



SOME INITIAL THEMES, QUESTIONS AND IDEAS TO BE EXPLORED IN THIS RESEARCH

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Background of Community Media in the UK

Looking at how community media projects grew out of a combination of arts & photography activities and film production projects. Highlight how the video revolution liberated ways of working more flexibly, and how predominantly left-wing community initiatives saw this as a democratic technological progression. The introduction will consider the changing social landscape within which community media now operates.

What is Community Media, and what's the point?

What is the definition of community media and how is it applied in practical terms? What aims and objectives are most common to the majority of community media projects researched in this study, and is there a particular ambition or utopia in mind? Does it aim to encourage people to work in the media industries, or has it another agenda? It is generally said that media is considered a 'sexy' medium and that young people want to do it. Is that actually true?

Walking the Walk, Talking the Talk, Doing the Do

Who are the facilitators of these projects? What are their profiles, backgrounds, approaches and agendas. Are they all fierce competitors, or is there any community spirit between them and sharing of ideas and working together?

- **Freelancers** – A step up in their commercial ambitions or actually dedicated to community level activity and development?
- **Independent Production Companies** – Prioritising community, or just filling the gap between broadcast commissions?
- **Television Companies** – Why are they involved? A ticking boxes exercise to meet diversity quotas and address external pressures, or genuinely interested in sharing their knowledge and access? Is the agenda more driven by media education training and industry needs?
- **Government and Council Initiatives** – Many inner-cities in England are now carved up between a whole host of organisations and various quangos. No strings attached or given independent autonomy? Also, what are the Big Grand Ideas & Strategies?
- **Colleges / Universities** – (see Television Companies, above)

Whose Community / What Community / Why Community?

Who are the recipients of these projects? What are their needs, demographics and aspirations? What do they hope to get out of these projects, or are they taking part only because they are approached? How are these groups chosen in the first place, and who is being left out?

- **Community Groups** – youth clubs, senior citizens, cultural groups, charities, neighbourhood organisations, social inclusion initiatives, to name just a few.

What do they have in common, if anything, which sees them involved in this type of work?

- **Schools** – How are these projects run with schools, do they enhance the school curriculum, and just how useful are they?
- **Special interest groups/organisations** – Is it just about socially excluded young people? Exploring how some diverse factions have got involved and benefited from media projects, ranging from science centres, National Trust, NHS, art galleries and churches.

Addressing Needs

What are the social agendas of community media projects? Different funding streams require different outputs, and can influence the way the projects are delivered and the subjects explored in the creative work. What are the common themes that are recurring in this sector, and how are these negotiated between the facilitators and the recipients?

- **Media Education** – How much of community media projects has the aim of nurturing future creative talent for the media industry? How do these differ in approach from the less vocational agendas, (see below)? How are the participants of these projects going to succeed in an industry which notoriously has very limited places and is incredibly competitive.
- **Social exclusion** – When approached by a school to work with a group of students who had been excluded for their behaviour, one production company were told to “*make it engaging, but not too much fun.*”
- **Citizenship** – The hot new subject in the National Curriculum, but also an umbrella term under which anything is acceptable? How can media tools help address the citizenship criteria?
- **Transferable Skills** – Using media as a tool to enhance participants’ confidence, communication and self-expression. Does this actually work, and how sustainable is it for the participant long term?
- **Lifelong Learning** – Exploring approaches that have involved older people, families, and wider community involvement in a single project.
- **Project Case Study** – This chapter ends with a case study exploring how one particular project has attempted to address all of the above, sharing good & bad experiences and lessons learnt.

Who’s paying for all this?

What are the funding opportunities for this type of work, and what does that actually “buy”? How do community media projects operate as a viable business, and what hoops do they have to jump through to secure funding?

One Night Stand vs Long Term Relationship

How short term funding can generate problems of the ‘parachute effect’ and the need for more sustainability. Is there a search for something more meaningful and less random in how these projects are funded, delivered and sustained?

The unidentifiable sector and the need for identity

Is there, or should there be, a union for community media companies?
Should this work be monitored to maintain high standards across the sector?
Should there be a common accreditation and evaluation for this type of work to maintain standards, or would this be counter-productive?

What are the measures of a successful project? What happens to the participants afterwards?

When does Community Media become exploitation?

What is the line between nurturing new creative talent as trainees, and hiring cheap labour and exploiting ambition? In addition to a range of opinions, a **Case Study** will be included which highlights best practice in this approach.

Education. Education! Education, and the argument of Process vs Product

A conversation between a community media evangelist and a proud devout sceptic; addressing issues concerning the impact and relevance of how media tools and ways of working are now used across the curriculum. Apply media with caution, or embrace whole heartedly?

Impact of digital technologies

With the access of digital video cameras and computers now at an all time high due to resources at schools, city learning centres, and community centres, young people are now more media and technology savvy earlier than any other generation before. How has this effected / enhanced the media education sector and what do young people look for in these initiatives, if they know it all already? Exploring how / if all this new equipment bought with public money is actually being used; and if not, why not? With the rapid advancements of new digital technologies, what are the potential future impacts on community projects?

The creation of 'alternative' voices in society? – Who get to see all this work?

Exploring issues of exhibition and distribution.

Case Study #1 – Personal profiles highlighting how community media projects have helped certain individuals “find their voice”.

Case Study #2 - on how digital technologies are being used in an innovative way to give free internet access and broadcast capabilities to a particular community, using recycled computers and whisky tin antennas.

Where go Community Media? – In Search of the new Media Professional

What are the specific challenges of this sector, and what needs to be put in place to secure its future? What attitudinal changes needs to happen from funders and facilitators to ensure the sectors' healthy expansion, and future? What could be the new sexy and knock media off its perch to stop it becoming complacent? For media projects to stay as popular in 10 years time as they are today, what needs to happen to ensure this is maintained, and how can the approaches meet the needs of the ever-changing education and society landscape to stay relevant?