue', otherwise he stated he would have continued with the website. Williams *et al* (2014: 31) attribute changing personal circumstances as a frequent reason for decline or closure of hyperlocals.

Sean Kelly, Annemarie Flanagan and Sue Choularton – NeighbourNet: West London

NeighbourNet Ltd was the longest running of the multi-title operations and displayed an organic division of labour (Durkheim 1893/1984) along the lines of a legacy local newspaper although it was online only. It was a mature operation, having started in 2000 at the time of the 'Dotcom bubble' (Madslien, 2010). Sean Kelly had worked in 'the City' for 20 years when he went into business with a software engineer:

> Sean Kelly: We were set up over 15 years ago now by myself and a guy called Tony Steele. The idea really was to do what we've done, which was to create a local news website, using the software that we developed ourselves, and then spread that pattern out to other adjacent areas in London […]. We've got ten websites now in the West and South West London area, which produce news on a weekly or fortnightly basis. (I:1 25/04/2016)

Their relationship was one 'characterised by heterogeneity' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28) with Sean providing business skills and Tony software expertise. Set against the time frame of the crisis in internet-era mainstream local media, discussed in Chapter 3, NeighbourNet Ltd was launched at a time when local newspapers were still highly profitable businesses (Franklin, 2008, 8; Williams and Franklin, 2007: 14; Tait, 2013; 6-7). The era of 'consolidation and mergers' in the mainstream was underway (*Chapter 3*) and the disruption of the internet had not yet affected local newspapers. There was no hint of the approaching crisis and local newspapers were a business

success. Nevertheless, Sean indicated that poor local news coverage was part of the reason for launching *Chiswick W4*:

> Sean Kelly: Partly, I suppose at that point, everybody was going to become a billionaire by setting up a website, so I can't deny that that wasn't a factor. But I think there was also consciousness that we weren't being well served by local news and it was an obvious gap in the market. (I:1)

The *Chiswick W4* site was established first and since then a network of a further nine sites in west London has followed. NeighbourNet operated a similar division of labour to a scaled down legacy newspaper operation with a high degree of both 'difference' and 'interdependence' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). While Sean dealt with the commercial side of the business and Tony IT, neither possessed journalism skills. They solved the content generation issue by employing professional journalists as part time editors, who worked for their respective websites on a stipend basis; in a bilateral negotiated exchange situation (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167). The editors were based on their 'patches' with Chiswick the group headquarters. Sean worked at NeighbourNet fulltime with staff that included: the editor of *Chiswick* W4, an administrator providing both accountancy and HR functions and advertising staff responsible for selling for all of the sites. Everyone was in a negotiated exchange relationship with the company.

  Two of the employees were Annemarie Flanagan editor of *Ealing Today* and *Acton W3* websites and Sue Choularton editor of *Wimbledon SW19*, both were embedded in their areas. Annemarie Flanagan was a former *BBC News 24* broadcast journalist who turned freelance when her first child was born. She became editor of *Ealing Today* in 2009 because it was part time and would work round her family commitments. She subsequently took over a second site as editor of *Acton W3*: 'I live in Ealing so I'm probably more hands-on in the Ealing area. Acton, I don't know the patch as well as Ealing, so I kind of have to sift out and look a bit more for the stories there' (I:1 03/06/2016). They are both part-time roles and after the stability of the full time salaried *BBC* work she was in an atypical work situation, where as a freelance she was always on the look-out for more work. She felt that as a community editor people did not treat her work as a wage-earning job : 'People think… I don't know what they think.

Sometimes they think we're just doing it as a hobby, but I need the money, I don't do it as a hobby, I have to work, it's a job for me' (I:1).

Her colleague Sue Choularton also worked part time as editor of the *Wimbledon SW19* site she said: 'I'm original old school journalist. I started as a newspaper reporter in Chester right out of university, so I've been through news reporter on newspapers, news editing. I ended up at the *Western Daily Press* in Bristol and then I went to work for *Teletext.*' (I:1 15/06/2016). When working at *Teletext* she was living in Wimbledon and working in Chiswick, she discovered the *Chiswick W4* website while commuting: 'I used to read that site all the time so it was just part of my life. Every day I'd look at it when I got in and I'd look at it when I left work at the end of the day' (I:1). In 2009 *Teletext* was shutting down so, with redundancy imminent, she approached NeighbourNet about starting a Wimbledon site. She launched *Wimbledon SW19* in 2010 and like Annemarie does other freelance work. Neither editor had to sell advertising and the extent of their involvement was to forward suggestions to the reps:

> Annemarie Flanagan: There's just Penny and Stuart really, I think, are the main two who will pull in the… so we will put the feelers out and I always send suggestions over on new businesses I see opening and I'll send it to Stuart and he'll say "I'll see what I can do"… Leave them to it and see if they can get some deal signed. (I:1)

She described a social bond based on interdependence where there was a 'collective consciousness dispersed through division of labour' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). The group dynamic was important to both editors, Sue was frequently in touch with her neighbouring editors because they often shared ideas:

> Sue Choularton: We definitely collaborate and we often email each other, so we're all in a group. So even though I'm working at home on my own, I do sort of feel part of the team and we meet up as well […] Probably the whole group socially meets up three or four times a year. We all met up only about a month ago. I would definitely meet up, like I say, with Penny, the commercial person [advertising], it probably works out about once a month and then the Putney Editor and Wandsworth, because we're more interrelated, we do, again probably only every two or three months. (I:1)

As well as the reciprocity of the 'negotiated exchange' type in operation, because everyone was salaried, there were other examples of a 'social bond based on interdependence' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28):

> Sue Choularton: When I'm away, there's a couple of neighbouring editors, certainly one main neighbouring editor, Putney, which is just next door to Wimbledon, she stands in for me. So actually I have just been away so the Putney Editor and Sean in headquarters were sort of standing in for me. (I:1)

Annemarie didn't have neighbouring editors so when she was away, Sean covered for her. But agreed that it was: 'nice having people to bounce off things with' (I:1). Occasionally she referred things 'up', to Sean, because she wanted another 'set of eyes' particularly for legal queries: 'There is interaction basically; it's quite important' (I:1). This situation of interdependence, being able to bounce ideas off each other, is borrowed from mainstream local newspaper. Also borrowed is the distancing of journalists from commercial decisions (Picard, 2010), with advertising specialists having sole responsibility for this aspect of the business. This contrasted with the newer independent franchise operations The Local Voice Network and Hyperlocal Today where those operating titles had to embrace entrepreneurial skills which meant becoming involved in commercial decisions.

4:4 Conclusion

Exploring biographical motivations and professional backgrounds revealed that many research participants' arrived in independent hyperlocal media as a direct result of the crisis in mainstream media. There were tales of marginalisation, as a result of redundancy, and narratives of resistance to the mainstream; with operations started as a result of dissatisfaction with existing media. Most participants lived in the hyperlocal area, although clearly it would be difficult for those running more than one title to live in both. Where this was the case their second or third hyperlocal either shared a boundary or other synergy with the first.

Applying reciprocal journalism theory to the narratives of participants', accessed bilateral/negotiated forms of direct reciprocity (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) where there was a contract in pace. Durkheim's theory of *The Division of Labour in*

Society (Durkheim, 1893/1984) was then applied to identify solidarity in negotiated forms of engagement. It also revealed a commonality of values and beliefs, or 'a conscience collective' (Giddens, 1978) displayed by participants' in their motivations for venturing into hyperlocal publishing.

Many of the research participants' with media backgrounds appeared more comfortable in organic division of society scenarios, prevalent in mainstream media. Those in the larger organisations enjoyed working in a collective situation, where they had support. Those without media backgrounds possessed transferable skills, in business, communication or IT. They also largely favoured division of labour situations, forming partnerships with people possessing complimentary skills or accessing those skills in other ways. Not-for-profit organisations like *Bristol Cable* were able to access expertise thanks to their altruistic media co-operative status. While commercial organisations like Local Voice Network, NeighbourNet Ltd or Stonebow Media entered into bilateral/negotiated exchange relationships acquire the necessary skill sets.

Participants' displayed the altruism of the 'conscious collective' present in mechanical solidarity, but many combined this with the interdependence of organic division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972; Aron, 1967; Giddens, 1978; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Organic division of labour was used to reduce precarity, operators often formed business relationships with those possessing advertising or commercial expertise. Most participants' worked on their provisions part time. For several the hyperlocal enterprise provided a significant income stream. Freelance presenter and commentator Richard Drew described it as his more constant income, 11 participants' considered their operations stable enough to form their main income.

Chapter 5: "I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism

5:1 Introduction:

Face-to-face, or footwork, journalism was once a part of everyday local reporting, but staff cuts, centralisation and online strategies have altered the working practices of reporters from mainstream organisations. This chapter will focus on the everyday activities of independent hyperlocal operators and how they are reviving traditional working practices. The academic study of subcultures begins by positioning them in relation to the mainstream or 'parent' culture (Cohen, 1972; Williams, 2011). Therefore, viewing excessively local independent news sites through a subcultural lens acknowledges that the parent culture of local legacy media has shaped the context within which hyperlocal is understood (Hess and Waller, 2016). Cohen (1972: 23) further suggests that each subculture 'attempts to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture' and I will use this aspect of subculture theory to identify and discuss elements of local newspaper culture that have been salvaged and repurposed by independent publishers for use in their everyday activities.

  A theoretical strand used to develop this discussion will be reciprocal journalism, because it uncovers the processes involved in the everyday, offline relationships formed when journalists interact with members of the community face-to-face. Reciprocity is defined by Linda Molm, David Shaffer and Jessica Collett, (2007: 199) as: 'giving of benefits to another in return for benefits received.' Based on the work of Molm and colleagues, Seth Lewis, Avery Holton and Mark Coddington introduced reciprocal journalism as a: 'new analytical framework' (2014: 231) acknowledging that reciprocity exists in both online and offline community settings. Dave Harte, Andy Williams and Jerome Turner (2016) identify examples of both, online and offline reciprocal practices, in the largest mixed method study of the UK hyperlocal sector (Williams *et al*, 2014). The chapter will identify acts of reciprocity between participants' and their communities, evident in my own study, to introduce a subcultural angle of traditional acts of reciprocal journalism which have been 'salvaged' from the, much diminished, parent culture of local

newspapers discussed in Chapter 3 (*Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture*).

Evidence in this chapter will therefore provide a response to research question two:

RQ2: What are the working practises of the independent publishers?

  The first section will look at the news gathering practices of hyperlocal journalists and how they are embedded in their communities; this is a practice that has been rejected by the parent culture of mainstream media with the closure of district offices (Howells, 2015). The embeddedness that results from a 'presence' in the hyperlocal area is an aspect of mechanical solidarity; embeddedness signifies being part of the 'conscience collective' which is at the heart of social cohesion in a particular community (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). The offline reciprocity of 'old fashioned footwork journalism' and 'tip-offs' from members of the public as a result of face-to-face contact, are evidenced in their narratives. Also the sometimes difficult relationship with mainstream media, resulting from their marginalised status.

  The second section will assess the 'banal' nature of hyperlocal coverage, suggesting that hyperlocals rebalance the 'reputational geography' of an area in the face of continual bad news and how 'just turning up' at local events enhances reciprocal engagement with the community.

  The third section considers those operations which are borrowing from alternative media, which is itself a subset of mainstream media: The *Bristol Cable* and *The Port Talbot Magnet* both have cooperative organisational structures. The fourth section takes a closer look at the case of Rachel Howells and *The Port Talbot Magnet* and what can happen when reciprocal engagement breaks down.

  The final section examines from a subcultural angle, how participants' finance their operations and whether they use advertising, the staple of mainstream media, or some other source. It also discusses the business world as a community, a look at print from a subcultural angle and furthers the discussion of precarity in terms of hyperlocal operations.

5:2 "Tip offs" and "rip offs": news reporting on the margins

The data for this study revealed that operators had a 'pick and mix' approach to mainstream local newspaper practices; retrieving certain aspects that were useful, but, rejecting others. The discussion will centre on participants' narratives about day-to-day news gathering, these evidenced the retrieving and repurposing of offline journalism practices as a result of being embedded in their neighbourhood. As part of the subcultural approach, news gathering practices rejected by mainstream media and adopted by operators will be identified. Certain practices had been adopted by operators regardless of whether they had previously worked within the parent culture.

Operators who had a background in mainstream media potentially brought with them 'baggage' from the parent culture according to Naldi and Picard (2012), who warned that professional backgrounds could be a hinderance as well as a help when starting a hyperlocal. They used the term 'formational myopia' to describe a situation where: 'pre-existing expectations and organizational objectives based on entrepreneurs' past experiences' (2012: 69) could adversely affect chances of sustainability unless they could adapt. While Naldi and Picard tended to focus on economic sustainability (2012), operator 'burnout' has been cited as a reason for the failure of hyperlocal enterprises (Williams *et al*, 2014: 32). Rejecting the mainstream practice of 'being first with the news' was necessary for the health and welfare of three participants', who had previously worked in large media organisations. Being on their own in a local environment involved a recalibration of their routines and expectations. Annemarie Flanagan, a former *BBC* journalist, spoke about having to fight the: 'newsroom mentality of a breaking news story' (I:1 03/06/2016). She described running round like a 'mad thing' when first starting at *Ealing Today*; before taking a reality check and thinking 'I'm not in a newsroom anymore, why am I doing this?' (I:1).   Emma Gunby and her business partner Mark Thomas, of *West Kirby Today*, had both worked for *The Press Association* (PA) for many years where certain work patterns and expectations were part of the job.

> Emma Gunby: That can be a difficulty of hyperlocal sites, especially when they're being run by people who've worked in big news organisations, is you're trying to run to those standards but you don't have those resources.

Emma Gunby: I think we're learning as we go along that actually sometimes it doesn't matter if we get it an hour or two hours later than everyone else, because the way our audience interacts with us is different. People will check in to read us, they don't maybe have those expectations that we're definitely going to be first with the news […]we've become a bit more relaxed because we had a period where there was just so much going on that we couldn't cope with it just on our own. So we had to relax and say we don't have to be first. Sometimes it'll have to wait and that's hard when you feel the responsibility on your shoulders, but I would say that's definitely a tricky one to balance. (I:1 14/06/2016)

Both Emma and Annemarie had adjusted their expectations and realised that they could not transfer large media organisation working practices to their hyperlocal operations. Before the first interview Michael Casey had been up all night covering elections and was exhausted. By the second interview he had adjusted his work life balance to take into account that he was working on his own, not as part of a media organisation:

Michael Casey: You think you have to cover everything and sometimes you'd spend 24/7 telling people why the police helicopter is up there. Sorry folks, I'm just leaving the phone. I'm here in my office and now leaving it and going downstairs for an hour and chatting and if I miss the biggest story in the world, I'm sorry but my health is really important here. That's a message to other hyperlocals. This is a marathon and not a sprint and I think that's what I learned from that week. (I:2 08/08/2017)

Paul Breeden and Richard Drew had made a different sort of adjustment in terms of their relationship with the audience. As discussed in Chapter 4 (*Participants' professional background and their motivation for independent hyperlocal publishing*), they were used to more distant relationships with the audience than that of a community journalist operating where they lived. They sometimes found the physical closeness of the audience unnerving.

  Such 'connectedness and embeddedness' with the community was the reason for Lewis *et al* singling out of community journalism as a good starting point for observing reciprocal journalism in practice (2014: 232). Before using reciprocal journalism for data analysis a recap is useful. The reciprocal exchange that this chapter will discuss is mainly the form of direct reciprocity where there is a *unilateral* flow of benefits between two actors: where A gives to B and B gives to A, but without any guarantee of something

in return (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232). This contrasts with the *bilateral* flow in negotiated exchanges, where A and B give to each other in a form of contract (ibid), as discussed in Chapter 4 in the context of participants' joint agreements. The *unilateral* form of direct reciprocal exchange is particularly valued, because the risk of no reciprocation provides opportunities to: 'demonstrate and develop trust and social bonding' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 233) which is a *symbolic* outcome. Such *symbolic* value may occur in addition to any *instrumental* value received from a partner's reciprocity (Molm *et al*, 2007: 213).

  In addition to the one-to-one exchange of *direct* reciprocity, there exists the one-to-many exchange of *indirec*t reciprocity which Lewis *et al*, describe as the 'bedrock of social networks, especially online' (2014: 234); because of its community building potential. *Sustained* reciprocity occurs when either of these two building blocks of social exchange, *direct* or *indirect*, occurs over a 'sustained' period of time (2014: 235). Harte *et al* note that *sustained* reciprocity: 'Marks the apotheosis of reciprocal communicative exchange in communities' (2017: 164-165; 2019: 126).

> Direct and indirect reciprocal acts can often be immediate and fleeting, but sustained reciprocity can only be achieved when relationships of exchange can be sustained over time, and in ways that ensure a steady stream of continued acts of mutual goodwill. (ibid)

Harte *et al* found 'extensive evidence of direct unilateral exchange in newsgathering practices of hyperlocals' (2017: 167) with offline practices such as walking an 'unofficial "beat"' where they made themselves visible within communities (ibid: 168). Traditional 'footwork journalism' was an aspect of traditional mainstream local reporting that most research participants' had revived, from the pre-internet era of local newspaper reporting; when getting out from behind a desk to speak to people, attend meetings and build contacts was once considered part of a local reporter's job. (Cole, 2006; Engel, 2009; Jackman, 2013). Participants' used terms such as 'face-to-face' or 'grassroots' journalism to describe what was effectively offline reciprocity.

  In the pre-internet era, journalists in local newspapers frequently cultivated 'contacts' by one-to-one direct offline reciprocity - going out into the community and meeting people (Engel, 2009). If the reporter, invested time in the community over a sustained period and built trust by regular direct reciprocity this could result in 'tip-offs' with the potential to develop sustained reciprocity. Harte *et al* note 'Such tip-offs, rooted in real world exchanges, were once the staple of local newspaper beat reporting, but have become rare since the […] large scale withdrawal of professional journalism from so many UK communities' (2017: 169). In contrast, the researchers found examples of hyperlocal

operators reviving footwork journalism, describing them as: 'Working both the digital "beat" and the real-world "beat"'(*Harte et al,* 2019: 125). They made a point of 'turning up' for quite parochial events such as local council meetings, shop openings and talent shows. Their physical presence in the community was in turn rewarded in terms of reciprocity with resulting tip-offs and online followers on *YouTube* or *Twitter.*
 Annemarie Flanagan said that 'presence' in the area was important (Hess and Waller, 2016): 'You can't kind of just let it go quiet for a while. People forget about you, so you've got to keep stories coming out' (I:1). Her statement emphasises the importance of the 'continued' element, suggesting that the reciprocal relationship is a fragile one, which can be easily lost, if not nurtured. Both she and NeighbourNet colleague Sue Choularton, lived 'on the patch' although Annemarie ran two, adjoining sites. Their embeddedness in the community underpinned their news values. She said that 'wheelie bins' were the current big topic in her area: 'There's a lot of local angst about wheelie bins so that's going to run and run, as it were, because that's something that everyone has something to say about' (I:1). NeighbourNet colleague Sue Choularton also viewed her patch through local eyes:

Sue Choularton:	As a resident. I tend to look at it from that perspective. So, I might write more about stuff like maybe parking and traffic and maybe even 'what's on' stuff that people would be interested in because I feel I have an interest, because I live here. I want to know what's on at the local theatre, that sort of thing. (I:1 15/06/2016)

Annemarie agreed: 'When I first took it on, I remember thinking "Yes, I want things that I want to read about," and I think that's why it's important for us to live in the patch, obviously because you care about what's going on and so you reflect that on your site' (I:1). Both Annemarie and Sue displayed the 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity because they assumed the position of someone living in the community when deciding their news agenda. This 'conscience collective' shared by the editors and their audience, where both writer and reader are potentially interested in the same things because they live in the same community, is in stark contrast to a view expressed by a Trinity Mirror Plc regional editorial director in 2016. In response to claims of clickbait, on the *Croydon Advertiser* by a former award-winning reporter*,* regional director Neil Benson said: 'The days when reporters could choose, arrogantly, to write about what

interests them, rather than what interests the audience, are over' (Mayhew, 2016). This difference in editorial approach illustrates the subculture of hyperlocal operations, in relation to mainstream corporate culture. The two NeighbourNet editors, believed that they shared the same interests as the audience, precisely because they all live in the same area. Furthermore Annemarie had confirmation that people read her email newsletters, because they would message her if it didn't arrive; providing an example of direct reciprocal engagement (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017).

Although Emma Gunby's had worked for the *Press Association* (*PA*), by the time of the interview, her primary income was derived from freelance social media management. Considering her professional involvement with online platforms, the expectation might be for her to privilege online communication. But she favoured a balance of online and offline engagement and was aghast that the value of face-to-face and telephone communication was being lost.

Emma Gunby:	I hear a lot about people like journalists, they'll only converse over Twitter, people are scared to… like old school journalist friends who still work in the industry are like they won't speak on the phone, they literally don't really… nobody phones anybody. We can't be like the old ones who are just moaning about how brilliant the old days were, but equally, I don't think there's much to beat actually speaking to people in person. (I:2 04/10/2017)

In fact, the second interview with Emma had to be delayed because at the pre-arranged time she was attending a breaking news story on her patch, which had come from a tip-off:

Emma Gunby:	We get a lot of tips from our readers, now, who'll send us stories in of things that they've heard. I definitely feel like, certainly in this area, we're probably the first port of call for a lot of people if there's something going on. So you saw the breaking news days we had last week [mentioned above] and we were just inundated with "What's going on, there's police everywhere?" And it just feels like really old fashioned grass roots journalism again, where people know you. I was walking the dog this morning and a woman stopped me in the street saying, what was all that about last week? I bumped into like the local ranger this morning and he's like, I'm doing this big fashion shoot today over on the island. So it's great. Old fashioned journalism mixed with modern techniques. (I:2)

Direct reciprocity which resulted in contacts 'tipping off' reporters was at the heart of traditional local journalism and several participants' spoke about being the first 'port-of-call' for contacts who had important stories. Michael Casey was rewarded for his investment in the community with a tip off about an accident, in Harlow, when a girl was killed when a bouncy castle broke free in high winds.

> Michael Casey: Saturday afternoon [...] somebody rings me up and says I think
> something nasty has happened in the town park... It's not difficult.
> You get in car, drive to car park [...] it then kicks in.
> I believe your professionalism, all the judgement calls you've got to
> make, of your filming. I'm 54 and I've been around the block a few
> times. Where I'm standing is, I think, a scene of a seven-year-old girl
> dying, so you've got to make lots of judgement calls there. But, as I
> said, a couple of days later I rang my source and said, 'Your local
> printed paper's been here for 33 years, I've only been here three
> years, you've got the BBC, why did you ring me?' 'I thought you'd
> turn up.' (I:1 06/05/2016)

The reply to Michael's question to his source 'Why did you ring me?' indicates that during the relatively short time he had been operating *You Thurrock* he had invested in the community, demonstrating 'prolonged and continued presence in place' (Hess and Waller, 2014:197). The local paper had been in existence for 30 years longer, but the investment in the community was missing. Michael meanwhile, had developed a reputation for personally attending stories and the tip-off was a result of this direct reciprocal engagement. The story which started as a phone call from a contact, became a national news story (*BBC News*, 2018).

Similar evidence of direct reciprocal engagement is demonstrated in *Table 5:1*. This features a section of interview with Richard Gurner, of the *Caerphilly Observer*, describing how a contact tipped off his trainee reporter, Gareth, after a face-to-face encounter. Offline reciprocity was a 'socially cohesive' aspect of the parent culture which Richard had missed when working in mainstream local newspapers (see Chapter 4). The interview also highlights reflexivity at work, between interviewer and interviewee, in interactive interviewing (Ellis, 1997:119-149). This journalistic interviewing style demonstrates part of the biographical inscription of this thesis.

Table 5:1 Section of interview with Richard Gurner of *Caerphilly Observer (I:1 06/05/2016)*

Richard: We found out through a local contact that the *Wales Ambulance Service* was going to be using a placebo in place of adrenaline to treat heart attacks as part of a secret trial to assess long term impact and the long-term effects of adrenaline on heart attack patients. It's very controversial.

And again. it was one of those situations where Gareth, again on the spot, doing footwork, foot journalism. He went out to a local foodbank to do a story on the local foodbank and he met somebody there, got chatting. A couple of weeks later, they contacted him and said my mate who's a paramedic has said that they're going to stop using adrenaline to treat heart attack patients, and it was one of those situations where it just sounded so out there, it was like, do you know what, we'll follow that up. Let's look into this a bit more, there was something there and again, Gareth found out it was part of this trial at *Warwick University,* contacted them and they were like, we don't want to talk about it.

Carol: No, I bet they didn't.

Richard: Instantly then it was like it's something big here, isn't it? If they just try to shut us down immediately, you knew there was something here.

Carol: Well done you.

Richard: So with my guidance, Gareth really put the work in and talked to all sorts of various people and again it was one of those situations where yes, this story is a little bit big for us in terms of we're very much a local newspaper. Even though we did the story, it's like let's try and get this to the nationals. So I tried to punt it out to *The Guardian* but they weren't having any of it.

Carol: Really?

Richard: Yes, bizarrely.

Carol: You would have thought it was right up their street, wouldn't you?

Richard: Yes. I spent two weeks trying to sell it to *The Guardian* and in the end, it was like, let's change track. So, *The Telegraph* took it in the end and had it on their front page which again was amazing and Gareth had only been a journalist for literally a matter of months.

Carol: A bit like Bob Woodward.

Richard: Yes, all of a sudden he's just on the front page of *The Telegraph* and he's like, flipping heck, amazing. So, all of a sudden we've got a bit of a thing going on here. And then *The Mail* and *The Times* stole it because *The Telegraph* put it up on their website the day before publication. So, it appeared on *The Mail's* website and *The Times* website and in their print editions and it was like we've just been ripped off here.

Again, it was like get on the phone to *The Mail,* you've ripped our copy off and their response was like, tough luck! *The Telegraph* put it up on their website so it's out there, we can do what we want. I was like, I'm not happy with that so got my *McNae's* out, the journalists' legal bible, looked up copyright, sent them a nice email threatening them under the *Copyright Designs & Patent Act* and they sent a cheque, £200. So again, that's more revenue. So, you always try and do little things like that.

Carol: What about *The Times*, did they give you anything?

Richard: Yes, *The Times* were really good about it. We phoned them up and they went, yes, just send an invoice and the standard rate is about £100. The original rate from *The Telegraph* was only £80 so

> we managed to end up making more chasing the people who ripped us off than selling the original article. But again though that was just a bonus, getting a bit of money out of that. The real thing for us was to win an award for that story.

The interview demonstrates not only the initial act resulting from direct reciprocity, which evolved from a piece of footwork journalism, but also provides a window into the subculture of hyperlocal production and its relationship with national newspapers. Richard's description of first trying to sell the story and then trying to retrieve the money from national media organisations which 'ripped off' the piece, underlines the subcultural claim for hyperlocal as marginalised by the mainstream. The *Caerphilly Observer* was outside of the parent culture inhabited by national newspapers and local legacy papers which belonged to the *News Media Association*; from which hyperlocals were excluded at the time of the research. *The Guardian* showed no interest in the story, to which I expressed my surprise because the paper prides itself on investigative journalism and I agreed with Richard's instinct to try them first. My 'Bob Woodward' comment refers to the *Washington Post* reporter (*BBC,* 2010) who had only been working as a journalist for a few months when he stumbled across the 1972 *Watergate* break-in; as an experienced journalist Richard clearly understood the cultural reference. This example provides evidence of the subcultural themes of marginality and antagonism.

  David Wimble wasn't looking for payment when a story that he published was picked up by the nationals, he was just delighted that the coverage drove traffic to his website:

> David Wimble: Our average hit on the website is about 300,000 unique hits a month, but we had one story last summer where there was an accident down the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway where the engine got hit by a tractor and it ended up on its side. Luckily no one was hurt. The two local newspapers published a really sensationalised story saying there was a chance the engine could explode and things like that.
> Being friendly with the people down the railway and with a working knowledge of the railway, not only did I get the best pictures almost instantly, but I wrote a very factual story of it. That got picked up by the Daily Mail and The Sun, who used my photos but had my website on the photo. The Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway Tweeted it was nice to have a factual thing and within three days, we had 2.3 million hits on the website from all over the world. We then also had lots of other specialist railway magazines asking if they could use our photos and take quotes. So over 100 different things where we said "yes, use what you like" but please just give us a credit for it. (I:2 1/6/2017)

David's railway story provides another example of sustained reciprocal engagement, he was able to access the best pictures immediately because he was 'friends with' and thus trusted by the railway operators. Also, by writing a very factual story he further repaid and nurtured that trust which existed between them. Peter Cole refers to the importance of accuracy, maintaining contacts and: 'the crucial importance of trust' that existed in local reporting during the pre-internet era (Cole, 2006; 75). These examples show that elements of offline reciprocity have been salvaged from mainstream local by hyperlocal operators – even those not from journalistic backgrounds.

   Accuracy was extremely important for participants', who went to great lengths to make sure they checked facts. A factually incorrect story could damage the bond of trust created through direct, indirect or even sustained reciprocity. Despite time pressures, Richard Gurner followed up press releases rather than succumbing to the temptation to print the contents unchecked.

Richard Gurner:	I've certainly got to keep my standards as high as I can. So a good thing yesterday, I had a press release through from a local insurance company, insurance brokers, "We've bust through the £10.7 million turnover mark, our profit is up by 34%, here are our figures." It was like am I just going to run that or am I just going to actually check on Companies House and what the score is. So I checked on Companies House, all the figures were completely wrong but again you have to do that. But again, that takes time and resource but you've got to do that, otherwise you just end up just publishing press releases. (I:2 14/07/2017)

Social media stories are even more potentially dangerous if not checked. Michael Casey cited an example of the contrasting treatment of a social media sourced story by himself and a local paper:

Michael Casey:	We had a story a couple of weeks ago where there was a funeral outside a church. The funeral cortege was waiting, a woman puts up on [social media site] a 30 second film and it's got a traffic warden and he's taking photographs of the procession as it's static. She's put, "Can't believe it, Thurrock traffic warden's put a ticket on a funeral, it's disgusting", and that's what she's saying on the film, look at this traffic warden – you can imagine it. […] It goes viral, comment after comment after comment, etc. The [local paper] put up the story, public outrage as Thurrock Council traffic warden tickets funeral. The story goes to the [national newspaper].

Michael Casey: Call me old fashioned because hyperlocal also means traditional reporting. I rang up the funeral directors and said, did you have a ticket imposed upon you? "No". Rang up Thurrock Council, did your parking attendant issue a parking ticket? "No". So my story on the Saturday morning was, Thurrock Council traffic warden victim of hate campaign [...] Call me old fashioned, but when something happens, we like to think, we like to check the facts. (I:2 08/08/2017)

He explained that, at the paper in question, the turnover of staff meant there had been a long succession of inexperienced trainees who 'come and go.' He said: 'the biggest danger is that they're putting stuff straight on the web' (I:2). Part of Richard and Michael's strategy of gaining trust in the community was to check stories before they were published, in Michael's case that involved employing direct reciprocal engagement and telephoning people. Both 'resisted' the temptation to skip the time-consuming fact-checking stage, because they were aware of the importance of building trust, evidencing the subcultural theme of resistance.

5:3 "I still think you'd win even if we built an office in your street": the development of trust in the community

Part of the subculture of hyperlocal, in terms of content, was not just the ground-breaking journalism which made national headlines, but parochial or 'banal' stories of traffic hold-ups, bad parking, broken street-lights (Harte *et al*, 2019: 3) and the population of 'newts' in a community (Lavelle: 2018). Jerome Turner used pet related stories to make his point about how communities engage through lost pets:

Hyperlocal media is, for many residents, key to an everyday understanding of their neighbourhood, a network of local information and events sitting outside of corporate or mainstream media that can encourage unexpected forms of civic engagement (Turner, 2015: 48)

Harte *et al* (2019: 142) discovered higher social media engagement, on one site in their study, for a lost dog story than local government stories. Harte described banal journalism as: 'News that reinforces normative values of a society through a shared everyday cultural specificity' (2018). A hyperlocal operator's investment in generalised parochial reporting comes under the heading of indirect reciprocity – a one to many approach where there is an element of community building resulting from recipients

173

assuming a collective entity (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 234). This collective identity resonates with the 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Harte *et al* note that an example of indirect reciprocity is: 'using a network to relay information quickly and accurately' (2016: 5). James Hatts of *London SE1* related a perfect example of this to delegates at the *Building the future of community journalism conference* (2018). He described how a temporary exclusion zone was set up by emergency services in the hyperlocal area after the *London Bridge* terror attacks in 2017. The zone, although necessary, was very disruptive for those living and working in the area with various streets cordoned off at different times throughout the investigation. To minimise the disruption to his readers James walked the perimeter on-a-daily basis *Tweeting* the extent of the zone and the diversions in place; in an example of both footwork journalism and indirect reciprocity.

  David Jackman invested time in the community with a physical presence and also included 'banal' copy in his news mix: 'I do all the things that I think a local paper should do but they don't anymore like your WIs and coffee morning stuff. I still go to Council meetings' (I:1 11/04/2016). Michael Casey was rewarded for covering a local talent show, in person, with video footage that would later prove a *You Tube* hit. When he posted the video on *You Tube* it was a generalised act of reciprocity, with no guarantee of return to himself. Four years later he enjoyed a significant reward when the video turned out to include a future *X Factor* winner:

Michael Casey:	I have 6,000 films on YouTube, what's the most viewed film on YouTube? It's a girl called Louisa Johnston who won X Factor in 2015 and it's her when we filmed her at a talent contest in 2011. So between 2011 and 2015 that film accumulated around 800 views and suddenly she stars on X-Factor, wins X-Factor and now it's got 433,000 views. If that was [mainstream media group], "Hi, can I go to this evening, there's a talent contest at the local theatre with a 13-year-old singing? How many unique views in it? Well, I don't know. Well, don't go then." They would have missed The Beatles then, wouldn't they? (I:2 08/08/2017)

He said it proved why 'the immediacy of chasing unique views' by legacy media, rather than investing in people and content is both 'short term' and destructive (I:2). Harte *et al* (2019: 132) found that professional local newspaper journalists were regarded as

'distant and removed from communities'; as a result local people were especially grateful when hyperlocal operators turned up at events. Both Michael and Pat Gamble spoke of being welcomed when they attended local events, because organisers so rarely saw anyone from the media. Pat said: 'I go along to the opening of something, you expect everybody to be there and they've all let them down. The [legacy paper] photographer's not turned up, BBC haven't got time and the TV channel couldn't make it and I end up on my own' (I:1). Pat was continually involved in acts of offline and online reciprocal journalism (Lewis, *et* al, 2014: Harte *et* al, 2017) by getting out and about on his patch:

> Pat Gamble: If Trent Bridge is closed because someone's going to jump off it, I'll be there. I walk or I get public transport or I drive in – we share a car – and I'll be at things. And then [...] you get local people coming to you rather than the [local legacy newspaper]. (I:1 12/05/2016)

A reporter from the legacy provider acknowledged the 'trust' that existed between Pat and his community:

> Pat Gamble: That was the [legacy paper's] concern that [I've] got this massive audience, and they have put a journalist into the area a couple of years ago. But he left, and the guy said to me "I still think you'd win, even if we built an office in your street. I still think you'd probably win now because you've got the trust. (I:1)

This compliment by a staff reporter, indicates the sustained reciprocity that Pat had generated with his continued presence in place (Hess and Wall, 2016: 197). The reporter also understands the value of trust and appears to concede that the legacy newspaper has lost that trust. This provides an example of retrieving and repurposing, Pat has gained the trust of the local community – a socially cohesive element which appears to have been lost in the parent culture (Cohen,1972:23; 1980, 83). Others spoke of a general appreciation of the 'ultra-local' coverage they provide, Paul Breeden said: 'When you start, people realise they can easily find out about particular planning issues, actually, that affect their neighbourhood, they are really, really grateful' (I:1 12/07/2016). Covering community stories that involve a physical presence clearly involves investment of time and resources, whereas what Michael Casey described as the 'crime and road traffic' content, popular with mainstream local media, is easily sourced online and rewritten. Michael felt that legacy media was fixated on bad news, he

called it: 'The hysteria surrounding crime and road traffic at the cost of your place in the community' (I:2). Sean Kelly agreed that in local reporting there needed to be a balance between positive community news and crime. He said that crime was: 'Incredibly popular in terms of the readership it will get'; but warned:

Sean Kelly: The danger with it is if you put too much of it out, and I think [...] local papers in general have fallen into this trap, if every week you're leading with a crime story, then people think why am I living in this crime ridden hellhole? Whereas good news stories are a bit harder. So, if you have cut your resources back, you will tend to do more crime stories and in the short term, it doesn't damage your readership but in the long term, I think it does. (I:2 08/08/2017)

Hyperlocal operators have accused legacy providers of : 'cherry picking the news' in favour of negative news (Harte, 2015: 160). Indeed, traditional 'news values' which mainstream media applies at all stages of the news selection process, privileges 'hard news' content (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017). Harcup and O'Neill's taxonomy of news (ibid: 1476) which investigated the content of 711 page leads across 10 national newspaper titles stated: 'Bad news is the big winner' in terms of coverage. In his history of popular journalism Matthew Engle (1996) found that for many years local and regional editors had been adopting the news values of the national tabloids. Independent operators therefore appeared to be trying to redress the imbalance, by retrieving 'old fashioned' news values. Harte *et al* 'Found a strong tendency among many community sites to want to produce news that paints their local area in a positive light' (2019:111). The academics discovered that hyperlocal operators were very conscious of their area's 'reputational geography' (Harte *et al*, 2019: 124), and this was especially true with those who did not have a journalism background.

  There has been support in the academic community for a rebalancing of news coverage with Dickens, Couldry and Fotopoulou urging a: 'need for "positive news" to counter the relentless cycle of murders, wars, scandal and government wrangling which has been commonplace in Britain since the 1990s' (2014: 104). Emphasis on positive news (Harte *et al*, 2019: 116-119) acts as a counter-balance to the relentlessly bad news stories which have appeared in local mainstream media over the years. There has been some acknowledgement that local mainstream outlets have been over-reliant on bad news. In 2017 Newsquest Plc/Gannett chief executive Henry Faure Walker said in interview with *The Guardian* (Smith, 2017) that current editorial policy was: 'Less about shock and horror on the front page.' He went on: 'My sense of talking to my editors is

that there is a shift away from car crash content. People seem more receptive to a slightly gentler approach than shouty red-top journalism'(ibid). Media commentator Roy Greenslade was scathing: 'Really? A man who runs the best part of 200 titles, including dailies, has only just stumbled across that reality […] Faure Walker's blinding insight is anything but blinding. In fact, it was blindingly obvious long before we were able to analyse the digital data' (Greenslade, 2017). Yet aside from promoting a positive image of the community, Turner indicates (2015: 48) that hyperlocal's primary objective is to provide a source of reliable, local information. This fits Hess and Waller's definition of excessively local reporting (2015: 197).

  On a wider cultural level, independent hyperlocal were also serving as a record of life in their communities. Michael Casey had a degree in history, so he was particularly proud of the archive he was creating. It also made him angry when he found instances, in a corporate run local legacy organisation (Sharman, 2017), of deleted online archives: 'the big boys are running a "scorched earth" through their archive' (I:2), he complained:

Michael Casey: Because my degree's in history, and in my heart that's where I am, I'd like to think that if I stopped those sites tomorrow, somebody would have a fair idea what life was like in Thurrock between September 1st 2008 and August 8th 2017 and in Harlow July 1st 2013, etc. And that is the responsibility… you set up a newspaper, that is one of your responsibilities… and if you don't do that, then you're reneging on one of your key responsibilities and if you're like them, where you're wiping the archive online […] So you're trying to click onto a story from 2009, and we're not talking about 1879, we're talking about 2009… [they've] just deleted it. (I:2 08/08/2017)

In her doctoral study on declining news coverage of Port Talbot, Rachel Howells also warned that the "record" once kept by local newspapers was being lost to future researchers (2015: 299). There can be no more generous example of indirect reciprocal engagement than archiving, where generalised information is gifted forward to future generations and 'the beneficiary of an act returns the favour not to the giver, but to another member of the social network' (Lewis *et al*, 2014, 234). Of course, not all legacy newspapers have followed a 'scorched earth policy' with regards their archives, those like the *KM Group* had meticulously curated archives that enhance their communities. Tim Luckhurst accessed the *KM Group* archive to write about the abdication of Edward VIII (2013; 39-47). Archives are culturally important, which is why in 2010 *KM Group* secured a grant from the *Heritage Lottery Fund* to digitise newspapers dating back 150

years; providing 26,000 pages of Kent history (Luft, 2010). Nevertheless, Michael Casey's argument provides another subcultural example of hyperlocal operators adopting aspects of the 'parent culture'. Arguably, where local newspapers have been 'hollowed out' by centralisation, legacy media archives may not provide a complete picture even where they exist. It will therefore fall to hyperlocal provisions to supplement the record of early 21st century life in ultra local communities. A situation which *The British Library* had acknowledged stating on its website: 'We have a special interest in archiving 'hyperlocal' news sites produced by local communities across the UK' (*British Library*, 2018).

5:4 Alternative approaches to local news creation: different ideas and organisational structures

This section will consider how independent operators have drawn practices from alternative media, as well as the mainstream, to shape both their organisation and interaction with the community. As discussed in Chapter 1 (*Literature review: applying a subcultural lens to hyperlocal*) alternative media is a contested term, which can at its most simplified be utilised purely as a distinction between mainstream and non-mainstream media (Forde, 2011:2) or at the opposite end of the scale represent media with a politically charged message attempting to affect change (Hess and Waller, 2016: 207). Chris Atton observes that alternative media have long existed on the margins of the mainstream: 'Providing democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production' (Atton, 2002: 4). He indicates that print has been the usual format for alternative media publications, with zine culture in the 1980's fuelling the rise of independent and small-scale publishing in the 1990s (2002:3). If the term itself is problematic, the organisational structures by which such media are produced are easier to identify. Atton suggests that there are three clear organisational structures of alternative media production (2003: 42-43):

1) The organisational hierarchy that *replicates the mainstream press* with an owner/editor overseeing a production staff;
2) *A non-hierarchical organisation* where individuals have equal control and all decisions are made collectively;

3) *The loosest type*, where roles are not fixed and everyone is involved in all levels of production.

Independent operators who had adopted alternative media approaches were Adam Cantwell-Corn and Rachel Howells. At *The Bristol Cable* a non-hierarchical organisation existed, whereas at the *Port Talbot Magnet* the structure was closer to the loosest type.

   The Cable had a unique approach to community engagement, compared with the other operations. This was motivated by its alternative media organisational approach and the fact that the 'community' in question was less geographical than social – giving voice to marginalised voices (Park, 1928; Williams, 1976/1983; Bauman, 2001). *The Cable* was different to the other operations featured which were focussed on small geographical communities, while it was focussed on excluded communities within a larger geographical community. Members owned a share in a media cooperative 'community benefit society' and were encouraged to contribute to the writing process, they also voted on which campaigns would be pursued by the paper. Adam explained that since they launched in 2014, *The Cable* had hosted regular workshops which were free or discounted for members: 'on everything from media law, video journalism, writing workshops, *Freedom of Information* – all sorts of media and journalism related trainings' (I:1 17/05/2016). This was an example of sustained reciprocity, similar to that identified by Harte *et al* (2016: 172) of hyperlocals running social media surgeries to help community groups.

> Adam Cantwell-Corn: We're very much keen on making sure that we don't just pay lip service to the kind of idea of diversity of voices or perspectives or people that are involved and to do that, there has to be very much a proactive approach to making it genuinely accessible which means organising training, having a collaborative editorial policy. One of the reasons why the *Bristol Cable* is quarterly is that we work with untrained journalists which means that things take longer. (I:1 17/05/2016)

He and his co-founders had set up *The Cable* after graduating from the *University of Sussex* with the aim of democratising local media: 'We're trying to bring these two elements of journalism and community action together' (Reid, 2014). *The Cable's* organisational approach was motivated by the background of Adam (a graduate in law with political science) and his fellow partners. They did not bring with them the working practices of mainstream media, but clearly had expectations about the role that the media should be performing. They shared a background in community activism which

informed their alternative media ethos of providing an outlet for people normally excluded from media production (Atton, 2003: 42-43). As outlined in Chapter 4, Adam stated that they were trying to: 'pioneer a different model for funding and producing media' not run a volunteer-led organisation (I:1). At the first interview Adam reported that 'one of the major decisions' at their second AGM was to introduce:

> Adam Cantwell-Corn: Regular payment for key organisers and also for contributors. And the way in which that'll be rolled out is that it's going to be on a flat rate across the organisation. So per unit of work it's the same amount for everybody, no matter their seniority or experience within the organisation. (I:1)

They were motivated by the altruism and 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity, but also displayed organic division of labour through interdependence (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28) in the number of roles assigned:

> Adam Cantwell-Corn: We have four media coordinators who are responsible for all of the content. Then there's three operations coordinators who also make up the media coordinator team as well and they do the strategic development, all the finance stuff, all the admin, all the networking and the outreach - the project development and management type stuff. Then we have two events coordinators who organise the logistical elements of all the events that we run.
> We have two people who do membership and that's membership administration and also membership engagement and development. We have somebody who helps ad hoc with finances. We have a couple of people who do manage and develop and administrate the website and I think that's it. (I:1)

The operation was therefore a 'non-hierarchical organisation' (Atton, 2003: 42-43) with decisions made collectively and specific roles assigned. This therefore indicated that *The Cable* fell between the organisational structure which borrowed closely from the mainstream and the most radical form without fixed roles and where all decisions were collective (Atton, 2003: 52-53). Atton warned that more radical forms of production: 'are often unwieldy they can make decision-making very difficult and often lead to the collapse of alternative media projects' (Ibid). *The Cable* though had a high level of organisation which augured well for the future of the organisation:

> Those grassroots alternative media projects that flourish tend to be the ones with a small, committed collective that is responsible for the day-to-day running and

> planning of the publication, leaving a larger pool of contributors free from this administrative burden. (Atton, 2003: 54)

The highly organised and interdependent structure at *The Cable* differs from the informally organised worker co-operative of research participant Rachel Howells. Having worked for *The Big Issue*, *Cymru,* Rachel had alternative media experience, but her title of editor indicates that the structure there replicated the mainstream. At *The Port Talbot Magnet* there were no pre-assigned job roles and the hyperlocal was established by a group of journalists who brought with them mainstream media experience. Latterly Rachel had her reservations about the organisational style they chose.

> Rachel Howells: I don't think it ever really was a cooperative really. It was at the beginning because there were lots of willing hands and people who wanted it to work. [...] We had members but they weren't members who were expected to do very much. We had contributors who we didn't insist on being members because we didn't want to scare them off. So I don't know that we ever really used the cooperative model to its full advantage and I don't know that it ever operated in that way anyway really. (I:2 05/07/2017)

She said there was a six-month run when they took it in turns to edit the hyperlocal for a week, but although it worked well for her not everybody was contributing equally: 'Then before you know it, there's only one of you doing it' (I:2). By the time of the first interview most had found other employment either freelance or in PR. Rachel was left editing the paper and the synergy with her doctoral research provided a degree of impetus.

  The hyperlocal had launched in 2009 just ahead of a live theatrical event in Port Talbot called *The Passion* which provided initial opportunity for 'investment' in the community:

> Rachel Howells: We launched the new website just ahead of *The Passion* and *The Passion* was the first big test for us. We had lots of volunteer journalists, there was about a dozen, 15 of us, who worked it and we covered… because it was a live theatrical event that went on for three whole days and there were things going on all around the town. So it was a great test for us and we did video, we did audio, we interviewed Hollywood stars right down to the kids that were involved as extras. There were a thousand local people involved as extras. We filmed it, we photographed it, we wrote about it, we covered absolutely everything.

Rachel Howells: We were the only media organisation to cover the whole thing and the world's media descended on Port Talbot that weekend, so it was a big thing locally and for the first time, it felt like a bit of a turning point because Port Talbot's quite down on itself as a town It's very polluted. The work opportunities that were there 30 years ago, obviously there were 20,000 people employed in the steel works at one time, it's now 3,500/4,000. 4,000. (I:1 27/04/2016)

With their extensive coverage of the event, Rachel and her colleagues initiated *indirect reciprocity* (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 234- 235: Harte *et al*, 2016; 10-13), creating a one to many community building element to their coverage, that Rachel felt contributed to a more upbeat feeling in the town and which she described as 'a turning point'. This indicates that the hyperlocal was part of the 'conscience collective' at this point.

The ultimate relationship between reporter and community is *sustained reciprocity* which occurs when direct and indirect reciprocal engagement occurs over a sustained length of time; it results in situations like those described by Richard Gurner and Michael Casey where there was sufficient trust for contacts to repay earlier favours. Harte *et al* found that 'hyperlocal publishers engage with people offline through embedding themselves in everyday places in their communities' (2016: 13). While this was clearly true for the other hyperlocal operators mentioned in this chapter, at *The Magnet* Rachel found it difficult to establish a similar rapport: 'We have to rely on our contacts and I've just found out today that David Cameron was at the steelworks yesterday. I had no idea, I was in Port Talbot yesterday and nobody told us' (I:2). That no one had 'tipped off' the paper indicates a lack of reciprocal engagement with the community.

5:5 "Harassment and nastiness": when reciprocity backfires

The *Port Talbot Magnet* closed in June 2017, the only hyperlocal in the study to cease publishing during the research period. There were a number of factors, which caused it to fail, the most damaging being the knock-on effect of threatened redundancies at the town's largest employer. Nevertheless, lack of 'continual presence in place' (Hess and Waller, 2014; 197) was a contributory factor. Rachel reflected: 'I think part of the problem

was that we weren't based in Port Talbot […] all of us were Swansea based which is kind of the big city and then Port Talbot is a town about five to ten miles away.' There was an additional element that many of Rachel's erstwhile colleagues, who had been made redundant from the legacy evening paper, were sub-editors which is a deskbound role: 'So they knew about Port Talbot, but they hadn't done any on the ground reporting there' (I:2). Both of these factors indicate the absence of the embedding aspect of mechanical solidarity.

Although *The Magnet's* reporting was excessively local, the 'prolonged and continual presence in that place' (Hess and Waller, 2014: 197), is questionable, particularly as many of the original members gradually drifted off and found other work so it was difficult to achieve continuity of personnel.

As discussed in Chapter 4, it is not necessary to live in the hyperlocal area, although it undoubtedly helps. Michael Casey lived and grew up in the *Your Harlow* hyperlocal area, although he was 27 miles away from his other hyperlocal *Your Thurrock.* The distance was balanced by previous investment in the community, he had worked in the area as a reporter over a prolonged period so had built up contacts: 'The people of Thurrock, they more or less know – and that's the victim of success – that you're on call' (I:1 06/05/2016). David Jackman was a former editor of the *Epping Forest Guardian* and the years he had invested making contacts in the area benefitted him in terms of sustained reciprocity after he was made redundant. David had better contacts in the Epping where he had worked, rather than where he lived, because he had spent many years investing in that community; covering meetings, picture opportunities and attending events of an excessively local nature.

Adopting the 'loosest type' of alternative media structure (Atton, 2003: 42-43) also likely contributed to *The Magnet's* demise, as Rachel indicated. Nevertheless, the closure of the hyperlocal provides an opportunity to observe the fragile nature of reciprocal engagement. *Harte et al*, indicate that direct and indirect reciprocal acts: 'can often be immediate and fleeting' (2017: 164-165) and over the seven-year lifetime of the hyperlocal snapshots taken at different times would likely have produced different outcomes in terms of examples of reciprocal engagement.

The research period for this study focused on a difficult period for Port Talbot which is heavily reliant on one industry, steel production, and the threat of redundancies negatively affected *The Magnet.* The upbeat 'conscience collective' in Port Talbot when the hyperlocal launched, was in stark contrast to the situation by 2016 when Rachel said

: 'people were so anxious about what the next six to 12 months might bring.' The data suggests that reciprocal engagement became more difficult as the community was affected by the threat to the local economy.

Shortly prior to the first interview Rachel had been trying to change the hyperlocal's print frequency, she explained: 'We tried to go monthly and it hasn't really worked, largely because *Tata Steel* announced 750 job losses in January just as we were in our third monthly edition and it was so hard on everybody' (I:2). Although the redundancies hadn't at that stage occurred, the uncertainty was enough to undermine the whole community: 'Most families have somebody there, working there and reliant on basically what are pretty good wages for the area' (I:2). Like many of the hyperlocals run by participants', *The Magnet* relied on advertisers as the primary form of income, Rachel said people: 'Just stopped advertising basically, so our revenue halved overnight with that announcement' (I:2). Crucially the advertisers did not return with renewed confidence, a situation which will have been compounded by *The Magnet* losing its ad rep who, Rachel said: 'made herself ill' trying to sell in such a difficult climate. When a newly appointed rep approached advertisers: 'That list of 80 I would [say] 90% of them didn't come back to us' (I:2). This suggests that any sustained reciprocity (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) that the first rep had built up was lost when she had to leave through ill health.

Between interviews, Rachel and her colleagues also carried out an investigative report in connection with the steelworks (*Appendix 10*) where the outcome of an act of direct reciprocity, resulting from a source 'tip-off', impacted negatively on the hyperlocal.

| Rachel Howells: | We had some whistle-blowers come to us saying that they were really concerned that since the 750 jobs had been lost in the steelworks, that a lot of the shifts were down from, say, 20 guys to ten or 12 but they were producing the same amount of steel. They were worried, therefore, that the men were getting tired. They weren't being given adequate breaks from the heat. They weren't being given adequate time to rehydrate themselves. When you get heat exhaustion, it's very dangerous. We spoke to some safety people who were very concerned to hear that. Some safety campaigners, one of whom... his son had died in an accident in the steelworks so he was very passionate about the issue, obviously. But we did a lot of research around that and what we heard gave us huge cause for concern. But my god, because of where the steelworks was in terms of how precarious the future was and it was undergoing this kind of bidding process at the time, the Unions closed ranks, none of the politicians were willing to help us. |

Rachel Howells: We couldn't get Tata to give us a comment. In the end, they gave a comment to the [legacy paper] and not to us. I was scooped on that story by a politician who mentioned it in The Senedd the day before it was due to come out in the paper. So the [legacy paper] picked it up from her and didn't get it from me. There were loads of things like that.

The story went out. Then I had a lot of harassment from local steelworkers who felt we'd made the wrong call; we shouldn't be questioning the steelworks at that moment in its precariousness. Afterwards, I had emails from guys in the steelworks who were being harassed by the Unions because they thought they knew who the whistle-blowers were.

So, some of the guys on the shop floor who were trade unionists were calling them in, accusing them of being the whistle-blowers, lying to them, telling them that I had given their names to the Unions and trying to 'out' them basically. And obviously they weren't the same guys, it wasn't the right guys but just to see those tactics first-hand and to get the level of harassment and poison and nastiness that went with that story, which also we tried to sell to some of the bigger nationals. The [national newspaper] at the time was running a Save Our Steel campaign. Nobody even replied to my phone calls or emails in that story, never mind picked it up and paid for it. (I:2)

Rachel's narrative demonstrates how a hyperlocal's relationship with a community can change when: 'the relational climate of trust and solidarity created by a reciprocal exchange' (Molm *et al*, 2013) is compromised. In an era of uncertainty caused by the impending redundancies at the steelworks, issues of reputational geography (Harte *et al*, 2019: 116-135) appear to have been re-negotiated. *The Magnet* undermined its solidarity with the community by running a negative story about *Tata Steel*, at a time when even national newspapers were supporting the steelworks. Support for the steelworks, because of the number of livelihoods dependent on it, appears to have taken on a greater importance in the community than the safety standards of the workers.

This example also highlights the issue of critical distance from the audience when covering contentious stories, an issue that Harte *et al* discuss when addressing the concerns of a contributor from the *Balsall Common* hyperlocal who says: 'We have to have a distance with crime because of the local issue of you've got to walk down the same street as some of these people' (2019: 118). The interviewee in question avoided

an uncomfortable situation by directing people to the mainstream media covering the crime which means they: 'potentially retain legitimacy locally by remaining on the community's side (ibid). In *The Magnet's* situation the national paper appears to have capitalised on the mood of the community over the threatened redundancies, at the expense of the hyperlocal. The backlash suffered by *The Magnet* demonstrates the fragile nature of reciprocal engagement. While the 'tip-off' from the source indicates the action of direct reciprocity, the eventual outcome was negative in terms of one-to-many, community building indirect reciprocity.

   The Magnet provides further evidence of the subcultural position of hyperlocals - outside of the mainstream, both in terms of the media and public services organisations. Rachel and her colleagues continually experienced difficulty establishing a rapport with those organisations which usually form the basis of 'beat reporting'; the official sources such as police, council and other 'official' local sources which traditionally form the backbone of local news gathering. (Dick, 2012: 755; Harte *et al*, 2019: 125).

> Rachel Howells: I listen with envy to some of the things Richard [Gurner] says about the way he works with the local courts, the police, the local council have been really open to him. We've just never had any of that in Port Talbot. It's been an absolute battle, from trying to get links on the BBC which we never managed, right through to it took me five years to get on the local police PR list.
> Only at the very end did Tata Steel start sending us stuff and talking to us and it was only once we were critical of them and then they wanted to romance us and talk us round. So, I think we found it very difficult and I think that's almost the serendipity of where geographically you're based. (I:2)

Rachel's account appears to describe a tension where the hyperlocal is both outside the mainstream, in terms of appealing to official organisations which arguably lean towards legacy media, yet at the same time struggling to 'maintain prolonged and continual presence' in the hyperlocal area (Hess and Waller, 2016: 197). She compares the situation at *The Magnet* with that at the *Caerphilly Observer*, but crucially Richard Gurner was 'Caerphilly born and bred' and he had worked as a reporter in the town so was embedded.

 Transferring this scenario to the wider media ecology, *The Magnet's* situation is ironically reminiscent of the catastrophic effect of the 2008 economic downturn on local legacy newspapers. Outside forces, in this case *Tata Steel's* proposed redundancies, undermined an organisation which had other issues to resolve. The *Tata* crisis provided

the final blow to *The Magnet*, Rachel said that when she and her colleagues tried to regroup and resume regular publication of the hyperlocal, 90% of their pre-crisis list of 80 advertisers: 'didn't come back to us' (I:2). Her narrative provides an indication of the fragile state of reciprocity and the interdependence between a hyperlocal and its audience, which is affected by the general fortunes of the community. The story of *The Magnet* is also a reminder of the precarity of relying on advertising as a primary source of income which will be discussed in the next section.

5:6 Reluctant salesmen: attitudes to advertising

Here I will consider the problem of generating income from hyperlocal operations. This was a problem faced by those relying on the hyperlocal for their primary employment, as part of a portfolio of work or who needed to cover their operating costs. In 2014 Martin Moore called for alternative funding models for hyperlocal news in *Addressing the democratic deficit in local news through positive plurality: or why we need a UK alternative of the Knight News Challenge* (2014). However, by the start of this study, his entreaty had not produced any radical new funding mechanisms and advertising was the 'dominant form of income generation' for hyperlocal operations (Williams *et al*, 2014: 5); the model prevalent in the parent culture. The data, for this thesis, reflected the generalised situation in independent publishing with the majority of participants' using advertising to some degree.

 Considering the reliance on advertising it was noteworthy that Emma Cooper was the only advertising specialist; meanwhile several participants', particularly journalists, admitted to being reluctant salesmen. The only operator to categorically avoid taking advertising was William Perrin who, as previously stated, viewed *Kings Cross Environment* as a 'modern way' of doing community work and bore the cost of running the site himself. Every other participant was using advertising, either as the sole form of income generation or as part of a mix of different streams.

  Their attitudes to the 'advertising issue' were as varied as the character of the hyperlocals that they ran. At the 'dabbling' end of the scale was Dave Harte who used *Google Ad Sense* essentially because he wanted to know how it worked and as a result generated about £5 a month. He also managed *Google Ads* for another hyperlocal.

> Dave Harte: I don't think I needed the £5 to cover my hosting costs. I'm happy to spend £5 on my hobby. It's not a big deal. And sometimes I move the ads around in order to see if different positions generate more income or whatever. So, there's a little bit of experimentation with it every now and again, just to test these things out. (18/05/2016)

At the other end of the scale was Emma Cooper, the professional ad sales operator of several Bristol hyperlocals, who co-ordinated a sales team from a converted garage at her home. In a scenario that echoed mainstream media, Emma oversaw a much scaled down version of the operation that she ran as *Head of Advertising (telesales)* at the *Bristol Evening Post.* In between these two examples were operators with a variety of skillsets who were involved in advertising sales to a greater or lesser extent.

As shown in Chapter 4, the majority of the research participants' were journalists, many of whom had also worked in legacy media where the roles of editorial (news and features writing) were typically independent of the commercial considerations of advertising sales and marketing (Picard, 2010). Entrepreneurialism was a relatively new phenomenon in journalism and the 'enterprising professional' (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 123) needed a range of competencies. Jamie Summerfield of *A Little bit of Stone* (*ALBOS*) spoke about the different skills that he had acquired: 'Analytics and SEO and loads of things' (26/04/2016). But, like many of the research participants he was a reluctant salesman: 'I'm a journalist. My background isn't sales, so I find it quite difficult to sell advertising. I'd much rather be out interviewing and writing and photographing' (26/04/2016). This resonated with Williams *et al's* findings that half of their respondents said they would like help with selling advertising (2014: 5/40).

Over the 18 years that James Hatts had been running *London SE1* the site had enjoyed a modest income from a variety of advertising sources. These included *Google Ad Sense,* visitor information on the website, print advertising in the former 'what's on' guide and an ad on the weekly email newsletter. After so many years, James was still a reluctant advertising salesman and lack of income was threatening the future of the site:

> James Hatts: Basically, our big problem here is that no one in my family has a business instinct. We're all much more interested in the content and the community side than we are about the business side and we're simply not very good at it. And it's not that there isn't more potential to do better, because I know there is.

James Hatts:	I know that it's not that we're scraping the bottom of the barrel for every last penny. I know that we're not even scratching the surface of the market but we're just not very good at it. We don't have that sales instinct and when I do deal with advertisers, my instinct is always to talk the price down, not up, and give people discounts, which in business sense is just madness. But I don't have that sort of… I'm not driven by sales and business. I'm driven by news and community. And that's the big problem and that's why we're on the cusp of shutting up shop. (I:1 22/03/2016)

It wasn't just lack of business instinct, James was uncomfortable about selling advertising because he feared that the site's journalistic integrity would be compromised. Although he had never worked in mainstream media, James displayed a desire for the journalistic norm of the invisible 'wall' between content and business decisions (Picard, 2010). By the second interview (I:2 23/06/2017) he was much more comfortable with the hyperlocal's financial situation, having launched a membership scheme in September 2016 (Scarborough, 2016a), which he said was: 'being very well supported' by the community (I:2). He believed that *London SE1's* 18-year history of providing reliable community news had been an important factor in subscription take-up: 'we have a track record' (I:2). This indicates the value of both sustained reciprocity (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 235; Harte *et* al, 2017: 164-165) and Hess and Waller's notion of 'prolonged and continual presence in place' (2014: 197) when asking for help from the community. He also believed that timing had played a part in the successful launch of the subscription scheme as there was: 'more public awareness of the challenges facing journalism':

James Hatts:	Our readers were already well familiar with going to *The Guardian* website and seeing an appeal to join their membership scheme on every article. So the whole notion of voluntary membership supported journalism was no longer so unusual or it was an idea that people already got. So we didn't have to sell the concept to them, we just had to sell our specific brand of local service. (I:2)

Although other hyperlocals had donate buttons, the only other operation running a membership scheme of any scale was *The Bristol Cable* which by the second interview with Adam Cantwell-Corn had increased its membership from 1,100 to 1850 but was still short of its 2,500 target that they had set for themselves. *The Cable* had a mixed

revenue stream, as a community benefit society it was able to access grant funding from philanthropic organisations and had run the *Crowdfunder* in 2014. They included advertising, but the alternative media business model meant that it was only accepted 'on the basis of an ethical advertising charter' (I:1 17/05/2016). *The Cable* had swapped services such as advertising for distribution of the magazine, Adam said: 'It's basically for goods and services, mostly with organisations that are relatively cash poor but who share the ethos principles that we do' (I:1).

As stated in Chapter 4, Jamie Summerfield and Jon Stone had also run a *Crowdfunder* as a way of getting a large one-off cash injection for *ALBOS,* the initiative had continued to 'give' even after the initial money was raised:

> Jamie Summerfield: We found that many of the businesses that supported us have continued to do so. I think probably about half have continued but not in a crowdfunding model, just they're paying to advertise. So that was good. It would have been nice to have had more but we're grateful that we've got the 50%. (26/04/2016)

The database meant they were able to capitalise on the reciprocal engagement created by the *Crowdfunder* to generate advertising. Prior to him leaving *ALBOS,* Jamie had been considering introducing a membership model with the database of names providing a starting point.

5:6:1 Precarity as the norm: everyday challenges of hyperlocal publishing

Williams *et al* discovered a generally encouraging picture of the hyperlocal sector but cautioned about 'the rather precarious nature of many community sites' because: 'professional and personal circumstances change' (2014: 32). This was demonstrated by Martin Johnston who had effectively finished working at his hyperlocal when the first interview took place (21/06/2016), having been offered a full-time job. Throughout the first interview Jamie Summerfield spoke enthusiastically about *ALBOS* before announcing that he would be leaving the hyperlocal. The same conflict of speaking enthusiastically about the future of the product yet masking a sub-text, which did not come out until later in the interview, was also apparent with David Wimble. On the one

hand he talked enthusiastically about plans for the future but later confided that he had considered selling *The Looker,* after being offered 'a very good price', adding: 'like any business it's for sale at the right price' (I:1). There was tension between his desire to operate as a businessman, 'egoistic' motivation, and his 'community hat', 'altruistic motivation' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). Describing his commitment to the paper, he admitted: 'I'm sort of addicted to doing it now, it would be so easy to say "do you know what …shove it, I can't be bothered"' (I:1). But, he also didn't want to see it disappear and felt: 'I don't think anybody else, unless they were really local, would make it work' (I:1). This resonated with Hess and Waller's subcultural theory of continued presence in the community (2016: 197) and the value of being embedded. David's frustration was not with selling advertising, he found that part of the enterprise relatively easy and got a lot of repeat advertising; it was chasing unpaid bills that he found particularly irksome - to the extent that he employed a part-time credit controller.

> David Wimble: But what if it's for a one off advert, coz we at one time on the system it showed we was owed about [amount] or something. If all those little £20 adverts added up where people haven't paid or they've queried something... They say we're not paying for that 'you didn't put a comma here' or... so now our terms and conditions say it's their responsibility to check the copy. If we don't hear back from them, they're liable for any mistakes (I:1).

David had started by retrieving the mainstream practice of invoicing after the paper had gone to print, but as unpaid bills mounted he had repurposed his business to a pre-payment mode. By the second interview, in Summer 2017, David appeared to have solved his advertising revenue problem by going into partnership with his printers, it had also eased his workload and from 'doing everything' he was writing and doing some selling.

> David Wimble: They do all the layouts and basically I just write it and we split the profit 50/50. So we split all the costs 50/50. I now have it printed at cost price[...] They do all the layout. Obviously they've got professional people that can do that, so it looks more professional. They design most of the adverts now as well and it's a good compromise for us because every week or every two weeks I get payment into my bank, regardless of whether they've been paid or not because cash flow is the biggest problem with us. (I:2: 1/6/2017)

The new updated front page layout of the paper is in *Appendix 6.* Also reproduced are two of David's page 3 editorials in *Appendix 15* and *16,* which indicate the challenges of hyperlocal publishing*. Appendix 15* was at the time of the second interview and indicates how he is trying new ideas to increase cash flow to the hyperlocal: he suggests that readers could make a donation. *Appendix 16* appeared in the June 13, 2018, edition when *The Looker* was celebrating its 200th issue. Although largely upbeat, he speaks candidly about his health problems, the hard work involved in putting out the printed product and openly talks about looking for a business partner and attracting more advertisers. This resonates with the narratives of Annemarie, Emma and Michael earlier in the chapter about not overworking. It appears to evidence further that longevity of a publishing operation, although an important element in creating sustained reciprocity, is not a guarantee of a hyperlocal's continuance.

As previously discussed, *London SE1,* which had been operating for 18 years, had a sustainability 'scare' during the research period. Harte *et al* indicated that the other long running hyperlocal *On the Wight* had found keeping going a struggle although there were signs of the: 'enterprise maturing and stabilising after ten years in operation' (2019: 158). During the first interview Simon candidly referred to the hyperlocal's business model as 'incomplete', suggesting that there was still room for improvement. The precarious nature of hyperlocal operations has been noted by observers (Radcliffe, 2012; Gulyás and Hammer, 2013; Harte *et al*, 2019; 181- 182). But this situation should be contextualised against greater societal change, Neilson and Rossiter make the case for 'precarity as the norm' (2008) in terms of the working world. Precarity is also an inherent part of 'atypical' working practices which feed into 'liquid journalism' (Deuze, 2008; Deuze and Witschge, 2017 and 2018) where conditions under which professional people work, change faster than it takes for habits and routines to be established. Guy Standing uses the term 'Precariat' to classify a new breed of worker in the post-industrialised area that does not enjoy the: 'labour rights and social entitlements of twentieth century industrial citizenship' (2014/2016) or indeed their stability. Therefore, rather than focusing on precarity, which is arguably an inherent feature of post-industrial media work, if not life, the focus of this subcultural study reveals the resilience (Hebdige, 2013) of participants' in the face of constant challenges and how they overcome them.

5:6:2 "There's nothing new in this world": embracing old ideas and trying new ones

The data reveals that the research participants' were a resilient bunch and between them had bounced back after numerous setbacks. Because of their startup nature and flexible, agile business models (Küng, 2008: 129) they could test both old and new ideas, repurposing practices borrowed from the mainstream while simultaneously trying out new ones.

 Immediately before the first interview, Simon Perry of *On the Wight* had been having a difficult day trying to sell advertising. However, once the interview was underway he was soon speaking enthusiastically about a new job software program that he was developing. His background was in new technology and he was designing software that would automate the 'job advertising' process and generate more income for the site. Along with Jamie Summerfield at *ALBOS*, and Adam Cantwell-Corn, *Bristol Cable,* Simon had taken part in a grant funded *Nesta* audience analytics research project for which each hyperlocal received a £6,500 grant (Geels, 2016). He said (I:1 08/08/2016) that the grant was 'a large amount of money to us, but tiny in governmental terms' and had both provided news skills and 'the luxury of time' to take a proper look into metrics and how they could make *On the Wight* more efficient. By the time of the second interview Simon was upbeat about the new job software that had been running for seven months. He had spent: 'between six and nine months to get to the point of launching, because we wanted it to be self-service' (I:2 17/08/2017). He explained: 'We needed to satisfy two sets of users, the job seeker and also the job advertiser as well.' Following the successful launch, he was in the process of 'productising it, making a white label version that could be rolled out to different cities and work in conjunction with hyperlocal.' (I:2).

 An obvious answer for hyperlocal operators who are not 'sales naturals', might appear to be to employ someone. But, like myself with *DRESSAGE,* (See positionality statement in Chapter 3) finding the right person could prove difficult. When Richard Gurner started in 2011 he had help from a former advertising colleague who following redundancy, helped him get the sales side of the business started. His next appointment was not so successful: 'I just basically made a mistake in choosing the person' (I:1 06/05/2016). He employed a fulltime sales person on a good salary and a company car', but, had to 'fire' the person because Richard found himself: 'spending more time managing him than

doing the rest of it' (I:1). By the time of the first interview he had a part-time sales person 'who's doing a great job' (I:1).

David Wimble, who was happy selling advertising, believed that ownership of the hyperlocal was vital; he said it provided the motivation that a salary and perks could not buy. Simon Perry had also tried to hire sales people, but ended up doing the job himself.

> Simon Perry: We've worked with other people before who've been out doing sales, but they just haven't been 'closers'. They've been people highly affable, likeable, lovely people that can go and chat to businesses about you, but they don't have that 'closing gene', which you absolutely need as a salesperson. (I:1 08/08/2016)

Michael Casey had tried a partnership with a legacy media organisation in the hope of taking care of his advertising, but it hadn't worked. As stated in Chapter 3, he had identified that the mainstream organisation did not have a sufficiently hyperlocal focus. Before the research period David Jackman had also had a short term tie-up for a magazine, he reflected that the mainstream provider seemed reluctant to put the human resources into selling advertising. Michael believed that advertisers wanted to see somebody: 'Not just somebody ringing up, you could be anybody' (I:1 06/05/2016); indicating that direct reciprocity was as important for advertising as it was for content creation. Although in an advertising context, the form of direct reciprocity would be bilateral/negotiated with an instrumental outcome. By the second interview he was reluctantly back selling advertising face-to-face himself.

Others like Pat Gamble who brought 'good people skills' from their previous employment had, undergone a steep learning curve when it came to selling advertising.

> Pat Gamble: When you start your own business after you've been in an institution or an industry, you end up doing everything for nothing because you get 'kind' ... there's no ruthlessness in you because you've not had that 'on your own' thing. So, you tend to think, you can have half price for a month and all this sort of nonsense. You make all those mistakes and many of the people I meet now are running their own businesses from home and they've all done the same thing. So, I think it's just an endemic thing that if you're not a businessman in the beginning, you've got to learn to be one. (I:1 12/05/2016)

Many of his advertisers signed up for multiple inclusions and in the early days he would tentatively approach them about re-advertising: 'I used to start saying "do you want to

stay?"' At which point his wife said: "'Just invoice them!" So I do and they pay. So, she's a bit tougher than me and it's toughened me up a bit. But I do that now, I say no to everything, no to all sorts of things unless they're paid' (I:1). His approach had worked because by the time of the first interview Pat's business instincts had 'kicked-in' and he was earning roughly the same from his advertising revenue as his 'take-home pay' in transport logistics.

Graphic designer Gary Brindle did not have selling skills either:

Gary Brindle:	I still don't enjoy it, I must admit, selling and advertising. It's just one of those things that I didn't think I'd be able to do. That was my whole thing about this, I had all the background skills for part of it but none of the others. (I:1 14/06/2016)

He was operating *Downend* Voice the largest of the *Voice Network* publications with more than 80 pages monthly, so despite his reticence advertising was not a problem: 'I'm very lucky insomuch as I don't have to chase too much advertising. I'm lucky that I have regular customers that receive quite a bit from their advertising so they're happy to continue advertising' (I:1). His approach to advertising was very traditional and demonstrated continued presence in the community (Hess and Waller, 2016: 197): 'I'm not a telephone person, I want to go out and meet people and discuss what we can do for them. So that is very time consuming but that's just me I suppose' (I:1). He also took the opportunity to employ the person who had initially planned to run the *Fishponds Voice,* to sell advertising. His preference for face-to-face selling demonstrated an offline direct bilateral/negotiated reciprocal engagement with advertisers. It was an approach that appeared to be rewarding him with a steady income, he estimated that 'around 90% 'stay' every month, with a bit of 'seasonal variation in the summer and Xmas' (I:1). Although some of this advertising came via other members of the group as part of their negotiated exchange relationship:

Gary Brindle:	Yes, I think because Emma more-or-less has a sales team with her, that she has bigger opportunities. I have sold across the group and everyone will sell whatever they can for everyone else. So where Downend is situated, I'm able to probably sell into Winterbourne and to Yate a little bit more than perhaps Keynsham or Filton. So, yes, we do try and sell into one another's, but, I think Emma has got a bigger sales... Well, there's three of them over there selling, so she does have a better opportunity and goes for bigger customers than I have the time or the patience to try and get hold of people. (I:1 14/06/2016)

Traditional advertising sales methods, retrieved from the parent culture, had been repurposed (Cohen, 1972: 27) by the *Network* and appeared to be working well. The primary format was monthly free-distribution print; platform and distribution styles which had also started life in the mainstream (ibid.).

At the other franchise model Hyperlocal Today, which was online only, David Prior and Emma Gunby were experimenting with innovative forms of advertising. As stated Chapter 4, David was using *Google Double Click* but he was constantly on the lookout for new approaches:

> David Prior: It's got to be rethought again in the mobile age because over 80% of traffic to the site views the site on mobile or tablet. So you can't just expect to give the same… well, you've got to re-imagine it basically for local advertisers. So what we're trying to do is just create a combination. Rather than just saying you can have, as you would in a local paper, there's the half page ad on page 14 available or whatever, I think there's a lot more value to be had by offering different combinations of, as I say, display advertising on the site but also sponsored content and also sponsored social media, so Tweets, Facebook posts.
> There's always a balance obviously between… we always try to, even with the sponsored content, make it newsworthy and engaging and make it look as less like advertorial as possible. But I just think for it to be sustainable in this day and age, I don't think hyperlocal media can really expect to just try and produce Pulitzer prize-winning investigatorial pieces and all the resources that would go into that, and then expect to make it sustainable. I think you've got to offer… I see it more as a part news service, part local marketing channel and hopefully the combination of that will ensure that it's sustainable. (I:1 12/05/2016)

Even though online advertising was still in its infancy, compared to print advertising, David saw signs of it evolving: 'People don't click through from advertising anymore. They just don't. I think it's more of a brand awareness and brand association thing, rather than… I don't think you should judge mobile advertising by click through rate anymore.'

Emma Gunby whose primary business was social media marketing was also experimenting mixing new ideas from the blogging world with more tried and tested advertising techniques.

Emma Gunby:	There is a bit of a crossover so stuff that I learn from doing my other business. So at the moment part of my other business, some of my clients, I have to work with bloggers. So I'd be asking bloggers, trying to get bloggers to do promotions for us. So I've kind of seen how their world works and that's sparked my interest in, we're basically a blog, we're a news blog so essentially we are bloggers. So there's a lot of these bloggers who are making decent money so why can't we operate on a similar level to them? [...] It's kind of looking at how bloggers are monetising what they do and whether we can do similar things. I think I've got the journalism head on one side where I'm passionate about local news and the importance of local news and being in the local community, but on the other side, you have a commercial brain as well where I understand how it can potentially make money. So I'm hoping it's a good match and it'll ultimately make it work, and also it's brilliant having David because he's way ahead of us and we can see what he's doing and then try it. (I:2 04/10/2017)

She had struggled to sell 'banner' advertising. What had done well was selling a 'column' of editorial, focussed on a particular event: 'There's nothing new in this world, is there? It's basically an old-fashioned advertorial really but we write them so there tends to be a lot of interest in them' (I:2). David had done particularly well with schools advertising, so Emma had also pursued income from this source: 'Local schools have always really supported us but certainly at this time of year, we're just inundated with schools wanting to advertise their open days because I can see it's the obvious place because… they need people within their catchments so we've done really well off local schools.' (I:2).

David Prior:	There is some sort of sharing of story ideas that goes on and certainly in the case of Heswall and West Kirby on the Wirral, they do also share advertising as well or present both patches as opportunities for advertisers. (I:1)

The sharing of ideas, both for content creation and potential advertising, was a feature of each of the hyperlocal groups; providing evidence of the interdependence of organic solidarity in operation (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28).

  At Hyperlocal Today, interviews were only conducted with three members of the group, one of whom (Martin Johnson) had given up the franchise by the time of the interview; he was full of praise for the model but had opted for the security of a fulltime job. The skillset of remaining Hyperlocal Today members was unexplored, although David

indicated that they were journalists, which indicated 'homogeneity or likeness', a social bond based on the similarity of skills of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). David spoke about: 'Licensing the sites to journalists…because journalists bring that extra bit of nous and obviously training as to what you can and what you can't write about' (I:1). This is a reference to the professionalisation of journalism (Lewis, 2012), which included the need for relevant legal training. It was revealing that the licence fee for Hyperlocal Today franchises included legal cover, something which would appeal to journalists. The negotiated exchange, or contractual agreement, appeared to be morphing like the rest of the business depending on which model worked best:

> David Prior: They run their own site as their own business and Hyperlocal Today essentially just takes a cut of their advertising revenue, and it's done on a licence fee basis which… again we're sort of evolving that to what works best [...] but each editor or editors runs their patch, their own business. (I:1)

As a fledgling franchise David was keen to keep the operation 'agile' enough to respond when opportunities presented themselves. This was further evidence of the subcultural, grassroots nature of the organisation, in contrast to the slow-moving 'incumbents' (Küng, 2008) visible in the mainstream, conjured up by the title of Williams and Franklin's (2007) study *Turning around the tanker; implementing Trinity Mirror's online strategy*. Emma brought social media marketing skills to the group, ran her own business and said: 'My dad had his own business when I was growing up, so I've always had that slight entrepreneurial kind of thing.' But at this stage, there did not appear to be the same range of skill sets to draw on as The Local Voice Network. Crucially there did not appear to be a franchise holder with sales experience or a business partner with the commercial nous of the Local Voice Network, NeighbourNet or Stonebow Media. David employed outsiders in a 'negotiated exchange' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167) relationship to provide the skills he lacked:

> David Prior: Yes, I have help, I've got a work experience chap with us at the moment but primarily just try to use freelancers when required and different suppliers. I've got someone who does the advertising, I've got someone who helps on the design front, just on an ad hoc basis. There's no need for me to have anyone employed permanently. (I:2 21/08/2017)

Superficially the predominance of journalists, meant Hyperlocal Today appeared to be closer to mechanical solidarity but David had found imaginative ways of introducing the skill sets necessary to create 'heterogeneity'. This was encouraging, since Picard has warned that the professionalisation of journalism has limited participants' exposure to commercial decisions, leaving them less prepared for the multiple skills needed for entrepreneurial operations like running a hyperlocal (2010). 'Formational myopia' has occurred where journalists have prioritised content creation over commercial considerations – such as advertising (Naldi and Picard, 2012). The Local Voice Network attributed equal importance to advertising and editorial, this was reflected in the structure of the company and suggested an organic solidarity approach. At the franchise operations, members supported each other both informally and in negotiated relationships, which was a strength of these collectives over the smaller solidary operations.

  Business directories were another source of income for participants', attracting paid-for listings, that were acknowledged by Williams *et al* (2014: 30); they noted that hyperlocals also ran business campaigns to promote local independent shops and restaurants (ibid: 17). Several participants' ran business directories with some showing a considerable degree of reciprocity. David Shafford and Vijay Jain considered local businesses to be as much a part of the local community as the mother and toddler groups, which had prompted the foundation of the hyperlocal. They felt that promoting and building relationships with local businesses was part of their remit; indicating that business owners were part of the 'conscience collective'. David and Vijay ran 'networking evenings' called *Dartford Living Live* every six months at a local hotel. As an indication of their investment in the local community and their altruistic approach (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28), David and Vijay had extended the networking events to include not only local business people but representatives of local charities; offering the voluntary sector an opportunity to build worthwhile contacts. These networking events were an example of community building offline, indirect reciprocity.

  Daniel Ionescu's Stonebow Media had taken business links to a new level for an organisation that started as a hyperlocal. His fellow director Dean Graham had a technology and marketing background, so the commercial side of the business had been given equal weight to the journalism. After *The Lincolnite* was established, their second online site was *Lincolnshire Business* in 2014. As a spin-off, Daniel and Dean established the 'Lincolnshire Business Awards' as a further investment in the business

community. Daniel said they had consolidated their standing with the business community: 'branching out into physical events associated with our titles' (I:2 23/06/2017). They had launched a business-to-business (B2B) event *Lincolnshire Business Expo* and *Lincolnshire Tech Expo* focussing on digital and tech companies, including a conference and awards. In April 2018 they rebranded the *Lincolnshire Business* publication *CityX* to include much more multimedia content and allow the brand to be rolled out to areas outside Lincolnshire. Daniel's intention was always to establish a: 'sustainable digital newsroom' which would be 'sustainable from a digital advertising perspective' (I:1 25/04/2016). Echoing Michael Casey's view about the importance of advertising being as hyperlocal as news coverage, Daniel explained:

> Daniel Ionescu: We've never used, for example, national ad networks or Google Ads or anything like that. What we've done differently from this perspective is we've always run our own ad network and all the ads were either done in-house or by respectable local companies. So we always had a very good roster of respectable adverts and that kept us… gave us quite a good image compared to other publications which will use network ads and you see things which are not relevant locally or personally or whatever. (I:1 25/04/2016)

Sean Kelly, the commercial partner behind NeighbourNet, echoed the importance of localness and knowing your customers, he explained: 'Our market is almost entirely small and medium sized local businesses' who wanted to 'promote their business in a very focussed way' (I:1 25/04/2016). Despite NeighbourNet containing nine hyperlocals there was surprisingly little group-wide advertising:

> Sean Kelly: No, it tends to be different advertisers for different sites. There is some crossover but, as I say, people want their local area so they will come to Wimbledon wanting to advertise in Wimbledon rather than wanting to advertise across our network. We've got relatively little advertising across the whole network. It's not really what our clients want. We do have some but it's not the norm. (I:1 25/04/2016)

This could help explain why Michael Casey's experience of a mainstream local legacy organisation selling his advertising had been so unfruitful. Sean felt that mainstream

local media had retreated from local advertising in the same way that they had from local journalism.

> Sean Kelly: They've really pulled back from small medium sized businesses and in digital, their strategy is to maximise their page views and sell those page views into collectivised 'ad farms'. I think they've got something called [name of software], which they do themselves. They consolidate it themselves so what they'll be doing is they'll be going to media buying agencies and saying we have two million page views today in London, would you like to buy at 20p per thousand? And the media buyer… it's automated… you can put it in and say this is what I've got to offer and somebody will come back and it will be bid on and it would be bought up. Now at 20p per thousand, we could never be viable. (I:2 08/08/2017)

His example shows how the parent culture of mainstream local newspapers had changed, not only in terms of news coverage but also with advertising, leaving hyperlocal operators to occupy the 'advertising ground' that had been relinquished. Paul Breeden agreed that national advertising could be a double edged sword. He had deal with national agencies.

> Paul Breeden: The issue is when you're dealing with some of these agencies, they're incredibly mean. They've got their own agency fee and at the moment, our prices are our prices… But we've had a couple of situations, with national estate agent chains for example, where after a tortuous process you start dealing with an agency and they do want to buy their space at half the price, which we don't do that. I think we'll be faced with that dilemma if we get to the [airlines] of this world, some of them really will want to drive us too far down on price. (I:2 07/08/2017)

NeighbourNet was online only, but Sean considered the weekly or fortnightly newsletters to subscribers, to be his organisation's 'distribution channel.' This form of delivering local news, represented a negotiated form of bilateral direct reciprocal exchange, since there was an informal contract with subscribers who had individually signed up for email newsletters.

> Sean Kelly: The number of sign ups is still probably what it was. I don't think the number of new sign ups has fallen but obviously if you have a large database of emails, every week we're going to lose 30 or 40. Whereas you go back four / five years, you weren't losing quite that many

Sean Kelly:	Because the database is now so much bigger, your attrition rate is growing and so you have to run faster to keep the top line number growing at the same percentage rate. When we launched the sites, I think our objective is to be the primary source of local news in the area. So we might not have the distribution that a Trinity Mirror or a Newsquest title has but if we're providing the best quality news, then that's objective one to get to that stage. I think pretty much in every area that we cover now that has been achieved because the cutbacks in the local newspaper groups have been so aggressive. (I:2)

The *Nesta Action Research into audience analytics* study suggested that email was a popular distribution channel. The study indicated: 'Growth in audiences subscribing to and engaging with hyperlocal content through email newsletters and mailing lists' (Geels, 2017).

 The other popular distribution channel was print, a medium that Williams *et al* noted was increasingly popular with hyperlocal operators: 'Who find the large guaranteed audience of a free print run easier to sell to local advertisers than internet advertising' (2014: 29). Kathryn Geels of *Nesta* agreed, she said in interview: 'Despite there being a decline in print in regional and national newspapers but for hyperlocal publishers, it's actually a really positive way that they can create income and also to increase readership' (23/05/2016). As stated in the introduction to this thesis the research has never been about online versus print, rather to understand the diversity of delivery platforms in the sector.

 Richard Coulter, joint founder of The Local Voice Network*,* was emphatic that in the present climate print was the best option: 'People haven't rejected print, they've rejected some aspects of it, that's the problem, i.e. paying for it' (I:1). One aspect that Richard and his business partner Emma Cooper were insistent on was that for an operation to survive advertising and editorial (news) had to be given equal status. Emma said: 'We aim to sell 50% of the space as advertising. That's the model that's worked for us' (I:1). Richard Coulter said that giving equal weight to both advertising and editorial was important: 'The two have just got to co-exist harmoniously' (I:1).

 Other publishers with a print product: David Wimble, David Shafford and Richard Gurner, agreed that they would not take more than 50% advertising in their papers. This 50:50 split indicated that advertising was not allowed to dominate a publication; income was not privileged over news. This was further evidence of the subcultural position of

independent hyperlocal operators, the advertising/editorial ratio had been adapted from mainstream media but in a way that gave equal importance to news. The ratio in mainstream local papers was traditionally 60:40 and for free distribution models as high as 70:30. This demonstrates both the more altruistic mindset of independent publishers as opposed to the egoistic, more exploitative, approach of the parent culture (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28).

5:6:3 "People set their watch by us": offline reciprocal engagement via print

Not only was the physical format popular because it was easier to sell print advertising, it also had other less predictable benefits. The physical nature of the product produced an unexpected form of offline reciprocity thanks to its means of distribution – often the participants' personally handed out copies to the audience. This example of offline direct reciprocal engagement will be explored in this subsection.

Since becoming online only, James Hatts acknowledged that he missed two things about *London SE1's* printed 'what's on' guide, which closed in 2014. Firstly: 'print advertising was easier to sell', but, also he missed meeting people when he distributed the papers: 'There's just no substitute for actually walking down the streets that you're covering, you pick up so much' (I:1 22/03/2016).

Many participants' were personally involved in the distribution of their papers, like Richard Gurner and David Wimble. Then there were those like those like David Shafford and Vijay Jain who used a mix of methods: taking some themselves, using volunteer labour for others topped up with some paid for help. Richard Gurner did his own distribution to keep the costs down and he found it a rewarding experience:

> Richard Gurner: The biggest thing that really gets me through the small hours is knowing that our readers really do value what we do, because on Thursdays now, me and Ben do the deliveries. So, I head down to the printers down in Cardiff with my little van and get 10,000 newspapers loaded into that and then we spend the day then distributing it to about 90 different shops, libraries, supermarkets, chip shops. We spend an entire day doing that around Caerphilly county borough.

Richard Gurner: And obviously now because we've been doing it for so long, people set their watch by us. So we turn up to one particular shop and there'll be like three or four people there going, "Oh we've been waiting for you. Can I take one for me, one for my neighbour and one for my mother." So, the reaction we get from readers is really special. And again I always say that the hard work is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday putting the paper out in that week but the best day then is Thursday when we actually hand the paper out to people, deliver it to shops because all of a sudden then it's a real thing and it's out there and people really value it. And the reaction we get from people is just overwhelming at times, to be honest, it's a bit like, thank you, because we do put a lot of effort into putting it together every fortnight. (I:1 06/05/2016)

On Thursday every fortnight Richard and Gareth were able to reinforce their position in the 'conscience collective' by personally distributing the paper. Emma Cooper echoed the sentiment about just how popular the printed paper was: 'The amount of feedback we get from the community is overwhelming really' (I:1). The Local Voice Network papers were not distributed by the operators, but each franchise holder soon knew if the papers hadn't arrived. Emma said: 'We do have on the odd occasion somebody will ring us and say I haven't had my paper yet and it's literally only come out the day before. So, it is definitely a community product' (I:1). Richard Drew, David Shafford and David Wimble all reported being telephoned by anxious readers because an edition was a few hours late. When Richard Drew was experiencing problems with distributors he increased the print run rather than risk being inundated with phone calls. At one stage he had been overwhelmed by: 'people going "I haven't had my paper", because people do like the paper – they love it' (I:1 14/06/2016). These examples of readers enquiring about their paper, were a demonstration of a grounded connection with the community (Hess and Walker, 2016: 197). There was also an attachment to the paper, by readers, that indicated sustained offline reciprocity. (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 235; Harte *et al,* 2017: 164-165).

  The *Voice Network* operators didn't deliver their own papers, however, they were responsible for reviving another feature associated with mainstream local newspapers – paper rounds. The *Voices* were delivered door-to-door so new paper rounds had been created, offering young people in the Bristol area the opportunity to earn some pocket money. Gary Brindle and Paul Breeden both had waiting lists of 14-year-olds wanting to earn some money.

Paul Breeden: Parents, if their teenager says I want a job, they're much happier about letting you employ their teenager, as long as they're above 13. And, in fact, I've got a waiting list now because it's actually quite hard for teenagers to find jobs, legally anymore because when we were children, everyone had a paper round but there aren't many paper rounds to be had anymore. (I:1 12/07/2016)

The *Network's* papers were therefore having an impact on the local economy, particularly for its enterprising young people. Rachel Howells also remarked on the impact to the local economy of *The Port Talbot Magnet*, she estimated that over three editions of the paper around 12 to 15 people or small companies received an income, indicating more direct bilateral negotiated reciprocal engagement, producing an instrumental outcome. She said that those benefitting included freelances and distributors.

5:7 Conclusion

The data analysed in this chapter shows research participants' adopting aspects of mainstream local newspapers that they felt no longer existed in the 'parent culture.' These 'old fashioned' methods existed alongside often innovative online techniques, demonstrating the diversity of these operations. The most important retrieved activity was 'face-to-face' or 'footwork' journalism, where reporters engaged in unilateral forms of reciprocal exchange which in turn led to the development of 'trust and social bonding' (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 233; Harte *et al*, 2019: 127).

  Continued reciprocal engagement meant that participants' became embedded and part of the 'conscience collective' of their neighbourhoods. The crucial point is that hyperlocal operators' online strategies did not physically remove them from the community. Journalist, Emma Gunby was horrified that many mainstream journalists no longer phoned anyone, she said there was nothing 'to beat speaking to people, person to person.' Her main job was social media marketing and she suggested that independent hyperlocal publishing was about diversity of approaches, she called it: 'Old fashioned journalism mixed with modern techniques' (I:2). The print platform offered unexpected reciprocal engagement with members of the community. Several operators distributed their own publications contributing to their place in the 'conscience collective'.

Organisations such as The Local Voice network which used distribution networks were reviving 'paper rounds' for teenagers, in a situation of direct bilateral/negotiated reciprocal exchange (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167).

The advertising model was itself borrowed from the mainstream and all but one operator used this income stream. Participants' suggested that mainstream media had also retreated from the ultra-local advertising market. Several had retrieved face-to-face and telesales approaches, but they adopted a repurposed attitude to print advertising which was evident in a less exploitative 50:50 division between adverts and news. Mainstream local newspapers traditionally privileged advertising and several online operators had avoided the generic content associated with much local media, creating their own bespoke set-ups so that advertising was genuinely local.

However, a hyperlocal's strength is also potentially its greatest weakness and embeddedness (Harte *et al*, 2019: 125) can cause problems when that community is threatened. *The Port Talbot Magnet* was seriously affected by the threat of mass redundancies at the *Tata Steel* works. Local confidence evaporated and, in a situation reminiscent of the economic crash of 2008, Rachel Howells said that people: 'just stopped advertising' (I:2 05/07/2017); emphasising that this traditional form of income generation, favoured by the parent culture, continues to be precarious.

Chapter 6: No longer "nano-scale"? Evidence of hyperlocal operations emerging from the margins

6:1 Introduction

This chapter will firstly look at changes to participants' operations during the study period and secondly map these changes onto a broader picture of the UK hyperlocal sector. The discussion will then consider the relationship with mainstream local media at the end of the research period.

  Because they are born in the mainstream, subcultures have a continuing relationship with it. Aspects of how subcultures resist, borrow, repurpose and are marginalised, by the mainstream parent culture, have so far been the focus of discussion. Like the mainstream, subcultures also evolve. Hebdige argues that they may start as 'Nano-scale, marginal' but they 'travel' becoming 'processed and reframed' until they are 'absorbed into the vernacular of "common culture"' (2014: 9). Although, Cohen suggests that subcultures do not assimilate into the dominant culture, instead they become 'an accepted, but differentiated part' of it (1972: 9). The discussion during this chapter will therefore look for evidence of this process of hyperlocal evolving, from the micro level upwards.

  This chapter will therefore provide evidence to explore the remaining research questions:

RQ3: How have their provisions changed throughout the field research period?

RQ4: As independent media outlets, what is their relationship with mainstream media?

  The first section will focus on the micro level of how online participants' operations evolved during the research period and their reflections a year after the first interview. In Chapter 4, participants were grouped in terms of single title and multi title operations because one of the aims was to identify division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984). By the

time of the second interview the robust status of the print model made it a more obvious choice to group operations using this platform, therefore the second section focuses on the narratives of those with a print option.

The third section considers the relationship between subculture and parent culture at the end of the research period, how operators perceived their relationship with mainstream local media. The fourth section discusses independent hyperlocal's position in the local media ecosystem at the end of the study and indicates how it has travelled since the start of the research period.

6:2 Changes in the study area: hatches, matches and despatches

Between interviews some participants' added new operations to their portfolios, others had voluntarily left hyperlocal publishing to pursue new careers, new partnerships had formed and one operation had closed. The term 'hatches, matches and despatches' was slang in newspapers for 'births, marriages and deaths'; a page at the heart of any local newspaper. David Jackman referred to them in Chapter 3 (I:1, 11/04/2016). In the *Troon Times,* page 2 was where members of the public notified the community about those three life changing events. Throughout the study period participants' had their own 'hatches, matches and dispatches' moments, some with significant changes to their operations. Here I will look at changes in the study area.

By the second interview most participants' had consolidated their operations, although the *Port Talbot Magnet* had closed and both Jamie Summerfield and Martin Johnson had left their respective hyperlocals as discussed in Chapter 5.

Pat Gamble at *West Bridgford Wire*, in Nottinghamshire, was upbeat about his operation: 'I think it's just got better and better really, I think I've got better personally, so you get invited to more things' (I:2 13/09/2017). His recipe for success was just to: 'keep doing it and keep building' his audience (I:2). His positive approach appeared to be working, his site was attracting advertising and had a large following on both the website and social media. As stated in Chapter 4, at the start of data collection he was earning roughly about the same from his hyperlocal as his take-home pay in his previous employment: 'I still don't market the advertising. If I did that, I think it would probably double' (I:2). He had devised both his own content and advertising strategy and admitted: 'I think the frustration though is that you wonder what you don't know' (I:2).

Pat's overall discourse therefore indicated a subcultural position, outside the mainstream; his non-media background left him with the feeling that there was still so much he needed to learn about the industry. In terms of the local news media ecosystem his operation was no longer marginal, it had become much more visible. It had been accepted onto the first stage of the *BBC Local Democracy Reporter Scheme.* Satisfying the corporation's criteria to receive copy from the news bank, accessed a greater range of stories. He had got himself a press card from the *British Association of Journalists* and also joined the media regulatory body *Independent Press Standards Organisation* (*IPSO).*

Jamie Summerfield announced during the first interview that he was planning to leave *ALBOS,* and he departed in the summer of 2016. Jon Cook, the remaining partner, was committed to running the hyperlocal out of what he called a: 'sense of social responsibility', indicating the altruistic motive of the 'conscience collective' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). He had been the sole operator for nearly a year and was running the hyperlocal with volunteer help, although he had fewer volunteers than previously:

Jon Cook:	It's been a very busy time. So, before we did have quite a few more volunteers than we have now. So, with me having to take it on to run it on my own, as well as a full time job and a young family, that made it incredibly difficult. So, volunteers are great in one respect, but they don't come without any overheads on managing them, and that led to some of them leaving because I couldn't commit more time to being there to answer things for them as and when they needed it. So, the situation evolved and basically, we've just got one volunteer now who helps out with things and I'm kind of picking up the rest of the things still. (I:2 30/06/2017)

Harte *et al* call 'the labour given by volunteers' a form of direct reciprocity and suggest that those who offer their help are rewarded by: 'gaining new, or honing existing, skills; or, they were assumed to be benefitting emotionally' (2016: 10/169). Jon's interview indicated an operator's perspective, suggesting that the need to invest time in volunteers could outweigh the benefit of the help they offered. Therefore, the number of volunteers contributing to the hyperlocal had reduced after Jamie left, because Jon had less time to 'manage them.' His personal circumstances had also changed having left his job of 12 years, which involved a 50-mile drive to work, and set up his own IT contracting company. By the second interview, Jon was working from home freeing up time for the

hyperlocal, in a situation of 'informal cross-subsidy' (Harte *et al*, 2019: 182-184). Providing a further indication of his implicit altruistic motive for hyperlocal publishing (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28), he had even made time to contribute to the larger hyperlocal community. In an indication of both the 'conscience collective' (ibid) and indirect reciprocity (Lewis et al, 2014; Harte et al, 2017) Jon had shared his experience of upgrading the *ALBOS* website on the *C4CJ* website (Cook, 2018).

 Dave Harte's comments on using volunteers were similar to Jon's, he infrequently used them and on rare occasions it would be students looking for a placement. Once again it was the investment of 'time' required to make the relationship work: 'I don't want to put the effort in to manage that process. So, it's easier, in some ways, to keep it to myself' (18/05/2016). He was another participant to experience a lifestyle change during the study period. Having completed the doctorate (2017), which provided symbiosis with the hyperlocal *Bournville Village,* he had been appointed *Associate Professor in Journalism and Media Studies* at *Birmingham City University.* His focus had therefore changed and in 2016 he said: 'Next year I might think about moving on and trying to get rid of it into somebody else's possession.' By the summer of 2017, he was still ostensibly running the hyperlocal but was posting only occasionally. By the time of writing up the thesis the site appeared to have become dormant, with only one post later than 2017, on June 9, 2018. The same appeared to be true of *Kings Cross Environment* in London where the latest post was November 29, 2018. As discussed in Chapter 4*, (Participants' professional background and their motivation for independent hyperlocal publishing*) William Perrin said that the hyperlocal was at a less active stage in its lifecycle, having played an important role in the regeneration of the area during 2007/8. By the start of data collection in 2016, with the regeneration largely complete, William and the other volunteers were only posting 'according to local need.' The site continued to 'tick over' throughout the data collection period.

 Another site in the capital, *London SE1,* was busy as ever and there was plenty of optimism for the future. This contrasted with the previous year James Hatts said that he was: 'on the cusp of shutting up shop' (see *Chapter 5*). A year later he was much happier about the hyperlocal's financial situation:

James Hatts:	The big change for us was last September when we moved to a membership supported model of operating. Although we're not completely out of the woods, that has kind of put us on a path to sustainability that wasn't there before and really it was very well received, in fact, the launch of our membership scheme and so far has been very well supported. Without it, we would have had to close last year. (I:2 23/06/2017)

As previously discussed, James attributed this to having a good 'track record' over the hyperlocal's 18-year existence, an example of sustained reciprocal engagement, and because he felt that readers were getting used to subscription models for news websites.

By the second interview, Michael Casey's two-year partnership with Trinity Mirror Plc/Local World Ltd had finished (discussed in *Chapter 5*) and he was once again operating *Your Thurrock* and *Your Harlow* on his own with the help of volunteers. His main change had been to adjust his work life balance, since at the time of the first interview he was exhausted:

> Michael Casey: After you spoke to me, we went to Portugal for a week and usually I read two / three books on my Kindle and I read ten pages and slept and at that time, it took about a week to say to [...] my wife, we need to make some adjustments here because I can't allow myself to get in this state again. I was so tired and it gets to that thing about, no, I'm not going to go to this job today or like the football, I'm not going to sit in the cold press box for three hours.
> And actually a couple of weeks ago, I think one of these rare moments where I had a Wednesday night Thurrock Council meeting, which are three hours, and I had a really good news item to do with protestors ejected [...] and Thursday morning I get up at about 6.45 and start editing it. My stepdaughter was on the phone saying there was a rooftop siege with a woman on top of a roof. So, I was then there for five hours and then I had BBC Radio Four to show round. And that was a typical day which I was exhausted, but, I quickly stepped off the track, cancelled everything from 6.00 onwards. (I:2)

Ironically, though, Michael's idea of a break was to take a 'busman's holiday' to cover the *Edinburgh Festival* for a friend who ran the hyperlocal *Edinburgh Reporter*; seeing 11 shows in three days.

> Michael Casey: Phyllis will be good on film, so she's got a couple of things to run in the Edinburgh Reporter, so I'll pop in and see her and see what latest technical stuff she's doing with her iPhone 7-Plus and stuff like that. So, there is that almost natural bartering system and so that's good and part of the community. (I:2)

Michael showed a strong 'conscience collective' the altruistic aspect of 'mechanical solidarity' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al,* 2003: 165; Jenks, 2005: 28). Being part of a community was an important motivation for him. Not just the Thurrock and Harlow communities, he also contributed to the larger hyperlocal community. Despite the demands on his time of running two hyperlocals, Michael demonstrated 'collective conscience' by also contributing to the independent hyperlocal community. He made 'little films' for his site called *Hyperlocal Bible* which offered free advice to other operators and contributed to the larger hyperlocal sector, a form of indirect reciprocity (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017):

> Michael Casey: I thought why not... I wish ten years ago there was somebody on YouTube saying how to run a hyperlocal and all the little things that come up every day. So, I started doing them and I've done about 50 and just handy hints in that way. But, actually I have had feedback from a number of people who said thanks very much for doing them. (I:2)

This act of indirect reciprocity (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) was not only a contribution to the hyperlocal community, it was also a reward to the *YouTube* community; where he had often found answers to technical questions when creating the hyperlocals. A millionaire friend had advised him: 'this is really priceless information, and not to give it away for free'; a motivation which would represent the egoistic approach of organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). But, Michael's implicit altruism (ibid.) forbade him from going down that route, the respect it earned him from the hyperlocal community was reward enough. He was still working full time on the hyperlocals and making a living, but the money was clearly not a driving force: 'I'll never set the world on fire with my 'park runs' and *Your Thurrock* will never make a million, but if you get those news items and you beat people to it…' Despite the hard work, his enthusiasm for community news appeared undiminished.

> Michael Casey: I'm keen to set up something like Bishops Stortford but I can't get anybody interested and my wife has said: "You know why, because it's really hard work" and I know it may be a little scary as well, but I can't see why other journalists couldn't start, why all these redundant journalists don't do it. (I:2)

After visiting the *London Community Media Association* he was inspired by the other independent operators that he met, particularly those producing monthly newspapers.

He was even tempted by print: 'I'd like to do something like that, but we'll see.' His passion for archiving was further evidence of his 'conscience collective'. Archiving was an indirect reciprocal act (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) of paying forward to future generations (discussed in Chapter 5) and had taken on another local project. He was compiling a 'fascinating' social history of his home town of Harlow on its 70th anniversary, as part of a *Heritage Lottery* project with *Harlow Museum*: 'We're halfway through, I'm 40 films in. Harlow New Town is 70 films of people, asking them when they came to Harlow and why they stayed' (I:2 08/08/2017).

Also in Essex, David Jackman's three sites had undergone further consolidation and he continued to work on them fulltime. At long-running *On the Wight*, Simon Perry launched the innovative 'full self-service' job search website in January 2017. He had created a bespoke system designed to 'fit' readers, businesses and generate the hyperlocal income through the job ads (Chapter 5: *"I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism*). He was by then preparing it so that similar sites could use the same software: 'We've had some conversations with some hyperlocals about it already and, as you well know, the struggle is income and this seems to fit it perfectly for them' (I:2 17/08/2017).

The oldest of the two multi-title online operations NeighbourNet had reached a stable stage in its development and the number of hyperlocal sites within the group remained at 10. By the second interview, Sean Kelly and his business partner Tony Steele were working on a major overhaul of their software. Sean said this had been dictated by: 'Changes in the way that search engines and social media are allowing us to broadcast stories' (I:2 08/08/2017). The organisation had gone the 'proprietary software route' which in the short term made life difficult but was better in the long term: 'I think it's almost impossible to do this sort of thing completely effectively on third party software. It's been very difficult for people who haven't developed their own software to grow from that base' (I:2).

NeighbourNet*'s* preferred means of broadcast had always been the direct reciprocity of email newsletter; a method of distribution which Kathryn Geels (23/05/2016) found during *Nesta's* research: 'was a really powerful tool for hyperlocal publishers to engage with their audiences.' Sean estimated this was how about 50% of their readership accesses the sites, although it was getting harder to persuade people to sign up and he was wary of becoming too dependent on social media:

Sean Kelly: Obviously that doesn't mean we're disregarding the opportunities that other channels create. What we believe has happened is there's been a lot of talk about problems in the news media, difficulty in making business in the digital industry.

I think a lot of people became very over-dependent on things like Facebook for distributing news and then when Facebook started to squeeze news publishers, which they have done over the last couple of years, then people really found their traffic disappeared, massive declines in traffic. So that really hit their business model.

With us, it had never been a particularly important channel for us and we didn't really want to be dependent on it. In a way, we saw them as something of a competitor but however, we do have to recognise if our competitors' stories are getting traction through social media and ours aren't, then people are going to be reading our competitors' stories and not ours. So, we do have to have a presence there and we do have to give the opportunity to view it that way if that's what they want, even though we prefer they just came directly to us. (I:2)

Another of the online multi-title operation was Daniel Ionescu's Stonebow Media, which was identified as successful by Williams *et al* (2014: 20). By the second interview, Daniel's original hyperlocal, *The Lincolnite,* had evolved into an independent publishing operation with three online publications. Daniel explained how the operation had changed, in the early days there were three or four part-time members of staff supplementing their income with freelance work; in an atypical journalism situation. He said: 'For the past almost three years now, everybody has been full time and fully salaried.' At the first interview there were 10 fulltime staff, a year later this had increased to 12 full time plus two-part time; entailing a move to larger premises. This indicated a sophisticated operation represented by organic solidarity and division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). Daniel was, however, an active member of the hyperlocal community, demonstrating a 'conscience collective' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28):

Daniel Ionescu: I've met a lot of interesting people at the C4CJ forums, etc. They tend to be the smaller publications, kind of something that either they do on the side, or something like that, and many of them I found they're still at the stage where they have to decide whether to dedicate themselves to something full time or not, and we have been at this stage but six years ago. (I:2 23/06/2017)

He said at first interview: 'the future for us means scale, and being able to have even more readers and cover a wider area' (I:1). By the second interview the business had expanded from two titles, *The Lincolnite* and *Lincolnshire Business*, to include a third online publication *Lincolnshire Reporter,* providing daily news from across the county. *The Reporter* was operated from the premises in Lincoln and there was a proposal to increase its physical presence across the county by opening 'local bureaux'. Daniel explained that the plan was to have: 'a small permanent office in a couple of the key major towns outside the city in order to have correspondents based there' (I:2 23/06/2017). These would correspond with the district offices, once prevalent in mainstream local newspapers (Jackman, 2013: 247-252; Howells, 2015), and represent an investment in locality and community: 'the prolonged and continual presence in that place' (Hess and Waller, 2016: 197) that underpins reciprocity.

Rachel Howells stated in her PhD thesis, *Journey to the centre of a news black hole: examining the democratic deficit in a town with no newspaper* (2015), that district offices traditionally represented an important resource for both reporters and local people, because of the way: 'they linked journalists with the local community' (2015: 180). Stonebow Media's proposed strategy therefore represent retrieving and repurposing a concept from the mainstream parent culture (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979). In subcultural terms the company was no longer marginal, it had become visible in the local media ecosystem in several ways. Firstly, in 2017 through nominations for its content:

> Daniel Ionescu: We were up in two categories at the *Online Media Awards*, it was 1st June. We were up for Best Launch for *Lincolnshire Reporter* and Best Local News Website for *The Lincolnite*. We haven't won in either but I was happy just to be there considering the likes of the competition in each of the categories. Just to give you an example in Best Local, we had *London Evening Standard*, among the *Liverpool Echo* and a range of other major titles and in the Best Launch / Relaunch we had *Financial Times* and a range of other titles. So, we were really chuffed just to be among those people there. (I:2)

The company had also been one of 15 hyperlocals accepted onto the first stage of the *BBC Democracy Reporters Scheme* (Abbott: 2017), and by September was one of only two hyperlocals in the UK to be accepted onto tier two, with two democracy reporters based at the company's premises (*The Lincolnite*, 2017).

6:3 "Build your audience online first" then launch a paper: the continued viability of print

The print platform continued to be a resilient and popular choice among participants', with the most surprising convert being David Prior. He was founder of the online only *Altrincham Today* and associated fledgling independent franchise operation Hyperlocal Today; which had been in operation for six months at the start of the research period. During the first interview David described print journalism as a 'dying industry' and had established his independent franchise group as 'mobile first', vowing: 'That I would only work in online journalism' (I:1 12/05/2016). By the second interview an *Altrincham Today* print product was in the final stages of preparation, despite him not being a fan of the format the year before:

> David Prior: No, I wasn't at all! But what I've subsequently found – and this is something that has worked very well in the States, as ever, they're a little bit ahead of us on the hyperlocal thinking – is that the ambition, and I'm starting it in Altrincham and hopefully going to roll it out, is to keep the daily web service going, but, to marry it up with a six times a year magazine which will be distributed free to businesses, shops, cafes, libraries, etc., within Altrincham. 10,000 copies and it will be part news magazines, part features, part handbook, part directory – as far away from the glossy celebrity lifestyle type magazine that are two a penny these days. It's just following the focused hyperlocal approach. It'll be called *Altrincham Today* and, yes, the aim is that... I do think there's still a place for the right kind of print. I don't buy a newspaper every day, but I'll buy one at the weekend. (I:2 21/08/2017)

His change of mind indicated both the resilience of the print platform as well as David's 'bricolage' outlook when repurposing of the medium (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Baker and Nelson, 2005; Deuze, 2006; Phillimore et al, 2016). He had previously worked on print operations, but there was no sentimentality about David's decision to try print – it was a commercial decision. Having previously discounted print, the way it was used by the mainstream, he was retrieving and repurposing it in a way that enhanced his business model. It was being trialled at *Altrincham Today,* with a view to 'rolling it out' across the franchise if the experiment worked. Apart from the print launch, the focus of David's attention between interviews was on consolidation rather than growth:

David Prior: We haven't concentrated on expanding the network as yet. That hasn't been the focus over the last year, I think we're up to nine now but that hasn't been the main objective. The main objective has been attempting to get the model sorted, essentially work out how to ensure that the sites are sustainable. It is, to an extent, one big experiment in finding out what works and what doesn't work and how different places affect sustainability. So, the focus hasn't been on scaling up. (I:2)

Franchise holder Emma Gunby and her business partner Mark Thomas, at *West Kirby Today* were watching developments at *Altrincham Today* with interest. Emma said they would let David: 'do his first and he can be the pilot and then we would follow his model.' (I:2 04/10/2017). Emma's primary income was social media marketing and she felt that using a digital platform to launch a print product was a sensible option: 'The more I think about it, I think that it's actually potentially the right way to do it - where you build your audience online first. We know we already have that customer base and now we can launch this product for them' (I:2). Emma's words appeared prescient when a year later, in June 2018, *Facebook* (Moore, 2018) launched a print magazine. Emma and Mark already worked closely on advertising with Mark Gorton at neighbouring *Heswall Today* (http://heswall.today/about/) and were in discussion about launching a joint print publication. All three parties were in direct bilateral exchange situations, with Hyperlocal Today as franchise holders, but their networked situation also represented a degree of solidarity through interdependence (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Jenks, 2005: 28). Emma said that it was: 'Good being in a group and seeing what other people are doing and getting ideas' (I:2). She gave examples of swapping story ideas with other franchise holders, the advertising tie-up with Mark Gorton, learning video skills from a franchise holder in Glasgow and benefitting from David's experience with the pilot print product.

  As stated in Chapter 5, lack of selling experience meant a steep learning curve for operators such as Emma, who had only been running the hyperlocal for six months when first interviewed. Eighteen months into the operation, she was still cross subsidising from her social media consultancy business, which provided her main income.

Emma Gunby: I couldn't do this for a living, it couldn't be my only source of income. But we're definitely seeing an increase in the advertising and now what we're also exploring is other models of how this could potentially make money.

Emma Gunby:	So, we're looking into hosting events, doing workshops. We've also set up a subgroup to *West Kirby Today* which is *West Kirby Today Business*. So certainly, in our area, there isn't a kind of central business organisation. There's no one business group, there's a few disparate groups but there's nothing where everybody works together. So, we set up this business group to help make... So we're looking at these events and then, interestingly, we're also starting to look at now whether we consider doing some kind of print product as well. (I:2)

This evidenced their increasing 'conscience collective' which was being expanded to exploring reciprocal engagement with the business community; a strategy which Daniel Ionescu, David Shafford and Vijay Jain had adopted. David Prior was also close to the business community through his other income stream as editor of the business website *Prolific North,* he was cross-subsidising by editing it two days a week and working on his hyperlocal and the franchise business for the remainder of the time. The Hyperlocal Today model was still 'work in progress' and at the first interview David said he was planning to: 'organically grow it and hopefully the time will come where it can step up a level.' A year later he was optimistic about the public appetite for hyperlocal journalism:

David Prior:	I think it's a golden age, to be honest, for local journalism but you need to get the means of delivery correct, and the size of the patch as well is key. So, the old print model, the old cluster of places that your old local paper used to cover, that's now too big an area and you need to go hyperlocal. What we've done with Altrincham and what the other sites are doing, just focus on that town and dig down and there's still definitely a place for an authoritative central hub of news. (I:2)

His reflections on what was wrong with the 'old print model' indicated the need to repurpose it. His faith in print appeared to have been rewarded, *Altrincham Today* was nominated in the 2018 *Society of Editors Regional Press Awards* for *Magazine of the Year* (2019). Overall, David was optimistic about the future of hyperlocal news.

David Prior:	What I found is that people care about hyperlocal news more than any other type of news, without a shadow of a doubt, because it's affecting them directly and it's their favourite restaurant that's closing or it's a new building that is going to ruin a view that they like down the road, or whatever, it's stuff that they really care about. (I:1 12/05/2016)

Vijay Jain at *Dartford Living* agreed that there was an appetite for micro-local coverage. He felt that audiences were less interested in the generic content which local/regional papers, taken over by national organisations, were offering: 'I think where we are… it's either if you're very local, just focusing on our town, then I think success is possible - or if you're looking at the big scale. But in-between, I think that's where people are struggling' (I:2 16/06/2017). At *Dartford Living* he and his business partner David Shafford had no immediate plans to give up the 'day jobs'. Although by the second interview David Shafford was planning to go part-time as an *Highway England Traffic Officer* to spend more time on the magazine and his web-development business. He said that the magazine had increased in size because there was so much interest in advertising. They had also expanded the business directory and live networking events for local businesses and charities.

> David Shafford: We still haven't had to actually ask anyone if they want to advertise, they've come to us. So, if we actually went out there and tried to drum up the business, we would probably be able to fill 100 pages I think. (I:2 16/06/2017)

Although the magazine appeared to be flourishing, there was still a lot of cross-subsidy (Harte *et al*, 2019: 181-184) from their personal lives: 'It would be nice to get something for it. So, I come home from work and think, okay, I've now got to do this for three or four hours and it takes up a heck of a lot our time' David said (I:2).

  As well as engaging in indirect reciprocity (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) by running *Dartford Living Live*, their community building networking events, David said that they were using profit they made to: 'sponsor a sports team and some charity stuff' (I:2). These events emphasised their community building indirect reciprocity (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) and their altruistic 'collective conscience' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Because of their not-for-profit approach, David said that they hoped to get some grant funding so they could offer other services to the local community: 'we're thinking about doing business workshops and stuff like that. So, there's definitely scope for us to help out as well' (I:2). They were involved in discussions about *Dartford Living* being: 'Classed as a community led company or something along those lines, that might allow us to apply for some grants' said David (I:2). This would provide them with the same form of non-hierarchical alternative media organisational structure as *Bristol Cable*

and would mean that they could start paying themselves something for the investment of time in the operation.

Between interviews David and Vijay had strengthened their ties with the local council and had been invited to sit on the Dartford 'town board' because of their interest in promoting the local business community:

> David Shafford: There's loads of businesses who want to work in the community and they're [the council] seeing, obviously, we can help with that and pushing it our way [...] the Council have dealings with [legacy media organisation] as well and they don't see us as competition and vice versa. I think that's the best way to be, because if we start positioning ourselves up against them, it's like there's two of us with some volunteers against probably a million-pound company and so there's no way we'd win that one. (I:2)

David's comments about 'winning that one' underlined the marginal, subcultural position of *Dartford Living* as operating outside the mainstream. Overall, Vijay said it had been a story of all-round growth: 'the magazine has grown in size and the amount of things we're doing on social media has increased. The website has increased' (I:2). At the first interview he had mooted the possibility of taking the 'print' option out of the mix, at some stage, to save costs. By the second interview he said: 'It's something we're thinking about but not something we've reached that point yet.' He added: 'Basically we're seeing the online bit growing more but not to the point where… the magazine is still very popular, that's the thing' (I:2).

The other Kent hyperlocal was *The Looker* and David Wimble's major breakthrough in solving his revenue problem was discussed in Chapter 5. He had gone into partnership with his printers which meant that they had taken away his major headache of chasing advertisers for money. His new partners also did the layout, designed the ads and best of all, he got regular payments into his bank. In 2018, *The Looker* produced its 200th edition which was a cause for celebration but also carried a warning (*Appendix 16*). David had suffered health problems which in the editorial section he said was a 'wake-up call' and he was looking for someone with the same 'work ethic' to share the responsibility of putting out the fortnightly paper and he was considering possibly selling a half-share in the business.

As a media co-operative *The Bristol Cable* had a very large group of people to share the workload. It was a non-hierarchical organisation with a popular print option, whose circulation had increased from 20,000 copies bi-monthly to 30,000. At the first interview

Adam Cantwell-Corn was working 'fulltime' on *The Cable* 'pretty well unpaid' and cross subsiding by working in a restaurant in the evening. At the start of data collection, *The Cable* had just held its second AGM he said:

> Adam Cantwell-Corn: One of the major decisions there was to approve a budget which saw the introduction for the first time of regular payment for key organisers and also for contributors. And the way in which that'll be rolled out is that it's going to be on a flat rate across the organisation. So, per unit of work it's the same amount for everybody, no matter their seniority or experience within the organisation. (I:1 17/05/2016)

By the second interview Adam was fulltime at the organisation and the community benefit society had a total of four fulltime employees: 'and a handful of others doing four to two days a week.' *The Cable* had increased its membership from 1100 to 1800 subscribers, however, a membership drive was the next priority because the figure was still some way short of the 2,500 Adam had hoped for:

> Adam Cantwell-Corn: The main thing for us really at the moment, and we're developing strategies to do so, is to have significant membership growth over the next short period because we need that to happen quicker than it is, basically, in order for the model to be sustainable. So that's where we are at, trying to work out what is the best way to deliver a membership growth campaign and get people to sign up because our engagement and reach is much higher. We're still getting members, we're still a growing organisation but we just basically need to make it happen quicker and that's the challenge for us now, always has been really. (I:2 13/09/2017)

The issue of growing membership highlights the problem of reciprocation when trying to get people pay for something they once got for free, it was a challenge which Simon Perry reflected on in Chapter 4. *The Cable's* alternative media organisational approach and investigative journalism focus had proved to be a strength because of the ability to attract grant funding. By the second interview *The Cable* was involved in a grant funded project called *Bureau Local* set up by the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism,* which Adam described as providing a: 'central point for local publications to work together' (I:2). Its altruistic, 'conscience collective' mechanical solidarity ethos (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) also appealed to philanthropic organisations. There was a major grant of '£100,000 a year for two years' in February 2018 from the *Omidyar*

Network so that *The Cable* could: 'continue to work on creating a community-owned media with a sustainable business model' (Parkyn-smith, 2018). The operation had previously benefited from a £40,000 grant from the *Reva & David Logan Foundation* in 2015 (The Bristol Cable, 2015), to fund their investigative journalism. As previously stated, *The Cable's* alternative media business model opened up the operation to grant funding but there was a flip side in that it limited advertising opportunities, since there was a strict ethical policy in place.

   The Cable's investigative journalism was, nevertheless, drawing the right sort of publicity as Paul Breeden at The Local Voice Network, also in Bristol, commented at the second interview: 'They're now producing stories that are getting proper attention. They're breaking stuff that no one else is getting which is fantastic' (I:2 07/08/2017). This indicated that *The Cable* was less marginal in relation to the parent culture, something that was confirmed by their nominations for national awards alongside mainstream media organisations. At the 2017 *Online Media Awards, The Bristol Cable* was highly commended in the 'best local/regional news site'. The paper was nominated again for the *Online Media Awards* in 2018 in the 'specialist/local news site of the year' category and was highly commended in 'the innovation and initiative award' of the year at the Regional Press awards 2017 (Society of Editors, 2018).

   Richard Gurner's *Caerphilly Observer* was also in the spotlight having won the 'Independent Community News Service of the year 2017' at *Wales Media Awards* for the second year running (Wales Media Awards, 2017); the paper subsequently picked up the award again in 2018. Richard felt that his operation had 'stabilised' between interviews:

> Richard Gurner: We've grown a little bit and I've managed to cut a few more costs here and there, so profitability is up. And we now seem to have like a solid revenue base which I think we did have 12 months ago, but it's just that little bit higher which means there's just a little bit less pressure. (I:2 14/07/2017)

The part-time advertising person he had just taken on in 2016 had done 'fantastically well' and he was upbeat, although not complacent. The increased visibility had also created a less welcome spin-off, Richard said that the local legacy paper had 'come out fighting this month.' He explained:

Richard Gurner: They've really upped their editorial coverage. I think in the hope to attract more advertisers, so it seems that [legacy organisation] now have decided to wake up a little bit to us and put a bit of money into their newspaper. That's a positive thing really because readers get a healthy local press and advertisers get a bit of competitive media, with maybe them getting as much value out of us advertising-wise, because obviously we're now in full competition with each other, whereas before I don't think they were really trying. (I:2)

He guessed that this was linked to the way the *Audit Bureau of Circulation* (*ABC*) collates circulation figures for legacy newspapers. He said that during the four years he had been producing the paper 'they haven't really bothered to do anything' (I:2) but recently, the opposition had changed their distribution model to coincide with the *ABC* circulation review period.

Richard Gurner: That certainly tells me now that they're going to have a bit of sustained push over the next six months at least. So, for four years they haven't really bothered changing anything or doing anything, or actually making an effort. Whereas in the last few weeks, they've really upped their game which is a little bit worrying but it's a positive thing all round I think. (I:2)

This feeds into the subcultural theme of marginality, suggested that the *Caerphilly Observer* had 'travelled', bringing it to the notice of the local mainstream opposition. *The Observer* was an award-winning operation and the response from the mainstream suggests that its presence was affecting circulation and potential advertising.

Paul Breeden at The Local Voice Network was in no doubt that the reason independent hyperlocal print was so effective was because of the value of local advertising to local businesses. He said that the strength of Richard Coulter and Emma Cooper's model was that rather than following other media operators online: 'It said no. The way you make this business work is by focusing on print' (I:1). The continuing value of print advertising was fundamental to the group's growth.

Paul Breeden: The reason our model works is more to do with the fact that print advertising is more effective. It is worth more to the advertiser. Online advertising, you still find the biggest companies in the world are still not able to charge the rates per view, however you define it. They're not able to charge as much online as they are in print if they've got a good print product that they can prove sells X copies or is given to X number of people. (I:1 12/07/2016)

Richard Coulter was adamant that at present print: 'Was the best option' but he did not rule out migrating to another platform if it was more viable:

Richard Coulter: If and when there is a new model that works that isn't print, some kind of digital, it might be something as yet unimagined, but we want to be in the position that we are the main news provider for those areas. So, when somebody comes up with a bright new idea, whether it's in five years or 10 years or whatever, then we're in a position to change. We're not wedded to print, we just do print because it's the one that works. (I:1 27/05/2016)

As Richard implied, they weren't using print because of some romantic ideology of hanging onto the past, they were leveraging the platform because each of the participants' needed to generate an income. Their current enthusiasm for print appeared to have translated into a healthy situation for the group, The *Voice Network* had grown substantially between interviews having increased from a total of 11 to 16 publications in a year. At the second interview Emma Cooper was running four titles having added *Hanham and Longwell Green* to the three she was running a year earlier; Richard Drew added *Thornbury Voice* to his existing stable of two titles, while Gary Brindle was also publishing three having added *Emersons Green Voice.* Licences for the two remaining franchises were for new operators; included the first outside Bristol, at Wells in Somerset. Emma said that thus far the group had 'evolved organically' she added: 'We've never gone out looking for new people to become part of our group, they've always come to us' (I:2 12/09/2017).

As previously stated *The Voice Network* was an independent franchise group, a 'grassroots' operation where operators paid a licence fee to the parent company but ran their own businesses; with the network sharing fundamentals such as printing. The group was thus able to leverage economies of scale like mainstream local newspaper groups. At the first interview Emma said that the monthly print run was 'approximately 94,000 copies' by the second interview Richard Coulter said that it was: 'Probably near enough 140,000/150,000.' By the end of the research period, *The Voice* papers had strengthened their shared identity and achieved a degree of standardisation across the group, while crucially having participants' embedded in their areas.

Graphic designer Gary Brindle said at the first interview he was hoping to make design changes to the publications and a year later had achieved a uniform look: 'We eventually got round to doing it and they all look very, very similar now. We're all using the same

typefaces and headlines are at a standard size.' (I:2 07/08/2017). This standardisation was a practice retrieved from the mainstream, since it speeded up production and helped with branding.

Evident at *The Voice Network* was what Hughes *et al* describe as: 'The kind of strong, shared sentiments which are the basis for the unity and conformity of mechanically solitary society' (203: 164). All five interviewees evidenced a shared pride in the success of the group, the 'conscience collective'. It was noticeable that in interview they spoke first about the success of the group, before mentioning their own titles. Emma said that they had a monthly social meeting when about 30 of them would meet up and 'go for a curry.' She said that a strength of the group was that: 'If you've got an issue, you just ring anybody really and hopefully somebody will have the answer for you' (I:2).

The problematic thing about applying Durkheim's mechanical solidarity to a sophisticated set-up like that at the Local Voice Network was that the original concept was based on a simplistic, pre-industrial agrarian model (1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Such a model, arguably, no longer exists in Western society. Operators like those at the network had adopted aspects of organic solidarity, while displaying the 'internal motives' or 'collective conscience' of mechanical solidarity (ibid.). Elements of organic solidarity such as 'heterogeneity,' 'interdependence,' 'innovation', and 'contracts' were all in evidence (ibid) at *The Voices* and in other operations. Applying subcultural theory suggests that these facets of organic solidarity were 'retrieved' and 'repurposed' (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979) from the mainstream local newspaper parent culture.

As explained in Chapters 4 and 5 the network had a series of contracts in existence, direct reciprocal, bilateral, negotiated exchange agreements (Lewis, 2014: 232; Harte *et al,* 2016: 167), and Gary Brindle explained in practical terms how the situation worked:

> Gary Brindle: Every month we invoice one another for… if someone's sold an advert into yours, then you invoice them for the money. Then obviously I invoice Richard and Emma for my service regarding the design and layout. So that's how it works. (I:1 14/06/2016)

This supportive environment which the group nurtured, the conscience collective, was particularly important in the early days of Paul Breeden's hyperlocal venture.

Paul Breeden: That's one of the vital parts of the model that Richard and Emma thought of. It wouldn't have worked for me, certainly at the beginning, if I'd been on my own… if I'd set up on my own. It was partly the fact that I had people who'd already done it I could talk to, to get lots of advice and that was really valuable but there was a financial benefit as well because Emma in particular, having a well-oiled operation, and also she's fairly close to me geographically, […] she provided me with a lot of ads, which benefits her as well because we've got a formula for who takes what slice. It's my publication, I do take most of it. (I:1 12/07/2016)

Both informal/unilateral in the form of free advice and formal/negotiated, exchange relationships (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al*, 2017) where there was an instrumental outcome were contributing to the solidarity of the group. They had similar bilateral/negotiated exchange relationships with actors outside the group, which contributed to the local economy, by creating an 'instrumental value' for them (Molm *et al*, 2007: 200). School children were benefitting financially from 'paper rounds' and *Voice* participants' spoke of employing other local people. Rachel Howells in the same chapter, indicated the benefit to the local economy of similar negotiated exchange relationships, established by the *Port Talbot Magnet* with paid freelancers and a local distribution company, who were being: 'supported by the paper though us paying them' (I:1). These relationships had disappeared with the closure of the hyperlocal.

Gary Brindle's workforce had expanded between interviews, he outlined the bilateral/negotiated arrangements he had with local people:

Gary Brindle: There's four journalists, the two primary ones and another two that will flit in and out as and when we need them really and they're happy with that, it coincides with kids and so on. And obviously I've got one other sales person that is in Fishponds and a design person sits with me, and then the distribution team has obviously got larger again because of taking on the Emersons Green one. (I:2 12/09/2017)

This indicated the level of organic solidarity 'heterogeneity' in his own team and the interdependence between them (Jenks, 2005: 28). This was in addition to the interdependence in the group as a whole. Each of the *Voice* participants' was optimistic about the future and its print platform. Underling the strength of the 'repurposed' platform, Richard Drew said: 'The print first work[s] because it's physical and it's local

and unlike some of our rivals, people read it' (I:2 15/09/2017). Richard Drew still worked on his magazines part-time alongside presenting work. The other part time editor in the group was *Voice* joint-owner Richard Coulter who produced *Filton Voice* as part of a portfolio of work. The other three participants' were full time, including Emma: 'Don't get me wrong, it always is hard work. It's not an easy job to do but I think actually it's quite nice that we all enjoy what we're doing. I think that's quite important.' (I:2 12/09/2017)

6:4 Challenging the mainstream: view from the grassroots

The fourth research question was designed to gather participants' views about their continuing relationship with the mainstream. As discussed in Chapter 5, in several cases there was a degree of irritation with the predatory nature of mainstream media towards hyperlocals, indicating the latter's marginal status. Mainstream media 'ripping off' hyperlocals was a problem acknowledged by Williams *et al* in their study, they quoted an anonymous participant: 'I think commercial media organisations which regularly plagiarise or hoover up news/features generated by hyperlocals should at least acknowledge and preferably pay their sources' (2014: 42).

 William Perrin and his team at *Kings Cross Environment* had a bruising encounter with mainstream media. They ran a London-wide cycling safety campaign following the death of a cyclist in Kings Cross in 2011, even attempting to bring a case of corporate manslaughter against *Transport for London* relating to the design of the junction where she was killed. William briefed *The Times* who ran a story: 'They ripped my copy off and didn't credit me, I was furious, and I rang up journalists. But that was poor behaviour on their part, but there you go, that's the news for you' (25/04/2016). All William wanted, was to be credited as the source of the story or at least for someone to ask rather than just taking it.

 More often than not hyperlocals were resigned to having their copy taken. Dave Harte said: 'Sometimes I can be grumpy about it and sometimes I'm not bothered.' He cited a story about *Cadbury's* closing their packaging design unit with the loss of 40 jobs, Dave picked up the story via social media from a friend who worked there:

Dave Harte: Based on his information, I wrote the story 40 people losing their job at Cadbury. It was quite a sensitive time actually, a year or so after Kraft had taken over and the 40 figure came from nobody, except from my mate [name]. There was no official quote and sure enough, in the next week's [newspaper], they kind of nicked the article using the 40 figure without citing me or anything else. So I was kind of annoyed at that.

I don't mind if they approach me and say this is interesting, can we use your pictures? Because what often happens is they then later go and find their own pictures or cover the story better, but this struck me as a kind of steal and I wasn't too comfortable with that. (18/05/2016)

Such irritation about the practices of some mainstream operators, that came across in the first interviews, led to this angle of questioning being pursued in the second round.

Ironically, complaints from hyperlocal operators of unethical behaviour at the hands of the parent culture, are mirrored by mainstream media's own stance of victimisation in the face of social media companies using their copy. Under a headline "Social media should pay for taking news stories" Ashleigh Highfield, Chairman of the *News Media Association* complained that that the current situation was currently "unfair" (Frean, 2017: 42). *The Times* business writer Alexandra Frean wrote that he wanted to see *Google* and *Facebook*: 'made to pay a levy for news they take from other media outlets and distribute on their websites unless they agree to share more of the of the advertising revenue' (ibid.). While mainstream organisations appeared to be using their position of dominance to take copy from subcultural operators, when social media organisations treated them in a similar fashion they complained bitterly. A case of 'people in glass houses, shouldn't throw stones', perhaps.

Few participants' had a relationship with mainstream local media organisations. As outlined in Chapters 3 and 4, prior to the research David Jackman had enjoyed a tie-up with Archant Ltd to do a 64-page, A5 glossy 'coffee table book' where he provided the content and they provided the advertising. But the mainstream operator assigned just one a part time ad rep and continually changed staff: 'There was no continuity with it, so sadly that stopped' (I:1 11/04/2016). Other relationships that did exist with legacy newspapers had disappeared as the mainstream owners evolved their business models away from participants, or formerly fledgling hyperlocals became more of a threat. Several spoke of having a good relationship with the *BBC,* operators like Michael Casey often worked with *BBC Essex.* He had also been in partnership Trinity Mirror Plc for two

years, the partnership finishing between interviews as the legacy organisation evolved its business model in a different direction. At the first interview Daniel Ionescu reported working with both *BBC Radio Lincolnshire* and the Trinity Mirror Plc title *Lincolnshire Echo* to 'organise hustings for the 2015 General Election and Europe Debate' (I:1). By the second interview the *Lincolnshire Echo* website had been renamed *Lincolnshire Live* and the relationships had soured. Daniel spoke of a 'stats war' with the new rival website which he interpreted as the Stonebow Media's three sites becoming more of a threat: 'It's still very hard to tell you how we compare directly to that but all I can say is that the figures are probably very close if they are getting so aggressive about this' (I:2). Richard Gurner's experience of the mainstream opposition paper 'coming out fighting' was further evidence of the mainstream media taking a more aggressive stance.

6:4:1 Regulation and credibility: being on the outside

The only operator to have a close relationship with a local legacy paper was Pat Gamble who had a very good working relationship with the Trinity Mirror Plc (now Reach Plc) owned *Nottingham Post.* Pat did not have a media background, so was wary of the rival newspaper. He expected antagonism, but his background may have been a benefit: 'Actually, I thought it was all cutthroat because the difficulty with me, and it might have been an advantage really, is that I didn't know anything about the industry at all' (I:1). Without a background in the media industry, he was open-minded and pragmatic about the relationship: 'We're all each other's sources, aren't we? I scan the [*local paper*] and they scan me' (I:1). His narrative was an example of how mutually beneficial a relationship could be between a hyperlocal and traditional media; direct reciprocal engagement existed between him and the corporate owned daily.

> Pat Gamble: There's a rivalry, don't get me wrong. Of course, there's a rivalry to get to a story first or something like that, but I think it's just a personality thing. The guy that is at the top, we get on really well and I've met most of the journalists. I've been invited to the newsroom, although we've never manged to settle that but I've got an open invitation to go and have a look at it. We've shared content. This is not regular but if I'm on the spot and I get a picture and they're office-bound, it might be that we'll share that. I do the same with the BBC, so BBC Nottingham, I've got a relationship with them. That's never been an issue. Notts TV, there's a relationship there.

Pat Gamble:	Because I see the people when I'm out at events, especially if you're out at a marathon or something, an event that's static, or even an incident, usually there's one of each from those two places there. We've fallen out, of course we have, and we have the odd fight once every six months about something, but generally speaking it's probably more support from them than from me to them. Legal things I've asked for advice on, they've covered… because I don't do courts, there was once a local very serious underage rape and I said, I really need this, can you help? And they went and did it. So they made sure they covered that and obviously we both got the content. But they did it and they sent me the story at the same time, so I'm grateful for that. (I:2 13/09/2017)

Pat's relationship with the legacy media also meant that he had also gone down a different regulatory route to other operators, having joined the *Independent Press Standards Organisation* (*IPSO*); which is the independent regulator favoured by the mainstream press. When Pat first looked at the *IPSO* website there was no obvious way of joining, there wasn't a membership link, the organisation appeared to be closed to outsiders. But a contact at *The Post* advised him to write to the regulator which eventually led to his membership. The issue of press regulation, and the two bodies that offered it, also emphasised the exclusion from the mainstream of independent operators. Richard Gurner, Daniel Ionescu, Simon Perry and Michael Casey had all looked at the *IPSO* website and said that it was far from obvious how 'outsiders' should join. They therefore each joined the rival *Independent Monitor for the Press* (*IMPRESS*) which was actively recruiting (Scarbrough, 2016a). Although Richard Gurner had since left *IMPRESS* (Mayhew, 2017a) and joined *IPSO* (Kakar, 2018).

By the second interview Pat Gamble had also got himself a press card by joining the *British Association of Journalists*, he felt membership conferred a degree of credibility and provided him with both free legal advice and insurance. Lewis (2012) identifies joining trades unions as an aspect of the professionalisation of journalism. This was confirmed by participants' who were already professional journalists being *National Union of Journalists* (NUJ) members. The issue of press cards is therefore something which reinforces the subcultural standing of hyperlocal operations since many publishers are excluded. In September 2017, *C4CJ* carried out 'The case for union recognition' survey and found that 88% of 'community and hyperlocal journalists' who responded felt that an *NUJ* card would give legitimacy, credibility and increased access to their work

(2017b). At the time of the survey many independent operators were ineligible for a press card because they did not meet the criteria, which stated that 'applicants must be earning the majority of their income from journalism' (ibid). *C4CJ* centre manager Emma Meese was in talks with the *NUJ* she explained the problem:

| Emma Meese: | So at the moment, one of the main stumbling blocks is funding. It's how much money you make from journalism. So, when these guidelines were drawn up, they were completely intended for journalists who were either freelance or worked at a newspaper. There was no such thing as setting up your own website, setting up your own newspaper, being a one-man band, you worked for a large media organisation [...] we're not saying that every member of ICNN should be eligible for a press card, we're not. What we're saying is there still has to be a set criteria. However, there are those people who are our members who should be eligible and currently are not [...] If you say I can't live on £100 a week, I'm also going to do some training on the side and I'm going to work in [store name] or something and that ends up paying you more, then you're not eligible for a press card, even if you're still spending five days a week running your news publication because you're not making the majority of your income from your journalism and you're not eligible. And that's the bit that makes it crazy. If you only make £10 a month from selling one advert a month on your hyperlocal but that's all the money you earn, you can get a press card. If you also have a weekend job, you can't get a press card. (18/09/2017) |

The problem has been caused by the evolution of journalism in the internet era which has changed the nature of what it is to be a journalist (Deuze, 2007; Deuze, 2008a; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009; Deuze and Witschge, 2017). Emma questioned whether the guidelines and criteria, are still relevant for the current landscape: 'No, they're not, basically' (18/09/2017). Paul Breeden highlighted another area where independent operators were disadvantaged by being outside the mainstream - Royal visits.

| Paul Breeden: | I used to work on local papers. When you had a Royal visit and you get the Royal rota pass which is, if you're a local weekly, you more or less expect to get it. I had a Royal visit last year and the Palace sent me the relevant information so I thought I'll apply for a rota pass then, assuming I was eligible, and then I found that the rota passes are managed by the NMA and I'm not eligible to join the NMA so I can't get one. In fact, the Palace person I spoke to was sympathetic and just let me join in [...] but I had no right to be there. (I:2 07/08/2017) |

He said that this was clearly an example of a historic arrangement for the coverage of Royal visits, in that it took no account of the retreat of legacy media from communities. As previously stated the *NMA* is the representative body for mainstream legacy media and acts as another professional gatekeeper (Lewis, 2012); in this instance restricting the issuing of Royal passes to legacy organisations marginalising independent publishers despite their more embedded presence in the community.

6:4:2 Declining presence in the community: a 'pump and dump' strategy?

One area on which participants' agreed, was the declining presence of reporters from legacy organisations on their patch. They discovered that mainstream reporters were following their activities online but rarely appeared at an event in person. Annemarie Flanagan said that the presence in the community of the legacy newspaper had been cut back to the bare minimum. She sometimes saw one reporter at full council meetings: 'But he doesn't live in the patch, so he doesn't feel as much as I do about things. He's just doing it as a job, which is fine, it's what people do' (I:1 03/06/2016). Her comment references her own embeddedness and offline direct reciprocal engagement with the community, as it does the lack of it from the local paper. It also indicates that unlike the 'conscience collective' that she feels, the other reporter is operating in an organic solidarity situation where the primary motive for his presence is financial (Jenks, 2008: 28). She described the paper as 'piggy-backing' her presence in the community: 'I feel like I'm becoming almost the news team for the newspaper, because the newspaper has cut back so much' (I:1). She added that: 'What I'm finding is whereas a few years back, I might have been following their stories, they're following me now' (I:1). She noticed that after putting her stories either on the site or in the newsletter, the legacy organisation would publish them:

> Annemarie Flanagan: Alright, they've done their own version of it, but it's my story, essentially and they've added a few more quotes but I'm thinking I'm the news service here, I'm like a news agency for the paper. So, it was kind of annoying somewhat because I think they should pay me but no, it wouldn't work like that. […] and a lot of people have actually said to me when I've been out on networking events, gosh, we're really reliant on you, the newspaper's nowhere to be seen anymore. So I do feel quite responsible sometimes. (I:1)

232

The same was true for her colleague Sue Choularton, who also had to think hard to remember when she had last seen anyone from the local paper: 'I don't think I've seen one of their reporters now probably for since before Christmas' (I:1 15/06/2016). Their reflections were fairly typical. Participants' who had come from mainstream organisations appreciated the problems faced for journalists that remained and were even sympathetic.

> Richard Coulter: I don't want to criticise them because most of them are still quite good friends of mine but they don't have the resources to go into the communities anymore, so they do a lot of centralising – endless court stories and things like that. But they don't spend any time in the communities, so there's that kind of disengagement going. (I:1)

Richard's comment, therefore, suggests an indication of mechanical solidarity, social bond based on resemblance (Jenks, 2005: 28) with former colleagues who still worked in mainstream operations. Other operator's reflections indicated that the take-over and centralisation strategy, discussed in Chapter 3, was still in practice. By the second interview Daniel Ionescu had seen the three local papers, that covered the circulation area of his sites, each lose their editors resulting in them being: 'remotely edited from Hull' (I:2). One of the two weekly newspapers on Emma Gunby's patch: 'has folded in the past year.' (I:2 04/10/2017). Simon Perry mentioned during the first interview that the paper on the island was the *Isle of Wight County Press* 'one of the few' independently owned by a family. By the second interview the paper had been taken over by Newsquest Plc, despite the local MP calling for the purchase to be delayed until an alternative buyer could be found (Sharman, 2017a). Simon predicted changes:

> Simon Perry: I think they would wisely be slow in their lowering the quality of the product. If it's just a big chunk, then people are going to notice it but six months in, I'm sure we'll start to see some of the content changing and become more from the national group. But what was notable was advertisers being given, frankly, incredible advertising deals in the lead up to the sale.
> One business I can think of immediately told us they were offered ten weeks advertising, including guaranteed editorial every week, for £300 which, if you're unkind, you'd say it was a pump and dump. Let's get the figures up as high as we can and then let's get rid of this baby. Those prices are just unsustainable, to say the least. (I:2 17/08/2017)

There were several follow up stories in the media reporting staff changes at the 133-year-old formerly family owned title including a report of 20 voluntary redundancies (Sharman, 2017b; 2017c; 2017d). Simon noted: 'In seriousness, I think there's a great opportunity for us here.' From a subcultural viewpoint Simon's optimism appears justified, since the sale moves the paper from being independent family-owned to mainstream corporate ownership. Any reciprocal engagement established in favour of the family owned paper would not necessarily be transferred to a paper under new owners, particularly following staff changes. This was reflected in Michael Casey's 'tip off' about the bouncy castle accident, discussed in Chapter 5, when a source chose to phone him rather than the paper which had been in existence for 33 years.

Emma Cooper, of The Local Voice Network, provided an advertising expert's perspective on how the relationship with the mainstream media had changed. She observed that the *Voice* papers were now on the radar of the mainstream newspaper organisations:

Emma Cooper:	I know that we have external marketing companies who ask for our newspapers on a monthly basis and they do that because they're analysing how many pages we are, how many advertisements we have, what our media packs are and the only reason they do that is obviously to give that information to other companies. So, I know that because I used to be the one asking for that information for the marketing department when I was Head of Advertising at the Evening Post. So, it's quite funny to see that I'm being asked for that information by probably bigger newspaper groups [..]
	I know that they do ask about it because we do get the feedback from people who still work there, when obviously they're having management meetings, our names come up. I just take that as a compliment really, that they're keeping an eye on us and we've just got to make sure we keep in their minds really. And if we're still in their minds, that means everything's going okay. (I:2 12/09/2017)

Her insight into the workings of mainstream media appears to confirm that the hyperlocal sector is more visible and less marginalised than at the beginning of the study period. As previously mentioned award nominations for independent hyperlocals had increased the visibility of the sector. *On the Wight* was one of the first hyperlocals to win awards for its

community coverage (Hartley, 2010; Harte *et al,* 2019: 159) and the profiles of *Bristol Cable, Caerphilly Observer, The Lincolnite* and *Lincolnshire Reporter* had all been raised during the study period by award nominations. Such strong showings from independent operators indicated that they were challenging the mainstream in terms of their content and becoming less marginal. Meanwhile Emma Cooper had identified that mainstream organisations were now watching her group's advertising performance. This provides evidence that in subcultural terms the independent hyperlocal sector had travelled (Hebdige, 2014: 9).

6:5 Emerging from a position of marginality: a sector organising itself

As a marginalised sub-set, internet-era independent publishing has benefitted from support by several non-profit meso organisations in response to the crisis in mainstream local media (see Chapter 3). William Perrin's *Talk About Local* (*TAL*) was one of the organisations which played an important role in the early stages of online community publishing in the UK. William and his team helped community journalists find an online voice through training workshops, *TAL* also played an important advocacy role by promoting the sector and encouraging support from other organisations. The innovation charity *Nesta* commissioned several reports on the hyperlocal sector including one on local advertising markets (Radcliffe, 2012, 2015; *Nesta* and *Kantar Media,* 2013; *Oliver and Ohlbaum*, 2013). It also provided seed funding through its *Destination Local* programme in conjunction with the *Technology Strategy Board* for an initial 10 hyperlocal projects (McArthy, 2012). The last of its initiatives in 2015 was an audience analytics research programme (Geels, 2016) in which *On the Wight, A Little Bit of Stone* and *Bristol Cable* all took part. The operators benefitted both educationally and financially, with each hyperlocal receiving up to £6,500 to take part in the project which trained them in analytics (see Chapter 5).

  Two other participants received seed funding through the *Carnegie UK Trust Neighbourhood News* initiative (2014), which provided £10,000 to a total of five hyperlocals. Michael Casey at *Your Thurrock* was a recipient and used the money to launch *Your Harlow.* The other was Rachel Howells who used the grant to launch the print edition of *Port Talbot Magnet* (See Chapter 4). In its 'findings' report *The future's bright – the future's local* the charity criticised the status quo, which it alleged favoured

mainstream local operators. Indicating the marginalised, subcultural nature, of independent operations the report recommended that the: 'UK Government should stimulate hyperlocal media by reworking existing interventions in the local news market that are currently heavily skewed to support existing providers' (*Carnegie UK Trust,* 2014: 14). The charity called for intervention: 'to start levelling the playing field' for hyperlocals, more specifically to allow independent operators to access statutory advertising budgets (ibid.). In 2013 academic David Baines estimated that:

> Among the "many flavours" of subsidy the local press receives zero rating for VAT (97m); statutory notices (£35m); public funds spent on printing contracts for 'town hall *Pravdas'* and content subsidies which it received as local authority press releases. (Baines, 2013: 205)

The final evaluation report on the *Carnegie UK Trust's Neighbourhood News* project put the value of statutory advertising in local papers between £45-50 million annually (*TAL,* 2014: 7). Despite the trust's recommendation to open up statutory advertising, throughout the study period many independent publishers were still effectively excluded from council advertising; for notices such as licensing and planning. This suggested a subcultural position of marginality still existed. Those with print publications, like Richard Gurner and David Shafford spoke of attracting council advertising. However despite having a print product Richard had to 'battle' for access to council advertising. He was not automatically eligible for public notices, he had to convince his local council that the *Caerphilly Observer* was eligible. The problem was that the *Observer* is produced fortnightly and the council was using a narrow definition of a newspaper, reinforcing the paper's marginal position:

Richard Gurner:	They'd looked it up in a dictionary and the dictionary definition they were using was a newspaper, a periodical published daily or weekly, no mention of a fortnightly. So automatically we were disqualified, and I was at pains to explain to them, our newspaper looks like a newspaper, feels like a newspaper, printed on the same press as the [name of legacy newspaper], why aren't we a newspaper?
	So, [I] battled with them for a bit and they basically came out and said, if you can get the okay from the Welsh Government, because this is a devolved area, then we'll be happy to use you for notices. So again it was a case of approaching the Welsh Government, explaining the situation to them, contacting the relevant Minister, explaining it all to her. And eventually then we got the letter back saying this does not constitute legal advice, but we can't see any reason why the Council can't put legal notices in the Caerphilly Observer and then that was that. (I:1 06/05/2016)

Since then Richard had enjoyed a steady stream of statutory advertising. Online operations were worst affected by the narrow definition of 'newspaper'. Even large organisations like NeighbourNet and Stonebow Media, were excluded from this lucrative revenue stream; despite the fact that where they were the main local news providers for their areas. Daniel was openly reported, calling public notices: 'millions of pounds that is basically a subsidy to papers across the country' (Sharman, 2017b).

Sean Kelly had taken part in a trial for council advertising, but there was 'a challenge' from one local authority who told him that the NeighbourNet sites weren't compliant. The hyperlocal group charged a fraction of the price of legacy newspapers which didn't have the same 'presence' in the community. Therefore, local businesses, such as local restaurant chains that needed a licence for new premises, were keen to use NeighbourNet for their public notices. He said that local businesses had: 'got together a group of people including a Queen's Counsel and the police and they reviewed this on our behalf.' Once again, the sticking point was the definition of newspaper:

| Sean Kelly: | All these pieces of legislation use the word newspaper in the media in which Public Notices are allowed to be published in. Now we would argue that other legislation clearly defines a newspaper as something that can be digital as well as made out of paper and that is the case, there are laws. |
| | However, the view of the barristers was that the Queen's Counsel's opinion wouldn't be unequivocal. So what we've done, if you look in the Oxford English Dictionary, it very specifically says that a newspaper is made out of paper. There's no alternative definition that allows it to be digital [...] it's quite clear that current usage has changed and the Oxford English Dictionary is out of date. (I:2) |

He said that: '30 seconds on the internet' will provide lots of examples of online sites calling themselves newspapers such as *The Independent*. Indeed, the *News Media Association,* which represented mainstream local media, also referred to newspapers in both formats; using the term 'UK newspapers – in digital and print' on the 'Digital news environment' section of its website (2019). Nevertheless, at the time of the second interview, Sean said that NeighbourNet was in: 'limbo waiting for the OED to make that change' (I:2). Despite the size of the operation it was still in a marginalised subcultural position, unable to access a valuable income stream available to the mainstream. As Sean indicated, even mainstream operations appeared to accept that newspapers appeared in both digital and physical format. However, national brands such as *The*

Independent were not affected and local mainstream media operations could access it through their print options.

6:5:1 Levelling the playing field: a representative body for the sector

In 2014 *Carnegie UK Trust* (2014: 14) called for changes to start 'levelling the playing field' for hyperlocal operators and this section will identify what occurred during the research period to improve their standing. There were two significant changes, the launch of a representative body for independent publishers the *Independent Community News Network* (*ICNN*) and hyperlocal's subsequent access to the *BBC Local News Partnership Scheme.*

   When analysing a hyperlocal news blog in Leeds, Tony Harcup advised against applying 'labels' to alternative forms of news production: 'They do not form a uniform sector any more than mainstream media are all the same' he insisted (2015: 16). However, the case for independent hyperlocal operations to be treated as a 'sector' was strengthened by the arrival of the *ICNN* in 2017. The *Network* began recruiting members in July 2017 to: 'advocate and lobby on behalf of independent news publishers across the country and fight for better opportunities for all' (Meese, 2017). Themes of resistance and marginalisation in this declaration underline the subcultural nature of the sector. The *News Media Association* (*NMA*) (2019) was the representative body for mainstream local, regional and national news providers during the study period; having been created in 2014 by a merger of the 178-year-old regional press association, the *Newspaper Society*, and the national newspaper publishers' group the *Newspaper Publishers' Association* (Ponsford, 2014a). As indicated by Paul Breeden, one of the 'services' which the *NMA* offered was administering Royal Rota passes (NMA, 2019). The organisation also described itself as: 'UK Press Card Authority gatekeepers and issues press cards to journalists, photographers and freelance newsgatherers working for the national and regional press' (2019). Independent hyperlocal operators were excluded from the *NMA* and, as discussed, many of them were unable to access public notices or press cards. Even in regulatory terms the parent culture and subculture were divided into different factions. The *NMA* was an advocate for the voluntary regulator *IPSO* (*NMA*, 'industry links', 2019) which represented mainstream operators. Only Pat Gamble initially

pursued this option after being encouraged by contacts in the mainstream to write to the organisation. Other research participants' stated at second interview that joining *IPSO* was 'far from obvious' and, since rival regulator *IMPRESS* was actively recruiting during 2016 (Scarbrough, 2016), many hyperlocal operators looking for legitimacy for their operations had joined the new regulatory body*.*

   The *Centre for Community Journalism* funded and based at *Cardiff University* provided the administrative hub for the *ICNN*. Director Emma Meese said that the sector was: 'even more united than it's ever been before' (18/09/2017) suggesting a 'conscience collective' in operation (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). The aim of the new *network* was to secure fair treatment for hyperlocals:

<blockquote>

Emma Meese: What we're fighting for is a level playing field. [...] we feel, given subsidies for various things and access to various things, that actually being a Trinity Mirror or Johnston Press or one of the big traditional legacy publishers, that you are at an unfair advantage.
And if you look at the work that people in our sector do, the journalists in our sector do, they're far more engrained in the community. They're far more likely to get the breaking news stories. They're far more likely to move the story on and get a new angle. So, what we're really fighting for is to get them on a level playing field because if everybody's starting from the same point, then it's a fair game but actually if you're starting from an unfair disadvantage, then it's very difficult to compete then, isn't it? (18/09/2017)

</blockquote>

The formation of the representative body in July 2017, with the official launch in January 2018, was the culmination of two years planning (Meese, 2017). The need for a trade body for hyperlocal was given particular urgency by the announcement of the *BBC Local News Partnership Scheme* (formerly the *Local Democracy Reporter Scheme*) (Meese, 2016). In early 2016 'conversations' were already underway between the corporation and *NMA* about this lucrative scheme which appeared to be open to hyperlocal journalists (ibid.), but without a trade body there were eligibility issues. Behind the scenes work, on the creation of a representative body ran concurrently with *C4CJ* lobbying for hyperlocal operations to be included in the *BBC* scheme. In response to the crisis in local news reporting, the scheme proposed using £8m worth of licence fee

money to provide local public interest reporting across the UK (*BBC,* 2018; Abbott,
2018b). The first consultation meeting about a representative body was held at *Cardiff
University* in July 2016 (Scarborough, 2016), at that meeting Matthew Barraclough
outlined the proposed *BBC Local News Partnerships* scheme.

C4CJ centre manager Emma Meese, sought input from hyperlocal operators about
whether they wanted a representative body and what form it should take; she also
attended the *TAL16* 'unconference' at *Birmingham City University* in September as part
of the consultation exercise (*TAL*, 2016). She said: 'We've been told at lots of the *Talk
About Locals* over previous years, that what they really feel is needed is a representative
body, so we had a lot of support' (18/09/2017). In the end it was the opportunity for
hyperlocals to access *BBC* content as part of the democracy reporter scheme, requiring
every publisher to satisfy the 'quality and reputable' criteria, that increased pressure for
the trade body:

Emma Meese:	This is where we sped up proceedings for ICNN and we said: "will it help you if we have the ICNN up and running to coincide with the launch of the scheme? And that our members match the eligibility criteria that you need in order to qualify or quantify them as quality and reputable publishers?" So, they said that would be really helpful. So, that's why we really got stuck in and set up as quickly as we could.
	Basically in order for the BBC to accept that you're quality and reputable, members say on joining that they'll adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice. We've now got David Banks, who's a leading media law expert in the UK, on a retainer. Should anybody have any legal questions or concerns or issues or anything, they have direct access to David Banks and also a robust complaints procedure was important to the BBC as well. So, we've worked with some lawyers on writing up an official complaints procedure and then members can either link to it on our website or put it on their website. (18/09/2017)

Forming the *ICNN* removed 'stumbling blocks' for accessing the *BBC* scheme,
increasing the sector's visibility and moved the sector closer to the mainstream; an
indication of the subculture travelling in relation to the parent culture. Members of the
ICNN had to adhere to either *IPSO's Editor's Code of Practice* or the *IMPRESS
Standards Code* and all had to 'demonstrate a clear and transparent
management/ownership structure' (Abbott, 2019). The definition for membership for the

ICNN (Abbott, 2018a), satisfied the 'quality and reputable' standard required by the BBC. This suggests a professionalisation of the sector taking it closer to the mainstream (Picard, 2010; Lewis, 2012).

Emma was invited to sit on the *Local Democracy Working Group* with representatives from mainstream media including the *News Media Association* (*NMA*). From there she was able to influence the development of the scheme so that small independent publishers were able to gain access: 'I've been working with them over a period of probably a year just saying can we change this clause and does that have to be in there?' (18/09/2017). Emma's contribution was the reason for the scheme being divided into two tiers, because the original criteria for accessing content was the same as for employing a reporter: 'That was really restrictive for many people in our sector' (18/09/2017). For the first tier, operators only signed up to receive content from the democracy reporters. The second tier was applications to employ the 150 reporters (Abbott, 2017a), something which was aimed at large scale operations.

After the first round of tendering, 15 hyperlocals were 'partnered' with the *BBC* to receive content, including *Your Harlow, Your Thurrock, West Bridgford Wire, The Lincolnite and Lincolnshire Reporter* (Abbott, 2017; Linford, 2017). At the second interviews, several participants' expressed irritation that they had missed the first round of tendering for a variety of reasons. With the *ICNN* still in the formative stage, there was confusion over eligibility for the scheme and the tier system. Other operators were simply so busy they missed the application window, but, were planning to apply for 'content only' in the second round of tendering (Abbott, 2017a). Only limited operations had the infrastructure to be interested in tier two, which involved employing a reporter who provided copy for all news organisations not just the one which was 'employing' them. Most felt this tier was aimed at mainstream organisations which could provide a base and easily absorb another reporter into a large staff, managed by a human resources (HR) department. Richard Gurner had decided against applying for a reporter, as well as the HR burden he was concerned about how it would affect the office culture of his small operation:

Richard Gurner:	I did have a good old think about it and I just thought it would be too much of a burden to manage somebody when they're not actually directly involved in Caerphilly Observer either.

<table>
<tr><td>Richard Gurner:</td><td>I think there would have been problems within the culture of my tiny little office because I'd have Ben there, and he would be working on Caerphilly Observer, and I'd also be managing and spending my time with another reporter who would actually be nothing to do with Caerphilly Observer and would be leaning on me for advice and help. And then that would be time taken away from other things I could be doing.
Also there is a whole pay disparity thing as well. So, I pay Ben as much as I can but then this BBC reporter would be paid a lot more so I didn't want Ben to think that he or she was more senior. So, it was all those issues as well and little things like, if they're sick, how are we going to cover sickness? If they're on holiday, how are we going to cover that? We'd have to get freelancers in or more than likely I would end up doing the job and I just thought I don't want to do any of that. (I:2 14/07/2017)</td></tr>
</table>

Richard's misgivings about tier two underlined the continuing subcultural standing of most small independent publishers. The sector was becoming organised with a representative body similar to the *NMA*, which helped them access to *BBC* scheme, but the culture of many operations was still outside the mainstream. There were exceptions, Daniel Ionescu's much larger organisation with its sophisticated organic solidarity division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) was accepted for tier one, the 'news bank' for *Lincolnite and Lincolnshire Reporter*, and had applied for tier two. Daniel explained how the process worked:

<table>
<tr><td>Daniel Ionescu:</td><td>There are two stages of the bids. The first stage that opened and finished was the stage for the news bank, which is the generic website where BBC and other partners would be able to share content with other local approved news organisations and the next stage is the bidding process for the local democracy contracts themselves. But to be able to apply for step two, you had to be approved for step one which we have. (I:2)</td></tr>
</table>

Michael Casey and Pat Gamble had also had their applications accepted for the news bank. After field research for this thesis was complete, it was announced that two *ICNN* members had been accepted to partner with the BBC for tier two including Stonebow Media, which was awarded a contract for two reporters (*The Lincolnite*, 2017). Having progressed from a single hyperlocal to a commercial multi-title operation Stonebow Media was closer to organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28); having 'travelled' (Hebdige, 2014: 9) from a subcultural position on the

margins of the local media ecosystem it had 'reached a position where it was more of a threat. This is reflected in Daniel's earlier observations about a stats war, the aggressive reaction of mainstream competitors to Stonebow Media's online metrics.

The other large-scale online organisation, NeighbourNet, missed the first tendering process because there was confusion over whether they should apply as a publisher or make 10 individual applications. Having resolved the situation, Sean Kelly intended to apply for the second round.

Sean Kelly: We're very supportive of what Matthew's doing and what he's trying to do. We understand the challenges that he faces and he's been quite open with us. There is... sort of... two competing pressures on him. At the end of the day, he cannot push forward this project without the cooperation of the larger publishers and, therefore, it is very difficult for him to do anything that they don't want to do. At the same time, he does have BBC Charter requirements and the fact that basically he can't subsidise a private sector publisher. Our point of view is that for all its deficiencies and for all that it is effectively a scheme designed for larger publishers, we would like to participate as managing a reporter. If you boil it down, all it is it's providing a HR function.

The idea that it in any way enhances the publishing business other than the stories that are provided, which are provided anyway, the only reason you would do it is if you wanted to take on the HR function from the BBC. Now obviously the larger companies are well set up to do this. They have HR departments. A company like ours, we have a HR function which is [name] who also does the books. She's not particularly happy at the idea of taking on six or seven extra employees and having to deal with them. So, we could contract a degree of it out so we think we could manage it, but it's not what we are good at. It will be a big suck up of a lot of our time which we could be doing other things on. The reason we feel we have to do it is that if [mainstream newspapers] get these contracts in the areas that they currently operate in, I think that will effectively put them on life support. Because they've got economies of scale, they can probably make a reasonable amount of profit out of these contracts. For someone like us, we won't. The risk is we'll make a loss on them and I think that's a realistic risk but I think for [mainstream operators] where they have a HR function, they can take these on board very easily and with no extra effort. (I:2)

Sean's comments indicate the metaphorical space between the mainstream which, he suggests, can leverage these contracts for financial gain and the subculture which can't. His reference to local newspapers being 'put on life support' also invokes a discussion about what have been termed the existence of 'zombie newspapers' (Howells, 2015: 42); the 'hollowing out' of traditional papers which, having lost most of their staff, provide limited local news coverage but are kept going for the income they provide (Tait, 2013: 5-17). Despite thinking that the *BBC* scheme was designed for large publishers, Sean felt that a positive spin-off to employing a democracy reporter would be to reinforce his claim on statutory notices: 'If we're the official *BBC* local reporter, why is it that then we're not allowed to publish council public notices?' (I:2).

Richard Gurner was in no doubt that the presence of a representative body had allowed hyperlocals to emerge from the margins to access the *BBC* scheme. As a member of the *National Union of Journalists* (*NUJ*) he had someone who represented him as a journalist, but the value of the *ICNN* was that it represented him as a publisher:

> Richard Gurner: I think the work that they've done with regards to the BBC Local Democracy Scheme, [...] that's been instrumental in getting a foot in the door for that scheme for independent publishers. So, without that sort of organisation or without that network, a representative body, then independent publishers will have been shut out of that scheme. (I:2)

In truth, accessing *BBC* money was the culmination of several years of lobbying and support from a range of non-profit organisations and this back-story will be discussed in the next subsection.

6:5:2 Support and lobbying finally bears fruit

Independent hyperlocal news operations have attracted the attention of academics and several philanthropic organisations because of their potential to provide reliable, local news in areas which have lost traditional newspapers (See Chapter 3). Academics have been particularly concerned about democratic deficit in areas worst hit by local newspaper closures (Barnett and Townend, 2014; Moore, 2014; Howells, 2015). The marginalised position of independent hyperlocal operations and their subcultural approach to ultra-local news production, had appealed to several meso organisations which provided support - both practical and financial. This section will review the support these organisations have provided and assess how they had helped the sector travel (Hebdige, 2014: 9).

  For many years advocacy group *Talk About Local*, founded by William Perrin of *Kings Cross Environment* (see *Chapter* 4), was the 'mother ship' for UK hyperlocal, playing a pivotal role in the development of the sector. *TAL*, started in 2009, was involved in the Williams *et al* (2014) research, helping the academics access their sample. As well as promoting the sector, William ran training workshops for citizen journalists throughout the UK in the practical creation of online news:

William Perrin: We've been in about 200 places across the UK. Everything from Wolverhampton Central Mosque through to a village in the middle of Dartmoor and we did it by a whole variety of different means. A small number were done face to face by my little team. I think there were four people at peak but most were done through remote training by UK Online Centre trainers […] We did that for two or three years with that money and then I morphed the business…
We also found during that time, I'd had to do what we might call market making because no one had heard of this local web stuff in 2007/8. I started the business in 2009 formally and I spent a lot of time on the circuit talking at conferences, talking about hyperlocal, getting articles in the press – that sort of thing. And what I found was that loads of people came out of the woodwork saying "I run a site like that, do you mean there are other people running websites like this?" And we had a meeting in Stoke on Trent in autumn 2009, it's on the website and, to my astonishment, almost 100 people came, all of them emerging blinking into the daylight realising they weren't alone for the first time. (25/04/2016)

Talk About Local 'Unconferences' provided an opportunity for people in the hyperlocal community to gather and share ideas, the last of these ran at *Birmingham City University* in September 2016 (https://talkaboutlocal.org.uk/tal16/). The work of *TAL* represents the early stages of the hyperlocal sector forming as a subculture, very much on the margins in relation to the mainstream parent culture. Nine years after its inception, William announced on the website the closure of *TAL* in January 2018 (https://talkaboutlocal.org.uk/), this coincided with the launch of the representative body for the sector, the *Independent Community News Network* heralding a new era for the subculture.

   Lobbying by representatives of various groups had undoubtedly helped raise the profile of hyperlocals. Douglas White, Head of Advocacy at *Carnegie UK Trust* said he: 'firmly believed, that without years' of himself, Kathryn Geels (*Nesta*), William Perrin *(TAL)* and Emma Meese *(C4CJ)* all 'sitting round tables lobbying for hyperlocal, the *BBC* scheme would not have been opened up to independent operators' (21/09/2017). For a long time their appeals fell on deaf ears, back in 2014 William (Perrin, 2014) was already calling on the *BBC* to open up its content to local news organisations. Kathryn explained that the same year she and Douglas became involved in quarterly working group meetings as a result of the *Revival of Local Journalism Conference* (*BBC*, 2014). The conference was set up to investigate how the *BBC* could become more involved with local news: 'We were knocking on the door of *BBC* for a while and had no interest from one particular team […] So, I think often it is the case where you just need to speak to the right person or the right initiative needs to come along' (23/05/2016).

   Kathryn speaking in 2016 felt that: 'the sector had pulled together really quickly in the last 18 months' (23/05/2016). She alluded to the increase in collective, networked activity, by not only hyperlocal operators but also the meso organisations; compared with when she joined *Nesta* in the early stages of *Destination Local*:

Kathryn Geels:	I think what we're also seeing, where originally there was just services working on their own, no service really knew of any other hyperlocal publisher because why would you? [...] And I think even organisations like Nesta or Carnegie and Cardiff University, probably up until only the last 18 months or two years, I would say, we were all working in very siloed areas. We kind of knew of each other but the first time we would hear about new research being published was when it was published. We weren't actually part of each other's research or we weren't utilising each other's intelligence or collaborating. So there's been a real shift in the networking. (23/05/2016)

A collective a joint letter was sent to the former *Secretary of State for Digital, Culture Media and Sport* in 2015: 'There was a group of us that wrote a joint letter to John Whittingdale when he first came into post as well. I guess it is that sort of power in numbers thing.' As a result of that letter a group of hyperlocal operators met with the *Secretary of State* including Rachel Howells and Michael Casey, who both mentioned the meeting in their first interview. Kathryn noted that the UK hyperlocal sector's visibility 'in terms of the wider media industry' had increased. More specifically she suggested that the sector had come to the attention of the *Google Labs Team*: 'which again is really positive' (23/05/2016). Kathryn's words were prophetic, in July 2018 *C4CJ* was awarded £233,000 of funding from the *Google Digital News Innovation Fund* to create new revenue streams for the community and hyperlocal news sector (Abbott, 2018d). The *Value My News* initiative (VMN) money was given to *C4CJ* to develop in collaboration with the *Media Innovation Studio* at *The University of Central Lancashire* (*UCLAN*) to: 'develop an innovative suite of tools enabling community and hyperlocal news publishers to make money from, and track the sale of, hyperlocal stories, while at the same time copyright existing content' (ibid). An initiative which would appear to respond to marginalised participants' complaints of mainstream media 'ripping off' their copy.

The *Google* money was the second large sum to be awarded to the sector after field work for this study had been completed. As a result of the *National Assembly for Wales inquiry into news journalism in Wales* (2017), in October 2017 the *Welsh Government* awarded £200,000 to hyperlocal journalism start-ups over a two-year period (*NUJ*, 2017; Abbott , 2017c). The *Welsh Assembly's Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee* also urged the *Welsh Government* to enable statutory notices to be published by hyperlocal and online providers saying that: 'the current system requiring them to be published in print "insulates" local newspapers from competition' (Sharman, 2018). Emma Meese, Dr Andy Williams, Dr Rachel Howells and Richard Gurner were all invited to give evidence to the inquiry, providing further evidence that the sector is emerging from a position of marginalisation.

In February 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May launched a review into press sustainability in the UK *The Cairncross Review* (*Gov.UK*, 2018). Welcoming the announcement Emma Meese made it clear that while there is cautious optimism in the sector there is also no room for complacency:

> Whereas almost 200 local newspapers have closed since 2005, there are now over 400 hyperlocals across the UK, with more being set up every week. But

their position is fragile. They have done so with fewer resources, less money and smaller returns. (Abbott, 2018)

During interview in 2017 Emma summarised: 'I think it's moved on and it's flourishing and we're seeing more people coming into the sector and yes, there's dropout but with any start-ups, not every start-up is going to succeed' (18/09/2017). 18 months after it began recruiting January 2019, membership of *ICNN* had reached 102 (Abbott, 2019). The advisory board included research participants: Dr Rachel Howells, Richard Gurner, Richard Coulter, Michael Casey and Daniel Ionescu.

  As well as the closure of *TAL,* both *Nesta* and *Carnegie UK Trust*, both active in the hyperlocal space at the start of the data collection, had departed by the end of the study. *C4CJ* was providing the focal point for the sector, both in terms of advocacy and by administering the *ICNN*; it had been active in securing major new investment initiatives. Michael Casey was appreciative of *C4CJ's* role and referred to it as 'the mothership' for 400 plus hyperlocals. The sector had not attracted the financial support of a UK equivalent of the US *Knight Trust*, which Martin Moore called for in *Addressing the democratic deficit in local news through positive plurality: Or, why we need a UK alternative of the Knight News Challenge* (2014). Although, arguably UK hyperlocals had become more resilient for having to remain agile, open-minded and ever resourceful, rather than relying on guaranteed funding initiatives. This open-mindedness led David Prior to launch a print product having initially dismissed the platform. Several participants' were leveraging the print platform, not out of sentimentality, but to generate income for their sites. One of those was Richard Coulter, although he did not rule out a switch to a digital platform in the future.

  Pat Gamble's irritation about negativity directed toward hyperlocal operations and the 'focus on failure' (see *Chapter 4*) is understandable considering that most research participants' were optimistic about the future of their operations. *ICNN's* Emma Meese said that more people are coming into the sector: 'There's dropout but, [as] with any start-ups, not every start-up is going to succeed' (18/09/2017). Yet, Carina Tenor's 2018 report *Polis: hyperlocal after the hype* was still describing it as 'a precarious sector' (2018: 3). This suggestion of precarity should be put into context within the wider local news landscape, where mainstream media had experienced its own problems. The two corporate giants Reach Plc (formerly Trinity Mirror Plc; Mayhew, 2018) reported a pre-tax loss of £113.5m for the first half of 2018 (Mayhew, 2018b) and the Johnston Press Plc share price fell to: 'all-time low of 3p as it faces £220m debts due for repayment next

year' (Mayhew, 2018a). Johnston Press Plc subsequently went into administration in November 2018 (Ponsford, 2018) and was taken over by JPI Media Ltd (Mayhew and Walker, 2018). By comparison the independent hyperlocal subculture was showing considerable resilience in what was clearly a challenging sector. As Neilson and Rossiter (2008) and Standing (2014) suggest precarity is commonplace in the 21st century world.

6:6 Conclusion

Most participants' were optimistic at the second interview and reported that their publishing operations had at the very least consolidated and in some cases grown in size. Three of the multi-title operations were significant businesses with many contracts, bilateral negotiated exchange relationships (Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167), in place either with employees or franchise holders. Two participants had left the sector to pursue lifestyle changes and one hyperlocal had closed. Those that remained continued to be embedded in their communities, underlining their subcultural credentials in terms of 'continued presence' (Hess and Waller, 2016: 197); while many participants' reported a declining physical presence of reporters from mainstream operators.

  The print platform continued to show resilience, not for nostalgic reasons but because of its ability to generate income. This format had been retrieved from the mainstream but was repurposed to suit individual operator's needs. Print-based Local Voice Network had expanded significantly, increasing from 11 to 16 publications in a year and increasing its overall print run from 94,000 to approaching 150,000 copies a month, meaning it could access economies of scale. The most surprising convert to print was David Prior having previously declared that he would work 'online only'. He was trialling a print edition of *Altrincham Today* with a view to rolling it out across the Hyperlocal Today group.

  The sector as a whole had 'travelled' (Hebdige, 2014: 19) during the study period, becoming more visible in several ways. Individual independent publishers continued to be nominated for and win awards in categories where they were pitched against mainstream operations. Advertising expert Emma Cooper knew that the *Voice* papers were on the radar of mainstream operators because of the enquiries she was getting about *Voice* titles. The sector's own representative body, the *ICNN*, was speedily established in 2017, to allow operators to access the *BBC Local News Partnership*. The trade body represented a professionalisation of the sector, bringing it closer to the mainstream which had the *NMA* fighting its corner.

By the end of the study period, the sector was more visible but still marginalised, with many operators still not able to access statutory advertising. The *ICNN* had taken over the role of lobbying on behalf of independent operators as philanthropic meso organisations - *TAL, Carnegie UK Trust* and *Nesta* - active at the start of the research, one-by-one left the space. *C4CJ* based at *Cardiff University* and administering the *ICNN*, had taken over this advocacy role; becoming what Michael Casey called the 'mothership' for 400 hyperlocals.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The PhD set out to find out about the culture of internet era independent news creation, some of the people involved, their motivations and day-to-day activities. As a qualitative study, I was interested to hear about participants' personal successes, their struggles and their relationship with mainstream local newspapers. By speaking to only 27 participants, it was never designed to be a wide-ranging study; the focus was on experience. I was however interested to see who was running these operations, their route to independent community publishing and find out about their day-to-day working practices. I was also keen to discover where such operations sat in relation to the wider UK local news ecosystem and see if they were holding their own in an increasingly corporate world. This concluding chapter therefore summarises my main arguments then sets out key findings and my recommendations for areas of further study and changes to policy. The findings are intended to contribute to the ongoing debate about local news ecologies in the UK.

7:1 The importance of biography in the research approach

The research approach has a high degree of biographical inscription, as my professional background was the reason I pursued this topic. Having worked as a local newspaper reporter during the 1980s and 90s, I was intrigued to observe a subculture of independent community news producers who appeared to be as embedded in their communities as I had once been. The physical closeness of these new independent operations to their communities, appeared to contrast with the trend within mainstream local newspapers of moving their reporters out of the community; a result of policies of mergers and centralisation.

 In the second decade of the 21st century, I had expected such embeddedness to be a thing of the past. In 2010 a fortnightly free-distribution community magazine opened in my own neighbourhood (*The Looker*) which was not only popular – you had to be quick to get hold of a copy – it was also full of advertising. The launch of this paper was in contrast to the general tale of doom and gloom in the mainstream media about newspaper closures and the loss of advertising; blamed first on the internet and then the

252

recession. I wondered if there was another story away from the corporate rhetoric of gloom? This research is my contribution to that discussion.

My observation that independent hyperlocal operations seemed marginal, yet were retrieving the embeddedness that was formerly part of the mainstream, suggested a subcultural approach for my study. Marginality has been a key theme in the study of subcultures since being identified by another journalist turned academic Robert E. Park of the *Chicago School of Sociology* in the 1920s (1925/1928).

Comparing the embeddedness of operators to my previous situation, indicated the presence of subcultural themes of retrieving and repurposing socially cohesive aspects discarded by the parent culture (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979). Such themes were applied to youth culture by researchers at the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* at *Birmingham University* during the 1970s and their relevance to independent hyperlocal publishing was noted by academics Kirsty Hess and Lisa Waller (2016). In the empirical chapters these and other subcultural themes were applied to the data to unpick the deeper meanings in the culture of independent hyperlocal publishing.

Alongside subcultural theory, reciprocal journalism (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017) was used to shed light on the depth of the relationships both between participants' and their audience. Durkheim's *The division of labour in society* (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) played an important role revealing elements of mechanical and organic solidarity present in the operations. The 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity was visible in most participants' operations because they were embedded in their neighbourhoods. The 'conscience collective' was also useful in understanding the way that colleagues worked together and the way they interacted with the wider hyperlocal publishing sector.

Organic solidarity helped reveal the interdependence of participants', with different skill-sets, in the larger operations (Jenks, 2005: 28) and the way that solidarity was created in situations where contracts existed. This fed back into reciprocal journalism to reveal supportive relationships in direct bilateral/negotiated exchange situations, evidencing 'collective' forms of news production beyond those working in not-for-profit situations. The empirical chapters were numbered 3-6 and the purpose of the first of them was to establish the setting, while the following three answered one or more of the research questions.

7:2 How crisis and resistance spawned a subculture

This section focusses on the background to the study and key to this is *CCCS* researcher Phil Cohen's suggestion that subcultures: 'attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture' (1972: 23). In order to find out what had been lost, it was necessary to understand the previous culture. The first of the empirical chapters (Chapter 3*: Biography and "churnalism": looking at a parent culture in crisis and the emergence of a news subculture*) therefore outlined the culture of local legacy newspapers since 1979, a period covering both the pre-internet and internet eras. This chapter addressed how the culture of local news production changed over three decades; gradually at first, then profoundly during the internet era. This historicised view, established provincial newspapers as the mainstream providers of local news before the arrival of the internet. It traced the emergence of a crisis in the local news sector, from 2005 onwards, due to a combination of factors: the disruptive effects of the internet on business models, the financial downturn and questionable business strategies which used debt to drive a policy of 'merger mania' (Mair, 2013: 26).

Subcultural theory suggests that subcultures evolve from a crisis in the parent culture (Cohen, 1972: 22; 1980: 82). In terms of subcultural theory, mainstream local newspapers therefore represent the parent culture, while independent hyperlocal news represents the subculture evolving from the crisis in that parent culture (ibid). At the start of the research period, independent hyperlocal operators were positioned as existing on the margins of the mainstream (Williams *et al*, 2014). Therefore, this chapter attempted to identify which elements that formerly existed in mainstream local newspapers had been lost, so they could potentially be identified in the working practices of research participants' discussed in the later chapters.

The focus was on how offline reciprocal journalism (Lewis *et al*, 2014: Harte *et al*; 2017) was an integral part of pre-internet local reporting. 'Face-to-face' exchange relationships with members of the community were encouraged by a culture which put reporters at the heart of their communities, by situating them in district offices and giving them their own ultra-local 'patch' (Howells, 2015). In line with the biographical inscription in this thesis, my positionality statement was included in this chapter; providing further evidence of the working practices of district reporters in the pre-internet, industrialised era (Deuze and Witschge, 2018).

The second of the empirical chapters (Chapter 4: *Participants' professional background and their motivation for independent hyperlocal publishing*) explored research question 1 by tracing how the 27 participants became independent hyperlocal operators.

RQ: 1: What are the professional backgrounds of key personnel responsible for the

   operation of a range of UK hyperlocal provisions?

   RQ: 1.1: What are their motivations for becoming involved in independent

      publishing?

   RQ2.1: Do they work alone?

   RQ2.2: Do they live in the areas for which they generate news?

Research participants' professional backgrounds were varied, but the majority identified as journalists or media professionals and only seven came from non-media backgrounds. Unsurprisingly, considering the crisis in local news provision, several who ventured into hyperlocal operations had been made redundant by mainstream organisations; suggesting themes of marginalisation by the parent culture (Park, 1915; 1928; Cohen, 1972). Several arrived at independent publishing because they were dissatisfied with the culture and output of mainstream local media; suggesting the subcultural theme of 'resistance' to the changes which had taken place (Hall and Jefferson, 2006). There were others whose primary motive was community cohesion, viewing hyperlocal publishing as a form of community service. Most participants' lived in the hyperlocal area, although several operated more than one provision; those with multiple titles lived in the catchment area of one of their provisions. Such embedding indicated the 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Many operators had formed working relationships, either formal or informal, with people who had complimentary skills to their own which suggested organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984).

Reciprocal journalism theory (Lewis *et al*, 2014: Harte *et al*; 2017) revealed that several relied on the direct reciprocal exchange of volunteers, although many were also in bilateral negotiated exchange relationships where there was either a contract in place or

an understanding between parties. Because it is generally concerned with the journalist/audience relationship, reciprocal journalism tends to focus on unilateral/informal exchange relationships. These create symbolic value which can result in the development of trust between parties or create the potential for community building. Bilateral/negotiated exchange is, therefore, a less valued and little researched branch of reciprocal journalism because it generally has an instrumental value; where money, or an equivalent value, changes hands. Applying Durkheim's theory of *The division of labour in society* (1893/1984) revealed how 'organic solidarity' was created between participants' in negotiated exchange relationships. Many participants' were working in situations which displayed 'organic solidarity', with evidence of both interdependence and a 'collective consciousness' dispersed through division of labour (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). This interdependence was particularly evident in the larger multi-title operations, two of which were independent franchises. These operations were popular with media professionals used to working in organic division of labour situations in mainstream organisations. The supportive network provided a way of limiting precarity; as Richard Drew said: 'the outlay is probably minimal, and you've got back up' (I:1). Working in division of labour situations is therefore arguably a working practice retrieved from the mainstream, especially as participants' in The Local Voice Network and Hyperlocal Today were reprising working relationships with former colleagues.

Crowdfunding was a very 21st century approach to income generation and had been used by two participants' to subsidise their operations; reciprocal journalism shed light on the processes involved. It was essentially direct unilateral/informal engagement; because the initial appeal was to a large online community but without the guarantee of a response. However, with crowdfunding there is an instrumental outcome for the hyperlocal indicating a negotiated exchange with individual members of the community, who pledge of money. It also revealed a mechanical solidarity 'conscience collective' at work (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003), as complete strangers felt strongly enough about the future of an operation that they were prepared to support it financially.

Several of the participants' had been running their operations for longer than 10 years and, having endured the 2008 economic downturn, had demonstrated resilience. It was notable that those set up during or since the economic downturn had a pragmatic approach to their financing. Simon Perry and his wife Sally had been running *On the*

Wight since 2005, he reflected that having begun by: 'providing a resource that might be useful for people' (I: 1) it was difficult to later start charging for it. This suggests the presence of the 'conscience collective' in the initial motivation, which is a mechanical solidarity approach (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28). Conversely, Daniel Ionescu's approach was one of organic solidarity when he started *The Lincolnite* in 2010. Simon observed that Daniel: 'Approached it as, this is a business and I'll do what's right for the business' (I: 1). The situation Simon described was of his operation shifting from 'altruistic' mechanical solidarity as part of a 'conscience collective', towards a situation of organic solidarity where there was a profit motive (Jenks, 2005: 28). This re-calibrated the terms of the hyperlocal's relationship with the community. It also demonstrated the potential lack of benefit to an organisation of indirect reciprocity, where: 'The beneficiary of an act returns the favour not to the giver, but to another member of the social network' (Lewis et al, 2014, 234).

7:3 Participants' retrieving and repurposing from the parent culture

Research question two was focussed on the everyday working practices of hyperlocal and this was examined in Chapter 5 (*"I thought you'd turn up": retrieving the art of footwork journalism*).

RQ2: What are the working practises of the independent publishers?

This provided an insight into the day-to-day activities of research participants', with examples of how they were retrieving aspects of mainstream culture but repurposing them to suit their subcultural needs. Most participants' had identified that face-to-face or footwork journalism was the most important 'socially cohesive' element lost in the parent culture (Cohen, 1972; 23), of mainstream local newspapers, and one which they were keen to retrieve. All of the participants' had online strategies, indeed more than half were operating online only hyperlocals which indicated that they were not 'living in the past'. Indeed most had a strong emphasis on social media and the key to their operations was diversity. There was evidence of a 'bricolage' outlook (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Baker and Nelson, 2005; Deuze, 2006; Phillimore et al, 2016) testing different platforms and

strategies to find out what worked. Crucially, however, their online strategies had not removed them from the community, they still personally attended events and meetings as part of a mix of offline and online activities. Emma Gunby, whose day job was social media marketing, called it: 'Old fashioned journalism mixed with modern techniques' (I:2). Richard Gurner and Michael Casey both described major stories, attracting national interest, which were the result of direct unilateral reciprocity in the form of tip-offs from members of the public (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017). Michael's source told him that he got the 'tip-off' because: 'I thought you'd turn up.' (I:1). Richard's dealings with national newspapers emphasised the marginal, subcultural status, of hyperlocal operators as at various stages mainstream employees ignored him, 'ripped off' the copy and he had to pursue them for payment.

Advertising was another aspect of the mainstream that had been retrieved and repurposed by most hyperlocal operators. Sean Kelly reported that mainstream operators had moved away from targeting small and medium sized business, as their strategies chased vast numbers of page views. This allowed hyperlocal operators to engage, unchallenged, with the small businesses that the parent culture had abandoned. It was not just that participants' were targeting neglected small businesses, but the way that they were doing it; which indicated retrieving and repurposing. Participants' often favoured face-to-face selling, once widely practised in local newspapers, because as Michael Casey insisted local advertisers wanted to see somebody: 'Not just somebody ringing up, you could be anybody.' Even those using print advertising had repurposed it for a more altruistic approach, accepting only 50% advertising so that news was treated with equal important to income. This was a contrast to the mainstream model, which privileged advertising income with a 60:40 split, or even 70:30 in the case of free-distribution newspapers. Adam Cantwell-Corn's media co-operative run *The Bristol Cable* only accepted advertising on a strictly ethical basis with organisations that shared the same ethos. Even those with online only strategies, generating income from advertising, were not following mainstream. They had repurposed the advertising model to suit their operation and the more established ones favoured bespoke set ups. Daniel Ionescu's Stonebow Media ran its own 'ad network', Simon Perry had 'built' his own job advertising software and Sean Kelly's NeighbourNet was also using proprietary software.

The qualitative approach also revealed that the print platform exhibited unexpected direct reciprocal engagement with the community. Several operators delivered their own

papers strengthening the 'conscience collective' meeting people waiting at the distribution points to collect their copy, Richard Gurner said: 'people set their watches by us' (I:1). This suggested offline sustained reciprocity through engagement with the physical platform (Lewis *et al*, 2014; Harte *et al,* 2017). This engagement in the community with the print product, was reinforced by other participants' who reported that readers would 'ring' them if their paper hadn't arrived on time.

 As in the mainstream, advertising was the most frequent form of income generation which suggested the subcultural theme of retrieval. However, the fate of the *Port Talbot Magnet* provided a timely reminder that traditional advertising is a precarious income stream. The hyperlocal closed in 2017 in the aftermath of threatened job losses at *Tata Steel,* the town's major employer. In a situation reminiscent of the 2008 financial downturn, *The Magnet's* advertising revenue dried up as community confidence evaporated. Rachel said that following the announcement: 'People just stopped advertising' (I:2). Crucially advertisers didn't come back to the hyperlocal when confidence returned and, the qualitative approach to data collection revealed, any reciprocal engagement with the community had been severely damaged. Firstly, the hyperlocal's ad rep left due to the stress of trying to sell advertising and was replaced by a new employee, undermining the reciprocal engagement she had established with advertisers. Also, Rachel and her team ran a negative story about working practices at the steel works (*Appendix 10*) after a tip-off from a source. Although the original story resulted from direct reciprocity, suggesting the presence of trust, ultimately the story eroded the bond with the community. The story backfired on *The Magnet* which was accused of attacking the steel works at a time when they should have been supporting it. Any indirect, community building, reciprocal engagement that the hyperlocal enjoyed was damaged by the story. In terms of mechanical solidarity, the hyperlocal was out of step with the 'conscience collective' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25). The example of *The Magnet* shows the fragile nature of all kinds of reciprocity, other than the direct bilateral negotiated kind, which when they work develop 'trust and social bonding' but which can easily be destroyed.

  Reciprocal engagement between *The Magnet* and the community was arguably undermined from the start, since the founders neither lived nor previously worked in the area. They lacked the 'conscience collective' of embedding which is a key aspect of mechanical solidarity. *The Magnet* had premises in the town, but Rachel said that she and her colleagues struggled to establish links with local organisations. Founder

members leaving to take up other professional roles also undermined relationship building.

7:4 A 'golden age' for local journalism? Independent publishers emerging from the margins

The third and fourth research questions sought to find out how participants' operations had changed between the study period and monitor their relationship with mainstream media. Chapter 6 (*No longer "Nano-scale"? Evidence of hyperlocal operations emerging from the margins*) examined this question.

RQ3: How have their provisions changed throughout the field research period?

RQ4: As independent media outlets, what is their relationship with mainstream media?

Dick Hebdige has argued that subcultures can travel they: 'may start out nano-scale, marginal, in opposition to the "mainstream" but they get extruded, processed and reframed by the market and media' (2014: 9). This empirical chapter looked at both the 'micro' level evidence of how participants' operations had changed between interviews and also assessed the position of the UK hyperlocal sector – or subculture – in relation to the mainstream.

 Micro level changes at operational level were considered first. Lifestyle changes prompted two participants' to leave their hyperlocals and the *Port Talbot Magnet* had closed. Otherwise, the remaining operations were ticking over with many participants' upbeat about their publishing activities and reporting consolidation or growth. The multi-title groups Stonebow Media and the Local Voice Network had travelled the farthest during the study period. Both were well developed in terms of more advanced organic solidarity, with many negotiated exchange contracts in place enabling interdependent workers to tap into each other's skill sets (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28; Lewis *et al*, 2014: 232; Harte *et al*, 2017: 167). Nevertheless, they retained non-exploitative elements of mechanical solidarity, demonstrating give-and-take relationships with their own communities as well as contributing to the larger 'hyperlocal' community particularly through the *ICNN*; where both Daniel Ionescu and Richard Coulter served on the advisory board. Stonebow Media had added an online title, *Lincolnshire Reporter,* bringing its total to three. Meanwhile the Local Voice Network, an

independent franchise operation, had increased from 11 titles to 16. Both showed signs of retrieving and repurposing aspects of the mainstream, Stonebow Media was organised along the organic solidarity lines of a traditional media company and there were plans to introduce two 'bureaux' to increase closeness to the community. This represented a repurposed version of the district offices which had formerly been a feature of the mainstream (Howells, 2015: 281-286). Local Voice Network had repurposed the print platform and was financially contributing to the community by employing paper boys and girls for the paper's distribution.

The print format continued to show resilience, because of its ability to generate income, although it was being utilised differently to the mainstream. The most obvious repurposing was that all titles were free-distribution and the frequency of publication varied between fortnightly, monthly and bi-monthly; mainstream titles were traditionally paid-for and either daily or weekly. Free-distribution papers had been born in the mainstream in the 1970s, underpinned by a business strategy of deriving income from advertising revenue, but reporting 'little if any "news"' (Franklin, 2006; 150-161). Independent operators appeared to have turned this paradox on its head and were using free-distribution print to subsidise their news creation. Küng has observed that the disruptive innovation of free-distribution print could eventually move into the paid newspaper's domain (2008: 136), suggesting the possibility for further 'travel' for the medium in the local news domain.

David Prior was a surprising convert to the medium, having said a year earlier that he would only work online. He was in the final stages of launching a bi-monthly print edition of *Altrincham Today*. If the pilot was successful, he was planning to roll out the model to other franchise holders in the Hyperlocal Today group. Franchise holder and social media marketing expert *Emma Gunby* reflected that using an online platform to launch a print product seemed the right way around, because it provided the opportunity to build an audience first. In a clear indication of retrieving and repurposing of the medium, David said that the way the mainstream was using print was no longer focussed enough; the size of the patch was key and the: 'old cluster of places that your old local newspaper used to cover' was now too big an area. Vijay Jain, who was joint owner of print-based *Dartford Living,* agreed that readers wanted micro-local coverage, not generic content. David went as far as to call it a 'golden age' for local journalism.

Although many participants' had worked in local newspapers, the resilience of the print platform had nothing to do with nostalgia; they had retrieved and repurposed the

medium because of its ability to generate income. Richard Coulter of the Local Voice Network was adamant that the way to make an independent business 'work' was by focussing on print. However, he did not rule out moving to a digital at a later stage if the platform was no longer performing. He and business partner Emma Cooper had devised a strategy of 50:50 advertising to editorial content, giving each side of the business equal weighting. Other participants' with a print presence had, independently of each other, adopted the same ratio and avoided the more exploitative advertising focus of the mainstream. The *Voice* strategy appeared to be working, as by the second interview advertising expert Emma Cooper recognised the signs that mainstream operators were 'keeping an eye on us.' She was regularly asked for information by marketing companies about pagination and media packs. Because of her professional background she knew that the information was being fed to mainstream organisations and exploited by them. She took this as a good sign: 'We've just got to make sure we keep in their minds' (I:2). This more visible presence was an example of how the subculture had travelled (Hebdige, 2014: 19), becoming less marginal during the study period. Several operations had either won or been nominated for national awards, raising their individual profile. However, the formation of a trade body to represent the sector in 2017 was the most obvious sign of independent publishing emerging from a position of marginality.

At the start of data collection, philanthropic organisations such as *Talk About Local, Carnegie UK Trust* and *Nesta* had been providing advocacy, training, or seed funding to promote independent hyperlocal news creation in the UK. By the end of the study period they had left the space. The *Centre for Community Journalism* (*C4CJ*) at *Cardiff University* had become the new 'mothership' - as Michael Casey put it (I:2). The trade body, the *Independent Community News Network* (*ICNN*), administered by *C4CJ*, was speedily established between 2016/2017 to enable independent operators to access the *BBC Local Democracy Reporter Scheme.* This subsequently became the *BBC Local News Partnership* scheme. *ICNN* director Emma Meese said in interview that she was involved in meetings, alongside corporate owners and the *News Media Association* (*NMA*), influencing the direction of the scheme so that it would be open to small independent publishers. After the first round of tendering in 2017, three participants' had satisfied *BBC* criteria and were accepted onto the tier one 'news bank' and others who had missed the deadline for various reasons were planning to apply in the second round. Stonebow Media had also won a contract for two democracy reporters, under tier two of

the scheme. This part was essentially designed for mainstream providers and offered further evidence of the increased profile of the company and how it had 'travelled'.

 The arrival of the *ICNN,* declared independent community news publishing as a legitimate part of the local news ecosystem. Creation of the organisation also represented a professionalisation of the sector, because membership criteria required operations to belong to a media regulatory body and 'demonstrate a clear and transparent management/ownership structure' (Abbott, 2019). Professionalisation is a feature of mainstream local media (Picard, 2010; Lewis, 2012) as is representation by a trade body; mainstream national, regional and local media was represented by the *NMA*. This indicates that those organisations which joined the *ICNN* had both retrieved from the mainstream and also travelled closer to it.

  The *ICNN's* 2018 annual reported stated that there were 102 members by the end of the year (Abbott, 2019). Although joining a trade body was not necessarily right for every independent publisher, so this figure needs to be put into context within the larger hyperlocal news publishing community; the size of which could only be an estimate due to the continuing lack of a reliable database. The Williams *et al* study targeted 496 active sites (2014: 6), but Harte *et al* noted that as late as 2017 there was still no formal collection of data about the sector or its audiences (2019: 89-113). This would suggest that a quarter of hyperlocal operations had signed up to the *ICNN*, indicating that for many it was possibly not suitable. Marginality could also have been an issue, with operators unaware of its existence. Therefore, claims that the sector had travelled need to be made in the light of this information. The whole sector had not travelled, rather opportunities had opened up for those who chose to professionalise in order to access aspects of the mainstream; many others were likely happy existing on the margins.

  Hyperlocal has for many years been represented as a very diverse collection of approaches (Radcliffe, 2012; 2015) and for James Hatts such diversity was to be welcomed (*Chapter 4*). He loved the fact that he still had things in common with publishers who were approaching community news creation in very different ways, suggesting the 'conscience collective' that existed between hyperlocal operators. Every independent publishing story is different, but they are linked by subcultural themes of marginality, resistance, retrieving and repurposing. The theme of marginality did not just apply to operators who had been made redundant or otherwise rejected, the

communities they represented had also been marginalised by the mainstream; following local paper closures. Participants' with fulltime jobs, were running operations covering communities from which mainstream media had physically retreated. Despite the presence of a representative body the subculture still showed signs of marginality, with many operators unable to access lucrative statutory advertising. *ICNN* director Emma Meese was intent on 'levelling the playing field' so that community publishers could access this form of revenue (Sharman, 2019), there were also issues with getting press cards and Royal Rota passes.

   Meanwhile, interview evidence revealed that the mainstream continued to physically distance itself from communities. Most participants' spoke of a declining presence of mainstream reporters on their patch, only Richard Gurner had noticed increased activity from the legacy paper in recent weeks. He suspected that it was part of a 'circulation push' to coincide with the *Audit Bureau of Circulation* (*ABC*) review period; suggesting a 'top-down' reason for increasing coverage rather than responding to local need. Only Pat Gamble had a good working relationship with the main legacy newspaper on his patch. A reporter from there having told him: "I still think you'd win, even if we built an office in your street. I still think you'd probably win now because you've got the trust" (I:1) (see *Chapter 5)*. The mainstream editor seemed to have adopted an 'if you can't beat him, join him' attitude and along with the rivalry there was direct reciprocal engagement, including sharing of content between Pat and the paper (see *Chapter 6)*.

   Chapter 6 also put into context suggestions about the continuing precarity of the independent hyperlocal sector (Tenor, 2018). Pat Gamble was irritated by negativity towards the sector and the 'focus on failure', it nearly put him off starting his operation. Emma Meese said in interview that drop-out was to be expected in any start-up situation: 'not everyone is going to succeed'. Most participants' were optimistic about the future with 11 participants' relying on their operations for their fulltime job. Of the 16 who worked part time several were using the hyperlocal as a significant income stream as part of a portfolio of related work. For some like freelance broadcaster Richard Drew it was the more reliable stream, if not the best paid. Reviewing the wider UK local news ecosystem showed that corporate mainstream providers were experiencing their own problems, with corporate giant *Reach* suffering a pre-tax loss of £113.3m in 2018 and Johnston Press Plc going into administration in the same year. By comparison the independent hyperlocal subculture was showing considerable resilience in a challenging

sector. The focus of this thesis was on showing the resilience of operators in an era where precarity should be considered 'the norm' (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008: 51; Standing, 2016). In a 'liquid world' (Bauman, 2000; Deuze; 2007; 2008) where work conditions are continually changing, resilience is more pertinent. Independent operators faced their challenges, but relatively speaking they were likely no worse than in other sections of society. Indeed, some operations were doing very well.

7:5 Findings, recommendations and summary

This study contributes to the continuing discussion about the local media ecosystem. From a theoretical perspective it also adds to the body of work utilising subcultural theory (Cohen, 1972, Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006; Jenks, 2005; Williams, 2011; Blackman, 2014), reciprocal journalism (Lewis et al, 2014; Harte et al, 2017) and *The division of labour* theory (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) by applying them to 21st century independent hyperlocal news provisions. Methodologically it adds to the biographical tradition which evolved from the work of Robert Park at the *Chicago School of Sociology* during the early 1920s (Park and Burgess, 1925; Park, 1928; Blackman, 2014: 298).

  The doctorate develops the work of Hess and Waller (2016) who proposed viewing these provisions from a subcultural perspective to 'generate new insights' into the culture of excessively local news creation and: 'Shifts the focus from politics, business models and economic sustainability that tend to dominate the literature in this space' (ibid: 206). It also utilises the work of *CCCS* researchers on youth culture and applies their theoretical positions to the field of independent hyperlocal publishing. Their work on youth culture is particularly relevant in these circumstances because of its representation of a culture with a collective identity (Hall and Jefferson, 2006; Blackman, 2007). This collective identity was uncovered by the application of reciprocal journalism (Lewis et al, 2014; Harte et al, 2017) to show the hitherto under theorised links between the participants' themselves, by way of direct bilateral/negotiated exchange relationships. By applying *The division of labour in society* theory (Durkheim, 1893/1984) the 'conscience collective' was revealed between participants' themselves, participants' and the community and as part of the wider independent publishing subculture. The principle findings are as follows:

Finding 1: Independent hyperlocal publishing still marginal

Internet-era 'independent' hyperlocal media, operated as a subset of mainstream local media displaying evidence of the marginality of a subculture. The subculture 'travelled' during the study period, enjoying increased visibility in the local news sector by the end of the research period. The launch of a representative body, the *ICNN*, had allowed some independent operators to access opportunities open to the mainstream, principally the *BBC Local news Partnership Scheme*. However, the sector continued to show evidence of marginality, with many independent operators 'excluded from structures of opportunity' (Williams, 2011: 11). Such as being able to carry statutory advertising, which potentially represented a valuable income stream.

Finding 2: Retrieving and repurposing created a diverse culture

Independent operators were retrieving and repurposing elements of the mainstream. They had retrieved socially cohesive aspects such as face-to-face or footwork journalism; this was theorised by way of reciprocal journalism as offline reciprocal engagement with the community (Lewis et al, 2014; Harte et al, 2017). Most had also repurposed local advertising and adjusted it to their needs. Others like Michael Casey were creating archives because they feared that the mainstream records were incomplete. Some participants' had also retrieved the print format which was in steep decline among mainstream local operators (Mayhew, 2019a). However independent operators were utilising the platform differently from the mainstream. It had been repurposed as tightly focussed on a 'hyperlocal' area to provide depth, in a free-distribution model and with a different frequency such as bi-weekly, monthly or bi-monthly.

 There was a 'Bricolage' nature to independent operations, they were characterised by diversity. It was not about slavishly sticking to one mode of delivery for their output. They embraced social media and online journalism alongside print and also email newsletters as delivery platforms. They were not treating print and online as polar opposites in a platform war. Participants' were open-minded to the possibilities of everything, they used what worked at the time and were prepared to 'change tack' in future if something better came along. Crucially they were not sentimental about print, they were using it for practical reasons because it generated income. Richard Coulter, who at the time was 'bullish' about the value of the print platform. He said that in the future his organisation

might change to an online platform 'something as yet unimagined' he said they were not 'wedded to print' (I:2). Vijay Jain had thought about going online only, but while the print product was still working he was not about the change. At the first interview David Prior had been adamant that he would only work in online journalism, by the second interview he was putting the finishing touches to a print version of *Altrincham Today.* It was published in November/December 2017 (see *Appendix 14*) and was nominated in the 2018 *Society of Editors Regional Press Awards* for *Magazine of the Year* (2019).

Finding 3 Operators demonstrate a 'conscience collective'

Applying Durkheim's theory (1993/1984) of mechanical solidarity to the modern world at first sight appears to be a contradiction, because the original concept was based on a simplistic, pre-industrial, agrarian model which no longer exists in Western society. Durkheim viewed organic solidarity as the basis of the more complex modern social order (Durkheim/Giddens, 1972: 10). Nevertheless, the internal motive or 'conscience collective' of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron, 1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) was evident in many situations, where participants' were embedded in their communities. This study therefore appears to confirm the suggestion that the transition from the 'traditional society' of mechanical society to the modern order of organic solidarity does not require 'the complete eradication of the *conscience collective*' (Durkheim/Giddens, 1972: 6). Aron indicated that there is 'more collective consciousness present in the individual consciousness than we imagine' (1967: 33) and participants' displayed evidence of this by reflecting 'the values and beliefs' of communities in their coverage (Durkheim/Giddens, 1972: 6). Much of what hyperlocals publish comes under the heading of 'banal' journalism, which is of interest to only a very limited audience (Turner, 2015; Harte *et al,* 2019). Harte has described the 'banal' content of much hyperlocal journalism as: 'News that reinforces normative values of a society through a shared everyday cultural specificity' (2018). Annemarie Flanagan demonstrated this internal motivation in her working practice, she reflected a shared understanding with her community by writing about things that interested her as a resident: 'You care about what's going on and so you reflect that on your site' (I:1).

  Giddens notes that Durkheim's 'the conscience collective' is most coherent in simple society (Giddens, 1978 25) and hyperlocal news is arguably at the bottom of the journalistic food chain. I suggest that a 'conscience collective' exists between journalists

267

and their 'communities' where sustained reciprocity has been achieved. The data shows that collective feeling was evident in even the most sophisticated operations, which otherwise displayed many aspects of organic solidarity.

The internet era has provided the opportunity for the formation of new types of communities and therefore fresh ways of viewing mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972: 3-9). Combining Durkheim's theory (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28) with reciprocal journalism (Lewis et al, 2014; Harte et al, 2017) provides a different theoretical angle to the study. Exchange relationships are at the heart of reciprocal journalism and they uncover the degree of embedding that a journalist has in a community. Embeddedness of community journalists allows them to share in the 'collective consciousness' of the neighbourhood and project this in the news that they create. The exchange relationships which they build through reciprocal journalism deepen the relationship, allowing even those who do not live in the hyperlocal area to become embedded when sustained reciprocity exists. This enabled Michael Casey and David Jackman to become embedded in hyperlocal areas where they did not live. Also for Richard Gurner to set up an operation in his home town of Caerphilly when he was working 200 miles away.

The division of labour in society (Durkheim, 1893/1984) theory also expands the understanding of reciprocal journalism in relation to contracts. Durkheim accepted the inevitable widespread role of 'contracts' in the modern world of 'organic solidarity'(Aron, 1967: 29-30). This revealed solidarity in situations where there was a contract in place, particularly where this underpinned 'a social bond based on interdependence' (Jenks, 2005: 28). In reciprocal journalism the presence of a contract is identified as a direct bilateral/negotiated exchange relationship. This type of exchange has been the poor relation to direct unilateral/informal reciprocity where no contract exists. That is because the latter has the potential for the symbolic outcome of creating trust, rather than being tainted by the instrumental outcome of money changing hands. Therefore direct negotiated/bilateral exchange has only the briefest mention in reciprocal journalism literature (Lewis et al, 2014: 232; Harte et al, 2017: 167) compared to its 'worthy' opposite number.

Applying Durkheim's mechanical and organic solidarity to the data (1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967; Giddens, 1978; Hughes *et al* 2003; Jenks, 2005: 28), reveals powerful bonds between participants', above and beyond the contracts that

joined them. There was collective feeling: between partnerships running a single operation; between operators in multi-title operations; also between individual operators and the wider hyperlocal community. This suggests that operators were drawn to collective situations where there is mutual support and they can tap into skill sets that they don't possess. This was represented by the heterogeneity of organic solidarity 'the social bond based in interdependence' (Durkheim, 1893/1984; 1972; Jenks, 2005: 28). There was also a 'collectivity' in larger operations resulting from common beliefs and shared sentiments. This represents a further retrieval from the mainstream where in the industrialised era the majority of journalists were newsroom based with interdependence of skillsets.

This finding is relevant because new independent hyperlocal franchise operations, such as The Local Voice Network or Hyperlocal Today, and the more traditionally organised NeighbourNet provided the opportunity for individuals to work on their own title in a supportive environment. The media co-operative *The Bristol Cable* operated a different management structure to these commercial operations but likewise provided a supportive environment. The solidarity that many operators felt extended to the wider independent publishing community. This strengthened the claim of independent hyperlocal as a subculture. Harte *et al* (2019: 124) observed that 'authenticity' was a key reason for running hyperlocal operations, being part of a 'conscience collective' is another way of expressing such authenticity.

Recommendations for future research directions

1. Further research should focus on the evolution of print in the post-industrial internet era. This research suggests that although it is being discarded by mainstream local news organisations, which can no longer extract the returns from the platform which they require for their business models, it is being retrieved and repurposed by independent operators. In much the same way as radio has been repurposed in the digital era with internet radio, print is likely to evolve rather than disappear (Küng, 2008: 128), providing an unrivalled opportunity to research the most important media platform of the past 500 years while in transition (Collins, 2006).

2. To carry out further qualitative research on news production practices in the independent community news sector to uncover 'best practice' which could be shared between participants'. In particular conduct qualitative research on the

new independent franchise groups which provide a supportive 'collective' environment for journalists, who may be used to working in 'interdependent' situations, to start out on their own. Innovative forms of public interest journalism such as that carried out by *The Bristol Cable* also require more research and support.

3. There is a need for further research and monitoring of the independent community news sector to find out whether it is finally emerging from a position of marginality. The launch of a trade body, the *ICNN* is a good start as is inclusion onto the *BBC* scheme. But there remains plenty of work to be done so that small independent operators do not continue to be marginalised. Depending on how the Government responds to the recommendations made in *The Cairncross Review: a sustainable future for journalism* (*DCMS*, 2019) the local news ecosystem may well change considerably. Disruption of the sector provides opportunities for small agile independent operations.

4. The use of Durkheim's 'conscience collective' provides a theoretical lens for analysing journalism collectives. The 'collectivity' shown in such diverse organisations as *The Bristol Cable* a media co-operative and The Local Voice network suggests that there is a collective thought process in operation in each organisation; even though their apparent aims and business models are so different. Members provide support for each other and although one is a media co-operative and the other an independent franchise organisation there is an authenticity in terms of their approach, which links to Durkheim's mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984; Durkheim/Giddens, 1972; Aron ,1967: 21-33; Giddens, 1978: 25; Hughes et al 2003). This theoretical angle could also be useful for a cultural analysis of investigative journalism collectives such as *The Bureau Local (*https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/local) and *The Ferret* (https://theferret.scot/).

5. Research should look back as well as forward, in order to fill in spaces in the scholarship. Michael Casey's passionate defence of archiving made me realise that local newspaper 'village correspondents' are practically invisible in terms of journalism scholarship. During the industrialised era of local news production their presence and excessively local lineage copy provided the offline version of 'banal' stories which are the bedrock of hyperlocal journalism (Turner, 2015; Harte *et al*, 2019: 3). Research into their contribution would provide a contribution

to the scholarship on banal journalism (ibid.) in excessively local news. Village correspondents could achieve their rightful place as a footnote in journalism history.

7:6 Concluding note

The size and strength of the independent community publishing sector is difficult to gauge because of the lack of a reliable database, but as the sector professionalises it may well grow as it attracts journalists seeking to work outside of the mainstream. The presence of the *BBC Local News Partnership* represents a new addition to the local news ecosystem and, although in its infancy, a government funded review into the sustainability of the UK news industry has called for its expansion. *The Cairncross Review* (2019) has also recommended tax relief, an innovation fund and the creation of an *Institute for Public News*. If these recommendations are implemented by the Government, it is likely to encourage a greater range of local news providers in the place of the current concentration of corporate providers. Such diversity should be encouraged and a premium placed on local news providers who display physical closeness to the community, since they are better able to articulate the needs and wishes of those sections of the population to a wider world. Independent hyperlocal operators have shown themselves to be embedded, adaptable and resilient.

The *ICNN* has called for a level playing field and before waiting for the Government to consider its position on the review's findings, the current policy on access to statutory advertising should be changed as a matter of urgency so that it is available to all local news providers. Currently many hyperlocal providers who enjoy genuine reciprocity with their communities are excluded. Without policy change statutory advertising continues to act as a subsidy for the mainstream.

Participants' have shown themselves to be a resilient bunch, remaining agile and open to different approaches. I would propose, that they are well positioned to benefit from further disruption to the sector; prepared to retrieve and repurpose ideas, reinventing them in new ways until they work. As Emma Gunby said when repurposing advertising features: 'There's nothing new in this world, is there?' Many of the research participants in this study were working fulltime on their titles. Others were working part-time using them as part of a portfolio for work, for Richard Drew the hyperlocals represented his more reliable income stream. Accusations about the precarity of independent publishing

are redundant in a 'liquid' world (Bauman, 2000; Deuze, 2007; 2008) where large numbers of people are living precariously – using foodbanks, working in the gig economy for example – it is all relative. Indeed, precarious is a term that could equally be applied to mainstream local media sector with corporate giants Reach Plc, known as Trinity Mirror Plc *at* the start of the study, and Johnston Press Plc, now JPI Media Ltd, both having their share of problems in 2018.

In the wider social world, narratives of exclusion and wider unrest have become more prominent since the start of the research. The study of subcultures is therefore more relevant than ever in early 21st century Britain, as these narratives of exclusion create fertile ground for the creation of marginalised subsets. There is a point in the TV drama *Brexit: the uncivil war* (2019: 1:12:54) where Dominic Cummings, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, asks his chief data analyst: 'Why aren't we getting any pushback from this? Why aren't journalists hounding us about it?' To which the analyst replies: 'The metropolitan commentariat are not our targets, so they're not seeing our posts on their timeline, so they have no idea what the rest of the country is seeing. So, no-one's reporting it. Feels dangerous doesn't it?' While the *Channel 4* production was a fictional drama, it tapped into the narrative of exclusion which underpinned the *Brexit* 'Leave' campaign; the 'us and them'. Unwittingly, it was also a comment on the lack of news that was filtering 'upwards' from community to national level. It has been this lack of news flow from communities that has been worrying academics for some years, with concerns about democratic deficit and news black holes forming in parts of the country (Barnett and Townend, 2014; Firmstone and Coleman, 2014; Moore, 2014; Howells, 2015)

Tragically the *Grenfell Tower* fire in 2017 was not a TV drama. Within hours of that catastrophic event in the centre of one of the most prosperous cities in the world, similar narratives of exclusion were emerging. Reports that blog posts from the *Grenfell Action Group* warning of the potential for such a disaster, a total of 10 in four-and-a-half years, had not prompted any action (Feller, 2018; Harte *et al*, 2019). Reporters who are physically closest to communities are best positioned to amplify the fears of marginalised sections of society and create an audience for them. Narratives of exclusion create fertile ground for the creation of subcultures which are born of resistance, marginalisation and crisis.

References

Abbott, M. (2017) *What do we mean when we talk about hyperlocal?* 16 May. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2017/05/16/what-do-we-mean-when-we-talk-about-hyperlocal/ (Accessed: 26 November).

Abbott, M. (2017a) *Fifteen hyperlocals to partner with the BBC,* 4 July. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2017/07/04/fifteen-hyperlocals-to-partner-with-the-bbc-2/ (Accessed 5 July 2017).

Abbott, M. (2017b) *BBC launches section two of local news partnership,* 8 September. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/news/bbc-launches-section-two-of-local-news-partnership/ (Accessed: 9 September).

Abbott, M. (2017c) *'Press cards would legitimise and add credibility to our work' say 88 per cent of hyperlocal publishers,* 13 September. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/icnn/press-cards-would-legitimise-and-add-credibility-to-our-work-say-88-per-cent-of-hyperlocal-publishers-2/ (Accessed: 15 September).

Abbott, M. (2017d) *Welsh Government pledges £200,000 to fund Welsh hyperlocal start-ups,* 2 October. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/news/welsh-government-pledges-200000-to-fund-welsh-hyperlocal-start-ups/ (Accessed: 27 February, 2018).

Abbott, M. (2017e) *C4CJ conference 2018: Building the future of community journalism*, 23 November. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2017/11/23/c4cj-conference-2018-building-the-future-of-community-journalism/ (Accessed: 26 November).

Abbott, M. (2018) *Statement on the PM's announcement of a review into the sustainability of local news*, 7 February. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2018/02/07/statement-on-the-pms-announcement-of-a-review-into-the-sustainability-of-local-news/ (Accessed: 8 February).

Abbott, M. (2018a) *Defining a hyperlocal: our criteria for membership,* 21 May. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/icnn/membership-criteria/ (Accessed: 4 August).

Abbott, M. (2018b) *BBC local democracy reporter scheme Q&A with ICNN director Emma Meese and head of LNP Matthew Barraclough.* 22 June. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/icnn/bbc-local-democracy-reporter-scheme-qa-with-icnn-director-emma-meese-and-head-of-the-lnp-matthew-barraclough/ (Accessed: 25 June).

Abbott, M. (2018c) *Interactive map of ICNN member publications,* 20 July. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/icnn/interactive-map-of-icnn-member-publications/ (Accessed: 4 August).

Abbott, M. (2018d) *C4CJ awarded six-figure fund from Google DNI Fund*, 24 July. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/news/c4cj-awarded-six-figure-fund-from-google-dni-fund/ (Accessed: 25 July).

Abbott, M. (2019) *The Centre for Community Journalism's annual report 2018*, 7 Jan. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2019/01/07/the-centre-for-community-journalisms-annual-report-2018-2/ (Accessed: 4 February).

Abbott, M. (2019a) *C4CJ & ICNN response to the Cairncross Review Report,* 12 February. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2019/02/12/c4cj-icnn-response-to-the-cairncross-review-report/ (Accessed: 12 February).

Abernathy, W., and Utterback, J. (1978) 'Patterns of innovation in technology' *Technology Review,* 80(7): 40-7.

Aron, R. (1967) *Main currents in sociological thought 2: Durkheim, Pareto, Weber.* Harmondsworth, Middx. : Pelican.

Atton, C. (2002) *Alternative media*. London: Sage.

Atton, C. (2003) 'Organisation and production in alternative media', in Cottle, S. (ed.) *Media, Organisation and Production.* London: Sage Publications, pp. 41-55.

Baines, D. (2010) 'Hyper-local: glocalised rural news', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 30 (9/10), pp. 581-592. DOI. 10.1108/01443331011072316.

Baines, D. (2013) 'The local press: victimised again', in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds.), *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 200-209.

Baker, T. and Nelson, R. (2005) 'Creating something from nothing: resource construction through entrepreneurial bricolage', *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 50:3. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2189%2Fasqu.2005.50.3.329

Barnett, S. and Greenslade, R. (2014) 'Can charity save the local press?' *British Journalism Review*, 25:62, DOI: 10.1177/0956474814526519.

Barnett, S. and Townend, J. (2014) 'Plurality, policy and the local', *Journalism Practice.* DOI:10.1080/17512786.2014.943930.

Barthes, R. (1977) 'Rhetoric of the image' (trans S. heath) in *Image, Music, Text.* London: Fontana.

Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2001) *Community: seeking safety in an insecure world.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2005) *Liquid life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bell, E. (2017) 'Grenfell reflects the accountability vacuum left by crumbling local press' The Guardian*,* 25 June. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/media-blog/2017/jun/25/grenfell-reflects-the-accountability-vacuum-left-by-crumbling-local-press (Accessed: 20 July, 2018).

BBC (2014) *James Harding - 2014 Revival of Local Journalism Conference*, 26 June. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2014/james-harding-local-journalism-conference (Accessed: 3 August, 2018).

BBC (2018) *Inside the BBC: Local news partnership*. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/partnerships/localnews (Accessed: 2 August).

BBC News (2010) *Profile: Bob Woodward, from Watergate to Obama,* 22 September. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-11388385 (Accessed: 17 June, 2018).

BBC Academy (2013) *Hyperlocal and happy to be in print*, 5 March. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/collegeofjournalism/entries/a6ef218c-09da-3cd9-b1fa-b8e987122046 (Accessed: 2nd February, 2016).

BBC News (2015) *Caerphilly Observer*, 25 February. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-31600641 (Accessed: 5 January, 2016).

BBC News (2017) *Company behind Port Talbot Magnet newspaper to close*, 15 June. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-40284831 (Accessed: 25 October, 2017).

BBC News (2018) *Bouncy castle death pair jailed for three years*, 15 June. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-44494748 (Accessed: 17 June).

Bissell, C. (2006) 'Technology and the media', in Collins, R. and Evans, J. (eds.), *Media technologies, markets and regulation*. Milton Keynes: The Open University, pp. 8-47.

Blackman, S. (2004) *Chilling out: the cultural politics of substance consumption, youth and drug policy.* Maidenhead: Open University.

Blackman, S. (2005) 'Youth subcultural theory: a critical engagement with the concept, its origins and politics, from the Chicago School to postmodernism', *Journal of Youth Studies,* 8:1, 1-20, DOI: 10.1080/13676260500063629.

Blackman, S. (2014) 'Subcultural theory: An historical and contemporary assessment of the concept for understanding deviance', *Deviant Behaviour*, 35, 496-512. DOI: 10.1080/01639625.2013.859049.

Birks, M. & Mills, J. (2015) *Grounded Theory; a practical guide,* 2nd edn. London: Sage.

Brexit: the uncivil war (2019) Channel 4 Television, 7 January.

British Library *(*2018) *Collection guides; web news.* Available at: https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/web-news (Accessed: 16 July).

Brock, G. (2013) *Out of Print.* London: Kogan Page Ltd.

Bryman, A. (2012) *Social research methods*, 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bulmer, M. (1984) *The Chicago school of sociology: institutionalization, diversity, and the rise of sociological research.* Chicago: Chicago Press.

Burrell, I. (2017) *How graduate-founded The Lincolnite is giving traditional media a run for their money*, 27 July. Available at: http://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2017/07/27/how-graduate-founded-the-lincolnite-giving-traditional-media-run-their-money (Accessed: 1 March, 2018).

Carnegie UK Trust (2014) *The future's bright - the future's local: findings from the Carnegie UK Trust's Neighbourhood News initiative.* Available at: https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/the-futures-bright-the-futures-local/ (Accessed: 15 January, 2015).

Chanda, M. (2016) 'The neighbourhood hyperlocal: new kid off the block or a chip off the old one?', *Digital Journalism,* 4:6, 743-763, DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2015.1096747.

Christensen, C. (2018) *Disruptive innovation.* Available at: http://www.claytonchristensen.com/key-concepts/ (Accessed: 11 September, 2018).

Christensen, C., Raynor, M. and McDonald, R. (2015) 'What is disruptive innovation?' *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: https://hbr.org/2015/12/what-is-disruptive-innovation (Accessed: 11 September, 2018).

Ciobanu, M. (2015) *How On The Wight is experimenting with automation in news,* 8 September. Available at: https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/how-on-the-wight-is-experimenting-with-automation-in-news/s2/a566367/ (Accessed: 5th January, 2016).

Clark, T. (2013) 'Can local newspapers survive in the digital age?' in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds) *What do we mean by local? The rise and fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism, 2nd edn.* Bury St Edmunds: Abramis, pp. 158-165.

Cohen, P. (1972) 'Subcultural conflict and working class community', in *Working Papers in Cultural Studies 2: Spring 1972 .* Birmingham: CCCS University of Birmingham, pp. 5-51.

Cohen, P. (1980) 'Subcultural conflict and working class community', in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A., and Willis, P. (eds) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural studies,* 1972-79. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 78-87.

Cole, P. (2006) 'Educating and training local journalists' in Franklin, B. (ed) *Local journalism and local media: making the local news.* London: Routledge, pp. 73-82.

Cole, P. and Harcup, T. (2010) *Newspaper journalism.* London: Sage.

Collins, R. (2006) 'The media, technology and social change' in *Media Technologies, Markets and Regulation*, in Collins, R. and Evans, J. (eds.). Milton Keynes: The Open University, pp.49-95.

Cook, J. (2018) *A Little Bit of a Refresh,* 21 February. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2018/02/21/a-little-bit-of-a-refresh/ (Accessed: 2 March).

Cook, C. and Sirkkunen, E. (2013) 'What's in a niche? Exploring the business model of online journalism', *Journal of Media Business Studies* 10 (4): 63-82. DOI: 10. 1080/16522354.2013.11073576.

Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2015) *Basics of Qualitative Research; techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory,* 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Curran, J. (2002) 'Media and the making of British society, c. 1700-2000', *Media history,* 8:2, 135-154. DOI: 10.1080/1368880022000047137.

Curran, J. (2003) 'Global journalism: a case study of the internet' in Couldry, N. and Curran, J. (eds) *Contesting media power: alternative media in a networked world'.* Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Pubs. Inc., pp. 227-241.

Cox, J. (2016) 'New research: some 198 UK local newspapers have close since 2005' *Press Gazette.* Available at: http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/new-research-some-198-uk-local-newspapers-have-closed-since-2005/ (Accessed: 6 April, 2018).

Coulter, R. (2013) 'How Filton's new Voice could be a business model for hyperlocal journalism' in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds.) *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 226-232.

Coulter, R., Gurner, R., Cracknell, J. and Morton, J. (2018) 'Why print is far from dead', *Building the future of community journalism conference.* Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, 11 January.

Davies, N. (2008) *Flat Earth news.* London: Chatto and Windus.

Davies, N. (2008a) 'Nick Davies: "Churnalism has taken the place of what we should be doing: Telling the truth"', *Press Gazette*, 4 February. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/nick-davies-churnalism-has-taken-the-place-of-what-we-should-be-doing-telling-the-truth-40117/ (Accessed: 22 August, 2018).

Delanty, G. (2010) *Community*, *2nd edn.* London: Routledge.

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2019) *The Cairncross review: a sustainable future for journalism,* 12 February. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-cairncross-review-a-sustainable-future-for-journalism (Accessed: 12 February).

Deuze, M. (2006) 'Participation, remediation, bricolage: considering principal components of a digital culture', *The Information Society*, 22:2, 63-75, DOI:10.1080/01972240600567170.

Deuze, M. (2007) 'Journalism in liquid modern times', *Journalism Studies*, 8:4, 671-679, DOI:10.1080/14616700701412233.

Deuze, M. (2007a) 'Convergence in the creative industries', *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* 10: 243, DOI 10.117/1367877907076793.

Deuze, M. (2008) 'The changing context of news work: liquid journalism and monitorial citizenship' *International Journal of Communication,* 2, 848-865. Available at http://ijoc.org. (Accessed: 14 June, 2018).

Deuze, M. (2008a) 'The professional identity of journalists in the context of convergence culture' *Observatorio ,* 7, 103-117. Available at: http://obs.obercom.pt/index.php/obs/article/view/216 (Accessed: 19 March, 2019).

Deuze, M. and Witschge, T. (2017) 'What journalism becomes', in Peters, C and Broersma, M. (eds.) *Rethinking journalism again: societal role and public relevance in a digital age.* Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 115-130.

Deuze, M. and Witschge, T. (2018) 'Beyond journalism: theorizing the transformation of journalism', *Journalism* 19(2) 165-181. DOI: 10.1177/1464884916688550.

Dick, M. (2012) 'The re-birth of the "beat": a hyperlocal online newsgathering model', *Journalism Practice*, 6: 5-6, 754-765. DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2012.667279.

Dickens, L., Couldry, N. & Fotopoulou, A. (2015) 'News in the community? Investigating emerging inter-local spaces of news production/consumption', *Journalism Studies,* 16:1, 97-144, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2014.890339.

Doyle, G. (2002). *Media ownership: The economics and politics of convergence and concentration in the UK and European media.* London: Sage.

Durkheim, E. (1893/1984) *The Division of labour in society*, introduction by Lewis Coser (Translation by W. D. Halls). Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Durkheim, E. (1972) *Selected writings.* Edited with introduction by Anthony Giddens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, C. and Berger, L. (2003) 'Their story/my story/our story: including the researcher's experience in interview research', in Holstein, J. and Gubrium, J. (eds) *Inside interviewing; new lenses, new concerns.* Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 156-183.

Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (2000) 'Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity' in *Handbook of qualitative research* 2nd edn., by Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, pp. 733-768.

Ellis, C., Kiesinger, C. and Tillman-Healy, L. (1997) 'Interactive interviewing – talking about emotional experience', in Hertz, R. (ed,) *Reflexivity and voice.* Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 119-149.

Emms, S. and Kihl, T. (2014) *A survivors' guide to hyperlocal media*, London: Nesta. Available at:

http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/survivors-guide-hyperlocal-media (Accessed: 18 November).

Encyclopaedia Britannica (No date) *George Cadbury: British businessman.* Available at: https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Cadbury (Accessed: 26 November, 2018).

Engel, M. (2009) 'Local papers: an obituary', *British Journalism Review,*6, 55-62. Available at: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0956474809106672

Engel, M. (2013) 'Glory Days: tales from the golden age of evening papers (had we but known)', in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds) *What do we mean by local?: The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism,* 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 27-32,

Feller, G. (2018) 'Grenfell and the lost art of reporting: Making news before it happens', *Building the future of community journalism*. Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, 11 January.

Firmstone, J. (2016) 'Mapping changes in local news', *Journalism Practice,* 10:7, 928-938, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2016.1165136.

Firmstone, J. and Coleman, S. (2014) 'The changing role of the local news media in enabling citizens to engage in local democracies', *Journalism practice*, 8:5, 596-6006, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2014.895516.

Forde, S. (2011) *Challenging the news; the journalism of alternative and community media.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Forsdick, S. (2018) *Scottish journalism co-operative to allow readers to influence investigations through new text message network*, 28 June. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/scottish-journalism-co-operative-to-allow-readers-to-influence-investigations-through-new-text-message-network/ (accessed: 26 March, 2019).

Fowler, N. (2011) *Have they got news for you? The rise, the fall and the future of regional and local newspapers in the United Kingdom. The seventeenth Guardian lecture delivered in Nuffield College, Oxford on November 10*. Available at: http://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/Resources/Guardian/Documents/Nuffield%20Guardian%20Lecture%202011.pdf (Accessed: 15/10/14).

Fowler, N. (2013) 'Hopes and fears in local land', in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds.) *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 137-140.

Fox, D., Kingsbury, J., and Pearson, M. (2013) *Destination local: our lessons to date. An interim report on Nesta's hyperlocal programme.* Available at: http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/destination_local_our_lessons_to_date.pdf (Accessed: 3 October, 2014).

Franklin, B. (2014) 'The future of journalism: in an age of digital media and economic uncertainty', *Journalism Studies,* 15:5, 481-499, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2014.930254 (Accessed: 18 November).

Franklin, B. (ed.) (2006) *Local journalism and local media: making the local news*, 2nd edn. Abingdon: Routledge.

Frean, A. (2017, August 3) Social media "should pay for taking news stories", *The Times*, 42.

Gauntlett, D. (2011) *Making is connecting: the social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0.* London: Polity.

Geels, K. (2016) *Action research in audience analytics – project completion and evaluation.* Available at: https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/action-research-in-audience-analytics-project-completion-and-evaluation/ (Accessed: 26 November).

Geertz, C. (1973) *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books Inc.

Gelder, K. (2007) *Subcultures: cultural histories and social practice.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Gelder, K. and Thornton, S. (1977) *The subcultures reader*. London: Routledge.

Giddens, A (1971) *Capitalism and modern social theory: an analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber.* London: the Eastern Press Ltd.

Giddens, A. (1978) *Durkheim*. London: Fontana.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) *The discovery of Grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Goodman, H. (2017) 'Local and regional news', *Hansard: House of Commons debates,* 30 March, 624, c. 198-226WH. Available at:

https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-03-30/debates/B069F48A-DFC6-48A8-A1BD-BA9AB827E5E9/LocalAndRegionalNews (Accessed: 6 July, 2017).

Gov.UK (2018) *New review launched of press sustainability in the UK.* 6 February. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-review-launched-of-press-sustainability-in-the-uk (Accessed: 7 February).

Graham-Dillon, A. (2018) *The Bristol Cable – a model for sustainable local journalism*. Available at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/2018/07/03/the-bristol-cable-a-model-for-sustainable-local-journalism/ (Accessed: 15 June, 2018).

Greenslade, R. (2014) *How to save local journalism (and democracy) with a new funding initiative*, 10 October. Available at:

http://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2014/oct/10/hyperlocal-media-digital-media (Accessed: 15 October).

Greenslade, R. (2017) Newsquest chief finally realises shock-horror doesn't sell regional papers, 19 January, Available at:

https://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2017/jan/19/newsquest-chief-finally-realises-shock-horror-doesnt-sell-regional-papers (Accessed: 1 August, 2018).

Groves, R. (1978) 'On the mode of administering a questionnaire and responses in open-ended items' *Social Science Research* 7, 257-271.

Groves, R. (1990) 'Theories and methods of telephone surveys', *Annual Review of Sociology,* 16: 221-240.

The Guardian (2015) *The Scott Trust: values and history*, 26 July. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/the-scott-trust/2015/jul/26/the-scott-trust (Accessed: 1 May, 2018).

Gulyás, Á. and Hammer, F. (2013) *Public service media in the digital age: international perspectives.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Gulyás, Á. (2013a) 'Changing business models and adaptation strategies of local newspapers' in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds,) *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 123-130.

Guy, M. (2012) *Fifty years since your Banbury Guardian set a newspaper first*, Available at: https://www.banburyguardian.co.uk/news/fifty-years-since-your-banbury-guardian-set-a-newspaper-first-1-3529582 (Accessed: 26th March, 2018).

Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. and Willis, P. (1980) *Culture, media, language: working papers in cultural studies, 1972-79.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Hall, S. and Jefferson, T. (2006) *Resistance through rituals; youth subcultures in post-war Britain,* 2nd edn. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography: principles in practice,* 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: principles and practice*, 3rd edn. London: Routledge.

Harcup, T. (2015) 'Alternative journalism as monitorial citizenship; a case study of a local news blog', *Digital Journalism*, DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2015.1063077. (Accessed: 25 November, 2015).

Harcup, T. (2015a) *Journalism: principles and practice,* 3rd edn. London: Sage.

Harcup, T. and O'Neill, D. (2001) 'What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited', *Journalism Studies,* 2:2, 261-280. DOI: 10.1080/14616700118449. (Accessed: 19 September, 2017).

Harcup, T. and O'Neill, D. (2017) 'What is news? News values revisited (again)', *Journalism Studies*, 18:12, 1470-1488, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193. (Accessed: 26 January, 2018).

Harris, J. (2016) *Bristol Cable founders: "We're holding people to account for their actions"* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jan/24/bristol-cable-newspaper-public-interest-journalism (Accessed: 5 October, 2016).

Harte, D. (2013) *Hyperlocal publishing in the UK – A 2013 snapshot.* Available at: http://daveharte.com/hyperlocal/hyperlocal-publishing-in-the-uk-a-2013-snapshot/ (Accessed: 1 October, 2014).

Harte, D. (2013a) 'One every two minutes': assessing the scale of hyperlocal publishing in the UK', *JOMEC Journal,* (3). Available at: https://jomec.cardiffuniversitypress.org/articles/abstract/10.18573/j.2013.10240/ (Accessed: 19 March, 2019).

Harte, D. (2014) *Hyperlocal news websites – some 2014 stats.* Available at: http://daveharte.com/research/hyperlocal-news-websites-some-2014-stats/
 (Accessed: 20 January, 2015).

Harte, D. (2017) *An investigation into hyperlocal journalism in the UK and how it creates value for citizens.* PhD thesis. Cardiff University. Available at: http://orca.cf.ac.uk/100797/1/2017harted.pdf (Accessed: 27 June).

Harte, D. (2018) '"Imagine doing a journalism degree and then being asked to write trash like this" – considerations in meeting the challenges of banal journalism', *Association for journalism education summer conference.* Canterbury Christ Church University, 28-29 June.

Harte, D., Howells, R. and Williams, A. (2019) *Hyperlocal journalism: the decline of local newspapers and the rise of online community news.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Harte, D., Turner, J. and Williams, A. (2016) 'Discourses of enterprise in hyperlocal community news in the UK' *Journalism Practice,* 10:2, 233-250. DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2015.1123109. (Accessed: 30 January, 2016).

Harte, D., Williams, A. & Turner, J. (2017) 'Reciprocity and the hyperlocal journalist' *Journalism Practice*, 11:2-3, 160-176 (also 1-17), DOI:10.1080/17512786.2016.1219963 (Accessed: September 2).

Hartley, S. (2010) *Winners at the Talk About local and Guardian Local awards*, 19 April. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/local/2010/apr/19/talk-about-local-unconference-award-winners (Accessed: 26 November, 2017).

Hatts, J. (2018) 'Five things I learnt from covering a terrorist attack in my neighbourhood' *Building the future of community journalism.* Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, 11 January.

Hebdige, D. (1979) *Subculture; the meaning of style.* London and New York: Methuen.

Hebdige, D. (2014) 'After shock: from punk to pornetration to "Let's be Facebook frendz!!"' in *Subcultures, popular music and social change* by Network Subcultures (eds). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (Ed) (2006) *Media production.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013) *The cultural industries.* 3 edn. London: Sage.

Hess, K. (2013) 'Breaking boundaries: recasting the "local" newspaper as "geo-social" news in a digital landscape', *Digital Journalism* 1:1, 48-63. DOI:10.1080/21670811.2012.714933 (Accessed: 2 July, 2018).

Hess, K. and Waller, L. (2016) 'Hip to be hyper: the subculture of excessively local news', *Digital Journalism,* 4:2, 193-210, DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2014.1002859. (Accessed: 24 March).

Holliday, A. (2007) *Doing and writing qualitative research*, 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Howells, R. (2015) *Journey to the centre of a news black hole: examining the democratic deficit in a town with no newspaper.* PhD thesis. Cardiff University. Available at: http://orca.cf.ac.uk/87313/1/2016howellsrphd.pdf (Accessed: 27 June, 2017).

Howley, K. (2010) *Understanding community media.* Los Angeles: Sage. Available at: http://ayorek.org/files/References/Understanding%20Community%20Media%20-%20Howley%20-%202010.pdf (Accessed: 17 April, 2016).

Hughes, J., Sharrock, W. and Martin, P. (2003) *Understanding classical sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim*, 2nd edn. London, Sage.

Hyperlocal Voices: James Hatts (2011) Available at: http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2011/01/03/hyperlocal-voices-james-hatts-se1/ (Accessed: 5 January, 2016).

Ingram, M. (2013) *AOL's hyper-local hubris: Patch is dying because local journalism is artisanal, not industrial*, 16 December. Available at: https://gigaom.com/2013/12/16/aols-hyperlocal-hubris-patch-is-dying-because-local-journalism-is-artisanal-not-industrial/ (Accessed: 30 April, 2018).

Irvine, A. (2010) 'Using phone interviews' *ESRC National Centre for Research Methods.* Available at: http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/1576/1/14-toolkit-phone-interviews.pdf (Accessed: 10 October, 2017).

Jackman, D. (2013) 'From redundancy to success with a hyperlocal news site', in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds) *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 247-252.

Jenks, C. (2005) *Subculture: the fragmentation of the social,* London: Sage.

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence culture: where old and new media collide.* New York: New York University Press.

John, P (2011) *The problem with the word 'hyperlocal'.* 2 February. Available at: http://wannabehacks.co.uk/2011/02/02/philip-john-the-problem-with-the-word-hyperlocal/ (Accessed: 3 October, 2014).

Kakar, A. (2018) *Regional publisher Iliffe Media joins IPSO along with former IMPRESS founding member the Caerphilly Observer,* 20 February. Available at: http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/regional-publisher-iliffe-media-joins-ipso-along-with-former-impress-founding-member-the-caerphilly-observer/ (Accessed: 20 February).

Kakar, A. (2018a) *Some 40 UK local newspapers closed in 2017 with net loss of 45 jobs, new research shows*, 20 March. Available at: http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/some-40-uk-local-newspapers-closed-in-2017-with-net-loss-of-45-jobs-new-research-shows/ (Accessed: 6 April).

Kempson, M. (2015) 'I sometimes wonder whether I'm an outsider; negotiated belonging in zine subculture' *Sociology*, 49:6, 1081-1095. DOI: 10.1177/0038038514565834. (Accessed: 13 August, 2018).

Kingsbury, J., Pearson, M., and Oliver & Ohlbaum Assoc. Ltd. (2013) *Research on local advertising markets*, Available at: http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/local-advertising-markets-and-hyperlocal-media (Accessed: 2 February, 2015).

Küng, L. (2008) *Strategic management in the media.* London: Sage.

Küng, L., Picard, R. and Towse, R. (2008) *The internet and the mass media.* London: Sage.

Kurpius, D., Metzgar, E. and Rowley, K. (2010) 'Sustaining hyperlocal media: in search of funding models', *Journalism studies,* 11:3, 359-376. DOI: 10.1080/14616700903429787.

Lavelle, D. (2018) *No story is too small: how the Wotton Times is reviving local media with newt exclusives*, 9 July. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/shortcuts/2018/jul/09/no-story-too-small-how-the-wotton-times-is-reviving-local-media-with-newt-exclusives (Accessed: 17 July).

LeMenager, S. and Hebdige, D. (2013) 'High and Dry: On Deserts and Crisis: Interview with Dick Hebdige.' *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities.* Vol. 1, No. 1, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/resilience.1.1.22 (Accessed: 8 August, 2018).

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1966) *The savage mind* . Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, S. (2012) 'The tension between professional control and open participation: journalism and its boundaries', *Information, Communication and Society,* 15:6, 836-866. Available at: DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2012.674150 (Accessed: 15 February, 2018)

Lewis, S. (2015) 'Reciprocity as a key concept for social media and society', *Social Media + Society,* (1-2) DOI: 10.1177/20563051155803399 (Accessed: 15 February, 2018).

Lewis, S., Holton, A. and Coddington, M. (2014) 'Reciprocal journalism: a concept of mutual exchange between journalists and audiences', *Journalism Practice,* 8:2, 229-241. Available at: DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2013.859840 (Accessed: 15 February, 2018).

Lewis, J., Williams, A. and Franklin, B. (2008) 'A compromised fourth estate? UK news journalism, public relations and news sources', *Journalism studies*, 9:1, 1-20. DOI: 10.1080/14616700701767974 (Accessed: 12 August, 2015).

Lindner, R. (1996) *The reportage of urban culture: Robert Park and the Chicago School.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Linford, P. (2017) *Fifteen hyperlocals set to bid for local democracy reporters.* 7 July. Available at: http://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/fifteen-hyperlocals-set-to-bid-for-local-democracy-reporters/ (Accessed: 10 July).

Linford, P. (2017a) *Hyperlocal network moves outside city for first time with 16th title launch.* 7 July. Available at: http://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/hyperlocal-network-moves-outside-city-for-first-time-with-16th-title-launch/?utm_source=emailhosts&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Jul07Mailout (Accessed: 10 July).

Linford, P. (2018) *Trinity Mirror now officially Reach plc.* 4 May, Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2018/news/trinity-mirror-now-officially-reach-plc/?utm_source=emailhosts&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=May08Mailout

(Accessed: 4 May).

Linford, P. (2018a) *Local news partnership "will not offset job losses" says BBC chief* , 15 May, Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2018/news/ldr-scheme-will-not-offset-local-press-job-losses-says-bbc-chief/ (Accessed: 1 August).

Linford, P. (2018b) *Judges hail MEN's "exceptional year" as Regional Press Awards handed out*, 18 May. Available at:
https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2018/news/judges-praise-mens-exceptional-year-as-regional-press-awards-handed-out/ (Accessed: 4 August).

LinkedIn available at https://www.linkedin.com

Littleton, S. (1992) *The Wapping dispute.* Aldershot: Avebury.

Local Web list (2015). Available at: http://localweblist.net (Accessed 6th July).

Luckhurst, T. (2013) 'King and Country: The *Kent Messenger* and the abdication of Edward VIII' in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds.) *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall -and possible rise again - of local journalism.* 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 39-47.

Luft, O. (2010) *KM Group to archive 150 year-old papers online,* 23 July. Available at:
http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/km-group-to-archive-150-year-old-papers-online/
(Accessed: 20 June, 2018).

Madslien, J. (2010) *Dotcom bubble burst: 10 years on*, 9 March. Available at:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8558257.stm (Accessed: 20 May, 2018).

Mair, J. (2013) 'Is there anything to learn from history?' in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds.) *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 21-26.

Mayhew, F. (2016) *'"Heartbroken" reporter Gareth Davies says Croydon Advertiser print edition now "thrown together collection of clickbait"*, 31 July. Available at:
https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/heartbroken-reporter-gareth-davies-says-croydon-advertser-print-edition-now-thrown-together-collection-of-clickbait/ (Accessed: August 2).

Mayhew, F. (2016a) *Trinity Mirror boss hits back at claims Croydon Advertiser printing "clickbait", says days when reporters wrote about interest are "over",* 1 August: Available at: https://pressgazette.co.uk/trinity-mirror-boss-hits-back-at-claims-croydon-advertiser-printing-clickbait-says-days-when-reporters-wrote-about-interests-were-over/ (Accessed: August 2).

Mayhew, F. (2017) *Newsquest boss reveals "shift away from car-crash content" and a "gentler approach" to journalism*, 18 January. Available at:

https://pressgazette.co.uk/newquest-boss-reveals-shift-away-from-car-crash-content-and-gentler-approach-to-journalism/ (Accessed; 20 January).

Mayhew, F. (2017a) *Guardian says money from readers has overtaken advertising as it boasts 500,000 paying subscribers,* 26 October, Available at:

https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/guardian-says-money-from-readers-has-overtaken-advertising-as-it-boasts-500000-paying-supporters-and-subscribers/ (Accessed: 28 October).

Mayhew, F. (2017b) *IMPRESS founder member Caerphilly Observer quit regulator over concerns about its 'transparency' and 'openness',* 22 November. Available at:

http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/impress-founder-member-caerphilly-observer-quits-regulator-over-concerns-about-its-transparency-and-openness/ (Accessed: 20 February, 2018).

Mayhew, F. (2018) *Trinity Mirror to rebrand as Reach after Express Newspapers takeover as it reports fall in revenue and profits for 2017,* 5 March, Available at:

https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/trinity-mirror-to-rebrand-as-reach-after-express-newspapers-takeover-as-it-reports-group-revenue-down-90m-in-2017/ (Accessed: 6 March).

Mayhew, F. (2018a) *Johnston Press share price falls to all-time low of 3p as it faces £220m debts due for repayment next year,* 24 July. Available at:

https://pressgazette.co.uk/johnston-press-share-price-falls-to-all-time-low-of-3p-as-it-faces-220m-debts-due-for-repayment-next-year/ (Accessed: 30 July).

Mayhew, F. (2018b) *Mirror, Express and Star publisher Reach reports pre-tax loss of £113.5m in first half of 2018 despite revenue growth*, 30 July. Available at:

https://pressgazette.co.uk/mirror-express-and-star-publisher-reach-reports-pre-tax-loss-of-113-5m-in-first-half-of-2018-despite-revenue-growth/ (Accessed: 30 July).

Mayhew, F. and Walker, J. (2018) *Bondholders take over Johnston Press and wipe out £135m in debts but largest shareholder planning legal action,* November 17. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/bondholders-take-over-johnston-press-and-wipe-out-135m-in-debts-but-largest-shareholder-planning-legal-action/ (Accessed: 26 November).

Mayhew, F. (2019) *Cairncross Review: Institute for Public Interest News, innovation fund and tax reliefs among nine proposals to save UK news industry* ,11 February. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/cairncross-review-institute-for-public-interest-news-innovation-fund-and-tax-reliefs-among-nine-proposals-to-save-uk-news-industry/ (Accessed: 12 February).

Mayhew, F. (2019a) *UK local newspaper closures: Net loss of 245 titles since 2005, new Press Gazette research,* 11 February. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/more-than-40-local-news-titles-closed-in-2018-with-loss-of-some-editorial-275-jobs-new-figures-show/ (Accessed: 12 February).

McAthy, R. (2012) *Ten projects awarded hyperlocal funding by Nesta.* Available at: http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/ten-local-media-services-awarded-hyperlocal-funding-by-nesta/s2/a549732/ (Accessed: 22 April, 2014).

McQuail D. (2005) *McQuail's mass communication theory* 5th edn. Los Angeles: Sage.

Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA)(2016) 'Local and Community Media with Adam Cantwell-Corn, Dr Peter Lewis, Ian Carter, Dr Andy Williams' *Communities conference.* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEVf_Tshn-M (Accessed: 16th May, 2016).

Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) (2016) 'Communities, Academic Research & Impact | George McKay, Claire Wallace, Leah Bassel, Kathryn Geels' *Communities conference.* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5zoytQEA24 (Accessed: 16th May, 2016).

Media Reform Coalition (2015) *Who owns the UK media?* Available at: http://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Who_owns_the_UK_media-report_plus_appendix1.pdf (Accessed: 6 April, 2018).

Merrill, B. & West, L. (2009) *Using biographical methods in social research.* London: Sage.

Meese, E. (2016) *BBC local reporters scheme: update for hyperlocal publishers*, 12 May, Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/news/bbc-local-reporters-scheme-update-for-hyperlocal-publishers/ (Accessed: 15 May).

Meese, E. (2017) *ICNN – The Independent Community News Network now open for members*, 18 July. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/icnn/icnn-the-independent-community-news-network-now-open-for-members/ (Accessed: 20 July 2017).

Metzgar, E., Kurpius, D. & Rowley, K. (2011) 'Defining hyperlocal media: Proposing a framework for discussion', *New Media Society,* 13, 772-787. DOI: 10.1177/1461444810385095 (Accessed: 22 October, 2014).

Miel, P. and Faris, R. (2008) *News and information as digital media*. Available at: http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Overview_MR.pdf (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

Molm, L. (2010) 'The Structure of reciprocity', *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 73: 2, 119-131. DOI:10.1177/0190272510369079.

Molm, L., Schaefer, D. and Collett, J. (2007) 'The Value of Reciprocity', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70:2, 199–217. DOI: 10.1177/019027250707000208.

Molm, L., Collett, J. and Schaefer, D. (2007a) 'Building solidarity through generalized exchange; a theory of reciprocity' *American Journal of Sociology* 113:1, 205-242. DOI: 10.1086/517900.

Moore, M. (2014) *Addressing the democratic deficit in local news through positive plurality: or, why we need a UK alternative of the Knight News Challenge.* Available at: http://mediastandardstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Positive-Plurality-policy-paper-9-10-14.pdf (Accessed: 15 October).

Moore, M. (2014a) *Why we need a UK equivalent of the Knight News Challenge.* 9 October. Available at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/2014/10/09/why-we-need-a-uk-equivalent-of-the-knight-news-challenge/ (Accessed: 15 October).

Moore, M. (2018, June 22) Facebook's latest publishing move is a print magazine, *The Times,* 22 June, 14.

Musselwhite, K., Cuff, L., McGregor, L. and King, K. (2007) 'The telephone interview is an effective method of data collection in clinical research: A discussion paper', *Internatio*nal *Journal of Nursing Studies,* 44, 1064-1070. Available at: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0020748906001672 (Accessed: 10 October, 2017).

Naldi, L. and Picard R. (2012) ' "Let's start an online news site": opportunities, resources, strategy and formational myopia in startups.' *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 9:4, 69-97, DOI: 10.1080/16522354.2012.11073556.

National Assembly for Wales, Inquiry into news journalism in Wales (2017). Available at: http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=259&RPID=1508945314&cp=yes (Accessed: 5 July, 2017).

National Assembly for Wales, Inquiry into news journalism in Wales: evidence from Rachel Howells (2017a). Available at: http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s64669/Paper%205%20Port%20Talbot%20Magnet.pdf (Accessed: 7 March, 2018).

NUJ (2017) *NUJ response to Welsh government grant for hyperlocal newspapers.* 2 October. Available at: https://www.nuj.org.uk/news/national-union-of-journalists-response-to-welsh-government/ (Accessed: 1st January, 2018).

Neilson, B. and Rossiter, N. (2008) 'Precarity as a political concept, or, Fordism as exception', *Theory, Culture and Society,* 25 (7-8), 51-72. DOI: 10.1177/026327408097796. (Accessed: 23 June, 2018).

Nielsen, K. (2012) 'Ten years that shock the media world; big questions and big trends in international media developments' *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.* Available at: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/ten-years-shook-media-world (Accessed: 10 May, 2016).

Nesta and Kantar Media (2013) *UK demand for hyperlocal media research report.* Available at:

https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/uk_demand_for_hyperlocal_media.pdf (Accessed: 18 November 2015).

Novick, G. (2008) 'Is there a bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research?' *NHS Public Access Author Manuscripts.* Available at:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3238794/ (Accessed: 10 October, 2017).

Oakley, A. (1981) 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms', in Roberts, H. (ed) *Doing feminist research.* London Routledge, pp. 30-61.

Ofcom (2012) *Communications market report 2012.* Available at:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/20218/cmr_uk_2012.pdf (Accessed: 14 January, 2015).

Ofcom (2013) *Internet citizens 2013: use of selected citizen-related online content and services.* Available at: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/telecoms-research/Internet-Citizens-Report.pdf (Accessed: 3 October, 2014).

Ofcom (2014) *Internet citizens 2014: use of citizen related online content and services.* Available at: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/telecoms-research/Internet_Citizens_Report_14.pdf. (Accessed: 14 January, 2015).

Office of Fair Trading (2009) *Review of the local and regional media merger* (OFT 1091). Available at: http://bufvc.ac.uk/copyright-guidance/mlr/index.php/site/244 (accessed: 26 November, 2018)

Oliver, J. (2010) *The pamphleteers: the birth of journalism, emergence of the press and the fourth estate.* London: Information Architects.

Online Journalism Blog (2012) *Hyperlocal voices: Rachel Howells, Port Talbot Magnet.* Available at: http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2012/06/22/hyperlocal-voices-rachel-howells-port-talbot-magnet/ (Accessed: 2 February 2016).

Online Journalism Blog (2012) *Hyperlocal voices: Richard Gurner, Caerphilly Observer*. Available at: http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2012/07/25/hyperlocal-voices-richard-gurner-caerphilly-observer/ (Accessed: 2 February, 2016).

Online Media Awards (2017) Available at: http://www.onlinemediaawards.net/online-media-awards/online-media-awards-2017#59792 (Accessed: March 1, 2018).

Open Source Initiative (1998) Available at: https://opensource.org/ (Accessed: 14 February, 2017).

Openly Local (2012) *Hyperlocal sites in UK and Ireland.* Available at: http://openlylocal.com/hyperlocal_sites (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

O'Reilly, T. (2007). 'What Is Web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software' *Communications & Strategies,* 1, 17. Available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Papers.cfm?abstract_id=1008839 (Accessed: 25 November, 2015).

Palmer, V. (1928) *Field studies in sociology: A student's manual.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pape, S. and Featherstone, S. (2005) *Newspaper journalism: a practical introduction.* London: Sage.

Park, R. (1928) 'Human migration and the marginal man', *American Journal of Sociology*, 33:6, 881-893.

Park, R. and Burgess, E. (1921) *Introduction to the science of sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Park, R. and Burgess, E. (1925/1967) *The city: suggestions for investigation of human behaviour in the urban environment.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Parkyn-Smith, A. (2018) *The Bristol Cable wins major grant funding*, 1 February, Available at: https://thebristolcable.org/2018/02/cable-wins-major-grant-funding-omidyar-network/ (Accessed: 3 February).

Pennycook, L. (2015) 'Click and connect: case studies of innovative hyperlocal news providers. Available at: https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/click-and-connect-case-studies-of-innovative-hyperlocal-news-providers/ (Accessed: 21 May, 2018).

Perrin, W. (2014) *Why doesn't BBC let other people use its local output for free? #localjournalism*, 26 June. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/collegeofjournalism/entries/d1e76d1e-bdb5-3423-bc8d-8cbb7d9381dd (Accessed: 26 November, 2017).

Peters, C. and Broersma, M. (eds) (2013) *Rethinking journalism: trust and participation in a transformed news landscape.* London: Routledge.

Peters, C. and Broersma, M. (eds) (2017) *Rethinking journalism again: societal role and public relevance in a digital age.* London: Routledge.

Phillimore, J., Humphries, R., Klaas, F. and Knecht, M. (2016) 'Bricolage: potential as a conceptual tool for understanding access to welfare in superdiverse neighbourhoods' *IRiS Working Paper Series,* No. 14, Birmingham University: Institute for Research into Superdiversity.

Picard, R. (2002) *The economics and financing of media companies.* 2nd edn. New York: Fordham University Press.

Picard, R. (2010) The biggest mistake of journalism professionalism. Available at: http://themediabusiness.blogspot.com/2010/01/biggest-mistake-of-journalism.html (Accessed: 5 July, 2018).

Picard, R. (2014) 'Twilight or new dawn of journalism? Evidence from the changing news ecosystem' *Journalism Practice,* 8:5 488-498, DOI:10.1080/17512786.2014.905338 (Accessed: 5 February, 2015).

Pickard, M. (2011) *Guardian Local – an update on the experiment*, 27 April. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/help/insideguardian/2011/apr/27/guardian-local-update (accessed: 29 April, 2018).

Plesner, U. (2011) 'Studying sideways: displacing the problem of power in research interviews with sociologists and journalists' *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(6) 471-482. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1077800411409871 (Accessed: 23 January, 2019).

Plunkett, J. (2005) *Murdoch predicts gloomy future for the press,* 24 November. Available at:
https://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/nov/24/pressandpublishing.business1 (Accessed: 31 September, 2018).

Polsky, N. (1967) *Hustlers, beats and others.* Chicago: Aldine.

Ponsford, D. (2012) *PG reveals 242 local press closures in 7 years*, April 30. Available at: http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/pg-research-reveals-242-local-press-closures-in-7-years/   (Accessed: 11 March, 2015).

Ponsford, D. (2013) *Print is the future for local journalism says founder of new weekly newspaper,* 26 September. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/print-future-local-journalism-says-founder-new-weekly-macclesfield-today/ (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

Ponsford, D. (2013a) *Newspapers put together by one person "skimming online content" - Montgomery's leaked Local World vision document*, 21 November. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/local-world-newspapers-will-be-put-together-one-person-skimming-online-content-monty-outlines/ (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

Ponsford, D. (2014) *Video: Why Page three is on the way out and paywalls are the way forward,* 10 January. Available at: http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/content/video-why-print-journalism-making-comeback-2014-page-three-way-out-and-metered-paywalls-are (Accessed: 11 January).

Ponsford, D. (2014a) *178 years on, Newspaper Society drops the word "newspaper" from its title in merger with NPA*, November 10. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/178-years-after-launch-newspaper-society-drops-word-newspaper-its-title-merge-npa/   (Accessed: 26 November).

Ponsford, D. (2016) *Print trumps digital for ultra local news says founder of growing Bristol mag publisher*, 23 February. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/print-trumps-digital-ultra-local-news-says-founder-growing-bristol-mag-publisher/ (Accessed: 1st March)

Ponsford, D. (2016a) *Phone-hacking scoop reporter Nick Davies to retire from journalism in September*, June 30. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/phone-hacking-scoop-reporter-nick-davies-to-retire-from-journalism-in-september/ (Accessed: 3 September, 2018).

Ponsford, D. (2018) *UK's fourth largest regional newspaper group Johnston Press enters administration*, 17 November. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/uks-fourth-largest-regional-newspaper-group-johnston-press-enters-administration/ (Accessed: 26 November).

Radcliffe, D. (2012) *Here and now: UK hyperlocal media today.* Available at: http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/here-and-now-uk-hyperlocal-media-today (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

Radcliffe, D. (2012a) *Why hyperlocals should not rule out print*, 1 May. Available at: https://www.journalism.co.uk/news-commentary/hyperlocal-news-websites-should-consider-print/s6/a548997/ (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

Radcliffe, D. (2013) *Hyperlocal 101, part two: production models & typology*, 1 August. Available at: http://www.slideshare.net/mrdamian/typology-101 (Accessed: 11 February, 2016).

Radcliffe, D. (2013a) 'Hyperlocal media: a small but growing part of the local media ecosystem', in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds) *What do we mean by local?: The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism,* 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 185-199.

Radcliffe, D. (2014) *Some thoughts on hyperlocal funding and sustainability*, 5 February. Available at: http://www.slideshare.net/mrdamian/hyperlocal-funding-and-sustainability (Accessed: 2 February, 2016).

Radcliffe, D. (2015) *Where are we now? UK hyperlocal media and community journalism 2015.* Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/C4CJ-Report-for-Screen.pdf Accessed: (29 September, 2015).

Radcliffe, D. (2015a) *How can hyperlocal media create active and digitally inclusive communities?' Centre for research on communities and culture review 2015*. Available at: http://www.slideshare.net/mrdamian/how-can-hyperlocal-media-create-active-and-digitally-inclusive-communities (Accessed: 6 November).

Ramsay, G., Freedman, D., Jackson, D. and Thorsen, E. (2017) *Mapping Changes in local news 2015-2017: more bad news for democracy*, March. Available at: https://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/mapping-changes-in-local-news-2015-2017-interactive-research-report-march-2017.pdf (Accessed: 26 November).

Ramsay, G. & Moore, M. (2016) *Monopolising local news: Is there an emerging local democratic deficit in the UK due to the decline of local papers?* May. Available at: (Accessed: 15 May 2017).

Reid, A. (2014) *How The Bristol Cable wants to "democratise local media",* 3 April. Available at: https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/how-the-bristol-cable-wants-to-democratise-local-media-/s2/a556313/ (Accessed: 5 October, 2016).

Rieder, R. (2013) *Rieder: inside the world of hyperlocal news,* 21 August. Available at: https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/columnist/rieder/2013/08/20/small-independent-hyperlocal-news-websites/2676515/ (Accessed: 30 April, 2018).

Ritzer, G. and Jurgenson, N. (2010) 'Production, consumption, presumption: the nature of capitalism in the age of the digital "prosumer"', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 10:1, 13-36, 1469-5405. DOI: 10.1177/1469540509354673 (Accessed: 02 February, 2015).

Rottwilm, P. (2014) *The future of journalistic work: Its changing nature and implications*, August. Available at: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/future-journalistic-work (Accessed: 1 August, 2018).

Savin-Baden, M. and Major, C. (2013) *Qualitative research: the essential guide to theory and practice.* Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge.

de Saussure, F. (1974) *Course in general linguistics,* London: Fontana.

Scarbrough, H. (2014) *World's first community journalism MOOC,* 23 January. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/news/worlds-first-community-journalism-mooc/ (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

Scarbrough, H. (2016) *IMPRESS invites hyperlocal publishers to join as members*, 16 March. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/news/impress-invites-hyperlocal-publishers-to-join-as-members/ (Accessed: 20th March).

Scarbrough, H. (2016a) *#C4CJconsultation: a round-up,* 27 July, Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2016/07/27/c4cjconsultation-a-round-up/ (Accessed: 27, July).

Scarbrough, H. (2016b) *One of the longest-running hyperlocals in the UK launches membership scheme,* 5 September, Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2016/09/05/one-of-the-longest-running-hyperlocals-in-the-uk-launches-membership-scheme/ (Accessed: 20 September).

Schaffer, J. (2007) *Citizen media: Fad or the future of news? The rise and prospects of hyperlocal journalism,* 4 February. Available at: http://www.j-lab.org/publications/citizen-media/ (Accessed: 11 March, 2015).

Schumpeter, J. (1934) *The Theory of economic development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schumpeter, J. (1942) *Capitalism, socialism, and democracy.* Harper: New York.

Sharman, D. (2017) *Ex-Local world site to lose public news archives in web upgrades,* 30 March. Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/ex-local-world-sites-to-lose-public-archives-in-web-upgrades/ (Accessed: 29 April, 2018).

Sharman, D. (2017a) *Newsquest completes purchase of island weekly despite MP's concerns*, 12 July*.* Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/mp-far-from-convinced-by-publishers-plan-to-buy-weekly/ (Accessed: 13 July).

Sharman, D. (2017b) *News chief hits out at readers' "clickbait" claims*, 9 October. Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/editor-says-digital-newsroom-has-made-journalists-more-creative-than-ever/ (Accessed: 10 October).

Sharman, D. (2017c) *Editor calls for end to regional press public notice "subsidies",* 19 October. Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/editor-calls-for-end-to-regional-press-public-notice-subsidies/ (Accessed: 20 October).

Sharman, D. (2017d) *Editor promoted following Newsquest buyout of weekly*, 15 November. Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/editor-promoted-following-Newsquest-buyout-of-weekly/ (Accessed: 26 March, 2018).

Sharman, D. (2017e) *Regional publisher seeks redundancies at recently-purchased weekly*, 21 November. Available at:

https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/regional-publisher-plans-cuts-at-recently-bought-weekly/ (accessed: 26 March 2018).

Sharman, D. (2017f) *Two journalists axed at daily as 19 staff leave sister weekly in cutbacks*, 19 December. Available at:

https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/two-journalists-axed-at-daily-as-19-staff-leave-sister-weekly-after-cuts/ (Accessed: 26 March, 2018).

Sharman, D. (2018) *Welsh government urged to spend £200,000 helping hyperlocal journalism,*10 May. Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2018/news/welsh-government-urged-to-spend-200000-helping-hyperlocal-journalism/?utm_source=emailhosts&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=May10Mailout (Accessed: 10 May).

Sharman, D. (2019) *Hyperlocals vow to fight for 'fair access' to statutory notices,* 2 January. Available at: https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2019/news/hyperlocals-vow-to-fight-for-fair-access-to-statutory-notices/ (Accessed: 11 February).

Sheffield, H. (2107) *Bristol Cable: the local investigative journalism co-op training citizens to hold power to account*, 7 December. Available at:

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/indyventure/bristol-cable-local-news-journalism-investigation-co-op-a8083496.html (Accessed: 20 December).

Singer, J. (2017) 'The journalist as entrepreneur' in Peters, C. and Broersma, M. (eds.), *Rethinking journalism again*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 131-145.

Siles, I. and Boczkowski, P. (2012) 'Making sense of the newspaper crisis: A critical assessment of existing research and an agenda for future work' *New Media Society*, 14:1375. DOI: 10.1177/1461444812455148. (Accessed: 22 October, 2014).

Smith, N. (2017) *Regional publishers: how do those that remain survive?* 17 January, Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2017/jan/17/regional-publishers-survive-data-content (Accessed: 26 July, 2018).

Society of Editors (2018) 'Regional press awards shortlist 2017' Available at: https://www.societyofeditors.org/soe_news/shortlists-announced-for-the-regional-press-awards-for-2017/ (Accessed: 26 November).

Society of Editors (2019) 'Regional press awards shortlist 2018' Available at:

https://www.societyofeditors.org/events/regional-press-awards/regional-press-awards-shortlist/ (Accessed: 11 April).

Standing, G. (2014) 'Understanding the Precariat through labour and work', *Development and Change,* 45:5, 963-980. DOI: 10.111/dech.12120. (Accessed: 23 June, 2018).

Standing, G. (2016) *The Precariat: the new dangerous class.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Street Porter, J. (2009) *Media revolution: stop press?* BBC Two Television, 9 March.

Sweney, M. (2015) *Johnston Press chief: local newspaper closures blown out of proportion,* 19 November. Available at:

https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/19/johnston-press-chief-local-newspaper-closures-blown-out-of-proportion (Accessed: 18 December, 2018).

Tait, R. (2013) 'Self-inflicted wounds? The decline of local news in the UK', in Mair, J., Keeble, R.L. and Fowler, N. (eds.) *What do we mean by local? The rise, fall – and possible rise again – of local journalism*, 2nd edn. Bury St Edmonds: Abramis, pp. 5-17.

Talk About Local (2014) 'Neighbourhood news: final evaluation report for Carnegie UK Trust', December. Available at:

https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/neighbourhood-news-final-evaluation-report-for-carnegie-uk-trust-by-talk-about-local/ (Accessed: 15 January, 2015).

Talk About Local (2015) #TAL2015 Unconference*. The British Library*, Euston Road, London. 28 February.

Talk About Local (2016) #TAL2016 Unconference*. Birmingham City University*, 15 October.

Talk About Local (2018) *Talk About Local is now closed.* Available at:

https://talkaboutlocal.org.uk/ (Accessed: 20 February).

Tenor, C. (2018) *Polis: hyperlocal after the hype.* Available at:

http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/Polis-Hyperlocal-News-report-Jul-2018.pdf (Accessed: 1 August).

The Bristol Cable (2015) 'Massive news for the Cable!', 29 November. Available at:

https://thebristolcable.org/2015/11/massive-news-for-the-cable/ (Accessed: 26 November, 2018).

The Lincolnite (2017) *Stonebow Media will employ two local democracy reporters in BBC news partnership scheme,* 7 December, Available at:

https://thelincolnite.co.uk/2017/12/stonebow-media-will-employ-two-local-democracy-reporters-bbc-news-partnership-scheme/ (Accessed: 1 March, 2018).

The Media Show (2014) *Local TV in Norwich and London; Johnston Press; Mail on Sunday's Scoop of the Year* [Podcast]. April 2. Available at:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03zd3j1 (Accessed: 11 March, 2015).

Thornton, S. (1995) *Club cultures: music, media and subcultural capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Thurman, N., Pascal, J. and Bradshaw, P. (2011) 'Can Big Media do "Big Society"?: A Critical Case Study of Commercial, Convergent Hyperlocal News'*, The Future of Journalism Conference.* Cardiff University, 8-9 September. Available at:

http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/135/1/Thurman_Can_big_media.pdf (Accessed: 22 October, 2014).

Tobitt, C. (2018) *Bureau Local marks first year of 'standing in the trenches' with local journalists and telling stories that matter*, 28 March. Available at:

https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/bureau-local-marks-first-year-of-standing-in-the-trenches-with-local-journalists-and-telling-data-stories-that-matter/ (Accessed: 26 March, 2019).

Tobitt, C. (2019) *Reach blames print ad decline for closure of three 'unsustainable' weeklies in south east,* 23 January. Available at: https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/reach-blames-print-ad-decline-for-closure-of-three-unsustainable-weeklies-in-south-east/ (Accessed: 12 February).

Tönnies, F. (1957) *Community and society (Gemeinshaft and Gesellschaft).* New York: Harper & Row.

Turner, J. (2015) 'Good dog, bad dog: exploring audience uses and attitudes to hyperlocal community news through the prism of banal pet stories', *Anthropological Notebooks*, 21:3, 39-50. Available at: http://www.drustvo-antropologov.si/AN/PDF/2015_3/Anthropological_Notebooks_XXI_3_Turner.pdf (Accessed: November 26, 2016).

Turvill, W. (2015) *Johnson Press closures mean more than 300 UK local newspapers have gone in the last 10 years*, 8 October. Available at:

http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/johnston-press-closures-mean-more-300-uk-local-newspapers-have-been-closed-ten-years/ (Accessed: 6 April, 2018).

Tushman, M. and Anderson, P. (1986) 'Technological discontinuities and organizational environments' , *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 31 : 439. Sage Publications.

Tushman, M. and Smith, W. (2002) 'Organizational technology' in Baum, J. (ed) *The Blackwell companion to organisations.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 386-414.

Wagemans, A., Witschge, T. and Deuze, M. (2016) 'Ideology as resource in entrepreneurial journalism: the French online news startup *Mediapart', Journalism Practice* 10:2, 160-177, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2015.1124732. (Accessed: 26 May, 2018).

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2010) 'News production, ethnography, and power: On the challenges of newsroom-centricity', in Bird, E. (ed.), *The Anthropology of news and journalism: global perspectives.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 21-34.

Wainwright, M. (2008) *It is a fight we must win*, 17 November. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/media/2008/nov/17/ray-tindle-local-press-newspapers (Accessed: 3rd March, 2015).

Wales Media Awards (2017) Available at: http://www.journalistscharity.org.uk/news/wales-media-awards-2017/ (Accessed: 4 August, 2018).

International Federation of Journalists (2006) *The changing nature of work: a global survey and case study of atypical work in the media industry*, April. Available at: http://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/images/General_Reports_-_moved_from_old_wesbite/The_Changing_Nature_of_Work__A_Global_Survey_and_Case_Study_of_Atypical_Work_in_the_Media_Industry_April_2006.pdf   (Accessed: 26 May, 2018).

Watkins J. (2009) *Romney Marsh lookers a thing of the past: Romney Marsh's history is crumbling, reports Jack Watkins*, 19 March. Available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/countryside/5015421/Romney-Marsh-lookers-a-thing-of-the-past.html (accessed: August 22, 2018).

West, L. (2016) *Distress in the city: racism, fundamentalism and a democratic education.* London: UCL Institute of Education Press.

Williams, A. (2013) *The value of hyperlocal news content*, 11 January. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/research/the-value-of-hyperlocal-news-content/ (Accessed: 26 November, 2014).

Williams, A. (2017) *7 shocking local news industry trends which should terrify you,* 23 May. Available at: https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/research/7-shocking-local-news-industry-trends-which-should-terrify-you/ (Accessed: December 6).

Williams, J.P. (2011) *Subcultural theory: traditions and concepts,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Williams, A., Barnett, S., Harte, D. and Townend, J. (2014) *The state of hyperlocal community news in the UK: findings from a survey of practitioners,* July. Available at: https://hyperlocalsurvey.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/hyperlocal-community-news-in-the-uk-2014.pdf (Accessed: 8 July, 2014).

Williams, A., and Harte, D. (2016) 'Hyperlocal news' in Witschge, T., Anderson, C., Domingo, D. and Hermida, A. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of digital journalism.* London: Sage, pp. 280-293.

Williams, A., Harte, D. and Turner, J, (2015) 'Filling the news hole? UK community journalism news and the crisis in local journalism' in Nielsen, R. (Ed.) *Local journalism; The decline of newspapers and the rise of digital media.* London: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and L.B. Tauris, pp. 203-223.

Williams, A., Harte, D. and Turner, J. (2015a) 'The value of UK hyperlocal community news: findings from a content analysis, and online survey and interviews with producers', *Digital Journalism*, 3:5, 680-703, DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2014.965932. (Accessed: 24 October).

Williams, A. and Franklin, B. (2007) 'Turning around the tanker; implementing Trinity Mirror's online strategy. *Cardiff University.* Available at: http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Media/documents/2007/03/13/Cardiff.Trinity.pdf (Accessed: 6 April, 2018).

Williams, G. (2006) 'Profits before product? Ownership and economics of the local press' in Franklin, B. (ed.), *Local journalism and local media: making the local news.* London: Routledge , pp. 83-92.

Williams, R. (1974) *Television, technology and cultural form,* London: Fontana.

Williams, R. (1976/1983) *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society.* London: Fontana.

Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to labour: how working class kids get working class jobs.* Farnborough, UK: Saxon House.

Willson, M. (2010) 'Technology, networks and communities', *Information, Communication & Society,* 13:5, 747-764. DOI: 10.1080/13691180903271572.

Witschge, T. (2013) 'Transforming journalistic practice: a profession caught between change and tradition' in Peters, C. and Broersma, M. (eds), *Rethinking Journalism: trust and participation in a transformed news landscape,* Abingdon, Oxon. : Routledge, pp. 160-172.

Witschge, T., Anderson, C., Domingo, D. and Hermida, A. (eds.) (2016) *The Sage Handbook of Digital Journalism.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Worley, M. (2015) 'Punk, politics and British (fan)zines, 1976-84: "While the world was dying, did you wonder why?"', *History Workshop Journal,* 79:7, 76-106, DOI: 10.1093/hwj/dbu043.

Wright Mills, C. (2000) *The sociological imagination, 40ᵗʰ edn.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yourthurrockfilms (2016*) Hyperlocal reflections: "Because I thought you'd turn up",* 26 April. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=haFzhroY1uE (Accessed: 14 February, 2018).

Yourthurrockfilms (2017) *The hyperlocal bible: journalism is about people and not page views*, 3 October. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_2IKlJRAVI (Accessed: 14 February, 2018).

Appendix 1
Location of participants'

No.	Interviewee	Hyperlocal name	Location
1	David Wimble	*The Looker*	Romney Marsh, Kent
2	James Hatts	*London SE1*	London
3	Vijay Jain	*Dartford Living*	Kent
4	David Shafford	*Dartford Living*	Kent
5	David Jackman	*Everything Epping Forest* *Everything Harlow* *Everything Local News*	Essex
6	Daniel Ionescu	*The Lincolnite* *Lincolnshire Business* ** Lincolnshire Reporter*	Lincoln, Lincolnshire
7	Jon Cook	*A Little Bit of Stone*	Stone, Staffordshire
8	Jamie Summerfield	*A Little Bit of Stone*	Stone, Staffordshire
9	Rachel Howells	*Port Talbot Magnet*	*Port Talbot,* Wales
10	Richard Gurner	*Caerphilly Observer*	Caerphilly, Wales
11	Sean Kelly	*ChiswickW4*	London
12	Annemarie Flanagan	*Ealing Today* *Acton W3*	London
13	Sue Choularton	*Wimbledon SW19*	London
14	Will Perrin	*Kings Cross Environment (Talkaboutlocal)*	London
15	Richard Coulter	*Filton Voice*	Bristol
16	Emma Cooper	*Keynsham Voice* *Bishopston Voice* *Henleaze and Westbury Voice*	Bristol

		* Hanham and Longwell Green Voice	
17	Richard Drew	*Frome Valley Voice Yate and Sodbury Voice * Thornbury Voice*	Bristol
18	Gary Brindle	*Downend Voice Fishponds Voice * Emersons Green Voice*	Bristol
19	Paul Breeden	*South Bristol Voice:* separate editions: for Totterdown and Bedminster	Bristol
20	Michael Casey	*Your Thurrock Your Harlow*	Essex
21	David Prior	*Altrincham Today*	Greater Manchester
22	Emma Gunby	*West Kirby Today*	The Wirral, Merseyside
23	Martin Johnson	*Stockport Today* (Title closing at interview)	Greater Manchester
24	Adam Cantwell-Corn	*The Bristol Cable*	Bristol
25	Pat Gamble	*West Bridgford Wire*	Nottingham
26	Dave Harte	*Bournville Village News*	Birmingham
27	Simon Perry	*On the Wight*	Isle of Wight

* denotes titles which were launched between interviews.

Appendix 2

Data collection schedule

No.	Name	First data collection	Second data collection	Hyperlocal name	Website
1	David Wimble	23/06/15	01/06/17	*The Looker*	www.thelooker.co.uk/
2	James Hatts	22/03/16	23/06/17	*London SE1*	www.london-se1.co.uk/
3	Vijay Jain	04/01/16	16/06/17	*Dartford Living*	www.dartfordliving.com/
4	David Shafford	10/12/15	16/06/17	*Dartford Living*	www.dartfordliving.com/
5	David Jackman	11/04/16	30/06/17	*Everything Epping Forest Everything Harlow Everything Local News*	www.everythingeppingforest.co.uk/ www.everythingharlow.co.uk/ www.everythinglocalnews.co.uk/
6	Daniel Ionescu	25/04/16	23/06/17	*The Lincolnite Lincolnshire Business Lincolnshire Reporter*	http://thelincolnite.co.uk/ http://lincsbusiness.co/ https://lincolnshirereporter.co.uk/
7	Jon Cook	27/05/16	30/06/17	*A Little Bit of Stone*	http://alittlebitofstone.com/
8	Jamie Summerfield	26/04/16	No second interview, left hyperlocal.	*A Little Bit of Stone*	http://alittlebitofstone.com/
9	Rachel Howells	27/04/16	05/07/17	*Port Talbot Magnet*	www.porttalbotmagnet.com/
10	Richard Gurner	06/05/16	14/07/17	*Caerphilly Observer*	https://caerphilly.observer/
11	Sean Kelly	25/04/16	08/08/17	*ChiswickW4*	www.chiswickw4.com/ www.NeighbourNet.com/
12	Annemarie Flanagan	03/06/16	15/09/17	*Ealing Today Acton W3*	www.ealingtoday.co.uk/ www.actonw3.com/
13	Sue Choularton	15/06/16	31/07/17 email interview.	*Wimbledon SW19*	www.wimbledonsw19.com/

14	William Perrin	25/04/16	No second interview required	*Kings Cross Environment, Talkaboutlocal*	https://kingscrossenvironment.com/ https://talkaboutlocal.org.uk/
15	Richard Coulter	27/05/26	07/08/17	*Filton Voice*	www.filtonvoice.co.uk/ www.localvoicenetwork.co.uk/
16	Emma Cooper	07/06/16	12/09/17	*Keynsham Voice Bishopston Voice Henleaze and Westbury Voice * Hanham and Longwell Green Voice*	www.keynshamvoice.co.uk/ www.bishopstonvoice.co.uk/ www.henleazeandwestburyvoice.co.uk/ www.hanhamandlongwellgreenvoice.co.uk/ www.localvoicenetwork.co.uk/
17	Richard Drew	14/06/16	15/09/17	*Frome Valley Voice Yate and Sodbury Voice * Thornbury Voice*	www.fromevalleyvoice.co.uk/ www.yateandsodburyvoice.co.uk/ www.thornburyvoice.co.uk/
18	Gary Brindle	14/06/16	07/08/17	*Downend Voice Fishponds Voice * Emersons Green Voice*	www.downendvoice.co.uk/ www.fishpondsvoice.co.uk/ www.emersonsgreenvoice.co.uk/
19	Paul Breeden	12/07/16	07/08/17	*South Bristol Voice: two editions.*	www.southbristolvoice.co.uk/
20	Michael Casey	06/05/16	08/08/17	*Your Thurrock Your Harlow*	www.yourthurrock.com/ www.yourharlow.com/
21	David Prior	12/05/16	21/08/17	*Altrincham Today*	http://altrincham.today/ http://hyperlocaltoday.co.uk/
22	Emma Gunby	14/06/16	04/10/17	*West Kirby Today*	http://westkirby.today/
23	Martin Johnston	21/06/16	No second interview, left the hyperlocal.	*Stockport Today*	http://stockporttoday.co.uk/
24	Adam Cantwell-Corn	17/05/16	13/09/17	*The Bristol Cable*	https://thebristolcable.org/
25	Pat Gamble	12/05/16	13/09/17	*West Bridgford Wire*	http://westbridgfordwire.com/

26	Dave Harte	18/05/16	Email interview	*Bournville Village News*	http://bournvillevillage.com/
27	Simon Perry	08/08/16	17/08/17	*On the Wight*	https://onthewight.com/

* Titles started between interviews

Additional interviews

Interviewee name	Interview date	Website	Organisation	
Kathryn Geels, *Programme Manager of Destination Local*	23/05/2016	www.nesta.org.uk/	*Nesta*: a UK innovation charity	Funded initial research into the sector (Radcliffe, 2012). Through the *Destination Local* initiative funded several projects in the hyperlocal sector between 2012 and 2016. *On the Wight, Bristol Cable* and *A Little Bit of Stone* took part in the project in 2015/2016 *Action Research in Audience Analytics*.
Emma Meese, manager of *Cardiff University's Centre for Community Journalism*	18/09/2017	www.communityjournalism.co.uk/en/	*Centre for Community Journalism, Cardiff University*	Founded in 2013 in response to the crisis in local news. C4CJ Provides support and resources for hyperlocal providers. Formed the *Independent Community News Network* in 2017.
Douglas White, *Head of Advocacy Carnegie UK Trust*	21/09/2017	www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/	*Carnegie UK trust*	Ran the *Neighbourhood News* initiative which funded the launch of both the *Port Talbot Magnet* printed

				edition and *Your Harlow.*

Appendix 3
Interview topics and their thematic link

1. What was the professional background of the interviewee? (*marginalisation through redundancy or atypical work pattern)*

2. What was their motivation for becoming involvement with the hyperlocal? (*marginalisation or resistance*)

3. Does the hyperlocal have a print product? (*Retrieving and repurposing*)?

4. Did the hyperlocal attract advertising? (*Retrieving and repurposing*)

5. Does the interviewee live on 'the hyperlocal patch'? (*Sustained presence in place/ retrieving*)?

6. Are other people involved in the production of the hyperlocal or its distribution? Are they paid? (*Negotiated exchange. Division of labour: mechanical or organic solidarity*)

7. Is the hyperlocal part of a group (reciprocal journalism: negotiated exchange) and if so do members support each other? (mechanical or organic solidarity)?

8. Have they received support from outside either from individuals or organisations, financial or otherwise, have they benefited from Crowdfunding? (*Marginality/ negotiated reciprocal exchange*)

9. What sort of relationship does the hyperlocal have with the mainstream legacy media? (*Resistance/marginalisation*)

10. How has the hyperlocal changed since the first interview? (*Local media ecology, second interview only*)

11. Has its relationship with local media changed? (*Local media ecology, second interview only*)

12. Is the hyperlocal involved with *BBC Local Democracy Reporter's Scheme*; an official press regulatory body (*IMPRESS or IPSO*) or *The Independent Community News Network*? (*Marginality, 2nd interview only*)

Appendix 4

Thumbnail accounts of independent operators and their titles

1. ***David Wimble:*** Owner, founder and editor of *The Looker* based on Romney Marsh, Kent where he was a life-long resident. *The Looker* was established in response to a gibe from the editor of a local newspaper that a Romney Marsh paper would not be viable, published fortnightly since 2010 with an online presence but the primary medium print. David was a businessman and radio presenter who had run community radio stations and worked on cruise ships providing on-board radio systems. Owner of *Radio Waves Media,* a Kent based company that provided on-board entertainment to cruise ships world-wide. Worked on *The Looker* part-time. Website: https://www.thelooker.co.uk/

2. ***James Hatts:*** Joint founder and editor of *London SE1* a family run hyperlocal established in 1998 with his father Leigh Hatts. *London SE1* was originally dual format, online with a print based 'what's on' guide until 2014; then it changed to online only with a weekly email newsletter sent to subscribers on a Monday. James started working on the website while at school, continued editing duties while at university studying history and Spanish; even continuing to lay-out pages while studying in Madrid for a year. After graduating it became his fulltime job, he lived in the London SE1 borough. Website: https://www.london-se1.co.uk/

3. ***Vijay Jain:*** Joint owner of *Dartford Living* a north Kent-based hyperlocal on the south side of the *Dartford Crossing* established around 2007. Originally called *DA1 Living* it started as a printed black-and-white newsletter providing information about mother and toddler groups. Vijay bought the newsletter after it had and changed to full-colour and was expanding too quickly for the original owners. The Dartford borough covers two post code areas, so the name was changed to *Dartford Living* when the circulation area expanded. *Dartford Living* had both an online presence and monthly printed magazine. Vijay held a marketing degree and worked fulltime managing flood modelling software for a multi-national engineering company. He worked on the hyperlocal part-time and lived in Dartford. Website: https://www.dartfordliving.com/

4. ***David Shafford:*** Joint owner of *Dartford Living* with Vijay Jain. David, ran a business designing websites and responded to a request for volunteers to work on the hyperlocal's website in 2014. He bought a share in *Dartford Living* six months later when Vijay's business partner chose to leave the hyperlocal. David held a business information technology degree and in addition to his web-design business worked full-time as a *Highways England Traffic Officer*. He worked on *Dartford*

Living part-time and was responsible for web design, advertising sales and organising *Dartford Living* business networking events. Vijay's responsibilities were editorial and social media. Like Vijay he was living in Dartford. Website: https://www.dartfordliving.com/

5. ***David Jackman:*** Founder and editor of online provisions *Everything Epping Forest* in 2008 and *Everything Harlow* in 2010. In 2010 he added *Everything Local News* as a PR media service for clients including the local MP, businesses and schools. David spent 21 years working as a journalist for a local newspapers group in Essex; starting as a trainee reporter on the *West Essex Gazette* in 1987 and rising to the status of editor. He was editor for 14 years of titles including the *Epping Forest Guardian* with four editions and also the *Harlow Citizen* and *Bishop Stortford Citizen.* After being made redundant, he set up the *Everything Epping Forest* in the area where worked. He was fulltime on the sites and provided a daily email news service to subscribers. Websites: http://www.everythingeppingforest.co.uk/ http://www.everythingharlow.co.uk/ http://www.everythinglocalnews.co.uk/

6. ***Daniel Ionescu:*** Founder and editor of *The Lincolnite* an online only hyperlocal based in Lincoln established in 2010. After graduating from the *University of Lincoln* with a degree in journalism, Daniel set up *The Lincolnite* with two other students as an online provision to serve the city. By the time of the study he was the only remaining founding director, his business partner throughout data collection was Dean Graham who joined the company in 2013. Together they ran the digital publishing group Stonebow Media Ltd until 2018 when they went their separate ways. The company produced two other titles *Lincolnshire Business* and *Lincolnshire Reporter* throughout the research period but in March 2018 Dean relaunched *Lincolnshire Business* as *CityX,* to follow a different path. Daniel continued to run the news business full time as director of Stonebow Media and managing editor of *The Lincolnite* and *Lincolnshire Reporter*. Stonebow Media was accepted onto the *BBC Local News Partnership Scheme* and awarded two democracy reporters for *Lincolnshire Reporter* in 2017. Websites: https://thelincolnite.co.uk/ https://lincolnshirereporter.co.uk/

7. ***Jon Cook:*** Owner of *A Little Bit of Stone* an online only provision based in Stone in Staffordshire, he had a background in IT solutions and was responsible for all technical aspects of the hyperlocal. He and Jamie Summerfield operated *A Little Bit of Stone* together for nearly six years providing complementary IT and editorial skills until Jamie left in 2016. They raised more than £15,000 from a *Crowdfunder* campaign in 2015 (https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/alittlebitofstone) to pay for improvements to the website and for Jamie to work two-and-a-half days a week on the site's editorial. After Jamie's departure Jon continued to run the site with the help of volunteers. He

worked part-time on the hyperlocal alongside his full-time role in IT solutions consultant. He had lived in Stone since 2005. Website: https://alittlebitofstone.com/

8. **Jamie Summerfield:** Founder of *A Little Bit of Stone* an online only provision. Jamie started the website shortly before meeting Jon Cook in 2010 in order to 'share the wonderful community spirit' in Stone in Staffordshire; he and his family had moved to the town in 2002. Jamie had been editor for nearly six years, when he stepped down in August 2016 to take up a full-time role as Communications Manager with the *British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists.* Trained as a journalist, he worked on *ALBOS* part-time alongside other media roles which included communications specialist and press officer for *Stoke-on-Trent City Council* and *Staffordshire Fire Service.* He was also responsible for digital content creation and reporting for *Podnosh* another Birmingham-based website. Lived in Stone. Website: https://alittlebitofstone.com/

9. **Rachel Howells:** Co-founder and editor *Port Talbot Magnet,* in south Wales. Established as a cooperative by Rachel and six other journalists from the Swansea branch of the *NUJ* who had either been made redundant or were struggling freelances. The website started in 2009, then in 2013 the *Carnegie Trust UK Neighbourhood News* initiative funded the launch of a monthly printed edition. Rachel edited the newspaper part-time while completing her a doctorate at *Cardiff University*, titled *Journey to the centre of a news black hole: examining the democratic deficit in a town with no newspaper* (2015). Port Talbot was the focus of her research and she said in interview that synergy between her research and the *Magnet* kept her tied to the project, as most of her co-directors left to pursue other work. Rachel worked part-time on the hyperlocal while living in Swansea. The last *Port Talbot Magnet* was issue 11 September/October 2016. The closure was announced on the website on October 4, 2016: http://www.porttalbotmagnet.com/

10. **Richard Gurner:** Owner, founder and editor of *Caerphilly Observer,* based in Caerphilly in south Wales, and online presence and print newspaper published fortnightly. Richard hailed from *Caerphilly* and started the hyperlocal as a website in 2009 to keep in touch with what was happening at home, while working as a journalist on *The Argus* in Brighton, Sussex. After moving back to his home-town in 2011 he started the *Caerphilly Observer* as a fortnightly print newspaper in 2013 with the help of a rural development grant. Richard worked fulltime as publisher and editor of the title. Website: https://caerphilly.observer/

11. **Sean Kelly:** Joint founder of *ChiswickW4* with business partner Tony Steele in 2000. They developed the business into *Neighbour Net Ltd* which during the study period comprised a total of 10 online only hyperlocal websites. Sean provided commercial expertise for the operation, bringing business experience from working in the City of London for 20 years; Tony was a software engineer. They employed professional journalists as part-time editors to compile the news content

for each website, with advertising sold by staff based at the organisation's headquarters in Chiswick where Sean lived. They had registered 27 domains with 10 providing a regular email news service throughout the study. Sean worked full time at NeighbourNet. Websites: http://www.neighbournet.com/ http://www.chiswickw4.com/

12. **Annemarie Flanagan:** Editor of both *Ealingtoday.com* and *ActonW3.com* which were both in the London borough of Ealing. Both provisions were part of the NeighbourNet.com group. Annemarie joined NeighbourNet as editor of *Ealing Today* in 2009, then soon afterwards took on the Acton site. Former senior broadcast journalist for the *BBC* for 12 years on both on radio and TV, including *News 24*. Left the BBC to become a freelance writer in 2003 when her first child was born. Lived in Ealing and was part-time on the sites alongside other freelance work including writing for *Ealing BID Company*. Websites: http://www.ealingtoday.co.uk/ http://www.actonw3.com/

13. **Sue Choularton:** Editor of *WimbledonSW19.com*. Started as a junior reporter in 1987 in Chester, followed by news editor at the *Western Daily Press* in Bristol, then moved to *Channel 4* as Assistant Editor at *Teletext.* While at *Teletext* she was working in Chiswick and became a subscriber to *ChiswickW4.* Prior to being made redundant, when *Teletext* closed in 2010, she approached Sean Kelly about setting up *WimbledonSW19* in the area she lived. Worked on the site part-time, alongside freelance commitments which include copywriter for *Word Association* and part-time work for the *Press Association* on their elections desk. Website: http://www.actonw3.com/

14. **William Perrin:** Founder and manager of not-for-profit online hyperlocal *Kings Cross Environment* since 2007. He was a senior civil servant who viewed hyperlocal work as a form of unpaid community service, setting up the site as a means for local people to share information about the regeneration of the Kings Cross area in London where he lived. The site was at its most active between 2008 and 2011 during the regeneration of the area and initiated a major campaign on cycle safety in London. William founded advocacy group *Talk About Local (TAL)* in 2009 as a focal point for hyperlocal publishers, promoting and supporting community websites with a series of 'unconferences'. *TAL* curated the original *Openly Local* website (2012) and was involved in its subsequent replacement the *Local Web List* (2015) of hyperlocals in the UK. TAL closed in January 2018. Websites: https://kingscrossenvironment.com/ https://talkaboutlocal.org.uk/

15. **Richard Coulter:** Publisher and editor of *Filton Voice* established in 2011 to cover the Filton area of north Bristol where he lived. The following year he and former *Bristol Evening Post* colleague Emma Cooper set up the Local Voice Network Ltd as a hyperlocal franchise operation with both online and printed presence. He qualified as a journalist at *Cardiff University School of Journalism* in 1992 and worked for 20 years in mainly regional press culminating in the role of assistant editor at the *Bristol Evening Post* from which he took redundancy in 2011. As well as editorial director of

the Local Voice Network, he worked part time on *Filton Voice* alongside other journalistic and public relations work. Websites: https://www.localvoicenetwork.co.uk/ https://www.filtonvoice.co.uk/

16. ***Emma Cooper:*** Business partner of Richard Coulter and Commercial Director of Local Voice Network Ltd. She was a former Head of Advertising (Telesales) at the *Bristol Evening Post* and part of the senior management team at *Northcliffe Media* which owned the *Post,* prior to taking redundancy in 2011. At the start of the research period Emma was publisher and advertising manager of three hyperlocal titles in the Bristol area where she lived: *Keynsham Voice, Bishopston Voice, Henleaze and Westbury Voice,* all had both a print and web presence. By the end of data collection she had added a fourth title, launching *Hanham and Longwell Green Voice.* She headed a team of three telesales personnel who sold space for both her own titles and into other titles in the group. Emma lived in Keynsham, in Bristol and worked on the titles full time. Websites: https://www.localvoicenetwork.co.uk/   https://www.keynshamvoice.co.uk/ https://www.bishopstonvoice.co.uk/ https://www.henleazeandwestburyvoice.co.uk/ https://www.hanhamandlongwellgreenvoice.co.uk/

17. ***Richard Drew:*** Franchise holder Local Voice Network, he was editor and publisher of *Frome Valley Voice* and *Yate and Sodbury Voice*, monthly print based with online presence. Richard was a freelance journalist and TV sports presenter, the magazines were one of his income streams. He experimented unsuccessful with his own magazine in Bristol prior to joining the *'Voice'* group and was an advocate of the franchise model. He lived in the Frome Valley area of Bristol; Yate and Sodbury were neighbouring areas. TV presenting was his main income stream and he employed other journalists and members of the franchise group to cover roles on the publications when he is away working. By the end of the study he had launched a fourth title *Thornbury Voice* and worked on his titles part time. Websites: https://www.fromevalleyvoice.co.uk/ https://www.yateandsodburyvoice.co.uk/ https://www.thornburyvoice.co.uk/

18. ***Gary Brindle:*** Franchise holder Local Voice Network. Editor and publisher of *Downend Voice* and *Fishponds Voice.* Gary was a graphic designer and was employed by other members of the group to 'layout' their publications. He also oversaw the layout guidelines for the *'Voice'* brand. Gary worked for the *Bristol Post* for 30 years and knew Richard Coulter, Emma Cooper and Paul Breeden. He was pre-press manager for 13 years and made redundant in 2009 when his job was outsourced to India. He was working as a graphic designer when Emma started her *'Voice'* publications and offered his design expertise before starting his own publications. Gary lived in the Downend area of Bristol and worked on the titles full time. By the end of the study period he had

launched a third title: *Emersons Green Voice.* Websites: https://www.downendvoice.co.uk/ https://www.fishpondsvoice.co.uk/ https://www.emersonsgreenvoice.co.uk/

19. ***Paul Breeden:*** Franchise holder Local Voice Network. Editor and publisher of monthly print publication *South Bristol Voice,* which comprised two editions. Paul worked as a journalist at *Western Daily Press,* a sister paper to the *Bristol Evening Post*, where he met Richard Coulter. After being made redundant in 2008 he took a variety of roles: freelance writing, editing, lecturing and training. He was heavily involved with the *National Union of Journalists* (NUJ) and a regular speaker at their annual conference. After watching the *Voice Network* grow for the first few years, launched his own titles in 2015 in South Bristol where he lived. Paul was fulltime on *South Bristol Voice* full time producing two issues: an edition for Totterdown, Knowle and Windmill Hill and one for Bedminster, Southville, Ashton and Ashton Vale. Website: https://www.southbristolvoice.co.uk/

20. ***Michael Casey:*** Freelance journalist who was editor and publisher of the online websites *Your Thurrock* and *Your Harlow* in Essex. He started *Your Thurrock* in 2008 because he wanted to work in online journalism and experiment with incorporating audio and video footage. In July 2013 he started *Your Harlow* with a grant from the *Carnegie UK Trust* as part of its *Neighbourhood News* initiative. He was in partnership with mainstream media group Local World Ltd between 2014 and 2016 but thereafter ran his sites independently. Michael was a career journalist working full-time on the websites and, as a freelance, supplied copy to national media organisations. His websites were accepted onto the *BBC Local News Partnership Scheme*. He lived in Harlow. Websites: http://www.yourthurrock.com/ http://www.yourharlow.com/

21. ***David Prior:*** Founder and editor of *Altrincham Today* the 'mobile first' provision on which he has based his franchise model Hyperlocal Today Ltd. Following a post-graduate journalism course, he worked for the *Press Association* and legacy print titles including the *Liverpool Daily Post.* David became demoralised with legacy media and moved into PR and marketing. But in 2013 returned to journalism and started editing a business news website *Prolific North* part-time. In October 2014 he launched *Altrincham Today* in his home town. He edited *Altrincham Today* and ran the '*Today*' franchise which during the research period comprised nine titles including *West Kirby Today* and *Stockport Today*. In 2017 he launched a print addition to *Altrincham Today.* He lived in Altrincham, Greater Manchester. Websites: http://hyperlocaltoday.co.uk/ http://altrincham.today/

22. ***Emma Gunby:*** Joint franchise holder of online, mobile-first, Hyperlocal Today provision *West Kirby Today* with business partner Mark Thomas. She lived in West Kirby, on the Wirral Peninsular, where the hyperlocal was based. Mark and Emma were former *Press Association* and *Liverpool Daily Post* journalists and colleagues. Emma went to university with David Prior and had heard about the Hyperlocal Today project. She and Mark set up *West Kirby Today* in January 2016 with a

desire to do 'back to basics, very, very, local news.' Emma worked part-time on the provision alongside her business Neon Fox Marketing. Mark was semi-retired and a former editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post.* Website: http://westkirby.today/

23. **Martin Johnston:** Former franchise holder of Hyperlocal Today title *Stockport Today*, active between March and June in 2016. Martin was founder and editor of the site and worked on it alongside part-time work at a local radio station. At the time of the first interview he had just ceased work on the hyperlocal because was starting a full-time job in marketing the following week. Nevertheless, the interview went ahead to add to the diversity of data. Martin lived in the hyperlocal area in Stockport, Lancashire, and his professional background was 25 years in sports PR. The website closed after interview.

24. **Adam Cantwell-Corn:** Joint founder, operations and media co-ordinator, of the *Bristol Cable* an online and print magazine based in Bristol. The *Cable* was a democratic, not-for-profit operation run as a community benefit society. It was launched in 2014 with income from a £3,300 *Crowdfunder* and thereafter published a quarterly, features-based magazine promoting investigative journalism. Adam was a law graduate and co-founded the *Cable* with fellow *Sussex University* graduates Alex Saelens and Alon Aviram; all three moved to Bristol after leaving university. The *Cable* ran as a non-hierarchical, media co-operative, and by the second interview had 1,800 members. It offered media training and workshops through the *Bristol Cable Media Lab*. Adam worked part-time on the *Cable* at the start of the research but was full time by the second interview. All contributors received a flat rate which was matched to the organisations' revenue. Website: https://thebristolcable.org/

25. *Pat Gamble:* Founder and editor of *West Bridgford Wire,* based in Nottingham. Pat launched the site in 2012 as an online only provision because he wanted to know what was happening in his home town. He didn't have a media background and set up *The Wire* when still working in transport and logistics management, fulfilling a long-held desire to be a journalist. He had 'business management and people skills' and was one of the few hyperlocal publishers with a good, working relationship with the local mainstream media. *The Wire* had been accepted onto the *BBC Local News Partnership Scheme.* Pat lived in West Bridgford and worked full-time on the provision, providing a daily email news service. Website: https://westbridgfordwire.com/

26. **Dave Harte:** Editor of *Bournville Village News* a not-for-profit website that he joined a year after it started in 2009, subsequently taking it over when the founder left in 2010. The hyperlocal area was the *Cadbury* village of *Bournville, Birmingham*, where Dave was living at the time. By the time of the first interview he had moved to a neighbouring area. He edited the hyperlocal while researching his doctorate *An investigation into hyperlocal journalism in the UK and how it creates value for*

citizens (2017). Was co-author of *The state of hyperlocal community news in the UK: Findings from a survey of practitioners* (Williams *et al¸*2014). By the second interview he had been awarded his doctorate and been appointed *Associate Professor in Journalism and Media Studies* at *Birmingham City University*. Website: http://bournvillevillage.com/

27. **Simon Perry:** Co-founder of online hyperlocal *On the Wight* with his wife Sally in 2012. She was responsible for content creation while he provided IT expertise and sold advertising. Simon came from a digital media background including running early dial-up bulletin boards. Sally was formerly director of project management at a web company in London and together they ran an agency in the 1990s setting up some of the earliest database driven websites. Simon was joint founder of *Lemon TV* in the late 1990s producing webcasts, then started the publication *Digital Lifestyles* and trained as a journalist and radio producer. Together Simon and Sally started the *Ventnor Blog* when they moved to the Isle of Wight in 2005, rebranding the site as *On the Wight* in 2012. Both worked full time on the site and provided a daily email news service to subscribers. Website: https://onthewight.com/

Appendix 5

The Looker front page in 2016
In 2016 David Wimble was laying out *The Looker* himself.

THE LOOKER.CO.UK

The Continent's most popular free newspaper*

Issue 145　　　　**Wednesday 27th April 2016**

RNLI 13-02

Lifeboats scrambled to save refugees crossing the Channel

In the week that the RNLI central press office released a statement about an early morning rescue of two people in a rubber dingy, local people have once again raised concerns about the possibility of refugees trying to get over the Channel by any means possible. Instead of the local stations' press officers releasing a statement, the charity took the unusual step of issuing a head office press release that said: "Our remit is simply to assist those in danger or distress at sea – we make no judgement and it is not for us to distinguish between people's reasons for being at sea. Our primary function as a search and rescue charity is to do just that."

The rescue took place after passengers from a passenger from a P&O passenger ferry spotted a faint white light at approximately 3.30am.

Both Dover and Dungeness lifeboats were requested to be launched with the Dover boat picking up two men in a 10 foot inflatable boat approximately one mile from the coast. It is believed that the light spotted came from a mobile phone they were using to make a call to the UK emergency services. Last year The Looker was contacted by concerned residents in St Mary's Bay, reporting sightings of small

Continued Page 2...

Queen's Birthday shunned by Town Council

New Romney residents were shocked to learn that its own Town Council had made no plans to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday.

A group of disappointed families arrived at the Green in New Romney to be met by an empty beacon.

A representative of New Romney Fire Station told The Looker "Normally the Council contacts us to load the beacon and then oversee the lighting of it and to standby to make sure everything is fine, but we were not approached this time."

When the Looker Group editor used the facebook 'Marsh Watch' page stating that he thought it was very disrespectful for the town not to celebrate what was one of the milestone historic events of the decade, the social media post was met with overwhelming support.

Other locals came into The Looker's office and enquired why no Union Flag was flying above the Town Hall - which was eventually raised mid-morning. The Looker hopes that maybe by the time of the Queen's 'official birthday' in June a beacon could be lit in recognition of this amazing achievement. In a statement from the New Romney Town Council, they expressed surprise that The Looker had "apparently received numerous negative comments regarding the fact that the Town Council did not, on this occasion, undertake the lighting of a beacon (in recognition of the Queen's 90th birthday) as the Town Council has not, in fact received same. However, in light of the comments that The Looker had received both at our office in New Romney High Street and on social media, they agreed that "a press statement will be issued and will likely follow early in the week commencing 25th April." We await to be enlightened...

Appendix 6

The Looker front cover design in May 2017 after the printers took over the layout

318

THE

LOOKER
.CO.UK

Eating ice cream on the beach... could damage your health!

Royal British Legion
95th Birthday Celebrations

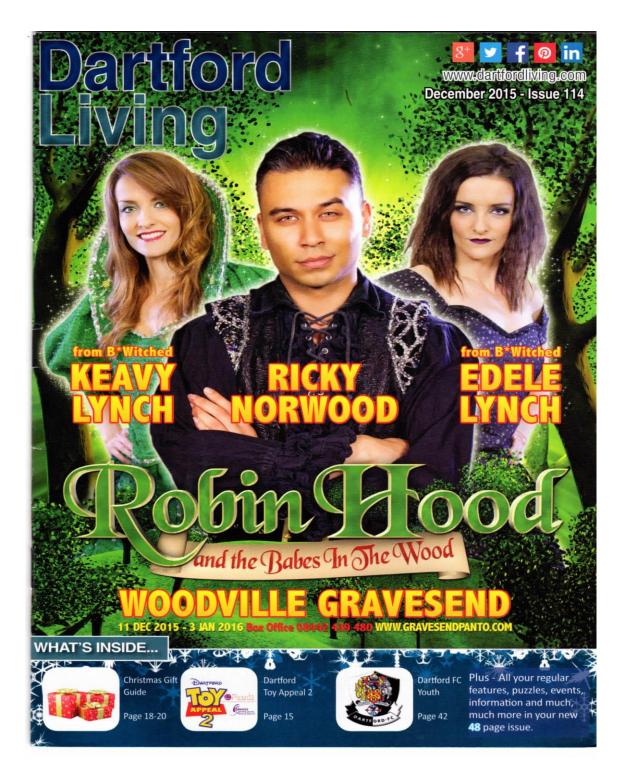**IN THIS ISSUE**
RHDR 90th Birthday Gala Weekend
Book Review - Small Island by Little Train
Councils Round-up
New Romney Scouts - Big Chocolate Experience

Appendix 7
Dartford Living front page December 2015

Appendix 8
Caerphilly Observer front page September 2016

Son admits killing mother

The body of Iris Owens, 75, was found at her home in Nelson Road, left

A man has admitted murdering his 75-year-old mother at her home in Ystrad Mynach.

At a hearing at Cardiff Crown Court today, September 9, Robert Owens, 47, pleaded guilty to killing Iris Owens at her house in Station Road, near Ystrad Mynach Railway Station on May 3 this year.

Owens admitted the murder via videolink from Cardiff prison and is due to be sentenced on October 31.

Judge Eleri Rees ordered a psychiatric report on Owens, of River Row in Abercynon, before he is sentenced

In the aftermath of her death, Mrs Owens was described by her community as friendly and lovely, and had been an active volunteer for local history groups.

School opens investigation into bullying after death threat

By Ben Barker

The death threat written on the door of a cubicle in the school's toilets.
We have obscured the pupil's name to protect his identity

A secondary school in Caerphilly has begun an investigation into claims of bullying, after a pupil received a death threat.

Staff at St Martin's School, Caerphilly, have been criticised by the step-mother of a Year 11 pupil for their handling of the claims.

The issue will be raised at the next meeting of school governors on Monday, September 19.

The death threat, written on a door in the boys' toilets, was first reported to staff at the end of the last school year, but had not been removed by the start of the new term on Monday, September 5, despite a summer refurbishment at the school.

The graffiti was eventually removed on Tuesday September 6, after the boy's parents phoned the school.

The boy's step-mother, 35, said: "My son came home with a photo of the graffiti on May 19, but we were told there was no budget to paint over the threat, despite the fact that the school has spent thousands of pounds on painting this summer.

"He was sent to find the caretaker himself, who said he could sandblast it off, but even that took three weeks for them to even attempt to remove it."

The boy, 15, claims to have been subjected to bullying at the school over the past four years.

His step-mother added: "He's been beaten up and choked in the past. There has been no attempt by staff to find the bullies. My son thinks it's normal to be bullied now, after so long.

"He's got no confidence or trust in the teachers, and I don't understand why it's taken three months for them to remove the death threat.

"It was tough enough for him to concentrate on his GCSEs at the end of last year, but even with the graffiti removed, he says he still knows it's there.

"The school thinks that the situation is over - because the message was removed that's it. No one has asked me how my son is, no one has apologised.

"I just want my son to be treated normally, like any other child. It's incredibly hard, I can't keep seeing him like this.

"He loves to learn, he's polite, but he says he finds the bullying normal. It's horrendous. No one seems to care."

St Martin's School headteacher, Lee Jarvis, vowed to punish anyone caught bullying as the school opened up an investigation into the claims.

Mr Jarvis said: "I would like to assure pupils, parents and the wider school community that St Martins is a caring and supportive school.

"We strive to create a learning environment where everyone can feel safe, respected, valued and confident that bullying will not be tolerated.

"In this particular case we are carrying out a thorough investigation and we are also working closely with the pupil concerned to provide appropriate care and support.

"This type of behaviour will not be tolerated and there will be serious repercussions for those held responsible."

St Martin's School, Caerphilly, is investigating claims of bullying and a death threat aimed at a pupil. Photo by Jaggery

Appendix 9
Port Talbot Magnet front page July 2016

The paper's lead story about the steelworks, reproduced in whole in *Appendix 10,* was the result of reciprocal engagement - a tip-off from concerned workers. But it caused ill-feeling in the town.

Appendix 10

Steel heroes fight to save works - but at what cost?

By Rachel Howells

Local steelworkers are breaking production records in their ongoing fight to save steelmaking in Port Talbot, but now some steelworkers are voicing concerns over safety as the 750 redundancies announced in January begin to make themselves felt.

Speaking exclusively to the Magnet, a group of steelworkers, who have asked to remain anonymous, have claimed manpower on some shifts is down by a third, but that men are still being expected to maintain the same levels of work. They say exhaustion is now common among workers.

"Manning levels were cut pretty much by a third, overnight," said one worker. "But we're expected to do the same work as when there was a full shift of us. At the end of a 12 hour shift I'm shattered. All I can do is go home and sleep. I can't make any other arrangements outside work for those four or five days because I'm too tired."

The worry is that exhaustion might compound other safety concerns at the works. Some workers say they are now working in high temperatures for longer than is recommended by health and safety guidelines. The guidelines state regular breaks for cooling off and rehydrating are essential if workers are to avoid heat stress.

"These longer cooling off periods are not being followed now, we get an hour in the heat, and half an hour to cool off," said another worker. "Also, we are expected to keep working as we cool off, so we're straight from one job to another and we don't always have time to drink to rehydrate ourselves."

A steel safety campaigner, who also asked not to be named, said heat stress can cause the body to go into shock, and in extreme circumstances can trigger a heart attack. He also said exhaustion and heat stress make accidents more likely.

"If people are tired and their bodies are under stress through heat, they are more likely to make mistakes," he explained. "Statistics show that guys who are tired or suffering from heat stress are not able to work to the same safety levels and standards."

Another steelworker agreed: "It is a dangerous place and if you don't treat it with respect every second of every day, something will jump up and bite you. Now we're expected to do the job of a third more men than before, it's more draining, more tiring, and we are less hydrated. That's when you get attention drift. But if something goes bang in there, you have to be on your toes and ready to evacuate. You can't take chances with things like hot metal or strip metal going past you at 60mph."

UNDER THREAT: Port Talbot steelworks.

Saving steel - but at what cost?

Steelworkers have also highlighted problems resulting from the loss of staff with particular training, with consequences for those left to carry out the same tasks without the training.

The safety campaigner said: "We all want to save the steelworks, of course we do. But at what cost? What are we left with? My fear is that the way things are going there could be serious injury or even a death. I along with everybody else am fighting to save our steel, but we have to ask, what are we fighting for?"

At the time of going to press, neither Tata Steel nor Community Union had responded to Magnet's questions on the workers' concerns. However, unions have stressed to AM David Rees and his team that health and safety concerns are being addressed with Tata management, and that gaps in staffing levels are in the process of being filled within the manning levels that are now left.

Mr Rees said: "We are all concerned that the working conditions of steelworkers do not pose health and safety risks. I know managers and unions are focusing on the challenges that have arisen as a result of staffing changes and the recent announcements from Tata, and they are being addressed as quickly as possible. However, we need assurances about how Tata ensures safety standards are maintained during these challenging times. We are hearing they are aware of the challenges and working together to find the best way forward both for the safety of the workforce and of course the public. We'll be monitoring progress to ensure that happens."

Aberavon MP Stephen Kinnock, who has been in consultation with Tata since the steel crisis became apparent, said he would ensure safety concerns were top of his list of priorities for monitoring the ongoing situation at the steelworks.

He said: "Steelworkers are working incredibly hard to continue making Port Talbot's world-class steel at a time of uncertainty, however health and safety has to be paramount. We need clear guarantees from the current and future owner of the Port Talbot steelworks that no corners will be cut. This means that the entire business has to be properly resourced, with training and compliance in health and safety given top priority."

Plaid Cymru AM Bethan Jenkins also pledged to raise the concerns with Tata management: "I'm worried to hear that workers in very dangerous jobs are beginning to fear for their safety as a consequence of redundancies begun this year. I know that jobs are going or have gone from right across the site, but clearly it is less safe to do it in some areas than others. It is very important at this still very uncertain time that workers feel they can carry out their work safely and are well supported to do so."

Appendix 11
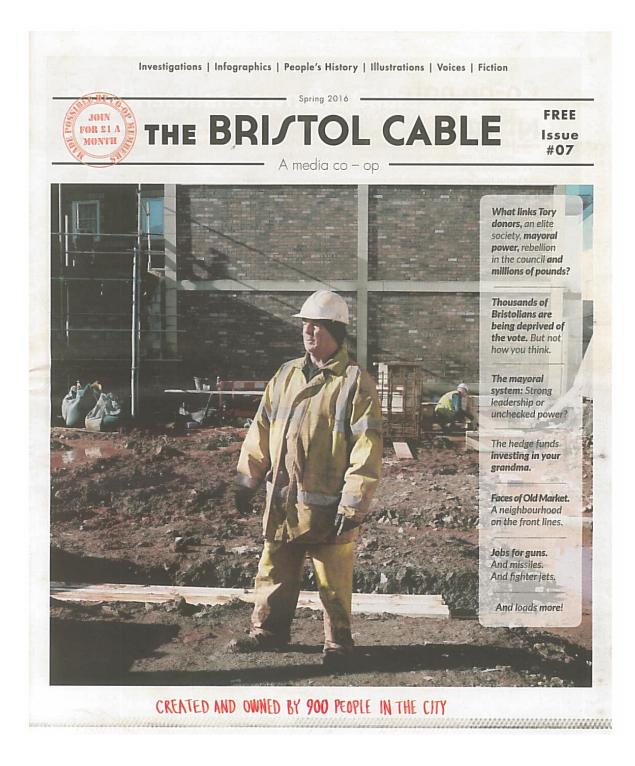
The *Filton Voice* front page December 2017

323

Appendix 12
The *Local Voice Network* front cover branding

Appendix 13
The *Bristol Cable* front page Spring 2016

Appendix 14

Altrincham Today issue 1 November/December 2017

Appendix 15

Editors WORD

With the financial pressures of sending The Looker to print every two weeks, a few difficult decisions had to be made about our future.

When I started this community newspaper nearly 8 years ago, I could not have envisaged that it would have grown into what it is now; the most popular and the largest circulated local news publication across the Marsh, now covering Hythe and Sandgate too. We pride ourselves on being truly local and have supported and highlighted many local charities and organisations fundraising and promotional events and activities over the years.

However, with the mounting costs of production and distribution mainly being subsidised by myself, we have reached a point where I am no longer in a position to carry on funding the excess costs to maintain it at its current circulation. The Looker is a family run business and is written and distributed by volunteers only.
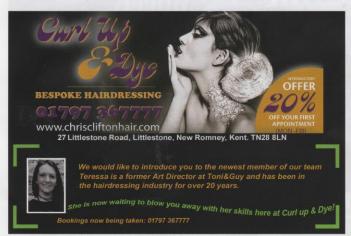
Some options we have looked at are;

Option 1. To sell the publication (We regularly get requests to buy the paper)

Option 2. To put a cover charge of £1 per copy on the paper. Which when you compare the price with the amount of actual local news and stories in each edition is still better value than either of the current paid for 'local' (sic) publications.

Option 3. To make an online edition only. Many of our competitors are choosing this option, though we feel our readers still want to read the Looker in paper form.

So, we have decided the best option for us is to have a donation scheme, which we hope will help with the printing costs. We are relying on our dedicated readers to donate whatever they can, either as a one off payment or on a regular basis to The Looker. This money will only be used to help with our print and production bills, which with our current circulation where we try to reach as many people as possible, is over £30,000 per year!

We think it would be unfair to burden any more costs on our fantastic advertisers, who fund much of this cost already. But with print prices due to go up again at the end of our current agreement, we feel it is the most viable option at the moment.

To this end we will start off with a collection box at our office based in 'Sweets 'n' Treats', 29 High Street, New Romney, Kent. TN28 8BN. Or you can send donations to the same address.

We hope you understand the reasons for this decision and how much we appreciate our loyal readers who continue to pick up this paper up every two weeks and sincerely hope that you will support us and help continue to make The Looker the best and only 'free' community newspaper in Shepway.

Kindest regards

David & Annabel

Appendix 16

Editors WORD

We made it to 200 editions and they said it could not be done! Well to be honest, the editor of the Folkestone Herald at the time said it would only last for four issues.

It has taken a lot of blood, sweat and tears and a lot of help from some good friends. I have witnessed attempts to copy the paper with three other publications come and go, including one called the 'Original Looker' (bloomin' cheek), 'The Martello' and the' Marsh Mail'.

All of them thought, well it can't be that hard to write a bi-weekly paper, after all if that Wimble can do it, anyone can! The reality of course it is very hard!! Chasing money from advertisers, getting the stories, writing them up, collating and then sending to print.

I have to admit that I have a few moments when I send the edition off to print and realise that it is only two weeks before I have to do it all over again, and realise that I have 28 pages (or more) to fill and am looking at a blank page.

I would not be able to do the paper without the help of my father who helps with the proof reading, and of course Wealden Print who have always done a great job of printing the paper in a way that I still maintain is better quality than the Herald or the KM.

Also, I would like to thank Andrew South who has given up working for another magazine, to help on a regular basis, not forgetting June Gooch and our Shingle Gardener who also give up their time, week after week to write for the paper.

Last year with the increase in printing costs, we were thinking about charging for the paper but instead we put up our advertising rate by about 5%, and without our amazing advertisers who pay the print bill, we would not be here.

So will it be going in another 200 editions? To be honest I really don't know. With my recent health issues it was a bit of a wake up call. I would be interested in either selling half of the business to spread the work load, but trying to find someone with the same work ethic as me is quite hard. All I will say is that I will do my best and take it month by month.

The one thing I can guarantee is that I hope to be off for a complete break shortly and when I come back, we're going to have a push on finding more advertisers so we can perhaps grow the paper a bit more. So if you are a business owner and would like to promote your business talk to me, and share the news about your company to our thousands of readers.

Normal Editor's Word will be back next edition . . . now time to light those 200 candles!

Happy reading
David