



AUDIENCE AT THE GATES

HOW THE BBC IS USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO IDENTIFY
TALENT AND INVOLVE AUDIENCES IN
PROGRAMME PRODUCTION

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1 Copyright Statement

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2 Abstract

The rise of social media has changed the way the BBC broadcasts. Previous studies have examined the way major broadcasters use social media and social network tools, such as YouTube and Twitter, to supplement their existing channels (Burgess and Green 2009), and to augment newsgathering (Wardle and Williams 2008). But, so far, none have looked at how the new ways the BBC has used social media to engage non programme-making staff and audiences in its programme-making activities – to invite them right inside “Fortress Journalism” (Horrocks 2009).

To that aim, this study analyses three BBC projects; *moo.gateway*, an internal social platform with the aim of identifying new programme-making talent within the BBC; *The Virtual Revolution*, a BBC2 documentary series which used social media to aid content development; and *World Have Your Say*, a BBC World Service radio programme which uses social media to include the audience in the development of its running order. Through qualitative interviews with a mixture of senior BBC staff, frontline programme producers, and participants in the programmes, these new uses of social media are critically examined.

The analysis of the interviews shows that the reasons given for initiating new ways of working were often emancipatory in nature, consistent with the social constructivist rhetoric of digital utopian literature such as *We Think* (Leadbeater 2008) and *Here Comes Everybody* (Shirky 2009). Interview responses were also consistent with other forms of rhetoric such as ‘digital natives’ (Prensky 2001), the ‘rhetorics of creativity’ (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham, 2006) and ‘open innovation’ (Chesburgh 2003).

The study finds that the success of the initiatives depended on an intersection between the everyday lives and motivations of both the participants and the project sponsors, and that external audiences were less interested in the mechanics of programme production and journalism than was assumed by BBC staff. This meant that numbers of participants were limited to those with considerable interest in the stories being developed, or with an interest in developing a career in the media. The success of participants in the *moo.gateway* case in obtaining programme commissions and film funding, both inside and outside the BBC, demonstrates the usefulness of social media in identifying new programme-making talent. Critical reviews of the narratives of the winning and losing finalists of a BBC3 competition ran using *moo.gateway* indicates that a prior knowledge of the BBC ‘rules of the

game' and participants' location within the BBC habitus (Bourdieu 1984) could be considered to be determining factors in their success at the BBC.

Succinctly, I have been able to show that social media can provide effective ways for BBC programme makers to identify new talent, but a significant insight and caveat is that care should be taken to ensure projects are framed in terms of the audience's motivation, rather than that of the BBC.

Additionally, where participants are from outside of the BBC, mentoring and coaching has a significant role to play in helping people understand the internal mechanics of the BBC, and particularly any unwritten 'rules of the game'.

I enjoyed unique access in the qualitative interviews for this PhD, at a unique moment in the BBC's evolution. As a result, these observations have been embraced and welcomed by policymakers within the organisation and by interested parties outside.

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My home department, CEMP, is a fine 'fraternity' of academics and colleagues who support each other and build on each other's ideas, of that bunch I would particularly like to thank Dr. Mark Readman for his help and support.

6 Declaration of Authorship

I, Andrew James Tedd, hereby declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

7 Introduction

7.1 About this PhD

This PhD is practice led. The main case study is a critical reflection on a major social media project I researched and designed while working at the BBC, which represented the culmination of the knowledge and best practice determined through my work in interactive and social media since 1993.

As such it posed a number of methodological challenges to both me and my supervisors, and we hope that our my chosen methodology may itself make a minor contribution to knowledge, and be useful to any other researcher seeking to base a PhD study on their professional practice. The methodology is based on Schön's model of 'The Reflective Practitioner' (1983) and builds on a successful framework for practice led PhDs devised by Scrivener (2009) through his supervision of numerous successfully completed doctoral projects.

In order to legitimate the findings of the main case, I chose to compare and contrast two other similar social media projects undertaken by the BBC at around the same time. Reflecting on these cases with their designers and key participants enabled to me to see that the themes I identified were consistent with the findings of others and shows that knowledge derived can be broadened out and may be applicable to other social media initiatives.

7.2 Context

The rise of social media and social network tools since 2006 has been phenomenal. While this doctorate has been in progress (from April 2009 to January 2016):

- 1,348 million users (equivalent to 18% of estimates of the world's population) have joined Facebook (Statista 2015) (United Nations 2015)
- 270 million users have joined Twitter (Statista 2015)
- six billion hours of video are watched on YouTube every month (DMR Digital Statistics 2015).

This growth has had a profound impact on the UK's broadcasters, with more than 35% of audiences using social media to access news weekly, and 60% of UK 18-24 year olds, and 54% of 25-34 year olds citing social media as their main source of news (Newman 2015). However, trust in traditional channels remains high with 45% of audiences rating TV news best for accuracy, compared to just 3% for social

media (Newman 2015). In the UK the BBC remains the dominant news provider with 48% of the news audience using it weekly, compared to 14% for the next most used 'traditional' provider, the Daily Mail, and 12% for the most used 'digital born' provider, Huff Post (Newman 2015, p. 17).

In this context, the BBC has made extensive use of social media to add features and content to its broadcast output. These uses range from reading out listener's Facebook comments on Radio One's Newsbeat (BBC 2015), and "linking Radio 3 fans" using a #bbcproms hashtag on Twitter (BBC 2015), and displaying behind the scenes and unseen footage on the corporation's YouTube channel (BBC 2015). It also uses social media to extend its newsgathering operations, with members of the public able to contribute stories, pictures and video by email, SMS, chat applications such as WhatsApp, Twitter, or direct upload to the BBC site (BBC 2015).

But these uses of social media augment the BBC's existing services and processes, and maintain the BBC's editorial authority over its output (Hermida & Thurman 2008) rather than allow it to work in genuinely new ways where editorial ownership is shared with the audience in a manner more consistent with the social constructivist and utopian ideas put forward in the popular digital literature such as *We Think* (Leadbeater 2008) and *Here Comes Everybody* (Shirky C. 2009).

This study explores the way the BBC has used social media to work in new ways with staff and audiences outside of the BBC programme-making departments; how it has used social media to identify new talent, and how it has collaborated with audiences on editorial content using mainstream social network tools.

7.3 Original contribution

For several years now the BBC has been using social media to replicate existing programme activities, for example, crowd-sourcing opinion and comment such as replacing or supplementing a phone-in by reading out tweets on air on the *Chris Moyles Show* in 2008 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Contact a radio show via social media

Journalists have also been making use of social media to supplement existing news gathering activity for a number of years, for example, the BBC User Generated Content Hub (BBC College of Journalism 2006; Wardle and Williams 2008; Harrison 2010) or the Send Image/Story functionality in the BBC News smartphone app (See Figure 2).

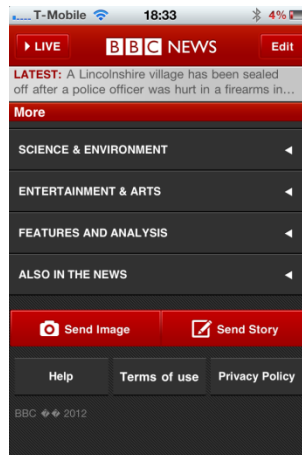


Figure 2: Send stories and images to BBC News via their iPhone app

While the use of social media to enhance existing working practices could be considered innovative, taking the form of business process innovation (Schumpeter 1934), the two activities mentioned above are already well researched (Hermida & Thurman 2008; Singer, et al. 2011; Williams, Wardle, and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011). In both cases the existing balance of power between programme-maker/journalist and audience remains:

“... our research suggests that deep down, most journalists do not view the user as an active participant in the news. ... users are involved at the start of the journalism and again once that journalism is finished. But the crucial and central processes – deciding what the news is and how to cover and present it – remain almost entirely under the journalist’s control.” (Singer et al. 2011, p.189)

“Our findings are in line with other research that shows that news organisations tend to expand their operations to the Internet based on their existing journalistic culture, including the way they relate to the public.” (Hermida and Thurman 2008, p.349)

“Our data suggest that, with the exception of some marginal collaborative projects, rather than changing the way most news journalists at the BBC work, audience material is firmly embedded within the long-standing routines of traditional journalism practice.” (Williams, Wardle, and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011)

So this project will make an original contribution by making its focus where the audience (and colleagues from outside the programme-making teams) have been allowed inside 'Fortress Journalism' (Horrocks 2009) and its factual programme-making equivalent – where journalists and factual programme-makers have chosen to relinquish some of their editorial control as they move to a programme development strategy based on what some call "open innovation" (Chesburgh 2003).

7.4 Research Questions

As seen in the previous 'Original contribution' section, other studies have examined the way major broadcasters use social media, such as YouTube and Twitter, to supplement their existing channels (Burgess & Green 2009) and how the BBC uses social media to augment newsgathering (Wardle and Williams 2008). However, so far, none have looked at how the BBC has used social media to engage non-programme making staff and audiences in its programme making activities.

Therefore, this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by exploring the researcher's professional practice, specifically a social media project '*moo*', through the question:

- How has the *moo* social media project enabled factual programme-makers and journalists to work in new ways inside the BBC?

Originally, I had anticipated there would be other similar projects taking place inside the BBC, with which I could compare the findings of my own project and experience, as part of the 'Reflection on Reflection' phase that Schön (1983) advocates as essential to the legitimization of knowledge derived from professional practice. However, in the course of the research phase of this project, none took place¹.

I did find two externally facing programmes (the BBC2 TV programme '*The Virtual Revolution*' and World Service radio programme '*World Have Your Say*') which attempted to go beyond straightforward audience-presenter interaction through social media, and to use social media to co-create the programme's narrative structure or running order with the production team.

¹ Following the end of the field research phase of this project, while working at the BBC on a different project, I was made aware of an initiative to use social media to facilitate idea generation and programme development - iCreate. This platform built on many of the key findings of my *moo* case study, and I met with the project's leaders on several occasions to advise and assist them.

After discussion with my supervisors, I felt it would be useful to add an ancillary research question to this study:

- How have *The Virtual Revolution* and *World Have Your Say* production teams used social media to work in new ways with audiences outside the BBC?

It's useful to be clear about what we mean by social media and the difference between inside/internal and outside/external.

Boyd and Ellison define social network tools as;

“... web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” (Boyd & Ellison 2007)

Boyd and Ellison's definition excludes some social media such as blogs and wikis, which although social, do not have explicit networking functionality. This study does include tools such as blogs and wikis and therefore will use the term 'social media'. Networking functionality is now being included as blogs and wikis and 'social networking tools' become more integrated.

Quantitative research on the use of social media by major corporations outside of the media industry, identifies four groups of firms using social media; 'developing' (who are using social media but have yet to experience significant benefit), 'internally networked', 'externally networked' and 'fully networked' (i.e. networked both internally and externally) (Bughin and Chui 2010). This distinction between 'internal' and 'external' is also a feature of literature on innovation and innovation models (Rothwell 1994; Chesburgh 2003; Gassmann and Enkel 2006; Tidd 2006; Bughin 2008).

For this reason also, it is useful to separate the main question into two. Accordingly, the case study section is split into two parts, one for each sub question.

This study analyses three BBC projects; *moo.gateway*, an internal social platform with the aim of identifying new programme making talent within the BBC; *The Virtual Revolution*, a BBC2 documentary series which used social media to aid content development and; *World Have Your Say*, a BBC World Service radio programme which uses social media to include the audience in the development of its running order. Through qualitative interviews with a mixture of senior BBC staff, frontline

programme producers, and participants in the programmes, these new uses of social media are critically examined.

The research will seek to establish if the BBC's approach to these projects was technologically deterministic, meaning that establishment of a particular technology shapes human behaviour, or based on the symptomatic use of technology, which implies that technologies only succeed when they assist humans with existing behaviours and problems (Williams 1975).

The interviews will explore the motivations of, and influences on, BBC senior managers for choosing an open innovation approach, and to examine the influence of prevailing rhetoric on that decision-making. These include the social constructivist rhetoric of digital utopian literature such as '*We Think*' (Leadbeater 2008) and '*Here Comes Everybody*' (Shirky 2009), and other forms of rhetoric such as 'digital natives' (Prensky 2001), the 'rhetorics of creativity' (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006) and 'open innovation' (Chesburgh 2003). Considering the influence of rhetoric is important because new and novel projects lack an empirical base of evidence to inform the initial decision-making, and evidence to guide decisions must be gathered as they progress. Underpinning these various rhetorics are a number of empirically researched concepts, such as Burt's work on the social origins of ideas (Burt 2003), which have been published in academic journals and business school literature. The interview analysis will be grounded in this theory, and any directly relevant academic research into social technology in corporations and the media industry.

Specifically in the *moo.gateway* idea sharing and talent discovery case, the research will also examine the 'real world' experiences of participants after they had been found through the use of the social network tool. As yet, the BBC and other UK broadcasters do not have an end-to-end 100% digital process for unknown talent to create and broadcast a programme, compared to 'digital born' broadcasters such as YouTube. This means that anyone successfully proposing an idea through a digital medium must also successfully navigate the BBC's existing processes, politics and culture if they want their programme to be broadcast to an audience.

The research will then further its contribution to new knowledge by drawing a set of conclusions on how programme-makers and journalists might use social media to involve audiences and colleagues outside their close teams in their editorial decision making. It will also develop ideas on how education, recruitment and training might evolve to take account of these new skills requirements. Due to the nature of the

content, and the appropriate research methodology, these techniques will not be generalisations or 'formal theory' (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

7.5 Methodological Challenges

At the time of its inception there was no off-the-shelf methodology which realistically reflected the nature of this study. This is problem is not uncommon for doctoral students, but nevertheless the adaptation of existing methodological approaches to enable critical reflection on the work of an experienced media practitioner could be considered to be original contribution. Given the researcher's location in the *Centre for Excellence in Media Practice* in Bournemouth University's Faculty of Media and Communication, they are well placed to share knowledge and experience of methodology with future practitioners embarking on doctoral research, and to enable them to proceed in a potentially more effective manner. It is important to note that this is an ancillary claim for a new contribution, not the main contribution of this thesis.

While there are similarities to Kemmis and Carr's critical approach to action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986) and the study makes use of case study method (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2000), it does not strictly follow either approach.

How the researcher's background, and the nature of the research project determined the approach taken will be described in brief in the next section and in detail in the Methodology chapter, for now it can be taken that the methodology developed needs to take account of:

- the existence of a significant body of prior knowledge
- the emancipatory nature of the main case
- the role of the researcher as an active participant in the main case.

These must be achieved in order to legitimize the knowledge that is developed within the study.

The relevance of elements of Schön's *Epistemology of Professional Practice* (Schön 1983), how critical theory has influenced the practice of action research (what Carr and Kemmis call 'critical educational science' (Carr and Kemmis 1986)), and taking a reflexive approach to the researcher's role and influence on the research will be considered (Johnson and Duberley 2003), critically, and in detail.

The study will then describe a model, used as the methodological framework for this research project, and the researcher anticipates that it will make an additional contribution to the new knowledge created in the course of this PhD.

7.6 Role of the Researcher

I worked at the BBC in a middle-senior management position for five years full-time from 2001-2006, and as a freelancer on and off from 2007-2014. The nature of my work in digital and social media meant that I had considerable influence on the shape and direction of internal BBC digital projects, and was well known to, and influential on, several of the interviewees in the main case study. I was also responsible for the early research and design on *moo.gateway* and that work overlapped with this doctoral study for the period 2009-2010. Without that privileged access then this research project could not have taken place, and the 'insider' nature and the location I possessed within the BBC habitus provided a level of trust with interviewees that might not have been afforded to an external researcher.

However, it could also be argued that this closeness compromises the researcher's objectivity. It is therefore extremely important that the methodology devised provides space for critical reflection and reflexivity on the role and influence of the researcher at each stage of each project examined in the case studies. How this is achieved will be explained in detail in the Methodology chapter but the nature of the relationship with each interviewee is clearly identified and tone of voice varied to convey a sense of the proximity of the interviewer to interviewee.

Other techniques used to mitigate my impact on the project are based on a reflexive approach, which includes the following specific actions:

- Undertaking reflective interviews with other participants in the project
- Being critical – examining the interviews in depth and analysing the motivations for particular statements and positions and, in particular, looking at the influence of rhetoric on the various stakeholders and myself
- Grounding the interviews in the findings of published academic literature

It is anticipated that by taking these steps it becomes possible for an experienced media practitioner to reflect on their professional practice and to derive knowledge from it that is epistemologically sound.

The next chapter is a review of the literature that is relevant to this study, which will demonstrate that the BBC is an interesting and important location for research into social media and new ways of working.

8 Literature Review

8.1 Introduction

As discussed in the Introduction, this project considers how the BBC is using social media to work in innovative ways, both internally and externally.

The research will seek to establish if the BBC's approach to these projects was technologically deterministic, meaning that establishment of a particular technology shapes human behaviour, or based on the symptomatic use of technology.

It will also explore the motivations of, and influences on, BBC senior managers for choosing an open innovation approach, and examine the influence of prevailing rhetoric on that decision-making.

Therefore, there are several strands to this literature review:

- technological determinism and its relevance to this case
- an examination of the rhetoric accompanying the social media phenomenon, including:
 - the rhetoric of social constructivism and mass creativity, so-called 'wikinomics' (Tapscott and Williams 2008)
 - the digital natives debate, which some have characterised as a 'moral panic' (Bennett and Maton 2010)
- a look at the more empirical ideas and hypotheses behind much of that rhetoric
- business innovation and 'creativity', which have a rhetoric all of their own
- a review of the specific research on sociology and the use of social media within organizations which help ground the findings of the case studies.

The literature relevant to methodology will be reviewed in the Methodology chapter.

8.2 Why the BBC?

8.2.1 The BBC's need for innovation

The British public believes that the BBC has, or rather had, a reputation for invention and innovation (BBC Trust 2007). However, this reputation was gained when the BBC was the major player in the UK broadcast market.

Audiences felt that in the past, the BBC could claim that it had real range and depth across its two television channels. Overall, BBC One was seen to be providing quality entertainment, and BBC Two, quality factual programming. This was felt to be 'distinctive' from what was on offer elsewhere. (Blinc Research/BBC Trust 2007, p.4).

Since deregulation and the proliferation of digital channels, on the evidence of surveys commissioned by the BBC, this reputation has diminished.

“... the growth of multi-channel television has complicated things. People feel that the explosion of choice in the multi-channel world has provided an alternative supply of range and depth.” (Blinc Research/BBC Trust 2007, p.4)

Clearly, we must be sceptical of research about the BBC that is commissioned by the BBC. However, the underlying messages in these findings are not positive. One could argue that there are circumstances in which it might be in the organisation's interests to use a decline in public standing to, for example, ask for increased funding, but the backdrop to this study is one of a decline in real terms in BBC funding, that the organisation has, to a large extent, been complicit with (Gannagé-Stewart 2015). So it seems likely that this drop in public standing is real.

This decline in reputation was considered serious enough that in 2007 - the first year of the BBC Trust's operation - the Trust felt compelled to openly encourage “innovation and distinctiveness” (Blinc Research/BBC Trust 2007, p.2).

In the 2006-7 Annual Report, the Trust said:

“Our audience research shows that public approval of the BBC remains strong but audiences want the BBC to provide a steady flow of new programme ideas. This means the BBC must show more creative ambition... we are looking for output that displays ambition, high quality, distinctiveness and originality.” (BBC Trust 2007, p.7)

The BBC Trust's 2007 Purpose Remit Survey identified a clear “innovation gap”, while 72% of the public felt that it was important that the BBC had “lots of fresh and new ideas”, only 51% agreed that the BBC was performing well in that regard. This gap (-21) was the largest overall on the survey (Blinc Research/BBC Trust 2007, p.2).

This “innovation gap” has stayed at approximately the same level since 2007. In 2011, the Trust found that:

“The single largest performance gap was for the priority ‘the BBC provides lots of fresh and new ideas’ (-20). The performance gap has not changed significantly since 2008-2009 (-21) (2009-2010 -22).” (Kantar Media/BBC Trust 2011, p.9)

So there is a clear need for ‘innovation’ and ‘fresh and new ideas’, expressed by the audience and understood at the highest level by the BBC Trust. This created the environment in which the main case study in this research was seen as a possible way of finding BBC employees with good ideas who were not in a position to use existing channels for idea submission, but whose ideas were very much needed by the corporation.

8.2.2 Information as public good

There are other reasons why the BBC should be an appropriate host for projects considering the research questions in this thesis. Not least of these is the concept of ‘information as public good’.

In *The Wealth of Networks* Benkler observes that many turn to the BBC or National Public Radio for news and asks:

“What is it about information that explains this difference? Why do we rely almost exclusively on markets and commercial firms to produce cars, steel, and wheat, but much less so for the most critical information our advanced societies depend on?” (Benkler 2006, p.35)

Benkler goes on to state:

“... certain characteristics of information and culture lead us to understand them as ‘public goods’ rather than as ‘pure private goods’ and standard ‘economic goods’.” (Benkler 2006, pp.35-36)

Information is ‘non-rival’, which means that one person’s consumption of information does not reduce its availability to others. In the digital age, reproduction of information costs nothing so its marginal cost of production is zero, the only cost is the one time production cost of the information. Such a good is known as a public good because markets will not produce them if priced at marginal cost – zero.

Consequently, Benkler argues:

“... a good like information (and culture and knowledge are, for purposes of economics, forms of information), which can never be sold both at a positive (greater than zero) price and at its marginal cost, is **fundamentally a candidate for substantial nonmarket production.**” (my emphasis) (Benkler 2006, p.36)

and that market driven production of information is inherently inefficient because it requires incentivisation in order for information to be produced, and this places high costs on future information producers and innovators. He then asks:

“Where does innovation and information production come from, then, if it does not come as much from intellectual-property-based market actors, as many generally believe? ... it comes mostly from a mixture of (1) nonmarket sources – both state and nonstate – (2) market actors whose business models do not depend on the regulatory framework of intellectual property.” (Benkler 2006, p.39)

So, we can see that there are clear economic reasons why the BBC is a candidate for early adoption of ‘open’ or social innovation and technology that might facilitate it and hence is a legitimate source of case studies for this study’s research questions.

8.3 Technological determinism versus the symptomatic adoption of technology

8.3.1 Introduction

This literature review has the aim of introducing the theoretical concepts and frameworks which shape the understanding of the findings of the case studies under review. One of the key concepts is how rhetoric helps form understanding, discourse and behaviour both in the field of technology-based learning, and in the nature of interaction between programme-makers and their audiences on social media platforms. There are two key rhetorical ideas which are particularly influential on both of these fields – ‘wikinomics’ and ‘digital natives’, both of which hinge on arguments of technological determinism versus a more symptomatic understanding of technology adoption, and that is where this section of the literature review will start.

8.3.2 Is social media changing working practice or are practitioners taking advantage of tools that help them introduce change?

Elements of the public discourse surrounding the Internet and social media, such as:

- Is Google making us stupid? (Carr 2008)
- Social websites harm children's brains: Chilling warning to parents from top neuroscientist (Derbyshire 2009)
- Twitter can improve student performance (Times Higher Ed 2011)
- How to switch on wired minds (Times Higher Ed 2011)

hinge on an argument of media determinism (McLuhan 1964) or technological determinism (Veblen 1921; Chandler 1995), versus a more humanist, or symptomatic, view of media evolution.

Smith and Marx define technological determinism as “The belief in technology as a key governing force in society...” (Smith and Marx 1994). It is a largely Marxist idea that technology defines users’ behaviours, rather than users selecting technologies that suit them. It is best understood by considering some published examples of technological determinism that are in the field of social media and technology-based learning, and thus relevant to this study.

If we look at the four examples above:

In *Is Google making us stupid?* Nicholas Carr (2008) argues that despite its many benefits, deep immersion in the Internet, and extensive use of the World Wide Web will cause the brain to adapt, and change. He sees this change, in not a particularly positive way – likening the increasing influence of computer programme designers and software engineers, especially Google’s, over our lives to the ‘Taylorisation’ of the mind (after F.W. Taylor, author of the *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor 1911)). Carr’s view is typical of the antithesis to the utopian rhetoric that accompanies the introduction of new technologies – an antithesis that is both technologically determinist, and somewhat dystopian.

The Daily Mail article *Social websites harm children's brains: Chilling warning to parents from top neuroscientist* is based on an interview with Professor Susan Greenfield, a neuroscientist from Oxford University, in which she is quoted as saying “My fear is that these technologies are infantilising the brain into the state of small children who are attracted by buzzing noises and bright lights, who have a small attention span and who live for the moment.” (Derbyshire 2009). This is fairly typical of comments she was making at the time, which attracted attention due to her status but were not backed up by any meaningful research-based evidence – “Why won’t Professor Susan Greenfield publish this theory in a scientific journal?” being typical of the kind of challenge issued (Goldacre 2011).

Susan Cunnane, writing in *Times Higher Education*, referenced research conducted in the US, and published in the *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, titled “The effect of Twitter on college student engagement and grades” (Cunnane 2011). This research found that “Analyses of Twitter communications showed that students and faculty were both highly engaged in the learning process in ways that transcended

traditional classroom activities. This study provides experimental evidence that Twitter can be used as an educational tool to help engage students and to mobilize faculty into a more active and participatory role.” (Junco, Heiberger, and Loken 2011) While this is peer-reviewed published research, there is a subtle, determinist shift in the findings from “Twitter can be used as an educational tool” to the title of the article “Twitter can improve student performance”. So, the reporting of this research is technological determinism, expressed in an utopian way.

The final example, again from *Times Higher Education* (THE), is a book review (originally titled ‘How to switch on wired minds’ (Wheeler 2011)) of *Now You See It* by Cathy Davidson (Davidson 2011) and subtitled “How the brain science of attention will transform the way we live, work and learn” (Wheeler 2011). The review outlines the premise of the book as “sustained exposure to such a range of digital media demands a different kind of attention than we have previously required.” and further examples of the determinist thinking in the book include “The brain is like an iPhone,” she suggests. “It has apps for just about everything.” – the review author offers the alternative view, “Some would argue the reverse - that perhaps it is the iPhone that mirrors the human brain that (after all) created it.” (Wheeler 2011) but the subtitle of the review suggests the comment is made to provide a semblance of objectivity. Therefore, as the previous THE article considered, this is technological determinism, with a positive, transformative view on the impact of social media and Internet technologies.

Those four examples are typical of the popular technologically determinist discourse, both rhetorical and evidence-based, which has accompanied the advent of social media, and the fears and hopes for its effects on young people and their ability to learn. The broader, philosophical arguments for technological determinism, and its counterpart, the symptomatic adoption of technology, will now be considered.

In *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* Raymond Williams described a determinist view on television: “If television had not been invented... certain definite social and cultural events would not have occurred.” (Williams 1975, p.12).

Williams also described a symptomatic position: “If television had not been invented, we would still be manipulated or mindlessly entertained, but in some other way and perhaps less powerfully.” (Williams 1975, p.12)

If we substitute ‘social media’ for ‘television’ in the two quotes above then they both continue to make sense. A determinist (such as Tapscott (2008)) would argue that

the invention of the Internet, and subsequent social networking tools, has created a new set of conditions for social change and progress. Someone (for example a social constructivist like Shirky (2010)) taking the symptomatic view would argue that other forces are driving social change – for example these forces might include what we refer to as postmodernism or the Information Age – and that the Internet has only acquired “effective status since it has become used for purposes which are already contained in this known social process.” (Williams 1975, p.13) – what is commonly referred to as Web 2.0 (O'Reilly 2005) or the social web.

8.3.3 Social McLuhan

The relevance of Marshall McLuhan's media theories to the Internet and digital technology have been the subject of considerable academic research and conjecture elsewhere. Perhaps the most foresighted of McLuhan's many theories is his notion of “the user is the content” (McLuhan 1976), several decades before Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, among others made this a literal fact.

For the purposes of this thesis, we will examine the ideas of those scholars who put forward the strongest ideas based on their reading of McLuhan – specifically Paul Levinson in *digital mcluhan*.

Just as previous new media made content out of the media that came before, Levinson argues that “the Internet is making content of them all” (Levinson 1999). This is particularly true of the BBC where the BBC iPlayer makes digital web content out of television and radio, and the television channel BBC 3 is soon to become an Internet only ‘television’ channel (BBC 2014).

There are three key themes in *digital mcluhan* that merit close examination here:

8.3.3.1 User as Content

Levinson's statement that “The medium is the message” is no doubt McLuhan's best known aphorism. Its fundamental meaning that our use of any communications medium has an impact far greater than the given content of any communication conveyed by it (Levinson 1999, p.35). In the case of social media this means that the process of communicating via social media has a more significant influence on our lives than any specific Facebook update, tweeted link, YouTube video or photo that is shared using it. This should be self-evident when the extent to which social media is used for phatic communication is considered. In the main *moo* case study, we will see how users of that website were prepared to submit ideas to a website in

order to further their careers – in their case both the quality of the idea, the manner of the submission, and the conversation around it will be seen to be influential.

Levinson contends that many have misinterpreted this statement as a “manifesto against content” or that “what is communicated does not matter at all” but in his opinion the reality is much more subtle, especially in the digital age. The most relevant of these subtleties to this thesis is Levinson’s contention that:

“not only are prior media the content of the Internet, but so too is the human user who, unlike the consumer of other mass media, creates content online with almost every use. In other words, **the user is the content of the Internet...**” (Levinson 1999, p.39)(my emphasis).

Whether it is a result of humans determining the content which is chosen and sent, or the use of prior media created by humans, or as has been the case more and more since the advent of social media, the human conversations that are literally the content of the Internet, it is the case that content is humanly determined.

Here, Levinson notes that he is at odds with, and critical of, McLuhan’s media determinism where McLuhan “casts humans as the effect of technology” – but at the same time the concept of humans as masters of the media is consistent with McLuhan’s overall schema. Levinson attempts to reconcile this difference through his own “anthropotropic theory” of media evolution and selection.

8.3.3.2 Levinson’s anthropotropic theory

Levinson’s anthropotropic theory sees “media increasingly selected for their support of pretechnological, human communication patterns in form and function.” (Levinson 1999, p.41).

Perhaps a more accessible way of describing this is that media are selected for their support of the everyday lives of their users – as proposed by Wellman and Haythornthwaite in *The Internet as part of Everyday Life* (Wellman and Haythornthwaite 2008) – this theory will be examined in greater detail during the main case study and conclusions.

8.3.3.3 Decentralisation and gatekeeping

Levinson writes of a “frontal assault on gatekeeping in the digital age” that is one of the key themes of *digital mcluhan*. Gatekeeping – and the perceived threat posed to it by the Internet and social technologies is a recurring theme in many of the works under consideration in this literature review – for example it features in both the writings of Shirky and Leadbeater which will be looked at later.

He contrasts webpages “which are daily created and revised by the “myriad members of the Web audience” with television and radio programmes which are “produced by a relatively minute number of professionals, who work in stark superiority to their audiences.” (Levinson 1999)

But who other than a media academic, social media guru or *Wired* writer “logs onto the Web with the deliberate intention of being part of a new interactive global village that is obsolescing the voyeuristic village engendered by television?” (Levinson 1999, p.200).²

Since Levinson wrote *digital mcluhan* the rise of the social web has further widened this divide – with the numbers of people posting content using social websites such as Facebook (US/Europe), QZone (China) Vkontakte (Russia) and Orkut (India/ Brazil) now numbered in the billions.

He also noted the growing number of viewers watching “video tapes of their own selection” instead of “supplied by a central network or station”, and “the advent of “call-in” radio and TV, in which listeners get to ask questions on air, constitutes an additional empowerment of decentralised audiences.” Even though ‘*digital mcluhan*’ is less than fifteen years old this description sounds rather quaint. Which demonstrates how much things in this space have changed in the ten or so years since the advent of the social web. Now BBC iPlayer and other online catch up services such as Sky+, YouView and the unofficial TVCatchup are a mainstay of broadcasting in the UK, but it is important to recognise that the centralised institutions have been able to adapt to the social, digital world and have not been decentralised to the point of extinction.

In the *Virtual Revolution* and *World Have Your Say* case studies we will see how those programmes have used social media to take a different approach to the kind of ‘gatekeeping’ described by Levinson, and to work in new ways with audiences.

Levinson also considers the impact of digitization and decentralisation on education where it is not a matter of gatekeeper or decentralized but both and – “on the one hand... courses taken online for academic credit are still essentially tied to the central institutions – universities, state boards of regents, etc. – that grant the credit. In this sense they still have a parlor contiguous with central authority.” If anything,

² In the last 12 months, the social media conversation accompanying many television programmes, suggests a significant number of viewers wish to logon on to a global, interactive, voyeuristic village...

this need for credibility of the institution ratifying the course has increased especially with the advent of MOOCs (Massively Open Online Courses) in the last few years, a phenomenon which match Levinson's prediction that "everything else about online courses is decentralised to a degree that far exceeds McLuhan's descriptions of mass media." (Levinson 1999, p.83).

He also foreshadows the possible impact of social technology on the effectiveness of learning, compared to that bound by the need for a physical presence, or that must be published as a physical object, "The dialogue made possible by online communication was thus an improvement, in some important respects, over both the place in education, and its faithful sidekick the book." And looks forward to the possible combination of these elements into a new learning medium "... the online course in effect is both a new kind of classroom and a new kind of book, a Hegelian synthesis of many of their best qualities which surpasses the classroom or the book operating alone, or even in tandem, offline." (Levinson 1999, p.85)

The *moo* website is one of these new forms of learning described by Levinson, but taken further than he imagined through the use of social media to allow conversations around the digital classrooms and books, to allow a technology-enabled form of learning consistent with Vygotsky's theory of social learning (Vygotsky 1962).

However, Levinson is not a blinkered utopian who sees digital learning as a total replacement for traditional forms of education, "but the advantages of centreless online education, though formidable, are complete over neither the classroom nor the book." Specifically, he identifies several characteristics of "the place" which leads him to believe it will endure, "place is not the only enduring counterweight to the centreless society. Social attitudes, political institutions, themselves have weight, which can count against the acceleration of decentralization." (Levinson 1999, p.86). And indeed he has been shown to be correct, neither the availability of low cost MOOCs, nor the introduction and raising of tuition fees in the UK have significantly diminished the demand for university education at an institution with a physical presence. What, it could be argued, has changed is that technologies have lowered the cost of entry, both in time and in money, for those who may not otherwise attend due to financial or time constraints (e.g. a young family).

8.3.4 The onward march of technopoly

In *Technopoly*, Postman argues that the debate between technological determinism and symptomatic technology is not a choice of either/or but a matter of both/and

(Postman 1993). The two views can be seen as two parts of a dialectical process; mankind can progress through sharing ideas, man invents a tool that allows for more rapid and efficient sharing of ideas, the tool is rapidly adopted by mankind, many new ideas are generated, and so the world changes...

Postman's arguments are relevant to this study because *Technopoly* remains one of the most eloquent and considered warnings about the intellectual dangers of technological determinism. How some of these intellectual dangers impacted on the three case studies will be seen in the Case Study chapter. He warns against three machine-based ideologies that are specifically relevant to the cases that will be reviewed.

8.3.4.1 The ideology of machines: computer technology

“Everyone uses or is used by computers, and for purposes that seem to know no boundaries.” (Postman 1993)

For Postman there is a “dangerous reductionism” in the ideological position “that humans are in some respects like machines... that humans are little else but machines and, finally, that human beings *are* machines.” (Postman 1993). The *How to switch on wired minds* article reviewed earlier in this chapter compares the human brain to the iPhone and thoughts to apps, by way of example. But Postman argues “artificial intelligence does not and cannot lead to a meaning-making, understanding, and feeling creature”, concerned that the metaphor of the human-machine has become common in everyday language, “it has become common to think about thinking as a mere matter of processing and decoding.” (Postman 1993).

He develops his position by introducing the term “agentic shift” (Postman 1993) to name the process whereby humans transfer responsibility for an outcome from themselves to a more abstract agent. As such, we might expect bureaucrats to embrace technologies that foster the illusion that decisions are not under their control – a comic example of which is the ‘Computer says No’ character in BBC3’s *Little Britain*. (BBC 2004)

Where Postman's analysis of the impact of computer technology starts to look dated is when it states that it “has not yet come close to the printing press in its power to generate radical and substantive social, political, and religious thought” (Postman 1993). Since Postman wrote those words we have had the advent of the Internet, and specifically the Web 2.0 or social media phase, and while there is debate over the degree to which social media played a part in the Arab spring or Al-

Qaeda's campaign (Morozov 2012), there is academic research that demonstrates that it played a part (Howard et al 2011).

Technopoly depends on our believing that we are at our best when acting like machines, and that in significant ways machines may be trusted to act as our surrogates. A very recent example of this would be Google's driverless cars, which aim to reduce accidents because accidents are mostly caused by human error. This is merely replacing a lack of faith in one human activity – driving – with almost total faith in another – computer programming.

Postman suggests a possible antidote is "technological modesty" that is remembering how many things can be done without the use of computers, and quotes Sir Bernard Lovell "literal-minded, narrowly focused computerized research is proving antithetical to the free exercise of that happy faculty known as serendipity – that is, the knack of achieving favourable results more or less by chance." (Postman 1993, p.121)

Computers, he argues, are too narrow as filters of information and therefore may be "antiserendipitous" – it could be argued that social media allows for serendipity but again algorithms designed to increase relevance based on particular users' past behaviour and choices limit the scope of the Internet by showing content similar to that chosen by users before – some argue this leads to a "balkanisation" of the Internet (Alstyne and Brynjolfsson 2005). He concludes the discussion of this ideology by asking rhetorically:

"We may well wonder what other human skills and traditions are being lost by our immersion in a computer culture." (Postman 1993, p.122)

8.3.4.2 The ideology of machines: invisible technologies

Postman defines ideology as a "set of assumptions of which we are barely conscious but which nonetheless directs our efforts to give shape and coherence to the world" (Postman 1993, p.123) and considers language to be the most powerful ideological instrument available to man. One which, most of the time, we are unaware of.

Postman deconstructs several invisible technologies, but the one of most relevance to this thesis is management, which he describes as "a system of power and control designed to make maximum use of relevant knowledge, the hierarchical

organisation of human abilities, and the flow of information from bottom to top and back again”, and a possible outcome of which is “the human being becomes, to use Michel Foucault’s phrase, “a calculable person.” (Postman 1993, p.140)

The purpose of reviewing *Technopoly* at length is to understand the rhetoric of technological and media determinism, and its impact on the technology-based learning industry, the BBC, and some specific projects conducted therein. However, in some instances technology was seen as the antidote to the “invisible technology” of management – in line with the utopian and emancipator ideals of the BBC media habitus. This will be examined more critically in the specific case study sections.

8.3.4.3 The ideology of machines: scientism

Now I will look at a form of positivism – scientism – which Postman defines as “the study of human behaviour, when conducted according to the rigorous principles established by the physical and biological sciences, will produce objective facts, testable theories, and profound understandings of the human condition. Perhaps even universal laws.” (Postman 1993, p.145). (I will consider positivism at length in the Methodology chapter).

Postman lists the three pillars that he considers underpin scientism:

1. the methods of the natural sciences can be applied to the study of human behaviour
2. social science generates specific principles which can be used to organize society on a rational and humane basis
3. faith in science can serve as a comprehensive belief system that gives meaning to life. (Postman 1993)

Postman states that the promotion of social science to the status of science is one of the foundations of ‘technopoly’, but he argues that social science is not scientific in the manner of natural science, but empirical, which in his interpretation”... means to look at things before drawing conclusions” and “also means to offer evidence that others can see as clearly as you.” (Postman 1993, p.149)

Given the researcher’s involvement in the main case study, it is worth bearing these specific points in mind: “scientists proceed on the assumption that the objects they study are indifferent to the fact that they are being studied.” (Postman 1993, p.150) In no way can participants in action research, or research that is similar in nature, be

considered to be indifferent given the emancipatory aims of much educational action research (Carr & Kemmis 1986).

Postman also observes that “science depends on the requirement that theories must be stated in a way that permits experiments to reveal that they are false”. This is not true of many social ‘science’ ‘experiments’ including many of the famous ones, (Postman uses the example of Milgram’s *Obedience to Authority*). What they are doing, according to Postman, is “documenting the behaviour and feelings of people as they confront problems posed by their culture” – which is not to say these works are not valid or worthwhile, merely that they are not science. The findings of researchers involved in such projects “... cannot be proved or disproved but will draw their appeal from the power of their language, the depth of their explanations, the relevance of their examples, and the credibility of their themes”, but it is vitally important to remember that “they are bound by time, by situation, and above all by the cultural prejudices of the researcher or writer.” (Postman 1993, p.154)

But this is not enough in *Technopoly*; in *Technopoly* “it becomes necessary, then, to transform psychology, sociology, and anthropology into ‘sciences’, in which humanity itself becomes an object”. It is clear from this sentence that Postman sees the attempt to position the study of human culture as a science as a devaluation – it, in effect, dehumanises it.

“It is the desperate hope, and wish, and ultimately the illusory belief that some standardized set of procedures called ‘science’ can provide us with an unimpeachable source of moral authority, a suprahuman basis for answers to questions like “What is life, and when, and why?” “Why is death and suffering” “What is right and wrong to do?” “What are good and evil ends?” “How ought we to think and feel and behave?” (Postman 1993, p.182)

This thesis is not studying such profound questions as those suggested by Postman in the quote above, but it includes a case study in which the subjects were far from indifferent to the researcher’s actions. It will be shown how the researcher’s initial ideas were a form of scientism, and the researcher’s transition from scientism to cultural theorist, is the learning journey at the heart of this doctoral research project.

This seems to be the process which has taken place, or is taking place, in the case studies which are the subject of this study.

8.3.5 Cultural reasons why factual programme-makers and journalists need to involve audiences in their editorial decisions...

There is a cultural shift taking place which will require the media to relate to their audiences in a more dialectical way than they did prior to the advent of the social web. However, this is not a brand new phenomenon. The newspapers of the 18th century served small audiences of businessmen or specific political parties. Printers and editors were often personally acquainted with their readers and could be held to account by them (Davis 1994). News was discourse, rather than a commodity. But as the media grew, so did their distance from their audience.

In 1979 Lyotard put forward the idea that; “the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post-industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age.” (Lyotard 1979, p.3)

Some think this transition started in the 1950s but it is not yet clear if postmodernism will supersede modernism (Habermas 1981) or if it is “part of the modern” (Lyotard 1979, p.79).

There are two significant arguments in Lyotard’s report, which are relevant to this thesis:

- As cultures shift from the modern to the postmodern there will be a shift in the legitimization of knowledge, specifically scientific knowledge, and;
- The decline of ‘grand Narratives’ will lead to a breakup of homogenised social perspectives and a more individual ‘atomised’ set of flexible networks.

In both cases, there will be less emphasis on the institution and more on the conversation.

Lyotard distinguishes between scientific and narrative (non-scientific) knowledge. Scientific knowledge is researched and then proven through discourse and dialectical reason. The transmission of this knowledge has traditionally occurred through didactic methods, which presuppose that the student does not know what the teacher knows.

Much of mainstream print and broadcast journalism is concerned with the transmission of knowledge in a didactic or rhetorical manner, making use of sophisticated narrative techniques.

The influence of postmodernism on this is that:

“A statement of science gains no validity from the fact of being reported. Even in the case of pedagogy, it is taught only if it is still verifiable in the

present through argumentation and proof. It is never secure from 'falsification'". (Lyotard 1979, p.26)

Further:

"A science that has not legitimated itself is not a true science; if the discourse that was meant to legitimate it seems to belong to a prescientific form of knowledge, like a 'vulgar' narrative, it is demoted to the lowest rank, that of an ideology or instrument of power." (Lyotard 1979, p.38).

Consider the reporting of climate change/climate science. The mainstream media have taken an editorial position based on the majority view of scientists working in this field – broadly that man's effect on the environment is a factor contributing to climate change. They have then represented this argument as scientific knowledge in a modernist, didactic narrative.

In the pre-Internet age, for the majority of the audience, this would have been sufficient 'proof'. If there were dissenting voices then it is unlikely they would have been heard once the institutional media had considered them irrelevant.

However, technology, specifically Internet technologies, provides the audience with a means of finding information that supports their viewpoint, and provides scientists sceptical about the evidence for climate change with a platform to share their knowledge and opinions. If sceptics in the audience are unable to distinguish between legitimated scientific knowledge (e.g. peer-reviewed journal articles) and narrative (e.g. opinionated blog articles written by experts) then the potential for the demotion of the knowledge to that of an ideology can be seen.

A possible demonstration of this is that in 2010 a BBC poll showed the number who believed it is a scientific fact that (climate change) is largely man-made has dropped from half (50%) to a third (34%) compared to the previous year (BBC News 2010). While this could simply have been a function of a cold winter it is indicative of the issues and scepticism faced by those reporting knowledge. This scepticism may then be enhanced by the potential for Internet communities to collectivise (Lanier 2010) and balkanise (Alstyne and Brynjolfsson 2005).

In the future, more information will become available to a wider audience without professional or academic research skills. Easy to use technology will further reduce the distinction between media produced by broadcast institutions and that produced by individuals or small groups. There will be an increasing need for the media,

particularly in contentious subject areas, to present scientific knowledge in a dialectic, rather than didactic manner. This is where answers to the research questions asked in this thesis become useful to factual programme-makers and journalists.

8.3.6 Communications technology and how it enhances the flow of ideas

Innovation requires communication – even the lone genius writer is rarely isolated and immune to the ideas and suggestions of others (Sawyer 2007, p.78). Major shifts in communications technology have always resulted in shifts in our ability to store, share ideas and hence innovate (Levinson 1999).

So, in order to understand how social media might help media organisations to work in new ways it is useful to look at the history and impact of communications technology before considering the relevant innovation models.

Discussion of social networking tools often refers to the 'global conversation' or makes use of McLuhan's term 'global village' (McLuhan 1964) but the notion of innovation and creativity as social activities is not a new one.

Within this paper will be arguments consistent with these in the case study section, so it is useful to look at how the discourse around new technologies has developed in the past.

The argument that new communications technology shape the way we think has been made before. The classicist Eric Havelock hypothesised that much of the Western way of thinking can be traced back to the point where Greek culture shifted from primary orality to literacy (Havelock 1963). While Havelock's ideas were controversial among classical scholars they were highly influential and helped form the ideas of media theorists, including Marshall McLuhan.

Reading as we understand it today, that is, reading in silence without having to speak the words out loud or move your lips as you read, has only been commonplace in the West since the 10th Century AD. The first person on record as having read this way was St. Ambrose in AD 383 (Manguel 1996). Previously the Sumerians had developed cuneiform writing systems in BC 3300-3200 and from there hieroglyphics and the alphabet evolved (Wolf 2007).

So, reading is a modern development, with mass literacy being evident from between the mid-18th and late 20th century, depending on if you look at Northern Europe or the whole world.

The spoken word is primary and immediate, it demands action, but it is also transitory. This makes it hard for societies to build and develop ideas across time and space. The first oral 'technologies' such as mnemonics, metre and lyrics were information management tools aimed at what Ancient Greeks termed the 'artificial' memory.

In the transition from an oral culture to a literate one, ideas are no longer bound to a person speaking or reciting them. More ideas can be generated than can be stored in memory, and they can be retrieved accurately as required. This enables literate societies to develop far more complex and collaborative ideas and to transcend their existing consciousness. (McLuhan 1962)

An early description of the 'creative conversation' can be found in the coffee house culture of 18th Century Europe and the principles of coffee house discourse (Ellis 2008) could just as easily be applied to *Twitter* or a well-run online discussion forum.

Since the advent of mass communications and broadcast technology in the 20th Century a shift has been seen from literacy to 'secondary orality' (Ong 1982, 2002) - communication is increasingly in the form of audio and video, but often that audio and video content depends on the written, printed or typed word for its existence.

Some say that we are now moving to a post-literate society where mass access to easy-to-use audio and video communications technology (Prensky 2010), means that it is produced in environments where it does not depend on a script, is more immediate and improvisational, and easier to share on a global scale. While there is clear evidence of the mass adoption of video communications technology through the success of sites such as YouTube (Burgess and Green 2009), it is not yet evident how, or when society becomes 'post-literate' and this position remains a rhetorical one.

It seems clear that major changes in communications technology have brought with them profound changes in mankind's ability to share and develop ideas across time and space - "Our media mediate our social interaction. When our media change our social interaction changes." (Wesch 2009). The addition of the social layer to the information revolution that began with the development of the computer and was

compounded by the creation of the Internet means that we are at the epoch of such a change now.

This could be seen as a technologically determinist point of view, but it can be argued that social media are technologies that allows us to think and organise ourselves in ways that, rather than being technologically determined, are similar to ways that we used to work in oral cultures prior to the advent of writing.

Henry Jenkins, philosopher behind the important Web 2.0 concepts 'Convergence' and 'Participatory Culture' (Jenkins 2006) expressed this view when interviewed in 2010:

"These technologies have brought cultural expression down to a human scale; they have placed the exchange of stories or songs in a social context; and they have opened up a space where all of us can be welcomed as potential participants." (Jenkins 2010).

Ten years previously, Douglas Adams expressed similar rhetoric:

"Interactivity. Many-to-many communications. Pervasive networking. These are cumbersome new terms for elements in our lives so fundamental that, before we lost them, we didn't even know to have names for them." (Adams 1999)

They are arguing that social media are not driving new human behaviours but providing a channel to a global audience for things humans have done all along. What we are seeing, especially in the media industry, is a convergence of life and work - "in the current digital and networked global media ecosystem the roles played by advertisers, media producers, and content consumers are converging." (Deuze 2009, p.473) –in what ways can this change working practices in the media?

How we think is fundamental to how we progress and innovate (Kuhn 1959). If the way we think changes, then we might reasonably expect the way we adapt or innovate to change. Therefore the ongoing debate on 'Is the Internet is changing the way we think?' (Edge.org 2010), particularly with regard to associative and biassociative thinking, which is central to idea generation (Koestler 1963), cannot be ignored.

In 1945, the American scientist, Vannevar Bush, published an article in the *Atlantic* magazine; 'As We May Think'. The article imagined inventions which might occur should science start to focus on man extending the power of his mind, rather than his physical powers.

Bush's idea centred on a machine which could assist the linear thought processes associated with storing and retrieving information (which are at best inefficient, because memory is transitory) thus freeing the brain to work in more creative, associative ways:

"When data of any sort are placed in storage, they are filed alphabetically or numerically, and information is found (when it is) by tracing it down from subclass to subclass... The human mind does not work that way. It operates by association." (Bush 1945)

Bush called this machine the Memex. The Memex would link information by linking it like a HyperCard stack:

"It is exactly as though the physical items had been gathered together from widely separated sources and bound together to form a new book." (Bush 1945)

Aspects of it sound like Wikipedia:

"Wholly new forms of encyclopaedias will appear, ready-made with a mesh of associative trails running through them..." (Bush 1945)

Today the article is recognised as one that foreshadowed hypertext, and laid the groundwork for information science (Levy 2005).

This idea reinforces the argument that how information is stored on the Internet closely resembles the way information is stored and retrieved by the human brain – by association (Koestler 1963). An example of which would be the astounding memories of epic oral poets (Parry 1932; Dalrymple 2006) When someone is surfing the Internet the links between web pages are similar to the links between pieces of information held in memory and some argue this bi-associative thinking (Koestler 1963) is more suited to triggering 'creativity', problem-solving, and thus innovation (Mednick 1962).

How does this compare to someone reading a printed text? There are specific genes for speaking and vision, but there are none for reading. The necessary neural pathways must be formed every time an individual brain acquires the skill of reading (Wolf 2007, p.11).

Wolf defines deep reading as:

"... the array of sophisticated processes that propel comprehension and that include inferential and deductive reasoning, analogical skills, critical analysis, reflection, and insight." (Wolf and Barzillai 2009)

The static nature of printed text forces the reader to engage their imagination, apply existing knowledge and make use of their analytical skill as they construct meaning and “go beyond the wisdom of the author to think their own thoughts.” (Wolf and Barzillai 2009).

In biassociative thinking, which one could argue is the mode of thought we are in when using the Internet, the ‘reader’ develops new thoughts through the montage of idea A followed by idea B (Miettinen 2006). The two ideas may be quite strongly linked, or they may have nothing in common except that the user followed a hyperlink to get from one to the other. This is very similar to the concept of ‘new combinations’ proposed by Schumpeter as one of the main driving forces behind innovation (Schumpeter 1934). With digital ‘text’, particularly hyperlinked multimedia ‘text’, the potential for innovative thoughts is immense.

However, the associative nature of the medium where users click between sites with a lack of common standards and organisation places great demands on users’ ability to analyse critically the quality of the text and the reliability of its sources. What some call the Google Generation is often unable to make these decisions (CIBER 2007). The argument that our ability to think critically and make decisions about the reliability of sources is being undermined by technology brings us back to the question of technological determinism.

In 2010 *The Edge* online magazine chose to make its annual question ‘Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think? It posed this question to 172 essayists “an array of world-class scientists, artists, and creative thinkers” including many of the leading Internet and Web 2.0 evangelists and opinion formers (Edge.org 2010).

No apparent consensus emerged from this debate, the responses falling broadly along the axes mentioned in the earlier section on technological determinism – determinist versus symptomatic, and utopian versus dystopian.

For this thesis, the distinction between technological and social determinism is about trying to understand if the activity comes first or is the activity technology-driven? Does a ‘creative’ or ‘innovative’ person find an interesting technology and then work out how to use it - or are they actively searching for tools to help them work in new, and (hopefully) better, ways?

8.4 Digital Utopians - the rhetoric of social media evangelism

8.4.1 Introduction

Accompanying each wave of mass media innovation there has been waves of utopian rhetoric proclaiming that it will change the world for the better and, in many cases, it could be argued the rhetoric became truth. But, as demonstrated in the section on technological determinism, this has often been followed by dystopian visions of the consequences of mass adoption of the new.

The Internet scholar, Danah Boyd supports this view:

“Most technology designers engage in their trade to make the world a better place. Technologists love to celebrate the amazing things that people can do with technology – bridge geography, connect communities and transform societies. Meanwhile, plenty of naysayers bemoan the changes brought on by technology, highlighting issues of distraction and attention for example. Unfortunately, this results in a battle between those with utopian and dystopian viewpoints, over who can have a more extreme perspective on technology. So where's the middle ground?” (Boyd 2012)

Ultimately the reality falls somewhere in between, in a dialectic, where technology is merely a vehicle for both positive and negative change, “technology is neither good nor bad, nor is it neutral” (Kranzberg 1986).

Social media is no exception.

Castells introduces four forms of network power in *'Rise of the Network Society'*:

- Networking power is the power that comes from people's inclusion or exclusion from a particular environment.
- Network power is the power that stems from setting up the rules for inclusion or exclusion.
- Networked power is the power that underpins those who can set the rules by imposing their will on others.
- Network-making power is the type of power possessed by those who can connect people and flow information. (Castells 1996)

Boyd considers the latter to be the most critical form of power because all other types of power are built on top:

“By restructuring the networks, technology can destabilise hierarchical power. Those who can control the flow of information and those who can control people's attention are extraordinarily powerful. The only people

more powerful than those who control the networks are those who can make the networks. It's no longer simply about broadcasting a message; it's about setting in motion mechanisms to draw attention to you. If you want power in a networked society, you need to orchestrate control over the information ecosystem.” (Boyd 2012)

This is an important concept to remember – while the stated aims in the main case appear to be largely emancipatory – it is important to remember this concept of network-making power when examining managerial motives for the use of social media within the workplace.

And the main case, and ancillary cases, are no exception either.

Through the process of reflection on action, and reflection on reflection, the literature which is especially relevant to this study, and which grounds the findings in empirical research has become apparent, and the themes and discourse, which have particularly influenced it will now be introduced.

There are two key strands of digital media rhetoric that influenced thinking among the management involved in the main case study, which need to be examined in order to make full sense of the decisions taken. These are:

- Mass creativity and social constructivism – “Wikinomics” (Tapscott and Williams 2008)
- Differences in generational aptitudes for technology – “Digital Natives” (Prensky 2001)

Before examining these themes and accompanying discourse, it is useful to first look at how rhetoric can become a form of knowledge – epistemic rhetoric – and also to look at the specific ‘rhetorics of creativity’.

8.4.2 Epistemic rhetoric

Scott (1967) argues that “In human affairs, then, rhetoric is a way of knowing; it is epistemic.” He suggests that in the absence of certainty, as truth is a construct (based on his reading of Toulmin), then rhetoric can be used to construct truth and understanding, and becomes a way of knowing – an episteme.

This is important to our understanding of the central case as two largely rhetorical arguments (‘wikinomics’ and ‘digital natives’) are consistent with the opinions expressed by those advocating a social media platform to enable mass creativity among the BBC’s younger (so-called ‘digitally native’) staff. At no point in their books; *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, *Here Comes Everybody* and *We Think*, did Levine

et al., Shirky or Leadbeater make any claims to truth, or advance a large body of empirical evidence to support their ideas – they are what they are – ideas and hypotheses. Yet somehow, among some of their readers, these ideas became truth – or at least were uncritically accepted.

If we accept Scott's argument that uncertainty creates an environment in which rhetoric can become a way of knowing by providing certainty and understanding, then we can see how rhetorical ideas might appeal to managers faced with an uncertain future and the need to engage with a workforce two generations their junior – one that it could be argued they would not truly understand.

An example of the importance in taking a rhetorical perspective in analysing communication to do with Internet and social technologies is given by Amernic and Craig in *The Rhetoric of a Juggernaut: AOLTimeWarner's Internet Policy*. Their main argument is that “the broad public interest will be better-served if use of the Internet as a means of corporate communication is subjected to wide-ranging critical scrutiny.” (Amernic and Crag 2004).

Although their contention that mega-corporations should not be allowed to determine what is in the public interest is, perhaps, of less relevance to the BBC, as its Charter clearly states that it exists “to serve the public interest” and that its main object “is the promotion of its Public Purposes” (BBC & DCMS 2006). Nevertheless, their points are applicable, and it can clearly be argued that the BBC is a form of “mega-corporation” although more of a quasi-governmental one. Their arguments concern:

- “the language of new capitalism
- the importance of mega-corporate policy rhetoric
- the privileged position of corporate leaders” (Amernic and Crag 2004, pp.24-27)

Amernic and Craig contend that “corporate Internet discourse has created a need to develop a critical language awareness, since language on (and about) the Internet is an integral part of ‘a restructured “global” form of capitalism [and one that is] gaining ascendancy’ in the contemporary world.” (Amernic and Crag 2004)

Referencing Postman (1993) for their second key point they suggest, “we have been washed over by a new life medium”, and “we have become different social beings within this different lifeworld.” (Amernic and Crag 2004).

Finally they argue that “there is a profound experiential and cognitive divide between a ‘rich and powerful’, but isolated, executive elite and the rest of society”, (Amernic and Crag 2004, p.27) quoting Korten who suggests that “there is good reason to conclude that people who are so isolated from the daily reality of those they rule are ill prepared to define the public interest” (Korten 1995). While some argue that BBC management are part of a corporate (or media) elite (Osborne 2011), isolated from public life, yet defining what is in the public interest with regard to the Internet – that is not the scope of this PhD. This study is more concerned with the influence of Internet rhetoric on those managers, and we need to consider the role of the three factors identified by Amernic and Crag on BBC management and staff in the design, development and delivery of the social platforms examined in the cases.

8.4.3 The rhetorics of creativity

Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2006) define rhetoric as a “subset of discourse” characterised by the following properties:

- highly elaborated structures, drawing on distinctive traditions of philosophical, educational, political and psychological thought
- organised to persuade, as a form of ‘communicative action’ (Habermas 1984), seeking to bring about consensus, leading in some cases to intervention in specific contexts of practice
- producing discursive frameworks such as key terms and taxonomies which can be learnt by practitioners who either need them or are obliged to use them. In this way, they feed back into more general ‘popular’ discourses of creativity.

In reviewing the literature on ‘creativity’, they identify nine key rhetorics of creativity, of varying degrees of relevance to this thesis’ main case. The nine are:

1. Creative Genius
2. Democratic and political creativity
3. Ubiquitous creativity
4. Creativity as a social good
5. Creativity as economic imperative
6. Play and creativity
7. Creativity and cognition
8. The creative affordances of technology
9. The Creative Classroom (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006)

While all nine rhetorics could be seen to impact on our understanding of the BBC and its role in British society, those that are particularly important here are:

- “Creative Genius”
- “Ubiquitous creativity”
- “Creativity as economic imperative”
- “Play and creativity”
- “Creativity and cognition” (specifically “cultural psychology and creativity”)
- and particularly, “the creative affordances of technology” (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006)

8.4.3.1 Creative Genius

Prior to the introduction of Greg Dyke’s ‘*Making it Happen*’ cultural change initiative the notion of “Creative Genius” – the idea that creativity is a “special quality of a few individuals, either highly educated and disciplined, or inspired in some way, or both” prevailed at the BBC.

Research showed “that people in the BBC are averse to proscribed (sic) processes for creativity. Many in the BBC at the time held a view that creativity is something one is born with and not something that could be taught or improved. The very suggestion that people not traditionally associated with the creative areas of the BBC could in fact contribute creatively to BBC ideas was an anathema.” (Spindler and van den Bruhl 2006)

This notion of creativity was very much a part of the BBC habitus and, although challenged by Dyke and the Making it Happen team (Schlesinger 2010), it would remain as a prevailing attitude which challenges the widespread adoption of social technology as a means of liberating mass creativity at the BBC.

8.4.3.2 Ubiquitous creativity

Banaji, Burn and Buckingham define this as the “notion that creativity is not just about consumption and production of artistic products, whether popular or elite, but involves a skill in having the flexibility to respond to problems and changes in the modern world and one’s personal life”. As we shall see in the main case study, this kind of thinking or belief was applied by BBC managers to the matter of BBC Staff responding to the problems and challenges faced at work. This is an extension of Banaji, Burn and Buckingham’s observation that “the foundation of this rhetoric lies

partly in early years education and the notion of providing young children with the tools to function successfully in the world.” (Banaji, Burn and Buckingham 2006, p.56). Although it could be considered consistent with it, if one took the view of the management at the BBC taking a paternal or maternal attitude to their staff.

8.4.3.3 Creativity as economic imperative

In this rhetoric, “The future of a competitive national economy is seen to depend... on the knowledge, flexibility, personal responsibility and problem solving skills of workers and their managers. These are, apparently, fostered and encouraged by creative methods in business, education and industry. There is a particular focus here on the contribution of the ‘creative industries’” (Banaji, Burn and Buckingham 2006, p.56).

We merely have to substitute ‘public service broadcasting’ for “a competitive national economy” to see the applicability of this rhetoric to desire for greater creativity at the BBC, particularly given its role in contributing to the development and sustenance of the UK creative industries, as specified in the BBC Charter where one of the BBC’s six public purposes is stated as “stimulating creativity and cultural excellence” (BBC & DCMS 2006).

8.4.3.4 Play and creativity

The *‘Rhetorics of creativity’* identifies play as a “persistent strand in writing about creativity” which “turns on the notion that childhood play is the origin of adult problem-solving and creative thought. It explores the functions of play in relation to both creative production and cultural consumption” (Banaji, Burn and Buckingham 2006, p.56). As we shall see in the interviews in the main case study, the notion of ‘playfulness’ as an indicator of creativity, creative behaviours and innovation is one expressed by several BBC managers with influence in this area.

8.4.3.5 Creativity and cognition

The particular aspect of this rhetoric, which is relevant to this study is that of cultural psychology and creativity – which “sees social activity and cultural resources as central features of the creative process” (Banaji, Burn and Buckingham 2006, p.44). According to Banaji et al. this draws on the work of Vgotsky who showed how imaginative play in childhood leads to the combination of imagination and thinking in concepts in early adolescence to form “true creativity, which is seen as a lifelong ability to transform cultural resources and one’s own identity.” This is a rhetoric in which creativity is productively connected with both culture and learning.

The relevance of this is that in the main case study, the ideas that creativity was both a function of learning, and a social activity among staff were taken as given. While Banaji et al. do not dispute that there may be some truth in each of the nine rhetorics they describe, it is the unthinking, or unchallenged, acceptance of these rhetorics at the BBC - the way in which the rhetoric became epistemic, which Foucault would call "truth effects" (Foucault 1980; Amernic and Crag 2004) - which we need to examine in the case studies.

8.4.3.6 The creative affordances of technology

This is probably the most influential of the rhetorics outlined by Banaji, Burn and Buckingham on the main case study featured in this thesis and, as such, merits a more detailed investigation than the others. The rhetoric argues that, "if creativity is not inherent in human mental powers and is, in fact, social and situational, then technological developments may well be linked to advances in the creativity of individual users" (Banaji, Burn and Buckingham 2006, p.58). This is a common theme in both the digitally utopian technology writing and business literature concerned with creativity and innovation – as will be shown later in this literature review.

Banaji et al. reference Avril Loveless who argued that digital technology enables news ways of being creative (Loveless 2002). Although most of the work referred to in this section is mainly concerned with education and learning in schools, much of the rhetoric is equally applicable to discourse around learning and training at the BBC. This can be teacher: pupil in tone, as evidenced by the BBC's choice of names such as 'Colleges' and 'Academy' for its internal learning institutions.

As well as the potential for increased, or new, creativity, some of the potential downsides are also highlighted. Work created is flashy and demonstrates skill in the use of the technology rather than being inherently 'creative' (Sefton Green 1999; Loveless 2002); computer programmes designed to improve creativity are not creative themselves and rely on rote learning and repetition (Scanlon et al. 2005); projects using technology to enhance creativity are inherently resource and time intensive (Sefton Green 1999); and what teachers consider to be creative media projects (liberation from constraint and teacher specification) is at odds with what actually constitutes effective media practice where there is close attention to language, and effective learning tasks need to be carefully structured (Reid at al. 1993). While this latter point is less of an issue at the BBC, it is still the case that

there is a tension between rhetoric around 'creative freedom' when good media practice can be very highly structured.

Banaji et al. observe that "wider social concerns are never far from the minds of those who work with children and technology, and that these concerns can head in several directions", and that this leads to "uniform approval and enthusiasm about technology's innate creativity" for some, whereas others develop "a wholesale rejection of the notion that any technology can be creative" (Banaji, Burn and Buckingham 2006, p.48). It can be argued that if 'staff' is substituted for 'children' then these observations still apply.

Within the rhetoric they describe a "range of positions, from those who applaud all technology as inherently improving, to those who welcome it cautiously and see creativity as residing in an, as yet, under-theorised relationship between contexts, users and applications." (Banaji, Burn and Buckingham 2006, p.58) Again, in the interviews in the case studies, we will see this full range of positions on the influence of technology on creativity demonstrated by the BBC management, stakeholders and users who defined the objectives and outcomes of the various projects to use social technology in the BBC's attempts to enhance and amplify 'creativity'.

Following Dyke's departure, the notion of creativity "...continued to shape the BBC's official discourse. Mark Thompson, the BBC's next DG, kept up the rhetoric in the corporate strategy labelled 'Creative Future'". (Schlesinger 2010)

8.4.4 Mass creativity and social constructivism - "Wikinomics"

Much of the popular writing in this area lacks empirical evidence, and is often pure manifesto. To many, these are compelling ideas that must bring a 'revolution' in the way organisations and audiences or consumers interact. A story about a lost mobile phone becomes a global movement and evidence of a new social order (Shirky C 2009, pp.1-24). Ideas for new ways of doing business are written as fact.

8.4.4.1 The Cluetrain Manifesto

"The Cluetrain Manifesto #84: We know some people from your company. They're pretty cool online. Do you have any more like that you're hiding? Can they come out and play?" (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger 2000)

The Cluetrain Manifesto (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger 2000) makes no claim to be peer-reviewed, or empirical, or otherwise evidence-based. Its rhetorical position is made clear by its self-definition as 'manifesto'. The ideas contained within it are very consistent with those

expressed at the BBC, so it could be argued that the rhetoric became epistemic and self-fulfilling, a kind of 'truth-effect' and it was extremely influential on one of the main protagonists on the inception of social media on the BBC Intranet, as will be shown in the interview on the history of the internal use of social technologies at the BBC.

That will be considered in more detail in the main case study, but now the specific manifesto claims that Levine et al. make with regard to corporate intranets will be examined in detail.

In manifesto statements 41-43 Levine et al. put forward one of their key suggestions – that of a workforce kept at arm's length from their customers and each other, but using technology, via the corporate intranet, to engage in 'conversations' about what they think is important to the business, rather than what they are told is important to the business. This concept of the disempowered worker, who knows better than the bosses how to run the business, using technology to connect with his or her peers is a recurring theme in *The Cluetrain Manifesto* and reminiscent of the emancipatory tone accompanying much of the rhetoric surrounding the use of technology in education – particularly when it comes to so-called 'digital natives'.

“#41: Companies make a religion of security, but this is largely a red herring. Most are protecting less against competitors than against their own market and workforce.

#42: As with networked markets, people are also talking to each other directly *inside* the company – and not just about rule and regulations, boardroom directives, bottom lines.

#43: Such conversations are taking place today on corporate intranets. But only when the conditions are right.” (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger 2000)

Statements 44 and 45 argue against the top-down nature of communication on corporate intranets, claiming that much of it is irrelevant or boring to workers. Recent research on the BBC Intranet carried out at the BBC by the researcher (Tedd 2012), to some extent confirms this view. The report shows that much of the featured content is generically corporate in nature, and the casual observer would think there is not much about making programmes or journalism at first glance. Therefore, one of the main criticisms levelled at the BBC intranet was its “lack of relevance” to BBC programme-makers.

"#44: Companies typically install intranets top-down to distribute HR policies and other corporate information that workers are doing their best to ignore.

#45: Intranets naturally tend to route around boredom. The best are built bottom-up by engaged individuals cooperating to construct something far more valuable: an intranetworked corporate conversation." (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger 2000)

In 46-48 Levine et al. propose that fear of unfettered conversations taking place among the workers prevents management from active participation, and leads to tendencies to be overly controlling. This is partially true of the BBC; prior to conducting this research project, the researcher was responsible for managing the BBC intranet and was persistently bemused by the reluctance of all but a few senior managers to engage in open conversations on the intranet due to fear of: saying the wrong thing, upsetting the staff, and not knowing all the answers amongst others. Thus we can see how the rhetoric of the manifesto speaks to the common sense and experience of people working in this field, and is likely to be received uncritically.

"#46: A healthy intranet *organises* workers in many meanings of the word. Its effect is more radical than the agenda of any union.

#47: While this scares companies witless, they also depend heavily on open intranets to generate and share critical knowledge. They need to resist the urge to "improve" or control these networked conversations.

#48: When corporate intranets are not constrained by fear and legalistic rules, the type of conversation they encourage sounds remarkably like the conversation of the networked marketplace." (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger 2000)

The last set of manifesto statements that will be examined are 49 to 51. These make a case for how "conversations subvert hierarchy". While in the rhetoric of *The Cluetrain Manifesto* this subversion of the hierarchy is a strictly bottom-up process, what is interesting in the main case study in particular at the BBC is how senior managers also saw the opportunity presented by social media to subvert the hierarchy from the top-down.

"#49: Org charts worked in an older economy where plans could be fully understood from atop steep management pyramids and detailed work orders could be handed down from on high.

#50: Today, the org chart is hyperlinked, not hierarchical. Respect for hands-on knowledge wins over respect for abstract authority.

#51: Command-and-control management styles both derive from and reinforce bureaucracy, power tripping and an overall culture of paranoia.” (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger 2000)

That concludes the key manifesto commitments that are applicable to the cases in this study. The key digital utopian texts that are relevant will now be reviewed.

8.4.4.2 Here Comes Everybody

'Here Comes Everybody' is unashamedly utopian in its outlook, “For the first time, we have the tools to make group action truly a reality. And they’re going to change our whole world” the back cover blurb promises (Shirky 2009). It has been selected for review here because it is one of the more influential books on social media but also because Shirky was heavily influential on the BBC’s own digital utopians. At an event to launch the BBC iCan social activism project Shirky gave a keynote at which he implored the BBC to move forward with digital activist projects “because only the BBC can do this.” (Shirky 2003)

Shirky promotes a series of ideas in the book, all of which have their basis in how technology-based social tools allow large groups to interact in ways which were not possible, or at least extremely difficult, prior to the widespread acceptance of the social web. Shirky considers these social innovations to have profound implications for traditional institutions, such as the BBC, although as mentioned above, the publicly funded and socially owned nature of the BBC, also means that Shirky considered it to be in a position to use social tools to its own, and society’s, advantage. This latter point is worth remembering, as while it has become clear that the BBC has made good use of social software in supporting its traditional model, it is less clear what social purpose has been served by its co-option of ‘the crowd’.

There are three of Shirky’s ideas, which are of particular relevance to this study:

- the mass amateurisation of the media
- mass filtering of content, after publication, rather than before
- collaborative production by large groups

Each of them draw on a pair of related concepts Shirky derives from the work of the economist, Ronald Coase, in particular, his *'Theory of the Firm'* (Coase 1937).

Shirky refers to the concepts as the ‘Coasean Ceiling’ (Shirky 2009, p.44) and ‘Coasean Floor’ (Shirky 2009, p.45). Coase was the first economist to define the economic rationale for the existence of hierarchical organisations, or firms.

Basically, firms exist when the costs of co-ordinating effort are less than the gain

derived from it (Coase 1937). Shirky argues that there are natural limits to this; there is a size below which the costs of running a firm cannot justify its existence – the Coasean Floor, and a size above which the firm would be too large and complex to manage – the Coasean Ceiling.

However, it is his contention that social and Internet technologies allow groups to move both above and below these natural limits. This occurs when technology reduces transaction costs to the point where large scale group activities that do not generate sufficient revenue to be viable to a business or institution become viable as a form of social action. Shirky is clearly putting this forward as an idea, so is short on evidence, but does point to the photo-sharing website *Flickr* as an example of how this could happen.

The mass amateurisation of the media is, Shirky argues, a great threat to the existence of traditional media. Focussing heavily on print media and journalism, he attempts to demonstrate how social technology, specifically the ability of anyone with an Internet connection to publish anything they want whenever they feel like it, renders newspapers obsolete. With the benefit of hindsight, this has not happened; traditional news media, including the BBC, have taken social technologies and both adapted them to suit their own ends, and evolved to fit into the new media landscape, e.g. the *Daily Mirror's ampp3d* website and newsfeed which aims “to create socially shareable data journalism.” (ampp3d 2013). However, this concept, and similar ones such as Henry Jenkins *Convergence Culture* did influence the conceptual thinking behind the project in the main case study.

Mass filtering, whereby ‘gatekeeping’ institutions such as the BBC, book publishers, or Hollywood studios are rendered obsolete by a combination of easy publishing and then survival of the fittest in a mass online popularity contest, was again heavily influential on the design of the moo website, and in the other cases considered in this study. Although rather than being seen as a threat to commissioners, it was seen as a potential benefit – primarily as a time-saver in internal projects, and as indicating a ready audience for external ones. The notion that mass filtering and peer review could be used to select the best ideas featured heavily in the design of the BBC3 ideas competition we will look at in the main research write up. As with mass amateurisation, the institutions under threat have shown themselves to be remarkably resilient in the five or six years since *Here Comes Everybody* was published.

Collaborative production whereby “people have to coordinate with one another to get anything done, is considerably harder than simple sharing, but the results can be more profound”, (Shirky 2009) was a consideration for the moo project, but proved hard to deliver in practice, due to the contained internal nature of the project. However, as we shall see in the relevant case studies *World Have Your Say* and *The Virtual Revolution*, some programme makers facing outside of the BBC to a mass audience, have been able to take advantage of the concept and bend it to the BBC’s, and the group’s advantage.

Shirky’s ideas are not without criticism – Brabazon asks who is “everybody”? In her opinion it is not everybody, as by definition the large body of people without Internet access or sufficiently developed Internet skills are excluded (Brabazon, 2008). But this particular critique does not really apply to BBC staff, or their audience(s). What does matter is that Shirky’s ideas are just ideas. While they are based on empirical economic and sociological theories – Coase’s *Nature of the Firm*, Granovetter’s *Importance of Weak Ties*, Burt’s *Social Origins of Good Ideas* to name a few – and each of which are examined in detail elsewhere in this literature review – Shirky offers no evidence base. As with other proponents of the influential ideas under consideration in this review – he makes no claim that they are anything other than ideas – however convincing a rhetorical case is attempted for them. Where the issues around these ideas arise is when they are accepted and acted upon uncritically, when the rhetoric becomes epistemic, and the researcher would contend, this could be said to have occurred with Shirky’s ideas at the BBC.

8.4.4.3 We Think

We Think proposes similar ideas to *Here Comes Everybody*, its key message is summarized in the following quote:

“Open and collaborative models of organisation will increasingly trump closed and hierarchical models as a way to promote innovation, organise work and engage consumers.” (Leadbeater 2008, p.89)

While *Here Comes Everybody* is mostly focused on socially constructivist ideas and the impact of Internet and social technology on projects with the broad common purpose of being for the greater social good, *We Think* has quite specific points to make on the BBC, and innovation, and therefore will be looked at in greater depth.

As with *Here Comes Everybody* we could justify its inclusion in this section through critical acclaim for Leadbeater’s ideas: “compulsory reading for all

who seek to understand the driving force of the century” (Management Today 2008), “one of the most influential (management thinkers) of the decade” (New York Times 2008), but there is, again, a specific connection to the BBC which makes it more relevant to this thesis than other similar books.

In the prologue, Leadbeater proposes a thought experiment based on an imagined BBC scenario, and this rhetorical device merits scrutiny in depth. In the thought experiment, Leadbeater imagines a YouTube star ‘Funtwo’ going to the BBC to propose the idea for the video that made him popular on YouTube:

“Funtwo’s first challenge would have been to find the right person to talk to among the myriad channels, departments and controllers, the bewildering maze of titles and hierarchies.”

“Then he would have had to hassle, wait, plead and beg to get an appointment with a commissioning editor – at the BBC they are known as Controllers. Getting that appointment would have been tricky because Funtwo did not go to university with any of the Controllers and is not a member of the Groucho Club, the media watering hole in London’s Soho.” (Leadbeater 2008, p. xv)

While Leadbeater’s description of the BBC commissioners and controllers falls into cliché, it is not unfair to say that for someone with limited experience of the commissioning process, whether they are outside of the BBC or work for it, the BBC can appear “bewildering”. It is this apparent inequity that the BBC senior managers in the main case study were attempting to reduce. While the basic assumption that more ideas is better, and the BBC (or any business) should seek to broaden its potential pool of ideas is widely supported in the business literature, there was an underlying assumption close to the principles of *We-think* and *Here comes everybody* which informed viewpoints and the idea that there was a large pool of untapped creative resource in the BBC motivated the *moo* project. Neither Shirky nor Leadbeater make claims that their ideas are true, or even empirically based, but as a result of the truth effects of epistemic rhetoric – in particular the rhetorics of creativity which have their roots in social constructivism – the potential exists for these ideas to become uncritically accepted in many fields, not just the BBC and the media.

“But suspend disbelief for a moment and imagine Funtwo made it through all these hoops and got into see one of the all-powerful Controllers. This is perhaps how the conversation would have gone:

“Controller: So you want to make a video: what’s it about?”

Funtwo: Of myself playing the electric guitar.

Controller: I see – and are you planning to make this video in a studio with sound and lights?

Funtwo: No I thought I could just use my bedroom. It’s quiet and sunny.”

(Leadbeater 2008,
p.xvi)

Again, this represents something of a cliché, nevertheless it is not that far from reality either. But, those managers participating in the *moo* project saw the need for change and acted on it quickly – while the BBC was not going to start broadcasting too many user-generated videos as prime time TV, it was clearly accepted that videos to communicate ideas for programmes could be relatively low fidelity.

“Controller: And if you are playing who will be shooting the video, where are the director, sound recordist and camera man? Are you working with a television production company we are used to dealing with?

Funtwo: No I thought I could just set up a video camera on a tripod and point it at myself. It’s fairly simple.

Controller: Do you have any experience directing or performing?

Funtwo: None.”

(Leadbeater 2008, p.xvi)

The concept of self-shooting was already well accepted at the BBC by the time ‘*We-Think*’ was published. However, the idea(s) that the commissioners were primarily looking for ideas from experienced production companies, producers and directors that the BBC was used to working with are valid. As with the previous expressions of the status quo, these aspects of the closed shop were things that the *moo* project was seeking to challenge, and change.

“Controller: And how long do you intend this video to be?

Funtwo: Quite short, I only want about 5 minutes, 21 seconds.

Controller: Ah, that’s a problem you see because the shortest programmes we do are really about 30 minutes. We’d really need something a bit longer. Do you have an idea when this video would be ready for transmission?

Funtwo: Well if I make it this afternoon I was hoping we could show it later this evening.”

(Leadbeater 2008, p.xvii)

Commissioning to specific slots in a schedule and with long lead times is again a fair representation of the way things were, and again, ways of working that were under threat from digital technology and the kinds of ideas expressed in the books under discussion in this section that the *moo* project was attempting to modernise.

“Controller: Ha ha, how charming. Let me explain the facts of life to you. You see, our schedules are full for the next nine months. Realistically we could not show anything for another year, at the earliest. And we deal in very large audiences here, which is why we’d really need a celebrity angle, a well-known presenter and a format – a bit like Ready Steady Guitar or Strictly Guitar. Sorry, final question: I don’t want to sound unduly sceptical, because I am sure you are really very talented, Mr. Two but how many people do you think will want to watch you playing your guitar?

Funtwo: Oh about 51 million.

Controller: Ha ha, very droll.”

(Leadbeater 2008, p.xvii)

Another somewhat clichéd strawman representation of the BBC that is also close enough to the perceived reality to gain easy acceptance. As will be shown in the case study interviews with Danny Cohen and Frank Ash, these were not a set of factors that were used to judge the ideas submitted in the *moo* project, indeed, the winning idea featured no celebrities and was initially broadcast on the web, rather than TV, to a limited, but enthusiastic audience.

“The point about Funtwo’s video is that he did not have to go through those hoops. He could just play, film, upload and share. He does not have to ask anyone’s permission.

That is the big change.”

(Leadbeater 2008, p.xvii)

While rhetorical, these ideas are not untrue – indeed something quite like it came to be genuinely true at the BBC as will be seen when the *moo* project is examined in more depth in the main case study. But it was only true for a while, and it did not stick, as the web became a more mundane part of everyday life.

Helpfully, Leadbeater describes five views of the future of the Internet before outlining the key principles of *We Think*. Views, which are not, in his opinion, mutually exclusive.

The first is that the future of the Internet is overstated: “It is just a tool to do what we’ve always done but it allows us to do it more quickly and to reach a larger audience.” At the start of this doctorate, and certainly at the start of the main case study, the views of the researcher and the key actors in the main case study were considerably more upbeat and utopian than this point of view. But, as the project evolved, other cases were examined, and the researcher took a more reflexive view of their own practice; therefore this view can be seen to more closely describe the BBC’s experience of social media as a tool to engage with both audiences and staff.

The second view is that “the Internet might well have a big impact on society but it will take a lot longer to work through than the super-optimists argue” and that “the big productivity gains from technological innovation come when the technology itself becomes so dull that it is integrated seamlessly into daily life.” (Leadbeater 2008)

The third view Leadbeater describes is a more dystopian view, in which “the web is already having a big impact on society and it’s mainly bad for us” (Leadbeater 2008). We will examine the ideas of some of the key proponents of this viewpoint in the next section of this literature review.

Leadbeater splits the fourth view into two wings, one of which he considers himself to belong to. Both wings of the fourth group argue that the web will mainly be good for society. The first wing consists of free market libertarians who believe the web will offer almost infinite choice and frictionless markets. The second wing, the one in which Leadbeater considers himself to fit, is comprised of “communitarian optimists” or as described earlier in this section, social constructivists. This group also includes Shirky, specifically the ideas contained in *Here Comes Everybody* and Benkler’s *The Wealth of Networks*. both of which have already been examined in this chapter. These optimists see “... in the Internet the possibility of community and collaboration, commons-based, peer-to-peer production, which will establish non-market and non-hierarchical organizations.” (Leadbeater 2008)

The last of the five groups take the view that the net has been “largely good so far and has huge potential but may turn bad.” At the time of writing *We Think* – 2008 – Leadbeater considered this group to be quite small but, as we shall see later, since then it has grown, as technology is, inevitably, used for both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ purposes.

Finally, Leadbeater acknowledges that there is an argument that the “web cannot be easily parcelled into an ideological position because it is about *everything* that makes up everyday life” (Leadbeater 2008). As with the first view, this is a view that the researcher has come to believe as both the literature and cases are closely examined over time – “technology is neither good nor bad, nor is it neutral” (Kranzberg 1986).

Among the slogans “We think therefore we are”, “You are what you share” and “You get what you give” the key ideas that are relevant are contained within the chapter on the “We-Think Business”:

“We-Think offers a different approach to innovation by encouraging the free sharing of ideas that come from multiple sources within and beyond the company; to work, by deploying self-management to make it more efficient and creative; to consumption, by turning consumers into participants in creating solutions and so mobilizing their commitment, effort and ideas; and to leadership, which must mobilize communities rather than concentrating power at the top and issuing instructions from on high.” (Leadbeater 2008, p.89)

Leadbeater compares the creative conversations taking place on social media to coffee house discourse in the 18th century (Leadbeater 2008, p.95). Ellis (2004) outlines twelve principles of coffee house conversation, which looked at through a 21st century lens could be the unwritten rules which govern sensible use of Twitter, or other social media platforms which are more focused on information sharing than socialising. The principles are:

- “Openness of discussion to all comers
- All who enter agree to behave by the discursive rules of the house
- The discursive economy of the coffee house is inclusive
- Debate is not unregulated, but should be rational, critical, sceptical, polite, calm, and reasoned
- Politeness is not observed for the sake of a social propriety that exists outside the coffee house, but in order for the discussion to be free and open

- Principles of empirical observation of the eyewitness, or presentation of evidence, and of forensic argument will be adopted
- The discussion should be interesting, relevant, curious, focussed and interesting
- Topics should matter: the issues debated should be ones of topical concern, on issues that engage with important debates of the day, or are informed by important principles
- The opinion of individuals matters in the creation of public opinion
- Individuals should give way in the face of superior argument or better information
- Gossip and chit-chat should be eschewed, while satire and lampoon are permitted... idleness (lurking), gabbling, incoherency, irrationality are rejected
- These rules are immanent, unstated, ubiquitous, omnipotent and unchallengeable.” (Ellis 2008)

Leadbeater believes that “in our day, social networking and online collaboration take out capacity for these combinatorial friendships to a new level” and that “more people than ever can start and take part in these conversations to combine their ideas and insights. In open source communities, innovation succeeds through early exposure to comments and criticism, which allow ideas to be refined, adjusted and reinterpreted.” This leads him to contend that “innovation and creativity are becoming increasingly distributed and emerging from many, often unexpected sources” and “many innovations now combine multiple technologies and the know-how of different disciplines. All of this is encouraging large companies to shift towards more collaborative, networked approaches to innovation to share costs and multiple their sources of ideas.” (Leadbeater 2008)

He combines these points to suggest “the first approach is open innovation by the sucking of ideas into a company, the second is open innovation by the giving away of ideas that then spread and multiply.” (Leadbeater 2008) Clearly, in the main case, and the secondary cases we are looking at the BBC exploiting social media to suck ideas in, whether it is from external audiences, or internal staff.

8.4.5 Criticism

There is not a great deal of critical analysis of such ‘social media rhetoric’ but there will now follow a brief introduction to some of it.

A deconstruction of the buzzwords contained in some of the social media manifestos can be found in *Wikinomics and its discontents: a critical analysis of Web 2.0 business manifestos* (Van Dijck & Nieborg 2009). They conclude:

“Most profoundly, Wikinomics and ‘We-Think’ suggest that the distinction between non-profit and for-profit platforms is made irrelevant by the model of peer-production, as if peer-production were some overarching humanist principle of society’s organization.”

(Van Dijck and Nieborg 2009)

While their reasoning is clear when one considers a customer interacting through social media with the producer of a commodity or utility, it is not so clear when one considers a fan of a programme interacting with its makers, or if the producer or broadcaster is publicly-funded or engaged in public service-programming (Benkler 2006).

8.4.5.1 The Cult of the Amateur

This criticism of the rise of the social web, by the self-proclaimed ‘digital apostate’ Andrew Keen is a “apolemic about the destructive impact of the digital revolution on our culture, economy and values” which suggests that “traditional ‘elitist’ media are being destroyed by digital technologies” because the cult of Web 2.0, which “... suggests that everyone - even the most poorly educated and inarticulate amongst us - can and should use digital media to express and realize themselves”, and as a result there has been “a flattening of culture that is blurring the lines between traditional audience and author, creator and consumer, expert and amateur”, which has led to “an endless digital forest of mediocrity.” (Keen 2006)

Keen takes aim at key social platforms:

- Blogs have “undermined our sense of what is true and what is false, what is real and what is imaginary.” Just “another person’s version of the truth”
- Wikipedia: “everyone with an agenda can rewrite an entry to their liking”
- YouTube: “an infinite gallery of amateur movies showing poor fools dancing, singing, eating, washing, shopping, driving, cleaning, sleeping or just staring into their computers”
- Google: “it just tells us what we already know”
- News aggregators: “make a mockery of traditional news media and turn current events into a childish game of Trivial Pursuit”

- Social networking sites “exist so we can advertise ourselves” and have led to an “infestation of anonymous sexual predators and paedophiles.” (Keen 2006)

But it’s not just our “cultural values and moral standards” that are at stake, in Keen’s view the greatest risk is the threat to “the very traditional institutions that have helped to foster and create our news, our literature, our music, our television shows and our movies.”

Keen outlines his three casualties of Web 2.0:

- Truth
- Professional expertise
- Privacy

Truth

Keen quotes Edelman (the PR agency) “In this era of exploding media technologies there is no truth except the truth you create for yourself.” (Keen 2006) If this study were on the impact of social media on the accuracy of journalism we might reflect on this point in greater detail – but it isn’t.

Professional expertise

As will be shown in the case study section, in the early research for *moo*, certain sections of the BBC were sceptical of the project, and felt it was not something that would be taken seriously by media professionals. This is a similar view to that held by Keen on the threat of the Internet and social media to professional expertise.

Keen’s concerns on the impact of the Internet on professional expertise do merit greater scrutiny though. He sees this as a cost of democratisation and the price of free user-generated Internet content is that of the noble amateur “undermining the authority of experts who contribute to a traditional resource such as Encyclopaedia Britannica” and “citizen journalists have no formal training or expertise, yet they routinely offer up opinion as fact, rumour as reportage, and innuendo as information.” (Keen 2006)

He continues the argument by quoting Habermas: “The price we pay for the growth in egalitarianism offered by the Internet is the decentralised access to unedited stories. In this medium, contributions by intellectuals lose their power to create a focus.” (Keen 2006)

But declares himself to be not (totally) dystopian: “Digital technology is a marvellous thing, giving us the means to globally connect and share knowledge in unprecedented ways” and citing examples of where professional expertise and user-generated content co-exist:

- Citizendium: “What is refreshing about Citizendium is that it acknowledges the fact that some people know more about certain things than others”
- Joost: “a service that promises to provide professional creators of video with a peer- to-peer platform for distributing and selling their content over the Internet”
- The Huffington Post: “will enjoy the best of both worlds – the immediacy and energy of a blog site with original, quality reportage.” (Keen 2006)

Keens’ main concerns are best summarised in this statement: “But technology doesn’t create human genius. It merely provides new tools for self-expression.” He concludes:

“Instead of developing technology, I believe that our real moral responsibility is to protect mainstream media against the cult of the amateur.” (Keen 2006, p.102)

One might expect that to be a message which would be well received at a ‘mainstream media’ organisation like the BBC, and if there was a concern, or fear, among senior managers about opening up programme-making processes through social media, it would be about being drowned in a sea of ‘mediocrity’ – such as cat videos, comments hate, and hopelessly bad ‘me too’ reality programme ideas. To some extent, this fear may have arisen as a result of years of exposure to poor and badly executed ideas, or it may have been as a result of exposure to rhetoric like Keen’s - quite possibly both!

8.4.5.2 Viewing social media through a Weberian lens- ‘*The Limits of Peer Production*’

Turner et al. critique peer production of the technologically-enabled kind proposed by Levine et al., Shirky and Leadbeater et al. through the conceptual frameworks of Max Weber.

They identify five claims across the digitally utopian, pro-peer production literature:

- 1) “Pursuing psychologically gratifying labour within peer production is an unqualified good

- 2) Peer networks are an egalitarian and efficient means of producing information goods
- 3) Peer production necessarily realises ethical relationships between collaborators
- 4) Peer production is equally suited to all domains of social activity
- 5) Peer production is nonmarket and non-proprietary”

(Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011)

This is relevant because it provides insight into how bureaucratic organisations, such as the BBC, may benefit from these social technologies even though their proponents put them forward as the antidote to large gatekeeping bureaucracies.

In the paper, Turner et al. sought to “challenge the consensus around peer production and argue that the form is not bringing about the idealised society many consensus scholars suggest.” (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011) They define what they consider to be the consensus, citing for example, Henry Jenkins: “Jenkins, like many scholars, casts digital platforms for fans as oppositional, libratory spaces, forces that corporate media producers must reckon with: ‘producers who fail to make their peace with this new participatory culture will face declining goodwill and diminished revenues’” (Jenkins 2006, p.25), and Yochai Benkler: “Many scholars now assume that peer production resolves the key social and psychological problems of the industrial era and at the same time makes possible a society built on voluntary collaboration, the pursuit of psychological health, and the search for individual well-being. Benkler and Jenkins argue that this coordination in turn amplifies the power of ordinary citizens and fans alike.” (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011)

So that, in their opinion, these factors combine in a way that “makes peer production a powerful and attractive alternative to bureaucracies in the consensus view” leading to their conclusion that for digital utopians and “for many scholars this represents nothing short of a potential transformation of society.” (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011)

Key points from each of the five claims identified by Turner et al. will now be briefly examined and their relevance to this study outlined.

Peer production is an unqualified good

“These scholars tend to construe the separation of private and professional selves as a social problem that digital networks will finally solve. Yet, Weber argued that bureaucracies evolved in part precisely to overcome the lack of distinct spheres in feudal life.”

(Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011)

We will see evidence of this in the case studies, which will show that it is more of an issue for senior figures, who are to some extent in the public sphere, than to rank and file programme-makers who are largely unknown.

Peer production is egalitarian

“Contemporary portrayals of peer production fail to account for the ongoing importance of bureaucratic institutions in fostering and preserving knowledge that actually affords peer production.” (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011)

This is an important point: when the BBC facilitates peer production activities, it brings with it its full range of support mechanisms and knowledge. Thus, participants in social media activities to identify new writing talent will be supported by the BBC Writer’s Room, and budding filmmakers will be supported by the BBC Academy and so on. Without this provision, it is difficult to say if the peer production efforts would achieve the same quality as with it.

Peer production is ethical

Turner et al. put forward two hypothetical examples of where peer production may be subject to unethical behaviour:

“Looking at peer production through the lens of Weber, however, suggests that these peer governance mechanisms may not be as liberating as many theorists suggest. The absence of formal rules, for instance, allows charismatic individuals to determine who is appointed or dismissed according to fiat.” (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011)

Some might say this is not very different from the commissioning structures operating at the BBC, ITV, Sky and Channel 4! Likewise: “Gatekeepers can subscribe to opaque governing norms and all too often these norms reinforce broader social patterns of discrimination and power.” (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011). Evidence of these norms working against peers liberated by social technology through the *moo* project will be found in the main case study.

Peer production suits all forms of social activity

It is difficult to imagine the individual members of the UK media industry self-organising to devise and negotiate a license fee and then collect it, so Turner et al.'s contention that "Comparatively ephemeral peer networks simply cannot concentrate and consistently deploy the resources that bureaucracies can with their goal-oriented routines professionalised staff, and stable operating procedures" (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011) appears to have a basis in reality.

Similarly, the complex 21st century newsrooms providing corporate news need bureaucracies to exist and survive: "Quality journalism depends on a host of resources that may well be best concentrated in formal, bureaucratic organisations. These include human expertise, money, and a newsroom culture that supports aggressive, critical reporting on matters of public concern." (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011)

Peer production is nonmarket and non-proprietary

Turner et al. argue against the last of the five claims by stating: "There is simply nothing to suggest that peer informational projects must be nonmarket and non-proprietary, that other economic forces cannot leverage what they produce, or that they will not become part of bureaucratic systems." (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011). As Berry (2008) argues in his insightful review of *The Wealth of Networks*, if networks are 'indeed so wealth-generating they will be co-opted into mainstream 'industrial' ways of production... the corporate world may provide peer production for the rest of us' which is weak, verging on non-existent. But, if we consider the UK media, we can see that all forms of mainstream media have been successful in supporting their existing products and content with social technology, whether that is through user-generated content or participation ("the user is the content").

They conclude: "Today, we need to consider peer production not only as a challenge to bureaucratic forms, but as a complement and, at times, even an extension of their missions" and "we might begin to ask whether peer production may not simply be a break from, but also an extension of, previous forms of social and economic organisation." (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011).

Finally, they suggest that scholars need to interrogate peer production through a new set of research questions such as:

- What are the consequences of peer production's failure to develop institutional mechanisms that secure bureaucratic values?
- How do digital networks exist within the institutional matrix of everyday life?
- How may peer networks serve less as alternatives to Weber's iron cage of rationalisation, than as implements of its diffusion?

These are questions that will be reflected on in each of the case studies in the main research findings section.

8.4.5.3 Other criticism and comment

To what extent is this a threat to an elite or the 'disruption of a cartel' that is self-serving and works to exclude ideas and innovation? (Heppell 2008)

The provocateur Nicholas Carr asked the question: 'Is Google making us stupid?' in the *Atlantic* magazine in 2008. Carr argued that the flat, random access, hyperlinked nature of the way that Google accesses the world of information on the web is depriving people of the ability to make the deep mental connections they get from reading deeply, and without distraction (Carr 2008).

Acknowledging McLuhan, Carr develops his case:

"When the Net absorbs a medium, that medium is re-created in the Net's image. It injects the medium's content with hyperlinks, blinking ads, and other digital gewgaws, and it surrounds the content with the content of all the other media it has absorbed... The result is to scatter our attention and diffuse our concentration." (Carr 2008)

Other scholars refer to the 'Cyber Balkans' (Alstytne and Brynjolfsson 2005), whereby in some cases, rather than resulting in greater intellectual diversity, Internet usage can lead to greater specialisation:

"Non-geographic criteria for selecting acquaintances can include common interests, status, economic class, academic discipline, religion, politics or ethnic group. In some cases, the result can be a greater balkanization along dimensions that matter far more than geography, while in other cases more diverse communities can emerge." (Alstytne and Brynjolfsson 2005, p.2)

Jaron Lanier takes it further in '*You are not a gadget*':

"Here's one problem with digital collectivism: We shouldn't want the whole world to take on the quality of having been designed by a committee. When you have everyone collaborate on everything, you generate a dull, average outcome in all things. You don't get innovation." (Lanier 2010)

It can also be argued that 'Balkanisation' and 'online collectivism' are simply a defence against drowning in a sea of information. As more people join more and more social networking sites and expand their networks, the volume of information they receive increases exponentially due to the network effect. Social technology is compounding this through adding features such as Facebook's 'frictionless sharing' (Tene 2012) which can be considered an example of what some call 'over-sharing' (Rose 2011). As well as information overload there are concerns about privacy (Brandtzæg, Luders, and Skjetne 2010) and security (Rose 2011).

This makes some commentators ask: "Has this constant sharing of everything made us subject to the tyranny of group-think? And, if it has, what is this doing to our ability to innovate?" (Dao 2011)

When considering the research questions, the point was made that the most obvious of the new ways of working were simply the existing media bureaucracies taking their existing processes, such as phone-ins and newsgathering, and adding social media to the workflow. This seems quite a way from the revolution in media peer production some have suggested, indeed:

"Many of us who study new media still proceed too often from the assumptions that peer production is radically participatory, egalitarian, efficient, and psychologically fulfilling. As a result, we all too easily echo the line that peer production is revolutionizing the way that we produce and consume information, democratizing culture, and fostering a robust public domain."

"... Today, we need to consider peer production not only as a challenge to bureaucratic forms, but as a complement and, at times, even an extension of their missions." (Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2011, p.255)

Social media evangelism and rhetoric is shaping the discourse and perceptions about the potential of social media. Does the evidence of changes in ways of doing business justify the rhetoric about what could be achieved? The issue will be analysed in greater detail in the final thesis.

8.4.6 Difference in generational aptitudes for technology - aka the 'digital natives' debate

An aspect of technologically determinist rhetoric which has been particularly influential on the field of education and learning is the debate surrounding 'digital natives'. While there are a number of terms which mean much the same thing, but forward by a number of authors (list them) it is the concept of 'digital natives' as expressed by Marc Prensky, that the researcher considers to have had the greatest

bearing in the main case study. An examination of the original 'digital natives' hypothesis, and subsequent criticism, and development of the idea, will follow.

8.4.6.1 “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants”

This is an essay written for *On the Horizon* by, who it calls, the 'internationally acclaimed thought leader' Marc Prensky in 2001. *On the Horizon* makes no claim to be a peer-reviewed educational journal; its stated mission is “to inform educators about the challenges that they will face in a changing world and steps they can take to meet these challenges.” (On the Horizon 2005)

As with *On the Horizon*, the article makes no claims to be a piece of empirical research, yet has been very influential on discourse on how education could change as a result of the impact of digital technologies such as the Internet, computer games, smartphones and social media. Management thinking on learning and training inside the BBC was influenced by this debate, as will be shown in the main case study.

Prensky's governing idea is clearly stated:

“Our students have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach.” (Prensky 2001, p.1)

According to Prensky, this is not incremental change: “A really big *discontinuity*” has occurred. Prensky describes the event as a 'singularity', he continues: “This so-called “singularity” is the arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the 20th century.” Prensky, quoting his own description of this event, even going so far as describing it as “so-called”, demonstrates the rhetorical nature of his argument – although it is not clear if he uses “so-called” to indicate “his name that is commonly or usually used for something” or “a name or description that is not really right or suitable” (Miriam-Webster 2014).

He describes digital natives as having “...spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones and all the other toys and tools of the digital age”, and “computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives.” (Prensky 2001)

These claims seem fairly obvious to anyone who has spent more than a few minutes in the company of teenagers and young adults in the 21st Century, but from here Prensky makes a substantial intuitive leap, and suggests that:

“...today’s students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors.” (Prensky 2001, p.2)

This bold and unsubstantiated statement moves from observations about a change in the culture and behaviour of young people to the notion that their psychology, and the way their brains work, is somehow different to that of their parents or teachers. Prensky does not elaborate on how they are different...

By contrast “Digital Immigrants” are those not born into the digital age, who Prensky argues have an ‘accent’ that can be “seen in such things as turning to the Internet for information second rather than first, or in reading the manual for a program rather than assuming that the program itself will teach us to use it.” (Prensky 2001)

Prensky contrasts his claims about the learning habits of digital natives:

“Digital natives are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task. They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to “serious” work.” (Prensky 2001, p.2)

With similarly unsubstantiated claims about what he seems to consider to be the conservative and reactionary teaching methods of their educators:

“Digital immigrant teachers assume that learners are the same as they have always been, and that the same methods that worked for the teachers when they were students will work for their students now. But that assumption is no longer valid. Today’s learners are different.” (Prensky 2001, p.3)

If at some point someone involved in setting the direction for learning technology at the BBC had read Prensky’s original article, and reflected on their own behaviour, they may well have observed that they were a ‘digital immigrant’ by generation, but a ‘digital native’ by behaviour – especially the ‘turn to the Internet first for information’ behaviour which Prensky considered one of the strongest indicators of ‘digital natives’ (and which subsequent empirical research on the topic has demonstrated is a valid observation (Helsper and Eynon 2009) – this research will be considered in more depth in the following ‘Criticism’ sub-section). But it did not happen...

In line with the aim of *On the Horizon* to inform educators of “steps they can take”, Prensky proposes that: “Today’s teachers have to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students” which he suggests means “going faster, less

step-by-step, more in parallel, with more random access, among other things.”
(Prensky 2001)

He also suggests that educators should differentiate “‘Legacy’ content (which) includes reading, writing, arithmetic, logical thinking, understanding the writings and ideas of the past, etc. – all of our traditional curriculum”, and “‘Future’ content is to a large extent, not surprisingly, digital and technological.” (Prensky 2001)

Prensky’s “own preference for teaching Digital Natives is to invent computer games to do the job.” (Prensky 2001)

8.4.6.2 Criticism of the “digital natives” hypothesis

Selwyn (2009) contends that the “emblematic role of the child has been especially prominent in debates over the past ten years concerning the societal role of new digital technologies such as personalized, portable computerized devices and so-called ‘social software’ and ‘Web 2.0’ tools.” He goes on “... the first years of the 2000s have been subject to a particularly virulent strain of the child computer user discourse, typified by portrayals of ‘digital natives’ and the ‘net generation’”. (Selwyn 2009, p.364)

This discourse has been “influential in shaping contemporary public, political and academic expectation of the technological capabilities and demands of those children and young people who were ‘digitally born’ in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.” (Selwyn 2009, p.365)

The “loose body of digital native literature is predicated upon a common perception of generational divide and disjuncture”, and, Selwyn argues was (and is) “highly influential within popular and political discourse, as well as in some scientific discussion. The ‘commonsensical’ notion of the digital native is foregrounded increasingly in the thoughts and pronouncements of policymakers, technology vendors and opinion formers throughout the world.” (Selwyn 2009, p.366)

While Selwyn uses quotation marks as a rhetorical device – he does not provide a reference for his ‘commonsensical’ quotation, and does not provide any evidence of the foregrounded thoughts of the groups mentioned; we shall see in the main case study that for policy makers, technology providers and opinion formers within the BBC, this was certainly the case. And “the ease with which these commonsensical ‘stories’ of the digital native generation are being repeated and ‘re-told’ should be cause for some alarm” not least because “common-sense thinking is uncritical,

episodic, and disjointed, but it is also powerful because it is taken for granted.” (Ng 1997, p.44).

Selwyn contrasts and examines the portrayal of “empowered” and “disempowered” digital natives.

The former inhabit a world of ‘Networked Individualism’ (Castells 1996) where they benefit from a “distinct individualization of everyday life that derives specifically from digital technology use” but at the same time they are highly sociable and “digital cultures of communal creativity” are considered to be of great importance to them. As a result of both their individualization and collaboration, Selwyn suggests that commentators argue that digital natives have a “propensity to question, challenge and critique.” (Selwyn 2009, p.367)

He contrasts the empowerment of the young through digital technology with another argument – that the autonomy it can provide leads to the “disadvantaging and disempowerment of children and young people through a set of risks and dangers of technology use” (Selwyn 2009, p.368) and suggests that there are concerns over an “intellectual and academic ‘dumbing-down’ associated with young people’s digitally redefined relationships with information and knowledge.”

Other academics in the same field of study have drawn similar conclusions: “Brabazon’s depiction of the current net generation of undergraduate students laments a situation where “clicking replaces thinking” and scholarship consists of little more than “Googling their way” through degree courses and engaging in forms of “accelerated smash and grab scholarship.” (Brabazon 2007)

Selwyn criticizes the digital natives’ proponents for suggesting that there is a “culture of disrespect between young people and formal institutions” (hardly a new thing?), and that “depictions of digital natives all imply a profound disempowerment of older generations” (Selwyn, p.374).

A distinct tension is evident throughout the digital native literature between “the generations who grow up with these ways of thinking” (Leadbeater 2008) and the “often Web-illiterate” adults in their lives (Keen 2007) – at the BBC this was seen more in terms of staff vs management (although there is an implicit generational divide in that contrast) by some BBC digital pioneers and utopians.

A number of commentators warn against attempts to motivate and engage young people simply through the introduction of consciously trendy forms of technology use in formal institutions (Lankshear and Knoebel 2004)

Selwyn notes that educators are being encouraged to develop forms of learning that are based around the collaborative creation, rather than individual consumption, of content. This was certainly the case with the *moo* creative learning website examined in the main case study.

Leadbeater also suggests making learning “a more peer-to-peer activity... seeing children as part of the school’s productive resources, not just as its consumers.” (Leadbeater 2008)

Selwyn concludes his review of the literature: “the overall tenor of these discursive constructions of young people and technology tends towards exaggeration and inconsistency. The digital native discourse as articulated currently cannot be said to provide an especially accurate or objective account of young people and technology.” This is because these views are “grounded rarely, if at all, in rigorous, objective, empirical studies conducted with representative samples. At best the evidence base for much of the digital native literature is rooted in informal observation and anecdote.” (Selwyn 2009, p.376)

Finally, he summarises the digital natives’ commentary as coming from a technologically determinist point of view:

“Much of the digital native commentary can be criticized similarly in its technological determinist view of societal change, where digital technologies are seen to be imbued with a range of inherent qualities which then impact (for better or worse) on young users in ways which were consistent regardless of circumstance or context.” (Selwyn 2009, p.376)

In reviewing the empirical evidence for and against the existence of a distinct generation of digital natives, Selwyn argues that “empirical studies portray a rather more complex picture of children and young people’s use of new technologies than the digital native commentary would suggest” – the most important point being that it is actually rather more limited than as described in the rhetoric, and “for many children and young people, technology use at home or at school remains rather less expansive and empowering” than the exponents of the digital native hypothesis would have us believe (Selwyn 2009).

Likewise, Boyd has identified groups of “disenfranchised teens” and “conscientious objectors” whose lack of engagement in Web 2.0 demonstrates that digitally native thinking does not pervade an entire generation in a homogenous manner (Boyd 2007).

Because “educational and civic institutions continue to have a role in providing young people with equitable levels of access to digital technologies” and “many children and young people will continue to require support in the creation and communication of content”, then adults – teachers, librarians and others - will continue to need to support young people’s use of technology and information (Selwyn 2009, p.374). This will be demonstrated in the case study, where it was necessary for the ‘adults’ i.e. management and the training community to intervene in the website to provide context and content, and therefore make the initiative relevant and compelling to younger members of the BBC workforce.

Selwyn concludes “there are few ways in which the current ‘digital native’ generation can be said to constitute a total disjuncture and discontinuity from previous generations” but there is a “very real danger that if these rhetorical stories continue to be taken at face value and conflated with the realities of young people’s technology use, then they can only provide an ill-informed and unrealistic basis for the formation of effective policymaking and practice.” (Selwyn 2009, p.376)

8.4.6.3 Empirical research on the habits of ‘digital natives’

In *Digital natives: where is the evidence?* (Helsper and Eynon 2009) Helsper and Eynon used empirical data from the Oxford Internet Survey in an attempt to separate the things that digital natives do, from the demographic characteristics of who they are. In their opinion, the extent to which digital nativeness is determined by date of birth, or, exposure to new technology is “an important question for policy and practice” because:

“If characteristics of a digital native are determined by age then older generations are lost and a solution to a ‘digital disconnect’ between adults and younger people is out of sight. However, if being tech savvy is determined by exposure and experience then collaboration and learning is possible in environments where younger and older generations interact.” (Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.4)

While this, if true, is a clearly relevant concern in an environment where educators are predominately old, and those being educated young, e.g. schools, it is also relevant to corporate environments where the gap between those owning

knowledge, and those in pursuit of it is still significant, particularly one which even its own staff can criticise as “obsessed with youth” (Crick 2009).

Summarising Prensky, Tapscott and other commentators on the phenomenon, Helsper and Enyon defined a digital native as someone who:

- multi-tasks
- has access to a range of new technologies
- is confident in their use of technologies
- uses the Internet as first port of call for information, and
- uses the Internet for learning.

(Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.5)

They then explored the significance of three variables:

- age/generation (self-explanatory, although they argue there is now a second generation of digital natives, those born post Web 2.0)
- experience (years using the Internet)
- breadth of use (the number of different activities a person undertakes online).

Broadly, they identified that:

- younger people were more likely, but not exclusively, to be digital natives (although it could be argued that their online activities merely represent their age (e.g. music and entertainment), than a particular disposition towards technology usage for technology’s sake)
- those who had experienced the Internet for longer periods of time were more digitally native, and
- the higher the number of different activities a person undertakes online, the more the Internet is integrated in the person’s everyday life.

(Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.11)

These observations led them to conclude that although age, experience and breadth of use were important in identifying digital natives, the strongest predictor of using the Internet as first port of call, was the breadth of a person’s Internet use, not their age. At first sight, this observation seems very obvious – the more that people use the Internet, the more they use it – nevertheless it ran contrary to the received wisdom that this was down to a generational divide and not a combination of factors of which age was only one. In their own words “generation alone does not

adequately define if someone is a digital native or not.” (Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.14)

To some extent, they admit this finding does “support the arguments put forward by Prensky and others. A large proportion of young people use the Internet, they are more likely to come from media rich homes, are more confident about their skills and are more likely to engage in online learning activities, but “it is not helpful to define digital natives and immigrants as two distinct, dichotomous generations” because an individual’s Internet use lies “along a continuum of engagement instead of being a dichotomous divide between user and non-users.” (Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.15)

In terms of the use of technology in formal education, they consider their most important finding to be: “it seems that, adults, specifically teachers can “speak the same language” as their students if they want to.” (Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.15)

They acknowledge some of the more nuanced arguments from proponents of the digital natives/net process for young people who have always experienced technology as part of their everyday lives. However, for the old, “it is an accommodative process” which is more difficult for the user (Tapscott 1998).

In conclusion, Helsper and Eynon argue that the “frequent uncritical use of these and similar terms... could have a negative impact upon the perceived possibilities of teacher-student interaction.” It is clear that they consider the digital natives’ hypothesis to fall into the determinist view of technological change: “proponents... arguably support a view of society as a new era that is fundamentally different and signals a break with previous times; where technology is a key driver of this change.” Whereas their own view is more symptomatic, being of the opinion that “contemporary society is a continuation of the past and technology, while important, is not the only determining factor in our lives.” (Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.19)

They broaden this point into a more general criticism of the educational establishment’s tendency to “see technology as the ‘fix’ of ‘solution’ to many of the challenges the sector faces”, and, as will be shown in the main case study, technology was clearly seen as the ‘fix’ to the problem of engaging younger staff with the ideas generation and development aspect of programme-making at the BBC.

“”Prensky and others are right – we need to understand learners in order to teach them well. We are not saying education should not change, but

debates about change must be based on empirical evidence and not rhetoric.” (Helsper and Eynon 2009, p.19)

8.4.6.4 Analysis of the outcome of the ‘digital natives’ debate

Working from the standpoint that “claims about change are common in social science” and that “generations of students have been regularly described as fundamentally dissimilar” Bennett and Maton (2010, p.323) attempt to demonstrate that “moral panics over ‘new’ students are a recurrent phenomenon in education.”

In spite of empirical evidence to the contrary (as examined in the previous section) and the subsequent development of ideas by some of the original authors, e.g. Prensky in ‘Digital Wisdom’ (Prensky 2009) they argue that “the idea put forward of a fundamental gap between the technologically skilled and the unskilled persists”, and even though “this assertion no longer excludes older people with sufficient exposure to digital technologies, there is still an assumption that younger people are naturally more tech savvy. and “an undercurrent of technological determinism persists in debates.” (Bennett & Maton 2010, p.324)

They then conduct a further analysis of the empirical evidence for and against digital natives showing that while a majority of young people “access information and communicate via the Internet and mobile technologies”, other activities are not carried out as extensively – “content creation activities as measured by items such as creating text, graphics, audio or video are consistently lower than might be anticipated given many claims about what young people are doing with technology” (Bennett & Maton 2010, p.328). BBC executives might be forgiven for making this assumption given that they were considering the learning needs of young people who had chosen to work with one of the world’s largest public service broadcasters...

Having shown that young people are not a homogenous group of multi-tasking technological polymaths, but rather different types of users with their own needs, examples being ‘digital pioneers’, ‘creative producers’, ‘everyday communicators’ and ‘information gatherers’, they suggest that for young people, as well as others, technology is used for particular, highly contextualized purposes and chosen for its value, its suitability for the purpose, and the nature of the interactions offered. (Bennett & Maton 2010)

Looking more specifically at the issues for educational researchers, Bennett and Maton make the point that “everyday technology-based activities may not prepare

students well for academic practices”, giving the example that “general information-seeking strategies may have limited application to tasks requiring synthesis and critical evaluation.” They acknowledge the counterpoint that “many of these issues would become irrelevant if education became more like everyday life, i.e. if formal learning became more like informal learning”, which of course is the solution proposed by Prensky (2001) and Tapscott (1998). A solution which, according to Bennett and Maton, “de-privileges education, teachers and knowledge, while valorising the attributes of the tech-savvy student”, one which “discounts wholly the notion that formal education can and does provide an important complement to informal learning.” (Bennett and Maton 2010, p.322)

Therefore they propose that:

“A more promising approach is to consider formal educational contexts and everyday contexts as being different, comprising of different activities with different purposes and outcomes, without necessarily privileging one over another.” (Bennett and Maton 2010)

They do this through invoking a number of theoretical concepts and frameworks, each of which has relevance to the case studies in this thesis and merits scrutiny.

Networked Individualism

Castell’s concept of ‘Networked Individualism’ defined as a “new pattern of sociability based on individualism” (Castells 2001) and made possible by the Internet, “connects people not only through traditional family and local community networks, but also through geographically dispersed social networks” connected by digital technology (Bennett and Maton 2010, p.323). Through these new societal structures, people are engaged in shifting patterns of networks of weak ties which evolve and devolve and provide many changing contexts to their everyday activities.

Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘field’, ‘capital’ and ‘habitus’

These concepts provide a way of analysing the shifting networks of the networked individual. As discussed in the Methodology chapter, according to Bourdieu individual actors can occupy a range of social fields, each with its own ‘unwritten rules’. Habitus is an actor’s disposition, as shaped by experience, capital is the status and resources they possess and their position in the relevant hierarchy and field is the degree of autonomy of a particular context.

We will examine the habitus, field and capital of the different groups of actors in the main case study in greater detail, because, according to Bennett and Maton, the

concepts “enable a more nuanced understanding than previous conceptualizations which have drawn a sharp distinction between the everyday world and education, without acknowledging that there are many and varied contexts in which young people engage with technology.” (Bennett and Maton 2010, p.324)

Vertical and horizontal discourse

Bernstein uses this concept to differentiate between knowledge gained through informal everyday life and that gained in formal educational contexts. This concept is particularly critical to the understanding of the successes and failures of the main case study in consideration in this thesis...

Horizontal discourse, knowledge gained in everyday existence is “contextually specific and context dependent, embedded in ongoing practices... and directed towards specific immediate goals, highly relevant to the acquirer in the context of his/her life” (Bernstein 1999).

On the other hand, vertical discourse, knowledge gained through formal education, is more related to other knowledge than to specific contexts, taking the form of “a coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure” (Bernstein 1999, p.159) – its meaning is generated through other meanings, not social context. Bennett and Maton refer to this as ‘pedagogised knowledge’, knowledge which has “been selected, rearranged into a particular sequence within a curriculum, and recontextualised within specific contexts of teaching and learning” – it is not everyday knowledge in an educational context but knowledge with a different form. The insight which this concept provides is that we can see how attempts to provide horizontal discourse through contexts where users might typically expect a vertical discourse has the potential to cause confusion, and may undermine the transfer of knowledge and the ability of the learners to learn.

Bennett and Maton argue that taken together these three concepts “provide an entrée into the complex worlds people inhabit and suggest a means by which we can build a more sophisticated understanding of current phenomena” and “a better basis for understanding which ‘everyday’ technology-supported activities have most relevance for which forms of formal education, when, where, how and for which students.” (Bennett and Maton 2010, p.326)

8.5 Business Innovation

8.5.1 Organisational reasons why programme makers need to change the way they work with colleagues and audiences

Ten years on from first publication of *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, genuinely compelling examples of audiences co-creating with broadcasters are few and far between.

There is greater audience participation, and news organisations make much better use of crowd-sourcing and user-generated content (UGC) (Wardle and Williams 2008), but there are far fewer production teams who develop a programme running order with their audience. As we have seen, there are cultural shifts which mean that audiences will become increasingly suspicious of content presented to them in a didactic manner. So the aim of this research is to identify substantive 'theory' from those programme makers who are collaborating with their audience, so that other programme teams may think about how they could adapt that knowledge to suit their programme and their audience.

In an organisation as large as the BBC, with 8 TV Channels, dozens of radio stations and a website with more than 2 million pages, the number of genuinely co-created programmes is fewer than five. Yet more and more executives and workers in organisations understand that their boundaries are becoming more porous and they expect to collaborate with people outside - in an Economist Intelligence Unit study from 2007, 50% of respondents expected to be working more with people outside of their organisation by 2010 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007).

"Customer innovation has increased dramatically, and two technological developments will continue the increase: The Internet and e-mail support the dense networks of communication that allow the frequent sharing of small sparks, and new software tools that support design... make it easier than ever for a customer to contribute a spark to the web."
(Sawyer 2007, p.208)

In *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* essay on crowd-sourcing work on Linux open source software two distinct groups were described who could help an 'organisation' with its 'products' (Raymond 1999). The 'cathedral' is constructed by master craftsmen who are carefully chosen, even if by self-selection, but the open market of the 'bazaar' requires everybody and anybody to participate to be fully effective. Does this division apply to working with audiences on programme storylines and running orders?

8.5.2 Innovation Models

According to Schumpeter all innovation can be included in one of five categories of 'new combinations':

1. New products (or changes to existing products)
2. New production methods
3. New markets
4. New materials and supply
5. New organisation (ways of working) (Schumpeter 1934)

These five categories combine into a form of process or value chain. Since Schumpeter identified innovation as being critical to the survival of business and organisations there has been considerable progress in the ways that firms organise themselves to deliver innovation. In the mid-1990s, Rothwell identified five generations of business innovation models. These are:

- First-generation Innovation Process (1950s — Mid 1960s) – Technology Push
- Second-generation Innovation Process (Mid 60s — Early 70s) – Market Pull
- Third-generation Innovation Process (Early 70s — Mid 80s) – The Coupling Model
- Fourth-generation Innovation Process (Early 80s—Early 90s) – Integrated Innovation Process
- Fifth Generation (Early 90s -) - (Rothwell 1994)

The key difference in the latest model is the use of a powerful electronic toolkit to enhance the efficiency of these operations. (Rothwell 1994, p.25). The fifth generation (5G) innovation concept:

“... sees innovation as a multi-actor process, which requires high levels of integration at both intra- and inter-firm levels, and which is increasingly facilitated by IT-based networking.” (Tidd 2006)

Looking inside the firm, amongst other things Rothwell considers 'effective data sharing systems' to be an enabler of the new innovation model. Likewise, looking outside the firm 'effective data links with R&D collaborators' will also be an enabler (Rothwell 1994, p.23).

It could be argued that we are now moving towards a development of the 5G model which builds on the networked and open elements through the use of social

computing technology. The fifth generation model now has a name - Open Innovation (Chesburgh 2003).

Chesburgh defines open innovation thus:

“Open innovation is a paradigm that assumes that firms can and should use external ideas as well as internal ideas, and internal and external paths to market, as the firms look to advance their technology. Open innovation combines internal and external ideas into architectures and systems whose requirements are defined by a business model. The business model utilises both external and internal ideas to create value, while defining internal mechanisms to claim some portion of the value.” (Chesburgh 2003)

Within the open innovation model, there are three process archetypes for innovation emerging:

- Outside-In Process
- Inside-Out Process
- Coupled Process (Gassmann and Enkel 2006)

Some have argued that digital, networked systems are the social structure of the future, and that we live in an information intensive, post-bureaucratic, networked society (Castells 1996; Child and McGrath 2001), others argue that the bureaucratic form will persist (McSweeney 2006) and that it will come to dominate even in apparently open and connected social media communities such as blogs (Lowrey, Parrott, and Meade 2011) and wikis (Keegan and Gergle 2010). This is because:

“The leading multi-national media conglomerates and diversified Internet/digital companies (i.e. Google, Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Apple) have developed strategies to ensure that the Web 2.0 Internet environment reinforces rather than undermines existing power configurations. (Arsenault and Castells 2008)

However, while this may be true of the big corporate digital media companies, ‘islands of relatively independent public service’ such as the BBC (Arsenault and Castells 2008, p.709) and other aspects of the media – such as the film industry - are more open to open, networked forms and “have been in open innovation mode for many years” (Chesburgh 2003, p.xxvii). An example of this would be the BBC’s widening of the amount of programming open to independent producers via the ‘Window of Creative Competition’ (The Guardian 2008).

8.5.3 Innovation - Organisation, Leadership and Teams

The economic argument for existing firms was defined in 'The Nature of the Firm' (Coase 1937). The thesis will examine this paper to identify factors which lead to the creation of firms being enhanced through the implementation of social media. For example;

“Changes like the telephone and the telegraph, which tend to reduce the cost of organising spatially will tend to increase the size of the firm. All changes which improve managerial technique will tend to increase the size of the firm.” (Coase 1937)

Since Coase, our understanding of firm theory has become more knowledge-based (Grant 1996) and our paradigms for effective management have had to adapt to these new models (Drucker 1998). Some of these new models place the firm in an evolutionary context (Holzl 2005) which is aligned with other hypotheses in the study that are humanist rather than technologically determined. Coase's theories have also been revisited in the light of technological and cultural developments since the 30s.

The extent to which leaders can make use of social media to get round bureaucracies and better connect with worker-followers is also a possible benefit of social media. The case studies will examine if and how they undermine Weber's principles of bureaucratic organisations (Weber 1947) – or if bureaucracies can use the tools to their own advantage.

To what extent does the use of social media multiply and amplify the kind of linkages, low-key sharing, improvisation and weak collaboration that feed the sub-conscious with sufficient information and ideas to be an inspired source of new ideas?

“... many creative collaborations are almost invisible - and it's these largely unseen and undocumented collaborations that hold the key to group genius.” (Sawyer 2007, p.5)

Here work will investigate a field of sociologically influenced business thinking on making use of 'weak ties':

“People connected to groups beyond their own can expect to find themselves delivering valuable ideas, seeming to be gifted with creativity.” (Burt 2003, p.5)

“When people with bridging ties use communication media, such as the Internet, they enhance their capability to educate community members

and to organise, as needed, for collective action.” (Kavanaugh, Reese, and Carrol 2005, p.119)

Given the potentially exponential increase in the volume of information that is available to teams - the Network Effect (Metcalfe's Law) (Shapiro & Hal 1999, p.183) in this context can become a burden and inefficient (Shirky 2003). The research will assess ways in which teams and networks work together to manage the huge volumes of data and information that become available to them when they fully exploit the web (Hendler and Golbeck 2008).

While Dunbar's number (Dunbar 2010) suggests a maximum size for a social network of ~150 due to limitations on our communication capacity, there is an argument that weak ties are more beneficial to a group dynamic than strong ties (Granovetter 1973) because very strong ties can work against idea exchange as the members develop intricate knowledge of each other's beliefs, orientation and ideas. This 'Creativity-Centrality spiral' (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003) presents a dilemma for innovators within organisations – in order to get things done and progress their careers, they must strengthen their ties within the organisation, but in doing so they run the risk of neglecting the weak ties that provided them with information and inspiration for their ideas in the first place. This concept will be examined in much greater depth in the next section of this literature review.

Serendipity (Jones and Goffee 2009, p.102) and improvisation (Sawyer 2000; Sawyer K. 2007, pp.153-178) are also an important part of innovation, particularly when we consider innovation as a conversation, rather than process. So, an innovative environment is one where teams are able to maximise their ability to draw on weak signals and weak ties, without being consciously aware of their influence - one which social media could enhance.

8.6 Three key ideas about organisational innovation which could be enhanced through the use of social media

8.6.1 The importance of weak ties

Granovetter (1973) argues that most network models deal with strong ties, confining their applicability to small, well-defined groups. 'The strength of weak ties' discusses the relationships between groups and the impact of the degree of overlap between networks on diffusion of influence and information, mobility opportunity and community organization.

This is a largely qualitative analysis, before considering it in depth, what Granovetter means by 'ties' and 'bridges' requires explanation.

The strength of an interpersonal tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie. He argues this is sufficient to determine "on a rough intuitive basis, whether a given tie is strong, weak, or absent." (Granovetter 1973, p.1361)

A bridge is "a line in a network which provides the *only* path between two points", therefore it follows that "*no strong tie is a bridge*" (Granovetter's emphasis). Weak ties are not automatically bridges, but it is true, and important to Granovetter's hypothesis, that "all bridges are weak ties."

"This means that whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater social distance (i.e. path length), when passed through weak ties rather than strong." (Granovetter 1973 p.1362)

The relevance of this to innovation and the flow of ideas is that "some have indicated that early innovators are marginal" and that they "under conform to norms to such a degree that they are perceived as highly deviant" (Rogers 1962, p.197), while, others "find that those named more frequently adopt an innovation substantially earlier."

An attempt to resolve this contradiction of whether early innovators are central or marginal, was developed by Becker (1970) by considering "the perceived risks of adoption of a given innovation." Where an innovation is thought relatively uncontroversial, central figures lead to its adoption, otherwise marginal figures do – because of the greater desire of central figures to protect their professional reputation through exposure to risky innovations:

"the *first* adopters of innovations are marginal, the next group, 'early adopters', "are a more integrated part of the local social system than the innovators." (Rogers 1962, p.183)

Individuals with many weak ties are, Granovetter argues, best placed to diffuse difficult innovations since some of those ties will be local bridges. Developing the idea, Granovetter notes that "behaviour is shaped and constrained by one's network" and observes that there are "ways in which individuals can manipulate these networks to achieve specific goals."

"Both facets are generally supposed to be affected by the structure of one's network. Bott argued that the crucial variable is that of whether

one's friends tend to know one another ("close knit" network) or not ("loose-knit" network)." (Granovetter 1973 p.1369)

Looking at this variable in more depth, it is logical that: "ties in the (strong ties part of the network) tend to be people who not only know one another, but who also have few contacts not tied to ego as well", and in contrary, "in the 'weak' sector, however, not only will ego's contacts not be tied to one another, but they will be tied to individuals not tied to ego. Indirect contacts are thus typically reached through ties in this sector; such ties are of importance not only in ego's manipulation of networks, but also in that they are the channels through which ideas, influences, or information socially distant from ego may reach him." (Granovetter 1973, p. 1370)

This leads Granovetter to conclude: "the fewer indirect contacts one has the more encapsulated he will be in terms of knowledge of the world beyond his own friendship circle, thus, bridging weak ties (and the consequent indirect contacts) are important in both ways." (Granovetter 1973, p.1371)

What is the relevance of this theory to this study? Granovetter's review of the data from his survey generates the following observations:

- people receive crucial information from individuals they have forgotten
- weak ties are important in making mobility possible
- weak ties effect social cohesion. When people change jobs, they both move from one network of ties to another, but also establishing links between them

Each of these observations shows how networks of weak ties help ideas move around organizations and for innovations to spread. Social media should act as an amplifier for these kinds of ties and bridges and this accelerate the flow of ideas.

Pulling these ideas together, Granovetter concludes that:

"Especially within professional and technical specialties which are well defined and limited in size, this mobility sets up elaborate structures of bridging weak ties between the more coherent clusters that constitute operative networks in particular locations. Information and ideas thus flow more easily through the specialty, giving it some "sense of community" activated at meetings and conventions. Maintenance of weak ties may well be the most important consequence of such meetings." (Granovetter 1973)

Given that at the time of writing (1973) the Internet, World Wide Web, and social media as we understand them today did not exist, it is not surprising that Granovetter frames his theory in terms of physical spaces and actions. However, it is not difficult for the modern reader to see how if we substitute 'online forum' for

community, or use the word 'virtual' in front of 'meeting' then the ideas are just as relevant, if not more relevant to the Web 2.0 world.

8.6.2 Networks, holes and good ideas

Granovetter's concepts have been developed through empirical research by Ronald S. Burt into the association between weak ties (structural holes) and 'good ideas', with attendant impact on perception on the creativity of employees and their salaries, assessment and promotion. The three key themes developed by Burt will now be considered in depth.

8.6.2.1 The social origins of good ideas

The Social Origins of Good Ideas is the title of a 2003 paper by Ronald S. Burt. The paper demonstrates a link between a worker/manager's network capital and the perception within their organisation of how good their ideas are (Burt 2003).

Burt's hypothesis is that:

"...people who live in the intersection of social worlds are at higher risk of having good ideas... people connected to otherwise segregated groups are more likely to be familiar with alternative ways of thinking and behaving, which gives them the option of selecting and synthesising alternatives." (Burt 2003)

Burt found:

"Managers whose discussion networks more often spanned structural holes were more likely to express their ideas, less likely to have their ideas dismissed by senior management, and more likely to have their ideas perceived as valuable." and that "social capital created a vision advantage". His research showed "... good ideas were discussed in a way that reproduced the existing social structure. Good ideas emerged from the intersection of social worlds but spread in a way that continued segregation between the worlds." (Burt 2003)

Burt's main point is that people who act as brokers by bridging gaps across structural holes have better ideas.

However, it seems to the researcher that the research says they are perceived as having better ideas by senior management – and not the entire company. This is quite an important distinction – there are very bright people in organisations who are specialists and experts and quite happy doing what they do – a positive silo mentality (ignoring the fact that silo is generally a pejorative term) – and have no interest in climbing the corporate pole.

From my experience, a good example of this would be the Natural History Unit at the BBC, the idea of the Head of the NHU becoming Director General is laughable – why would they want to? But the idea that a group of this kind does not create huge value for the BBC is similarly ridiculous.

It seems that what the senior managers in Burt's study value (within the scope of the study) is the ability of people to act as brokers within an organisation bridging gaps between business units. He identifies four types of brokerage:

1. **Awareness** – the simplest act of brokerage is to make people on both sides of a structural hole aware of the interests and difficulties in the other group. People who can communicate these issues between groups are important because so much conflict and confusion in organizations results from misunderstandings of the constraints on colleagues in other groups. This is certainly a brokerage activity that can be performed using social media.
2. **Transferring best practice** – this is a higher level of brokerage. People familiar with activities in two groups are more able than people confined within either group to see how a belief or practice in one group could create value in the other and to know how to translate the belief or practice into language digestible in the target group. As with awareness, this is an activity that can be delivered via social media.
3. **Drawing analogies between seemingly irrelevant groups** – people who recognize that the way other groups think or behave may have implications for the value of operations in their own group will have an advantage over those who do not. This can be difficult for those who have spent a long time confined inside one group – talk of people being institutionalized in the BBC can be heard fairly commonly in the experience of the researcher (and may even be applicable to him from time to time...). Such people often look for differences between themselves and others to justify their assertion that their situation is different so that they can feel comfortable ignoring beliefs and behaviours different from their own. A more complex act of communication than the first two, and one that is more likely to be difficult to perform using social media.
4. **Synthesising new beliefs and behaviours** that combine elements from multiple groups. People familiar with activities in two groups are more likely to see new beliefs or behaviours that combine elements from both groups. Although the broker can use social media to observe the different activities that they wish to synthesise, as with drawing analogies, communicating the

synthesized idea is a complex activity that will be difficult to perform through exclusive use of social media.

Thus, it is quite easy to understand how brokers are critical to organisational learning and creativity, and are key to driving and embedding change in organisations. Burt goes as far as to assert that “people whose networks span structural holes have early access to diverse, often contradictory, information and interpretations, which gives them a competitive advantage in seeing good ideas” and, in Burt’s opinion, this means that “organisations with management and collaboration networks that bridge structural holes in their markets seem to learn faster and be more productively creative.” (Burt 2004, pp.356-357)

Burt identifies a number of issues and behaviours which contribute to and reinforce what is commonly known as a silo mentality; this term is used at the BBC in a largely pejorative sense. These are:

- Managers who are part of dense, closed networks were more likely to have their ideas dismissed or seen as low value, so have learned not to express ideas. They then withdraw into the closed group to wait for orders, thus continuing the isolation of the group.
- Groups controlled by task-focussed senior leaders are less likely to develop ideas through brokerage even if the organisation incentivises and rewards this. Here is an example quote from the study: “I don’t want my people even thinking about alternatives. They spend two weeks thinking about an alternative, only to learn what we have is 90% as good. The result is that they wasted two weeks and I’m behind schedule. I get some complaints about stifling creativity, but all I want is to be good enough and on schedule.”

If this kind of attitude is then reinforced by a high degree of value being placed on personal loyalty, then it is easy to imagine an organisation riddled with silos.

Social convenience is a large factor in determining who a manager discusses ideas with, even among both local and enterprise brokers, so if ideas are taken up, they spread in a way that continues segregation between groups.

The majority (69%) of managers excluded their manager from the discussion they had around their idea. This reinforces the concept of networks, and not hierarchies being how work gets done in organisations (Bryan et al. 2007). Instead, managers

sought out the most central person of higher rank in their network – who Burt refers to as the “informal boss”.

Burt acknowledges two issues with the research. The first is one of methodology – he only knew about the people with whom managers had their most detailed discussions about their idea and not ALL the people they contacted.

The second is less of a criticism, more just a reflection of the difference between ideas and action. On revisiting, the company he found that of the 100 top ideas, only 16 were being worked on. Of course, this may just be a reflection of resource constraint. Not surprisingly, the factors which lead to those 16 being perceived as being good, also related to their chances of being selected for resource.

My own criticism of the research would be that Burt always takes the view that social networks lead to good ideas, when this could be a chicken or egg situation. That is, good ideas give an individual the ability to create extensive bridges and extend their networks. This often seems to be the case in the media where powerful ideas will open many doors, sometimes even for those with little relevant network capital.

This idea is developed more thoroughly in the concept of the ‘Creativity-Centrality’ spiral, which is reviewed after two more of Burt’s ideas have been considered.

8.6.2.2 Structural holes and good ideas

In the development of his ideas in *Structural holes and good ideas* (Burt 2004), Burt considers more explicitly the impact of brokerage across structural holes on employee’s salary, job evaluations and promotion prospects, finding that “Managers who often discussed supply-chain issues with managers in other groups were better paid, received more positive job evaluations, and were more likely to be promoted”, and that “... the company rewarded managers for building relations across structural holes in the organization. Brokerage is linked with promotion, positive job evaluations, and high salary relative to peers.” He also looked at the implications for good ideas and ‘creativity’ (Burt 2004).

After excluding the effect of education, experience and other factors on salary, Burt was able to identify that “... a stronger salary association with brokerage in the higher ranks as a manager becomes more the author of his or her own job and as success depends more on reading the organization to identify valuable projects and knowing who can be brought together to implement the projects.” (Burt 2004, p.371)

When it came to job evaluations, Burt found that managers whose discussion networks spanned numerous structural holes had twice the odds of being evaluated “outstanding” in their assessment. Similarly, when looking at promotions, those managers brokering connections across segregated groups had “significantly higher odds” of a promotion (or above average salary increase) (Burt 2004, p.376).

So, in terms of its impact on the basic management levers of pay, promotion and evaluation, spanning structural holes would appear to be strongly incentivised by organisations. Even if this incentivisation is implicit, rather than explicit, it could reasonably be expected that ambitious managers would seek to bridge structural holes and develop their networks with weak ties to increase their social, network and cultural capital. One might also expect the more technically and media literate to see the advantages of social media in achieving this.

When Burt looked at ‘good ideas’ he found that “... managers constrained in a closed discussion network were less likely to have valuable ideas and more likely to have their ideas dismissed...” whereas “managers whose networks spanned structural holes were more likely to express an idea and to discuss it with colleagues, have the idea engaged by senior management, and have it judged valuable.” (Burt 2004, p.386).

Developing his concept of ‘good ideas’ into a more general notion of ‘creativity’ it can be seen that Burt considers the common understanding of creativity to be a rhetorical form of creativity similar to the ‘Creative Genius’ romantic rhetoric of creativity (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006) discussed earlier in this literature review. Burt also identifies that “Sociologists typically emphasise environmental factors in the prediction of creativity – factors such as the family and era variables in Simonton’s analysis...” (Burt 2004)

However, Burt’s own conclusion is rather more straightforward: “The more consequential creativity implication in terms of brokerage is the shift in focus from the production of ideas to the value produced. The brokerage value of an idea resides in a situation, in the transaction through which an idea is delivered to an audience; not in the source of the idea, nor in the idea itself.” Similarly, he suggests that:

“People with connections across structural holes have early access to diverse, often contradictory, information and interpretations, which gives them a competitive advantage in seeing and developing good ideas.”
(Burt 2004)

So, those with established bridges across structural holes enjoy a network and cultural capital advantage over those who do not. Given the highly competitive nature of the internal market for commissions and programme-making budgets in the BBC, one might expect a website that attempts to span these holes to be seen as potentially weakening their position by those bridging networks. Burt continues:

“People connected to groups beyond their own can expect to find themselves delivering valuable ideas, seeming to be gifted with creativity. This is not creativity born of genius; it is creativity as an import-export business. An idea mundane in one group can be valuable in another.”
(Burt 2004)

Burt’s concept of ideas as an ‘import-business’ and their potential influence on the perception of the creativity of the ideas brokers would have been very useful to those designing the learning website in the main case. It might have alerted them to the political risk associated with undermining the apparent creativity of those acting as ideas brokers by disintermediating them. Given the cultural capital that is attached to perceived creativity then one might expect the possibility that ideas brokers might be threatened by the site and might resist it.

Finally, the conclusion Burt draws that is most relevant to the research questions under consideration here:

“In our age of ready technology, people often make the mistake of thinking that they create value when they have an idea born of sophisticated analysis. That is not true. An idea is as valuable as an audience is willing to credit it with being. An idea is no less valuable to its recipients just because there are people elsewhere who do not value it.”
(Burt 2004, p.388)

So, “there is a market for the information arbitrage of network entrepreneurs” because across groups in organisations “creativity is a diffusion process of repeated discovery in which a good idea is carried across structural holes to be discovered in one group of people, rediscovered in another, then rediscovered in still others – and each discovery is no less an experience of creativity for people encountering the good idea.” (Burt 2004, p.389)

Burt concludes: “In this light, there is an incentive to define work situations such that people are forced to engage diverse ideas”, what management at the French company Rhone-Poulenc called ‘*le vide*’ and as discussed elsewhere in this review.

8.6.3 The Creativity-Centrality Spiral

This concept, outlined in a 2003 article '*The social side of creativity: a static and dynamic social network perspective*' by Jill Perry-Smith and Christina Shalley, builds on Granovetter's and Burt's ideas (among others). They observed that previous research in this area tended to "view networks as static, and do not consider networks as changing over time." Their six propositions merit in-depth investigation as they provide an organizational rationale for managers with a track record in 'creativity' to continually reinvent and evolve their networks in order to sustain their ability to deliver good ideas – to view creative networks as dynamic.

8.6.3.1 Definitions

Usefully, they define what they mean by creativity in the context of work and organisational behaviour:

"Individuals can be creative in their jobs by generating new ways to perform their work, by coming up with novel procedures or innovative ideas, and by reconfiguring known approaches into new alternatives. Thus, creativity does not have to exist only on specific types of projects; it can occur while an individual performs in various work situations. We define creativity at work – an individual level construct – as an approach to work that leads to the generation of novel and appropriate ideas, processes, or solutions." (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, p.90)

This is a broad definition of creativity in the workplace – the kind of pan-organisational creativity which was the goal of the BBC's Making It Happen initiative starting from when Greg Dyke was Director General – "to be the most creative organization in the world" (BBC, 2006). The projects and programmes under consideration in this thesis take a more programme-specific definition of creativity – specifically ideas for new and compelling TV, radio and online programmes and formats. Nevertheless, the concept remains applicable, even with the tighter definition, as the need for uniqueness applies in both definitions.

"This definition can involve creative business strategies, creative solutions to business problems, or creative changes to job processes. In order to be considered creative, however, these outputs must have some level of uniqueness compared to other ideas." (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003, p. 90)

8.6.3.2 Social context and ties

They argue that creativity exists in a social context, and that creativity depends on two key combinations of factors:

- interpersonal communication and interpersonal interaction, and
- creativity-relevant skills

The communication of ideas and information should improve creativity, and the influence of external factors should improve creativity-relevant skills – even among those with an innately high level of skill.

They then look at the influence of the specific kinds of social ties identified by Granovetter (Granovetter 1973). Weak ties are important to creativity because “actors connected by weak ties are more likely to be different because they are not immersed in the same interconnected web of relationships, shaped to some extent, by similarities. Therefore, weaker ties are more likely to connect people with diverse perspectives, different outlooks, varying interests and diverse approaches to problems” (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, p.94). So, the access to more non-redundant information and diverse social circles facilitates a variety of processes which should help foster creativity:

1. access to more information should enhance knowledge relevant to creativity and/or domain-relevant knowledge
2. exposure to different approaches and perspectives should enhance creativity-relevant skills, such as flexible thinking
3. weak ties facilitate autonomy, thus avoiding conformity, which is generally considered to hinder creativity (Amabile 1996).

This contrasts with strongly-tied networks, where information and perspectives circulate quickly and becomes redundant, and social pressures lead to conformity, leaving less opportunity for helpful information to surface from other networks.

This leads to the first set of Perry-Smith and Shalley’s propositions:

“Proposition 1a: Weak ties should facilitate creativity at work compared to strong ties.

Proposition 1b: Relatively many weak ties and fewer strong ties should correspond with higher creativity at work than many strong ties and fewer weak ties.

Proposition 1c: A larger number of weak ties should correspond with higher creativity at work, up to a point; beyond this point, there is less benefit realized from larger numbers of weak ties, and they may constrain creativity at work.” (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, p.95)

So, if an actor is able to make use of social media to increase the number of networks with which they have weak ties, they should then see an improvement in their creativity at work – or at least their colleagues’ perception of it, if we follow Burt’s models more closely. We will see the realisation of this in several of the case

study interviews with senior BBC leaders, who grasped the possibilities to increase their network capital through the use of social media, and thus enhance the perception of their creativity.

8.6.3.3 Network position

The position of an actor within a network also influences their ability to be creative. According to Perry-Smith and Shalley: “Actors occupying closeness centrality positions are likely to feel more comfortable taking informed risks” and “they are likely to be perceived as having higher status by the rest of the members of the network” (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003).

However, too much closeness can become a constraint as the overly-centralized are pulled in too many directions and become overly aware of constraints, conflicting viewpoints and barriers to new ideas, which leads to stress, which also then reduces creative potential. Greater closeness is also associated with extensive domain-relevant knowledge which may prevent things being seen from a broad perspective – or may even make them seem impossible.

Which provide the basis for the second proposition:

“Proposition 2: Holding constant ties outside the network, individuals with greater closeness centrality are likely to have higher creativity at work, through some moderate level of closeness centrality, beyond this level, greater closeness centrality may constrain creativity.” (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, p.98)

This contrasts with the third proposition, based on the ability of those in peripheral positions to make connections which can facilitate creativity:

“Proposition 3: Individuals occupying a peripheral position in a network with a large number of connections outside the network will have the highest creativity at work, compared to both more central actors and other peripheral actors with fewer outside connections.” (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, p.99)

8.6.3.4 The Creativity-Centrality Spiral

“Proposition 4: An individual’s creativity at work will lead him or her to occupy a position of higher closeness centrality.” (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, p.99)

Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003) suggest two phases for the creativity-centrality spiral.

- **Phase One** – the spiral is positive with centrality facilitating creativity, and creativity facilitating centrality.

But then a turning point is reached, driven by several processes. As the spiral develops, the successful actor is driven closer and closer to the centre. Weak relationships that were a source of diverse information become strong, and as the actor spends more time with people in the network, their thoughts converge because of an increase in shared experiences and redundant information sharing – “This leads to creativity stifling conformity.” (Perry-Smith & Shalley 2003, p.100)

Other ways in which Perry-Smith and Shalley argue that increased centrality reduces creativity are:

“... the person who is too central... or has been central over a long period of time represents the person entrenched within the status quo of the organization or profession.”

“...it almost becomes unmanageable or extremely difficult to break free of the web of ties and to see beyond them to new ideas.”

“... the individual probably spends less time with weak ties outside the network, so he or she is less likely to be exposed to fresh new ideas and approaches.” (Perry-Smith & Shalley 2003, p.100)

And so the next phase commences:

- **Phase Two** – centrality will not be associated with higher levels of creativity and may actually constrain creativity

Because of prior creative contributions and his or her ensuing central position, the highly central person embodies and represents the field. They have to spend time maintaining a network of much stronger ties and this diverts attention away from creativity. Thus, centrality becomes a constraint, “... and the spiral becomes self-correcting, with increasing centrality leading to lower levels of creativity.” (Perry-Smith & Shalley 2003, p.100)

This then means the actor is less likely to become more central – so a stable position is reached, or the actor consciously tries to become less central – and thus generates new networks of weak ties and re-energises their reputation for creativity. Perhaps the most famous example of the latter at the BBC is Sir David Attenborough turning down the job of Director General:

“In 1972 he was up for the Director General’s job. There is a chapter in his autobiography, *Life on Air*, which was first published in 2002 and updated this year, headed ‘The Threat of the Desk’. It involves a vision of himself steering something called the Management Methods Committee when he could have been hanging out with gorillas in Rwanda, picking leeches off his legs.” (Tyrrel 2010)

The phases discussed above are summarised in the fifth set of propositions:

“Proposition 5a: In phase 1 a positive, self-reinforcing spiral exists between centrality and creativity such that an increase in one leads to an increase in the other, until centrality becomes constraining. In phase 2 the spiral becomes self-correcting such that an increase in centrality no longer leads to an increase in creativity.”

“Proposition 5b: The more creative the person is, the more he or she will move from a position with many weak ties and fewer strong ones to one with many strong ties and many (but proportionally fewer) weak ties.”

“Proposition 5c: As an individual becomes more central, his or her creativity should continue to increase at a decreasing rate, up to a point. Beyond this point, increase in centrality may constrain creativity.” (Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, p.101)

Propositions 5b and 5c succinctly outline the dilemma facing the ambitious manager in a company where advancement is, in part, dependant on a reputation for creativity – do they continue to climb an increasingly narrow ladder, moving further away from the networks that provide the ideas that fuel their reputation – or do they choose to stay out on the fringes – where the cool ideas are, but where power (and salaries) are less? As we will see in the case studies, some BBC senior managers saw the potential in social technology to allow them to be both central, and to maintain networks of weak ties concurrently.

8.7 The relative value of internal and external knowledge

Menon and Pfeffer (2003) ask: “How do managers value knowledge possessed by members of their own organization and how do they value the knowledge possessed by outsiders?”. This question, and their findings and conclusions are relevant to the case studies in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, because they enable us to place the relative appeal of internal versus external social networking platforms at the BBC in the context of other organization.

Secondly, they also provide insight into the difficulties production management faced in convincing commissioners of the relative merits of internal proposals, compared to those from external production companies. This issue was a particular consideration for the team developing *iCreate*, which built on the learning from *moo.gateway*.

One answer to Menon and Pfeffer’s question is often referred to as ‘Not invented here’ syndrome. This comes about when managers inside an organisation form tight groups which come to value internal knowledge as superior to knowledge from

outside their organization. This is consistent with theories of 'ingroup favouritism' and outgroup derogation (Brewer 1979) but they argue that "organisational reality frequently contradicts it."

In reviewing the key literature on this, they find that "when people value an insider's knowledge, they often gain little in the way of personal self-enhancement, and instead face the prospect of legitimating (sic) a direct competitor for organisational rewards." In contrast, the incentives to look at external competition mean that "managers are motivated to learn from competitors because they fear being outcompeted in the marketplace, and they can learn and borrow without facing the status costs of validating a direct (internal) competitor." (Menon and Pfeffer 2003, p.501). In fact managers gain status by using external contacts and knowledge (Burt 1992).

Also, the availability of internal knowledge can "simultaneously reduce its valuation through a series of perceptual processes whereby its flaws appear more visible simply because both insiders and their ideas can be examined more closely", and they observe that "the difficulty of accessing external knowledge makes it scarce and unique, thereby heightening its perceived value".

Based on these observations they developed three propositions:

"1. Internal competition raises the status costs of valuing internal knowledge."

"2. External competition increases motivations to value external knowledge."

"3. Although availability lowers the financial costs of obtaining and using internal knowledge, it also subjects it to greater scrutiny and criticism. While internal knowledge comes to be seen as familiar and flawed, scarce and difficult to obtain external knowledge retains its uniqueness and value." (Menon and Pfeffer 2003, p. 503)

In an organisation where a great deal of an individual's success is down to how they exploit their cultural capital (and in the opinion of the researcher, this is clearly the case at the BBC) then we can see how Proposition 3 in particular will incentivize the acquisition of knowledge from outside the organization.

In a series of case studies and surveys they were able to confirm their propositions and made some additional observations: "proximity permitted inside observers to see the imperfect processes that lay behind the creation of even unblemished final products" and "given that external knowledge is frequently more costly and difficult

to obtain than proximate internal information, managers become particularly committed to affirming the value of knowledge that was costly to obtain.” (Menon and Pfeffer 2003, p.518)

They identified the following possible consequences from their observations: “overvaluing external knowledge can negatively affect an organisation’s ability to innovate, implement knowledge, and maintain employee morale” noting that companies in the case studies (Fresh Choice and Xerox) were “outsourcing knowledge and idea production to outsiders while stifling, or at least not encouraging, internal innovation.” They also concluded that the case study organizations “wasted tacit, detailed, and available internal knowledge and pursued systematically less rich external knowledge” which, because of “weaker (or non-existent) social ties to outsiders as compared to insiders, such knowledge can be more difficult to implement.”

While noting that their research, being based on two case studies and some managerial surveys, is “exploratory and preliminary” their conclusions are particularly relevant to the internally competitive nature of the BBC, arguing that their observed processes “are likely to dominate the ‘not invented here’ syndrome particularly in internally competitive organizations, and can produce detrimental consequences for innovation, implementation and internal morale.”

“The dilemma of acquiring sustainable competitive advantage is particularly challenging if... managers systematically value external knowledge more than internal knowledge... firms would be highly motivated to copy away the competitive advantage of others, while being less motivated to generate competitive advantage internally.”

“It is only by doing something unique, valuable, and difficult to imitate, that companies can achieve advantage in the marketplace,”

“organizational practices that enable managers to share credit for internal knowledge transfers and to acknowledge the biases arising from close oversight may be less likely to promote dysfunctional search, and more likely to foster the development of internally-generated competitive advantage.” (Menon and Pfeffer 2003, p.522)

8.8 Social media in a corporate environment

There are new theories of the firm, specifically relevant to this thesis, which describe firms in the context of Web 2.0, such as ‘Enterprise 2.0’ (Bughin 2008; McAfee 2009).

McAfee is the originator of the term 'Enterprise 2.0' and gives the following definition:

"Enterprise 2.0 is the use of emergent social software platforms by organisations in pursuit of their goals". (McAfee 2009, p.73)

'Emergent social software platforms' (ESSPs) share characteristics such as tags, links and multi-authoring and include the following kinds of web software (with a well-known consumer example given in each case):

- Collaborative documents or wikis (Wikipedia)
- Social networking sites (Facebook)
- Social bookmarking (delicious)
- Media-sharing (YouTube)
- Blogging (WordPress)
- Search (Google)
- Location based services (craigslist)

There will now be a brief outline of research which will be used to ground the findings of the case studies and conclusions in the subsequent chapters.

The ability of wikis to engage knowledge workers in a more participatory information environment and the effect on organisation culture has been examined (Hasan & Pfaff 2006).

Other research considers how employees are using social bookmarking tools to easily store and find collections of material in large information spaces (Millen, Feinberg, and Kerr 2005), and the motivations behind employees using social media tools (DiMicco et al. 2008; The New York Times 2011). Perhaps surprisingly, research has even shown that non-work related 'cyber-loafing' can increase employee productivity by providing a restorative function (Lim and Chen 2011).

More specifically with regard to the role of social media in innovation and innovation processes, research has looked at: how social technology can be applied to business process lifecycle management (Mathiesen, Watson, Bandara and Rosemann 2011); be used to harness tacit knowledge for innovation (Khan & Jones 2011); establish online innovation communities (Hautz, Hutter, Fuller, Matzler, and Rieger 2010) and virtualise the serendipity of water cooler style communication (Brzozowski 2009)

There are proposals for crowd-sourced open innovation models, an example of which follows:

- Ideation forum
- Seed the conversation
- Encourage participants to interact
- Act on the results
- Reach out to key contributors (Shih 2009)

Nevertheless, there is little which looks at the use of social media and social networks to deliver innovative ways of working in the media industry. Researchers have investigated: how workers use social networks as a source of competitive advantage and, at the same time, support and co-operation (Antcliff, Saundry, & Stuart 2007); how business innovation might provide growth opportunities to documentary film producers (Vladica & Davis 2008); how 'weak signals' might be used in journalism (Uskali 2005) and how actor-network and communities of practice theory can help understanding of innovation in online newsrooms (Weiss & Domingo 2010)

So, this project will help to fill a gap in existing knowledge by developing substantive theory on how factual programme-makers can usefully involve audiences and colleagues from outside their existing team in their editorial decision-making.

9 Methodology & Ontology:

Towards an Epistemology of Reflexive Media Practice

9.1 Introduction

As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, at the time of its inception there was no off-the-shelf methodology which realistically reflected the nature of this study. While this could be said of many PhD studies, it nevertheless presents a challenge, so the project also asks the question: “What is an appropriate methodological approach for an experienced media practitioner wishing to base a full PhD study on their professional knowledge?”

In this section we will attempt to answer this question by considering Schön’s model for an epistemology of practice (Schön 2001), examining the similarities to Kemmis and Carr’s critical approach to action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986) and critiquing the role of the researcher in their own research by drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1984).

We will then discuss some specific methods which have been useful, namely a case study method (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2000) and an elite interview technique (Richards, 1996; Berry 2002).

Having looked at the methodological approach, and specific methods used within that approach, the ontology of the knowledge derived from the specific case studies will be examined. The researcher’s preferred approach has been to consider the learning from the cases from the viewpoint of ontological parsimony (Glock 2003).

First of all, the background of the researcher and this study, prior to commencement of the PhD proper, merit discussion as they have considerable bearing on the methodological approach chosen.

9.2 Background

After working in a management consultancy which took a research-led approach bringing business school academics and businesses together, the researcher started to question the validity of much of what passed as ‘knowledge’ in the business adoption of social media. While many of the ideas contained in books such as *Here Comes Everybody* (Shirky 2009), *Wikinomics* (Tapscott and Williams 2008)

or *We Think* (Leadbeater 2008) appeared useful on a common sense level, the knowledge appeared to the researcher to be anecdotal in nature, lacked an empirical basis, and seemed to be accepted uncritically by many working in the field. As we shall see in more detail in the literature review, several of the key texts are akin to manifestos, rather than being genuinely research-based (Van Dijck and Nieborg 2009).

The researcher was working on a social learning project at the BBC which he put forward as the main case study in this project's proposal. This project was educational, and with what could be considered to be an emancipatory element, as one of its aims was to provide access to BBC Commissioning channels for those who did not have regular access through their existing role or network.

The researcher's initial proposal was, with the benefit of hindsight, alarmingly positivist. He shared a lack of confidence in the knowledge derived from experience and practice similar to that described by Schön in 2001.

The researcher believes that much of the personal benefit of this doctoral study has been in moving from a positive approach to one more rooted in critical thinking. There has also been considerable, and more transferrable, benefit in having to determine a new methodological approach because one did not exist which adequately covered the researcher's circumstances and that of this study.

Thus, the methodology developed needs to take account of:

- the existence of a significant body of prior knowledge
- the emancipatory nature of the main case
- the role of the researcher as an active participant in the main case

in order to legitimize the knowledge that is contained within it.

9.3 Legitimising Prior Knowledge - Schön's Epistemology of Practice

In 1974 Schein proposed that professional knowledge is comprised of:

- an underlying discipline or basic science component upon which the practice rest which it is developed
- an applied science or engineering component from which many of the day-to-day diagnostic procedures and problem solutions are derived

- a skills or attitudinal component that concerns the actual performance of services to the client, using the underlying basic and applied knowledge. (Schein 1974)

Glazer argues that minor professions such as social work, education, divinity and town planning are beguiled by the success of major professions such as law, medicine and business. As a result, they have tried to substitute a basis in scientific knowledge for their traditional reliance on experience and practice. We could argue that 'the media' (specifically in this project the study of media practice), is such a minor profession, and in a similar predicament.

According to Schön there is "an epistemology of professional practice rooted historically in the positivist philosophy which powerfully shaped both modern university and the modern conception of the proper relationship of theory and practice." (Schön 2001, p.5)

"Research and practice are perceived to be linked by an exchange in which researchers offer theories and techniques applicable to practice problems, and practitioners, in return, give researchers new problems to work on in a practical test of the utility of research results.

... But real-world problems did not come well formed. They tend to present themselves, on the contrary, as messy, indeterminate, problematic situations." (Schön 2001, p.6)

The media industry learning problems under scrutiny in the case studies researched here are not well formed, they are indeed 'messy situations'. Schön argues:

"In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground which overlooks a swamp. From the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to a solution through the use of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy low lands, problems are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution. The irony of the situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or to society at large, however great the technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner is confronted with a choice. Shall he or she remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to his standards of rigour, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems and non-rigorous inquiry?" (Schön 2001, p.7)

If we accept Schön's argument, we accept that the interesting problems that are most useful to solve, that are also messy, are not those ideally suited to technically rational research techniques. If we consider that we need to apply those techniques,

in order for research to be seen to have been conducted rigorously, then we create a problem:

“By defining rigour only in terms of technical rationality, we exclude as non-rigorous much of what competent practitioners actually do, including the skilful performance of problem-setting a judgement on which technical problem-solving depends. Indeed, we exclude the most important components of competent practice.” (Schön 2001, p.7)

So, in wanting to take a positivist, technically rational approach to legitimizing his professional knowledge, gained almost entirely in Schön’s “swampy low lands” the researcher was effectively contradicting himself or, at least, trying to apply positivist theory and techniques to problems that they were very unsuited to.

“Positivism and the positivist epistemology of practice now seem to rest on a particular view of science, one now largely discredited... Perhaps there is an epistemology of practice which takes full account of the competence practitioners sometimes display in situations of uncertainty, complexity, and uniqueness. Perhaps there is a way of looking at problem-setting and intuitive artistry which presents these activities as describable and susceptible to a kind of rigour that falls outside the boundaries of technical rationality.” (Schön 2001, p.9)

Schön’s Epistemology of Practice provides one possible answer to this conundrum. Schön argues that, in addition to the tacit knowing in action which is fundamental to experienced practice, there are three separate types of reflection, each of which is fundamental to the legitimation of knowledge which is born out of practice:

“Clearly, it is one thing to engage spontaneously in a performance that involves reflection-in-action, and quite another thing to reflect on that reflection-in-action through an act of description. It is still another thing to reflect on the resulting description. Indeed, these several, distinct kinds of reflection can play important roles in the process by which an individual learns a new kind of performance.” (Schön 2001, p.13)

We can summarise these different types of reflection as:

- Reflection in Action
- Reflection on Action
- Reflection on Reflection

In the next three sections we will look at the three different modes of reflection which, taken together, confer legitimacy on practitioner knowledge.

9.3.1 Reflection in Action

As significant parts of the early work packages in this study occurred prior to its official inception, and therefore are not subject to considered academic record-

keeping, in the way that those subsequent to it have been, it is useful to understand what Schön means by 'reflection in action', so that we can see why he considers knowledge displayed through action to be legitimate and also to distinguish it properly from reflection on action.

First Schön argues that for experienced practitioners, knowing is implicit in action:

"Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is in our action. And similarly, the workaday life of the professional practitioner reveals, in its recognitions, judgments and skills, a pattern of tacit knowing-in-action. Once we put technical rationality aside, thereby giving up our view of competent practice as an application of knowledge to instrumental decisions, there is nothing strange about the idea that a kind of knowing is inherent in intelligent action." (Schön 2001, p.9)

By Schön's definition, reflection in action is only marginally less tacit than knowing in action. There is no pause for reflection, no stopping for time to think. As Schön puts it, it is recognised in common sense terms such as "thinking on your feet", "keeping your wits about you" and "learning by doing" – all of which suggest that not only can we think about doing, but that we can think about doing while actually doing it (Schön 1983, p.54).

However, that does not mean that all reflection in action is spontaneous, it may not be rapid at all, it takes place in what Schön terms the "action-present", the time of which is bounded by the nature of the case and profession under consideration. In the cases under consideration the "action-present" could be considered to be a two-hour editorial meeting, two-day training course, two-week agile development 'sprint', or two month programme shoot and edit.

Examples of the kinds of activities that could be considered to be 'reflection in action' that we will come across in the case studies include:

- Changing the focus of a user interview away from a scripted questionnaire when unexpected insights are provided by the interviewee
- Amending a programme running order on the day to include new stories and leads suggested through social media
- Adapting details of website designs to take account of feedback on prototypes
- Shifting the focus of a training course to take account of the differing levels of experience of delegates.

The important consideration in this study is that this tacit reflection in action demonstrated by the practitioners in the cases studied is surfaced and captured, and this requires the facilitation of reflection on action...

9.3.2 Reflection on Action

As one appraisal of Schön's concept puts it: "It is difficult to interpret Schön without heeding the distinction between reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action."

(Munby 1989) This is because:

"(Schön's) ...emphasis is upon "in-action," not the familiar sense of "reflection" that most would take the word to mean. Accordingly, where it is normal, indeed desirable, to deliberately review one's actions using customary logical rules, this is not what Schön means by reflection-in-action. Instead, he reserves the phrase "reflection-on-action" to capture such reasoning." (Munby 1989, p.6)

As we saw above, reflection in action is more of the moment. One benefit then of undertaking reflection that is closer to the more common understanding of the terms is that:

"Reflection on spontaneous reflection-in-action can serve as a corrective to overlearning. As a practitioner surfaces the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, he may allow himself to notice and make new sense of confusing and unique phenomena." (Schön 2001, p.14)

What Schön means here is that when practice becomes 'overlearned' (whereby the components that constitute a task become inaccessible to spontaneous conscious recall, potentially leading to a decrease in performance (Langer & Imber 1979)) then a period of forced conscious reflection on that activity that has become overlearned by questioning the tacit understandings that have grown through repetitive experience, can arrest a decline in performance due to the overlearning.

This distinction between the two modes of reflection in or on action is not always entirely clear, and is not without its critics. Court (1988) finds that Schön's 'examples' seem to illustrate several rather different kinds of "reflection-in-action" and most, upon examination, appear to involve removing oneself from the action in order to reflect. Thus the term "reflection-in-action" may not be appropriate." (p.144)

But for the purposes of this study we can define reflection on action in such a way as to make it readily distinguishable from more tacit reflection in action. In order for us to consider a reflection, a reflection on action then we need some clear space

between it and the practice being reflected upon – it needs to be outside of the “action-present”.

Examples of the kinds of activities that we might consider to be ‘reflection on action’ that we will come across in the case studies include:

- Using different user research techniques, e.g. moving away from interviewing, to reflect a product’s maturity and different stages of the product lifecycle
- Looking at new social platforms and tools when existing ones become difficult to use due to various types of noise, e.g. trolling, or organized ‘clicktivism’ (Morozov 2012)
- Fundamental changes to the editorial approach of a website based on usage data from a six month period
- Comprehensively redesigning a training course to better suit the technology usage of younger delegates.

However, even these kinds of reflections are still very much related to the specific case practice of a profession. In order to create knowledge that can be transferred to other professions, to other area’s practice within the same profession, or even other cases within a specific practice, a further level of reflection is required, one that is a step further removed from the action.

9.3.3 Reflection on Reflection

We have already seen what Schön means by Reflection in Action:

“Depending on the context and the practitioner, such inquiry may take the form of on-the-spot problem-solving...”

and Reflection on Action:

“... or it may take the form of theory building, or reappreciation of the problem of the situation. When the problem at hand proves resistant to readily accessible solutions, the practitioner may rethink the approach he has been taking and invent new strategies of action...”

Now we need to consider what he means by Reflection on Reflection. The need for a more considered period of reflection occurs when a practitioner:

“... encounters a situation that falls outside his usual range of descriptive categories, he may surface and criticize his initial understandings and proceed to construct a new situation-specific theory of the phenomena before him.” (Schön, 2001, p. 15)

As discussed earlier, Schön refers to the 'swamp' of professional practice, and the 'higher ground' of technical rationality. The researcher has moved between his professional work (definitely a swamp) and university research unit (to some extent, the higher ground) during the course of the cycles of Action/Reflection and the desire to turn his tacit working knowledge into something more demonstrable and empirical is reminiscent of the 'crisis in confidence in professional knowledge' which led Schön to devise his model for the legitimization of that knowledge.

So, it could be argued that in order to properly reflect on previous cycles of reflection in and on action, the practitioner could look to create some intellectual distance between themselves and practice – to gain the vantage of the 'higher ground'.

In the context of this study, the following are examples of what Schön might call 'reflection on reflection':

- Critically examining the efficacy of different user research techniques and the a priori assumptions of the researcher
- Identifying the habitus and any ideological assumptions of the social classes colonizing different social tools
- Investigating the prior motivations of those advocating web-based learning for evidence of technological determinism (or other isms)
- Questioning the value of training courses compared to employee initiated informal and social learning.

There will now be a short discussion of other PhD models based on Schön's ideas and/or in the workplace.

9.3.4 Relevant PhD models

Scrivener has developed a model for design-led reflective PhDs, which is based on Schön's model, and considered in more detail below. Costley and Lester advocate a case for 'Work-based doctorates' in which they argue that work-based research and learning are a field in their own right and:

“Underpinning this are conceptions of intellectual and research rigour that are eminently practical, rooted in a reflective-creative paradigm rather than in a positivistic or technical-rational one, and linked to the idea of adequacy for high levels of complexity.” (Costley and Lester 2012, p.10)

Both models suggest the need for demonstration of transfer of knowledge back to the workplace in order to fully legitimate that knowledge.

Hence, following the final Reflection on Reflection stage, as part of the conclusion to this thesis, the researcher shows how knowledge derived in the course of his research has transferred back into the workplace at the BBC.

9.3.5 A model for practice-based research PhDs

Scrivener (2000) describes a method for PhD students solving research problems through the use of design and engineering. The method is based on Schön's model for Reflective Practice.

There are nine steps:

1. Artefact is produced
2. Artefact is new or improved
3. Artefact is the solution to a known problem
4. Artefact demonstrates a solution to the problem
5. The Problem is recognised as such by others
6. The artefact (solution) is useful
7. Knowledge reified in the artefact can be described
8. Knowledge is widely applicable and widely transferable
9. Knowledge reified in the artefact is more important than the artefact.

(Scrivener 2000)

Examination of these nine steps shows how the *moo* project, the main case study in this thesis, maps onto them:

Step	This research project
Artefact is produced	The <i>moo</i> website was designed, developed and published
Artefact is new or improved	No similar internal website existed at the BBC
Artefact is the solution to a known problem	The problem was junior staff not having access to commissioners and providing a forum for the publication of their ideas
Artefact demonstrates a solution to the problem	The site provided this forum by allowing upload of videos and discussion and comment on them
The Problem is recognised as such by others	This problem was recognised by the BBC Creativity Board (Chaired by the

	Creative Director) and Controller, BBC 3
The artefact (solution) is useful	100+ ideas were uploaded to the site and reviewed by the Controller, BBC3. One of the ideas became a commission and was subsequently broadcast on BBC3, and kick started the career of the Producer.
Knowledge reified in the artefact can be described	The reflection on action aspect of this doctoral study
Knowledge is widely applicable and widely transferable	Examination of similar, but audience-facing case studies within the BBC draws out the applicable and transferrable knowledge and
Knowledge reified in the artefact is more important than the artefact	To be considered in the 'Reflection on Reflection' concluding interviews...

In order to verify the epistemology of this thesis, the following questions need to be asked of it:

Has the thesis:

- Demonstrated that there is a problem to be solved?
- Shown that the solution to the problem resulted in a new or improved artefact?
- Shown that the problem is one that the World (BBC) would like to see solved?
- Demonstrated the usefulness of the solution?
- Demonstrated that the knowledge exemplified in the solution can be abstracted (i.e. described and/or formalised)?
- Considered the general applicability and transferability of this knowledge?
- Proved this knowledge (i.e. demonstrated that the problem has been eradicated or ameliorated by the solution)? (Scrivener 2000)

But Scrivener contends that demonstration of answers to these questions is not sufficient to merit the award of a PhD on its own. The student needs to demonstrate "that they arrived at the problem and its solution in a self-conscious and reasoned

way.” The project is presented as an argument which is a “post-hoc justification for the decisions that were made” – which is what has happened with this thesis. So, there is a final test: “Has the student demonstrated that he or she is a self-conscious and systematic problem-setter and –solver?”

He goes on to argue:

“In my experience, there is no generally agreed methodology for this demonstration. The primary research methodology is problem-solving itself, which often, in practice, cannot be fully explicated... Consequently the student is not required to describe in detail the problem-setting and problem-solving processes. Rather, the student is expected to provide a persuasive case for the worthiness of research problem, the rationality of the steps taken to solve it and their execution. In short, although there is no overarching methodology there is an overarching ethic of self-conscious, informed and systematic problem selection and solution.”
(Scrivener 2000)

If we consider the timeline for this PhD, it is obvious that it dates back to prior to its official academic commencement in April 2009. The first research work was carried out on the *moo* website in late 2007, and the site was designed and developed in early 2008, this research and design work was carried out to the design and development standards of a web agency working on a BBC project, which are not those of an academic research project. If the researcher tried to post-rationalise a more traditional research methodology, such as action research, onto this project (and there has been great pressure to do this at times) then it would fail. However, Scrivener’s method recognises that the problem solving “cannot be fully explicated” and therefore the student is “not required to describe in detail the problem-setting and problem-solving processes”.

This thesis will, in fact, describe the problem-setting and problem-solving processes in considerable detail as part of the *moo* case study but what it does not do is ascribe a particular research methodology to them, or claim that they adhere to one.

What it does instead is use Schön’s concepts of professional reflective practice to demonstrate that the knowledge abstracted from the research and cases is legitimate.

Schön argues that, just as in everyday life, the professional depends on tacit knowing in action. But there are often periods when they reflect on their actions, and the understanding implicit in those actions. Through reflection the professional criticises, restructures their understanding, and then adapts their future actions accordingly.

This is the rational process which underlies the 'art' whereby practitioners deal with uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and the conflict of values which characterise many work situations, such as the *moo* project which is the main case study of this PhD. This project can therefore be treated as a reflection in and on action by a professional practitioner.

Scrivener suggests the following format for a report on a "creative-production project" based on his understanding of Schön:

- Reflection on practice (including identification of issues, concerns and interests to be worked within the project)
- Review of theory, knowledge and information (relevant to identified issues, concerns and interests)
- Reframing of issues, concerns and interests (in response to material found in the review)

Cycles of:

- Summary of a work episode (i.e. to place subsequent description into context, e.g. when it occurred, what the objectives were, who was involved, how long it lasted, what the outcomes were, etc.)
- Reflection on the work episode (i.e. focusing on moments of reflection in action and practice, supported by records of working)
- Post-project reflection on action and practice (i.e. on the project as a whole)
- Reflection on reflection on action and practice (i.e. critical reflection on one's work-focused reflection)

9.4 Research as transformation of media practice

In this section how the emancipatory and transformational nature of the main case, and the researcher's active participation in that case, suggest similarities with action research, first more broadly, and then specifically the 'Critical Education Science' suggested by Carr and Kemmis in *'Becoming Critical'*. (Carr and Kemmis 1986)

9.4.1 Common ground with action research methodology

On the face of it, action research, and the cycles of action-reflection in Schön's Epistemology of Practice have much in common (as they do with Kolb's theory of experiential learning (Kolb 1984). Both feature cycles (or spirals) of action and reflection, with each subsequent cycle informed by the learning from the one previous to it. However, there are also differences:

“Action research is distinguished by a deliberate and planned intent to solve a particular problem (or set of problems). By its nature, action research involves strategic action. Such strategic action is not integral to the reflective practitioner model of learning and teaching (though, of course, it may result). That the reflective practitioner model involves going through part of the action research spiral (as expressed, for example, in Kolb’s learning cycle) does not make it action research. Merely going through the spiral (even all of it) will not result in action research.” (McMahon 2006)

The cycle of action-reflection on the main case study, which pre-dated the commencement of this PhD, was not carried out according to a rigorous action research methodology. But it does not mean the knowledge developed during that cycle lacks legitimacy, as saw in the previous section; Schön has demonstrated how this kind of knowledge is valid.

Subsequent cycles of action-reflection, after the commencement of the PhD, with the corresponding, proper academic supervision of the researcher, have been conducted with far greater rigour.

But... this project is NOT an action research project. Being based on some existing work, and the main case commencing prior to the inception of the PhD proper preclude the various action research methodologies from being totally appropriate.

Nevertheless, it has much in common with an action research project, and an examination of action research methodologies should glean techniques which are relevant.

9.4.2 Interpretive action research

Action research (usually considered to fit into the critical theory research paradigm), takes critical theory’s attempts to understand a situation - so that it may be changed - and then looks at actions which may actually change it. A key situation where action research is a viable methodology is when something, such as an organisational process, needs to be done differently (McNiff and Whitehead 2011).

This was clearly the case at the start of a ‘research’ project the researcher was involved in (and from which this PhD has evolved) at the BBC in 2008. There was a sense among senior staff with a responsibility for ‘creativity’ that the corporation was missing out on ideas from lower-ranking and junior staff. They felt a possible reason for this was because bureaucracy was preventing those ideas from moving around the organisation as effectively as they could. This hunch was backed up by research which showed that staff felt they were not valued for their creativity (Kanter 2003,

p.3) – a considerable problem for an organisation which retained its 2003 vision ‘to be the most creative in the world’ (and still does) (BBC 2012). This created a strong case for change.

There are two key strands of action research:

- interpretive action research
- living theory action research

All the cases in this project have an element of management involvement in common. Models of action learning which are closer to critical theory (the living theory strand) tend to imply conflict between management and participant-researchers (Elliott 1993) but this has not been the case in the examples considered here.

In the real world, which is a world action research attempts to inhabit, change projects at organisations like the BBC can take a long time, circumstances change, and people move on. All of these have happened (not least to the researcher) in the course of this project and therefore we have to live with some ambiguity and stylistic differences between methodologies – differences that in the words of their leading proponents are ‘often not clear’ (McNiff and Whitehead 2011, p.12).

This project also shares many characteristics with the field of information science being concerned with aspects of the related disciplines of: internet studies and knowledge management, and information science topics such as: information architecture, information seeking behaviour, knowledge transfer and user-centred design.

The literature on the use of action research within information science suggests an interpretive approach to action research can be appropriate (Baskerville and Wood-Harper 1996; Baskerville 1999).

The type of learning created by action research represents enhanced understanding of a complex social-organisational problem. The domain of information systems action research is clearest where the human organisation interacts with information system. The research addresses a specific social setting, although it will generate knowledge that enhances the development of general theory. Action research aims for an understanding of a complex human process rather than prescribing a universal social law (Baskerville 1999, p.10).

However, some argue that the recognition that “educational theory must be grounded in the interpretations of teachers (practitioners), is not in itself sufficient.” (Carr and Kemmis 1986, p.129). For two reasons:

- reality may distort consciousness
- the failure to recognise that many of the aims and purposes that teachers pursue are not the result of conscious choice so much as constraints contained in a social structure over which they have little, if any, direct control.

Therefore, Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest that (educational) research must look beyond a conception of social science as either scientific or interpretive and that an alternative epistemology is needed.

9.4.3 A Critical Approach to Action Research

In *Becoming Critical – Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis propose a rationale for the view that “teachers have a special role as researchers and that the most plausible way to construe educational research is as a form of critical social science.” (Carr and Kemmis 1986, p.2). They make a case for “action research as critical educational science”. As already stated, this project shares many characteristics with action research, and the main case study it is based on is primarily an educational project, but it was not conceived as action research, and the researcher does not make any claim that it is - nevertheless it will take inspiration from the field, and particularly their model, by being properly critical of each stage in the cycles of action/reflection.

While their model is intended for use by teachers acting as researcher-participants in the field of education, it is generally applicable to an educational context within the BBC. Firstly, the researcher was directly engaged in educational activity through BBC Training & Development (later renamed the BBC Academy) and secondly, a broad remit of the BBC is to act in an educational capacity – to “inform, educate, entertain.” (Reith 1922)

Carr and Kemmis (1986) identify five formal requirements for ‘educational theory’ – the development of an epistemological framework for a practical education science. They contend that educational theory must:

1. reject positivist notions of rationality, objectivity and truth

2. accept the need to employ the interpretive categories of teachers (practitioners)
3. provide ways of distinguishing ideologically distorted interpretations from those that are not. It must also provide some view of how any distorted self-understanding is to be overcome
4. be concerned to identify and expose those aspects of the existing social order which frustrate the pursuit of rational goals and must be able to offer theoretical accounts which make teachers aware of how they may be eliminated or overcome
5. recognise that educational theory is practical, in the sense that the question of its educational status will be determined by the ways in which it relates to practice.

Later in this section, we will look at how this study specifically addresses each of these five points, but first we will examine what Carr and Kemmis mean by a 'critical educational science' and demonstrate its relevance to this project.

9.4.3.1 The influence of critical social science and the Frankfurt School on approaches to action research

Habermas argues that in order to generate legitimate knowledge from social action and situations the researcher must understand and recognise the knowledge-constitutive interests of the participants (Habermas 1973), which can be technical, practical or emancipatory, which can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

Interest	Knowledge	Medium	Science
Technical	Instrumental (causal explanation)	Work	Empirical-analytic or natural sciences
Practical	Practical (understanding)	Language	Hermeneutic or 'interpretive' sciences
Emancipatory	Emancipatory (reflection)	Power	Critical sciences

(Carr and Kemmis 1986, p.136)

An examination of the key actors in the main case study (including the researcher) reveals their a priori motivations, leading to the genesis of the project, to be largely emancipatory. Habermas suggests that knowledge derived in such situations is a

function of reflection and operates through the exercise of power. This indicates a critical social science approach is required.

It is important to distinguish between theory and practice – to distinguish between critical theory and critical social science. This is because critical theories can be criticized on the basis that while they transform ways of viewing the world, they do not change practice, and it was, and is, an intention of this project to transform practice within the BBC.

Habermas (1973) developed the concept of a critical social science to overcome this theoretical limitation. It is a social process combining critique with the determination to overcome apparent inequalities of social institutions and their actions. It requires the integration of theory and practice as in a dialectical process of reflection, enlightenment and action – action which is emancipatory in nature and aimed at the improvement of the social and material conditions under which the practice takes place. In Habermas's own words:

“The mediation of theory and praxis can only be clarified if to begin with we distinguish three functions, which are measured in terms of different criteria: the formation and extension of critical theorems, which can stand up to scientific discourse; the organization of processes of enlightenment, in which such theorems are applied and can be tested in a unique manner by the initiation of processes of reflection carried on within certain groups toward which these processes have been directed; and the selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions, and the conduct of political struggle. On the first level, the aim is true statements, on the second, authentic insights, and on the third, prudent decisions.” (Habermas 1973)

The human, social and political nature of critical social science's process of reflection implies the participation of the researcher in the social action being studied, or rather **that participants become researchers**. Because “the disinterested, ‘objective’ researcher of natural science and the empathetic observer of interpretive science may help in the organization of self-reflection, but they are ‘outsiders’ and, as such, they see only the exterior of the action, whether as a social system or as a re-enacted experience” (Carr & Kemmis 1986, p.149). Moreover, this is exactly what happened in the inception of this doctorate – the participant became a researcher – but remained on the inside, with visibility of the interior action.

We can now see how critical social science, meets Carr and Kemmis' five criteria, which were introduced at the start of this section:

Requirement	How critical social science meets the requirement
Reject positivist notions of rationality, objectivity and truth	Sees 'truth' as historically and socially embedded, not standing above the concerns of participants in real situations
Employ the interpretive categories of practitioners	Depends upon the meanings and interpretations of practitioners, grounded in their authentic language and experience
Distinguish ideologically distorted interpretations from those that are not	Institutes critical processes of self-reflection whose purpose is to distinguish between distorted ideas and those that are not
Identify aspects of existing social order which frustrate pursuit of rational goals	Employs critique to expose aspects of the social order over which participants have no control and which prevent change
Recognise that educational theory is practical	Helps practitioners inform themselves about the actions they need to take to overcome their problems and eliminate their frustrations

9.4.3.2 'Critical Educational Science'

In developing their case for a critical educational science, Carr and Kemmis state that if positivism takes a view of educational reform that is largely technical, and interpretive research sees it as practical, then critical education science views it as participatory and collaborative. They go on:

"It takes a view of educational research as critical analysis directed at the transformation of educational practices, the educational understandings and educational values of those involved in the process, and the social and institutional structures which provide frameworks for their action."
(Carr and Kemmis 1986, p.156)

Fay puts it more simply: "A critical social theory arises out of the problems of everyday life and is constructed with an eye towards solving them" (Fay 1977, p.109).

Comstock writes in a similar vein to Fay: "Critical social research begins from the life problems of definite and particular social agents who may be individuals, groups or classes that are oppressed by and alienated from social processes they maintain or create but do not control. Beginning from the practical problems of everyday

existence it returns to that life with the aim of enlightening its subjects...” (Comstock 1982, pp.378-9)

As will be demonstrated in the main case study sections later, the more closely that the transformative actions chosen mapped onto the everyday lives of the participants, the more impact they had and the greater the traction of the change.

In Carr and Kemmis’s opinion, it is important that researchers do not stand outside the situations that they aim to transform, or act as critics, although they acknowledge this as an important and helpful role. They argue that participants must “collaborate in the organization of their own enlightenment, the decision-making by which they will transform their situations and continuing critical analysis...” This forms a cycle (shown diagrammatically below), very similar in essence to Schön’s cycles of Knowing in Action, Reflection in Action , Reflection on Action and Reflection on Reflection.

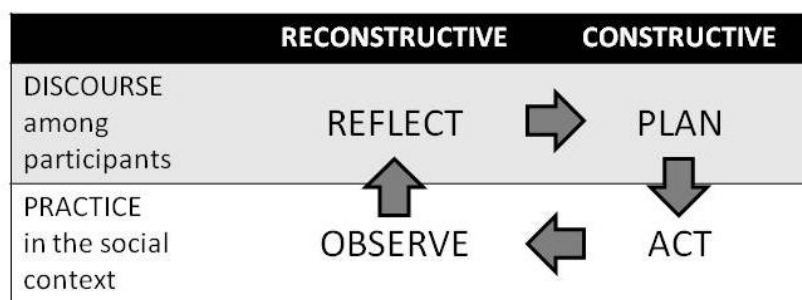


Figure 3: The 'moments' of action research

What then were the activities that took place to ensure that participants in the main situation being researched collaborated in enlightenment, decision-making and analysis? The diagram below gives examples of how this was achieved (much greater detail on each activity will be contained in the main case study section).

Action Research 'moment'	Activity	Nature of activity
Cycle 1		
Plan 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative user research aimed at uncovering audience needs and wants Gather trainer and BBC Academy requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enlightenment/discourse
Act 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iterative user-centred design process Rapid prototyping using agile techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decision-making/practice
Observe 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor progress with audience and trainers and make minor adaptations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis/practice (reflection in action)
Reflect 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with users, trainers, sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis/discourse (reflection on action)
Cycle 2		
Plan 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign of product to better meet user everyday motivations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enlightenment/discourse
Act 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iterative user-centred design process Integration of product into everyday activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decision-making/practice
Observe 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor progress with audience and trainers and make minor adaptations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis/practice (reflection in action)
Reflect 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with users, trainers, sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis/discourse (reflection on action)

So it can be seen that the action research cycles were both embedded in the everyday practice of the participants, and discursive – ensuring that participants were involved in each of enlightenment, decision-making and analysis – as would be

required to meet Habermas's notion of a critical social science, or Carr and Kemmis's critical educational science.

Requirement	How critical social science meets the requirement	How this project meets the requirement
Reject positivist notions of rationality, objectivity and truth	Sees 'truth' as historically and socially embedded, not standing above the concerns of participants in real situations	Devise a methodology based on critical social science
Employ the interpretive categories of practitioners	Depends upon the meanings and interpretations of practitioners, grounded in their authentic language and experience	The researcher is a practitioner. Final thesis draws heavily on the insights and reflections of other practitioners involved in the research and cases
Distinguish ideologically distorted interpretations from those that are not	Institutes critical processes of self-reflection whose purpose is to distinguish between distorted ideas and those that are not	Critically examine the a priori assumptions of those involved in the research and cases at all stages of the project
Identify aspects of existing social order which frustrate pursuit of rational goals	Employs critique to expose aspects of the social order over which participants have no control and which prevent change	Initial aims of the project (and cases) were aimed at providing channels for access to commissioning and development to groups excluded from them – junior programme makers, non-programme making staff, and audiences

Recognise that educational theory is practical	Helps practitioners inform themselves about the actions they need to take to overcome their problems and eliminate their frustrations	Research (and cases) are practical and real, affecting the BBC's ways of working both internally and with its audiences
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Following on from the main action research case, the study has then looked at two other areas in the BBC to see if their learning confirms the findings of the main approach and what else can be learned – particularly with regard to working outside the BBC.

9.5 Mitigating the Impact of the Researcher on the Research

An understanding of the role of researcher in shaping this research, specifically the outcomes of the project being researched, but also the environment within which it was conducted, cannot be ignored if any claim to knowledge is to be considered legitimate. In order to achieve this we will look at two of Bourdieu's main concepts – Reflexivity (Bourdieu 1998) and Habitus (Bourdieu 1984).

9.5.1 Practical Sense and Reflexive Knowledge

Bourdieu considers the extent to which actors can attain knowledge of a cultural field to be dependent on two epistemological types: 'practical sense' and 'reflexive' knowledge (Bourdieu 1998).

'Practical sense' is akin to a "feel for the game" (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002), and it is the researcher's feel for the game of digital media production and social learning, both within and without the BBC, that has enabled the knowledge and (trusted) access which make this project possible. But this comes at a risk - how does the reader know that the conclusions of this study are legitimate knowledge and not just the transcript of "a cosy chat between you and your mates" (Berger 2010).

This is where Bourdieu's second epistemological type (reflexive knowledge) helps validate this research. Bourdieu suggests that we act out and embody the imperatives and values of the field within which we operate, thus the researcher must attempt to identify the intellectual influence of their habitus and their impact on the form of the research and its outcomes.

Johnson and Duberley (2003) summarise Bourdieu's argument which "any science is embedded in, and conditioned by, the underlying socially derived collective unconsciousness that conditions what is taken to be warranted knowledge. For Bourdieu reflexivity entails systematic reflection by the social scientist aimed at making the unconscious conscious and the tacit explicit, so as to reveal how his or her formative social location or habitat influence any account." (Johnson and Duberley 2003)

They describe this approach as 'epistemic reflexivity', one of three combinations of ontological and epistemological assumptions that characterise reflexivity in management research (such as the case studies featured in this project). These combinations are summarised in the table below:

Type of reflexivity	Aims	Processes	Outcomes	Role of Researcher
Methodological	To nurture and sustain objectivity	Analysis of researcher behaviours to erase methodological lapses	Technicism/ Scientism which preserves privileged knowledge	Disinterested and sceptical expert
Deconstructive/hyper	To display and overturn constructive processes so as to invoke temporary alternative voices	Autopoietic deconstruction of deconstructions based upon duality of awareness	Discursive unsettling, repudiation of authoritative textual monologue and the development of new literary forms	Flaneur eliding with de-centred discourse deconstructor/ narrative therapist
Epistemic	To emancipate by reclaiming control over social, ethical and metatheoretical	Dialogic sociorational analyses of the actors' and researcher's habitus	Denaturalisation and the development of transformative redefinition/ interventions	Committed process facilitator aware of his/her own habitus

subtexts of discourses	ideally grounded in consensus
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(Johnson and Duberley 2003)

If methodological reflexivity is the thesis, and deconstructive reflexivity is the antithesis, then epistemic reflexivity represents a synthesis of these two ideas. The researcher's own journey from positivism to epistemic reflexivity can be seen in terms of the dialectic evolution of these sets of epistemological assumptions.

9.5.2 Habitus as a research tool

The researcher's 'habitus' is very much that of the BBC/digital media elite, and even when relocated to the higher ground of the research unit at CEMP, it is easy to make the case that many of the situations, characteristics, and actors, are the same - the key difference being a more critical approach to the examination of practice. Therefore the researcher needs to reflect on his social and cultural origins, position in the field, and 'intellectual bias'. 'Radical doubt' will be introduced to the research by asking these questions at each stage:

- How has the researcher impacted this stage of the project?
- How has the researcher mitigated the effects of their impact through a critical examination of it?

9.5.3 The practice of everyday life

In *The practice of everyday life* de Certeau develops the ideas of Foucault and Bourdieu and observes:

"In many works, narrativity insinuates itself into scientific discourse as its general denomination (its title), as one of its parts ("case" studies, "life stories", or stories of groups, etc.) or as its counterpoint (quoted fragments, interviews, "sayings", etc.). Narrativity haunts such discourse." (de Certeau 1984, p.78)

He builds on this observation to argue:

"Shouldn't we recognise its *scientific* legitimacy by assuming that instead of being a remainder that cannot be, or has not yet been, eliminated from discourse, narrativity has a necessary function in it, and that *a theory of narration is indissociable from a theory of practices, as its condition as well as its production?*" (de Certeau 1984, p.78)

De Certeau's argument suggests that narratives, such as interviews and case histories detailing the everyday practice of "users" can form a theoretical underpinning to the epistemology of reflexive media practice proposed in this methodology.

9.6 The Ontology of Knowledge derived from Media Practice

So far in this chapter, the main concern has been that of methodology – are the means by which the inferences made about the social world by scholars valid? But now ontology – the study of the world as it actually IS – will be considered (some argue that this emphasis on methodology is a characteristic of the social sciences in general (Hall 2003)).

Methodologies consist of “techniques for making observations about causal relations” whereas, an ontology consists of premises about the deep causal structures of the world from which analysis begins and without which theories about the social world would not make sense” (Hall 2003, p.374). This is important because the observations made in the specific case studies need to be grounded in the underlying social world of the media, as it is, in order for the observations to be of any use, and to stand any chance of the observations being transferable outside of the specific domain of the cases being researched.

The remainder of this section will look at how the principle of ontological parsimony can be adapted to underpin this study’s observations within the structural premises of the media industry in a manner which requires the minimum of ‘ontological commitments’ (Glock 2003, p.42).

9.6.1 Ontological Parsimony

While it is best known as Occam’s razor (the simplest answer is often correct), the principle of parsimony has been expressed many times in the history of scientific and philosophical discourse:

“We may assume the superiority ceteris paribus of the demonstration which derives from fewer postulates or hypotheses.” (Aristotle 1963, p.150)

“Rudiments or principles must not be unnecessarily multiplied” (Kant 1950, pp. 538–9)

“We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances.” (Newton 1972, p. 398)

“The grand aim of all science...is to cover the greatest possible number of empirical facts by logical deductions from the smallest possible number of hypotheses or axioms” (Einstein, quoted in Nash 1963, p.173)

The principle of ontological parsimony attempts to conserve the number of assumptions we must make to accept a theory. That is, a theory is more ontologically parsimonious than another, if it posits fewer types of things.

(This is distinct from epistemological parsimony which attempts to limit the number of things that a theory posits.)

More recently, philosophers have interpreted ontological parsimony as a principle of theory choice, that it is rational, and natural, to prefer theories which commit us to smaller ontologies. Thus a more modern expression of ontological parsimony is:

“Other things being equal, if T1 is more ontologically parsimonious than T2 then it is rational to prefer T1 to T2.” (Baker 2013)

What does it mean for one theory to be more ontologically parsimonious than another? This is best understood in terms of Quine’s concept of ontological commitment. If we have two competing theories, T1 and T2, but T2 requires another theory, S, to hold true, then T1 is more ontologically parsimonious than T2 (Quine 1966).

(It is important to note that this is a heuristic guide to theory choice, and not a rule. If a more complex theory offers a better understanding or more explanatory power than a simple one, it may well be better to choose the more complex.)

9.6.2 The Application of Ontological Parsimony to the Observations in this Thesis

What does the application of ontological parsimony mean in practice?

Well, if in an interview we ask Actor A, ‘What caused Observation X?’ and Actor A replies, ‘Premise Y’ then, if the acceptance of Premise Y as the explanation for Observation X requires fewer ontological commitments than other possible explanations, we should take that explanation at face value. If there are simpler possible explanations than Premise Y, then we need to explore further, and more critically examine the actor’s motivations for providing the answer they gave.

However, as has already been discussed, and will be seen again in the case study section, a key theme of this study is the uncritical acceptance of utopian ideas about the transformative potential of technology, and educational technology in particular. How then do we make sure that applying the principle of ontological parsimony – the simplest answer is usually correct – is not itself an uncritical acceptance of the most straightforward explanation for a particular observation?

While it is important to remember that ontological parsimony is a heuristic guide, rather than a definitive arbiter, a number of the methodological approaches and

methods discussed elsewhere in this chapter, when applied to the most parsimonious explanations, will provide the necessary degree of confidence:

- Is the interviewee a reflective practitioner? What evidence is there to support this?
- Is the explanation demonstrated in, or applicable to, the other case studies under examination?
- Has the nature of the impact of the habitus of the actors (including researcher, either as participant, or as interviewer) been critically examined?
- Have we applied the specific techniques for dealing with elite interviews where necessary?

In this section we have seen how applying the principle of ontological parsimony to the observations made, and conclusions drawn, in this study allows us to accept the most simple and straightforward explanations of those which can be drawn from the many premises about the structure of the media industry. Now the specific research methods used will be discussed.

9.7 Specific Methods

9.7.1 Case Study Method (Gomm, Hammersley, Foster (2000))

While an argument can be made that knowledge can be generalised from a single case study Donmoyer (2000), this thesis will not attempt that. Instead, by contrasting the main case study with three other cases in a similar area at the BBC the researcher hopes to demonstrate that the knowledge is transferable to other social media projects at the BBC, by implication throughout the UK media industry.

All of the cases look at the BBC's use of social media in developing new ways of working, rather than the more commonly (and extensively researched) practices for using social media as an intrinsic part of its programming. Two of the cases (including the main case) are internally-facing, and the other two are more concerned with involving audiences in programme development and design. In particular the learning and innovative nature of the internal projects, and the involvement of the managers and trainers involved with staff as individuals, has much in common with educational action research and reinforces the need for an interpretive, or critical, approach to this study rather than a more 'natural, scientific' quantitative one, which might be justifiable if the project was exclusively looking at the large numbers involved in the audience-facing cases.

9.7.2 Elite Interviews

Several of the interviewees in this project could be considered to be members of the UK media elite (The Guardian 2003-2011). Elite interviews bring with them several sets of problems.

One group of problems is logistical. Asking busy people to write down a detailed task analysis seems highly unlikely to happen. As part of the study, appropriate mechanisms for capturing the level of detail required - which are not too much of a burden on the participants - will be investigated. The technology should provide a fairly easy mechanism for doing this.

Another set of problems are to do with the conduct of interviews. Common issues include:

- Subjects can be unrevealing
- Subjects are under no obligation to tell the truth
- Interviewer can lose control of the situation

Although these issues can arise in every interview there is a greater risk in an 'elite' interview.

Approaches which can help to minimise the effects of these problems include:

- Use multiple sources
- Ask the subject to critique their own case
- Ask about other participants and organisations
- Move away from impact questions (Berry 2002).

The main way in which the researcher will overcome the issues associated with these kinds of interviews is through the use of multiple sources, all of which have the same value attached to them, and through rigorous coding and analysis of the interviews.

(With the benefit of hindsight, these techniques were useful in most of the interviews undertaken in the course of this study, regardless of the actor's status in the BBC and/or media hierarchy. It could be argued that the participants are all part of, or consider themselves to be part of a (digital) media elite, and therefore all the interviews could be approached as 'elite' interviews.)

9.8 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated a possible methodology for a full PhD based on the professional knowledge (both existing and that acquired through research) of an experienced media practitioner.

The researcher's existing knowledge can be legitimised through cycles of action, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and reflection-on-reflection as demonstrated in Schön's 'Epistemology of Practice' (Schön 1983). Schön himself considers this process to be 'non-rigorous inquiry' (Schön 1987) so the research can be made more rigorous through the application of the principles of action research. Here the research has been made more rigorous by taking a more critical approach based on the model proposed by Carr and Kemmis (Carr and Kemmis 1986).

In order to mitigate the role of the researcher in the research, a further layer of scrutiny has been added through epistemic reflexivity in the style of Bourdieu (Johnson and Duberley 2003).

After a number of cycles of action-reflection (where 'action' is the researcher's professional work in the media), the knowledge derived has then been tested through comparison with other case studies in which the researcher was not a participant. Analysis of these cases could be considered a further layer of reflection on reflection, but also serve to mitigate the impact of the researcher on the research.

Finally, the BBC iCreate project built on moo and demonstrated the validity of some of the findings of this PhD.

The approach and overlap of the various techniques can be seen in the following table, which suggests the basic structure for the original research section of this thesis:

Epistemology of Practice		Critical action research	Epistemic Reflexivity	Specific Methods	ONTOLOG
How has the <i>moo</i> social media project enabled factual programme-makers and journalists to work in new ways <u>inside</u> the BBC?					
Action	Plan/Act	How has the researcher impacted this stage?	Moo project work		
Reflection-in-action					
Reflection-on-action	Observe		moo case study		

Reflection-on-reflection	Reflect	How has the researcher mitigated their effects?	Interviews: E.Semple F.Ash A.Yentob Grounded theory	
Action	Plan/Act	How has the researcher impacted this stage?	Moo project work	
Reflection-in-action				
Reflection-on-action	Observe	How has the researcher mitigated their effects?	moo case study	
Reflection-on-reflection	Reflect		Interviews: D.Cohen A. Mosse S. Fingleton Grounded theory	
How have <i>The Virtual Revolution</i> and <i>World Have Your Say</i> production teams used social media to work in new ways with audiences <u>outside</u> the BBC?				
Reflection-on-action	Observe		The Virtual Revolution Case study	
Reflection-on-reflection			Interviews: D. Biddle D.Gluckman	
	Reflect		Grounded theory	
Reflection-on-action	Observe		WHYS Case study	
Reflection-on-reflection			Interviews: WHYS Team R.Atkins	

	Reflect		Grounded theory	
Reflection-on-action			iCreate project	

9.8.1A possible framework for other practice led PhD researchers

This section provides some guidance for other doctoral students who wish to base PhD research on their professional practice, using an approach similar to the action/reflection methodology described above. I call this approach ‘reflexive practice’:

1. Base the PhD on a specific case or cases, aiming to build on hypotheses which have been developed during the student’s career.
2. As far as possible, synchronise the start the start of the research project and the start of the doctorate. My institution had difficulty understanding that part of the PhD case predated the start of the PhD itself, and while other institutions may find this easier to understand, it would make for a much neater study. On the other hand, as Schön says, professional practice is “messy” and doctorates in this area will not be as neat as, for example, a pure science PhD.
3. Clearly define the purpose of each package of work, period of study, or reflective interview prior to commencement and ideally specify this as a methodological plan early in the PhD.
4. Recognise that much of the literature studied in the literature review will better fit as supporting material in the case study write ups as grounded theory. It will not all fit neatly into a literature review - the purpose of which is to frame the knowledge the PhD is based on, and to identify the gap the study will attempt to fill.
5. Ensure there is a robust basis for reflexive critique of the researcher’s role and influence as a central figure in the research project. Call this out explicitly in the case write up. This researcher found Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ and Carr & Kemmis ‘Critical Educational Science’ particularly helpful in developing the concept of ‘reflexive practice’.

6. Cross-reference your own practice against that of your peers. Study projects which are similar to your own to see if there are similarities, and to identify points of difference.
7. Consider discussing this cross referencing with an informed, impartial observer – this could be your supervisory team, but it may be beneficial to seek other expertise.

In the next chapter, we will consider the key themes in the existing literature which provide the conceptual framework for the analysis of the case studies and interviews carried out in the original research element of this study.

10 Case Study Section

10.1.1 How this section is structured

Each section and interview in this section is labelled according to the relevant steps suggested in the methodology section. Due to the participation of the researcher in some of the key activities under scrutiny, but not others, it is possible for an interview to be a 'reflection on action' for the interviewee, but a 'reflection on reflection' for the interviewer/researcher.

Each interview is summarised, and, in line with the proposed method, the summary is followed by a critique of the role and influence of the researcher on that part of the case study in question. This can vary from highly influential and deeply involved to completely uninvolved and operating in a pure research capacity.

How each interview and package of work relates to both the research questions and the stages of the proposed epistemology of practice are shown the following table:

Interview/Work package	Interviewee/project phase	Researcher phase
How has the <i>moo</i> social media project enabled factual programme-makers and journalists to work in new ways <u>inside</u> the BBC?		
Interview with Euan Semple – Backstory to the Internal use of social networking at the BBC	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Action
BBC creative network phase one		
Stakeholder and user research*	Plan	Plan
Design and development of website*	Act	Act
Monitoring site usage*	Observe	Observe
Interview with Manager, BBC Creativity & Audiences (part one)	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Action
BBC creative network phase two		
Review site usage	Reflection in Action	Reflection in Action

User research	Plan	Plan
BBC 3 Competition	Act	Act
Monitoring site usage	Observe	Observe
Interview with Manager, BBC Creativity & Audiences (part two)	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Action
Interview with BBC Creative Director	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Action
Interview with BBC 3 Competition Winner	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Action
Interview with BBC 3 Controller	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Action
Interview with BBC 3 Competition Runner Up	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Action
How have <i>The Virtual Revolution</i> and <i>World Have Your Say</i> production teams used social media to work in new ways with audiences <u>outside</u> the BBC?		
Interview with BBC <i>The Virtual Revolution</i> production team	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Reflection
Interview with BBC <i>World Have Your Say</i> Presenter	Reflection on Action	Reflection on Reflection

(*The tasks on a grey background took place before the PhD project started)

To give the reader an implicit awareness of the level of my involvement in a particular section, I have varied the tone of voice accordingly. How this is achieved is explained in the next section.

10.2 Tone of voice

Throughout the case study section I have chosen to vary the tone of voice according to the nature of the researcher's involvement in a particular case or phase of a case.

The intention is to signal to the reader the researcher's proximity to a particular interviewee or package of work. Where the researcher is close to an interviewee or was involved in the design or development of a particular artefact then a first person perspective and interviewee forename will be used. Where the researcher is unknown to the interviewee, and there was no practical involvement in a project, then a third person point of view and interview surname will be used.

This is important because in interviews where the researcher is identified as being close to the interviewee, and has a potential influence upon them, or was heavily involved in the work being carried out, then the reader must pay careful attention that the write up and analysis are sufficiently critical and reflexive. Each interview and work package is followed by a section on the nature and influence of the researcher where the researcher's role is called out and subject to critique.

In order to help the reader identify where there is a risk of the researcher being too close to the interviewee or content, a tabular summary of these perspectives follows:

Interview/Work package	Nature of researcher's relationship	Researcher's point of view
Interview with Euan Semple – Backstory to the Internal use of social networking at the BBC	Close, influential	Subjective
BBC creative network phase one		
Stakeholder and user research	Active participant	Subjective
Design and development of website	Active participant	Subjective
Monitoring site usage	Active participant	Subjective
Interview with Manager, BBC Creativity & Audiences (part one)	Close, influential	Subjective
BBC creative network phase two		

Review site usage	Active participant	Subjective
User research	Active participant	Subjective
BBC 3 Competition	Observer	Objective
Monitoring site usage	Observer	Objective
Interview with Manager, BBC Creativity & Audiences (part two)	Close, influential	Objective
Interview with BBC Creative Director	Well known, influential	Objective
Interview with BBC 3 Competition Winner	Unknown, no influence	Objective
Interview with BBC 3 Controller	Unknown, no influence	Objective
Interview with BBC 3 Competition Runner Up	Unknown, no influence	Objective
Interview with BBC <i>The Virtual Revolution</i> production team	Unknown, no influence	Objective
Interview with BBC <i>World Have Your Say</i> Presenter	Unknown, no influence	Objective

11 The backstory to the internal use of social networking at the BBC

11.1 Reflection on Action - Interview with Euan Semple, Director, Knowledge Management and Informal Learning, BBC

11.1.1 Background

The purpose of this interview is to set the background, and context, of the internal use of social technology by the BBC. The interviewee, Euan Semple, is considered a pioneer in the use of social technology within corporations (reference) and since leaving the BBC, has become a published author (*'Organisations don't tweet, people do'*) and established keynote speaker advising organisations such as (list).

11.1.2 Interview and analysis

I interviewed Euan in 2009 at his home office. We had left the BBC in 2006 having been close colleagues for a number of years and we remain in contact at the time of writing. The nature of this relationship will be examined more critically in the section following the analysis of this interview.

I started by asking him how he was initially drawn to the idea of using technology to connect people within organisations:

"I'd got involved in networking people, exploring new ways of making programmes and that was my department's job - we'd become quite good at being social secretaries and getting people to talk to each other who should be talking to each other." (Euan Semple)

Euan's initial trials of early forms of social technology arose from his mandate to develop communities of practice, firstly within a film and VT editing department he managed, then more broadly across the BBC. Communities of practice are "not formally recognized within an organisation but can be critical to an organisation's ability to leverage expertise distributed by virtue of physical location or organizational design." (Cross and Parker 2003, p.9) Social networking is also considered effective in promoting innovation, whether it is "new product development or process improvement initiatives" (Cross and Parker 2003, p.9) which fell under Semple's remit to explore "new ways of making programmes".

"At the same time I was discovering blogging. I'd been in forums for a long time but began to get into the more overtly social stuff and the three

things came together, because I was called “Head of Knowledge Management”. My job was to make people share with each other what they knew. This technology was making me able to do that really easily at home.” (Euan Semple)

So, Euan identified the potential to bring social technology being used as part of the everyday lives of its (then) early adopters inside the BBC to enable networking, knowledge sharing, and hopefully, new ways of making programmes, as a result.

He then outlined a couple of factors he considers were essential in getting these early trials going. Firstly, he was sufficiently empowered, both in terms of authority, and with IT infrastructure.

“I had a number of advantages. I was senior already so I had enough clout, I knew enough of the people who could sack me to keep us all safe. I had my own technology infrastructure and really smart guys who knew how to drive it so I didn’t have to talk to IT which was a huge benefit. And a boss, who signed the forms and let me get on with it, so a combination of those made it easier.” (Euan Semple)

Secondly, he chose to take a low-key bottom-up approach, rather than impose a top-down management view.

“We decided not to have a big management initiative, the big corporate comms thing, because, cynical or not, people just tend to run in the other direction when one of those comes towards them.” (Euan Semple)

As with many of Euan’s views and hypotheses on the design and benefits of social technology this could be rhetoric straight from the pages of *The Cluetrain Manifesto* such as:

“44. Companies typically install intranets top down to distribute HR policies and other corporate information that workers are doing their best to ignore.”

This is not surprising; Euan would count several of the authors as his friends. However, these hypotheses (whether Euan’s or Levine et al.’s) have been since demonstrated to be accurate by more empirical work – although we need to be wary that some of this is potentially circular in nature, if it uses BBC case studies and Euan’s work as the basis for its conclusions – for example *Enterprise 2.0* by McAfee (who also wrote the foreword for Euan’s book) (McAfee 2009).

Subsequently, the need for some degree of direction from organisation leaders was recognised, and this was definitely a factor in the greater impact delivered by the project in the main case study. In *Enterprise 2.0*, McAfee argues that: “It is not enough to simply deploy the new technologies of interaction and collaboration and

wait for the benefits to accrue. That strategy will almost certainly lead to disappointment and failure.” (McAfee 2009). Later in this section, the friction caused by this ‘laissez-faire’ approach will be considered, but initially, Semple’s tactics were based on his belief in the need to establish trust.

“The nature of it is people need to open up and be honest and, and ask dumb questions and offer heartfelt answers. Intuitively I felt they had to trust the thing and, and discover it through advocacy.” (Euan Semple)

This view is supported by Cross & Parker who identified that “people did not necessarily need to trust experts in order to seek them out for surface information, but they did need to trust them for the exchange to be one where true learning took place”, and that “when people are dealing with complex problems and novel solutions, establishing trust can have a substantial impact on the quality of collaboration.” (Cross and Parker 2003, p.47)

Having established the need for the site(s) to be trustworthy, Euan also believed in rapid growth in participation:

“It is a numbers game; you need as many people as fast as you can to give it some life, to allow the demographics to work so that people counteract each other's extremes, so it can become self-managing.

To do that you have to have no preconceived ideas about what people should be talking about, so long as they talk, so long as they stay in there, you don't care because that means when a real work question comes along there'll be at least people there who are able to deal with it and answer it.” (Euan Semple)

However, just because the BBC is a media and communications organisation, it did not mean that this change in working practice came easily to it:

“A lot of organisations excuse themselves by saying ‘oh well of course you work at the BBC, you work in a communications organisation’ but it wasn't the communicators who got into it. They were all invested in the lovey world that was giving them status and this was their worst nightmare. This was the backroom guys and the guys who didn't have other platforms on which to be heard that were behind it, so it wasn't, in that sense, characteristic of the BBC.” (Euan Semple)

As will be shown in the section on the habitus of the BBC and in subsequent interviews, Euan, in common with other senior managers, believed that there were groups of creative staff who were outside of the existing networks and power structures. He saw social technology as having a role in emancipating these ‘backroom guys’, or at least opening up the BBC to their ideas, but perhaps did not see that some senior colleagues in the ‘lovey world’ shared his ambition.

“I'd been in the Beeb a long time and, in my view, the real organisation was networked, it was people who knew people by their credits and yet we'd overlaid that with a bureaucratic pseudo-civil service hierarchy.”
(Euan Semple)

In the *Hidden Power of Social Networks*, Cross and Parker demonstrate that organizations are “all dramatically affected by information flow and webs of relationships within social networks” and that “these networks are not depicted on any formal chart, but they are intricately intertwined with an organisation’s performance, the way it develops and executes strategy, and its ability to innovate” (Cross and Parker 2003). Semple understood this intuitively, but it was an intuitive viewpoint which subsequently was borne out by empirical research such as Cross and Parker’s.

Here Euan describes the context to his initial interest in social technology.

“I find the language of being a manager quite difficult. Was I in charge of them, was I running them? None of the above. I was notionally their manager, fifty editors, a combination of film and video tape editors. We were very different beasts if you like. And who had had a whole bunch of the colleagues made redundant just before I arrived, so really anti-management culture.

The film editors were seen by the management as unemployable, they were mavericks who didn't fill forms in and didn't turn up when they were supposed to and they tended to prefer the VT editors who were more from an engineering background, more process systems kind of thinking guys.” (Euan Semple)

He describes a group of people whose job requires them to think in a non-linear manner, while at the same time being extensively networked in the BBC community.

“It's actually the film editors who added the value 'cos the system was broken and they made it work by breaking it more and they established and built relationships with production staff that made the production staff feel engaged and happy.” (Euan Semple)

This group correlate with the archetypes and situations that the business literature suggest are fundamental to technical and process innovation, such as Sawyer (2007) and Ideo guy (2009). In particular, the scheduling systems used by the editors were failing to match the practicalities of their day-to-day work.

From that situation, Euan saw the potential for an early social networking tool;

“I remember thinking I just gave them all a web page on which they could say what they were good at, what they did last and when they were free, this could all sort itself out.” (Euan Semple)

This idea ultimately became the connect.gateway tool on the BBC Intranet, with over 3,000 members at its peak in 2004. It was an early version of the kind of business social networking tool which many of us are now familiar with through use of LinkedIn (over 330 million users at the end of 2014) (Statista 2015). Euan's idea was also based on his observation of who the editors who worked for him were already using the Internet to connect with virtual communities of practice and to share information online:

“Even ten years ago the better, smarter editors were already having conversations out on the web with people from other companies about anything best practice and I thought ‘we’ve got to bring this back inside civilisation’ - if you don’t at least try to understand it and help it and make it work for you as a company they’ll just go out on the web.” (Euan Semple)

This observation is similar to several of the 95 theses of *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, but best summarised in Levine et al.’s comparison of (Inter) networked markets:

“Through the Internet, the people in your markets are discovering and inventing new ways to converse. They’re talking about your business. They’re telling one another the truth, in very human voices...”

and (Intra) networked workers:

“Intranets are enabling your best people to hyperlink themselves together, outside the org chart. They’re incredibly productive and innovative. They’re telling one another the truth, in very human voices.” (Levine, Locke, Searls, and Weinberger 2000)

Another area where Euan's views match the tone of Levine et al. is on the matter of the need for management to be less authoritarian and more influential when engaging in social technology;

“You don’t actually have control. You never do have control; you have the mechanics and the apparatus of it but what you now have is influence.” (Euan Semple)

Where theses on control are presented in *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, the tone is more political, and framed in the context of fear and struggle, as might be expected from a self-proclaimed manifesto.

“48. When corporate intranets are not constrained by fear and legalistic rules, the type of conversation they encourage sounds remarkably like the conversation of the networked marketplace.

51. Command and control management styles both derive from, and reinforce, bureaucracy, power tripping, and an overall culture of paranoia.” (Levine, Locke, Searls, and Weinberger 2000)

Overall, comparing the tone of Euan's insights and observations to those of *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, then his is a far more pragmatic kind of utopianism. The out-and-out provocative theses and pledges of the Manifesto are replaced by the need to balance the goals of workers, managers and the audience to mutual effect. Euan was not publishing to stir things up, he was working within an organization, with people he needed to deal with on a day-to-day basis. An example of this would be to contrast Levine et al.'s pejorative view of corporate information in thesis 44, with Euan's more accommodating opinion that: "You need to be aware equally of HR and the lawyers and everybody else that you have to just find that middle ground where it works, it works for both sides."

In the week prior to interviewing Euan, I had been in the BBC and had had a look at the old sites (no longer supported by BBC central IT) and saw familiar characters taking part in familiar conversations. I offered this observation to Euan:

“AT: I had a look at it the other week, there's still some of the same conversations going on from when we were there, the same ones that used to make us pull our hair out.

ES: But in a way that shouldn't be surprising because it's human nature isn't it?”

While this tight bonding of the group was a strength during the initial development and main phase of the sites' growth it became problematic in later stages because of the inward focus mentioned above, which prevents the acquisition of links and membership from outside – one of the main benefits and reasons for developing the tools in the first place. Kairam, Wang and Leskovec (2012) state:

“When all members are too tightly bound to the core, as they are in groups with high fringe growth and high transitivity, groups might become too inwardly focused, precluding the possibility of gaining new information and members outside the group.” (Kairam, Wang, and Leskovec 2012)

Euan made the same point in rather more straightforward language;

“You want your early adopters because they've got the energy to come in and build it, but then they get to be a bit proprietorial and start hacking off other people and not being welcoming enough to newbies.” (Euan Semple)

Managing this tension between the inward-looking conversations of the core group(s) and to attract and sustain new membership became critical, because

“Groups with one or more cores of tightly connected members and a periphery of members loosely connected or entirely disconnected from this core should experience increased and prolonged growth.” (Kairam, Wang, and Leskovec 2012)

At the time there was a tension surrounding the amount of ‘leadership’ being shown on the site, and what some senior colleagues saw as ‘laissez-faire’ attitudes to, for example, gossip. Euan’s view was very much that if management wanted certain conversations to happen, then they just needed to log onto the site and participate:

“Leaders need to be themselves and just engage. People say ‘Oh it’ll lead to rack and ruin’ and you think ‘No it’s just going to show you what’s going on and then your job as a manager is to deal with it’.” (Euan Semple)

In *Why Should Anyone Be Led by You?* Jones and Goffee (2006) argue that authenticity is a critical component of modern organizational leadership because: “As hierarchies flatten, meaning disappears. We look to leadership to instil our organisations with meaning.” They suggest that leaders need to show themselves, with skill. Some leaders are adept at using social media to achieve this, and there is an interview with one of them at the end of this chapter, but I knew, from conversations with them at the time, that significant elements of the BBC leadership were reluctant to participate, in case it was seen as management interference.

Euan’s position on the need for leaders to post in an authentic voice is broadly the same as Jones and Goffee’s:

“It’s about characteristics. There are some people who by their nature are suited to this, or are comfortable talking authentically, and get it and just come in and it works. There are those who shouldn’t go near it with a barge pole and one of the risks at the moment because it’s becoming so popular and so visible is it’s the thing that you have to do.” (Euan Semple)

In particular, he observed the need for leaders to post because they want to, rather than because they feel they need to, and also the need for them to realise it is an acquired skill, and something that isn’t going to happen overnight:

“There’s a whole bunch of people becoming involved in it that really, they’re trying to do it too fast. They’re blogging ‘cos their comms person tells them it’s a cool thing for an exec to do. It’s painful to watch and that touches on something else - patience - ‘cos it will take a lot longer than most people expect, as in years.” (Euan Semple)

This need to be patient, and willing to learn in public, puts barriers in the way of management or leadership participation due to a lack of time and/or a reluctance to

be seen to make mistakes. Even though admitting you do not know everything and may not always get things right contributes to the presentation of the authentic self, according to Jones and Goffee.

If we develop Jones and Goffee's argument about meaning disappearing in a flat hierarchy, this means that a leadership void would be created, which would need to be filled. I put it to Euan that there was value to having some controversial characters using the tools, who gave the sites a bit of excitement and that was quite important in hooking people in.

"One of the bits of advice I give clients these days is that you want scandal and innuendo, don't be afraid of it." (Euan Semple)

Gluckman (1963) argues that gossip and scandal are socially virtuous, and draws on anthropological research to demonstrate that they are an important component in the development of emergent cultures. As long as certain rules and mores are followed, for example, scandalisation must be directed at those outside the group, gossip enables a group to bond. If it is directed within a group, then it will be a destructive force. For gossip to enable cohesion within a group, Gluckman says that that group must already be "united by a sense of community which is based on the fairly successful pursuit of common objectives."

This last point can be readily applied to the staff of the BBC, who are, at any given point, unified by their objective of delivering public service broadcasting. At the time being discussed in this interview (2001-2004) this bonding was perhaps stronger than at any other point in recent BBC history as a result of Greg Dyke's leadership and the positive staff response to it (Spindler ref). Therefore, it seems likely that the tolerance of a certain amount of gossip and scandal was constructive and enabled adoption of the social technologies to grow. There was also a safety in numbers, as it was not always clear how many other senior managers shared Euan's view:

"Somebody would raise something that would make us all go (intake of breath) but then a bunch of us would then go, me too. And really quickly, so that they became safer as they couldn't be isolated and picked off, and you learn all those tactics to make the ecology work." (Euan Semple)

Here Euan is talking about a 'common bond' group. Kairam et al. (2012) describe differences between groups which are based on "*common bond*, where group members form attachments to **one another**", and groups based on "*common identity*, in which group members form attachments to the **group itself**".

This is interesting because other research (Dholakiaa, Bagozzia, and Pearo 2004; Kairam, Wang, and Leskovec 2012) argues that common identity groups are more likely to be resilient to the membership changes that accrue over time in an online community. Dholakiaa et al. also identified key differences between network-based and small group-based virtual communities, for example, interaction with a network-based community tends to be purposive, e.g. 'to get information', whereas interaction within a small group-based community tends to be more social in its nature, e.g. 'maintaining personal contact'.

With *talk.gateway* the BBC had a virtual community that was both network and small group-based at the same time. With the benefit of hindsight it can be seen that the regulars were a small group-based network who 'hung out' in the virtual community to meet social needs, and were therefore available to answer questions and provide information to colleagues who visited the virtual community with a clear purpose, but with no desire to be part of the group. It could be argued that this mixed ecology was a key factor in the success of the site, even if it was not an explicitly-stated strategy.

The small group-based part of the virtual community contained a number of staff, who while being active and helpful, were also perceived as being difficult to manage:

"People are difficult to manage and you've got your clever people who are even more difficult to manage and you need a few of those about, I mean, I kind of see the new tools as if you can, if you can handle it, they help you manage those people better, they're not actually a threat to you." (Euan Semple)

"It's not doing things by committee, it's not asking people's permission to do things, you still need people who stick out there and lead but I think in different ways. And it's like the old joke about 'the good news is you've got 250 people working for you, the bad news is they don't see it that way.'" (Euan Semple)

We can see the influence of *The Cluetrain Manifesto* rhetoric in comments such as:

"David Weinberger said that conversations can only take place between equals and it's not always the one who's higher up the chain that makes the conversation unequal; sometimes it's an overly deferential attitude on the part of the other person." (Euan Semple)

Weinberger being one of the four authors of *The Cluetrain Manifesto*. And we can see other aspects of 'digital utopian' (Turner 2006) rhetoric in comments such as

"The industrialisation of human relationships is what's happened" and

"I think the corporate environment was an aberration as well and that many of us are already existing in a networked world of loose affiliations

who come together in dispersed teams - certainly as heavy manufacturing becomes less of our world in the West.” (Euan Semple)

In discussing his motivation for wanting to work with social technologies we can also see Euan's belief in the shortcomings of management styles from the Industrial Age being applied to a digital, information based economy:

“Going back to why I got into this. Dave Snowden was one of my influences in the early days and he always used to say you can't manage knowledge but you can create a knowledge ecology and that was what I was setting out to do. In a knowledge economy there's no such thing as conscripts, there's only volunteers, trouble is we've trained our managers to manage conscripts.” (Euan Semple)

These comments and, in particular, the use of words like 'conscripts' by Euan, demonstrate a belief in the emancipatory nature of digital and social technology which, as we saw in the literature review, is a core tenet of a digital utopian philosophy. Having said that he also claims he does not like using words like 'revolutionary':

“I'm just trying to pick non-revolutionary words because I think there's also the risk of being too overstated, I do really think it's going to change the world but not in some overt, revolutionary way.” (Euan Semple)

But Euan is still prone to making comments such as:

“The decentralisation of stuff's interesting because how do you make things hang together? I mean we haven't used the word 'anarchy' yet but anarchy doesn't necessarily mean the disruptive connotations it got in the twenties. It's the ultimate democracy.” (Euan Semple)

Ultimately I would argue that Euan's philosophy was one of what I would call 'practical utopianism' – a believer in the potential for technology to make things better and to be force for good, but as he had a real job with bosses and colleagues to answer to, his experiences are grounded in the mess and reality of the everyday lives of the people using the web tools he was responsible for.

“I'm not a big fan of any sense of a bottom-up worker revolution crap - it's just a network and you're a node in the network and some of those nodes are higher up in the middle of the old hierarchy, if you want, and the middle and the top are just as much interested in being understood as the bottom, and are just as poorly served.” (Euan Semple)

While he was influenced by the various rhetorics making the case for the digital revolution, he was also aware of the shortcomings of an approach that was overly confrontational, and kept the tool focused on the straightforward, explicit information sharing and retrieval needs of BBC staff.

11.1.3 Interview Summary - Euan Semple

11.1.3.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

Euan was not directly involved in the moo project, but as the BBC's digital pioneer in internal social media we can see how his work laid the foundations for moo, and particularly his influence and tutelage of the author-researcher.

11.1.3.2 What is the original contribution?

In this interview, we uncovered the following key points, which had provided a platform of understanding of good practice on which moo could be built:

- Internal social media teams need to be empowered, and have autonomy, especially when it comes to IT
- Take a low key bottom up approach to encouraging participation, not a top down authoritative one
- Encourage rapid growth, and do not overly control conversations
- Social media is a powerful tool for revealing hidden social networks
- If leadership engage, they need to use an authentic voice.

11.1.3.3 My reflections

In this interview we have seen how Euan Semple's pioneering work in the internal use of social media inside large organisations could be considered to have been influenced by digitally utopian rhetoric such as that contained within the theses of *The Cluetrain Manifesto* (Levine, Locke, Searls, and Weinberger 2000). It could be argued that innovations do not have an empirical base of evidence to draw on, or they would not be innovations.

Compared to the hypotheses of *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, Euan's reflections, as evidenced in the interview, are more pragmatic and grounded in the reality and "messiness" of a large organisation. Academic and empirical business research published since he left the BBC, such as Jones and Goffee's work on authentic leadership (Jones and Goffee 2007) and Kairam et al.'s work on online group dynamics (Kairam, Wang, and Leskovec 2012) support some of Euan's findings and observations.

Overall, we might conclude that rhetoric could possibly be considered to have been an influence on Euan's determination to make social technology happen at the BBC. However, his findings, and research outside of the BBC since then, confirm that

there was a legitimate role for social media to play in enabling authentic communication between staff members, and those leaders who were prepared to participate.

11.1.4 The role and influence of the researcher

During the time period under discussion in the interview, I was a close colleague of Euan's working in the same department with, among other things, a management responsibility for the published knowledge and transactional sections of the BBC Intranet. This work gave me a more task-focussed and operational perspective than Euan, aimed at assisting users in 'finding things out and getting things done' more than communication for the sake of communication. While I was initially sceptical of the claims made for social media, over time Euan's ideas were influential on me and led to design changes such as augmenting published content with social media comment, and including social media content in search results.

It is, therefore, important for the reader to be aware that if they consider Euan was influenced by digital utopian rhetoric, then it is likely the researcher, me, was indirectly influenced as well. In the write up of this interview, I have attempted to mitigate this influence through directly addressing those interview responses which contain rhetorical sentiment, but also by grounding practical observations in empirical research.

11.2 The habitus of the BBC

Bourdieu (1990) defines habitus as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.”

What that means in practice is that cultural matters of taste, distinction and judgement become embodied in the everyday practices of those in a particular habitus, in a way that is almost sub-conscious to its inhabitants. These judgements can be represented according to the relative volume of cultural and economic capital of groups as seen in the following diagram.

BBC staff can be considered to sit broadly in the upper left quadrant of Bourdieu's graphical depiction of habitus as, compared to the average, they can be considered to be strong in both cultural and economic capital. In 2014, the BBC's staff of 18,974 earned a total of £976.5m, giving an average of £51,465 (The Guardian 2015), significantly in excess of the provisional 2015 UK median salary of £27,456 (ONS 2015). In terms of cultural capital 33% of BBC Senior Managers (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission 2014) and 4.6% of all staff (BBC 2009) were educated at Oxford and Cambridge universities compared to less than 1% of the public (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission 2014). Figures for university-educated staff from other universities were not available but can be projected to be in a similar proportion.

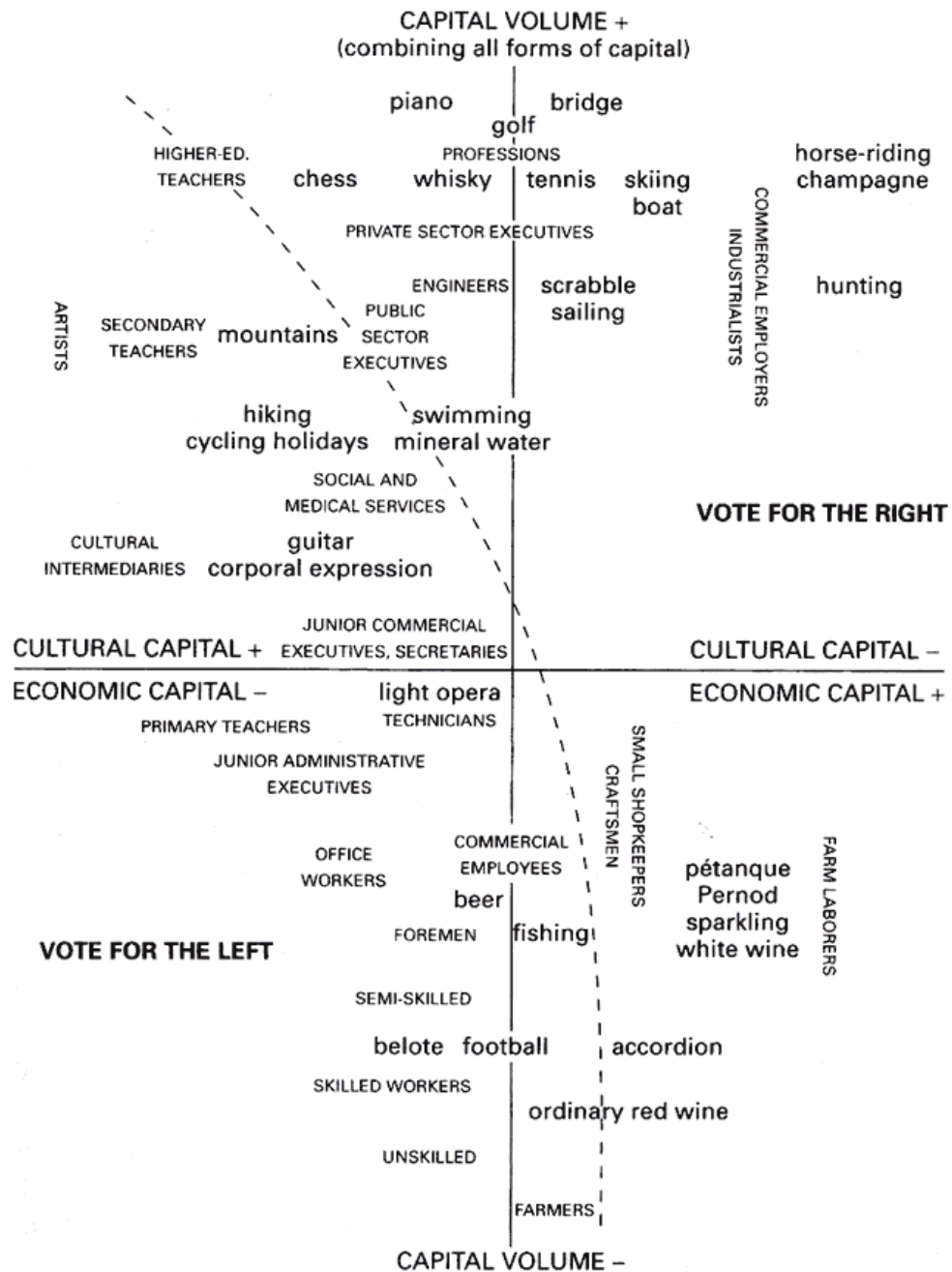


Figure 4: Habitus

It is useful to overlay this diagram with where we might expect to find certain roles, which are featured in the following case studies, are located within the habitus of the BBC.

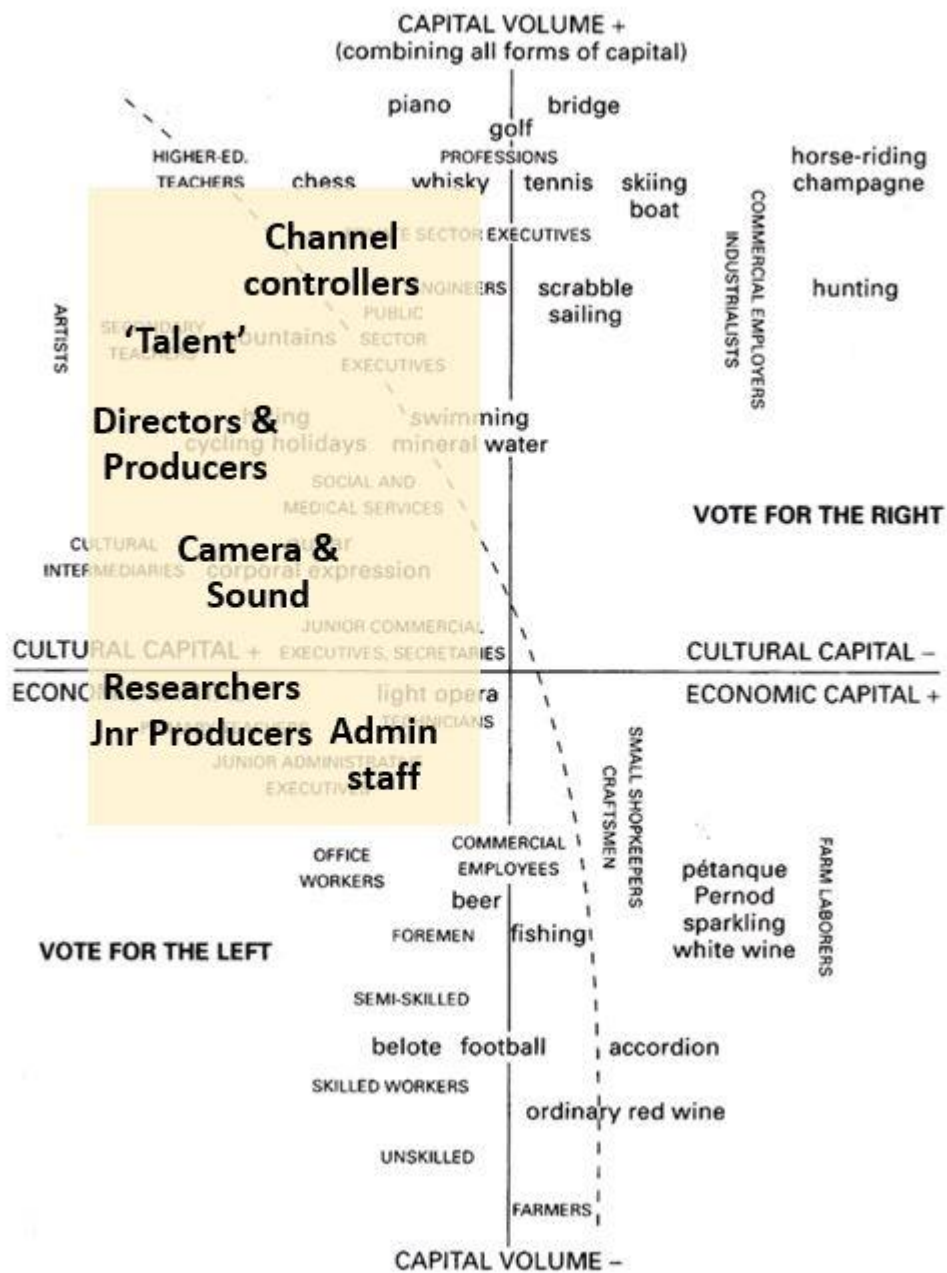


Figure 5: Habitus of the BBC

12 Case study - *moo.gateway*

12.1 The BBC creative network phase one

12.1.1 Background

As demonstrated in the literature review the BBC had a documented need for innovation, in the form of new programmes and programme ideas. One way in which it attempted to be more 'creative' was through the formation of a Creative Network. This was a group of BBC staff, trained in audience insight and creative facilitation techniques, who were available to help BBC teams generate new programme ideas and solutions to their business problems. The Creative Network was led by the BBC Creative Director, Alan Yentob, and the training for the network participants was carried out by a team managed by Frank Ash, Manager BBC Creativity & Audiences. Both Alan Yentob and Frank Ash feature in interviews later in this case study.

In 2007 Yentob and Ash decided to investigate if the Creative Network might work more effectively if it had a website or made use of social technology, and they commissioned this researcher to carry out some stakeholder and user research to find out more about how a website could work, not just for the Creative Network, but for BBC staff at large.

12.1.2 Plan - BBC stakeholder and user research

The first round of stakeholder research was conducted in June 2007 with ten senior managers from a mixture of BBC programme making and online technology teams. The findings were grouped into four broad categories, summarised in the report as follows:

Strategy

- The site needs to explain Creative Futures (the BBC initiative of that time period)
- Senior management connecting with staff around creativity
- Vision are planning a series of events around the country and need a mechanism for sharing the learning

Commissioning

- The site needs to open up and humanise the commissioning process

- Vision want the site to communicate changes to commissioning coming in the Autumn
- Audience insight and narrative

Creativity Cycle

- The Creativity Cycle (the BBC process used by the Creative Network) supports the site content and architecture...
- ... but it is not explicitly mentioned, except where used as a diagnostic
- Masterclasses from top talent on how they work their magic – use the archive
- Interpretation and context of audience data – but not the data itself

Social Networking

- The site is about SHARING not TELLING
- A place where people can build on each other's ideas – the Corporation does NOT have all the answers
- Favourite clips, promos, pilots, lists being shared the way people share and email clips from You Tube (BBC 2007)

I then spoke with eight facilitators from the Creative Network; the eight interviewees were a mix of experienced middle managers with programme making and journalism backgrounds.

Here is the summary of those interviews taken from the research report:

Focus

- Creative Futures is a big turn-off – it has damaged the word 'Creative'
- Staff don't know or care what it means – creativity needs a humanist context
- Focus should be on execution of ideas rather than turning 'thoughts' into ideas, they do not think people will share programme ideas (at first)

Commissioning

- Help in forming the inarguable argument
- People will not be comfortable about asking for help initially
- Commissioners are uncomfortable talking about the reality – too polite – this needs to become more honest

- Needs to be “more interesting than an A4 document”

Social Networking

- Use site to find out what others are doing – mechanism for talking to normal people
- How do people get round the bureaucracy?
- Celebration of small things
- Stuff to share – eavesdropping, fly on the wall, giggly, fun

Tone and Design

- unPC
- Graphic design must be strong
- Honest, human, authentic
- Counter-cultural (!!!)
- Low-key, viral (BBC 2007)

The reactions from each group to each of four broad content ideas can be summarised in tabular form as follows:

Content Idea	Senior Managers	Facilitators
Senior Management explaining Creative Futures	YES	NO
Facebook style social networking	YES	YES
Tips from talent, colleagues & external sources	YES	YES
Humanising commissioning process and audience data	YES	YES

(BBC, 2007)

While there was broad agreement in most areas, and a basis for taking the research further, there was disagreement between the facilitators and senior managers over the ‘Creative Futures’ content and the facilitator’s claim that the word ‘creative’ had been damaged by association with the Creative Futures initiative was problematic. In particular, the facilitators felt that the staff associated the ‘Creative Future’ initiative with cost cutting and possible redundancies. This could be considered an example of Foucault’s concept of resistance – how when a group seeks to exercise

power through the use of language, it then creates resistance to the effects of power, and interestingly in the context of this case study, that can be a creative and productive force (Foucault 1982). At the time though, the managers supporting the BBC Creative Network website concept found themselves in a situation where they were trying to build a website about 'creativity' in an organisation with aspirations to be "the most creative in the world" (BBC 2006) and yet it was felt staff would react badly to use of the word 'creative'. This could be seen to be the BBC staff acting, or reacting to power, in a way which Foucault would recognise:

"Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart" (Foucault 1998, p.100)

Given the broad consensus in a number of areas, it was agreed to conduct more research with potential end users among the BBC staff.

The next phase of the research took place in September 2007. It was carried out with a group of programme-making staff spread across the following roles and BBC departments:

- Researchers
- Assistant Producers
- Producers
- Senior Producers
- CBBC
- Natural History Unit
- BBC Wales (BBC 2007)

These staff were considered to be younger than average for the BBC (77% under the age of 35) and with shorter than average service (66% less than 5 years' service) (BBC 2007). It is also fair to say that the CBBC, Natural History Unit and BBC Wales, were considered to be departments with a strong reputation for innovative and quality programming (Jones and Goffee 2009). Regular use of social networking sites was 77% at a time when only 17% of UK citizens were looking at social media on a weekly basis (Statista 2015). Of the social media sites visited, Facebook was by far the dominant platform, with all the regular social media users in the survey group having a Facebook profile.

The users were shown a number of concept boards based on the outcomes of the first phase of the research and their reactions were recorded and discussed. The first of these is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Creative network concept 1

This concept was liked by all of the majority respondents who reacted positively to the “fun”, “informal”, “cool” and “different” tone and design of the website concept. They indicated that the intended purpose of the site was clear, understood and useful. The more social aspects of the design, e.g. “Who’s said what” were more easily understood by interviewees who were more frequent users of consumer social media such as Facebook. The interviewees’ only negative reaction was to any jargon around ‘creativity’ and they preferred language which was more straightforward here such as ‘How not to pitch’ and ‘Confessions of a commissioner’. This was assumed to be because it was a more straightforward fit with the language of their everyday lives, and as we have seen already in this section there was a deep suspicion of how words to do with ‘creativity’ might be being used by management to disguise other business activity (BBC 2007).

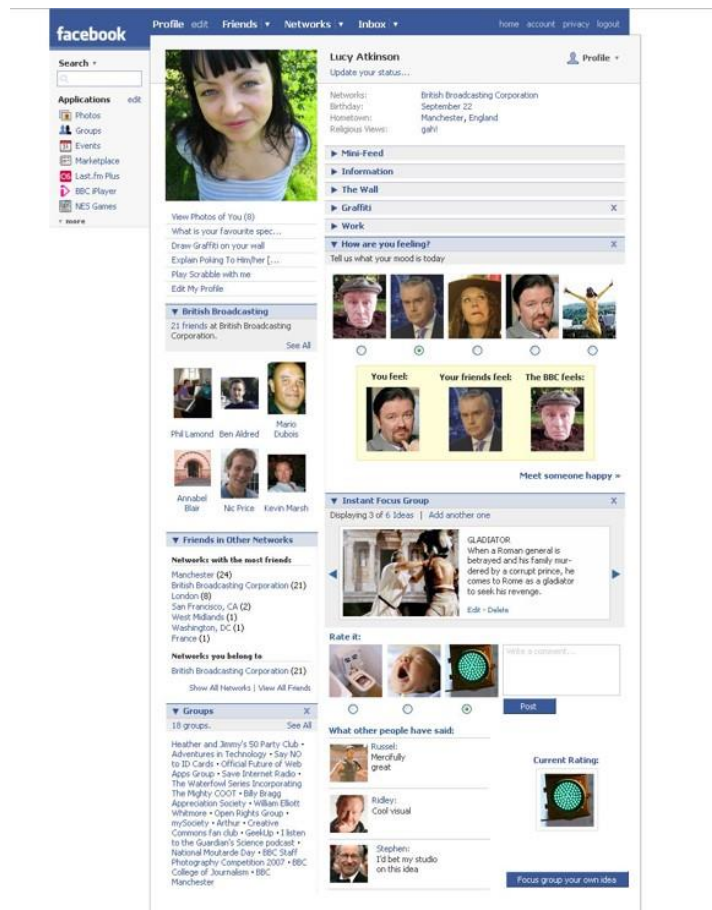


Figure 7: Creative network concept 2

Research participants were then shown a concept which more explicitly integrated the creative network content in their existing social media (see Figure 7). The concept included a number of creative network Facebook 'apps' which could be included directly in the user's Facebook page such as 'Instant focus group', 'Meet the commissioners', 'Big Brainstorm' and 'How are you feeling?'.

Interviewees expressed concerns over privacy with this concept. They did not want their social lives being exposed to BBC management, even if this was a remote possibility. The 'How are you feeling?' mood app was universally disliked whereas the 'Instant focus group' app was universally liked. Interviewees indicated that 'fun' need not be frivolous and that any content needed to be directly related to their work at the BBC. Their responses indicated a clear line between work and non-work socialising and content that was from work, but not about directly about their work was clearly perceived to get in the way of making programmes (BBC 2007).

Younger users were generally less concerned about sharing their ideas in the open (and therefore risking others 'stealing' their ideas) than older users, but on further investigation this was shown to be more of a tribal viewpoint. There were

departments in the BBC which were less concerned about sharing than others, and younger staff working in an area more concerned about the risk of ideas being 'stolen' would take on that point of view (BBC 2007). This contradicts the 'digital natives' rhetoric which assumes that all 'millennials/generation Y/etc.' users are comfortable sharing their ideas online (Prensky 2001).



Figure 8: Creative network concept 3

The third concept shown to potential users of the proposed site was a viral marketing concept based on parody of the BBC staff newspaper 'Ariel' (see Figure 8). This was treated with more suspicion by the interviewees who felt it would only be received positively if it was very funny and was at considerable risk of appearing 'lame'. Any attempt at viral marketing would also need to be honest about its origin and not try to disguise where it was coming from – this view was held about any large corporation trying to use social media, not just the BBC (BBC 2007).

This finding echoes the research of Burgess and Green, which showed that while big corporations generate many views for their content on YouTube, their channels do not attract many subscribers compared to the 'YouTube stars' – participants whose personal brands developed within YouTube's social network. This suggests that big media corporations are not seen as participants in YouTube when it is considered as a bone fide social network rather than a digital broadcasting channel (Burgess and Green 2009).

My analysis of the feedback led me to make the following recommendations to the sponsors of the potential site:

- The homepage of the site should be simple and clear with a focus on sharing useful programme-making content from the BBC and from across the wider web
- Any potentially frivolous or non-programme making related content should be avoided
- A requirement to be a member of the site should not be considered necessary with the whole aim of the site to be as 'frictionless' as possible
- Jargon such as 'creative facilitators' or 'creative network' should be avoided as far as possible and replaced with simple message such as 'help each other make better programmes'
- There was a role for (jargon free) BBC corporate content such as audience data but it would need to stand on its own merit along with user generated and non-BBC content. (BBC 2007)

The decision was taken to move forward with a prototype site and to build it using technology and methodologies which allowed for rapid prototyping and iteration with end users.

12.1.3 Act - design and development of the creative network website

The website development started in late 2007 and was carried out with a BBC design and development team based in BBC Manchester using the web application framework 'Ruby on Rails'.

At the same time, the BBC Creativity & Audiences team, taking advice on interactive learning from the BBC Academy, took over the conceptual ownership of the site. A significant step was taken when the team decided to change the name from 'Creative Network' and remove references to 'creativity' which might be construed as coming from a corporate context. What the site was NOT called was, perhaps, more important than what it was called, and the team considered 'the network' before they decided on 'moo' – which was an (ironic) acronym for 'making original output' – the kind of BBC business jargon the site was trying to subvert.

A number of the possible design options for the site, conceived prior to it being renamed '*moo*', are shown in Figures 9 and 10.

audiences & creativity



Figure 9: moo site design concept

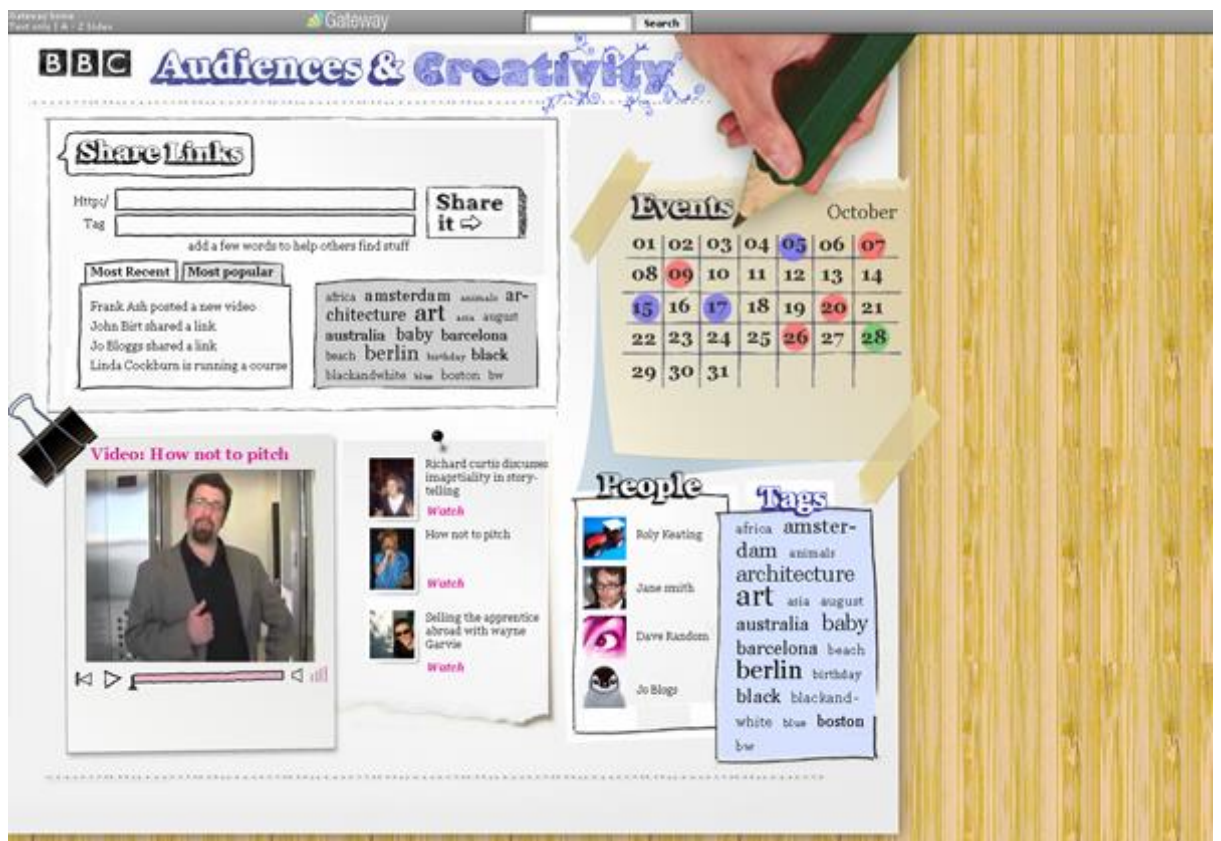


Figure 10: moo site design concept

The final design concept was influenced by the 'nu rave' fashion popular with the target demographic at the time (see Figures 11-14).

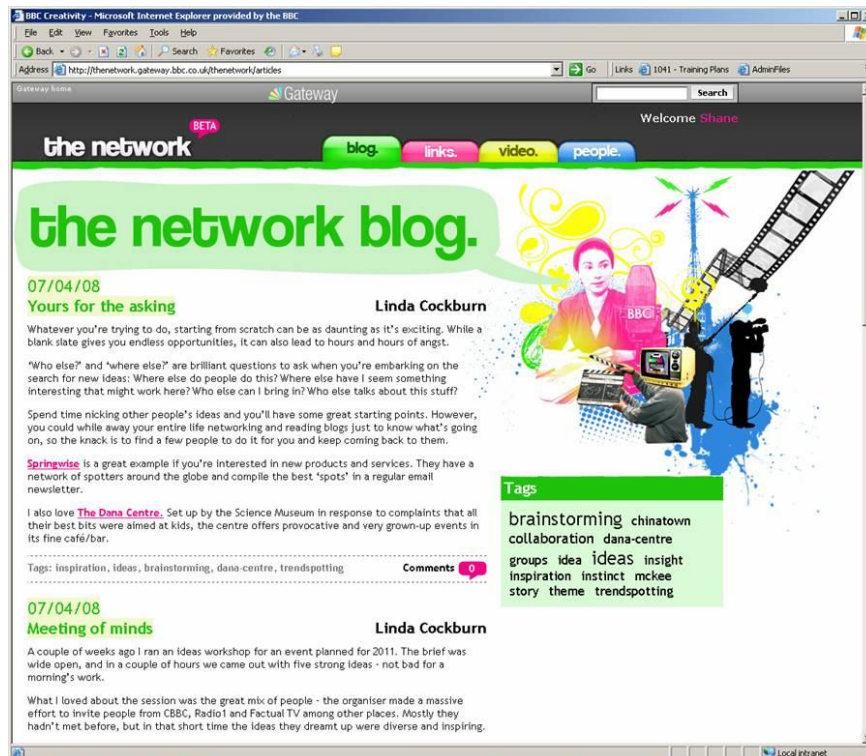


Figure 11: The network (moo) blog page

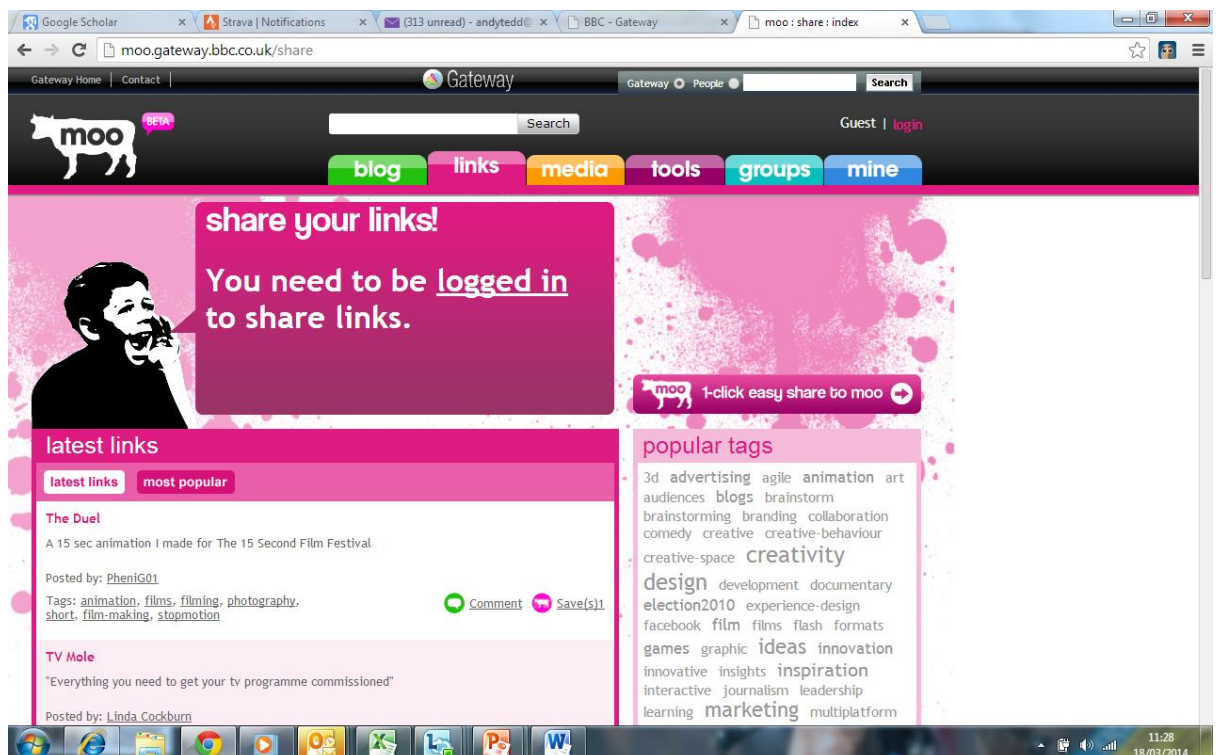


Figure 12: moo final design link sharing page



Figure 13: moo final design video page

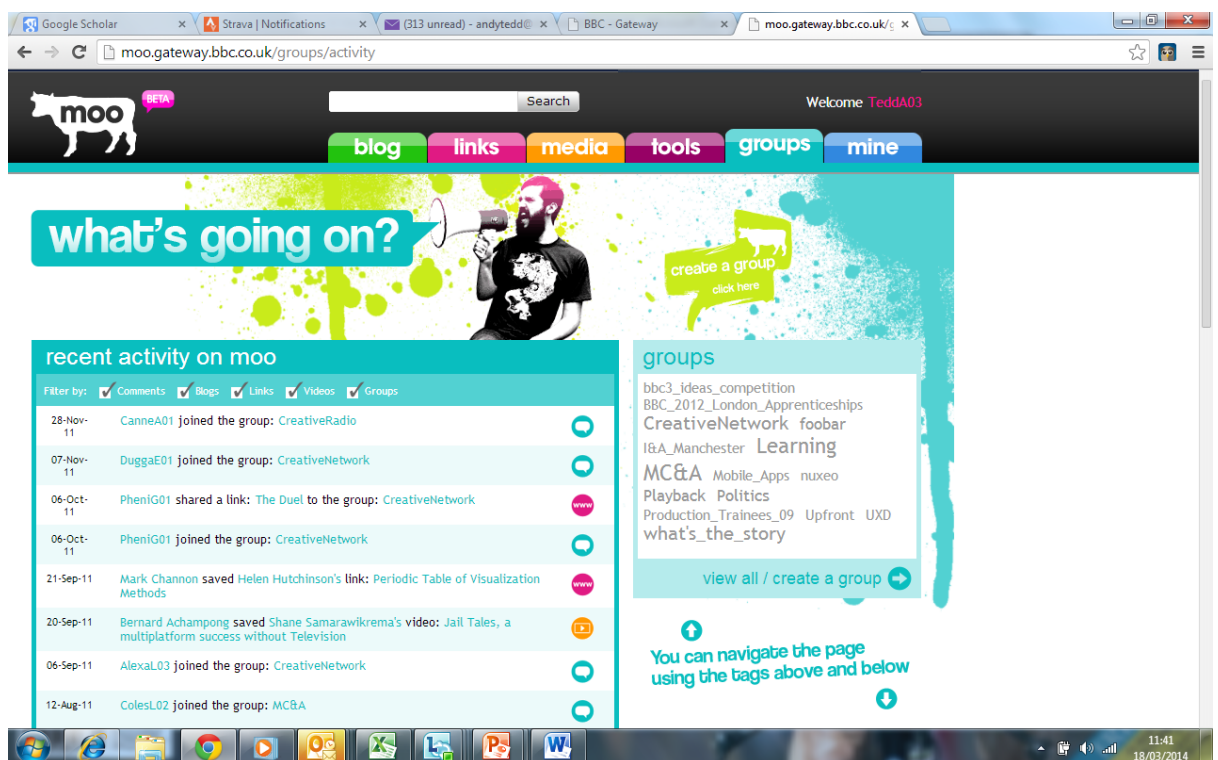


Figure 14: moo final design activity feed page

The site was launched as a soft 'beta' launch without much promotion in early 2008.

12.1.4 Observe

The site ran on the BBC intranet as a 'beta' version until October 2008, when evaluation research with the end users was conducted. The details of this are discussed in Section 3.3.

12.1.5 How has this section helped answer the research question?

In this section we've seen how the moo web site was designed and built, and how the intended user group of BBC programme makers and journalists were engaged in a user-centred design process to ensure the site met their goals and aims. This UCD design process also provided insight on options for the aesthetic style of the site and its tone of voice, helping to provide a user experience which would encourage participation. If BBC staff were put off by poorly judged tone or design, then moo would have no chance to enable staff to work in new ways.

12.1.6 The role and influence of the researcher

I was very heavily involved in the research, design and development of this phase of the project, and influential on the stakeholders. Had I been under academic supervision during this period we might have chosen to describe the project as an action research project, and I have pointed out the similarities between this project and action research methodologies, particularly critical action science (Carr & Kemmis 1986) in the methodology chapter.

The research methodology was based on best practice (at the time) in user-centred design, which is a web design approach, loosely based on ethnographic techniques which attempts to be objective in uncovering end-user needs and goals.

The design process, which then follows, typically attempts to align end-user goals with business objectives and stakeholder goals. It is, at this point, that the process risks becoming subjective, and on innovation projects which cannot by definition draw on empirical evidence or prior experience, then it is my contention that rhetoric starts to become heavily influential on decision-making.

In order to mitigate my impact on the project I have attempted to take a reflexive approach by doing the following:

- Undertaking reflective interviews with other participants in the project
- Being critical – examining the interviews in depth and analysing the motivations for particular statements and positions and in particular looking at the influence of rhetoric on the various stakeholders and myself

- Grounding the interviews in the findings of published academic literature

12.2 Reflection in action - Interview with Manager, BBC

Creativity & Learning (Part One)

In the first half of this interview, Frank Ash explains the rationale, and some of the inspiration behind the *moo.gateway* BBC Intranet site. First, his observations about what lay behind the success of popular external social networking sites are considered:

“What the sites appeared to be doing was to give their audience a framework to leave them to make it up for themselves. The very successful ones were ones that weren't telling them how to use sites, they were actually just simply giving them the mechanism that they could use for themselves and the sites really took off when people started to use them in, perhaps, ways the designers never considered.” (Frank Ash)

This contrasted with his views on typical BBC Intranet sites which he considered “were very much management positions” and “we had tended in the organisation to use these sites as rule bases or knowledge bases.” He explained what he meant by a ‘management position’, and why he thought it would not help him achieve his aims;

“We're going to give you a whole lot of rules about safety. We're going to set up a site so you can make sure that all your programs comply editorially speaking. So, what I was really scared of was, “Oh my God! Are we going to build yet another internal BBC site which nobody in their right mind will want to go to, but they feel that they have to because it's part of their role rather than somewhere they want to go.” (Frank Ash)

This led him to want to try a different approach, which was “don't make it look like a top-down position, but give them the space and the room to play and let them discover what they want the site to be.” (Frank Ash)

Underlying this approach was the belief that “most people are very creative and spend most of their time being enormously creative without even realising they're doing it.” (Frank Ash)

Here Frank is deploying one of Benaji et al.'s rhetorics of creativity – ubiquitous creativity – the “notion that creativity is not just about consumption and production of artistic products, whether popular or elite, but involves a skill in having the flexibility to respond to problems and changes in the modern world and one's personal life.”

(Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006). Further evidence of the influence of this rhetoric is demonstrated through comments like:

“They walk through BBC buildings and conveniently forget that actually they have extraordinary abilities. They're extraordinarily creative. But they think of it as gossip, going to the pub, discussing each other's friends. And my guess is that all we need to do was give them a facility where they could behave as they would outside the BBC so they could do it inside as well.” (Frank Ash)

and

“We got the feeling that a lot of people in the organisation have their own special interests that they may share with only a few other people. And this could actually facilitate it.” (Frank Ash)

The rhetoric of creativity was not the only rhetorical influence on this project – the possible impact of rhetoric of ‘digital natives’ can be seen in the following comments:

“We thought that what we would target was very much the younger person, the web-wise generation because it seemed to me that they would be the ones who would see immediately what we were trying to do. So the target was young programme-makers.” (Frank Ash)

So here the assumption is that young people immediately understood the opportunity that the social network presented to them – to share and develop their ideas online (and be noticed and further their careers by doing so). Unfortunately this assumption remains unproven, either for the traditional age-based definition of ‘digital natives’ or the broader behaviours based definition put forward by Helsper and Eynon (2009).

“They are very young but also they were very street-wise, worldly-wise young program makers who we were aware were already doing a huge amount using these kind of tools and services on the web.” (Frank Ash)

With this comment Frank seems to have fallen into another ‘digital natives’ assumption trap, where because some young people are observed to have a facility with technology and digital media, it is assumed to be evidence of a generational shift. This fallacy is evident in Prensky’s original *Digital natives, digital immigrants* essay (Prensky 2001), but has shown to be false in subsequent critical reviews of digital natives discourse (Helsper and Eynon 2009; Selwyn 2009),

Frank drew two key conclusions from the research. The first was that “Not one single person said, “I wonder why you're doing this.” Not one single person said, “I can't understand how this can possibly be of any benefit or use to me.” Not one single one of them was negative in any way.” It will need to be assumed that he was

talking about a particular group or demographic here, because Frank also noted that: "Old people by and large didn't get it." (Frank Ash)

When asked about what might be at the heart of these perceived generational differences, he elaborated:

"Yes, because I think unfortunately, the more senior you become, the more closed, perhaps you become. The culture and that ethos that I mentioned before about it's my idea, hands off, because I want the glory at the end of it." (Frank Ash)

This is a different take on the digital natives debate to those discussed in the literature review. It is not about differences in facility with technology, and while it shares some common ground with the rhetorical stance on differing attitudes to intellectual property among generations as expressed by e.g. Keen (2007), it is the counter to the position expressed by younger subjects in the early user research – that younger programme makers considered publishing an idea online to be taking ownership of it, rather than potentially giving it away.

"And I think one of the things I've found so interesting is that in one hand we say we want to be the most creative organisation in the world. And on the other hand, we put every barrier conceivable in the way of letting go and having fun with ideas and letting people play." (Frank Ash)

Readman (2011) demonstrates how the word 'creativity' may be used as an instrument of power and policy, and it was clear from talking to the middle managers in the Creative Network in the early research that management use of the term 'creativity' would be viewed cynically by staff.

This created a dichotomy where a website to facilitate creativity, in an organization with the aspiration to be 'the most creative in the world', could not be labelled as 'creative' and was also seen as being counter-cultural:

"Quite a lot of senior people, in fact even Yentob said they saw the site as being countercultural. Which I found a bit perverse, the BBC's creative director saying a site about creativity could be seen as being countercultural in an organisation that's supposed to be the most creative in the world." (Frank Ash)

Frank expanded on what he thought was meant by counter-cultural: in this specific context, he described the existing BBC culture:

"Countercultural in that it was trying to challenge the existing creative ethos. The culture of the BBC goes back to this idea that ideas had individual ownership and the ownership was important, because that's

how you got kudos, that's how you got accolades, and that's how you actually moved upwards and onwards." (Frank Ash)

And contrasted this with his conception of a new, digitally-enabled, sharing, culture:

"And therefore, what was going to be incredibly difficult was to deal with colleagues who say, "What's in it for me if I bring in other people who improve my idea? They are now sharing ownership with me." It's almost impossible to say whose idea it was that initiated this. Because by the time it's been redeveloped with thought, you've had new inputs, new ways of realising this idea, prototyping it, developing it, and releasing it, there may be 25 to 30 people, all of whom have had a significant input into moving it on and completing it. And I think that is something incredibly difficult to deal with culturally." (Frank Ash)

Therefore, there was a perceived complexity to dealing with recognition and reward on collaborative ideas in any situation, further compounded by expectations of existing BBC culture and behaviours:

"So, this was not going to be a quick fix, overnight job. This was going to take an awful long time. So many senior people at the BBC found this difficult, because that's the culture that they grew up in, and they developed their skills and they moved up the ladder. It's so familiar to them that it's become embedded. And I feel with a lot of them that they really couldn't see that there might be another way." (Frank Ash)

There was another set of expectations around the behaviours of programme makers as they react to the site. Frank considered it likely that they would see this as an attempt to exercise power, and they would therefore resist;

"I don't believe what the designers and builders of this site are actually saying to me. So, they expected that there must be some kind of conspiracy going on. Is this management getting clever and trying to play the game in order that they can use this site bash us over the head?" (Frank Ash)

This attitude was demonstrated quite clearly in the early research in the project, particularly by experienced staff who did not consider themselves to be senior management – for example, the participants in the Creative Network focus groups.

Working with the design team (including me), Frank came up with a set of broad design principles and parameters:

"What we were trying to set up was not nearly as directed and specific as traditional (internal BBC) sites. We wanted people to say, "Well, it looks like fun, but I don't know why I should use it." Or, "What's in it for me?" or "What do we get out of it?" I think predominately people were expecting sites to do stuff for them. In other words, they were passive recipients. This idea that actually, the site will only come alive if you start to use it yourself to find what you want from it, is a big leap of faith." (Frank Ash)

Frank also had a range of ideas on how the communication surrounding the site should be positioned so that it was both aligned with grassroots BBC culture, while appearing to be counter to what could be perceived as management hegemony:

“The first consideration was this should not be yet another massive champagne launch. Because again, I think that was absolutely counterproductive and against the spirit and the ethos of everything that we were trying to do. We wanted to do a soft, gentle launch, a beta version to begin with. This was very much about, "Do it myself. Do it undercover. Don't make a big fuss about it. . And just let it gradually, organically build through people coming to the site and finding it, through word of mouth.” (Frank Ash)

Frank was very keen to move away from what he considered traditional training and learning:

“Instead of doing a whole online course, the idea was to do straightforward main items on something really simple, like how to open a story. It wasn't saying "This is what you've learnt. You've learned the following." Instead it said, "Here's something you'd be interested in. Think about this." So it was quite laid back.” (Frank Ash)

He wanted to have more of a dialogue with learners, he wanted the learning to be “far more conversational and hopefully what happens as a result of seeing learning in its widest possible sense.” (Frank Ash) To him this meant:

“It wasn't "Here are 10 rules on how to start your own story." We're saying, "Have you thought about this?" Or, "here's a technique," or "Here is how somebody else has done?" Hopefully, also, to get them to start peer to peer feedback. So you want to feature some films or ideas to use as catalysts to promote some sort of dialogue.” (Frank Ash)

With the benefit of hindsight, the viral success of ‘Buzzfeed’ style lists (Wired 2014) in the period since *moo* was launched suggests that, even if it was not as good a learning experience, articles based on lists may have enjoyed more popularity with the intended audience.

When asked about how well the site had performed, in the period between its launch and mid-2009, Frank believed the site statistics showed a modest, organic growth in numbers of users:

“We are aware of increasing activity. It's happened gently. It's not been an explosion. But perhaps that would have been mistaken thinking in terms of its much better to have people finding the site and really using it, than a big push which suddenly said, "Oh, lots of people went to look, but actually very few returned.” (Frank Ash)

And in his opinion, their level of interaction with the site suggested they were engaged by it:

“We are getting more feedback from comments posted on the site. It may be a small group of people, but they really are using the site. They're going to it quite regularly, and they appear to really, really relish what it offers.” (Frank Ash)

However, comments such as “it may be a small group of people” hint at a perception that the site was not enjoying the success hoped for.

12.2.1 Interview Summary - Frank Ash part one

12.2.1.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

This interview has shown that in order for the moo project to succeed it was felt that it was important to appeal to younger programme-makers as they were considered to be more open to new ways of working. The BBC managers involved were keen to encourage them to bring their outside interests and creativity into the workplace. Digital youth culture was viewed as a sharing culture, which aligned with the managers view that programme making is based on collaboration and sharing ideas. In line with the findings from the interview with Euan Semple, there would be no “champagne launch” with a soft ‘beta’ style launch. However, this first phase of the site did not get the volume of participation that was hoped for.

12.2.1.2 Is there any further original contribution?

In addition to the points specifically aligned to the research questions, this interview gives rise to the interesting observation that the BBC’s mission to be “the most creative organisation in the world” (BBC 2003) was at odds with anecdotal first-hand experience of it. And therefore a web site intended to encourage creativity need to be “countercultural”.

12.2.1.3 My Reflections

In this interview, we’ve seen how the motivation of a senior stakeholder in the moo project could be seen as similar to three kinds of rhetoric which influence the digital learning space. Frank’s assertion that the BBC needed an intranet site where content was created from the bottom up, not top down, while an apparently honestly held opinion, is also consistent with the rhetoric of digital utopianism, and particularly the social constructivist flavour of it that was discussed in the literature review.

Frank's reasoning for this assertion is another seemingly honestly held opinion that everyone is creative, which is consistent with another rhetoric – that of ubiquitous creativity (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006).

The third rhetoric that could be considered to be influential on Frank's underlying belief that a project based on this kind of learning would be more relevant to young people with their assumed greater acceptance of, and facility with, technology is that of 'digital natives' (Prensky 2001). This rhetoric was examined in detail in the literature review.

The interview also examined the 'creative' habitus of the BBC, in particular the power games being played out by staff and management through the use of the word 'creativity' and the need to align the site with grassroots and everyday BBC culture.

In the next section, we will look at the steps taken to increase interaction with the site by more explicitly aligning with the motivations and career goals of younger programme-makers.

12.3 The BBC creative network phase two

12.3.1 Reflection in action - review of site usage

After launch the site did not attract the kind of usage, both in terms of numbers of posters, and volume of content originated or shared that the team had hoped for. While members of the Creativity & Audiences team, and the Creative Network were active in originating blog articles, and sharing links and YouTube videos, the site had not really attracted a wider audience among younger programme-makers such as those interviewed in the initial research.

The decision was taken to conduct more qualitative research among the target audience, **and this work was carried out by the author of this thesis.**

At the same time, the Creativity & Audiences team were set a specific objective by the Head of BBC Training & Development to 'get a programme commissioned' through their creative development activities. This was taken to mean that one of the ideas generated during a workshop, facilitation exercise, or online or face-to-face training programme should be of sufficient relevance, and merit, to a BBC channel that it would be commissioned as if it had come through the regular commissioning channels.

This objective would prove to be of critical significance as it ensured that the objectives of senior managers, both in learning and commissioning, the site owners, and the users of the site were all aligned with the aim of achieving a programme commission, an objective that I would argue is the fundamental purpose of the BBC, more so than the platitudes and corporate speak of strategy documents and the Charter.

In *A multilevel model of resistance to information technology implementation*, Lapointe and Rivard define resistance to new technology from groups as coming in phases:

1. apathy
2. passive resistance
3. active resistance
4. aggressive resistance

(Lapointe & Rivard 2005)

In the first phase of the project, the perceived lack of success could be attributed to apathy, as the project was not promoted or imposed in a manner that was likely to encounter resistance.

12.3.2 Plan - User research

The first stage of the review was to find out what was working on the site, and what could be improved, so I carried out a series of interviews among the target user group.

These interviews were held in early 2009 in BBC locations in London, Cardiff and Bristol with representatives of the target audience.

The key usage statistics were:

- 474 viewers of the site
- 50 users had posted:
 - 31 videos
 - 116 links
 - 8 blog articles;

- 24 comments
- 9.5:1 lurk: post ratio* (BBC 2009)

(* in line with 1:9:90 contribute: comment: lurk ratio found across the Internet)

This was below the expectations of the sponsors of the site, although those expectations had not been articulated in numeric form.

The most popular tags used on the site were:

- creativity
- storytelling
- ideas
- inspiration
- design (BBC 2009)

The most popular content items on the site were:

- Where does Creativity Hide? (link to video)(external content)
- Wordplay: Wind-up and pitch (link) (external content)
- Ikea Inventors & Innovators (link) (external content)
- What does it all MEME? (link) (external content)
- Writers' Academy (video) (BBC corporate content) (BBC 2009)

It is interesting to note the popularity of items featuring the word 'creativity' given the reticence expressed around the use of the term in the initial round of user research in 2007. This could be explained because in the items listed above the terms occurs in a user-generated (tagging) or external context (a TED video by Theresa Amabile), rather than a BBC corporate context.

The qualitative feedback on the site was positive in terms of usability, design, content and branding. Users had found the site through personal recommendation but, when asked, typically did not feel a viral campaign to increase awareness would work. Users did react positively to the concept of competitions, particularly if those competitions were aligned with their everyday goals and objectives – making programmes and getting programme ideas commissioned (BBC 2009).

A number of other recommendations were made around specific group tagging functionality but the key recommendation to hold a competition with a prize related

to career development was accepted by the BBC Creativity & Audiences team and put into development.

12.3.3 Act - BBC 3 Competition

The competition is described in Section 3.4 – the second part of the interview with Frank Ash, Manager, BBC Creativity & Audiences.

12.3.4 Observe - Site and competition usage

By the end of the competition, the site's usage had grown as follows:

- 320 links
- 80 competition videos
- 24 comments on most commented video
- 190 shared videos
- 24 blog articles

12.3.5 How has this section helped answer the research question?

In this section we have seen how qualitative user research, and quantitative review of the site statistics, gave a greater understanding of what parts of the site were working for programme-makers, and what their key interests were – namely the progression of their careers. This led to the development of a competition which would directly enable new ways of working for the participants, and would lead to considerable opportunity of access to successful entrants.

12.3.6 The role and influence of the researcher

I carried out the research to review the site and made the recommendations put forward to improve the site. The review was conducted according to best practice in user-centred design methodology.

Accordingly, the impact of the researcher, and mitigation of that impact can be treated in the same way as described in the previous phase.

By the time the *moo*/BBC3 competition was launched the researcher was no longer undertaking paid work on the project, and had commenced supervised doctoral study so interviews from Section 3.6 onwards were not subject to any unusual influence or impact and do not require any special mitigation.

12.4 Reflection on action - Interview with Manager, BBC Creativity & Learning (Part Two)

In the second part of this interview, Frank explains how and why the focus of the *moo* website shifted from pure knowledge sharing, to supporting a competition, run in conjunction with BBC3:

“The starting point was to say, we have a fantastic facility that no other internal site on BBC has. You can actually upload and download videos as a central feature. Because the idea then was that people would start sharing, and swapping ideas. However, it wasn't in the first nine months being used as much as we would have liked. So what we decided to do was run a competition.” (Frank Ash)

As the site's target audience was younger programme-makers, Frank decided that:

“We would try to run it on BBC3. So the key plan with this was to get Danny Cohen (then BBC 3 Controller) on side. Now, Danny effectively overlapped generations, he's only about 32 as far as I know. He was absolutely the right person to go to.” (Frank Ash)

“Also because BBC3 was an innovative channel, it dared to do stuff differently. It was for younger people and seemed to be the most creative of all the channels that we could go to. So it was kind of a perfect fit for us and we were delighted that Danny immediately saw the merits and benefits of the site and competition.” (Frank Ash)

In an interview with Danny Cohen later in this section, his interest in the project, and the reason behind that interest, will be examined in greater detail. Frank summarized his interest as follows:

“He saw this as being really good for him because he also absolutely got that the idea, the philosophy, of competition was essentially for everyone.” (Frank Ash)

“Once Danny was on board, we designed a home page for the competition, and we announced it, it was quite well publicised, which we were pleased about. Then we sat back and worried, “Is anyone going to actually dare to put up their videos?” (Frank Ash)

I asked Frank why he thought this might be:

“The risk was, “Would anybody actually dare to put their video up into the public domain? Where it could be shot down in flames, by people making negative comments.” (Frank Ash)

This doubt led to Frank questioning the appeal of the competition and taking a pessimistic view of how many entrants would upload a pitch video:

“Our expectations on how many entries would we get kept being revised downwards, I think we got down to about 30... We thought 30 would be good.” (Frank Ash)

However, this view did prove to be unnecessarily pessimistic:

“On the last Friday before the entries were closed, we started to see a huge amount of activity on the site. And by the end of that day, we got 100 videos on that site, which I thought was... I mean that was actually one of the most exciting days, I was proud of the site.” (Frank Ash)

At the time, the audience of BBC staff outside of the regular TV commissioning channels was of the order of 10,000. To get 100 entries seems broadly in line with 2009 levels of participation inequality, what was known as the “1-9-90 rule” (Nielsen 2006), i.e. out of a user-generated content-based online community of 10,000 one might expect 9,000 ‘lurkers’, 900 ‘intermittent contributors’ (or commenters) and 100 ‘heavy contributors’ (or content creators). So at first glance, 100 entries might not seem like a huge number, but it was in line with frequently observed behaviour across the Internet.

Frank was very pleased with this result, and in subsequent comments, you get a sense of his underlying utopianism and the emancipatory way in which he viewed the aims of the *moo* project. He believed the project clearly demonstrated colleagues outside of the programme making were capable of generating programme ideas, and wanted to do so:

“It said, “There are a lot of us out there who would dare to do this.” And the most gratifying thing was that a lot of it came from non-programme-making areas. It's not just about the so-called ‘creatives’.” (Frank Ash)

And that through the *moo* website and the competition online, social technology would afford them access to the ‘great and the good’ – the channel controllers – a view echoed by Danny Cohen in an interview later in this chapter:

“One of the things that excited Danny was that via this competition, he would see or, at the very least, get to know the creative people that he would never ever otherwise meet because the protocol and process that who actually gets to talk to the commissioners, let alone the controllers, is so difficult and is so constrained. Only the most senior people are allowed access into the controllers’ lives.” (Frank Ash)

So, the site and the competition held the potential to increase the network or social capital of successful participants which, according to Bourdieu, plays a significant part in shaping the habitus of an individual. Thus, it can be argued that the *moo* site might enable entrants to redefine their habitus in a way that was more favourable in terms of realising their programme-making ambitions.

“Danny discovered that the people at a very junior level not only had creative ideas, but actually when it came, when we did a short listing to pitch them, were brilliant at pitching as well and I think that he got really excited by that.” (Frank Ash)

In this comment we can see how Frank is confirming how the competition demonstrated a belief in 'ubiquitous creativity' (one of Banaji et al.'s 'Rhetorics of Creativity' (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006)) to be correct.

He then went on to explain how the competition would allow participants to develop knowledge of, and experience in, 'the rules of the game', which are an essential part of appearing to fit into a particular habitus:

"What we've replicated in terms of competition was that first meeting that everyone should have, to say to the controller or whoever it is, "Listen, I've got the germ of an idea. Do you think it is worth my while developing it?" (Frank Ash)

At the same time, the participants' absence of knowledge of the 'rules of the game' meant that, in Frank's opinion, their ideas were constrained by preconceived ideas of what can and cannot be done:

"What I think was really interesting was just how off the wall some of these ideas were. I think it's a danger that the programme makers in this organisation are playing safe. They're very, very much aware of, "Well we never do that. They have said they want ideas within this particular genre and that's what we'll concentrate on." (Frank Ash)

This was an absence he appeared to find quite refreshing:

"The good people who entered the competition had no idea of this way of working. So as far as they were concerned, any idea, however crazy or off the wall it was, was worth submitting and I think that was the beauty of the competition. You got real originality, some wonderfully idiosyncratic, sometimes quite crazy ideas." (Frank Ash)

A key feature of the *moo* project, in addition, to the ability to post and share videos and promos, was the ability for BBC colleagues to comment on those posts and shares. The stakeholders had the digitally utopian ambition, or vision, that colleagues would offer constructive criticism of each other's ideas and may even go on to build on them together and ultimately collaborate on programme making both online and offline.

"One of the really heartening things about the competition is just how much support those ideas got. There was a facility so that they could look at an idea and make comments, and a lot of the comments were incredibly positive and incredibly supportive. I think that was actually wonderful because that very much went back to what we had hoped right in the beginning of this project, the idea of people supporting each other." (Frank Ash)

We then spoke about what had happened to the finalists in the competition (six competitors got the chance to pitch to Danny Cohen, BBC3 Controller):

“I have to say this is slightly disappointing to me and in a way harks back to some of the worst aspects of the BBC. That Danny picked three of the ideas and wanted them to be further developed. Unfortunately, as far as I know, none of those ideas has really, really moved on that much.” (Frank Ash)

At the time of this interview, it was the case that there had not been much progress, however subsequently, two of the finalists were able to progress their ideas significantly, and they are interviewed later in this chapter. However, this part of the interview is nevertheless interesting as shows how Frank realised that the finalists needed practical support on every step of their journey:

“And I think there was a slight sadness that perhaps the people that Danny went to felt that this was a sort of duty that they were doing, rather than really giving it support that I would have wanted. I do get a sense that Danny wasn't, unfortunately, able to manage that process. He was very busy and quite frankly, he handed on those three people to the people that he thought might be interested in having to develop those ideas.” (Frank Ash)

And perhaps more tellingly, he hints at the ‘habitus with habitus’ of BBC television programme-makers within the wider BBC:

“Maybe a lack of time, but it may also, who knows, but slightly perhaps this idea of, “Why should I, an exalted program maker, worry about somebody from financial services. He's got this idea which I'm not really keen on myself. Therefore, why should I bother?”

A channel controller saying, “This is good,” doesn't necessarily get through that.” (Frank Ash)

(My emphasis). Here we can clearly see how organisational and hierarchical power are insufficient to push through an idea on their own. Ideas need active promotion and the buy-in of staff at all levels in order to proceed. This resistance here was not active or overt, but a more passive form, exercised through a reluctance to engage with the idea using accepted forms of organizational discourse and process.

Later interviews in this case study will demonstrate how this view was held more widely in the BBC, and how it felt for two of the successful finalists to experience this passive resistance first hand.

12.4.1 Interview Summary - Frank Ash part two

12.4.1.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

This interview explained how a competition with access to advice from BBC commissioners and the opportunity to pitch to a channel controller was devised in response to research into usage of moo. The competition was run on BBC3 as that was considered more relevant to the younger staff using moo, and Danny Cohen, BBC 3 Controllers was keen to use social media to broaden his network and reach. This competition was considered a success and attracted participation in line with that expected on the Internet at large. Entrants from outside traditional programme-making areas also contributed ideas, and many of these were of a high quality, including a finalist.

12.4.1.2 Is there any further original contribution?

Over and above the research questions, the interview also showed how just opening a channel to commissioners through social media was not enough to ensure access. Inexperienced participants needed help navigating the BBC's power structures. A Channel Controller saying "This is good." Is not sufficient to cut through that.

12.4.1.3 My Reflections

This interview considered the decision to run a programme ideas competition with BBC3 to drive up the usage of the site, and demonstrated how the competition was successful in so far as participation was similar to what might be expected based on the 1:9:90 'rule' for the ratio of contributors to 'lurkers' on social platforms (Nielsen 2006). A possible explanation for this success in increasing contribution could be that the prize in the competition – an opportunity to pitch to a channel controller with the possibility for a programme idea taken into development was directly aligned with the everyday lives (de Certeau 1984) and career aspirations of the junior BBC staff it was aimed at.

The interview then provided evidence of stakeholders' desire for an emancipatory effect from the project – namely increasing the cultural and network capital of the competition participants.

However, Frank also started to provide a feel for the habitus within habitus of BBC programme-making and how a lack of knowledge of the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1984) or what de Certeau would call 'implicit principles' (de Certeau 1984, p.53) could stand in the way of the success of the competition winners.

This will be considered in more detail in the interviews with the competition winner and runner up which follow the interviews with other senior BBC stakeholders in the project.

12.5 Reflection on action - Interview with BBC Creative

Director

As part of this 'Reflection on action' phase of the project, I also interviewed Alan Yentob, BBC Creative Director. Alan was Head of the Creative Network, and had a broader remit of spreading creativity throughout the BBC, in addition to some programme-making responsibilities. As such, he was the business sponsor of the *moo* project, and heavily involved in the initial discussions around the user research and interpretations of it. As with Frank, there is a utopian and emancipatory tone to Alan's answers when asked about his reasons for sponsoring the project:

"The BBC is a creative organisation. That's the driving force behind it and everyone in it, whoever they are, also sees that. Whatever their view of the BBC, they see themselves as creative, they see their role as creative." (Alan Yentob)

Again, this is an example of the rhetoric of ubiquitous creativity, although the BBC is considered by many to be a creative organization, it does not necessarily follow that everyone who works for it, is 'creative'. However, that is what Alan appears to believe. The next comment seems to hint at how he thinks the size and scale of the BBC can hold people back, a comment that is more emancipatory in tone:

"Sometimes they see the organisation as an impediment, all being while they see it a bit in the workforce as an enabler but obviously we're a very large organisation. The challenges are different from in a small organisation. The opportunities are greater but at the same time in a big organisation, you sometimes want to feel small because it's more creative." (Alan Yentob)

Combining this belief in ubiquitous creativity with a belief that the size of the organization may be preventing people from being creative seems to imply that Alan might be interested in digitally utopian projects which promise to liberate creativity by connecting people and circumventing organizational barriers and boundaries. As demonstrated in the literature review, this a common theme of the popular digitally utopian literature such as *Here Comes Everybody* (Shirky 2009) and *We Think* (Leadbeater 2008).

This is evidenced in the following comment, where he emphasizes the importance of networks in learning:

“I am a great believer that you can learn from your colleagues, learn from people around you. I certainly did when I arrived in the BBC. I was most inspired by just my peers who had been there maybe a year or two longer and I was able to learn from what they did.” (Alan Yentob)

And reflects on how he believes technology has democratised media production:

“In 20 years the big change is that anyone can do it. There's obviously a difference between people doing it at home and people doing it professionally, but the differences are less than they were. The most potent stuff is often to be found on YouTube, it's a magnet for the stuff that's interesting.” (Alan Yentob)

Having given those reasons, Alan then provided some more context to the project, going back as far as the Making it Happen initiative, which occurred under Greg Dyke's leadership in the period 2001-2003:

“Making it Happen was an attempt also to make everyone in the BBC, and in the independent sector, beyond it, feel engaged and involved in what was happening, and try to get them to learn how to work together, to brainstorm, to think of how to link into people's needs and aspirations. To use the size of the BBC to make it, to be able to put together a disparate group of people, each of whom had something different to bring.” (Alan Yentob)

Making it Happen was succeeded by various initiatives as Director Generals came and went but the origins of the Creative Network, which the *moo* project was the online face of, can be traced directly back to it: “It brings us to this idea of social media and the idea of the creative network.” He explained the main rationale of the network:

“What the creative network does is that you take people who are talented people working in some part of the organisation and you bring them to some other part of the organisation where they've got a problem. And you help them problem solve. What they do is they bring a new perspective to it. Each time we applied this, it seemed to me that the results inevitably threw light on a situation and made it better. (Alan Yentob)

What Yentob is describing here could be considered to be a media elite variation of the wisdom of crowds or open innovation concepts promoted by digital utopians such as Tapscott and Williams in *Wikinomics* (Tapscott and Williams 2008) and business innovation gurus such as Chesburgh in *Open Innovation* (Chesburgh 2003). As with much of the digital utopian and creativity literature these concepts are largely rhetorical and hypothetical in nature.

He described his view of the rationale for the project:

“The other thing about a big organisation is where do the ideas come from? There is a suspicion that everything is so top-down, that the official websites belong to the bosses or whatever. This project is obviously an attempt to create a website which belonged to those people who were participating.” (Alan Yentob)

As with Frank Ash, the tone was emancipatory, and he perceived a problem of there being staff with potentially good ideas for programmes, who lacked the social and network capital necessary to bring sufficient attention to their ideas:

“We're just like a social network, in other words that you could exchange ideas in a confidence of sorts. You could also be generous enough to share things and your own insights with other people. And you can have access to people who are powerful, out of your network and who were making decisions. But not in the usual way, not having to join the queue, or go through a laborious editorial process.” (Alan Yentob)

So he saw the competition hosted on *moo* as a way of getting round these obstacles:

“And we created a competition in an environment in which you could shortcut the normal process and find a way through all that, through this special social network. That's what we were trying to do and to model it in such a way, this website, that it didn't feel bureaucratic.” (Alan Yentob)

He also believed in the benefits of collaboration demonstrated through increased innovation and creativity, a theory found in business literature dealing with creativity (Sawyer 2007) and the digital enterprise (McAfee 2009) as well as the network utopian literature (Castells 1996; Benkler 2006).

“It felt like it belonged to people who were on it, and it wasn't top-down, but that you did get access to valuable insights and information and people and material that you could pass on that material to each other.” (Alan Yentob)

Again, he was keen to emphasise the emancipatory nature, as he saw it:

“Feeling empowered because it's a small group and you're not, therefore, in a hierarchy and low down in the pecking order.” (Alan Yentob)

As we will see in the interview with Danny Cohen, Yentob's view was consistent with the digital natives rhetoric that the net generation were different and more familiar with technology and if he wanted to access them, and their ideas, then he needed to make better use of it:

“I'm always looking for people. Frankly, in that area, I think it's just looking for younger people, people with different interests, people who are familiar and at ease with the technology, people who I don't see.” (Alan Yentob)

“Particularly in an environment where I think people are being changed as a new generation buying this new technology, the internet. The way that they behave, the way they think and feel is altered by communications systems, the mobile phones, the webs, all these things that they have. And some of that is good and some of it isn't so good.”
(Alan Yentob)

This is a somewhat determinist point of view, typical of those who subscribe to the digital natives (Prensky 2001) rhetoric (Helsper and Eynon 2009), although neither totally utopian nor dystopian as he sees the potential for the good and the not so good in it.

Having explained how he thought social technology could better connect those at the ‘top’ and the ‘bottom’ of the BBC, he then explained why he thought this was important, and what the benefits would be to the organization. How it would reduce frustration among the lower levels of the hierarchy:

“I think in a big organisation where there's a narrow funnel at the top, you can get very frustrated if you feel you're at the bottom of the food chain... That if you feel you keep getting messages from those people filtered down to you.” (Alan Yentob)

And increase the effectiveness of the messaging from the commissioners:

“The other disadvantage is that the people at the top of the organisation can increasingly become prescriptive. They say, "Well, this is what I'm looking for." And it's important that they're much more open than that.”
(Alan Yentob)

So he saw the power of the site being in its ability to make connections – to create the weak ties between networks, which Burt has demonstrated help good ideas flow around organisations (Burt 2003).

“From both points of view, I think you need to connect those people at the top of that food chain, the commissioners and the others, with those people who are generating ideas further down, and who don't have the time, in real time, to get closer to those people. And that's why I thought through a social network was the way to do it.” (Alan Yentob)

Reflecting on the outcomes of the competition (at the time when the finalists had been selected, but had yet to start progressing through the development and commissioning system), he described how he was pleasantly surprised that the ideas were both good, and that the best ones were obviously the best to both ‘professionals’ and the ‘crowd’.

“We thought we were going to have to mediate those ideas for him, but after he'd seen a few, he said, "Actually these are pretty good." So he

looked at all of them, and he went in and commented, and, the best thing I thought was that the ones that had the most comments and the mobocracy that decided the best, were the ones that Danny thought were the best as well.” (Alan Yentob)

Given his initial aspirations for the potential for collaboration on the site he was pleased to see these conversations had taken place, even if they weren’t quite the kind of programme-making and storytelling builds he had hoped for (as will be seen in the interviews with the competition finalists);

“It gives you a sense that a lot of people answered and not just the three people in the room but the 100 people who made those films and all the people on that website. So that becomes a dialogue between a lot of people, where there is actually some process to watch and see developing. And I think that’s great. (Alan Yentob)

12.5.1 Interview Summary - Alan Yentob

12.5.1.1 How has the interview helped answer the research question?

This interview evidences a series of beliefs held by the BBC’s Creative Director:

- That everyone in the BBC sees themselves as creative, and should be given the opportunity to express that creativity and contribute to the BBC’s creative output
- Sometimes the organisation is an impediment to the above
- Networks are central to sharing ideas and learning
- It’s important to connect people at the top of the organisation to those at the bottom so ideas can flow freely between them.

Moo could potentially enable all of these things and therefore Alan Yentob felt it could be an important part of the creative transformation of the BBC and enabling new ways of working.

12.5.1.2 Is there any further original contribution?

In addition to the contribution made through its part in answering the research question, this interview also shows Alan Yentob’s belief in the power of the crowd or network to make good collective decisions was borne out through the crowd’s choices being consistent with the BBC’s controller and commissioners involved in the project. While some might say this was a relatively straightforward choice, as the quality of the winning ideas was so superior to many of the others, it nevertheless

shows that some of the rhetoric around ‘wisdom of the crowd’ can be shown to occur in practice.

12.5.1.3 My reflections

As with Frank Ash, Alan Yentob’s comments could be seen in the same vein as the rhetorics of creativity (primarily the rhetoric of ubiquitous creativity) and share Frank’s emancipatory tone. Alan Yentob’s remarks also share the characteristics of digital utopian rhetoric, in particular that of open innovation or mass collaboration (Chesburgh 2003; Tapscott and Williams 2008).

Again, the belief in a generation of ‘digital natives’ is evidenced in Alan Yentob’s comments. Overall, the similarity between Frank Ash’s and Alan Yentob’s responses and ideas is not surprising given they were part of the same team and subject to similar internal BBC influences (this researcher included). The answers provided in their interviews did not demonstrate evidence of an empirical basis for their assertions, which are consistent with the rhetorics of:

- Digital utopians/emancipation (Turner 2006)
- Ubiquitous creativity/open innovation (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006; Tapscott and Williams 2008)
- Digital natives (Prensky 2001)

Given the project’s principle of ontological parsimony, it can therefore be observed that the drivers behind the inception of this project are largely rhetorical, although these driving forces seem to be honestly held beliefs.

The next interview examines the experience of Andy Mosse, the competition winner.

12.6 Reflection on action - Interview with Competition

Winner

One of the finalists was Andy Mosse, a young BBC staffer from a programme-making department in BBC Bristol, a part of the BBC largely known for its factual programmes, such as those produced by the Natural History Unit. Andy submitted a teaser trailer for an idea he called ‘*Wu How*’, a comedy ‘*How to...*’ programme intended for a young audience, demographically identical to that of BBC3 and relying on postmodern visual humour based on the audience’s assumed knowledge of different genres, from martial arts movies, to children’s TV from the 1970s.

He had already developed his trailer prior to the *moo* competition being open for entries, but his idea had not made it through the commissioning process, as he explains:

“It was then passed on to commissioners, I think, through development team. I wasn't in any of those meetings. But it got turned down as they didn't think Danny would like it or they didn't think it was suitable for BBC 3. Which was interesting when it caught on.” (Andy Mosse)

The big problem he felt was that the people who he was pitching to were not the intended audience, and did not understand what they found funny about it: “No one really got it that was the thing.” Andy went into more detail about why he had created a video pitch, rather than a paper or electronic proposal, after he heard that:

“(Danny Cohen) ...was interested in "How To" type programs. It was kind of virtually impossible to explain to people on paper. So I wanted to make the taster to be able to explain it. But most people sort of thought, "Oh, it's not what we... It's not quite what we make down in Bristol. We don't do any comedy. And we don't do any 'How to' type programs.” (Andy Mosse)

He explained that he came up with the mixed genre format, because he wanted to do comedic programmes, but knew it was difficult to get into comedy (habitus (BBC Comedy) within habitus (BBC programme making)) without prior experience and evidence of success. So he picked a different genre to comedy (factual) but intended to make the trailer funny:

“Generally you can forget about comedy. It's not possible to get anything away without any experience. So it was a long shot basically. I knew it was a long shot. But I just wanted to do something... I wanted to be on BBC3. That was my sort of premise. I wasn't really that keen on what was on BBC3 at the time.” (Andy Mosse)

So he developed his idea into something he felt would work on BBC3 that he would be happy with, and explained how he chose his topics for the ‘How to’s’, such as ‘How to use your smartphone with gloves on’ and ‘How to cook a great meal at a festival’:

“They were basically the things I thought that kind of audience were into. I did quite a lot of research into the kind of things that were popular. And we did variations or new versions of the same areas.” (Andy Mosse)

Having failed to get anywhere at BBC Bristol with *Wu How*, despite appearing to be in the right kind of programme making part of the BBC (but not exactly right), Mosse was very excited to see the details of the *moo* competition when it was opened for entries and uploaded his trailer as soon as he could (see Figure 15).

“Well, I put it up. Yeah, I just uploaded it. I didn't tell anyone I'd done it. And then people started emailing saying "Hey, your 'Wu How's really good" So those were the comments on it. So then I pitched it to Danny. It was part of the prize, to pitch to Danny, as you know. And then I got a meeting with the commissioner, called Jo Twist. And that was the winning prize. In typical BBC fashion, the prize of the competition was a meeting.” (Andy Mosse)



Figure 15: WU-HOW trailer uploaded to the moo competition site

Mosse then explained how the meetings went and how his idea started to gain momentum:

“The meeting (with Jo Twist) went quite well. She was keen to get it on as a multiplatform project. She was keen on it as a TV idea, because she felt that there was already a lot of How To stuff on the internet. And I felt that it should always be a TV idea just because there wasn't anything on TV like it.” (Andy Mosse)

As the idea moved on, Mosse had to demonstrate his ability to take on board the ideas and contributions of other BBC colleagues, especially the more powerful ones. It is here that his knowledge of the rules of the game and relevant cultural capital, acquired from working in the 'right' part of the BBC habitus, proved beneficial.

“So she put it forward as that. Danny felt it was a bit more of an online thing. So he came back with this steer to pitch it to him as an online only proposition. So I pitched it as 3-minute shows, ten 3-minute shows. Jo Twist showed it back to him. He then commissioned it, and then we started working on it about a month after that.” (Andy Mosse)

After the shows had been produced, they were broadcast on the BBC iPlayer and via the BBC3 website.

“On the iPlayer, it did really well. And it got hundreds of thousands of downloads and it was top of the iPlayer list for a few days, which is really, really good. Especially because it was something that hadn't been promoted at all...” (Andy Mosse)

“On Twitter, it went completely mad as well. There are pages and pages of people tweeting it.” (Andy Mosse)

An example of the positive feedback on twitter can be seen in Figure 16.

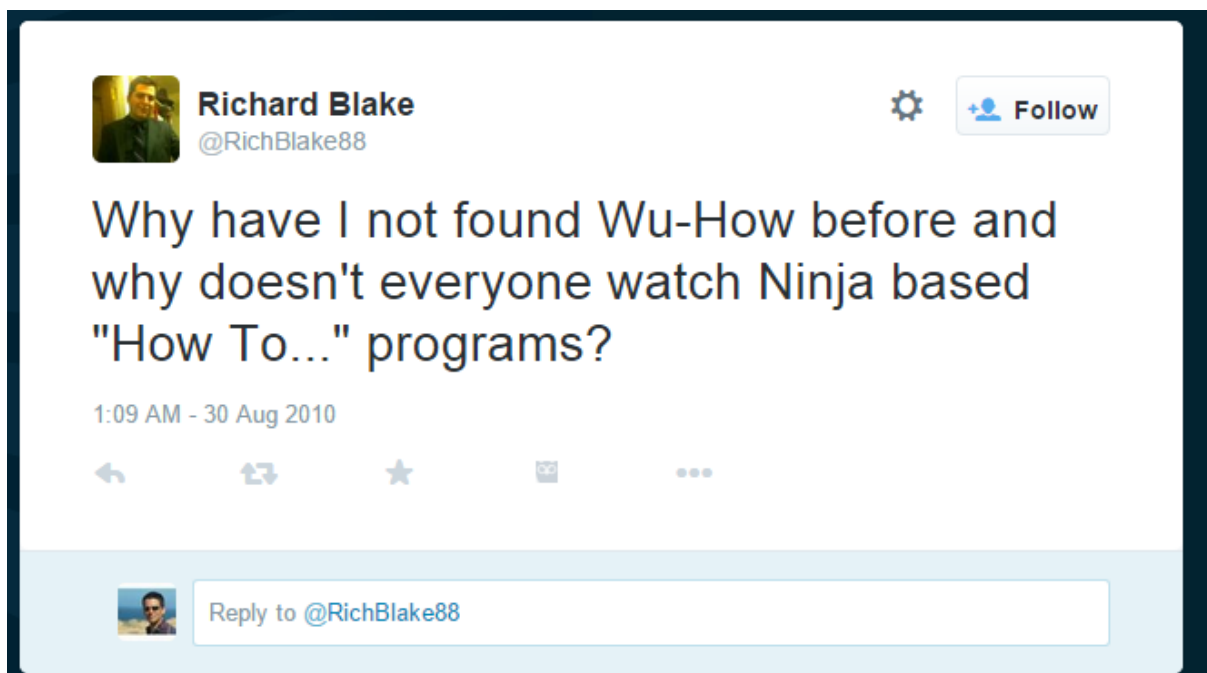


Figure 16: WU HOW tweet

However, it was not universally well received on all digital channels,

“One of the things I was really surprised at was that on YouTube, it completely bombed on YouTube.” (Andy Mosse)

Even after 5 years the *Wu How* videos on YouTube are still searching for an audience, with only the technology episode having received more than 10,000 views, which compares very poorly to the volume of iPlayer downloads claimed by Mosse. In YouTube, Mosse had his own, more straightforward, explanation:

“Because we weren't offering anything different on YouTube. So it was just basically what they were, and I think people were thinking, "Why I'm watching on YouTube when I can watch the whole thing on BBC." (Andy Mosse)

Having been pitched as collections that formed 30 minute programmes, and asked to be broken down into individual online sketches, the individual 'how to' items on iPlayer were then requested to be repackaged back into TV programmes.

"The TV commission then came off the back of the online stuff. It was picked up by the BBC3 Scheduler. He said, "I really like this. Let us just chuck them together. I basically just watched all ten, back-to-back."
(Andy Mosse)

However, creatively this was not as straightforward as it seemed.

"The things that we pitched as half hour TV's before were at very, very different pace. They were slower, they had more information. They had little sketches and skits that would pop up with the ninjas who become little characters and so on." (Andy Mosse)

Mosse explained how else he might have repackaged the items and programmes.

"The other thing I would have done differently was on YouTube... I would have separated all the items out as individual ones so they were more searchable." (Andy Mosse)

This shows a more fundamental understanding of YouTube as a platform, and arguably a genre, than that demonstrated by the commissioners and schedulers Mosse was working for. One of YouTube's most popular content genres is short 'how to' videos (Burgess and Green 2009) and users of these arrive at them by googling the task they are trying to complete, e.g. "How do I use my iPhone with gloves on?" If a programme contains this content, but is titled "BBC3 Wu How Series 1 Episode 3" then it will not rank highly in the search results for that task.

In all of these responses, in his patience in unpicking an idea, then repackaging it back to the way he originally intended, and in his flexibility in dealing with those in power above him in the BBC3 hierarchy, despite their demonstrably inferior understanding of both genre and audience, Mosse demonstrates his knowledge of the 'rules of the game'. This should be considered as much a part of the explanation of his relatively smooth path through the commissioning process, post *moo* competition, as the quality of his idea and his skills as a digital programme maker.

Asked if the *moo* competition had helped him move his television career forward, Mosse replied:

"Yeah. I feel like it, it's got me lots of brownie points. Now I am a director and it was something that helped me do well." (Andy Mosse)

“They see me as someone who can, I guess, who can pull off the more quirky things now, who can develop a visual style. And come out with something new. And so that is always something good to have.” (Andy Mosse)

Asked what advice he would give to entrants of a future *moo* style competition he made the following suggestion:

“I would say make something you want to see regardless of whether you think you can get commissioned or not. Just make something you want to see. Because I think I just became more and more... Slightly discouraged, I think, by the commissioning process...”

“I don't usually bother trying to think of ideas for specific briefs, where there's a steer on an idea, because it's usually the end of all creativity. Just come up with your own stuff and find a route.” (Andy Mosse)

12.6.1 Interview Summary

12.6.1.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

In this interview Andy Mosse explained how he found it difficult to express and communicate his ideas on paper using the conventional commissioning process. Similarly, cross genre ideas were also difficult to pitch as coming from BBC Bristol (which mostly makes factual programmes) it was anticipated that Andy couldn't ‘do comedy’.

By enabling video pitching, and providing a direct channel to the BBC3 Controller, the *moo* website enabled Andy to overcome these barriers and to progress his career in television. This was a demonstrable success for the project and clearly shows how it enabled new ways of working at the BBC.

12.6.1.2 What is the original contribution?

In addition to the contribution made above the interview also shows how Andy Mosse's existing knowledge of the BBC's ‘rules of the game’ meant he had a much easier time navigating the BBC's processes and power structures than some of his fellow finalists, who lacked this knowledge and cultural capital.

12.6.1.3 My reflections

The fact of Andy Mosse's success with a previously rejected idea and his response here, suggests that the instincts, whether rhetorically informed or not, of Alan Yentob and Frank Ash in believing that

- there was a pool of young talent with good ideas, but who lacked the network and social capital to get those ideas in front of powerful commissioners and controllers and
- that digital and social media could provide a platform and network could provide a means of connecting with that talent

were correct.

What they had not considered, as we shall see in the interview with Stephen Fingleton, was the extent to which the cultural capital of the idea's original owner would determine the progress of an idea once the structural holes had been bridged (Burt 2004).

12.7 Reflection on action - Interview with Controller, BBC

Three

As a further step in the reflection on action phase of this research project, I carried out an interview with Danny Cohen, then Controller of BBC3. He was not involved in the initial phases of the project but became interested in it when he was looking for new, younger talent to come up with ideas for BBC3. His interests in the project could be considered to be more symptomatic than those of its other sponsors who could be considered more determinist in their outlook (Williams 1975).

"I'm interested in new technology... and the media, and I'm also interested in how you get at ideas from unusual places." (Danny Cohen)

Another way in which Cohen's thinking contrasted with other senior managers working on the project, was in his rejection of the rhetoric of 'ubiquitous creativity':

"I'm not sure I quite believe everyone's got a brilliant TV idea, not even in TV, people have different strengths and skills. Being a brilliant producer doesn't always make you brilliant at coming up with the ideas for television. So I'm very interested in getting ideas from different places." (Danny Cohen)

Asked to elaborate in his interest in getting ideas from outside, he explained:

"There's a number of reasons for that. One is you risk only talking to a small amount of people, and that means there's only so much air in the room. The other is that you tend, in these kinds of jobs, to talk to very senior people. And, you only get one kind of perspective." (Danny Cohen)

One of the utopian arguments in favour of technology is that it disrupts cartels and can disintermediate bureaucrats who reduce value by sitting between ideas and

capital (Gellman 1996; Heppell 2008). While not expressing this view explicitly, Cohen definitely hinted at his suspicions that the people pitching ideas to him were not always the originators of those ideas:

“And also, you don’t know... sometimes you don’t know who actually in a team is really coming up with the ideas. It may be someone very junior who’s very brilliant that you’re not getting to. Really, you need to be talking to them because they’re so good - rather than the Executive Producer or the Head of Development, and technology’s an enabler of that.” (Danny Cohen)

He then described the personal benefits of using technology to look for ideas and new talent, that is saving time in a way which he could fit in with the ‘reality of his everyday life’ (Wellman and Haythornthwaite 2008). Again this is a more symptomatic and practical view of the benefits of technology than those expressed by the originators of the project.

“There are only so many hours in a day. My job involves meetings every half hour or on the hour from 9 till 6, 6.30. So, you only can meet so many people and you’ve got millions of other things you’ve got to do in your job, technology is one way where you can get at that people without (the need for more meetings).” (Danny Cohen)

Before meeting with Frank Ash to understand what the *moo* project was setting out to achieve, Cohen had been just about start another technology project for his channel, which he described as:

“A kind of suggestion box for BBC3, because I wanted just feedback from across the organisation of what they thought was good or bad about the channel and what they’d like and didn’t like and what they’d change...” (Danny Cohen)

But then he found out about the *moo* project and Frank Ash met him and pitched him the idea, which he was interested in because he felt it would help him:

“Just to get fresh air into the room, ideas where you can see lots of different perspectives. I’m always interested in that. I’m interested in technology. So they came and pitched it and they set it up and I didn’t have to do a huge amount, to be honest in the early stages.” (Danny Cohen)

As the competition progressed, and a long list of pitches were chosen, Cohen became more involved:

“I can’t actually remember how many I had to choose from, and then we shortlisted that down to about, six or eight. And they came and did a physical person pitch to me and I recruited a fellow judge for it. And

people did that presentation in different ways. Some had props and, you know presentations. Some just spoke.” (Danny Cohen)

“And they had about ten minutes each to pitch their idea. And we gave them - because it was partly a training exercise - we gave each of them feedback on both their idea and the way they presented it.” (Danny Cohen)

Eventually the ideas were whittled down to just two, the prize being to go into development, not a commission. Cohen explained why:

“The way we did it was, we said that we had a winner, but we didn’t definitely confirm that commission. Because you don’t want to in the end, if there’s nothing good enough to be commissioned going forward, you want to spend the license fee payer’s money...” (Danny Cohen)

Once the ideas were in development, for reasons that will be explained in the interview with Stephen Fingleton, only the *Wu How* idea was able to progress into full production.

“And we felt that *Wu How* was both a worthy winner and we could give it a go as an idea online and then put it onto TV.” (Danny Cohen)

When asked why they chose to develop the idea for online platforms first, Cohen explained:

“Because it’s natural form was short form. So, you know quite simply it was nuggety information. Also, it was experimental in its form and the Internet is a good place to experiment at low cost.” (Danny Cohen)

Cohen made a point similar to a comment made by Andy Mosse (*Wu How*’s creator) about the idea being difficult to communicate on paper, and a video-sharing platform being an easier way to pitch it:

“I think that it could of (been explained on paper), but it’s actually true of a lot of ideas, a lot of genres now, that the best way of pitching it is tape.” (Danny Cohen)

He went on to explain:

“About twelve years ago, I was Head of Development at a production company called Diverse. When I was doing it, it was nearly all paper. And it’s very hard to imagine even, you know just over a decade ago, any development work being done on tape that wasn’t the next stage funded development work..., i.e. the broadcaster giving you x thousand pounds to go and make the tape.” (Danny Cohen)

Now he believes the Internet and low cost digital production have changed all that:

“And because of the new technology and people’s ability now to edit their stuff on Macs and laptops, that’s completely changed. So a lot of the pitches I get, say for a documentary, there may be a paper pitch, but... certainly BBC3, most of the commissions happen, because the tape was so compelling.” (Danny Cohen)

Cohen explained how video pitching made his job much easier, and his responses were likely to be much more immediate:

“Massively. Massively, And in different ways with different kinds of projects. So, in the case of that one, that was all about a way of understanding... Well two things actually. The style which is very distinctive and funny. So you couldn’t get that across on paper in the same way. But also their ability, because you could see how well they could do it. So it did those two things... I’m going to say, even if I’m in a tent in India, can I call you tomorrow?” (Danny Cohen)

In his opinion this is because video pitching:

“It brings it to life. It gives you confidence in style and tone and execution. Yeah, I think you get those two things. It brings it to life. It gives you a clear sense of execution and it tells you something about the ability of the producers. Arguably that increases the work (because it takes more time). But actually it’s an increase in work that enables you to make a more informed decision. So it’s not wasted extra time.” (Danny Cohen)

When he explained why he thought this change might suit younger programme-making talent more, it was the first time in the interview that I heard any rhetoric – a form of the digital natives’ rhetoric; where young people have a greater facility with technology, video production and prefer to communicate with images over words (Prensky 2001).

“And so I mean that seems to me to play into the hands of younger people coming in, because they’ll probably just want to get out and do it rather than write it down. And also they have the skill sets to both produce, shoot and edit.” (Danny Cohen)

Asked if he could see digital and social technology completely replacing the existing processes, Cohen was sceptical:

“The flipside of all of this is, I think, this is a route to ideas, but I don’t think it’s ever going to replace or be as important as being in a room and talking. So, I think there’s an interesting question about how much of it is a first-stage tool..., and how much of it could be the whole process.” (Danny Cohen)

“And also you’re having a conversation. It’s not only looking them in the whites of the eyes, which is absolutely right, it’s also answering loads of questions about how they’re going to do it.” (Danny Cohen)

We then discussed the social aspect of *moo*, and whether it did or did not influence him, he appeared to be circumspect about what Surowiecki calls the 'wisdom of crowds' (Surowiecki 2005). Was he surprised that the *Wu How* pitch attracted the most positive comment (24 comments)?

"I wasn't really, because I thought it stood out a mile. Creatively, I think it stood out. But I don't believe in commissioning by democracy. Or popularity. It's the wrong way to do things. Because part of good commissioning is... part of it is giving people what they don't think they want. So I think it's interesting, but you can't bear it in mind too much."
(Danny Cohen)

He then explained why it was important to keep his brief for the competition (and commissioning rounds in general) fairly loose and unspecific:

"If the commissioner tells you exactly what they want...the first thing is you get everything the same. The second thing is if you knew what you wanted you wouldn't be asking for it, you'd be making it. And the third thing is, more than anything, you want the thing you haven't thought of and didn't know about. Because it's fresh and because that would mean innovation and all those different things.

One of the difficult things you've got to try and do as a commissioner, is give enough information that it's clear enough, but not be too prescriptive that you narrow off possibility..." (Danny Cohen)

While making sense to a commissioner, he understood how difficult this could make things for producers trying to work out where to focus their attention when generating ideas:

"And so by pure logic. That means it's not something I'm going to tell you I want.

So, you sit there and try to tell them what you want and you think, "This must sound quite vague. Is it actually so vague it's annoying?" Am I being clear enough, but you're always trying to steer a line between being clear enough and not being too prescriptive that you shut off something..." (Danny Cohen)

12.7.1 Interview Summary

12.7.1.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

This interview demonstrates how the project enabled the BBC to work in two significant new ways.

Despite his rejection of the notion of ‘ubiquitous creativity’ shared by Frank Ash and Alan Yentob, Danny Cohen saw that the *moo* project would open up a direct channel to BBC colleagues with ideas outside of his network. He also felt that sometimes the people pitching to him were not the people with the ideas, and again the site would enable him to get to them.

Danny also saw the benefits of pitching using digital video, which was much cheaper and easier to do using low cost digital technology and a channel such as *moo*. This allowed the programme makers to show off their ability to a much greater extent than pitching on paper or even in person.

12.7.1.2 Is there any further original contribution?

Danny Cohen commented that digital technology could only get you so far, and you still needed to meet the prospective talent in person to look them in the eye, so the commissioner or controller could use their judgement in deciding if the new talent could actually deliver.

He also found it “interesting” that the ‘crowd’ arrived at the same decisions as he did, but felt it was an easy choice as the two finalists were so superior. He wasn’t persuaded that commission is a democratic process.

The interview also revealed what we could call the commissioner’s conundrum – how does a commissioner provide enough detail in a brief to generate good ideas to fill a slot – but not give so much detail that they get ten versions of the same idea?

12.7.1.3 My reflections

In this interview, we have seen how Danny Cohen’s interest and involvement in Phase Two of the *moo* project were symptomatic. That is, he had some problems he needed to solve – he wanted more ideas for BBC3, he wanted those ideas to come directly from young programme makers – and technology provided him with a possible solution.

This contrasts with a deterministic view of technology, one where technology is created in the expectation that humans will adapt themselves to it, which is more similar to the mind-set in evidence in Phase One of the project.

It is interesting to note that the project was only able to meet its objective of getting a programme commissioned and on air when the mind-set shifted from one of technological determinism to a symptomatic use of technology, and the project

became aligned with the everyday lives and goals of both its end users and its business sponsors.

12.8 Reflection on action - Interview with Competition

Runner-Up (Stephen Fingleton)

While Andy Mosse had the most successful outcome from the *moo* competition, with his idea becoming a broadcast programme both on the BBC website and BBC3 television, there was another finalist, Stephen Fingleton, whose idea got as far as the development stage. It is interesting to contrast their progress as it provides insights into how the influence of cultural capital and perceptions of habitus determine progress as much as the strength of an idea.

Fingleton explained how he became aware of the competition:

“There was something on Gateway (the BBC staff Intranet) which outlined it and but there were also cards that were left around the canteen, and they did messages on the noticeboards and the lifts. I looked at the scheme, studied it, I saw that it was for people across the business, rather than just people in Vision. I stop down in Vision all the time but I’d never heard of it.” (Stephen Fingleton)

He explained why the competition being open to “people across the business” was important to him:

“I’ve asked to be put on the mailing list for Vision but they never do it so it’s fairly enclosed.” (Stephen Fingleton)

He then went on to describe his pitch:

“The idea I had was *My Tax Dollars*. It was basically looking at exactly where people’s tax was spent, how much tax they paid and where it was spent.” (Stephen Fingleton)

As will be demonstrated later in the interview, this concept to some extent played to colleagues’ preconceived ideas about the pitches they would get from people in the more business-minded BBC departments.

“The pitch had to be for BBC3 so I researched the sort of shows they did and came up with a format which would suit it for BBC3. If I was doing it for BBC2 I would have done something else, so for young people, so basically I pitched it as a politics show for young people but for a very specific topic - about the accountability of tax pounds.” (Stephen Fingleton)

Not working in a programme-making department came with further capital disadvantages – a lack of access to editing equipment, although this did force an ingenious approach:

“I didn’t have any (editing) equipment so I designed a pitch you could film in a single take so I wouldn’t need to do any cutting and I already had a pretty cheap DVD camera.” (Stephen Fingleton)

“So we went down to Westminster and filmed that, uploaded, worked on the pitch for a while, tested it on a few people.” (Stephen Fingleton)

After the shortlist had been chosen by the judges, BBC Creativity & Audiences (Frank Ash’s team) provided the finalists with some training and advice so they received equal preparation for their pitch to Danny Cohen.

“The *Moo* competition people provided pitching practice which was good, but it was pretty generic in that you could have got that from anyone. The idea was shortlisted and then I got some more pitching training.” (Stephen Fingleton)

“My understanding was Danny Cohen would read the very brief summary, would have a glance at the pitch, but wouldn’t necessarily watch all the video pitch all the way through, so you had to be grab him up front. (If it was good) It then went forward to having to pitch to him in person and someone else.” (Stephen Fingleton)

My Tax Dollars was considered one of the best video pitches and Fingleton went on to pitch to Cohen in person.

“That was fine, there was a few quips about the part of the business I worked in, but generally alright.” (Stephen Fingleton)

Stephen’s comment that there were a “few quips” suggests, again, that maybe he was perceived as what Bourdieu might describe as “not one of us” (Bourdieu 1984), that he was from a different habitus – but he was already part of the BBC habitus, which could mean that there is a habitus within habitus. I asked Stephen to elaborate on the nature of these ‘quips’ and his reaction to them:

“Because there was money involved and I work in finance, they said, “Is this where you got the idea?!” And so on. So in other words it wasn’t a black box thing, it was also a matter of “Where do you work?” All that’s known in advance. It’s not just decided on the idea and the pitch.” (Stephen Fingleton)

However, despite this, Fingleton came away with the impression that:

“The pitch went fine, I got runner-up and he said “You’ve taken it to development with BBC3, we’ve got a strand called *Mischief*, could you re-do it for someone like them?” (Stephen Fingleton)

Once the idea went into development, Stephen Fingleton's lack of knowledge of the 'rules of the game' started to create political problems for him:

"I actually had a four-part series in mind but was asked to do it more as a one-off so I met with a development producer. The meeting didn't go particularly well because she wanted to do something completely different to the idea and I wasn't tactful enough to want to put it differently." (Stephen Fingleton)

A development Executive became involved subsequently:

"She really liked my idea and so the person I'd been paired had their idea dismissed, and that was also the end of my involvement with the process. I was told that it would be developed, they would pitch it to Danny and hopefully it would get made. And I was told to liaise with the development producer who I didn't really click with." (Stephen Fingleton)

After a few weeks, it started to become apparent to Fingleton that his idea was not progressing:

"I kept asking y'know if I could be involved in the document that was being sent to Danny and things like that and I was fobbed off, emails weren't replied to, and then I was told that they were doing less episodes of the *Mischief* strand and they might consider re-doing it in April." (Stephen Fingleton)

The door was left slightly ajar to him:

"However I would be put on a list of people to be invited to ideas-generating sessions for factual, again that was going to be done through the development producer." (Stephen Fingleton)

But nothing was forthcoming:

"She never got in touch with me, I probably should have followed it up myself but that was the end of it as far as I know. April came and went, there was no contact." (Stephen Fingleton)

Later in 2011, Fingleton saw a programme on BBC2 which felt very familiar to him:

"And then I saw a show on BBC2, three months ago, called *Your Tax and how they spend it*. I made enquiries, I checked to see if anyone I had met had worked on it, but there were only three people who had, it came out of BBC2 possibly the news division. I emailed the development exec about it, and she said she didn't know anything about it." (Stephen Fingleton)

In the researcher's experience of the BBC, and as will be demonstrated in *The Virtual Revolution* case study, it is not uncommon for people working in different parts of the BBC, who are not in contact with each other, to come up with similar ideas for programmes at similar times – in the wider film and TV industry this is one

of several forms of a phenomenon referred to as parallel development (Konda 2014).

“So that was the end of the matter. It was frustrating because I hadn’t even received an official terminus from them in terms of “we’re not doing it”, I could have re-done it for BBC2 and I would have done it that way. I don’t know whether the idea was kicking around for a while and it was considered BBC property.” (Stephen Fingleton)

Here Fingleton demonstrated the ‘digital native’ attitude to publishing ideas that is, establishing ownership through publication, which was uncovered in the early research stages of the product. This is in contrast to the attitude of programme makers (both younger and older) less comfortable with digital technology who saw the publication of ideas online as inviting ‘theft’. He felt that the competition should have protected his idea and established his authority over the concept.

“Because it was on this website, ‘cos it was on the *moo* website I felt that provided a degree of security and that nobody would be bold enough to do something similar.” (Stephen Fingleton)

I put it to Fingleton that parallel development was quite a common occurrence in film and TV (Konda 2014) and that maybe this was simply an accidental form of that. Fingleton seemed to accept this as a possibility, if not a certainty:

“It could have been parallel development. I would say that the format hasn’t been done elsewhere in the world, in the way I talked about the actual pitch, to be clear I don’t know if it was or it wasn’t.” (Stephen Fingleton)

Even if there was grudging acceptance of the possibility of this being accidental, Fingleton was able to take some comfort from the broadcast of *Your tax and how they spend it*:

“I got a lot of people calling me up saying your idea’s on the TV, and in fact I didn’t even realise it. I know these things happen a lot and I’d be the last one to claim someone would nick it and I did basic due diligence to see if there was a link but I couldn’t tell if there was. **What it did tell me was that the idea was good enough for TV.**” (Stephen Fingleton)

(My emphasis)

Taking comfort in the evidence that he was capable of coming up with ideas that were suitable for broadcast, Fingleton attempted to renew his contact with the development executives he was introduced to as a result of the *moo* competition:

“I contacted the Development Exec again and I said “Look I’m doing stuff out of the business, I’m doing film-making and it’s going OK. Do you

have any suggestions as to how I could get involved in anything?" and she said, "Get in touch with a couple of executives in factual, send them your films." (Stephen Fingleton)

However, Fingleton was aware of the shortcomings of this approach:

"She gave me two names. I contacted both of them, one of them didn't reply to my email. One who did said "Sure send it over." I've sent them my last film. To be honest sending fiction short films to execs in factual isn't necessarily going to help, unless they're doing a reconstruction on the cheap." (Stephen Fingleton)

At the time of the interview, nothing further had occurred as a result of these introductions.

I asked Fingleton if he had derived any benefit or value from the ability of people to make comments on the competition entries on the *moo* website. His response was somewhat less than positive and the digital utopia of colleagues collaborating online on each other's ideas did not appear to be born out in the reality of his experience.

"It was put up on the website and there were people making comments on it, on video and some of them were quite critical and I had issues with that because they didn't read the documents, they didn't study it in full, 'cos you can comment at any point! This was on *moo* and one of the problems was the *moo* video went up but it didn't have the pitch document and the pitch document answered a lot of the questions that people had." (Stephen Fingleton)

And he was quite critical of the low standard of the comments he received:

"It wasn't development it was more 'X-Factor'. Comments can be helpful but they weren't because they were, they were critical rather than development-led." (Stephen Fingleton)

He went so far as to compare some of the comments to "YouTube comments", commonly held to be one of the lowest forms of popular culture on the web due to their often antagonistic nature (Lange 2007).

"They're like YouTube comments and it's a problem with putting comments on social network sites, just where you don't know the people you're opening yourself up to doing that now there's benefits and there's risks to that." (Stephen Fingleton)

Fingleton indicated that he had expected a higher standard of comment, given the media industry background of the commenters and the nature of the competition:

"But internally though you would think with a more select audience that you'd get better comments, but now I think people the people who were seriously interested in it would actually just email you. They wouldn't put comments up." (Stephen Fingleton)

On reflection, he seemed to find his outcomes from the competition, and even his experiences with BBC development after becoming a finalist, not to be sufficiently rewarding to encourage him to enter a similar one, if it were run.

“Given the amount of work involved in creating the video pitch, I don’t think there’s the figures in terms of the number of people watching it, whether they’re even the right people, whether it would justify the effort. I would probably go to an outside website if I was going to do that and I’d want something that would attract cross-broadcaster or cross-company interest.” (Stephen Fingleton)

This disappointment, despite an apparently successful outcome, was interesting, given that Fingleton’s earlier answers had hinted at issues related to his relative lack of cultural and network capital and a sense that maybe he was “not one of us” (Lamont 1992, p.5). I asked Fingleton if he felt the competition had lived up to his expectations:

“Strictly speaking yes it did in that I did get to pitch to Danny Cohen and that’s what the competition was for.” (Stephen Fingleton)

However...

“The problem was it was geared to some extent towards getting people who weren’t necessarily in the division doing it so there needed to be an extra level of support to help you navigate afterwards if it went on to become a serious idea.” (Stephen Fingleton).

So, Fingleton was aware, or had become aware, of his lack of relevant cultural capital and knowledge of ‘the rules of the game’. He also understood how other competitors, from programme-making areas of the BBC, would possess that knowledge:

“And that (support) didn’t happen so, for example, somebody, I imagine somebody in Vision would be, would be used to or have strategies to dealing with what I had to do.” (Stephen Fingleton)

In his own opinion, Fingleton clearly felt he had been treated as an outsider by the development team:

“I was treated by the development person as someone who’s been propped up by an outside scheme who didn’t know anything about making television and who was a hindrance to the production.” (Stephen Fingleton)

Asked to reflect on how this situation could be improved in the future, he had this to say:

“A good thing would be to be put on attachment for six months so you’d be working in the office when they’re doing the programme and that would be in my mind the most positive thing that could have happened as an outcome for someone who works in administration and gets an idea that’s put on TV.” (Stephen Fingleton)

And he considered the kind of help and support that would be needed was not creative or technical, as he had initially assumed, but much more to make up for his lack of cultural and network capital, and to help him operate in a different habitus within the BBC:

“Initially I think the fact I didn’t come from that world would mean people automatically think you need extra support, but creative support rather than political support, but actually it was political, and even administrative support I needed.” (Stephen Fingleton)

Earlier in the interview, Stephen had mentioned his interests in film making outside the BBC. He had funded and directed his own short feature film, which appeared to have generated some interest in his home region of Northern Ireland. I asked him if the BBC executives had shown any interest in this experience.

“Not in the slightest. Not in the slightest. But, during the pitch things settled down very quickly because that’s dramatisation and I knew what I was talking about, I was very confident about how I would do it. I answered their questions, in terms of the format so that was fine. Someone who wasn’t confident pitching would have difficulties with that.” (Stephen Fingleton)

In Danny Cohen’s words this is where “looking them in the whites of the eyes” and “asking loads of questions about how they are going to do it” (Danny Cohen) becomes important; it is the demonstration or embodiment of cultural capital through performance (Bourdieu 1986). Fingleton explained what he felt could have been done to develop this aspect of the competition winner’s cultural capital.

“Someone who wasn’t very confident pitching but had a really good idea and a really good way to do it probably would have required more intensive support. You can’t just put someone on a short (training) programme and get them to go on a pitch to a channel controller. They have a very short attention span, very high demands, and that’s a skill that needs to be built up more.” (Stephen Fingleton)

I asked Fingleton how he felt Cohen had received his pitch:

“He liked the idea, I could talk the talk but I was still disposable I would say, but the idea, the idea was sticky. He wanted to do something on politics as it happens. There were no promises other than ‘we’ll develop it and see if it can work’.” (Stephen Fingleton)

However, once Cohen had made his decisions, he felt his progress went less well:

“From the Mischief meeting, it looked very good, but I was essentially paired off with someone who viewed me as a barnacle and didn't want me around and I still don't know what happened in the process and I don't know why it wasn't suggested again in April.” (Stephen Fingleton)

I asked him to elaborate on what “viewed me as a barnacle” meant:

“It was one weak link in the process that could shut me out and there was no way of getting over that. I mean I did talk to the *moo* people about it, but to be honest once it goes inside Vision it was beyond their ability to do anything.” (Stephen Fingleton)

He then continued with some speculation on why he thought this ‘shutting out’ might have happened:

“I think one of the reasons I wasn't invited to the meetings was the sense that I was someone who could generate ideas. I was someone who was potentially competition in terms of there's cut-backs and do you really want to bring someone in who hasn't worked in that background before, it could be quite arduous, I can understand that.” (Stephen Fingleton)

While this is speculation on Fingleton's part, it is useful to cross-reference it with Cohen's comment that “...sometimes you don't know who actually in a team is really coming up with the ideas. It may be someone very junior who's very brilliant that you're not getting to.” (Danny Cohen). It is interesting to note the possibility that the technology had allowed Cohen to overcome this problem and speak directly to those with ideas, but as soon as the idea was back under the control of the existing bureaucracy, it reverted to type. It is relevant to repeat Frank Ash's comment, “Why should I, an exalted program maker, worry about somebody from financial services. He's got this idea which I'm not really keen on myself. Therefore, why should I bother?”

Thus the additional social capital (in terms of access to Cohen) afforded to Fingleton through a technological channel was only temporary. As Frank Ash pointed out: “A channel controller saying, “This is good,” doesn't necessarily get through that.”

I asked Fingleton if he had considered the possibility that he might be perceived as difficult to work with, or unreceptive to feedback. His response was unequivocal:

“I'm very good at receiving feedback because I've done a screenwriting course which consists of sitting around for an hour while three or four people tell you how terrible you are and it's like scientology or something. You begin to crave it so, in other words I was trained on it, had I not been trained it would have been very difficult.” (Stephen Fingleton)

In my experience of the BBC, this wasn't necessarily the kind of feedback he would get, he would also have to be prepared to take on board other people's ideas and incorporate them into his own, as Cohen had said "... it's a conversation."

"Well there was two strands to that. The fact it was going to be with Mischief was not what I planned but using the same principles it was quite an adaptable idea and I had no problems with that.... I wasn't protective." (Stephen Fingleton)

So that answer suggested Fingleton was prepared to work with others in a collaborative way and conversational, as would be expected, according to the Channel Commissioner's 'rules of the game'. However, he then described a scenario in which he would not be prepared to compromise:

"If it was a fiction idea I should point out it would have been very different. I deliberately didn't pitch a fiction idea. Whereas a factual idea I've a lot less ownership about so I was OK with it getting kicked around." (Stephen Fingleton)

In the next part of his answer he then seemed to indicate that this behaviour had started to show itself when working on the non-fiction idea, and while this distinction was clear in theory, it may not have been so clear in practice:

"The problem was when I was paired with someone who didn't like the idea and wanted to do something else and that's when you've got to be protective because then they're killing what makes it up, alive and what makes it different." (Stephen Fingleton)

I asked Fingleton a more straightforward question about if he felt he fitted in with the people he was dealing with:

"The more senior they were the better. The less senior, the worse. That's unusual I would say, but that's because I'm in the wrong job, and I do a lot of the stuff outside and I'm more comfortable with that. I, one of the reasons I work in an office is because I don't want to take shit from creative people who are less talented than me, and I can't stand, I'm far happy taking shit in an office about a job I don't care about, than I am being on a set watching someone make mistakes." (Stephen Fingleton)

I then asked if he felt at any point if he had been more compliant, or gave way a bit on something, that he'd have got a job in production (his ultimate ambition), but at the expense of the idea;

"No, I thought about it many times and I basically had a decision to make when I met the development producer which was, which was to cripple the idea for the sake of psychological flattery or to protect it in front of the exec, and I chose the latter. I don't think there was a win on the table." (Stephen Fingleton)

His reasoning for this did seem to be considered and forward looking:

“I think once you do that (give in too easily on an idea) you’re a hack and people have no interest in hacks and so you’ve just got to know what to fight for and I would say I was very practical with everything.” (Stephen Fingleton)

The answers to these questions do give a sense of Fingleton as a protector of his creative ideas, who, through inexperience, could be awkward to work with and reluctant to compromise, but also someone who was aware of that possible shortcoming. This seems suggestive of a lack of appropriate cultural and social capital, rather than deep psychological flaws. He summarized the reason for his lack of progress as:

“The main issue was I didn’t have enough political knowledge, I just didn’t have enough knowledge of the political landscape.” (Stephen Fingleton)

I finished the interview by asking him if he would enter a similar competition again, as one of the ‘digital utopian’ originators of the *moo* site, I found his answer quite disappointing:

“That’s a tough question. If you’d asked me four months ago I’d say yes, um but I don’t think my future’s in the organisation now.” (Stephen Fingleton)

12.8.1 Interview Summary

12.8.1.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

Stephen Fingleton represented the ideal *moo* participant – someone working in a BBC service or support function who wanted to make programmes. His success in reaching the final of the competition, even if his programme did not get made³ demonstrates how the project enabled the BBC to work in new ways.

Like Andy Mosse, Stephen was able to make a video pitch and put his ideas on screen, despite not having access to commissioners or training on how to pitch.

Despite not getting his idea produced, Stephen took comfort in the success he did have, and chose to pursue his career outside of the BBC – which has gone very well (see Postscript to this interview).

12.8.1.2 Is there any further original contribution?

³ Well, maybe it did, just not by Stephen - if his suspicions could be confirmed.

This interview shows how knowledge of the BBC habitus and rules of the game are central to programme makers' chances of success. Stephen got into political difficulty through inexperience and lack of knowledge of the BBC habitus – he felt he was an “outsider”.

Given Stephen's success since leaving the BBC, which must constitute a regrettable loss of talent, it seems obvious that the BBC needs to give much better support to talented ‘outsiders’ in the future. This was indeed the case with iCreate, a 2012-13 project built on the learnings from *moo*.

It is also interesting to observe that just because a channel controller says “this is good” it doesn't mean a programme is guaranteed to happen.

12.8.1.3 My reflections

In this interview we have seen how, as with Andy Mosse, the *moo* site, and more importantly the BBC3 competition that was run on the site, enabled BBC commissioners to identify and connect with untapped talent lower down the BBC hierarchy, in line with its aims and objectives.

However, compared to Andy Mosse, Stephen Fingleton's relative lack of relevant cultural and social capital – a lack of knowledge of what Bourdieu would call ‘the rules of the game’ – and a sense of him not being from the right part of the BBC habitus, a feeling of being ‘not one of us’, seemed to prevent him from progressing his concept, when circumstantial evidence suggests it was a viable programme idea, and the post-script to this interview demonstrates that Fingleton has film-making talent.

It could be argued that this is the key bit of learning which could be taken from this case study – while technology may partially deliver on its promise to circumvent cartels and to increase the network and/or social capital of its users – their ideas still have to be delivered in the real world.

This demands they have sufficient knowledge of the relevant rules of the game and are passable members of the appropriate habitus. If steps are not put in place to help them acquire the cultural capital they need to pass judgement on matters of taste and distinction (Bourdieu 1984) then they will find progress difficult at best.

12.8.2 Post-script - Stephen's post BBC career

Since leaving the BBC, Stephen Fingleton's career has moved on considerably. He was able to acquire funding to write and direct a feature film *The Survivalist*, which

was critically well received in both the US (The Hollywood Reporter 2015) and UK (Screen Daily 2015). At the time of writing in Autumn 2015 he had just earned a place on BAFTA's 2015 Breakthrough Brits scheme (BAFTA 2015) and also won the 'Citizen Kane Award for Best Directorial Revelation' at the Catalonian International Film Festival (Sitges Film Festival 2015), among other awards.

Stephen's judgement that "I don't think my future's in the organisation right now" appears to have been correct.

13 Case Study - *The Virtual Revolution*

13.1 Background

The Virtual Revolution television series consisted of four episodes broadcast on terrestrial television on 1/02/10, 6/2/10, 12/2/10 and 19/2/10 on BBC2.

The four episodes were titled:

- The great levelling?
- Enemy of the state?
- The cost of free
- Homo Interconnecticus?

The programme's production team had the explicit aim of using the Internet and social media to enable the programme to be developed in a more open and collaborative way than was typical at the BBC at the time (and still is at the time of submission in 2015).

These are the key statistics relating to the social media contribution to the series:

- 242 'contributors' credited on website
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/virtualrevolution/credits.shtml>
(A contributor here is defined as an individual or group with a BBC ID who made a recognized contribution to the programme and had an acknowledgement on *The Virtual Revolution* website)
- 129 blog posts (0-100 comments per post typically) posted between June 2009 – March 2010
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/digitalrevolution/archives.shtml>

Distribution of blog posts	
Month	No. of blog posts
June 2009	1
July	19
August	18
September	17
October	23
November	32
December	11
January 2010	2

February	5
March	1

(Frequency of posting peaked during edit and production; the posts receiving the greatest numbers of comments were those accompanying broadcasts of the episodes in February 2010).

- 957 tweets (see Figure 18) <https://twitter.com/bbcdigrev>
- 2989 followers on twitter <https://twitter.com/bbcdigrev>



Figure 17: *The Virtual Revolution* Twitter page

These figures compare with an audience of 1.2m viewers for the first episode on its initial broadcast on BBC 2 (Guardian Media 2010). Thus, the total number of followers on Twitter represent just 0.2% of the total audience for the first episode of the series.

These relatively low volumes of online participation were a significant influence on the researcher's decision to move away from an attempt to quantitatively analyse the social media contribution and instead to focus on the issues qualitatively and, in particular, to examine the impact of rhetoric on the underlying assumptions made when deciding to proceed with the projects in the cast studies, and the approaches that were taken.

13.2 Reflection on action - Interview with *The Virtual Revolution* Producer and Social Media Producer

13.2.1 Introduction

The following text is a summary and analysis of an interview with Dan Gluckman, the *Virtual Revolution* Series Producer, and Dan Biddle, the Social Media Producer. They were interviewed simultaneously. The purpose of this interview is to compare approaches taken by BBC Producers attempting to collaborate on programme ideas with people outside the BBC.

13.2.2 Research phase

Whereas most BBC programmes, which make use of social media, involve the audience as commentators, during or after the programme was broadcast, or in news gatherings (Wardle and Williams 2008) *The Virtual Revolution* is interesting because it sought to involve the audience in the programme prior to broadcast. While it is not a genuine blank page innovation in the manner of the *moo* competition, it did allow the audience the ability to alter the series' direction prior to broadcast, and as such represented a new way of working for the BBC.

Dan Gluckman, one of the Series Producers, explained the programme-makers' aims as follows:

"Basically, it was to involve the wider audience in the making of the documentary, so, what happens in the research phase is that a team of researchers and producers come together for a short time, and pick up a story and subjects when there's a whole lot of people out there who are already expert in it." (Dan Gluckman)

Gluckman wanted to make use of this knowledge base:

"So, I was trying to get their expertise and knowledge of interesting stories that might add to the documentary and have better impact - particularly in this space which we very much felt was at a danger of feeling like an old media organization. We wanted them to feel more involved... Involving the media that we were actually talking about in the program." (Dan Gluckman)

By way of comparison, he explained how traditional documentary making worked:

"Documentary making is a very established machine and it runs efficiently. It has to because budgets are squeezed, so there is a definite time window for researching, scripting, shooting, editing, and those processes are very well thought through and don't really involve the wider world except for phone calls to experts and contributors and interview and filming trips." (Dan Gluckman)

He then explained three reasons why changing this way of working might be challenging to the BBC and his colleagues:

"It's challenging to traditional documentary makers in two ways. It's challenging because people have egos, obviously, and you know,

believe quite rightly in many cases, that they are very good storytellers and so, why should they involve other people when they can do it perfectly well?" (Dan Gluckman)

As was demonstrated by Stephen Fingleton's experience in the previous case study, BBC programme makers found it difficult to work with people from within the BBC habitus even when they were given a Channel Controller's backing. This appears to make it easy to understand Gluckman's assertion that they will be reluctant to take on ideas from those who are definitely outside the BBC habitus.

The second reason he gave was to do with the unknown elements of engaging in a completely new process:

"It's challenging in process terms because it's an unknown process and it's a complicated process. Getting other people involved - what does it mean? How does it work? Anything like that would be difficult to do for anybody." (Dan Gluckman)

The third reason was more pragmatic, and to do with managing the egos of various contributors, many of whom did not agree, for example, Andrew Keen and Tim O'Reilly (O'Reilly 2008):

"When you're trying to tell a story with a balanced viewpoint and multiple viewpoints that might be opposing and contributors that have history or clashes then you didn't want to necessarily get everybody in the virtual room aware of "Oh, we're talking to him, him, him and him". Just because of the politics of "I won't talk to you because you will talk to him." (Dan Gluckman)

Working online in an open way made this considerably more complex than working behind closed doors offline in the traditional documentary production method:

"Let's say someone was going out to see some contributors, which was about a sensitive subject. If we then, meanwhile, were blogging about somebody who had an opposing point of view or was iconoclastic about their role in the web, the director would say, "You can't publish that because I'm about to go and talk to these people. If they read that, they're going to think I'm coming at them from a very different point of view than where I am actually coming from". So it is the opening up of the process which makes it much more challenging." (Dan Gluckman)

Gluckman admitted that there was no method for them to follow, that this was a genuine process innovation for the BBC:

"We were pretty much creating it from scratch, so the process evolved even as we were making it." (Dan Gluckman)

In order to make the unknown social technology elements of the production seem more familiar to colleagues with less experience of social media, they aligned the phases with the traditional documentary process:

“So, we basically split it (the social side of making the programme) into periods that matched with documentary making. So there was a research phase, a filming phase and an editing phase. And we knew what we wanted to get out of each one. And so in research phase we got some big name bloggers to write guest blog posts in response to programme specific blog posts from our presenter, Alex, and then used those to start conversations in the wider web community. Along with those we had specific questions being asked by directors or researchers; “We are looking for this?” Or, “We want people like this.” or something specific about the subject.” (Dan Gluckman)

Having considered the impact of a more open, social process on the research phase of the programme, we then discussed how it affected the production (filming and editing) phase.

13.2.3 Production

First Gluckman explained how he thought the audience could become involved in the filming phase of programme production:

“The idea was to feed into scripting and then when we got to filming we were publishing clips from our rushes and I guess that we hoping for comments which might feed into the process but also people would take those rushes as they were available to download and edit, and start doing stuff that was interesting.” (Dan Gluckman)

Then, following that, the editing phase:

“And then in the editing phase, there were questions being put out, questions that people on the program might want answered or we put out a graphics clip and got some feedback on it.” (Dan Gluckman)

Dan Biddle, the programme’s Social Media Producer, explained in greater detail how the audience feedback was invited during the edit:

“We had a graphic of packet switching which is used in the program and had been produced for us. And it was being taken for a second draft, and the producer of that particular episode said, “Put it out and say does this make sense?” (Dan Biddle)

Initially they had ambitions of crowd sourcing footage for the programme, and even interviews, but the appetite for this did not match their aspirations (as will be seen in the *World Have Your Say* case study, audience interest in programme making and journalistic process is considerably less than programme makers believe it to be before they start these kind of initiatives):

“But there was only one person that actually came in saying, “Yes, I’m going to Buenos Aires and I will take a camera with me and I will do this.”
(Dan Gluckman)

Despite this low involvement in reality, the producers still wanted to believe in the rhetorical possibilities of open innovation (Chesburgh 2003), ubiquitous creativity (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006) and the ‘bazaar’ (Raymond 1999):

“I think there was certainly the potential for more, so one of the programs touched on crowd sourcing a bit. There was the creative potential to open up a little bit of the program for a crowd source piece, but we could never convince the director of that particular program to do that. So, there were some options like that where there could be improvement.”
(Dan Gluckman)

The previous comment hints at the scepticism of the value of social media of some of their colleagues from more traditional television backgrounds. Gluckman and Biddle made a conscious effort to use similar language and process terms to describe the social media elements so they appeared to conform to the ‘rules of the game’, rules which Gluckman understand perfectly well, being part of that habitus:

“We wanted to be part of that production in the sense that it was important that what we did had some impact on the program. Obviously the director is still in-charge of the program, so it had to be something they understood. And I come from that background anyway, so I totally understand it.” (Dan Gluckman)

This need for a kind of semantic camouflage also applied when discussing the social elements of the series with BBC executives and commissioners:

“It had to be complementary. And there was an awareness that whatever happened with the multi-platform side of things should not in any way jeopardise the series because the series was going to reach millions of people on BBC.” (Dan Gluckman)

Gluckman’s comments make clear the relative importance of the traditional series compared to the social elements here – it is clear that the series was the important thing, and the social aspects of the programme-making process was an add-on which could not be allowed to “jeopardise” the mainstream format. If we reconsider the viewing figures (1.2 m viewers for episode one) compared to e.g. the number of followers on Twitter (approximately 3,000), then this seems a rational approach. Gluckman continued to emphasise the mainstream:

“So this wasn’t like some of the other things we’ve pitched in the past. It wasn’t a late night program on BBC3. It was a big BBC2 glossy landmark. So it had to deliver to those values.” (Dan Gluckman)

It is important to note the somewhat reverential terms in which Gluckman refers to a “big glossy landmark” and the audience of “millions” in the preceding comment – this will be relevant in the next section when we look at the volume and impact of the social media contribution.

13.2.4 Social media and community

In the third section of the interview, I asked Gluckman and Biddle about the volume and quality of the contributions made through social media, and what impact they had on the completed series:

“We had in the order of hundreds of people getting involved, which we were happy with... We never expected that it would be a massive audience, the concept was that the niche social audience would make the programme better for the volume audience.” (Dan Biddle)

I put it to the producers that if they had had tens of thousands of people contributing through social media during the research and production phases, it would have been unmanageable. But because there were a few hundred, they found the contributions were manageable:

“Yeah, and that was good. One of the interesting things about the community was as that went on, the numbers of people who were getting involved went down and the involvement of people who stayed went up.” (Dan Biddle)

“So we got really valuable people, which is interesting because basically it doesn't then become the wisdom of the crowd. It becomes the wisdom of the few, but the very informed few, it's a particular few.” (Dan Gluckman)

In describing the development of the open source computer operating system, Linux, Eric Raymond developed the concept of *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* (Raymond 1999). He described the Linux development community as a “great babbling bazaar of differing agendas and approaches”, and contrasted it with the previous approaches to building software which he considered to be “built like cathedrals, carefully crafted by individual wizards or small bands of mages working in splendid isolation.”

Applying this concept to the *Virtual Revolution* we could consider the ‘cathedral’ to be the BBC production team, working in ‘splendid isolation’ in W12, and the ‘bazaar’ is the network of social media contributors out on the Internet. This seems broadly in line with the utopian ideas put forward in influential books such as Shirky’s *Here Comes Everybody* (Shirky 2009) and Leadbeater’s *We Think* (Leadbeater 2008) in

which it is suggested institutions like the BBC open their doors to ideas from the crowd and benefit from the crowd's mass creativity.

However, it is important to compare the low volume of contributors experienced by the *Virtual Revolution* productions team with the notion of 'everybody' put forward by Shirky et al.

Perhaps, the 'bazaar' could also be the programme's mainstream audience, and the 'cathedral' that small subset of the audience interested in working with the production team? In the next case study on *World Have Your Say*, a BBC journalist, with more experience of working with the crowd, will give his views on how the numbers of audience members actually interested in participating in the detail of programme production are very limited, far fewer than might be expected if the hypotheses in the digital utopian literature had come true.

Managing the contributions of this 'particular few', was not without problems:

"But it did occasionally suffer from, there being a core, really fanatical user group who were very, very active. Because the rest of people were dipping in and out, it's that 1-9-90 thing and the 1 could be very influential." (Dan Biddle)

The 1-9-90 participation concept (Nielsen, 2006) was introduced in the *moo* case study and refers to the ratio of contributors to commentators to 'lurkers' (general audience members who just consume content without contribution or comment). The producers had to be mindful of the ability of the '1' to push their own agendas:

"So there were certain hobby horse topics. Some who kept asking: "Where are the female voices here?", and some of them were very vocal about open source." (Dan Biddle)

Biddle felt that the volume of comments was sufficient to be interesting, but not so many that he became overwhelmed and unable to respond:

"The scale was okay because there's a reasonable recognition by the community that there's a limited resource at the other end. So as long as you've got a person who responds to a bunch of comments every day, they don't expect you to individually respond to them." (Dan Biddle)

For particular hot topics, which attracted more comment, he was able to step back:

"Let's say you've got ten commenters, then it's very manageable to have a conversation with the actual source, the blog owner, or whatever. If you've got 450 separate commenters making different points, then the engagement is between themselves." (Dan Biddle)

This is because the community became self-managing once there were sufficient commenters:

“They’re actually replying to comments themselves and you can think, “I don’t need to dig into this” because they’re having this conversation themselves which is what you want. I’ll just add where I will feel it is pertinent.” (Dan Biddle)

When asked what concerns they had about generating community engagement with suggested content and running orders, Gluckman had this to say:

“Something I was concerned about was that people would get upset if what they talked about didn’t come through the program. Porn came up, porn is a large part of the early days of the Internet, but at some point, relatively early on the directors decided they weren’t going to take the porn thing in a big scale.” (Dan Gluckman)

In this case, and most others, it seems that Gluckman’s concerns were not borne out, but when it came to the more passionate issue of ‘open source’, the community did become more vocal:

“The only thing anyone really kicked off about was the open source license of the video rushes. And they asked, “Why isn’t this open?” (Dan Gluckman)

Asked to reflect on what they might have done differently, or would do differently if asked to try another open, collaborative documentary series, the producers felt they hosted conversations which should have been held elsewhere on the Internet:

“I think we did a bit too much of kind of trying to build a community on our site and not enough being out in the world.” (Dan Gluckman)

This would have been more in line with several of the BBC’s *Fifteen Web Principles* devised as part of the *BBC 2.0* strategy (Thompson 2006), in particular the following two points:

“3. Do not attempt to do everything yourselves: link to other high-quality sites instead. Your users will thank you. Use other people’s content and tools to enhance your site, and vice versa.

14. Link to discussions on the web, don’t host them: Only host web-based discussions where there is a clear rationale.” (Loosemore 2007)

They also felt they did not make sufficient use of the BBC’s network of technology correspondents and technology gurus to promote and, potentially, improve the series:

“So we did use Rory Cellan Jones (BBC Technology correspondent) to write blogs for us and Bill Thompson (BBC digital pioneer). It would have been better, I think, to being a bit more woven into the fabric of their stuff.” (Dan Gluckman)

However, they were aware that different parts of the BBC see things differently and the agenda of BBC News might not have been the same as their agenda:

“But on the other hand that would have brought problems because that's, we know that's kind of ridden with politics and their own agendas.” (Dan Biddle)

I asked Dan to explain this further:

“So I think there's a bit of a split in the BBC between knowledge and news. Which you can tell because straight off the back of *Virtual Revolution* and you just had that *Superpower* season on the World Service (a history of the Internet series broadcast on World Service radio), And they had comments on their blog such as "This again. Do you know you just did this program?" And the reply was, "Well, BBC Vision did that program. This is the World Service". It's great the way parallel development can occur within the same organization let alone between two different ones.” (Dan Gluckman)

The issue of parallel development came up in Stephen Fingleton's interview, he was sceptical as to it being a real possibility, rather than a cover up for taking his idea, but here we see clear evidence of parallel development occurring in BBC World and BBC Vision without either division being aware of the other's work on a very similar concept and series.

When asked how they thought they could be more open and collaborate more with the potential audience for a similar, future programme, Gluckman replied with two ideas:

“I'm really interested in the releasing of rushes and that potential, and what you can do with the assets of the program in terms of the legacy of the program.” (Dan Gluckman)

The second idea was more collaborative:

“The alternative way is to go more open and iterative, you'd genuinely say, “This is where we're going with the programs. Do you agree with this? Is there anything we're getting wrong?” And then you'd whack up some rushes, some quick thoughts and various things, and people genuinely get involved in it and co-create...”(Dan Gluckman)

“You could be more experimental, more iterative, and then come away with something that was more built around the crowd.” (Dan Biddle)

Gluckman summarised their experiment in open source programming in terms of the distinction between the crowd and experts (the architects and masons of the cathedral) in the following response:

“It’s wisdom from the crowd rather than the wisdom of the crowd, isn’t it? And we always knew that was going to be the way because if you want to know the number of bulls eyes in a jar then that’s where the crowd appear to know, whereas that’s not the way it works for knowledge. There is actually one person who could say, “No, no, no, cut the blue wire.” (Dan Gluckman)

13.2.5 Interview Summary

13.2.5.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

The relevant research question is: “How have *The Virtual Revolution* and *World Have Your Say* production teams used social media to work in new ways with audiences outside the BBC?” The bare facts of the how were discussed in the Background section and interview body, but there are a number of interesting contributions which merit summary.

Aligning the social media elements with the traditional phases of documentary production made the process innovation inherent in *The Virtual Revolution* easier for the organisation (and reluctant colleagues) to deal with.

The producers had to rein in their original ambition for the level of crowd-sourced material due to the logistical difficulty of getting people who wanted to contribute, with broadcast quality skills, in the right place at the right time – it required too many coincidences when the key contributors were number in hundreds.

It is difficult to ascertain how much genuine value the producers feel the crowd sourcing added to *The Virtual Revolution*. It seems obvious both Dans feel it was something the BBC needed to do, and needed to be seen to be doing – but was the TV programme better as a result? That is not so clear.

The series attracted a committed group of contributors numbered in hundreds, compared to a TV audience numbered in millions. This is a long way from Shirky’s ‘Everybody’ (Shirky 2009). While disappointing for social constructivists, tis kept the social media elements manageable, as thousands of contributors would have overwhelmed the team. Dan Gluckman called this “the wisdom of the few”.

The producers felt they could have made better use of the major social networking platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, and not made so much use of the BBC site as the main host.

13.2.5.2 My reflections

In this interview, we have seen how the producers of the BBC television series *The Virtual Revolution* used a variety of social media techniques to co-develop the programme with the audience. The numbers who got involved were considerably fewer than might be expected from reading the digital utopian literature on open innovation and crowd sourcing (a fraction of one per cent), but this had a benefit for the producers because it meant the volume of contribution was manageable with the resources available to them.

The online contributors were distinct from the general audience and perhaps closer to the 'cathedral' of BBC programme-making than the 'bazaar' of open source coding ideology and the programme made use of 'wisdom from the crowd' rather than the 'wisdom of the crowd'.

14 Case Study - *World Have Your Say*

14.1 Background

The website for the BBC World Service radio show *World Have Your Say* (WHYS) describes the programme as “... an international discussion hosted by the BBC and driven by you”, and invites its listeners to “... shape the programme using social media. Tell us what the important conversations are where you are in the world. If you’re living in the middle of a news story, share your experience.” (BBC 2016)

An exact figure for number of listeners was difficult to pin down, due to the global nature of the programme, but its presenter, Ros Atkins, had this response when interviewed for this case study:

“The World Service English listenership is 40-45 million weekly reach so that means 45 million people are turning on at some point during the week, how many people are listening to any one show I don't know, but you’re going to be talking probably in the low millions based on how weekly reach breaks down to a particular point.” (Ros Atkins)

Listeners are able to ‘shape the programme’ by using the messaging application WhatsApp, by posting on the programme’s Facebook page, or by contacting them using Twitter.

Users may also be invited to participate when the programme is on air, in which case the programme team will call them on the telephone, or through VOIP such as Skype. This is no different to many other BBC programmes though, and it is the ability for users to ‘shape the programme’ which is different and of interest to this research project.

14.2 Reflection on action - interview with Ros Atkins, *World Have Your Say* Presenter

14.2.1 Production process

At the start of the interview, Ros Atkins was asked to describe the ways in which interested listeners could contribute story ideas to the *World Have Your Say* production team:

“There are lots of ways you can get involved in *World Have Your Say*. We have a policy that we’ll just use anything people want to use so you can email us or call us, our office number is available on our website. Our personal emails are easy to find and on our website, we’re very easy

to find on Twitter and Facebook, we're as accessible as we possibly can be, and you can get in touch however you would like." (Ros Atkins)

He prefers to start his working day by using the microblogging platform, *Twitter*:

"As soon as I sit down at my desk I tweet something to the effect of "I'm here and this is what we're doing" and then for the next eight hours I'm open for business and sometimes you'll not get very much and sometimes you'll get a flurry of activity and I always reply to anything I get." (Ros Atkins)

This openness to audience involvement even extends to open editorial meetings, which is unique in the researcher's experience and knowledge of the BBC:

"You can take part in our editorial meeting if you'd like to or you can just send us a note, and we'll always reply. We reply to everyone, and the most common reply is 'that's an interesting issue but what's your evidence that it's a global conversation?'" (Ros Atkins)

Atkins explained how the programme's basic mechanism for choosing stories works, and how it is quite a selective process that is commonly misunderstood, even by regular listeners:

"A lot of suggestions fall at that hurdle because people are suggesting particular items, particular issues but they are often quite local, so one of us will go back to them and say 'How can we make this a broader discussion which our audience might want to take part in?' or I might pass it on to one of the other programme teams on a multi-item news programme who might want to pick it up." (Ros Atkins)

Atkins added the caveat that he felt audience interest in the show was down to their interest in global news stories and not due to any particular interest in him as a person or celebrity:

"I would add that - I'm sure there are some presenters with whom the public has a huge fascination and just want to communicate with them because of who they are, I guess you'd call them celebrities – but I'm not a celebrity, I'm just a news presenter, and some people are interested in talking to me personally but not that many." (Ros Atkins)

When asked if the different social media platforms provided different kinds of contribution or had different characters, Atkins replied that "Twitter appears to be dominated much more by, I don't know if professionals is the right word but y'know journalists, people who work in NGO, people with kind of professional interests in global affairs or current affairs" (Ros Atkins). Whereas "Facebook seems to be a much more, a much broader representation of all sorts of people." This had led him to conclude that "the percentage of people using Twitter in a professional capacity is much higher than the percentage of people using Facebook in a professional

capacity.” (Ros Atkins). This belief had an impact on the programme because he felt that “if you’re looking for a pundit in a programme - which *WHYS* doesn’t often, but if you were - Twitter is better, the kind of potential guest per person is higher than on Facebook.” (Ros Atkins)

This is interesting as it does provide the potential for certain kinds of bias to creep into guest selection, although it is important to note Atkin’s comment that this kind of recruitment is not a frequent occurrence on *WHYS*. Studies have shown significant bias in Twitter’s demographics in terms of gender, race, and geography (Mislove, Lehmann, Ahn, Onnela, and Rosenquist 2011) and politics (Hitlin & Mitchell 2013).

I asked Atkins what behaviours he would expect to see potential contributors demonstrate that might mark them out as someone *WHYS* would invite onto the programme:

“If they’re able to speak concisely and respectfully. We’ll always test people out with questions which acknowledge alternative views of whatever the subject is and if they react very badly to the suggestion that other people might see it differently, we don’t mind what opinions people have but we want them to be respectful.” (Ros Atkins)

Is this the imposition of a certain kind of etiquette on contributors, which could be considered a manner of taste or distinction? Or is it just the need to maintain order in the debate from the practical point of view of broadcasting a programme that is not chaotic? However, once on air it seems a reticence and what some might call better manners that affect those making more outrageous comments via social media, as “people will say stuff on social media they won’t say on the radio or the television. There are things that they feel comfortable saying behind their screens but to actually come out and say live and in front of people is something they’re reluctant to do.” (Ros Atkins)

Asked if the open nature of the programme meant it was at risk of being compromised or distorted through flash mobs or other kinds of online pressure, Atkins thought that there was a risk: “If someone really wants to lie and really wants to pull the wool over your eyes and get on air on a programme like this, if they really get their act together they’ve got quite a good chance.” (Ros Atkins). But, he felt the programme had sufficient checks and balances to prevent its editorial integrity being compromised:

“What they haven’t got a good chance of is getting a free hit on air, they’re still going to get questioned vigorously. Also you’re going to be looking at two or more often three or four contacts with the *WHYS* team

before you get in touch with me on the air. You've got to be pretty organised to get through that and most lobbying, in my experience, comes in the form of bulk emails, so suddenly 30 people will email on one subject saying, "you've got this wrong". (Ros Atkins)

14.2.2 Impact of social media on *World Have Your Say*

When asked to consider what his main observations and experiences of involving the audience more heavily in creating *World Have Your Say* than a typical BBC programme, Atkins explained how the audience's interest in the processes of journalism was far lower than journalists like him assume:

"I think when we started *World Have Your Say*, we had a hope that we would be deluged with ready, fully-formed ideas or nearly-formed ideas which we could take and put on to the air, but what's become very, very clear is that people aren't interested in running orders, or making programmes or making newspapers, or whatever the case may be, they're interested in events and issues and that's what they want to talk about." (Ros Atkins)

This observation is very consistent with those of *The Virtual Revolution* producers. Audiences seemed to be interested in ideas, and stories, but not so much the mechanics of programme-making or journalism – it's just not part of their everyday lives - unless like the *moo* audience they want to develop a career as a journalist or programme-maker, in which case it is a day-to-day objective.

Atkins described what this ambivalence to journalism meant to the programme team in practical terms;

"So if you say online "I've got Story A, Story B, and Story C, which one do you think we should do? What order should they be in?" You'll find the level of engagement with those questions is unbelievably low." (Ros Atkins)

It is not that audiences are not interested in the topics, they just aren't interested in the question, so:

"What will happen is that people will just start talking about whichever of the issues are that they're interested in. So while they won't directly say "Put this on *WHYS* I want this in your running order." they will say "I think this about that subject" and so they indirectly offer you the information you want." (Ros Atkins)

As Atkins understood it, this had been the case with previous attempts to involve BBC audiences in editorial decision-making:

"You had features like Simon Mayo's news on demand which started in 2001 where three stories were presented to the audience and people voted on them. Well that didn't last because no one was voting on them.

Not because the stories weren't good, but because people are just not inclined to spend ages fretting about running orders - that's what journalists do." (Ros Atkins)

Similarly, Paul Bradshaw, an academic expert in online journalism, when interviewed as part of this research, talked about the audience-participants in his *Help Me Investigate* project in a similar way:

"I'm very clear that journalism is a by-product, and that the real outcome of the site is people getting hold of information. And one thing that has struck me is that when you get to a stage of investigation where you ask someone to write the story of the investigation, generally only the journalists would accept that challenge. So other people do not want to write a narrative; they just want the information." (Paul Bradshaw)

But Atkins felt this lack of interest in journalistic process did not mean a lack of interest in sharing per se, more an ambivalence to big media organisations like the BBC trying to own sharing and conversations:

"Kevin Anderson, who was one of the founding team members of *WHYS*, said that people want to share, but they don't necessarily want to share with a particular organization." (Ros Atkins)

Atkins saw the following implications for the BBC and big media organisations:

"The media needs to go to where the conversation is, don't wait for the conversation to come to you. And that is borne out by our experience time and time and time again. If people are moved they'll express themselves, wherever they want to express themselves. They might come to the BBC to do it, they might not, but it's much more important for us to just be wherever it's happening, and if it's within the BBC's confines fine, and if it's not, that's also fine." (Ros Atkins)

So far from journalists becoming disintermediated by the Internet and social technology, Atkins did not feel his role was redundant or diminished:

"There's still a huge role for journalists. There's a series of editorial judgements that are made from the beginning of the process to the hour that we're on air, and without that you'd end up with something and it might be interesting to hear but I don't think it would be as consistent, and consistently relevant to a big global audience without our involvement. I suppose I would say that!" (Ros Atkins)

Atkins addressed the concern that programme-makers and journalists have about social media being a potential time waster by positioning it as an alternative source of research material, rather than an addition:

"You've always had to spend an amount of time researching what stories belong in your running order, the things that you would look at now are different to the things you would have looked at ten years' ago, but the

process of looking needn't take any longer or shorter because of social media, it's just another thing, a very significant thing to consider. I think as we've become less reliant on things like newspapers, so we've become more reliant on social media but I don't think that the process of preparation has been necessarily altered." (Ros Atkins).

So traditional activities were being performed in different ways, taking about the same amount of time. Atkins explained what some of the differences are, the first being that social media brings the ideas to the journalist:

"One is they serve you up on a plate thousands of people and thousands of ideas for you to consider whereas before social media you would have to consciously go and look for the things that you wanted, whether you opened a newspaper or you spoke to a correspondent, now a lot of stuff is pushed in your direction. Now you still have to consider what you want to use but social media offers you a lot more possibilities the moment you open it up in the morning, so that's been important." (Ros Atkins)

Another is that social media enables news stories to be told from the everyday perspectives of normal people, something very much in line with the digital utopian views which were described in the literature review;

"And two, there's some of us who've for a long time, tried to make news more about the experience of normal people, but that process is made an awful lot easier by social media because there they are telling you what they're experiencing and telling you what they think. And so while we were doing that anyway before social media, social media allows you to do that in a range of ways that we could only have dreamed about ten years ago." (Ros Atkins)

Atkins explained the philosophical influences on him, which had led him to believe the importance of including stories of the everyday lives of the programme's audience in its news reporting:

"I did History at university and my director of studies was an eminent social historian and he did a pretty good job of persuading me that the experience of ordinary people is relevant to understanding what's happening in any given society at any given time." (Ros Atkins)

This socially constructed view of news and history is entirely consistent with the socially constructivist views of some web evangelists such as Clay Shirky. It seems entirely consistent with the editorial judgements implicit in a programme called *World Have Your Say*, and it could be argued that the BBC requirements around impartiality mean that it should not be a rhetorical, utopian, position, but one which is balanced by other viewpoints, as Atkins explained:

"If you take the crisis in Greece, I want to understand from a correspondent or an expert the macro economic factors that are playing

out and the deals that have been done, and the possible impact that will have on the debt crisis. But I also want to understand, because it's just as important, what impact that debt crisis is having now on a baker in Athens." (Ros Atkins)

Atkins then made the more profound and philosophical point:

"But the other thing is that people's experience is the truth." (Ros Atkins)

He explained what he meant by 'truth' in this context:

"Reporters and correspondents and presenters, we spend all of our time interpreting an event, or how a group of people feel, and that has a role to play, but actually what someone is feeling or what someone is experiencing there is no need for interpretation, the audience can just hear it. And sometimes you'll get a truth, a normal person's experience that frankly you won't get from a journalist." (Ros Atkins)

Atkins believed this to be important because it opened stories up beyond a journalist's or presenter's preconceived ideas of what a story is about:

"You'll hear opinions you didn't expect to hear. You'll hear experiences that you didn't realise were being experienced." (Ros Atkins)

And because he believes a multiplicity of viewpoints enables audiences to get a broader sense of what Atkins considers to be 'truth':

"Journalism is always going to be an attempt to share an event or an issue and it's always going to be imperfect, but people's experiences, the more you can have of them, the closer you'll get to the truth." (Ros Atkins)

I asked him if he felt social media had shifted the balance between expert opinion and real stories in news programmes:

"Yes it has. But this is not a revolution." (Ros Atkins)

This is a less emancipatory tone than that expressed in the utopian literature, such as Leadbeater's belief that broadcasting institutions would be made less relevant, as expressed in *'We Think'* (Leadbeater 2008). It is, however, consistent with Euan Semple's view that "... it's going to change the world but not in some overt, revolutionary way."

"I'm not trying to get rid of all of the very good things that BBC reporters and BBC correspondents, and BBC producers do. They are all perfectly valid and as worthwhile as they've ever been. But I do think that if you look at a running order now and compared with ten years ago then the role of the experience of ordinary people and the role of ordinary people helping us to report a story is indisputably bigger and it's only going one way." (Ros Atkins)

He described this in the context of the reporting of the Arab Spring:

“The expert analysis that we were getting from people like Jim Muir - you wouldn't do away with that for the world. But without the help of social media and our audience in reaching lots of people and having them help us understand what was happening it would have been impossible, no criticism of any BBC people, it would have been impossible to report the story.” (Ros Atkins)

It is important to note that in this context he is really talking about the audience in a newsgathering role, rather than in programme development. He described the audience's role in the reporting of this story in more detail:

“We did whole *WHYS*'s, not discussions; rolling news, reporting the news, hour after hour, where every guest was a normal person saying “I'm in this part of Taria Square, this is happening”, and the whole picture was painted by people who were experiencing the event, and if they hadn't been telling us, we would have been unable to report the story as well.” (Ros Atkins)

Atkins described how he felt the combination of everyday experience and the expertise of the BBC provided what he considered to be a better mix of storytelling than either element on its own:

“You take it for what it is, which is a series of human experiences, you match that with the facts and the information, the context that we can provide here at the BBC with our expertise, you mix the two together and that's the best stab we can make at it.” (Ros Atkins)

As with *The Virtual Revolution*, Atkins is not overwhelmed by the volume of contribution one might expect if ‘everybody came’ in the manner predicted by Clay Shirky and other utopians (Shirky 2009).

“I don't get deluged by stuff to do with the programme, but there was a novelty to a presenter being accessible when I started *WHYS*, and when I started to put my email online people clearly felt it was very strange. Everyone's on Twitter now so people are just more interested in talking to you about subjects than they are talking about you.” (Ros Atkins)

He did point out that if the volume of contribution increased significantly, then the *WHYS* programme team would struggle to cope;

“It's never reached the scale where it's become unmanageable but I know that Peter Horrocks who's the Head of BBC global news has been musing about what the BBC would do, if it got to that stage. The level of communication *WHYS* has at the moment is manageable and it's good because we can maintain a decent standard of conversation and can moderate everything, but if you multiplied the number of comments we were getting by a hundred, that would be impossible with our current resources.” (Ros Atkins)

However he felt this was unlikely to happen for reasons of principle – namely that the BBC should not host conversations but should go to where they are on the Internet, in line with the BBC's 15 Principles of Web 2.0 (Loosemore 2007).

"We (the BBC) don't have to be the host of the conversation. I find that pretty persuasive because the cost involved is huge and if you are the host, however hard you try not to, you will to some extent define the conversation because of people's perceptions in the BBC and also because of the make-up of people that use the BBC. Whereas if you go to where the conversation is, you're going to reach everyone, rather than just people who come to the BBC." (Ros Atkins)

I asked him if the programme's openness on social media, and just in general terms, made it vulnerable to lobbying by pressure groups:

"Not as often as you'd think. It happens very occasionally and it's never effective, it's normally very very obvious to suddenly get a load of emails all on one subject in a burst. I can think of more examples of when I worked at Five Live which is a few years ago now. No, we're bothered far less than you might expect. Which you can either attribute to the fact that people don't think we're important or they know that we've got some pretty good safeguards in place. I can only think of two examples or three examples in six or seven years." (Ros Atkins)

It seems that the same technologies that enable lobbying also make it obvious when it is taking place.

14.2.3 Interview Summary - Ros Atkins

14.2.3.1 How has this interview helped answer the research question?

As with the *Virtual Revolution*, an audience of millions for the *World Have Your Say* daily radio show filters down to a hard-core of committed contributors who can be numbered in the hundreds. And again, this is fortunate for the production team, who would otherwise be overwhelmed.

Compared to the *Virtual Revolution*, WHYS make better use of other media and social media platforms to share, promote and host their stories. Ros Atkins feels big global news organisations like the BBC must go to where audiences, rather than expect audiences to come to them and this could be considered to be a significant factor in their approach being less reliant on the BBC acting as a host platform.

Again, it's difficult to determine exact differences that the social media make to the programme's editorial content, if any. Ros Atkins doesn't think they cover different stories to those they would have covered anyway. But Atkins is a committed social

historian who considers the experience of everyday people to be an essential part of the truth of a particular story. This is where, in his opinion, social media adds a lot of value to the news, and, Atkins believes, allows WHYS to “get closer to the truth”.

14.2.3.2 My reflections

In this interview, we have seen how the BBC World Service programme *World Have Your Say* has opened up its programme making and journalistic processes to its audience on social media. For a programme with a regular weekly audience of 40 million, the volume of contribution experienced is considerably less than might be expected from the digital utopian literature predicting mass creativity and user involvement in media production. Where the audience do participate it is more often as newsgatherers as found by Wardle and Williams in their study of social media in BBC News (Wardle and Williams 2008) or to provide ideas relevant to their everyday lives, then consume the broadcast, with much less interest shown in the journalistic processes in between. This is similar to the experience of the *Virtual Revolution* in the previous case study.

As with the *Virtual Revolution* , the *WHYS* staff spoken to felt that the stories developed in conjunction with the audience represented a more complete picture of the ‘truth’ than stories developed by the BBC in isolation, even though only a small percentage of the audience are interested enough to become involved.

15 Observations

This PhD came about because I was working in technology-based learning at the BBC at a time when the corporation was in the vanguard of large media organisations trying to make sense of how social media might change its relationship with both its staff and its audiences.

This provided me with a unique access to staff at all levels in the organization, from researchers in the early stages of their careers to Board level directors with power and influence. They all saw me as a colleague first, and researcher second and, perhaps, this meant they were prepared to open up in ways they might not have done if I was, for example, a journalist looking in from the outside.

This section contains my key observations, grouped according to my research questions:

- How has the *moo* social media project enabled factual programme-makers and journalists to work in new ways inside the BBC?
- How have *The Virtual Revolution* and *World Have Your Say* production teams used social media to work in new ways with audiences outside the BBC?
- What is a suitable methodology for a PhD based on the working practice of a media professional?

I have also included some observations on my own learning journey, as I have found this experience profound, and have ended up in a completely different location intellectually to the one I expected when I started in 2009!

15.1 How the BBC is using social media to work in new ways

The BBC makes extensive use of social media to extend the reach of its traditional programming, and to replicate its existing working practices and types of audience engagement. These activities have been extensively researched elsewhere, for example, by Wardle et al. (2008). Use of social media to work in genuinely new ways is considerably more limited however, and in the course of this study, I found three projects of significance which merited in depth analysis and critique.

Inside the BBC, the *moo.gateway* project aimed to uncover unknown programme-making talent working at lower levels in the hierarchy, or in professional services and administrative areas outside the main programme making divisions.

Two programmes looked outside the BBC to find new ways of interacting with their audience. The BBC World Service radio programme *World Have Your Say* uses social tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Google hangouts to work with listeners to generate ideas for stories and its daily running order.

The BBC2 documentary series *The Virtual Revolution* used crowd-sourcing techniques throughout its pre-production phase, working with potential audience members to define the structure and content of the programmes and identify interviewees.

Observations will be grouped according to the research question they fall under:

15.2 How has the *moo* social media project enabled factual programme-makers and journalists to work in new ways inside the BBC?

While there are many observations detailed in the main case study, there are four key observations which I believe could be applied to similar projects, and would be beneficial for people embarking on such endeavours to consider.

15.2.1 The views of participants in the project appear to have been influenced by prevailing rhetoric

In their description of the *moo* project, key stakeholders and project team members used language consistent with three rhetorics associated with social media and related technology:

- Digital utopian rhetoric (Turner 2006)
- Digital native rhetoric (Prensky 2001)
- The rhetoric of creativity (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006)

The digital utopian rhetoric views technology as an overwhelming force for good and, in a learning context, emancipating learners by allowing free access to knowledge, breaking up cartels, and providing access to previously closed networks. There are clear echoes of this in the origins of the *moo* project with its aims of uncovering hidden talent in the BBC by providing access to pitching 'secrets' and providing direct access to the BBC3 Controller.

The digital utopian rhetoric is a form of technological determinism, whereby human behaviour is changed through the use of technology. If this were the case, then it would merely have been sufficient to launch *moo* and use of it would have taken off.

But this was not the case. The opposing view to technological determinism sees use of technology as symptomatic, that is, technologies are only really adopted when they help humans solve existing problems or meet existing needs. In this case, we can observe that the site only really took off when it was aligned with the goal of BBC staff to further their careers.

The digital native rhetoric sees young people, born after the early 1980s, (variously known as Generation Y, millennials, digital natives) and thus living in a world where the Internet and World Wide Web were freely available from their early teenage years, as having distinct facility with, and attitudes to technology, compared to their baby boomer parents, and Generation X colleagues and bosses who preceded them into the workplace. This rhetorical position, originally proposed by Marc Prensky, but uncritically accepted by many involved in educational and learning technology has since been exposed as false through critical analysis and empirical research by, for instance, Helsper and Eynon. (Helsper and Eynon 2009)

Nevertheless, this rhetoric had significant influence on the *moo* project, as evidenced in the interviews with key stakeholders and in their belief that it needed to be web based in order to appeal to younger BBC staff, and that the graphics and user experience should be designed in such a way as to alienate older, more senior, colleagues and managers.

Banaji et al. list nine 'Rhetorics of creativity' (Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham 2006), those that appear to have influenced the *moo* project were: ubiquitous creativity, play and creativity, and the creative affordances of technology.

'Ubiquitous creativity' implies the everyday application of creativity to everyday situations by anyone – the notion that we are all creative: this view was certainly held by some of the senior stakeholders in the project, if not the BBC3 Controller, who was clear he was looking for 'talent'.

'Play and creativity', that is, the notion that childhood play is the origin of creative thought and problem solving can be seen in the interviews where stakeholders demonstrated a belief that "playfulness" (Frank Ash) and "curiosity" (Alan Yentob) were at the heart of the creativity that they wanted the site to identify and nurture. While these are legitimate views, based on experience, there was not a genuinely empirical basis to them, hence they were a largely rhetorical position.

The final rhetoric which appears to have influenced the project is that of ‘the creative affordances of technology’. The basic principle of this is that the use of technology is somehow implicitly creative. I would argue this is a determinist viewpoint, and at odds with the largely transactional nature, or idle amusement of many web practices. But, in the early phases of the project, some stakeholders clearly believed that if the site were built, then it would be used for ‘creative’ purposes without the need for clear alignment with BBC staff’s needs and goals.

“The other thing about a big organisation is where do the ideas come from? There is a suspicion that everything is so top-down, that the official websites belong to the bosses or whatever. This project is obviously an attempt to create a website which belonged to those people who were participating.” (Alan Yentob)

15.2.2 The contribution made through social media, although meaningful, was not overwhelming

In corollary to the *Digital Utopians* (Turner 2006) rhetoric, commentators such as Andrew Keen have put forward a series of dystopian viewpoints. One of his arguments is that online ‘Participatory Culture’ (Jenkins 2006) will lead to society ‘drowning in a sea of mediocrity’ of amateur videos and content (Keen 2007). However, the reality of the *moo* project was that participation was much more limited. Even when the pitching competition ran, the site attracted 100 video pitches from a staffing body of over 20,000. The number of videos submitted meant that the competition organisers were able to review them all and provide considered feedback to all entrants.

15.2.3 Staff members only became interested in participating in the social network when it was explicitly aligned with their goals and interests

The *moo* website did not attract significant contribution until the stakeholder goals were explicitly aligned with the everyday goals of the target audience.

‘Build it and they will come’ is rarely an axiom that can be applied to web sites and digital technology. In an attention economy (Goldhaber 1997) sites that do not have a clear purpose, or serve an immediate and unmet need are unlikely to attract significant numbers of users. In its first iteration, *moo*’s purpose was vague and it was not clear to staff what the benefit to them for participating was, other than the ephemeral and nebulous practice of creativity. The more straightforward and easily understood parts of the site – links sharing and blog articles – did attract attention.

In the site's second phase the competition made an explicit promise to BBC staff. If they posted a video to the site, then all the videos would be reviewed, and the best would be put forward to the Controller of BBC3 and the owner of the idea would get training on how to pitch to senior commissioners and channel controllers. The main aim of most BBC staff is to participate in public-service programme making, and for their programmes to find an audience on television, radio or online (Kleinman 2012). The competition tapped straight into that everyday goal and also met one of the key needs of the BBC3 Controller – to identify fresh and new programme-making voices for his channel. This alignment of the everyday goals of both the users and the business owner of the site meant the site was in a position where it might succeed.

15.2.4 Having identified programme-making talent, their success then appears to have been determined by internal politics and unwritten 'rules of the game'

Specifically, *habitus* and 'habitus within habitus'. Contrasting the progress of the two competition winners, Andy and Stephen, seems to indicate that Andy, with his greater experience of BBC production 'rules of the game' and a job title that is more easily recognized by gatekeepers within the BBC *habitus*, found it easier to progress. While Stephen who, by his own admission, did not "... want to take shit from creative people who are less talented than me, and I can't stand", and not coming from the right part of the BBC, found it more difficult. This is in spite of them both being within the BBC *habitus* at large and the explicit intention of the BBC3 Controller to find new talent.

Danny Cohen hinted at this when giving his reasons for sponsoring the *moo* project:

"... even in TV, people have different strengths and skills. Being a brilliant producer doesn't always make you brilliant at coming up with the ideas for television. So I'm very interested in getting ideas from different places. There's a number of reasons for that. One is you risk only talking to a small amount of people. The other is that you tend, in these kinds of jobs, to talk to very senior people and, you only get one kind of perspective. And also, you don't know... sometimes you don't know who actually in a team is really coming up with the ideas. It may be someone very junior who's very brilliant that you're not getting to." (Danny Cohen)

An example of the *habitus within habitus* thinking that Andy Mosse came up against is shown in his comment: "But most people (I showed my video pitch to) thought, "Oh, it's not what we... It's not quite what we make down in Bristol. We don't do any comedy. And we don't do any 'How to' type programs." (Andy Mosse).

While Stephen Fingleton believes it affected him much more directly, "...as it was geared to some extent towards getting people who weren't necessarily in the division doing it, there needed to be an extra level of support of how you would then navigate afterwards if it went on to become a serious idea." He went on to say, "somebody in (BBC) Vision would be, would be used to or have strategies to dealing with what I had to do." (Stephen Fingleton)

This lack of explicit cultural capital in the form of knowledge of the institution and the rules of the game created one issue for Stephen. Another issue was his lack of embodied cultural capital – the sense of 'not one of us' – demonstrated in comments such as, "I was treated by the development person as someone who's been propped up by an outside scheme who didn't know anything about making television and who was a hindrance to the production." (Stephen Fingleton)

In order for this kind of initiative to succeed for people from outside of the immediate programme-making habitus in the future then it would make sense for outsiders coming in to the system to be given mentoring, coaching and guidance about how BBC programme-making works, as Stephen said, "the fact I didn't come from that world would automatically make you think you need extra support, but creative support rather than political support, well actually it was political, and even administrative support I needed." (Stephen Fingleton)

Subsequently, in the summer of 2012, I interviewed Pat Younge, then Chief Creative Officer of BBC Productions, about a similar crowd-sourcing talent acquisition project he was sponsoring (*iCreate*). He acknowledged this issue that people and ideas needed his full political support in order to progress through the bureaucracy. In a subsequent interview in the BBC newspaper, *Ariel* in November 2012, Younge outlined steps to address the potential lack of cultural capital of some participants:

"Younge believes there is a general naivety about the challenges that development teams face in transferring a concept into a piece of television or radio. Creating our Future, as his project is called, will address that by training people about the process - whether or not they work in a programme environment - and tapping into the collective brain of the BBC in a truly collaborative way." (Defago 2012)

15.3 How have *The Virtual Revolution* and *World Have Your Say* production teams used social media to work in new ways with audiences outside the BBC?

Having made a series of observations as a form of action researcher on the *moo* project, it was then interesting to see to what extent these observations were matched by other projects at the BBC. These projects were externally facing, aspiring to involve their audiences in their programme-making decisions but, nevertheless, a comparison is illuminating, and three key observations are broadly similar.

The similarity of three out of the four key findings of the internal and external cases demonstrates the usefulness of comparing them, and increases my confidence in the findings of the case based on my practice. I am therefore satisfied that the decision to include study of other practitioner's work in this research was useful and has had a positive impact. I would recommend to other practice led PhD students that they take the time to include some study of their peer's practice as part of their research and reflection.

15.3.1 The views of producers and presenters appear to have been somewhat influenced by prevailing rhetoric

When speaking to the producers of programmes that sought to use social media to collaborate, there was evidence of the influence of rhetoric, although it was marginally less emancipatory in tone than that surrounding the *moo* project. The dominant rhetoric was that of digital utopianism, with digital natives' rhetoric less obvious, and the rhetorics of creativity hardly featured at all – which could be considered surprising since the ubiquitous creativity seems to be very consistent with the crowd-sourcing aspects of digital utopian rhetoric.

In describing the differences between traditional programme-making processes and the collaborative process devised for *The Virtual Revolution*, the Programme Producer, Dan Gluckman described it as “democratisation”:

“Those processes are very well thought through and don't really involve the wider world except for phone calls to experts and contributors and interview and filming trips. So it was the role of this sort of democratisation and opening of the process which makes it much more challenging.” (Dan Gluckman)

Although, democratisation of the process was not an explicit aim of the programme – the producers chose “to involve the wider audience in the making of the documentary” because they felt it would lead to a better programme through involving “expertise and knowledge of interesting stories that might add to the documentary” and that would prevent the “danger of feeling like (output from) an old media organization” (Dan Gluckman).

Similarly, the producers and presenters of *World Have Your Say* were mainly interested in how involving the audience would improve the programme on their terms. The main presenter, Ros Atkins, described the programme's aim as "reflecting global conversations" and, in order to achieve that, the programme team need to be "as accessible as we possibly can be, and you (the audience) can get in touch however you would like." (Ros Atkins)

15.3.2 The contribution made through social media, although meaningful, was not overwhelming

When they embarked on their project, the producers of *The Virtual Revolution* were concerned that when they opened the gate, they were going to be overwhelmed by audience members who wanted to participate in the programme-making process.

In my experience, this is a common theme at the BBC, where many staff think that the public at large share their interest in the inner workings of the corporation, and topics such as 'media literacy'. The evidence of the two cases under consideration is that audiences are interested in submitting ideas for programmes and running orders, and interested in viewing or listening to those stories when broadcast, but rather less in the programme-making mechanics in between.

In the case of *The Virtual Revolution* the contributors were numbered in the "order of hundreds" (Dan Gluckman), the audience in the millions, and the open journalism of *World Have Your Say* attracts contributions from tens per day, compared to a global audience of "45 million" (Ros Atkins).

This could be considered to be the media equivalent of Raymond's concept of *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* (Raymond 1999) in which the production of media stories takes place at the hands of a small, exclusive group inside the *Cathedral* of the BBC (or C4, or Sky, etc.), but the idea sourcing and consumption takes place in the *Bazaar*, that is, in full public view.

15.3.3 Audience members are only interested in participating in programme-making in so far as it impacts on their interests and everyday lives

According to the programme makers in the case studies in this thesis, and an academic expert in collaborative journalism interviewed, there is a limit to the audience's desire to get involved in the actual programme-making process. They are interested in getting their ideas turned into stories, and hearing those stories

being told, but are not really interested in the journalistic and production processes required to take a set of ideas and turn them into a viable radio, TV or other kind of broadcast programme.

“I think when we started *World Have Your Say*, we had a hope that we would be deluged with ready, fully-formed ideas or nearly-formed ideas which we could take and put on to the air, but what’s become very, very clear is that people aren’t interested in running orders, or making programmes or making newspapers, or whatever the case may be, they’re interested in events and issues and that’s what they want to talk about.” (Ros Atkins)

And,

“People are just not inclined to spend ages fretting about running orders - that’s what journalists do.” (Ros Atkins)

The Virtual Revolution found that as they moved from the research stage into more detailed technical production that audience involvement waned: “the numbers of people who were getting involved went down and the involvement of people who stayed went up” (Dan Gluckman). In the later stages, this was as few as ‘ten’ people – compare this with a programme audience in the millions.

Similarly, Paul Bradshaw, an academic expert in online journalism, when interviewed as part of this research, talked about the audience-participants in his *Help Me Investigate* project in a similar way:

“I’m very clear that journalism is a by-product, and that the real outcome of the site is people getting hold of information. And one thing that has struck me is that when you get to a stage of investigation where you ask someone to write the story of the investigation, generally only the journalists would accept that challenge. So other people do not want to write a narrative; they just want the information.” (Paul Bradshaw)

Therefore, the audience is interested in using social media to feed ideas, stories and news into the programme-making process, and then commenting on the broadcast output (Wardle and Williams 2008) but considerably less interested in getting fully involved in the detail of the production.

15.4 My learning journey

This PhD is the output of a learning journey which has taken me from positivism to critical thinking, from an analytic to a more continental philosophical outlook

As a science graduate with an instrumental view on life I set out with good intentions of measuring the positive impact of social media on media company performance, of

creating graphs that show the relationship between numbers of tweets and audience appreciation index, and providing an antidote to the rhetoric and anecdotes that (I thought) disguised the fact that no one really knew if social media ‘worked’. I was going to prove that it did.

How misguided I was, but somewhere along the way, between my supervisors’ insistence on the need to account for my personal impact on the case studies and interviewees, a spectacular cock-up of a transfer viva, and a near fatal car crash (which also accounts for why it has taken so long), I came to understand what it meant to look at things critically. That stories can be data, as long as you do not try to create universal laws, or broaden your observations beyond the circumstances of the case.

Most of all, rather than thinking of professional practice as a lowly cousin of academic knowledge, I now understand that without practice, there is no knowledge.

15.5 What is an appropriate methodology for an experienced media professional undertaking a doctorate based on their professional practice?

At the time of commencement there was no ‘off the shelf’ methodology available which cited the circumstances of this project; namely an experienced media practitioner scrutinizing their working practice and seeing how it compared to other similar productions. The project featured elements of action learning, action research, critical educational science, case study method, Schön’s model for an epistemology of professional practice, ontological parsimony. But none were an exact fit.

The deep influence and involvement of the researcher in the main case study being examined also meant that the nature of the influence needed to be analysed and criticised.

By drawing on the experience of Scrivener who supervises practice-based PhDs using a model based on Schön, and taking an approach of ‘epistemic reflexivity’ based on Bourdieu’s epistemological types, I derived a method which has allowed me to demonstrate a sound epistemological basis to this PhD.

In many ways, I feel this is as significant a contribution to knowledge as the other observations made commented on in this section. This methodological ‘recipe’,

which may be useful for other PhD students basing their doctorate on their profession practice was detailed in the Methodology chapter. To recap, it consists of the following stages:

15.6 Advice for other practice led PhD Researchers

In the Methodology chapter I outlined the sequence of cycles of action (practice) and reflection, which combined with a comparison of other's practice, give rise to what I have called 'reflexive practice'.

Should other practitioners choose to base a PhD on their own professional practice then, in summary, I would suggest the following advice:

- Synchronise the start of the PhD with the start of a cycle of action/reflection.
- Allow for at least two or three cycles of action-reflection of their own work, either different phases of the same project, or different projects with sufficient similarity to allow direct comparison
- Be critical, reflexive, and consider the use of habitus as a research tool
- Study the practice of other professionals in the same field, and compare and contrast their work with the of the PhD student. The student should seek to legitimate their findings though comparison with others.

This is just a brief guide, more detail is contained in the Methodology chapter – hopefully it may serve to save other practice led PhD students some of the lengthy challenges faced by my supervisors and me.

15.7 Has this thesis met its own challenges?

In the Methodology chapter we saw how Scrivener (2000) sets out eight challenges for work-based and practice led PhDs:

Let's consider each of those challenges in turn...

15.7.1 Has this thesis demonstrated that there is a problem to be solved?

In the Introduction and Literature Review the thesis demonstrated that there was a perceived problem with the BBC's lack of innovation, and in the main case we saw that BBC management felt the need to find new programme making talent as part of the solution to this problem.

15.7.2 Has this thesis shown that the solution to the problem resulted in a new or improved artefact?

The 'moo' website is a new artefact which is also a solution to the problem.

15.7.3 Has this thesis shown that the problem is one that the BBC would like to see solved?

The interviews with Frank Ash, Alan Yentob and Danny Cohen demonstrate the desire among senior BBC managers (with a responsibility for creative output) to see the problem solved.

15.7.4 Has this thesis demonstrated the usefulness of the solution?

The thesis has shown the success of the solution in connecting a number of younger programme makers with credible ideas with the BBC 3 controller and commissioners.

15.7.5 Has this thesis demonstrated that the knowledge exemplified in the solution can be abstracted?

By comparing the moo case study with social media practice in other areas of the BBC, we have been able to identify a number of common knowledge themes, which have been described previously in this Observations section.

15.7.6 Has this thesis considered the general applicability and transferability of this knowledge?

While I would be reluctant to state that the key observations would transfer to another industry, given the consistent themes that emerged in the external audience cases, I would be confident they could be transfereed to other projects in the media industry.

The recommendations for professional practice PhDs made in the Methodology chapter should be applicable to any work based PhD, where the student is reflecting on their own practice.

15.7.7 Has this thesis proved this knowledge?

By comparing the themes in my own practice with those of my peers, and by completing several cycles of action-reflection and reflection on reflection, my supervisors and I are satisfied that this thesis is epistemologically sound

15.7.8 Has the student demonstrated that he or she is a self-conscious and systematic problem-setter and solver?

Throughout this thesis I have taken steps to consider the impact of my actions on my research and to, as far as is possible, ensure repeatability of research and transferability of knowledge. By developing the concept of 'reflexive practice' I have suggested a model for researchers to investigate their own practice in a way that

encourages a high degree of awareness of the researcher's impact on their professional field, and to understand that their research does not stand alone from this, but is the same thing. Without practice, there is not knowledge.

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