

**Changing Imperatives in Third Sector Media and  
Cultural Production: A Study of News Production,  
Documentary Film-making and Arts and Cultural  
Programming.**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds  
Institute of Communications Studies (ICS)

September 2012

## **Declaration of Authorship**

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all my research participants for their trust, invaluable insights, generosity and time in the midst of very busy schedules without all of which this research would not have been possible. I am very grateful to *Deutsche Bildung* for the financial support offered towards this research project. I am even more grateful to the Institute of Communications Studies (ICS) at the University of Leeds whose partial tuition scholarship award enabled me to pursue this research and from whose research environment and teaching assistance opportunities this research project benefitted immensely.

I wish to express special thanks to my supervisors Professor David J. Hesmondhalgh and Dr Helen Kennedy for supporting my research project in the first place. I have hugely profited from their guidance, inspiration, support, patience and constructive critique throughout the process of researching and writing up this thesis. Indeed, I have been overwhelmed by their generosity both as outstanding academics and as private individuals. I also thank members of staff and fellow PhD students at the ICS for their support and friendship. Similarly, I thank staff at the ISS and SDDU for their continued assistance with respect to the delivery of IT, research and teaching skills.

Lastly, my particular thanks go to Christiane Nicolay, Georg and Jacob Hemmerling, Paul and Brenda Kigozi, Lizzi Burns and Solo Mutibwa. I highly appreciate their unrelenting support, advice and encouragement throughout the duration of this research project.

## **Abstract**

Research on third sector media and cultural organisations has tended to focus on socio-political imperatives in organisational and production processes. However, my research shows that as socio-political circumstances have gradually changed, other imperatives especially of a professional, artistic and commercial nature now play an equally important role in these processes in the third sector. The interplay between the different imperatives can be conflicting, pulling producers in different directions. Moreover, producers can be subjected to systemic pressures such as demands from subsidy, other funders, broadcasters and politics, all of which impact third sector media and cultural work. Producers respond in ways that have not been sufficiently studied. This thesis aims to address this gap.

Drawing on relevant theoretical perspectives and qualitative research methods, I address three key issues in this thesis. First, I examine the ways in which producers in the third sector respond to professional, artistic and commercial imperatives alongside socio-political ones in the organisation and production of news, documentary film and arts and cultural programmes. Where the interplay between these imperatives is conflicting, I analyse how producers negotiate between them. Second, I analyse the response of producers to systemic pressures. Third, I evaluate how producers perceive their work following competing imperatives and systemic pressures.

I argue that the evolving environment in which third sector media and cultural organisations operate in some cases compels producers to prioritise commercial and professional imperatives over socio-political and artistic ones and to give in to systemic pressures. Based on British and German case study companies, my thesis provides crucial insights into the interplay between such pressures and competing imperatives in contemporary third sector media and cultural organisation and production.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Research Context

Third sector media and cultural organisations are witnessing an unprecedented growth and expansion in Western Europe. This growth has resulted from the significance accorded to their social and cultural value which, it is believed, consists not only in facilitating democratic communication, but also in encouraging innovation and experimentation in form and content (Atton, 2002; Bailey *et al.*, 2008). Notably, their content is playing a crucial part in filling the gap left by mainstream media, namely public service and commercial media. Many commentators feel that mainstream public service and commercial media are proving unable to provide a full range of media and cultural programming that adequately serves the diverse groups, communities and geographical regions to be found within most West European societies (McCain and Lowe, 1990; Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Curran and Seaton, 2010).

Scholars have attributed this situation to the following developments. First, from the 1980s onwards, mainstream public service media have faced multiple challenges as a result of deregulation, fierce competition in a multi-channel environment, audience segmentation and technological transformation (Tracey, 1998; Born, 2003; Barnet, 2007; McNair, 2007). Numerous and fierce debates raged about whether such media were worth the resources spent or even merited the preferential treatment they got (Curran 1991; Blumler, 1993; Dahlgren 1995). These factors gradually compelled mainstream public service media to restructure their organisation and operations in order to adapt to and remain competitive in the new deregulated media landscape (Atkinson and Raboy 1997; Lowe and Bardoel 2007).

Arguably, this led to the abandoning of many public service obligations considered less profitable yet crucial in facilitating 'informed, rational and inclusive

public debate' (Curran, 2002: 227). Such obligations include the provision of local news and other informational content, investigative reporting and diverse socially relevant cultural outputs (Murdoch & Golding 2005; Barnet, 2007). In essence, these obligations 'give priority to public affairs programmes, reasoned discussion and [...] pluralistic representation' and in doing so, 'put the needs of democracy before those of profit, and are supported in this by public law and regulation' (Curran, 2002: 227). The inability or unwillingness of mainstream public service and commercial media to fulfil such functions has created a void that third sector media and cultural producers strive to fill.

Second, the ownership of commercial media has tended to be concentrated in the hands of a few corporations. Political economists of communication have argued that the power accruing from such concentration of ownership can be exercised to control the production and distribution of ideas, values and beliefs inherent in media and cultural content (Cottle, 2003; Hesmondhalgh, 2006b), a scenario that has dire consequences for the processes of interaction and communication among different groups in society.

Third, and following on from the first two developments, in both mainstream public service and commercial media, scholars have observed a significant shift away from audiences being addressed as citizens to being viewed and treated as consumers. This has coincided with an increase in the volume of sensationalist and populist programming directed at such 'consumers', ranging from 'infotainment' in print to reality television and game shows in broadcasting (Murdock and Golding 1999; Croteau and Hoynes, 2001). Some critics claim that there has been a tendency in both mainstream public service and commercial media not only to limit the range of opinions expressed therein, but also to marginalise, discredit and even exclude dissenting perspectives that advocate ideas and viewpoints considered to belong outside

the boundaries of perceived dominant norms (Hackett, 1984; Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Curran, 2002).

As a result of these developments over the last decades, democratic communication in third sector media and cultural companies has gained greater social and cultural significance. Essentially, such communication aims to prioritise relevant, civic information and to facilitate debate, innovation, greater access and participation of ordinary people and marginalised and disempowered groups in media and cultural production processes in a bid to foster change (McGrath, 1990; 1996; Downing *et al.*, 2001; Atton, 2002; Lewis and Jones, 2006). Scholars on the organisational and production processes in third sector media and cultural companies have drawn on social and political theory to argue that for this to successfully happen, such companies need to maintain their own communicative spaces in which they can express and defend their interests outside the supervision of dominant groups (Atton, 2007; Atton and Hamilton, 2008; Bailey *et al.*, 2008).

More importantly, Atton, drawing on the work of James Hamilton, asserts that such companies must be 'de-professionalised', 'de-capitalised' and de-institutionalised' (2002: 25) if the different forms of ownership typically exhibited by third sector media and cultural companies are to be of any meaningful social and cultural value. In this thesis, I conceptualise the pursuit of such democratic communication with a view to effecting social change as *socio-political imperatives*. More follows on this idea below.

However, my research shows that changing socio-economic and socio-political circumstances dating as far back as the late 1970s gradually fostered the ascendancy of professional, artistic and commercial imperatives alongside socio-political ones in the organisational and production processes of third sector media and cultural companies.

The problem is that embracing all these different imperatives pulls producers<sup>1</sup> in different directions. Whereas some producers uphold socio-political imperatives, others maintain a balance between the different imperatives. Still for others, the tension emanating from the interaction between the imperatives can sometimes be so strong that it poses great problems. Additionally, numerous systemic influences such as political controls and demands from subsidy, funders and broadcasters may sometimes not only aggravate the tensions with which producers are already confronted, but they may also threaten the independence of producers. All these factors impact third sector media and cultural work. As such, there is a need to gain insights into how contemporary third sector media and cultural producers face up to and deal with these issues. Given these tensions, contradictions and problems that I return to in Section 1.3 in more detail, this thesis aims to investigate the following questions:

In what ways do producers in third sector media and cultural organisations respond to the different imperatives?

In which ways do producers respond to political controls and demands from subsidy, other funders and broadcasters?

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term ‘producer’ throughout this thesis to refer to single individuals and groups of individuals involved in some way in the creation of ideas, texts and aesthetic experiences within perceived ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production contexts. Such outputs and experiences tend to be circulated through means that might be mediated (for example radio, television) and/or non-mediated (for instance, live performances, workshop sessions). These individuals might be ‘artists’ by profession such as writers, actors, designers, musicians, dancers, poets, photographers, documentary film-makers and directors, or they might perform ancillary functions as engineers, technicians, administrators or even volunteers. Some are paid for their work while others – particularly volunteers – do not receive wages or a salary although they might be reimbursed for basic expenses such as subsistence and travel costs. In using the term ‘producer’ in this sense, I am more concerned with the collective nature of work involved in organisation and production than the status and prestige individuals might enjoy due to their professions.

How do competing imperatives and other pressures impact on how producers view their work?

I explore these questions across three genres: in news production, documentary film-making and arts and cultural programming, concentrating on the period between 1968 and 2011. I chose to focus on these genres for three reasons. First, the three genres are the most common and oldest in the third sector. Second, deriving from their prevalence and longevity, these genres have accumulated sufficient literature which allows for comparison between historical and contemporary contexts. Third, the three genres seem the most affected by artistic, professional and commercial imperatives as well as subsidy, political controls and in some cases, broadcaster influence. It is useful to briefly look at what the different genres in the sector constitute.

News production generally involves assembling events into news accounts. Early research on news production tended to view news as the result of a reporter's subjective experience, attitude and expectations. This tradition came to be known as the gatekeeping model following White's (1950) and Breed's (1955) classic studies which emphasised the individual reporter's subjectivity in controlling and selecting items for news stories. Despite their contribution to the understanding of news production at the time, these seminal studies were later critiqued by sociologists of news production for their inability to explain the impact of broader social systemic factors such as news work routines, newsroom relationships and organisational cultures (Tuchman, 1978a; Fishman, 1980; Reese, 2001). I discuss these factors in more detail in Chapter 2 indicating how they shape the nature and content of what passes as news. Third sector news production in particular can be said:

to play a role in creating avenues for people to connect with each other and their public institutions by bringing awareness of problems, issues, and potential solutions to people in a community [...] stimulate growth of knowledge, enhance civic attitudes [with a view to] reinvigorating public debate about issues of concern to citizens, and

improving participation in civic activities, such as voting, belonging to community organisations, or participating in community problem-solving (Choi, 2008).

The term ‘documentary’, coined by John Grierson in 1926, referred to work that reflected ‘the creative treatment of actuality’ (Grierson, 1966: 13 *cf.* Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 12) and which served a clearly defined social purpose (Corner, 1996). Since then, leading documentary scholars have tended to define this genre in relation to its functions (Barnouw, 1993; Rosenthal and Corner, 2005; Rosenthal, 2007). Corner (2000a: 2), for example, notes that ‘the functions of documentary work have been at least as important in its history and generic identity as its forms’. For him, then, documentary film-making is about:

how a film or programme was made (according to what recipes, methods and ethics), how it looks and sounds, and what job it was designed to do, what kind of impact and use-value it was to have for audiences. Only in relation to at least one of these features, and probably by reference to more than one, we will identify something as documentary work... (Ibid.).

From this, Corner identifies three classic functions of documentary film production, namely ‘providing publicity for citizenship’, ‘documentary as journalistic inquiry and exposition’ and ‘documentary as radical interrogation and alternative perspective’ (Ibid.). To these, he adds a relatively new function he terms ‘documentary as diversion’ meaning ‘popular factual entertainment’ in the form of ‘Docusoaps’ (Ibid.: 3). Nichols summarises the ‘use-value’ of the varied forms and functions in documentary work in the following:

Some documentaries set out to *explain* aspects of the world to us. They analyse problems and propose solutions. They try to account for aspects of the historical world by means of their representations. They seek to mobilise our support for one position instead of another. Other documentaries invite us to *understand* aspects of the world more fully. They observe, describe, or poetically evoke situations and interactions. They try to enrich our understanding of aspects of the historical world by means of their representations (2001: 165, emphasis by the author).

This is the understanding that informs third sector documentary production.

Arts and cultural programming, in a general sense, is 'engaged in creating, producing, presenting, distributing and preserving as well as educating about aesthetic, heritage and entertainment activities, products and artefacts' (Wyszomirski, 2002 *cf.* Carpenter, 2008: 8). In a similar vein, Blandy views such programming as encompassing 'the formal and informal ways in which organisations and institutions address, cultivate, present, preserve, and celebrate the creative and symbolic forms associated with culture' (2008: 174). Such 'creative and symbolic forms' are derived from common customs and beliefs allowing for a folkloric and artful expression of such values in myriad forms and interactions (Ibid.: 177 - 178). Cases in point could be 'a play, video, or piece of music - the function of which is a self-conscious, personal, or collective expression of something' (Lewis, 1990: 5). Balfe and Peters developed a useful taxonomy that appears to capture most of the existing activities, art forms and experiences that make up arts and cultural programmes. Their taxonomy reads as follows:

1. Visual arts (painting, jewellery making, tattooing, designing, crafting);
2. Literary arts (writing poetry, screenplays or books);
3. Media arts (creating computer art, choreography, composing music videos);
4. Musical arts (song writing, instrument making);
5. Dance and other movement arts (choreography, gymnastics, skating);
6. Performances, exhibitions;
  - o Music (playing a musical instrument or singing; opera, bluegrass, hymns, rap);
  - o Dancing or moving (ballet, ethnic, folk, ice dancing);
  - o Acting (performing in plays, musicals, mime, or comedy);
  - o Literary (reading poetry, storytelling, giving lectures);
7. Multimedia or other (music videos, street performers, circuses);
8. Ancillary activities within all these performing and exhibiting activities (directing, technical assistance, production);
9. Media (films, TV, computerized art, animated film, Internet art);
10. Selling or renting art objects, media products, and so on (fairs, festivals, shows, stores);
11. Collecting, preserving (libraries, archives, museums);
12. Teaching about arts and culture (theory and appreciation, arts management);

13. Administrative, technical, governance, fundraising work (artists' collaborative, boards, technical work) (2000, *cf.* Carpenter, 2008: 9 – 10).

For the purposes of this thesis, I use Balfe and Peters' taxonomy because it seems exhaustive and also acknowledges overlaps between the different activities, art forms and experiences in the same way as third sector arts and cultural programming does. I focus on the performing arts, particularly third sector theatre, musicals, pantomime and comedy, although I also make reference to the literary and visual arts such as creative writing, poetry and storytelling all of which take place in the companies under study in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Having outlined the context of this research project, I proceed as follows in this chapter. In Section 1.2 I define the term 'third sector' and explain why I choose to use it and not the other terms that have been used to describe 'non-mainstream' media and cultural production processes. In Section 1.3 I define what I mean by socio-political, professional, artistic and commercial imperatives. I then explain the role of subsidy, other funders, broadcasters and politics in third sector media and cultural work. I discuss the main problems associated with the interaction between all these factors across the three genres in this study. I outline the key theoretical and empirical aspects of this research project before specifying how this thesis is organised in Section 1.4.

## **1.2 Defining Third Sector Media and Cultural Organisations**

As hinted at above, organisations involved in 'non-mainstream' media and cultural production processes have been referred to by various terms in different contexts. The most common terms are alternative media, community media, citizens' media, independent media, social movement media and participatory media. To begin with, Atton (2002: 9 – 10) notes that the term 'alternative' in alternative media can be seen as 'a blanket term [whose] strength lies in the fact that it can encompass far more' forms of production than other terms. But, he qualifies this, noting that '[t]o deploy

“alternative” as an analytical term, however, might afford us little more specificity than saying “non-mainstream” (Ibid.). Harcup observes that ‘[d]efinitions of alternative media are not fixed or universally accepted’ (2005: 361) while Comedia (1984: 95) noted that alternative media were defined in terms of what they were not.

Other scholars are wary of the term ‘alternative’ because they think it too often positions ‘non-mainstream’ organisational and production processes in a rigid dichotomous relationship with the mainstream public service and commercial media which, they argue, is not accurate (Rodriguez, 2001; Bailey *et al.*, 2008). Even John Downing, one of the key scholars in this area of study, retracted from this rigid binary position<sup>2</sup>, in one of his recent books. In fact, some empirical studies have identified blurring boundaries between mainstream and ‘non-mainstream’ media in terms of practice and aims (Eliasoph, 1997; Harcup, 2005).

Still other empirical research has identified that some ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production sites consider themselves either to be supplementary to mainstream media and cultural production institutions or even as the main providers of specific and relevant outputs to certain members of diverse cultural groups, particularly diasporic ones in Western Europe altogether (Husband, 1994; Cottle, 1997; 1998; Gillespie, 2003; Georgiou, 2005). Some evidence suggests that diasporic media and cultural production sites assume a central role because they ‘specifically reflect [the] class, political and aesthetic interests [of the groups they serve]’ (Downing and

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<sup>2</sup> In his earlier work, Downing (1984) approached the study of non-mainstream media in terms of ‘binarisms’, an approach he now portrays in his more recent work (Downing *et al.*, 2001: ix - xii) as rather problematic. Nevertheless, he still holds the view that practice in ‘non-mainstream’ media and production processes is inherently non-conventional both in terms of content and organisation and that it is still primarily geared towards opposing the dominant power structure perceived to be maintained by mainstream media.

Husband 2005: 210). In this case, the reference to such sites as ‘alternative’ does not seem right and, inevitably, projects a distorted view of what precisely these sites are or what their role is. It is for these reasons that I avoid to use this term.

Likewise, the concept ‘community’ in community media is very broad. On a positive note, some proponents of the term have highlighted its portrayal of the local and/or regional character of the media and cultural production processes associated with it (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986; Donohue *et al.*, 1997; Buchholz, 2001). For others, the term emphasises the identity of a group of people bound by perceived shared values and ties rooted in common social and political settings (Berrigan, 1977; 1979; Beaud, 1980; Howley, 2005b; 2009; Lewis and Jones, 2006; Johnson and Menichelli, 2007; Keough, 2010). To critics, however, the term ‘community’ is problematic. For example, it ‘suggests simplistic, low budget, and low technology production – an approach which can seem, on occasion, to imply a lowering of expectation and standards’ (Lewis, 1990: 112).

In contrast, this thesis shows that many contemporary third sector media and cultural companies engage in the creation of high-quality outputs and experiences. Moreover, such outputs and experiences are often circulated regionally, nationally and in some cases, even internationally with considerable success. For this reason, to refer to these companies as ‘community’ seems inaccurate. Moreover, it is not always clear whether the term ‘community’ refers to geographical or virtual communities or simply communities of interest (Bailey *et al.*, 2008). All this vagueness surrounding the term, in my opinion, renders it an inappropriate definition of the contemporary ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production processes I discuss in this thesis.

The term ‘citizens’ media’ as coined by Rodriguez (2001) alludes to civic practices ‘embedded within the everyday lives of citizens, and media content that is both driven and produced by those people’ (Atton, 2003c: 267) as members of nation states.

Whereas this captures the ways in which citizens get involved in media and cultural production processes, it does not seem to account for groups and communities that do not possess legal membership to any one nation state but still participate in the same processes. Of such groups like refugees and illegal immigrants involved in media and cultural production, Downing (2010) notes that ‘the word “citizen” as applied to media has to be explicitly stripped of its legal connotation’ if it is to incorporate them. This seems to make sense to me given that I encountered a number of ‘non-citizen’ producers in at least three of the fifteen companies (two in Britain and one in Germany) I studied during my field research. On these grounds I choose not to use this term.

‘Independent’ in independent media, like ‘alternative’ and ‘community’, is too vague a term. Like the other terms, it dichotomises mainstream and ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production processes, thereby leaving little or no room for fluidity. O’Sullivan *et al.* (1994), for instance, portray independent film and video as constituting ‘an incommensurable array of different personnel and practices, each defined contingently as independent against a specific mainstream’<sup>3</sup>. The authors note further that the term ‘independent’ has been applied in other contexts ‘to help secure public funds from bodies like the Arts Council, British Film Institute and local councils for low-budget non-commercial production (Ibid.).

In other contexts, the term has most commonly been associated with either small and medium-sized independent production companies or larger ones usually referred to as ‘super-indies’ (Elbing and Voelzkow 2006; Davis *et al.* 2008; Chalaby, 2010). These multiple references to the term ‘independent’ render it not sufficiently specific to

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<sup>3</sup> O’Sullivan *et al.* (1994: 148) note further that the term has been used as a ‘euphemism for “capitalist” or “commercial” in the British broadcasting scene’ to emphasise independence from state ownership. The use of the term in this sense seems rare now.

capture the contemporary ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production processes I examine in this thesis.

Social movement media is another term that some scholars prefer for its depiction of a range of media and cultural activities embedded within social movements and seeking to bring about social change (Downing, 1995; Ostertag, 2007). The problem, however, is that there are myriads of activities and projects engaged in ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production which do not consider themselves appendages of any social movement even though they might share some of the latter’s goals (Downing, 2010; McMillian, 2011).

Of ‘participatory’ in participatory media, Downing (2010) notes that the term generally appears to have been hijacked to mean different things in different contexts. Some scholars have used the term to depict the wider involvement of ordinary people in media-supported development projects in the global South (Guennel *et al.*, 2000; Fraser and Estrada, 2001; Olorunnisola, 2002). In New Media studies, scholars speak of participatory media to refer to Web 2.0 technologies that facilitate online participation (Vickery and Wunsch-Vincent, 2007). In documentary film production, some commentators allude to ‘participatory film-making’ to mean wider involvement in documentary-making (Kilborn and Izod, 1997; Miller, 2009; Evans and Foster, 2009). As such, the term is inappropriate for use as an overarching definition for ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production more generally.

The term ‘third sector’ in third sector media is the one I prefer because it differentiates ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production from mainstream public service and commercial media. Of the term, Downing (2010, n.p) notes that:

[i]t is a policy-based term primarily defining [non-mainstream] media as what they are not, in other words that part of the media spectrum which is not commercially, governmentally or institutionally funded. It is thus a convenient term for media policy debate, but offers no more than this.

In contrast, I think the term ‘third sector media’ encapsulates many contemporary ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural organisations in ways that the other terms do not. This is because generally, the ‘third sector’ refers ‘to non-governmental organisations [...] which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. The third sector is often referred to as civil society or the social economy’ (ESRC/Society Today, 2010). Prominent stakeholders in the third sector include voluntary and charity organisations, community enterprises, social firms and businesses as well as social movements and other non-profit organisations (Pearce, 2003; Hasenfeld and Gidron, 2005).

The third sector constitutes a wide range of organisations with different histories, sizes, purposes and working practices. Such organisations undertake a variety of roles in civil society. Thus, it is not uncommon for a single organisation to take on multiple roles simultaneously. Such roles may range from running awareness campaigns on social issues to delivering services tailored to the specific needs of members of civil society to providing information (Fennell *et al.*, 2008). In Britain, for example, advocacy and lobbying on behalf of the disadvantaged traditionally have been a central feature of third sector organisations in addition to service delivery. By contrast, third sector organisations in Germany have tended to concentrate more on the provision of social services, but are increasingly engaging in lobby work (Zimmer and Evers, 2010).

According to Wigglesworth and Kendall (2000), the third sector is increasingly succeeding in providing opportunities through participation in community and public life given the intensifying disillusionment with private market solutions and state controlled agencies that are unable to adequately address the needs of ordinary people and especially so, those of marginalised and disempowered groups. By attempting to contribute to the public good in this way, the third sector aims to foster institutional diversity, enhance innovation and to some extent, inhibit monopolistic tendencies by

adding a sphere of self-organisation alongside that of the state and the market (Anheier, 2002). It is in this sense that I refer to ‘non-mainstream’ media and cultural production sites because most (if not all) exhibit many of the features depicted above.

Third sector media and cultural organisations, then, refer to institutions outside mainstream public-service and commercial sectors, representing a sector of media and cultural production that is often understood as relatively autonomous of state and commercial interests, and as operating in the interests of community and public life. Such autonomy implies self-definition and an adherence to values and practices which I allude to as socio-political imperatives throughout the thesis. Like third sector organisations, media and cultural companies in the third sector are characterised by diverse histories, trajectories and sizes. They comprise predominantly not-for profit, micro media and arts collectives, small and medium-sized cultural production firms, self-help and advocacy groups, some of which may be appended to social movements. Some companies may also make profit. Examples of third sector media and cultural companies fall into these categories:

- Radio;
- Television including public access channels;
- Documentary film and arts production companies including video and arts collectives and diverse cultural sites. The latter group might comprise various unconventional arts providers<sup>4</sup>;

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<sup>4</sup> DiMaggio (n.d.: 3/28) points to the difficulty of measuring cultural activities outside traditional arts venues. As a consequence, he notes that such activities tend to be completely ignored despite the fact that they play an important function in community and public life. DiMaggio provides illustrative examples such as theatre performances, book readings and performance rehearsals that take place in schools, universities and churches among other settings.

- Publishing (newspapers, magazines, fanzines, leaflets, pamphlets and posters);
- Photography projects;
- Online multimedia communication platforms such as blogs.

For this thesis, I conducted research in companies that belong to all the categories listed above<sup>5</sup>. Nearly all these organisations engage in media and cultural production for a wide variety of reasons, but most of them are involved in some attempt to foster democratic communication and social change in harmony with socio-political imperatives. As hinted at above, however, professional, artistic and commercial imperatives are assuming an increasingly ascendant role, thereby impacting organisational and production processes in this sector significantly. I now define these different imperatives below.

### **1.3 Imperatives in Third Sector Media and Cultural Production**

In outlining the research context of this thesis earlier, I noted that the social and cultural importance of third sector media and cultural companies lies in their prioritisation of media and cultural content that aims to explore local and regional issues, stimulates dialogue, encourages greater involvement and reflects the diversity of traditions and cultures in communities and regions. The overarching goal is to bolster ties and relations in public life (Kershaw, 1992; Matarasso, 2000; Bowman and Willis,

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<sup>5</sup> Participant observation and face-to-face semi-structured interviews were not possible at the online multimedia communication platform - *ObemSpace* that I studied. This was because *ObemSpace* has no formal workplace or base mainly due to the fact that it is run by a group of artists for fellow artists in different locations in the Yorkshire region and Northwest England. Nevertheless, the information provided was valuable for this research because it shows that *ObemSpace* offers a free space in which diverse local and regional artists can publicise their upcoming performances and productions and forge collaborative networks.

2003; Choi, 2008). This is encapsulated in a form of ‘social responsibility’ that foregrounds ‘first person, eyewitness accounts by participants’ and emphasises ‘collective and anti-hierarchical forms of organisation which eschew demarcation and specialisation’ (Atton, 2003c: 267) in the production of news, documentary film and culture. This understanding informs what I call *socio-political imperatives*.

Before defining what professional imperatives in news and cultural production are, it is helpful to briefly explain the overarching concept of professionalism which views professions as constituting a standardised and discrete body of knowledge acquired by individuals, who – as members in a profession - then provide a service to society in accordance with given standards (Singer, 2003; Ursell, 2006). Drawing on earlier scholarship, Singer argues that such membership in a profession can be claimed “only by people with particular talents, judgement or education”, and it is crucial that both practitioners and the public they serve realise as much’ (2003: 140). For Soloski, ‘service to society and not financial reward is seen as being the primary reason for becoming a professional’ (1989: 210).

Singer (2003) identifies the core characteristics of professionalism and divides them into three categories, the cognitive, normative and evaluative dimensions. She notes that the cognitive dimension draws on the esoteric knowledge and techniques that professionals apply in their work which gives them a monopoly on expertise which, in turn, makes them irreplaceable (Singer, 2003: 141). The normative dimension, she notes further, orients itself towards distinctive ethics in the form of basic ideals revolving around devotion to a calling that is of service to the larger community (Ibid.). Lastly, the evaluative dimension highlights the autonomy and prestige that each single profession enjoys most notably manifested in ‘professionally accorded honours such as titles and prizes’ (Ibid.: 142).

So, what does this conception of professionalism mean for news and cultural production? With regard to news production, some scholars have argued that this conception is too dependent on the definition of the classic professions, particularly law and medicine (Ursell, 2006: 153; Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 33) to duly account for journalism as a profession. Other scholars have even contended that journalism is not a profession at all. Hallin, for example, advances the following argument in support of this position:

Many journalists would characterise it as a craft rather than a profession; in a number of cases journalists have gone to court to argue that they should be considered not professionals under labour laws, but ordinary wage-workers engaged in routine activities under close supervision - and therefore eligible for overtime pay. Many toilers in the media industry indeed fit this description (Hallin 1996: 245).

Hallin and Mancini (2004: 33) assert that a standardised body of knowledge and formal professional training are not considered essential for practice in journalism. In the former case, the argument might derive from the fact that journalism is 'one of the few institutions that regularly addresses a wide range of issues across economic, cultural, political, social, and racial lines' (Ryan 2001: 14). The latter case is reflected in the sense that 'a degree in journalism is optional - and probably more necessary for employment at the bottom than at the top of the profession; no licences or exams are required, and no peer review boards judge one's competence' (Hallin 1996: 245). Whether the view regarding the latter case still holds true today is subject to debate.

Nevertheless, I argue that journalism is a profession based on two reasons. First, although journalism has no esoteric knowledge, core skills such as gathering and processing accurate and important information so that it can be disseminated to a wider audience are identifiable (Singer, 2003). Indeed, news producers have repeatedly laid 'claims to professionalism in journalism [...] based on such routine competencies as factual accuracy, speed at meeting deadlines, style in presentation and a shared sense of

news values [as well as] skill and competence in the performance of routine work tasks (Elliot, 1977: 149).

Second, and building on the first point according to Ursell, 'for a journalist in a democracy, professionalism is defined very much in terms of delivering factually based, comprehensive, fairly reported and speedy news about events and people to the public' (2006: 155). It is the attitude and commitment of providing objective news that should be taken as the yardstick for journalistic professional status 'rather than the fulfilment of sociological requirements' (Singer 2003: 143).

It is in this sense that I allude to *professional imperatives* in news production. I argue in Chapter Four that being professional or being seen to be so is crucial not only in attracting audiences in a very competitive media environment but it also invokes close association with skilfulness, credibility and reliability all of which are important features in contemporary news production 'particularly [...] at a time when the number of information sources, many of which are unreliable, is expanding at an almost incomprehensible rate' (Ryan 2001: 5). However, as we shall see, it is also used to attract advertisers and sponsors, a move that I portray as messy and one that has consequences for the social and cultural value of third sector news production.

In a similar vein, professional imperatives in cultural production are constituted by the 'skill and competence at coping with the varying work and restrictions involved in [creating outputs and making performances as well as] the ability to keep appointments punctually (Elliot, 1977: 149 – 150). Professional imperatives in documentary film-making, for example, also stress 'the skill and competence', 'the judgement' and 'devotion to a calling' in putting together ideas and material in what Kilborn and Izod (1997) call 'documentary discourse'. These attributes apply to 'virtuoso performances' in arts and cultural programming as well. Overall, professional imperatives in cultural production can be summarised in the statement 'that a creative

individual who produces [artistic] works must have a genuine understanding of the skills, techniques, conventions and traditions of the discipline they are working in' (Bailin, 1988: 97 *cf.* McIntyre, 2012: 24).

Equally significant, professional imperatives attune cultural producers to the importance of ethical considerations in the meaning-making process as summarised by Gross *et al.* in the following:

- o the image maker's commitment to him/herself to produce images which reflect his/her intention to the best of his/her ability;
- o the image maker's responsibility to adhere to the standards of his/her profession and fulfil his/her commitments to the institutions or individuals who have made the production economically possible;
- o the image maker's obligation to his/her subjects; and
- o the image maker's obligation to the audience (1988: 6 *cf.* Katz, 2003; 334).

*Artistic imperatives* in media and cultural production have many dimensions which make them rather difficult to define. According to Matarasso, this is because 'everyone will have their own response to [artistic] work [and will] make different judgements of [such work] (2000: 53). In an interview, for example, a director of a third sector radio station noted that 'making radio programmes is all about creativity. It's not just about technology. It's about coming up with ideas, it's about telling stories and doing it in a way that makes people listen or want to listen' (Shaw, 2001: 52). To DiMaggio (n.d.: 41), artistic quality is about 'craft skill, daring or disturbing content, innovative production technique, virtuoso performances and seamless ensemble work'. Parker and Sefton-Green view artistic imperatives as facilitating 'the ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem-solve, communicate, collaborate and [...] reflect critically' (*cf.* Oakley, 2009a: 4). Overall, most commentators view artistic imperatives as constituted by novelty and technical efficiency (Matarasso, 2000; Brooks, 2006; McCain, 2006; McIntyre, 2012).

Lastly, *commercial imperatives* derive from the quest to make profit out of news and cultural outputs. In the case of news production in commercial media (and in some mainstream public service media), for example, key practices such as investigative reporting have been dispensed with because they are seen to be costly in terms of time and personnel (Simpson, 1981; McNair, 1998; Keeble, 1998; Croteau and Hoynes, 2001; Harcup, 2004). Instead, emphasis is placed on packaging events as news which are favourable to advertisers and sponsors who, in turn, tend to be sold specific audiences with a (higher) disposable income. Simpson (1981) interestingly refers to much of what passes for news as ‘the bit between the ads’.

Similarly, commercial imperatives in the production of cultural outputs are concerned with the pursuit of profit. In the commercial sector, if there is no audience to which a particular cultural product can be sold profitably or if the audience does actually exist but may not possess the purchasing power to deliver swift profits and cover production costs, then that cultural product is highly unlikely to be made (Peterson, 1982; Miede, 1989). Morrison (2008b: 201) concurs by noting that commercial imperatives ‘seek the greatest degree of profitability and therefore make market-driven programming decisions that lead to the greatest possible paid attendance’. For many third sector media and cultural companies with the core remit to provide socially relevant cultural products that tend to be commercially unviable, adopting commercial imperatives puts producers in a very difficult position. This is an issue to which I return below.

In addition to the imperatives defined above, there are systemic influences that impact third sector media and cultural production in different ways. Such influences

include public policy especially as it relates to subsidy<sup>6</sup> and the role of other funders and broadcasters. Progressive policymakers tend to provide subsidy on condition that such support contributes to facilitating economic and social objectives. Economically, subsidy is intended to support the sector with a view to transmitting associated skills and boosting local employment opportunities (ALM, 2009; Ofcom, 2010b). Socially, subsidy aims to promote artistic excellence, encourage the creation of socially relevant work that may not otherwise find a market and make such work as widely accessible as possible (Throsby, 2010; Morris, 2012). Other funding, say through donations, is crucial to supporting third sector media and cultural production as are diverse political initiatives and (public access) broadcasters.

One further point needs to be made about the relationship between the socio-political imperatives on the one side, and professional, artistic and commercial imperatives as well as subsidy on the other. The ascendancy of the latter imperatives in third sector media and cultural production is not a new phenomenon in itself. Commentators and producers alike have attributed the rise of artistic imperatives in third sector theatre production, for example, to the need to be able to express subject matter in new ways that reflected the evolving circumstances effectively from the late 1970s onwards (Sebald, 1988; McGrath, 1996; Peacock, 1999).

Professional and commercial imperatives in the sector in Britain, for instance, emerged largely as a result of the wider Thatcherite 'enterprise culture' which emphasised 'value for money' while discouraging subsidy (Kelly, 1984; Feist and Hutchison, 1990). In the third sector press, declining circulation and advertising

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<sup>6</sup>Subsidy here also refers to support (either in cash or in kind or even both) granted not only by public bodies but also by other charitable organisations such as trusts and foundations. Such support is normally provided for non-commercial, social purposes. As such, subsidy as discussed in this thesis is not commensurate with commercial imperatives.

triggered the need to 'professionalise' in a bid to adapt to the prevailing socio-economic realities (Harcup, 1994; McMillian, 2011). As we shall see, these ascendant imperatives tended to push socio-political ones to the periphery, a phenomenon that has only intensified in the 2000s. Below I now explain the tensions, contradictions and problems that arise from the interplay between the different imperatives and systemic influences in the production of third sector media and cultural work.

Take, for example, socio-political and professional imperatives in news production. As noted earlier, third sector media and cultural organisations driven primarily by the former might foreground 'first person, eyewitness accounts by participants' (Atton, 2003c: 267), also known as native reporting, while those adhering to the latter might emphasise objective news reporting. However, the problem is that objective news reporting is seen by some critics as 'a strategy of hegemony used by some members of society to dominate others' (MacKinnon, 1982: 537 *cf.* Lichtenberg 1996: 226), a phenomenon that conflicts with socio-political imperatives.

Other scholars have contended that objective news reporting helps maintain the status quo in the sense that it tends to emphasise facts which are nothing more than dominant observations of what is generally viewed as acceptable (Whitaker, 1981; Ryan, 2001), a phenomenon that, in the view of some researchers, third sector media and cultural producers should aim to challenge (Downing *et al.*, 2001; Atton, 2002). In the discussion of the sociology of news production in Chapter Two of this thesis, I cite other critics who contend that objective news reporting is not possible in journalistic practice because the cultural values and norms of journalists influence the process of meaning-making, thereby fostering bias (Hall *et al.*, 1981; Berkowitz, 1997; Schudson, 2005).

By contrast, it is said that the wide association of native reporting with 'exhorting others to do-it-yourself' (Duncombe, 1997: 175), [l]acking any pretence of

objectivity [and its tendency to] put across forcefully opinionated accounts of events (McMillian, 2011: 4) has led to its marginalisation as ‘unprofessional, inefficient, limited in its capacity to reach large audiences and as marginal as some of the societal groups to whom [it] tr[ies] to give a voice’ (Bailey *et al.*, 2008: 20). This shows some of the contradictions which emerge when attempting to bring together socio-political and professional imperatives.

Alternatively, if we take socio-political and commercial imperatives, we find contradictions here too. As already intimated, third sector media and cultural organisations aim to provide outputs and experiences which address issues of relevance and concern to diverse groups and communities that may not be catered to by mainstream public service and commercial media. More significantly, members of such groups and communities are usually encouraged to participate in the organisational and production processes (Matarasso, 2000; Atton, 2003a; 2007). Commercial imperatives, by contrast, tend to foreground the pursuit of profits. This fosters the reliance on media formats which, in turn, inevitably facilitate the production of bland and ‘safe’ populist programming and inhibit greater involvement in production processes.

And then there are the debates surrounding the relationship between artistic and commercial imperatives in cultural production. Such debates tend to view both sets of imperatives as being divergent from one another. Providing the Western popular music industry as an illustrative example, Keith Negus discusses the common assumptions about artistic and commercial imperatives as occupying two dichotomous sides within this industry. On the one side, the assumption goes, are ‘the heroes, namely the musicians, producers and performers (the creative artists)’ associated with artistic imperatives. On the other side, it is assumed, are ‘the villains’ who constitute ‘record companies and entertainment corporations (the commercial corrupters and manipulators)’ and as such embody commercial imperatives (Negus, 1996: 46 *cf.*

McIntyre, 2012: 160). According to Negus, it is assumed in this scenario that the latter are 'a ruthless corporate machine that continually attempts to control creativity, compromise aesthetic practices and offers audiences little choice' (Ibid.). As a result of these assumptions, he notes that as soon as an artist 'has "sold out" to commercial interests', they are seen to lose 'their "creative edge"' (Ibid.: 160 – 161).

In a similar vein, Hesmondhalgh observes that artists 'are often judged on the basis of the assumptions about whether or not the symbol creators had commercial intentions' and that 'those creators who reject commercial imperatives most entirely are the best', all of which manifests the 'overly polarised view of the relationship between creativity and commerce' (2007: 70). Even if some views of the relationship are overly polarised, however, there are real tensions between commercial and artistic imperatives. But, 'the relationship between creativity and commerce is a matter of negotiation, conflict and struggle' (Ibid.) rather than one of outright opposition or simplistic contrast.

In addition to the tensions and contradictions resulting from these competing imperatives, there are pressures generated by subsidy, funders, broadcasters and politics. For example, policymakers might sometimes award subsidy with an agenda different from that of third sector media and cultural producers on any given project. Or, as we shall see, policymakers and producers might share similar goals but favour different ways to achieving such goals. Similarly, funders and donors might have a vested interest in funding work on particular themes and as such, might influence production (Chapman, 2007). Likewise, broadcasters habitually dictate the pattern and shape of commissioned work. For third sector documentary film-makers intent on critical and expository social documentaries, this presents strong tensions particularly as the former tend to be interested in populist 'docusoaps' (Chanan, 2007). Also, politics

especially through regulation can be restrictive in instances where third sector media and cultural producers are perceived to be overly critical of government.

All these tensions, contradictions and pressures emanating from competing imperatives and systemic influences impact third sector media and cultural work in ways that have not been sufficiently researched. I investigate how third sector media and cultural producers respond to these in this thesis. I also evaluate how producers perceive their work. In doing so, I borrow a taxonomy used by Pollard *et al.* (2004: 42 - 43) in their study of how minority-led ethnic film producers in Britain viewed their work in relation to individual and organisational aspects. It is these aspects that I focus on. I highlight individual perceptions relating to employment, earnings, qualifications and skills, self-fulfilment, and peer recognition as well as organisational aspects concerning financial stability, growth, and output.

#### **1.4 Research Project and Thesis Structure**

Theoretically, this research project brings together different areas of research which complement each other in ways that clearly and consistently address issues of power, control, dominance and structural imbalances in modern capitalist societies. This project also brings together three genres of media and cultural production normally located in different academic contexts, namely news production, documentary and arts and cultural programming in the third sector. In doing so, this research study helps to situate these genres within larger intellectual traditions in media, cultural and communication(s) studies.

I did empirical research in fifteen organisations. Eight of these are based in Britain while seven are located in Germany. The entire duration of my field research lasted 8 months between November 2009 and December 2011. In six of the fifteen organisations, I spent four weeks. In two other organisations, I spent a week in each.

During this period at these eight organisations, I conducted participant observation, semi-structured interviews and studied company documents and artefacts. In the rest of the other companies, I spent a day in each during which I conducted semi-structured interviews and partial observation. The findings of this research project point to key similarities and differences between the genres in the third sector.

With regard to similarities, all the three genres are characterised by increasing professionalisation, commercialisation and institutionalisation. Additionally, they all aim to inform, challenge and reach large audiences. Albeit to varying degrees, most producers across these genres show passionate attachment to their work and a desire to make some kind of impact in making society a better place. The main difference between these genres concerns the issue of autonomy. Third sector news producers compromise socio-political imperatives the most because they have fewer opportunities to circulate their work, a situation that makes them reliant on advertisers and sponsors.

By contrast, documentary film-makers and arts and cultural programmers in the third sector uphold socio-political imperatives mainly because they have access to a range of distribution outlets. This situation helps these producers to work around competing imperatives and systemic pressures in a bid to maintain their independence. Two other crucial differences are that third sector documentary is the only genre that still exhibits the horizontal form of organisation, is still characterised by low wages and demonstrates multiple job-holding the most while third sector arts and cultural programming is the most reliant on subsidy of all the three genres under study.

Although I detail the contribution of this thesis later on, it is useful here to provide a summary thereof. First, this thesis updates, builds on and expands existing knowledge in this area of study. For example, contrary to research on the organisation of third sector media and cultural companies which has tended to portray these companies as characterised by a predominantly collective organisational form, my

empirical findings suggest that hierarchical and hybrid forms of organisation are common.

Second, this thesis contributes to our understanding of current practices in third sector media and cultural organisations. Across the three genres under study, evidence shows that the sector has become increasingly professionalised, commercialised and institutionalised, all of which threaten the social and cultural value of these companies. Thirdly, the empirical evidence presented in this thesis could be of interest to progressive policymakers working towards supporting third sector media and cultural production. Of paramount importance is the need to disentangle economic goals from social ones. This is because some of the evidence I found suggests that sometimes the former tend to be emphasised more than the latter.

I now provide an overview of how the rest of this thesis is organised. In Chapter Two, I spell out the research context of this thesis by discussing a range of perspectives which contribute to an understanding of competing imperatives and systemic pressures that impact organisational and production processes in third sector media and cultural organisations. I draw some of these perspectives from three areas of research, namely the political economy of communication and sociological approaches to news and cultural production. Other perspectives on which I draw are informed by social and political theoretical concepts, namely the Habermasian public sphere, the Gramscian notion of counter-hegemony and the notion of 'wider social participation' (Atton, 2002). I then provide an account of how public policy has shaped the development of the third sector, particularly focusing on British and German contexts.

Chapter Three serves two purposes. First, it is intended to link the various theoretical perspectives informing this research project with the three empirical chapters in this thesis. Second, it describes the key aspects of the qualitative research methodology I applied. I discuss the preparatory activities for my field research, present

the methods of data collection I used to gather the data needed to address the research questions and elaborate the process of data analysis. Here, I explain the ethical issues and considerations pertaining to this research project in accordance with the requirements of the ethics committee of the University of Leeds before concluding this chapter with a brief account of my experiences in the field.

Chapter Four, the first of the three empirical chapters in this thesis, is concerned with changing imperatives in news production in the third sector. It addresses the ways in which producers respond to socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives and systemic pressures in news-making. It also evaluates how competing imperatives and systemic pressures impact on the ways in which producers perceive their work. I begin by explaining the way in which these imperatives tend to orient third sector news production. I briefly present the historical (organisational and production) circumstances from which news production in this sector emerged in the late 1960s. This is followed by a profile of five selected case study news production companies, three of which were active already in the 1970s and 1980s and as such, allow for a comprehensive analysis of historical and contemporary developments in this genre.

Whereas third sector news producers were primarily driven by socio-political imperatives between the 1960s and mid-1980s, significant changes in the socio-economic and socio-political climate from then onwards fostered the ascendancy of commercial and professional imperatives in the news-making process. I show how responses to commercial and professional imperatives create tensions with socio-political goals and the ways in which producers face up to and deal with these tensions. The key argument in this chapter is that third sector news producers compromise socio-political imperatives the most compared to their counterparts in third sector documentary and arts and cultural programming. Invoking the gate-keeping theory alluded to above, I note that commercial and professional imperatives on the one side,

and political controls on the other sometimes dictate what becomes news. Nevertheless, many third sector news producers proclaim passion for their work.

In Chapter Five, I analyse the response of third sector documentary film-makers to the different imperatives and systemic pressures in this genre. Also, I assess the ways in which competing imperatives and systemic pressures impact on how such film-makers experience their work. To begin with, I elucidate how socio-political, professional, artistic and commercial imperatives drive contemporary third sector documentary film production, then outline the historical (organisational and production) context within which this genre originated. I then profile five contemporary documentary film production companies three of which are immediate products of the countercultural era. As such, they provide rich data regarding the pattern of historical and contemporary processes in this genre.

My main argument is that third sector documentary film-makers have more control of their work than third sector news producers for two reasons. First, they have more opportunities to make the most of their skills to attract activities that yield additional income. Second, such film-makers have a host of opportunities to circulate their work, a situation that helps them maintain their autonomy and uphold socio-political imperatives. Unsurprisingly, many third sector documentary film-makers profess relative autonomy in and emotional attachment to their work despite the difficulties with which they are confronted.

Chapter Six, the last of the three empirical chapters in this thesis, covers changing imperatives in arts and cultural programming in the third sector. I examine the ways in which producers in this genre respond to socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives and systemic pressures. I evaluate how competing imperatives and systemic pressures impact on the ways in which producers view their work. Here, I start by explaining the way in which the different imperatives

guide third sector arts and cultural programming with a particular emphasis on theatre production. I follow with a historical outline of the (organisational and production) circumstances out of which such programming arose. I then present a profile of five third sector theatre companies among which three originated in the countercultural period and as such, permit an exploration of key developments in this genre.

I argue that third sector arts and cultural producers negotiate between the different imperatives and systemic pressures with most relative success. The explanation for this lies in the fact that unlike third sector news producers and documentary film-makers, third sector arts and cultural producers have far more opportunities to exploit their skills to earn extra income and to distribute their work. These factors often enable such producers to maintain their independence and to prioritise socio-political and artistic imperatives. Despite relative independence, third sector arts and cultural producers perceive their work as insecure and uncertain but nonetheless proclaim passionate attachment to it.

In Chapter Seven I offer a summary of this thesis. I specify the contribution of this thesis which is three-fold. First, this thesis updates and expands the current body of literature in this field. Second, it provides important insights into current practices in contemporary third sector media and cultural organisations. Third, this thesis contributes empirical evidence that may inform public policy with a view to addressing some of the tensions and contradictions affecting the sector. The overarching argument is that the ascendancy of professional and commercial imperatives has fostered increasing professionalisation, capitalisation and institutionalisation, all of which impact the social and cultural value of the third sector. If left unchecked, this situation not only risks undermining democratic communication, but it can also aggravate the existing structural inequities. I also reflect on this study, outline its potential limitations before considering issues for future work.

## 2. Research Context: Literature and Public Policy

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I spell out a number of perspectives that contribute to an understanding of the context within which third sector media and cultural organisations operate. To this end, I draw on the political economy of communication and sociological approaches to news and cultural production which I discuss in Sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 respectively. I also draw on the Habermasian public sphere, the Gramscian concept of hegemony and the notion of wider social participation. I discuss these in Section 2.2. In Section 2.5 I explain the role of subsidy and regulation in the third sector, highlighting the pivotal moments that have shaped the development of the sectors in Britain and Germany. Section 2.6 concludes this chapter.

### 2.2 The Political Economy of Communication

Predicated on Marxist thought, the political economy of communication is concerned with issues of ownership, power and control. Marx's quote below captures his engagement with such issues:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976 *cf.* Cottle, 2003: 4).

Political economy of communication draws attention to the relationship 'between the way in which social relations of production are historically organised and how this [...] provides the ruling class(es) with an important advantage in terms of controlling the forms of 'mental production' (Ibid.). Deriving from this, political economists argue that

individuals owning and controlling 'material production' will also likely have control over the production of ideas, values and beliefs circulating in society, a phenomenon that might bolster their position of social dominance (Ibid.). For political economists of communication, therefore, the issue of media ownership is crucial. This is especially so given that modern capitalist societies are increasingly characterised by considerable unequal distribution of wealth whereby a relatively small percentage of wealthy people possesses a larger share of the overall resources available (Hesmondhalgh, 2006b).

For political economists, the concentration of ownership of media corporations into a few hands generates enormous power which can potentially be exercised to control media and cultural content. Although the extent of such control may be subject to debate, it is hard to deny that owners exercise 'allocative' control, whereby they 'make the fundamental decisions that determine the direction of the company' without necessarily running the daily operative business (Ibid.: 22). Moreover, there is a strong likelihood that individuals hired to run the daily management of media institutions 'will be drawn also from the relatively wealthy and privileged classes of society and thus the link that Marx suggests between the control of the means of production and the production of ideas is not broken' (Ibid.: 23).

The implications of this perceived (proprietor) control over production and distribution of media and cultural content, according to researchers in the political economy of communication tradition, are two-fold. First, audiences are primarily viewed as consumers to be delivered to advertisers and sponsors rather than as citizens or workers. This means that news, for example, is rendered a commodity in the sense that events are selected and packaged as news in a bid to attract and reach maximum audiences in higher spending groups likely to purchase the products advertised therein (McManus, 1994).

Second, political economists of communication argue that control places media corporations in a position where such corporations tend to facilitate the exposure and reproduction of the interests and perspectives of the owners and privileged elites rather than those of marginalised and disempowered groups (Curran, 2002). As a result, proponents of this tradition note that the voices and perspectives expressed in the media are likely to be limited, especially if they are perceived to threaten the commercial (and political) interests of the proprietors and privileged elites (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995). Similarly, dissenting perspectives are likely to be excluded through marginalisation and discrediting (Hackett, 1984; Murdock and Golding, 2005).

Other researchers in this tradition focus on the reduction of diversity of media and cultural outputs. For them, concentration of media ownership, power and control in the hands of a few wealthy and privileged elites raises barriers to entry into media markets which, in turn, not only 'limit[s] competition' (Curran, 2002: 229) but also 'limit[s] the range of products produced and the access of audiences to those products' (Hesmondhalgh, 2006b: 24). Two important points derive from this. First, this fosters a situation where 'poorer and/or geographically distant citizens have to make do with fewer products from which to choose' (Ibid.). Second, such products tend to be populist in nature and primarily geared towards making large and swift profits, thereby replacing the informational and cultural outputs that audiences may need access to in order to make civic decisions (Croteau and Hoynes, 2001).

Indeed, this is supported by other researchers who have taken the view that the products of capitalist media tend to be 'easily understood, popular, formulated, undisturbing, assimilable fictional material' (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 40), and that the provision of such content 'undermines intelligent and rational debate' (Curran, 2002:

226). As we shall see below, versions of such views have motivated third sector media and cultural producers to provide alternatives to prevailing media systems.

In spite of its illumination of the mechanics of media economics and organisation, the political economy of communication tradition has been criticised for a number of weaknesses. One which is particularly pertinent to the current research is that political economy of communication research has explained media and cultural production processes too much in terms of economic imperatives (Cottle, 2003; 2007). According to such views, its macro-economic orientation fails to engage with the daily social processes within media and cultural production sites, such as standardised routines, technological resources and legal issues, all of which enable and constrain the nature and content of media and cultural outputs in different ways. These processes are accounted for by sociological approaches to news and cultural production which I discuss in Sections 2.3 and 2.4 respectively. Such approaches help to make up for the gaps in the political economy of communication tradition.

### **2.2.1 Other Relevant Theoretical Approaches Complementing the Political Economy of Communication**

Before turning to these more sociological approaches, I want to discuss how political economy research has been supplemented by the perspectives of key philosophers and social theorists. These theorists have been used by analysts of third sector media and cultural organisations to argue the value of such institutions. For example, third sector media and cultural organisations have been seen as potentially enhancing the public sphere, the ‘social space where information, ideas, and debate can circulate in society and where political opinion can be formed’ (Dahlgren 1995: ix). In contemporary liberal-democratic Western European societies, this ‘social space’ is meant to be inclusive of all members of society and it is a space where, ideally, ‘access is guaranteed to all citizens’ (Eley, 1992: 289).

However, as we have seen above, the reality is that these societies are characterised by inequalities and marginalisation which subsequently deny critical views and marginal groups access to and participation in the public sphere. For Fraser then, since ‘full parity of participation in public debate and deliberation is not within the reach of possibility’ for marginalised views and groups owing to ‘the basic institutional framework [which] generates unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination’ (1992: 121), she advocates what she calls ‘alternative publics’ or ‘subaltern counter-publics’. Third sector media and cultural organisations can be seen as offering such ‘counter-publics’, which marginalised groups can own and use as a platform to articulate and express their opinions, needs and interests.

Despite critique<sup>7</sup>, Fraser contends that it is only through such ‘publics’ that marginal interests can be expressed and defended since this is not always possible in the public sphere (Ibid.: 122). Furthermore, these ‘publics’, according to Habermas, enhance ‘communicative rationality’ necessary for democratic communication to take place outside of the ‘re-feudalised’ (1989/[1962]: 150/175 – 178) mainstream public service and commercial media organisations owned and controlled by proprietary and political interests. This kind of understanding informs the forms of ownership and organisation in third sector media and cultural production.

Another relevant notion from social and political theory is the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Gramsci contended that dominant groups in society establish their supremacy by seeking ‘intellectual and moral leadership’ through persuasion rather than suppression (Eley, 1992: 323). This results in a situation where ‘ruling elites are necessarily at their most secure (and so can use less coercion) when they succeed in naturalising their preferred discourses and practices with three key groups of people:

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<sup>7</sup> Gitlin (1998: 173) argues that multiple public spheres, to which he refers as ‘public sphericules’, weaken the public sphere and thus threaten democratic practice.

the gatekeepers of the culture industry; those who manage, hire and fire these gatekeepers; and those who train and educate these gatekeepers' (Louw, 2001: 169). Such views are consistent with a Marxian political economy view of the link between the control of the means of production and the production of dominant ideas (Hesmondhalgh, 2006b: 23).

For hegemony to be a successful condition, it 'has to be won, secured and constantly defended' (Eley, 1992: 324) in order for it to become 'adaptive' and 'responsive to changing conditions' (O'Connor and Downing, 1995: 16). This, however, does not wipe out discontent with 'the dominant ideological frameworks' (Downing *et al.*, 2001) which may be channelled into 'counter-hegemonic cultural activity' (O'Connor and Downing, 1995: 16). It has often been the need to challenge such 'dominant ideological frameworks' through oppositional communicative spaces that has driven marginalised groups to establish the ownership and management of their own sites of media and cultural production on their own terms and away from dominant (proprietary and political) power and control.

These theoretical propositions, along with the political economy perspective, have been crucial in situating, understanding and evaluating the social and cultural significance of third sector media and cultural organisations in modern societies. Drawing on the work of Raymond Williams and James Hamilton, Atton has built on these theoretical approaches by highlighting the practical reality of third sector media and cultural companies. He argues that for democratic communication to take place effectively, such companies 'must be de-professionalised' meaning that 'they must be available to ordinary people without the necessity of professional training'. He notes further that such companies must be 'de-capitalised' ensuring that they are 'without excessive capital outlay' and also 'de-institutionalised' compelling them to 'take place in settings other than media institutions or similar settings' (2002: 25). The rationale for

this is to avert the sort of commercial and political power and control inherent in mainstream public service and commercial media from being replicated in third sector media and cultural organisations.

As we shall see, third sector media and cultural companies in Britain and Germany in the early 2000s are far from being ‘de-professionalised’, ‘de-capitalised’ or even ‘de-institutionalised’. The evidence suggests that many of these companies have actually been moving in the opposite direction as a result of changing socio-economic and socio-political circumstances some of which date as far back as the late 1970s. I illuminate these evolving circumstances when I chart the emergence of the professional, artistic and commercial imperatives in the organisational and production processes of third sector media and cultural organisations in the empirical chapters of this thesis. For now, I briefly review relevant research on the implications of ‘de-professionalisation’, ‘de-capitalisation’ and ‘de-institutionalisation’ for the sector.

### **2.2.2 Dynamics of Third Sector Media and Cultural Organisations**

Many scholars have argued that third sector media and cultural companies tend to favour a more horizontal or collective form of organisation than a hierarchical one, citing the latter’s wide association with commercialism (which many producers in the sector reject on ideological grounds) as the main reason for this (Kershaw, 1992; Harcup, 1994; Dickinson, 1999; Day, 2005). To Bailey *et al.* (2008), horizontal forms of organisation favour communicative empowerment of marginalised groups not only in media and cultural production processes in such companies, but also in civil society at large. Rooted in the principles and practice of the social movements during the countercultural era, the understanding is that such wider involvement is only possible outside of ‘hierarchies of authority and a complex division of labour’ (Comedia, 1984: 98).

Other scholars, although acknowledging this distinctiveness, have been critical of the collective form of organisation. In the 1980s, strong critique was already being levelled at this organisational form for being ‘on the whole relatively expensive (in terms of the use of time and resources)’ (Ibid.: 1984: 96). Comedia, for example, criticised the inability of companies in this sector ‘to take decisions quickly, so as to be able to respond to changes in the market’ (Ibid.: 99). They observed that producers in third sector media and cultural organisations rejected such skills as financial planning, budgeting, credit control, accountancy, entrepreneurship and management on the grounds that they were capitalist (Ibid.: 98). Even Atton (2003a: 45), who generally favours de-professionalisation and collectivism, notes that the collective organisational form tends to inhibit the efficient and effective operation of third sector media and cultural companies, particularly when conducting business in the socio-economic climate in which they are compelled to operate.

Taking the alternative press as an example, Atton (2003a, 42 – 43) identifies three forms of organisation characteristic of its publications. He notes that some display a hierarchical structure ‘that replicates that of the mainstream press, with an owner and editor overseeing reporters, staff writers and technical production staff...’ Others, he continues, exhibit a ‘non-hierarchical organisation where the individuals have equal control over the publication and where decisions - including editorial ones - are made collectively [while at the same time] each person will tend to have a specific task (editing, writing, paste-up, printing)?’. Still other third sector publications, according to Atton, show ‘the loosest [form of organisation], where tasks and roles are not fixed, and where everyone is involved in all aspects of production and decisions are made collectively’. As we shall see in Chapters Four to Six, I found examples of these different kinds of organisational form in the third sector media and cultural companies I studied.

Of the three third sector newspapers I studied, one showed a hierarchical structure while the other two displayed a hybrid one. That is to say, the latter publications demonstrated a combination of a hierarchical and non-hierarchical form of organisation. Taking all the fifteen case studies analysed in this thesis across the three genres (news production, documentary and arts and cultural programming), the following picture emerges: three companies displayed a hierarchical structure, three others showed a horizontal one and nine in total exhibited a hybrid form of organisation.

Thus, it can be said that contemporary third sector media and cultural organisations tend to demonstrate a more hybrid organisational structure than either a horizontal or hierarchical one as much previous literature suggests. The explanation for this, I would suggest, lies in the fact that third sector media and cultural producers juggle the perceived ‘capitalist’ skills and values such as ‘entrepreneurship and management’ with relatively unconventional practice like collective decision-making. The former embody professional and commercial imperatives normally associated with the hierarchical organisational form while the latter reflects socio-political imperatives in alignment with non-hierarchical forms of organisation.

The interaction between these imperatives, I argue, unleashes problems for producers who respond to these in different ways. Sometimes producers achieve a balance between the different imperatives which translates into a combination of hierarchical and horizontal organisational forms as the overwhelmingly high number of hybrid-structured companies (nine) alluded to above demonstrates. At other times, producers prioritise professional and commercial imperatives as reflected by the three hierarchically organised companies. I highlight the messiness surrounding this move in the empirical chapters. Still at other times, producers uphold socio-political imperatives as shown by the three horizontally structured companies.

Commentators argue that third sector media and cultural companies tend to be more responsive than mainstream public service and commercial media organisations to the needs and interests of diverse groups in society (DiCenzo, 1996; Duncombe, 1997; Atton, 2002; Lewis, 2008). For Atton, such companies make their own news, whether by appearing in it as significant actors or by creating news relevant to their situation (2002: 11). He invokes the idea of native reporting whereby third sector media and cultural producers create outputs ‘from a position of engagement with the event or process that is their subject’ (Atton, 2003a: 46).

This position, according to Atton, is underpinned by ‘the principles of self-management, organisational and ideological independence’ with a view to producing outputs that are relevant to the interests and needs of the communities being served and presenting such outputs in a manner that is meaningful to the communities in question and with their collaboration and support (Ibid.). To sum up the role of native reporters, Philip Elliot noted that such communicators ‘are concerned about the social relevance, the meaning or purpose of their work. To say purpose is not to suggest that such communicators want to be propagandists for a particular cause. Their aim is to stimulate and explain things to the audience in a more active way than is allowed for by the established [media organisations]’ (1977: 149). This role applies as much to third sector documentary film-makers and theatre producers.

Third sector media and cultural production practices, then, are driven by the kinds of socio-political imperatives discussed in Chapter 1. A number of researchers have highlighted the need to correct social injustices and marginalisation in mainstream media and cultural organisations, with a view to facilitating democratic communication (Browne 1984; Boyd 1986; McCain and Lowe, 1990; Kershaw, 1992). And although the political economy perspective discussed above helps to explain these social injustices through primarily macro-economic imperatives, sociological approaches to news and

cultural production hinted at above illuminate the day-to-day social systemic processes impacting media and cultural productions much better. It is to these that I now turn.

### **2.3 The Sociology of News Production**

The sociology of news production focuses on studies of (professional) journalism. Researchers in this tradition assume that news outputs are human constructions which gain their characteristics from the social context within which they emerge. The emphasis is on the social forces which facilitate or constrain how producers assemble events and stories into news. Some of the key sociological studies have highlighted the standardised news-making routines in professional journalism and the role of perceived ‘values and beliefs’ that guide news producers in their work. As intimated in the Introduction, these aspects are important because they pose a challenge to third sector news producers in the meaning-making process, particularly because such producers have tended to claim that their work is primarily predicated on socio-political imperatives.

Essentially, news production studies have found that news workers abide by work values that help them to routinise their practices in order to effectively assemble events into news. Such a routine helps mechanise the news production process by guaranteeing ‘that a constant volume of news is produced at regular and frequent intervals’ which effectively reduces the risk associated with ‘a random search for news’ and ‘lengthy explorations which might be fruitless’ (Rock, 1981: 66). Characteristic of the work routine are a ‘newsgathering net’ which constitutes reporting personnel and equipment (Tuchman, 1978a; 1997), the typification of newsworthy events (Molotch and Lester, 1981), legal considerations (Whitaker, 1981; McNair, 1998; Harcup, 2004), inter-relationships with advertisers and other institutions (Fishman, 1980; Reese, 2001; Curran, 2002) and sources (Hall *et al.*, 1981; Soloski, 1989).

The rationale of such professional journalistic routines, according to the sociology of news, is to put together 'accurate' and 'factual' information into objective news content as efficiently as possible (Elliot, 1977; Soloski, 1989). Political economists have drawn on such studies to argue that these routines help produce commoditised information that tends to generate 'palliative', 'comforting', 'simplified' and 'de-contextualised' news content (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 40; Curran, 2002: 226). In this respect, and others, the sociology of news has complemented the political economy of communication perspective.

Other sociologists of news have shown how news producers are considerably influenced by their cultural values and norms in the process of making meaning. Schudson notes, for example, that 'among the resources journalists work with are the traditions of story-telling, picture-making, and sentence construction they inherit from their own cultures, with a number of vital assumptions about the world built in' (2005: 189 – 190). Such 'cultural maps' help news workers make sense of events by facilitating the assignment of selected events to specific cultural and social contexts familiar to the audience (Hall *et al.*, 1981: 337). However, this means that cultural maps are so deeply entrenched within news workers that even professional journalistic values are no bulwark against a bias inherent in them (Schudson, 2005: 185).

This explains why critics of objective news argue, for example, that 'neutral value-free language in which the pure facts of the world could be recorded without prejudice is impossible because evaluations are already implicit in the concepts, the language in terms of which one observes and records' (Hackett, 1984: 234 – 235). This is in response to claims that disinterested observers provide more reliable 'truths' owing to their impartiality in relation to the events from which they detach themselves.

Such critical sociology of news helps support advocates of the third sector, and in particular, the notion of 'native reporting' in which third sector news producers engage

with events of which they are an integral part. It is not surprising, then, that the adoption of mechanised news-making techniques associated with professional imperatives, when coupled with native reporting which is in line with socio-political imperatives, generates huge tensions and difficulties for third sector news producers. This thesis is concerned with the analysis of how producers respond to these. I now turn to the sociology of cultural production which explains the factors impacting the creation of cultural outputs and (aesthetic) experiences.

## 2.4 The Sociology of Cultural Production

Some perspectives on cultural production have tended to focus on two aspects, namely the artist and their work. The artist, perceived to be ‘a special kind of person’ (Williams, 1958: xv – xvi *cf.* Oakley, 2009a: 15), is said to use their ‘imagination, expertise and perseverance to make [...] something novel or original which may then lead to astounding cultural works’ (McIntyre, 2012: 26). Although such ‘cultural works’ tend to be imbued with symbolic meaning, McCain argues that not all cultural goods are artistic (2006: 155). I will return to this point in Chapters Five and Six.

In addition to these two aspects, sociologists of cultural production point out a third component which concentrates on the (social) context within which cultural products and experiences are created, disseminated and received. For example, Zolberg depicts some of the forces at work in such an environment in the following:

From a sociological standpoint, a work of art is a moment in a process involving the collaboration of more than one actor, working through certain social institutions [...]. Because [sociologists] assume that, like other social phenomena, art cannot be fully understood divorced from its social context [...], they accept the fact that the value attached to [art] derives, not solely from aesthetic qualities intrinsic to the work, but from external conditions as well (1990: 9 *cf.* McIntyre, 2012: 44).

Peterson builds on this line of argument by noting that ‘the nature and content of symbolic products are shaped by the social, legal and economic milieu in which they are

produced' (1982: 143). He then provides a useful list of five interdependent factors<sup>8</sup> that impact cultural production, namely law, technology, market, organisation structure and occupational careers (Ibid.). Like sociologists of news, sociologists of cultural production have often emphasised a set standardised routines and a complex division of labour. It is these that I concentrate on here.

It can be said that 'the routine ways [in which cultural producers] coordinate their efforts in actualising a symbolic product or service' (Peterson, 1982: 147) have implications for the nature of cultural products and experiences. McIntyre claims that cultural producers follow a standard set of routines which inevitably produces formulaic, populist, bland and unchallenging cultural products (2012: 118). Ultimately, this routine cements 'professional cultural practice' (Ibid.).

Another key issue in the sociology of cultural production is the division of labour. Hesmondhalgh (2007: 64 – 65) lists a number of occupations and associated functions found in many cultural industries which I summarise below;

1. Primary creative personnel or symbol creators such as musicians, screenwriters and directors, magazine journalists and authors;
2. Technical workers such as sound engineers, camera operators, copy editors who are expected to perform a technically orientated set of tasks efficiently;
3. Creative managers [...] are depicted as brokers between the interests of owners and executives and those of creative personnel;
4. Marketing personnel who match the work of primarily creative personnel to audiences, sometimes creating symbols to publicise and promote such work;
5. Owners and executives who have the power to hire and fire personnel and set the general direction of company policy;
6. Unskilled and semi-skilled labour which constitutes a vast body of unskilled workers involved in the creation, circulation and reproduction of products.

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<sup>8</sup> Although Peterson discusses these factors primarily as constraints in cultural production processes, I do not entirely share his view because, whereas these factors can be constricting under certain circumstances, they can also be enabling in other situations. This is the sense in which I treat them here.

Contemporary cultural production processes in many cultural industries have involved an amalgamation of such functions (Miege, 1989; McIntyre, 2012). This is particularly the case ‘in small companies or temporary projects on the margins of a cultural industry’ Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 65). Moreover, the execution of these functions has tended to be organised on a project-by-project basis in many cultural industries such as (documentary) film-making (Kilborn and Izod, 1997; Rosenthal, 2007) and arts and cultural programming (Matarasso, 2000; Downing, 2001).

Overall, critical sociologists of cultural production argue that routinised ‘professional cultural practices’ foster the making of ‘uniform’ and ‘uninteresting’ cultural work (McIntyre, 2012: 118 – 119) geared towards profit maximisation. This is clearly at odds with artistic and socio-political imperatives which tend to prioritise the making of novel and relevant symbolic outputs and aesthetic experiences. As we shall see, such outputs and experiences are not only geared towards meeting the needs and interests of community and public life, but they are also intended to build, maintain and bolster social ties. As such, the relationship between these different imperatives puts producers in a very difficult situation. This then begs the question how such producers can create original symbolic products and experiences whilst working within a web of ‘professional cultural practices’ and profit-driven motivations. I analyse how third sector cultural producers respond to this conflicting relationship in this thesis.

Until this point, I have discussed a range of perspectives which contribute to an understanding of competing imperatives and systemic pressures in third sector media and cultural organisations. At this juncture, it is important to look at how public policy has shaped (and continues to shape) the organisational and production processes in third sector media and cultural organisations. Historically, many of the social movements of the countercultural era campaigned for access and participation in media and cultural production processes, first in mainstream media organisations, then

eventually on their own terms (Berrigan, 1977; 1979; Jankowski *et al.*, 1992). Out of this struggle emerged significant initiatives, support mechanisms and regulations that in many respects paved the way for the development of third sector media and cultural organisations as we know them today. It is to these that I now turn.

## **2.5 Third Sector Media Organisations and Public Policy**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

Some public policies have aimed to support the third sector media and cultural companies that are the focus of this thesis. Progressive policymakers have sought to enhance the provision of local news and information, support civic participation, bring communities and regions together around shared interests, boost the growth of local creative and business industries and the acquisition of associated skills and training among workers (Blanchard, 2001; Hewson, 2005; DCMS, 2006; 2011; Ofcom, 2010b; 2011; ALM, 2009; 2011). Consistent with the political economy critique above, the assumption of such policymakers is that mainstream public service and commercial media are unable or unwilling to provide such socio-political benefits. I focus here on media and cultural policies, particularly focusing on the British and German contexts.

### **2.5.2 Media Policy in the Third Sector**

In some cases, media policies have paid little attention to media and cultural organisations in the third sector. This has tended to be the case with the press, for example. Where the state has intervened in the third sector press, it was often because third sector publications used abusive and derogatory language against public authorities (Nelson, 1989; McMillian, 2011). In other cases, some third sector newspapers have received printing subsidies. On the whole, however, the third sector press has relied on advertising, sponsoring and fundraising to be able to break even.

In third sector broadcasting, the case has been different. Historically, the allocation of ownership to the scarce radio spectrum has been a major bone of contention in the Western world, particularly in the United States (McChesney, 1998; Herman and McChesney 2001) and Western Europe (McCain and Lowe, 1990; Tracey, 1998; Murdoch and Golding, 2005). In this context, third sector radio and (public access) television were a result of a long-fought battle of the ‘access movement’ during the countercultural era. This movement comprised a coalition of diverse groups ranging from pirate broadcasters to individuals to various social and political groups. Many of these individuals and groups demanded the decentralisation of broadcasting with a view to facilitating public access to and participation in the media production processes of national broadcasting organisations (Jankowski *et al.*, 1992). Some national governments responded by granting some limited non-professional participation in national broadcasting systems from the 1970s onwards.

In television, for example, programmes enhancing audience participation such as *Open Door* broadcast by the BBC and *Anruf Erwünscht*<sup>9</sup> by the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* (WDR) in former West Germany were introduced in the early 1970s (Hollander, 1992: 9 – 10). However, such programmes did not seem to appease the access movement as Murdoch and Golding observed:

Within broadcasting, for example, recent years have seen a proliferation of participatory programmes such as ‘phone-ins’, studio shows where the audience joins in the discussion, and programmes produced by non-professional groups. These developments represent an attempt to accommodate the mounting pressure from excluded and under-represented groups for greater access to scarce communications facilities. Although welcome, these sorts of incorporative strategies are subject to several crucial limitations. By and large they are allocated only very limited amounts of

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<sup>9</sup> *Anruf Erwünscht* was the first interactive phone-in radio programme developed by the WDR - a German public service broadcasting organisation founded in 1955 with headquarters in Cologne.

time and resources and consequently they are easily swamped by the volume of mainstream output. Moreover the fact that the presentation of oppositional views is largely confined to these contexts means that they are implicitly labelled as 'minority' enthusiasms, which further reinforces their marginality and hinders them gaining wider credibility (1977: 38).

Eventually, some national governments gave in to the persistent demands of the access movement and introduced experiments in third sector broadcasting, such as pilot radio and (public access) television, albeit under tight restrictions. In the U.S, for example, third sector broadcasting experiments were only conducted on the condition that they did not threaten the existing or potential profitability of commercial broadcasters (McChesney, 1998: 20). In Britain, third sector radio stations were awarded licences. But these were for limited periods, were given no financial support and were compelled to rely on very weak transmitters with limited geographical range among other things (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986: 48). In former West Germany, the pilot third sector radio and television projects were tactfully delayed by the authorities for nearly a decade (Hollander, 1992: 11). In the respective countries, authorities feared the potential these projects had as political and social tools for mobilisation (Home Office, 1987; Sommer-Guist, 2007)

However, this situation changed from the mid-1980s onwards. In Britain, the (then) Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) introduced a form of third sector radio service called 'incremental local radio stations' (McCain and Lowe 1990: 87) and had by 1989 awarded franchises for this 'entirely new breed of radio station in the UK' only to abandon these plans (Ibid). Already franchised public access television stations were left to fend for themselves which is why they did not survive beyond a few years (Nigg and Wade, 1980). It was not until New Labour assumed power in 1997 that third sector broadcasting re-emerged on the policy agenda. In former West Germany on the other hand, the situation was somewhat different. Under the German federal system, broadcasting regulation then, as now, was in the jurisdiction of media supervisory

bodies<sup>10</sup> in the individual federal states. As such, *Radio Dreieckland*, based in the federal state of *Baden Wuerttemberg*, was the first third sector radio station to be introduced in late 1987 after years of pirate broadcasting (Sandmann, 1987; Buchholz 2001).

Today, the structure of the German federal system explains why there is no unified or central third sector media regulation in Germany. At most, there exist merely federal associations of radio and public access television stations which represent the interests of the various media and cultural organisations in the sector. At the time of writing this thesis, 14 out of the 16 federal states maintain and support at least a third sector radio station while 11 of the 16 states do so for public access television. In my view, this demonstrates strong support for third sector broadcasting in Germany. All in all, there are 35 radio stations and 77 public access television stations in the German third sector.

In Britain, three milestones significantly supported third sector broadcasting. The first one was the ‘access radio’ pilot scheme<sup>11</sup> launched in 2001 and expanded in 2003 after it was evaluated and found to be successful. Back then, it was hailed ‘as promising to be the most important new cultural development in the United Kingdom for many years’ (Buckley, 2010: n.p.). As we shall see, changing imperatives today seem to be standing in the way of this as far as genuine cultural expression is concerned. The second one was the passing of the Communications Act of 2003 which expanded third sector broadcasting and provides (minimal) financial support through the Community Radio Fund administered by Ofcom on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Community Radio Order of 2004 (recently amended in 2010),

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<sup>10</sup> These bodies carry the responsibility for regulating broadcasting within the territorial borders of the sixteen federal states. The only exception is that of the neighbouring federal states of Berlin and Brandenburg which both share a single media supervisory body.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion of the ‘access radio’ initiative, see Everitt (2003) and CRO (2004).

which stipulates the licensing terms and offers guidance on operative issues (Ofcom, 2004), was the third one.

As a result of these policy initiatives, 231 third sector radio stations in total have been established since 2005. Of these, 196 (many of which are members of the Community Media Association (CMA)<sup>12</sup>), are broadcasting and a further 23 have either decided not to launch or have handed their licence back, largely due to funding problems. Twelve are preparing to start broadcasting (Ofcom, 2011: 3).

Additionally, a range of temporary licences known as Restricted Services Licences<sup>13</sup> (RSLs) for radio and Restricted Television Service Licences (RTSLs) for television in the third sector have been introduced for primarily non-commercial and civic purposes such as community sports, cultural or religious events, or for training or educational purposes (Ofcom, 2009a). In 2009, for instance, 368 temporary radio services were licensed (Ibid.) underlining the government's efforts in facilitating access to and participation in media and cultural production processes.

The situation with Restricted Television Service Licences (RTSLs), however, is more complex for a number of reasons. Hewson, for example, attributes this to the hitherto 'fragile' regulation and the 'excessively rigid demarcation between *local* and *community* television, or *not-for-profit* "social investments" and *profit-driven* "commercial investments"' (2005: 8). Other reasons derive predominantly from market barriers and financial constraints that disadvantage low-cost third sector television production (DCMS, 2011: 12 – 14) as well as managerial and technological challenges (Blanchard, 2001). Thus, it comes as no surprise that of the ten RTSLs issued since 1998, only three

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<sup>12</sup> The Community Media Association (CMA), based in Sheffield, represents the interests of various media and cultural production initiatives in the third sector across Britain.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed description of the range of Restricted Services Licences (RSLs), their uses and terms of application, see *Restricted Services Licence: Annual Report 2009* (Ofcom, 2009a).

such services are in operation at the time of writing this thesis while the remainder are either temporarily out of service or defunct altogether.

Following lengthy consultations<sup>14</sup> on the social and economic feasibility of third sector television and bearing in mind the transition from analogue to digital, the government is in the process of putting in place a framework geared towards introducing a new generation of local television services across Britain.<sup>15</sup> This, I would argue, demonstrates the commitment of the incumbent media policy to facilitate third sector broadcasting. I now turn to cultural policy.

### 2.5.3 Cultural Policy in the Third Sector

In Britain until the early 1980s, cultural production in the third sector was not driven by explicit cultural policy<sup>16</sup> but more by initiatives. Such initiatives were put in

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<sup>14</sup> The key details from these consultations have been reviewed for and published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the following reports, namely *Commercially Viable Local Television in the UK* which is available at: [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Local-TV-Report-Dec10\\_FullReport.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Local-TV-Report-Dec10_FullReport.pdf) and *A New Framework for Local TV in the UK* which can be accessed at: [http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/Local-TV-Framework\\_July2011.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/Local-TV-Framework_July2011.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> At the time of writing this thesis, the DCMS is working towards introducing new legislation that will facilitate the establishment of a range of local television services. It is envisaged that the first tranche of 20 such services will be licensed in the course of 2012. An update can be accessed at: [http://www.culture.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/broadcasting/7235.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/broadcasting/7235.aspx)

<sup>16</sup> Hesmondhalgh (2007: 138 – 139) suggests two ways in which the term ‘cultural policy’ can be defined. In a broad sense, he notes, cultural policy ‘could include public broadcasting, the use of quotas and scheduling limitations to protect “national” culture, national ownership rules, subsidies...’. In a narrower sense, particularly in the Anglophone world, according to Hesmondhalgh, the term is often used ‘to refer to the subsidy, regulation and management of the “arts” such as ‘the visual arts, “literature”, music and dance, theatre and drama...’.

place through commitment and cooperation among local authorities, trade unions, the Arts Council, Regional Arts Associations (RAA), Channel Four and the British Film Institute (BFI) in an attempt to merge economic and cultural objectives (Kelly, 1986; Mulgan and Worpole, 1986; Lewis, 1990). According to these authors, the aim of third sector cultural initiatives was to promote access to and enhance greater participation in cultural production with a view to facilitating self-development and social cohesion.

In particular, this involved targeting disadvantaged groups perceived to have little or no access to traditional arts. As such, third sector cultural initiatives were predicated on the principle of ‘cultural democracy’<sup>17</sup> (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986: 29) which depicts ‘a society in which people are free to come together to produce, distribute and receive the cultures they choose’ (Lewis, 1990: 111). No matter their skill level, people are encouraged to engage in the creation and presentation of the arts with a view to using such arts to address and improve individual and community conditions (Hager, 2008: 160). Webster summarises the principle of cultural democracy as one that:

promotes the arts in a way that is accessible, where all contributions are valued, and where everyone has an opportunity to take part... [Cultural democracy is] made up of many voices, defined by and representing all cultures and communities. It would not exclude professional artists but nor would it value their contribution over any other (1997: 21).

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For the purposes of this thesis, I use the latter sense because it captures the discussion of arts and cultural programming in the third sector more effectively than the former.

<sup>17</sup> The term ‘cultural democracy’ is an integral part of third sector cultural initiatives and has been given different names in different countries over time. According to Blandy (2008: 174), the first use of the term was by J. Drachsler in his 1920 book *Democracy and Assimilation: The Blending of Immigrant Heritages in America*. Over the years and in different contexts, the term has either been linked to or interchangeably used to mean community arts or community-based arts and community cultural development (Kelly, 1984; Webster, 1997; Hager, 2008).

Already in the 1980s in Britain, two key schemes established in the field of documentary film-making demonstrated the practicality of third sector cultural initiatives in promoting and enhancing greater involvement in cultural production. These included the Workshop Agreement and the Job Fit Scheme. The Workshop Agreement was a declaration of the commitment to trade union conditions binding diverse third sector documentary film producers organised under the Association of Cinematography, Television and allied Technicians (ACTT), known today as the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph & Theatre Union (BECTU). Essentially, the agreement spelled out issues revolving around pay, working conditions and a financial structure required for workshops to be franchised (Dickinson, 1999: 163 – 167). This effectively enabled third sector documentary film-makers to be able to work with diverse social and political groups while retaining the right to broadcast on Channel Four (Blanchard and Harvey, 1983; Mulgan and Worpole, 1986). This, I argue later, paved the way for professionalisation and institutionalisation of organisational and production processes in the third sector.

The Job Fit scheme, developed by the (then) ACTT with funding from the Greater London Training Board, attempted to address gender and racial bias prevalent in film and broadcasting in the 1980s (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986: 32). This scheme provided short and long training courses particularly aimed at women and ethnic minorities, thereby demonstrating how a union used its power progressively to promote access to an industry to which entry was restricted to the BBC's training programme, still heavily biased towards Oxbridge (Ibid.). In 1983 the Greater London Council (GLC) initiated a radical cultural policy which came to be known as the community arts policy. In essence, this policy aimed to address the cultural needs and interests of primarily the unemployed, youth sub-cultures (particularly girls), women's groups and gay men's groups, the elderly and later the disabled (Ibid.: 74 – 75). A wide range of

activities in the third sector were funded including festivals, photography, music, printing and publishing projects as well as fringe theatrical productions. As we shall see, one of the case studies I examine in this thesis benefitted from such funding.

It can be said that the impact of this radical cultural policy was mixed. On the one hand, emphasis tended to be placed on the quality of the experience of producing a piece of art (process) as opposed to the quality of that art piece (product) (Lewis, 1990; Webster, 1997). That is to say, ‘the journey was more important than the arrival, the means more important than the ends’ (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986: 85). After all, ‘it [was] not so much the particular cultural product [...] which [was] the key factor in attracting people to a project so much as a more general sense of whether or not the place offer[ed] a friendly, welcoming and enjoyable ambience in which to meet other people and have a pleasurable social experience’ (Lewis, 1990: 28).

On the other hand, however, my research shows that some third sector cultural producers did manage to create relatively good and interesting outputs such as documentary films and theatrical productions while simultaneously facilitating the ‘social experience’. Generally though, there was no assurance that participants on the arts projects were actually those for whom such projects were intended. And where they were the targets, the numbers tended to be minimal (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986: 86). Also, according to Mulgan and Worpole, the various bookshop, film, video and theatrical collectives lacked crucial and effective administration, marketing, promotion and distribution strategies to become economically self-sufficient over time which explains why many went under (Ibid.).

From the mid-1980s through to the 1990s, the wider political economy of the Thatcherite and successive Conservative governments impacted cultural policy in a way that fostered and enforced the transition from the reliance on public subsidy to the business sponsorship of the arts (Feist and Hutchison, 1990; Peacock, 1999). However,

commentators noted that such sponsorships tended to advantage the established arts houses (Lewis, 1990; Matarasso, 2000). Other observers critiqued these sponsorships as merely strategies for building a good corporate image and securing influence, the result of which was the production of unchallenging work (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986; McGrath, 1990). I engage with the issue of arts sponsorship in Chapter Six.

Although the GLC was dissolved in 1986, some aspects of its radical cultural policy appear to have been incorporated into the creative industries strategy under the ‘New Labour’ administration<sup>18</sup>. This is particularly the case with the fusion of economic and social goals as reflected in such undertakings as arts education, urban regeneration, probation services, employment and social inclusion (Andersen and Oakley, 2008; DCMS, 2011). Indeed, some of the evidence I found suggests that third sector cultural policy has tended to be justified on primarily social and rehabilitative grounds. In Chapter Six, I engage in the debate about whether or not cultural support can be justified if the arts are not used to foster processes of change in society.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

I have discussed a host of perspectives which provide an understanding of the context within which third sector media and cultural organisations operate. On the one hand, I have attempted to demonstrate how the political economy perspective and the theoretical concepts from social and political theory help us locate and assess the social and cultural importance of third sector media and cultural organisations in modern capitalist societies. Notably, such importance is reflected in the provision of spaces in which public access and participation are facilitated.

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<sup>18</sup> See Hesmondhalgh (2007: 139 – 149) and Oakley (2008: 21 - 22) for a comprehensive discussion of the ‘New Labour’ government creative industries policy.

On the other hand, we have seen how sociological perspectives on news and cultural production contribute to our understanding of competing imperatives and systemic pressures in third sector media and cultural organisations. I highlighted how these imperatives and pressures can impact the nature and content of third sector media and cultural outputs in ways that pose tensions, contradictions and problems for producers. It is against this background that public policies intended to support the sector have been designed. The main thrust of such policies has not only been oriented towards socio-political goals such as facilitating civic participation and cohesion in community and public life, but also towards economic goals like supporting local business enterprise and the delivery of a range of professional skills and training.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the qualitative research methodology applied for this project. In Section 3.2, I state the aim of this thesis, list the research questions and discuss the activities I undertook in preparation for my field research. Also, it is here that I introduce the (twenty) research participants who made a substantial contribution to this research project in acknowledgement of their support. I use pseudonyms to refer to each one of them and the organisations for which they work. Rather than introduce these research participants on a genre-by-genre basis, I list them in chronological order considering that some of these participants engage in work across news production, documentary film and the programming of art and culture. In Section 3.3, I discuss the methodology I applied to gather the data required to answer the research questions. In doing so, I attempt to justify the selection of these methods by explaining why I chose not to use other commonly applied research methods. I touch on the potential impact these methods might have on the findings of this study.

I then discuss the data analysis process in Section 3.4, focusing on how I organised and processed the raw data gathered in the field before interpreting and making sense of them, and eventually building them into arguments. In doing this, I highlight the difficulty associated with imposing a clear order on the (usually) unstructured raw data. Section 3.5 follows with an explanation of the ethical issues and considerations pertaining to this study in tune with the requirements of the ethics committee of the University of Leeds. A brief account of my experiences in the field in Section 3.6 concludes this chapter.

## **3.2 Research Design**

### **3.2.1 Research Purpose**

The rationale of this research project was to explore changing imperatives in the organisational and production processes in third sector media and cultural organisations. The focus was on the study of such organisations in Western Europe, particularly in Britain and Germany. Although the respective countries exhibit many fundamental differences and given that my aims in this thesis are not explicitly comparative, I chose to concentrate on and stress their similarities and how these might have shaped the development of third sector media and cultural companies in both countries. Such similarities include sharing a relatively common social democratic culture, a similar history of the countercultural era, disillusionment with dominant ideological discourses in public communication and the prevalence of considerable structural inequities among other things.

As I noted in the Introduction, this study was born after I observed that much of the literature has tended to view most third sector media and cultural companies as prioritising socio-political imperatives in their organisation and production. Reflected in the provision of specific media and cultural outputs, encouragement of debate and the promotion of greater involvement in media and cultural production processes, socio-political imperatives are seen to embody the kind of social and cultural values that mainstream public service and commercial media may not possess. But a closer look at the organisational and production contexts of many contemporary third sector media and cultural companies revealed that artistic, professional and commercial imperatives are increasingly assuming an ascendant role. Additionally, numerous systemic factors ranging from political controls to demands from subsidy, funders and broadcasters influence third sector media and cultural work in different ways. All this impacts such work in ways that can be conflicting and contradictory. I noted that producers respond

to such contradictions and problems in ways that have not yet been researched. Identifying the need to address this gap, I set out – with the guidance of my supervisors – to formulate a set of appropriate research questions with a view to investigating this changing situation.

### **3.2.2 Research Questions**

Given the breadth of third sector media and cultural production, it was important to identify and select specific genres for examination. In a piece entitled ‘The Qualitative Research Process’, Jensen proposes that researchers should seek ‘to identify and delimit a portion of reality – which is to be examined with reference to theoretically informed purpose, or conceptualisation, and according to a systematic procedure of data collection and analysis’ (2002b: 237). As noted in the Introduction, it is with this understanding that I chose to focus on news production, documentary film-making and arts and cultural programming mainly because these genres were the most prevalent, well-documented and seemed the most affected by artistic, professional and commercial imperatives and other systemic factors. Against this background, the following set of research questions was formulated;

In what ways do producers in third sector media and cultural organisations respond to the different imperatives?

In which ways do producers respond to political controls and demands from subsidy, other funders and broadcasters?

How do competing imperatives and systemic pressures impact on how producers view their work?

Admittedly, these research questions did not read as they do here right from the outset. Rather, they are a culmination of some refinement as the field research progressed and as I gained ‘a deeper understanding of the nature of the qualitative research process, and a fuller appreciation of [...] my on-going development as a

researcher' (Watt, 2007: 98). Indeed, the 'deeper understanding' and 'on-going development' were crucial in helping me to formulate the research questions in such a way as to generate the relevant data required, bearing in mind how much influence I would have as a researcher in the field.

Having settled on the research questions, it was soon apparent that a qualitative research methodology would be most suited to generating the relevant data needed to answer the research questions. This was because scholars have noted that qualitative research generally not only yields 'sufficient detail to enable the reader "to interpret the meaning and context of what is being researched [...] and exposes the experience as a process"' but it also illuminates 'the processes by which data have been collected, analysed and presented' (Popay *et al.*, 1998: 347 - 348 *cf.* Horsburgh, 2003: 309). To this end, I devised a course of action which constituted the necessary preparations for the next series of steps in my field research to which I now turn.

### **3.2.3 The Preparatory Phase**

Jensen suggests three steps of research design that I found helpful as I prepared to undertake field research, namely 'strategy, tactics and techniques' (2002b: 237). To begin with, strategy 'refers to a general plan for entering a particular social setting, and for establishing means of communication and points of observation which may generate relevant evidence' (Ibid.). Averting the inappropriateness of choosing settings to investigate simply because such settings were available (Yin, 2003), I used 'a general plan' to search, map out and approach third sector media and cultural organisations in Britain and Germany based on three main criteria.

First, the organisations must have been in operation for a relatively long time because this would allow for a detailed study of their history and evolution. Second, the organisations must have mission statements that specified socio-political goals as reflected in the production of socially relevant outputs coupled with access to and

participation in media and cultural production by ordinary people. Thirdly, the organisations must perceive themselves as belonging in the third sector. That is to say, the organisations must conceive of themselves as neither belonging in the public service nor commercial media and cultural production sectors.

Further still, I gave careful consideration to the number of organisations I needed to study. Would conducting field research at fewer (three to five) third sector media and cultural companies for relatively long periods (one to two months at each) help yield data that were sufficient, valid and reliable? Or was it better to undertake research at a number of companies (say, five for each genre) and spend less time at each (two to four weeks)? With the guidance of my supervisors, I decided on the latter option. On reflection, this turned out to be a good decision considering that some leading scholars on case study research argue that carrying out fieldwork at multiple sites not only tends to generate data that are instructive, but that such data also tend to be more valid and permit generalisation<sup>19</sup> (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). This is particularly the case if the research purpose is to describe, explore and develop or improve a theoretical or conceptual perspective (Yin, 2003) which this thesis attempts to do.

Tactics as the next step refers 'to attempts by the researcher to anticipate and pre-structure [...] the social interactions which will yield evidence [from the] people to be interviewed...' (Jensen, 2002b: 237 – 238). This step enabled me to initiate contact with participants I felt would, first, grant me access to the selected companies, and second, provide me with the data I needed to gather. Contact was sought via email, telephone calls, in one case via Skype and wherever possible, via preparatory visits. In retrospect, I felt the preparatory visits helped me not only to develop a feel for the participants and their organisations and vice-versa, but also to establish an initial rapport that removed

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<sup>19</sup> For an interesting discussion about whether qualitative research is expected to be generalizable or not, see Horsburgh (2003: 309).

any suspicion about my intentions. Also, this tended to accelerate the process of gaining access.

Indeed, Marshall and Rossman recommend that researchers should approach potential participants in order to thrash out the involvement of the former in the setting of the latter with a view to answering the research questions of the study effectively:

[I]t is helpful to elaborate on the planned extent of participation: what the nature of that involvement is likely to be, how much will be revealed about the study's purpose to the people in the setting, how intensively the researcher will be present, how focused the participation will be, and how ethical dilemmas will be managed. The researcher should be specific as to how his participation will inform the research questions (2006: 101).

On approaching potential participants, I introduced myself and explained that the purpose of my field research was to gain insights into their work and experiences and that 'I believed they could provide me with a good opportunity to learn' (Watt, 2007: 86). I stressed that the ultimate goal of my research was to explore the development of and to update the knowledge on media and cultural production and organisation in the third sector. I also added that I would highlight and celebrate the impact of participants' work. During this initial contact, I also suggested the times and duration of the field research at the respective companies and specified that I envisioned using semi-structured interviews, participant observation and the collection of company documents and artefacts as my key methods of gathering information and learning.

At virtually all the case study organisations I researched, access was granted only after reassurances were made on three key issues. First, the participants could withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reasons. Second, the data collected would be handled sensitively and confidentially. Third, the names of the participants and their companies would be anonymised to protect their identities in this thesis.

‘Techniques’, the last of the three steps, refers to ‘the researcher’s concrete means of interacting with and documenting the field’ (Jensen, 2002b: 238). As noted above, the qualitative nature of this research required the gathering of detailed and rich data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The task at hand was to select a methodology which would give me as the researcher sufficient control over the data gathering process and which would yield the data required to effectively answer the research questions. As such, semi-structured interviews and participant observation were chosen to serve this purpose, particularly because of their potential to generate detailed data which are crucial to the interpretation and understanding of the production and organisational processes at the case studies being researched (Stake, 2000). The data collection methods were supplemented by the study of documents and artefacts. Before I discuss these methods in detail, I want to introduce my research participants first.

### **3.2.4 Research Participants**

As hinted at above, I selected research participants for this study based on two factors. First, such producers must have worked in the third sector long enough to be able to provide rich anecdotal accounts of both historical and contemporary phenomena within the sector. Second, these producers must have explicitly ascribed to the pursuit of socio-political imperatives in their work. Although these producers come from a range of media and cultural production backgrounds in both Britain and Germany, they are by no means representative of the respective third sector spheres. In any case, the twenty producers provided rich data, a phenomenon that made them adequate for this research project both in terms of quality and quantity.

To begin with, Adam is an English middle-aged theatre producer by profession and the artistic director of *Antarc Theatre* based in Yorkshire. He describes himself as ‘an anti-capitalist and Green activist proper’. He has over thirty years’ experience in making theatre with diverse communities and a number of ‘fringe’ theatrical companies either

as an actor, director or script-writer. He is also involved in activist groups campaigning against what he calls 'capitalist excesses' and 'environmental degradation'.

Amanda is an English associate producer at *Gray End Productions* in London. In her early twenties, she is a university graduate trained in drama. She got the job at *Gray End Productions* after she had successfully completed an internship there, ending a tough period that saw her write over three dozen applications for internships. During the three years she has worked at the company, she remarks that no working day is the same. The versatility of her job ranges from supervising box office advance sales and rehearsals to preparing scripts to drafting forthcoming programmes to completing funding applications to liaising with associate artists among other things.

Ashley is an English musician by profession and the station manager at *Radio Shannakay* where he is responsible for running the day-to-day operation of the radio station. He is also a member of an experimental music band formed in the mid-1990s alongside which he also performs his own work. Ashley also offers training in media production skills. Similarly working at *Radio Shannakay* is Neill of British Caribbean origin, who is a (volunteer) presenter in charge of the radio station's *Breakfast Show*. Having a background in sales and marketing, Neill also assists the sales team particularly in attracting advertising and sponsoring.

Bianca is a thoughtful, middle-aged German film-maker and television producer specialising in documenting themes revolving around Jewish life in Europe at *Dalberg Productions* - a production company she and a colleague founded in 1991. Bianca recounted that between 1991 and 1996, the company thrived on regular commissions from public service broadcasters but that commissions receded thereafter mainly as a result of structural changes in the latter. Alongside documentaries, *Dalberg Productions* makes educational films, trains young people aspiring to become documentary film-

makers and broadcasts a weekly bulletin on diverse (Jewish) themes at a public access television called *Berliner Open Access TV* in Berlin.

Charles is a middle-aged English documentary film-maker based in London. A 1970s graduate in film, television and photography, he co-founded a video workshop in the late 1970s that evolved into a production company called *Stratham Productions* by the 1980s. Simultaneously, Charles narrates that together with four other people, he set up a local television station that run until the early 1990s when it disbanded. Apart from making documentaries, other work at the company includes ‘community-led investigative journalism’, training in media production skills and advocacy work. In addition to his work at *Stratham Productions*, Charles holds part-time lecturing jobs at two universities in London.

Debbie is a university graduate in her early twenties and is one of the two core producers working with Charles at *Stratham Productions*. Debbie initially got in touch with the company when she did a placement there during her undergraduate studies. On completion of her degree, she opted to stay at the company. Her work seems very versatile ranging from completing grant funding proposals to co-maintaining the company’s online presence to writing the company project reports to co-planning and co-running trainee workshops alongside doing pre-and post-production work. Additionally, Debbie co-organises and co-executes documentary film shoots. In her free time, she writes for an activist website and helps maintain its on-line presence.

Friedrich is a freelance German-Jewish journalist affiliated with a third sector newspaper called *Shalom News* that addresses a primarily German-Jewish audience in Berlin. Appearing to be in his mid-thirties and a graduate in Jewish literature and media studies, he is one of the three editors at *Shalom News*. Stressing his huge interest in investigative journalism and controversial topics from which he feels most journalists shy away, Friedrich considers himself a ‘non-conformist’ who ‘can’t stand the manner

in which [mainstream] media operate'. Overall, he comes across as a very provocative and polarising character, but interesting and extremely articulate nonetheless.

Gerhard, the owner of *Nordhausen Productions*, is a middle-aged German documentary film-maker and television producer with a hectic character. He is actually a video journalist by profession but turned film-maker and television producer after founding *Nordhausen Productions* in 1995/1996. Initially in the 1970s, Gerhard says that he had been a member of a video workshop while simultaneously working as a freelance video reporter in Berlin before moving to the federal state of Thuringia (formerly part of East Germany) in the early 1990s. Strikingly, although he appears to have successfully transitioned to television and documentary film production for primarily mainstream audiences, he remains nostalgic about the 'exciting and adventurous' video collective days and maintains that he has not lost his 'advocate roots' (video collective background). Dieter, another freelance documentary film producer I talked to, is affiliated with *Nordhausen Productions*.

Born in India, Gopal came to England in the 1960s, studied Law at a university in the northwest, after which he moved to London where he actively got involved in the leadership of the Indian community. In 1972, he and two other colleagues established a community newspaper in an effort 'to campaign for and support the different ethnic and religious groups from India resident in London'. Out of this grew *AsiaNet*, a weekly newspaper of which Gopal is the chief editor. Alongside *AsiaNet*, two more publications are produced. One of the editors at *AsiaNet* is Parveen, a relatively young journalist with an academic background in the arts who also writes for a lifestyle magazine based in the UK.

Hans and Sven are both middle-aged German (social documentary) photographers by profession and the founders of *Fotolabor*, a not-for-profit digital photography collective established over two decades ago. For half of that time, they

have also made documentary films, primarily engaging with numerous social justice and environmental themes in and around Berlin. Prior to his *Fotolabor* career, Sven worked for a number of left-wing alternative newspapers and dedicated the remainder of his time to activism in the Squatter Movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Hans, by contrast, worked in an alternative book store and occasionally for an alternative book publisher. Both producers hold second jobs, with Hans working as a freelance photographer for a number of publications while Sven runs a micro tourist agency which specialises in organising tours for people interested in seeing ‘the focal points of the anarchist movement from the late 1960s onwards which attracted students, artists, squatters, hippies, punks and left-leaning intellectuals’ as he puts it.

Heinz, a middle-aged German, is the station manager of *Warburg Radio* and one of the seven remaining founding members of a (left-wing) publication and pirate radio from which *Warburg Radio* later emerged. Alongside engaging in political activism, he delivers courses in media production skills. Similarly, Ulrich is a middle-aged German and one of the founding members of the predecessors of *Warburg Radio*. A musician by profession, Ulrich performs in a music band and has published a book on the social, economic and political circumstances in Thuringia after the demise of Communism. Apart from co-presenting a range of programmes on *Warburg Radio*, Ulrich manages most of the social projects that the radio station runs.

Malik is the editor of *Ummah Post* – a newspaper based in London and serving the Muslim community both in the UK and abroad. He is middle-aged, soft-spoken and a pharmacist by profession. Malik, of South Asian descent, migrated from Tanzania to Britain in the 1970s as a young person and although he was trained in Pharmacy, he developed a particular interest in media because he was intrigued by the sort of power he felt media have in influencing people’s perceptions – ‘both for good and for bad’ as he says. During his Polytechnic days in South England, Malik worked as a trainee on

several Islamic magazines after which, he and his team, founded *Ummah Post* that primarily aimed to target the British Muslim community in London in the 1980s.

In his mid-forties, Markus is a German theatre producer with a doctorate in theatrical pedagogy. At odds with the dominance of established theatre, Markus became involved with fringe theatre and other activist groups during his university days. This explains why he chose to work for the *Kraemer Youth Theatre* which, as we shall see, was born out of a left-leaning community youth theatre troupe established in the 1970s. Alongside co-training young people at *Kraemer Youth Theatre*, Markus co-plans the productions and liaises with potential sponsors and funders.

With nearly twenty years' experience in the arts management sector in Britain, Meredith - a middle-aged English arts graduate in language studies – describes herself as a consultant in cultural project management. She has managed and delivered arts and cultural programmes for a range of organisations particularly local authorities and third sector organisations. Before she moved to *Richmond Arts* where she is associate producer and project manager, Meredith managed a third sector cultural company specialising in a host of performing arts activities directed at young people both in and out of schools.

Ralf is a middle-aged German documentary film-maker and an activist affiliated with a number of social campaign groups. He graduated from a television and film college in Berlin before becoming a member of one of the numerous video workshops in Berlin in the 1970s. He has been a member of the *West Berlin Collective* for the last twenty years since it was formally established in 1987/1988 as part of the Squatters' Movement scene in West Berlin. Technically, though, the collective emerged already in the 1970s. In addition to his work at the *West Berlin Collective*, Ralf also works part-time as a freelance journalist, specialising in environmental and social justice themes for both third sector and mainstream media. Below I now turn to the data collection methods.

### 3.3 Data Collection

#### 3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In many disciplines, including media and communication research, interviewing is the most prevalent method of data collection mainly because ‘the best way to find out what [participants] think about something is to ask them’ (Bower, 1973: vi *cf.* Jensen, 2002b: 240). But the downside of interviewing ‘is that people do not always say what they think, or mean what they say’ (Ibid.: 240) which can have a negative impact on the outcome(s) of one’s research. Nevertheless, interviews offer invaluable insights into the lives of the participants under study in ways that many other methods might not (Russell and Kelly, 2002). Commentators have noted that interviews are an active interaction between participants and the researcher the result of which is the creation of data that can be made sense of through analysis and interpretation (Horsburgh, 2003; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Watt, 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

In particular, I chose semi-structured interviews because of their perceived informality, flexibility, conversational and exploratory style and open-endedness of the questions (Watt, 2007: 91). Conducted in both English and German, semi-structured interviews enabled me to delve deep into relevant issues that participants raised or to seek clarification on any ambiguities that occurred. Retrospectively, this helped me to achieve the goal of gathering detailed and rich data.

Other researchers have reported about interviews which have gone so far as to foster conversations in which ‘the roles of the interviewer and interviewee have become so blurred as to all but disappear’ (Russell and Kelly, 2002: n.p). How precisely this may or may not affect the interview process and the resultant data collected is debatable. In any case, I let my participants talk at length on their own terms, the objective being to minimise my influence on what was said although as I have noted above, I sought clarification on unclear but relevant issues raised. I made an effort to give the

respondents as much time as they needed to answer the questions. Where I thought a question had not been answered satisfactorily, I followed up with a paraphrased or even related question which was not necessarily listed on the questionnaire, but appeared to me to potentially elicit relevant information.

Equipped with a digital voice recorder, I recorded all the twenty interviews conducted. On average, they lasted thirty to forty-five minutes, although three of them went slightly over sixty minutes. In terms of the language of communication, ten interviews were conducted in English while the other ten were in German. I will return to the discussion of the complexity of translation and transcription of qualitative research data in Section 3.4.

The topics addressed in the semi-structured interviews generally ranged from the history, mission, functions, perceptions and perceived changes in the production and organisational contexts under which the participants worked. In particular, I asked participants about their set of beliefs, values and practices, their understanding of socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives as well as the concepts of autonomy and ethics and how these relate to their work. Furthermore, I asked participants about their personal aspirations and ambitions and the overall goals of their companies. It is important to mention here that I also obtained some of this data from relatively informal conversations with participants, especially during lunch breaks or travels to press conferences, shooting and performance venues.

Overall, I felt the longer participants had worked in the sector, the more comprehensive and detailed their accounts were. In many cases, I picked up extra information through observing the body language and paying attention to the intonation of the participants (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 99), especially when such accounts were nostalgic. A case in point was when Adam of *Antarc Theatre* had a tear roll down his cheek while recounting how the company nearly went under in the mid-

1980s despite the hard work and commitment producers put in their work. Another case in point was when Gopal of *AsiaNet* nearly broke in tears while narrating the plight of many Ugandan Asians arriving in Britain in the 1970s and how this bolstered his resolve to run his newspaper at the time. Or, Heinz of *Warburg Radio*, who triumphantly threw his hands in the air while giving an account of how the radio station eventually obtained its first broadcasting licence as a community radio after years of pirate broadcasting and underground publications. As we shall see in the empirical chapters, I felt observing participants' 'body language and affect' (Ibid.) during the semi-structured interviews revealed additional information such as insecurities and anxiety about their work but also pride, achievement, passion and nostalgia. I now discuss participant observation, the second of the three methods of data collection I applied for my field research.

### **3.3.2 Participant Observation**

Observation as a method of data collection is useful in gathering data about processes within a setting under study. Jensen refers to observation as a 'set of research activities that involve the continuous and long-term presence, normally of one researcher, and generally in one delimited locale' (2002b: 242). But for all its strengths, observation as a research method might not always be feasible considering that participants may feel uneasy about being observed (Watt, 2007). As such, scholars such as Hammersley and Atkinson have advocated participant observation as a more feasible and desirable method of data collection, asserting that 'there is normally a degree of [participation and observation] in any fieldwork' given that 'observers participate and participants observe, as [both sets of groups] try to interpret what is really going on' (1995: 104 *cf.* Jensen, 2002b: 242).

Although I chose participant observation for its feasibility before embarking on fieldwork, I only came to appreciate the fact that I was part of the setting under

observation whilst in the field, notably through ‘watching what happen[ed], listening to what [was] said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews [and] collecting documents and artefacts’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 3). More importantly, I became aware that the use of participant observation as a method of data collection ‘avoids the controversial, and questionable, terminology of “ethnography”<sup>20</sup>, which was imported into media and communication research particularly during the 1980s’ (Jensen, 2002b: 243).

As a participant observer, ‘immersion in [the companies under study for this research project] permitted [me] to hear, see, and to begin to experience reality as the participants [did]’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 100) on a daily basis. I made an effort to gather and write down as much of this experience as possible in the form of field notes in regular intervals. In an effort to avert the accumulation of notes describing events and processes in an unstructured manner, I employed the typology suggested by Burgess which classifies field notes according to ‘substance’, ‘logistics’ and ‘reflexivity’ as follows:

1. Substantive notes, which capture representations of the scene under study;
2. Logistical notes, which add information about circumstances under which these data were gathered;
3. Reflexive notes, which initiate the process of analysis and theorising on the basis of observations and other data (1982 *cf.* Jensen, 2002b: 243).

As such, I set out to ‘focus on substance (what) and logistics (how) in the field, and to reserve the main reflexive activity (why) for the later stages of the research process’ (Ibid.). But I quickly realised that this did not always work this way, particularly as I

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<sup>20</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the problems surrounding the use of the term ‘ethnography’ in media and communications research, also known as ‘media ethnography’, see Jensen (2002a: 164 – 166).

became engaged in a constant dialogue with myself about the events that were happening and how to make sense of such phenomena.

Drawing on a number of scholars of qualitative research, Watt notes that 'getting ideas down when they occur is actually the beginning of analysis' (2007: 83). As such, I got into the habit of writing reflexive notes in the field whenever ideas occurred to me, pointing to a higher degree of fluidity and flexibility in taking field notes than Burgess' typology allows for. In fact, I learnt relatively quickly that 'analysis takes place throughout the entire research process, [shaping and reshaping the progression of a study], and [as] data is gradually transformed into findings' (Ibid.: 95).

Also, it became clear early on in my field research that I needed to analyse gathered data as I went along both to adjust my observation strategies, shifting some emphasis towards those experiences which bore upon the development of my understanding, and generally, to exercise control over my emerging ideas (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 156). It is, therefore, not surprising that during the process of transcribing the interviews I had conducted, my vivid memories of the field led me to view some of the 'representations of the scene[s] under study' I had noted down in a different light.

In other cases, I came to interpret 'information about circumstances under which [the] data were gathered' through a perspective different from the one I had in the field. I noted these interpretations down. Retrospectively, I felt this high level of flexibility in taking (field) notes as and when necessary helped me to reflect on how best to make sense of the events that emerged both in the field and away from it. For example, through writing a combination of 'substantive', 'logistical' and 'reflexive' notes, I not only familiarised myself with the editorial policies in the newsrooms and conventions in documentary film-making and arts and cultural programming of the companies under study, but I also noted – wherever appropriate – 'how' and 'why' such

policies and conventions related to or differed from the existing ideas in third sector media and cultural production. The 'how' and 'why' questions were always at the forefront in the dialogue with myself whenever I had the opportunity to take part in editorial meetings and work alongside producers whether on news stories, audio-visual content or arts and cultural programmes.

Also, I was able to gain invaluable insights into the processes of production and organisation at the companies under study as a participant observer. I saw how the making of news, for example, involves producers determining what is newsworthy and telling the news stories through the use of particular conventions to give meaning to the events they covered. In documentary film production, I experienced 'first-hand involvement' (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 100) in the ways producers selected and recorded real-life experiences of their subjects based either on their imagination, emotions, political views, observation or own experience (Harding, 2001; Gregory *et al.* 2005).

On a number of occasions, I was asked or invited to take part in the process of making meaning. In doing so and aware of the potential impact of my presence, I tried the best I could to keep a very low profile. Nevertheless, I was aware that my presence in the first place and subsequent involvement in the meaning-making process as a participant observer may have influenced the processes under study in ways that might be different from the normal course of events at the selected companies. Looking back I would say that producers got used to my presence after a few days, especially at the six companies at which I spent four weeks. Both semi-structured interviews and participant observation were complemented by the collection and study of numerous documents and artefacts which I discuss below.

### 3.3.3 Studying Documents and Artefacts

Marshall and Rossman (2006) note that although the study of documents and artefacts may not be considered a major part of data collection, such a study is, nevertheless, crucial in providing data on the background and historical context of the setting being researched. For the authors, activities such as skimming recent newspaper editorials or obtaining information from a web site, is collecting data (Ibid.: 107). There seems to be a consensus that the unobtrusive nature of studying documents and artefacts makes this approach to data collection very effective in the following ways. First, it can be undertaken without intruding on the setting under study and second, it can be employed to verify the validity of information gathered through other primary methods of data collection (Jensen, 2002b; Yin, 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). For this research, the documentary evidence I studied included newspaper articles, editorial meeting minutes, policy statements, annual government reports, output reviews, archival records and executive memos. The main artefacts I looked at were documentary films, photographs, play scripts, brochures and leaflets.

Taking the study of third sector documentary films as an example, I watched a number of such films that were accessible in a search of clues about the kind of themes that third sector documentary film makers tackled in the earlier years and juxtaposed them with contemporary ones. This way, I was able to obtain evidence that documentary films produced during the 1970s concentrated more on the dominant themes of the social movements of the countercultural era while contemporary ones appear to tackle a wider range of prevailing themes. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. The same applies to the review of accessible play scripts and other archival material of third sector theatrical performances in Chapter Six.

Effectively, ‘the study of data from nonrecurring, disappearing, or rare events’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 121) from such artefacts provided me with crucial

sources of evidence considering the fact that this thesis charts historical and contemporary developments pertaining to the organisational and production contexts in third sector media and cultural organisations. And although the main weakness of studying documents and artefacts lies in the fact that such artefacts possess 'limited or indirect explanatory value' (Jensen, 2002b: 243) without the interpretation of the researcher (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 108), this method of data collection remains invaluable to the research process when combined with the other methods.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

According to Watt (2007: 95), 'data analysis involves organising what has been seen, heard, and read so that sense can be made of what is learned'. To Marshall and Rossman, data analysis 'is a process of bringing meaning to raw, inexpressive data [which on their own have] no inherent meaning; the interpretive act brings meaning to those data...' (2006: 157). The process of data analysis is predicated on transforming such data into findings without necessarily applying a specific formula or using a particular recipe and in doing so, renders the findings unique for each researcher and only revealed once arrived at (Patton, 2002: 432 *cf.* Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 157).

I started the process of data analysis by transcribing all the twenty interviews. I chose to transcribe the interviews myself for two reasons. First, some scholars advise that doing so aids the researcher to relive the field research experience, a phenomenon which facilitates gaining a deeper sense and understanding of the raw data and their surrounding context in the data analysis process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Second, considering that interviewees do not speak in a structured manner, the judgement involved in arranging such speech in a particular order might alter the meaning of the word transcripts, and probably that of the interview (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 110). In turn, this might impact the interpretation and understanding

of the data which can potentially lead to questionable findings. This is particularly true if the transcription is done by someone else other than the researcher who conducted the interviews (Ibid.). As such, the authors challenge researchers to be aware of the problems involved in transcribing. I admit that these are issues I only came to seriously consider late in my research.

The next step in the data analysis process was translating the German language interviews into English. Marshall and Rossman assert that qualitative inquiry obliges researchers to inform the reader if translation took place and to explain how they went about it (2006: 112). Again, I did this myself. In doing so, I endeavoured to preserve ‘the individual situation and the overall cultural context [in the interviews]’ in a bid to ‘generate accurate and meaningful data’ (Esposito, 2001: 570 *cf.* Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 111). Although I do not claim that the translated texts represent the exact reproductions of the initial audio material in German, I am confident that the meaning of the former fairly corresponds to that of the latter given that I am a fluent speaker of both English and German.

Similar to transcribing, I came to appreciate the complexities involved in translating qualitative research data at a later stage in my research. These complexities merit discussion in this chapter because of their potential to impact the interpretation and construction of meaning – two key integral constituents in the process of data analysis. Marshall and Rossman note that:

[i]ssues of transcribing and translating are subtle and complex; they are not merely technical tasks. The writer of a qualitative research [study] has an ethical obligation to discuss these issues and how [s/he] will approach them, especially since qualitative research generates words – the primary symbol system through which meaning is conveyed and constructed (2006: 113).

By this point in the data analysis phase, I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of transcript material and notes I had accumulated in the field (Watt, 2007: 89). I confronted this situation by familiarising myself with the data through repeatedly

reading them and searching for recurrent themes and issues which led to the next step of categorising the data and generating themes.

In the category and theme generation step I fed the interview transcripts into *Nvivo 8* with a view to ‘identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together...’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 158 – 159). In the construction of categories to begin with, I created key terms which I then assigned to nodes as required by the software. These key terms, many of which I had drawn from my literature review before embarking on fieldwork, included but were not limited to the history, mission, aims, organisational size and structure, finances, funding, genres, outputs and perceptions of third sector media and cultural producers and their organisations. Other key terms emerged as I continually gained a deeper understanding of the dynamic processes at work in the field. Technically, I initially created the key terms as categories in free nodes, but later moved them to tree nodes as subcategories emerged and the need to make connections between categories and subcategories arose.

Additionally, I created case nodes for the respective participants and companies with references to participants’ interviews and my own field notes explaining what I had observed about the participants and their working environment. This not only facilitated a comparison between the participants, especially ‘their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences’ (Charmaz, 2000: 515), but it also enabled me to ‘pull out and organise themes from the mass of words in front of me, so I could begin to formulate arguments’ (Watt, 2007: 96). This was further enhanced by printing off hard copies of the transcripts which I went over regularly during this data analysis phase in search of thematic details of paramount significance.

Although some scholars have been sceptical about the extent to which software programmes such as *Nvivo* might tend to break data into ‘fragments [which] may seem

to take on an existence of their own' (Charmaz, 2000: 520 – 521), my own experience was positive. I felt *Nvivo* was very helpful in the analysis of the features of the different categories and aided me 'to see interrelated processes rather than static isolated topics', the goal of which was to 'connect categories and define how they fit[ted] into larger processes' (Ibid.: 517). I learnt that '[i]nterpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order' (Patton, 2002: 480 *cf.* Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 162).

Some scholars, however, are critical of 'imposing order' on data through categorisations or themes, arguing that such categorisations or themes might not 'remain true to the data from participants...' (Horsburgh, 2003: 308). Horsburgh notes further that '[i]mposition of a neat structure upon data has the potential to create order at the expense of accuracy and it may be misleading to view categories as discrete, self-sufficient entities, if appreciation of their interdependence is a prerequisite to understanding of the overall context' (Ibid.: 309 - 310).

Nevertheless, I felt that arranging the unstructured raw data and subsequent research findings under specific categories helped me not only in identifying and managing the volume of data that had accumulated, but also in making sense of them and formulating arguments and explanations. It is with this understanding that I strove to approach the writing of this thesis.

### **3.5 Ethical Issues and Considerations**

Many scholars highlight the significance of abiding by ethical imperatives when conducting research with participants (Stake, 2000; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Notably, the emphasis is placed on gaining informed consent which addresses important aspects such as anonymity, confidentiality, potential

risks and any conflicts of interest. As hinted at above, the ethics committee of the University of Leeds requires that scholars conducting research with participants provide potential participants with all relevant information on which these can base their decision on whether or not to take part in the research study.

To this end, I compiled an information sheet spelling out in an accessible style what the aims and objectives of my research study were, how long I envisaged the research to last, what precisely I expected from my participants, how I would handle the results of the study and what I would do with them. Additionally, I designed a participant consent form which had to be completed by the participants. In order to minimise formalities due to time and practical reasons, I had the participant consent forms signed by the responsible persons at each respective company under study rather than have each individual participant sign their own form. I gave participants copies of the signed consent forms for their own records and ensured that all the forms were scanned and kept in both electronic and hard copy formats for any future reference.

As noted above, I assured participants that their accounts would be made anonymous, handled confidentially and that participants could withdraw from this research project at any time. As such, I replaced participants' and company names with pseudonyms in order not to divulge their identities. And whereas some participants had no objections whatsoever to disclosing their identities, I chose to remain consistent by using pseudonyms throughout this thesis.

### **3.6 Experiences in the Field**

Looking back, I would say that conducting research in the field was both challenging and rewarding. Some of the challenges included having to wait for long periods to hear back from potential participants during the preparatory phase. In the field, arranging a suitable time for interviews with some participants given their very

busy schedules was occasionally problematic and frustrating. On these occasions, I was very unsure about how to prompt participants without appearing to be 'pushy'.

Similarly challenging were the initial (two or three) interviews in which I felt less relaxed due to my status as a fledgling researcher. But as I conducted more of them, I grew in confidence, felt more relaxed and concentrated better on what was being said rather than on how the next question read. Also, I did not manage to transcribe the audio material after each interview as planned mainly because working long hours often left no time for this. Nevertheless, the exciting and rewarding experiences were engaging in the production processes and getting to know people. Most of all, it was the gratification of conducting field research for this project independently, linking theory and practice and gaining insights into the execution of qualitative research.

## **4. Changing Imperatives in News Production in the Third Sector**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this, the first of the three empirical chapters in this thesis, I address my main research questions:

In what ways do producers in third sector media and cultural organisations respond to socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives in the production of news?

In which ways do they respond to political controls and demands from subsidy?

How do competing imperatives and pressures impact on how producers view their work?

My main argument is that some producers successfully navigate between the different imperatives. For others, though, the tensions resulting from the interaction between these imperatives are so strong that they pose great difficulties. Such difficulties are in some cases compounded by political controls in the form of regulatory restrictions, encouragement of self-censorship and the threat of cuts to public funding or the threat to revoke broadcasting licences. Other producers prioritise commercial and professional imperatives over socio-political ones, a move that shapes news and informational accounts in ways that tend to favour advertisers and sponsors as we shall see. At this point, it is useful to explain how these different imperatives drive news production in the third sector.

Socio-political imperatives in this genre emphasise the provision of specific informational and news outputs which strive to appeal and respond to the needs, concerns and tastes of diverse communities and regions. Such outputs ideally constitute community experiences, views, aspirations and opinions normally not reported in mainstream public service and commercial media. Moreover, public involvement in the news-making process plays a central role.

By contrast, professional imperatives in news production foreground norms that are rooted in the routinised practices of news gathering, selection, categorisation and presentation into which producers are socialised from the outset (McNair, 1998; Harcup, 2004). According to some researchers, professional imperatives in news enable the assemblage of accounts that tend to be characterised by such skills and competencies as factual accuracy, comprehensiveness, fairness and honouring deadlines (Elliot, 1977; Singer, 2003; Ursell, 2006). Other scholars have observed that objectivity (with its related norms of balance and impartiality) is seen by many news workers to be central to professional imperatives. This is because such workers are socialised into believing that balance and neutrality help journalists to refrain from any form of value judgements in news-making (Lichtenberg 1996; Schudson, 2001).

Commercial imperatives, on the other hand, require third sector media news producers to build audiences in order to generate income like other media businesses do. The ideal would be to generate income whilst providing news that aims to serve citizens' interests and needs. But the reality is more complex than that mainly because the quest to make profits significantly impacts not only how events are assembled and presented, but also which events are chosen as news (McManus, 1994). Additionally, some scholars contend that news producers reliant on advertising revenue might give

in to the pressure of advertisers to select and package news accounts that promote the interests of the latter (Croteau and Hoynes, 2001; Curran, 2002)

These three sets of imperatives push news producers in different directions. This situation is complicated further by political control and demands from subsidy creating considerable difficulties. In the remainder of this chapter I analyse how producers respond to these difficulties and how this impacts on the ways in which they view their work. The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 4.2 outlines two crucial aspects pertaining to the historical development of news organisation and production in the third sector in the period from the late 1960s onwards. These aspects can be said to have significantly shaped the sector's trajectory in ways that inform my main argument. In Section 4.3 I profile five companies on which I base the analysis in the discussion that follows. This analysis, in Section 4.4, concentrates on how news producers of the profiled companies respond to the interaction between socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives in the process of targeting wider, diverse audiences and addressing subject matter that meets the needs and interests of such audiences.

I explore the ways in which the interplay between the different imperatives impacts the organisational structure of the companies under study in this chapter and how this enables or constrains greater involvement in the news-making process in Section 4.5. It is important to note that there are significant overlaps between Sections 4.4 and 4.5. The idea behind arranging these sections into production and organisational processes is to point out the key issues that are characteristic of each of these processes. I examine how producers perceive the quality of their work following competing imperatives and pressures in Section 4.6 before concluding this chapter in Section 4.7.

## 4.2 Historical Development of News Production in the Third Sector

I focus here on two aspects, namely a) the circumstances under which third sector news production emerged from the late 1960s and b) the context within which news producers organised themselves. News production in third sector media from 1968 onwards was born out of the social movements of the countercultural era. News accounts and other information from this sector reported on what was happening in the countercultural scene across the Western world, with particular emphasis on the dissension from and resistance to institutional rules, fixed beliefs, and social controls (Gusfield 1970).

For example, some of the news coverage featured dissent on issues such as divorce, abortion, homophobia, drugs and censorship (Nelson, 1989) while other coverage focused on the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights and Feminist movements, racism, liberation struggles in the non-Western world, the de-schooling movement, the student movement, and later the Anti-nuclear Weapons' and Trade Union protests (Duncombe, 1997; Marshall, 1998; Atton, 2003b). Cultural coverage also had a strongly political, radical flavour.

Behind the coverage of the countercultural scene were a number of diverse publications such as newspapers, magazines, fanzines, comics, leaflets and bulletins. Supplemented by pirate broadcasting (Browne, 1984; McCain and Lowe, 1990), these publications became commonly known as the underground press. In Britain, the most prominent newspapers were the *International Times (IT)*, *Oz* and *Friends* later known as *Frendz* while *Die Tageszeitung (taz)* and *Radikal* were two of the most well known in former West Germany. Some of the literature has tended to look at the underground press as monolithic which is problematic given that the diverse publications had their

own 'unmistakable style' (Nelson, 1989: 52) reflected in their content and distinct character of their producers.

In terms of content, for example, some newspapers sought to report on the ideals and developments of the social movements within specific national contexts while others incorporated both national and international contexts. Still others confined themselves to serving and promoting the needs of particular communities, and as such tended to concentrate more on specific issues such as squatters' and tenants' rights, for example. With reference to their producers, some publications were written by people who organised themselves in collectives or community and radical groups. Others were published by single individuals. Nevertheless, what they all seemed to have in common was the desire to disseminate perceived relevant news and information that was not only unreported by mainstream media, but that also aimed to challenge the reproduction of dominant discourses (Downing *et al.*, 2001; Atton, 2002).

Generally, third sector news producers tended to favour a decentralised way of working which was characterised by various levels of commitment and involvement. They tended to see themselves as 'activists or organisers first and journalists second' (McMillan, 2011: 9). As a result of this unstructured way of organising, the third sector press tended to serve different purposes for different people. For some producers, newspapers, magazines, fanzines, comics and bulletins offered a platform to express and communicate their ideas and views while for others news-making was simply 'emotionally fulfilling and response-generating' (Duncombe, 1997: 197). For other producers, the process of making news was a way of gaining experience in newspaper production, particularly when it came to 'learning the mechanics of layout, distribution, sales, and advertising' (Ibid.: 7). For readers, the third sector press was a medium through which to make sense of the events within the social movements.

In terms of the style in which news events and other information were presented, third sector news producers in the earlier years made no claims to objectivity as mainstream media did. United in their disdain for mainstream journalists whom they accused of being out of touch with the circumstances experienced by many ordinary people, third sector news producers claimed for themselves a kind of epistemic privilege, arguing that only those reporting from within the communities could reflect their true picture. As such, their reporting style was nearly always subjective in nature. Moreover, it was not uncommon that such a reporting style was at times characterised by ‘fiercely polemical’, ‘angry and iconoclastic opinions’ (McMillan, 2011). At other times, the reporting style was imbued with overly ‘provocative’, ‘inflammatory’ or ‘obscene’ language that producers and their outputs became targets of harassment and prosecution from authorities on the grounds that they corrupted ‘public morals’ (Ibid.; Nelson, 1989).

As the socio-political circumstances from the mid-to-late 1980s onwards changed, so did news production in third sector media. It seemed that the ‘political and economic tide’ (Harcup, 1994) of the late 1960s and 1970s had gone out only to be replaced by a relatively new set of issues. In Britain, for instance, the most prominent of such issues were the Miners’ Strike, the campaign against the Poll Tax and the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie. In (West) Germany, the movements in support of anti-nuclear energy, ecological matters, homosexuality and the liberation from Soviet dictatorship in (East) Germany stood out.

What is more, the anger and revolutionary fervour that characterised reporting in the 1960s and 1970s seemed misplaced from the late 1980s onwards. According to Harcup, the few third sector newspapers which were still active during this period

were compelled to rethink their overtly political and radical outlook for two reasons. First, the level of buoyant political activity witnessed during the countercultural period faded away from the 1980s (1994: 24). Second, in a bid to survive in the evolving marketplace, third sector news producers increasingly strove to attract enough advertisers to break even (Ibid.: 14).

In terms of organisation, the 'collectivist-democratist' form of organisation which had appealed to producers in the earlier years proved extremely demanding although it remained popular even in the 1990s. But it became clear in the early 1990s that third sector newspapers which demonstrated a lack of financial documentation, control or planning, experienced falling circulation and advertising and had no clarity about their future direction, stood no chance to survive in the new socio-economic climate (Ibid.: 28). This explains why many such newspapers went under.

From the 1990s to this day, news production in the third sector has been dominated by a number of newspapers, magazines, radio stations, public access channels and local television. Some of these were established between the 1970s and 1990s while others appeared only in the 2000s. Although some of them may be horizontally organised, appear sympathetic to left-wing politics and may privilege subjective reporting, they may not necessarily see themselves as appendages to a social movement (McMillan, 2011). It is these companies that I look at in this chapter, particularly focusing on the ways in which producers at three newspapers and two radio stations respond to the interaction between socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives and other systemic influences in the process of making news. I also evaluate the ways in which these competing imperatives and systemic pressures impact on how producers perceive their work.

For example, two of these newspapers, namely *AsiaNet* and *Ummah Post*, were founded in 1972 and 1988 respectively as community newsheets. I show that they have since broken out of the narrow confines of the specific communities they set out to serve and the particular themes they addressed and evolved into business newspapers covering broader contemporary themes and characterised by a national and international outlook. In the process, they have increasingly embraced professional and commercial imperatives which appear to have relegated socio-political imperatives to a secondary role.

*Warburg Radio*, one of the radio stations I look at, was founded initially as an underground newsheet in the 1970s. It then evolved into a pirate radio station in the 1980s before it became a third sector radio station in the 1990s. During these phases of evolution, producers at *Warburg Radio*, like those at *AsiaNet* and *Ummah Post*, responded to the changing socio-economic climate in ways that I analyse over the next pages. Before that, however, I want to introduce these newspapers and radio stations below.

### **4.3 Third Sector News Production Company Profiles**

Here, I present crucial information pertaining to the mission, organisational structure, finances and outputs of the five third sector news production companies I discuss in this chapter. This information was gathered through participant observation, semi-structured interviews and the study of various accessible company records and artefacts. The five companies comprise *AsiaNet* (1972) (Britain), *Shalom News* (2005) (Germany), *Ummah Post* (1988) (Britain), *Warburg Radio* (1974/1991) (Germany) and *Radio Shannakay* (2005) (Britain).

**Third Sector News Production Companies under Study in this Chapter**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Finances</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
<i>AsianNet</i> (Newspaper)	Britain	Micro	Hierarchy	Not Available	News, magazines, community events/Circulation = approximately 35,000 copies
<i>Shalom News</i> (Newspaper)	Germany	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	News, commentary, analysis, community events/ Circulation = approximately 7,500 copies
<i>Ummah Post</i> (Newspaper)	Britain	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	News commentary, community events/Circulation = approximately 20,000 copies
<i>Warburg Radio</i>	Germany	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	News, current affairs, arts and cultural programming, phone-ins, community events, social projects
<i>Radio Shannakay</i>	Britain	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	News, current affairs, arts, drama and music, conversation, phone-ins, community events, social projects

**Table 1: A list of Selected News Production Companies in the Third Sector**

As noted earlier three of the five third sector media companies are newspapers while the other two are radio stations. With regard to the mission, *AsiaNet* is a weekly newspaper based in London. It has appeared in English and in an Indian vernacular for 40 years now. *AsiaNet* aims to 'inform, educate and entertain the British Asian population' and simultaneously 'to act as a bridge between the Asian diaspora and the wider British society'. Similarly, *Shalom News* is a weekly German-Jewish newspaper which provides 'news, current affairs and commentary' to both the German-Jewish community in the city of Berlin in Germany and the wider public.

*Ummah Post* is a monthly newspaper located in London. Its mission consists in reporting news and issues of concern to both the Muslim community in Britain and to an international readership. Like *AsiaNet*, it seeks to act as a platform for expression and communication between the Muslim community and the wider British public. On the other hand, *Warburg Radio*, based in the German state of Thuringia, was initially founded as an underground newspaper in the 1970s (*Das Untergrundsecho*) and then evolved into a pirate radio (*Die Landfunke*) in the 1980s. Today, *Warburg Radio* is a twenty-four hour non-profit radio station which aims to provide a wide range of programmes encompassing all aspects of the communities within the region. In a similar vein, *Radio Shannakay*, situated in South England, depicts itself as a non-profit social enterprise providing diverse programming directed at numerous communities in the region.

With reference to the organisational structure, the following can be said. Whereas *AsiaNet* exhibits a hierarchical form of organisation, *Ummah Post*, *Shalom News*, *Warburg Radio* and *Radio Shannakay* are characterised by a hybrid structure displaying a combination of hierarchical and horizontal forms of organisation. All of the companies either have a chief editor or a station manager at the helm.

In terms of finances, all the companies under study in this chapter are micro companies<sup>21</sup> because they have ten or less (core) staff and have an annual turnover of less than £1.5 m. The three newspapers earn their income through sales, advertising and sponsoring. *Ummah Post* receives printing subsidies from the British government while the two radio stations also receive annual grants from the respective governments. *Warburg Radio*, for instance, receives an annual grant amounting to approximately £30,000 from local authorities while *Radio Shannakay* receives £14,000 on average from Ofcom's Community Radio Fund. These figures do not include grants obtained from trusts and foundations or additional income earned through, say, advertising, donations and in-kind contributions.

As far as outputs are concerned, all the companies listed in the table provide predominantly news and other informational material and run diverse community events. The radios *Warburg* and *Shannakay* also manage social projects examples of which we shall see. Having profiled the five case study companies in this chapter, I now turn to the analysis of their news production processes. I highlight the significance of socio-political imperatives in the early years first and then show how commercial and professional imperatives gradually emerged as a result of evolving socio-economic circumstances. As we shall see, the response of producers to these imperatives was varied.

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<sup>21</sup> Here, I use the legal definition provided by the EU which depicts a micro company as one which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover does not exceed 2 million Euros which amounts to a little over £ 1.5 million pounds at the time of writing this thesis. More details about this definition can be found at: [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/enterprise/business\\_environment/n26026\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/enterprise/business_environment/n26026_en.htm) (Accessed 22.04.2012).

## 4.4 News Production Processes at the Case Study Organisations

In Section 4.2, I noted that as the socio-political circumstances from the late 1970s evolved, many third sector news producers strove not only to engage with the impact of these changes on community and public life, but also to target wider, diverse audiences in alignment with socio-political imperatives. This development was also motivated by professional and commercial imperatives. Below I analyse how producers responded to the interaction between these imperatives. I show how producers responded to these imperatives in the shift away from reporting on a relatively limited scope of topics from the 1980s onwards to the coverage of broader issues. Similarly, I show the ways in which producers deal with the different imperatives today. I also examine how some third sector news producers compromise between their autonomy and political controls.

### 4.4.1 Seeking Out Wider Audiences

To begin with, *AsiaNet*, for example, started out as a vernacular newspaper in early 1972 serving predominantly Gujarati and Hindu communities. The newly arrived Ugandan Asians who had been expelled by the then Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in the same year became a target audience too. In the following, Gopal, the chief editor at *AsianNet*, reflected on the initial readership at which point I observed tears in his eyes:

[The 1960s and 1970s] were a difficult period for us as Indians but also for other minorities. The treatment we got, say, concerning housing, business licences etc was often harsh and frankly racist. In many parts of the country, we heard fellow Indians endured the same kind of treatment, some more than others. And then there was the thing with the Ugandan Asians which threatened to worsen the situation because [Ugandan Asians] were accused of taking away housing and school places from British people and milking welfare benefits [...] I personally knew some of them and I knew these were successful and hard-working people who worked tirelessly to rebuild their lives having come here without a single penny [...] It's around that time that I felt the

need to open up a newspaper that told the true stories of people, no matter whether Gujarati or Hindu and get them to share their experiences and come together to help each other (Gopal).

Similarly, *Ummah Post* aimed to serve the Muslim community in London which was not catered for by the mainstream media. According to Malik, the founder of the paper, this target audience which is 'ethnically very diverse' and adheres to 'different strands of Islam' was in need of a 'Muslim medium' which reflected Muslim views on issues concerning this community. In any case, *Ummah Post* was established in 1988 in the aftermath of the controversy caused by Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*. Of the situation, Malik notes:

Until [*The Satanic Verses*], there had been no serious Muslim media. You saw maybe a magazine or flyers lying around in mosques or at [Muslim] events [...] But after [*The Satanic Verses*] crisis, things changed because it was clear that mainstream media were biased in the way they reported things. They didn't understand that Muslims are ethnically very diverse and believe in different strands of Islam [...] I thought: how is it [possible] there was actually no medium for Muslims in London? Not even anywhere else countrywide? I thought Muslims needed to air their views on the scandal and other issues that concerned them [...] Having had some experience with [a Muslim newsletter] I had started during my Polytechnic days [in South England] and later writing for two youth Muslim magazines, I started *Ummah Post* with three colleagues. We wanted *Ummah Post* to report Muslim views on *The Satanic Verses* crisis and also other issues concerning Muslims here in London (Malik).

Additionally, *Warburg Radio* both as an underground newspaper (*Das Untergrundsecho*) and later as a pirate radio (*Die Landfunke*) initially targeted predominantly the left-wing scene in Thuringia and a few working-class neighbourhoods. The former was targeted in an effort to try and prevent it from disintegrating amidst heavy repression by the East German Communist government. Of the initial target audience of *Warburg Radio*, Ulrich, one of the founding members of the radio station, comments:

Back then *Das Untergrundsecho* was disseminated in different parts of the city where the left-wing scene had numerous small hubs. It provided the latest news on various developments [in a number of working-class neighbourhoods] within Thuringia. We got much of the news from the left-wing scene in West Berlin. And when *Die Landfunke* came, its news was rather unique and very popular with the scene because it advocated undermining the Socialist Unity Party [the ruling political party of the former East German government] particularly for its brutal repression. There wasn't anything else comparable to *Die Landfunke* at the time. Its information programmes usually lasted just under an hour or so but it was just enough to electrify the scene [...] Hungry as the scene was for news and information, Both *Das Untergrundsecho* and *Die Landfunke* really helped to quell that hunger and keep the scene together (Ulrich).

The three companies discussed above demonstrate that in the 1970s and 1980s, producers sought to reach out to specific audiences whose interests and needs were not catered to in line with socio-political imperatives. Gopal and his fellow producers at *AsiaNet* targeted primarily Gujarati and Hindu communities as well as the newly arrived Ugandan Asians resident in London while Malik and colleagues addressed the different sections of the Muslim community also in London. Producers at the predecessors of *Warburg Radio* concentrated on supplying the left-wing scene in Thuringia with news and information in a bid to prevent the scene from falling apart amid government repression.

However, changing socio-political circumstances from the 1980s onwards led third sector news producers to target wider audiences for two reasons. First, many producers began to cover broader subject matter that reflected the dynamics in society and that responded to the needs and interests of diverse, hitherto neglected audience groups, a move which harmonised with socio-political imperatives. Second, the need to appeal to broader audiences was also partly rooted in the desire to boost circulation in tune with commercial imperatives on the one hand. On the other, it was based on the pursuit of an authoritative voice on specific issues both nationally and internationally

and a claim to critical and factual reporting in harmony with professional imperatives. In the case of *AsiaNet*, for instance, producers began targeting the entire Asian population across Britain:

In the 1980s, the Asian population in this country was growing and doing well in business, education, the civil service, name it. Asians were dispersed across the country, in Southwest England, in the East Midlands, in Yorkshire etc and we wanted to reach as many of them as possible [...] The point I think at which we began national distribution must have been around 1991, maybe 1992. It was a few years after we opened the headquarters in India from where we were able to get news from the sub-continent. There was quite a lot of interest in news from Pakistan and Bangladesh and Sri Lanka as well (Gopal).

In a similar vein, Malik and colleagues at *Ummah Post* found themselves addressing a wider readership from the early 1990s onwards. This development was attributed to the scope of subject matter that was covered at the time. From its coverage of *The Satanic Verses* crisis in 1988 to the First Gulf War in 1990 through to the Bosnian War between 1992 and 1995, *Ummah Post* became renowned for its empathetic but informed and critical stance on Muslim issues. As such, Malik notes that producers at *Ummah Post* were regularly consulted on such issues by the mainstream media:

Throughout *The Satanic Verses* crisis and later the Iraq War [in 1990] and the Bosnian War, we did our homework well and reported critically on what was happening even though we empathised with Muslim concerns. Not everyone liked our coverage, but that's not the reason we were in the business. Many mainstream journalists consulted us on some issues and wanted to collaborate with us [...] We knew we had to get things right if we were to establish ourselves in the UK and build an international audience at the same time. It is during the Iraq War [in 1990] that we realised we had a much bigger international audience than we thought. People contacted us from all over the world with their views and support but also with critique. Some of it helpful, some of it just nonsense [...] It was a real achievement for us to see so many people reading our paper a few years after we had launched (Malik).

Also, *Warburg Radio* sought to expand its listenership in the 1980s when the first signs emerged that the East German government seemed to be crumbling:

When it became clear that the controls [against pirate broadcasting in the 1980s] were becoming increasingly lax, *Die Landfunke* began targeting more and more people who began regularly tuning in and reading *Das Untergrundsecho*. People were sympathetic and supportive. The programming was very popular with people both young and old in part I guess because it was rebellious. People were not used to that at all. But it was also in many respects the only source of news about the last years of the Cold War that was not manipulated by the [Socialist Unity Party]. Although there was a risk of drastic punishment if caught listening in, more people tuned in nevertheless. [The government media] were very centralised and dull. People had grown tired of them because they always produced the same slogans (Ulrich).

As noted earlier, the evolving socio-political circumstances in the 1980s appear to have required third sector news producers to address increasingly wider audiences. *AsiaNet* transitioned from targeting only Gujarati, Hindu and Ugandan Asian communities in London to addressing the Asian population in many regions across Britain. In particular, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan communities in Britain appear to have become equally key targets for the paper considering that there seemed to be a lot of interest in news from the respective countries. As we shall see in more detail below, the motivation for this was to tap into the new markets these communities provided.

On the other hand, producers at *Ummah Post* sought to establish themselves as the leading British Muslim newspaper by trying to address Muslims across the country and the wider British public. With reference to the Muslim community, Malik notes elsewhere in the interview that since the 1990s the paper has been increasingly reaching out both to second and third generation British Muslim immigrants and to the newly arrived ones. He notes that the latter group comprises Muslims from a range of ethnic backgrounds, primarily of Asian (Pakistani and Bangladeshi), Malaysian, Turkish,

Middle Eastern and African origin. In addition to the coverage of international crises that unfolded from the late 1980s onwards, *Ummah Post* has also continued to build an international readership through reporting on international Muslim events.

Similarly, *Warburg Radio* sought to expand its audience to include more audience groups from the 1980s onwards. This contrasted with the earlier years when, as a pirate radio, it targeted only the left-wing scene and working-class neighbourhoods on occasion. The rationale was to inform as many people as possible of developments during the final years of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Through its wide scope of news and information programmes, *Warburg Radio* today attracts a host of diverse audiences ranging from school children, youths and students to sections of the wider public considered to be at risk such as the elderly, the long-term unemployed, the disabled and immigrants.

In the pursuit of wider, diverse audiences, the responses to socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives were different. Producers at *Ummah Post* were able to reach diverse and larger audiences (both Muslim and non-Muslim) through what seemed like critical, factual and fair reporting on Muslim issues, a phenomenon that suggests a successful negotiation between socio-political and professional imperatives. Subsequently, it might not come as a surprise that producers at *Ummah Post* were sought out for consultation and collaboration on Muslim issues by mainstream journalists according to Malik. Indeed, a study of a hoard of archived (mainstream) British and international newspapers that Malik maintains provides evidence of his contribution on Muslim issues in the form of commentary and analysis.

At *AsiaNet*, the interaction between the different imperatives in targeting wider, diverse audiences at *AsiaNet* was clearly tense. By concentrating on building a larger readership in order to boost circulation and make profit in tune with commercial

imperatives, Gopal and colleagues sacrificed providing relatively in-depth and comprehensive news and informational content for more shorter and wide-ranging but superficial material fostered by the mechanisation of the news-making process in alignment with professional imperatives. I return to this point in more detail below.

In sum, it can be said that producers at *Ummah Post* sought to reach out to wider, diverse audiences that had not been catered to until that point in line with socio-political imperatives. In doing so, such producers engaged with evolving themes in a critical but fair manner in alignment with professional imperatives, thereby successfully navigating between the two sets of imperatives. At *AsiaNet*, though, the pursuit of wider, diverse audiences was mainly motivated by commercial and professional imperatives which clearly relegated socio-political ones to the margins. The discussion now turns to the interaction between the different imperatives in the coverage of news content.

#### **4.4.2 From Specific (Community) News to Broader Themes**

As we have seen above, producers at the case study companies in the earlier years provided news and information that addressed particular audiences. *AsiaNet*, for example, covered news stories that primarily reflected individual and community circumstances of selected Asian communities in London. Individual stories revolved around issues such as racist attacks on Asian families, discrimination in public places, difficulties on the housing market and in securing medical treatment all of which were unlikely to be reported anywhere else. Similarly, a look at two of the very first copies published by *Ummah Post* in 1988 reveals that the coverage centred on commentary and analysis of *The Satanic Verses* crisis combined with calls for unity and better communication among Muslims in London.

Although it is difficult to pin down precisely when the shift from the coverage of specific community news to broader contemporary issues took place at the companies under study in this chapter, producers' accounts suggest that the mid-to-late 1980s is a good marker. In the case of *AsiaNet*, the early 1990s witnessed the extension of the paper's news coverage across numerous regions in Britain. *Ummah Post* was at that point already reporting on international Muslim crises like the First Gulf War and the Bosnian War while *Warburg Radio* was in the process of establishing itself as a third sector radio station after the demise of the East German Communist government. In the following, I discuss how producers transitioned to covering contemporary themes, highlighting how socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives impacted this transition.

*AsiaNet*, for instance, broadened its coverage gradually to cover a number of contemporary themes such as weekly reports contributed by high-profile British Asian parliamentarians on the most prominent issues in Westminster. Today, the paper comprises the following sections: Media, Finance, Health and Wellbeing, Fashion, Community Voice and Upcoming Events, Bollywood, Sports, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The Media section, for instance, is a single page and summarises prominent stories with an Asian angle to them extracted from other media outlets while The Community Voice and Upcoming Events sections are also single pages and accommodate the contributions of community members. The biggest section of all is the Finance section spreading over three pages. Most of the news stories in this section concern Asian businesses in Britain. I look at this section in a little more detail below because it demonstrates how the considerable influence exerted by commercial and professional imperatives shapes organisational and production processes at *AsiaNet*.

It so happened that my fieldwork at the paper coincided with the period during which *AsiaNet* showcased the contribution of British Asian businesses to the economy of London in the Finance section. The campaign itself had been sparked off a few weeks earlier by a ferocious debate on a new draft immigration bill in 2009 which foresaw tighter restrictions for immigrants as a result of a regression in economic growth. In particular, the campaign underlined the significant contribution made by the approximately 40,000 registered Asian-owned businesses in London which boast an annual turnover of nearly £60 billion and offer employment to almost 300,000 people.

Essentially, the campaign demonstrated how *AsiaNet* was responsive to contemporary developments both within the Asian business community and the wider British public through its news coverage, a phenomenon that foregrounds socio-political imperatives. During the weeks I conducted my field research there, six selected Asian business enterprises were featured in the paper's coverage as best-practice examples. These enterprises specialised in public relations, accountancy and clerical services, insurance, IT consultancy, wholesaling as well as catering and event management respectively.

However, a closer look at the businesses showcased throughout the campaign indicated that most of them were regular advertisers in the paper. For clarification on why the campaign concentrated on showcasing those particular businesses, I was told that these are 'clients' with whom *AsiaNet* has collaborated for a long time and whose contribution is worth coverage. But what was meant by coverage here in the context of the campaign is revealing. Each of the six businesses was asked to send a brief outline indicating how and when the idea of the business came about, what its size, speciality and future plans were and finally, what advice the owners had for fledgling businesses. The outlines sent were then edited into news stories.

For all the campaign's laudable aim to portray the achievements of Asian businesses in London, it is hard to ignore the influential role of commercial imperatives in putting together the business news stories. The mere talk of the paper collaborating with 'client' advertisers for a long time is nothing unusual, but worrying nevertheless. The scope of the relationship between newspapers and advertisers has been subject to scholarly debate. Commentators have alluded to the impact of advertisers in subtly pressuring newspapers, particularly those entirely dependent on advertising revenue, to 'highlight favourable stories...' (Keeble, 1998: 35).

McManus builds on this line of thought by contending that:

advertisers may exert two kinds of pressures on news decisions: The first is to select and package news to attract the largest audience likely to buy the products advertised; the second is to create a favourable or 'buying' environment for those ads within news content (1994: 34).

Additionally, a further look at *AsiaNet* copies seemed to indicate that commercial and professional imperatives might have been more influential in the making of news stories than socio-political ones. Although *AsiaNet* boasts over thirty pages providing 'the latest news with in-depth reports and analysis on issues of particular importance to British Asians', there were two aspects that could not be overlooked. First, the news articles were nearly always too short to actually provide any in-depth analysis. An explanation for this could be the weekly nature of the paper which might have prompted producers to want to cover many stories in brief rather than report on a few stories which go in-depth (Tuchman, 1997). Second, the paper displayed a high number of advertisements. In at least two copies, whole pages accommodated public advertisements, notably of the NHS with its Swine Flu Vaccination Programme run in November 2009. It seems that news stories were kept short or withdrawn in order to make space for as many advertisements as possible.

What is more, some of the short news stories were couched in one-line statements from elite sources (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 103) while others were characterised by ‘vivid and graphic presentations’ (McManus, 1994: 7). Such ‘presentations’ constituted numerous photographs that resemble the ‘technically uniform, visually sophisticated, easy-to-understand, fast-paced, people-oriented stories that are produced in a minimum amount of time’ (Bantz *et al.*, 1997: 273) in television newscasts designed to appeal to those who have neither the inclination nor the time to seek out more in-depth coverage (Tuchman, 2002: 83). Such content is reminiscent of the ‘popular, formulated, un-disturbing, assimilable fictional material’ (Murdoch and Golding, 1977: 40) that ‘undermines intelligent and rational debate’ (Curran, 2002: 226) as we saw in Chapter 2. This was particularly the case with the news stories in the Health and Wellbeing, Fashion, Bollywood and Sports sections of the paper. As I noted in the discussion of the sociology of news above, such content results from a set of tightly organised, standardised routines associated with professional imperatives. Thus, one might argue that the coverage of broader themes at *AsiaNet* is determined much more by professional and commercial imperatives than socio-political ones.

Another illustrative example of how third sector news producers respond to the interaction between the different imperatives is offered by the coverage of events surrounding an annual awards event at *Ummah Post*. Here, I show that the relationship between socio-political and commercial imperatives is contradictory. According to Malik, the awards event aims to bring together Muslims to honour fellow Muslims (also occasionally non-Muslims) who make outstanding contributions to the British Muslim community. This event is a culmination of a nomination process in which every member of the Muslim community is encouraged to nominate ‘an individual, a project

or an initiative that [members] think deserves recognition and can serve as an example to [the entire British Muslim community]?

Since the awards event normally takes place at the end of each year, the closing date for nominations is usually the first week of July and a shortlist of the nominees is published in October, two months before the award ceremony. Nominations are judged by ‘a panel of independent experts drawn from the British Muslim community’ whose identity remains concealed throughout. Nominees are entered into an awards category which comprises sixteen different areas. In order to give a sense of the kind of contributions that merit an award, I list five random categories below:

1. Arts: for excellence in the visual and performing arts and architecture;
2. Creativity in Islamic thought: for excellence in the development of a new and challenging approach to understanding and application of Islam;
3. Media: for fair, accurate and balanced reporting on issues involving Muslims nationally or internationally;
4. Good citizenship: for showing courage and determination in securing rights for British Muslims, [and lastly];
5. Enterprise: for excellence in business and commerce (*Ummah Post*).

How do these awards impact news coverage at *Ummah Post*? The relation between the award event and news production is reflected in the fact that a significant amount of news commentary and analysis around the themes of the awards categories features prominently in the paper in the run up to the awards ceremony. During my fieldwork at *Ummah Post* in December 2009, there were two hotly debated topics. The first concerned the perceived Islamophobic sentiment which seemed to have been taken to new heights in Europe, particularly after the Swiss had voted in a referendum to ban the construction of minarets in their country in the autumn of 2009. The vote, so the official government explanation went, was not a ban on practising Islam in Switzerland, but rather one on building minarets. As such, some of the news commentary and

analysis interpreted this as an attack on Islam and focused primarily on the theme of 'good citizenship'. That is to say, what it meant to stand up for the rights of one's faith 'in the face of adversity'.

The second fiercely debated topic regarded instant stop and search measures and arrests of suspected Muslim terrorists that had been tightened in Britain. According to Malik, *Ummah Post* reports regularly on the victims of these measures and has meticulously recorded the number of Muslims alleged to have been stopped and searched or even arrested and convicted since the aftermath of September 2001. What he finds 'very disturbing' is that although many of the victims are released at some point 'after no concrete charges have been brought against them', such victims and their families sometimes have to endure a difficult and prolonged period of psychological trauma in the process. To aggravate matters, Malik adds, 'the mainstream media criminalise and demonise [the Muslim community] as a whole which is unfair'. As such, some of the coverage touched on how Muslim issues - both in the UK and abroad - were being reported, thereby focusing on the theme of 'media'.

The involvement of some community members in the preparation of the awards event and the news commentary and analysis that derive from it can be seen to be of huge socio-political relevance. This seems to reflect what one might expect of a third sector newspaper such as *Ummah Post* with regard to its self-proclaimed community-building function. Of particular significance is the provision of commentary and analysis that inform, engage and enable the paper's readership to make judgments on the issues of the time. All of this can be seen to emphasise the role of socio-political imperatives in the meaning-making process.

However, the award event itself did not seem to me to be inclusive in a number of ways. First, the awards ceremony took place in a huge rented lobby hall of a

prominent sports and leisure complex in central London. Whereas renting a community hall in Northwest London where the paper and the core community are based might have enabled more ordinary community members to attend, Malik notes that the use of the venue in central London was sponsored by one of the business guests. It probably comes as no surprise that this business guest was also an advertiser in *Ummah Post*.

Second, an admission ticket to the event cost between £50 and £150 pounds depending on the table at which one paid to sit. This is far from cheap. Of the roughly 400 invited guests including the guest of honour who was a high-profile English politician accompanied by three other high-ranking civil servants, at least half appeared to be business people and other prominent elites of the Muslim community. Bearing this in mind the event did not seem like a place where many ordinary members of the Muslim community would come given the location and the price of admission. But then again, putting on an event such as this requires financial resources without which Malik himself admitted the awards ceremony would not be possible. He was keen to add that business sponsorship did not in any way influence decisions regarding winners. Thus, it can be inferred that whereas the coverage of the themes associated with the awards event was driven by socio-political imperatives, the event itself was motivated by commercial and professional ones.

The final example that illustrates the interaction between socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives in the pursuit of a wider range of themes concerns the incorporation of social project work into news and information programming at *Warburg Radio*. The argument is that in certain instances the incorporation of social project work into news and information programming is enabled by the successful navigation between socio-political and professional imperatives on the one side, and public subsidy on the other. During my fieldwork at

*Warburg Radio*, there were numerous social projects going on at the station, two of which I became involved in. For this reason, it is these two projects that I choose to focus on here. The first one targeted people perceived to belong to risk groups that are marginalised and disadvantaged in various ways. Such groups included people with physical and mental disabilities, the long-time unemployed and immigrants, particularly of East European origin. Funded partly by means from the European Social Fund<sup>22</sup> (ESF) and partly by the local government, the project aimed not only to report on the difficulties that these groups faced on a daily basis, but it also worked to equip participant groups with basic media competence and a range of other relevant professional skills in a bid to help integrate them better into community and public life, particularly in the labour market.

Such project work was routinely developed into news stories framed into a broader context. For instance, some of the news stories revolved around what it means to live with a physical or mental disability or how to cope with the routine of an author, musician or performer as a disabled person. This provided insights into the lives of these people which presumably would not be obtained anywhere else in such detail. What is more, the news stories reported on the nature of help and care available and how this could be accessed. Many participants were significantly involved in putting together these news programmes through gathering, processing and disseminating such relevant information to a wider audience, thereby demonstrating journalistic skills.

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<sup>22</sup>The European Social Fund (ESF) refers to the EU's Structural Funds which was set up to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across EU member states and regions with a view to promoting economic and social cohesion. For more details on this, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en> (Accessed 07.03.2012).

Here, socio-political and professional imperatives in tandem with subsidy appear to have been navigated successfully.

The second project was commissioned by the media supervisory body responsible for the federal state of Thuringia and concerned the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of German Unification in 2010. This project gathered perceptions of German people (and those of foreigners) about German Unity. Of the project, Ulrich, one of the producers at *Warburg Radio*, comments:

This is a project that I and [a colleague] started. We came up with the idea after the [media supervisory body] commissioned a project to commemorate 20 years of German Unity. 2000 Euros were made available for the project. My idea was: okay, it's 20 years since [the Berlin Wall] fell but there's still a lot of tension and lots of misperceptions on both sides [former East and West Germany]. The [Berlin Wall] is still very much present in the minds, at least in the minds of those living in the country. So, we thought, how did the Germans living outside Germany experience the fall of the Berlin Wall? How do they view the unified Germany from the outside? Is it a view with emotions different from those of the Germans living here? Since the project had to demonstrate some connection with the state of Thuringia, we sought to hear from voices of people who either originated in Thuringia or were connected to this state in some way before they emigrated or so. We felt a lot had been written, sang and said about German Unification but nothing of the like – at least to our knowledge - was ever done. We also decided to include the voices of immigrants who lived in Thuringia before [the fall of the Berlin Wall]. We wanted to know how they viewed things. We wanted to know how significant people thought German Unification was. Did it play a role at all for people, say, from [former] Yugoslavia or people from France? (Ulrich).

As it turned out, there was a very high rate of responses to the call for contributions. This was not surprising given that Thuringia was at the forefront of the Cold War in many respects. Most notably, more than half of the inner-German border that separated the two German states during this period ran across Thuringia's landmass which is 763 km long. As such, there were a lot of contributions from Germans who emigrated after they had been dispossessed of their land and property to

make way for the inner-German border. In effect, a significant portion of news coverage was derived from the many contributions received and fitted into the wider context of both the Cold War and the twentieth anniversary of German Unification. Here again, socio-political and professional imperatives dominated.

Unlike the coverage of the Asian business campaign at *AsiaNet* in which commercial and professional imperatives were more dominant than socio-political ones, the reporting on events and themes related to social project work at *Warburg Radio* demonstrated a successful negotiation between socio-political and professional imperatives. In the latter case, ordinary people were enabled to make contributions based on the authority of their personal experience of and subjective engagement with the issues under discussion (Atton, 2007: 21). Producers at *Warburg Radio* then merged such contributions with historical records in an effort to put together comprehensive and compelling news and informational accounts.

Indeed, the incorporation of social project work into news and information programmes in this way has been said to enhance the social and cultural importance of third sector media and cultural organisations. Some commentators have noted that such programming in these companies not only addresses controversial and neglected topics, but it also promotes greater involvement in public debate and deliberation (Guennel *et al.*, 2000; Lewis and Jones, 2006). Although this is desirable, the problem is that nearly all social project work and related programming are dependent on subsidy. With regard to the two social projects at *Warburg Radio*, the ESF made their execution possible. As noted in the Introduction, subsidy, like advertiser support, brings with it some problems and disadvantages. Most notably, such funding might not only impact the nature of subject matter covered in news accounts and how it may be presented, but it

may also threaten the autonomy of producers. I now look at how producers respond to these tensions and controls in more detail.

#### **4.4.3 Radical Critique Can Be ‘a Recipe for Self-destruction’**

Before looking at the ways in which third sector news producers respond to such tensions and controls, it is helpful first to recollect the context within which third sector news production in the early years occurred. Early producers who, although covered a relatively limited set of themes such as class struggles, racism and feminism, usually neither accepted nor relied on public subsidy because it was seen to corrupt the principles of the sector. By contrast, many contemporary producers report on broader subject matter but in doing so, often appear reliant on subsidy which, in many cases, meets the costs required for third sector media companies to survive. Like advertisers who influence producers’ news decisions, policymakers’ decisions whether or not to fund a social project might in effect determine whether and how certain aspects surrounding the theme of the project in question are reported on. This situation shows how third sector news production today has become mired in subsidy, a phenomenon that has consequences for the autonomy of producers.

Illustrative of this quagmire is *Ummah Post* which prior to 9/11 and the London bombings in July 2005, received government support in the form of printing subsidies and public service announcements which helped with keeping production costs relatively low and generated revenue respectively. In the aftermath of both events, things changed according to Malik. He is convinced that the anti-Islam sentiment reached government bureaucracies which gradually scrapped the printing subsidies and advertising, especially after *Ummah Post* directed sharp critique at the government for what many in the Muslim community in Britain perceived as ‘draconian anti-terror laws’ aimed at targeting and discriminating Muslims in general. Because this threatened the

existence of the newspaper, a re-evaluation of the mode of reporting at *Ummah Post* was necessary. Of the dilemma, Malik comments:

We finally decided that in the interest of our work and community, we wanted to avoid a hard-line style even on very important things like campaigning for state funding for Muslim schools, criticising the draconian anti-terror laws that most of our Muslim brethren felt were unfair etc, etc [...] This decision was not easy. There were lengthy discussions and some of [our contributors] did not understand it at first. But continuing in that way as one of us put it was [...] a recipe for self-destruction (Malik).

I will return to the style of reporting in more detail below. For now, I want to point out that whereas *Ummah Post* appears to have continued advocating for state funding of Muslim schools and criticising the perceived harsh terror measures directed at Muslim terror suspects, the watering down of the reporting tone can be seen to amount to self-censorship (Keeble, 1998). Seen this way, one might say that *Ummah Post* traded-off critical reporting which harmonises with socio-political imperatives for subsidy reflected in the need not to upset the government for fear of losing advertising revenue. Malik maintains that *Ummah Post* remains 'loyal to [its] principles' one of which is critical reporting despite having to tread carefully in order not to jeopardise the 'long and fruitful collaboration' with the government.

A similar dilemma was experienced by producers at *Warburg Radio* who were persistently critical of the policies of the local conservative party generally perceived to be drastic and too commercially-driven. In addition to this persistent critique, producers also habitually mobilised citizens against these policies, a phenomenon that risked the revocation of their broadcasting licence as Heinz comments:

Just about seven or eight years ago our licence was almost revoked because of a biased [news] report [...]. We know factions in the conservative party were behind this as they had been waiting for a chance to strike back. So we've had to tone down our reporting on their policies so as not to risk having to lose our licence... (Heinz).

Like producers at *Ummah Post*, those at *Warburg Radio* have also had to tone down their reporting on contradictory political issues in a bid to avert the revocation of their broadcasting licence. This is reminiscent of some of the political controls, either covert or overt, identified by commentators as significantly impacting the process of news production. It is not surprising that such controls, in the form of restrictive laws and regulations, encouragement of self-censorship, refusals to increase public funding, the threat of privatisation or the loss of franchises (Curran, 2002: 222 – 223), steer news producers away from covering less favoured news stories (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 102).

In his work on the boundaries of journalistic autonomy, Altschull similarly notes that news producers will always face the pressure to conform to state or commercial interests one way or the other. He argues that ‘no newspaper, magazine or broadcasting outlet exceeds the boundaries of autonomy acceptable to those who meet the costs that enable them to survive’ (1997: 260). On this evidence, one might infer that the watering down of the critical stance at both *Ummah Post* and *Warburg Radio* suggests that producers are compelled not to overstep these boundaries if they want to remain in receipt of public funding or retain their licences. This appears to contradict much of the literature which has tended to view third sector media producers as being insulated from commerce and politics (Buchholz, 2001; Howley, 2005b; 2009; Lewis and Jones, 2006; Gillmor, 2006; Johnson and Menichelli, 2007; Hooffacker, 2009; Devereux, 2010).

In sum, *AsiaNet*, *Ummah Post* and *Warburg Radio* all demonstrate that socio-political imperatives remain a key element of continuity in third sector news production, albeit in a modified way. However, the influence of commercial and professional imperatives on the one side, and subsidy and political controls on the

other, has compelled producers to take a pragmatic approach in a bid to adapt to the prevailing socio-economic realities in which they are working. But this is only part of the story. This pragmatic approach has not only restricted itself to the making of news stories, but it has also impacted greater involvement in news production processes in different ways. Here, the interplay between the different imperatives has drawn different responses from producers. It is to these that I now turn in the next section.

#### **4.5 Organisational Processes at the Case Study Organisations**

As noted above, greater involvement in the third sector during the early years meant granting people with or without prior media experience the opportunity to take part in the planning, management and administration of organisational and production processes (Berrigan, 1977; 1979). Although not all the companies considered in this chapter originated in the countercultural period, they all claim to facilitate access and participation in these processes in line with socio-political imperatives. However, the emergence of professional and commercial imperatives alongside socio-political ones poses a huge challenge to organisational matters for producers.

Sometimes producers respond to this challenge by sacrificing the encouragement of wider participation for a tighter division of labour, a move that emphasises professional and commercial imperatives but tends to conflict with socio-political ones. In doing so, producers adopt a hierarchical organisational form. At other times, producers maintain a balance between socio-political and professional imperatives, thereby enabling a hybrid form of organisation which promotes wider participation to a considerable degree. But as we shall see, such an organisational form can also be characterised by tensions. In a rare example at *Radio Shannakay*, socio-political and

commercial imperatives appear to fit in together when community members get involved in searching for financial means to sustain the operation of their radio station.

#### 4.5.1 'Either Grow or Perish'

In 1972, *AsiaNet* demonstrated the emphasis on a decentralised working environment in its first mission statement which read as follows:

Our intention is to provide the latest news about Indian affairs to the Indian community in London [...] Any member wishing to help in any way whether by donating cash, contributing to articles, proof-reading, distributing or assisting in any other way is warmly welcome. No previous newspaper experience is required [...] Only commitment and the willingness to perform tasks as necessary is what it takes... (*AsiaNet*).

The situation at the time was such that interested community members were welcome to help in the news production process by writing articles, proof-reading or helping with distribution. However, as the socio-economic climate gradually changed, so did the internal organisation at *AsiaNet*, particularly in response to competition:

Many [Asian] families came into [the newspaper] business and things changed. The choice was simple. Either grow [into a proper professional business] or perish. Such was the situation at the time [...] At that point we were running weekly while [competitors] appeared monthly. We had built a profile in London and were slowly moving into other cities, so we had an advantage and we used it the best way we could [...] It's always been tough, that's why there are very few of the old batch left (Gopal).

Amidst this socio-economic climate at the beginning of the 1990s, *AsiaNet* needed to 'professionalise' in order to survive in the tough marketplace. As hinted at earlier, the shift to a more professional status began with the establishment of headquarters in India intended to supply news material from the sub-continent. Then the paper went from a biweekly to a weekly format while the rest of its competitors were predominantly monthlies. It can be said that these developments provided *AsiaNet* with an edge over its competitors. In order to achieve even more efficiency, the

internal organisation of the paper was rearranged in such a way that four sections were created, each with its own tasks. It was no coincidence that many producers left the paper during this period.

Today, the editorial section is headed by Gopal himself in his capacity as chief editor supported by four full-time journalists and a host of freelance authors with more or less specialised fields of expertise. Two of the four full-time journalists are also responsible for the copy of the paper that appears separately in an Indian vernacular. Strikingly, a number of high-profile politicians of Asian descent, particularly members of parliament and other prominent elites within the Asian community regularly write pieces for the newspaper. There are four of them in total, with each one commenting on and analysing the most prominent themes and events of the week in parliament. The elites include a business entrepreneur, a lawyer and a medical practitioner who provide commentary on current financial, legal and health issues respectively.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the contributions (usually readers' responses) of ordinary community members in the Community Voice and Upcoming Events section are limited to one page and are usually not allowed to exceed 150 - 200 words. In the copies I looked at, there was no indication that ordinary community members had written any news accounts or provided any detailed commentary or analysis. This seems to suggest a reliance on professional contributors or elites, a phenomenon that contrasts starkly with the paper's mission of encouraging wider participation.

The other sections include sales and advertising, accountancy and graphics. The sales and advertising section comprises six employees, two of who normally spend a significant amount of time canvassing business, advertiser and sponsor support. Overall, this section seeks to exploit the full potential of the paper by encouraging both old and new advertisers to use more space, offering different forms of advertising and

assisting with the design of the advertisements. While the accountancy section is run by an individual whose responsibility it is to oversee the paper's costs and revenue and manage the circulation of the copies, the graphics section consists of two individuals who are responsible for the layout and printing of the newspaper. Whereas this hierarchical organisational form characterised by a high level of task specialisation appears to be very effective and highly productive, and harmonises with both commercial and professional imperatives, it inhibits wider involvement in the meaning-making process despite claims to the contrary, thereby pointing to a contradiction.

#### **4.5.2 Balancing Act: Combining 'Citizen' and Professional Journalistic Practices**

By contrast, *Shalom News*, *Ummah Post*, *Warburg Radio* and *Radio Shannakay* all demonstrate a hybrid organisational structure. *Shalom News*, for example, has a chief editor at the helm supported by three editors. Although *Shalom News* is owned by a holding company which sets the target for circulation and publishes the paper, the day-to-day operation is managed by the editors. They write most of the articles, although contributions from high-profile writers, usually academics and politicians but also diverse community members make up a significant portion of news commentary and analysis which points to a high level of involvement of the readership with the paper.

What is more, the paper attaches more importance to the quality of the contributions than to the names behind them as Friedrich comments:

The four of us share most of the articles among ourselves but we do get quite a lot of articles sent in from people from all walks of life. [For example] academics who have published work and wish to contribute a condensed version of it, politicians who think they have the solutions to our problems, [business] managers explaining the world of business to the readership, activists campaigning for a cause, interns trying out their skills and so on and so forth. Some of the articles are really good, we just ask the authors to make some minor editorial changes. Some are okay but need re-editing

while others are just simply crap and we just send them back [...] What counts for us is the quality of the pieces not which names are behind them. Everyone gets their fair chance with us and people know that. That's why they are willing to contribute. That's why they read *Shalom News*. I suppose it's the fresh and diverse perspectives that appeal to them (Friedrich).

The fact that *Shalom News* grants 'people from all walks of life' the chance to contribute to news accounts renders it a platform for expression and communication within the Jewish community in Berlin. It is quite striking that the editorial hierarchy of the paper does not appear to inhibit wider participation provided the quality of the contributions is good. Here, we see professional editors granting community members a significant role in helping to make sense of community and public life around them which arguably reflects a successful interplay between socio-political and professional imperatives. This level of involvement differs markedly from that at *AsiaNet* in that community members at *Shalom News* are granted relatively more leeway and space to write whole pieces that are published on the basis of their quality.

Similarly, news producers at *Ummah Post* encourage members of the Muslim community, both in Britain and abroad, to make contributions to news accounts. A study of a few copies of the paper and its website shows that numerous high-profile writers from a range of backgrounds and disciplines as well as community members regularly write news articles. Although the paper is headed by Malik in his capacity as chief editor assisted by a deputy and two producers, I observed that everyone on occasion undertook different tasks as and when necessary, pointing to a hybrid organisational form resulting from a balance between socio-political and professional imperatives.

Indeed, the encouragement of greater participation at both *Shalom News* and *Ummah Post* is reminiscent of some of the research on citizen journalism which indicates

that many news producers often show an openness to the increasing involvement of citizens in media production processes (Singer, 2006; Ornebring, 2008; Thurman, 2008). Ornebring takes this a step further by identifying two main forms of involvement. The first one, which he terms 'customisation' and is characterised by 'lower levels of involvement' particularly online, provides audiences with:

the possibility to get news through an RSS feed or other type of feed, the opportunity to grade/mark various types of content, the opportunity to directly comment on different types of content (for example, a comment function in conjunction with an article, or via an email to the article writer) [all of which] might then influence the content structure and/or design (2008: 774).

The second and more substantial form of involvement identified by Ornebring constitutes the 'actual production of content which is then consumed by the users' (Ibid.). He suggests that such content, also commonly referred to as *user-generated content* (UGC), 'would include different forms of textual production (the major possible types being user blogs and blog posts, user comments and posts on forums, and user-produced news items and/or features), video production (most commonly in the form of digitally produced short video clips) and audio production (like user-generated podcasts), (Ibid.). These findings are in line with my own research which also found that producers at *Shalom News* and *Ummah Post* attached great importance to comments and posts. Producers were particularly keen on blog posts because 'bloggers construct their narratives using language, discourse and examples that are familiar to their audiences' (Atton, 2007: 21).

For all the credit that producers at *Shalom News* and *Ummah Post* may deserve for their promotion of wider participation in this way, it is crucial to note that, in many instances, UGC was usually moderated or edited not only to fit the space available but also to conform to journalistic standards at the respective companies. To this end,

many contributors had been socialised into adhering to a set of values, attitudes and skills in making sense of the events on which they reported. Surely, this is desirable in terms of ensuring the quality of the contributions and paying attention to ethical considerations. But one could also claim that this constricts the engagement of contributors in the meaning-making process on their own terms, a phenomenon that is vitally significant if companies such as *Shalom News* and *Ummah Post* are to realise their commitment to facilitate wider participation in the processes of media production.

Regarding the radio stations *Warburg* and *Shannakay*, both are headed by station managers who are, in turn, assisted by producers (two in the former case and four in the latter). Of the two radio stations, *Warburg Radio* illustrates better the move away from a decentralised working environment proper characteristic of the earlier years to one which combines both horizontal and hierarchical forms of organisation. This move, made possible by a compromise between socio-political and professional imperatives, can be traced back to the juncture at which the radio station acquired a broadcasting licence after years of pirate broadcasting, a phenomenon that changed its internal organisation significantly:

After [acquiring the broadcast licence] we got rid of, if you like, propaganda. That was one of the terms of the licence agreement. Any material that was overly political was left out. No campaign group was allowed to broadcast propaganda. Material that wasn't technically good enough was left out. There was no need to produce poor quality [broadcasts] when we were training people in broadcasting skills and had the latest technology around. Poor quality puts off the audience. And because we do not broadcast for the sake of it, everyone who wanted to present but had no broadcasting skills had to go through our training programme. Because we are a community radio station doesn't mean we shouldn't produce good quality [broadcasts] [...] We moved the station meetings from late evening to day time because getting people together [for those meetings] proved to be extremely difficult. There were things that simply needed immediate attention and couldn't wait. We pushed for people to take responsibilities for specific matters. Most of the partners we collaborate with – the Job Centre,

schools, local authorities etc have working hours between 8 or 9 [am] and 4 or 5 [pm] during the week. You can't expect them to ring you and all you have to say is: I can't make any decision on that now. It's got to be discussed first when people turn up in the evening. It just doesn't work that way. Of course this upset people, but we had no any other way of doing it (Heinz).

The way of organising at *Warburg Radio* evolved from one where virtually everyone and every group could broadcast any given programmes without political and technical considerations to one where the radio station became legally and technically bound to pay attention to these issues. This points to a development towards professionalism, including the 'pushing for people to take responsibilities for specific matters' and the re-scheduling of station meetings from late evenings to day time. A further orientation towards professionalism is reflected by training in broadcasting skills at the radio station.

Significantly, this mode of organising and working does not appear to inhibit wider participation as shown by the numerous editorial teams which contribute to the news broadcasts. Of the twelve editorial teams at the radio station, I had the chance to work with the news team, the arts and cultural programming team and the youth team. I observed that these three teams considerably influenced both organisational and production processes at *Warburg Radio*, particularly in terms of decision-making, planning, recruitment of volunteers, helping with outreach work and providing comprehensive news and information programmes. This suggests a successful interaction between socio-political and professional imperatives.

However, it is important to mention that the routine at *Warburg Radio* was not very different from that of many mainstream media companies. In the editorial team, for example, such a routine consisted in perusing newspapers (both third sector and mainstream), identifying perceived relevant and interesting events to report on,

contacting local institutional news sources, attending press conferences and going out into the community to gather news. Apart from the core staff, everyone else who had received training in broadcasting skills at the radio station executed anyone of these tasks. I return to this below.

At *Radio Shannakay*, the hybrid form of organisation can be seen as a result of the interplay between socio-political, commercial and professional imperatives which is sometimes successful and at other times unsuccessful. Commercial and socio-political imperatives, for example, were successfully negotiated in the attempt to seek additional sources of income in order to maintain operations after the station received successive cuts to its subsidy. The result was the development of a ‘programme sponsorship’ which, according to the station, is ‘an exciting way [for local businesses] to build a special relationship with listeners through association with [...] sponsoring the news or a variety of shows’. Furthermore, ‘businesses [are] credited with a phrase along the lines of “Brought to you by”, “Supported by”, or “In association with”’.

Behind this was an advertising and marketing manager working hand in hand with a sales team constituting volunteers from the community in a bid to help save their station from going under. The problem with this, however, is that getting businesses to sponsor news programmes opens the door for the potential of advertisers and sponsors to influence the selection and coverage of news events. As we saw above, this risks relegating socio-political imperatives to a peripheral role.

Another significant aspect of the hybrid form of organisation at *Radio Shannakay* is the contentious relationship between a creeping division of labour associated with professional imperatives and the promotion of wider involvement in tune with socio-political imperatives. The radio station exhibits a professional broadcasting ethic which

now requires producers to execute specific tasks and to follow strict guidelines when presenting their programmes. As Ashley comments:

Most of the programmes are scripted beforehand and presenters use these as a guideline when conducting their programmes. But of course, a lot of the conversation in the information programmes is spontaneous. Long pauses, errs and ahhs, and sorry-I'll-read-that-agains, though, are edited out afterwards. Initially, we had people coming in and presenting freely, but we felt that needed to change for quality reasons. [The breakfast presenters], for instance, are now assisted by a producer who monitors and manages the incoming news stream on their behalf. Currently most programmes are pre-recorded. We always aim for a professional standard which makes for better communication (Ashley).

These comments point to the aspiration to produce high-quality news and informational broadcasts as reflected in the omission of amateurish fluffs and gaffes and task specialisation in alignment with professional imperatives. Whereas such professional aspirations are certainly desirable in that they favour a more structured way of working which, in turn, allows for more effectiveness and quality in communication, they can nonetheless be said to inhibit greater involvement, a phenomenon that is at odds with socio-political imperatives for which the radio station claims to stand. This relatively high level of professionalism appears to contradict some earlier work which has tended to view eschewing task specialisation and fluffs and gaffes in third sector radio broadcasting as part of the appeal that makes such broadcasters stand out from mainstream public service and commercial media (Lewis and Booth, 1989; Sakolsky and Dunifer, 1998; Harcup, 2003). Harcup, for instance, suggests that such amateurishness could be seen as a strength rather than a weakness in terms of encouraging wider involvement in news-making processes (2003: 356).

Similarly, many commentators have tended to emphasise access and participation in alignment with socio-political imperatives over the quality of news and informational

outputs in line with professional ones, arguing that third sector media more generally, and third sector radio stations particularly, should be (electronic) spaces of experimentation in which ‘non-professionals’ engage in the meaning-making process on their own terms and in which they are allowed to fail (Hochheimer, 1993; Howley, 2005b; 2009; Lewis and Jones, 2006; Lewis, 2008; Keough, 2010). On the evidence provided above, it can be said that this is not always the case. In the ensuing discussion, I analyse how the interaction between the different imperatives influences the presentation of news and informational accounts under both the hybrid and hierarchical organisational forms.

#### **4.5.3 Inclination Towards Authoritative Sources and Manipulative Narrative Styles**

At *Radio Shannakay*, the selection of events for assemblage into news and information programmes is significantly reliant on a news feed provided by the regional BBC broadcaster in South England. This is reminiscent of professional imperatives that are characterised by a dependence on institutional sources among others that ensure a constant flow of events to be processed into news (Rock, 1981). Of this, Ashley notes:

We also use [the BBC’s] news feed and that’s where we get the majority of our news which is on the hour. We do edit that news and sometimes we edit that specifically for *Radio Shannakay* knowing that the kind of stories for *Radio Shannakay* might have a slightly different take on [the regional BBC broadcaster]. So, some stories which they might put far down on the list, we might put first on our news because of the kind of station we are. You might find certain kinds of stories are more appropriate for *Radio Shannakay*. We do have our own news teams... So they will go out and find stories [...] find out what’s going on in the community, who’s making things happen in the community and having that one-to-one discussion with them. It’s not just the news articles. It’s getting those people in and having the debates and discussions with them (Ashley).

At first glance one might question the relevance of *Radio Shannakay* as a third sector radio station given that it derives the majority of its news from the regional broadcaster which appears to be a duplication of resources. However, putting a community angle to the re-edited news from the BBC feed and merging it with going out and discovering what is happening in the community appears to provide broader material from which to assemble relatively credible and informed news and information programmes. In particular, the 'one-to-one discussions' with community members might enable producers to give 'heightened exposure' to diverse views and opinions. Taken together, both the re-edited news with a community angle and the community news gathered through one-to-one discussions can be seen to display a successful interplay between socio-political and professional imperatives which is partly reflected in a blurring of 'social lines between the reporters and the reported on, between the reporters and reported to' (Eliasoph, 1997: 247). This, one might claim, embodies a functioning hybrid organisational form.

However, when advertising comes into play, it significantly upsets wider involvement, pointing to a tense interplay between commercial and socio-political imperatives. This tension results from the gradual increase in advertising which, according to Neill, one of the breakfast presenters at *Radio Shannakay*, is consuming more air time than in the past, thereby constraining debate and discussion:

The schedule has become busier than it was [two years ago] We are doing a bit more advertising and that takes up air time because obviously we need that cash. This leaves little time for people's comments and views on the news topics of the day. It's amazing to listen to what people have to say. Sometimes people have very interesting ideas on issues that you go: he or she's definitely a politician or lawyer or whatever. And when you ask, somebody tells you they are an artist or a medic. And you're like: I would never have thought that even for a second. And then you have to cut people off on the

other end because time is tight. I catch myself sometimes thinking: this is not that much fun anymore. People are not getting that much time as they used to (Neill).

Although the contentious relationship between commercial and socio-political imperatives under the station's hybrid organisational form still permits expression and discussion to take place, there is a strong likelihood that this could trigger a gradual erosion of socio-political imperatives. This would not only signal the exact opposite of what the radio station was established for, but it would threaten to undermine the social value of *Radio Shannakay*.

At *AsiaNet*, professional imperatives clearly relegate socio-political ones to a secondary role, and in doing so, cement a rigid hierarchical organisational structure, which in turn impacts production in different ways. Here, I focus on how the interaction between socio-political and professional imperatives impacts two issues, namely the relationship between producers and their news sources, and the ways in which news accounts are presented. With regard to the first point, the specialisation of tasks means that only editors gather, select, process and write news accounts often relying on a pool of (community) elites and institutions as news sources. Of this, Parveen, one of the editors at *AsiaNet*, says:

I do many interviews with a lot of big people, say like community leaders, spiritual leaders, businessmen, lawyers and people like that. They know much more about what goes on in their fields or if not, they can always refer me to someone who might give the information I want. I have a list of their names. Depending on the topic, I just need to call to arrange an interview... (Parveen).

The understanding here is that producers gravitate towards authoritative sources by virtue of the expertise they possess. In principle, this makes sense considering that such 'sources are consulted precisely for their presumed expertise and not merely as proponents of a certain point of view' (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 102). This is necessary particularly as such knowledge is not readily available to many

community members yet it tends to affect their lives in many ways. But the problem with this at *AsiaNet* is that the perspectives of ‘ordinary’ readers are rarely sought, a phenomenon that can be seen to inhibit greater participation.

What is more, there seemed no indication that diverse viewpoints were considered based on my study of a number of copies of the paper. For a newspaper whose thrust is to serve members of the entire Asian community in Britain, this seemed contradictory. As such, *AsiaNet* risks being accused of being out of touch with the circumstances experienced by many community members if producers are seen to engage in ‘bland, cautious and professionally balanced journalism’ associated with mainstream media (McMillian, 2011: 8). Indeed, such critique would not be misplaced given the tightly organised routine of the paper depicted below.

Each morning, producers in the editorial section perused other newspapers – both mainstream and third sector. Occasionally, they listened to radio broadcasts. Articles that were perceived to be interesting and worth following up on were scanned. Additionally, producers received news tips usually on the phone but also via email as well as press releases from several public institutions which were usually edited first to fit the space available. During the course of the day, interviews with sources were arranged. This meant that either sources came to the premises or producers went out. However, I soon discovered that producers only went out if interviews featured ‘big people’, usually high-ranking mainstream politicians and elites, community leaders and elites and business people. In addition, one news producer normally covered any scheduled press conferences and followed up on stories. On no occasion did I witness producers going out into the community to gather news or find out what was happening there. This clearly shows that socio-political and professional imperatives at *AsiaNet* are not successfully balanced.

However, producers at *AsiaNet* do not appear to consciously ignore the perspectives of their community members. Rather, producers are socialised into learning ‘common news narratives that help them quickly choose which social story should be told and which kinds of people should be involved in its telling’ (Berkowitz and TerKeurst, 1999: 127 – 128). Parveen’s comments above illustrate this well. Other scholars have also identified a similar trend. Atton and Wickenden, for instance, in their triangulated case study on the sourcing routines of an activist newspaper in Britain found that although producers favoured the views and opinions of ordinary people and strove to incorporate them as native reporters into the news production process, the primary definers of the issues under coverage remained elites hierarchically structured as those for the mainstream media (2005: 350). Similarly, in their study of the process of news production at a diasporic newspaper, Bailey *et al.* (2008) found that the primary definers of events covered were mostly an elite formed by the diasporic community’s own journalists and expert contributors (2008: 93).

With reference to the presentation of news accounts, evidence at *AsiaNet* and *Ummah Post* suggests that news accounts are not always presented in a manner that is meaningful to community audiences, indicating a further tension between socio-political and professional imperatives. As noted above, news stories at *AsiaNet* are not only invariably too short and lacking depth, but such stories are ‘couched in one-liners’ (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995) extracted from statements of authoritative sources and conveyed in an impartial manner associated with objective reporting. However, the Asian business campaign news stories, edited from the briefs sent by the respective businesses, were an exception in that such accounts were highly emotive and full of praise for former Ugandan Asians who, after having lost virtually everything, went from ‘rags to riches’ because of their ‘excellent enterprising spirit and hardworking attitude’.

This represented the application of a subjective reporting style which conveys a news account with clear value judgment (Hackett, 1984: 232).

The situation at *Ummah Post* bears some parallels with *AsiaNet* but is different in one crucial respect, namely that producers at *Ummah Post* chose to work with the objective reporting style from the outset. This was because of the diverse nature of the Muslim community in London that they sought to address back in 1988. Malik notes:

For us to report the facts for all we decided [the newspaper] had to be in the English language because Muslims are of diverse ethnic backgrounds and the common language is English. And we also ensured that it would be non-sectarian and non-partisan. Non-sectarian in a religious sense and non-partisan in not supporting any Islamic political party or the mainstream parties such as Labour or Lib Dems [Liberal democrats]. We would be neutral in everything [...] We would just report on the issues. And we also believed in the diversity of opinions in our communities, so we would reflect the community concerns (Malik).

Neutrality and balance in the coverage of issues was deemed to be crucial in light of the heterogeneity of the British Muslim community in London at the time. This appears to have been a conscious effort to avoid alienating certain views or to be seen to promote certain views at the expense of others. But objectivity and its associated concepts of balance and impartiality can be problematic in some contexts as Malik explains below. He has occasionally drawn sharp criticism from some of the members of the British Muslim community for his perceived balanced reporting:

Some very conservative voices in the Muslim community – I am surprised even at times those who were born [in the UK] who you would consider more rational and a bit critical - think that if you are a true Muslim person, you should not criticise Islam because that is what non-Muslims do anyway. They keep on saying that these are hard times and solidarity should be what matters. They expect you to be a yes person. Some ask me, how dare you do this? People expect you to turn a blind eye on things that are not right or endorse things that are questionable [...]. That does not deter us from keeping our line... (Malik).

This reaction to objective reporting by some community members seems to suggest an expectation of loyalty from producers regardless of the circumstances. In an attempt to explain why this might be the case, at least from a religious point of view, Starkey notes that ‘religious adherence sometimes requires denial of imperfection in the creed, lest the whole edifice of beliefs, scriptures and institutions should come tumbling down as a result...’ (Starkey, 2007: 98).

Another reason for adopting objective reporting at *Ummah Post* may have to do with the reluctance of producers to upset those individuals whose position might be undermined by other types of coverage. It could also have to do with the conscious effort of such producers to refrain from upsetting or alienating their audiences, say, by promoting a particular viewpoint at the expense of another. Essentially, producers may apply objective reporting as a ‘strategic ritual’ (Tuchman, 1978a) in an attempt not to jeopardise their relationship with sources within the community.

For instance, some scholars have found that producers use the objective reporting style as an efficient way of averting conflict with the powerful and refraining from reporting on events that might threaten their interests (Soloski, 1989; McManus, 1994; Berkowitz and TerKeurst, 1999). Similarly, Neveu (2001: 56 - 58) found in his analysis of the local third sector press that producers, many of whom were not professional journalists but ordinary citizens working as native reporters, needed courage to report about unfair practices within the community because of the bond and stakes they had therein. For them, according to Neveu, the best way around this was to report only verifiable facts coupled with quotes from community leaders but without journalistic comment. Soloski concurs and expands this line of argument by noting that:

[e]vents can be safely presented as a series of facts that require no explanation of their political significance. By presenting the news as a series of facts, news organisations are

protected in [...] that since journalists need to rely on sources to provide them with the facts about events, sources and not journalists are responsible for the accuracy of the facts. To a limited degree this helps to insulate both journalists and their news organisations from charges of bias and inaccurate reporting (1989: 214).

However, although *Ummah Post* set out to report news stories in a neutral and balanced manner, a look at some copies of the paper suggested that this does not always seem to be the case. In particular, some news stories on state funding for Muslim schools and the handling of Muslim terrorist suspects appeared to have been written in an emotive style partly laden with ‘inflamed opinions’ and ‘heated prose’ (McMillan, 2011). Far from objective, this reporting style appeared to echo more the notion of native reporting where producers’ accounts of events were conveyed in a personal and intimate manner, the ultimate goal of which was to try and accurately reflect reality in a way that people experience it rather than if this reality is framed for them (Atton, 2002; 2003a). At *Radio Shannakay*, producers use the objective and subjective reporting styles mainly as a result of merging BBC re-edited news with stories gathered within the community.

In sum, it can be inferred that the reporting style at *AsiaNet* has gradually shifted from the mere emphasis on a slanted and reflexive reporting style that promotes an explicit stance in line with socio-political imperatives to the adoption of an objective reporting style proper in alignment with professional imperatives. This, we have seen, inhibits participation. Although *Ummah Post* claims to apply an objective presentation style, the evidence above suggests that producers at the paper present news accounts either objectively or subjectively to fit particular contexts. Similarly, producers at *Radio Shannakay* apply the objective and subjective reporting styles as and when necessary. Therefore, this latter point leads me to agree with Eliasoph (1997) whose research at a third sector radio station found that producers manipulate narrative styles by bending

and using them to explain things, suggesting a successful interplay between socio-political and professional imperatives. Since this (and much of the evidence we have seen above relating to organising and production practices) points to the adoption of a pragmatic approach to their work, it is interesting to find out how the competing imperatives and other influences impact on how producers view their work.

#### **4.6 Impact of Competing Imperatives and Pressures on Perceptions of Work**

With the help of Pollard *et al.*'s (2004) taxonomy I mentioned in the Introduction, I evaluate the ways in which competing imperatives and other pressures impact on how third sector news producers view individual and organisational aspects relating to their work, especially in terms of success, frustrations or even failure. I begin with Malik of *Ummah Post* who perceives his work as follows:

When you go around the country and find that the paper is taken very, very seriously, it's a good feeling. Also, it's unique that the paper is distributed through mosques. It's the only Muslim newspaper allowed in most of the mosques because most Muslims recognise that we take the issue of diversity in Islam seriously. We try to address this, you know, very complex diversity [from] theological, ethnic and political [perspectives] which is really very difficult, but that's how we've earned credibility [...] The other thing is you get to meet a lot of people - community leaders, politicians, clerics, intellectuals. I mean, I've met Muslim and non-Muslim prominent personalities, [in Britain] and [abroad] that I would maybe never have met if I wasn't in the media. You know, I was one of the first foreign journalists to interview the first president of Bosnia. I interviewed Aslan, the [third] president of Chechnya. As part of a British delegation to Iraq during the First Gulf War, I travelled to Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia where we met with several Arab leaders to negotiate the release of British hostages. And I could go on and on. I mean, I wouldn't give up this for anything even though I work 18 hours a day. People say because there is no money in this thing. But in life, money is not the most important. It is there, it is important, but it's not the most important thing. What is really important to me is when you see that what you've written has an effect. That is the most important thing. And you don't have to be a

Muslim leader or a politician or whatever to do that. I could have probably written something else [which] nobody could have even cared to read. But I write the *Ummah Post*. My only wish is to turn it into a daily! (Malik).

Malik appears to derive a great sense of achievement from the fact that *Ummah Post* is 'taken very, very seriously' and that it is the only paper allowed in most mosques. Additionally, it is important to him that what he writes has an impact as opposed to a scenario where he 'could have probably written something else [which] nobody could have even cared to read'. This sense of achievement corresponds to what Hesmondhalgh and Baker found, namely that producers gained great pleasure from learning that their work 'was recognised as interesting or desirable by others' and that people showed interest in such work which they might not show in other occupations (2011: 124 - 125). Notably, where such interest was not forthcoming, producers felt frustrated and deeply disappointed (Ibid.).

Further still, Malik speaks with pride about the sort of people he has met in relation to his work. Many of these people appear to be famous, so his work can be seen to display an element of being 'cool' and characterised by 'glamour' (Ibid.: 124). This is perhaps best illustrated by the sentence 'I was one of the first foreign journalists to interview the first president of Bosnia' implying the coolness of 'being ahead of others' in interviewing famous people (Ibid.: 126). And then there is mention of the travels to Arab countries and subsequent meetings with Arab leaders as part of a British delegation with a mandate to seek the release of British hostages. Such travels can arguably be seen as 'freebies' (Ibid.: 129) enjoyed in the process of work or by virtue of one's (professional) achievements.

Strikingly, although Malik was trained as a pharmacist, he chose to work in the third sector media industry. What is more, Malik stresses that he is not in the media industry to make money as the primary objective but rather to make an impact. This

desire to make an impact can be seen as a sense of calling characterised by a ‘mix of [...] identity, meaning [...] and self-esteem [...] imbued with an almost overriding passion for [his work] and a sense of destiny and urgency about engaging in that [work]’ (Sassi, 2007). Seen in this light, it makes sense from an organisational perspective that Malik wishes to turn *Ummah Post* into a weekly newspaper. Overall, I would argue that socio-political and professional imperatives seem to matter more to him than commercial ones.

Friedrich of *Shalom News* perceives his work in the following:

I suppose what is satisfying about work [*at Shalom News*] is being able to voice one’s opinion, speaking candidly although obviously, there is a limited degree of self-censorship [...] We are not [the mainstream Jewish newspaper] which has to fight against very extensive self-censorship. That is what I find most pleasant. Even though our work involves a high degree of exploitation and self-exploitation like long working hours, it is a creative job about which I’m passionate (Friedrich).

Here, Friedrich cherishes the possibility of being able to speak out openly and honestly albeit with ‘a limited degree of self-censorship’. As hinted at above, *Shalom News* is owned by a publishing holding company which, as one might expect, has the potential to intervene in the editorial policy of the newspaper. A look at some research conducted on the impact of proprietorial intervention might be helpful in comprehending why Friedrich appreciates being able to express his opinion with relative freedom. Keeble, for example, comments on the prospect of newspaper owners interfering in editorial matters as follows:

There are many accounts of these proprietors interfering in the day-to-day operations of newspapers. Editorials have been written or re-written, layouts have been altered. Partisan politics [...] have been promoted. Favoured journalists have risen through the ranks; others have been sacked or pressurised into leaving. Newspapers end up being, not public watchdogs, but press lords’ poodles’ (1998: 36).

Intriguingly, the holding company does not intervene in the paper's editorial policy even though Friedrich recounts that *Shalom News* has been boycotted on occasion for its watchdog function reflected in the paper's overly critical reporting. This is a phenomenon that might affect the paper's circulation and income, and under given circumstances compel the owners to intervene. Of the boycott Friedrich notes:

As long as you are engaged in critical and independent journalism, you make yourself enemies. You must be able to cope with that. There are journalists and editors who say: I don't want to make enemies. I only want friends. Perhaps I might need the friends at some point. That's not my attitude. I'm of the opinion that as a journalist, one has professional ethics which dictate: I must observe things critically [...] maintain a critical view of all sides. Only then can one be taken to be a serious journalist... Our newspaper has been boycotted in the past by [certain sections] of the Jewish community, for example, here in Berlin. When the articles are too critical of the chaos in the administration of the Jewish community, decisions are made not to have the paper displayed or circulated in and around their premises. That is a good sign (Friedrich).

It can be said that a news producer who enjoys such leeway in editorial matters despite the risk of jeopardising the paper's circulation can count themselves as fortunate. This is because many newspaper owners seek to promote their financial interests from the outset and not necessarily to facilitate exclusive reporting as the primary goal (Keeble, 1998; Harcup, 2004). Viewed this way, Friedrich clearly favours socio-political and professional imperatives over commercial ones. However, the freedom in editorial matters at *Shalom News* is followed by exploitation and self-exploitation in the form of long working hours.

Commenting on the perception of his work, Gopal of *AsiaNet* says:

We are where we are now because of hard work, investment in hard work. Right from when we started in the 70s, we've worked hard to become the largest and most successful newspaper of its type outside India. We have a good reputation on the Sub-continent and [in Britain]. We've always set targets for sales and we've achieved most of them and

we've continued to aim higher. What has helped us is that we haven't rested on what we've achieved but always aimed higher [...] I'm approaching my late 60s but still work a five-day week. The [newspaper] business has changed a lot – become unpredictable, but thanks to our hard work and experience in sales, we've been able to do reasonably well (Gopal).

Unlike Malik and Friedrich who emphasise their desire to make an impact on public life in line with socio-political imperatives, Gopal appears more concerned with building 'a good reputation' and achieving 'set sales targets' and even 'aiming higher' in tune with commercial and professional imperatives. The very fact that he does not even mention any editorial aspects of his work to which *AsianNet* claims to attach great importance is revealing. This, I would claim, shows that commercial and professional imperatives dominate work at *AsianNet*, thereby pushing socio-political ones to the margins.

Of how he perceives his work at *Radio Shannakay*, Ashley says:

I love working with people. I love hearing people's stories and I feel we provide an opportunity for people to give their stories and give their opinions as they may be unheard in other media outlets. So, for me giving people that opportunity, seeing people progress from having very few skills either technically or naturally people's skills working with local communities is for me very rewarding. The job changes every day. I would never want to swap this place for anything else (Ashley).

Ashley notes his love for working with people, and hearing their stories. He gains satisfaction from seeing people make a progression in terms of acquiring and building on new skills. The passing on of such skills (broadcasting, inter-personal communication, administration and sales) in order to develop people's abilities with a view to helping them prosper is reminiscent of a devotion to a calling that is of service to society and is not normally motivated by financial reward (Soloski, 1989; Singer, 2003). As such, Ashley puts socio-political and professional imperatives before commercial ones. The revelation that he 'would never want to swap [his work] for anything else' says much about how he identifies with and values such work. Also, the

fact that ‘the job changes every day’ points to a variety of tasks to be accomplished with the associated excitement factor that comes with such variation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 129).

Lastly, Heinz of *Warburg Radio* views his work in this way:

What I appreciate about *Warburg Radio* is that people come here driven by a personal desire to want to make a change for the better in our society. That really motivates me most. This unique spirit to want to come together and do something about the multitude of problems facing our society is incredible. You can't buy that. To work with a group of people who are different from oneself in terms of age, professional backgrounds, ways of thinking is a huge group benefit, and also a huge personal benefit. Of course we have our squabbles every now and then. It would be strange if we didn't given the diversity of individuals active here. [The squabbles] can be painful at times, especially in the wake of constant changes to the way we work. We have the licence renewal coming up [in 7 months] and as always every one's nerves are on the edge. But that is part of the mix - It has always been that way. Having said that, there are not many places I would want to be like here (Heinz).

Heinz appears to revel in the inspiration generated by producers coming to *Warburg Radio* in order to make a contribution in making society a better place. This objective aligns itself with socio-political imperatives. Heinz notes that the ethos that drives producers at the radio station is priceless and that it is crucial in helping producers accomplish their work as a team. Indeed, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) assert that team work in the media industry is very significant considering the varied nature of tasks and individuals involved in media production processes. The authors add that where such a diversity of individuals prevails, tensions and friction become inevitable and can translate into envy, rivalry or even hatred. I did not observe any of these during my fieldwork at *Warburg Radio* but Heinz acknowledges that ‘squabbles’ are part of work at the radio station. He also says there are not many places of work he would swap for *Warburg Radio*. Also, the constant changes to the way producers at *Warburg*

*Radio* work have more to do with increasing professionalisation of organisational and production practices at the radio station.

A common thread running through the comments above is the passion producers attach to their work. Malik, Ashley and Heinz say they would not ‘give up’ or ‘swap’ their work for any other job. They also speak of wanting to make an impact on or contribution to public life in society in alignment with socio-political imperatives. But these producers also face numerous challenges. For example, Friedrich mentions long working hours and self-exploitation which are characteristic of much of the work in media and cultural industries (Banks, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). In many third sector media and cultural organisations, these aspects help to subsidise operational costs which is crucial in enabling survival in the marketplace.

Friedrich also alludes to ‘a limited degree of self-censorship’, thereby acknowledging the pressures exerted by proprietary and political interests. This is reminiscent of earlier studies on third sector media organisations which found that producers censored themselves in order to keep their financial sources and to maintain long-standing working relationships with institutional sources and politicians (Donohue *et al.*, 1997; Berkowitz and Terkeurst, 1999). This shows that many third sector media and cultural organisations are by no means insulated from proprietary and political interests as some literature has tended to suggest.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have tried to show that the shift towards the pursuit of wider audiences and broader themes resulted from the interplay between socio-political, commercial and professional imperatives. Sometimes it was successful as in the case of *Ummah Post* where producers covered Muslim issues in a critical, factual and fair

manner which earned them a reputation as experts in Muslim affairs. At other times, the interaction between these imperatives was not successful. A case in point was *AsiaNet* which traded off the provision of comprehensive news and information for extensive but superficial content in an attempt to attract a wider readership and maximise profit in tune with commercial imperatives.

The overarching argument in this chapter is that the provision of relevant and detailed news and informational content, which is unlikely to feature in mainstream public service and commercial media, is enabled either by the emphasis on socio-political imperatives or by a successful navigation between these and professional imperatives. An example of the former is the coverage of themes related to the awards event at *Ummah Post*. The latter is illustrated by programming revolving around social project work at *Warburg Radio* and news reporting at *Shalom News* and *Radio Shannakay*. All these companies display a hybrid organisational structure which suggests that this mode of organising is not only pertinent to the production of media content that responds to the needs and interests of audiences, but also encourages wider participation in this process.

By contrast, the bland and superficial news and informational content produced at *AsiaNet* clearly results from routinised news-making practices and tends to reflect the interests of advertisers and sponsors rather than those of the readership. The fact that commercial and professional imperatives dictate content invokes the gatekeeping theory I alluded to in the Introduction. In this scenario news accounts in third sector news production are not a result of producers' subjective experiences, attitudes and expectations, but a product of dominant commercial and professional interests.

This development 'bodes badly for the democratic generation and dissemination of information, images, and ideas' (King and Mele, 1999: 605). Given that the thrust of

third sector news producers is to try and 'redress the increasing monopolistic grip over what is produced and circulated in' (Ibid.) society, allowing commercial and professional interests to dictate organisational and production processes in third sector media and cultural companies threatens to undermine the social and cultural importance of such companies. In more drastic terms, this has the potential to severely constrain the ability of third sector media producers to 'function as both critique and corrective to' (Ibid.) the dominance of media content through commercial and political interests, a phenomenon that inhibits the facilitation of democratic practice.

## **5. Changing Imperatives in Documentary Film-Making in the Third Sector**

### **5.1 Introduction**

I analyse the ways in which third sector documentary film-makers respond to socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives and to systemic pressures in this chapter. I then assess how these different imperatives and pressures impact on how such film-makers view their work. I argue that third sector documentary film-makers enjoy a relatively higher degree of independence from commercial interests and pressures from subsidy, broadcasters and politics than third sector news producers.

As noted in the Introduction, documentary has been defined in terms of four functions, namely as a platform for publicising civic life, as ‘journalistic inquiry and exposition’, as ‘radical interrogation and alternative perspective’ and as ‘popular factual entertainment’ (Corner, 2000a: 2 - 3). Many documentaries fulfilling the first three functions observe, describe, explain and analyse (historical and contemporary) aspects of public life with a view to informing and improving our understanding of the world around us (Kilborn and Izod, 1997; Nichols, 2001). Some rally public support for one position instead of another (Nichols, 2001: 165) or advocate a given cause (Harding, 2001). It is this understanding that informs third sector documentary film-making.

At this juncture, it is helpful to explain how the different imperatives orient documentary film production in the third sector. Socio-political imperatives, to begin with, not only foreground the promotion of civic values and alternative perspectives but also encourage the interrogation and exposition of relevant issues in community and public life (Corner, 2000a; Harding, 2001; Rosenthal, 2007). Such expository and

questioning work is crucial given that it might not feature in the mainstream public service and commercial media.

Professional imperatives, by contrast, require third sector documentary filmmakers to prioritise the adoption of conventions that help organise and structure documentaries. Such conventions encompass skills, competence and a good sense of judgement all of which require producers to collect, frame and edit material in such a way as to change it from a mere record of actuality into a form which can be referred to as ‘documentary discourse’ (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 4). In other words, these conventions enable producers to ‘weld various components (words, music, images and sound effects) into an artefact that can have both functional and aesthetic appeal (Ibid.: 12). In doing so, nearly every stage in this process requires serious consideration of ethical issues as reflected in the commitment to the purpose of documentary work, to the funders of such work, to the subjects therein and to the audience for which such work is intended (Gross *et al.*, 1988: 6 *cf.* Katz, 2003; 334). Other important components of professional imperatives include budgeting, project management, administration, marketing and distribution (Harding, 2001; Rosenthal, 2007).

As mentioned in the Introduction, artistic imperatives in third sector cultural production have many dimensions. One of them means presenting work in interesting and compelling ways (Shaw, 2001; Downing, 2001). Another dimension concerns ‘the technical competence of the final work, its ambition and originality, its ability to communicate the ideas or feelings of its creators to audiences and the nature and longevity of its impact’ (Matarasso, 2000: 53). Other commentators have added to this the ability to question through creating challenging work and to make connections (DiMaggio, n.d.; Oakley, 2009a). In short, artistic imperatives in third sector cultural production generally, and in third sector documentary particularly, can be said to

embody ‘the ability to generate novel and useful ideas and solutions to everyday problems and challenges’ (McIntyre, 2012; 5).

Lastly, commercial imperatives compel documentary film-makers in the third sector to identify ‘a market that needs to be specifically targeted, but creatively so, as it is likely to be alienated by the aggressive strategies commonly found in [mainstream media]’ (Berra, 2008: 163). Such a market might constitute ‘an individual customer [say, a trust or foundation commissioning work for educational purposes], [or] a small customer group, with similar cultural needs, and personal characteristics, such as age, gender, race, interests, abilities, disabilities, income, or occupations’ (Ibid.). In many cases, however, it tends to comprise audiences whose needs and interests are not catered to by mainstream media. In some other cases, the greater the purchasing power of a given audience, the more likely market-oriented production decisions will dictate the nature and content of documentary work (Morrison, 2008b). In sum, such a market, according to Berra, should be of sufficient size to be profitable and sustainable, should distinguish itself from the mass market and have the potential of manageable growth by providing opportunities for new companies to succeed based on instinctive knowledge of the market rather than pure financial acumen (2008: 164).

Overall, these different imperatives compel third sector documentary film-makers to move in various directions. This is added to by systemic pressures which create great difficulties. I analyse below how producers respond to these difficulties and how these impact on the ways producers view their work. This chapter is organised as follows. Section 5.2 presents a brief historical account recounting the circumstances out of which third sector documentary emerged and how it organised itself from the countercultural period onwards. This is crucial because it helps us understand the context within which the different imperatives developed and the ways in which they

have tended to impact organisational and production processes in the sector. More importantly, this account enables us to make comparisons between such historical and contemporary processes.

With this in mind, I introduce five third sector media and cultural companies that are conceptually and structurally linked to these historical circumstances in Section 5.3. I chose to study these companies because three of them are direct products of the countercultural era and as such, enable us to chart the evolution of the respective organisational and production processes. The other two claim to support democratic communication. For these reasons, the five companies provide the appropriate context to analyse the response of producers to the different imperatives in the course of reaching out to neglected audiences and tackling broader themes in Section 5.4.

Section 5.5 examines how the interaction between the different imperatives impacts the form of organisation of the companies under study in this chapter and how this influences access and participation. The analyses in Sections 5.4 and 5.5 are important because they provide us with evidence which shows the degree to which documentary film-makers in the third sector facilitate democratic communication in accordance with their mission statements. Also, there are considerable overlaps between these sections. The categorisation into production and organisational processes is intended to highlight the crucial issues characteristic of each of these processes. In Section 5.6 I offer an assessment of how producers experience their work following competing imperatives and systemic pressures. Section 5.7 then marks the conclusion of this chapter.

## 5.2 Historical Development of Documentary Film-Making in the Third Sector

In this section I concentrate on two aspects in the development of third sector documentary between the late 1960s and the 2000s. The first aspect depicts the circumstances out of which third sector documentary was born. The second aspect describes how producers organised themselves. Also known as the workshop movement,<sup>23</sup> third sector documentary sought to record the prevalent political and social concerns at the heart of social movement activity. As we saw in the preceding chapter, some of these concerns included the anti-apartheid struggle, opposition to the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights and Feminist movements, squatting, student protests and industrial conflicts among others.

Spearheading the workshop movement were diverse collectives and cooperatives. Some of them engaged in the making of documentary films and videos that served specific communities and audiences. For instance, established in 1969 in Britain *Amber Films* documented traditional regional working-class communities in the North East, highlighting a culture that was perceived to be in decline as traditional manufacturing jobs disappeared and were replaced by low paid, casualised work in the ‘service sector’

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<sup>23</sup> See Dickinson (1999: 163 – 167) for a detailed discussion of the origins of the workshop movement in Britain. Some literature has tended to conflate the workshop movement and the (political and aesthetic) ‘avant-garde’ or ‘experimental’ movement but the two were not the same thing although both strove to distinguish themselves from the mainstream and commercial film industries. For clarification, I focus here on the workshop movement which primarily focused on socio-political work during the countercultural era and not the ‘experimental’ movement which concentrated on experimenting with film and video art out of the art school tradition and whose emergence is commonly associated with the establishment of the *London Film Makers Co-op* in 1966. For an exploration of the ‘experimental’ movement, see Rees (1999).

(Newsinger, 2009: 131). Other such pioneer collectives in Britain included *Cinema Action* (1968); *Berwick Street Film Collective* (1970); *Liberation Films* (1972); *Four Corner Films* (1973) and *the News Reel Collective* (1974) while the most prominent collectives in former West Germany included *Hamburger Coop* (1968) and *Kollektiv Westberliner Filmarbeiter – KWF* (1970).

By contrast, other collectives engaged predominantly in distribution and exhibition work. For example, *Angry Arts*, *Politkino* and *The Other Cinema* in Britain and *Rosta Kino*, *Kino Arsenal* and *MedienOperative e.V* in former West Germany were the most well-known at the time. In addition to the coverage of local issues, much of the work produced, distributed and exhibited by many of these collectives entailed critiques of American and English imperialism and showed a commitment to internationalism by documenting national liberation movements around the world (Blanchard and Harvey 1983: 232). Such work was rooted in the Griersonian tradition which utilises documentary film as a means of recording and communicating the real-life experiences of ordinary people albeit under state sponsorship (Swann, 1979; Aitken, 2010).

In order to try and achieve a significant impact, many third sector documentary film-makers in Britain strove to make films cheaply and independently which they toured in a bid to reach out to working-class and minority audiences in non-conventional venues across the country and to engage in discussions with such audiences after the showings (Dickinson, 1999). Where producers received subsidy from public institutions like the British Film Institute (BFI), the Arts Council of England (ACE) or the Regional Arts Associations (RAAs), they ‘saw no contradiction involved in making films about social reform within the context of state patronage’ (Ibid.: 129). It is important to note that this had been hitherto anathema to the third sector more generally.

In terms of organisation, the collectives favoured a horizontal way of working which was characterised by a commitment to equality and non-specialisation of tasks. Moreover, producers were keen to facilitate the involvement of ordinary people in all aspects of production. For example, ordinary people were allowed to look at and contribute to an unfinished film (Blanchard and Harvey 1983: 231). Although this tended to prolong the production process, it granted ordinary people the opportunity to shape the meaning-making process significantly in line with socio-political imperatives. Further still, although many third sector documentary film producers were very passionate about their work, ‘few managed to make a living out of their film work [which explains why many] worked at other jobs to earn money...’ (Ibid.). Nevertheless, they ‘remained faithful to their [...] cause and presented a picture of a group of dedicated and idealistic film-makers subjected to “hard work” [...] long hours and low wages’ (Swann, 1979: 26).

Changes in the socio-political circumstances from the 1980s onwards altered third sector documentary in that countercultural themes receded, giving way to the coverage of broader and more contemporary issues. As discussed in the preceding chapter such issues in Britain came to include the Miners’ Strike and Poll Tax protests among other things while anti-nuclear energy, anti-imperialist critiques and the effects of increasing urbanisation featured most prominently in (West) Germany among other things.

Paradoxically, although the 1980s witnessed a significant growth of the workshop movement, they also marked the beginning of its partial decline. During this period, the movement thrived partly as a result of stable public funding and partly due to the establishment of Channel Four in Britain which delivered third sector documentaries to television audiences. But then again, this generated stiff competition among the

different workshops for both subsidy and Channel Four broadcasting slots<sup>24</sup>. While some commentators saw this development as a distraction from the initial causes of third sector documentary (Dickinson, 1999), others noted the inadvertent need of the sector to ‘professionalise’ and ‘enterprise’. This meant not only conforming to television conventions and making money in order to become self-sustaining (Catterall, 1999) in alignment with professional and commercial imperatives, but it was also largely a response to the Thatcherite ‘enterprise culture’ that favoured entrepreneurialism over the reliance on subsidy.

By the early 1990s when Channel Four and the other public institutions that supported third sector documentary withdrew their funding from the workshop sector (Newsinger, 2009: 158), many producers either left the sector out of frustration (Dickinson, 1999) or moved to work for diverse production companies that made documentaries under traditional commissioning arrangements with diverse broadcasters (Robins and Cornford 1992; Doyle and Patterson, 2008). Particularly from the mid-1990s onwards such companies have been experiencing investment and economic growth following a period of consolidation (Elbing and Voelzkow, 2006; Chalaby, 2010). These developments explain why hardly any workshops survived beyond the 1990s (Newsinger, 2009: 167). Whereas some of the producers who chose to remain in the third sector recognised the need to ‘professionalise’, they sought to do so without ‘compromising [their] ideals’ as one of them remarked:

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<sup>24</sup> According to Hobson (2007: 75), Channel Four, through its *Eleventh Hour* stream (1982 – 1988), broadcast documentary films produced by workshops across the country that it helped fund. Many of these documentaries, according to both Hobson and Catterall (1999), comprised challenging and often original, innovative and provocative work that reflected the remit of Channel Four.

We sold our skills as crew to television to earn money, but we wouldn't make their films. That may have been an oddball position, but it says something about us. We wanted to make films we believed in. If TV wouldn't fund those, then it could do so through our making [of a TV programme] or whatever we crewed. We learnt our skills that way, which was useful. We were developing our craft, but we were not compromising our ideals (Interview *cf.* Newsinger, 2009: 132).

In the 2000s, the interaction between the ascendant artistic, professional and commercial imperatives in co-existence with socio-political ones places great demands on such producers. Based on the five selected third sector documentary film production companies below, I reflect on how producers therein respond to the contradictory demands of aligning their socio-political ambitions and artistic qualities with embracing documentary film conventions and seeking to earn money from their work in a bid to survive in the marketplace.

### **5.3 Third Sector Documentary Film-Making Company Profiles**

This section profiles five third sector companies producing documentaries. They include *Stratham Productions (1976)* (London) in Britain and the *West Berlin Collective (1978)* (Berlin), *Nordhausen Productions (1995/1996)* (Thuringia), *Fotolabor (1976/1977)* (Berlin), and *Dalberg Productions (1991)* (Berlin) all based in Germany.

**Third Sector Documentary Film-Making Companies under Study in this Chapter**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Finances</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
<i>Stratham Productions</i>	Britain	Micro	Hybrid	Not Available	Documentary films and numerous videos, news, training and diverse political work
<i>West Berlin Collective</i>	Germany	Micro	Horizontal	< £1.5 m	Documentary films and videos, training and political work
<i>Nordhausen Productions</i>	Germany	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	Documentary films and videos, industrial productions, news, features, reportage and training
<i>Fotolabor</i>	Germany	Micro	Horizontal	< £1.5 m	Photography, documentary films and videos, training and political work
<i>Dalberg Productions</i>	Germany	Micro	Horizontal	< £1.5 m	Documentary films, news, training and political work

**Table 2: A list of Selected Documentary Film-making Companies in the Third Sector.**

Here, I provide a summary of key data about the profiled companies. I focus particularly on their missions, company structure, finances and outputs. *Stratham Productions*, to begin with, is a London-based media production company specialising in the making of documentary films and engaging in community-led investigative journalism. It evolved from a video workshop established in the mid-1970s in East London. Today, *Stratham Productions* distributes documentary films and independent videotapes, provides facilities for independent producers, and runs training workshops in media production.

Similarly, the *West Berlin Collective* produces and distributes independent and politically committed documentary films and videos. It is based in Berlin where it was founded in 1978 by an informal group of six activists as part of the Squatters' Movement before it formally became a collective in 1987/1988. Additionally, the collective collaborates with both individuals and institutions involved in political and social work through the provision of media training and equipment.

*Nordhausen Productions*, by contrast, is a production company with a much broader repertoire. Based in Thuringia, the company aims to reach broader audiences with its diverse outputs. *Fotolabor*, initially established as an umbrella organisation for diverse underground publications in the 1970s, is a Berlin-based workshop specialising in photography and documentary. Similarly located in Berlin, *Dalberg Productions* is a production company which makes documentaries and news directed primarily at German-Jewish audiences in Berlin but also across Germany.

From an organisational perspective, *Stratham Productions* and *Nordhausen Productions* display a hybrid organisational structure while the *West Berlin Collective*, *Fotolabor* and *Dalberg Productions* exhibit a horizontal one. Apart from *Dalberg Productions*, all the other companies were founded by individuals who were involved

in the workshop movement during the 1970s and 1980s. With regard to finances, all the companies under study here are considered to be micro companies because they have less than ten core staff and record an annual turnover of less than £1.5 million pounds. Apart from *Nordhausen Productions*, all the others receive public subsidy. In reference to outputs, all the companies provide a range of other content in addition to documentaries. For instance, *Stratham Productions*, *Nordhausen Productions* and *Dalberg Productions* all provide news and informational content while *Fotolabor* engages in (social) photography. Overall, all these companies are involved in some kind of media production training and political work<sup>25</sup>. The latter, as we shall see below, informs some of the documentary films and videos produced.

#### **5.4 Documentary Film Production at the Case Study Companies**

In this section I demonstrate how the move away from making documentaries that tended to address particular groups to producing documentary films that targeted wider audiences in the early years was facilitated by a relatively successful navigation between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives. I note that subsidy and commissions from broadcasters played a significant role too. I then show how contemporary documentary film-makers in the third sector navigate between the different imperatives and systemic pressures.

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<sup>25</sup> By political work here I do not mean work associated in the narrow sense with political parties, but rather work that is undertaken by individuals or groups driven by the desire to make a positive change in society. An illustrative example of such work is provided by Nigg and Wade (1980: 31) who note that campaigning for tenants on council estates in using video or drama, making available photographs taken at a demonstration by a community group to those arrested for assault on the police and printing and designing posters for strikers are all political activities.

### 5.4.1 From Serving a ‘Well-knit Community’ to Broader Audiences

The *West Berlin Collective* aimed to reach the left-wing scene in Berlin from the 1970s onwards, particularly through ‘indulging in agitation and propaganda’. As Ralf remarks:

Twenty years ago I would say that we produced films that reflected the views of those concerned. This was particularly so because we made films as a part of the social movement. We were definitely partisan in that we indulged in agitation and propaganda which was the declared goal [...] (Ralf).

Similarly, *Fotolabor* which began life as an underground newspaper, strove to reach the left-wing scene in Berlin and keep it together in the early years as Hans comments:

Initially, *Fotolabor* produced its own newspaper until 1981 before it headed a coalition of a number of underground publications made for and by the [left-wing scene in Berlin] Out of these many publications came a single broad-based newspaper. Later we purchased [printing] equipment after moving [into new premises] and offered the different groups within [the left-wing scene] the chance to use [our facilities]. This was great because these groups came in and out to make flyers, posters or process photos and even design exhibitions. It made it easier to keep in touch with what was going on in [the left-wing scene] It was a well-knit community with strong ties which was the idea behind our plan to form a coalition in the first place (Hans).

*Stratham Productions* on the other hand targeted three local communities in East London in an effort to address some of the prevailing issues therein, especially housing problems and other associated issues like homelessness and squatting. Charles notes of this:

We were based in Hackney in the early 80s but we also did a lot of work in Tower Hamlets and Newham. It was very much moving between the three. For as long as I can remember, the three were, have always been, synonymous with deprivation, crime, housing problems, squatting, immigration etc But the way [local] authorities talked about these things made you think the problems created themselves. Often

you could trace that back to [the failings of the authorities] That became very clear when we were shooting *Home Streets At The East End* [a documentary about housing and homelessness in Hackney in the 1980s] (Charles).

These comments indicate that in the early years, third sector documentary film-makers tended to address specific communities and were motivated primarily by socio-political imperatives. However, as social and political circumstances changed, producers aimed to address wider audiences, a phenomenon that was driven by socio-political and professional imperatives on the one hand, and subsidy and commissions from broadcasters on the other. The *West Berlin Collective*, for instance, illustrates this transition in the following:

Between 1978 and 1984, we mainly produced video magazines which documented the eviction of squatters whenever we got a tip off about an action. We then disseminated that [within the left-wing scene]. 1985 to 1987 were quiet and very difficult years because we were struggling financially until 1988/89 when we formally became a collective. But 1988 was really the turning point before and during the IMF demo [An anti-imperialist demonstration against the summit convened by the International Monetary Fund in Berlin in 1988]. So, we filmed scenes on the streets and showed rough edits to people in parks and pubs. Although the quality was really very poor, some people found [the edits] quite interesting. We tried to get discussions going by putting [the events on the streets] into a general political perspective, you know, that capitalism was spiralling out of control. But it didn't really work the way we wanted so we gave that up although we managed to make *Rogue Imperialism* out of the material we shot. That was possible because we had become a collective and that made us eligible for grant-aid [...] and within two years, we made three films... *Rogue Imperialism* and *The Storm of Freedom Is Brewing* were shown in video cinemas... [while] *Steelworks Alarm* was bought by [a television station]. That actually got us new editing equipment (Ralf).

Regarding the nature of audiences the collective addresses today, he continues:

I wouldn't say we've got a particular audience that we address. It's rather varied. Our educational films fit in more with young people in schools and tertiary institutions, but also school dropouts with a last chance to obtain some form of qualification. [Our political films] are more suited to charities, campaign groups and

the kind of people they work with [...] We don't really have a clearly defined audience now like we did when we made films for [the left-wing scene] (Ibid).

In the case of *Stratham Productions*, Charles echoes a similar scenario:

Obviously the kind of films we've made over the years have tended to focus on what's currently happening in London. So, with those kind of films, we've tried to reach more people. It's not that we lost interest in East London or because we moved our office to [South London] in 1988. In the early days of Channel Four, the kind of agenda of Channel 4 was much more about programmes that might challenge popular assumptions. They might have been radical ways of looking at problems. They might have been opening up subjects that had never been talked about or simply exposing things that certain people didn't want exposed for whichever reasons. As long as they fulfilled those criteria, Channel Four was willing to fund them because there was a diverse audience for them. *Annexation of the Docklands* and *The 1990 Poll Tax Mellee* definitely fell into that category (Charles).

Similarly, producers at *Fotolabor* expanded the audience to which they disseminated their photographs in the late 1980s:

The focus was predominantly on shooting and disseminating photos for publication and exhibition in Berlin until 1987 or 1988 I think it was - for the simple reason that all the photographers were people from Berlin and the photos were taken at different spots in Berlin [...] We got in touch with photographers from other cities with time who sent photos from Hamburg and Stuttgart and later from other cities across the country [...] The interest in our photographs rose sharply after the fall of the Berlin Wall so we decided to open up our archive to an international audience while at the same time getting in more international photos (Hans).

In order for producers at *Fotolabor* to reach out to even more audiences, they added documentary film-making to their repertoire in the 2000s. According to Sven, this was after the realisation that social photography on its own would probably not have as much an impact as documentary film has:

When documenting events on the fringes of society, photos are a very useful medium for conveying the realities out there. But we've also realised over the years that photos cannot always capture the suppression and discontent of the disadvantaged. And to add to this is the danger of exhibiting demo photos [photos shot at demonstrations] all the time. We've been very conscious to try to avoid platitudes and that is very challenging. It's for this reason that we've been increasingly using film [...] over the last few years to get our message out using another medium (Sven).

Overall, the comments above suggest that from the mid-1980s third sector documentary film producers disseminated their documentaries (and photographs) to wider audiences than had been the case in the earlier years. Producers at the *West Berlin Collective* sparked this trend off by showing rough edits of shot material to 'people in parks and pubs' and later had two documentaries shown in 'video cinemas'. They even had one bought by a television station. Today, producers address an even more 'varied' audience. Similarly, producers at *Stratham Productions* addressed a much broader audience in the 1980s than in the earlier years partly as result of the collaboration with Channel Four. At *Fotolabor*, producers transitioned to disseminating their photographs to national and international audiences. In all the three cases, although the pursuit of broader audiences might appear to have been solely informed by socio-political imperatives, there are indications that suggest that other imperatives too were at work.

For instance, producers at the *West Berlin Collective* appear only to have been able to produce documentary films intended for broader audiences on acquisition of subsidy, a phenomenon that Ralf stressed had been controversial within the sector in the earlier years. Although subsidy helps to cover the costs of production and the remuneration of producers, it tends to come with strings attached which, in some instances, dictate the nature and content of the subject matter covered in a given documentary film and the audience for which it is made. I return to this below. It is, therefore, not surprising that the organisation that awarded grant-aid for the production of *Rogue Imperialism*, a documentary that aimed to expose some of the

demerits of advanced capitalism, maintained close links with trade unions. Although this might raise ethical questions about the degree to which subsidy and funders might influence the content, we see that *Rogue Imperialism* helps unearth the problems associated with advanced capitalism in the public interest. Here, one might claim that *Rogue Imperialism* results from a successful interplay between subsidy on the one side, and socio-political and professional imperatives on the other.

In a similar vein, it is only after producers at *Stratham Productions* acquired funding from Channel Four and the BFI that films addressing wider audiences were produced. Here, funding from a broadcaster and subsidy from public institutions came to the fore. As in (West) Germany until the late 1970s, accepting such support in Britain was seen by many in the sector to conflict with the principles of third sector documentary film production. The reasons for this were two-fold. First, producers generally distrusted the state and public bodies which were perceived to perpetuate the structural imbalances that producers themselves sought to address in the first place (Lewis, 1990). Second, some early producers rejected public funding for fear that this could potentially appropriate them into the establishment from which they sought to distinguish themselves (Dickinson, 1999). Those who accepted subsidy did so because they did not see any contradiction in making social documentaries with public support.

To understand why some producers broke with some of their ideological principles by accepting funding from broadcasters and public bodies, it is crucial to consider some developments that were geared towards enabling third sector documentary film-making to achieve a more significant impact. First, public subsidy in the 1980s was stable and available which helped producers to cover part or all the production costs for their work, thereby guaranteeing survival at least in the mid-term (Ibid.). Second, such producers were funded to make documentaries that addressed

themes of public concern in new, distinct and innovative ways (Catterall, 1999, Hobson, 2007). Third, and following on from the two points above, broadcaster funding and subsidy enabled more exposure of third sector documentaries to wider audiences than had been the case in the earlier years.

As such, this helped some producers to break out of the third sector 'ghetto', especially if they complied with television conventions associated with professional imperatives. Cases in point were the documentary films *Steelworks Alarm* by the *West Berlin Collective* and *Annexation of the Docklands* and *The 1990 Poll Tax Mellee* by *Stratham Productions* that were broadcast on both German and British television in the early 1990s. More on these documentaries follows below. Here, I would argue that socio-political and professional imperatives on the one hand, and funding from broadcasters and subsidy on the other interacted successfully to enable third sector documentary film-makers to reach wider audiences. The discussion now turns to the kind of documentary films that effected this transition.

#### **5.4.2 Professionalism in Contemporary Third Sector Documentary**

Similar to the pursuit of diverse, wider audiences, the transition from producing documentaries that engaged with specific, local and/or regional themes to making such films that tackled broader subject matter was made possible by the interaction between socio-political and professional imperatives on the one side, and subsidy and funding from broadcasters on the other. At the *West Berlin Collective*, for instance, this shift is best illustrated by looking at the subject matter tackled in the documentary *Stamp Out The Capitalists* which was made in 1982 and juxtaposing this with that addressed in the subsequent films at the close of that decade. *Stamp Out The Capitalists* records events on the streets of Berlin before and during an official visit of Ronald Reagan (the former U.S President) to (West) Germany in 1982 after attending

a NATO summit in Bonn. Prior to Reagan's visit in Berlin, squatters were evicted from various disused buildings across West Berlin, a phenomenon that led to widespread discontent within the left-wing scene in general, and the Squatters' movement in particular.

The left-wing scene therefore rallied support to protest against the evictions at what famously became the 'Anti-Reagan Demonstration'. The film *Stamp Out The Capitalists* did not use commentary but a passive, observational style letting events speak for themselves. In doing so, it juxtaposed the 'sanitised' images on mainstream television showing the conference venue and participants in Bonn with the images on the streets of the mass demonstration capturing special police forces beating up demonstrators in the vicinity of the barriers that fenced off the inner-city where Reagan's entourage was presumed to be. According to Ralf, *Stamp Out The Capitalists* was popular with the left-wing scene because it was propaganda proper intended to serve agitation purposes. However, the mode of documentary film production at the *West Berlin Collective* changed from the late-1980s:

We don't make films that way today. Although we are still part of the social movement, we operate differently I guess due to our personal development over the years and partly as a result of professionalism (Ralf).

Additionally, he remarks below that over the years, there has been a need to move away from the production of films focused on a handful of themes to a wider range of issues affecting the public:

Our coverage has broadened to [include] other subject areas over time. [These are] besides squatting and municipal development - migration, racism, anti-racism. A quite complex theme involves the debates about fascism in both the historical and current sense in this country but also the debates about neo-fascist tendencies in European society as a whole. The goal is to try and get as many more people as possible to think about how these problems can be combated (Ibid).

Ralf appears to attribute the shift away from tackling parochial subject matter to broader themes that respond to the concerns and interests of diverse, wider audiences to 'personal development' and 'professionalism'. Personal development can be understood in the context of improving self-awareness of one's work and defining or redefining one's identification with such work over a given period of time (Meyer, 1997). This is vindicated by Ralf's retrospective hint at the realisation that making propagandistic films did not always generate the desired results elsewhere in the interview. Professionalism can be viewed as a commitment to ethical considerations and conventions required to arrange ideas and subject matter into 'documentary discourse' (Kilborn and Izod, 1997) in an effort to explain and analyse problems in public life with a view to seeking solutions (Nichols, 2001). This points to a successful negotiation between socio-political and professional imperatives already in the 1980s that drove the making of documentaries which tackled wider themes at the collective.

Other films that benefitted from the successful interplay between these imperatives included the aforementioned *Rogue Imperialism*, *The Storm of Freedom Is Brewing* and *Steelworks Alarm*. In an attempt to capture some of the diverse themes of the day, *The Storm of Freedom Is Brewing* reflected on the slow but steady changes that were taking place in former East Berlin in the late 1980s that eventually culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall, while *Steelworks Alarm* presented an ethnographic take on the events that unfolded as part of a trade union protest at an engineering plant that was destined for privatisation.

At *Stratham Productions* in the early years, one of the first documentaries to be produced was *Home Streets At The East End*. The film tackled housing problems in Hackney which culminated in widespread homelessness and associated issues such as crime and discrimination. Many community members recorded in the film held the

housing authorities accountable for these problems, pointing to what they perceived to be inefficient and poor housing management given that many houses were often left empty for prolonged periods prior to redevelopment. But at the same time, squatters were being evicted without being offered appropriate alternatives, a situation that led to disturbances in many neighbourhoods. Overall, the film records the living situation of squatters in different neighbourhoods and documents some of the riots that erupted as a result of attempted evictions by the police. Also, much of the behind-the-scenes work of the Squatters' Union which strove to prevent the evictions and negotiated deals with the local authorities on behalf of the squatters features prominently in *Home Streets At The East End*.

From the mid-1980s, however, *Stratham Productions* expanded the scope of themes it engaged with from homelessness and squatting to animal rights, urbanisation and environmental issues among others. In particular, the theme of urban regeneration during this period became quite prominent in the wake of plans to redevelop the Docklands in East and Southeast London. Identifying this as a pressing issue, producers at *Stratham Productions* sought to highlight what they perceived as the benefits and limitations of the redevelopment plans, a move that harmonised with socio-political imperatives.

On the one hand, according to Charles, the regeneration of the Docklands appealed to many people in the area not only in light of the potential improvement of the physical setting and the economy, but also the creation of diverse social amenities for communities. This was not surprising considering that until that point the area had experienced relatively high levels of poverty and deprivation. On the other hand, however, Charles adds that some people voiced their concern that they could be driven out of their neighbourhoods, especially if it turned out that they could not

afford to pay the high rents demanded for the redeveloped housing. Others were anxious that the heritage of the area would be irrevocably destroyed and as such, were resentful of the redevelopment plans.

Addressing these complex circumstances in the documentary *Annexation Of The Docklands* made in 1987 when redevelopment was underway, producers outlined the history of the docklands, highlighting its initial status as one of the most prominent industrial ports in the world. The film provides a wider context of how the docklands became defunct in the late 1960s, exploring the gradual changes in (global) trade patterns that eventually fostered the decline of industrialisation and the impact this had on the surrounding area. Many of the accounts in the film were provided by community groups with which producers closely worked, interspersed with interviews of local authorities and former port workers. The documentary particularly focuses on the initial period when opposition to the redevelopment plans was at its peak.

Overall, it can be said that the timeliness of *Annexation Of The Docklands* points to how producers at *Stratham Productions*, in collaboration with communities, former port workers and local authorities, responded to a pressing theme in alignment with socio-political imperatives. Professional imperatives were displayed in the sense that extensive research into this relatively new phenomenon of urban regeneration in the 1980s was conducted over a lengthy period of time, yielding material which was combined with actual life situations in the communities and skilfully assembled into a 'knowledge-enhancing' documentary (Kilborn and Izod, 1997). Similarly, artistic imperatives were reflected in the technique used to portray the subject matter in an innovative and entertaining way in an effort to heighten the impact of the film. A case in point was the visual representation of forms of employment such as dockers and ship chandlers that no longer exist.

Additionally, subsidy from the BFI and funding from Channel Four also contributed significantly to the making of *Annexation Of The Docklands*. More importantly, its success also helped to secure further funding for *The 1990 Poll Tax Melee* three years later which juxtaposed mainstream media reports with eyewitness accounts of the events that unfolded during and after the Poll Tax demonstration in London in March 1990. Therefore, it can be said that the two documentaries marked a transition to the coverage of broader themes. Whereas *Annexation Of The Docklands* was facilitated by a smooth interaction between socio-political, professional and artistic imperatives, *The 1990 Poll Tax Melee* resulted from a successful navigation between socio-political and professional imperatives. Also, both documentaries benefitted from subsidy and funding from the BFI and Channel Four. Moreover, producers at *Stratham Productions* were able to make money from the two documentaries without compromising the social relevance of the themes.

*Fotolabor* also demonstrated a shift away from primarily recording themes revolving around squatting to documenting wider themes from the 1980s onwards, a phenomenon that required producers to navigate between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives on the one hand, and subsidy on the other. Producers at *Fotolabor* observed the detrimental effects of the rapid urbanisation in Berlin over a prolonged period of time and eventually made the documentary *The Victims of Urbanisation* in 2004. As a result of local government initiatives aimed at redeveloping the inner city since the early 1980s, two patterns emerged that this film attempts to highlight according to Sven. On the one hand, increasing urbanisation since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 has reshaped Berlin into one of the most prominent metropolitan cities in Europe which Sven acknowledges is beneficial in certain ways. In particular, many old housing estates have been either refurbished or demolished. In the latter case, new corporate blocks have emerged attracting businesses and

investments that have contributed to the city's economic growth in terms of employment and tax income.

On the other hand, however, this pattern has fostered a shortage of reasonably affordable residential units, rendering the rent prices in these blocks high. Particularly working-class tenants, the unemployed and immigrants who tend to possess a relatively low disposable income cannot afford such high prices and as such, have been hit hardest. Sven has observed that many have not only lost their homes, but that they are being pushed out of the inner-city and out of sight of the general public and foreign tourists. Indeed, a look at the photographic record Sven has assembled over the years shows many disadvantaged individuals retreating to the 'numerous backyards of the city' which are themselves 'being clamped down on'. Not only have such individuals 'been thrown out of these places', according to Sven, but 'a huge portion of the city's history has also been destroyed'. Having documented this pattern for years through social photography, he is very critical of the unresponsiveness of politics and mainstream media to these injustices and other associated problems such as racism and neo-fascism. Of this grim scenario, Sven remarks:

We keep making the general public aware of the fact that there are losers [as a result of the process of increased urbanisation], there are the poor, there is racism, there is fascism, neo-fascism and that this evolution does not only produce winners, but that it leaves many people on the fringes of society who no longer quite fit into the mould [of the city] due to social and political problems and are [therefore] displaced. They are driven out of areas such as train stations, areas where a given image of the city has to be cultivated and in this image, a certain and increasingly large group of people does not fit in. That is the dark side of this city (Sven).

The purpose of *The Victims of Urbanisation*, according to Sven, is the strong drive to inform the public of the prevailing social ills resulting from increased urbanisation. In harmony with socio-political imperatives, this documentary emphasises the significance 'to deal with aspects of the real world that [have] some

drama and perhaps importance – that we might do something about a particular situation or at least should be aware of it’ (Ellis and McLane 2005: ix *cf.* Chapman, 2007: 2). Furthermore, *The Victims of Urbanisation* ‘appear[s] to have special relevance to the socio-political world [in the sense that it] help[s] us to gain a better sense of the place which we as individual citizens might occupy within the larger order’ [and reminds us] that what we are witnessing can, potentially at least, spill over into the world which we or others like us inhabit (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 231).

Sven notes elsewhere in the interview that much of the material used for *The Victims of Urbanisation* was collected through prolonged years of observation, holding discussions with some of the victims, conducting interviews with local authorities and studying archival records on the subject. As such, aspects of real-life experiences were merged with other material gathered through social photography, observation, interview accounts and research and skilfully crafted into the documentary in tune with professional imperatives. From an artistic perspective, producers at *Fotolabor* utilised documentary not only to explain the process of increasing urbanisation, but also to make connections with its associated problems in an imaginative and compelling way. Here, socio-political, professional and artistic imperatives, coupled with subsidy, played a crucial role in the making of *The Victims of Urbanisation*.

Until this point, we have seen that in their attempt to reach broader audiences, third sector documentary film-makers successfully negotiated between socio-political, professional and artistic imperatives. At the *West Berlin Collective* and *Stratham Productions*, producers even made money from their documentaries without sacrificing the social purpose of their work. In the making of these documentaries, subsidy and funding from broadcasters were crucial. But although the latter help to cover production costs and producers’ remunerations, the strings attached to them can

sometimes impact the nature and content of documentaries in ways that pose considerable problems for producers. This is also the case with support<sup>26</sup> and commissions from broadcasters who might exert influence not only on the format (in terms of time and length) and style of documentary films, but also on the content and function such documentaries might fulfil (Corner, 1996; Kilborn and Izod, 1997; Rosenthal and Corner, 2005). I provide producers' accounts of these tensions and problems and then show how producers respond to these below.

### 5.4.3 The Struggle for and Negotiation of Autonomy

Sven of *Fotolabor* acknowledges the significance of subsidy despite the strings attached:

We are dependent on grant funding and subsidies to which we are entitled as a non-profit engaged in [socio-political] and educational work. Only with such funding are we able to pay rent for our premises and support our work. But again, the other problem is that not all our work can generate funding. Some of it is not supported for various reasons. Some funders may find it rather controversial and might want to have it their way. The last thing we want is to lose our autonomy. That's when the real juggling act begins (Sven).

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<sup>26</sup> Here, I differentiate between support and commissions from broadcasters because the two are not quite the same thing. By broadcaster support I mean the resources and facilities that a television station might put at the disposal of third sector documentary filmmakers such as funding, training, personnel, equipment and the use of its archival material. Such support is particularly offered by public access broadcasters who, although in theory are obliged to leave programme content to producers and concentrate more on 'the experience of media authorship and participation' (King and Mele, 1999: 608), might sometimes exert influence over the creative, technical and ethical facets of programmes in practice. By contrast, I use commissions in the traditional sense to mean the process of conceiving an idea for a potential documentary, actually making it and submitting it to the television station. In this instance, the station might not feel obliged to provide any support towards production beyond funding and yet may exert considerable influence on many, if not all, aspects of production (Kilborn and Izod, 1997).

Similarly, Charles of *Stratham Productions* echoes the same conundrum:

I would say the main areas of difficulty are basically to do with maintaining independence. So one aspect of that is – and it's particularly true in this country that funding is about control. So if you come with a viewpoint that is different to the one of the funders, they won't fund you which I have to say I have first-hand experience in. So it's difficult to get funding for what you really want to do and I don't want to do anything just to get funding. So that's always the dilemma if you like (Charles).

Further still, Ralf of the *West Berlin Collective* alludes to issues of funding associated with the kind of documentaries made as follows:

We've got no institutional funding. This collective runs solely on the help of volunteers. Much of our work engages with films covering social justice themes at the forefront of social movement activity and is mostly made possible by grant-aid. This makes it extremely difficult to develop a sort of infrastructure which is financially sustainable. I sometimes don't know how we manage, how we keep things going. It's muddling along with all sorts of financial problems. But well, we chose to do this. If we didn't like what we are doing, we wouldn't be doing it (Ralf).

He continues with reference to the distribution of such films:

[W]e face the problem that both our themes as well as the way we engage with them [are] non-mainstream. That is precisely our cause but obviously also our problem. This is a problem because mainstream media find our work far too controversial and provocative to be disseminated to their audiences. That is how our cause works against us, especially if you consider that there are rare slots for documentary film in the German television landscape as a result of intense competition. The access to cinemas is also very limited and very often, we are just not in a position to overcome the hurdles (Ibid.).

As hinted at earlier, the selection of given subject matter (and presentation style, more of which follows below) does not happen in isolation, but rather is closely linked to funding and distribution (Chapman, 2007). In other words, the budget available determines what theme will be explored and how it will be approached or presented (Ibid.). Given that many of the documentaries produced in the third sector are funded through grants awarded by public bodies, trusts and foundations or

support from broadcasters, the choice of the theme on the part of the film-maker is decisive. 'Such organisations', according to Chapman, 'attach importance to the *topic* for the documentary' (Ibid.: 60, emphasis by the author). For the film-maker, this means engaging with the 'right' themes from the perspective of the funder, a situation that might impact the autonomy of the former. Here, I mean autonomy in the sense suggested by Mark Banks in his analysis of the factors that impact cultural work in relation to the art-commerce dialectic. In that analysis, he defines the concept of autonomy as:

the capacity of individuals (and also institutions and organisations) to exercise discretion or apply freedom of choice; [...] the ability to determine the pattern and shape of [art and cultural work, and more importantly, to exercise] freedom from the particular demands and constraints of [funders]... (Banks, 2010: 252 – 253).

The understanding is that autonomy provides producers with the independence to be able to express their ideas, aspirations, imaginations, political views, emotion, observation or their own experience in creative and novel ways (Chanan, 2007). More importantly, such an expression should (ideally) remain unfettered from subsidy, funding and control from broadcasters. At *Fotolabor*, producers appear to strive to achieve a balance between retaining their independence and the influence from subsidy as the following example demonstrates.

In 2006, producers made *What Now For Johanna?*, a documentary which tells a story of Johanna, a 67 year-old disabled woman who used to work as a sales assistant before she became unemployed. This documentary was a response to a series of reforms which became known as *Agenda 2010*. Introduced by the Social Democratic/Green coalition government in 2003, *Agenda 2010* aimed to boost the weak economy by reducing health-care and welfare benefits, restructuring labour regulations and reforming the pension system. *What Now For Johanna?* set out to

highlight the adverse effects these reforms would have on disadvantaged groups across the country, particularly the unemployed, the ill, the disabled and the poor. According to Hans, one of the producers at *Fotolabor*, although it was widely believed that *Agenda 2010* would spark economic growth and reduce unemployment, this would happen at the expense of the disadvantaged who would be hit hardest:

We focused on Johanna, a former sales assistant who volunteers at the *Strassenzeitung*, you know, a newspaper for the unemployed and homeless here in Berlin. We collaborate with them so that helped. Johanna was just the perfect protagonist in the film because she's been disabled since childhood, has had 17 complicated operations and has experienced discrimination first-hand on the job. She's 67 years old and unemployed and like many others, she was going to lose her benefits. Everyone was talking about how *Agenda 2010* was going to bring about economic growth and reduce unemployment. But did it have to be at the expense of [the disadvantaged]? People weren't thinking about what the cuts meant for them. So, our message in the film was: This is not fair and we show why. This needs to be rethought (Hans).

However, authorities declined to fund *What Now For Johanna?* noting that it was 'too polemic and biased'. It was only after producers addressed these concerns that they received funding, pointing to a compromise between their autonomy and demands from subsidy. Hans notes:

[The media supervisory body] refused to fund it the first time we approached them because they felt it was too polemic and biased against the government. They thought we should have had more government perspectives in there explaining things from [the government's] side and less polemical language. We didn't feel that was accurate but we included some more official perspectives unsympathetic to our views and reworked a few scenes in the end. We got funding the second time round but that meant the film was completed later than scheduled (Ibid.)

By contrast, producers at the *West Berlin Collective* appear not to compromise their autonomy. This is reflected in their perseverance with documenting predominantly social movement themes which appear not to attract funding let alone be readily distributed through mainstream channels. It must be mentioned that

*Fotolabor* and the *West Berlin Collective* get many of their documentaries broadcast at Berlin's popular public access television, *Berliner Open Access TV*, which tends not to interfere with producers' work provided such work fulfils the technical and ethical (and sometimes artistic) standards of the station.

Similarly, producers at *Stratham Productions* go to great lengths to avert 'the kind of political control' attached to subsidy by adopting a series of cost-saving production techniques which Charles explains in the following:

[W]e have found various ways round [funding problems]. I mean one way round it is doing projects that are not about making independent film but using our skills and resources to do other things like [...] running workshops. Another way of addressing [funding problems] is having lots of low budget tactics for producing stuff. So you know – getting the best out of last year's technology rather than keeping buying new stuff, recycling stuff. [A third way is] getting independent commissions. And one of our survival strategies and a way to avoid this kind of political control through funding is by getting money outside the UK. So the work I was doing in Brussels was paid for the last 6 of the past 8 years. It was paid for us to do activities that were completely in line with what we wanted to do (Charles).

Here, the incorporation of workshops into core work, the adoption of 'low budget tactics', 'recycling stuff' and acquiring subsidies from Europe without strings attached serve as strategies to diversify the funding base at *Stratham Productions*, thereby averting the numerous forms of control associated with subsidy.

With regard to commissions from broadcasters, the situation appears much more complex. As hinted at above, scholars have found that broadcasters tend to exert significant influence over documentary film production which may generate a contentious relationship between them and documentary film-makers. This applies to third sector documentary film producers as well. Kilborn and Izod, for example, depict this relationship as follows:

The attempt on the part of institutions to exercise control over both form and content of documentary programming has inevitably led to strains and stresses in the relationship between documentarists and broadcasters. In particular, there is a growing feeling amongst documentary film-makers that the contemporary ecology of broadcasting has made it increasingly difficult to uphold some of the principal aims of documentary as they have traditionally been conceived (1997: 171).

As with subsidy from public bodies and other organisations, most broadcasters stipulate the requirements to which film-makers have to conform. Such requirements might include 'formats used, styles and approaches employed and even subjects tackled' (Ibid.: 169). Taking formats as an example, Charles notes:

In the past, we would have lots of meetings with the BBC people where they would say things like: We love what you're doing, it's just that you filmed it on U-matic or you filmed it on SVHH. So it's not broadcast standard. So they used to use technology as an argument [against our work]. We love it but we can't broadcast it. So they didn't have to engage in the politics of why they weren't going to show it. And as the technology converged, you know, we are using PD150s and they're using PD150s, they have to come up with other arguments (Charles).

This begs the question how third sector documentary film producers cope with such constraints. Charles says:

Definitely in the last 10 years, it's been difficult to get anything on television and not only for us but really for many independent social documentary film-makers which is why there aren't many left. I mean basically it is a kind of nearly extinct species. And *Stratham Productions* is one of the few sort of survivors [...] But anyway, for much of our work it's not always about making a finished documentary or short film but something extraordinarily simple like 5 – 10 minute clips showing a particular situation that might completely change people's perceptions or situation. And we get a lot of our films shown at screenings and festivals, especially at the BFI (Ibid.)

For producers at *Nordhausen Productions*, the case is different and more complicated due to their dependence on CGB, a regional broadcaster. Gerhard comments:

90% of our programming is commissioned. That is, we have an idea, make the programme completely and submit it to the CGB or the CGB makes a programme on a theme and may require equipment which we then loan out. This puts us in a position of dependence on them. It has advantages and disadvantages (Gerhard).

Indeed, one of the 'advantages' is illustrated by the production of the documentary *Safer in Exile than at Home*. Here, the interests of producers at *Nordhausen Productions* coincided with those of the CGB, allowing the former to maintain their autonomy while attending to the latter's demands. Dieter, who headed the production of the film, read in the newspaper about the story of a German Jew named Karl who had lived in Thuringia and fled the Nazi pogroms in Germany in the 1930s, spending more than five years on the run in Europe before seeking refuge in the Caribbean. Dieter wanted to make a film about this extraordinary story since it had special relevance to the region and touched upon the broader historical context of the situation in which German Jews found themselves at the time.

What is interesting about the documentary is the artful assemblage of historical accounts, archival material, photographs and the dramatic portraiture of Karl's personality. The film comes across as exploratory, educative, dramatic, tragic yet entertaining all at the same time. Given that Dieter's interest in this story coincided with that of CGB, he set about making the 'routine arrangements'. These included contacting Karl in the Caribbean, doing the obligatory research into the subject matter, writing the funding proposal, organising the shoots and postproduction in alignment with professional imperatives:

CGB clearly states that subjects must have an element of concern to the region. This can be either positive or negative and must be within either Thuringia or must be about Thuringia's involvement somewhere in the world. It can also be a subject addressing some political issue at the Federal level that has an impact on Thuringia, say, for example, the terror attacks [of 11 September 2001] generated strong reactions in Thuringia such as the tightening of security; funeral marches; condolence books;

solidarity with America; fear of war and so on [...] CGB immediately liked the idea because a) Karl lived here at the time and hails from a very wealthy and influential shoemaker business family, b) Karl's story is very unusual because he fled from a country of one dictator into the hands of another in [the Caribbean] who saved his life (Dieter).

Here, it can be said that the coincidence of interest between the subject matter of *Safer in Exile than at Home* and the requirements of the CGB enabled Dieter to exercise his freedom to express Karl's story artfully, entertainingly and skilfully, pointing to a successful navigation between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives. But this does not obscure the numerous 'disadvantages' brought about by the general dependence of producers at *Nordhausen Productions* on the CGB for commissions. One of these disadvantages emerges from 'a series of different forces (economic, political and cultural), some internally generated, others externally enforced' (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 170) that broadcasters more generally, and in this instance, CGB particularly are confronted with. These 'different forces' have fostered a reduction in commissions, leaving producers at *Nordhausen Productions* in a precarious position as Gerhard remarks:

Like many other independent production companies, we suffer from chronic underfunding. We don't generate that much profit anymore to enable us to pay all our costs, rent, technical equipment, vehicles. This has mainly been due to intense competition and [structural] changes at the CGB. Our financial situation has compelled us to try and go other ways. We seem to have found a way to combine our [television] commissions with industrial productions. We now have 2 – 3 major industrial productions each year and that number is increasing which is good (Gerhard).

Gerhard paints a future scenario in relation to industrial productions<sup>27</sup> and television commissions in the following:

I predict an increase in the volume of industrial productions because we are recording surging numbers every year. I also predict a reduction in the number of commissions from the CGB. They are not in good shape at the moment and I doubt that will improve in the foreseeable future (Ibid.)

*Stratham Productions* and *Nordhausen Productions* respond to the threat posed by broadcaster control to their autonomy in different ways. Producers at the former engage in work that is ‘not always about making finished documentaries or short films but short video clips’ that are intended to convey the intended message to viewers. According to Charles, such video clips are made accessible on the company website and viewers are encouraged to watch them through social networking sites such as ‘Facebook, MySpace, Flickr or even by word of mouth’. I also observed that producers at *Stratham Productions* benefit from the growing circulation of DVDs which can be easily purchased over the internet.

Illustrative examples of this concern two documentaries made by the company in 2009, namely *Random Incarceration* and *Save Our Cultural Landmark*. The former explored the notion of ‘extraordinary rendition’ whereby fundamentalist Muslim

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<sup>27</sup> Industrial productions, also commonly referred to simply as industrial, promotional or sponsored films, are films funded by corporate and charitable organisations. According to Prelinger (2006: vi), such films funded by the former entail commercial information targeting primarily customers, business partners and the public. Films financed by the latter, on the other hand, tend to publicise ‘donated services or other non-financial assistance’. Overall, according to Prelinger, ‘sponsored films encompass advertisements, public service announcements, special event productions, cartoons, newsreels and documentaries, training films, organisational profiles, corporate reports, works showcasing manufacturing processes and products, and of course, polemics made to win over audiences to the funders’ point of view’.

suspects around the world are pursued and captured by the U.S government in its 'war on terror'. Without adequate evidence of any wrongdoing, many suspects particularly in the mid-2000s were imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay. The film concentrates particularly on Afghanistan and Pakistan where many suspects were rounded up although the presence of some of them in those countries, as it later transpired, was unrelated to any terrorist activities. The documentary claims that at least two suspects had been in Afghanistan as 'missionaries or humanitarian aid workers'.

Although *Random Incarceration*, according to Charles, was rejected by the BBC on the grounds that it 'was too biased' and as such, 'did not fulfil the requirements of the documentary genre', the film nonetheless received favourable reviews in the media after being shown at a number of screenings. More importantly, producers at the company recorded significant interest from online DVD purchases both in the U.K and abroad. Similarly, the DVDs of *Save Our Cultural Landmark*, a documentary that exposed plans by local authorities to sell or demolish an old coal power station in Southwest London that 'represents a historical cultural landmark', sold well online according to Charles. One might infer, then, that the circulation of documentaries in this way helps producers circumvent broadcaster control.

Other means through which producers at *Stratham Productions* find a way around broadcaster control is by showing their documentaries at screenings and festivals, 'especially at the BFI' as Charles remarks. Festivals are an effective way of publicising documentaries because of their potential to attract the attention of a wide range of potential distributors or even a number of television commissioners. To Rosenthal, festivals are the ideal forums to place 'films with an innovative style, personal stories, films with political bite and films ... "on the cutting edge"' (2007: 373).

Screenings, too, serve a similar purpose and even go a step further in that they facilitate more interaction. According to Harding (2001: 171 – 172), screenings are a useful tool to address the target audience, particularly as they are cheap, mobile and interactive. He contends that depending on their organisation, ‘screenings can have more impact on the audience than other forms of distribution, even television’, especially if audiences are given the opportunity to interact with producers and ask questions they feel are not answered by the film and/or video. Indeed, virtually all the screenings that I attended involved information exchanges, debate and deliberation between third sector documentary film-makers and the audiences, thereby pointing to the social and cultural value of such documentary work.

Taken together, it can be said that the circulation of documentary work in the form of short clips and DVDs coupled with showing such work at film festivals and screenings represents a crucial means to circumvent the control exercised by broadcasters while simultaneously reaching wider audiences. These means not only offer third sector documentary film-makers more options to circulate their work, but they also enable producers to maintain their independence from commercial imperatives and pressures exerted by subsidy and broadcasters, thereby furthering their socio-political goals. This way, they enjoy a significant advantage over third sector news producers who have lesser options for the distribution of their content.

By contrast, producers at *Nordhausen Productions* respond to their precarious situation by utilising their skills to make primarily corporate industrial films. A study of the film catalogue at the company shows that industrial films made since 2006 fall into four categories, namely recruitment and training, teaching, demonstrating a product or promoting a service (Rosenthal, 2007). At the time of my fieldwork at *Nordhausen Productions* in April 2010, a promotional video for a furniture warehouse about to

launch had just been completed while another promoting a regional health and wellbeing company chain was underway.

Similarly, producers at the *West Berlin Collective* utilise their skills and equipment to make predominantly non-corporate films as a means to diversify their income base. Many such films have featured in exhibitions, presentations, public service announcements and (art and video) installations. An illustrative example hereof includes exhibition films for a 'refugee museum centre' in Berlin which was the first port of call for refugees fleeing Communist East Germany between 1953 and 1990. In regular intervals, the *West Berlin Collective* is commissioned to make films about the museum centre's educational programmes and other special events with a view to maintaining 'a [visual] record of the causes, process and consequences of the inner-German division'.

On a critical note, although all the alternative sources of earning money discussed above help producers to avoid the various forms of control, such sources appear to distract producers from the core task of making social documentaries. But then again, it is extremely difficult to make documentaries let alone to maintain general operation without sufficient finances. One could claim that embracing these income sources is essential to cope with the prevailing socio-economic circumstances and in a way, signals a degree of capitalisation in this typically under-funded sector.

Generally, the adoption of alternative sources of funding and distribution should be seen in relation to the present state of television. Ralf of the *West Berlin Collective*, Charles of *Stratham Productions* and Gerhard of *Nordhausen Productions* all point to the difficulty of getting their documentaries on television in their comments above. For example, Ralf notes that mainstream television finds documentaries produced at the *West Berlin Collective* 'far too controversial and provocative to be disseminated to

[its] audiences'. This results in the exclusion of alternative perspectives alluded to in the Introduction. Gerhard notes that structural changes<sup>28</sup> at the CGB have gradually generated a reduction in the commissioning of socio-political documentaries and predicts no betterment of the situation 'in the foreseeable future'. Kilborn and Izod capture this general development well when they note that:

[t]he rapid changes in the structures of broadcasting have also brought greater pressure to deliver work against ever-tighter deadlines and often with reduced budgets. It is now generally accepted, for instance, that as much time (if not more) will be spent in attempting to secure commissions as in the actual production. The requirement to complete projects within much shorter periods than hitherto is felt by many producers to be particularly invidious, since it has been long considered that a vital prerequisite for a successful documentary is the opportunity to pursue detailed research (1997: 191).

Additionally, both Charles and Gerhard also allude to intense competition for the few documentary slots on television. Chanan (2007: 8), for instance, asserts that social documentaries face competition from lavish series, docu-soaps and reality shows in television which have grown in demand thus rendering broadcasters to reconstruct their schedules in the attempt to keep hold of their audiences. This development, he notes further, has made it very difficult for producers to evade the logic of the channel controllers, since television is a buyers' market.

Overall, we have seen in this section that producers at the companies under study in this chapter transitioned from targeting specific audiences with relatively limited themes to addressing broader topics directed at wider audiences from the

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<sup>28</sup> For a general and comprehensive discussion of the significant changes that have fundamentally altered the operating principles of public service broadcasters across the Western world over the last thirty years, see Curran (1991); Blumler and Gurevitch (1995); Curran and Gurevitch (1996); Tracey (1998); Murdoch and Golding (2005) and Curran and Seaton (2010).

1980s onwards. This transition was enabled by the successful navigation between socio-political, professional and artistic imperatives on the one side, and subsidy, funding and support from broadcasters on the other. I also showed how contemporary producers utilise various means to circulate their work, thereby working around commercial imperatives and broadcaster controls to promote their socio-political agenda in ways that some third sector news producers are unable to. I now turn to the discussion of how producers' responses to the different imperatives are reflected in the organisational processes at their companies below.

## **5.5 Organisational Processes at the Selected Case Study Companies**

This section is concerned with how socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives impact access to and participation in the organisational processes of the companies under study in this chapter. I discuss the mission of some of the companies to give a sense of what producers set out to do. I then follow with an analysis of how producers negotiate the different imperatives in an effort to facilitate greater involvement in participatory film-making.

I describe the organisational structures around which producers work, which are sometimes hybrid and sometimes horizontal. I show that the former results from the interaction between socio-political and professional imperatives while the latter signals the commitment to socio-political imperatives. In doing so, I pay particular attention to how both forms of organisation enable or constrain wider participation. I describe the two commonly used narrative structures associated with socio-political and professional imperatives respectively. I then analyse how producers compromise between these imperatives, drawing attention to how the narrative structures influence wider involvement in the production process.

### 5.5.1 Participatory Film-making in Third Sector Documentary

*Stratham Productions* works primarily with community groups across London. In the production of documentaries, producers at the company attach great importance to building a ‘mutually beneficial’ relationship with participant groups as Debbie comments:

*Stratham Productions* has a personal approach to documentary production. We respond to individuals, not solely issues and take the time to develop a relationship that is mutually beneficial with participants. We have a fairly informal environment where anyone is welcome to contribute an opinion whether here for 1 day or 20 years. There is trust put on individuals to manage their own time, work and feedback as and when necessary (Debbie).

With reference to the kind of themes the company sets out to cover, she continues as follows:

*Stratham Productions* is a micro-production company that provides a voice to those people and issues under-represented in the mainstream media. There is a focus on access and participation across *Stratham Productions*’ work, which covers themes of urbanism, regeneration, gentrification, displacement etc. and social conscience [...] *Stratham Productions* is often commissioned to work in partnership with a number of community-led projects as a media partner. Although this does not always end in a film, it’s still worthwhile because offshoots emerge from which many films have been made (Ibid.).

During my fieldwork at *Stratham Productions* I assisted on one of the ‘offshoots’ called *Nature Before Olympics* which comprised a series of short documentaries. Following up on how the idea for this documentary emerged, I learnt that the selection of the subject matter treated in this film stemmed from ideas and actual experiences gained while *Stratham Productions* worked on a commissioned five-year partnership programme with community-led projects around London.

Work on *Nature Before Olympics* began in 2005 after it transpired that several natural spaces were to make way for the construction of some of the facilities for the

London 2012 Olympics games. The short film series documented the resistance of a number of communities to these plans both before and during the construction phase, helping them to express their emotional situation (Grigsby, 1995: 8 – 9 *cf.* Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 7). Although some participants took a leading role in the making of this documentary in line with socio-political imperatives, professional imperatives emphasised the need for direction and power to be in the hands of a film director or production crew to effectively realise the film project (Rosenthal, 2007). Chapman, for example, contends that relinquishing too much authorship and power on the part of the director or production crew ‘amounts to a gamble with creative vision’ (2007: 15). Based on participant observation at *Stratham Productions*, I agree with Chapman’s contention, as producers there were very much aware of this conundrum.

Indeed, in an effort to maintain the ‘creative vision’ of *Nature Before Olympics* and to observe the conventions of ‘documentary discourse’, producers assumed a more creative and directorial role. For example, I witnessed many instances where ‘events [were] specially orchestrated to make them more amenable to capture by the camera [while] [i]n other cases subjects [were] directed in such a way that their “contributions” fit[ted] in with the film-makers’ preconceived notions of what [was] required’ (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 199).

However, striking the middle ground between involvement and control in the making of documentaries such as *Nature Before Olympics* can be difficult. At one point during one of the shoots, Debbie admitted to the challenge and exhaustion of managing the sometimes very different motivations and expectations that participants brought with them to the project. Nevertheless, she felt on the whole that combining the participatory approach with *Stratham Productions’* direction had proved to be productive. Indeed, many participants appeared enthusiastic and happy about the

overall execution of the project, pointing to a successful interplay between socio-political and professional imperatives.

Similarly, *Fotolabor's* mission facilitates wider involvement as follows:

We encourage people to portray issues that concern them from their own perspective. This principle is very important. We don't go out there as journalists and practically report about people and the way we see things. We engage in exchanges with active groups and encourage them to shoot photos, make [documentary] films and offer them any help they might need and ultimately disseminate their work in different forms whether as an exhibition or a slide show on the Internet or as a book or poster or film or whatever. Though we are clearly aligned with the left-wing movement, we are un-dogmatic in encouraging people to organise themselves. It is not only about squatting or protesting against neo-fascists, it's also about finding and expressing their voice in their own way and on things that mean something to them (Hans).

Hans underpins this by offering three examples showing how producers at *Fotolabor* facilitate access and participation in the process of making meaning. One of these concerns involvement in the making of *Alternative Living*, a film documenting 'alternative styles of living' in which residents allegedly live in an environmentally-friendly style. Of this, he says:

Siegfried lives in a municipality where there are so many self-administered housing projects with alternative styles of living. People there depend primarily on gardening and recycling to survive. He wrote a book about this and uploaded photos on the Internet. The photos were really so good that we lent him our equipment and he shot quite interesting stuff which we made into *Alternative Living* that exceeded our expectations. It did incredibly well (Ibid.).

Another example of wider participation involves the recording of civil disobedience activities during anti-nuclear power protests:

I come from the region where Gorleben [a small municipality in Germany best known for its radioactive waste disposal facility and frequent anti-nuclear protests] is located, where a permanent deep repository for radioactive waste is being built. When the transportation of radioactive material is scheduled, I like to go over there and take part in the demonstrations [...] Because there is so much going on, you can't be

everywhere at the same time. So what we do is get a couple of people to shoot photos and film events at different spots. Over the years we've accumulated many photos and film clips that way (Ibid.).

In the last example illustrating wider involvement at *Fotolabor* in alignment with its mission, Hans comments on the documenting of perceived inhumane conditions at a refugee hostel:

Or Mohammed was a refugee who fled Sudan and had to live under extremely difficult conditions in a refugee hostel and was also attacked by neo-Nazis. He shot very nice photos of the refugee movement within the hostel where refugees spoke out about the miserable conditions under which they were housed. The photos were really shocking. This brought [the refugees] a lot of attention and sympathy and led to some changes to the system and some are still in revision (Ibid.).

In addition to *Stratham Productions* and *Fotolabor*, the *West Berlin Collective* too promotes greater participation in the making of documentaries. This is reflected in the work which producers at the collective set out to do:

Our work is predicated on partnerships, collaborations and advocacy work. This happens in two ways; we support political campaigns with which we identify in that we pick up the topics they raise, make our equipment available if needed, we offer an infrastructure for people to express themselves through film or video [...] And it's not that we only try to get people to present themselves through film alone. We also support them with exhibitions, workshops and training (Ralf).

Ralf illustrates this by recounting a story of two punk trainees - Gisela and Inge - who documented events taking place at an old venue (*Kulturfabrik*) in Berlin which is popular with the left-wing scene and diverse subcultures, but has been under threat of closure since 2009. The threat of closure, according to Ralf, derived from the fact that because *Kulturfabrik* is located centrally in Berlin, the local government was being tempted by property developers to demolish the venue in order to build business and residential blocks that would earn the local authorities additional income in taxes. As such, the rationale behind the short documentary *Hands Off Kulturfabrik* was to

highlight the significance of the venue in providing a platform for artists and performers from the margins to express themselves. Some of the events that take place at *Kulturfabrik* include music performances, community drama, poetry slams, working-class cabaret and public lectures among others. Of participatory film-making at the collective, Ralf remarks:

Just recently we had two trainees here – *Gisela and Inge* who are two young punks who came here and said that they wanted to make a [documentary] film about *Kulturfabrik*, a well-known concert hall here which the local authorities want to close. The two visited events there over a period of 3 months and filmed what went on there during this period. We've now uploaded the short film and 18 photos of the material shot at events in *Kulturfabrik*. Among the things I was really happy about was that both of them continually brought with them better photos which suggested that they had developed a feel for photography. And the images too were looking better each time they came back although I did do some filming myself. They told us just last week that they were offered a placement at *Kulturfabrik* in recognition of their photos and short film and that there is a prospect of transforming [the placement] into a permanent position. It is very rare that something like that happens and I would be very happy for them if it really worked out. The other good news is that *Kulturfabrik* has bought the film for its advocacy campaign and they want us together with *Gisela and Inge* to work on another for their upcoming [thirtieth] anniversary (Ibid.).

In line with their mission, producers at *Stratham Productions*, *Fotolabor* and the *West Berlin Collective* set out to encourage greater involvement in the meaning-making process as *Nature Before Olympics*, *Alternative Living* and *Hands Off Kulturfabrik* respectively demonstrate. This way of working, mostly known as participatory film-making, allows ordinary people and diverse marginalised and disempowered groups a greater sense of ownership of and control over the production process (Miller, 2009). Kilborn and Izod contend that 'the act of filming takes on a decidedly political aspect in that it will often help the participating individuals to discover or redefine their feelings of what it is to be members of that community' (1997: 213). Moreover, this imbues the documentary with credibility and authenticity (Lazarus, 2001). Ultimately,

this can be seen as an attempt to ‘redress the balance in a relationship which has always traditionally favoured the documentary producer’ (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 214), thereby suggesting a dominance of socio-political imperatives. In this ‘relationship’ the direction and guidance of producers can be seen to reflect professional imperatives.

Whereas participatory film-making has been accused of emphasising the quality of the process rather than the outputs (Harding, 2001; Gregory *et al.*, 2005), the documentaries described above demonstrate that the respective producers were able to facilitate the process while at the same time paying attention to the quality of the documentaries. Moreover, *Alternative Living* made by *Fotolabor* and *Hands Off Kulturfabrik* by the *West Berlin Collective* earned producers some income. Having looked at how participatory film-making facilitates wider involvement, the discussion now turns to the impact of the hybrid and horizontal organisational structures on participation.

### **5.5.2 Organisational Structures Serve Different Motivations**

*Stratham Productions*, which having started as a collective in the earlier years, emphasised a decentralised way of working in line with socio-political imperatives. Today, it displays a hybrid organisational structure. Charles comments on this evolution as follows:

[The organisational structure] has kind of evolved in a funny way which is why I suppose in some way I feel responsible for every area. I kind of like get involved in every area because I always kind of thought that independent film-making meant that that’s what you did. You got involved in everything. You know, you need to know about budgeting, you need to know about contracts, you need to know about what happens when a machine stops working or how to do lighting or you know whatever. It’s never been separated into job functions really and it wasn’t that long ago that we’ve kind of started to be a little bit like Julie is definitely concentrating on post-production, Debbie is definitely concentrating on project co-ordination and

fundraising but both of them do filming and the same with me. So, there's a bit of a hybrid I suppose (Charles).

The same mode of organisation is echoed by Gerhard of *Nordhausen*

*Productions:*

For some time now, we moved on to kind of get people to specialise in given thematic areas. Our experience showed that it's much more effective to get things done if everyone concentrated on given areas where they have expertise and are familiar with things like research in those areas. For example, Claudia, Mathias and Andreas specialise in social themes, Ute and Ariane in [cultural programming], Edmund on political issues. I myself do a bit of everything really, though I normally concentrate on [...] acquiring industrial commissions of late. But, of course, every one of us is always on the lookout for potential programme ideas across all the thematic areas. Occasionally, we revert to everybody doing a bit of everything as need arises because flexibility in our job is a key factor (Gerhard).

Hans of *Fotolabor* reflects on the current organisational structure at the company when he says:

Even after we consciously transformed into a non-profit organisation - because it was in our interests to invest in meaningful political and educational work like offering regular workshops and seminars as well as trainee placements for young people - our sense and way of collective working remained the same. Sven is formally the head of the company but that's more a legal thing. We all have equal rights and that applies to the people we work with as well. People who wish to work here are encouraged to bring their own themes with them, issues that they are concerned about. I don't think we would be able to work well with people whom we had to tell what to do. It's important that they have an ambition and passion. It's important that their socio-political view of things sort of matches ours. Our experience here so far has been that most young volunteers who come to us are highly politically motivated and they enrich our work by bringing in fresh perspectives or new ways of thinking (Hans).

Similarly, the form of organisation at the *West Berlin Collective* and *Dalberg Productions* demonstrates horizontality reminiscent of the 'collectivist-democratist' way of organisation in the early years. In the former case, the decentralised mode of organisation 'is more stable' and manifests 'less points of friction' than in the earlier

years because its feasibility has been ‘tested over and over again but has withstood numerous challenges’ according to Ralf. Moreover, it is the way in which documentaries are produced ‘as a collective and not as a hierarchically structured entity’ that motivates producers to pursue their work. At *Dalberg Productions*, Bianca notes that ‘every [producer] must be in position to do a bit of everything and it’s always been that way’.

Overall, although *Stratham Productions* and *Nordhausen Productions* are both characterised by a hybrid organisational structure, they facilitate participation in completely different ways. At *Stratham Productions*, participatory film-making seemed to fit well within the company’s mode of working. At *Nordhausen Productions*, by contrast, the hybrid structure of the company did not seem to leave much room for wider participation. The closest it came to this was through formal internship training although there did seem to be exceptions. Such exceptions involved a number of activist groups which use the company’s facilities regularly to produce campaign videos and short films. Although *Nordhausen Productions* clearly identifies with such work, the company rarely feeds this work into its core documentary work. Instead, such campaign work is largely confined to the company’s website. Gerhard notes:

I like to think that we do almost 100 per-cent professional [work]. Committing three errors in programming for the CGB or several errors in a row means you don’t get any more commissions. This incentivises you to work professionally or you are out of business sooner than you think. We do have the technical equipment and a good team to achieve this. Anything that falls below the required standards at the CGB would ruin our reputation... But the material for our advocacy campaigns is usually in the form of rough edits, unless we want to make short films for screenings or festivals or if campaign groups want to have DVDs for their work... We strictly don’t mix the two at all (Gerhard).

The hybrid structure exhibited by *Nordhausen Productions* is characterised by two organisational contexts, namely the core one comprising the ‘good team’ which ‘works

professionally' and the peripheral one accommodating activist groups. Despite the fact that both groups shared many goals, these groups produced their work with different motivations. The 'good team' was clearly driven by professional and commercial imperatives while the activist groups prioritised socio-political goals. Having shown how participatory film-making and organisational structures impact participation, I now examine how narrative structures in third sector documentary enable or constrain wider involvement.

### **5.5.3 'Treating the Subject Matter in an Impartial Manner Waters Down the Viewpoints'**

In an effort to convey real-life experiences effectively, documentary film-makers generally do not simply chronicle such experiences. Rather, they employ given structures to transform '[these experiences] from a mere record of actuality into a form which we can refer to as "documentary discourse"' (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 4). This 'act of transformation' can be said to constitute three structures, namely argumentative, observational and subjective, all of which portray actuality in different ways (Corner, 1996; Rosenthal, 2007). Third sector documentary film-makers use the argumentative narrative structure, also known as the 'problem-solution structure' (Nichols, 2001: 66) in the form of an argument which is either explicitly presented by the narrator with the help of examples that clearly explain the points being made or implicitly when presenting the audience with a couple of carefully chosen examples in an effort to enable the audience to form their own opinion (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 126).

Furthermore, this style is characterised by a voice-over narration which is meant to appear authoritative. The voice is usually of a person off-screen although it may sometimes be of a person in the story (Cizek, 2005: 85). This authoritativeness of

the argumentative narrative structure tends to be linked with the notion of objectivity which is seen to provide an accurate portrayal of facts especially when the voice-over narration is of a person off screen (Kilborn and Izod, 1997). As such, the argumentative narrative structure can be said to align itself with professional imperatives.

The observational structure is associated with observation and is said to focus on documenting 'life as it happens' with minimal intervention of the producer (Corner, 1996). I highlight the main problems with this assertion below. In any case, it reflects an objective narrative style associated with professional imperatives. On the other hand, the subjective narrative structure is utilised to select specific aspects out of a given context and then present them from a particular interpretive perspective which may reflect a commitment to a political and social agenda that foregrounds socio-political imperatives (Harding, 2001; Cizek, 2005; Zheutlin, 2005)

Below I show that some third sector documentary film producers sometimes combine the argumentative and subjective narrative structures while at other times they apply only the latter. Others subscribe only to the subjective narrative structure. Bianca of *Dalberg Productions*, for example, explains how she tries to counter stereotypes and misperceptions about Jewish people in Germany by combining a detached tone in the presentation of facts with the incorporation of testimonies of contemporary witnesses to support the facts in her documentaries:

In essence, our work is all about Jewish life. It's not primarily about the past but we do obviously allude to the historical circumstances and how we think they relate to certain aspects of life today. If you watch public service television, you will notice that [Jewish life] is reported on in terms of the holocaust, usually in January and November or in terms of the rich [wealthy Jewish people] or the Middle East crisis. Such reporting is usually laden with stereotypes that are always reproduced. We try to counter [these stereotypes] and lots of other misperceptions by presenting facts from

a detached stance in so far as this is possible and then backing them up with the testimonies of contemporary witnesses, for example. From experience I know that getting [contemporary witnesses] to give their testimonies can be so moving. It works a lot with emotions and if at the end of it all, people can relate with and think about what they've seen and heard, I can't think of a better way that reflects what the real situation is, [portraying] ordinary [Jewish] people who like everyone else have problems and may be rich or poor (Bianca).

Here, 'presenting facts from a detached stance' is reminiscent of the argumentative narrative structure in which the narrator explicitly or implicitly illustrates the points being made in order to enable the audience to draw their own conclusions. Also, Bianca's presentation of facts from a disinterested vantage point is mirrored in the objective narrative style which strives to record reality as it happens with minimal interference of the producer and in line with professional imperatives. The use of testimonies by contemporary witnesses to back up the 'facts' provides a compelling account of events. Such an account is usually skewed towards the protagonists in the story and can be seen to be subjective in that it emphasises a slanted and reflexive viewpoint that promotes a given stance explicitly. This mirrors the subjective narrative structure which harmonises with socio-political imperatives. As such, the narrative structures that Bianca applies here clearly complement each other in an effort to accommodate wider perspectives.

In a similar vein, Dieter of *Nordhausen Productions*, Charles of *Stratham Productions* and Sven of *Fotolabor* in their documentaries *Safer in Exile than at Home*, *Random Incarceration* and *The Victims of Urbanisation* oscillated between the argumentative and subjective narrative structures. Dieter emphasised that his documentary was about 'making a statement about the effects of the actions of the Nazi regime' and as such, was informed by detailed research providing the facts that complemented Karl's testimony and dramatic portraiture. Charles too pursued detailed research to gather facts as reflected in the numerous interviews conducted with U.S authorities and the

victims' lawyers, a visit to Guantanamo Bay coupled with a study of media reports and victims' own accounts. Sven likewise made use of facts collected from long-term observation, conducting interviews with local authorities, amplifying the accounts of marginalised groups and studying a host of media reports on the subject.

But the combination of the argumentative and subjective narrative structures is not without its controversies bearing in mind that the application of objectivity in documentary has in the past been fiercely contested and continues to be so today. Emile de Antonio, one of the most prominent socio-political documentary film-makers between the early 1960s and late 1980s in the United States, for example, noted of objectivity:

The assumption of objectivity is false. Film-makers edit what they see, edit as they film what they see, weight people, moments and scenes by giving them different looks and values. As soon as one points a camera, objectivity is romantic hype. With any cut at all, objectivity fades away (Interview *cf.* Zheutlin, 2005: 158).

I agree with these comments. Such intervention is reflected, for example, in the mere selection of a given topic and the filming of the related material, both of which can be said to be based on subjective decisions (Harding, 2001). This seems to be the case with Bianca of *Dalberg Productions* who selects and documents events she perceives to be important in the German-Jewish community of which she is a member.

Chapman builds this line of thought further by posing a key question that third sector documentary film-makers should ask themselves when reflecting on the notions of objectivity and subjectivity:

[U]nlike apparently objective news reporting, documentary requires a strong expression of personal theme. How can the documentary maker convey a personal understanding or opinion of the content and people filmed if there is an obligation towards objectivity? The idea that this is a desirable goal is relatively recent, emerging from television journalism with its aim of presenting both sides of a story (2007: 10).

I think Chapman makes a convincing argument here that objectivity has no place in documentary<sup>29</sup>. She notes further that ‘the documentary film-maker has an obligation *not* to be objective’ because they ‘are interpreters of the world rather than objective recorders of reality’. She adds that ‘if the film-maker cannot be truly objective, this is not to say that he or she cannot search for “truth” as perceived’ (Ibid.: 11, emphasis by the author).

Kilborn and Izod take this line of argument a step further by providing a compelling account about the ‘level of objectivity’ achievable in the process of ‘interpreting the real’:

[D]ocumentaries can never be any more than a representation or an interpretation of events and issues in the real world. In other words, for all their claims to present the world as it is and their attempts to engage the attention of their audiences by the force of their argument, documentaries can never attain the level of objectivity to which they sometimes aspire. Thus, whilst many viewers may be disposed to believe in the general truthfulness of the account (especially when it has the mark of some institutional authority), they are aware that the account offered is one that is seen from a particular perspective. [And although] [d]ocumentaries can sometimes be powerfully persuasive; on the other hand, they will hardly ever be the last word on an issue (1997: 5).

In line with Emile de Antonio, Chapman, Kilborn and Izod, Barnouw neatly sums up how subjective decisions – ‘whether conscious or not’ – emerge throughout the entire production process in the following remarks:

Documentarists make endless choices: of topic, people, vistas, angles, lenses, juxtapositions, sounds, words. Each selection is an expression of a point of view, whether conscious or not, acknowledged or not. Any documentary group that claims to be objective is merely asserting a conviction that its choices have a special validity

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<sup>29</sup> For a similar and more elaborate discussion of the application of the concept of objectivity in documentary, see Corner (1996).

and deserve everyone's acceptance and admiration. Even behind the first step of selection, choice of topic, there is a motive or set of motives. Someone feels there is something about the topic that needs clarification, and that if one can document aspects of it (the whole truth is a legal fiction) the work will yield something useful in comprehension, agreement or action (1993: 344).

Considering the problematic nature of objectivity in third sector documentary, producers utilise the subjective narrative structure at times because they feel that it conveys the opinions and perspectives of the participants and diverse groups with whom they work in a compelling and reflexive way in alignment with socio-political imperatives. For example, Sven notes that the company strives to make sure that 'the perspectives of [the diverse groups producers work with] invariably come to the fore because it is them at the centre of our work not us', thus suggesting encouragement of wider involvement. Similarly, Charles' *Save Our Cultural Landmark* applied a subjective narrative structure throughout for the same purpose. Other producers like Ralf of the *West Berlin Collective* seem to favour the subjective narrative structure exclusively:

The problem with public debates on fundamental issues is that there is an attempt to treat the subject matter in an impartial manner which I believe waters down the viewpoints. I observe the processes in society, reflect on them and comment on them (Ralf).

He adds that even after the collective gave up agitation and propaganda that characterised its films in the early years, the subjective narrative structure remains 'the central principle' in their documentaries:

But we haven't lost our subjectivity. It is still a key principle and is quite distinct in our films. When we express ourselves, we make it clear that we have a viewpoint. We don't try to be neutral, we are part of something and that is our perspective. I would say that is the central principle (Ibid).

In sum, some producers at the companies under study in this chapter sometimes combine the argumentative and subjective narrative structures while at other times, such producers apply only the latter. Others adhere only to the subjective

narrative structure. I have drawn attention to the ways in which the narrative structures influence involvement in the meaning-making process. I have also highlighted the problems associated with objectivity in documentary. Having seen third sector documentary film-makers' responses to competing imperatives and other pressures, it is interesting at this point to look at how these imperatives and pressures impact on how producers view their work.

## **5.6 Impact of Competing Imperatives and Pressures on Perceptions of Work**

In this section I assess how competing imperatives and other pressures impact on how third sector documentary film-makers perceive their work in terms of success, frustration or even failure. I base my assessment on the taxonomy suggested by Pollard *et al.* (2004) alluded to in the Introduction, focusing on individual and organisational aspects relating to producers' work. To begin with, Charles of *Stratham Productions* comments:

Obviously if our work maybe influences people or politics or if it changes situations on the ground, that's satisfying [...] For instance, [one of our films] won an award in documentary but the people who gave the award had no idea that it was made with this kind of approach with complete beginners [...] Also, the processes of film-making, for example researching, being able to write bits of text, reviewing - I mean to me it kind of draws on a whole load of skills which I kind of find interesting to pursue (Charles).

Charles alludes here to the impact that the work at *Stratham Productions* may have in terms of 'influencing people or politics' which is 'satisfying'. This desire to engage in work 'that might completely change people's perceptions or situation' is reminiscent of Oakley's research on British fine arts graduates who - albeit 'often ironically' - referred to their pursuit of 'art as a way to change society' (Oakley, 2009b: 288). This, I would argue, points to a commitment to socio-political imperatives.

Also, Charles revels in the pleasure derived from the recognition of a documentary produced at the company as reflected in the award received, particularly as that film apparently resulted from participatory film-making. This award can be said to signal an appreciation of creativity, thereby acknowledging artistic imperatives. Also, the award can be seen as a significant achievement from which producers at *Stratham Productions* derived great pleasure on discovering that their documentary ‘was recognised as interesting or desirable by others’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 124 – 125). Furthermore, Charles relishes his work which ‘draws on a whole load of skills’ such as ‘researching, being able to write bits of text, reviewing’, all of which are associated with professional imperatives. This varied nature of his work can be seen to open up a wide variety of experiences which might generate excitement (Ibid.: 128 – 129) as opposed to boring and monotonous work.

Ralf of the *West Berlin Collective* comments as follows on his work:

It pleases me when I get the feeling that we’ve actually succeeded in some way to have an effect on public discussion. That happens mostly if we succeed in procuring films for distribution. When our films are discovered, be it on *Berliner Open Access TV*, at [film] festivals or through research or even through the [film] clips on our website. When we notice that there is actual demand for them, that there is a need to make things subject of discussion or debate. If we appear to be on the right course, then I derive pleasure from my work [...] One thing I really like here is working without any hierarchies. That I can try out things. That I can fail without being blamed for it. That is a major motivation to work here. Looking back, I wouldn’t say we are not successful, we have really been successful with our work over the last 20 years even though there is a feeling it could get even better [...] That resources are insufficient, that we have to put up with a chronic lack of resources is what I don’t like about my work here. It is frustrating to always have to hit the brick wall (Ralf).

As in Charles’ comments above, the theme of impact continues in Ralf’s remarks when he equates success with having ‘an effect on public discussion’ by engaging with pressing subject matter. This clearly aligns itself with socio-political imperatives. Ralf

derives satisfaction from learning ‘that there is actual demand for’ the documentaries produced by the collective which, in turn, vindicates the fact that producers might have had the right ‘intuition’ or ‘hunch’ or ‘feeling’ (O’Connor, 1999), particularly if their work sells. This, one might argue, points to commercial imperatives.

The implication here is that by making documentaries that (might) sell, producers at the collective do not appear to see any contradictions between art and money. This harmonises with Oakley’s findings in her research on British fine arts graduates which found that there was no ‘evidence that making money from artistic work was seen as “selling out”’ (Oakley, 2009b: 289). Also, Ralf’s comments appear to reflect a subtle ‘anticipation and fear’ of how their documentaries are going to be received. This reaction points to a high degree of emotional investment characteristic of creative work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 134).

Additionally, Ralf seems to enjoy ‘working without hierarchies’ which gives him the freedom to experiment without being reprimanded for any eventual failure. The understanding here is that this horizontal form of organisation has not only been ‘a major motivation to work at the collective’, but that it appears to have partly contributed to the success enjoyed over the last decades. This is echoed by Hesmondhalgh in his discussion of the notion of ‘collectivism’ in cultural activity in the third sector when he notes ‘that people operate better where there is a minimum degree of hierarchical control, and where there are high levels of equality of responsibility, opportunity and reward’ (2000: 111).

However, Hesmondhalgh adds that genuine equality is an ideal which is never achieved in practice, but that the nearer particular moments come to this ideal (Ibid.), the greater the likelihood of achieving success. Also, the chronic lack of resources that Ralf dislikes about his work and which is also a source of frustration invokes the

notion of 'precariousness' used here to mean 'irregular or insecure work' which typifies 'much of what happens in cultural work' (Oakley, 2009b: 285). One might argue, then, that Ralf 'may prefer the relative autonomy' of his work which 'might pay relatively little, but' (Ibid.: 290) allows him to experiment and entitles him to 'fail without being blamed for it'. This echoes socio-political and artistic imperatives in third sector documentary.

On how he views his work at *Nordhausen Productions*, Gerhard comments:

I like the excitement about the kind of work we do. Things are always happening around us and there is always something to do. So, yes, it's the excitement and tension day in, day out. You have to make decisions quickly. One other thing we've learnt over the years is you have to be incredibly flexible. There are situations that necessitate that one has to - you have to switch from one thing to another as quickly as possible. This applies to all the aspects of our job [...] it's always superb whenever we meet our deadlines. These are things I like in spite of the stress involved. The ability to keep as calm as possible and despite time constraints and stress - deliver a high-quality programme and on time [...] You get to meet lots of people. And I must say in the course of my work, I've met people from the homeless, the poorest to the [German] federal chancellor to the [German] Federal president to many prominent people in this country. I've met them, spoken to them and filmed them. It's not often in a lifetime that you get to meet a wide range of personalities like that. That's really amazing given the fact that we operate predominantly on a regional basis here in Thuringia. It's striking that we always discover something new. Of, course we repeat some things to provide detailed context, but I would say we discover more new things than we repeat. Personally, it's important to me that we discover people. Every person has a story to tell. - whether it's interesting or not is another thing altogether. (Gerhard).

Being able to 'meet deadlines' and 'deliver high-quality programmes on time' amidst 'time constraints and stress' reflects a deep commitment to professional imperatives. The execution of these tasks can be seen to reflect 'excitement and pain [...] followed by delight and rest of completion' (Williams, 1965/1961: 44 *cf.* Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 134). Gerhard boasts having 'met, spoken to and filmed' lots of famous

(and less famous) people, a phenomenon which appears to give his work a degree of ‘coolness’ and ‘glamour’ (Ibid.: 124). Additionally, the intent of producers at *Nordhausen Productions* to continually ‘discover more new things and people’ might suggest ‘a high degree of personal and emotional investment’ in and an ‘intense engagement with the subject matter [which] appears to be true of much of documentary work’ (Ibid.: 149 – 150). Also, such an intent can be seen as a willingness of producers to observe, describe, explain and analyse evolving aspects in public life in artful and entertaining ways associated with socio-political and artistic imperatives.

Hans of *Fotolabor* experiences his work as follows:

Meeting people from all walks of life is something I like. I am quite amazed at how much I keep on learning by meeting lots of exciting people. I admire the kind of passion and energy and time that people sacrifice to make things happen [...] And although we have a head that represents our organisation, we all have equal rights and are independent. That is good. The only disadvantage is that we don’t earn much. It could be better (Hans).

As with Gerhard above, Hans relishes the possibility of ‘meeting lots of exciting people from whom he keeps on learning’. One might argue that he derives satisfaction from the inspiration such learning generates (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 133). Hans’ admiration for peers who he says ‘sacrifice passion and energy and time [...] to make things happen’ reflects his appreciation of the efforts of others to make a contribution to society. As with Ralf above, Hans cherishes a decentralised way of working which is characterised by relative autonomy despite relatively little monetary rewards (Oakley, 2009b; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

Of his work at *Fotolabor*, Sven says:

To add to what Hans has just said, although I’m not always here due to my financial situation at the moment, I’m a passionate representative of this project and I like the autonomy we enjoy here. I also like our political orientation because it reflects my way of thinking that we can influence things. That we can work hand in hand to represent

certain people out there or help them represent themselves. That is what sums up our work. This is what motivates me most to invest time and energy in this project. The other thing I like is the form of organisation we have here. It doesn't matter whether you're a finance person, a photographer, an author or whatever. As long as you share the interest in influencing the way things are, you would be here in the right place. We've got a number of people here who share this interest and enrich our work from different perspectives. I very much like that (Sven).

Sven's allusion to his difficult financial situation which compels him to spend more time outside the studio attending to his second job typifies the multiple job-holding common in the media and cultural industries (Oakley, 2009a; 2009b; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). The holding of second jobs (or even three in some cases) is intended to supplement the relatively low pay from creative work alluded to by some producers above. Additionally, Sven mentions other themes such as the autonomy enjoyed at *Fotolabor*, the ability to make an impact and the horizontal form of organisation, all of which are associated with socio-political and artistic imperatives. Also, his allusion to 'people sharing a common interest and enriching work at the company from different perspectives' highlights the significance of 'teamwork, socialising and networking' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 152) as key features of cultural work which facilitate the acquisition of ideas, information, contacts, resources and mutual support (Oakley, 2009a: 32).

Lastly, Bianca of *Dalberg Productions* perceives her work as follows:

I am motivated by the incremental changes, however small, to people's perceptions and beliefs through portraying Jewish life the way it is. I've recently taken on showing my documentaries in schools and having discussions with pupils. They are our future and I think it's important to talk to them about what these historical events mean and how they've shaped our society (Bianca).

In Bianca's comments, the theme of impact arises again. It is reflected in the attempt to try to change people's perceptions by making documentaries that serve to 'revise long-held or prejudiced views' (Kilborn and Izod, 1997) about Jewish people in tune

with socio-political imperatives. This way of making an impact can, as we saw with Malik of *Ummah Post* in Chapter Four, be viewed as a 'devotion to a sense of calling that is of service to the larger community and which reflects the normative dimension of professionalism (Singer, 2003: 141).

In sum, one of the most recurrent themes that characterises producers' work is the desire to make an impact which is driven by socio-political and artistic imperatives. Also, producers make 'declarations of enjoyment and enrichment' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 127) from their work and profess relative autonomy in and emotional attachment to such work despite the numerous tensions, contradictions and problems with which they are faced. One might claim that such declarations and professions can be seen to 'provide both a justification, and a disciplinary mechanism for staying, often unprofitably, with artistic work and not abandoning it altogether' (Oakley, 2009b: 287).

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that from the 1980s onwards, producers at the companies under study in this chapter transitioned from addressing specific audiences with a limited scope of topics to tackling broader ones aimed at wider audiences. I have noted that this shift was made possible by successfully navigating between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives on the one side, and support from broadcasters and subsidy on the other. In the 2000s, producers are still engaged in a constant battle to deal with the different imperatives and systemic pressures in a bid not only to reach broader audiences, but also to make challenging documentaries, maintain their relative autonomy and promote greater involvement in the meaning-making process.

To this end, some producers utilise public access television to disseminate their work without compromising their creative vision and message given that such television strongly supports documentaries that ‘present a spectrum of lifestyles, values, issues, ideas and viewpoints to audiences with specific tastes and interests’ (King and Mele, 1999: 604). In this instance, they remain true to socio-political imperatives. Others combine documentary with political work, making the most of their long-term involvement in and knowledge of the communities and regions they serve. The overarching goal is to facilitate the expression and representation of ‘the values and experiences of those communities’ through ‘recording “the impact of certain social and political decisions on people’s lives”’ (Newbury, 2002: 115).

Other producers juggle the maintenance of their independence with the demands of funders and broadcasters by packaging ‘documentaries that voice social concern [...] in more accessible formats’ (Kilborn and Izod, 1997: 189). From the point of view of such third sector documentary film-makers, although this risks engaging with, say, ‘historical subjects which in the 1970s might have been treated in a pontificating, celebratory manner’ (Ibid.) but now have to be ‘dressed up’ in television formats that tend to be geared towards populist programming, broadcasters (both public access and public service) still provide such film-makers with opportunities to circulate their work, albeit under certain restrictions. Whereas such restrictions might discourage experimentation, they nevertheless ensure that socially relevant work is disseminated to broader audiences in ways that such audiences are familiar with. McIntyre summarises this well in the following:

Conventions exist that prevent [producers] from having to re-invent the wheel, as it were, so they can select from a standard set of pre-existing standards, rules or conventions [...] Change, nonetheless, is possible since the basis for most cultural product’s power is to bring audiences into its emotional orbit [However] [i]f creators

step too far outside the convention, they face the danger of their creation not being recognised as such (2012: 53 – 54).

The pursuit of industrial productions is one way third sector documentary film-makers have tried to evade broadcaster control. Although this development distracts from core documentary work and signals an increasing capitalisation of the sector, it can be attributed to pragmatism without which third sector documentary film-makers would most likely be catapulted out of work and into meaninglessness. This would be unfortunate considering the nature of many third sector documentaries which are not only challenging, expository, informative and even dramatic, but that many of them also allow for greater involvement and inclusiveness. All these are traits that characterise democratic communication and render third sector documentary distinct from the mainstream. Amid the adoption of pragmatism and the numerous changes to the ways in which contemporary third sector documentary film producers work, there are clear indications of aspects of continuity such as the decentralised way of working with its commitment to equality and rotation of tasks, working long hours with little pay and yet remaining passionate and positive about work. Also, little or no pay still drives multiple job-holding in the 2000s just as in the early years.

In comparison to third sector news producers, third sector documentary film-makers have been more successful in promoting their socio-political objectives than the former. As we have seen, this is mainly because third sector documentary film producers have access to more options to circulate their work, thereby circumventing commercial imperatives and pressures from broadcasters. By contrast, third sector news producers, with less distribution outlets for their news and informational content, are more susceptible to advertiser, sponsor and political influence, making it difficult for them to uphold socio-political imperatives.

## **6. Changing Imperatives in Arts and Cultural Programming in the Third Sector**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this, the last of the three empirical chapters in this thesis, I address changing imperatives in arts and cultural programming in the third sector. I analyse producers' responses to socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives and to systemic pressures. I follow with an evaluation of how the different imperatives and pressures impact on how producers perceive their work. The key argument in this chapter is that despite the numerous tensions and contradictions that constrict their work, producers in this genre uphold socio-political imperatives most successfully as a result of a range of options to circulate their work. Although they view their work as uncertain and insecure, third sector arts and cultural producers profess passionate attachment to such work.

To recap, arts and cultural programming in the third sector facilitates the creation, production, presentation, distribution and preservation of and education about aesthetic, heritage and entertainment activities, products and artefacts (Wyszomirski, 2002 *cf.* Carpenter, 2008: 8). Such activities can range from visual arts such as painting to literary arts like writing poetry to performance arts comprising acting, dancing and singing among other things. As noted in the Introduction, although I concentrate on the performing arts, especially third sector theatre, musicals, pantomime and comedy, I also engage with the literary and visual arts, particularly creative writing, poetry and story-telling that take place in some of the selected case study companies in this chapter.

I now explain how the different imperatives<sup>30</sup> guide arts and cultural programming in the third sector. Socio-political imperatives, for instance, favour ‘an approach which promotes greater access to the arts in general, and more specifically, involvement in the processes which define the arts’ (Webster, 1997: 19). Such involvement of ordinary people and marginalised groups in the arts necessitates selecting subject matter which relates to their own experiences and addresses their concerns in creative and new ways.

Professional imperatives in arts and cultural programming can be looked at from two inter-related perspectives, namely the expertise and attitude of arts producers. The expertise of arts producers points to an emphasis on ‘skills, techniques, conventions and traditions’ (McIntyre, 2012: 24) that are crucial in creating outputs and (leisure) experiences with a view to making an impact. Such expertise might also include skills in budgeting, project management, administration, marketing, distribution and evaluation (Colbert, 2008). The attitude encompasses the willingness to work collaboratively in partnership with people from non-arts backgrounds, arts producers from other arts disciplines and other third parties. At any one time, arts producers can be required to ‘work at the limit of their disciplines’ (Parker and Sefton-Green, 2009: 4 *cf.* Oakley, 2009a: 4) or to compromise their core skills altogether or even to work on projects with low or no pay (Morrison, 2008a).

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<sup>30</sup> Artistic imperatives are not introduced here to avoid repetition. In this chapter, the meaning accorded to them in the discussion of third sector arts and cultural programming is synonymous with that discussed in documentary film-making in the third sector in Section 5.1 of the previous chapter.

Lastly, commercial imperatives in arts and cultural programming mean that arts producers sometimes have to 'seek the greatest degree of profitability and therefore make market-driven programming decisions that lead to the greatest possible paid attendance' (Morrison, 2008b: 201). Additionally, there is a 'general desire on the part of performers, venues, and audiences to see places full rather than half empty. Who fills them doesn't really matter' (Lewis, 1990: 148). Therefore, '[u]nder these market-driven conditions, new dramas, avant-garde plays, experimental operas, and innovative musical compositions would rarely find their way onto the stage' (Morrison, 2008b: 201).

In sum, the different imperatives constitute different logics which pull producers in different directions. Additionally, the pressures from subsidy and other funders pose problems for producers. In this chapter, I show how producers respond to these problems. I organise this chapter as follows. First, I provide a short historical background of the origins of third sector arts and cultural programming, focusing particularly on theatre production from the late 1960s onwards. Serving as an entry point into the analysis that follows, this background gives us a sense of how the organisational and production contexts in the sector have evolved. It also offers us a basis on which to compare historical and contemporary phenomena in the sector.

I then profile five third sector media and cultural companies, concentrating on their mission, organisational structure, finances and outputs all of which give clear indications and pointers about how organisational and production processes in the sector have changed and might develop respectively. The fact that three of the five profiled companies in this chapter are direct products of the countercultural era is very crucial to this task. I analyse how producers in the early years responded to socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives and systemic pressures in

the pursuit of new, diverse audiences and themes. I show how producers respond to these factors today.

I examine the ways in which the interplay between the different imperatives impacts wider participation in third sector theatre organisation, particularly concentrating on the role of the mission, organisational structure and performance conventions of the selected case study companies in this chapter. The categorisation of the analysis into production and organisational processes is meant to emphasise the distinctive aspects of each of these processes. I then evaluate how producers view their work following competing imperatives and systemic pressures before concluding.

## **6.2 Historical Development of Arts and Cultural Programming in the Third Sector**

The brief historical account that follows is by no means exhaustive. It concentrates on two aspects: a) the circumstances in which arts and cultural programming in the third sector originated and, b) how third sector arts producers organised themselves. This period witnessed different strands of activism encapsulated in the use of different art forms which shared political, social and cultural goals (Kelly, 1984). The art form I focus on here is theatre.

Lacy (1995) argues that many of the artistic outputs produced from the late 1960s onwards grew out of the general militancy of that era, resulting from the 'theatricalisation of protest and resistance' (Kershaw, 1992: 170). As discussed in the two previous chapters, such resistance manifested itself in the questioning and rejection of dominant values. Furthermore, the dissent on social issues such as abortion and drugs and the treatment of such dominant themes like the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights and Feminist movements among others informed third sector theatrical productions.

The driving forces behind these productions were diverse social and political arts groups which tended to organise themselves in collectives and troupes characterised by a sense of equality in decision-making, collective scripting and task rotation (McGrath, 1990; 1996). The most prominent collectives in Britain between 1967 and 1974 included *CAST (Cartoon Archetypal Slogan Theatre) (1967)*, *Red Ladder (1968)*, *Portable Theatre (1969/1970)*, *Foco Novo (1971)*, *7:84 England (1971)* and *Joint Stock (1974)* (Reinelt, 1996; Pal, 2010) while *Theater am Turm (TAT) (1965/1966)*, *Aktionstheater (1967)* - although closed and reopened a year later as *Antitheater (1968)* and *GRIPS Theatre (1969)* were the most well-known in (West) Germany in the late 1960s and 1970s (Sebald, 1988; Watson, 1996).

The decentralised form of organisation enabled third sector theatre producers to involve communities and diverse disempowered groups in both the exciting and tedious aspects of production. In line with socio-political imperatives, this phenomenon enabled predominantly working-class audiences to identify with productions and make sense of the ideas and themes therein which might have usually been invisible and hidden from their understanding (DiCenzo, 1996: 45). More importantly, this collective structure lent itself to the prevailing third sector theatrical form, agitprop<sup>31</sup>, which was ‘inexpensive to produce, could be performed anywhere, and the material could be altered to suit changing situations’ (Ibid.: 44).

But changes in the social and political circumstances from the late 1970s onwards coupled with conflicting ‘revolutionary’ and ‘reformist’ positions (Van Evren, 1988; DiCenzo, 1996) about future direction transformed the sector. The ‘theatricalisation of protest and resistance’ receded as the countercultural social

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<sup>31</sup> See Kershaw (1992: 257 – 258) for a comprehensive definition of agitprop and the conventions associated with it.

movements waned. Consequently, third sector theatre producers started addressing broader audiences and tackling emerging themes such as the Miners' Strikes and trade union protests in Britain and the anti-nuclear and anti-capitalism protests in (West) Germany. Already in the mid-1970s, some third sector theatre producers acknowledged that agitprop as a theatrical form was no longer suited to treat a wide range of contemporary issues. Simultaneously, the rapidly changing socio-economic climate tested the resolve of the horizontal form of organisation cherished by many collectives with mixed results. Some disintegrated under its taxing burden, others gradually 'professionalised' and adopted a hierarchical organisational form while still others embraced a hybrid structure.

Generally, the 1980s witnessed a marked increase in the growth of third sector theatre companies. In Britain, this was largely due to the wider Thatcherite political economy which introduced a new series of funding schemes characterised by 'the kind of "entrepreneurial action" preferred by neo-conservatism' (Kershaw 1992: 172). Ran by the Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme, these new funding schemes not only helped to sponsor the arts, but they also complemented subsidy (Feist and Hutchison, 1990: 19). By contrast, third sector theatre companies in (West) Germany only prospered in cities such as Berlin and Munich where the corresponding federal states were supportive of the third sector theatre movement (Watson, 1996).

According to Kelly (1984), the rationale for subsidy was to neutralise the subversive nature of third sector theatre by seeking to incorporate it into the arts establishment. Where such theatre was driven by revolutionary protest in the early years (Van Evren, 1988), successive governments through public support emphasised aesthetics, professionalism and 'value for money' from the 1980s (Kelly, 1984; McGrath, 1990; Primavesi, 2011). This led to two key developments. First, public

support fostered dependency rendering the sector a victim of ‘grant addiction’ (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986; Lewis, 1990). Second, the ascendancy of artistic, professional and commercial imperatives alongside socio-political ones impacted organisational and production processes in ways that generated fierce debates within the sector in the 1990s and 2000s about its future direction (McGrath, 1990; Webster, 1997; Matarasso, 2000).

Whereas commentators have noted that the different imperatives are often conflicting and as such pose considerable problems, there seems to be no detailed case study research analysing the response of contemporary producers to these problems. This chapter aims to address this. In order to effectively achieve this, I have selected five third sector theatre companies which I profile below.

### **6.3 Profiling Selected Third Sector Media and Cultural Companies**

In this section I provide key data concerning the mission, company structure, finances and outputs of five third sector theatre companies. The key details are summarised in the table below. Although many of these companies vary in terms of organisation, financial stability and the nature of outputs produced, they tend to share the same mission. The five companies are *Antarc Theatre (1968)* (Yorkshire), *Gray End Productions (1972)* (London), *Huddermount Productions (1985)* (Yorkshire) and *Richmond Arts (1992/2004)* (London) all in Britain and *Kraemer Theatre (1961/1972)* (Thuringia, Germany).

**Third Sector Theatre Production Companies under Study in this Chapter**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Finances</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
<i>Gray End Productions</i>	Britain	Micro	Hierarchical	> £1.5 m	Theatre performances, cinema screenings and film festivals, exhibitions, training and diverse social project work
<i>Antarc Theatre</i>	Britain	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	Theatre performances, musical comedies, training and social project work
<i>Richmond Arts</i>	Britain	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	Theatre and festival performances, training and social project work
<i>Kraemer Youth Theatre</i>	Germany	Micro	Hierarchical	< £1.5 m	Theatre and street performances, training, educational and social project work
<i>Huddermount Productions</i>	Britain	Micro	Hybrid	< £1.5 m	Performing and visual arts, film and radio production, training and social project work

**Table 3: A List of Selected Media and Cultural Production Companies in the Third Sector**

With regard to the mission, *Gray End Productions* is a non-profit third sector media and cultural organisation located in London. Initially established as a touring theatre troupe in 1972, today it boasts a challenging and innovative programme of theatrical performances coupled with cinema, visual arts, education and outreach programmes. Similarly, *Antarc Theatre*, founded as a touring radical agitprop collective in 1968, is today a third sector theatre company based in Yorkshire and well-known for new, challenging and high-quality work which addresses contemporary issues revolving around perceived homophobia, structural imbalances and environmental degradation both nationally and internationally.

*Richmond Arts* was initiated as a partnership between two freelance artists in the 1990s but has now grown into a non-profit London-based arts production company which brings together teams of freelance artists and cultural practitioners to collaborate on the production of large-scale community plays and street festival projects both across the UK and abroad. The overarching goal of the company is to empower communities through searching for new direction following industrial closure, building community identity to create shared values and sense of worth, celebrating and bringing confidence within all age groups, and commemorating a common heritage (*Richmond Arts*).

Technically established in Thuringia in 1961 as a youth drama group, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* became a left-wing theatre collective predominantly targeting working-class youth in 1972. Today, the company has evolved into a third sector youth theatre with charitable status. Its core goal is to provide young people with training and to develop their creative potential through improvised and street theatrical performances. *Huddermount Productions* is a third sector media and cultural company with charitable status based in Yorkshire. Set up in 1985 as a touring theatre collective, the company

has grown into a prolific site of media and cultural production. Alongside engaging in the performing and visual arts, *Huddermount Productions* also runs two radio stations.

In reference to the organisational structure, *Gray End Productions* has a core staff of less than ten people. Overseen by a Board of Directors, the company is organised hierarchically with an artistic director called Solomon at the helm. He is assisted by a general manager, an associate producer, two staff in the development department, three staff in the education and social inclusion departments and about a dozen volunteers. By contrast, *Antarc Theatre* exhibits a hybrid form of organisation which combines both a hierarchical structure of administration with a collective approach to work. The company is run by Adam assisted by four core staff members all of whom are overseen by a Board of Management Committee.

Similarly, *Richmond Arts* displays a hybrid organisational structure. The company is headed by the two founding partners in their capacities as artistic director (Justin) and research director (Jeremiah) supported by Meredith. Contrastingly, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* is hierarchically organised and overseen by an elected Management Committee which is responsible for appointing the artistic director among other things. Ursula, the artistic director is assisted by nine core staff members in addition to an army of freelance artists and volunteers. *Huddermount Productions* is organised around a hybrid structure. Supervised by a Board of Directors, the company is managed by an artistic director called Keith and a development director named Melanie. Over the years, Keith and Melanie have formed a pool of four freelance artists with whom they collaborate on various projects.

As far as finances are concerned, *Gray End Productions* boasts an annual turnover exceeding £1.5m. It receives a substantial amount of its funding from the Arts Council of England (ACE), trusts, foundations and local authorities. For example, the total income earned from box office sales, general fundraising, (individual and corporate)

sponsorship and grants for 2010 amounted to £2,930,762. In a similar vein, *Antarc Theatre* receives its core funding from the ACE which amounts to £235,955 in 2011/2012 followed by box office income of which, unfortunately, there are no figures available. Out of (ideological) principle, the company rejects any form of individual or corporate sponsorship. Likewise, there are no figures available to give a sense of *Richmond Arts'* finances. What is certain, though, is that all the company's work is subsidised by local authorities, trusts, foundations, the lottery and the European Social Fund. Based on Meredith's interview account, all the income earned from box office sales, workshop fees, fundraising activities and the sale of publications like books, CDs and DVDs generally flows back to the diverse communities and groups with which the company collaborates.

The *Kraemer Youth Theatre* is reliant on funding from federal, state and local authorities. Federal funding primarily covers educational workshops in schools and international workshops hosted at the theatre's premises while funding from state and local authorities enables the execution of individual projects such as street theatrical and festival performances. Other funding sources include income derived from annual membership fees (approximately £40 at the time of writing this thesis), corporate sponsorship and box office sales. Similarly, *Huddermount Productions* is dependent on public support, lottery funding and commissions. Like *Richmond Arts*, *Huddermount Productions* is increasingly trying to exploit its creative resources to generate more income from disseminating its outputs through publications, CDs, DVDs as well as adopting advertising on its radio stations.

Lastly, the outputs produced at *Gray End Productions* result from a mixture of in-house and external activities. For example, in the season 2009/2010, there were 347 theatre performances and 83 cinema screenings of independent films organised around six different local, regional and international film festivals. *Antarc Theatre*, on the hand,

tends to produce two to three productions (or co-productions) annually which are then toured nationally during the course of the year. They are complemented by training and social project work.

In line with its mission, *Richmond Arts* produces large-scale community plays and organises several street festival projects in partnership with communities and regions across Britain and Europe. These events are intended to be a collective expression of particular aspects of the communities and regions in question. At *Kraemer Youth Theatre*, the core work comprises in-house, festival and street performances, drama training and educational workshops in schools. According to its 2009/2010 annual report, the company put on 213 performances both within and outside its premises. On average, this number of performances amounted to about five performances per week, constituted forty-three hours of time in rehearsal involving 180 young people.

Similarly, the outputs at *Huddermount Productions* comprise in-house and street performances complemented by training in media production and various art forms. Up to twenty plays, a dozen publications (mainly books and project reports) and numerous paintings have been produced. The discussion now turns to the ways in which producers at the companies profiled above respond to the different imperatives in theatre production.

#### **6.4 Theatre Production at the Selected Case Study Organisations**

In this section, I explore how early third sector theatre producers navigated between socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives in the process of moving away from targeting specific non-traditional theatre-going audiences to pursuing broader audiences from the late 1970s onwards. I then examine how contemporary producers respond to the different imperatives. Despite some

contradictions I show that such producers tend to successfully navigate between the imperatives.

In Section 6.4.2, I describe how, from the late 1970s onwards, producers at the companies under study in this chapter transitioned from addressing predominantly working-class issues to the treatment of wider themes in response to the evolving socio-political circumstances in harmony with socio-political imperatives. I show that producers sometimes achieve a balance between the different imperatives and with the help of subsidy. At other times the interaction between the imperatives is less successful. I analyse producers' responses to pressures from subsidy and sponsorship in Sub-section 6.4.3.

#### **6.4.1 Targeting Broader Audiences in Pursuit of Income and Artistic Recognition**

As hinted at above, third sector theatre producers committed themselves to reaching out to non-traditional theatre-going audiences, primarily working-class people whose interests, needs and tastes were not catered to by the established theatres (Lewis, 1990). The overarching goal was to raise working-class consciousness and to provoke widespread demand for social and political change (Peacock, 1999) in tune with socio-political imperatives. The perceived exclusion of these audiences from the mainstream arts was predicated on two factors. First, based on Bourdieu's notion of cultural competence, Lewis argues that working-class audiences were not seen to have the codes necessary to understand a work of art due to their relatively low level of education (1990: 8 – 10). Second, working-class audiences were not considered to have the disposable income to afford mainstream theatre as opposed to elite audiences (Ibid.: 26).

Indeed, accounts of some of the working-class people who managed to access mainstream theatre in Britain in the 1980s indicate that they were intimidated by the

classical buildings with their 'plush seats, thick velvet curtains [and] ushers in the official looking uniforms...' (Van Erven, 1988: 173). This was seen to reinforce social barriers and to inhibit any enjoyment of theatrical experiences for such audiences (Lewis 1990). In order to counter this exclusion which reinforced class divisions, third sector theatre producers responded by taking their performances to non-conventional theatre venues such as pubs, working men's clubs and other informal settings where the target audiences gathered for social, recreational and political activities (Peacock, 1999; Hager, 2008). Significantly, admission to performances tended either to be free of charge or cost minimal contributions.

In most cases, the only way early third sector theatre producers could reach their target audiences was through touring their work because most producers did not own permanent venues (McGrath, 1990; Kershaw, 1992). They utilised this circumstance to distinguish themselves from the more formal and mainstream theatres which attracted a primarily 'initiated' and elite audience (Lewis, 1990; Harding, 1998). Archives at *Gray End Productions*, for example, show that producers in the early years addressed predominantly working-class audiences but also 'West Indian, South Asian, Irish and children audiences' in London. Similarly, archival records at *Antarc Theatre* indicate that producers between 1968 and 1984 targeted primarily working-class audiences first in London and then in Yorkshire where the company moved in 1976. In 1972, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* set out to reach working-class youths with a view to agitating for 'equal and better life chances' for them.

However, this changed gradually from the late 1970s onwards when third sector theatre producers began to pursue larger followings, a development that was motivated by artistic, professional and commercial imperatives as we shall see. This development is best illustrated by *Antarc Theatre* which completely reorganised itself in a bid to build new, diverse audiences. The company altered its artistic policy four times to this end,

moving away from the production of plays which fed into matters and struggles of class politics targeting predominantly working-class audiences to addressing broader audience groups. These constituted women, youths, minority ethnic communities and the disabled throughout the 1980s. Other audiences pursued in the 1990s and 2000s included Lesbian and Gay groups as well as environmental activist groups.

In order to effectively respond to the interests and tastes of these diverse audiences, *Antarc Theatre* made further changes to its artistic policy. For instance, where collective scripting of plays was the norm in the early years, today producers at the company regularly commission a group of third sector artists called *The Rainbow Writers* who are committed to capturing the evolving socio-political circumstances affecting these audiences in novel, interesting and artful ways through the production of high-quality work. This commitment clearly aligns itself with artistic and socio-political imperatives. Moreover, many of *The Rainbow Writers* belong in some of these audiences that *Antarc Theatre* strives to reach. Adam comments:

What we are open to is making sure that we maintain a diverse artistic team. So, I'm conscious that I want to work with women. I want to work with lesbians, Asians. I want to work with people of African-Caribbean background. We are gonna be working with a writer who is Scottish-Ghanaian mixed race. There's a writer who is Muslim. Alicia is a lesbian writer. But when you hear yourself describing that, it sounds so contrived. That sounds like we are just ticking boxes, you know. These writers are also very good. So, I am not gonna work with an Asian just because he's got brown skin, you know. I'm not gonna work with a Ugandan actor because she's Ugandan. I'm gonna work with her because she's a really good actor. I'm not gonna work with [a disabled actor] because he has no legs. I'm gonna work with him because he's a phenomenally good actor. So, you know, there is an artistic quality here as well (Adam).

Another key factor that aided *Antarc Theatre* in reaching out to broader audiences was its evolution from a radical, touring collective with no permanent base to a hybrid structured theatre company operating from leased premises. Although

signalling a move towards institutionalisation, this step was crucial in that the premises not only provide a space in which rehearsals and performances take place, but also this space can be seen as a breeding ground for the company's work, particularly as *The Rainbow Writers* meet to discuss their work and how best to address the preferences of the range of audiences they aim to serve as Adam remarks:

*The Rainbow Writers* meet as a forum every few months not with the intention of being commissioned by *Antarc Theatre*. But just to sit in here and talk about issues that come up as writers. How much creative control should we have as writers? How can we try to address the changing tastes of our audiences? How do you talk to them? How do you get them away from their flat screen televisions? How do you get them away from *Big Brother*? How do you get them away from *X Factor*? These kind of issues. And they feel it's a safe place to share ideas. And they also read each other's work and they support each other. So, some of their work doesn't come to *Antarc Theatre*. It goes to TV, it goes to other theatre companies. But in doing that, there is a loyalty to us as a company (Ibid.).

Similarly, *Gray End Productions* strove to reach out to diverse, wider audiences from the 1980s onwards through updating its artistic policy, which until that point, had focused on promoting working-class consciousness using agitprop. Today, the company produces new and innovative work that aims to promote and celebrate diverse British communities, to challenge both national and international injustices and to empower children, young people and disadvantaged groups. Already in 1980, the company's pursuit of larger audiences was cemented by the conversion of a disused hall on a high street in northwest London into a third sector arts theatre. It was later expanded to include a cinema, gallery and studio spaces in a bid to provide high-quality artistic outputs and (leisure) experiences to new, broader audiences. This not only clearly marked a move towards institutionalisation, but it also demonstrated the domination of socio-political and artistic imperatives.

In a similar vein, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* today strives to develop and 'support creativity in youths from all walks of life'. It aims to achieve this by 'showing them what

they are capable of and by giving them the confidence to tackle whatever life throws at them'. The overarching objective of the company is to 'broaden young people's experiences, encourage them to express themselves through theatre and prepare them for adulthood'. In an effort to attract a diverse, wider youth audience, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* is now permanently housed in a refurbished, previously abandoned property. Despite having a permanent base, the company still tours its productions in an effort to reach out to the various target youth audiences. The pursuit of such diverse youth audiences in this way can be said to result from a smooth interaction between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives.

However, the pursuit of new, diverse audiences has sometimes been contradictory particularly where third sector theatre producers stage their productions in established theatres, something they opposed in the earlier years. The bone of contention has been that the desire to seek 'artistic recognition' and make 'money' in mainstream theatre potentially undermines socio-political goals. Van Erven captured this development well in the mid-1980s when he noted that:

[i]n addition to playing [in mainstream theatre], many [third sector theatre producers] have appeared on television and at many international theatre festivals as well. [These producers do this] not only for the money but also for the artistic recognition... [Many] still prefer to play for working-class audiences and continue to consider themselves ideologically opposed to [mainstream theatre]. But in order to balance their ever-increasing budgets, they are forced to make excursions into [mainstream theatre] (1988: 186).

John McGrath, one of the most prominent third sector theatre producers in Britain (until his death in 2002) and the founder of the company *7:84 England* defended this development by remarking that:

you can't really stay out [mainstream theatres] because they are very good places to make theatre in. We can't afford to turn our backs on all [mainstream theatre], that's crazy! What we've got to try and do is to convince the people in them that the audiences we bring to the theatre are more important than the audiences that they

usually bring in. If we transform the theatre buildings, the attitudes of the people that run them and the audiences, then the future of [third sector theatre production] is enormous, actually (Interview *cf.* Van Erven, 1988: 187).

I agree with McGrath here that mounting third sector theatre productions in established theatre exposes such work to more audiences which, in turn, might increase the likelihood of such work to make a bigger impact than was the case in the earlier years. The key question here is whether contemporary third sector theatre producers, in targeting new, diverse audiences in mainstream theatre, stage their work on their own terms or are obliged to embrace the conventions typical of these houses in which case they would compromise socio-political imperatives?

Adam of *Antarc Theatre* notes of this:

Yes, we perform once in a while in [mainstream theatres]. And when audiences have come to see our work, that's been really great because they know *Antarc Theatre* is performing. But that's really rare. Because we make left-leaning theatre which we feel is very challenging and questioning and critical, it makes [mainstream theatres] uncomfortable. The London theatres don't want to take that kind of work. So, well, not from us anyway. They will take it from other people. So, I'm struggling with that one. But a voice in my head says it doesn't matter [...] We are not selling out. Do I want us to sell out? Is that not part of the capitalist business system? It's putting bums on seats, you know, it's making a profit. We have this dichotomy. We have this juxtaposition. We have this tension (Adam).

Adam seems to hint at the importance of artistic recognition when he notes how 'really great' it is that audiences in mainstream theatres 'know *Antarc Theatre* is performing', signalling the rise of artistic imperatives. He notes the conundrum of whether or not to 'sell out'. For *Antarc Theatre* which (still) rejects commercialisation out of (ideological) principle, this presents producers at the company with a major problem consisting in the clash between socio-political goals and the need to make money. And whereas Adam's ambivalence is understandable, evidence suggests that these producers continue

to stage their perceived 'challenging and questioning and critical' work in established theatre out of pragmatism whenever an opportunity opens up, albeit rarely.

It is important to view this in relation to the company's financial position. For instance, I noted above that *Antarc Theatre* receives its core funding from the ACE. However, the company has experienced persistent cuts to its core funding over the last three years. Whereas it received £253,442 in financial year 2010/2011, this figure dropped to £235,955 in 2011/2012 and is envisaged to plummet to £140,000 in 2012/2013. This makes clear that additional sources of income are crucial if *Antarc Theatre* is to sustain its operations and continue to target new, diverse audiences in the prevailing socio-economic climate. Staging productions in established theatres is certainly one source of income despite being in tune with commercial imperatives.

On mounting theatre in established theatres in pursuit of broader audiences, Amanda of *Gray End Productions* remarks:

obviously, we like to tour our works, like we had the American tour of *Century Of East-West Relations*<sup>32</sup> last year [2010]. But again, that almost broke us as a staff. It really did because there was just so much extra stuff to do on top of the normal daily fire-fighting (Amanda).

Despite the difficulties associated with touring and staging productions in mainstream theatres, Amanda adds that targeting broader audiences remains crucial:

Of course our ambition is that our work speaks to as many people as possible. Whether we do this [at *Gray End Productions*], at [an American mainstream theatre] or at the West End is not really what matters. What matters is that we actually get to engage with the public about stuff that is happening... Some of our work has been well received and lauded for its quality. People take that for granted but it requires good

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<sup>32</sup> *Century Of East-West Relations* is a play exploring over 170 years of Afghan culture, history and politics and the ways in which these fields are intertwined with the West's foreign policy. More discussion of the play follows in Sub-section 6.4.2.

business acumen. Recently when we were looking at all of the cuts that we've received and how we are gonna try and balance the budget, it was clear that [international tours] brought in most money but they were also most taxing as well... (Ibid.).

In the pursuit of new, diverse audiences, Amanda notes that the venue 'is not really what matters' but the engagement with people about contemporary issues which is in line with socio-political imperatives. This seems to reflect an attempt to break away from the traditional distinction between mainstream and non-mainstream audiences. She also alludes to the 'quality' of work which 'has been well received' and for which the company has been 'lauded', highlighting the role of artistic imperatives. More significantly, Amanda implies that good entrepreneurship is the driving force behind work that performs well at the box office, all of which suggests a relatively successful interaction between socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives.

Out of pragmatism, producers at *Gray End Productions* seek 'to try and balance the budget' by 'making excursions into [international] mainstream theatres' (Van Erven, 1988: 186) in order to earn more income to sustain the production of their work. The cuts to the company's public funding are the main reason for this move. For example, its funding from the ACE dropped from £779,071 in financial year 2010/2011 to £725,315 in 2011/2012 while the annual grants from local authorities which amount to approximately £300,000 annually are under review at the time of writing this thesis. I will return to the issue of subsidy and the constraints associated with it below.

Overall, the pursuit of broader audiences in third sector theatre production was (and still is) driven by socio-political, professional, artistic and commercial imperatives. The staging of contemporary third sector theatre in mainstream theatre, though contradictory, can be seen as a pragmatic way not only to earn additional income, but also to circulate such work more widely and build an artistic reputation. I now analyse how the different imperatives impacted the transition from tackling a relatively limited set of themes to addressing broader subject matter.

### 6.4.2 From Addressing Primarily Class Politics to Broader Issues

As hinted at earlier, most third sector theatre companies until the late 1970s engaged in the ‘theatricalisation of protest and resistance’. *Antarc Theatre*, for instance, focused on the production of plays that fed into the political disputes and militant class struggles during this period. Similarly, *Gray End Productions* addressed perceived structural injustices revolving around issues such as working-class housing, discrimination, industrialisation and trade union disputes. Further still, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* made drama that campaigned for better life chances of youths from working-class backgrounds. All this work was driven by socio-political goals. But as socio-political circumstances evolved, so did the themes of the plays and the imperatives that guided third sector theatre production from the late 1970s onwards.

At *Antarc Theatre*, for example, the most prominent plays produced between 1977 and 1981, according to Adam, included *Unemployment And Despair (1977/1978)* and *Work Without A Family Life (1979/1980)*. The former was concerned with highlighting the effects of rising working-class unemployment and associated problems in the late 1970s while the latter explored the effects that working long hours and in shift rhythm had on the quality of family life in Yorkshire respectively. Plays that stood out in the 1990s addressed the concerns of minority ethnic groups and disabled people, issues of cultural identity, gender and sexuality, AIDS, domestic violence as well as education, poverty and pregnancies among young people. The 2000s have witnessed the production of plays the subject matter of which producers at *Antarc Theatre* have drawn from a host of prevailing issues, ranging from the 2001 racial riots in northwest England to issues associated with environmental degradation to community tragedies in the Yorkshire region to the constantly increasing inequities in modern British society.

The interaction between the different imperatives in many of these plays is evident. One of them is a production reflecting a community tragedy called *The Blue*

*Asbestos Tragedy*. This production explored the circumstances surrounding the contamination of an inner-city in Yorkshire with asbestos dust emitted by a local asbestos factory dating from the 1870s to the early 1960s. According to Adam, although the local authorities have remained coy about the circumstances surrounding the tragedy for decades, it is presumed that many of the deaths in the area since then are related to this tragedy. One of the writers, Isaac, at *Antarc Theatre* used this tragedy as subject matter to create an experimental musical comedy:

So, Isaac wrote a musical comedy about the tragedy which he asked me to perform in and my partner. And I found myself singing songs that were very melodic and easy to sing along but actually, they were about people dying. And I saw - there were old people in the audience who were of the generation that lived there - I saw in their faces these songs were making them think about, you know, people they had lost - their loved ones. And so, all the people were laughing along with the piece. There were also moments which were really touching for them. And it was like a pantomime because at one point, one of the people in the audience shouted: 'He's behind you', you know. And so, afterwards in the pub, Isaac and I were saying: we've got something here. There is a form here that we need to rediscover which is a sort of working-class opera, working-class pantomime that is for adults. It's not for children. And it's political and it's entertaining and it's comedic (Adam).

Socio-political imperatives here emphasised the exposition of any 'hidden or obscure histories, relationships, issues and problems which [are] important to the [community] from which they [are] drawn' (Kershaw 1992: 246). In artistic terms, producers at *Antarc Theatre* expressed this tragedy in an experimental manner reflected in 'a sort of working-class pantomime that is for adults' and is 'political, entertaining and comedic'. This seems to me to point to a successful interaction between socio-political and artistic imperatives in the expression of events surrounding a community tragedy in an artful manner that the audience understands and can relate with.

Similarly, another production performed by *Antarc Theatre* called *Showdown With The Greedy Rich* demonstrates a smooth interaction between socio-political, artistic and

commercial imperatives in the treatment of contemporary relations between politicians and ordinary people. This production, which seemed to oscillate between a 'musical gig' and a 'pantomime', was based on the Luddite uprising of the early nineteenth-century in Britain. It told the story of a Luddite rebel who wages war against the ruthless 'rags-to-riches' society of the time. Whereas this piece was set in the nineteenth-century, its subject matter was designed in such a way that it had 'a satirical take on' contemporary elites and politicians. Apparently, this experimental piece resonated with the audiences who seemed not only to relate to the subject matter, but to feel part of the performance. Adam comments on the piece as follows:

*Showdown With The Greedy Rich* was a Christmas show in 2009 and it was really successful. People liked it. It wasn't particularly well made. It was flawed. We knew there were weaknesses and we learnt from those weaknesses. Because it fell between a musical gig and a pantomime and people weren't sure what they were seeing. We were testing something out. But we knew it was working because audiences liked it. Audiences did shout out, you know. At one point, one of the characters said about [another character playing the rich man]: 'He's just a bastard!'. And then turned to the audience: 'Let me hear you say the word bastard'. And the whole audience was shouting: 'bastard, bastard'. And we were going: audiences like that. They like that naughtiness. They like that anger, but it's childish. So, what the danger is, if you are not careful, you dumb down the work and you go to the lowest common denominator and getting in a lot of the time 'bastard' is dumbing down. But, the character that we are calling bastard was belatedly a sort of satirical take on John Prescott. John Prescott was the deputy prime minister. And what he had done was he had left his trade union behind to become this very powerful, power-crazy thug, really, you know. So the audience knew that they were shouting bastard not at a character on stage, but they were shouting bastard at John Prescott, you know. So, yeah, on the surface you've a quite superficial piece of work but under the surface, you've quite a subversive piece of work which is attacking politicians (Ibid.).

I will return to the use and significance of satirical techniques in third sector theatre production below. For now, I want to draw attention to two points. First, the subject matter in *Showdown With The Greedy Rich* addresses a contemporary issue which reflects the responsiveness of third sector theatre producers to the concerns of ordinary

people. The fact that the audience seem to be engulfed in emotion and appear to like ‘the naughtiness’ about the piece which, as Adam notes risks ‘dumbing down’ the work if overdone, reveals the contemporary distrust and disillusionment with modern elites and politicians just like the Luddites were dissatisfied with the rich in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Second, although *Showdown With The Greedy Rich* ‘wasn’t particularly well made’, it was (commercially) successful. This demonstrates the willingness of third sector theatre to take risks and experiment with art forms in a bid to portray wider socially relevant and challenging issues in novel ways as opposed to sticking with ‘tried and tested formulas’ (Carpenter, 2008). Here, professional imperatives did not appear to play a crucial role.

However, socio-political imperatives can sometimes be more dominant than artistic, professional and commercial ones as another production made by *Antarc Theatre* shows. *Doomed World*, a dark comedy set in a future where food and water are extremely scarce, is based on dramatic scenes documenting the plight of African migrants arriving at the Italian island of *Lampedusa* in the Mediterranean Sea. The play focuses on the intensifying problem of global warming and subsequent climate change both of which have adverse effects on the future of the planet. Adam makes clear that *Doomed World* is ‘not about climate change’ *per se*, but rather more about its consequences and possible future scenarios when he notes that:

*Doomed World* was not about climate change. It was about what happens as a result of climate change. That is, if we continue to treat this planet the way that we have done and are doing, which is to extract from it as if it is not an innate object rather than looking at it as a living being, then we would destroy it. We would destroy it as a habitat that we can live in. So, what would it be like to live in that virtually uninhabitable environment? And the play was basically saying: we would do anything to survive and we would kill each other, you know (Ibid.).

Despite the treatment of this grim but socially relevant subject matter in a dramatic way, *Doomed World* did not sell as envisaged. According to Adam, the reason for this

was provided by audience research conducted after the play which revealed that many audience members found the play 'brutal' and 'bleak':

Now, people of the 18 - 35 age group really liked that play. People over 35 hated it. They said it was brutal. They said it offered no hope. It was bleak. Because we were showing a world - And what we were saying is: that is the world we are heading for, you know. We were saying, you know, when young people turn to me in my old age and say to me: old man, what did you do? You know, I can say, well, I made a play and tried to communicate the message. But, you know, even people in the audience were saying that, you're not supposed to do that. You are not supposed to make plays as bleak as that. I would argue they are in a state of denial. I would argue it's a state of fear (Ibid.).

In the case of *Gray End Productions*, archival records show that two of the most successful plays in terms of box office income that tackled wider social themes in the early 1980s included *A Search For A Nest (1983/1984)* and *Here To Stay (1985)*. The former explored the difficulties associated with working-class housing while the latter charted the beginnings of multiculturalism in London during this period. Both plays significantly benefitted from GLC funding and were later performed in mainstream theatres, suggesting a successful navigation between socio-political and commercial imperatives on the one side, and subsidy on the other. The 1990s and 2000s have seen *Gray End Productions* resurrect a nearly extinct theatrical technique called verbatim theatre that is driven primarily by socio-political and professional imperatives. According to Hammond and Steward:

[t]he term verbatim refers to the origins of the text spoken in the play. The words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or research process, or are appropriated from existing records such as transcripts of an official enquiry. They are then edited, arranged or re-contextualised to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used (2008: 9).

The greatest strength of verbatim theatre lies in the fact 'that the characters who appear in [verbatim plays] exist or have existed in the real world, outside of theatre,

outside of [producers'] imagination, and that the words those people are shown to be speaking are indeed their own' (Ibid.: 9 – 10). At *Gray End Productions*, producers edit transcripts of public inquiries set up to investigate suspected wrongdoing on the part of public institutions into verbatim or 'tribunal plays'. Such plays are seen to provide 'more space, more words, and more scope than newspapers and TV and radio news bulletins' do (Norton-Taylor, 2011). I return to this discussion below.

The most popular tribunal play put on at *Gray End Productions* in the 1990s was *Dodgy Deal (1994)* which explored circumstances surrounding perceived illegal arms sales to the Middle East. It became the first ever play to be staged in the House of Commons. It was followed by *Eltham Hate Crime (1999)* which portrayed a suspected fatal racial attack on a black youth. In the 2000s three of the most successful productions include *Administering Injustice (2004)* about the indefinite imprisonment of suspected Muslim terrorists in Guantanamo, *Century Of East-West Relations (2009)* charting over a century of Afghan culture, history and politics and how the country continues to be the focal point of the West's foreign policy and more recently, *The Capital in Flames (2011)* exploring the events surrounding the riots that shocked Britain in August 2011.

Of the productions staged in the 2000s, *Century Of East-West Relations* has been the most successful in terms of box office income at *Gray End Productions*. This success might partly be attributed to the fact that the play was staged at a time when the British public's weariness of the armed conflict in Afghanistan appeared to have hit a new peak towards the end of that decade. In terms of socio-political imperatives, Amanda says the play was 'not so much about whose political or cultural position is right or wrong but about giving the audience insights into why events in Afghanistan are the way they are'. Essentially, the play contextualised the involvement of the West in Afghanistan in general, and particularly that of Britain, charting the evolution of the conflict dating

from the First Anglo-Afghan War in 1842 through to the exploration of over '170 years of invasion, occupation and conflict' to the 2000s. Also, the play sought 'to provoke discussion' about the rationale behind British military presence in Afghanistan 'nearly ten years after [the war] started'.

In alignment with artistic imperatives, Solomon, the artistic director at *Gray End Productions*, together with four associate playwrights on *Century Of East-West Relations* used 'a free range of their imagination' to express the subject matter in an artful and dramatic manner. Indeed, many reviews of the play I studied praised the artistic portrayal in the play. Professional imperatives were reflected in the skills and techniques applied to put together data from detailed historical research, interviews with Afghans, military personnel (British and American) and politicians into a high-quality piece of work intended to be informative, educative and entertaining.

As hinted at above, *Century Of East-West Relations* was nationally and internationally very successful in commercial terms. Production records at *Gray End Productions* indicate that the play was performed for the Pentagon in a mainstream theatre in Washington and in three other established theatres in as many cities in the U.S respectively. Additionally, publications and DVDs of the play also brought in extra income. Further still, box office income was maximised considering that 'part of the overhead costs incurred during the [American] tour [of the play] were covered by the British Council and [an American Foundation that supports military personnel injured in armed conflicts]'. As such, it can be said that producers at *Gray End Productions* successfully navigated between the different imperatives in portraying the complex subject matter. Subsidy was crucial here.

In another play called *Torture and Murder in Military Detention* performed by *Gray End Productions* in the summer of 2011, socio-political and professional imperatives were more dominant than artistic and commercial ones. The subject matter of this play was

based on a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of an Iraqi hotel worker who passed away while in British military detention in September 2003 during the Second Gulf War. The play also explored the general indiscipline within the army ranks which culminated in the mistreatment and serious abuse of several Iraqi civilians detained by British soldiers in Iraq. Commenting on the circumstances surrounding the play, Amanda notes:

It had fantastic reviews [...] I think the subject matter was great. Box office was terrible. And it's really hard to strike that balance because we are known as Britain's leading political theatre. You know, all The Time's leaders, New York Times leaders even, you know. There's no other theatre in the UK even that is getting that kind of coverage in the broadsheets and not in the Culture section, but actually in the Politics section. And yet, you know, that's what we are totally lauded for, and yet, we do something totally political like that, and nobody comes (Amanda).

Asked what the reasons for the terrible box office sales could have been, she notes three factors, namely the unfortunate timing, the inadequate press coverage of the public inquiry on which *Torture and Murder in Military Detention* was based, and the possibility that the 'queer taste and sedentary style' of the play may not have appealed to the audience:

I think it was a number of reasons: I think that it was summer, so people don't come to the theatre anyway. The inquiry itself was so absent in the press that people didn't really know or understand what it was about or how important it was. So there wasn't enough of that kind of consciousness of the subject matter [...] People didn't really know. I think people just – I wonder whether they had kind of politics fatigue from – we were in the wake of all the expenses scandal [...] you know, maybe they just kind of thought: do you know what? I don't want to hear about the government messing up again. I would much rather go [elsewhere]. I think that had a big impact on it. And also you know, it's a very queer taste, it's a very sedentary style of performance. It's so subtle. It's almost formic. You know, nothing happens on stage except a witness leaves and another one comes on. It's not everybody's cup of tea. Again, that's fine. But it does make it very hard, you know, made us question whether we should put this on. But again, you just have to go: well, actually, that's what we are here to do. That's why

the Arts Council give us their money. That's why people do come back and actually, hopefully the next one will be more popular (Ibid.)

With regard to socio-political imperatives, it is clear that the play attempted to expose the wrongdoings within the British military given that the government had tried to conceal information concerning the scandal allegedly for fear of endangering national security. In staging the play, producers at *Gray End Productions* sought to enable the audience 'to get a much better understanding of the [scandal]' (Norton-Taylor, 2004). Professional imperatives were demonstrated in the 'skill [...] and hard work' (Hammond and Steward, 2008: 10) employed to edit the 'long', 'dry' and 'not really exciting' public inquiry report about the scandal into a script for *Torture and Murder in Military Detention*. In artistic terms, although the 'sedentary style' of the play might have seemed less imaginative, the play got fantastic reviews nonetheless. Commercially, the box office performance was 'terrible' which might well have had to do with the timing rather than the nature of the play itself.

Nevertheless, Amanda implies that producers at *Gray End Productions* continue to stage such productions regardless of box office performance because 'that's what [they] are [t]here to do' and '[t]hat's why the Arts Council give [producers] their money'. More generally, subsidy has enabled third sector theatre producers to fulfil their remit which 'has traditionally been to [...] put on plays that challenge or inspire debate but would not be popular enough to stage' (Needham, 2012). But as noted earlier, its acceptance in the sector has been and remains a bone of contention.

Indeed, some commentators have tended to view public support as corrupting the 'morals' of third sector theatre production (Kelly, 1984; Webster, 1997; McGrath, 1990). Other observers have criticised subsidy as an instrumentalist approach with which the sector has been appropriated into the mainstream and subsequently turned into 'a branch of social work' (Lewis, 1990) or 'welfare arts' (Gant and Morris, 1997;

Harding, 1998). And given that many third sector theatre producers have colluded in this process (Van Erven, 1988; Peacock, 1999; Primavesi, 2011), this development is reminiscent of what some theorists have depicted as the absorption of emergent and oppositional ideologies into the dominant means of cultural production (Gramsci, 1971; Williams, 1981).

Looked at it in this light, subsidy can potentially 'blunt social criticism' (Van Erven, 1988) and constrain the autonomy of producers through dictating the issues to tackle and how these might be conveyed (McGrath, 1996). Likewise, (individual and corporate) sponsorships of arts and cultural programming can be constrictive creating considerable tensions for producers. This, then, begs the question how such producers respond to these tensions. It is to this that the discussion now turns.

### **6.4.3 'If We Say with a Begging Hand, Please Commission Us, Then the Power is in Their Hands...'**

Here, I show that third sector theatre producers sometimes manage to resist pressures from subsidy and sponsors in an effort to retain their (artistic) autonomy while at other times, they give in to such pressures. Still others seem to encounter no tensions between juggling their autonomy and the pressures. For example, in defence of the artistic control over his work against the influence from commissioning funders, Adam of *Antarc Theatre* comments:

I think we go to them with the project and go: isn't this brilliant? And they go: yeah. O.k., pay for it then. If we say with a begging hand, please commission us. Then the power is in their hands and they go: well... As an artist I have been in that situation before. This is my first salary job in 30 years. Before that I was a freelance artist. As a freelance theatre-maker, I would go to the NHS and they would say: yeah, we want a play that is about anti-alcohol or we want a play that is about AIDS. We want a play that is about homophobia. We want a play that is about racism. Yeah, I can make a piece of work like that. But I would like the artistic control. But when the artistic control is in the hands of the commissioner, yeah – this happened to me in the 90s. We want you to work on this estate in [South England]. And on this estate, the young

people are engaging in joyriding, you know, when you steal cars just to drive them like racing cars until you smash them. And so, what happens is, in the community you've got 16 year-olds driving 120 miles per hour up and down the streets. And, of course, knocking down children and killing them and the rest of it. So, they brought me in to make a piece of work with the teenagers that was about the dangers of joyriding. The problem was those teenagers did not want to make a piece of theatre about joyriding. They wanted to make a pantomime. And actually, they were joyriders. But they wouldn't be on the streets joyriding because they would be rehearsing a pantomime with me. So, the commissioners were going: we didn't want a pantomime. And I'm going: but the young people wanted a pantomime, you know what I mean. And those guys are the ones stealing the cars. But they can't steal the cars when they were rehearsing the pantomime, you know what I mean... (Adam).

From Adam's point of view, the aim of the project was to get the teenagers off the street and engage them in a meaningful arts activity. In his view, as long as that arts activity served the intended purpose, it did not matter what the art form was. Given that third sector arts projects often allocate part of the ownership to the participants, it seemed to Adam to make sense to settle for a pantomime that the teenagers wanted to do as opposed to a piece of theatre initially envisioned for the project. In this case, Adam's insistence on retaining the artistic control on this project apparently paid off given that the project got funded. In other cases, however, he is compelled to give in to the demands of funders.

One such case concerns an arts workshop programme called *Why Racism*. *Why Racism* was designed by *Antarc Theatre* at the request of a school in a town called *Thonwick* in South Yorkshire. According to Adam, the school experienced relatively high levels of racism mainly because of its location in a neighbourhood that strongly sympathises with the British National Party (BNP). In *Why Racism*, producers contextualised the roots of racism by highlighting the role of colonialism, globalisation and capitalism. But the funders felt *Why Racism* was 'too biased', 'ineffective' and 'overloaded', compelling producers to rework it into something simpler that was reduced to 'cultural differences' in Britain:

There's this school in *Thornick* that was having a problem with racism because it was on a housing estate which was very pro-BNP. So they rang up the company and went: we've got a problem with racism, we've got a problem with homophobia. Do you have a play about racism? How do we deal with the political right? And I was saying: Well, we don't have a play on the shelf ready. I don't think the play would necessarily cure people of racism. But probably a series of workshops would be better because the problem is much bigger than racism. The problem is about climate change. The problem is about globalisation, free markets. So, we devised workshops and went in to try and explore these issues with these 14, 15 year old kids. And we realised it was working. They were realising, actually – one of them kept saying poor countries, poor countries. I said: Well, what happened to the resources that were taken from poor countries? People move from poor countries and go somewhere else, you know. So, all this talk that they come to our country and take our jobs - what's left of their country? It's kind of simplistic. So, it's back to that imperialism, it's all those arguments and once you begin to peel that on your way, it's very difficult to justify racism [...] Teachers said to me: it's very biased. It's overloaded. It's ineffective for the purposes of the workshop. We can't have it like that. So we ended up focusing more on cultural differences in this country. I wasn't comfortable removing the context. But that's what we did [...] It was better than abandoning the whole thing (Adam).

Another example which demonstrates how producers give in to the demands of funders concerns Meredith of *Richmond Arts* who remarked that producers at the company were compelled to remove a 'lit cigarette' scene from one of their large-scale community play projects named *Know Your Heritage*<sup>33</sup>. The reason for this was because the scene in question contradicted the funder's 'smoking-cessation' campaign. In the end, *Richmond Arts* producers toed the line of the commissioning funder and as such, sacrificed some of their artistic control. Fortunately for producers, the removal of the

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<sup>33</sup> *Know Your Heritage* is a play produced by *Richmond Arts* in collaboration with a community in Southeast England. Based on research records and memories, the play explored the local history of this community and region spanning over 150 years with its heroes, villains, hardships and triumphs. A detailed discussion of the play follows in Section 6.5.

'lit cigarette' scene was not 'a deal breaker'. Of the situation regarding producers' creative control and commissioners' demands, Meredith remarks:

[O]n the whole this is thrashed out in initial discussions with partners. If the project has been put out to tender, the tender document will outline *Richmond Art's* vision for the project and how it intends to meet the commissioner's outcomes while maintaining artistic excellence. But this is always a compromise - apart from anything mostly we are working with non-professional people led by a small professional team - enabling people to do their best is behind all we do. And sometimes, local authority partners may want a different set of outcomes from those we would prefer to focus on. However, ultimately, provided something isn't defamatory, libellous, racist, sexist or obscene, and the language used is appropriate, most commissioners are happy to leave the artistic outputs to us. In *Know Your Heritage*, for instance, there was a scene where a miner lights a cigarette. This was right for the historical time in which the play was set but the local authority promotes smoking-cessation and asked for it to be removed. There was a bit of discussion about this but it wasn't a deal breaker. To be honest dealing with the health and safety aspects of having a lit cigarette on stage were worse so we dropped it from the action (Meredith).

In order to reduce their dependence on subsidy as a means of preserving their autonomy, producers at *Gray End Productions* have developed diverse strategies built around fundraising and sponsorship events in a bid to diversify their income base. Of these strategies, Amanda notes:

Solomon [the artistic director] is our primary fundraiser, frankly. We've also got two members in our development department who are constantly writing grant applications, writing to substantial finance individuals, trying to find corporate sponsorship - that kind of thing. They work more closely with the education and social inclusion department than I do. But often, actually, the social inclusion director writes her own funding applications and sources her own funding for her projects. Often, they are project-specific and bring funds as such. And I do a lot of fundraising as well either through applications, but also through events like an auction or a sort of extra-curricular activity like Am-dram performances recently where lawyers came in and performed for a week on stage with a professional director and a personal designer. The tickets were £8. Again, that was fundraising and it's really tough especially as memberships are dropping away. People's willingness to come to theatre is really, really tough. And that is very scary (Amanda).

The fundraising and sponsorship schemes alluded to here demonstrate how innovative producers at *Gray End Productions* are in seeking effective ways to bring in additional income, particularly in the wake of successive cuts to their subsidy. In addition to the routine grant applications, ‘corporate sponsorship’ (more of which follows below) and ‘am-dram’ performances are cases in point. My further study of the company’s documents and artefacts indicated that producers organise an annual quiz at a fair which yields significant income. Moreover, the company sometimes uses its *Q & A* sessions after performances to raise funds.

Furthermore, *Gray End Productions* uses its gallery space to conduct special arts auctions and exploits its resources to raise further income. Resources such as the spaces in the cinema, cafe and bar are offered for rent to businesses and individuals wishing to use them for their meetings and functions. Moreover, seats in the main auditorium are named after individual and corporate donors and sponsors who contribute considerable amounts of money in return for visibility and recognition. Such strategies demonstrate the increasing capitalisation of third sector media and cultural companies. Whereas these strategies, particularly sponsorships, help producers to diversify their income base, they may impact the autonomy of producers. Amanda comments on how ‘intrusive’ sponsors can be:

We demonstrate to them how we are – how we do what we are supposed to do. But they certainly don’t have influence in that respect at all. We’ve never got money from this guy before, we’ve got one guy who’s just donated some money to *The Capital in Flames* with the condition that he’s allowed to come in and sit in the rehearsals and give me feedback which I then give to Solomon so that, you know, he might want to consider. It’s all a very difficult situation just because he gave so many thousand pounds why should he come in and tell us what he thinks it should look like? So, it’s very difficult, and you know, I’ve been trying to tread it very carefully, but again, we’re gonna need him in the future. So, of course, we need to make sure that he feels like he is being listened to. And actually, his points are well-made. So, it’s really tough. But that’s the first time we’ve done that. And we will have to, you know, decide whether

it's worth it, and whether we felt it was appropriate or intrusive and that kind of thing (Amanda).

Amanda's comments appear contradictory. On the one hand, she says sponsors do not have influence. On the other, she seems to imply that this sponsor had a vested interest in influencing the production of *The Capital in Flames* which remained shrouded in mystery. In any case, the possibility that this sponsor appears entitled to give his input on the basis of his financial contribution is revealing and worrying. Moreover, the fact that producers feel obliged 'to make sure that he feels like he is being listened to' because producers are 'gonna need him in the future' points to a creeping commercialisation of third sector theatre production.

Likewise, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* is increasingly relying on corporate sponsorship to diversify its income base. But unlike producers at *Gray End Productions*, those at the former appear not to experience any interference from sponsors judging by the comments below:

We haven't had a case where any of our sponsors have meddled in our programming. Why should they? They are visible in our premises and we credit them accordingly if they have sponsored any of our productions. In appreciation [for their support], we sometimes invite them to look at the rehearsals in order to get a sense of what is involved backstage. We also invite them to performances every now and then but they very rarely come. It often happens that people sponsor productions that they don't even come to see. It would be simple to say that doesn't matter. Provided the sponsorship is running, all is fine. But I think that would be wrong. The sponsorship is one thing - but we are also interested in building a good partnership (Markus, Producer, *Kraemer Youth Theatre*).

It can be said that subsidy and sponsorship signal a pragmatic approach adopted by third sector theatre producers in the production of their work without which they would hardly survive in the prevailing marketplace. But given that both come with strings attached, we have seen that producers respond to the tensions posed in different ways. Equally important, Amanda and Markus seem to imply that building

and maintaining links with sponsors is becoming an integral part of third sector theatre production. This is captured well by Shaw's observation that 'there appears to be an increasing number of businesses which are open to the idea of a [...] partnership with arts organisations. It is very much down to human contact. There needs to be openness and flexibility; a real willingness to find a way that works for both organisations...' (2001:19). I would argue that in these economically difficult times for third sector theatre, this seems like a viable relationship. But if these partnerships are going to entitle sponsors and businesses to intervene in the process of third sector cultural production, then this is a very worrying development.

Overall, the transition from addressing particular audiences with a relatively limited range of themes to the pursuit of wider audiences with broader subject matter was motivated by socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives to varying degrees. We have also seen that producers respond to pressures posed by demands from subsidy and sponsorship in different ways. Sometimes producers insist on maintaining their (artistic) autonomy. At other times they give in to such pressures. Other producers claim not to experience any such pressures. Below I now turn to the ways in which the different imperatives impact organisational processes.

## **6.5 Organisational Processes at the Selected Case Study Companies**

Third sector theatre producers aim 'to demystify the arts and to bring people closer to the creative process [...] in a way that is self-affirming, empowering and democratic' (Webster, 1997: 20 - 21). In Sub-section 6.5.1, I highlight four integral aspects of the mission of three companies under study in this chapter, namely 'artistic detective work', training and the use of the arts for social and rehabilitative purposes. I argue that these aspects encourage wider participation as a result of the successful interplay between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives.

Sub-section 6.5.2 analyses the ways in which the interaction between different imperatives shapes the organisational form of some case study companies. Here, the argument is that the hybrid form of organisation tends to allow for much greater access and participation in theatre-making processes as a result of a successful navigation between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives than the hierarchical one which constricts such involvement due to the prioritisation of professional and commercial imperatives. In Sub-section 6.5.3 I show how producers make use of hybrid and relatively ‘unconventional’ art forms in facilitating greater involvement. I argue that such art forms result from achieving a balance between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives

### **6.5.1 ‘Getting to Know Your Patch’**

*Richmond Arts* is organised in such a way that it operates across a large geographical area in collaboration with numerous communities. As hinted at in Sub-section 6.3.1, this collaboration aims to create productions which reflect the identity and heritage of these communities in creative ways. Whereas this harmonises with socio-political and artistic imperatives, the fact is that producers do not belong in these communities and as such, are unlikely to be familiar with the needs, interests and concerns of members and diverse groups therein. So, how do producers deal with this problem in an effort to facilitate wider participation? Meredith remarks:

You have to start in a small way to get their confidence and get them to feel comfortable. Jeremiah [the research director] sometimes just spends time in local pubs talking to people to get the feel of a place before he starts doing research [...] For *Know Your Heritage* we ran open casting days. These weren’t auditions. Nobody had to go into a room on their own and Justin [the artistic director] ran theatre games and made it fun, before asking people in pairs or threes to read bits from the script. That way they felt comfortable. No one was turned away. I spent a lot of time just talking to people and getting to know them and vice versa so that everyone was familiar and comfortable and felt able to articulate things if they were worried about anything (Meredith).

Similarly, *Kraemer Youth Theatre* encourages the participation of young people in theatrical production by making them feel as comfortable as possible:

We always want to find out as much as possible about the circumstances of the young people we work with. We give them the chance to come and see the rehearsals in order to get a sense of what is involved in telling a story on stage. We show them the set and the props and the technical stuff and they get to meet the people who make theatre. We try to make the experience for them as comfortable and fun as possible (Markus).

At both *Richmond Arts* and *Kraemer Youth Theatre*, producers attach great importance to getting to know participants who are new to theatre and connecting with them. The idea behind this is clearly to gain their confidence by creating an environment in which they not only feel comfortable, but also develop a sense of being an integral part of the production process. Here, it can be said that connecting with participants in this way points to socio-political imperatives. Artistic imperatives are reflected in the selection of drama as an art form which gives participants a platform to express themselves creatively. Professional imperatives are displayed in conducting research into issues affecting participants and introducing such participants to theatrical skills and conventions. Webster highlights the significance of laying the groundwork for collaboration with diverse groups and communities when he notes that:

[u]sually, before any decisions are made about art forms, arts detective work will be taking place. This involves getting to know your patch, dropping in on as many community centres as possible, talking to as many key people as practicable (over the inevitable cup of tea), finding out key issues, local problems, local events... In this way a picture of what people do, think, say emerges. This process, often called networking, enables [producers] to make some hunches and try out some ideas (1997: 34).

Such 'arts detective work' is an integral part of the work of *Antarc Theatre*. Such work came to the fore in *The Blue Asbestos Tragedy* introduced above. Before the play was created, Adam and his colleagues investigated the historical, social and political settings of the community in which the asbestos tragedy occurred. In the process, according to Adam, producers talked to a lot of people of the older generation and

invited some of them to sit in the rehearsals and offer their thoughts. This proved to be crucial in reflecting the tragedy ‘as truthfully as it could get’ and in an ‘entertaining and comedic’ way, thus indicating a smooth interplay between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives in promoting greater participation.

In a similar vein, producers at *Gray End Productions* invariably pursue ‘arts detective work’ for their verbatim plays. For example, before embarking on *The Capital in Flames* which tackled the circumstances surrounding the riots that occurred in London in August 2011, producers talked to a lot of people including ‘taxi drivers, local politicians, police, lawyers, community leaders, victims and hospital workers’ in order to ‘get to the bottom of what really happened and why’ as Amanda remarks. She adds that ‘the input of many people [in the affected communities]’ makes ‘everybody want to see our take on the riots’. Here, the facilitation of wider involvement in the meaning-making process clearly demonstrates socio-political imperatives. Professional imperatives are reflected in the recording and transcription of interviews, coupled with skilfully editing, arranging, (re)contextualising and building the interview accounts into a dramatic presentation (Hammond and Steward, 2008: 9).

In addition to ‘arts detective work’, training and the use of the arts for social and rehabilitative purposes are other key integral aspects of the organisation of work in third sector arts and cultural work. These aspects encourage wider participation, albeit with different motivations. At *Antarc Theatre*, for example, Adam notes:

The rhythm of the year has been that early in the year January, February we run actor training for people who can’t afford to go to drama school. It tends to be adults, it tends to be people in their 30s who have always wanted to learn to act, have done amateur dramatics but it’s not fed them, they realise they need to learn more skills. So we run actor training courses for free. And I run that in the evenings for people after work. And sometimes we get undergraduates from Leeds University, sometimes we get actors who are out of work, who want to just keep their acting muscle flexed, you know. And then you get people who don’t have actor skills at all [...] So in the early

part of the year, there tends to be the rhythm of doing that and with the aim of auditioning people in the Easter break to give them an opportunity of a production which we produce and we pay for. And that production has for the last few years taken place at the Carriage Works Theatre in their festival - the Emerge Festival which is about emerging work. And so *Antarc Theatre* has a slot there although we're hardly an emerging company because we are 43 years old. But it would be an opportunity for people who've only just done a little bit of training to perform on stage and we always commission a brand newly trained designer, an emerging director and a new writer. So, it's new writing, new artists and it's like an incubation really for them. So that happens in the early part of the year through to Easter and into the summer (Adam).

With reference to third sector theatre production for rehabilitative purposes, he adds:

I wanna set up a project which engages ex-offenders when they come out of prison. Its 6 months training, 2 days a week theatre training. And 2 days a week trained to be youth workers with the aim that they can go out of that with a Level 3 qualification which is like A-Levels and then they use their skills either as theatre-makers or as youth workers back in their communities to engage with young people. Because when they come out of prison and go back to their communities, the young people 'lionise' them, you know what I mean, hero-worship them. And that's how crime escalates because they may have gone in selling drugs but they come out and they become leaders, they become gangsters... But obviously, they are not gonna get jobs as actors but they can be youth workers, and we would make theatre with them that then tours prisons. So, as far as the Arts Council are concerned, we would be touring one play a year funded by them, but what we want to also draw down is funding that will allow us to do a second tour – but of prisons. So, we would tour two plays (Ibid.).

Socio-political imperatives are not only reflected in the training given to interested participants, fledgling and unemployed artists to enable them gain experience in the making of theatre or 'keep their acting muscle flexed', but also in the productions that get staged at the 'Emerge Festival'. Such training and productions are significant components of the company's organisational practices. Similarly, although the training of young offenders may appear to be motivated by funding from the Arts Council, socio-political imperatives are identifiable in the attempt to enhance the 'self-development' of these youths through the acquisition of 'a Level 3 qualification'.

Whereas the use of third sector arts for social and rehabilitative purposes generally illustrates a high level of instrumentalism, I would argue that there are individual and community benefits deriving from this. On an individual level, participants not only gain 'self-confidence', resulting from 'real achievement and the acquisition of actual skills' but they might benefit from 'the extension of social networks, personal control [and] empowerment (Matarasso, 2000: 15). Furthermore, Walshe (2012) has pointed to studies which found that participants tend to 'have better social and communication skills, are more likely to go on to pursue higher education, and are less likely to re-offend'. On a community level, such arts and cultural activities might help to mitigate social exclusion (Matarasso, 2000: 16).

Indeed, Hill (1997), in his discussion of the factors affecting young people's participation in artistic and cultural programmes, asks what claim the arts may have on subsidy if they do not fulfil a social or rehabilitative function 'or assist in the processes of change in society'? At the time of writing, the ex-offenders' theatrical project alluded to above has been funded. It aims 'to encourage re-integration into society and the acquisition of social skills' (Hill, 1997: n.p). Seen from this perspective, arts projects such as this can be said to foster 'a transforming experience' (Matarasso, 2000: 16) because they aim to make a difference in the lives of the disadvantaged in society.

An illustrative example of the application of third sector arts for social purposes is provided by *Huddermount Productions* on a project called *Our City, Our Home*. The company specialises in designing innovative arts and cultural projects which address social problems in predominantly deprived areas across Yorkshire. In one such area in an inner-city estate in Leeds characterised by 'high levels of crime, a high number of lone parents and people on benefits', *Huddermount Productions* was commissioned to address some of these social problems through the arts. The company designed a number of arts and cultural programmes to this end. One of these involved storytelling,

conversation workshops and creative writing and aimed to build the confidence of lone parents, nearly all of whom 'were single mums and some of whom had been victims of domestic violence, abuse, stereotypes, isolation and discrimination' according to the report and diverse artefacts pertaining to *Our City, Our Home*.

In the course of the project, lone parents 'either talked/or wrote about their experiences for the very first time'. Here, creative writing as an art form can be seen 'to heal the wounds of a social problem' and to give a platform and dignity to the victims of domestic violence, abuse and discrimination through 'enabling them to recognise and express their feelings about the world around them' (Lacy, 1995: 19). The ultimate goal was to counter the stigma of lone parenthood and to build the confidence and self-esteem of the participants. Here, both socio-political and artistic imperatives played a crucial role in promoting wider involvement with a view to addressing social problems.

Despite these key social and rehabilitative functions, the role of third sector arts has been scrutinised. Because these arts prioritise addressing a range of social problems in society over artistic values, they have sometimes been derided as 'welfare arts' or 'arts-based social work' (Gant and Morris, 1997: 43) which, though 'socially concerned', are 'aesthetically insignificant' (Lacy, 1995: 55). Also, the impact of such arts has been questioned because whereas they can account for what they do with the money and/or other kinds of support they receive, they often fail to effectively demonstrate the worth and contribution of their work (Matarasso, 2000)<sup>34</sup>. I now look at how the hierarchical and hybrid organisational structures of three companies under study impact participation and the role that the different imperatives play in the process.

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<sup>34</sup> Oakley (2008: 28) makes a similar point in her discussion of the problem of evaluating the impact of cultural activities. She refers to this as the 'advocacy problem' meaning 'the gulf between the *claims made for a particular activity* and *the evidence to substantiate those claims*', a conundrum particularly faced by 'artists and those campaigning for more public spending'.

### 6.5.2 'Amateur Doesn't Have to Mean Amateurish'

The structure around which a company is organised significantly influences participation. *Antarc Theatre*, for example, began as a collective but 'was forced into a hierarchy' in order to survive. Adam, while recounting how producers at the time had endured all sorts of hardship to keep the collective afloat, got quite emotional with a tear or two rolling down one of his cheeks:

*Antarc Theatre* was a collective. It was a non-hierarchical collective right through to the early 80s. But it nearly went bankrupt and in order to save the company, the company was forced into a hierarchy with an artistic director at the top. And many artists of that time are still angry about that and left and, you know, you've taken away what is basically an arch of communist organisation (Adam).

The decentralised form of organisation (or the lack of it) at *Gray End Productions* left a lot to be desired:

Solomon likes to remind people how far *Gray End Productions* has come [...] When he took over in 1984, the building was run down, the bar was damp with grimy posters all over the walls. There seemed to be little organisation, everybody seemed to do what they wanted and that showed in the performances (Amanda).

As profiled above, no company is organised around a horizontal structure proper anymore, which might suggest the impracticability of such an organisational form. Some commentators have noted that initial collectives which broke with the 'collectivist-democratist' structure tended to survive while those that did not went under (Van Erven, 1988; Kershaw, 1992). As the socio-economic climate evolved, *Gray End Productions* and *Kraemer Youth Theatre* became hierarchically organised while *Antarc Theatre* adopted a hybrid structure, with an artistic director at the helm. Amidst these structural changes, third sector theatre producers who became disillusioned with these developments dropped out of the sector altogether as Adam's comments indicate.

The hybrid organisational structure at *Antarc Theatre* today allows for both a collective and professional approach to work. On the one hand, producers facilitate

greater involvement of emerging and unemployed artists, interested ordinary people and juvenile offenders in theatre-making. Particularly in reference to the former groups, Adam noted that producers 'utilise participants' skills and talents' in their core productions in tune with socio-political imperatives. On the other hand, although the subject matter might sometimes be collectively researched and even discussed, artistic development and control are normally left to the artistic director and playwrights in alignment with professional and artistic imperatives. A case in point was the play *The Blue Asbestos Tragedy* which was collectively researched and in which two community members featured as actors, but was written and (creatively) developed by Isaac, a member of *The Rainbow Writers*, suggesting a successful interaction between socio-political, artistic and professional imperatives.

Similarly, the hybrid way of organising at *Richmond Arts* promotes wider participation by encouraging a collective and professional approach to work. This was illustrated by the production of *Know Your Heritage* alluded to earlier. Meredith remarks:

The budget for *Know Your Heritage*, including the nine-month workshop programme that preceded it, was over £60,000 and this was funded mainly through the Heritage Lottery Fund with additional funding from the local authority - both cash and in kind. But we also sold tickets cheap, only £5 and sold DVDs of the show to the cast for £10. That meant that part of the project paid for itself. We also ran a bar during the show for the audience which made a good profit. But for participants it is always free to take part and the workshops, if not free, are very cheap. The creative writing courses were only £15 for six 2-hour weekly sessions and then they got a free rehearsed reading of their pieces with professional actors. We also encouraged the participants to run their own fundraising events. They ran a coffee morning. This didn't raise a lot of money, that wasn't the point. It raised a bit, and they felt they were contributing but more importantly they bonded socially and had a lot of fun (Meredith).

In tune with socio-political imperatives, the collective approach to *Know Your Heritage* enabled participants to manage some of the income-generating activities intended to support the play project such as running a bar and fundraising events. This not only

appeared to give participants a sense of ownership of the project, but the overarching goal was the promotion of social bonding. The professional approach to the play project was reflected in the provision of participants with 'a free rehearsed reading of their pieces'. Also, Meredith noted that participants were instructed in such skills as grant application, filming, administration and budgeting matters, all of which harmonise with professional imperatives. Moreover, in commercial terms, 'part of the project paid for itself' through box office income and the sale of the DVDs of the play.

At *Gray End Productions*, the hierarchical organisational structure promotes participation, albeit in a limited way. Amanda comments:

You obviously do quality controlling, you don't just say, oh, anyone or any other company can come in. You know, we've spent years building relationships, so our company has a shared experience. We just know that what they will produce will be a shared experience show and that's fine. And you also know that that will be a huge thing and that people will come and see it. So that's the way you kind of balance it in your programme. You get incoming shows that you hope, obviously, will be, you know, your bread and butter and that gives you the freedom to do something like this (Amanda).

Here, although the preference to work with professional theatre producers and companies with a proven track record and the ability to attract audiences in tune with professional and commercial imperatives appears to leave no room for wider participation, this is not the case. *Gray End Productions* does audition relatively experienced non-professional people for some of its core performances from the communities it serves, pointing to a commitment of socio-political imperatives. Amanda describes such performers as not 'fitting a particular category'. She notes that some of them are amateurs who nonetheless 'love acting on stage and are really good at it' while others are fully trained actors performing on a freelance basis.

Amanda also adds that it is not uncommon to be unable 'to say who's an amateur and who's a professional on stage'. Based on my fieldwork findings, I agree

with her diagnosis. Regardless of the organisational structure, the perceived boundary between amateurs and professionals is sometimes much more fluid than it might appear at first sight. Seen from this perspective, one could make the claim that socio-political, professional and commercial imperatives interact successfully under the hierarchical way of organising at *Gray End Productions*.

Similarly, the fusing of the 'skills and talents' of amateurs with the guidance of producers at *Antarc Theatre*, according to Adam, might make it virtually impossible to distinguish a professional from an amateur. This pattern inevitably induces the discussion about the extent to which the boundary between professionals and amateurs in third sector theatre is distinct or fluid. In terms of working conditions, the fluidity between these groups is highlighted by Scott's observation that '[b]oth groups rehearse in the evenings and weekends in order to fit around their paying jobs' (Scott, 2011) assuming they are in some form of employment. Building on Amanda's point above that 'to say who's an amateur and who's a professional on stage' might sometimes be difficult, Scott notes further that '[b]oth [groups] perform for the love of putting on theatre' and concludes that 'the distinction between them seems increasingly obsolete' (Ibid.), a proposition that I agree with based on my fieldwork experience.

Morrison (2008a) concurs by questioning the distinction normally made between amateurs and professionals noting that "amateur" doesn't have to mean "amateurish". As a prominent commentator on this subject, he notes that he has come across 'amateur actors, directors and technicians who do several stage productions a year and whose CVs cover several pages [w]hile many professional actors have long fallow periods waiting for the next voiceover...'. Morrison notes further that theatre-making is 'not all about experience' and 'drama school training' but also about

commitment, talent and artistic excellence<sup>35</sup> or what he calls the ability ‘to turn base matter into gold’ (Ibid.). Similarly, McIntyre agrees with this line of argument noting that ‘amateur and professional, draw on the same skills base albeit with differing expertise [and as such] are not separate and isolable...’ (2012: 25). This, I would argue, not only suggests that socio-political and professional imperatives complement each other in contemporary third sector theatre production, but it also clearly demonstrates that the sector is witnessing increased professionalisation.

In sum, it can be inferred that although the relatively successful interaction between the different imperatives enables third sector theatre producers under a hybrid organisational structure to promote wider participation, control tends to rest with producers. Whereas the hierarchical structure, which emphasises professional and commercial imperatives, encourages the involvement of experienced amateurs in theatre-making, it limits wider inclusiveness. Below I now analyse the ways in which another factor, performance conventions, enable or constrain participation.

### **6.5.3 ‘Maximising the Socially Interactive Potential of Theatre’**

Here, I show that out of the need to express contemporary socio-political circumstances in new and artful ways from the 1970s onwards, third sector theatre producers combined agitprop conventions with various techniques embedded in experimental art forms to achieve socio-political militancy and artistic quality in tune with socio-political and artistic imperatives. Today, producers strive to facilitate wider involvement by utilising such hybrid and sometimes ‘unconventional’ art forms.

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<sup>35</sup> In their discussion of some of the characteristics associated with amateurs or Pro-Ams engaged in cultural activities, Leadbeater and Miller (2004: 22/39) list more key attributes such as having a strong sense of vocation, dedication, passion and perseverance.

For all its strengths, the unsuitability of agitprop to capture the evolving socio-political circumstances in novel and creative ways already preoccupied third sector theatre producers in the mid-1970s. For example, an early producer noted that:

[t]he major problem is that [agitprop] provides answers rather than asking questions. For a short sketch on a particular issue (a rent strike, for example) we find that agitprop is an effective, perhaps the best, theatrical method of mobilising support. If we want to put over an understanding of, say, the roots of racism or the oppression of women, in a way that actually moves an audience to re-examine their own beliefs and attitudes and feel the necessity of acting to transform their own and others' attitudes, then we find that agitprop is a perfect tool. But we also find it is unable to fulfil the artistic task of portraying and interpreting the way people operate, and why they operate in that particular way, revealing the contradictions as they grow out of the social, economic, and political conditions of society itself (Seyd, 1975: 40 *cf.* DiCenzo, 1996: 46).

Another early producer reflected on a potential way forward either with 'politically conscious theatre' or popular entertainment:

We were faced with a choice: to make a political theatre for the politically conscious sector of the working-class... or to seek a broad working-class audience which would be attracted to our shows first and foremost because [the shows] offered the prospect of a good night out. We opted for the latter... (Rawlence, 1979: 67 *cf.* DiCenzo, 1996: 48).

This marked the point at which third sector theatre producers transitioned from pure agitprop and gravitated towards more popular entertainment and other hybrid forms. In doing so, producers engaged in the creation of work that treated contemporary socio-political issues in new and entertaining ways using various techniques embedded in hybrid art forms in line with socio-political, artistic and commercial imperatives. Such techniques included the use of humour, comedy, satire and folk songs among other things (Sebald, 1988; Van Erven, 1988; Reinelt, 1996).

Today, producers still inter-mix agitprop conventions with humour and satire in an effort to connect with audiences during and after performances. A good example

which illustrates the combination of these conventions with laughter (but also with sadness) embedded within an experimental art form is *The Blue Asbestos Tragedy* by *Antarc Theatre* introduced above. As indicated there, the gist of the play was an attempt to shed some light on the 'obscure histories, relationships, issues and problems' surrounding the asbestos tragedy. Additionally, the play also aimed to explore how the tragedy might be linked to the on-going deaths in that area, particularly as the local authorities have tended not to divulge much information.

The ultimate goal of the producers was three-fold. First, producers not only sought to bridge the distance between them and the audience, but they also worked towards gaining the trust of that audience considering that producers were not from that area. Second, having built trust, producers strove to challenge the audience to question the manner in which the local authorities had dealt with the tragedy. Third, producers aimed to promote wider involvement in the meaning-making process. Such involvement was reflected in the post-performance discussion in which producers made the audience 'feel involved in the creative process; [becoming] aware that the play [was] for them, and in a very real sense, by them' (Van Erven, 1988: 177). Here, socio-political and artistic imperatives were crucial.

In a similar vein, *Showdown With The Greedy Rich*, another production by *Antarc Theatre* also introduced above, utilised a hybrid art form which oscillated between a 'musical gig' and a 'pantomime' in enabling wider participation in the process of meaning-making. Although premised on the Luddite uprising of the early nineteenth-century in Britain, the play satirised contemporary elites and politicians. The response drawn from the audience revealed the distrust and disillusionment with modern elites and politicians comparable to that experienced by the Luddites towards the rich in the nineteenth century. The 'naughtiness' that Adam alluded to when commenting on the production can be interpreted as a kind of 'social anger' or 'rage' that satirical

techniques provoke both during and after the performance. This way, producers prompt audiences to challenge perceived structural injustices, pointing to a smooth interaction between socio-political and artistic imperatives.

Other third sector theatre producers make use of relatively ‘unconventional’ art forms in a bid to facilitate wider involvement. A case in point is *Torture and Murder in Military Detention* which, as we saw above, was characterised by a ‘sedentary style’ typical of verbatim theatre produced at *Gray End Productions*. Although such a style renders verbatim theatre appear less imaginative and entertaining than, say, popular, fictitious plays, ‘it lets people speak for themselves’ (Norton-Taylor, 2011). This implies two issues. First, that verbatim theatre is inclusive. Robin Soans, a prominent British verbatim producer who works in both the third and mainstream sectors underlines this point by noting that such theatre is concerned with ‘widening the number and variety of people you listen to, to include people who traditionally haven’t been seen and heard in the theatre’ (cf. Hammond and Steward, 2008: 18). This serves a crucial socio-political function.

Second, the proposition that verbatim theatre ‘lets people speak for themselves’ leads David Hare, another prominent British verbatim producer, to claim that such theatre provides an accurate source of information because verbatim producers ‘have much less to gain from lies and spin, and much more interest in being honest’ than news journalists (Ibid.: 10). For Hare, ‘this sort of theatre provides what journalism fails to provide, and at a time when it is sorely needed’ (Ibid.). I have trouble with this because like news producers and documentary film-makers, a playwright consciously or unconsciously makes subjective decisions about which bits of the material in the play should be included and emphasised and which ones should be omitted from it. Indeed, Hammond and Steward (2008: 10) assert that ‘[n]o play, like no newspaper article, is

without bias and inflection'. I highlighted similar debates in news and documentary in Chapters Two and Five respectively.

Viewed in this light, it can be said that verbatim theatre primarily results from a successful interaction between socio-political and professional imperatives. This is reflected in 'the task of dealing with serious subject matter' which is skilfully crafted into dramatic performances with a view to informing citizens about 'the detail of important public enquiries' and to sparking debate and discussion (Ibid.: 11). According to Hammond and Steward, it is this provision of citizens 'with greater access to important information' that makes 'verbatim theatre [...] a remarkably democratic medium' (Ibid.:12).

In sum, it can be inferred that the application of hybrid and 'unconventional' art forms in third sector theatre production sometimes helps promote wider participation. Unlike performances in established theatres which are characterised by 'dominant stage-auditorium relationships', the art forms in third sector theatre tend to favour a more direct and flexible interaction between performers and the audience which can be a 'foundation for actor-audience solidarity' (Kershaw, 1992: 247). These art forms 'are participatory [in the sense that] they encourage and often depend on the direct involvement and feedback of the audience' [the rationale of which is the attempt] 'to maximise the socially interactive potential of theatre' (DiCenzo, 1996: 51). This means that third sector theatre producers play 'with' and 'for' people (Ibid.) in order 'to provide pleasure [but sometimes to express sadness], usually through music/songs and comedy [as a means of] building positive relationships and a sense of solidarity with their audiences' (Ibid.: 52). Having looked at the ways in which the mission, organisational structures and performance conventions of the case study companies in this chapter impact participation, I now assess how producers view their work following competing imperatives and systemic pressures.

## 6.6 Impact of Competing Imperatives and Pressures on Perceptions of Work

Using Pollard *et al.*'s (2004) taxonomy explained in the Introduction, I evaluate the ways in which competing imperatives and other pressures impact on how third sector theatre producers view individual and organisational aspects relating to their work, particularly in terms of success, frustrations or even failure. For example, Meredith of *Richmond Arts* perceives her work as:

making a difference, making new friends, working with a highly professional and creative team, and especially, making new art all the time [...] I have never been involved in a community play, or indeed any community project properly managed, however small, that has not had a transformational effect on at least some of the participants. Whether a project or performance is successful or not depends on many variables. Subject matter and timing are important. People are very interested usually in their local history presented in a new way. But a big cast will bring in a big audience - and they are the best people to market it. And marketing is really important - sometimes it's good and sometimes less good, and this does make a difference. If you can work it so you can get a piece on the local TV news it's always a sell-out - invariably. (Meredith).

Meredith points to the 'varied sociality of her job' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 128) which she notes not only includes 'working with a highly professional and creative team' and 'making new friends', but also involves 'making new art all the time'. The overall objective of her work can be said to be 'making a difference' to participants' circumstances. Moreover, such work can be a commercial success if marketed well. In all these aspects of Meredith's work, the presence of socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives is identifiable. This fits in with Matarasso's observation that 'there is no reason to expect lower standards of management, professionalism or artistic quality from community-based arts projects [because] their energy and passion often produces work of great originality and power' (2000: 21).

On the future growth of her company, Meredith remarks:

Bucking the trend a bit we are getting quite a lot of work and we have very limited administrative infrastructure so we're having to go through the process currently of developing a business plan and looking at long term admin space and staffing and funding options. This will need to be in place by April next year [2012]. But we need to ensure that we don't overstretch ourselves and find that we're struggling if work becomes scarce again (Meredith).

Although *Richmond Arts* plans to expand as a result of 'a lot of work', one notices a sense of caution about not to 'over-stretch' in case 'work becomes scarce again'. This situation is reminiscent of Leadbeater and Oakley's (1999) study on how independent cultural entrepreneurs tend to work. The authors note that such entrepreneurs generally opt to remain small because of 'constant uncertainty, insecurity and change' (Ibid.: 15). 'Given these pitfalls it is quite rational for [these producers] to want to stay small, not just for creative reasons but to avoid over-committing themselves' (Ibid.: 26). The phase through which *Richmond Arts* is going requires 'formulating business plans and budgets [considering that] [b]usinesses based on service provision often go through periods of feast, when they have a lot of work, followed by a famine...' (Ibid.: 27). For Hesmondhalgh and Baker, the issue of insecurity 'is a feature of a great deal of working life, but is arguably worse in the cultural industries than many other sectors, because of the uncertain and short-term nature of cultural-industry job contracts...' (2011: 113).

On how she views her work, Amanda of *Gray End Productions* remarks:

It's the best and worst thing which I do. I walk in and I don't know what's gonna hit me in the morning. Because we're all given so much responsibility and autonomy and yet in some way, so little that you feel at times an enormous investment and enormous pride, even adding social inclusion work, working on *The Capital in Flames*, successfully fundraising £40,000 in the morning – whatever it might be. But similarly, you feel totally exhausted and overstretched and underappreciated as well. But you just do this yo-yo thing. And also, because everybody feels like that, everybody has to prove their worth so much and we are supportive to each other, but, basically, it's a brilliant team to work with. You know, everyone is always: how can I help you? Don't mind, don't worry, it's gonna be alright which is great. It's very, very rewarding (Amanda).

Amanda revels in being able to accomplish various tasks including ‘successfully fundraising £40,000 in the morning’. This is a typical example of the high level of subjective investment that many creative workers have in what they do’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 113). The ‘yo-yo thing’ as reflected at times in the ‘enormous investment and enormous pride’ derived from ‘being given so much responsibility and autonomy’ and then presumably in the annoyance resulting from being given less responsibilities and freedom at other times coupled with ‘total exhaustion’ and being ‘overstretched and underappreciated’ can be seen as an oscillation between ‘pleasure and [frustration], freedom and constraint, characteristic of so much creative work’ (Ibid.: 154). The fact that work colleagues at *Gray End Productions* appear to console each other during phases of hardship points to a work relationship that can be ‘therapeutic’ in nature (Ibid.: 152).

On the financial state of her company, particularly in the wake of subsidy cuts, Amanda says:

It’s a nightmare. It means that we are gonna have to have in future smaller artistic casts, simpler sets and fewer varied productions. It means that we would have to be much more - we would be much less accessible to smaller and less known companies and playwrights. So that’s gonna be really tough. We’ve already had to cancel some things like the solicitor script reading service of certain topics. We can’t afford it anymore. We are looking into fundraising. Solomon is a full-time fundraiser himself. I mean he’s astonishing the way that he, you know, moves and shakes and puts things together and brings people together and sorts of things. Like I said, we are also looking at sponsorship and other potential income sources (Amanda).

This is clearly a worrying development in many ways. First, reducing casts would likely limit, if not inhibit wider participation. Second, ‘simpler sets and fewer varied productions’ would not only compel producers to compromise the quality of performances, but they would also likely keep producers from taking creative risks in favour of ‘tried and tested formulae’ which foster the production of bland, ‘safe’ and

unchallenging populist work geared towards profit maximisation. Third, the inaccessibility of *Gray End Productions* to ‘smaller and less known companies and playwrights’ would mean that artists on the margins of cultural industries would no longer be given the opportunity either to contribute to the theatre-making experience at the company or to use *Gray End Productions* as a platform to showcase their own work. This scenario would risk undermining socio-political and artistic imperatives which are central pillars of democratic communication.

Moreover, in a bid to make up for lost subsidy, producers at *Gray End Productions* have turned to income-generating strategies such as fundraising and sponsorship among other things. However desirable such strategies may be under the circumstances, these strategies force producers to ‘do whatever is required to support commercial interests’ (Banks, 2007: 36), thereby distracting from core work.

Adam of *Antarc Theatre* says of his work:

Okay, I wake up every morning and I look forward to go to work. So, of all the theatre companies that I could be director of, this is the only one I feel like to – I love this company. I love this work [...] I could have taken over any theatre company and turned it political. But the board would not have supported me whereas the board of this company [does]. So yeah, in monetary terms, I’m not very wealthy, but I’m wealthy in my spiritual terms, you know. I love my job. The danger of that is I love it too much and I think about it 24/7. So, maybe my family – but my family support me because they understand. My son – I’ve got 2 batches of children. I’ve got series one who are 22 and 24 and series two who are 3 and 5. So in series one, my son says to me: yeah, you are a revolutionary within the artistic world. You are not making necessarily experimental work but you’re doing work, you’re trying to change things through your work. And he said: you’re very lucky. You can do that [...] So, I feel very lucky because there is nothing else I wanna do [...] I wanna drop dead doing this. When I die, it will be hopefully in a rehearsal room unless I go completely mad before then (Adam).

Adam’s proclamation of how much he loves his work and that ‘he wants to drop dead doing it’ points to an extraordinarily ‘passionate attachment’ to his work which can be said to emanate from ‘the possibility of the maximisation of self-expressiveness’ that

such work provides him (McRobbie, 2004: 132). In addition, he remarks that 'he is not wealthy in monetary terms' but 'wealthy in his spiritual terms' which points to a great attachment to the psychic income and gratification he derives from his work. By 'thinking about his work 24/7', one might argue that Adam 'defines [himself] too much through [his] work' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 148).

In doing so, Adam displays 'a high degree of personal, emotional investment' in such work, a phenomenon that not only reveals the difficulty of disentangling his work from the rest of his life (Ibid.: 151), but it also has 'implications for work-life balance' (Ibid.: 149). Fortunately, it appears his family are very supportive of him 'because they understand'. Also, Adam appears to gain satisfaction from the '[spoken] moment of affirmation' in which he is told by his son that he is lucky. And the fact that he feels very lucky because he is doing work that is trying to change things suggests a deep commitment to socio-political imperatives.

In reference to the financial position of *Antarc Theatre*, Adam comments:

Unfortunately, from March [2012], we've had our funding cut by £90,000. So, for instance, *Show Down With The Greedy Rich* has nine performers in it including, you know, a celebrity – George. We can't afford to do that. So we have to look very carefully. So now we are looking at how do we maintain an output on reduction of funding? And as anti-capitalists, we should be able to do things. So, we've started looking at other possible income streams, you know. It's awkward that as an anti-capitalist I'm using words like an income stream, you know. But I still have to play the business game. I still have to write a business plan for the Arts Council. Anyway, the ex-offenders project I mentioned earlier is one way of getting in some funding. So, in other words, the funding cut is forcing us to change our rhythm, change our output. What I cannot do ethically is I cannot do what Jeremy Hunt wants me to do which is to go to capitalist philanthropists and say: Please, sponsor us. Because their money is dirty money, if you know what I mean. (Adam).

As in the case of *Gray End Productions*, subsidy cuts are likely to compromise the quality of performances at *Antarc Theatre*. Despite claims to hold on to their anti-capitalist

stance, the reality is that producers at *Antarc Theatre* are increasingly compelled to adapt to a market-oriented environment as reflected in the need 'to play the business game' associated with professional and commercial imperatives. Unlike *Gray End Productions* and *Kraemer Youth Theatre* which are increasingly relying on sponsorship, *Antarc Theatre* as Adam remarks, (still) categorically rules out such sponsorship on ideological grounds. Although undertaking the ex-offenders project appears to have been motivated by the need to attract funding rather than socio-political imperatives, a deep commitment to socio-political goals is identifiable.

Lastly, Markus of *Kraemer Youth Theatre* experiences his work in the following:

We are hopeful that our new fundraising and sponsorship schemes will bear fruit to enable us to continue our work with the 150 or so kids and youths. It's just astonishing to watch these young people who you have seen creeping around, looking terrified when they come here the first time and now buzzing with confidence after having produced a brilliant performance (Markus).

Such expressions of hope that the work will continue reflect 'precariousness, in the sense of irregular or insecure work [that] characterises much of what happens in cultural work (Oakley, 2009b: 285). Other commentators have noted that such 'precariousness' in cultural work is met with a high degree of optimism, of being able to turn things around (Matarasso, 2000; McRobbie, 2004). Markus is gratified to watch young people blossom through engaging in theatre and to see them 'buzzing with confidence'. Such gratification can be said to offer Markus 'a certain degree of rewarding self-realisation' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 157), driven by the desire to make an impact in society in tune with socio-political imperatives. The 'fundraising and sponsorship schemes', which align themselves with commercial imperatives, can be seen here as a means to achieving such an impact and not as an end in themselves.

Overall, the overriding themes in producers' perceptions above concern uncertainty and insecurity in cultural work but also passionate, subjective attachment to

such work. These two contrasting but inextricably intertwined states typical of much third sector cultural work might be best encapsulated in what Gill and Pratt (2008) term a 'blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurship' (2008: 14).

## **6.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have demonstrated that third sector theatre producers in the early years fairly successfully navigated between socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives in the transition from targeting primarily working-class audiences with relatively specific themes to addressing wider, diverse audiences with broader issues. Today, the skilful negotiation between the different imperatives and systemic pressures has seen contemporary third sector theatre producers create new, socially relevant, entertaining and experimental work which, in some instances, is commercially successful. Considering that such work is produced on shoe-string budgets, this can be seen as a triumph of the social and cultural value of third sector arts and cultural programming in two main ways.

First, where commercial cultural production allows little room for failure due to its reliance on 'tried and tested formulae' which tend to foster the production of bland and uncritical work, the successful negotiation between the different imperatives enables third sector arts producers 'to invest in truly unpredictable work' which might 'surprise with a new or startling perspective' and 'explore uncertainty' (Morris, 2012). Second, third sector arts and cultural programming not only facilitates wider involvement as shown in the support for fledgling artists, unemployed actors and people from all walks of life, but it also enables the application of such work for instrumental goals, particularly social and rehabilitative purposes. We saw that these functions help make society a better place and as such, point to the commitment of socio-political imperatives.

Alongside socio-political imperatives, artistic and commercial ones play a crucial role. We have seen that third sector arts and cultural producers attach great importance to artistic imperatives because they allow for the expression of views, emotion and real-life experiences in new and imaginative ways. Similar to third sector documentary filmmakers, arts and cultural programmers in the third sector invariably fight to preserve their (artistic) autonomy in a bid to be able to make relevant, entertaining, but challenging work that is sometimes commercially successful. Also, producers are aware that artistic recognition in the sector matters and can prove decisive in obtaining commissions and other collaborative project work.

The relative independence enjoyed by third sector arts and cultural producers stems from access to a range of distribution spaces such as concert and community halls, theatres (both third sector and mainstream), pubs, streets, third sector radio and television, cinema as well as other media such as websites, CDs and DVDs. This might explain why professional imperatives may not always play a significant role in third sector arts and cultural work because such work may not demand conformity with professional conventions, say, in the same way as third sector documentary needs to with mainstream broadcasting organisations.

Furthermore, arts and cultural programmers in the third sector have devised strategies to diversify their income base. I showed that such programmers utilise their skills to provide training to different groups. They are also increasingly attracting sponsorship from individuals and businesses, which although helps to make up for subsidy cuts, has the potential to influence the production of third sector arts and cultural work and to undermine the sector's social value. These producers have also identified other social and cultural work which, although not always artistic, serves the public good.

## **7. Conclusion**

### **7.1 Thesis Summary and Contribution**

This thesis began by contextualising the social and cultural importance of third sector media and cultural organisations in the wake of numerous developments that have transformed mainstream public service and commercial media. I noted that such importance is reflected in the distinctiveness, for example in terms of providing relevant, civic information, encouraging debate and deliberation and facilitating greater access and participation in media and cultural production processes. I pointed out that the overarching goal of third sector media and cultural organisations is to promote democratic communication and effect social change in alignment with socio-political imperatives. However, I also indicated that ascendant artistic, professional and commercial imperatives now assume a crucial role in the organisational and production processes of these organisations. This sometimes leads to considerable tensions, contradictions and problems because the different imperatives can be strongly divergent.

Moreover, I noted that producers are confronted with demands from subsidy, funders, broadcasters and politics, all of which threaten the autonomy of producers. I further noted that competing imperatives and other pressures impact on the ways in which producers perceive their work. I mentioned that these aspects have not sufficiently been studied and as such, this thesis aimed to address this gap. To this end, I applied an interpretative and qualitative framework comprising semi-structured interviews, participant observation and the study of documents and artefacts. The findings obtained were presented on a genre by genre basis.

In third sector news production, for example, I found that some producers successfully navigate between socio-political and professional imperatives to provide specific news and informational material unlikely to be provided by mainstream public service and commercial media. Also, such producers tend to facilitate involvement through the hybrid form of organisation that their companies tend to display. Other producers reject commercialism which insulates them from the influence of advertisers and sponsors. Nonetheless, these producers are subjected to political controls which tend to compel them to 'tone down' (overly) critical reporting. Still other producers prioritise commercial and professional imperatives over socio-political ones. Here, commercial and professional interests can be seen as the 'gatekeepers' dictating news production rather than producers. Overall, third sector news producers view their work favourably despite the numerous challenges they are faced with.

In third sector documentary, producers tend to successfully navigate between socio-political, artistic, professional and commercial imperatives on the one hand, and demands from funders, sponsors and broadcasters on the other. Some producers avert any potential tensions, contradictions and problems by disseminating work through public access television which supports and encourages such work. This tends to be documentary work that mainstream public service and commercial media shy away from because it is usually challenging, deviates from established television conventions and may often be perceived as commercially unviable.

Other producers tend to focus on their political work and to provide training in media skills. Such producers circumvent broadcaster influence by circulating their work via CDs, DVDs, film festivals and screenings. These producers also make industrial films which, although bring in additional income, distract from core documentary work. Still other film-makers in the third sector compromise between their creative vision and the demands from broadcasters by presenting their documentary work in conventional

television formats, particularly with regard to length and narrative structures. On the whole, producers display control over their work to which they attach high subjective importance.

Third sector arts and cultural producers tend to generally negotiate between the different imperatives and various pressures with most success. This is reflected in the production of work which sometimes is not only novel, artful, exciting and experimental, but some of it is also commercially successful. This is striking considering that such producers have endured successive cuts to their subsidy. Generally, although their work is sometimes uncertain and insecure, producers proclaim passionate attachment to it.

The contribution of this thesis is three-fold. First, it updates, builds on and expands the body of knowledge in this field. I cited Atton's (2003a) work which identified three forms of organisation displayed by the third sector press, namely the hierarchical, horizontal and hybrid structures. My own research not only supports Atton's findings, but it goes further to provide an account of the organisational forms in documentary and arts and cultural programming in the third sector. Of the fifteen case study organisations I studied, three organisations showed a hierarchical structure, three others exhibited a horizontal one while nine displayed a hybrid structure. On a genre by genre basis, out of the five news production companies, one was hierarchically organised while the other four demonstrated a hybrid structure. Of the five documentary film-making companies, three were horizontally organised while the other two showed a hybrid structure. Regarding the five arts and cultural programming organisations, two were hierarchically organised while the other three displayed a hybrid structure.

The prevalence of the hybrid organisational form may suggest the impracticability of the horizontal form of organisation in the prevailing socio-economic climate. Some

of the evidence we saw demonstrated that whereas the horizontal organisational form appealed to producers in the early years, today it is perceived to be 'burdensome' and 'inefficient' (McMillian, 2011: 11). The hierarchical structure is also less common in the sector mainly as a result of its perceived inflexibility and inhibition of wider participation. The hybrid organisational form results from the interaction between professional and commercial imperatives on the one side, and socio-political ones on the other, thereby pointing to the ascendant role of the former in contemporary third sector media and cultural production.

Second, this thesis provides insights into current practices in the organisational and production processes of third sector media and cultural organisations. My findings indicate that instead of being 'de-professionalised', 'de-capitalised' and 'de-institutionalised' in order to effectively promote democratic communication, many case study companies in this thesis are actually moving in the opposite direction as a result of evolving socio-economic realities. Across news production, documentary and arts and cultural programming in the third sector, I demonstrated that professionalisation is reflected in professional identity comprising a standardised set of routine practices, values, skills and competence, the adherence to which indicates the extent of producers' commitment to their work. We saw that third sector media and cultural producers use these norms to guide them as they give meaning to their work in much the same way as mainstream media and cultural workers do. This finding counters much of the critique that has tended to portray third sector media and cultural production generally as 'unprofessional', 'inefficient', 'self-indulgent' and 'inconsequential'.

Another dimension of professionalisation in the third sector is evidenced by the adoption of such strategies as financial planning, budgeting, credit control, accountancy, entrepreneurship, management and audience research. Often rejected in the early years on ideological grounds, these strategies are now increasingly playing a

significant role in helping third sector media and cultural companies cope in the marketplace. These strategies enable producers to keep records about their income and funding, to plan and keep track of their outputs and to obtain substantial feedback about their work.

My research findings demonstrate that capitalisation in third sector media and cultural production is driven by the need to earn additional income in order to maintain operations and guarantee survival in the marketplace. To this end, I showed that some third sector news producers canvass support among businesses, advertisers and sponsors. In a similar vein, third sector documentary film-makers engage in the production of industrial films. Whereas the making of such films which publicise civic information tends to align itself with socio-political goals and as such, is an integral part of core work, the production of corporate films is entirely geared towards making profit. This diverts crucial resources (time and personnel) from core documentary work. We also saw that capitalisation in third sector arts and cultural programming is reflected in a host of fundraising and sponsorship schemes designed to attract an array of income streams, ranging from social and cultural project commissions to arts auctions to renting out spaces to the provision of visibility for businesses in exchange for money.

With regard to institutionalisation, I found that many third sector media and cultural organisations have transitioned from operating within communities to either leasing or establishing permanent office and/or performance spaces. Whereas this move provides producers with a space in which they can conduct their work, some of the evidence we saw showed that some producers no longer go out into communities and other unusual settings to gather news events or to perform in such settings. This contrasts with the early years in which producers went into communities and other

unusual places from which they reported on events as they experienced them or toured their work and mounted productions in such settings.

Another crucial finding concerns contemporary distribution practices. Third sector media and cultural studies have tended to focus on production, organisation and consumption. Distribution has not been given much attention. My research found that many third sector media and cultural producers manage to preserve their (artistic) autonomy because they have access to a range of circulation options that help circumvent constraints posed by traditional distribution outlets such as broadcasters and mainstream theatres. The examples I noted included circulation via short video films on websites, DVDs, (film and Theatre) festivals, screenings and (public access) broadcasters. These findings suggest that the circulation of third sector media and cultural work via websites and DVDs has benefitted from the advancement of digital technology which keeps costs low while festivals serve as a crucial platform to launch innovative and experimental work seeking distribution and (critical) exposure.

Third, some of the evidence in this thesis might potentially inform future public policy on third sector media and cultural production, particularly with regard to how best to integrate economic and social goals in making the sector self-sustaining while effectively pursuing social goals. At present, third sector public policy is contradictory in that despite successive cuts to their subsidy, third sector media and cultural producers are still expected to fulfil their socio-political remit and gradually become economically self-reliant. We saw that the cuts are forcing producers to channel their energy and resources towards the pursuit of additional income streams in order to try and break even. The result is increasing commercialisation and professionalisation which risks undermining the social and cultural importance of the sector. Having summarised the thrust of this thesis and highlighted its contribution, I now reflect on

this study as a whole and outline four issues that may potentially be seen as limitations of this study.

## 7.2 Reflections and Limitations

In my early definition of third sector media and cultural organisations I noted that such organisations are relatively autonomous from commercial and political influences. Having discussed the context within which these organisations operate, is this actually the case? In terms of production, although the sector defines itself in terms of its socio-political goals, the evidence we saw suggests that evolving socio-economic and socio-political circumstances have compelled third sector media and cultural producers to pursue professional, artistic and commercial imperatives in order to adapt to the current marketplace. I showed that third sector media and cultural producers draw on the same skills, techniques and routinised practices as their counterparts in mainstream public service and commercial media. We also saw that some third sector media and cultural producers are constrained by political controls such as constrictive regulation, the encouragement of censorship and the threat of revoking franchises.

With regard to circulation, many third sector media and cultural producers, like their mainstream counterparts, strive to reach broad audiences in order to maximise income, attempt to make an impact and to seek artistic recognition. Given the competitive nature of media and cultural markets more generally, both sets of producers are compelled to make work that vies for the attention of broad audiences. To this end, some third sector media and cultural producers perform in established theatres as in the case of *Gray End Productions* and, occasionally, *Antarc Theatre*. *Nordhausen Productions* ‘packages’ its documentary work into conventional television formats in order to reach wider audiences.

With reference to evaluation, some of the work made by third sector media and cultural producers tends to be assessed through formal mainstream channels. For example, evidence demonstrates that performances at *Antarc Theatre* and *Gray End Productions* benefit from favourable mainstream reviews and press coverage. Such reviews and coverage not only bring such performances to the attention of the core followings of the respective companies, but also to broader audiences. All this suggests that whereas third sector media and cultural organisations sometimes realise their social and cultural value in tune with socio-political and artistic imperatives, such organisations also operate under conflicting professional and commercial imperatives coupled with systemic pressures which make these organisations far from being independent.

I hinted at four possible limitations of this research project earlier in Chapter Three. The first one regards the issue of representativeness of my research participants. I noted the sheer diversity of producers involved in third sector media and cultural production. Many have no leased or permanent bases, and as such, cannot be easily identified. Some work fairly regularly, others more intermittently while others work on an ad hoc basis. Whereas I found much of this fascinating during my fieldwork, it soon became clear early on that this range of producers would be extremely difficult to capture in a representative way in this thesis. Nevertheless, I do think that the producers under study in this thesis in many respects embody the values, attitudes and ethos characteristic of contemporary third sector media and cultural production.

The second one concerns the impact of researcher presence in the organisations. It is crucial here to acknowledge my presence and involvement in the production processes at the selected case studies. I am aware that this might have impacted such processes in ways different from the normal course of work. But as already mentioned, I got the impression that after a few days at the case studies, many participants seemed

not to be distracted from their routine. Particularly at the radio stations, it was apparent that participants are used to having different people chip in, so my presence was unobtrusive.

The complexity surrounding the transcription and translation of raw data in qualitative research in relation to the preservation of meaning and the 'overall cultural context' is the third potential limitation of this research study. I stated that my proficiency in both English and German enabled me to preserve the meaning of the raw data as much as possible. However, I do not claim that the exact meaning in the initial German interviews was reproduced in the English versions. Rather, it is more the case that the meaning in the former corresponds to that in the latter.

The fourth potential limitation of this research project relates to generalizability. This research is situated in a predominantly Western tradition, primarily focusing on British and German contexts which raises questions about its applicability and transferability in other global contexts. The socio-political circumstances in other parts of the globe such as Africa, Asia and Latin America are different from those in the West which might render a meaningful transferability of this study's findings difficult. But as globalisation processes in media and cultural production flow across different parts of the world, there is a possibility that my findings would be useful in serving as a model for third sector media and cultural production companies in non-Western countries in their efforts to cope with the relatively global socio-economic environment in which they are players, albeit to varying extents.

### **7.3 Changing Imperatives and Democratic Communication**

In the early years, producers tended to prioritise socio-political imperatives across news production, documentary and arts and cultural programming in order to promote democratic communication. Across these genres, socio-political imperatives

emphasised ‘a radically democratic and participatory ideal of what culture and society might be or ought to be’ (Duncombe, 1997: 2). Early news producers, for instance, sought to carve out ‘a free space’ within which to imagine, accommodate and express different ways of ‘thinking, communicating, and being’ and to highlight other ways in which ‘human relations, creation, and consumption could be organised’ (Ibid.: 195 – 196). In doing so, producers ‘actively participated in the events they covered’ using a ‘hip vernacular [which] they shared with most of their readership’ (McMillian, 2011: 4). Although such a language of rage and revolutionary fervour is out of fashion today, the considerable inequities in society it sought to address are still present.

Similarly, early third sector documentary film-makers foregrounded socio-political imperatives. Although such film-makers tended to disregard ‘questions of art, aesthetics and the craft of communicating’, their documentaries were usually ‘impassioned and politically well-intentioned but unimaginative and poorly crafted films that [were] incapable of communicating successfully with [some of] the audiences for which they [were] intended’ (Zheutlin, 2005: 150). But with the ascendancy of artistic, professional and commercial imperatives, third sector documentary producers ‘answered the needs of certain sections of the public [and] were able to engage with diverse minorities [...] and worked with them to construct images and meanings which were evidently of relevance to those people at the time’ (Dickinson, 1999: 9). As we saw, some of the documentaries were commercially successful.

On a much broader level, John McGrath summarised the ‘value’ and ‘role’ of cultural production in 1990 as follows:

Firstly it can contribute to a definition, a revaluation of the cultural identity of a people or a section of society, can add to the richness and diversity of that identity. Secondly, it can assert, draw attention to, give voice to threatened communities, can, by allowing them to speak, help them survive. Thirdly, it can mount an attack on the standardisation of culture and consciousness which is a function of late industrial/early technological ‘consumerist’ societies everywhere. Fourthly, it can be and often is linked

to a wider political struggle for the right of a people or a section of a society to control its own destiny, to 'self-determination'. Fifthly, it can make a challenge to the values imposed on it from a dominant group – it can help to stop ruling class, or ruling race, or male, or multi-national capitalist values being 'universalised' as common sense, or self-evident truth (1990: 142).

Theoretically, this is an accurate portrayal of the social and cultural value of third sector media and cultural organisations in facilitating democratic practice. In practice, however, contemporary producers achieve these goals to different degrees depending on how such producers manage to navigate between competing imperatives and systemic pressures. I provided examples in which the successful negotiation between all these factors demonstrated democratic practice. For instance, producers at *Richmond Arts* 'contribute to a definition, a revaluation of the cultural identity of a people [and] add to the richness and diversity of that identity' through designing arts and cultural programmes that emphasise shared values and commemorate a common heritage.

Also, documentary work at *Stratham Productions*, the *West Berlin Collective* and *Fotolabor* 'assert[s]' and 'draw[s] attention' to the plight of marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Much of this work offers insights into the root causes of structural inequities in modern capitalist societies in ways that public service and commercial media may not be willing or able to. Similarly, news and information reporting at *Ummah Post*, *Shalom News* and *Warburg Radio* 'give[s] voice to' groups that might have suffered or still suffer from some kind of distress. Cases in point here include the stigmatisation of the British Muslim community particularly after 9/11, the situation of the German Jews and the victims of the former East German Communist dictatorship.

Furthermore, much of the work created at *Antarc Theatre* is characterised by 'attack[s] on the standardisation of culture and consciousness which is a function of late industrial/early technological 'consumerist' societies everywhere'. Essentially, many

contemporary producers at the case study companies in this thesis share the desire, need and struggle ‘to control [their] own destiny, to ‘self-determination’ [and] to ‘make a challenge to the values imposed on [them] from a dominant group’. They might not have the leverage ‘to stop [the] ruling class’, but their work points to a commitment and endurance in working towards this goal. For many, this is reminiscent of a ‘devotion to a calling that is of service to the larger community’ (Singer, 2003: 141).

However, this does not apply in cases where third sector media and cultural producers prioritise commercial and professional imperatives. As shown above, these imperatives tend not only to foster the production of sensationalist, superficial and uncritical work, but also to discourage taking creative risks and to bring about the inhibition of wider participation. As such, it is hard to see how such producers can credibly criticise and seek to correct the imbalances typical of communication in mainstream public service and commercial media if they replicate the same injustices in their own organisational and production processes. Indeed, if ‘culture becomes defined in terms of consumerism not citizenship, standardised products not expressions of cultural creativity, and [if] audiences are positioned by income [...] not citizenship rights or cultural needs’ (Cottle, 2003: 10), then one might ask what the remit of third sector media and cultural organisations is.

#### **7.4 Thoughts on Future Work**

Given the steady growth of media and cultural production in the third sector, it is important for future work to identify which companies and producers belong in the sector and under what criteria in order to project a fairly accurate view of the sector. This would develop our understanding of the precise imperatives that drive such companies and producers. Taking characteristics like size, finances and organisational form as yardsticks is crucial in mapping out part of the field, but such features do not

seem to adequately capture contemporary organisational and production processes in third sector media and cultural work. An illustrative example is the website *ObemSpace* mentioned in the Introduction to which the above characteristics do not apply.

Following successive cuts to public subsidy, further research is needed to look into how public policy can help third sector media and cultural organisations gain access to viable alternative sources of funding and other support. Given the social and cultural value of these organisations, it would be unfortunate to leave them to fend for themselves. Some of the evidence we saw suggests that if these companies are left to market forces alone, they would inevitably experience increased professionalisation and commercialisation, a development that would potentially undermine the facilitation of democratic communication.

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