

Cultural Context of Creative Labour

An Empirical Study of New Media Work in Nigeria

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

School of Media and Communication
The University of Leeds

April 2015

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Acknowledgements

There are quite a number of persons who deserve to be acknowledged for their varying levels of support at different stages of preparing and writing this thesis. From a chronological order, I would like to begin with parents: to my late father and to my mother who has quietly but steadfastly carried out her role in my life: namely, being a great mother; also to my siblings for forming part of the closely-knit family we are.

The journey that culminated in this thesis would have been far less fulfilling without the firm guidance of my supervisors Helen Kennedy and David Lee. Undoubtedly, there were moments when it was difficult for me to deal with their demands and criticisms of my work; however I always knew that those apparently negative appraisals were to my benefit and, for that reason, I am and have always been grateful for their immense contribution to the thesis and to my overall development as a scholar and researcher. I would also like to mention the support given by some of the academic staff at the School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds – particularly David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Cabanes – and my PhD colleagues, notably Christiaan De Beukelaer, Toussaint Nothias and Nur Kareelawati Adb Karim (aka Ella).

I also acknowledge the support of those I spent a great deal of my time with in the United Kingdom while writing up the thesis. I am grateful to Xavier Bosch, Mark Fox, Rory White, Felix Martin and many others such as Philip Unsworth, Frs. Andrew Soane, Peter Bristow, Robert Farell and Peter Haverty and everyone else who made my stay worthwhile in spite of their having to deal with those periods when I seemed to do nothing else but isolate myself in my room.

Last but far from least, I would like to thank all those back in Nigeria at the Pan-Atlantic University (who fully supported my PhD in cash!) and those who read my infrequent emails. Of course there are many others, too numerous to mention here, who have been very supportive in one way or the other. To these and everyone else, I'd like to express my gratitude in four words: thank you very much!

Abstract

My study had two aims: first, to find out the extent to which claims about new media work that result from research in the West apply in the Nigerian context; and second, to investigate how new media workers in Nigeria negotiate the specificities of their cultural context. Its purpose was therefore to examine the experiences of new media workers in Nigeria, how these diverge from claims made around such work in Western-based literature and what these experiences suggest about new media and creative labour in Nigeria. To fulfill these aims, I conducted field research in Lagos, Nigeria through two focus group sessions with eight managers and owners of new media companies, interviews with thirty-five new media workers, and participant observation at a Lagos-based new media company. The study came up with two main findings. First, that the specific features of new media work in Nigeria are manifestations of broader themes which define the cultural context or ‘way of life’ of people in Nigeria. Therefore, adverse conditions like software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnic differentiation in new media work can be understood as manifestations of broader features of the Nigerian cultural context, namely, precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking. Second, that new media workers’ negotiation of these conditions produce outcomes that have positive, instrumental and emancipatory dimensions. Specifically, I showed how software piracy contributes to the sustenance of a moral economy, how the negotiation of infrastructural breakdown manifests an entrepreneurialism of improvisation and how the mobilization of ethnicity leads to the formation of associative ties. Overall, my study foregrounds the relevance of cultural context in discourses about new media and, more generally, creative work in the cultural industries and, in so doing, offers a different perspective to analyses about such work in developing contexts of the Global South.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. New media work in media studies

1.1.1 Overview

Media production labour has not always received as much academic attention as it does today. The so-called ‘turn to cultural work’ in social sciences and the humanities in the 2000s was largely motivated by the urge ‘to counter some of the complacency surrounding creative and new media work on the part of policy makers’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010, p.70) as well as of commentators who celebrated the values of creativity and entrepreneurship (such as Deuze, 2007; Florida, 2002; Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999). Empirical research on work in the creative and new media industries has found that such labour is characterized by insecurity and unstable conditions of labour, the prevalence of informal modes of finding new jobs and projects, entrepreneurialism, long working hours, networking practices as a way to get by in the industry and poorly paid labour amid the pressures of keeping up with recent developments in the field (Gill, 2002, 2009, 2010; Kotamraju, 2002; Neff et al., 2005; Ross, 2004). Furthermore, the research has found that these precarious conditions of work intermingle with the perceived and valued autonomy and flexibility that creative and new media work brings with it (Batt, 2001; Gill, 2002; Neff et al., 2005; Ross, 2004).

The central concern of my study is that most of these findings are based on geographically, economically and culturally specific empirical data sourced from developed countries of the Global North. Although empirical studies such as Andrew Ross’s ethnography of new media workers in New York’s Silicon Alley and Rosalind Gill’s study of new media workers in six European countries have contributed a great deal to understandings about experiences in new media labour, this thesis aims to add to existing scholarship on new media work through the investigation of new media work practices outside the developed world. It is a study of new media labour in a

region which is historically, economically and culturally distinct from those in the West. Specifically, my purpose in this thesis is to examine the conditions of new media work in a developing context of the Global South through the empirical prism of Lagos, Nigeria. Apart from introducing a more global perspective to the research field, this study addresses the call for more cultural and contextual nuance in understandings of creative and cultural labour (Kennedy, 2010). According to Paul du Gay (1996), echoing John Urry (1990), ‘what it means to be a worker is not set in stone once and for all, but is dependent upon historical and cultural conditions’ (p.5).

1.1.2 Research questions

The rationale behind this study is twofold. First, it is a commitment to exploring how the specificities of cultural context contribute to shaping the experiences of new media work. For this, it asks whether and how the lives and occupational practices of new media workers vary according to the environmental setting within which they carry out their labour. It therefore examines the extent to which cultural context matters in creative labour in the cultural industries, and thereby questions the applicability of western-based theories about new media work in the Nigerian context. This is important because, as Gibson (2010) argues, ‘cultural work cannot be separated from the social networks of people who make or produce culture, the sites they occupy in order to do so and their interactions with the environment and conditions of work’ (p.205). The inseparability of cultural work and the cultural context where it takes place leads to the second rationale for my study: the need to understand how new media workers negotiate the conditions peculiar to their cultural context. It investigates the degree to which the features and affordances of new media work (as distinct from other forms of labour) equip workers with strategies to deal with and overcome the challenges they experience within their specific context. It therefore foregrounds new media work in order to examine how those who engage in it ‘make innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules’ (De Certeau, 1984, p. xiv).

The research questions of this thesis are therefore as follows:

1. To what extent do claims about new media work which result from research in the Global North apply in countries like Nigeria in the Global South?
2. How do new media workers in Nigeria negotiate the specificities of the cultural context in which they carry out their work? Subsidiary questions to this are:
 1. How do these specificities contribute to the experiences of new media workers in Nigeria and;
 2. How do the features of new media work contribute to the ways in which workers in Nigeria negotiate the conditions of their labour?

To provide cogent answers to these questions, I conducted field research in Lagos, Nigeria, among people who engaged in new media work. The analysis for my study draws primarily from interviews with thirty-five new media workers, two focus group sessions with eight respondents each as well as participant observation at a new media company in Lagos, Nigeria. There were two reasons for conducting the fieldwork: the first was to be able to better understand the new media industry in Lagos; the second was to identify key characteristics of the Nigerian cultural context that contribute to the experiences of new media workers there. To achieve the first, I delimited the scope of new media work for my study by applying a definition of 'new media' proposed by Lev Manovich (2001). According to Manovich, 'new media' are those cultural objects which use digital computing technology for distribution and exhibition. These objects include websites, multimedia, digital animation, video games and virtual reality. New media work can therefore be described as the production of these objects. However, since digital convergence has meant that other media forms such as television, radio and publishing also depend on digital technology for distribution and exhibition, I distinguished new media work as those occupations that involve the production and manipulation of digital (or new) media in ways that did not exist before the invention of the World Wide Web and the development of related technologies in the early nineties (Veltman, 2006). Based on this, I limit my study of new media work to three occupations: web design, digital animation and online games production. Moreover, as I discuss in Chapter 4, I found out that these three occupations were among the most common fields in the Nigerian new media industry.

For the second rationale behind the fieldwork, I identified three features which shape the experiences and practices of new media workers in Nigeria: the prevalence of software piracy in Nigeria; the recurrence of infrastructural and technological breakdown and; the salience of ethnicity in the country. Although these factors also affect broader facets of life and labour in Nigeria, I singled these out because they were critical to the way new media work is carried out among my respondents. I found that the experiences of new media workers' in my research was characterized by the efforts they made to negotiate these conditions in their cultural context.

For the rest of this chapter, I discuss the two key facets of my study: *new media work* and *cultural context*. In the next section, I discuss the new media work and its significance in my study. First, I offer a definition of it based on the explanation of new media given by Manovich (2001). Second, I consider some of the characteristics of new media work as a form of creative labour, seen by some writers as similar to activities traditionally associated with the 'arts'. Third, I examine new media work as an occupational activity that has contextual roots: from its historical origins to its development within a particular social and economic frame. I then show how these external conditions of new media work have shaped the way it has been researched in the cultural industries literature.

The following section deals with the relevance of cultural context. I start by briefly examining the peculiarities of the African context and, following Ulrich Beck (2000), I discuss why it is relevant to highlight contextual differences in relation to the conditions of work – particularly between the Global North and the Global South. Next, I discuss the developments of digital media taking place in Nigeria which suggest a rationale for studying new media workers there. I also point out that, despite these developments, there are underlying challenges (related to the Nigeria's status as a developing country) which confront new media workers and, in comparison with Western countries, determine their experiences in ways that may be unique to the Nigerian context. I then highlight the conditions that lead to these experiences and synthesize them using three broad themes under which the empirical research for the

thesis will be organized. These themes are precariousness, entrepreneurialism and networking. Finally, I briefly highlight the methods used for my fieldwork and, afterwards, present the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Understanding new media work

1.2.1 Definition of new media work

Definitions are often disputable especially when they refer to terms which are fluid and ever-evolving like ‘new media.’ Nevertheless, various definitions have been proffered in the literature (see Flew, 2005, Lister et al., 2008; Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002; Van Dijk, 2012) with some of them based on comparisons between ‘old’ and traditional media (such as radio, television) and new forms of media (such as the internet). In choosing a definition of new media work for my study, I offer a revision of the one proffered by Manovich (2001) which highlights a crucial difference between new media from others forms of media: namely, the use of digital computer technology. According to Manovich,

new media are the cultural objects which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition. Thus, Internet, Web sites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs and DVD, Virtual Reality, and computer-generated special effects all fall under new media. Other cultural objects which use computing for production and storage but not for final distribution – television programs, feature films, magazines, books and other paper-based publications – are not new media. (p.10)

In my view, the problem with this formulation is that it limits the role of digital computer technology to the distribution and exhibition of cultural objects. Applying this definition to contemporary new media will therefore fail to account for the fact that traditional media in modern times (television programs, films and magazines) are now being exhibited by means of computing technology – especially through the internet.

In proposing a definition that is better suited to recent technological developments, I draw on Manovich’s explanation on the distinction between the process of film production and the development of computer games. According to him, even though film production is increasingly carried out using computer animation and graphics,

contemporary cinema still centers around the system of human stars and celebrities. Manovich argued that, in film production environments, the person who operates the computer is ‘kept out of the key creative decisions, and is delegated to the position of a technician.’ (p.9) In contrast, computer operators in video game production have traditionally been involved in the whole production process: they model the 2D or 3D characters; they are also responsible for determining the games’ sequences; and they generate new characters and scenarios in response to user actions. According to Manovich, the difference therefore between the use of computers for traditional film production and for video game production is that video games, as cultural objects, are ‘native’ to digital computer technology and, hence, require computers for the complete production process. According to Manovich, video games begin ‘as singular computer programs [...] rather than being an already established medium (such as cinema) which is only now undergoing computerization’ (p.9). Being ‘native’ therefore means that, ontologically, new media objects are solely dependent on digital computer technology and therefore they did not exist before such technology emerged. Based on this idea, I refine Manovich’s definition of new media as follows:

new media are the cultural objects which *are native* to digital computer technology and depend solely on them for their production, distribution and exhibition.

The usefulness of this definition lies in the fact that it draws attention to the role of digital computer technology as the source, process and end of new media objects. New media workers (such as web designers, online game designers and digital animators) are therefore people involved in the production and manipulation of natively digital cultural objects from the first stages of production and throughout the whole process, to the exhibition of the final product.

1.2.2 New media work as creative labour

Although Manovich (2001) did not specify what he meant by ‘cultural objects’ in the definition quoted above, my use of the term refers to those objects which contribute to

‘our understanding of the world’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2007, p.3) such as images and various forms of textual symbols. Since new media work, as defined above, is the production of these cultural objects in digital format, I argue that it can also be described as creative labour. According to Hesmondhalgh (2007),

The invention and/or performance of stories, songs, images, poems, jokes and so on, in no matter what technological form, involves a particular type of creativity – the manipulation of symbols for the purposes of entertainment, information and perhaps even enlightenment. (p.6)

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) suggest that one of the defining characteristics of creative labour is ‘the communication of experience’ through symbolic production. In this sense, new media work can be understood as the communication of experience through the production and manipulation of digital objects, a specific form of symbolic production. Furthermore, new media workers, like creative labourers and artists, are those who make the task of communicating experience their ‘central work in life’ by dedicating themselves to it through the application of the skills which they usually acquire through learning (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p.61).

As an activity which involves ‘a particular type of creativity’ new media work can be associated with high degrees of freedom, autonomy and control, identified by several commentators as features of such work (Gill, 2002; Hesmondhalgh 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Ross, 2004). According to Hesmondhalgh (2010), autonomy means that workers ‘have the possibility of shaping outcomes, and producing good work in the sense of work that contributes to the common good’ (p.282). Autonomy also potentially contributes to an increase in control over the processes of production (Damarin, 2006; Gill, 2007). Furthermore, the freedom to determine and directly influence the result of one’s labour is seen as one of the characteristics of creative labour and, therefore, of new media work (Gill, 2002). Hesmondhalgh (2010) argues that such work

involves expressive and communicative forms of endeavour, which are highly valued by many people in modern societies. Although this of course depends very much on industry and genre, in principle at least this suggests that they are capable of providing a basis for respect and recognition from others, which in turn can help nourish the worker's sense of self-esteem, and over time, contribute to projects of self-realisation. (p.282)

1.2.3 New media work as contextual

New media are a relatively novel phenomena. As highlighted earlier, many aspects of new media did not exist before the invention of the World Wide Web and the development of related technologies at the beginning of the 1990s (Veltman, 2006). For this reason, new media work is also a relatively new occupation in comparison with disciplines like accounting, engineering or medicine. Perrons (2003) links it to the 'new ways of organizing the production, distribution and exchange of existing goods as well as entirely new goods and services' that came into being as a result of 'increasing use of information and computing technologies, and the Internet' in the so-called 'new economy' (p.67). Neff et al (2005) traced the origins of the 'new economy' (which refers to the period of apparent economic growth in many developed countries in the 1990s) to 'developments in computer technology, global competition and corporate strategies to reduce costs and increase productivity' (p.309) which reached a peak in the 1990s and coincided with the origins of the new media industry.

The development of new media work therefore occurred within a specific historical context characterized by the social, economic and political changes taking place in developed countries like the US and UK. During this period, new media work, like other forms of labour, has been influenced by neoliberalism and other external factors which determine how it is experienced by workers. These external factors have been the theme of much of the research on new media work in the cultural industries (see Damarin, 2006; Gill, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2010; Gottshall and Kroos, 2003; Henniger and Gottschall, 2007; Indegaard, 2004; Neff, 2012; Neff et al., 2005; Perrons, 2003; Ross, 2004). For example, many scholars have written about how the pressure new

media workers face to re-skill and keep up with the pace of technological development in the field expose them to precarious, risky and insecure conditions of work (Damarin, 2006; Gill, 2007, 2010; Kotamraju, 2002; Neff et al., 2005). These pressures lead workers to develop unusual work patterns ‘in which periods with no work can give way to periods that require intense activity, round-the-clock working, with its attendant impacts on sleep, diet, health and social life’ (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Gill (2010) also affirmed that these conditions reflect the situation of labour in ‘affluent societies’ undergoing ‘transformation in advanced capitalism under the impact of globalization, information and communication technologies, and changing modes of political and economic governance’ (p.3).

However, despite its Western roots, new media work has become an occupational activity for various workers across the globe – including those far removed from the economic and technological advancements of ‘affluent societies’ of the Global North such as regions of the Global South like Nigeria. However, little is known about the experiences of in new media work in non-Western contexts which have different social, economic and cultural configurations and labour histories that diverge from those of developed countries. It is for this reason that scholarly attention needs to be given to the study of new media work in contexts of the Global South. Such research would, among other things, help to foreground the role of cultural context in experiences of new media work. It will also determine the applicability of concepts, theories and findings about new media work of advanced economies, in less developed contexts of the Global South. Such research will contribute to growing calls for the de-westernization of concepts and ideas in media studies (Willem, 2014). Specifically, it will address the call made by Kennedy (2010a) for more contextual nuance in research about new media work:

Claims about media work need to acknowledge the specificity, diversity and particular local conditions of this very varied industry. These conditions can only emerge through empirical investigation. In carrying out such research, it is necessary to ask to what extent, and how, are risk, the affective/creative turn

and the rise of networks lived and experienced by, for example, web designers working in a particular time and place? (p.190)

As already mentioned, this is the primary aim of my thesis: to investigate how new media work is experienced in less developed context like Nigeria in comparison with findings made in the literature. One of the advantages of this study is that, besides broadening the scope of the research field, it gives global perspective to the research field. My study of new media workers in Lagos, Nigeria therefore requires understanding the ‘specificity, diversity and particular local conditions’ where such workers operate. In other words, it calls for understanding the cultural context of Lagos, Nigeria. I turn to this in the next section.

1.3 The relevance of cultural context

1.3.1 The Global South: A backward case or a different development?

In trying to ‘make sense of what is happening in Africa’ (p.xv), Chabal and Daloz (1999) argued that modernity in the continent is rooted in the deep history and traditions of the societies where it is taking place. According to them:

If Africans believe that being modern is compatible with being ‘traditional’, then we must understand not just what this means but how it is possible. In so doing, we might well be called upon to consider the possibility that there are different types of modernity, though they may not all be endowed with the same potential for economic and scientific development. (p.145)

Thus, in their attempt to understand why African countries like Nigeria arguably lag behind those in the West¹, Chabal and Daloz propose that African societies are ‘pursuing their own specific form of modernization’ (p.30). They ask: ‘is this because they have failed to “develop” or is it, more realistically, because they are modernizing differently?’ (p.46). While such questions about modernization are unlikely to have straightforward answers, they provide a useful starting point from which to approach my analysis of new media labour from perspectives that are outside the West. Specifically, for my research about new media work in the Nigerian context, questions about the ‘divergent paths toward modernity’ help to highlight the dissimilarities that exist between the affluent countries of the West and those of the less developed economies like Nigeria. As I suggested in the previous section, these external differences are relevant to the study of new media labour. Furthermore, investigating the specific conditions of work in less advanced societies like Lagos, Nigeria will help to unearth some of these differences.

¹ Chabal and Daloz’s views were written in 1999. Nevertheless, these social and economic conditions are arguably still prevalent in African countries including Nigeria. Although current predictions about Nigeria becoming one of largest economies in the world by 2050 (the so-called MINT countries), this does not contradict the fact that there is potentially a difference between the development in countries like Nigeria and those of the West.

If, as highlighted in the previous section, transformations within the affluent societies of the West ‘have produced an apparently novel situation in which increasing numbers of workers are engaged in insecure, casualized or irregular labour’ (Gill and Pratt, 2008, p.2), it may be useful to ask: what is taking place in countries outside the Global North? Do similar conditions of work exist there? If they do, what factors are responsible for bringing them about? To provide useful answers to these questions, I turn to the work of Ulrich Beck who draws attention to the apparent similarities between the ‘informalization’ of work in the ‘modernized’ countries of Europe and the US and what exists in ‘pre-modern’ societies such as those of Latin America and Africa. In his book, *The Brave New World of Work*, Beck (2000) charts the transition from a ‘work society’ of stable employment to a ‘second modernity’ of individualized and insecure labour taking place in the West. He observes that these changes in the conditions of work in Western societies are such that ‘formal work and full employment’ is giving way to ‘informal, multi-activity work’ which, as he argues, is already prevalent in less-developed countries like Brazil. Thus, Beck describes this ostensible situation (which, for him, is the ‘unintended consequence of the neoliberal free-market utopia’) as a ‘Brazilianization of the West’ (p.1).

According to Beck, the ‘Brazilianization of the West’ thesis is based on the apparent notion that the situation of work in the developed countries of the West and the poorer countries of Latin America are converging because both are informalized. However, he contends that, in reality, this is not the case. He asks:

Does the development of the structure of work have common, or even the same, features in all societies? Or do these vary with the cultural context? Talk of Brazilianization sets aside any assumption that the establishment of the Western work society (with its degrees of formalization or legalization and its hierarchy of economic sectors) is a universal process. For industrialization does not stipulate any particular social or political accompaniment; neither the structure of income and employment, nor the mobility and regulation of labour, nor the organization of interests, has to be a certain kind for the

industrialization process to occur. Rather, these aspects will depend upon the specific cultural conditions and the actors involved. (p.95)

Beck argues that even though ‘informalization of work’ in the Global North and the Global South appear to be similar, they actually differ because ‘the cultural context and conditions of informal work [in these regions] are completely different in such important dimensions as family ties and provision, the role of the state and the historical experience of wage-labour’ (p.95). For Beck, the ‘surprisingly similar precariousness of work in the so-called first and third worlds’ are the result of totally ‘different histories as well as contemporary causes and dynamics’ (p.96). On one hand, he describes the informal situation in the West as a ‘downward elevator effect’ which is characterized by ‘the erosion of labour rights, living standards and social security.’ On the other hand, he notes that such conditions of labour already have a ‘long tradition’ in many less developed countries and ‘can be observed there in all its ambivalence’ (p.97).

1.3.2 Cultural context as ‘way of life’

In my view, this ‘long tradition’ of labour conditions in societies of the Global South is crucial to understanding what takes place there because it contributes strongly to the culture of those societies. In his seminal work, *Long Revolution*, Raymond Williams (2001) proffered his well-known definition of culture as ‘way of life.’ He defined culture as the ‘description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour’ (p.57). According to Williams, the ways through which these meanings are developed and perceived are reflected in people’s everyday experiences. Thus culture can be understood as the sum of available descriptions through which societies make sense of their common experiences (Hall, 1980). Since the expression of meaning in and through experiences occurs over time and leads to the emergence of social practices that also develop and take shape over time, culture can be said to be ‘threaded through all social practices’ (Hall, 1980, p.60) and is the sum of the interrelationships that exist between them. Thus, as a ‘whole way of life,’ culture

encompasses shared meanings, experiences and the social practices of people in a society which develop over a sustained period of time.

This ‘way of life’ also encompasses the experiences and practices of people in many parts of Nigeria. For example, the long-term absence or breakdown of infrastructure (electricity, telephony or internet) in cities like Lagos – which I discuss in this thesis – has determined how people act to compensate for the privations that those amenities are designed to avoid. In other words, the persistent experience of such adverse conditions has led to a situation in which people in such societies develop specific behaviours and practices aimed at negotiating them. Eventually, these practices become inscribed in the culture of the society as the ‘way of life’ or cultural context.

This ‘way of life’ (or cultural context) is also reflected in the ‘long tradition’ of informal labour conditions referred to by Beck (2000) that has led to a situation in which those conditions have become ingrained in the culture of many less developed countries. It is from this perspective that I adopt Beck’s thesis about the informal conditions of work in developing countries. My interest in Beck’s argument lies not necessarily in his account of the conditions in Western countries but in the attention he gives to the conditions of work in less developed contexts in comparison with those of the West. Although Beck focuses on Brazil and South America (drawing on empirical studies carried out in that region), I argue that his broad analysis of informal modes of work in comparison with the West can also be applied to countries in Africa like Nigeria. Thus, in the place of Brazil, I focus on Nigeria which arguably exhibits similar characteristics as Brazil² and is also ‘semi-industrialized’ country in the global South³.

However, in my study, I go beyond acknowledging the existence of informal conditions of labour in countries like Nigeria. Rather, I argue that, in contrast to the

² This is in terms of the size of their population and economies in comparison with the other countries on their respective continents

³ Although Brazil has developed significantly since the time of Beck’s writing, my concern is with the broader social and economic conditions faced by countries like it.

‘downward elevator effect’ which Beck claims is taking place in Western countries as a result of informalization of labour, there is an ‘upward effect’ in developing contexts like Nigeria as a result of people’s attempts to negotiate such conditions. Therefore, if the ‘downward effect’ of Beck has a negative connotation, the ‘upward effect’ I propose about labour (specifically, new media labour) in Nigeria is a positive one. As I will discuss in Chapter 3 which focusses on the Nigerian context, the conditions of work in Nigeria have, for a long time, been precarious, insecure and informal due to factors related to the country’s social, political and economic history (Gandy, 2005; Larkin, 2008; Meagher, 2010; Nwaka, 2005; Revell, 2010). If, as Beck suggests, insecure working conditions have only begun to take root in countries of the West, how best can concepts like insecurity, precariousness and informality be understood in countries like Nigeria where they have become endemic to life and labour? I will argue in this thesis using empirical data from the field that such concepts take on different meanings in the context of new media work in Nigeria. Overall, my study suggests that the analysis of labour from a cultural context (or ‘way of life’) different from the West provides more nuanced understandings about how those terms can be applied in varied contexts.

In summary, my research about new media labour in Nigeria aims to contribute to debates about the conditions of such work and the experiences of workers by emphasizing the importance of cultural context. To do this, I identify specific themes in Nigeria which form part of its cultural context (or ‘way of life’) and contribute to shaping the experiences of workers there. I introduce these themes in the next section.

1.4 Researching new media work in Nigeria

1.4.1 Research themes

To adequately engage with Nigerian context, my study focusses on those social, cultural and economic factors which directly affect the practice of new media work. These factors include: the circumstances of life and labour in the informal economy; the cultural, economic, and ethical issues around the pirating of software; the prevalence of infrastructural decay and technological malfunction in the country; and the salience of ethnic differentiation among people. By examining these factors, I aim to question the applicability of claims about new media labour in current research and propose new understandings about such work in the Nigerian context. My empirical engagement with these contextual conditions will be carried out under three broad themes based on a combination of features of new media work derived from the literature (precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking) and the specificities of the Nigerian cultural context (software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity). The themes which form the basis of my empirical engagement in the study, are as follows:

Software piracy as contributor to precariousness

Because of its prevalence and historical roots, the practice of software piracy can be described as a feature of the Nigerian cultural context (Larkin, 2008). As I discuss in Chapter 3, it also plays an important role in the practice of new media work in Nigeria. This theme of my study investigates how practices of software piracy and copyright infringement among new media workers are an important contributor to their experiences of precariousness in the Nigerian context. In examining the practices of software piracy, I draw attention to the particular forms of insecurity and precariousness experienced by my research participants as a result of those practices. Specifically, I discuss how these precarious conditions are the outcome of the occupational, legal or ethical consequences of acquiring and using of pirated software. I refer to these consequences as the ‘tensions’ that emerge from using pirated software. Furthermore, I engage with moral economy theory to examine new media workers negotiate these ‘tensions’ brought on by their use of software piracy.

Entrepreneurialism as antidote to infrastructural breakdown

Infrastructural breakdown is a historical and predominant feature of the Nigerian context which has adverse effects on the practice of new media work. Under this theme, I discuss the challenges of infrastructural breakdown for new media workers and the specific form of entrepreneurialism that emerge from their attempts to deal with it. On one hand, I show how these infrastructural challenges are one of the key drivers of entrepreneurialism among new media workers in Nigeria. On the other hand, I examine the entrepreneurial strategies my research participants adopt to negotiate these challenges in the practice of their labour. I refer to the sum of these entrepreneurial strategies (which are a response to adverse conditions) as ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’. I show how this form of entrepreneurialism engenders traits which are more akin to some of the traditional concepts of entrepreneurship such as uncertainty management, innovation and alertness to profit opportunities rather than to some of the conceptions of entrepreneurialism described in the literature on new media and cultural labour in the West. In laying out the attributes of ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ in my research, I also highlight how features of new media work such as flexibility and freedom contribute to attempts by my respondents to negotiate the infrastructural challenges they experience.

The influence of ethnicity in social networking

Ethnic differentiation is an important feature of the Nigerian social, political and cultural configuration and influences the way new media workers build and mobilize their social networks. Under this theme, I examine the link between ethnicity and social networking among new media workers in the Nigerian context. I discuss how those in my research negotiate the demands of ethnic and kinship ties along with those of new media work in the formation and mobilization of social networks. Drawing on various social network theories, I show that the social networks formed and mobilized by new media workers are made up of associative ties which are a combination of professional ties and ethnic or kinship-based ones. I demonstrate how these associative ties form as a result of other factors such as religion and language. In the chapter, I

also highlight how my findings about the social networking practices vary from those of the West particularly in terms of the spaces and locations where they take place.

1.4.2 The Methodology

As mentioned previously, to investigate the above themes I conducted field research using qualitative methods to gather empirical data on the practices and experiences of new media workers in Nigeria. The primary aim of the fieldwork was to understand how the specificities of the context contributed to the experiences of new media workers in Nigeria and, inversely, how new media work shaped the ways by which they negotiated the contextual conditions of their labour. A full account of the fieldwork is provided in Chapter 4. In this section, I present a summary of the methods employed.

Data was gathered using focus groups, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. There were two focus groups organized with owners and managers of new media companies as well as thirty-five interviews conducted with web designers, animators, online games producers as well as others who described themselves using various titles such as social media marketer, project manager and music blogger. I also carried out participant observation at a new media company.

The two focus group sessions consisted of individuals from thirteen companies ranging from web design and animation to online advertising and mobile marketing. There were eight participants in each session. The aim of the focus groups was to gain more insight into new media practices in Nigeria and to arrive at a clearer understanding of the conditions of work in the Nigerian new media industry. During the interviews, I interrogated workers on how they negotiated these conditions. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed at understanding how their dealings with software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity affected and determined their practice of new media work. Finally, my participant observation for one month at a new media companies in Lagos provided me with first hand experience of the issues

raised about new media work. There, I observed some of the experiences recorded in the interviews and conducted and further interacted with company employees.

Due to the sparseness of labour data from official sources, I had to rely on findings from my fieldwork to gain some insight into statistics about Nigeria's new media industries (such as size, companies, spatiality). As mentioned above, a detailed account of this, as well as the field methods I adopted, is provided in Chapter 4. Next, I present a summary of the chapters in the thesis.

1.4.3 Structure of the thesis

Following this introduction, I present a review of the literature on new media work in Chapter 2 which summarizes the general and more specific debates about creative and cultural work in the literature as they apply to new media work. Through this discussion, I map out the ideas for the study and identify gaps in the literature which my own research attempts to fill. Chapter 3 engages with the social and cultural context of Nigeria. It does this by, first, presenting a broad overview of country's historical background with the aim of drawing out those aspects of the Nigerian context that are significant to the study. These include: the operations of the informal economy; the challenges of infrastructure and technology; the prevalence of software piracy; and the pervasiveness of ethnic differentiation. At the end of the chapter I synthesize these aspects of the Nigerian context into the three themes around which my empirical chapters are based and within which the overall argument of the thesis is made.

In Chapter 4, I present the methodology of my research with a detailed account of my fieldwork. I also provide a description of the new media work in Nigeria especially the kinds of work involved, the numbers and sizes of companies and other structural information which, in the absence of official statistics about the industry, I derive from my fieldwork. This serves to contextualize the data that which I will engage with in the empirical chapters which directly map on to the themes of my research (introduced above). Chapter 5 begins the empirical analysis of the thesis. Using data from the

fieldwork, I examine the theme of precariousness and software piracy which I already introduced above. Chapter 6 focusses on entrepreneurialism and the experiences of infrastructural breakdown among my respondents. In Chapter 7, the final empirical chapter, I engage with the theme of ethnicity and social networking among my research participants.

Finally, I conclude the thesis in Chapter 8 where I summarize the findings in the thesis by discussing how the main findings of the research reflect on the overall argument of the thesis: that cultural contexts potentially raise different questions and introduce new perspectives and meanings to the study of new media work. Specifically for the Nigerian context, issues of precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking arguably have different applications because they can and do produce different outcomes in the experiences of new media workers.

Chapter 2

New Media Work: A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I highlighted the two main questions my research aims to address: first, the extent to which claims about new media work that result from research in the Global North apply in the Global South; second, how new media workers in Nigeria negotiate the specificities of the socio-cultural context in which they carry out their work. In this chapter, I provide a ‘map’ in relation to the first question by reviewing the existing literature on the experiences and conditions of labour in new media work. This review is important because it examines the body of research that discusses the features that have been found to characterize new media work and the issues that affect new media workers in Western countries of the Global North. This discussion will enable me to highlight the strengths and limitations of existing findings and theorisations for my own research, which focusses on new media work in context that is geographically, economically and culturally different from those treated in the literature.

To effectively carry out this review and present a framework and rationale for my own study, I divide the chapter into five main sections. In the first section which follows this introduction, I present an overview of the field. Starting with cultural industries debates which contextualize research on new media work, I summarize findings from empirical studies on creative labour and new media work including an enumeration of the features of new media work that have been identified in those studies. I then draw up a classification of these features as a framework for discussing the literature on new media work in the rest of the chapter. In this classification, I delineate three sets of features. The first set includes features of new media work which I describe as intrinsic to the work itself. The second set refers to features that pertain both to new media work and to the external conditions of the work – they are both intrinsic to and external to new media work. The third set of features applies only to the external conditions under which new media work takes place. This final set maps on to the three empirical themes in my study of new media work in the Nigerian context. As

already introduced in the previous chapter, these themes are piracy, entrepreneurialism, and social networks. The purpose of separating intrinsic and external features is to make the point that while the latter are dependent on context, the former are not. In addition, while extrinsic features are dictated by prevailing circumstances in many affluent Western societies, intrinsic features are arguably shared across geographical boundaries.

After drawing up this classification, I engage with the literature about each set of features captured in the framework. The first of these sections is about the love for new media work which derives from the features of freedom, autonomy and control associated with such work. As I will argue, these are traits which are intrinsically characteristic to new media work. The next section focuses on new media workers' commitment to their labour which, as I will show, derives from both the intrinsic nature of new media work and the external pressures to which new media workers are exposed. The final section will engage with the external conditions of new media work and the features (as discussed in the literature) that emanate from those conditions. In this final section, I bring up the three themes of my research. Thereafter, I conclude the chapter.

In sum, the primary aim of this chapter is to map out the ideas and debates which frame my study. In subsequent chapters, I will use my empirical data to critically examine the applicability of the ideas available in the literature on new media work discussed here.

2.2 New media workers: what has been said about them?

2.2.1 Overview

New media workers have, in the last decade, been the object of interesting and valuable research, especially in the fields of sociology and cultural studies, but also in communications, media studies and geography. Many of these studies have been carried out within the ambit of cultural industries research and have been borne out of scholars' interest in issues such as those related to the subjective experience of new media workers (Gill, 2002, 2007), the structural conditions of labour in the sector (Christopherson, 2004) or space and co-location in new media work (Neff, 2006; Pratt, 2000). Although most of these studies have arisen from and contributed to the recent 'turn to labour' in the social sciences and humanities particularly in the fields of cultural studies and sociology (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), they have their roots in longer standing debates about the cultural industries. I highlight four of these debates.

The first can be traced back to the work of Frankfurt School writers and is remotely associated with the outcome of criticisms against Theodor Adorno's 'totalising concept of the culture industry' which 'failed to register the distinctions between the different kinds of cultural commodities' and the labour that accompanied the production of cultural goods (O'Connor, 2007, p.21). While Adorno (1977) had lamented the homogenization of cultural goods due to their growing standardization and mass production, recent analysis of the cultural industries has emphasized the 'complex and contradictory nature of cultural products' as well as their increasing diversity (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p.162). This diversity is manifested by the increasing variety of cultural goods (such as books, videos, music and websites) which have widened the scope for scholarship in cultural production. According to Lash (2007), although Adorno and Horkheimer's theory of the culture industry was instrumental in the development of cultural studies, approaches in the study of media and culture have 'moved on since the time at which Horkheimer and Adorno were writing' (p.3).

Second, research interest in new media work (as cultural work) can be broadly linked to the criticisms leveled against Marxist labour process theories for not paying

attention to workers' subjective experiences (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). According to Du Gay (1996), this occurred because Marx's original treatment of alienation as essentially 'an objective condition' (p.13) had practically 'eradicated the subject from history' (p.16) since by its very nature, alienation (in Marx's view) 'prevents workers from being able to perceive their own situation' or subjective experiences (p.13). Banks (2007) argues that the failure of Marxian theorists to explore subjectivity in labour can be attributed to a tendency for them to understand workers in 'one-dimensional terms' either as 'personifications of labour' or as 'bearers of class relations' (p.27). The ostensibly 'missing subject' in Marxian thought on cultural labour led to renewed concerns about issues related to subjectivity and experience in cultural labour. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) note that, among cultural studies-influenced researchers, this concern has led to empirical studies of creative labour such as new media work.

Third, focus on new media work and other types of creative labour has been motivated by the need to challenge the views of policy-makers and some academics who went on to glorify the apparent exploits of creative workers without fully coming to terms with their subjective experiences (Banks et al., 2013; Gill, 2002, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). In policy circles, this attention to labour gave rise to 'creative' and 'cultural' policy discourses first in Australia in the mid-1990s and soon afterwards in the UK. Furthermore, some academics (such as Florida, 2002 and Howkins, 2001) gave voice to the optimistic tones of governments and policy-makers by celebrating the economic potential of the creative sectors and the freedoms they offered workers. Richard Florida, for example, formulated his thesis on the 'creative class' which encompassed a wide range of occupational activities and gave prominence to the potential of creative workers in post-industrial society. Florida's account of creative work highlights the flexible and autonomous nature of such labour which, he argues, makes it appealing to the younger members of today's workforce. Similarly, Flores and Gray (1999) emphasized an 'unavoidable decline' of career-based occupations and the 'emergence of knowledge-based economies' that fostered a 'new, entrepreneurial approach' to working life. For Howkins (2001), the 'creative economy' comprises any sector involved in the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (including

those of science and engineering) and with potential for economic growth and social transformation. These accounts and the criticisms they generated (see Hesmondhalgh, 2009) contributed in shaping creative and cultural industries scholarship. The growing academic interest in the cultural industries thus ‘prompted [empirical] explorations of the nature and organization of work in fields such as fashion, music, television and new media’ (Banks et al., 2013, p.1).

The fourth factor that contributed to an increased interest in the study of new media work within the broader context of creative labour centered on the so-called transformations of work in the period of late modernity (Banks et al., 2013). These ideas have been spearheaded by scholars such as Beck (2000), Bauman (2005) and Sennett (2006) who highlighted the changes in working conditions that have taken place in Western countries. Beck (2000), for example, employs the term ‘reflexive modernity’ to describe the transition away from a first stage of modernity towards another, second stage, which is risk-filled and characterized by general insecurity as a result of the growing individualization of work. As discussed in the introduction, Beck argued that what has been the prevailing condition of work in developing countries like Brazil, is gradually taking root in Western countries where ‘attractive, highly skilled and well-paid full-time employment is on its way out’ (p.2). In a bid to investigate such claims, various empirical studies on working conditions have been conducted. Banks et al. (2013) note that workers in media, design and the arts typically exemplify the working lives presented by these accounts about the ‘worker of the future.’

Alongside these four factors are the transformations which have taken place in advanced capitalism under the impact of globalisation as well as ‘changing modes of political and economic governance’ (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Perrons (2003) observed that these transformations are, among other things, characterized by ‘the increasing use of information and computing technologies, and the Internet’ such that, ‘new ways of organizing the production, distribution and exchange of existing goods as well as entirely new goods and services have come into being’ (p.67). For her, new media work is one of the range of jobs and activities that have emerged under this situation and which does ‘not fit neatly into existing industrial sectors or occupational

categories' (p.68). As I discussed in the previous chapter, new media occupations such as web design, animation and online game production, which are covered in my research, fall under these occupational categories.

New media workers (that is, those involved in these kinds of work) are the subject of the call made by Gill (2002) who lamented the fact that they were 'invoked rhetorically all the time but rarely studied.' According to Gill (2002), such rhetorical invocations are found in claims about new media workers being the 'poster boys and girls' (p.3) of the future,' the 'icons of new economy thinking' (p.4), the 'iconic members of the precarious generation' (p.3) as well as being greeted by governments around the world as the 'new model workers of the future' (p.4). In contrast to these rhetorical claims, Gill (2002, 2007, 2010) argued that statements about new media and creative labourers need to be based on empirical research that pays attention to the voices and experiences of the workers themselves. Based on research she carried out among new media workers in Netherlands, UK and US, Gill pointed out that, in contrast to the celebratory tones about the patterns and prospects of workers in the sector, the terrain of new media work is often not as smooth as it is made to sound.

While Gill (2002, 2007, 2010) centered her studies on how new media workers are able to manage their lives and, in the process, create their own biographies, other scholars approached their research from different perspectives and adopted distinct frames of reference. For example, Wittel (2001), in his research on new media workers, tried to understand how social ties were built, maintained and altered as well as the means, tactics and strategies employed for doing so. He formulated the concept of 'network sociality' to describe the rising importance of networking and its transformation of working practices among new media workers. Neff et al (2005) studied new media workers by examining the kind of work that they do and terming it 'entrepreneurial labour' in an attempt to highlight the entrepreneurial processes of such labour. Christopherson (2004) placed new media workers within a policy-based context with an aim to find out how their identities are formed 'in interaction with broader economic and cultural transformations' (p. 543) and to learn how they view the environments within which they work. Kotamraju (2002) pursued themes that focused on how the skills of new media workers, rather than their working conditions,

help us better understand new media work. Damarin (2006) researched new media workers by addressing the occupational structures inherent in web site production, a form of work that takes place under flexible settings which, in her view, is a typical feature of that kind of work. Perrons (2003) explored claims about how the organization of work in new media sectors has helped to reduce gender inequality. Kennedy (2010) raised pertinent issues around the professionalization of web design by examining how this topic features in the 'discursive repertoires of web designers and developers' (p.188). In subsequent work, Kennedy (2011) discussed the ethics and values in web design work in relation to web standards, accessibility and celebrity culture. Other researchers (such as Christopherson, 2004; Gottshall and Kroos, 2003; Henniger and Gottschall, 2007; and Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf, 2007) have preferred to contextualize their work in geographical terms by theming their studies around the peculiarities of new media workers in specific countries (for example, Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf's study of German Internet companies) or by carrying out comparative analysis between two or more countries (such as Gottshall and Kroos' study of Germany and UK; Christopherson's comparative work on Sweden, Germany and US). One of the earliest and most significant research projects in this field was conducted by Andrew Ross (2003), who undertook an ethnographic study of the lives of new media workers in New York's Silicon Alley during and just after the dot-com bust. Neff (2012), also based on research carried out on Silicon Alley around the same period as Ross's study, analyzed the circumstances surrounding new media workers' inclination towards what she calls 'venture labour,' by which they invested time, energy and other personal resources to the organizations they served as employees. Finally, in their empirical research on a type of new media work which may be more appropriately classified under information technology, Bergvall-Kareborn and Howcroft (2013) demonstrate that the careers of a particular set of mobile application developers are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial and precarious.

Each of these studies has contributed to knowledge and understanding of the subjective experiences of new media workers by drawing attention to one or more features that characterize this kind of work in modern society. Gill (2010), on her part, delineated ten 'key features of contemporary new media work' (p. 162) which attempt

to capture the traits of those who engage in this kind of labour. Her list includes: love of the work; entrepreneurialism; short-term, precarious, insecure work; low pay; long hours culture; keeping up; DIY learning; informality; exclusions and inequalities; and no future. A similar enumeration was made by Neff et al. (2005) which they labeled as the 'eight forces [that] give rise to phenomenon of entrepreneurial labour' (p.307). In addition to some of the elements from Gill's list, Neff et al. include 'the cultural quality of cool, creativity, autonomy and international competition' (p.307). Other terminology used to describe conditions and practices among new media workers include 'network sociality' (Wittel, 2001), 'free labour' (Terranova, 2000), 'sacrificial labour' (Ross, 2003) and 'venture labour' (Neff, 2012). I discuss each of these terms later in this chapter.

In many cases, these characteristics of new media work apply more broadly to labour in the creative and cultural industries. For example, in summarizing the findings from the literature on cultural work, Gill and Pratt (2008) highlight the following features:

a preponderance of temporary, intermittent and precarious jobs; long hours and bulimic patterns of working; the collapse or erasure of the boundaries between work and play; poor pay; high levels of mobility; passionate attachment to the work and to the identity of creative labourer (e.g. web designer, artist, fashion designer); an attitudinal mindset that is a blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism; informal work environments and distinctive forms of sociality; and profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, earning enough money and 'keeping up' in rapidly changing fields (p.14).

Similarly, in their exploration of three cultural industries (the television industry, the recording industry and the magazine industry), Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) delineated a number of features which, according to them, captured the experiences of the cultural workers who were their research participants: low pay, long working hours and lack of union support; insecurity and uncertainty; the urge to socialize and network; and isolation.

2.2.2 Classification of features

Have enumerated features which have been attributed to new media work in the literature, I now draw up a classification with which to build my argument on new media work in the Nigerian context. In this classification, I draw out three main categories of features: first, those intrinsically related to new media work; second, those that are the result of intrinsic and external factors in new media work; and, third, those which pertain more closely to the external conditions of new media work. This first category is based on the notion that some of the features emanate from the characteristics of new media work itself and are manifested by workers' reactions and attitudes towards them. For example, the passionate attachment that new media workers feel towards new media work is derived from the opportunities it offers for freedom and creativity, autonomy and control over the work process (Gill, 2010; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Neff et al., 2005). The second category refers to features which, on one hand, can be attributed to new media work's intrinsic features and, on the other hand, are related with the external conditions of new media work. This category is related to workers' commitment to their labour (Gill, 2007; Kennedy, 2011) as a result of their passionate attachment to it or from the external pressures they face in order to make ends meet or keep up with a fast-changing sector. The third category is based on the external conditions of new media work – that is, the social, cultural and economic contexts in which new media work takes place – and includes features of new media work such as precariousness, entrepreneurialism and networking. The classification is shown in the table below:

Intrinsic features	Hybrid features	External features
Passion and love of the work – Autonomy – Freedom and Creativity – Control	Commitment to the work – Long hours culture – Keeping up – Bulimic patterns – DIY learning	Precariousness and insecurity Entrepreneurialism Social Networking

Table 1: Classification of features of new media work

The rationale for developing this classification is that, to investigate claims about new media work in different contexts, it is important to determine those features which, are dependent on context and those which are not. Therefore, what I am proposing here is that features in the first category are not dependent on external factors; features in the second category depend both on internal and external factors; and features in the third category depend entirely on external factors, and therefore might be expected to vary in different contexts. The primary purpose of this classification is twofold: first, to identify those features of new media work that are dictated by external conditions and therefore might be expected to vary in different contexts; second, to identify those intrinsic features which exist across contextual boundaries and which might influence the way external features are lived and experienced by workers in varied contexts. My study therefore focuses primarily on the first and third categories. It identifies the external conditions of new media work in Nigeria and examines the intrinsic features inasmuch as they influence the ways in which workers negotiate those conditions.

I begin in the next section with a discussion about the intrinsic features in the first category. As the table above shows, these intrinsic qualities – listed as freedom, autonomy and control – are characteristic to new media and are responsible for new media workers' passion and love for their work (Gill, 2007, 2010; Kennedy, 2011; Neff, 2005).

2.3 Category 1: Intrinsic qualities of new media work

There is a general agreement in the empirical literature that new media workers are passionate about the kind of work in which they are engaged. Some writers refer to the ‘deep attachment, affective bindings’ that tie new media workers to their labour, and to the idea of self-expression and self-actualization through work (Gill and Pratt, 2008, p.15). Gill (2007) observed that the ‘sheer enjoyment of the work of new media’ was a regular feature in correspondences with her research subjects. Comments among Gill’s respondents such as ‘it’s like being paid for your hobby’ or about the pleasure of being able to ‘create something for yourself’ seemed to support the idea that new media work is ‘profoundly satisfying and immensely pleasurable’ (Gill and Pratt, 2008, p.15). According to one of Ross’s (2003) research participants, new media was described as work that ‘you couldn’t help doing’ (p.10).

There are different reasons why a particular type of work can engender high levels of affect among those involved in it. External factors such as decent pay or sociable colleagues, for example, may lead people to feel attracted to the work and find it satisfying. This could also be the case for the common ideals of workers. Ross (2004), for instance, observed that the ‘no-collar’ mentality of new media workers in his research could be strongly linked with the ideological origins of the Web. Similarly, Gill (2007, p.13) suggested that the ‘expressions of love and ardor’ among her respondents may have been related to the ‘broader development of the Web and Web culture as a whole.’ However, the most common reasons offered in the literature to account for new media workers’ attachment to their labour are those that involve the nature of new media work itself rather than external factors. By this, I refer to the opportunities it offers for freedom and creativity as well as autonomy and the control it gives workers (Damarin, 2006; Gill, 2002, 2007; Kennedy, 2011; Neff et al., 2005). Alongside the general acknowledgement of these characteristics in new media work, there have also been some critical views. These views have highlighted how these features of creative labour lead to self-exploitation, stress and anxiety among workers in response to their immediate political and economic concerns (McRobbie, 2002; Ross, 2003; Sennett, 1998). However, another group of scholars have drawn attention to the positive aspects of freedom, autonomy and control along with other desirable

features of creative labour such as self-esteem, self-realisation and self-determination (Banks, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Holt and Lapenta, 2010; Kennedy, 2011).

I now examine these features of creative labour. As I mentioned above, these intrinsic features of freedom, autonomy and control are included in my classification because they contribute to some of the ways in which new media workers in the Nigerian context negotiate the external conditions of labour. In what follows, I discuss how these concepts have been analyzed in the literature on creative work in general and new media work in particular. I begin with an overview of freedom and creativity in work and their connection with Marxist ideas of non-alienated practical activity. Thereafter, I examine how control over the work process and autonomy have been treated in research about creative and new media work.

2.3.1 Work, freedom and creativity

In writing about the nature of artistic production, Wolff (1993) traced the origins of the classic portrait of the artist – one in which the artist is separated from the rest of society as an outcast of sorts and, in a way, isolated from social life and interaction and whose unique creative abilities can be attributable to divine inspiration. Wolff observed that this notion of the ‘artist,’ which was mostly formulated during the developmental stages of industrial capitalism, was problematic for two reasons. First, it presented a narrow concept of the artist as painter or producer of works that could be exhibited and sold at galleries and public expositions, while ignoring new forms of art patronage and employment for artists ‘many of whom are indeed integrated [...] into various branches of capitalist production’ (p.11). Second, it presented the artist as an epitome of genius and to whose work the notion of creative activity could be solely applied. Wolff notes that while, on the one hand, the conception of the artist has necessarily broadened under capitalism, on the other hand, the perception of the artist as ‘creative genius’ is a wrong one. Addressing this erroneous idea, she argues that, ‘all forms of work are (potentially) creative in the same way, and that artistic work,

like other work, loses its quality as “free, creative activity” under capitalism’ (p.13). According to Wolff,

Marx argued that creative practical activity, engaged in transforming the material environment, was one of the major features distinguishing humans from animals. In non-alienated conditions, people have the ability and potential to act, consciously and with the use of abstract thought and imagination, to change nature and their surroundings. This labour, then, is creative; it arises out of human needs and intentions, it is freely exercised on its object and it is constructive and transformative. (p.14)

To avoid essentialist tendencies in Marx’s writings, Wolff acknowledges that his notions of human labour and practical activity appear to endorse the use of *homo faber* as a premise in theories of human nature, and helpfully clarifies that ‘the primacy of *homo faber* lies in its actual, historical primacy, and not in any a priori theory of human nature’ (p.15). She goes on to contend that labour can be understood as ‘the basic, necessary human activity’ and that, ‘insofar as it is not forced, distorted or alienated, it is a free creative activity’ (p.16). This suggests a lack of basis for distinguishing artistic production from other forms of work.

The similarity between art and labour thus lies in their shared relationship to the human essence; that is, they are both creative activities by means of which man produces objects that express him, that speak for and about him. Therefore, there is no radical opposition between art and work (Vazquez, 1973 in Wolff, 1993, p.16).

Therefore, like art, all forms of labour are creative as long as they allow the expression of oneself under non-alienated conditions. This means that they are essentially imbued with freedom and creativity insofar as they are not forced or encumbered by external circumstances. From this perspective, one can understand Williams’ (1965) assertion that art is ordinary because the artist, like everyone else, attempts to formulate, describe and communicate experience (by the expression of oneself) through work. However, artists, like creative workers, can be said to be involved in a ‘particularly intense forms of this ordinary human activity’ because they are directly involved in the

task of communicating experience, which they also make their ‘central work in life’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, p.61). According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011),

Some [creative workers] are more able, through genetic endowment, motivation and practice, to transmit that experience in a way that audiences can understand and feel. Creative workers then are far more ordinary than traditional views of ‘art’ would have us believe. There is nevertheless something extraordinary about them. Their work is the communication of experience through symbolic production (p.61).

It may therefore be inferred that, because of their dedication to and direct involvement in the task of communicating experience, those involved in creative labour (such as new media workers) experience freedom and creativity more intensely than other forms of work. I argue that this intensified experience of freedom and creativity engenders in them a passionate attachment to such work since, in part, it fulfills the human urge to pursue one’s creative potential (Wolff, 1991). In the next section, I discuss this passionate attachment in new media work and its relation with the two other intrinsic features of such work listed in my classification: control and autonomy.

2.3.2 Control, autonomy and passion for new media work

Control over the labour process involves the mastery one has over the conditions and techniques of work. This includes control over the pace of work, control over the quantity and quality of production, and control over choice of method adopted (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). It is also closely linked to freedom because control over the location of work assumes freedom of physical movement as well as the freedom from inordinate pressure (Blauner, 1967). According to Blauner (1967), control is also associated with a worker’s sense of being involved in meaningful activity. A key aspect of this concerns the extent to which one is involved in a given task. Here, full control over the work process implies not only being able ‘to work on the whole, or a large part’ of the end product (Blauner, 1967, p.23) but also to appreciate one’s role within the larger work process. As Neff et al. (2005) note from

their research, new media workers 'feel they are creative because they can visualize how their own part of the production process fits into both production and consumption of the final product. This, in turn, leads to a subjective feeling that they own the product and control their labour' (p.315). Creativity in the labour process can therefore also be related to the amount of control one has over the processes of production.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), in their analyses of 'good' and 'bad' work, suggest that *control*, together with *freedom*, can be alternated with *autonomy*, which is listed as one of their attributes of 'good' work. For them, workplace autonomy refers to 'the degree of self-determination that individual workers or groups of workers have within a certain work situation' (p.40). Autonomy can also be defined as the ability to 'self-organize one's own actions or to be causal' (Benz and Frey, 2008, p.364) and is related to aspects of self-determination, described in psychological studies as one of the basic psychological needs of an individual (Ryan and Deci, 2000). From this perspective, any activity that fosters autonomy is desirable because those who carry it out potentially exercise high level of control over such activity. Some of the research indicates that a number of new media workers describe their work as a hobby because of the autonomy it allows them (Gill, 2010; Ross, 2004). For example, one of Gill's (2007) respondents declared that working in new media was 'like being paid for your hobby' (p.14). Ross (2004) also noted that the early adopters of internet technology were 'techno-hobbyists and Web enthusiasts' (p.12), referring to people who worked with the internet as a pastime, outside their usual working hours.

The desirability of autonomous work can also be linked to the pleasure involved in carrying it out. Kennedy (2011) observed that, 'throughout the creative and cultural industries, there is something of a disavowal that the activity of producing culture can be characterized as labour at all, because it is so playful and creative' (p.26). As Wittel (2000) commented, 'play is associated with creativity, experimentation and innovation; it stands counterposed to bureaucracy and a Protestant work ethic' (p.69). Also, since new media work is 'frequently autonomous and stimulating, leading to interest, involvement and self-realization' (Kennedy, 2011, p.27), the opportunities for workplace autonomy that new media work intrinsically offers, also make it 'good'

work and therefore able to engender feelings of intense passion in those engaged in it (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Kennedy, 2011). From this perspective, one can understand why new media workers have been described as people who exhibit an extraordinary degree of enthusiasm for their work and are passionately attached to it (Gill, 2007, Kennedy, 2011).

Passionate attachment to new media work also featured in my own research in Nigeria. Many of my interviewees expressed love for their work. For example, the following comments were common among my respondents:

I believe it is passion, because it's something I love doing and working overnight doing it. While people are sleeping I am there online trying to figure out how this thing works. (Adam, web developer)

I realised that I was fond of spending so much time – even without eating – doing this type of work and having no other thought in the world while doing it. I enjoyed and still enjoy it very much. It became pretty obvious that this was what I had passion for. (Christopher, web designer)

Responses like these (and many others which I draw on in the empirical chapters) among new media workers in Nigeria (which is a context different from those considered the literature I have discussed so far) suggest that love and passion for such work cuts across geographical and cultural contexts and may therefore be described as intrinsic to the work itself rather than on external conditions.

However, the quotes above from my fieldwork also draw attention to another feature of new media work which also derives from workers' passionate attachment to their labour. I refer specifically to the tendency for new media and creative workers to spend long hours engaged in work. This tendency to work long hours, as well as to ardently keep up with new technologies, is the theme of the next section. There, I argue that the rigorous practice of working long hours and of keeping up with technology through re-skilling are the result of two factors. First, they are the outcome of workers' passionate attachment to their labour and, second, by the external conditions of labour. I discuss these in the next section as the second category in my classification of the features of new media work.

2.4 Category 2: Intrinsic and extrinsic features

In this section, I discuss how new media workers exercise their commitment to work through their tendency to work long hours and the constant efforts they make to improve and update their skills. As outlined in my classification of features above, these are simultaneously caused by two factors: first, they stem from workers' passionate attachment to their labour; second, they are the result of the external pressures that influence their work. While the former is the result of the intrinsic qualities of such work (treated in the previous section), the latter derives from its external conditions (to be discussed in the next section). In this section, I first engage with new media workers' commitment to their labour as a result of their passionate attachment to it, then I examine their commitment due to external pressures.

2.4.1 Commitment through passion

As highlighted in the previous section, the literature about new media work suggests that a consequence of the passionate attachment that new media workers have towards their labour is the spill over between work and play (Wittel, 2001). This assimilation of work and play leads to a collapse of the boundaries between both kinds of activities (Pratt, 2000; Gill and Pratt, 2008) and generates a tendency for new media workers to prolong the time spent on their work. Gill (2010) affirms this in her own research – 'creative work in new media is marked by very long hours' (p.10) – and it is also corroborated in much of the literature on new media and creative labour (Gottschall et al., 2003; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Kennedy, 2011; Neff, 2005; Pratt, 2000; Ross, 2004).

Ross (2004) writes about the 'creative lives' of the new media workers he studied being characterized by 'solving creative problems for long and often unsocial hours in return for deferred rewards (p.10)' Comparing them to the artists of the renaissance, he asks rhetorically:

What is the profile of this new kind of worker who behaves and thinks like an artist? It is someone who is comfortable in an ever-changing environment that often demands creative shifts in communication with different kinds of

employers, clients and colleagues; who is attitudinally geared toward work that requires long and often unsocial hours; who dedicates their time and energy to distinct projects rather than to a steady flow of production; who exercises self-management, if not self-employment, in the execution of their work; and who is accustomed to a contingent and casual work environment, without supervision or judgement from above. (p.144)

The above portrait Ross paints of the new media worker is intended to depict, the flexible and creative character of the occupation. Neff et al. (2005) note that, along with these creative images, the new media workers in their research were characterized by a ‘strong sense of autonomy that is closely related to employment flexibility’ (p.316). However, these writers have also problematized the notion of flexibility at work. While, on one hand, it allows workers to determine for themselves the hours to work, on the other hand it means that employers and clients often expect workers to work all the time or when it suits them. For employees, this includes hours of work outside those stipulated by their employment contracts – regardless of whether they were paid for those contracts or not. Kennedy (2011, p.40) suggests that, for some workers, a non-monetary reward for the hours spent on new media work is the pleasure of carrying it out. According to her, ‘pleasure, then, is a further reward of cultural work, deriving both from internal factors like dedication [and] immersion.’ She argues further that many web designers (who were the focus of her study) work under conditions that afford them ‘reasonable degrees of control, resulting in considerable degrees of absorption’ that potentially lead them to spend many hours on their work. This is why Gill and Pratt (2008) suggest that long hours cultures can be ‘the outcome of passionate engagement, creativity and self-expression’ (p.18).

The empirical literature also indicates that the culture of working long hours stems from the requirement to keep up with technological developments in new media. As one of Gill’s respondents commented, ‘you have to keep up and that takes time and energy as well’ (2010, p.11). The necessity for new media workers to keep updating their skills is one of the findings from a study of web designers conducted by Kotamraju (2002). She argued that re-skilling is a defining characteristic of new media work. According to her, ‘whether web design skills are presented as conceptual or as

straightforward technical competence, the fact remains that [web designers] need to be continually updated and reformatted to meet the requirements of the technology' (p.17). Indeed, much of the literature talks about the need for re-skilling as a burden for new media workers. I engage with these discussions later in this chapter but here, I refer to how re-skilling is also an outcome of new media workers' passion for their labour.

Drawing on theories of self-determination from the field of psychology, I equate the need for re-skilling with the *desire for competence* which has been recognized as one of the aspects of self-determination crucial for human well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000). According to this idea, competence refers to 'the propensity to control the environment, to experience oneself as capable and effective, and to put one's abilities to use' (Benz and Frey, p.364). Consequently, competence (like autonomy) could be understood as an intrinsic desire which people possess to achieve self-determination. I suggest therefore that the need for re-skilling exhibited by new media workers also represents an inherent desire for competence because, by re-skilling, they acquire for themselves the expertise needed for greater control in the production and manipulation of new media (such as in the development of websites or animation). It can be argued therefore that, for new media workers, the urge to attain competence (which is an aspect of self-determination and well-being) is expressed through an 'intense passion' to keep up with the technological advancements of their work. Moreover, the desire to re-skill can also be recognized as a positive aspect of the work since, as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) propose, any kind of activity that contributes to human well-being is potentially 'good' work. Finally, I suggest that the desire for competence is potentially enhanced when new media workers are able to control the strategies adopted for re-skilling. These strategies refer to the means they employ to acquire new skills and keep up. Control over their learning process provides workers with further opportunities for exercising freedom. This self-acquisition mechanism is what Gill (2010) has termed 'DIY learning' which is included among her features of new media work.

So far, I have shown how some of the literature affirms that passion and love of work contribute to and are demonstrated by the culture of long hours and re-skilling among

new media workers. However, as indicated earlier, much of the literature has treated these features with less optimism because they have been more frequently interpreted as manifestations of workers' self-exploitation as a result of the external pressures of work. I engage with these debates next.

2.4.2 Commitment through pressure

Some of the commentaries on new media work and creative labour refer to long hours cultures as a response to the pressures that workers experience. Gill and Pratt (2008), for example, acknowledge that, although the long hours culture of creative workers can be the outcome of a passionate engagement with their work, it may also be 'dictated by punishing schedules and oppressive deadlines' (p.18). From this point of view, the culture of long hours is construed as a direct consequence of the project-based arrangements of most types of new media work, whereby individuals labour extensively to finish projects in order to take up new ones. This may either reflect a lack of self-management (Kodz et al., 2003) or the indication of a progressive work-life imbalance (Perrons, 2003). Gottschall et al. (2003) note that, for new media workers, 'periods of hard work, sometimes on multiple jobs simultaneously, and long hours including night and weekend shifts [...] alternate with slack periods when only a small job or none is at hand' (p.10). Pratt (2000, p.432) termed this pattern of work 'bulimic.' In his study of new media workers in New York, he noticed that people tended to work in 'boom and bust' patterns; that is, working for 'long days and nights' at a stretch before breaking up until the next project. Gill (2002) explains that, for some of her respondents, 'many projects had extremely tight deadlines (which workers agreed to meet in order to get the contract) and these necessitated intense round-the-clock working for a short period, which might then be followed by several weeks with no (new media) work at all' (p.83-84). Under these circumstances, workers were pressured to 'burn' as many hours as possible on available projects including odd hours of the day, late nights and weekends. This is why, as Gill (2010) mentions about her respondents, some new media workers looked forward to having more time for themselves.

Apart from the tensions that arise from trying to complete projects, new media workers are also pressured to keep up with the modern tools and techniques of their trade. In her writing about web designers, Kotamraju (2002) frequently used the term 'pressure' to describe the tensions such workers are confronted with to 'keep up with the changing technology of the web' or to 'update a skill-set.' Nevertheless, her usage of this term appears synonymous with the 'passion' for new media work discussed in the previous section. For example, she notes that 'the pressure to keep up with the changing technology of the web is often articulated as an attractive quality of the job' (p.18). As she explained, this was the case during the relatively early years of the Web when web design was heavily associated with the 'cutting edge of technology and art' and therefore 'seen as cool work.' As she noted:

The excitement provoked by constant upgrading ensures that the web design jobs possessed what Bauman [1998, p.33] describes as some of the ideal qualities of the modern job: 'varied, exciting...giving occasion to ever-new sensations' (p.18).

The pressure referred to above which provokes such excitement can be distinguished from the pressures new media workers face which are imposed on them by societal constraints. The latter has more to do with workers' concerns about finding new jobs, contracts or projects, the need to earn income for their upkeep and the requirement to re-skill in order to remain relevant in the industry. Kotamraju further argues that re-skilling is of primary importance for new media workers because it provides them with at least the technical capital that potentially determines their identity in the industry. According to her, 'not keeping up with the latest technology definitely means that one is not a good web designer, but it also means that one may not be a web designer at all' (p.18).

Other literature on new media work make it clear that the working conditions of new media workers (and how they respond to them) are contingent on geographic context. In a study that compared new media work in the US with that in Sweden and Germany, Christopherson (2004) observed that in a highly competitive market like the US, those engaged in short-term contracts 'need to always think one step ahead,

setting up their next work contract at the same time they are completing work in the present.’ On the other hand, in Sweden and Germany where workers ‘follow a path closer to what would be considered a conventional career,’ they experience ‘less job turnover over time’ (p.549). The empirical literature also seems to show a variation within countries. For example, while Henniger and Gottshall (2007) note that, ‘available data on UK and US media workers indicate working conditions similar to those for freelance knowledge workers in Germany’ (p.67), Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf (2007) relate from their study of internet workers *also* in Germany that, ‘standardized working-hours seem to be emerging’ (p.97). According to them, these working schedules ‘are usually associated with Fordist times, but accepted by employees in order to adapt to customers’ office hours, to cooperate with colleagues and to match superiors preferences’ (p. 97). Thus, like Christopherson, Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf (2007) suggest that fixed office hours and more stable conditions can be found in countries like Germany, rather than flexible, long working hours. Furthermore, her research indicates that such stable working conditions provide employers with the security to invest in employees’ training which greatly eases the pressures that workers face in trying to upgrade their skills.

In summary, I have shown from the literature that, on one hand, the culture of working long hours and the constant need to re-skill derive from new media workers’ passion and love for their work. On the other hand, they are also the outcome of the societal pressures workers face to survive and make ends meet (as with everyone else). I have also briefly discussed how some other empirical studies demonstrate that the extent of these pressures vary with geographic, economic and social context. In the next section, I engage with this contextual theme further by examining other features of new media work which I consider to be primarily context-dependent. These other features differ from those considered in this section because, as I argue, they are solely the result of extrinsic factors such as contractual arrangements, sociality and the legal frameworks within which such work takes place. In keeping with my argument in this thesis, I suggest that these particular features vary with context because they are based on new media workers’ responses to the prevailing social, legal, economic and network structures of their work environment. As I will discuss, it is these, extrinsic features

which differentiate new media work in varied contexts and form the basis for identifying the themes for my analysis of new media workers in Nigeria. As already mentioned, these features are precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking in the practice of new media work.

2.5 Category 3: External conditions of new media work

Following my arguments in the previous sections, the experiences in new media work as a result of its intrinsic qualities (namely, freedom, autonomy and control) may be distinguished from those experiences that emanate from the external conditions of such work. I have suggested that while the former lead new media workers to be passionately attached for such work (intrinsic), the latter potentially give rise to the pressures encountered while carrying it out (extrinsic). Although, as discussed in the previous section, both have been found to result in similar practices among new media workers such as long hours cultures and constant re-skilling, the distinction between them is relevant: I have suggested that while it is possible to argue that there is evidence of a passionate commitment to labour across different geographic contexts, the nature and type of pressures experienced by new media workers are dependent on the specificities of those contexts. In this section, I review the literature that talks about those features of new media work that pertain to the external contexts of such work. The discussion is organized under three subheadings: precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking. Each of these subheadings correspond with the themes of the empirical chapters of my thesis, and form the basis of what I argue distinguishes new media work in the Nigerian context from those in the West where most of the research has so far been conducted.

2.5.1 Precariousness in new media work

The precariousness of new media work and creative labour in general is a theme that surfaces many times in the literature. Ross (2007) describes it as a ‘way of life’ for creative workers while Gill (2010) notes that it is ‘endemic’ to life in new media and cultural work. According to Kalleberg and Hewison (2013), precarious work in general refers to the uncertainty, instability, and insecurity of work in which people bear the risks of work and receive limited benefits from it. It stands in contrast to stable employment which is often associated with standard, permanent and full-time work. In new media work, Kennedy (2011) noted that precariousness and insecurity are noticeable in various work arrangements including project-based, freelance as well

as in portfolio work patterns. In their research, Neff et al. (2005) observed that new media workers were typically ‘employed as freelancers, temporary workers and independent contractors as well as full-time and part-time employees’ (p.311) and thus were particularly well-known victims of precarious and insecure conditions. Gill and Pratt (2008) further noted that a range of work arrangements ‘from illegalized, casualized and temporary employment, to homeworking, piecework and freelancing’ are susceptible to precarious working conditions. Gill (2010) stated that, among her research respondents, freelancers were most affected by precariousness. According to her, this was because they combined different kinds of jobs to survive. For this reason, they lacked access to insurance, pension schemes and other benefits typically associated with full-time employed work. Nevertheless, precarious conditions in new media are not limited to freelancers. Gill (2010) observed that her research participants who were contracted as employees ‘were not necessarily faring much better’ as some of them, despite claims to stock options at their companies, were on risky contracts in which ‘they could lose their job without any notice at all’ (p.9).

In the West, the origins of precarious work can be traced to global economic, political, and social changes which started in the 1970s and have since accelerated (Kalleberg and Hewison, 2012; Neff, 2012). Before then, in the so-called golden age of capitalism (1950s and 1960s), work was known to be characterized by standard full-time work which was ‘directed by an employer at the employer’s place of business and with regular pay and benefits’ (Kalleberg and Hewison, 2012, p.272). According to Kalleberg and Hewison (2013), the changes that began to take place from the 1970s ‘created an impetus for nation-states and businesses to establish increasingly flexible production processes and employment systems’ (p.274). These developments resulted in profound transformations such as rapid globalization; advances in technology; changes to regulatory regimes; and the growth of international competition in product, capital, and labor markets. Such changes contributed to the neoliberal ideas and programs that emerged and which created a situation in which work became increasingly precarious and less stable in Western economies.

The roots of academic engagement with precariousness in contemporary labour can also be traced to the political activism of a European social movement which

organized around the concept of ‘precarity’ in order to develop strategies against insecure and unstable working conditions (Casas-Cortés, 2009; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005). These activist workers lamented their increasing vulnerability as a result of neoliberal economic reforms and globalization that led to the reduction of social safety nets (Kalleberg and Hewison, 2012). At the core of these precarious conditions were macro-level structural changes which were characterized by a ‘neoliberal revolution’ in the midst of ever-increasing ‘globalized production’ (Kalleberg and Hewison, 2012 p.274).

Precariousness as a feature of work can therefore be understood as resulting from and revolving around the social, economic and political conditions of labour particularly in the West. For new media work specifically, the literature has highlighted the effect of precariousness on those who operate in this industry. Kennedy (2012) provides a useful summary:

Precarity and insecurity manifest themselves in various material forms: in the preponderance of project-based and freelance work in the new media sector (Christopherson, 2004; Henniger and Gottschall, 2007); in other ‘risky’ conditions such as portfolio work patterns, international competition and foreshortened careers (Neff et al, 2005; Gottschall and Kroos, 2006); in the alleged fast-changing skill set needed to work in this field and the difficulties workers subsequently face in keeping up (Kotamraju, 2002); and in the flexibility associated with the diverse roles that new media workers may be expected to carry out (Betzelt and Gottschall, 2004; Damarin, 2006) (p.24).

Since these manifestations are based on research conducted in the West, it could be said that the ‘material forms’ of precariousness listed above have their roots in the historical transformations of labour described previously. As such, these forms of precariousness, since they are Western by origin, may be applicable mostly to new media work in Western contexts. One may then ask: in what specific forms are precariousness manifested in other contexts with different work histories and varied social, economic and political milieux? To this end, my research suggests one specific manifestation of precariousness which applies to the Nigerian context: the practice of

software piracy. In other words, based on my research findings, I show how the use of pirated software is an important contributor to the precarious conditions experienced by new media workers in the Nigerian context.

This focus on software piracy is relevant because, in the literature on new media work, very little has been said about software piracy or about workers' engagement with the tools they require for work vis-a-vis their experiences at work. This may be partly due to the fact that much of the research till date has been undertaken in the West where software piracy is arguably not a dominant issue. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, piracy in Nigeria is an important topic because it is rooted in the social, economic and cultural milieu of life and labour in the country. My analysis of this topic is based on three main ideas; first, precarious conditions are ingrained features of life and labour in the context in which my research participants operate; second, software piracy is a key component of the Nigerian context and also a contributor of the precarious conditions experienced by new media workers there; third, features of new media work influence the practice of software piracy among my research participants which in turn determine how they experienced precariousness in their context. To engage with these ideas I first discuss the origins of software piracy within the historical context of Nigeria in Chapter 3; then I present my empirical findings in Chapter 5.

2.5.2 Entrepreneurialism in new media work

In commentaries about new media work, entrepreneurialism has been identified as one of the industry's defining features (Christopherson, 2004; Gill, 2007, 2010; Neff et al, 2005, Neff, 2012; Oakley, 2014). Like precariousness, I refer to it an extrinsic feature of new media work because it is dependent on the external context within which such work is carried out. Neff et al (2005) attempted to trace the origins of what they referred to as 'entrepreneurial labour' in new media work by linking it to decisions made by firms in the US and other regions to change the norms of the workplace as a response to the growing trend in the post-industrial economy toward nonstandard employment in the 1970s. These changes were reflected in the introduction of policies

that encouraged the hiring of independent contractors and ‘perma-temps’ as a replacement to regular employees. As a result of this, there was a gradual shift of economic risk from institutions and organizations onto individual workers. Neff et al. (2005) noted that, ‘without strong stabilizing norms and regulations of workplace behavior and rewards’, media workers began to bear these risks with the hope that they would be better able to navigate uncertainty while remaining associated with the industry. Neff (2012) termed this behaviour ‘venture labour’ which, according to her, became prevalent among new media workers and contributed to the dot-com bubble in the US. Venture labour, ‘as a way of managing the risk of contemporary work’ (Neff, 2012, p.16) potentially explains what Christopherson (2014) described as the ‘entrepreneurial model’ predominant in the US new media sector.

Apart from managing the risks in the firms they worked, another method workers opted to handle this situation has been to set up their own firms. Thus, in her research conducted in several European countries, Gill (2010) observed that entrepreneurialism among new media workers was evident through ‘the proliferation of micro-businesses or independents’ along with the ‘habits and dispositions and mentalities of the workers, with their aspirations to innovate, create and to be pioneers’ (p.7). In a similar research on new media work, Gottshall and Kroos (2003) also highlighted the predominance of ‘self-employed workers without employees’ (p.5) in the UK and in Germany. However, the study of the German industry by Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf (2007) presented a somewhat contrasting picture. According to their study of 12 internet companies, there was an increasing tendency towards ‘routine work, stable employment, formal hierarchical structures and direct control’ (p.73). They noted the sharp difference between what had been reported, for example, about the new media industry in New York (see Batt, 1997) and the ‘standard employment pattern’ which had begun to develop under conditions of consolidation in Germany in 2001.

This variation in the employment patterns available in different contexts is further highlighted by Christopherson (2004) in her comparative study of new media in the US and in Sweden and Germany. For Christopherson, this variation is the result of differences in the industrial and regulatory frameworks across countries. According to her, ‘the “regulatory difference” has produced considerable variation in the

occupational identities of new media workers among advanced economies' (p.543). It has led to a situation in which some countries create capacities for some types of solutions or constrain them. She cites, for example, the situation in which career patterns in the new media sector of Sweden and Germany follow 'an employment-based professional model' while the United States is characterized by a 'free-agent, entrepreneurial model' (p.549). Thus, according to Christopherson (2004), while in countries like Sweden and Germany, the new media workforce 'tend to be full-time employees and to work under longer-term employment contracts even when they are working on projects', the case is different in countries like the United States 'where an entrepreneurial model prevails' and 'the costs of sustaining a project-based industry are primarily absorbed by the workforce' (p.556).

If such variations exist among countries of the Global North, how can we understand what prevails in countries of the Global South? In this thesis, I address this issue by examining entrepreneurialism among new media workers in the Nigerian context. This is important because the study of a context like Nigeria which is different from those of the West from a geographic, economic and cultural standpoint, potentially opens up new frames for understanding entrepreneurialism in new media work. For example, apart from the variations in regulatory frameworks across countries, the impact of infrastructure on the practice of new media work can provide fresh perspectives on entrepreneurialism among those in the industry. Such a study will have to account for the specificities of infrastructure in the context under observation. My investigation on entrepreneurialism in the Nigerian context will therefore examine how the prevalence of infrastructural breakdown manifests the entrepreneurial practices of new media workers there.

To do this, I discuss how the breakdown of infrastructure is characterized by the prevalence of electricity outages and poor internet access. I also examine the ways by which people continually attempt to negotiate these conditions in their everyday lives. In Chapter 6, I draw on my empirical data to suggest that the specific form of entrepreneurialism practiced by my research participants is a function of the efforts they make to negotiate the infrastructural challenges encountered in their work. In

doing this, I examine how the intrinsic features of new media work contribute to their negotiation of those challenges.

2.5.3 Networking practices in new media work

Networking has been broadly viewed in the literature as a strategy new media workers employ in dealing with precarious working conditions. It refers specifically to how workers take advantage of occasions often set aside for socializing to network and find new jobs, projects and work opportunities. In her research, Gill (2010) found that networking had its roots in the informality of the new media sector. According to her, operations based on informality ‘are all seemingly removed from the formal sphere governed by established procedures, equal opportunities legislation or union agreements.’ For this reason, activities such as finding work, recruiting staff and winning new clients are now based on ‘sociality and “who you know”’ (p.172).

Networking has also been talked about using terms like ‘network sociality’ (Wittel, 2001) and ‘compulsory sociality’ (Gregg, 2008). In formulating his theory on network sociality, Wittel’s (2001) referred to the socializing aspect of ‘networking events’ as a manifestation of how new media workers integrate work into play. He noted how work was extended into play when the new media companies he researched organized parties and other similar events. According to him, these events provided a ‘perfect symbiosis of work and play, of instrumentality and of non-purposive rationality’ (p.69). Along with other scholars, Wittel (2001) has argued that such events are increasingly serving the role of providing new media workers with the opportunity to network, to build their list of contacts and to secure new projects. As Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) observe, this ‘blurring of networking and socialization means it becomes very difficult to maintain a boundary around one’s working life’ (p.154). For this reason, as Wittel contends, for new media workers, networking *is* work and therefore a compulsory aspect of their occupational activity (Neff et al., 2005; Gregg, 2008).

For Gregg (2008), the pressures which emerge from this requirement to network and build contacts is what she referred to as ‘compulsory sociality.’ In Gregg’s view, this way of networking means that workers are never really switched off from work and the demands of the workplace follow them into spaces which have traditionally been dedicated to relaxing and socializing. Thus, Gregg and other writers (like Gill, 2010; Kennedy, 2011) problematize the networking culture of ‘beer drinking’ or ‘Friday night drinking’ which, in the UK, often take place in pubs which Hesmondhalgh and Baker describe as ‘very racialised spaces’ (p.153). According to Gill (2010), networking this way implies that the ‘entire self is a work project that must be presented in all the right ways at all the right occasions’ (p.173). For Gottschall and Kroos (2003), networking is also the social mechanism which allows for control of communication, trust, and reputation and therefore can be understood as a form of self-promotion. As Neff et al. (2005) put it, ‘networking means that playtime is no longer a release from work-time; it is a required supplement to work-time, and relies on constant self-promotion’ (p.322) The pressure to network as a requirement for moving ahead professionally is therefore viewed by many researchers as a path to work-life imbalance, one in which the boundary between work and life is increasingly indistinct.

In spite of these claims, the practice of networking is largely dependent on context. The way networking is conducted in the West – where most of the above-commentary are based – is arguably different from what exists in other regions. Again, Christopherson (2004) draws attention to the contextual differences of this feature of new media work. According to her, despite the ‘rapid growth of online employment and job search [in the US], employers and workers still overwhelmingly depend on personal networks to make employment matches’ (p.549). This means that new media workers in the US depend on their personal networks as the most important source of jobs or freelance work which contrasts with those in countries like Sweden and Germany where workers are not ‘as dependent on these networks for sustaining employment and a career’ since they ‘follow a path closer to what would be considered a “conventional career”’ (p.550). This implies that they have less job turnover over time and sustain longer-term employment relationships.

The consideration of personal networks in different contexts draws attention to the relevance of preexisting networks among new media workers. Personal networks refer to those ties based on kinship and ethnic bonds which differ from those which are developed at work and through professional linkages. In most of the literature discussed above, networking activities among new media workers are based on situated events that take place in physical locations. It is at these locations that workers try to make new contacts and enhance their existing networks (Neff, 2005; Kennedy, 2011; Wittel, 2001). As Neff (2005) argued, ‘networking, or the processes of the formation of social network ties, is concentrated in activities within narrow geographic clusters’ (p.134). However, networks based on kinship and ethnic ties are not formed in such physical or geographic spaces but are preexistent. This means that they are not necessarily built through the effort of individuals even though they can be mobilized when required. Therefore, one of the questions I address in this thesis relates to how these preexisting networks based on ethnicity and kinship feature and get mobilized in the lives of new media workers in Nigeria.

As with precariousness and entrepreneurialism discussed above, my thesis attempts to proffer answers to this question which has not been addressed in the existing literature on new media work. Again, this deficiency is understandable because most of the existing research has been conducted in the West where features like ethnicity and kinship-based ties are perhaps not as salient in the lives of new media workers as they are in a context like Nigeria. As I discuss in Chapter 3, ethnicity is a key feature in Nigeria and the social and political configuration of the country is set up according to the various ethnic groups that exist in it. Ethnic differentiation therefore arguably plays a major role in the social networking practices of daily life. In Chapter 7, drawing on my empirical data, I examine how the salience of ethnicity and kinship influenced the networking habits of my research participants. As I will argue, the specific characteristics of new media work also determine the salience of ethnic and kinship ties among those I researched which potentially lead to new forms of social ties.

2.6 Conclusion: A framework for the thesis

The aim of this chapter has been to carry out a review of literature on new media work in order to map out the debates which frame my study. I have argued that the experiences of new media workers can be grouped into three categories: first, those based on the intrinsic features of new media work; second, those which can be described as both intrinsic and extrinsic to new media work; and third, those based primarily on the external conditions under which new media work is carried out. The first set of features can be described as independent of context and therefore apply to new media work across geographic or economic contexts. As I explained, this is because they are derived from qualities of new media work that are related to intrinsic human values: freedom, autonomy and control. In contrast, the third set of features are contextual because they relate to the societal pressures workers face when carrying out their work. Therefore, these features potentially vary from place to place.

As I highlighted in the chapter, my study focusses particularly on the third category of features while also paying attention to the influence of the intrinsic qualities of new media work on how new media workers in Nigeria negotiate the external conditions of work in their context. Among the features of new media work which pertain to the external condition of such work, I drew attention to three: precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking. In discussing how these features have been treated in the literature, I drew further attention to issues which were not addressed by the research field. First, I suggested that the practice of software piracy in the Nigerian context constitutes an important contributor to the precarious conditions of new media workers. For this reason, it is a necessary element in my study of precariousness in the Nigerian context. Second, I suggested that the infrastructural challenges of the Nigerian context potentially shape the entrepreneurial practices of new media workers and is therefore a relevant component of my study. Third, I suggested that a study of the networking among new media workers in the Nigerian context requires an examination of the influence of ethnicity in such practices. As I explained, this is because of the deep-rootedness of ethnic differentiation in Nigeria which arguably defines social networking in the country. Armed with these themes, I now move on to the next chapter which focusses on the Nigerian context.

Chapter 3

The Nigerian context

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I carried out a review of the literature on new media work and identified the three themes I will be focussing on in this thesis. The themes draw on some of extrinsic features of new media work which I have identified based on their dependence on the external context within which such work take place. These features are precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking. Although the literature refer to these three concepts as features that characterize new media work in the West (Gill, 2010; Kennedy, 2011; Neff et al, 2005), in this chapter I discuss how, beyond new media work, they more broadly characterize life and labour in Nigeria's informal economy. These three features constitute what I introduced in Chapter 1 as a 'way of life' in Nigeria (in the same sense as Raymond Williams' (1965) seminal definition of culture as 'a particular *way of life*, which expresses certain meanings and values' (p.4) because they are ingrained in the cultural landscape of Nigeria's informal economy in which many new media workers operate. Thus, precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking are not treated in my study as features of new media work but as attributes of the Nigerian cultural context. As highlighted in Chapter 2, these features were manifested in new media work through three different phenomena: for precariousness, it was software piracy; for entrepreneurialism, infrastructural breakdown; and for social networking, ethnicity. In this chapter, I examine each of these features with their respective manifestations in the Nigerian context.

I begin with a quick overview of Nigeria's history from pre-colonial times through colonial rule to the present post-colonial period. The aim of this account is to highlight the points in this history that are crucial to understanding the current state of affairs in Nigeria from the point of view of my research. Therefore the main issue I draw from this historical narrative pertains to the development, growth and nature of the informal economy in Nigeria. Next, I examine the features which I have described as characteristic to the informal economy. To do this, first I discuss the precarious

conditions of life and labour while also examining the phenomenon of software piracy and its prevalence in the country. Second, I discuss entrepreneurialism as a feature of the Nigerian cultural context and its relationship with the predominance of infrastructural breakdown. Finally, I examine social networking in the Nigerian context and the role played by the salience of ethnic/kinship ties and ethnic differentiation in Nigeria.

An important point to make here is that although the themes outlined above refer generally to Nigeria, they are based on field research which was conducted in Lagos. The discussion in this chapter therefore applies specifically to the experiences of Nigerians and new media workers in Lagos.

3.2 Charting the Nigerian history

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the eighth largest in the world with currently over one hundred and seventy million people (CIA, 2011) out of which fifty percent live in urban areas. Lagos is the most populated city in Nigeria and, despite being the city with the smallest geographic size, it is also one of the most populous cities in Africa. Current estimates show that the Nigerian population is one of the youngest in the world with just over sixty percent under the age of twenty-four. The country is categorised as a developing country because of its inferior economy in comparison to more advanced countries.

Since it became a postcolonial and independent state in 1960, Nigeria has mostly operated as an extractive economy. Before the departure of the British colonialists, the country's income had come from various sectors of the economy such as agriculture and mining. In the 1970s, however, a heavy dependence on crude oil practically eliminated all other sources of the country's revenue and crippled the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Alongside the endemic malaise of its non-oil sectors, the economy witnessed a massive growth of 'informal sector' economic activities in the 1980s, estimated by some to be as high as 75% of the total economy (USDoS, 2011). Recently, the country was listed as one of four countries expected to become one of the largest economies in the world (the others are Mexico, Turkey and Indonesia) (BBC, 2014).

From a sociocultural perspective, Nigeria is composed of more than 250 ethnic groups and therefore has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. Brian Larkin (2008) who conducted an ethnographic study of Nigerian film industries describes it as a 'vibrant, diverse and provocative nation [that is] continually experimenting and producing new forms of urban life, new sounds, sights and experiences that constitute the physical ambient for its citizens' (p.15).

Nigeria's history traces a similar path to that of other African countries. Cooper (2002) divides this history into three periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial. He

notes that the pre-colonial era consisted of independent kingdoms, empires, chiefdoms, village councils and kinship systems which prevailed for many centuries until about the mid-nineteenth century. Thereafter, the colonial era marked the subjugation of African people to the power of imperial forces. After gaining independence from colonial rulers (which for most African countries, took place between 1958 and 1963), the former colonies emerged as autonomous nation-states, with their own symbols of sovereignty and varying degrees of modernity. In this historical trajectory, colonialism in Africa thus served as the bridge between, on one hand, the centuries-old and deep-rooted traditionalism of the pre-colonial era and, on the other hand, the relative modernization of African nation-states. Beyond these broad historical outlines, there is a marked divergence in how the process of transitioning from traditional to modern was carried out by the colonialists in each African State (see Cooper, 2002). For Nigeria, as with other African countries, this process had important ramifications for the kind of society that emerged in the postcolonial era. In the next sections I examine this shift from colonial to postcolonial, beginning with the former.

3.2.1 The Colonial Context

Before its independence as a sovereign nation in 1960, Nigeria was a geographical entity made up of distinct cultural groups that existed autonomously. The gradual occupation and eventual takeover of the region by the British spanned over forty years. Spurred on by trading, missionary and political motivations (most notably, the so-called ‘Scramble for Africa’ of 1845), the colonizers established and extended their occupation of the geographic area by combining their political influence with military force whenever necessary. The process began with the annexation of the southern city of Lagos as a British colony in 1861 and was followed by the establishment of British Protectorates in the rest of the southern region. By 1903, through military conquests, the British had overcome all major opposition to their colonial expansion in the North. To facilitate the governance of these disparate regions, they amalgamated the northern and southern territories, including the Lagos colony, and marked out boundaries to demarcate the united region from neighboring colonies. This amalgamation which took place in 1914 designated the birth of the Nigerian nation.

As with most countries in Africa, Nigeria has been described as both beneficiary and victim of colonialism. On one hand, the country is considered a beneficiary because colonialism has been credited with the establishment of the political, administrative and economic structures that still exist and, in most cases, have served as the foundation for modernization in Nigeria. These developments existed in various forms. First, the colonialists can be said to have connected the country's economy with the rest of the world through the establishment of trade links between Nigeria and Europe. According to Falola and Heaton (2008), one of the main objectives of British colonial policy was to expand commercial activity in Nigeria through the exportation of raw materials (cash crops and minerals) and the importation of European goods. Second, the British colonialists are known to have initiated the development of modern methods of transport that facilitated internal market growth. Large-scale projects, such as railway lines between the northern city of Kano and the port city of Lagos in the South, were undertaken to facilitate the shipment of goods from Nigeria to Europe. The country's internal and navigable waterways as well as road networks were also expanded to allow for the transportation of people and local agricultural produce between regions and cities. Third, the colonialists have been credited with laying the foundations of modern technology, science, and industry (Kennedy, 1988). These included the telegraph, the telephone and electricity which were introduced in the late nineteenth century. Modern forms of administration and education were also initiated which led to a wider range of occupational experiences and to an increase in the level of professionalism in the workforce particularly with the introduction of wage labour in the early 1900s (Falola and Heaton, 2008; Kennedy, 1988). These colonial developments took place between 1900 and 1929 and soon after the end of the second world war in 1945.

On the other hand, some of the policies implemented by the colonialists during their years of control appeared to be less progressive and have been criticized by historians because of the adverse effects they have had on different facets of the socio-cultural and economic life of the country (see Bayart, 2010; Cooper, 2002; Falola and Heaton, 2012; Kennedy, 1988; Larkin, 2008). For example, focusing on the growth of

indigenous entrepreneurship in African economies, Kennedy (1988) noted that the preferential treatment allotted to European interest groups during the colonial era meant that local entrepreneurs were ‘largely confined to traditional activities of little economic relevance’ and to the ‘least profitable small-scale ventures at the bottom of the European-dominated trading hierarchy’ (p.10). Furthermore, the measures used to ensure the expansion of the colonial economy were often in disregard of the welfare of Nigerians. For example, the imposition of taxes was one of the means used to forcibly introduce a cash-based economy into the country. Forced labour was also common since Nigerian workers were initially unwilling to abandon their production of cash crops to earn wages by working for European construction, mining and shipping firms. However, with the pressure to earn cash in order to cater for their families and pay taxes, workers were compelled to engage themselves in some form of wage labour (Falola and Heaton, 2008). As I discuss later, the ensuing dependence on foreign-based wage labour, especially in periods of job scarcity, had implications on the growth of the informal economy in Nigeria.

Larkin (2008) also highlighted the impact of colonial policy on infrastructure in Nigeria. According to him, the introduction of modern technology in colonial Nigeria was a process that was both political and ideological because, among other things, it served to ‘emphasize the difference of African societies and their inability to be assimilated into modern society’ (p.24). Larkin argued that one of the colonialists’ aims in introducing technology in Nigeria was to induce feelings of awe in Nigerians for the technical capabilities of the colonizers. He referred to this colonial strategy as the ‘colonial sublime’ because of ‘the way technology was made to be an explicit part of the colonial political spectacle’ (p.10). Inevitably, this ‘sublime’ could not be sustained for very long and, according to Larkin, the consequences that ensued were unexpected: due to the inability of the colonialists to overcome technical defects as well as the scarcity of adequately trained local technicians, recurrent breakdown became the inevitable outcome for most infrastructure in the country. In subsequent sections, I discuss this in more detail and relate it with the current situation of poor electricity and internet supply in Nigeria. I also highlight its relevance to the entrepreneurial mindset of people, including the new media workers in my study.

Bayart (2010) highlighted another policy of the colonialists which contributed to what he referred to as the ‘production of ethnicity’ in Nigeria. Although Nigeria was made up of varied ethnic groups during the colonial era, Bayart noted that identities based on ethnic differentiation ‘did not exist a century ago or, at least, were not as clearly defined’ (p.51). According to him, the colonialists were instrumental in the reinforcement of ethnic identities and consciousness among people based on their location and practices. Notably, the system of indirect rule implemented by the British was specifically designed to separate the North from the South on the basis of culture, religion and ethnic group. This had the effect of strengthening inter-ethnic bonds while intensifying intra-ethnic rivalries and animosities. Thus, identification based on ethnicity has since been critical in shaping political and social life in Nigeria (a topic which I engage with further in the next section), particularly in multiethnic cities like Lagos. As I discuss in this thesis, ethnicity also played an important role in the social networking practices of the new media workers I studied.

Following this brief examination on some of the social and cultural effects of colonial rule in Nigeria’s history, I now move on to a discussion about how these effects developed further during the country’s postcolonial era.

3.2.2 A portrait of the Nigerian post-colony

Since the early years after independence from British rule in 1960, the Nigerian post-colony has endured a situation in which the ‘implications of colonialism have had disadvantages that far outweigh its heralded advantages’ (Ekeh, 1975, p.99). Political instability which, in most part, was the result of the ethnic divisions that (as highlighted above) surfaced and intensified under colonial rule, had the effect of crippling economic and societal progress. According to Falola and Heaton (2008), national cohesion was a challenge because the lives of Nigerians focused not on their designation as ‘Nigerians’ but centered primarily on their local communities ‘that had existed for hundreds and thousands of years’ (p.158). Since political power had been distributed according to the major ethnic regions by the colonialists, the contest for

power at the federal level became very ethnically-charged after independence. The mutual fear of domination of one ethnic group by another led to political confrontations which boiled over and eventually led to the intervention and subsequent takeover by the military. The persistence of the ethnic wrangling for power (also within the military) eventually degenerated into a civil war in 1967 and ushered in almost three decades of militarism, the absence of democracy, and the mismanagement of the country's economy.

The end of the civil war in 1970 opened up a new phase in the postcolonial era. This phase was characterized by the country's sudden wealth, which had come about as a result of a global rise in the value of crude oil (which was first discovered in 1958). According to Apter (2005), this change of fortune presented Nigeria with 'unprecedented prosperity' (p.22) which was evident in 'the clutter and cacophony of new construction [that] intensified as sports stadiums, national monuments, bridges, highways, and palatial hotels modernized the nation' (p.22). According to him, Nigeria's oil boom was a 'spectacle to behold' and the mood in the country was one of 'dizzy excitement' at the new wealth and opportunity. Apter notes that even though Nigerians may have been divided by region and ethnicity, they had become dramatically united by the 'blessings of oil, which circulated, like blood, through the national body' (p.23).

Unfortunately, in the euphoria of the oil boom, a heavy dependence on crude oil impoverished all other sources of income. Although most of the country's wealth had previously been derived from agriculture and mining, the expansion of the petroleum industry led to the gradual collapse of non-oil sectors, transforming the country into a 'centralized, bureaucratic petro-state' (Watts, 1992, p.36). The oil glut also transformed Nigeria into a 'rentier state' in which revenue was derived not from domestic labour or local production but from royalties or 'rents' derived from multinational petroleum corporations such as Shell, BP and Agip (Apter, 2005; Falola and Heaton, 2008). Furthermore, as Falola and Heaton (2008) note, the oil wealth, rather than contributing to the country's economic progress and improving the living condition of Nigerians, was unevenly distributed and squandered, benefitting only

those people who had access to state power through the acquisition of licenses, contracts and government revenues. As Tive (2006) summarizes:

In the 1970s, Nigeria experienced an oil boom; there was need for the revenue generated from this boom to be harnessed for effective economic development. Unfortunately, the revenue generated from the sale of crude oil during this period was probably thrown into “the bottomless pit.” Nigerian leaders developed an aphorism called “sharing the national cake.” Revenue accruing from the oil sector was diverted to private bank accounts overseas, leaving the nation with no basic infrastructure or anachronistic ones. (p.17)

The eventual collapse of oil prices (which occurred in the 1980s) was followed by a period of economic crisis in the country. During this time, the Nigerian government (as with many governments in Africa) was pressured by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to initiate a structural adjustment programme to curb the excesses of the state. One of the aims of this programme was to decentralize and liberalize the economy by introducing free-market policies and ‘to remove impediments caused by state interference in market operations’ (Jenkins, 2004, p.213). According to Falola and Heaton (2008), this situation had further negative impacts on the country’s economy which affected different strata of society. For example, the civil service as well as public schools and universities were neglected due to the scarcity of funds. In addition, many workers lost their jobs because private sector firms could not afford to retain them. Consequently, rising joblessness gave rise to growing rates of urban crime, most noticeably in the southern cities such as Lagos where the population was largest as a result of the migration of people from other regions in search of employment opportunities. As Apter (2005) notes, during this period which lasted through the 1990s, ‘a crisis of representation and social credibility eroded the very foundations of civil society, giving rise to the era of 419⁴ and its arts of

⁴ ‘419’ is the term used to describe the culture of deception which had developed in the early 1990s which was used by conmen and confidence tricksters to defraud another of his/her goods. The number ‘419’ is derived from the country’s penal code outlawing the impersonification of officials for personal gain.

dissimulation' (p.16). The period also recorded a massive growth of the informal economy, characterized by self-employed, semi-skilled labour or manual labour such as small-scale trading, plumbing, hairdressing and other income generating activities that sometimes take place outside the usual regulatory framework of the state (Castells and Portes, 1989). The eventual return to democracy in 1999 was a respite to economic and cultural life in Nigeria partly because it put an end of military rule and brought about relative political stability. Nevertheless, the country remained largely underdeveloped and the challenges of ethnic divisions, infrastructure, unemployment and corruption continued to exist.

It is within this context that new media workers operate. Like other Nigerians, their everyday work is characterized by the need to negotiate the external conditions of economic, social and cultural life in the country. As discussed in the previous chapter, these external conditions which are endemic to the Nigerian context determine the specific ways by which new media work is practiced there. For example, the practice of networking among new media workers is closely related to their ethnic affiliations because ethnicity is an important element of the Nigerian context. Similarly, entrepreneurial practices among new media workers in Nigeria are influenced by the nature of infrastructural problems prevalent in Nigeria. This, in turn, produces various manifestations of precariousness in the Nigerian context (such as software piracy) which are not experienced in the same way in the developed world. In the next sections, I discuss these specificities of the Nigerian context in more detail. While the empirical chapters of the thesis (which follow this one) engage with the experiences of new media workers in the Nigerian context, the rest of this chapter is devoted to discussing specific aspects of this context in which those experiences take place. To do this, it is divided into four sections: work and employment; technology and infrastructure; piracy and legislation; and finally, ethnicity and networks. These aspects of the Nigerian context provide contextual depth to the themes around which my discussion of my empirical data is organised, namely, precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking.

3.3 Work, employment and the informal economy in Nigeria

There have been various definitions of the informal economy (such as by Castells and Portes, 1989; Hart, 2006; Roberts, 1989, 1994; Sassen-Koob, 1989). Roberts (1989), for example, proposed that the distinction between the formal and informal sectors is that the latter refers often, but not exclusively, to activities ‘carried out in small firms or by the self-employed, which elude government requirements such as registration, tax and social security obligations, and health and safety rules’ as well as activities that are conducted outside regulatory standards regarding minimum wages. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the informal sector can be described as those activities with the following characteristics: small scale of operation; family ownership; reliance on indigenous resources; labour intensive activity, technology adapted to local conditions; skills acquired outside the formal school system; ease of entry into the activity; and operation in unregulated, competitive markets (ILO, 1972).

This description of the informal economy is useful to my study because it is the context within which many of the workers in my research operate. This was made clear from the characteristics they exhibited which, as I show in this section, are typical of the conditions of work enumerated above. In Nigeria, many of these conditions have their origins in the events of the country’s history described in the previous section. As mentioned then, Nigeria’s ‘oil boom’ of the 1970s was followed by an ‘oil bust’ during the 1980s along with attempts at economic restructuring which impacted negatively on the country. According to Kennedy (1988), the scarcity of employment opportunities during this period of economic crisis meant that entrepreneurialism and self-employment became common. Kennedy noted that three broad groups of entrepreneurs emerged. First, there were those who relied almost solely on obtaining government contracts by setting up large businesses or affiliating themselves with foreign companies. This set of people were usually those with privileged positions among the political establishment, technocrats educated overseas and with commensurate experience or people with the financial wherewithal needed to compete for the large contracts. These made up the formal sector. The second group comprised of a large section of the population involved in small scale businesses as

local proprietors. These were simply-organized firms which were enumerated in government statistics. They employed a relatively low number of paid workers as apprentices which often included their kin members. It was not unusual for workers in full-time employment elsewhere to own and manage such firms on a part-time basis. Kennedy (1988) noted that this group operated in a wide range of business sectors such as vehicle repairs, small-scale building contracting, bars, hotels and restaurants in poor areas, food stores, professional services (like plumbing and electrical works), retail distribution and many others. Finally, a third group existed which, unlike the previous groups, were not captured by official labour statistics partly because they were engaged in activities (such as traditional crafts and petty trade) which were so minute that they were rendered virtually invisible. This group is made up of individuals who are usually not engaged in formal employment because of a lack of qualification (in terms of education or skills) or the scarcity of work opportunities.

In more recent studies, various writers have confirmed the persistence and growth of the informal economy in Nigeria (Gandy, 2005; Lobato, 2010; Nwaka, 2005; Onyebueke and Geyer, 2011; Revell, 2010). For example, writing specifically about Lagos, Gandy (2005) noted that the informal economy which is ‘the result of a specific set of policies pursued by Nigeria’s military dictatorships over the last decades under IMF and World Bank guidance [that] decimated the metropolitan economy’ (p.42) is made up of ‘mini (or even major) entrepreneurs and traders’ some of whom are ‘retrenched white-collar workers [...] absorbed into the informal economy, working in waste recycling, transport, security services, artisanal production and trade’ (p.47).

Along with economic challenges, the growth of Lagos’ informal economy has been exacerbated by rapid urbanization because it has historically been the destination for migrants from different parts of the country. The exponential expansion in the population in Lagos which began in the colonial era⁵ led to the rapid growth of the informal sector within it. As such, approximately 70% of Lagos inhabitants have been

⁵ Statistics report that Lagos has grown from 267,407 in 1953 to 10.6 million in 2010 and estimates suggest that this figure will rise to 15.8 million by 2025 (UN Habitat, 2008; Revell, 2010).

identified as belonging to this sector (World Bank, 2006). This population includes those who are underemployed or not in regular salaried employment such as ‘small traders, black markets, recycling, and all the numerous forms of urban survival which emerge as radical restructuring of the organizational forms of economic activity’ (Okwui et al., 2003, p.8). In his study of the informal sector in Mexico, Roberts (1989) argued that among the advantages of informality for generating employment was the fact that, ‘it was easy to become a small-scale entrepreneur, requiring no more than space in a house and a small amount of capital in tools, materials, or articles for sale’ (p.41). This description captures the situation in Lagos where, according to Gandy (2005, p.46), people in the informal sector ‘depend upon barter and improvisation’ and cooperate to build micro-trading networks, resources or work spaces.

One of the characteristics of informal economies across Africa is the development of clusters (Meagher, 2006, 2010; Daniels, 2012; Zeng, 2009). For example, Zeng (2009) highlighted the widespread presence of skilled workers in computer-based clusters in the informal sector of Lagos. Citing the example of ‘Otigba Computer Village’ (OCV) where the specialized ‘repair, sales, and even production of electronics’ takes place, he noted that, ‘in addition to unskilled traders, between 55 and 60 percent of workers there are university graduates with training in electrical engineering. (Zeng, 2009, in Daniels, 2012, p.24). Like the Nigerian film industry referred to earlier, the OCV cluster is a phenomenon that developed and operates on the basis of informal structures. In a research study, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (2006, p.26) noted that the cluster benefited in the early nineties from ‘the unprecedented growth in IT usage in Nigeria’ along with the high rate of unemployment among university graduates who ‘were determined to make the most of the opportunities of an increasingly growing IT business.’ According to him, enterprises in the cluster ‘often start as a small family-based business with funds from own savings or from friends and relatives [while] some operate as street vendors until they accumulated sufficient funds to rent shop space.’ This was also typical of the operations of some of the new media businesses in my own research whereby some workers took advantage of family and kinship ties to acquire new projects and contracts.

Beyond trade and services, informal economy activities are also a feature of the creative industries – the most notable in Nigeria being film production (Larkin, 2008; Lobato, 2010). An illustration of this provided in Lobato's (2010) study of distribution in the Nigerian film industry:

Its industrial organization has been shaped by small-scale entrepreneurial distributors formerly occupied with bootlegs and electronics equipment; content, rather than being king, has always been more of an add-on to an existing trade in electronics hardware and black-market media. There has been little concentration or consolidation of ownership in these networks, which are labyrinthine in their informality yet highly efficient in their distributive capacity. The industry is structured in such a way that large numbers of films can circulate without the same capacity constraints that plague theatrical releasing (p.17).

In the text above, some of the characteristics of the informal economy can be identified: small-scale operation; adaptation of technology; and low barrier of entry as a result of which films can be distributed 'without the same capacity constraints' as established industry methods. Apart from the film industry, the new media sector also exhibits some of these features. For example, I found in my research that the industry is mostly made up of small firms with few workers and small-scale operations. Also, many of those who took part in my study were self-taught or acquired their skills outside formal education. This contributed to the relatively low entry barrier associated with new media work as was related to me by my research participants.

In my empirical chapters, I provide detailed evidence and specific accounts of how the characteristics of the informal economy are manifested in the practices of new media workers. In the next section, I discuss some of the issues that shape these practices but, first, I point out how the analysis of the informal economy draws attention to broader features of the Nigerian context which apply not only to new media work but to a wider cross-section of the labour in Nigeria. In a useful commentary about the informal economy, Karin Barber (1987) describes it in the following terms:

The formal sector [...] is surrounded by a sea of small operators: petty traders, middlemen, brokers, artisans, and providers of all kinds of services whose operations are not bureaucratically rational and revolve around personal rather than purely financial relationships. The people in the informal sector hope that by *skillful manipulation of contacts* and opportunities they may be able to construct a personal career for themselves out of a diversity of enterprises which will allow them to rise above the mass of their struggling competitors. The informal sector is swamped by an excess of *would-be entrepreneurs* all competing to get a foothold in a fluid and *precarious economy* (p.30) [italics mine]

The above description gives support to the framework with which I am approaching my study of new media work in the Nigerian cultural context. Three key features of the informal economy in Nigeria can be drawn out from it: the recourse to social networks (that is, the ‘manipulation of contacts’), an entrepreneurial mindset (of ‘would-be entrepreneurs’), and the pervasiveness of precariousness. These features fairly accurately capture the broader cultural context in which the new media workers in my research operated. Put differently, the recourse to social networking, the spirit of entrepreneurialism and the precariousness experienced in Nigeria can be said to constitute the ‘way of life’ of those I researched. There is therefore a direct correlation between these features of the Nigerian cultural context and those ‘extrinsic’ features of new media work that emerge from literature as I discussed in Chapter 2. While the former refer to broader characteristics of labour in the Nigerian context, the latter are used to describe as features of new media work – a specific occupational field – in Western contexts. In my view, this points to an important distinction between Western contexts and those of countries like Nigeria: in contrast to Western societies which have a history of stable and formalized employment, those of less developed economies are characterized by the ‘long tradition’ of informal labour conditions in less developed countries (Beck, 2000). As I argued in Chapter 1, this has led to a situation in which the informalized conditions of less developed contexts have become ingrained in their culture. Thus, precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social

networking can be described as endemic to the Nigerian cultural context. Although these features have been identified as recent phenomena in many countries of the Global North, they already constitute a 'way of life' in countries like Nigeria in the Global South.

From this perspective, a study of the experiences of new media work in Nigeria using the same themes as the available literature would be inadequate. Rather, within the broad characterization of the Nigerian cultural context (precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking), I have identified features which apply specifically to new media work. These include: the prevalence of infrastructural breakdown; the practice of software piracy and; the salience of ethnic differentiation. I discuss each of these in the next sections.

3.4 The rise and fall of infrastructure in Nigeria

According to Simone (2012), infrastructural and technological networks constitute the building blocks of modernity in urban life. They are the essence of modernization and play an important role in the flow of urbanity by means of what Graham and Marvin (2001) have described as a series of ‘socio-technical processes’ – to represent the combination of the social structures they enable and the technical functions they exhibit. In the social sphere, the infrastructural technologies of transport, telecommunications, energy and water facilitate the economic exchange of goods and services as well as of cultures and religions (Larkin, 2008). Technologies also connect urban places to wider regional or national networks, not only in a physical sense but also a relational sense because, through them, people, organisations and institutions can extend their influence in time and space beyond the ‘here’ and ‘now’ – such as when visiting websites or making long-distance phone calls (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.17). Nevertheless, Simone (2012, n.p) argues that, ‘while infrastructure attempts to nurture, articulate, or circumvent, its proficiency of engineering, substance of investment or institutional support does not guarantee that it will accomplish what it sets out to do.’ According to Simone, infrastructure always carries with it the threat of collapse which can lead to a radical reconfiguration of the urban space. In this section, I discuss how the inadequacies of technology and infrastructure which are an important feature of the Nigerian context and therefore a key consideration for my research on the conditions of new media work. In this discussion, I trace the historical roots of infrastructural breakdown in Nigeria and then examine how the present condition potentially affects the practice of new media work.

There are two periods in Nigeria’s history to which the onset of infrastructural breakdown can be traced. As I referred to earlier, one of them is recorded by Larkin (2008) who explained how the British colonial rulers used technology as an instrument for establishing superiority over their colonized subjects. Larkin argued that the installation of technologies by the British was carried out partly as a means to represent the technical mastery and, therefore supremacy, of the colonialists. According to him,

The erection of factories; the construction of bridges, railways and lighting systems; indeed the terrifying ability to remake landscapes and force the natural world to conform to these technological projects by leveling mountains, flooding villages, and remaking cities; these were the ways in which the sublime was produced as a necessary spectacle of colonial rule.

Larkin argued that, outside their existence as conceptual objects, infrastructural technologies are also physical objects which ‘get taken up and used in everyday life [...] generating intended and unintended outcomes [...] outside their sponsors’ control’ (p.3). Some of these outcomes include their potency for deterioration and eventual breakdown and, consequently, a need for regular servicing and repair. This unexpected outcome posed a significant challenge to the ideological intentions of the colonialists and, more importantly, to the long-term durability of the technologies they had installed.

According to Larkin, when technical problems started to emerge in the infrastructure for radio, electricity and water supply, the technologies began to assume states of banality: their imperfections gradually wiped away the feelings of awe that they once inspired in people⁶. Furthermore, as Larkin argues, because of their short-term role, colonial policies were unable to ensure that the technologies were constantly renewed when required. Essentially, the exploitative mission of colonial rule meant that there was little motivation for investing in the long-term development of Nigeria (Falola and Heaton, 2008). When the clamour for independence rose (especially after the second world war), the colonialists were pressured and hurried into promulgating policies that promoted self-governance in Nigeria. By this time, the material and technical qualities of infrastructure had already been exposed to the various possibilities of their physical life (such as deterioration, theft and vandalization) and, with insufficient attention

⁶ In his account of the construction of a railway like in Northern Nigeria between 1907 and 1911, Larkin (2008, p.37–38) provides evidence of how such technological installations inspired feelings of awe.

given to their repair, the infrastructural challenges that arose grew ‘in excess of the colonial ability to fix order’ (Larkin, 2008, p.249). The infrastructural technologies therefore underwent gradual deterioration and eventual decay, a process which continued after the colonial rulers had departed.

A second period in Nigeria’s history that led to the prevalence of infrastructural collapse occurred in the post-colonial period when, as Andrew Apter (2005) discusses, technology was employed to reinforce the reality of independent rule and to demonstrate modernity. In the 1970s, almost as a reenactment of Larkin’s ‘colonial sublime,’ Nigerians yet again experienced a situation in which the installation of urban infrastructure served as a symbol for modernization. However, Apter (2005) argues that although the infrastructural rhetoric of this era – like its colonial forbears – invoked themes related to progress and modernity, it went further by rejecting the ‘opposition between civilization and barbarism that had sustained colonial overrule’ (p.5). The context in which the rapid infrastructural and technological development of Nigeria took place in the post-colonial period was one of economic prosperity as a result of the global surge in oil prices that occurred soon after the country’s civil war (from 1967 to 1970). In his study of the transformation of the country during those years of ‘oil boom,’ Apter describes the setting:

After nearly four years of armed struggle, infrastructural deterioration, and imminent fragmentation [...], Nigeria’s deposits of high quality crude – combined with a fourfold leap in world market price – was received as a blessing from Providence. [...] As petroleum resources poured in, an ambitious national development plan invested in parastatal industries, education, hospitals, and mass media [as well as] an ever expanding public sector bringing in schools, clinics, piped water, and electricity. (p.22)

As discussed earlier, the instant prosperity from crude oil transformed Nigeria into a rentier state since most of the wealth was obtained from rents and royalties paid by the oil companies operating in the country. Nigerians once again witnessed a flurry of infrastructural development – not one that was promoted by the external forces of

colonization, but from the independent State and whose aim, according to Apter, was to eliminate memories of colonial servitude while showcasing the emergence of a distinctive post-colonial modernity. Apter's research on these years of Nigeria's oil boom highlights the symbolic and elaborate display of wealth and modernity through the country's hosting of the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977. He argues that the extravagance of that event, along with the erection and resuscitation of infrastructure in Lagos and other major urban locations, was to be found in the 'tangible signs of progress and abundance [which] ratified the new prosperity with visible evidence, producing a national dramaturgy of appearances and representations that beckoned toward modernity and brought it into being' (p.41).

However, behind the façade of instant development were the contradictions of a rentier economy: the accumulation of wealth through external 'rent' collection rather than internal production. According to Falola and Heaton (2008, p.184), this created 'a marked division between those who had access to rents and those who did not' and contributed to a system in which nepotism, ethnic sectionalism, patron-client networks and parochialism became very rampant. Although the oil windfall left in its wake infrastructural technologies that gave the promise of a true African modernity, the mismanagement of the oil wealth meant that, during the economic turmoil that followed in the 1980s, amenities such as electricity grids, water pipes and public buildings underwent gradual dilapidation due to lack of maintenance, technical inefficiency or non-completion (Apter, 2005; Larkin, 2008; Watts, 1992). Lamenting the effects of this condition on urban life, Larkin (2008), notes:

For most of its history, Nigeria has persevered with poor infrastructural conditions which have tended toward collapse. This collapse structures the rhythms, practices, and shape of everyday urban life. In Nigeria, most people use their bath not for bathing but for storing water, knowing that service will be discontinued for hours and sometimes days at a time. [...] Mobile phones are for communication but are also flipped open to give light when blackout occurs and one is waiting for a generator to start. [...] Objects break down, power plants fail, water supply dries up, radio broadcasts are sometimes too weak to

be heard, bad phone lines render voices intelligible, and connections fail.
(p.246)

As the quote above indicates, technological breakdown in Nigeria has assumed a status of banality in Nigeria. It is endemic to urban life especially in cities like Lagos which has traditionally been the city endowed with the most number of infrastructural installations in the country⁷. Individuals and enterprises that operate in Lagos are therefore accustomed to this condition and regularly employ alternatives to alleviate the absence or inadequacy of public amenities. In a survey carried out in 2001, it was found that, on the average, firms had access to mains electricity for 2.78 days a week. The common response to unreliable electricity was therefore to invest in private generator which solved the supply problem, but involved additional costs for fuel and maintenance of the equipment. Furthermore, the survey reported that 69% of those firms had at least one telephone which worked for only about half the time. To overcome the inconvenience of unreliable telephone service, the firms began adopting mobile telephones (Soderbom and Teal, 2002).

More than ten years later, my own research on work in the Nigerian new media sector indicates that these conditions still exist. New media workers endure the same conditions with more recent technologies like the internet. When the internet emerged in the mid-nineties, it was almost exclusively limited to people living in urban areas (Smith, 2006). Moreover, it relied on landline telephone services which were either too expensive or too unreliable. Consequently, access to the internet through cyber-café's became the common practice among people. These cyber-café's operated by subscribing to the few internet service providers (ISPs) and, relying on economies of scale, offered affordable access to individuals. Eventually, in a bid to increase profits, the ISPs began offering internet services directly to individuals, homes and small businesses by means of portable modems and dongles which relied on wireless radio

⁷ Falola and Heaton (2008: p.116) note that as early as 1898 Lagos already had 'a Public Works Department charged with the maintenance of public buildings and roads and the extension of electric lighting, telegraphs, piers and public transport, among other things.'

technology instead of telephone networks. However, a combination of limited bandwidth, poor and unreliable infrastructure and the rapid growth of the internet subscriber base ensured that the ISPs were unable to meet the high demand for internet access. At the time of my research, internet services were still substandard and highly erratic for internet users in Nigeria.

With the inadequacy of basic amenities like electricity and internet which are a given in many other countries, new media workers (at least those in my research) have imbibed daily practices that are the result of trying to overcome the deficiencies of technology and infrastructure. For example, the offices they rented, the hours they worked or the contractual arrangements they made were often dependent on their access to infrastructure such as electricity or technologies such as the internet. As I discuss at length in Chapter 5, the specific characteristics of new media work presented some of my respondents with some hope for survival under these contextual conditions. In the next section, I discuss another feature of the Nigerian context: software piracy.

3.5 The roots of software piracy in Nigeria

Crawford (2009) describes the practice of piracy in Nigeria as the result of people's attempt 'to gain autonomy through microcosmic controls of the economy against a trajectory of outside influence dating back to colonialism' (p.6). In his view, these 'outside' forces included the dominating control of the British colonialists and the external influence of the IMF and the World Bank through structural adjustment programs introduced in the country in the 1980s. Although they were aimed at reducing the role of the state, deregulating the market, allowing for the freer flow of capital globally, and generating economic well-being, the policies had adverse effects on the economy and 'swelled the ranks of the informal sector beyond its absorptive capacity' (Nwaka, 2005, p.4). The outcome of this situation was the development of 'micro-political forms of knowledge that were based in local resourcefulness' to deal with the privations of what Crawford (2009) referred to as the 'Nigerian repair economy' (p.9). For Crawford, 'the practice of technological reproduction' was at the heart of this economy (p.10) and piracy, the illegal reproduction of digital media, was its by-product.

According to Coleman (2010), digital piracy 'interferes with the smooth functioning of capitalist and liberal-legal imperatives' (p.495). In Nigeria, it was also the reaction or response to the inhibitions that arise in the face of capitalist influences particularly in developing contexts. An example of this occurred when the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) enforced a trade bloc against Nigeria in response to a seizure of MPAA assets by the Nigerian government in its attempt to nationalize the local film industry (Crawford, 2009). As a result, piracy began to thrive and, along with it, industries like Nollywood emerged (Larkin, 2008). As various scholars have noted, Nollywood arose out of the infrastructure created by media piracy (Larkin, 2008; Liang, 2009). In his study on the impact of media piracy on Nigeria's film industry, Larkin (2008) argued:

Piracy has made available to Nigerians a vast array of world media at a speed they could never imagine, hooking them up to the accelerated circuit of global media flows. Where cinema screens were once filled with outdated films from the United States or India, pirate media means that Nigerian audiences can

watch films contemporaneously with audiences in New York or Bombay. Instead of being marginalized by official distribution networks, Nigerian consumers can now participate in the immediacy of an international consumer culture—but only through the mediating capacity of piracy. (p.224)

The growing culture of piracy in Nigeria also contributed significantly to the phenomenal rise of the video film industry (Larkin, 2008; Lobato, 2010; Ugor, 2009). Larkin notes that the film industry was built by employing the same informal organizational and distribution networks as those used for pirating media. Therefore, while forces of capitalism and globalization contributed to the economic impoverishment of many Nigerians and restricted their access to global culture and information, piracy served as a means to open up new channels of access and, in the process, create new avenues for the distribution of local content. However, Nigeria's film industry is not the only sector to have benefitted from piracy. The new media industry can also be said to have developed as a result of this widespread culture of copyright infringement. Piracy has arguably empowered new media workers in Nigeria by providing them with access to the software needed for their labour.

The 'corruption of infrastructure' in Nigeria as a catalyst of media piracy has been analyzed in depth by Brian Larkin (2004, 2005, 2008). According to him, much work on the transformative effects of technologies assume the smooth functioning of the systems on which they are built without 'acknowledging the reality of infrastructural connections that are frequently messy' (Larkin, 2008, p.220). Larkin argues that a recognition that infrastructural breakdown forms part of the everyday life helps to shed light on phenomena like media piracy which emerge under those circumstances. According to him,

If infrastructures represent attempts to order, regulate, and rationalize society, then breakdowns in their operation, or the rise of provisional and informal infrastructures, highlight the failure of that ordering and the recoding that takes its place. (Larkin, 2004, p.289)

Among the various ways by which infrastructure can undergo 'recoding' is through the pirating of media forms such as film and software. To explain how this occurs, it will be useful to draw attention to the informal practices of everyday life in Nigeria. As mentioned above, people in Nigeria resort to alternative uses for malfunctioning systems or fall back on substitutes to the failing infrastructures: the use of candles, lamps or battery-powered torches to mitigate the discomforts that arise from the regular absence of electricity; or the local storage of water – gathered from the heavy rainfall – in large basins, are regular practices in urban areas. These everyday practices have evolved not just from the collapse of infrastructure but also from the collapse of the idea that state-sponsored infrastructure are designed for the universal public good. For this reason, these practices have grown up in the informal and private domain, away from the regulation of the state, and with a greater assurance that people's own systems (albeit improvised) will serve their purposes. Nevertheless, these practices are typically carried out at a personal cost to those who resort to them. As Larkin notes:

Access to private roads, satellite television, the Internet, and electricity is regulated not by the state but by how much individual consumers (as opposed to citizens) can pay for generators, bribes for preferential service, black market gasoline, and a range of goods that were once expected to be freely (or cheaply) available in the public domain. (p.246)

One important feature of infrastructures provided by the state is that they normally serve as the framework on top of which other technologies are constructed in the urban space. Electricity, for example, is the underlying layer that supports the various systems which are connected to form urban life: lighting, heating, cooling and so on. These separate systems are often provided, not by the government, but by private entities. However, when the basic infrastructure fails, all the systems which depend on it also collapse. When this occurs frequently, as is the case in Nigeria, the common mode of operation is to depend on alternatives which, with increasing regularity, tend to fall outside the boundaries of what is legal. This explains the dubious practices of obtaining 'bribes for preferential services' or gasoline from the 'black market' referred to in the quote above. From this perspective, activities classified as software piracy can

be understood as little more than an alternative means for obtaining licensed software. Software piracy is not the direct consequence of infrastructural breakdown. Rather, in Nigeria, it can be said to be the outcome of a culture of ‘recoding’ and of seeking alternatives to the impediments of everyday life which, in this case, refers to the prohibitive cost of original software. Just as Nigerians turn on their generators when electricity fails or they purchase petrol from the black market during periods of fuel shortages, pirated software are copied from one disk to another or bought and sold at open markets because they are too expensive to afford in their original, legal form. Although software are not essential commodities for everyone as are electricity and fuel, they are crucial for new media workers and, what is more, the spread of software piracy is arguably more extensive than the illegal activities around those other goods.

There are at least two reasons why software piracy has spread unabated in Nigeria: first, the digital nature of software means that they can very easily be reproduced even at no cost; second, the laws guiding copyright and issues related to intellectual property such as piracy have historically been weakly enforced in developing countries like Nigeria (see Mizukami et al., 2011; Sezneva and Karaganis, 2011). Indeed, it is arguably the case that when computers became widely used in Nigeria in the early nineties, these laws were absent and therefore most computer users were unaware that, from a global standpoint, copying and distributing unlicensed software were illegal practices. A combination of these two factors – the digital nature of software and the traditionally weak laws against copyright in Nigeria – contributed to the proliferation of pirated software and the pirating of software. Reports by the Business Software Alliance show that in 2010, the rate of software piracy in Nigeria stood at 81% and in 2011, 82% of software used in the country were pirated. To put this in better context, a 32-country survey in 2010 placed Nigeria second behind China in terms of software piracy (BSA, 2010). Arguably, software piracy has also contributed to the spread of ICT knowledge in the country and to the growth of the new media industry which depends on the use of computer software.

Although pirated software can be found in many parts of Nigeria, they are found most commonly at the ‘Otigba Computer Village’ (OCV) – which I introduced earlier as an

example of informal economy activities. The OCV cluster is located in a densely populated area of Lagos and is arguably the most popular source of affordable, accessible and illegal software. The cluster began as a small gathering of retailers who dealt in computer parts but, over time, ‘grew to become a beehive of computer hardware, and software trade and production’ (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006, p.15). This ‘software trade’ eventually transformed into the commercial exchange of pirated goods conducted mainly through informal transactions with non-registered and freelance retailers. According to Zeng (2009), there are over 40,000 employees in 5,000 enterprises that operate the cluster and, although not all of them businesses participate in the production or sale of pirated software, the sale of pirated products has been a regular feature of the marketplace.

As I discuss later, the enforcement of laws against software piracy has increased as a result of lobbying from software organizations like Microsoft and Adobe. Zeng (2009) notes that the OCV cluster became so popular that the Nigerian government began to apply regulations to the businesses in relation to intellectual property and consumer protection. Also, further efforts by the Nigerian government and other organizations to curb the practice of piracy moved beyond the retailers at the OCV cluster to individual users. In spite of this however, software piracy in the country is still prevalent: my own research suggests that pirated software is still common amongst new media workers in Lagos. In Chapter 5 which deals with the precarious consequences of software piracy, I draw on my research data to discuss specific experiences of new media workers in their practice of piracy. In the next section, I move on to the topic of ethnicity which is the final theme in my discussion about the Nigerian context.

3.6 The salience of ethnic identities in Nigeria

The term 'ethnicity' is one that regularly surfaces among African sociologists and anthropologists (Southall, 1970; Lentz, 1995) and in many other fields concerned with social and cultural life. It is frequently alternated with the terms 'ethnic group' and 'ethnic identity.' Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) explain that the combination of 'ethnic' with 'group' implies that, 'members have some awareness of group membership and a common origin and culture, or that others think of them as having these attributes' (p.112). They define ethnicity as the social structures through which members of an ethnic group are attached to one another and to how such structures are used by members of the group or by others. Similarly, based on a definition of ethnic identity as 'that aspect of a person's self-conceptualization which results from identification with a broader group in opposition to others on the basis of perceived cultural differentiation and/or common descent' (Jones, 1997 p.xiii), ethnicity has also been defined elsewhere as 'the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation' (Osaghae, 1995, p.11). Both these definitions converge in the understanding that ethnicity is exercised when it is consciously employed by the social actors involved (Ukiwo, 2005). This implies that ethnicity is defined not merely by the awareness of ethnic similarities among members of an ethnic group nor by the recognition of ethnic difference between a person or group and another but, more significantly, by how these similarities and differences are put to use and mobilized.

The importance of ethnicity in the Nigerian context has been well documented (for example by Lewis et al., 2002; Mohammed, 2005; Okolie, 2009; Osaghae and Suberu, 2005; Ukiwo, 2005). The historical sketches outlined in a previous section reveals that ethnicity has played an important role in shaping events in Nigeria from the pre-colonial origins of its diverse peoples to its status as a postcolonial state. In anthropology, ethnicity in countries like Nigeria has being studied in four traditions: essentialism, instrumentalism, constructivism and institutionalism (Varshney, 2002) The essentialist school of thought bases its analysis of ethnicity on the pre-existence of primitive societies. According to this tradition, these societies existed before the

arrival of the colonial rulers into Nigeria in the mid-nineteenth century and the British colonial rulers acted as ‘civilizers’ for their primitive cultures. Scholars of a ‘constructivist tradition’, on the other hand, focus on the colonial period of Nigeria’s history. In their work, they underline the effort of the colonialists to amplify and reinforce the ethnic differences in Nigerian people in order to simplify for themselves the task of subjugating and governing them. By means of political persuasion or forceful intervention, they accomplished this through indirect rule, tribal categorizations and the promotion of separate settlements between natives and settlers of urban areas (Ukiwo, 2005). Theorists who analyze the instrumental role of ethnicity in the country’s postcolonial era emphasize the role played by ‘state managers’ who, in competition over power, economic resources, and prestige, engage in processes of promoting ethnic and regional identities by taking advantage of the values and beliefs held by particular groups about themselves and others (Okolie, 2003). Other commentators of the institutionalist tradition go further by focussing on how such actions have been institutionalized through national or regional policy with the effect of increasing ethnic identity and mobilisation at the political level. Throughout its brief history therefore, ethnic differentiation has been an important fabric of cultural, social and political life in Nigeria evidenced by the depth and pervasiveness of ethnic awareness in most parts of the country (Apter, 2005; Falola and Heaton, 2008; Osaghae, 1995).

Depending on the defining characteristics employed, the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria ranges from 250 to 619 (Okolie, 2003; Mohammed, 2005). Historically, the largest and most dominant of these groups have been the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. These ethnic groups are differentiated by language, culture, religion, history, ancestry and geographical settlement. The Igbos are found in the southeastern region of the country, the Yorubas in the Southwest and the Hausa-Fulani in the North. Within these regions, there are other minority ethnic groups, which are differentiated from the major ethnic group also by language (or dialect), customs and ancestry. Although identified by their particular locales, many of these ethnic groups have not been geographically static. In the pre-colonial era, the desire for new commodity

trading outlets impelled indigenes to migrate between the northern and southern regions within the boundaries of what is now Nigeria (Kennedy, 1988).

Subsequently, colonialism brought about rapid urbanisation as a result of the developmental projects carried out by the colonial government in the 1930s. The search for wage labour (which was believed to be widely available in the cities) meant that there was a mass movement of people away from the rural areas where activities were essentially based on subsistence agriculture. The labour demands of the growing export economy (Falola and Heaton, 2008) led to a high influx of migrant male workers which in turn contributed to the massive relocation of people to the cities in order to cater for the needs of the industry workers (Whiteman, 2012). For this reason, urban regions such as Lagos grew in population and increasingly became the permanent abode for people of different ethnic orientations. Indeed, as a result of this, the population of Lagos now far exceeds most of the other states in the country (Census, 2006). Kaye Whiteman (2012) notes that because of the influx of people with different ethnic orientations, Lagos gradually evolved into ‘a microcosm of the whole country.’

One of the effects of the agglomeration of ethnicities in Lagos has been to diminish the intensity of ethnic affiliation among people of the same ethnic group. According to Horowitz (1998), groups tend to form among people living under identical conditions because individuals possess a ‘deep sociality’ and require the cooperation that groups provide. In urban areas like Lagos, group affiliations appear to be becoming less based on ethnic orientation and more on economic and occupational similarities. This suggests that identity models based on ethnic origins and kinship groups are apparently giving way to those determined by economic survival through cooperation and competition. This does not mean that ethnicity no longer has any salience among people in Lagos. The findings from a survey in Lagos conducted by Langer and Ukiwo (2007) based on ‘how social groups perceive the world in which they live and act’ showed that ethnicity is still an important feature in people’s daily lives. The survey was carried out to find out the most important forms of self-identification for their respondents and revealed that in an ethnically diverse area of Lagos with a dense

agglomeration of informal sector activity, ethnicity (which, as they explain, was used interchangeably with language and state of origin by their respondents) still served as a significant identity marker. A more interesting finding from the research was the fact that the salience of ethnic orientation is being eroded by other identity markers such as occupation. Langer and Ukiwo (2007) do not offer any reason for this trend. However, I suggest that it may occur for two reasons. First, social networking in Lagos appears to be increasingly carried out in places where people frequently meet and interact such as churches and workplaces. Second, the relevance of social bonds is arguably becoming less dependent on the role of ethnicity and kinship as identity markers and more on their instrumental value or their potential for mobilization. In this sense, ethnic, kinship or even occupational ties may be deemed useful when they can be mobilized to one's advantage (Anthias, 2007). I discuss this further in Chapter 7.

A consideration of ethnicity as a key feature of the Nigerian context therefore falls within the wider frame of social capital and how social networks are mobilized by Nigerians and, specifically for my research, new media workers. There are examples from my field work that show how this took place among some of my respondents particularly in their search for new projects and contracts.

In the next section, I provide a synthesis of the discussion so far about the Nigerian context. Having examined the various issues which I deem to be emblematic of this context, I now relate them directly to the themes chosen for my study about the conditions of new media work in Nigeria: precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking.

3.7 The Nigerian context of new media work: putting it all together

In the previous three sections, I discussed some of the specificities of the Nigerian context: software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity. These were identified as having a more direct influence on the practice of new media work rather than those which pertain more broadly to the Nigerian cultural context, namely, precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking. Together, these two sets of features form the themes for my research as follows:

Features that specifically apply to new media work	Broader features of the Nigerian cultural context	Empirical Chapter
Software piracy	Precariousness	5
Infrastructural breakdown	Entrepreneurialism	6
Ethnicity	Social networking	7

Table 2: Research themes

In this concluding section, I present a summary of each theme.

I begin with software piracy which is a subject that is absent in the available literature about the experiences of new media workers or the conditions of their work. As discussed above, software piracy is an important feature in the Nigerian context because of its preponderance among new media workers there. Moreover, since the broader issue of media piracy (which includes film and music) has recently received wide attention in policy circles (see BSA, 2009, 2011) and in academic research (see Edwards et al., 2013; Karaganis, 2011; Lobato and Thomas, 2012; Rone, 2013), it is appropriate to examine how it features in the lives of new media workers. Investigating the practice of software piracy among new media workers in the Nigerian context is also relevant because it draws attention to some of the characteristics of this context which vary from those in Western countries. First, as has been mentioned, the prevalence of software piracy in Nigeria is strongly connected to

the historical absence and weakness of regulatory copyright laws which is a well known feature of developing contexts (Mizukami et al., 2011; Sezneva and Karaganis, 2011). Second, the spread of software piracy is heavily linked to informal economy activity (though it is not exclusively carried out there) since, as research indicates, regions with large informal economies have the highest rates of software piracy (BSA, 2010, 2011). If, as Karaganis (2011) argues, piracy is a 'global pricing problem,' then it is arguably more prevalent in developing economies like Nigeria and, specifically, Lagos where the informal sector is significantly large (Gandy, 2005; Revel, 2010).

My treatment of software piracy among new media workers in Nigeria will be made from the perspective of its effect on the precarious conditions experienced by my research participants. As I argued in Chapter 2, precarious conditions are a feature of the Nigerian cultural context and, in Chapter 5, I show how the use of pirated software contributed to those conditions for new media workers in their attempts to negotiate them.

Next, I examine infrastructural breakdown in Nigeria. As I discussed above, infrastructural challenges are endemic in Nigeria and are the result of can be traced to colonial and postcolonial events in the country. Specifically, in my study, I focus on the non-availability of electricity and the limited access to the internet affect new media workers in Nigeria. However, as I have explained, such challenges are not unique to new media workers. Rather, they have become a normal part of life for Nigerians generally. This is shown by the way people have become accustomed to seeking alternative solutions to the privations of electricity. For example, Larkin (2008) referred to the routine use of generators, oil lamps and candles by people 'when electricity disappears' (p.242) in Nigeria. It can be said that the prevalence of electricity outages is unique to less developed countries like Nigeria. It is a phenomenon that is rare in the developed world (Larkin, 2008) and is only experienced – on a regular basis – by people who live and work in such less developed contexts. This was the context of the new media workers in my research which, if only on the basis of infrastructural technologies, is different from the West. For this reason, the experiences of new media workers in Nigeria can be expected to differ from those

in the West insofar as such experiences are shaped by the challenges of electricity and internet access.

In Chapter 6, I discuss these experiences in new media work from the perspective of the second theme of my study: entrepreneurialism. Essentially, I examine how the entrepreneurial spirit of the new media workers in my research was manifested in their attempts to negotiate the infrastructural challenges (of electricity and internet access) they experienced in the Nigerian context. I will show that entrepreneurialism, which has been identified as a feature of new media work in the West, is endemic to the Nigerian cultural context (as mentioned previously, a ‘way of life’) and, for this reason, was lived and experienced in unique ways by the new media workers in my research.

Finally, my discussion on the specificities of the Nigerian context in this chapter included the topic of ethnicity. As I mentioned, ethnicity has been a key theme of cultural life in Nigeria which, as with the other features discussed above, is the result of events that took place during the colonial and postcolonial periods of the country’s history. I discussed how ethnicity has traditionally been an instrument for mobilization (Anthias, 2007; Meagher, 2010) and noted how one’s ethnic identity serves as a means for gaining advantage in different scenarios in Nigeria. However, I also mentioned that factors such as the rapid urbanization of Lagos are contributing to the blurring of ethnic identities as the sole determinant and the formation of social networks. I discussed how evidence from research, such as by Langer and Ukiwo (2007), indicate that other criteria for self-identification are becoming more salient among people in Lagos. Noteworthy among these are occupational identities.

With the potential decline in salience based on ethnic identities, other instruments for mobilization such as occupation, religion and ethnic language are becoming relevant. Based on this, in Chapter 7, I examine the role of ethnicity and kinship in the practice of social networking among the new media workers in my research. Although networking has been found to be an important feature of new media work, my analysis goes beyond merely affirming that networking takes place. It investigates how

networks are formed and mobilized and the factors that influence this process. This is relevant because, as I have argued, the context in which new media workers in Nigeria operate produces potentially different parameters for analysis. In this case, this difference is made clear by the role of ethnicity in the Nigerian cultural milieu which, among other things, has contributed to shaping the political and social configuration of the country.

To conclude, I have presented in this chapter a detailed view of the Nigerian context insofar as it concerns my research on new media work. The discussion has drawn attention to the specificities of this context which may have commonalities with countries in the Global South (for example, in other African countries) but are notably different from those in the Global North where the research has largely been focussed.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, these external and contextual aspects of new media work do not necessarily eliminate the importance of the intrinsic non-contextual ones. In spite of the external constraints, new media workers in Nigeria (based on my research) were also passionate about their work and valued the opportunities it gave them for creativity, freedom and autonomy. These intrinsic qualities had to be balanced with the external factors such as the challenges of obtaining software, the frustrations of electrical breakdown and the concerns about mobilizing ethnic networks.

In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology of my research and, based on findings during my field work, I give a detailed description of the new media industry in Nigeria with the aim of providing further context for the empirical chapters which follow.

Chapter 4

Researching the Nigerian New Media Industries

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined the Nigerian context and discussed how precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking are endemic to life and labour in the Nigerian context. I also showed how these features are manifested in the practice of software piracy, in experiences of infrastructural breakdown and in the salience of ethnic differentiation in Nigeria. In this chapter, I present a detailed account of how I researched this context, that is, my research methodology. First, I present a summary of the overall aim of the fieldwork along with the timelines I worked with. Second, I provide a rationale for my choice of methods (focus groups, interviews and participant observation) as well as reflections on my position in the field. Thereafter, I give a detailed description of how I went about conducting the fieldwork by means of the chosen methods in the field and explain the challenges I encountered in the process of engaging with my research participants.

Following the account of my fieldwork, I present an overview of the new media industries. Due to the absence of official government statistics specifically for the new media sector⁸, most of the material in this section is based on my empirical findings during the fieldwork. Essentially, I examine the occupations that make up the new media industries with a focus on the three which were most prominent among the new media workers in my research, namely, web design, digital animation and online games production. I also briefly highlight the available contracts in these industries.

⁸ Official data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on the size of the labour force refer to *economic activities* like ‘computer programming, consultancy and related activities’, ‘information services activities’ as well as ‘creative, arts and entertainment activities’

4.2 The fieldwork

4.2.1 Summary

The primary goal of my fieldwork was to gather empirical data that would enable me achieve my research aim which is to investigate how new media workers negotiate the specificities of the Nigerian context where they carry out their work. In doing this, I sought to understand how the specificities of the context contributed to the experiences of new media workers in Nigeria and, inversely, how new media work shaped the strategies they employed to negotiate the contextual conditions of their labour. To address this issue, I focussed on three aspects of the Nigerian cultural context which, in my view, directly influenced the practice of new media work: software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity

The approach I adopted was in two phases. First, a preliminary phase in which I tried to get an idea of the scope of the new media industry in Nigeria. This implied finding out about the companies in it, their specialties and main challenges they encountered in Nigeria. Second, a field research phase during which I made attempts to connect and interact with new media workers individually and to observe them while they worked. During the first phase, I searched for and gathered data from various secondary sources (insofar as such data was available) which provided me with a useful estimate of the composition of the industry. I also obtained information from focus groups conducted with owners and managers of new media businesses. In the field research phase, I related individually with new media workers through interviews and as a participant observer at a new media company. Both phases (preliminary and field research) lasted for a total of seven months.

The table below shows a summary of the fieldwork:

Research Phases and Dates	Research Methods	Objectives
1. Preliminary research (September 2012 to October 2012)	Desk research	Data gathering on the scope and configuration of the industry.
	Focus group sessions	Acquire knowledge about the broader experiences/concerns of new media companies in the industry. Also, to recruit participants for interviews.
2. Field research (November 2012 to February 2012)	Interviews	Data gathering on the experiences of individual new media workers
	Participant observation	To obtain first hand knowledge of experiences in new media work

Table 3: Fieldwork summary

4.2.2 Choice of methods and reflections from the field

The methods chosen for my study have been defined in various ways in literature (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, Preissle and Grant, 2004, Wimmer and Dominick, 2006) and have been used extensively in social science research. Each of these methods has its own unique advantages, requirements and outcomes. For example, scholars have noted that field methods like participant observation are characterized by the need to immerse oneself in a particular culture or context for a sufficient period of time. In some instances, this has led to situations in which the researcher becomes native to the research environment (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). However, the circumstances that surround field studies vary from one research project to the other – such as the nature of the research environment, the

topic and purpose of the research and the position of the researcher in relation to the field. I present a detailed description of each method in my research but, before doing so, I reflect on my position as a researcher among my research participants and how it may have affected (positively or negatively) the results of my study. I do this in order to provide a rationale for the methods chosen for the research and how they were used in the fieldwork.

Three important factors defined my position in this research: first, my identity as a Nigerian; second, my status as an academic and researcher and; third, my previous association with the industry as a new media worker. In the first place, being a Nigerian (and having lived there for most of my life) potentially had some effect on my approach to the themes and ‘way of life’ being studied in field. For example, before embarking on the project I was reasonably familiar with (and had experienced) the infrastructural challenges (of electricity and internet) commonly faced by Nigerians. I also belong to a specific ethnic group (even though not the major ones – Yoruba, Igbo or Hausa – mentioned in Chapter 3) which has a distinct culture and language. For this reason, it can be said that I began the fieldwork with reasonably clear expectations of what kind of data I would find. However, rather than being a disadvantage, I suggest that this proved to be an advantage in the context of my PhD study. Although the time spent for fieldwork varies for doctoral studies in social science, I would argue that my pre-knowledge of the Nigerian context lessened the demand for a lengthy period in the field. This is because I did not need to integrate myself with the idiosyncrasies of life in Nigeria. Instead, I was able to focus on salient and inconspicuous points that could be observed in the Nigerian context. For example, my experience as a Nigerian enabled me to identify my respondents’ ethnic origin without necessarily asking them about it – I was able to decipher this information from their names or their accents. In addition, being conversant with the Nigerian context meant that it was easier to arrange times and schedules for the interviews while trying to get the most out of my participants. For example, thanks to my awareness of the customs (such as the appropriate forms of formal or informal greeting) and challenges (such as the patterns of traffic in Lagos), I had a better sense of the places to meet my interviewees, the amount of time to dedicate to interview sessions and the most

suitable tone for conducting the interviews. This last point leads to the second important factor in my position during the research: my status as a researcher.

Although some writers have pointed to the limitations of being native to the culture or context being studied especially with reference to the lack of objective distance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), I believe that my position as an academic and a researcher helped to mitigate the effects of that challenge. Specifically, I argue that my status as a researcher from a foreign university helped to establish some distance between me and my research participants. This was made evident to me by the way my respondents treated me with arguably more respect than they might do to non-researchers or other researchers from local universities. In addition to this, my affiliation with the Pan-Atlantic University as a lecturer contributed to the high regard they appeared to have towards me. The Pan-Atlantic University (PAU) is a private institution in Lagos which is well respected in country⁹. Although I introduced myself as a PhD student of University of Leeds, my association with the PAU was made clear by the fact of having organized the focus groups and held some of my interviews at its premises. What is more important, this status made it easy to gain access to my research participants. This was evident in my invitations for them to participate in the focus groups, to be interviewed or to be observed. It was even more so for those participants who had previously been my students at the university. As with my identity as a Nigerian, this factor helped in minimizing the time I spent in the field.

Finally, my previous association with new media industry played a role in the outcome of my fieldwork. Since I had previously been engaged in new media work (for 7 years as a web designer and developer), I was conversant with some of the conditions new media workers faced in the Nigerian context. For example, I was aware of the economic challenges of purchasing original licenses of software like Adobe as well as the ubiquitousness of pirated versions¹⁰. However, since my activity had been restricted to freelance work while holding full-time web design related jobs at non-

⁹ This respect is mostly because it is the parent institution of the Lagos Business School which has previously been placed highly in one of the global rankings of Financial Times.

¹⁰ This was the case even though I never purchased pirated software for my own personal use

media companies, my knowledge of the intricacies of the new media industry were, at best, limited. Nevertheless, my grasp of the technical details involved in new media practice made it easy for me to understand some of the technical aspects of work talked about by my respondents during interviews. For this reason, I was also able to quickly integrate myself into the working life of the company I researched as participant observer. I would argue therefore that my familiarity with new media work along with and the other factors discussed above (my Nigerian identity and my researcher/academic status) facilitated and contributed to the relatively successful outcome of my fieldwork. I also argue that the methods chosen for the fieldwork (focus groups, interviews and participant observation) were ideal because they were sufficient for gathering the data required for my research particularly under the circumstances described above. In the next section, I provide detailed descriptions of each of the phases of my fieldwork: first, the preliminary research phase and; second, the field research.

4.2.3 Preliminary research phase

4.2.3.1 *Desk research*

The preliminary stage of the fieldwork lasted for two months and was dedicated to gathering secondary data from available sources. Since new media work is a nascent occupational field in Nigeria and one which operates mostly in the informal economy, there were no official statistics about it from national and regional databases and surveys¹¹. For this reason, I had to rely on data available from manual internet searches for new media companies in Nigeria. Inevitably, search results directed me to the websites of companies which claimed to specialize in new media work such as web design and animation. To augment these findings, I made use of my personal database of friends and professional contacts to generate obtain further information about new media companies.

¹¹ Since I was aware of this before going to the field, I had made attempts to participate in a mapping of the creative industries in Nigeria with the British Council and its partners. This mapping would have included the new media industries but did not take place eventually.

The information gathered through this method provided me with useful data about the most prominent new media companies in Lagos and the fields they specialized in. Since this information was obtained from company websites, it was difficult to ascertain the size of these firms. In the end, the list comprised a total of 32 companies all based primarily in Lagos apart from one which had operations in Ibadan (a city about 100 km away from Lagos). A summary of the list is shown in the table below.

Total number of companies		32
Fields of specialization	Web design	23
	Web marketing/advertising	16
	Mobile app development	5
	Animation	4
	Online/mobile games	3
	Offline multimedia	2

Table 4: List of companies gathered during desk research

It is worth noting that 15 of the companies in the list claimed on their websites to have more than one specialization. For example, some of those involved in web design work also claimed that they did web marketing while others stated they were involved in mobile application development. Also, within fields such as web design, web marketing and animation, there were sub-fields such as e-commerce, social media and 2D animation respectively, which companies variedly specialized in. A full breakdown of the list is available in the appendix. This list formed the basis of selecting participants for the focus group sessions which I describe next.

4.2.3.2 Focus groups

For the next step in my fieldwork, I organized two focus group sessions with owners and managers of new media companies. As mentioned above, the list of participants for the focus groups was derived from the data gathered during the desk research. As a

way to encourage people to participate in the focus groups, I organized a workshop titled 'e-Merging Media in Nigeria: Culture, Content, Context' which was aimed at discussing issues related to the development of the new media industry in Nigeria. Thereafter I went about inviting the owners and managers of the companies in my list to the workshop.

The workshop was organized under the auspices of a Centre for Creative Industries Development and Research (CINDER) which I had established at the School of Media and Communication, Pan-Atlantic University¹². One of the key attractions of the workshop was that it was to be held at this University which, as indicated earlier, is one of the most prestigious in Lagos. The workshop was publicized through the Centre's website using a mechanism that sent personalized emails to as many new media companies in the list as possible¹³. The emails directed recipients to the workshop's web page which included a personalized registration form. During this process, phone calls were made and subsequent emails were sent to encourage more people to register. Since contact details or email addresses were not obtainable for all the companies in the list, I adopting a snowballing approach as a way to reach more people. In this approach, the registration forms were designed to include fields that allowed registrants to suggest other new media companies by providing the email addresses of other companies they thought would be willing to attend the workshop. In the end, there were a total of 22 registrations from 33 invited companies.

The workshop was held on October 30, 2012 at the campus of the Pan-Atlantic University situated at 2, Ahmed Onibudo Street, Victoria Island, Lagos. Attendance was free to the participants including lunch and tea served at break periods¹⁴. There were three plenary sessions during the workshop which had different themes as follows:

¹² At the time of my research, the university was called 'Pan-African University'.

¹³ The email addresses were obtained from the websites of the companies.

¹⁴ The costs for the workshop were borne by the university

1. The Nigerian economic environment and the opportunities for the new media industry (presented by Dr. Doyin Salami of the Lagos Business School)
2. Technology at the service of social innovation in the Nigerian environment (presented by Mr. Tunji Eleso, co-founder of Co-Creation Hub, Lagos¹⁵)
3. Managing growth and global expectations in the local environment (presented by Chukwuemeka Afigbo, a Program Manager at Google Nigeria)

Since the speakers were experts in their topics, the workshop provided the participants with helpful knowledge and ideas about the themes covered. For me, the workshop was a good opportunity to engage with the participants individually. More crucially, it served as the ideal platform for conducting the focus groups and gain more insight into the new media industries in Nigeria.

There were 16 people in total who attended the workshop from 13 different new media companies. There were two focus groups which were held in-between the three plenary sessions of the workshop. Participants were split into two groups for breakout sessions after each of the first two plenary sessions: one group was led by a colleague of mine, Lami Attah, while I led the second. Focus groups were conducted during my breakout sessions, with 8 participants in each group. The participants had been previously informed that these breakout sessions would serve as forums for discussing the themes of the workshop as well as other concerns related specifically to the new media industry in Nigeria. In other words, the term ‘focus groups’ was not explicitly mentioned to them, nor were consent forms handed to them before the sessions since it was felt that these would introduce extra layers of formality and negatively affect their contributions in the discussions. However, participants were made aware beforehand that the workshop and the discussions were research-based (as part of the aims of the CINDER Centre) and, therefore, would be recorded. Since the participants did not raise any objections to this, the sessions were openly recorded.

¹⁵ Co-Creation Hub is a co-working space for new media and IT-based workers in Lagos. I refer to such spaces in my empirical chapters as one of the places where some of my respondents operated from.

During the focus group sessions my main concern was to gain more insight into new media practice in Nigeria and to understand the pertinent issues related to working in the industry. From the responses of the participants, I obtained an appreciable understanding of the challenges that individuals and companies face in the Nigerian environment.

From the focus groups, I was able to find out:

1. How new media work was understood in the Nigerian context.
2. The roles, competencies and skills expected of new media workers.
3. The employment opportunities and contract arrangements in the industry.

From the onset of the field research, one of my abiding aims was to acquire sufficient knowledge about how new media work was understood by people who worked in the industry within the Nigerian context. This was important to know because I wanted to identify the occupational activities that had emerged within it and the key concerns that people had about it. During focus group sessions, the responses made by participants appeared to be more balanced and less inhibited. The remarks and comments by individual respondents helped to stimulate others to pursue various lines of thinking. For this reason, the questions I asked did not follow a rigid pattern but were adapted to the comments and answers of the participants. For example, when a participant of one of the focus groups mentioned the difficulties he experienced when dealing with some clients, this theme was taken up by other participants who also spoke about how they suffered from general misconceptions about new media work. Although it was not one of the questions I had previously prepared, the topic was an important one because it highlighted how the fledgling nature of the industry affected new media workers in negative ways. For this reason, the focus groups helped provide me with something akin to the collective view of people in the industry. In addition, the sessions offered me the opportunity to relate with participants through informal conversations, to build some rapport with them, generate leads and make new contacts for the subsequent phases of my fieldwork. Although, for reasons already mentioned above, I did not foresee challenges regarding access to potential new media companies

where I could carry out participant observation, being able to network with the participants of workshop did make it easier to decide on a particular location.

Finally, the focus groups prepared me for the next stage of the field research: interviews and participant observation.

4.2.4 Field research phase

4.2.4.1 Interviews

As table 4.1 indicates, this stage of my fieldwork was made up of two parts: first, interviews with new media workers (who were freelancers, full-time/part-time employees or self-employed) and; second, participant observation at a new media organization. These two methods were complementary. The former consisted mostly of interviews but also involved (when possible) observing some of my respondents at their place of work. During the latter, I also conducted interviews with staff of the new media company I researched.

Having gained some useful insights about the new media industry from the focus groups described above, I proceeded to interview new media workers individually. For this, I relied on three sources: first, the contacts I had made during the preliminary phase of the research – those I had made contact with prior to and during the workshop; second, former students of mine who were still actively involved in new media work; third, new media workers referred to me by friends. During that time, I made initial contact with the participants by phone and email to arrange for convenient times and locations. From those in the third set above, one person declined to be interviewed because he expressed doubts about my motive while another responded favourably but was unavailable during the period of my fieldwork. Others did not respond to my email or found it difficult to agree on a specific date and venue. In total, I conducted thirty-five formal interviews during a period of five months. Most of my interviewees were below thirty years of age. There were 31 men and only 4 were women. Although the target for each interview was forty minutes, the average time

was forty-five minutes mostly because I exceeded the time with some participants who were willing to talk at length.

All the interviews were recorded except four (three of these were due to technical problems with my audio recorder). The choice of location for the interviews depended on the preferences of my interviewees. Eight of the interviews took place at the Pan-Atlantic University (the same venue of the focus groups) while the others were conducted at either the offices of the participants or at public sites such as restaurants. The ambient noise during some of the interviews – especially those that took place in restaurants – negatively affected the quality of their audio recordings but this could not be helped because of the difficulty of finding better locations. Some of the interviews had to be rescheduled several times because the interviewees could not be present. At other times, it was difficult to agree on a convenient time or venue. The table below shows a breakdown of the interviewees’ profiles by sector, role or specific occupation (often given by the interviewee)¹⁶, gender and age (if known)¹⁷.

	Pseudonym	New media sector	Role/Position (usually given by interviewee)	Gender	Age (if known)
1	Orlando	Web design	Creative Director	Male	
2	Christopher	Web design	CEO/Founder	Male	23
3	Martin	Web design	Project manager	Male	
4	Tom	Web design	Creative Director	Male	24
5	Samson	Animation (2D)	CEO	Male	23
6	Belle	Animation (2D)	Copywriter	Female	
7	Henry	Animation (2D)	Illustrator	Male	21

¹⁶ The role ‘sole proprietor’ in the table is assigned to those who single-handedly managed their companies and did not have any other staff

¹⁷ I did not ask all the interviewees for their age especially on occasions when it did not seem appropriate to do so (such as during interviews with women – the age assigned to Diane in the table is an estimate based on the age range she gave me)

	Pseudonym	New media sector	Role/Position (usually given by interviewee)	Gender	Age (if known)
8	Marvin	Animation (3D)	CEO/Founder	Male	30
9	Idris	Web design/Multimedia	Photographer	Male	
10	Andrew	Web design	Head of development	Male	33
11	Tony	Web design	CEO/Founder	Male	
12	Osaze	Web design	Sole proprietor	Male	32
13	Melvin	Web design	No specific role given	Male	
14	Charles	Mobile design	Co-founder	Male	19
15	Diane	Animation (3D)	CEO/Founder	Female	24
16	Damian	Web design	Co-founder	Male	
17	Kevin	Video games	CEO	Male	
18	Shola	Web design	Co-founder	Male	25
19	David	Video games	Founder	Male	22
20	James	Mobile development	no role given	Male	25
21	Dickson	Web design	Consultant	Male	
22	Adamu	Web design	Sole proprietor	Male	22
23	Jeremy	Web design	no specific role given	Male	

	Pseudonym	New media sector	Role/Position (usually given by interviewee)	Gender	Age (if known)
24	Sidney	Animation (3D)	Sole proprietor	Male	
25	Paul	Web design	Owner	Male	
26	Kevin B.	Web design and development	Co-founder	Male	33
27	Ronald	Video games	Sole proprietor	Male	32
28	Kevin I.	Animation (3D)	Freelancer	Male	26
29	Yvonne	Web design	Sole proprietor	Female	27
30	Jeremy I.	Web design/Web marketing	Sole proprietor	Male	27
31	Desmond	Social Media	Freelancer	Male	25
32	George	Web design	Digital graphics	Male	25
33	Nefi	Web design	CEO	Female	
34	Anthony	Web marketing	CEO/Founder	Male	
35	John	Animation	Sole proprietor	Male	

Table 5: List of interviewees

The interviews were semi-structured; unlike the focus groups, I asked my interviewees questions directly from the list I had prepared. After finding out the specific kind of new media occupation they were involved in, I asked my interviewees about the reason for their choice of work and the specific skills required for it. I then went on to

ask them questions related to the themes of my research. In relation to software piracy, I tried to find out the types of software they used and how they acquired them. For some, I specifically raised the issue of piracy and their feelings and attitudes towards it. Depending on their responses, I asked more direct questions about the use of pirated software and how it affected their work. With regard to infrastructure, I tried to find out about their experiences of electricity outages and internet access, and the measures they took to overcome them. I also asked them whether they worked from home or other locations and the reason they did so. Finally, I brought up issues about ethnicity. I asked them about the salience of ethnic differentiation in their working environment and their feelings towards it. I tried to find out how and from whom they obtained projects and contracts. For those who managed their own companies, I asked them about the ethnic groups of those they worked with and those they hired. A full list of the interview questions are included in Appendix .

4.2.4.2 Participant observation

The second stage of my field research was as an overt participant observer at a new media company which I give the pseudonym, DanyMedia. The company offered services in web design and flash-based multimedia. I gained access to DanyMedia through one of the participants at the workshop and focus groups. Due to the short time I was to spend with them, I was not assigned to any of the company's main projects. Instead, I worked alone on a project which I had myself proposed to the company but which matched their interests. The project was the redesign of a website on visual art owned by the Pan-Atlantic University. Since I had previously led the team that designed the existing website, it was relatively easy for me to convince the CEO of DanyMedia to take up the redesign project. More importantly, this project enabled me to carry out my research without being unduly pressured with work. I spent about a month at the company.

As a company, DanyMedia was first established in the early 2000s under a different name and became one of the most renowned and well-respected multimedia companies in Nigeria. With a total of thirteen employees, DanyMedia was large in

comparison with most of the companies in my research. However, during the period of my research, I met only seven or eight of these employees. According to one of those I spoke with, most staff carry out their work from other locations – at home or at clients' sites. The work setting at the company was very informal. The main office area was an open space where the computer desks were arranged. There were two desktop computers: one used by the CEO of the company (who was also the creative director) and the other was used by any other staff. These computers had the latest versions of software by Adobe (at the time of writing, Adobe Creative Suite 6) and Autodesk. Although I could not verify whether they were pirated, the CEO informed me that they were original licenses. Most of the staff worked with laptops, some of which were purchased for them by the company. According to those I talked with, the company also took care to provide them with the software they needed for their work.

For its main source of electricity, the office relied on a generator. This alternated with the public supply of electricity whenever it was available. On one occasion, work for the day was delayed and eventually truncated when it was discovered that there was no fuel to power the generator. For that reason, I continued my work until the battery of my laptop was almost exhausted and then closed for the day earlier than planned – as did most of the other staff. This gave me first hand experience of what had already been related to me by several interviewees in my research regarding their own experiences of the erraticism of electricity during work. I refer to this in more detail in Chapter 6. At the company, there was no collective source of internet connection. Instead, staff relied on their own personal devices to gain access to the internet. Usually, this consisted of either a dongle attached to one's laptop or desktop or a mobile phone. These devices provided internet access from different service providers but went off intermittently. I did not use the internet all the time for my work but when I needed it, I used a dongle which I had recently purchased with my own funds and which proved very erratic.

Five of the employees I met at DanyMedia were under thirty years of age. The CEO was over forty and one of the managers (who was also the lead web developer) was

aged over thirty. Five of the eight staff I met belonged to the same ethnic group which was Igbo – including the CEO and the lead web developer. The other three were not Igbo but did not belong to any of the major ethnic groups. At the time of my research, there was no female employee. My interaction with the workers revealed that all of them were Christian and at least three of them attended the same church. The most recent employee had been hired after being referred to one of the managers by a relative of his who belonged to the same church.

Finally, I observed that whenever there were no urgent projects at DanyTech, some of the workers participated in informal training sessions with the CEO (and creative director) while others worked on their own personal projects. I observed that staff took on personal projects as freelancers as long as it did not interfere with official duties. The projects undertaken by the company were mostly obtained through referrals from the contacts of various staff, particularly from those of the lead designer who was well-known in the new media industry.

My field research also included observing an online games company called Kambia (a pseudonym) for only single day. Although this was far less extensive than my research at DanyTech, it provided useful addition to my data. Kambia was more formal and organized than DanyTech and was founded only about a year before my research. There were individual desktop computers as well as equipment for the 6 illustrators and animators who made up the core team. The CEO and the creative director also had separate offices. Regarding its infrastructural make-up, the company had a central internet connection although, like DanyTech, a generator was the main source of electricity. The ethnic distribution did not appear to be skewed towards a single ethnic group. For example, CEO was Yoruba while the creative director was Igbo. I did notice that one of the illustrators was also Yoruba while there was an animator (a woman) who was Igbo. Through my discussions with people in the industry, I understood that Kambia was unique and different from most new media companies in Lagos largely because it had financial support from venture capitalists. Also, unlike most of the companies in my research, its mode of operation implied that it did not belong in the informal economy.

In the next section, I present an overview of the new media industry based on my research findings. As I tried to make clear in the previous chapter, the Nigerian new media industry essentially operates in the informal economy (as my findings indicated, companies like Kambia described above are unusual) and because of this, there is a real shortage of economic data from government sources. Given this fact, evidence about the character of the new media industries (such as is made available in the UK by, for example, SkillSet) is not based on official statistics but on data from my fieldwork (explained in detail in this chapter) which is sometimes anecdotal.

4.3 The Nigerian new media industries

4.3.1 Development and composition

At the time of my research, the new media industry in Nigeria was still in its infancy in comparison to those in more developed countries, having only taken off in the early 2000s after the arrival of the internet and other digital technologies in the late nineties (Smith, 2006). My research suggests that the industry is made up mostly of young people between ages 22-35. This youthful demographic may be the result of the recent rise in the availability of new media technologies – computers, laptops and especially mobile phones. According to recent statistics, more people in Nigeria now own or have access to equipment that can receive digital media. According to the figures, 5.5% of Nigerians (out of a total population of about 170 million) owned personal computers in 2010 which represented an increase from less than 1% in 2007 (Open Source Foundation, 2012).

There has also been an increasing penetration of internet in the country. According to International Telecommunications Union, Nigeria has had one of the fastest internet usage growths in the world: around 2.5 million users (about 1.5% of the population) in 2005; 10 million users in 2008; and 44 million users in 2011. Currently, there are about 60 million internet users in Nigeria which represents over 30% of the country's population (InternetWorldStats, 2013). Arguably, this growth in internet usage has been catalyzed by urbanization and is driven mostly by the expansion of mobile platforms. For example, the urban population in Nigeria currently stands at 50% of the country's total population and out of every 100 urban Nigerians, 50 access the internet monthly, 58 have internet capable mobile phones and 21 have smart phones (World Economic Forum, 2013). Furthermore, Nigeria has the tenth highest number of mobile phones in the world, with 2% of global mobile internet population being Nigerians. While some of these statistics may be open to questioning, they provide an indication of the growth of internet in Nigeria and, consequently, of an environment in which new media industries might grow and flourish.

However, in comparison with other creative industries like Nollywood, the new media industries are less established and less organized. For this reason, and also because, as mentioned earlier, the new media industries are mostly based in the informal economy, official statistics do not provide detailed information and therefore it has not possible to generate an accurate map of the sector in terms of the number of companies and their sizes. Although data is publicly available from the National Bureau of Statistics (2010), the new media sector is not specifically included. Instead, within its statistics on the *'Household Distribution of Employed Persons by Economic Activity'* are included sectors such as 'information and communication' and 'arts, entertainment and recreation.' These sectors consist of 'economic activities' under which new media work may fall. These activities include 'computer programming, consultancy and related activities', 'information services activities' and 'creative, arts and entertainment activities'. Unfortunately, no description is provided about any of these categories. The data is represented as follows:

Sector	Economic Activity	Size
Information and communication	• Computer programming, consultancy and related activities	143,050
	• Information services activities	42,826
Arts, entertainment and recreation	• Creative, arts and entertainment activities	301,959

**Table 6: Available data related new media sector in Nigeria
(source: National Bureau of Statistics)**

The figures above are based on a total number of 48,533,319 employed people in Nigeria (28% of the total population). The data does not give details about the size of the economic activities based on specific regions like Lagos. In the next section, I discuss the kinds of occupations new media workers occupy and the kinds of contracts

available in Nigeria. Due to the vagueness of the data presented above, the discussion is based on my empirical findings.

4.3.2 Occupations and contracts in new media work

Although the new media sector in Nigeria may not have attained the level of most western countries, my research showed that it consists of a diversity of occupations similar to those found in those places. These occupations include web design and development, copywriting, web programming, web hosting, web marketing, content management, project management, social media, mobile/app development, animation, illustration, video/computer/online game production and offline multimedia. As I noted in Chapter 1, the occupations which I focus on in my research (primarily because they were the ones most practiced amongst my research participants) are web design, digital animation and online games production.

Among those who participated in my research, the most common occupational activity was web design (see table 4.2 above). I would like to argue that this is a reflection of the whole industry. The popularity of web design in comparison with other fields may related to the fact that it has one of the least demanding entry requirements, economically, in comparison with other fields in the industry – often, all that is required is only a computer with basic tools installed. By definition, web design is essentially the creation of websites. At its most basic level, it involves writing Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) in any plain text editing software like Notepad which is available at no cost. When they work this way, web designers construct websites ‘manually’ by aggregating the various elements that make up a typical webpage (text, images and video) using special code (called ‘markup’) to indicate their structural or logical relation to other elements. Although using tools like Notepad may be sufficient for very basic websites, web design is often carried out using more advanced software which make the construction of websites more manageable and efficient. In addition, the technical skills associated with web design often require the knowledge of programming languages such as PHP and JavaScript. Advances in web technology and the increasing sophistication of web design software have led to a

further widening of the skills needed for web design. For example, although in the early days of web design knowledge of HTML was adequate for building websites, today's industry has seen the proliferation of new tools and techniques such as AJAX, jQuery and WordPress¹⁸ that help to simplify the task of creating complex websites. Apart from gaining expertise in some of these tools, the work of creating websites also involves a broad skill-set with a wide range of competencies such as high levels of literacy, attention to detail, interface design principles and information architecture (Kotamraju, 2002).

To keep apace with developments in internet technology, web designers in Nigeria have felt the need to adjust their skill-set. Most of those in my research operated as freelancers or in small companies with only few workers and expressed their desire to diversify their web design knowledge or specialize in one area in order to be more competitive in the industry. For example, some of them mentioned that they wanted to acquire expertise in the techniques of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)¹⁹ while others took advantage of the popularity of social media by specializing in the work of integrating websites with Facebook, Twitter and other platforms. Other web designers tried to gain competitive advantage by learning to use various content management systems like Wordpress or Joomla or by specializing in building websites based on responsive design techniques. I also found that some new media workers had moved away from traditional web design to the development of web applications for mobile devices – although it seems that the number of people involved in this is limited because of the complexity and significant change in skills required for mobile devices.

From my personal observation of trends in the web design industry over the years, I have noticed a change in the way web design is practiced in Nigeria. In my view, these changes are not unrelated to web designers gradual exposure to the internet which, as I

¹⁸ AJAX and jQuery are based on JavaScript. While AJAX is a feature that allows web developers to create websites which fetch data asynchronously from other sources, jQuery is a library with various functions. Wordpress is a PHP-based content management software.

¹⁹ SEO is the technique involved in making web pages rank high in search engine results.

highlighted at the beginning of this section, is on the rise. The following comment by one of my respondents captures this:

Around 2004-2005, it was easy to recognize websites designed by Nigerians because most of them lacked creativity. Later on, web designers began to use pre-designed templates from services such as templatemonster.com. The problem was that even though their websites improved in quality, it became obvious after a while that they were made with templates. Today, there are many proficient and creative web designers who prefer not to use templates anymore even when not doing so could cost them certain projects. [...]

Personally, when I have a project that involves, for example, social media integration, the first thing I do is to go online to see what other web designers are doing in terms of user experience and interaction, login implementation, design patterns and so on. Before now, I couldn't do this because, like most people, I didn't have access to this information. (Kelvin, web designer)

Although the quote represents the impressions of one of my respondents, the brief historical account it traces corresponds with my own observations as a web designer and, currently, as a researcher doing fieldwork in the Nigerian industry.

The other forms of new media work that exist in the industry are digital animation and online games design. In comparison with web design, there were not as many people involved in these new media fields. However, my research data included two companies in these sectors which had become well-known – one of them being Kambia, the online games company referred to earlier. The rising popularity of these sectors (which is attracting foreign investment as in the case with Kambia) may be related to an increase in quality of the animations and online games being produced. Digital animation can be described as the process of introducing motion to digital elements – images, text, shapes and sound. It involves the production of moving objects which could be in two (2D) or three-dimensional (3D) form. Digital animation tools vary from complex 3D animations to simple ones in which images are drawn and composited to produce a moving picture. Producing large, high-quality 3D animations

is time-consuming and usually requires hundreds, if not thousands, of computers. However, the time and effort it takes is still less than producing the same images by hand-drawing and compositing. In my research, I noticed that there was a difference between the demands of 2D and 3D animation – the former appeared to be more strenuous than the latter. This was because while 3D animation has been made easier by the availability of modelling software like 3Ds Max and Maya, 2D animation required more manual skills such as the ability to draw and illustrate by hand.

Moreover, the relatively high cost of equipment for digital animation appears to hamper a more rapid growth of the industry for both kinds of animation. For example, one of the budding animation companies in my research that specialized in 2D related how they had to spend a fortune to purchase the hardware and software they needed to start their business. Nevertheless, regardless of the cost of equipment, freelance animators were still found during my fieldwork and most of them specialised in 2D animation using Adobe Flash or 3D animation using 3Ds Max which are generally available (I discuss this further in the Chapter 5 on software piracy). There is a challenge of the unavailability of skills in the industry. For this reason, some companies (including those in non-media sectors) resort to outsourcing parts of their production processes that required animation in order to meet deadlines.

Video games design is similar to animation because it also involves the creation of moving objects. However, the main feature of video games is interactivity, which requires complex data manipulation techniques in order to achieve high levels of variability for different user actions. As mentioned above, there were only a limited number of individuals and companies involved in this field during my fieldwork. However, rather than the development of video games such as those produced by the large companies (like Microsoft and Sony), these individuals and companies were involved in the creation of online or casual games which are typically playable on websites. However, it appears that the skills and investment needed to create and sustain such new media business is affecting the industry. Another reason may be related to the reception of the market to such games. Since the games rely on internet access, the culture of playing such casual games is yet to catch on in Nigeria. As a

workaround, some companies and a few individuals have begun creating mobile games that do not depend on internet access. Nevertheless, during my research, these were few in comparison with the other industries discussed above.

Regarding contracts, various arrangements exist in the new media industry in Lagos. The kinds of contracts adopted by new media workers depended on whether such arrangements helped them to negotiate the external conditions of their work such as the availability of internet access or electricity (I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6). My research indicated that some new media workers have their own small companies which they manage on a full-time or part-time basis. Sometimes, they combine the running of their own companies with short-term contracts held with other organizations. Others dedicate themselves to full-time employment at new media companies although they are often allowed to carry out freelance work during office hours. Thus, freelancing is a common phenomenon in the industry and is practiced by full-time or part-time employees as well as company owners. However, this varies with the industry. My findings suggest that web designers are more flexible and many of them operate as both freelancers and employees as described above. On the other hand, animators tend to manage their own companies with their employees, and they dedicate all their time to it. Online games producers were similar to animators in that they had companies which they were committed to. However, I encountered a few online games creators who operated their business as sole proprietors.

4.4 Conclusion

As already mentioned, the new media industry in Nigeria is still in its infancy and occupational activities like web design, animation and online games production are still in their fledgling state. It is in this developmental phase of new media labour in the particular cultural context of Nigeria that my research has set out to investigate the specific features of such work and the particular experiences of workers engaged in it. Understanding the lives and experiences of new media workers in Nigeria has therefore been an important aspect of my research and was the main purpose for my fieldwork.

In this chapter therefore, I presented a detailed account of the fieldwork with an empirical report on Nigeria's new media industries. First, I provided a rationale for my research methods and discussed how my position in the field contributed to the effectiveness of these methods. Then I explained how I conducted the field research the phases involved and the methods adopted. Finally, I presented an overview of the new media industries based on my findings in the field. This included a description of the new media occupations relevant to my study, the size of the companies in the industry and the kinds of contracts involved.

I now move on to the empirical chapters where I engage with the data from the focus groups, interviews and participant observation conducted in the field. In the following chapters, I use this data to analyze and discuss the three aspects of the Nigerian cultural context which form the core of my thesis. In Chapter 5, I discuss software piracy with a focus on its precariousness consequences for new media workers; in Chapter 6, I examine the effect of infrastructural breakdown from the perspective of entrepreneurialism in new media work; and, finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss the impacts of ethnicity on the social networking practices of new media workers in Nigeria.

Chapter 5

Software Piracy and the Negotiation of Precariousness

5.1 Introduction

This chapter on software piracy and precariousness among new media workers in the Nigerian context begins the analysis of my empirical data. In previous chapters, I outlined the basis for the empirical analysis to be carried out here and in subsequent chapters. In my review of the western-dominated literature on new media work in Chapter 2, I pointed out three identified features of new media work which depend on the external context of such work: precariousness, entrepreneurialism and networking. In Chapter 3 on the Nigerian context, I argued that, beyond new media work, these features actually characterize life and labour in the Nigerian context as a whole. Put differently, these features constitute a ‘way of life’ for Nigerians in response to historical, social and political developments in the country. I went on to identify and discuss features which (in contrast to what is available in the literature) are specific to the practice of new media work in Nigeria. These are software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity. In this chapter, I begin with the first of these features. I discuss how software piracy contributes to the precarious conditions of new media work in Nigeria. Using my empirical data, I show how my research participants find themselves within sites of tension in their attempts to negotiate the precarious conditions of work associated with the acquisition and use of pirated software. I explain how they are confronted with ‘tensions’ which I identify as occupational, legal or ethical.

The chapter is divided into five broad sections. Following this introduction, I present a brief overview of the literature on precariousness in the creative and cultural industries. I argue that while current analyses of the conditions of cultural work take into cognizance the prevailing climate of precarious and insecure labour in advanced economies, their understandings of precariousness are insufficient for investigating what is happening in less developed countries like Nigeria. I argue that an important contributor to the precarious experiences of new media workers in Nigeria is the

phenomenon of software piracy which is a very pervasive practice among new media workersthere and forms a key aspect of their work.

In the third section, I discuss the context of software piracy in the Nigerian new media industry. Citing data on different types of software for new media work, I show how they reflected on the high costs of original software which are beyond their reach and the consequent pervasiveness of pirated software. In the fourth section, I discuss the tensions experienced by my respondents which, as I argue, manifest the precarious conditions associated with software piracy. I look first at the occupational tensions, then the legal tensions and, finally, I examine how the ethical tensions experienced by my respondents manifest the role of the economy of software piracy in sustaining the moral economy of new media work. In the concluding section, I present a summary of the discussion.

5.2 Understanding Precariousness

5.2.1 Precarious Work in Creative Labour

Precarious work is the result of social, economic and political forces across various countries in the world. It refers to labour which is insecure, uncertain, unstable and characterized by the individualization of risk (Beck, 2000; Kalleberg and Hewison, 2012; Neff, 2012). The precariousness of work is not a novel phenomenon. Gill and Pratt (2008) note that capitalist labour has always been known to operate under precarious conditions; what is different is that, in contemporary advanced societies, the precariousness of work has extended from 'lower-paid and lower-skilled' labour to 'well-paid and high-status' work (p.2). In effect, precariousness appears to have become a pervasive feature of work in many developed economies.

Since work is an important constituent of social life and a central aspect of human endeavour (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Kalleberg and Hewison, 2012), research in the fields of sociology and cultural studies has tried to understand how people are affected by the precarious conditions they experience while carrying out that work. The attention to precariousness at work has been further intensified by the variety of references to the so-called transformations in labour taking place in many advanced societies (Bauman, 2005, 2013; Beck, 2000; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Castells, 1996). Many of these sources have pointed to the shift from standard, permanent and full-time employment arrangements to nonstandard and short-term ones. For example, Boltanski and Chiapello (2002) argued that changes in labour conditions are the outcome of a 'new spirit of capitalism' which emerged during the 1980s. According to them, these transformations were set off by the 'breaking down of large integrated companies into a series of small units that were connected through network of contacts.' This led to the rise of 'temporary work, sub-contracting, outsourcing activities that did not belong to the company's core business, etc.' (p.18). They noted that, under these conditions, labour and employment relations became increasingly uncertain and precarious.

Although precariousness has become a feature of many occupational fields, it has been described by some academics as particularly emblematic of labour in the cultural and creative industries (Gill, 2002, 2007; McRobbie, 2002; Ross, 2007). Because of their unique role as producers of culture as well as their possession of ‘capacities which relate to wealth creation, urban regeneration and social cohesion’ (Gill and Pratt, 2008, p.13), cultural workers have been portrayed in some policy and academic circles as people with the ability to withstand various forms of occupational risk. According to such ideas, ‘the new creative workforce is meant to be young, multi-skilled, flexible, psychologically resilient, independent, single and unattached to a particular location (Ellmeier, 2003, p.3). This is why, according to Ross (2007), creative workers have seemed ‘more likely to universalize the traditionally precarious work profile of the artist’ (p.13).

Various empirical studies of the creative and cultural industries have shown how experiences of precariousness can be seen in creative workers’ negotiation of short-term, insecure and casual work in conditions of structural uncertainty (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Such work has been identified as being freelance and project-based (Christopherson, 2004), risky as a result of international competition and foreshortened careers (Neff et al. 2005) as well as unstable due to rapid technological changes in the sector. In her research about new media workers, Gill (2009) highlighted the pressures her respondents faced in obtaining and maintaining a constant flow of work during peak periods as well as the health risks which accompanied their lack of rest during tight work schedules. These pressures, according to Gill, existed amidst a lack of work benefits such as pensions and inability-to-work insurance. To lower their risks, workers combined various new media projects or took up jobs in other fields in order to raise sufficient income for their personal upkeep.

Empirical findings like those mentioned above have helped to advance knowledge about precarious conditions in the cultural industries in general²⁰. However, what it means to ‘experience’ precariousness needs to be properly contextualized. Neilson and Rossiter (2008) have argued that precariousness is not ‘an empirical object that can be presupposed as stable and contained’ (p.63). By this, they mean that precariousness cannot be limited ‘to any single set of experiences, social situations, geographical sites or temporal rhythms’ (p.64). Rather, precariousness and the experience of precariousness are inconstant but depend on a variety of economic, social or cultural conditions. According to them,

Played out over diverse and at times overlapping institutional fields, the sign and experience of precarity is multiplied across competing regimes of value: surplus value of precarious labour, scarcity value of intellectual property rights, cultural and social values of individual and group identities, legal and governmental values of border control, etc. (p.64)

Following this, I argue that the experience of precariousness is contingent on a broad range of factors which are contextually determined. This implies that current understandings of precariousness need to take into account the conditions of labour in different geographic, economic and cultural contexts. This is the approach I adopt in my investigation of how new media workers in the Nigerian context experience precariousness in their labour. I explain this in more detail in next section.

5.2.2 A Contextual Perspective on Precariousness

In their research on creative labour in the cultural industries, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) highlight two meanings of the term ‘insecurity’. According to them, the first is used in ‘an objective, measurable sense concerning conditions and length of job tenure’ (p.35), while the second has a more subjective meaning which refers to what is

²⁰ However, not all empirical research on new media labour conform with the view that such work is carried out under precarious conditions. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf (2007), found that work in internet companies in Germany were more stable and secure.

suggested when people say they ‘feel insecure.’ Hesmondhalgh and Baker note that the latter includes people’s concerns about their safety which might involve ‘threats to physical health through injury and contact with harmful substances, and physical effects of mental states such as anxiety and stress’ (p.35). In most of the literature about the insecure and precarious conditions of new media work, what has been understood as workers’ subjective experiences has been largely informed by what they (or the researchers) perceive as insecure and precarious based on the general notion of ‘secure’ work within the context it is carried out. Thus, in advanced economies (where much of the research has been conducted), the experiences of creative workers have typically been measured against ‘secure’ and ‘stable’ conditions represented by full-time, regular and standardized employment. Put differently, work is understood as insecure (for example, when it lacks benefits) because it fails to meet the criteria of what is considered to be secure (for example, when it includes benefits such as pension and insurance). Similarly, labour may be deemed precarious when it is based on short-term, intermittent project-based labour compared to work that is characterized by regular or standard employment. In other words, what is understood as precarious or insecure labour has often been based on what people ‘feel’ as insecure; namely, work that lacks the features of full-time, regular and standardized work.

In developed countries, such understandings of precarious and insecure work may be justifiable because of their extensive history of formalized and regular labour (albeit alongside less formal modes of work carried out by working class people and women). In developing countries like Nigeria where informal labour arrangements have been historically predominant, a different view of precarious and insecure labour may be required. As Kalleberg and Hewison (2012) argue based on their research on the precarious conditions of work in less developed Asian countries,

“precarity” may sometimes be seen as a useful concept in Europe and in the more developed countries of Asia, where there have been social protections and where the notion of standard work retains some of its normative value. In other countries [...] where precarious employment may be seen as the norm, using this terminology may be considered of less relevance. (p.273)

For this reason, I contend that notions of precariousness which are based on the collapse of formal, standard work practices and the rise of temporary and insecure employment are also less relevant for describing the work experiences in the Nigerian context dominated by informal working conditions. As I discussed in Chapter 3, for many workers in Nigeria (within and outside the cultural industries), these informal conditions imply that labour has always been marked by high levels of precariousness and insecurity, one which has become ingrained in the cultural context of Nigeria, or the 'way of life' of many people including my research participants. Rather than focussing on precariousness in the sense of employment security, my study of new media work in Nigeria unearthed other factors which appeared to be more relevant to that context. Specifically, I identified a relationship between workers' use of pirated software and their experiences of insecurity, instability and risk. In other words, my respondents' use of pirated software brought about conditions that made their work feel insecure and unstable. By this, I am not suggesting that software piracy was the exclusive cause of precariousness among the new media workers in my research. Rather, I am identifying software piracy as an important contributor to their experiences of precariousness in Nigeria, one which cannot be ignored in studies of new media labour specifically in the Nigerian context. This importance stems from the fact that (as I discussed in Chapter 3), software piracy is a feature that is endemic to new media work in Nigeria. In the next section, I engage with this topic of software piracy and explain its importance in discourses about precariousness in the lives of new media workers in Nigeria.

5.2.3 The precariousness of software piracy

Piracy has been defined in many ways (see Gallegos, 2000; Gopal and Sanders, 1998; Limayem et al., 2004; WIPO, 2002) but practically all the definitions converge in the notion that it is the unauthorized copying or reproduction of material belonging to another. Essentially, piracy refers to the duplication of goods that involves the infringement of copyright. Even though piracy has been treated by some scholars within ethical frames (for example, Moores and Chang, 2006; Gupta et al., 2004;

Simpson et al., 1994; Wagner and Sanders, 2001), the fact that it constitutes a breach of copyright laws means that, essentially, piracy is illegal. Laws governing the infringement of copyright vary from one country to another (BSA, 2012) but Karaganis (2011) argues that these laws are too frequently applied from the perspective of the rights of software copyright owners and leave little space to engage with the causes of and the factors that lead people to create and use pirated goods. According to him, the pertinent factors that should be considered in policy and academic discourses around piracy are the high prices for media goods, the low incomes of people who consume them, and the availability of cheap technologies with which pirated goods are created. As he notes, the importance of these factors is underlined by their predominance in less developed economies where piracy is most widespread.

Broadly speaking, piracy in developing countries can be described as a consequence of the effort people make to keep up with the economic, cultural and technological developments of a globalized age. It stems from the fear of being excluded from local and international flows of information as a result of poverty and social inequality (Primo and Lloyd, 2011). Although globalization has contributed to the circulation of culture and knowledge across national boundaries, it has also been blamed for the gulf in wealth between developed and developing countries (Scholte, 2005; Shah, 2010) which has prevented people in the latter from accessing what is being circulated globally. Piracy in developing countries can therefore be understood as the attempt to bridge the global wealth gap by creating channels which serve as mechanisms for access to knowledge and information (Brown et al., 2011).

The global imbalance of information can therefore be said to be at the root of practices of piracy in countries like Nigeria. I would argue that this is more so for new media workers who must keep up with the advancements in their field which is particularly subject to technological transformations in a globalized world. To catch up with new trends and techniques in web design or digital animation, they often need to update their skills and their knowledge of various tools and software. The quickest and least expensive way for them to accomplish this is through software piracy. Yet, the

acquisition and use of pirated software has its own dynamics in the Nigerian context. These dynamics introduce experiences which represent an intensification of precariousness in the practice of new media work. This form of precariousness is marked by feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and risk while carrying out that work.

The precariousness of software piracy for new media workers in my research was based on the fact that my respondents felt insecure when using pirated software. This was because pirated software had disruptive consequences on their work. To explain this, I highlight two kinds of dynamics in relation to software piracy in the Nigerian context. The first draws on the fact that software piracy is illegal. According to Gill and Pratt (2008), precariousness in relation to work has referred to all forms of insecure, contingent, flexible labour including those that are ‘illegalized’ (p.3). Illegal work is characterized by insecurity, uncertainty, and risk because it contravenes public laws and is therefore susceptible to disruption and discontinuation by enforcers of such laws. Since software piracy is bound by laws against the violation of copyright and intellectual property (BSA, 2010; Karaganis, 2011), those who practice it are potentially under the threat of detainment by law enforcement agents. For this reason, software pirates typically operate in covert ways in order to avoid detection. Their activity can therefore be described as insecure and precarious because, by law, it is subject to abrogation (Karaganis, 2011).

The scope of software piracy’s illegality suggests that the production and willful consumption of pirated software are both illegal. This means that people who willfully acquire pirated software for production (as opposed to *producing* pirated software) are also guilty of piracy and copyright infringement. This is referred to as ‘end-user piracy’ (Gallegos, 2000; IIPA, 2009). For this reason, my research participants who purchased or acquired pirated software for their work of producing new media were constantly at conflict with piracy laws. They too were subject to the precarious circumstances associated with working under illegal conditions. This is because, under anti-piracy schemes (see Adobe, 2009), there appears to be a blurred boundary between those who produce pirated software for willful trademark counterfeiting or for resale on a commercial scale and those who obtain and use pirated software for other

kinds of production such as new media work. Here, two categories of people can be identified: first, people who *produce* pirated software for profit and, second, people who *use* pirated software for profit. As indicated above, both categories of people are liable for breach of copyright under anti-piracy laws. Most of my research participants regularly used pirated software in their work and therefore fell into the latter category. For this reason, many of them operated under precarious and insecure conditions characterized by the fears and concerns about being found out by enforcement agents and anti-piracy schemes of software companies.

The precariousness of software piracy in my research was also characterized by the dynamics of informality. Liang and Sundaram (2011) acknowledge that it is impossible to understand practices of piracy without understanding the conditions of informality in which they take place. This refers to ‘the social worlds in which piracy emerges, the forms of circulation and consumption in which it is implicated, and the fears and forms of social control that it generates’ (Liang and Sundaram, 2011, p.346). In Nigeria, the informal economy of software piracy is composed of producers and users coexisting in a symbiotic relationship. Those who produce pirated software for sale depend on the custom of others who rely on pirated software for use/production. As I explain in the following sections, transactions between both groups take place on a regular basis, but it is replete with distrust, risk and insecurity mostly experienced by those who purchase the software. This insecurity is caused by the realization that pirated software bought from producers do not always function as expected. In many cases, this occurs because the pirated software are sold as either incomplete products (stripped of important functionalities) or trial software camouflaged as fully licensed copies. The informality of software piracy thus consigns new media workers to conditions of uncertainty and insecurity regarding the software they use for their work and therefore undermines their ability to carry out such work.

Apart from physical outlets where pirated software are sold, concerns about trust and security are also present when illegal software are obtained freely from unauthorized

internet websites. This is because malware and computer viruses²¹ have been known to accompany software which are downloaded from these illegal websites (BSA, 2009; Gallegos, 2000). As I discuss below, new media workers in my research who obtained software from such websites were often concerned about the severe damage that could be inflicted on their computers and its potential effect on their work.

In summary, these two dynamics of software piracy point to two manifestations of precariousness: the first concerns to the illegal status of software piracy while the second pertains to the informal economy of software piracy in Nigeria. In the first, new media workers are concerned with questions about the lawful implications of piracy and its potential disruptions to their work; in the second, they are concerned with doubts about whether the software will work as expected and the consequences of such a situation on their work. Henceforth, I refer to the former as the ‘legal tensions’ of software piracy and the latter as its ‘occupational tensions’. In drawing attention to these ‘tensions’, my aim is not to claim that they are unique to the Nigerian context. As Karaganis (2011) has shown in a comprehensive study on media piracy in developing countries like Brazil, India, Russia, South Africa and Bolivia, these issues are visible in other contexts as well. Rather, my intention is to underline the relevance of software piracy as a manifestation of precariousness in Nigeria as well as how it is experienced by new media workers there.

As is the argument in this chapter (which contributes to that of the whole thesis), such a perspective of precariousness among new media workers in Nigeria varies from findings on new media work in the West which dominates the literature. In the following sections, I draw on my empirical data to discuss how these tensions were visible among those I researched. I begin in the next section by examining the reason behind the prevalence of software piracy among my research participants. As I show, the high cost of software was the most important cause of widespread software piracy among my respondents.

²¹ A virus is a piece of code that is capable of copying itself and typically has a detrimental effect, such as corrupting the system or destroying valuable data.

5.3 The Context of Software Piracy in New Media Work

In the previous section, I highlighted the ways by which the use of pirated software potentially intensifies the precarious conditions of new media workers in Nigeria. In this section, I build on those ideas by drawing on my empirical data to provide evidence on how this took place. In doing this, I consider it useful to briefly examine the prevalence of software piracy in Nigeria in order to further contextualize my empirical analysis. The purpose of this is to show how economic concerns are at the root of the pervasiveness of software piracy in Nigeria – or at least among those I researched. So, in this section, I first highlight the most commonly used software among my participants; second, I discuss the impact on the high costs of these software; and third I examine the resulting pervasiveness of pirated software.

5.3.1 Commonly used new media software in Nigeria

There are different types of software used for various tasks in new media production. Based on the comments of those I interviewed, there are software which are considered important because of specific functionalities or simply because they are widely used by new media workers in Nigeria. There are also software which perform operations that are common across the different types of new media work such as those involved in the manipulation of images in digital animation, casual video games production and the graphical aspects of web design. One of the most widely regarded image editing software is Adobe Photoshop which owned by Adobe Systems, a leading company in the global software industry. In Nigeria, the use of Photoshop is widespread. For many of my research participants, the combination of sophistication, flexibility and user-friendliness has made Photoshop an essential work tool. As one of them described it, ‘Photoshop is in a class of its own. It’s a tool that one cannot live without.’

For web design work, Adobe Dreamweaver was popular among my research participants. At the time of writing, Dreamweaver formed part of Adobe’s Creative

Suite (CS) of software along with Adobe Fireworks (an image editing software developed specifically to manipulate images for websites), Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Flash and other related software. Since these software have been developed to integrate seamlessly with each other and therefore make web design work faster and easier, they have arguably become the standard for web design practice in Nigeria. However, there are still other web designers who employ simpler tools like Notepad (which is free) and other similar text editors to build websites. For animation work, the two most popular software for 3D animation (at the time of writing) were owned by the same software company, AutoDesk. They are Maya and 3D Studio Max. For 2D animation, a variety of software applications are employed for different operations. While Adobe Flash was used by some of my respondents, others adopted lesser known software such as Toon Boom Studio (developed by Toon Boom Inc.) along with Adobe Illustrator and Adobe AfterEffects which are included within Adobe's Creative Suite. For the creation of casual video games, Adobe Flash was the main software used by my respondents. Although HTML5 (the latest version of HTML at the time of writing) has increasingly been adopted in the West for creating web and mobile-based video games, it was not used by most of the online games creators in my research. Instead, I found that Adobe Flash was the most common software for creating games.

With regard to operating systems (OS)²², Microsoft Windows which runs on IBM-based computers (generally referred to as personal computers, or PCs) was most common among my respondents. Other types of operating systems are the Macintosh (or Mac, which runs on Apple computers) and open-source platforms such as Linux, FreeBSD or Ubuntu but these were less common in my research. The popularity of Windows OS among my participants also mirrors global statistics which ranks it as the most widely used OS (Karaganis, 2011; StatCounter, 2014). In agreement with Karaganis (2011) who draws on data from developing countries, I contend that the popularity of Windows OS can be attributed to its illegal and widespread distribution through software piracy. As I show next, the wide patronage of Windows OS, Adobe

²² Operating Systems are the underlying software on which all other software (such as Photoshop, Flash and Dreamweaver) depend for their functioning.

Creative Suite, 3D Studio Max and other software used by new media workers is mostly due to their availability in cheap and affordable pirated forms.

5.3.2 Software and the crisis of affordability in new media work

Most of the software highlighted in the previous section are premium commodities. They are developed and maintained by large multinational firms which include some of the most profitable companies in the world and whose successes are hinged on the quality and cost of their products. As mentioned above, these companies include Microsoft, Adobe and Autodesk whose products are widely used by new media workers. According to Karaganis (2011), these firms choose to retain the high costs of their software for two reasons: first, to protect the pricing structure in high-income countries where most of their profits are generated; and second, to maintain their dominant positions in developing countries when local incomes rise.

To illustrate this, it is useful to note that the cost of Microsoft Windows OS in a less developed country like Nigeria is the same or higher than in countries like UK and US despite the disparity in local incomes. For example, the minimum wage in Nigeria is currently about £750 annually while it is about £11,500²³ in the UK and £9,800 in the US. Also, the earnings of a new media worker in Nigeria can be estimated to fall within the range of £1,600 and £4,300 annually²⁴. Yet, Windows 8.1 (the latest version at the time of writing) costs between £99 and £160 in Nigeria which (according to the official Microsoft website) is approximately the same price for the software in the UK (where it is between £99 and £189) and higher than in the US (which is between £76 and £130). Similarly, at the time of writing, the price for each software in Adobe Creative Suite was approximately £12 per month²⁵ across the African market. This price was the same for the US and slightly less than that for the UK (£14.29 per

²³ Based on an hourly wage of £6.50 at 37.5 hours a week.

²⁴ Since statistical figures on the income of new media workers in Nigeria are not available due, in part, to the absence of publicly available data, these figures are estimates based on my interactions with them.

²⁵ Adobe's software pricing plans are subscription-based and operate in such a way that the software are like services which are rented by users on a monthly basis. This system was designed to limit piracy.

month). Apart from Adobe software, other tools for animation or for the production of casual video games are similarly expensive or not easily available for purchase. For example, Toon Boom's software for 2D animation ranges from £160 to about £600 and has to be shipped from abroad since there are no local resellers in Nigeria (as confirmed by the company's website). In the same way, Autodesk 3ds Max (for 3D animation) is not available locally and has to be purchased online at the rental price of £160 per month or £3,100 for the full software license.

To give an indication of the challenges new media workers in Nigeria face in obtaining software for their work, I draw on the experiences of one of my research participants, Yvonne, who is a self-taught freelance web designer. Using savings from her previous work at a number of small companies, she decided to set up her own business but encountered financial difficulties while trying to buy web design software from Adobe's website. As she explained:

I tried to get the software by going online to Adobe's website. I noticed that they had three different types of pricing: for students, for enterprises and for businesses... I thought the student version wouldn't work for me so I had a look at the enterprise version. It was very expensive. After doing the conversion from dollars, I saw that it was far above my budget... If it was affordable, I would have been able to buy it with my bank debit card.

Eventually, Yvonne had to purchase pirated copies of the software which she uses on different computers. According to her:

The most recent software I got was from a friend even though I don't know where he got it from. I use it on my desktop. For my laptop, I got the software (which is the original version) from the school I trained at. It was Adobe CS4, the older version of Adobe's software. The latest is now CS6. I still have CS4 installed in my laptop and that's what I currently use. Actually, on my desktop, I have CS4 and CS5. I bought the CS5 at computer village for N1,000 [less than £4].

The high costs of original software and the fact that they do not reflect the low incomes in Nigeria negatively affect new media workers like Yvonne and lead them to patronize illegal software. Whenever I raised the topic of software piracy during my field interviews, many of my respondents openly expressed their frustration because they interpreted the excessive cost of software as a form of marginalization and injustice. For example, Kevin who works as a part-time web developer in his own small firm, believed that Nigeria should not be afforded the same treatment as others countries. In his view, such a situation inevitably leads to a rise in the patronage of cheaper alternatives.

I always say this: software giants like Adobe, Microsoft are not ready for the African market. If they're charging \$50 per software in the USA and they come to Nigeria to do the same, they are only kidding themselves. People won't buy because they can't afford it. They would rather go for something cheaper (Kevin, web developer).

Kevin's argument is based on his own experiences of the economic realities of life and labour in Nigeria. According to him, it was necessary to abandon his small business for a period in order to look for a job to raise enough finances for his personal upkeep and for the business. For Kevin, as with many of my respondents, new media work provided an opportunity to engage in what he believed to be meaningful work and from which he hoped to earn sufficient income for daily sustenance. Due to high competition for the limited employment opportunities in engineering, accounting or other professional fields²⁶, many of my respondents believed that new media work provided an alternative into the world of work through self-employment. However, the constraints that accompanied the purchase of the original tools required for such work presented obstacles for many people. In the absence of pirated alternatives, most of my respondents would have been left with the option of seeking other sources of income or of giving up on new media work altogether. As some them commented:

²⁶ According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 23.90 percent in 2011 from 21.10 percent in 2010. In 2010, Lagos was 27.60. Also, at least two-thirds of unemployed youth are between 15 and 24 years of age (Akande, 2014).

Software is really the heart of anything you do. Without the software, the hardware is just a piece of metal or plastic. But at the same time, mainly in the Third World – with emphasis on the *Third World* – you just can't ask someone to do a quick job that will fetch him something like 10,000 [£40] and tell him that he'll need to buy software that will cost him over 100,000 [£400]... People would have just ended up doing something else. They would probably have stuck to architecture, engineering or something like that (Kevin, animator).

But look at this, how do I get this thing unless I have \$300 [£200] to spend on Adobe Master Collection (I'm sure it's even more than that now...like \$600 [£380]). Unless I have that amount, I can't buy it, so I might as well just sit down and forget it (Shola, web designer).

The comments above suggest that rather than decide to 'just sit down and forget it' (as indicated by Shola above), new media workers in Nigeria prefer to 'go for something cheaper' (as noted by Kelvin previously) as long as it is available. Since their livelihoods depend on these software, less expensive alternatives are inevitably the preferred option. Martin, a project manager at a web design company presents these sentiments more pragmatically:

The issue is that if you sell Microsoft Office to me for 10,000 [£40] and there's another one going for only 500 [£2], I won't think twice.

The cheaper option advocated for is pirated software. With the high prices of software required for new media work and with the wide availability of cheap, pirated alternatives in Nigeria, it was not surprising that the majority of my respondents resorted to pirated software. As an alternative, pirated software gave people like Yvonne, Kevin and others the opportunity to set up their new media businesses, carry out projects for clients and earn some income for their daily upkeep. In the next section, I conclude the discussion on the context of software piracy in new media work by examining the range of sources from which my respondents obtained them.

5.3.3 The pervasiveness of software piracy in new media work

In Nigeria, we get software everywhere: in Ibadan, in Ojota, in Ikeja... there's software everywhere and it's very cheap (Melvin, web designer).

There are different ways to obtain pirated software in Nigeria. Since the high cost of licensed software has led to a general preference for pirated products in Nigeria, there has also been a rise in the ubiquity of illegal versions. According to the 2011 report by Business Software Alliance, the rate of software piracy in Nigeria has averaged eighty-two percent from 2007 to 2011. Indeed, as the comment above suggests, there are a variety of places where pirated software are bought and sold in the country. In Lagos (which seems to have the largest market for pirated software in the country), illegal software is mostly associated with a popular cluster called the Otigba Computer Village (introduced in Chapter 3) which is located in a suburb called Ikeja. Also referred to as 'computer village', 'Ikeja' or 'Otigba', the cluster is widely patronized because of its broad range of cheap and available software. Most of my interviewees acknowledged that it was their primary source of software. The availability and low cost of pirated software was particularly convenient for owners of small web design companies in my research who take advantage by installing in several computers since original licenses (per workstation) are too expensive. As some of them commented:

Software is expensive but the Ikeja guys have made everything so easy for us and, with small change, you can get just about every software you want to get (Tony, web design company owner).

Most of our software are bought from the computer village (Christopher, web design company owner).

There are other packages that are pirated here in Nigeria or wherever they are pirated and you can get them right there in the computer village (Paul, web designer and company owner).

Although many of the stores in the cluster are formally registered and deal in legitimate products, many of them still offer pirated software as a way to meet their customers' needs or to attract more clients. As a result of the access to inexpensive reproduction equipment, retailers are able to duplicate software in large quantities and sell them very cheaply and thus entice potential clients – even those in search of original software. As one of my interviewees related:

The other day, I wanted to buy the original version of Norton Antivirus. And right there was a guy at the corner, showing me a pirated copy for 250 naira [less than £4]. That's like 1% of the cost of the original one. The software worked and I currently use it in my laptop (Kelvin, web developer).

Apart from the computer village, there are also other sources of cheap, pirated software in Nigeria. Indeed, the proliferation of pirated software extends from Lagos to other parts of the country. One of my respondents who initially operated in the northern region before relocating to Lagos explained that pirated software were first made available to him by traveling salespeople.

Well, retailers buy from Lagos and take it down to the North. So I bought from a computer store where they sell hard drives, CDs, empty CDs. They also sell software too (Adamu, web developer).

Since the early 2000s, rising access to the internet has opened up new channels for obtaining pirated software. By means of peer-to-peer networks, the internet has arguably become the most exploited channel for those who prefer not to buy pirated software from physical outlets. However, issues of cost, time and limited bandwidth for downloading large files appears to have restricted the widespread use of the internet as a means for obtaining software. One of my interviewees mentioned that his biggest challenge was to download heavy software because of the unreliability of internet connections. For such reasons, the internet had not gained as much popularity as had direct purchase from retailers during my field

work. Nevertheless, it did play an important role in the subversion of anti-piracy strategies which I discuss later.

Another well-known channel for acquiring illegal software among my research participants was through the unauthorized distribution of licensed software among friends or colleagues. In such cases, the point of departure is usually a licensed version of a software packaged in a compact disc (CD) which is lent to another person to install or transfer to a computer or onto a different portable storage device such as a USB disc. This in turn is distributed to anyone in need of it and, in this way, the chain of illegal installation continues interminably. Such methods of obtaining software became so widespread in Nigeria that they were commonplace even in institutional settings such as universities. This casual reproduction and distribution of licensed software for domestic or 'personal' use has led to the routinization of unauthorized copying. One of my interviewees who claimed to acquire his web design skills while at university, explained his experience in the following terms:

It was a situation whereby someone has access to software that is not particularly licensed to a lot of computers but just one. And maybe his friend has a copy of the source or installer and he just copies it and installs it in his system and another person looking for the same software copies it. I guess proliferation of software, as it were, goes on and on like that. So most of the time the first version of this software might actually be licensed to someone and might not actually be pirated but because people copy it and it goes from one hand to the other and goes on and on like that. [...] Yes it comes with the product key and it goes from one hand to another. Even if that is not the case on every occasion but that is the major case. [...] Initially the software was not something that was provided at school, but at a point in time, the instructor or lecturer actually gave out a version of the software which we multi-installed on our systems (Tom, web designer).

For most software users in Nigeria in the late 1990s (when computers were not as common as they currently are), the unbridled distribution and installation of

software was normal practice. This was partly because the wide availability and access to software (almost exclusively in its reproduced form) ensured that people did not appreciate the commodity value of software. Rather, software were perceived as digital goods that could be freely exchanged among people. As Tom acknowledged:

At the time it happened, truthfully it didn't cross anyone's mind that the software needed to be paid for and that it wasn't supposed to be distributed.

However, despite a growing awareness of software as a commodity, I found that such 'friendly exchanges' were still practiced by some of my research participants. For example, a participant who owns of a new media company and outsources many of his projects to freelance workers admitted that his primary source of software was through friends:

For me personally, what I did was to ask a friend to install it for me. That's how I got most of my software (Martin, new media company owner).

However, the commodity value of software is now being recognized and these 'friendly exchanges' are transforming into 'business transactions' consummated between friends but which are still far more affordable than buying original software licenses. An interviewee who identified himself as a freelance social media marketer related his experience when trying obtain software from 'a friend':

I went to meet a friend at the company where I worked before, because they use Apple computers there and they have the software I need. So I asked him to install the software for me. He decided to charge me for it but the amount he asked for was much lower than what it would have cost me to buy the original software. I left my laptop with him and he completed the installations in three or four days (Desmond, social media marketer).

To summarize, the availability of illegal software from markets, stores, the internet and through friends has greatly contributed to its widespread use in Nigeria. As I previously argued, this prevalence is, among other things, the outcome of widespread informality and the economic insufficiency experienced by those who use software in Nigeria. The preponderance and ubiquity of pirated software means that people have become accustomed to it. What Cross (2011) observed about piracy in his study of Mexico can easily be applied to Nigeria: ‘people have simply grown up in a pirate economy’ (p.321). For this reason, some of my respondents felt justified in their use of such software and exonerated themselves from guilt. For example:

Piracy is still at an all-time high. I think there’s nothing we’re going to do about that. It’s always going to be there. At some point, we’ve all used pirated software before (Martin, new media company owner).

Every web designer uses cheap software in Nigeria. I’m sure about that.

In Nigeria, people take software for granted and don’t see the value of using authenticated software. It’s not our fault, though (Sydney, animator).

Later, I show how these tendencies to excuse from blame were tempered by the ethical tensions which arise from using pirated software. In the next section, I examine the occupational and legal consequences (which I refer to as ‘tensions’) of using pirated software and how they manifest the precarious conditions involved in carrying out new media work in the Nigerian context. First, I discuss the occupational tensions which result from the informality of software piracy. Then I examine the legal tensions caused by its illegal status.

5.4 Pirate Practices and their Precarious Consequences

5.4.1 Informality and the occupational tensions of software piracy

By occupational tensions, I refer to those precarious conditions experienced by the new media workers in my research as a result of the informality around practices of software piracy. This informality relates to the dynamics involved in the circulation and consumption of pirated software. Essentially, occupational tensions are experienced as a result of the uncertainties and risks around the acquisition of pirated software. I identified two kinds of experiences: those that involved my respondents' dealings with fraudulent software retailers and those that related with their negotiation of dubious internet sources.

For the first, responses from my research participants showed that, as a result of the occasional deceitfulness of software retailers, many of them constantly live with awareness that the pirated software they purchase may not always functioning as expected. This is because some functionalities available in the original software are sometimes not accessible in the pirated versions they buy. As one of my participants explained:

Yes, there are features that you will not be able use on them. For example, with Photoshop, you can find a whole range of pirated copies around but there are features of it that you may not find in all of them. For instance, you won't find the 3D effect in them because they are not genuine copies. But for basic design functionalities, you'll be able to work with them (Tony, web designer).

Many times, these shortcomings of pirated software affect the quality of new media workers' output. For example, Andrew, a web developer at the new media company I researched as a participant observer, mentioned that pirated software prevented him and his colleagues from 'stretching [their] software to the limit' since they usually 'want to use every feature available on it.' As he explained:

It's a very fine line. Yes, all of us have at one time or the other used pirated software but we discovered at one point in web development work that something happened which is tied directly to the fact that it's not a full software. Something was done to it to make it not work as it should. When you need to use some feature, it's not there because it has been removed. That's why the software is cheap in the first place (Andrew, web developer).

Another interviewee who created video games as a freelancer mentioned that all his software were purchased abroad because he wanted to avoid the limitations of pirate versions which he believed were the only options for him in Nigeria.

In Nigeria the software I would have gotten for myself would have been pirated and would not have some of the functionalities I require because some of the functionalities actually need live internet updates. If I had pirated software I won't be able to do that and it would affect the quality of my work because I would have to try to make amends, cut corners in the game stories and do a mishmash of it (Ronald, video games creator).

The persistent use of pirated software among my respondents suggests that Ronald's²⁷ decision to avoid such software was not shared by many who, despite the absence of important functionalities in the software, are willing to endure its adverse effects on their work. Many of them were forced to endure the hassles and risks involved in buying pirated software from fraudulent retailers at software markets like the computer village mentioned earlier. Indeed, the computer village is notorious for dubious vendors who sell defective or nonfunctional products to unsuspecting customers. Some of the software sold at the computer village were incomplete, digitally altered, or merely trial versions which were deceitfully camouflaged as functional even though pirated. Although such software were sold as pirated versions, buyers were offered much less than what the retailers claimed they were. Such practices are archetypal of

²⁷ In fact, as he admitted, Ronald could buy original software from abroad because he received financial support from a wealthy patron. This further buttresses the economic roots of software piracy among new media workers: If they had the financial means (as Ronald did), they may have opted for original software – at least, to avoid the occupational risks associated with their pirated versions.

the underground, illegitimate activities associated with some portrayals of the informal economy (Webb et al., 2009).

For many new media workers in Nigeria, even though pirated software serve as an antidote to the global imbalance of information and knowledge, the informal nature of their circulation actually contribute to maintaining that imbalance. This is because defective software (which arise from such informal environments) adversely affect the quality of products that new media workers produce and hamper their ability to compete in the global space. Thus, while the practice of software piracy tries to bridge the global wealth gap by creating alternative channels for access to knowledge and information, the informality of circulation and consumption (Liang and Sundaram, 2011) which characterize those channels introduce further barriers on workers' ability to compete globally. Neff et al. (2005) note that, 'in order to compete within an increasingly worldwide labor market, [new media] workers internalize the need to make cultural products that are innovative, unique and less expensive' (p.325). In contexts like Nigeria where the use of substandard and defective pirated software is very common, the ability for workers to effectively compete internationally is highly restrained. Beyond the global, this situation also affects them in the local arena. While people like Ronald rely on wealthy patrons to purchase original software from abroad, others are not so fortunate and have to 'make amends' by 'cutting corners' and producing bad quality work. This potentially puts them at a disadvantage and heightens the precariousness of their work; thanks to the fluid and ephemeral nature of the informal economy (Meagher, 2007), when people cannot compete in one area, they look for other means of survival.

Some of my respondents related how they were victims of the deceitful and fraudulent practices of software retailers. For example, Yvonne (whom I discussed in an earlier section) related her experience as follows:

I bought a copy of Adobe CS5 from Computer Village for 1,000 naira [£4] and the person who sold it to me told me that it was a complete version and that it had the keys preloaded and all that. I knew it wasn't an original version but I expected that, as

a pirated version, it would still work. To my surprise, after 10 days it started requesting for the original product key which had not been included. It was actually a trial version and so I had to remove it from my system and search for another one. (Yvonne, web designer)

The risks of buying software from fraudulent retailers in the computer village therefore go beyond the mere absence of certain software functionalities. As Yvonne's experience suggests, they can result in a total disruption of work. They lead to tensions in the occupational lives of new media workers which are apparent in the decisions they have to make about whether to save costs through the purchase of pirated software or to suffer the discomforts and hassles such as that experienced by Yvonne. As I highlighted previously, since the cost of licensed software is prohibitive for many, the available options open to new media workers also includes the abandonment of work altogether. Furthermore, the informal economy of software in Nigeria makes it complicated to seek compensation for losses incurred like Yvonne's. There are several reasons for this. First, the methods put in place by the state to curb such fraudulent behaviour by software vendors have been known to be very ineffective. Second, due to the highly informal setting under which transactions occur at the computer village, it is often futile for buyers to seek redress for any harm done to them. As my respondents confirmed, some retailers at the cluster do not own stores but peddle their goods around the market; and thus tracing them is a potentially arduous process.

Third, the low cost of the software relative to the effort needed to follow up on cases of fraud discourages victims from pursuing legal action. Fourth, since buyers are implicitly aware of the risks involved in purchasing software from such retailers, there is a tendency for them to accept a share of the blame for their misfortune. Finally, by purchasing software at the computer village, buyers are indirectly complicit in the illegal act of software piracy and risk being indicted by enforcement agents (I discuss this in more detail in the next section). In short, buying pirated software from the computer village often led my respondents into what I call an 'informality trap' – one which is characterized by their inability to directly reverse whatever adversity accompanies their acquisition of pirated software (by returning the software or by

seeking compensation). This ‘informality trap’ is a precarious condition because those caught in it are neither aware of the disruptive consequences to their work, nor of the extent or the duration of this disruption.

It was the desire to avert such situations that persuaded some of my respondents to discontinue their patronage of the computer village and adopt alternative channels for obtaining software. As one of my interviewees commented:

I don't go to Computer Village for anything because I don't trust them especially after an incident in which I was sold an inferior piece of hardware (Desmond, social media marketer).

Another respondent who claimed to have stopped his previous patronage of the computer village noted that he had turned to internet as his main source of illegal software.

Oh no, I don't buy things from there because I don't trust those guys in computer village unless I take my computer there myself. In fact, we don't use pirated software anymore, we use what we call illegal downloads (Shola, web designer).

However, such illegal software downloads from pirate websites are not without their own risks and challenges. On one hand, some of the software used for new media work have large file sizes and therefore downloading them requires the availability of high bandwidth internet which (as I discuss in Chapter 6) was not easily obtainable for many of my research participants. On the other hand, internet sources for pirated software have been known to infect users' computers with viruses, malware or tools for remotely controlled cyber crime. According to industry research carried out in 2006, twenty-five percent of websites which offered access to pirated software and piracy related tools distributed malicious code that potentially undermined the performance of users' computers (IDC, 2006). These websites operate by exploiting vulnerabilities in the users' computers to install unwanted software automatically and

without permission. Although it does not occur all the time, the risks of being infected by computer viruses appear to be higher for users who download illegal software from suspicious websites and my respondents expressed their fears about them:

Of course I'm afraid; fears of spyware, malware, etc coming with these software
(Kevin, web developer)

Piracy can come off worse for users, because the software can damage their computers
(Tony, web designer)

Therefore, despite its availability as an alternative to purchasing from fraudulent vendors in the computer village and elsewhere, the internet as a source for pirated software posed genuine challenges for new media workers in my research. In addition, the internet (and the perils of malware) played an even more vital role in how my respondents dealt with the challenges of anti-piracy systems. This is issue I discuss in the next section where I examine the tensions which emanate from the legal consequences of using pirated software.

5.4.2 Legal tensions of software piracy

The thing is that I don't want a situation in which I'll be online and get detected for having a fake license; and my programs will shut down or something. I just want to have the software and to be able use them without any problems (Osaze, web designer).

The comment above was made by an interviewee whose illegal software had previously been detected by anti-piracy systems online. In his attempt to regain access to the software, he lost most of the files in his web design project. His case serves as a good introduction to this section because gives an example of the kinds of legal tensions experienced by some of my participants. The illegality of software piracy in Nigeria and many other countries implies that governments and especially software companies and their agencies are constantly developing new strategies to limit its spread and apprehend software pirates (BSA, 2010, 2011). Here, I focus on the tactics

my respondents adopted to cope with the anti-piracy campaigns of software companies and their agents. I also show how these tactics contribute to the tensions experienced in carrying out new media work in Nigeria – as evidenced by the case of Osaze above.

With regard to the practice of software piracy, Karaganis (2011) observed that small businesses are typically vulnerable to enforcement by software companies and governments because they are ‘often unable to afford operating fully within the licit economy’ of software. According to findings from a study of piracy in Russia, he noted that ‘a software-compliance audit or a raid could be a business-threatening experience’ for these firms (p.54). In contrast, larger firms are treated in less hostile terms primarily because of their bargaining power and the higher implications of the threat they carry to discontinue the patronage of certain software. To appease these firms, software companies like Adobe or Microsoft offer discounts or discriminatory pricing as a way to dissuade these firms from adopting open-source or other alternative software (Karaganis, 2011). Karaganis further noted that although a large percentage of their income is from these large firms, software companies continue to carry out enforcement programs against smaller businesses in order to maintain price levels in the market. Thus, small businesses remain at the bottom end of the power structures that support the anti-piracy strategies and campaigns of software companies.

These anti-piracy technologies adopted by software companies were well known to most of my respondents who are included among the small businesses at which they are targeted. It was common knowledge, for instance, that Adobe designed their software in such a way as to require users to activate them before they could function properly. For this, Adobe ensured that a registration or product key was needed to ‘unlock’ the software before installing it. Also, most of my respondents were aware of software tools called product key generators (also referred to as ‘keygens’ or ‘cracks’) which are freely available on the internet and which can be used to illegally ‘unlock’ licensed and original software. Such practices were discussed openly by some of my interviewees who were able to talk about them on the evidence of their own personal experiences.

Microsoft Office came pre-installed in the laptop when I bought it. For Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Fireworks and others, I downloaded the trial versions. I got the cracks from a friend. Basically, Adobe software are not free but there are trial versions. So the cracks help to get past the expiry dates of these trial versions (Jeremy, web designer and blogger).

What happens is this: you download the trial versions online and get the serial number somewhere else, like keygens and all that. I used to do that to get my feet wet with the programs (Orlando, web designer).

To prevent the messages from coming up, you need to activate the software. Since there are cracks now available, I go online sometimes to get them for certain softwares, not only Windows (Paul, web designer).

Despite their popularity, these practices are accompanied by a number of risks. One of them, which I highlighted earlier, is the danger associated with unknowingly installing computer viruses. This danger exists because product key generators (or 'keygens') are typically made available on websites which distribute viruses, malware and spyware (that is, software which self-install on computers and can track users' internet behaviour) without the user's permission. To avoid these perils, one of my participants described how he frequently assembles a database of product keys from various sources in order to unlock different types of software when required. Such practices are not peculiar to Nigeria. They are carried out by software pirates in many parts of the world, including countries like Mexico (Cross, 2011), India (Liang and Sundaram, 2011) and Russia (Sevneva and Karaganis, 2011). Indeed, the global proliferation of software piracy especially through the internet (Coleman, 2010) has led software companies to set up anti-piracy campaigns aimed at limiting the illegal circulation of their products.

Companies like Adobe, Autodesk and Microsoft which have been mostly affected by the surge in piracy (BSA, 2010; Karaganis, 2011) have deployed various technologies such as copy-protected discs and different forms of digital rights management (DRM).

The function of DRM systems is to verify software by requiring users to connect to a remote server containing the DRM application. For example, in 2005 Microsoft developed the Windows Genuine Advantage (WGA) tool with which computers connected to the internet were programmed to verify whether operating systems were properly licensed. Although these checks complicated the process of copying, they were still easily bypassed by software pirates (Fisher, 2007). However, one drawback of subverting these anti-piracy systems is that the software in question ceases to be updatable through the internet. This presented a challenge for some of my respondents who found it difficult to work online without being detected. Since their work relied heavily on the internet, they had to devise innovative ways to overcome this challenge. As one of them explained:

So far, there has been no need for me to upgrade my software. But to prevent automatic updates, the technique I use is to close all the applications whenever I'm connected to the Internet. So, I use the software on my laptop only when I am not working on the Internet and when I need to get on the Internet, I make sure that all of them are closed (Desmond, new media marketer).

The only thing you have to do is make sure not to go online at a certain period or you just stay quiet (Shola, web designer).

Nevertheless, there is always the danger of being detected.

It happens sometimes. Especially when you're working online. First of all it was with Windows. The moment Microsoft detects that your OS is not genuine, you'll have problems carrying out updates and other things online. [...] So what I do is to reformat. That's the only way. (Paul, web designer)

Reformatting (which Paul describes as 'the only way') refers to the act of deleting all data, programs and available memory from a computer and reinstalling all over. It is a tedious and potentially time-consuming process which typically requires carefully backing up one's system to ensure that valuable data is not lost. Despite the

inconveniences it causes, reformatting was one of the ways by which some of my respondents like Paul were able to resist the efforts made by the software companies to safeguard their intellectual property as well as their profits.

The anti-piracy schemes of software companies have also gone beyond methods based on copy-protection or DRM. From the early 2000s in Nigeria, measures against piracy have been instigated by software firms like Microsoft who, with the assistance of government-backed enforcement agencies, began to organize raids of shops to dispose of illegal software (Crawford, 2009). Agents of Microsoft and Adobe have also been authorized by the government to verify the presence of legal software installations in public and private organizations. Such legal steps taken by software companies along with technological strategies aimed at restricting the unlicensed usage of their products had an effect on some of my interviewees. For some, it was a reason to reflect on the possibility of purchasing licensed software. As some of them commented:

Well, we're working on getting or buying the genuine software because we're aware that Adobe is getting strict. [...] For Adobe software, we know that one has to have an Adobe ID and a license from them. We're working on that and actually started about five months ago. We're also thinking about getting Macs in the office and we know that it will be difficult to get software for those in Nigeria. The only option for that will be to buy the software (Melvin, web developer).

I remembered there was a time when Microsoft came to Lagos and they were arresting people, I remembered my dad was in Ibadan then and he had an original version. Right from time I've always known that you get softwares cheaper in Lagos, but later on I realized that they were illegal and Microsoft doesn't like that because it's not making any money for them (Shola, web designer).

I would like to suggest that comments like the ones above are the result of the legal tensions that arise from using pirated software. These tensions are manifested when people have to make a choice between the continued use of pirated software (with its concomitant risks and inconveniences) and the economic strain of acquiring licensed

software. It was obvious from my research that the challenges of dealing with anti-piracy contributed to the attitude of some of my respondents towards pirated software. As Paul (the web designer who reformatted his computer), admitted:

With all this I try to ensure that, when I get a new laptop, the Windows OS that comes with it is genuine so that I don't have to reformat it.

These legal and occupational tensions in the experiences of my research participants clearly demonstrate that precariousness of software practice among my respondents. However, their reaction to software piracy was not only shaped by external factors such as anti-piracy laws (“will I get caught?”) and occupational concerns (“will the software work?”). My findings revealed that some of my research participants were also aware of the ethical implications of using pirated software. I engage with this topic in the next and final section.

5.4.3 Ethical tensions and the moral economy of software piracy

By ethical tensions, I refer specifically to the moral dispositions of my respondents and their concerns about what is good and right in relation to their practice of software piracy. While the tensions discussed above were driven by insecurities such as the fear of being detected or apprehended by anti-piracy agents (legal tensions) or of the negative effects on the quality of their work (occupational tensions), the ethical tensions that arose among my research participants were based on questions about whether using pirated software was the ethical thing to do. From my research, these tensions were the result of internal processes of self-reflection triggered by two main considerations. First, from some of my participants' ideas about justice and fairness with respect to the rewards for one's labour. To them, piracy implied that individuals who built software (that is, software developers) were denied of their right to the [economic] reward for that work. As some of them commented:

Ethically it's wrong because if some guy created something to sell and make money, it is his intellectual property and should get his money's worth (Shola, web designer).

Software can only keep coming if we pay for them [...] because the software developer is also human and needs to get the rewards for his effort (Jeremy, web developer).

In these comments, my respondents appeared to show empathy towards the software developer (as an individual – not necessarily as an organization) whose right to the rewards for her/his labour is potentially undermined by piracy. I use the term ‘empathy’ (rather than merely ‘sympathy’) because of my respondents’ tendency to understand and share the feelings of the other by putting themselves in the same situation. As Jeremy further commented:

I prefer to pay for the software I use to make money because I would like others to pay for mine as well. If I develop software to sell, I expect everyone to pay for it in order to use it. [...] Software can only keep coming if we pay for them. ‘Cause if we spend time creating products and nobody pays for them but, instead, ‘cracks’ them... I tell you, we’ll be out of business (Jeremy)

In this comment, empathetic feelings are expressed towards those who create software and who expect to receive their due reward from it. Pratt (2000) observed in his study of new media workers that they ‘tended to self-identify with [software] coders’ in their working patterns (p.432). Those in my own research also appeared to self-identify with software developers but, in this case, they did so by appreciating the importance of receiving one’s due reward for work or, of not being denied the right to such reward by means of piracy.

The second factor which contributed to the ethical tensions experienced by my respondents in their use of pirated software involved the sense of guilt they felt for their actions. In this case, the issue was not so much the effect of piracy on ‘the other’ as it was on ‘the self’. On one hand it emanated from a sense of guilt because piracy seemed to contravene norms based on religious or moral codes of conduct, as the following comment indicates:

Using pirated software makes me feel guilty for robbing someone else off his business. [...] Personally, as a Christian, I feel guilty (Christopher, web designer).

On the other hand, it arose from the realization of not having achieved a certain economic or professional status:

Yes, I've felt guilty before. I didn't like the feeling that I was *still* using pirated software and that anytime I wanted to update it alerted me that it was a bad version. So I contacted my father's friend and he paid for the license and gave it to me (Adam, web designer).

I do feel guilty sometimes because I know I should be using original software. Definitely, when we get bigger as a company, we intend to use solely original software because pirated versions have their limitations. (Christopher, web designer).

In both cases, the sense of guilt appears to be the result of their inability to fulfill certain norms or expectations and which is made evident by their use of pirated software. To analyse these two sources of ethical tension observed in my respondents, I draw on moral economy theory to suggest that these tensions arise because of the nature of the new media industries in the Nigerian cultural context which, in exhibiting traits of a pre-modern economy' can be described as 'moral', having not attained the level of the so-called 'market society' characterized by rational, economic systems that subordinate human needs in the pursuit of economic gain (Bolton, 2006; Sayer, 2000). This is not to say that the new media industry in Nigeria is not driven by economic pressures or that the economic is entirely policed by the social norms, expectations and values of people. Rather, I argue that, to some extent, economic activity in the industry is a means to an end: the end being 'the maintenance, support and enhancement of the social' (Bolton, 2006, n.p).

To show how this emerged in my research, I draw on Sayer (2000) who described the moral economy as embodying 'norms and sentiments regarding the responsibilities and rights of individuals and institutions with respect to others' (p.79). As discussed above, some of my respondents expressed such sentiments (of empathy) towards the

rights of others (that is, software developers) with whom they self-identified. However, in my view, this act of self-identification was necessary because, without it, new media workers may have been felt justified to use pirated software because of their disadvantaged position in the global access to knowledge and information – as some of the quotes in this chapter indicate. Nevertheless, I argue that in a society driven by ‘moral’ ideals, values based on empathy potentially win through, as the following comment makes clear regarding software piracy:

I have a philosophy: If I steal from someone, another person will steal from you
(Andrew, web developer).

It will be a mistake, however, to understate the influence of the economic pressures faced by some of my respondents with respect to their use of pirated software. According to Sayer (2004), ‘markets and associated economic phenomena both depend on and *influence* moral/ethical sentiments, norms and behaviours.’ For this reason, ‘moral economy’ is concerned with ‘how economic activities of all kinds are influenced and structured by moral dispositions and norms,’ and conversely, how ‘those norms may be compromised, overridden or reinforced by economic pressures’ (p.2). There are therefore two key concepts that stand out: moral dispositions and economic pressures. While the moral dispositions of my respondents were shaped by their religious beliefs (for example, ‘as a Christian’) or by principles which guide their actions (‘If I steal from someone, another person will steal from you’), they were often diametrically opposed (and sometimes tempered) by the economic pressures of software purchase. In my view, this opposition was the cause of the ethical tensions they experienced.

While their moral sentiments are triggered off and sustained by the legal and occupational consequences of using pirated software, the economic strains associated with choosing the alternative route (that is, buying original software) appear to oppose their urge to follow their moral dispositions and do what seems like ‘the right thing’. The opposition of the economic and its apparent triumph (shown by my respondents’ sustained use of pirated software) leads to feelings of moral guilt: the awareness of

one's failure to carry out an action dictated by one's moral dispositions. This is reflected in the quote above: 'I do feel guilty sometimes because I know I should be using original software.' In this situation, it may be inferred that the economic pressures associated with software piracy prevail over the moral ones. Nevertheless, for many of my respondents, this condition was not a permanent one. Rather than completely resign to their present situation and, in the process, allow economic forces 'consume and override the values and norms of the noneconomic realm' (Bolton, 2006), some of my research participants made comments that revealed an attempt to preserve their moral dispositions, albeit in aspirational terms:

When we have the money, we intend to buy the originals (Christopher, web designer).

We are looking to officially license all the applications we are using, but however we would do it as time goes on (Diane, animator).

Well, we're working on getting or buying the genuine software (Melvin, web developer).

I argue that the hopeful ambitions captured by the comments above achieve two purposes: first, they lessen the feelings of guilt that accompany the use of pirated software; second, they indicate a desire to prioritize moral dispositions over prevailing economic forces – despite the apparent subjugation of the latter over the former. Overall, for the new media workers in my research, I argue that these aims converge into one: to ease the ethical tensions that arise from the use of pirated software. However, although the comments above suggest that the only way to achieve this aim was by 'getting or buying the genuine software', this was not the case for all my respondents.

Another method adopted to overcome these tensions was the use of free and open-source alternatives in place of the pirated software. Open-source software are those whose source code is shared with the public and which can be downloaded freely. Although, in some cases, they are not as popular or effective as their commercial

software equivalents²⁸, open-source alternatives often perform the same functions and carry out similar processes. However, free and open-source software typically suffer from the ‘network effects’ and lock-in effects of software usage. The theory of ‘network effects’ refers to the idea that the value of a software increases with the number of people who use it. Thus, the more people use a particular software, the more valuable it becomes to them and, consequently, the higher its chance of attaining a status as industry standard. ‘Lock-in’ follows from network effects. It occurs as a result of the costs involved in adopting a different type of software: people become ‘locked into’ a particular software when it becomes difficult to switch to another having become accustomed to the first. Although the persistent use of pirated software has been known to reinforce network and lock-in effects for commercial software like those of Microsoft and Adobe (Karaganis, 2011; Katz, 2005) – also for some of my research participants – I argue that open-source software are more suited to moral economies like the new media industry in Nigeria where the conflict between people’s moral dispositions and their economic pressures come to fore. In my research, not all my respondents had adopted open-source tools and software (which also includes free tools and online resources) but I suggest that, eventually, it will become the norm for new media workers – particularly as a way to ease their ethical tensions. The following comment offers an example of this possibility:

I wouldn’t deny that I use pirated software but over time I decided to use open source. [...] But over time I fell in love with open source softwares because I get softwares that I can use without paying for them. Notepad for example is free and open source, so I use it to build websites from the scratch (David, web/video games developer).

Similarly, when asked whether they would be adversely affected by the nonavailability of pirated software, the following responses were recorded:

It won’t really affect me because, for now, I use some free tools available such as the one I downloaded recently called ‘Coda’ (Jeremy, web designer).

²⁸ For example, some of my respondents mentioned that open-source image editing tools like GIMP were inferior to commercial software like Adobe Photoshop.

I would neither say yes or no because somehow I engage myself so much online and take one or two packages online from some schools and computer outfits. So, even if you don't have the software, there are websites now and the vast knowledge and resources on the Internet (Paul, web designer).

In conclusion, although the persistent and illicit use of pirated software by my respondents seems to contradict claims about a moral economy in new media work in Nigeria, I have shown that this is not necessarily the case for two reasons. First, I showed how the moral dispositions of some of respondents were sustained by their aspirational desires to purchase original software in the midst of acute economic pressures to maintain the status quo with pirated software. Second, I showed that the adoption of open-source software has the effect of preserving the moral economy within which my participants operated in the face of the economic pressures which lead them to adopt pirated software.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how understandings of precariousness in new media work can take into account the specific conditions of labour that exist in different cultural contexts. I have argued that, in the Nigerian context, precariousness does not need to be evaluated only from the perspective of a collapse of formal, standard work practices and the rise of temporary and insecure employment. As I explained in Chapter 3, such an analysis will count for little in contexts like Nigeria which have been dominated by informal working conditions for long periods of its existence. Rather than focusing on precariousness from the standpoint of employment security, this chapter focused on software piracy (a key issue in Nigeria) and the experiences of insecurity that arise from new media workers' acquisition and use of pirated software. To this end, I examined not only how practices of software piracy among new media workers are the outcome of precarious conditions of life and labour but also how they represent an important site where precariousness is experienced and negotiated.

In my analysis, I identified three ways by which the new media workers in my research experienced precariousness. First, through the occupational tensions that arise from the informal economy of software piracy in Nigeria (especially Lagos). These occur when my respondents purchase pirated software from untrustworthy vendors who dot the local software market, or when they download from harmful internet sources. The tensions are revealed when the acquired software do not function as expected or when users are compelled to deal with the dubious retailers. The second is through the legal tensions associated with software piracy. In this case, my respondents are faced with the challenge of dealing with the anti-piracy schemes instituted by governments and software organizations. These legal tensions are manifested when, due to the strain inflicted on them by these systems, software users must decide between paying for original licenses (amid their inadequate economic situation) or enduring the challenges of anti-piracy.

Occupational and legal tensions inexorably lead to the ethical tensions associated with software piracy among my respondents. In discussing ethical tension, I drew on the

moral economy theory to show how my respondents were had to decide between following the dictates of their social norms and values (their moral dispositions) or conceding to the economic forces of software. I argued that although the economic pressures appeared to prevail over the moral ones (shown by my respondents' persistent use of pirated software), their feelings of guilt which were reinforced by the legal and occupational tensions they experienced, led them to hold on to their moral dispositions, albeit in hopeful and aspirational ways. While the present solution was to give in to the economic pressures by continuing with cheaper and more affordable pirated software, they expressed desires to purchase original licenses 'in the future', when, as they hoped, they would be in a better economic position. In this way, they justified their actions and eased their ethical tensions. However, I also mentioned that purchasing original software was not the only way to ease this tension. I showed how some of my respondents had resorted to free and open-source software as alternatives to commercial ones, despite the social and economic forces (such as network and lock-in effects) which hamper them.

Overall, I argue that my respondents' ability to respond and, to an extent, overcome the precarious and insecure conditions associated with their use of pirated software should be understood as a positive and optimistic aspect of new media work in Nigeria. Despite the challenges that accompany software piracy, as well the global imbalances and power structures that foster and sustain it, it is important to investigate, highlight, and assess (as this chapter has tried to do) the means and channels adopted to overcome it by those who suffer from its consequences. This is even more pertinent for workers who operate outside the context of the Global North where most of the research on creative and cultural work has been conducted. In the next chapter, I continue with this theme by examining how entrepreneurialism was employed among the new media workers in my research in response to the infrastructural challenges prevalent in the Nigerian context.

Chapter 6

Entrepreneurialism and the Negotiation of Infrastructural Breakdown

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I focussed on software piracy as a manifestation of precariousness among the new media workers in my research. In this chapter, I discuss their entrepreneurial practices when confronted with infrastructural breakdown. As with software piracy, I show how new media workers' response to infrastructural breakdown is as a manifestation of entrepreneurialism in the Nigerian context.

In dealing with theme of entrepreneurialism, I first discuss current concepts and theories about entrepreneurialism in new media and cultural work to determine whether they conform with conditions in Nigerian context. Examining concepts like 'venture labour' (Neff, 2012) and 'forced entrepreneurship' (Oakley, 2014), I argue that ideas about entrepreneurialism in the Western-based literature are inadequate for explaining the situation in Nigeria. Second, to show this, I draw attention to the informal economy in Nigeria which I describe as the root of the entrepreneurial behaviour found among my respondents. In doing this, I propose the term 'making-do entrepreneurialism' which tries to capture the kind of entrepreneurialism among new media workers appropriate to the Nigerian context – one that is manifested in the way they negotiate the challenges of electricity and internet access failure.

Third, to examine this form of entrepreneurialism, I draw on theories of entrepreneurship from mainstream economics to highlight three characteristics of entrepreneurs: uncertainty management, innovation, and alertness to profit opportunities. I examine how each of these characteristics were lived and experienced by those in my research. In relation to the first, I discuss the uncertainties of electricity and internet access for new media workers in Nigeria and how they manage them. In the second, I examine the innovative ways by which new media workers negotiate

these infrastructural challenges and, in the third, I discuss the motivational factors that contribute to their alertness to the opportunities available through new media work.

Overall, this chapter shows how the form of entrepreneurialism among new media workers in my research differs from ideas put forward in the literature, primarily in areas related to historical origin, practices and motivations. Also, I show that this conceptualization of entrepreneurialism in the Nigerian context is a positive and optimistic one which is based on the innovative capacity of the new media workers in my research to improvise in the face of difficulties.

6.2 Entrepreneurialism in Cultural Labour

As I discussed in Chapter 2, entrepreneurialism is one of the features of new media work that frequently surface in the literature (Christopherson, 2004; Gill, 2007, 2010; Neff et al, 2005, Neff, 2012; Oakley, 2014). It is also one of the features which I have classified as extrinsic to new media work, based on its dependence on the context where such work is carried out. In this section, I examine how entrepreneurialism has been treated in the literature, drawing on two specific conceptualizations ('venture labour' and 'forced entrepreneurship') which emerge from its manifestations in Western countries. In the discussion, I trace the general outlines of the discourse on entrepreneurialism before engaging with these concepts.

Neff et al (2005) argued that greater employment insecurity in many industries emerged as a result of changes in the norms of the workplace firms as a response to the growing trend in the post-industrial economy toward nonstandard employment in the 1970s. According to them, these changes led to policies that encouraged the hiring of independent contractors and 'perma-temps' as a replacement to regular employees. The outcome was a gradual shift of economic risk from institutions and organizations onto individual workers. Neff et al. (2005) further argued that in the media industries, workers began to bear these risks with the hope that they would be able to navigate uncertainty while remaining associated with the industry. According to them, these policies affected workers' attachment to work as well as their sense of self and led them toward 'entrepreneurial labour' by setting up their own firms as a way of bearing the risks. They further highlighted how this entrepreneurial inclination was experienced strongly in the new media sector because of the peculiar kind of innovative and pioneering work carried out there which was well suited to the spirit of enterprise. In her study of new media workers, Gill (2010) also observed that entrepreneurialism arose from 'their aspirations to innovate, create and to be pioneers' (p.7).

However, some writers noted that spirit of enterprise was not a feature of new media work in all countries (Christopherson, 2004; Mayer and Ahuja, 2007). For example, in her comparative study of new media in the US, Sweden and Germany, Christopherson (2004) found that while Sweden and Germany follow ‘an employment-based professional model’, the United States is characterized by a ‘free-agent, entrepreneurial model’ (p.549). Thus, according to Christopherson (2004), while in countries like Sweden and Germany, the new media workforce ‘tend to be full-time employees and to work under longer-term employment contracts even when they are working on projects.’ (p.555). This is because in these countries, ‘a greater portion of the burden of sustaining a skilled workforce is the responsibility of the firm rather than the individual worker’ and therefore ‘policy is directly engaged in constructing these differences through legislation and regulation governing inter-firm competition, employment, and collective bargaining’ (p.551). The case is different in countries like the United States ‘where an entrepreneurial model prevails’ and ‘the costs of sustaining a project-based industry are primarily absorbed by the workforce’ (p.556).

I would now like to draw attention to two conceptualizations of entrepreneurialism in the literature on new media work and creative labour in the West. These are ‘venture labour’ (Neff, 2012) and ‘forced entrepreneurialism’ (Oakley, 2014). While these do not exhaust what has been written about entrepreneurialism, I highlight them only to provide contrast to my own findings about entrepreneurialism among workers in Nigeria

Neff (2012) used the term ‘venture labour’ to describe ‘a way of managing the risk of contemporary work’ (Neff, 2012, p.16). According to her, this form of entrepreneurial behaviour exhibited particularly by new media workers was the result of particular social and historical factors which began in the US in the 1970s and reached a peak in the early 2000s. These factors involved a growing trend towards employment insecurity and nonstandard work arrangements outside of full-time, permanent employment (Neff et al., 2005) and led workers to practice known as ‘venture labour’ which she describes as the ‘explicit expression of entrepreneurial values by non-entrepreneurs’ (p.16). This means that people who did not set out to become entrepreneurs exhibited entrepreneurial patterns of behaviour through their personal

investments in time, energy and human capital in the companies where they worked. Thus, they acted like entrepreneurs by bearing some of the risks of the companies as if they had ownership of them, even when they were not actual owners. According to Neff,

The social context for this frenzy and the rush to boldly take risks occurred in the midst of major structural changes from an economy in which 30 percent of the workforce was unionized to the wide acceptance of at-will employment. The attitudes toward risk [...] happened in the context of the shift from a workplace where regular, full-time employment was the norm to a growing percentage of the American workforce in nonstandard jobs, many lacking health insurance, pensions and training. (p.21)

Neff notes that under these circumstances, risk became a desirable choice since jobs were increasingly acquired through flexible hiring in order to meet demand ‘only when times were good.’ As Neff (2012) suggests, ‘venture labour’ serves as the conceptual frame within which the entrepreneurial mindset of new media workers at a particular time (late 1990s to early 2000s) in a particular place (the US) can be understood. In her view, this brand of entrepreneurialism is one of the ways by which employees adapted to bearing the economic and financial risks that were prevalent in their time.

Another conceptualization of entrepreneurialism among cultural workers is offered by Oakley (2014) who describes it as ‘forced’ entrepreneurship’. According to Oakley, what lies behind the apparent growth of entrepreneurship in the cultural sectors is ‘forced entrepreneurship’ which is the need people feel ‘to adopt worsening working arrangements in rapidly changing industries.’ Oakley argues that this is more so because the term *entrepreneur* ‘ill-fits those who have never expressed any desire to be self-employed but have simply had to adapt’ (p.149). In her view, this brand of entrepreneurialism is experienced by those who

set up businesses because that is the easiest way to carry out their practice. They get premises because they need to get away from the kitchen table. They take on projects to pay the rent, and other projects on the back of that, because they now have new expertise (p.145).

In other words, they are ‘forced’ to be entrepreneurial ‘not as they please and not under self-selected circumstances’ (p.145). As Oakley explains, these circumstances are those of increasing precariousness and constraint which are mostly the result of wide structural changes in the UK and other European countries such as the consolidation and disintegration of media and internet companies. According to her, these made the conditions of cultural workers (such as those involved in new media) difficult, with many of them turning to self-employment. While the outcome of these circumstances for workers has been understood as a shift towards ‘entrepreneurship,’ Oakley suggests that it is better described as a movement towards ‘casualisation of formally secure employment’ (p.148). Like others (Neff, 2012; Sennett, 2006), she highlights the transfer of the task of shouldering the burden of risk from employers to employees as a key feature of these conditions which, as a result, is leading workers to ‘move from one short-term contract to another in situations of increasing insecurity’ (p.148).

According to Oakley, another important cause of ‘forced’ entrepreneurship among cultural workers was the growth and availability of digital technology especially in advanced economies. Crucial to this development was the dot-com boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s and the frantic activity among small scale entrepreneurs that characterized it. Despite the collapse of many of the firms that characterized that period, the dot-com era has been identified as a key moment in the expansion of digital technology. Indeed, as Heilemann (2005) argues, the dot-com bust became known as the ‘price made for progress’ because it was during that period that the foundations for the wide-scale development of internet infrastructure were set up in the US and in many developed countries.

Clearly, 'venture labour' and 'forced entrepreneurship' are useful notions with which to understand the nature of entrepreneurial practices adopted and experienced by workers in new media and the broader cultural industries in Western countries. However, if they provide some explanation for the rise of self-employment and entrepreneurial behaviours in developed contexts, they are potentially limited as conceptual tools for understanding what is taking place in less-developed contexts. To a large extent, this limitation is due to the fact that notions like 'venture labour' and 'forced entrepreneurship' have arisen from and apply specifically to the conditions of work in the particular context of advanced countries like the US and UK. As I argued in the previous chapter, since these notions of entrepreneurial behaviour emphasize a departure from 'formally secure employment' which had previously characterized much of labour in the West, they necessarily exclude conditions in other regions of the world which have been historically driven by informal processes. For this reason, they do not account for the innovative (or entrepreneurial) ways by which people in developing contexts overcome basic everyday challenges such as the infrastructural difficulties that critically hamper new media work in Nigeria. In this chapter, I attempt to address this limitation by proposing a different conception of entrepreneurialism which more closely aligns with the Nigerian context. I begin in the next section with a discussion of the roots of entrepreneurialism in Nigeria.

6.3 The roots of entrepreneurialism in Nigeria

In Chapter 3, I introduced the topic of entrepreneurialism as one of the themes of my research. As I argued, entrepreneurial behaviour can be understood as a defining feature of the Nigerian cultural context or as a ‘way of life’ which characterizes the lives of most people there, especially those who operate in the informal economy such as majority of those who took part in my research. In this section, I build on that discussion in an attempt to better understand and conceptualize the form of entrepreneurialism lived by my research participants.

The entrepreneurial practices of new media workers in Nigeria can only be understood from the perspective of the broader historical development of labour in the country. As I explained in Chapter 3, the conditions that produce these practices can be traced to events during the country’s late colonial and early postcolonial history, which gave rise to the rapid growth of the informal economy. Although the informal economy has been widely identified as the sector where ‘income generating activities take place outside the regulatory of the state’ (Castells and Portes, 1989), the broad range of informal processes that have arisen in large urban areas like Lagos have now pervaded activities within the regulated, or formal, sector. According to Meagher (2010), this ‘rapid informalization’ has since begun to ‘blur the empirical boundaries between official and unofficial spheres’ (p.14). To illustrate this, Meagher cites research that shows how goods (such as pirated software or mobile phone imitations) which originate in unregulated contexts are integrated into formal production and distribution channels. Similarly, Smith (2006a) discusses how the formal telecommunications sector in Nigeria depends on a vastly growing informal sector for the distribution of mobile airtime. Empirical studies like these led Keith Hart (2006) to argue for a broader approach to understanding the informal economy. In his view, rather than limiting it to extra-legal or non-regulated activities, a more helpful approach will be to focus on the particular practices that are predominant within it. In this chapter, I focus on one of such practices, namely, self-employment or entrepreneurialism²⁹.

²⁹ Another feature is the prevalence of social networks which is the topic of Chapter 7.

Self-employment in the informal economy can be understood as an economic strategy through which the processes and structures needed to adapt to parlous economic conditions are mostly realised and acquired through self-effort (Lourenço-Lindell, 2002; Trager, 1987). According to Lourenço-Lindell (2002), self-employment embodies a spirit of survivalism which shows how people in the informal economy 'have not passively watched their conditions deteriorate.' Rather,

they create their own income sources and diversify them [...]. They reinvent traditional socio-cultural practices in order to deal with the challenges of contemporary urban life and combine different social positions and multiple identities to access a wider range of opportunities in the diverse socio-economic environments of the city (Lourenço-Lindell, 2002 p.10).

This mode of operating gives expression to the entrepreneurial mindset which is characteristic to those who operate in the informal economy of cities like Lagos. It may be considered as a natural response to the dire circumstances persistent in such environments. As Neuwirth (2012) observed during his ethnographic study of Lagos, the informal economy is synonymous with this form of entrepreneurialism because it 'essentially translates as the ingenuity economy, the economy of improvisation and self-reliance, the do-it-yourself, or DIY, economy' (p.17). For this reason, as Barber (1987) indicated, the informal economy is characterized by 'an excess of would-be entrepreneurs all competing to get a foothold in a fluid and precarious economy' (p.30). Although Neuwirth (2012) and Barber (1987) write in different periods, they both refer to a wide range of small-scale operators in the informal economy which includes petty traders, artisans as well as restaurants in poor areas, food retailers, bus conductors, plumbers, electricians, and providers of all kinds of ad-hoc services that emerge only when the need arises.

Increasing globalization and rising access to internet technologies in Nigeria (as highlighted in Chapter 4) has created further opportunities for people in the informal economy. To the list of small-scale operators can also be included freelancers and

micro-businesses involved in various forms of new media work – web design, social media, digital animation, mobile development and casual games design. Although new media work in Nigeria is not carried out solely in the informal economy (as I indicated in my analysis of the industry in Chapter 4), the relative size of its informal-based operators (including most of my research participants) suggests that it belongs mostly within the ranks of the informal economy. Therefore, as with other operators in the informal sector, new media workers in Lagos can be said to experience the form of entrepreneurialism which, as I have described above, is particular to it. Unlike notions of ‘venture labour’ and ‘forced entrepreneurship,’ I argue that this form of entrepreneurialism is not a break away from a previous tradition of ‘standard employment relationships’ (Oakley, 2014, p.156) but is a deeply embedded feature of life and labour characterized by the need to find solutions to the everyday challenges of contemporary urban livelihood.

Using my empirical data, my aim in this chapter is to describe and analyze the main characteristics of this particular form of entrepreneurialism. To do this, I have identified three theories of traditional entrepreneurship drawn mainly from mainstream economics. These are uncertainty management, innovation, and alertness to profit opportunities. I use these concepts to trace the broad outlines of the entrepreneurial behaviours exhibited by my respondents. In the next section, I engage with these theories.

6.4 Classical Concepts of Entrepreneurship

The first concept I discuss is uncertainty management. One of the earliest notions of the entrepreneur in mainstream economics described such a person as one who has to make a judgment about buying goods at a certain price and selling them to consumers at an uncertain price. According to Richard Cantillon, the eighteenth century economist who is widely considered to be the originator of modern theories on entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur is a person who bears the risks involved in such decisions (Hébert and Link, 1989). The literature also provides a distinction between risk and uncertainty. Knight (1921) argued that while risk relates to recurrent events whose frequency provides the entrepreneur with foreknowledge based on past experiences (which makes them insurable), uncertainty refers to unique events with no knowable probability except through subjective estimation and intuition. For Knight, the main characteristic of the entrepreneur is not so much risk-taking as it is the management of uncertainty. Although the notion of uncertainty has already been raised in Chapter 5 in context of precariousness and software piracy, its usage in this chapter is different; while precariousness may also be associated with perilousness and potential danger (such as to the legal or harmful consequences of software piracy), uncertainty in the context of entrepreneurship refers specifically to an almost complete lack of knowledge that makes it difficult to know the result or outcome of a situation. Here, uncertainty is about taking chances. Thus, from this standpoint of mainstream economics, entrepreneurship is the art of knowing how to deal with uncertainty in decision making (Hébert and Link, 1989).

The second concept in entrepreneurship is innovation. According to Bilton and Cummings (2014), entrepreneurial activity can be defined very simply as the process of successfully bringing something to the market. In their study of management and creativity, they draw a close link between entrepreneurship and what they refer to as 'market innovation' which involves 'developing an innovation and taking it to prospective users' (p.91). This connection between entrepreneurship and innovation echoes Schumpeter's (1934) notion of the entrepreneur as, first and foremost, an innovator who brings about economic transformation through the production of new

goods and services by making new combinations of existing goods in the fields of business organization, marketing, distribution and production. Innovation can be carried out in different ways by entrepreneurs. In his treatment of entrepreneurship in developing countries, Kennedy (1988) draws attention to the distinction between ‘original’ innovation and ‘imitative’ innovation. While the former involves the creation (or ‘new combinations’) of products that did not exist before, the latter mainly refers to the ‘subsequent introduction of original discoveries to enterprises, sectors, regions and countries’ (Kennedy, 1988, p.160). It may be said therefore that imitative innovation does not usually require the level of knowledge, skill or capital required for original innovation. Thus, Kennedy (1988) argued that imitative innovation is more likely to be predominant in less developed countries ‘since it is the very scarcity of skill, capital, organisational and technological capacity that renders these countries less developed in the first place’ (p.160).

The third concept presents entrepreneurs as people who are alert to profit opportunities in the market economy (Kirzner, 1985). Here, an analogy of the entrepreneur is given as ‘a person who, upon seeing a ten dollar bill on the ground in front of him, is alert to the opportunity and grabs it immediately’ (Hébert and Link, 1989, p.46). The primary aim of this simplistic definition is to make the point that an entrepreneur is one who acts quickly to exploit what s/he believes to be a favorable situation. For example, in the market economy, the entrepreneur is seen as a person who, motivated by the desire to make profit, pays attention to the needs of consumers in order to generate profit from them.

These three concepts describe different aspects of traditional entrepreneurship. They encapsulate key features which were visible in the entrepreneurial behaviours and practices of those I researched. For the rest of the chapter, I examine these behaviours and practices from the perspective of how my respondents negotiated the infrastructural challenges in the Nigerian context. I refer to these acts of negotiation as ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ (Daniels, 2010) or ‘entrepreneurialism of improvisation’ which aims to encapsulate the attempts made by people in Nigeria’s informal economy to find workarounds to the basic challenges of everyday life. I

examine how this form of entrepreneurialism was lived among the new media workers in my research from the perspective of the traditional concepts of management of uncertainty, innovation and alertness to opportunities. While regular entrepreneurialism refers mainly to profit-making concerns, 'making-do entrepreneurialism' is about survival. It does not denote mere passivity and resignation to the conditions faced by my respondents. Rather, it suggests a spirit of improvisation when confronted with challenges that are not directly in their control (and therefore beyond their direct intervention) but which must be managed and negotiated. In the next section, I draw on my empirical data to discuss this form of entrepreneurialism among my research participants.

6.5 Infrastructural breakdown: risks, uncertainties and opportunities

6.5.1 Overview

Although the availability of electricity and internet access is a given in many countries, it is not the case in Nigeria. The fact that the public supply of electricity in Nigeria is erratic has been well documented (Agboli and Ukaegbu, 2006; Larkin, 2004; Lobato, 2010; Smith, 2006). The non-availability or inadequate provision of electricity is a familiar feature of life in Nigeria. The inability and, sometimes, reluctance (Apter, 2005) of the Nigerian government to attend to the decrepit state of public infrastructure has resulted in their proneness to breakdown (Larkin, 2008). For this reason, basic facilities such as electricity which depend on these infrastructure have remained completely or partially unavailable for a wide cross-section of the population.

The unreliability of electricity and internet access caused by infrastructural breakdown presents significant challenges to new media workers in Nigeria since their very livelihoods depend on it. The absence of constant electricity and regular access to the internet is one of the key differences between new media work in the Nigerian context and that of more advanced countries. This is not only because it reflects the deficiencies of infrastructure in Nigeria in comparison with the West but, more significantly, because it helps to draw attention to the practices of entrepreneurialism that emerge from it. As I have indicated above, entrepreneurial practices in the informal economy stem from the effort people make to negotiate the challenging social and economic conditions they experience in society. For new media workers in Nigeria, the unstable availability of electricity and the internet is an example one such condition which they negotiate in ways which could be described as entrepreneurial.

In this section, I discuss various manifestations of entrepreneurialism among the new media workers in my research in response to these infrastructural challenges. I discuss these kinds of entrepreneurial behaviour using the theories on entrepreneurship highlighted in the previous section. First, I show how my respondents exhibited

entrepreneurial traits through their management of the uncertainties associated with electricity outages and internet failure. Second, I explain how they practiced innovation in response to these conditions. Finally, I engage with their alertness to opportunities which was based on their astuteness in taking advantage of the means available to them while negotiating the challenges of their context.

6.5.2 Generators, ISPs and the management of uncertainty

Employing a combination of factuality and wit, Brian Larkin (2008) describes what transpires in Nigeria on a daily basis.

In Nigeria and many nations like it, when electricity disappears things similarly come to a standstill. For about two minutes. There is mild surprise, irritation but no shock. Then people walk around to the back of their houses and turn on small generators. Businesses fire up larger ones. People fill their lamps with oil, light candles, and in a few minutes everything is going on as before, with people trading, dancing, praying, and eating: the warp and woof of everyday life (p.242).

Larkin (2008) goes on to compare this regular occurrence in Nigeria with a highly atypical New York blackout in 2003. According to him, this singular event ‘halted everyday order and turned life upside down’ in New York, as reactions of shock were followed by ‘a sense of the vulnerability of Western infrastructural networks’ (p.242). For Larkin, the contrasting reactions to electricity outage in Nigeria and New York illustrate a distinctive feature of daily life in Nigeria which is mostly unfamiliar in the West: the constant breakdown of infrastructure and technology. As I discussed in Chapter 3, this condition is the outcome of a historical process in Nigeria which began with colonial rule and continued during the postcolonial period (Larkin, 2008). It is the cause of notable privations in the lives of Nigerians such as the frequent unavailability of electricity and, more recently, internet access (Smith, 2006a).

The unreliability of infrastructure and technologies is a major source of uncertainty for my research participants as with many other people in Nigeria. Unlike the experiences

of software piracy, discussed in Chapter 5, which affects only those who use software, the absence of electricity and internet has far-reaching consequences in the lives of most Nigerians. Despite their apparent banality, unexpected events like electricity blackouts contribute significantly to the uncertainties that characterize life in Nigeria including for the new media workers in my research who had to rely on generators to keep up with the daily grind of new media production. For this reason, generators have become a vital ingredient for new media work in Nigeria. Christopher, one of my research participants who managed a small-scale web design business explained how his work depended on the generator he used. This was so that the computers in the office could function. His major concern was therefore to ensure that the generator was fueled regularly. According to him:

You cannot but have a generator. We use a generator and we make sure that there's always fuel available. Fuel is a priority because the business will not run without fuel. So, it affects the business but this situation has become really normal for us. Just as we need computers, we also need fuel to run the generator. [...] Although, luckily, this location is better than others because sometimes, we have power the whole day, there are other times when we have to use the generator all through the day (Christopher, web designer).

For people like Christopher, a generator served as one way to manage the uncertainty of electricity outages. As he explains in the comment above, the unpredictability of public electric supply compelled him to make decisions about when to use the generator or not and, consequently, how much money to invest in the purchase of fuel. The uncertainties brought about by the lack of electricity meant that new media workers like Christopher had to make such decisions on a daily basis. Some of my interviewees also spoke about the added costs they had to bear because of the necessary reliance on generators and fuel for them. For example, Kevin started a web design company but found it difficult to cope with the infrastructural problems associated with running it. As he explained:

I registered and formally started my company in 2006 with a friend and we operated from an office. We still run the office anyway, but I pulled out for obvious reasons. [...] The challenges we faced had to do with electricity, internet, and people's perception about what we do. That was pretty much it.

Kevin related how he had to secure a full-time job at a company where he was employed as a social media expert. For him, this position was temporary because his primary aim was to continue his own web design business. However, the chances of doing so were contingent on his being able to successfully bear the risks involved in taking up web design projects. As he explained, the decision to acquire the full-time job was based on the inability to bear those risks:

Let me give you a scenario. Last year I got a project with a law firm, it's a web design project worth about five hundred thousand naira [approximately £2,000]. I had to spend about 20% of the money on my generator because, to run a project in Nigeria which makes use of electricity, you have to presume that electricity doesn't exist and provide it yourself. And that is a problem. And then you can imagine spending 40% or 50% of your profit: you have to 'settle' other guys, personal expenses, go to the client's site, make presentations, fuel your car, and so on. So the absence of power is a very big problem.

For Kevin, the risks and uncertainties involved in some of the projects were difficult to bear and this compelled him to prioritize or to forego them altogether. He noted that such decisions had impacts on his reputation as a web designer.

Yes, there are times I had to just let go of some projects after calculating the overhead costs. Let's say the cost of running the project is going to 45% and the client is not ready for an increase in the price because he also has a tight budget, you just tell the client to find another person. But this tells on your reputation because if the client has a bigger job next time he won't call you. Yet you wouldn't like to run the project at a loss.

Kevin's case was similar to other new media workers I interviewed. In the comments they made, the challenges of bearing the additional costs associated with providing their own electricity was a common theme. Although this difficulty is not exclusive to new media (since electricity is needed for different kinds of work in Nigeria), it clearly shows how the experiences of new media workers in the Nigerian context differ from those in the West. Among my respondents, those who managed their own new media businesses had to include the cost of generator and fuel in their operating costs. This often implied a continual decision-making process about how best to minimize their overheads in order to maximize their profit. As an interviewee explained:

Everything we do is online, I mean if you are not online, you need your laptop or computer to work. If these things are not working, how do you expect to work? The cost of diesel and running a generator compared to what you are going to make from the project...I mean it's ridiculous, if we pay rent space or diesel expenses and all that, considering what you will get at the end of the day...so that is a challenge (Orlando, web designer).

In traditional theories on entrepreneurship, such decision-making processes in the face of uncertainty are a defining characteristic of entrepreneurs. Richard Cantillon noted that uncertainty is a pervasive fact of daily life, but those who confront it continually in their economic decisions are entrepreneurs. Hébert and Link (1989) defined the entrepreneur as 'someone who specializes in taking responsibility for and making judgmental decisions that affect the location, the form, and the use of goods, resources, or institutions' (p.7). The examples I have presented show how my respondents had to make decisions about resources such as generators, fuel and money. However, such decisions are not always directly associated with tangible goods (such as how much money to spend on fuel). For some of my respondents who could not afford generators or did not have full control over them, such decisions involved making the optimal use of time when electricity was available. For example, an interviewee explained his experience of working at his parents' home:

At home, we have generator. Sometimes I get to use it, sometimes I don't. So it's more like balancing the available and non-availability of electricity and the internet; when it's available, you work a lot; when it's not available, you pack up and go to sleep (Adam, web designer).

Apart from tangible resources, the proper allocation of time is also a key element of entrepreneurial behaviour (Schultz, 1975). However, in the experience of new media work in Nigeria, time allocated to work is always prone to disruption because of the uncertainty of electricity. Some interviewees spoke about how this had effects on their work. In these cases, electricity outages represented a disruption not only to quantity of time available to work but also to its quality. The quality of new media work can arguably be affected by frequent disruptions to activities such as programming, designing, modeling or similar new media tasks which may require concentration and mental focus. For example, one of them commented:

When you have to deal with anything ICT you need constant internet supply and electricity. Not even constant, but electricity that does not blink, because the moment it blinks, you lose focus and direction. What we do involves a lot of thinking, analysis, strategy, planning architecture and so on. So when something obstructs it, the product we actually had a lot of zeal to produce might not come out the way we wanted it (David, video games developer).

To deal with these disruptions, generators were not sufficient for my respondents. They also had to rely on equipment such as UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) systems and long-lasting batteries for their computers as a way manage the uncertainty of electricity. UPS systems are electrical apparatuses which provide emergency power to a machine when the default power source fails. Since computer technology (on which new media work is largely dependent) requires electrical power, such technologies are useful in the event that the main electrical source malfunctions. However, these instruments are not designed to keep computers running interminably. On one hand, UPS systems only store electrical power long enough for individuals to shut down their computers properly. Laptops, on the other hand, can run on batteries

for a few hours. Yet, under the kind of conditions experienced by workers in Nigeria, these facilities are necessary because they help to mitigate the uncertainties of electrical breakdown.

To illustrate this with an example from my field observation, I draw on my experience at the new media company I researched. While there, I noticed that the generator was frequently used because public electricity was nearly always unavailable. On one of such days, work came to an abrupt end because the fuel for the generator got exhausted unexpectedly. When this occurred, some of the workers continued work using their battery-powered laptops while others relied on a UPS. In a short while, both sources of power were completely drained. Since fuel could not be purchased at short notice, work had to be suspended for the day. For me, this disruption produced feelings of frustration because of the limited time I had available to complete the task at hand. For the new media workers and freelancers in my research, such unexpected interruptions were difficult to avoid. More importantly, they were concerned about its financial implications on their work.

Apart from the uncertainties due to the shortcomings of electricity, my research participants also discussed similar challenges with regard to internet infrastructure in the Nigerian context. As I explained in Chapter 3, the history of internet access in Nigeria followed a path in which internet access was first obtained primarily through cyber-café's and then by means of a limited but growing number of internet service providers (ISPs). As I discussed, these ISPs offered unreliable services which were characterized by very slow or broken internet connections as a result of the generally poor internet infrastructure in the country. The only means of obtaining relatively reliable internet connection was by paying large amounts of money for high bandwidths. For practically all those in my research (and, arguably, for most small scale new media workers), the cost of such high bandwidths is prohibitive. This situation contributed to their experiences of uncertainty at work. As some of them commented:

Personally, I've had really bad experiences with ISPs such as one which I decided to use because they were located close to us. Although people say that they've improved, I'm not ready to try them again because it was hell using them. Sometimes, I had to go to a cyber-café to upload a website even though the internet I had was supposed to be working (Christopher, web designer).

Yeah of course, downtimes are always there... ISPs will tell you that they are running maintenance and it takes like 2 days to repair. And even though you paid for 3 months, it means you are off for those 2 days. So you have to find another means: either by going to a cybercafé or paying another 2-3 months subscription with another ISP. (Kevin, web developer)

We pay so much for crappy internet services outside which is not fair and we need to be connected in order to be able to do what we do. (Charles, front-end web developer)

As with the unavailability of electricity, my respondents were adversely affected by the unreliability of their connection to the internet. For many of them, access to the internet was necessary for the execution of their new media projects. For example, they required access to the internet for downloading tools, uploading their own work as well as updating themselves with the latest knowledge in the field. Indeed, without internet access, many aspects of new media work are difficult to accomplish. As one of my interviewees commented:

I can't think when the internet doesn't work [...] because most of my work is carried out on the internet, [...] and so when I send a request to my server and it takes more than two seconds to respond, it slows me down. (Andrew, web developer)

Despite the comments above, it can be said that the need for constant internet access is not as fundamental as that of electricity in new media work. However, for my respondents, its unavailability was enough to determine the kinds of entrepreneurial decisions they made for the sustenance of their businesses. This is because the inadequacy of internet connections negatively affects the quality of the services they

offer their clients and, consequently, the economic success of their work. As one of them explained:

Where I live, all the service providers are not really stable and that tells on business. Imagine you promised the client that you'll upload videos of 1GB and your ISP is providing you with a slow connection. There is no way you would meet the client's demands because you and I know that video files are not easy to upload. It tells on your delivery time, tells on customer satisfaction and so many other factors (Kevin, web developer).

As the comments so far suggest, the combination of unreliable internet access and the limited availability of electricity was clearly a source of uncertainty for those in my research. Although I have treated both challenges separately in this section, in reality they were experienced by my research participants simultaneously. In other words, new media work in the Nigerian context involves dealing with the uncertainty of electricity and internet access at the same time such that the presence of one does not exclude the other. When electricity was not available, no work could be done (as shown in the example above). However, when electricity was available, there was not guarantee that work could be carried out as expected because internet access, needed to carry out certain functions, may not be available. Such a situation was vividly captured by one of my respondents as follows:

Sometimes, when it's raining the internet connection just keeps crawling. So we decided to get a modem. But even when you get internet that is somehow fast, it might not be that effective because electricity could go off at any time (Orlando, web designer).

For some of my research participants, the economic burden of ensuring the availability of both electricity and internet connection led to feelings of frustration as exemplified by the following comment:

It's quite difficult for self-starters like us to get things done easily because we can't afford ways to power a generator all the time, we cannot get to pay for unlimited

internet supply all the time because we also have other things to use money for. So to invest in our business is not easy because when you do that, what would you have left? So it's quite difficult to balance business and life due to the economic condition (David, video games developer).

Thus far, I have discussed how the inadequacies of infrastructure in Nigeria lead to experiences of uncertainty in the practice of new media work among my research participants. As I explained, these infrastructural problems are manifested by the prevalence of unreliable supply of electricity and internet access. I also showed how generators, UPSs and battery-powered laptops served as the ordinary means available to my respondents for managing these uncertainties. I argued that these attempts at uncertainty management necessarily lead them to make entrepreneurial decisions regarding tangible resources (generator, fuel, money) and intangible ones (time, quality of work). As I argued, such decision making processes are characteristic of entrepreneurs who spend their time trying to profit 'from exploiting uncertainties and managing the incalculable' (Neff, 2012).

One potential difference between this experience of risks and uncertainties among my respondents and how it has been recounted in the literature (through concepts like venture labour and forced entrepreneurialism) is that, in the latter, entrepreneurs actively take risks through the decisions they make whereas, in Nigeria, they are confronted with risks because of the uncertainties that already exist and they necessarily look for workarounds to them. For example, in describing the concept of venture labour, Neff (2012) argued that, in the US, uncertainty was framed in certain ways so that people were encouraged to take risks and not to fear failure. In Nigeria, such framing is not required because the uncertainties of life and work are clearly perceptible and experienced on a daily basis; what is needed is to negotiate them. In the next section, I discuss how, in the process of trying to manage these uncertainties, my research participants developed innovative practices to negotiate them. I argue that these innovative practices are at the core of 'making-do entrepreneurialism' which is the term I have used to label the art of negotiating basic everyday challenges in the

Nigerian context. In the next section, I focus on these practices and discuss how they were lived among my respondents.

6.5.3 Adaptation as innovation

As I highlighted at the beginning of the chapter, traditional conceptions of entrepreneurship include innovation as one of the defining characteristics of entrepreneurs (Casson, 1982; Hébert and Link; 1988; Swedberg, 2000). I noted that entrepreneurs have been characterized by their proclivity for managing uncertainties, their ability to innovate and their alertness of profit opportunities whenever they arise. However, differences in the socio-cultural and economic environment potentially mean that the style and quality of these traits differ among entrepreneurs in developed and less developed contexts.

In a study of entrepreneurship in transition economies, Solymossy (2005) argued that it ‘requires three elements working in concert: the individual, a business entity, and the environment in which it occurs, and [...] there are significant differences in success based on the context in which it occurs’ (p.502). From this perspective, my approach to innovation among new media workers in the Nigerian context does not necessarily follow commonly held understandings of the term which emphasize the introduction of new goods and services into a marketplace. First, rather than focus on the goods which are produced and introduced into the market, I pay closer attention to the processes and practices involved in the production of those goods. In line with Solymossy, I argue that these practices can be described as innovative when considered within the particular context in which they are carried out. As Baumol (1968) argued, ‘any such innovation, whether it is purely technological or it consists in a modification in the way in which an industry is organized, will require entrepreneurial initiative in its introduction’ (p.66). Therefore the kind of innovation I discuss in the Nigerian context is based on the practices of new media workers.

Second, my approach in the analysis of entrepreneurialism in the Nigerian context distinguishes between original and imitative innovation. Imitative innovation occurs when original innovations are adapted to a different context from where they were

originally developed. Apart from the innovative activity associated with the production of new goods and services, entrepreneurial practices in less developed economies also involve improvisation in the development of alternative channels and organizational strategies for the production of those goods and services (Solymossy, 2005). As an example of this, Lobato (2010) notes that, in the absence of technical equipment required for high quality film production, film makers in Nigeria opted for a ‘cheap, televisual model of film production’ as well as ‘an innovative model of dispersed, informal distribution’ in order to find their own ‘third way’ (p.26). Similarly, in a study of the informal economy in Kenya, Daniels (2010) highlighted the entrepreneurial spirit of some of the craftworkers. He observed that, ‘under severe material constraints, they are forced to improvise solutions to everyday problems that, from time to time, result in game-changing innovations that better address local needs’ (p.3).

Imitative innovation also refers to a situation in which the processes involved in the production of goods and services are adapted to local conditions. Thus, in the example cited above, Lobato talked about how the processes of film production and distribution have been tailored by film makers in Nigeria to fit the specific conditions of life and labour there. The ‘third way’ which Lobato refers to simply denotes those practices which have emerged as a result of such adaptation and therefore, in my view, is an outcome of imitative innovation. In my research, this kind of innovation was recognizable in the ways new media workers improvised and adapted the processes and characteristics of new media work to suit their particular circumstances. To produce websites, animations or video games, those I interviewed had to employ innovative means to ‘improvise solutions to everyday problems’ (Lobato, 2010, p.26).

In what follows, I discuss four practices among my research participants which demonstrate how they carried out imitative innovation. These practices are based on the work schedules my respondents kept; the techniques they employed to carry out their work; the contract arrangements they made with clients; and the mobility of their work spaces. In keeping with the theme of this chapter, I highlight these practices because they stemmed from workers’ desire to overcome the infrastructural challenges

(unreliable electricity and internet) experienced in the Nigerian context. Unlike the use of generators, laptops and UPS systems, these practices have emerged specifically from intrinsic features of new media work which, as I discussed in Chapter 2, include values such as freedom, autonomy and control over the process of labour. As I suggest below, these factors facilitated entrepreneurial innovation for new media workers in Nigeria.

6.5.3.1 Flexible working schedules

For many of my participants, adapting to the demands of new media work required adjusting their work schedules. As the comment below (made by one of my interviewees, Adam, who works as the sole proprietor of his new media company) indicates, this sometimes implied working at irregular hours.

I work from home once in a while, and I find that electricity is available there except for weekdays during the working hours [...] but we always have it at nights so I can work in the night (Adam, web designer).

In his study of new media workers, Pratt (2000) referred to ‘bulimic’ work patterns as a way to describe how they work for ‘long days and nights, then break until the next project’ (p.432). He linked this work pattern to the importance his research subjects attached to ‘their identity as part of “new media” [and] which was ‘buoyed by their interaction with a “community” of like-minded workers’ (p.432). Drawing on Maffesoli’s (1996) notion of the ‘tribe’, Pratt further suggested that this ‘feeling of belonging’ potentially served ‘as a function of a specific ethic’ which was demonstrated by the ‘boom and bust’ working patterns found in his research. In my own research, I found different reasons for such ‘bulimic’ work styles. For respondents like Adam above, such patterns were adopted primarily as an antidote to conditions imposed by the limitations of Nigerian infrastructure. I argue that working late and odd hours among my research participants can be described as the way they adapted to this particular condition of their context – such as in Adam’s case in which he organized his work schedule to correspond with the availability of electricity. This is not to say that new media workers in Nigeria do not develop working patterns in

response to the kind of inclinations suggested by Pratt and others in the literature. Rather, I am arguing that – at least for those in my research – such irregular work patterns appear to be determined to a large extent by the infrastructural challenges they experience. Although the literature does not directly refer to these working patterns as evidence of the entrepreneurial behaviour of new media workers, I am suggesting that, these patterns form part of the innovative strategies used by my respondents to adapt to the challenges of the Nigerian context. Based on my research therefore, these patterns reflect the entrepreneurial behaviour of new media workers.

The difference between work patterns among those in Nigeria and those in the West was further accentuated by the fact that such ‘boom and bust’ patterns of working were not always possible for my respondents. In her research among new media workers in Amsterdam, Gill (2007) referred to their tendency toward ‘intense periods of working, followed by very little work for long periods’ (p.6). In contrast to this, my findings in Nigeria show that the ability for workers to sustain ‘intense periods of working’ was limited by infrastructural issues which were often beyond their control. The following comment made by one of my research participants who tried to carry out his web design projects at home illustrates this point:

Yes, I work from home sometimes. I go home and continue doing what I want to do. Sometimes everything just goes wrong, generator is not good, there is no electricity, there is a strike and you can’t get fuel and all that. Most times it happens at night and the best thing is close your PC and pick a book or you sleep (Charles, web designer).

For Charles and others like him, the possibility of working for long and intense hours was contingent on the availability of electricity. To deal with such challenges (which affect the amount of time available for them to work), some of my respondents adopted other innovative strategies which took advantage of the flexibility of space and location that new media work allows. I discuss this next.

6.5.3.2 *The mobility of new media work*

One feature of new media work which has been highlighted in the literature is the high level of mobility among those who engage in it (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Mobility refers to the possibility of working without being restricted to a single location such as an office or one's home. In new media work, mobility is facilitated by the digital nature of the work with its growing dependence on the internet. For some of my respondents, mobility was employed as an instrument for overcoming the privations that result from the absence of electricity and internet access. Since forms of new media work like web design often require little more than a single laptop, my respondents (especially web designers) were able to move from one location to another in search of work spaces where electricity and internet access could be found. Charles, the web designer I introduced above, explained that when he began working as a freelancer, one such location was the cyber-café – not just for access to the internet, but also to access electricity.

What we used to do was buy time at the cyber-café and work from there, which is expensive. You pay for an hour for the internet which you might not use because all you'd want is to plug up your PC to work (Charles, web designer).

When he set up his company, Charles decided to operate from a co-working space rather than from a personal office. Co-working spaces are privately-owned clusters which, at the time of my research, had just been introduced in Lagos. The main benefit of such spaces for workers in Lagos is that they offer constant electricity and internet access. This is possible because the fees paid by subscribers of the space are used to maintain the generator that supplies electricity and to provide internet connection with sufficient bandwidth for a large number of people. New media workers like Charles take advantage of such locations to carry out their work. These spaces consist of large rooms where many individuals and small businesses regularly operate from. For Charles, the benefits of working from this location was clear.

If we had an office, it would have been too expensive to keep the lights on because there is no power. Here, we have 11-12 hours of electricity every day.

However, there were some other respondents who preferred the privacy and potential stability of their own office but also without the daily costs and hassles associated with maintaining a generator. For such people, there were arrangements similar to the co-working spaces which allowed them to rent offices that were shared by two or three small companies while the proprietors of the office space took care of providing electricity and internet access. As an interviewee who operated from such a location explained:

We all know the power situation and it's not very encouraging. You either need to work from a place where there is a standby generator (a big one) in a serviced apartment or you source your own generating set. You just need to backup. Ours is a serviced building, so the different offices here don't have to have their own separate generating set because there is a general one that comes on when public supply goes off. The cost is part of the overall charges (Tom, web designer).

Although this arrangement was convenient for those who chose them, it was too expensive for others. Indeed, some of my respondents did their best to work from locations which cost them the minimum possible amount of money. For example, one of my interviewees, Ronald, who operated as a freelance video games designer took advantage of the semi-publicness of a university to carry out his work at zero cost to him. Since he was known by some people at the university because he had attended a short course there, he could easily mingle with the crowd without being singled out. As the university could own and maintain industrial-scale generators, it was able to provide constant electricity and internet access within its campus. Because Ronald needed no more than his laptop to carry out his work, he was able to move and work in spaces within the university which were not occupied.

The above accounts clearly demonstrate how flexibility in the adaptation of 'place' was used by my respondents to negotiate the restrictions caused by infrastructural inadequacies. This spatial flexibility is a feature of digital-based labour such as new media work. As Huws (2003) noted, 'the digitization of information has vastly

increased the extent to which it can be accessed remotely, removing the need for physical proximity to sources and eliminating transport costs' (p.148). Thus, a web designer does not need to be in a particular physical location to carry out a task for which all the tools are digital and accessible using a laptop or downloadable from the internet (as is common today). As Gill (2002) argued, 'the capacity to choose a workspace is also an indicator of flexible working practices' (p.84). I argue that it is also a manifestation of the freedom associated with new media work and therefore an intrinsic feature of new media work. For this reason, my respondents were not restricted to working from home or other locations and they used this to their advantage in overcoming (or minimizing) the infrastructural challenges they experienced. In other words, their need to find convenient places to work is not simply because 'they need to get away from the kitchen table' as suggested by Oakley (2014) about workers in the West. Rather, it is because working from home or self-managed offices often requires providing electricity and internet access for themselves which, for many of my research participants, was either too expensive or too cumbersome to do. I argue that the ability to overcome such barriers requires a particular entrepreneurial mindset that is directed at devising or searching for innovative workarounds to problems such as infrastructural ones.

Apart from the 'flexibility of place' some of my respondents also took advantage of the flexibility in their dealings with clients and customers to address these challenges. I discuss this next.

6.5.3.3 *The flexibility of work arrangements*

According to research carried out in the West, new media work is characterized by the flexibility of contract arrangements workers get involved in (Gill, 2010; Neff et al., 2005). In my research, some new media workers took advantage of this flexibility to address their infrastructural problems. For these people, the possibility of access to electricity and internet helped to shape the nature of the contract agreements they made with clients or employees. Essentially, they often tried to obtain contracts that made it easier for them to gain access to constant electricity and reliable internet

connection. This was because access to these facilities ensured that they could conveniently and successfully work on the clients' projects as well as other personal projects.

For example, for those of my respondents who were employees, access to facilities at the companies at which they worked enabled them to carry out their own personal projects alongside those of their employers. For those in part-time employment various possibilities existed. While some agreed to work with companies on specific days of the week, others based their engagement on the availability of company projects. Such arrangements sometimes provided them with the opportunity to work on their own personal project using the facilities of the employer. One of my participants, Orlando, who managed a web design business while working as a graphic designer for a non-media company, used the facilities at the premises of his employers to conduct his business. According to him, since his employers allowed him to do this, he also took advantage of this privilege to hold meetings with his business partners. As the company had a generator which provided fairly uninterrupted power, Orlando had access to constant electricity to work on projects of his personal business. Regarding the need for an office and a personal generator, he explained,

Getting an office means having a generator and that doesn't make any sense for us right now since we can do the work and meet the deadline before the client's deadline (Orlando, web designer).

A similar type of arrangement exists whereby a new media company agrees a full-time employment contract with an individual but permits her/him to carry out personal projects when there are no official projects. In such arrangements, occasions arise when employees acquire projects from clients with the option of taking them up as company projects or retaining them as personal projects. Some of the employers I interacted with during my research indicated that, since they understood the conditions of their employees, they decided to 'officialize' this kind of arrangement in order to prevent employees from secretly carrying out personal projects during office hours. For workers, apart from saving them the cost of providing their own electricity and

connection to the internet, arrangements like these provide them with the security of ‘officially’ having access to the facilities required for their own projects. As one of my interviewees explained:

I work for a company, but we work like partners. I could get a project and do it here, and it won't disturb the company's projects. So it's not like I'm under strict or serious surveillance or serious monitoring. [...] I try as much as possible not to make anything I do on the side affect the company's projects – but it's not like I get those personal projects all the time (Marvin, web developer).

In my view, such arrangements demonstrate how my respondents were able to take advantage of the characteristics of new media work in addressing their infrastructural problems. By this I refer in particular to features of new media work (and creative work in general) which allow workers the freedom and independence while carrying it out (Hesmondhalgh, 2010). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) refer to this as workplace autonomy which is ‘the degree of self-determination that individual workers or groups of workers have within a certain work situation’ (p.40). For my research participants, this freedom – which is intrinsic to new media work – provides opportunities for new media workers in Nigeria to self-determine in the face of the limitations of their context. I argue that their use of the freedom intrinsic to new media work in the face of the limitations of infrastructure engenders innovative and entrepreneurial action which, among other things, is manifested in the kinds of contractual arrangements made by my respondents.

The final set of practices which show how my research participants demonstrated entrepreneurial innovation in their negotiation of infrastructural challenges relates with the techniques they adopted at work.

6.5.3.4 Working patterns and habits

As noted earlier, since many aspects of new media work are digitized, workers have found it easier to exercise freedom with respect to space and time in carrying out their work. To this end, I discussed how my respondents used this freedom to circumvent

the infrastructural limitations that are pervasive in the Nigerian context. Furthermore, I mentioned how the different kinds of hardware they use conform to their infrastructural needs: desktop computers with UPS systems and laptops with batteries. However, I observed that desktop computers were less common among my research participants than laptops. This is related to the fact that laptops are portable and are less dependent on the availability of public electrical power than desktops. Laptops facilitate the kind of mobility required for new media work in the Nigerian context and, as a result of their battery power, are more useful in situations when public electricity is unavailable.

Nevertheless, with respect to internet connections, laptops appeared to have little advantage over desktops. Since laptops usually required external devices (which, in Nigeria, was the standard way to connect to the internet), they were also prone to failure like desktops. These external devices were usually either modems or dongles. While modems were large enough to provide access to several computers simultaneously, dongles were limited to individual computers. Most of my respondents relied on dongles because they allowed for greater mobility and switched from one to the other during the course of their work. For example, one of them explained the strategy at his firm:

There are times when the connection goes down for two days. That's when we check for other options and switch services. If one goes down, we just pick up the other. Our delivery time is what is affected (Tony web designer)

For small teams of workers, modems were more cost effective and their portability was an advantage for those who did not regularly work from the same location – as was the case for many of my participants. As one of them explained:

We had internet connections that kept crawling whenever it rained. What are trying to do now is keep a modem somewhere and use it when we have to do work online. We do what we can with it and then do the rest of the work from home (Orlando, web designer)

As a result of the unreliability of dongle-based connections and the cumbersomeness of modems, some of my respondents resorted to using their mobile phones as an alternative work tools when the situation demanded it. As I described in Chapter 4, mobile phones are one of the main sources of internet access in Nigeria. One potential reason for this is that mobile subscriptions to the internet are deemed to be less expensive than those offered by traditional ISPs. However, because of their miniature size, mobile phones are not ideal tools for doing new media work. Nevertheless, one interviewee disclosed how she had to resort to using her mobile phone to attend to an urgent customer request when internet access was not available. Another respondent related that he had sometimes used his phone as a marketing tool to showcase his portfolio to potential clients.

Finally, some of my interviewees described how they adjusted their work strategies according to the availability of electricity and internet connection. This meant that they tried to do as much as possible when electricity or internet was not accessible and made up for it when they were. The following comment illustrates such a scenario:

As far as the internet is concerned, if it messes up, it will come back some other time. So whatever I can do without the internet I will do it now and then when the internet comes I would work with it. In situations when the internet is not working, I open up tabs in my browser with the mind that when it eventually works, I will go back to those tabs and insert all that is needed there. For example when I'm working on codes, I can always preview my HTML/CSS codes but when I'm working on PHP or so on, I need the internet to do that. So I set up PHP components so when the internet comes I work with them. So you need to be flexible to adjust to the situations and problems we have in Nigeria (Orlando, web designer).

In summary, although the infrastructural challenges experienced by my respondents (that is, their lack of access to electricity and/or internet) affected their ability to work, I have shown in this section how the innovative strategies they adopted contribute toward alleviating those conditions. I have noted how these strategies were evident in

the way they organized their work schedules, worked from different locations, arranged contracts with clients and employers to their benefit and adopted various techniques at work in order to overcome the limitations of their situation in the Nigerian context. As I have argued, these strategies were the means through which my research participants tailored their practice of new media work to the specificities of their local situation. In my view, these strategies are innovative because, as I explained earlier in the section, they often involve the development of new forms of organization and work practices in new media which are suited and adapted to the Nigerian context. I argue that these strategies of adaptation, negotiation and improvisation are constitutive of the 'making-do entrepreneurialism' lived by new media workers in Nigeria.

Having thus examined the ways new media workers in my research managed the uncertainties of infrastructure and the innovative strategies they adopted to overcome these uncertainties, I now turn to the final element in the portrait of traditional entrepreneurialism which I introduced at the beginning of the chapter: perception and the alertness to profit opportunities.

6.5.4 Motivation and alertness to opportunities

One of the features used to define the entrepreneur in mainstream economics is an alertness to profit-making opportunities. According to these definitions, entrepreneurship is the process by which individuals pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they control (Swedberg, 2000). Entrepreneurial alertness refers to the individual's ability to recognize those opportunities and seize them immediately (Hébert and Link, 1989; Webb et al., 2009). To act on what is perceived as a valuable opportunity, the entrepreneur must be driven by certain motivations (Licht and Siegel, 2006) which, as some theorists have suggested, is primarily characterized by a desire to make money (Von Mises, 1951; Swedberg, 2000). According to this view, the entrepreneur pays close attention to the needs of consumers with the main aim of generating profit from them.

However, other factors apart from money have been found to motivate entrepreneurs. In his classic conception of the entrepreneur, Schumpeter (1934) argued that the entrepreneur is motivated by ‘the dream and the will to found a private kingdom,’ which is the desire for power and independence; ‘the will to conquer: the impulse to fight, to prove oneself superior to others,’ which can be translated as the will to succeed; and finally, ‘the joy of creating, of getting things done, or simply of exercising one’s energy and ingenuity.’ (Swedberg, 2000, p.16). Furthermore, in social psychology, McClelland (1961) was first suggested that the entrepreneur is driven by the need for achievement. Subsequently, other psychological theorists recognized that entrepreneurial motivation is embedded in a social context and therefore is affected and influenced by external factors. For example, regardless of one’s motivation, the possibility of seizing an entrepreneurial opportunity can only exist when such opportunities present themselves in one’s social context. Finally, sociologists have argued that entrepreneurial motivation is determined by factors such as the characteristics of a society, the national economic development and the role of the state, and the presence of an informal economy in societies (Reynolds, 1991, Thornton et al., 2011).

My own research findings align with psychological and sociological perspectives on entrepreneurial motivation, namely, that it depends on the economic and socio-cultural context in which individuals operate. Essentially, the entrepreneurial motivation of those I interviewed was characterized by two things: first, the urge to make money; second, the desire to rise above the challenging conditions experienced in their context. For the first, some of my respondents stated explicitly that their primary motive for their entrepreneurial activities in new media were monetary. The following is an example:

Initially, I was just designing websites and created a music blog. Along the way, as I was posting songs to the blog, I began to receive requests from some artists to help promote their music. That’s how it started. I felt that since I was getting money from it, I would continue with this and see how it would end up. So, basically, I am doing this now because of the money (Jeremy, music blogger).

This comment was made by Jeremy, one of my research participants who described himself as a ‘social media blogger’, a ‘web designer’ and an ‘online-based public relations broker’ for upcoming music artists. His main work involved the promotion of budding musicians by featuring their songs on his website in order to make them available for listening, downloading and commenting by visitors. At other times, he designed websites for clients. Web-based music promotion is a burgeoning type of practice in Lagos which is facilitated by the widening base of aspiring music artists in the informal economy. Although his business concept appeared original and innovative, Jeremy was aware that he was only one of a large and growing pool of new media-based music promoters in the city. The rapid saturation in the market, among other factors, prompted him to begin plans for diversification into other lifestyle interests like films and sports even though, at the time of the interview, he expressed satisfaction with his average monthly income. For him, there was no other source of income.

In their writings, Neff et al. (2005) Gill (2007) highlighted the ‘coolness’ factor which they considered characteristic to and an attractive feature of new media work. According to them, this cultural attribute of ‘cool’ was derived from the perceived ‘hipness of the product and the success of the field’ (Gill, 2007, p.15) as well as from the depiction of the work as ‘fun, fast-paced and exciting’ (Neff et al. 2005). Gill mentioned that, in her research, money was not mentioned as a reason for working in new media. In my own research however, there were respondents who, like Jeremy above, appeared to be directly motivated by monetary objectives. For example, Desmond, a “digital marketer” specialized in managing the social media accounts of his clients only as a means to an end. One reason for taking up this occupation was to be able to raise the money needed to become trained as a film director. Another reason was to enable him support himself and his family. For him, the ultimate attraction was not so much new media work itself as to the potential monetary rewards that could be derived from it. As he noted:

If I get a good job which is in line with what I want to do and for which I'll be paid well, I'll definitely take the job in order to save money for my needs and ambitions.

Beyond the 'fun, fast-paced and exciting' nature of the field referred to in Western literature, new media work was attractive to some of my respondents because it provided opportunities to earn money through skills which they believed could be self-acquired. Although this seems to corroborate views about motivation from mainstream economics which see entrepreneurs as driven exclusively by the desire to make money, I argue that underneath this monetary motive was a more fundamental one. In other words, although some of my respondents claimed that they were driven by the monetary rewards of their work, I argue that such claims can be interpreted as a desire to overcome the broader challenges experienced in their context. Nevertheless, while some respondents may have explicitly stated that money was their primary motive, others admitted that it was only a secondary driving force. For example, one of them commented:

It's not just about being an entrepreneur; it's about what drives you [...] No matter how poor you are as long as you are still breathing you still have the chance to improve yourself. For me, being an entrepreneur means being ready to beat all odds and having enough courage to withstand certain situations in life. I wouldn't say I'm strong enough, but I have gathered enough strength (David, video games creator).

The quote above highlights a key aspect of entrepreneurialism in my research: the desire my respondents had to 'withstand certain situations' experienced in their context. Throughout this chapter I have focussed one of such situations, namely, the infrastructural challenges faced by new media workers which limit their access to electricity and the internet. Many of my research participants were motivated directly or indirectly by the desire to rise above such challenges. In my view, this was made evident through the innovative strategies discussed in the previous section. Indeed, I suggest that the monetary motivations stated by some of my participants only served as a façade to this fundamental reason behind their entrepreneurial behaviour.

The story of Osaze, one of my research participants, further buttresses this point. After dropping out of university for financial reasons, he developed an interest for web design while working as a self-employed wholesale dealer in clothing items, an activity he admitted was only to make ends meet. As he explained:

It started like this: A friend of mine wanted to design a site and he called me, asking whether I knew someone he could pay to do it. So I called another friend and they both met. The guy did the job for him but it wasn't good enough. I began to wonder whether I could do better than what he had done. So I got motivated and said to myself, 'I have to learn this.'

Eventually, his clothing business failed and, on losing large amounts of money, he returned to web design which he believed would help him "start again from the scratch." Reflecting on his entrepreneurial role as a web designer, Osaze recalled his initial source of motivation for new media work with the following comment:

Well, I want to be successful as an entrepreneur... Most people would say they need all the money in the world to be successful, I don't think it's money that makes you successful. I think success has to do with your desire, your goals and all that. And that is what is driving me to be successful.

Finally, I draw on the comment of another respondent, Diane, an animator who ran her own animation company. According to her:

Before I started a company I would have said yes to getting a job elsewhere, but for the past two years I have come to the realization that maybe there is a reason why I am here, why I am in this industry now. [...] Yes, poverty might be there, but I feel proud to be an entrepreneur and this is what I'm doing.

Although Diane does not explicitly mention the challenges encountered at work, her comment is relevant because it expresses the desire found amongst most of my research participants, namely, to rise above the current situation of their context

despite the difficult conditions they faced. In my view, this summarizes the entrepreneurial mindset which can be said to characterize new media work in Nigeria.

Essentially, I argue that, 'making-do entrepreneurialism' is a positive concept which captures an attitude based on the desire to rise above and beyond the limiting conditions in the working lives of my research participants. While such conditions involve risks and uncertainties such as the infrastructural challenges experienced in Nigeria, they engender innovative habits and practices which helped the new media workers in my research to manage and negotiate those uncertainties. Such management and innovative strategies are facilitated by the intrinsic characteristics of such work (autonomy, freedom, control) which also contributed to their 'will to conquer' and 'the impulse to fight' – in the words of Schumpeter (1934).

6.6 Conclusion: Entrepreneurialism in Context

In this chapter, I examined entrepreneurialism among new media workers in Nigeria using traditional theories of uncertainty management, innovation and alertness to opportunities drawn from mainstream economics. The reason for this was to argue that the particular kind of entrepreneurial behaviour observed among my research participants conformed to these notions of entrepreneurship rather than the ideas that exist in the literature on new media work. This is because current ideas about entrepreneurialism among new media workers (such as ‘entrepreneurial labour’, ‘venture labour’ and ‘forced entrepreneurship’) are based on findings in the West which are based on the departure from ‘formally secure employment’ which characterize labour in many advanced countries (Neff, 2012; Neff et al., 2005; Oakley, 2014). On this basis, they are at variance with new media workers in countries like Nigeria who operate within labour regimes that have been dominated by informal economy activities for most of their existence.

In proposing alternative terminology that adequately captures the Nigerian context, I suggested the term ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ which refers to a form of entrepreneurialism based on improvisation because it expresses workers’ attempts to manage and negotiate the basic everyday challenges they face at work. As I explained, one of such challenges is the prevalence of infrastructural breakdown in Nigeria – the irregular access to electricity and the internet.

‘Making-do entrepreneurialism’ is essentially based on the way new media workers respond to the infrastructural problems of electricity and internet access. Drawing on my empirical data, I discussed how my respondents managed the uncertainties of electricity and internet access led them to decision making processes which are characteristic of entrepreneurs: decisions based on the allocation of resources such as generator, fuel and money as well as time and quality of work. I also discussed the innovative practices of my respondents. As I explained, these practices are based on principles of imitative innovation and are directed to negotiating the challenges of infrastructure. These practices were related to the work schedules they kept; the

techniques they employed to carry out their work; the contract arrangements they made with clients; and the mobility of their work spaces. Finally, I discussed how my respondents exhibited entrepreneurial traits through their alertness to opportunities. I showed that these opportunities were either based on the urge to make money or the desire to rise above the challenging conditions experienced in their context.

As I argued, ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ does not denote the merely passive idea of ‘getting by’. Rather, it is a positive concept which demonstrates the innovative capacity of new media workers in Nigeria to improvise in the face of difficulties. At the heart of this form of entrepreneurialism was the ability of my respondents to take advantage of the opportunities offered them by new media work (such as flexibility and freedom) to develop strategies for negotiating the adversities of non-electricity and internet failure.

In the next chapter, the final empirical chapter of the thesis, I focus on ethnicity, another feature of the Nigerian context which my respondents had to grapple with in their urge to negotiate the adverse conditions experienced in doing new media work.

Chapter 7

Social networking and the influence of ethnicity

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I dealt with the entrepreneurial practices of my research participants in response to their infrastructural challenges they confront in the Nigerian context. Before that, I examined precarious conditions they experienced in their practices of software piracy. As I highlighted in Chapter 3, these themes of my thesis are based on features of the Nigerian cultural context (precariousness and entrepreneurialism) and specificities of new media work in the Nigerian context (software piracy and infrastructural breakdown). In this final empirical chapter, I discuss the relationship between ethnicity and social networking among new media workers in Nigeria. I examine how ties based on ethnicity and kinship influenced the social networking practices of those I researched.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I engage with the academic literature and commentary on networking in the cultural industries generally and new media work specifically. I then relate these discussions to theories about social networks found in the writings of Burt (1993), Granovetter (1973), Brautigam (2003). This discussion raises pertinent themes for analysis such as the importance of skills as a form of human capital for new media workers, the significance of ethnic and kinship ties in social networks, as well as the weak tie and strong tie paradigm introduced by Granovetter. In the second and lengthiest section, I use data from my interviews and interactions with new media workers in the field to discuss how they negotiated ties of kinship and ethnicity alongside the demands of the industry. Finally, in the concluding section, I summarize the findings from my research on networking amongst new media workers in Nigeria.

The argument I make in this chapter conforms with those in the other chapters and with the overall arguments of the thesis. Generally, I contend that, as a result of the variation in cultural context, practices of networking found among my respondents

differ from those highlighted in the Western-based literature. I also found that the social networks built and mobilized by my respondents were based not only on strong (ethnic) and weak (professional) ties according to Granovetter's (1973) theory but also on associative ties – in line with Brautigam (2003).

7.2 Networking in New Media: What has been said?

As highlighted in the Chapter 2, the scholarly treatment given to the practices of networking among new media workers has mostly been from the perspective of how they are pressured to engage in social activities as a means of finding new work opportunities and maintaining contacts. According to these accounts, networking engagements frequently take the form of partying, clubbing, ‘beer drinking’ (Kennedy, 2011) or ‘Friday night drinking’ (Gregg, 2008) as well as partaking in conferences and informal networking or showcase events (Gill, 2002, 2009; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Kennedy, 2011; Neff et al., 2005; Wittel, 2001). Jubert (2011) notes that, in this context, finding work is no longer limited to ‘seeing an ad and sending in your CV.’ Rather, workers are increasingly compelled to ‘go to events, buy people beer, bum a cigarette, blog, twitter, remind people that you exist.’ These activities have been described as ‘network sociality’ (Wittel, 2001) or ‘compulsory sociality’ (Gregg, 2008) which are carried out by workers with the aim of strengthening their existing networks or of building new ones. For Wittel (2001), network sociality refers to social relations that are informational and ‘not based on mutual experience or common history, but primarily on an exchange of data and on “catching up”’ (p.51). It is concerned with how people ‘build, maintain and alter’ social ties, the ‘means, tactics and strategies’ they employ, as well as the cultural capital needed to increase their social capital (p.53). Gregg (2006) uses the term ‘compulsory sociality’ to describe the obligation that workers feel to network and maintain networks. Oakley et al. (2008) observe that ‘networking is seen as necessary, but people may find it uncomfortable. But some see it as the only way to get on’ (p.33). Although Gregg and Oakley et al. refer more broadly to artists and creative labourers, the same has also been applied specifically to new media workers (for example, Gill, 2009, 2010). There are other more optimistic views of networking in the literature. For example, Nielsen and Rossiter (2005) highlight the importance of relationships which are foregrounded by networks. Kennedy (2011) also acknowledges how ‘the capacity of networks plays a vital role in the range of ethical and moral practices’ in web design including the ways in which it is used in service of ‘the good’ by designers (p.41).

In contexts like Lagos, where many forms of labour operate under informal conditions, networking practices among new media workers potentially vary and may therefore need to be analyzed differently. For example, I show in this chapter how, in contrast to findings in the West which emphasized the role of informal meetings (partying, clubbing, 'beer drinking' and so on), networking among my respondents took place almost exclusively at formal gatherings like conferences, seminars and camps. Specifically, my research stresses the important role that the cultural factors of ethnicity and kinship play in determining the nature of networking practices in Nigeria. Although some of the writers cited above acknowledge the existence of race and ethnicity issues in networking practices, they do so from the perspective of a specific social or cultural context. For example, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) highlight the racial dimension of networking in pubs which are spaces that are culturally specific to the UK.

In this chapter, I examine how ethnicity and kinship, as pervasive phenomena in the Nigerian context, were experienced by the new media workers who participated in my research. I do this by focusing on social networks as an important aspect of networking practices. Drawing attention to social networks helps to incorporate the notion of ethnic and kinship ties since (as I discussed in chapter 3) relations based on ethnicity and kinship are central to the social networks built and maintained by people in Nigeria. For the rest of this section, I examine the available literature about networking practices in new media work. First, I highlight how it has been associated with informality and as a strategy for coping with precarious work conditions in advanced economies. Next, I discuss its relation with project-based labour which has been acknowledged as a defining characteristic of new media work. Finally, I examine how the role of skills and re-skilling among new media workers has been observed to contribute to practices of networking in combination with their personal networks. To conclude the section, I discuss the relationship between skills and personal networks in social network analysis and, in the following section, I apply this to my analysis of social networks among new media workers in the Nigerian context.

7.2.1 From networking to social networks

Much of the commentary on new media work and creative labour has associated networking practices with the precarious conditions under which such work takes place. Gill (2002) notes that intermittent and precarious work which is ‘endemic to life in new media’ has been partly the result of ‘transformations in advanced capitalism under the impact of globalisation’ (p.1) as well as the rapid rate of growth in information and communication technologies. According to various accounts, this has led to a situation in which work has become flexible (Beck, 2000), risk-tolerant (Gill, 2010; Neff, 2012) and individualized (Beck, 2000; Gill, 2002). Gill (2010) also notes that, as a result of these conditions, standard operations like client and staff recruitment have become informalized and ‘removed from the formal sphere governed by established procedures’ (p.13). She further argues that, in these informalized environments, networking as a practice has taken centre stage because, for new media workers who subsist and thrive under such informal conditions, networking has become an important feature of their labour. Thus, in summarizing the relationship between networking and precariousness, some commentators have suggested that networking can be understood as a strategy for dealing with the precarious conditions of work (Kennedy, 2011).

Although networking practices are not unique to new media work, the literature has highlighted certain characteristics of such work which make networking practices particularly relevant to it. One of these characteristics is the fact that new media work is project-based and therefore involves short-term and intermittent labour (Gill, 2010). Essentially, project-based work is dependent on the completion of projects and has been described as an important feature of new media work (Christopherson, 2004). Christopherson (2004) notes that projects ‘occur within defined time boundaries’ and ‘are evaluated by the quality and cost of the finished product – an event, photography exhibit, movie, architectural design, conceptual model, or plan’ (p.545). According to her, project-based production is typical of creative work and has become common in advanced capitalist economies ‘because they make economic sense’ (p.546). This is the case because projects allow workers to respond flexibly to market demands and

changes. For this reason, as Christopherson suggests, project-based work is more attuned to individual workers or small firms. She argues that, unlike large firms, individuals and small firms are potentially nimble enough to adjust to varied market conditions by moving quickly from one project to another without taking on additional costs such as the hiring of new staff. This agility is enhanced by two key attributes of new media work: the first is the fact that individuals can rely on their personal skill-set to accomplish various projects; the second is that workers can rely on their personal networks in their search for new projects. Christopherson (2004) concludes that, 'individuals, their skills, and their personal networks are at the heart of the project' (p.546). In other words, the 'projectness' of new media labour leads workers to rely on skills and personal networks in the organization of their work. Thus, I suggest that they can be described as people who mobilize their social networks as a means to successfully sell their skills in the marketplace. This activity of 'selling skills' is what I would like to refer to as networking.

However, writers like Sennett (1998) dispute this view about the relationship between skills and networking. For Sennett, in contemporary society, networking in itself has become a superficial skill which has replaced other deeper skills. He blames this situation on the growth of flexibility and adaptability in the workplace. According to him, a routinized structure was the norm in Fordist era during which workers had stability and job-security (Natarajan, 2003) and did not need to rely on social networking to find work. I argue that this is not necessarily the case because, in the first place, networking presumes and potentially thrives on the availability of deep-rooted skills. Also, the success of one's networking practices may depend on the depth of the skills that are being promoted. Therefore, rather than a replacement, it can be said that networking has become an additional requirement in contemporary work.

For this reason, I argue that understanding the practice of networking in new media work requires examining the place of skills in the lives of those who engage in such work. Kotamraju (2002) has suggested that a focus on skills provides us with a better understanding of the conditions under which new media work is carried out and the practices that it involves. Since new media work is largely dependent on technology, it

often requires the acquisition of technology-based skills. As Kotamraju (2002) noted, the introduction of technology has been known in many cases to influence a range of types of work because people feel the need to upgrade their skills in order to adapt to conditions that emerge from the use of those technologies. For new media workers, the pressure to update their skills is experienced regularly because of the rapid advancements in digital technologies which form the basis of their everyday work. This implies that for them to remain relevant in their field, they must constantly keep apace with changes in technology. Apart from the developments in digital technology, Kotamraju (2002) noted other factors which induce new media workers to constantly re-skill. Most notably, in her research on the web design industry, she highlighted the issues that arose from the 'battle for territory' between computer scientists (who laid more emphasis on coding) and graphic designers (who paid greater attention to the artistic aspects of web design) which occurred during the developmental stages of the field in the US. According to her, such conflicts reflected the vaguely defined nature of new media work and were further exacerbated by the constant need for new media workers to reinvent their skills. Christopherson (2004), drawing on the work of Kotamraju, argued that the question of skills is central to the occupational identities of new media workers. In addition, she noted that skills are crucial to their economic survival because whether they obtain new projects is partly determined by the skills they can exhibit to potential clients (that is, it depends on the quality of skills they can sell in the marketplace).

However, as Gill (2002) suggested based on her research findings, obtaining projects in new media work is determined not necessarily by 'what you know' but by 'who you know' (p.82). In this way, Gill draws attention to the importance of informal and social networks and how workers mobilize them as instruments for negotiating the marketplace to obtain new projects and jobs. Social networks have been found to serve two purposes for new media workers. First, they play a key role as a source of work. In her study of new media work in New York's Silicon Alley, Neff (2005) observed that social networks 'became the main resource for maintaining employability' because they were the means by which workers mediated the labour market (p.138). Similarly, Gill (2009) reported that, for most of her respondents, their social networks

were ‘the conduits for finding work, regardless of whether one is a company director, freelancer or lands a stable job somewhere’ (p.12). Second, social networks help to provide new media workers with knowledge and information about new technologies. Writing in 2002, Kotamraju referred to online forums as the main source of information about skills. Today, these forums also include blogs and social network sites³⁰ where new media workers obtain up-to-date information not only about the latest skills required in their field but also tools, techniques and support on various types of new media projects. Kennedy (2011) describes these online networks as a form of networking which helps new media workers to collaborate and build community. In whichever form, social networks are essential for new media workers who necessarily invest time and effort in building and enhancing them. In this chapter, I focus on offline networks because they form the foundations of how networking is enacted in Nigeria. An analysis of how these networks are formed, the resources they contain and the changes they undergo can provide insight into practices of networking in Nigeria where crosscutting factors like ethnicity and kinship bonds play a significant role. In what follows, I draw on sociological theories of social networks to throw more light on networking practices in new media work and how they can be analyzed in the Nigerian context. This is useful in order to provide theoretical foundations to my empirical findings in Nigeria.

7.2.2 Social networks and their structures

Broadly speaking, social networks refer to the sets of ties linking several actors within a wider social system. The treatment of social networks in sociological research has generated a number of theories which attempt to explain the dynamics of ties within a network. In this section, I engage with some of these theories which I suggest can be usefully related to new media networking and ethnic and kinship networks, which interact and overlap in Nigeria.

³⁰ Online forums today include highly popular platforms like stackoverflow.com but also the regular social network sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

To elaborate his theory on 'structural holes' which attempts to explain how one's chances of success are determined by the structure of one's networks through the avoidance of redundant connections, Burt (1993) distinguishes three types of capital: economic, human and social. While economic capital refers to a person's financial assets, human capital includes one's natural abilities and acquired skills. Social capital, on the other hand, refers to one's social network which is 'the set of personal relations that an individual can totalize' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2002, p.357) by means of her/his economic and human capital. Burt (1993) categorizes both economic and human capital as properties of individuals and assigns greater importance to social capital because only 'through relations with colleagues, friends, and clients come the opportunity to transform financial and human capital to profit' (p.58). By this, he appears to give support to the cliché that, 'it's not what you know but who you know' which Gill (2002) acknowledged in her research (as discussed above). Applying Burt's distinction of capital to new media labour, the human capital of new media workers may be represented by the skills they possess while their social capital refers to their network of contacts from whom they try to obtain new projects and jobs (that is, their social networks). Following Burt's logic, greater importance can be ascribed to the social networks of new media workers ('who they know') over their skills ('what they know') in highly competitive new media labour markets where a high number of skilled individuals operate. Under such conditions, as Burt notes, 'whatever you bring to a production task, there are other people who could do the same job; perhaps not as well in every detail, but probably as well within the tolerances of the people for whom the job is done' (p.59). However, in less competitive markets where new media skills are not in abundance, the converse may prevail and the possession of skills may be valued as much as, or higher than, social networks. In such situations, the extent to which new media workers can build and extend their networks (and therefore increase their chances of obtaining new projects) would arguably depend on the skills they possess and, therefore, 'who you know' may be largely dependent on 'what you know'. In this chapter, I show how this was indeed the case among participants of my research in Lagos.

Burt (1993) goes on to discuss the nature of the networks developed by individuals. He argues that while one's network can be described as one's access to people with specific resources (such as power, prestige, skills and information), it is often 'contingent on the resources available to individuals socially proximate to the person' (p.60). According to him:

Wealthy people develop ties with other wealthy people. Educated people develop ties with one another. Young people develop ties with one another. [...] Socially similar people, even in the pursuit of independent interests, spend time in the same places. [...] Socially similar people have more shared interests. [...] Whatever the etiology for strong relations between socially similar people, it is to be expected that the resources and opinions of any one individual will be correlated with the resources and opinions of their close contacts.

Based on the above, it may be inferred that networks developed by individuals include those which are based on ethnic and kinship relations. As I elaborated in Chapter 3, ethnic and kinship relations are based on an awareness of a common origin and culture. They refer to the social structures through which members of an ethnic group are attached to one another and how such structures are used by members of the group. These kinds of relations are characterized by linkages between 'socially similar' people who 'spend time in the same places' even though other interests (such as professional ones) may be 'independent' or possibly unrelated. The social similarity found in ethnic and kinship based networks typically refers to the possession of a common language, homeland, ancestry or physical properties among people – which are well-known attributes of ethnic or kinship groups (Baumann, 2004). However, most of the literature about new media work do not acknowledge the role played by ethnic and kinship networks, because such networks are not prominent in the locations where research has taken place³¹. For example, Wittel (2001) stated that his notion of network sociality is 'not based on mutual experience or common history but primarily

³¹ Although there have been studies on ethnicity in the broader cultural industries such as Hesmondhalgh and Saha (2013), or Holgate and Mckay (2010) on workers in London's cultural industries.

on an exchange of data' (p.51). According to him, network sociality is based on ephemeral linkages because it consists of social relations which are essentially 'fleeting and transient' (p.51). For Wittel, 'network sociality can be understood in contrast to community' which denotes 'stability, coherence, embeddedness and belonging' (p.51). In contrast, my own research on the networking practices of new media workers focuses on the role that ethnic and kinship ties play in the social networking practices among new media workers because of the cultural importance of such ties in the Nigeria context, and the role they therefore play in work-based social networking.

The distinction between network ties such as those based on ethnicity and network linkages based on an exchange of data or information is the subject of Granovetter's (1973) theory on the strength of weak ties. Granovetter (1973) differentiated strong ties from weak ties depending on the intensity of the relationship between two or more actors. According to his thesis, the strength of a tie is determined by the frequency of contact, the reciprocity of favors and obligations, and the intimacy between the actors. Weak ties are characterized by infrequency of contact and a general lack of affective content. Granovetter (1983) argued that since actors with strong ties tend to move in the same circles, the information shared among them coincide frequently in contrast with those of weaker ties. The outcome of this is that new information passes more easily through weak ties than it does through strong ones since, as he suggested, those with whom we share weak ties, 'move in different circles from ours [and] connect us to a wider world' (p.34). Therefore while strong ties may be constrained by a propensity for parochialism, weak ties allow for greater response to changing circumstances through the acquisition of new information. From this perspective, ethnic and kinship relations can be categorized as strong ties while those which make up Wittel's (2001) network sociality are weak ties. This is understandable since, according to Wittel, network sociality is based on the 'micro-sociology of the information age' in which social relations are largely 'informational' (p.52). While such an approach may be deemed appropriate in contexts similar to that in which

Wittel was carried out his research³², it would be insufficient for explaining the nature of networking practices that take place in societies where strong ties of ethnicity and kinship play an important role in people's lives, including new media workers. Although, as Gravenetter argues, such strong ties do not circulate new information as effectively as weak ties, they may hold valuable resources such as power, access and influence which may be helpful for new media workers in obtaining new jobs, contracts or projects. I expand further on this point using my empirical data in the next section.

A final point about social networks which is relevant to my study refers to how the variation in social network ties raises questions about Granovetter's theory on the strength of weak ties. Although, for illustrative and empirical reasons, Gravenetter applied the label 'friend' to his concept of strong ties and 'acquaintance' to weak ties in his study, it may be argued that the distinctions between strong ties and weak ties are not always fixed, but vary in accord with prevailing circumstances. Studies on the structure and mobilization of social networks within the informal economies of African contexts have referred to a continuum of ties (Brautigam, 2003; Meagher, 2010) rather than simply strong or weak ties. For example, in her study of social networks in Nigeria and other African societies, Brautigam (2003, p.449) suggested that ties and relationships exist in at least three forms: first, ethnic, kinship or communal ties which are based on communal identities; second, associative ties which exist as a result of shared histories that cut across communal boundaries, such as 'attendance at the same school or membership in the same clubs'; and third, professional or occupational ties based on repeated business interactions with no previous social bond. It can be argued that these ties can exist simultaneously between two or more nodes within a social network at any given time. For example, associative ties between people can emerge as the result of the ethnic relations that exists among them. Similarly, ethnic or associative ties may lead people to develop relations with each other which are based on the exchange of professional information. In such

³² Wittel theory on network sociality was based on empirical research carried out in London.

situations, stronger ties may be said to facilitate the flow of new information which, according to Granovetter's theory, is what defines the 'strength' of weak ties.

The issues raised in this section indicate that practices of networking discussed in the literature on new media labour depend on the context in which workers operate. Social networking is not always the same for all new media workers in all parts of the world. As I have suggested and argue below, ethnic and kinship ties play an important role in new media networking in Nigeria, even if they do not in parts of the developed world where much research into new media work has been carried out. As Lourenço-Lindell (2001) helpfully observes, 'the structure and content of social networks, as well as the relation between network characteristics and ability to mobilise support, will vary from one socio-economic and cultural context to another' (p.41). To substantiate these ideas, I now employ data from my research to examine how ethnic and kinship ties influence the dynamics of the social networks mobilized by new media workers in Lagos and, in turn, determine the practices of networking in the new media industry.

7.3 Networking and the negotiation of networks in Nigeria

In this empirical section, I analyse the responses from my interviews and my observation in the field. First, I discuss the negative reaction of my respondents to the ethnic and kinship networks based on their experiences. Next, I examine how the demand for skills in the new media sector lead them to prioritize skills over ethnicity and kinship in the construction and mobilization of social networks. Finally, I show how, despite the general disavowal for them, ethnic and kinship ties were still visible in the social networking patterns of my respondents.

7.3.1 The weakening of ethnic and kinship networks

Recourse to kinship and ethnic ties is a deeply ingrained practice among people in Nigeria which cuts across different segments of the society. These ties can be differentiated from other ties such as those based on occupation or religion because they are ascribed to individuals at birth rather than acquired by them (Baumann, 2004; Tostensten et al., 2001). While kinship ties denote family and blood relationships, ethnic ties often refer to one's identification with a broader group on the grounds of cultural differentiation from others as well as common descent or ancestry (Jones, 1997). Kinship ties may therefore be understood as the foundation of ethnic linkages and they form an individual's most basic social networks. Smith (2006) notes that, in contemporary Nigeria, people of all social strata navigate political and economic insecurity and inequality by relying on social networks ties based on kinship and community of origin. As I will demonstrate, my own research among new media workers in Lagos also revealed that these ties influence the nature of networking practices lived and experienced by this group of workers. In this section, I begin with a discussion about the influence of kinship relations before engaging with ties based on ethnicity.

Kinship groups in Nigeria, as in many parts of Africa, tend to be made up of large extended families (Ferrara, 2007). In rural areas, members of extended families typically live in close proximity and form communities with hierarchical structures in which the oldest member assumes the role as head of the clan. In urban areas like

Lagos, where such proximity is not possible, families still retain their tightly knit bonds as well as their hierarchical and formal structures of authority. These structures manifest a high power distance between parents and children which means that parents exercise a lot of influence on the younger family members (Hofstede, 1996). Furthermore, an important characteristic of family and kinship networks is the anticipation of reciprocity between parents (or senior kin members) and their children. This implies that, when they attain working status, young family members are expected to provide financial support to their aged parents and other kin members who are in need. According to Granovetter (1983), ‘this pervasive use of strong ties by the poor and insecure is a response to economic pressures’ because, in the absence of state or other kinds of support, ‘they believe themselves to be without alternatives’ (p.213). For this reason, parents and kin members often feel obligated to intervene in the economic lives of young members by directly influencing the career choices they make. This was the experience of some participants in my research who recounted how they resisted the efforts by their parents and kinsfolk to dissuade them from engaging in new media work. For example, one of my research participants named Diane related how she encountered opposition from her parents after indicating her intention to pursue a career as an animator. As she explained:

When I returned from school and I told my parents that I wanted to start an animation company, they were like “no way!”. At that time, one of the large organizations was receiving applications for a graduate trainee employment programme and my parents said that I had to apply for it. I did so and I was not taken, but I wasn't even interested so I didn't mind at all.

Such reaction by Diane's parents towards a career in animation can be explained by two perceptions of new media work in the Nigerian context. First, as discussed in the previous chapter, new media work is mostly entrepreneurial and is largely based on opportunism and survivalism (Omidyar, 2012). Therefore, it is deemed to be an inadequate career choice to support kinship networks that depend on the reciprocal benefits described above. Second, as highlighted in Chapter 4, new media work is an obscure occupational field because of its relatively recent emergence and the slow

diffusion of digital media infrastructure in the country. For this reason, there is a general lack of awareness among many (especially older) people about what occupations in new media entail. Thus, potentially precarious careers in new media (rather than stable and established occupations in, say, accounting or engineering) are unlikely to be supported by older kinsfolk who depend on the reciprocal benefits associated with kinship ties. It is from this perspective that the refusal of Diane's parents to encourage her career ambition can be understood.

Indeed, some other my respondents, like Diane, who chose to work in the new media industry experienced exclusion from their kinship networks and, consequently, were denied benefits due to them. The case of Samson is illustrative of this. As an aspiring animator, he dropped out of a management degree at university because of his desire to pursue a career in animation. While making this decision, he had to resist pressure from his parents and other kinsfolk who remained unconvinced that a career in animation would provide the needed benefits for members of the family. This eventually resulted in their refusal to financially support his training as an animator and in his exclusion from family benefits.

As the experiences of Samson and Diane indicate, the choice of occupations in new media sometimes conflicts with expectations of economic reciprocity which, as I have noted, is an important feature of family and kinship networks in Nigeria. In other words, new media work potentially undermines the structure of kinship networks. In a similar way, the lack of knowledge about new media work contributed to the way kinship ties were perceived among my research participants. For example, reflecting on the ignorance of her kinsfolk toward her career choice, Diane commented:

Up till now I don't even think my parents understand what I'm doing, let alone other people. My aunts and grandparents, when they call me, usually ask: 'what about that thing you are doing?' They never know exactly what to call it. Yes I understand that a lot of people still need to be educated about what I do but as the industry begins to grow and people will know what we are doing, then maybe they will understand.

The unfamiliarity of friends and family with new media was commonly spoken about by my respondents as part of their experiences of new media work. For example, Desmond, another interviewee I have quoted in previous chapters, explained the low acceptance of his job as a digital and social media marketer in the following way:

My parents don't know what I do. To them, I don't have any work. Some of my friends just think I don't do anything either. In fact, there's one of them who thinks I'm one of those internet scammers because I'm always on the internet and he doesn't associate me with any particular company. So many people find it difficult to understand what I do (Desmond, social media marketer).

In such situations in which one's occupation is neither fully understood nor encouraged within (and beyond) kinship and family networks, information about knowledge and skills are bound to be limited within such networks. Thus, there was a general impression among my respondents that their kinship networks were inadequate sources of information about skills and other resources in new media work. In some way, this reinforced Granovetter's notion about the non-circulation of information within strong ties. It also suggested a weakening of the strength of kinship ties among my respondents.

Nevertheless, although kinship ties were unreliable as sources of knowledge and skills, my findings revealed that they potentially held resources of power and influence which were useful for obtaining work opportunities. This occurred when the clients of new media workers *were* their kin members. In this case, kinship ties were both disadvantageous and advantageous. They were disadvantageous when new media workers were victims of such situations. For example, some of those I interviewed explained how they lost out against competitors who they believed were kin members of the prospective clients, even though less qualified. Those who related such accounts often interpreted these incidents in terms of the client's failure to understand and appreciate the requirements of new media work. Essentially, they felt aggrieved and unfairly treated. The comments below recount such experiences:

There is a client whose job I can't do any more. I just can't deal with her anymore. I had designed her website and it was up and running. [...] Although she's formally educated, works in a bank and manages her own business, she's really an illiterate! She didn't check the website I had done but because her son or daughter or whoever it was said that he or she could do it for free, she complained that I hadn't done anything. I was really confused (Yvonne, web designer).

Yes I've prepared proposals in the past even though they sometimes give the jobs to their family members. Yes, it happens, when you sell an idea to them. There was this company I was trying to sell something to the other day, I gave all the information and he went behind my back to give it to someone else. Maybe a relative that does the same thing (Kevin, web designer).

Although none of those I interviewed related incidents in which they benefitted from the power and influence of their own kin or family members, the possibility that they did cannot be excluded. However, some of them admitted that they sometimes carried out projects for family members – usually for free or at reduced charges. For example, Paul who is a self-employed web designer explained his strategy when dealing with relatives while Shola, also self-employed in web design work spoke in similar terms:

How much I charge for websites depends also on relationships. Sometimes in business you have to bend the rules. It may be for a church member or some family relations or close friends, you know, all those kinds of chains... In those cases I kind of bring down the price. But when it's strictly business, I go business (Paul, web designer).

If my mum wants a website, I'll do it for free (Shola, web designer)

However, even those who appeared to benefit from such situations complained that such projects were unprofitable and unhelpful to their business. As Shola later admitted: 'I don't see any advantage in creating websites for free. First, it takes my time and what do I get from it?' Therefore, regardless of whether they were victims or beneficiaries of the power and influence wielded by kin members, many of my respondents had reasons to complain about kinship networks and expressed a

disavowal of such networks as instruments for gaining advantage in their work. In their view, there was little to gain from such networks in terms of information and access to work opportunities. Rather, they frequently lost out when such network connections were mobilized in the new media workplace. For this reason, recourse to social networks based on kinship ties was not a common practice among those I researched. Since kinship ties are strong ties, this appears to corroborate Granovetter's theory which de-emphasizes the value of such ties in matters related to information and access to job opportunities.

While kinship networks are limited in size, networks based on ethnicity potentially have greater reach as sources of information about work opportunities in new media. As mentioned earlier, kinship networks are based on family and blood relations and are therefore less extensive than ethnic networks, which are made up of people with broader cultural and historical similarities. Ethnic grouping is an important element of identification in Nigeria. As discussed in Chapter 3, every Nigerian belongs to one of over 250 ethnic groups in the country. Each ethnic group can be identified by its own dialect, culture and geographic locale with the most dominant ones being the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Although they do not possess as much tie strength as those based on kinship, the larger number of people within ethnic groups potentially offers new media workers better opportunities to build reliable social networks and gain advantage in their work.

Nevertheless, as with kinship networks, there was a general disavowal among my respondents of the usefulness of ethnic affiliations in their networking practices. This attitude may be the result of their exposure to ethnic marginalization or denigration in daily life. One of my interviewees Orlando who, as introduced in previous chapters, manages a web design firm, explained his experience while searching for an apartment:

It hasn't happened to me at work but, outside of work, I think it's an issue in Nigeria. For instance you are looking for an apartment and you meet the landlady. In fact before you get to the landlady, the agent will ask for your state of origin, your religion

and stuff like that. Initially I really didn't know why they were asking me, I just thought it was basic information, but later on I found out that a Yoruba landlord wants a Yoruba³³ tenant. If you are not from their place, no house for you. So it actually affects you somehow, because you would think: 'I know I'm a good guy but what does where I'm from have to do with anything?' (Orlando, web designer).

Similarly, Shola whose ethnic group is Yoruba, recounted the negative reaction of friends and family toward inter-ethnic courtship:

There are people close to me who always say Yoruba people should not marry Igbo³⁴ people. My elder brother is dating an Igbo girl and I've heard thousands of jokes about her but, even though they are jokes, I believe for every joke there is some element of truth. But I don't think it's necessary. I don't understand them (Shola, web designer).

Some incidents of ethnic marginalization were also experienced at work by some of my respondents. Such incidents often occurred when dealing with clients who, according to the victims, were ignorant about new media work. Overall, such events had the effect of reinforcing their disapproving views about the benefits of ethnic-based networks. One of my respondents, Jeremy, who is non-Yoruba ethnic group, related how his ethnic affiliation was the reason he was not awarded a project by a potential client.

I had the experience once when I went to negotiate with a client who wanted me to build an e-commerce website for her supermarket. We discussed and agreed on a price but I discovered only later that she gave the job to someone else because I was not Yoruba [...] I felt bad but I don't think I would do the same since it is based on ignorance. If you really know what you're doing, you should go for what works as long as it isn't illegal, regardless of whether the person is black or white or from north or south (Jeremy, web developer).

³³ Yoruba is the major and dominant ethnic group in Lagos.

³⁴ As highlighted above, Igbo is one of the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria based in the South East. However, due to migration, they have become relatively dominant in the Southwestern city of Lagos.

Because of such experiences and to avoid the risk of losing out on project opportunities, some of my respondents assume different ethnic identities on different occasions in order to gain or maintain the advantage. They do this by speaking in the clients' local language in order to win their approval. Since language is an important indicator of ethnic affiliation or integration, it can serve as an effective instrument of mediation between persons of different ethnic groups. For example, some of my respondents who were not Yoruba but fluent in the language were able to deal confidently with Yoruba clients. On other occasions, the ability to communicate in the language of a minority (or less dominant) ethnic group was also advantageous. For example, speaking the Igbo language in a Yoruba-dominated part of Lagos is a useful strategy for securing Igbo clientele. This was the experience of Paul, one of my interviewees who speaks both Yoruba and Igbo but strategically attracts Igbo clientele to his web design training classes because, in his office, they feel more at home in a Yoruba-dominated area:

The area my office is Yoruba but most of those who come are actually Igbos. Why? Because my secretary is an Igbo lady. So the moment they come and realise that she speaks Igbo and discover where she's from, they speak their language and enroll for the classes. But if they had met someone from somewhere else, they would have taken a long time or may not have come at all. They feel more relaxed and at home because this person is from their place and has some relationship with them in terms of state of origin. I would say ethnicity really plays an important role in the kind of business I run which is one of rendering services. (Paul, web design trainer)

Sometimes it comes in useful [...] Since I speak most languages, I don't have any problem. The moment people know I can speak their language, they think that I am one of them. (Paul, web designer)

Another respondent who owned a new media company and was well-known in the industry believed that, based on his experience, being able to speak different languages was useful for getting around in Nigeria.

There are certain places you go to where you speak Yoruba or Igbo and it's helpful. I think this is the same anywhere in the world where one will have to learn how to connect with people in their language which is beneficial. (Marvin, new media business owner)

However, most of my respondents could only speak one ethnic language. Also, some of them did not think it was a helpful strategy for obtaining new clients or find jobs in new media. Some of them argued that people (particularly clients) who employed various methods of ethnic differentiation did so because of their ignorance of new media work. This suggestion that clients are ignorant of the demands and requirements of new media labour resonated among several respondents in my research. As with recourse to kinship networks highlighted earlier, they traced this lack of knowledge to the fact that the new media industry is still at a stage of infancy in Nigeria.

Such experiences contribute even more to the general disavowal for ethnic and kinship ties. It also appeared to shift workers' networking interests to other forms of ties that are more advantageous to their work. In the next section, I discuss how the importance of skills in new media work were deemed more relevant to the social networking practices of my research participants.

7.3.2 The rise of skills-based networks

In contrast to how they valued ethnic and kinship ties, I noticed in my research that new media workers attached much importance to their skill-set as means by which they might obtain work. This was because they were aware that the shortage of people with relevant skills was leading new media companies and clients to intensify their search for the qualified employees or freelancers. Thus, many respondents appeared convinced about the importance of equipping themselves with the skill-set needed to excel or simply to get by in the new media industry. This conviction was often based on the belief that, for a fledgling but maturing new media industry in Nigeria, having the relevant skills was more important than belonging to or integrating oneself with an ethnic group. This was more so because top level employers and clients were in dire

need of professionals who could demonstrate a high degree of expertise. Such belief was backed by the experiences of my respondents. For example, Kevin mentioned how this was reflected in the bidding processes he participated in:

Well, I think when people see your portfolio and have seen what you have done and have compared with other people, once they see that you can deliver on the project they don't care what tribe you are from. If a Nigerian wants something done, he goes for the best guy he can find. [...] Based on my experience, I've worked with the Igbos, with Hausas and others. During project bids I met some competitors who were of the same tribe with the client and I still won the contract (Kevin, web designer).

With experiences like this, it would seem that ethnic networks were unreliable and insufficient as a means of securing both work and skilled employees. Since the scarcity of skillful personnel appeared to have discouraged employers from depending on ethnic ties during hiring exercises, workers had to focus on improving their skills rather than their ethnic networks. The employers in my research indicated that, when hiring, they were more likely to give priority to candidates' ability to demonstrate new media skills than to shared ethnic ties. The following comments which capture this view were made by Damien and Kola, who manage reputable new media companies in Lagos:

Already there is scarcity of human resource, so that kind of selection based on ethnic group might not work. It depends on the number of people. It doesn't work with us. If you have about ten people now, out of those ten people it is very difficult to use ethnic groupings to choose; but if you have a very large pool, like two hundred people ... that's when that sort of thing can work (Damien, co-founder of a web design company).

If I have a business that I need to make money from, I'm not going to put someone who won't give the desired results. If I find someone who wastes my time and doesn't give the results I want, I'm not going to waste my time on that person. I don't know why people do that. [...] For example, I have a very close cousin in the university who asked to do his internship with us. I knew that this person won't be able to add any

value to the company. He had to compete against another person who was an illustrator. I hired the illustrator (Kola, CEO of a video games production company).

In my view, these comments show how the importance of occupational identities is superseding that of ethnic identities in Nigeria – as Langer and Ukiwo, (2007) found out in a research carried out to test the salience of ethnicity in the country. Although they suggested that such changes are the result of rapid urbanization in cities like Lagos, I argue that these changes are also industry-specific. As I pointed out in previous chapters, the new media industry in Nigeria is not as developed as other sectors in the country. Therefore, its workforce is limited in terms of quantity and quality in comparison with others. Moreover, thanks to the internet, the new media industry is particularly subject to the impacts of globalization and to market forces beyond the country's borders. This implies that new media workers compete not only within the local industry but also in a wider global arena. For this reason, employers and clients have the option of either hiring workers within Nigeria or engaging with freelancers from other countries through the internet. Thus, a growing awareness of this wider labour market appears to be contributing to the prioritization of occupational identities in the Nigerian new media industry. Also, as a comment by Damien above indicates, employers now prioritize skills and proficiency over ethnic ties because of the limited size of a sufficiently skilled workforce in Nigeria. In other words, hiring processes are based on how candidates can demonstrate specific sets of skills needed to execute new media projects rather than their ethnic affiliation. In the following quote, Damien describes how the recruitment process at his company takes place:

We look at the jobs they have done before and also we look at their skill-set. [...] Most of our work is broken into different phases of the design process: the website markup (HTML) and PHP programming with which to build web applications and all that. When it comes to the programming part, it's basically just about looking at the kind of work they have done and dissecting to see their level of programming knowledge. From basic interviewing, you can tell how good somebody is. For example, I usually ask them for the difference between POST and GET [...]It's not difficult to choose

because there are a lot of guys out there who actually don't know these things(Damien, co-founder of a web design company)³⁵.

The demands of such selection processes compelled some of my research participants to present themselves and seek work on the basis of skills rather than through the dependence on ethnic ties. Their practices of networking also reflected this preference for building professional ties based on 'what you know' rather than 'who you know' which contrasts with findings from Gill's research conducted in the West. The importance of skills has led to an increase in the number of professional meetings and conferences in the Nigerian new media industry which necessarily cut across ethnic boundaries. These events include camps, seminars and training sessions that cover different kinds of new media skills. I suggest that this trend is a reflection of how the new media industry in Nigeria is gradually maturing. To further highlight the decreasing relevance of ethnic identities in the industry and the increasing importance of skills, I now draw on a narrative on one of my research participants, Adamu.

Adamu relocated to Lagos in search of better opportunities to expand his web design business. Although he had previously operated from his home in Sokoto, a sparsely populated and underdeveloped city in the northwest of Nigeria, all his important clients were based in Lagos. Adamu belongs to the Hausa ethnic group which is dominant in northern Nigeria but a minority group in Lagos³⁶. After working on his own as a web designer at his home in Sokoto, he decided to make the long trip to Lagos to attend a professional event called Bar Camp which was a two-day event organized as a platform for web and mobile developers to hone their skills and network with people in the industry. As part of the event, individuals were offered the opportunity to present and speak about their projects to other attendees. As Adamu recounted:

³⁵ The terminology used in this quote (HTML, PHP, POST and GET) are technical concepts employed in web design work.

³⁶ Hausa people who reside in Lagos are mostly of low social standing and commonly take up some of the lowest jobs in the society. They are often employed as security guards or they manage their own small shops.

I came for Bar Camp in 2009, which was the first time I visited and experienced Lagos. I was invited to the stage to present something, and when I mentioned that I was from Sokoto, people were like ‘wow, seriously?’ Personally, I had never thought there was any one else doing the same thing I was doing. I thought it was just me, my PC, the web and the world outside Nigeria. It was only when I started meeting people that I realized that there were many other web designers in the country. And it was fun.

For Adamu, that event was crucial in his transition from an obscure freelancer to a respected web developer in touch with the wider new media industry in Nigeria. He attributed this progression to the professional ties and networks he was able to build with other web designers in Lagos.

In fact it changed everything. I improved, I buckled up, I started doing partnerships, discussing ways to expand with people from Lagos. Yes, it was online but I formed a lot of partnerships. Some partnerships that lasted long, some short, lots of businesses from there to Lagos. [...] I eventually migrated to Lagos in 2011.

Through the partnerships and professional networks he built during the period, Adamu acquired multiple new media projects. This happened not simply because of those networks but because he had been able to demonstrate his skills as a competent web designer among his peers. Thus, his networks and his chances of finding new work opportunities were bolstered by the skills he possessed and displayed. Reflecting on how he acquired one of his largest projects, Adamu explained:

I’ve done a bank project which is my biggest so far. Yes I did a whole system but I worked for months, four or five months to be precise. I think they contracted it to another company and that company came to me through someone who knew I was capable.

The networks built by Adamu were not based on unidirectional ties from which he alone benefited in a non-reciprocal fashion. Rather, since Adamu was able to

demonstrate that he possessed high level web design skills which were valuable for those with whom he set up partnerships, the relationships were beneficial to everyone involved. The story of Adamu illustrates a number of features that have been raised specifically about new media work. First, it shows how the centrality of skills (which Christopherson (2004) and Kotamraju (2002) have highlighted in relation to new media work) contribute to experiences in new media work. In her discussion about how people rise to the status of 'micro-celebrity' in web design, Kennedy (2011) argued that, unlike other cultural industries such as the music sector, such achievements in web design are usually based on merit and skill rather than on 'ambition and luck'. This was the case with Adamu, whose skill was the main reason for the rise in his status (which led to the growth of his network), more than his ethnic background. As one of my interviewees commented about him:

Personally, I really don't understand what the whole idea is with tribalism. If this guy is a brilliant Hausa guy then let's work with him, the way Yoruba people speak about Hausa people, you will think they are all dumb. The day I spoke with him, in fact I fell in love with everything about this guy: intelligent, brilliant, insightful, visionary... That's all I need! (Shola, web designer)

Comments such as the one above were common amongst new media workers and employers who claimed to eschew ethnic, kinship or social considerations in favour of nondiscriminatory ones that are based on the demonstration of skills. In such cases, people are judged or assigned celebrity statuses specifically because of their skills and other criteria outside the realm of new media work were secondary. Thus there was a rise in the acceptance of skills-based networks as against ethnic based ones. Another reason for this rise among my respondents had to do with the pleasure of learning new skills and being respected for it (Gill, 2007). Many of my interviewees expressed these feelings in different ways by speaking about the relevance of their skills and their eagerness to improve those skills. For example, an interviewee who worked at one of the few animation companies in Nigeria related how people reacted positively to his skills.

There's no particular way to describe what I do, so I just describe myself by all the skills I have. When people see my work, the most common reaction is "Wow, you have a lot of talent." (Henry, animator)

Similarly, in referring to the relevance of being recognized for his skills, another respondent, Orlando, mentioned that it served as a motivation for him to do more:

Yes, I think it's important not just because I want people to know that I did things, but because it gives you the confidence or drive to make you want to do more work and get better. When someone acknowledges your work, it makes you feel happy to know that your work is noticed. It makes you want to even make it better than it is. And this happens a lot with Web work. (Orlando, web designer)

Many other respondents expressed their willingness to be judged mainly by their skills. This implied that they preferred to be evaluated based on merit rather than other criteria such as ethnicity. These sentiments were expressed both by individuals who worked as freelancers and by those who operated their own businesses, as the comments below illustrate.

We just allow our jobs to speak for us. If we have to win any contract, we want to do it on merit, not because we want to stand as though we are big when we're not. So, if we're up to the task, let our jobs speak for us. (Tony, web designer)

Work should speak for itself. I'm not looking for fame and popularity even though a lot of people do. (Marvin, animation company CEO)

The comments above and the ones before all point to the growing relevance of skills as a measure of competence and as an increasing determinant of access to work opportunities in the Nigerian new media industry. They suggest the existence and potential rise of a merit-based system in the sector which is unencumbered by the demands of ethnicity or kinship networks. As such, social networks in the Nigerian new media industry could be said to have their basis in skills. Thus, in this industry 'what you know' is clearly prioritized over 'who you know.' This conforms with

Burt's (1993) logic which, as discussed earlier, ascribes greater importance to social capital over human capital in competitive labour markets while acknowledging the reverse in markets where there are fewer workers with the necessary skills. In Nigeria, as I have shown, the priority of the 'what' (skills) over the 'who' (ethnic-based networks) is taking place precisely in a context of increasing demand for skills because of the scarce availability of labour.

However, as Burt himself admits, merit-based systems exist only in an ideal world. In his writing on the social structure of competition in labour markets, Burt (1993) argued that, as competition grows, criteria other than skills and technical ability 'are used to narrow the pool down to the individual who gets the opportunity' (p.59). According to him, these other criteria are social capital. In Nigeria, these other criteria include ties of ethnicity and kinship which are included in people's social capital. In reality, the deep-rootedness of these ties in Nigeria makes them still relevant in many areas of society including the new media industry. This, of course, has an effect on networking and social networks. Despite the rhetoric about the importance placed on skills, I found that ethnic and kinship networks still play a role in determining access to work opportunities. According to my research findings, ethnic and kinship networks were still pertinent to the everyday relations among workers in the new media sector, albeit in increasingly subtle ways. I discuss this in the next section.

7.3.3 The subtle persistence of ethnic ties

As I discussed so far in this chapter, most of my respondents denied that ethnicity and kinship played a significant role in their search for employees or work opportunities in new media. Rather, many of them indicated that their skills were the primary means through which they preferred and sought to gain the recognition of clients and employers in the industry. Thus, it would seem, networking is based primarily on skill, not on more traditional factors in Nigerian society like ethnicity and kinship. To develop skills-based networks, some of them took advantage of the small but growing number of industry conferences and events that take place in Lagos to meet new people and make new friends. The case of Adamu, discussed above, showed how one

such industry meet-up led to the extension of his professional network and provided him with new project opportunities for his business. Events like those are helpful to the new media workers in my research because they serve as a marketplace where they can sell their skills to prospective employers and clients. The following comment made by James, one of my respondent who worked as an employee at a new media company, illustrates this point:

I think the problem is that before you can run a business here in Nigeria you have to go through someone to get something. So even if you have the skills, it doesn't really matter. Because if someone knows or has a connection, you can get someone else who has the skill-set to do the work. Even if you have the skill-set but don't have the connection then it will be difficult. [...] For example, I met the founder of [a well-known Nigerian company] at a conference once and we chatted. So if I sent him an email or something like that, I would expect to be picked if they needed something. So that is an example of the connection I'm talking about – even if I don't really know him. I think the more time you spend doing business and the more people you meet, then the more you make connections (James, mobile developer).

Although the comment by the interviewee above appears contrary to my assertions about the importance of skills in the new media industry, in reality it is not. Instead, the quote above helps to explain that while the ability to display skills is important in finding work opportunities, skills are not sufficient. It suggests that entering the industry (through one's human capital) is the critical moment when social capital matters. To explain this idea and its relation to ethnic ties, I refer to Burt's (1993) notion of capital discussed earlier. As I highlighted, Burt categorized capital into three types: economic, human and social. In applying the last two types to new media labour, I noted that human capital can be associated with the skills that workers possess while social capital refers to their networks or their 'connections' (to adopt the term used by the interviewee quoted above). According to Burt (1993), even though all three forms of capital are necessary, 'social capital is the final arbiter of competitive success' (p.58). I argue that, amongst the new media workers I studied, these forms of capital are interlinked with each other in such a way that one depends on the other in

the task of gaining advantage. In other words, the possession of skills (human capital) contributes to the widening of one's network (social capital). For example, the case of Adamu introduced earlier (as with other respondents in my research) shows that the size of the social network he was able to build depended on the skills he possessed and was able to demonstrate. Further findings from my research also showed that the human capital of my respondents included other qualities apart from skills. Specifically, it included attributes that pertain to their ethnicities. During my field work, there were a number of factors that demonstrated how ethnicities were mobilized as human capital. One of these concerned my respondents' high dependence on referrals for finding work. By means of referrals (that is, through the recommendation of previous clients), most of my respondents found new jobs, projects or contracts from other clients. The following comments were responses from various people who admitted that most of their projects were obtained through referrals. The first is from Melvin who worked as both the employee of a company and a freelancer. The second comment was made by Osaze, a freelance web developer, describing how he obtained projects through referrals from friends and former clients.

Most of our jobs are based on referrals (Melvin, web developer).

The jobs I've gotten have been by referral. People refer me, 'I want to do website', 'oh I know someone who does that', and they call me (Osaze, web designer).

Similarly, Marvin, who runs an animation company, explained that he obtained referrals by meeting people or 'just being out there'. Finally, Kevin noted that he got most of his projects through referrals rather than by writing proposals simply because the former was an easier route.

I know quite a number of people in this town by just being out there. Most of my work is based on referrals. We create work for one person and get more through them (Marvin, animation company owner).

It's easier to get a deal through referrals than through proposals. In Nigeria – I don't know about anywhere else – it's easier (Kevin, web developer).

Referrals are essentially processes that take place within the context of social networks. Burt (1993) describes such networks as the sum of a person's contacts including 'everyone you now know, everyone you have ever known, and everyone who knows you even though you don't know them' (p.59). Referrals are made when, within this broad network, one is able to identify individual contacts who possess the specific resources required at any given time for a given purpose. When more than one contact possesses the resources needed, other criteria are introduced to decide the one from whom the greatest advantage can be derived. It is in such situations that factors such as ethnicity are brought into play. Although the referrals talked about by my respondents were carried out on the basis of the skills possessed by those who were recommended, my interactions with them revealed that some referrals were also the result of shared ethnicities. These ethnic-based referrals were made in subtle ways that went unnoticed and, in almost all cases, denied by those I interviewed. For example, Osaze who I quoted earlier, admitted that none of the referrals he received were from people outside his own Igbo ethnic group. At the same time, he refused to acknowledge the existence of ethnic preferences behind those referrals.

The jobs I do have been mostly from Igbo contacts. Maybe, because most of my close friends are Igbo. None of the big jobs have been from Yorubas. [...] Well, I've had friends who just want to help my business. I have this job, this is your field, and I wouldn't want to give it to someone else so let me just give it to you. [...] No, I don't think there's any ethnic preference attached to these referrals (Osaze, web designer).

Along with the practice of referrals, the mobilization of ethnicities was visible through the kinds of associations formed by workers and at companies. I was not able to notice this at recruitment exercises (none of which occurred during my research) but by simply observing the composition of the companies in my research. I found that many of the companies were essentially homogenous groups which comprised people with similar ethnic orientation. For example, the company I researched as participant

observer was made up mostly of people of Igbo origin. Out of thirteen employees, eight were Igbos. Noteworthily, the managers were all Igbo³⁷. Similarly, one of my interviewees indicated that all the employees at her animation company were of Yoruba origin. Just as before, the presence of ethnic motivations behind these patterns were denied by those I interviewed. To understand how and why these patterns exist, it is necessary to provide some background to Nigeria's ethnic-based structures.

In Chapter 3 which focussed on the Nigerian context I discussed how, as a way to facilitate easy governance, colonial policy in Nigeria contributed to the reinforcement of ethnic boundaries. I showed how the establishment of the North-South dichotomy was followed by the subdivision of the country into three regions according to the major ethnic groups (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo). I also discussed how this process of ethnic differentiation continued in the postcolonial period and led to the classification of individuals as either indigenes and non-indigenes depending on whether they belonged to the ethnic group associated with the region (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005).

Following this, government policies were established which promulgated that public and political institutions were set up according to regional (and therefore ethnic) affiliations. Thus, for universities and higher institutions, admission processes were carried out through regional (ethnic) quota systems whereby indigenes were accorded preferential treatment at institutions located within their ethnic region (Blench and Dendo, 2003). It thus became the norm in Nigeria to associate universities with specific ethnic groups and, gradually, the same was applied to other organizations such as social clubs and churches. These structural arrangements in the Nigerian society explain findings in my research which showed that new media companies were often ethnically constituted. In other words, the specific ways in which some institutions and organizations are configured in Nigeria potentially influence the associations that new media workers form. In my research, this was made clear by the ethnically homogenous companies I observed.

³⁷ It is also useful to mention that just before my period of research, they had completed a very big project for an organization in an Igbo region which was referred by a former Igbo client.

As already mentioned, there was a general disavowal among my interviewees that ethnic preferences were behind these patterns. There was a general claim that such ethnic clustering was coincidental, as the following comments indicate:

It's coincidental that there are mostly people from the East here. It's not a preference.
(Andrew, head of web development at a multimedia company)

Oh my God! We are all Yoruba...it wasn't intentional, it just happened. This is the first time I'm actually putting it together. (Dani, lead animator at an animation company)

It's not on purpose that most of the people in the office schooled in the West or are from here. (Martin, project manager at a web design company)

To explain these 'coincidences', I suggest three crosscutting factors at play in the construction of these ethnic arrangements: the first had to do with university affiliation; the second was linked to religion; and the third to ethnic language. In all the cases in which employees within new media companies belonged to the same ethnic group, I discovered that the employees had either attended the same university, practiced the same religion or spoke the same ethnic language.

In the first case, as explained above, the alignment of people's ethnic affiliation with their educational institutions is possible in Nigeria because of national policy frameworks (called the 'quota system') which take account of the ethnic stratification of the country (Jinadu, 2007; Osaghae, n.d). This implies that a university situated in a particular region could be closely associated with the dominant ethnic group in that region because indigenes are officially assigned priority of place during admission (Blench and Dendo, 2003). Therefore if two people attend the same university, there is relatively high probability that they would belong to the same ethnic group. During my research, it was fairly common to find coworkers (particularly high ranking staff) who attended the same university and shared the same ethnicity. For example there were two web design companies in my research whose managers were of Yoruba origin and also former classmates from the same university. At some point, they had hired staff

who were also from the same university – even though they had not been acquainted with them while at university. One of them who had started his company with a classmate of his, argued that his university was one of the best in the country in ICT and therefore people who graduated from there were potentially qualified from the standpoint of the skills they had. Assuming this was the case, my findings suggest that hiring the skilled people from that university effectively implied hiring people from within a single ethnic group – in this case, Yoruba. Thus, social network ties based on affiliation to the same university were also potentially skills-based and ethnic-based at the same time. Therefore, in agreement with Brautigam's (2010) suggestion, discussed earlier, about a 'continuum of ties' in the Nigerian and African context of social networks, it can be said that the networks of new media workers in my research include communal ties (ethnic-based), professional ties (skills-based) and what she referred to as associative ties – in this case, university-based ties.

Second, membership of the same religious group was also found to be a common feature among workers in the new media companies researched. As there is an important overlap between ethnic and religious affiliations in Nigeria, religion can be considered as one of the defining characteristics of ethnicity (Langer and Ukiwo, 2007). This implies that, to some degree, religion is a feature of ethnicity and religious identities can be linked to ethnic ones (Suberu and Osaghae, 2005). When detached from ethnic affiliations, Meagher (2010) notes that religious affinities can by themselves act as 'mechanisms for the development of trust, common commercial values, and social closure' (p.128). However, when they align with ethnic affinities (as I observed in my research), they potentially contribute towards the reinforcement of ethnic ties. The relevance of religious affiliation in social networking in my research was noticed in the company I researched as observer. I noticed that a number of staff belonged to the same religious group or had similar religious inclinations. One of the employees explained to me how his skills had been discovered by one of the managers through a friend who attended the same church. I also observed that some other staff of the company also had the same religious affiliation and, at the same time, belonged to the Igbo ethnic group which was the most dominant in the company. Thus, as with university affiliations, social networks based on similar religious inclinations could

also be simultaneously skills-based and ethnic-based. Following Brautigam (2010) therefore, ties based on religious affiliation can be described as associative and can be distinguished from skills-based (professional) ties and ethnic-based (communal) ones.

Finally, I identified language as one of the factors which facilitated the formation of networks characterized by ethnic ties among the new media workers in my research. In the previous section, I discussed how some of my respondents employed language as an instrument for actively negotiating networks based on ethnicity. In this case, I refer to their non-deliberate use of language as a tool in the construction of ties that are patterned along ethnic lines. Since language serves as a means of communication as well as an important identity marker for members of an ethnic group, it can lead to greater affiliation between people of the same ethnicity – as was noticed in my research. In some of the companies that featured in my research and among some of the freelance new media workers, language was a key element in the construction of their networks. For these, the ethnic language (such as Yoruba or Igbo) was used as the primary means of communication and served as complement to the possession of new media skills. Thus, while social network ties based on language (associative) were interwoven with those based on ethnicity (communal ties), in new media work they were also connected with those based on skills (professional ties) which is in line with Brautigam's (2010) theory discussed above.

It is important to mention that these patterns existed in spite of the negative answers given by my interviewees in response to questions about whether they mobilized ethnic ties at work and in hiring. When asked about the relevance of ethnicity for them, some of them offered rhetorical responses such as the following:

In our company, we see a Nigeria with no borders in-between, we don't see the Nigeria with all the states, we don't have the ability to see that way. We see a country without division, so when I see Mohammed I don't see him as a Northerner. We all have the same philosophy: our art, our work, our love for what we do is the thing we share and language, musical preference... (Andrew, web developer).

We kind of relate like one tribe. I think it's common around the world, when people are involved in something similar; especially something dealing with their lifestyle or career, because ICT affects your lifestyle, most ICT individuals embrace pop culture. So we kind of see ourselves as the same tribe (David, video games producer).

It is useful also to underline the fact that these patterns of ethnic converging among new media workers take place in Lagos which, compared to other regions in the country, has been recognized as ethnically tolerant even among my respondents.

I'm not very conscious about people's ethnicity. It's just not the way I was brought up. Maybe because I was brought up in Lagos and the kind of family I lived in. In fact I don't think I've ever thought about tribe as an issue until my service year in Abuja when I discovered there was such (Dani, animator).

Here in Lagos (I don't know about other cities), ethnicity has kind of blended. You hardly hear about it except in the civil service (Kevin, animator).

These comments seem to reveal a contradiction between what new media workers in my research say and what they actually do. I argue that this apparent contrast between words and actions highlights the subtleties that characterize ethnic mobilization by new media workers in the Nigerian context. While on one hand, the specific demands of new media work lead workers and employers to prioritize skills over other considerations, on the other hand, structural configurations within the country means that other considerations such as ethnicity are never completely suppressed but are mobilized in subtle ways that go unnoticed even by the actors involved. I argue that at the intersection of skills and ethnicity are the crosscutting factors (university affiliation, religion and language) which form what Brautigam (2010) referred to as associative ties within the social networks of the new media workers in my research.

7.4 Conclusion: The social networks of new media workers

The aim of this chapter has been to examine how social networking is manifested amongst new media workers in the Nigerian context. As I explained in Chapter 3, networking is a dominant theme in literature on new media work but it is also an important feature of the Nigerian cultural context. I began the chapter by discussing how social networking has been discussed in literature about new media work and its focus on how new media workers are compelled to engage in social activities as a means of finding new work opportunities and maintaining contacts. These networking took place through partying, clubbing, ‘beer drinking’ (Kennedy, 2011) or ‘Friday night drinking’ (Gregg, 2008) and similar events.

The chapter found different patterns among new media workers in Nigeria. Beyond focusing on how and where they networked, I laid emphasis on the factors that influenced the kinds of networks my respondents built and mobilized in order to take into account the existence of networks based on ethnicity and kinship. Drawing data from my field work, I showed how many participants in my research regarded kinship and ethnic networks as irrelevant and sometimes disadvantageous to their work. As discussed, this was often a result of the negative experiences they underwent as a result of the poor reception of family and kin members to occupations in new media as well as the treatment they received when clients used their positions of power and influence in kinship networks to hinder access to job opportunities. New media workers were also put off by clients who used ethnicities as instruments for inclusion and exclusion in the access to new media projects. Although some of them employed strategies to avoid such exclusions and to foster ethnic inclusion and integration, the common reaction among respondents in my research was to disavow kinship and ethnic networks as a means of gaining advantage in new media work. Instead of ethnic and kinship ties, most of them spoke about the importance of demonstrating their skills as the way to finding work and fresh job opportunities and so developing skills-based, not ethnic and kinship-based, networks. As I suggested, this attitude among workers is potentially the outcome of the intensified need for and shortage of skilled people in the Nigerian new media industry. However, despite the widespread consensus about the

value of skills among my respondents, my research also unearthed a tendency among new media workers and the companies they formed to congregate and form associations along ethnic lines. To explain this pattern, I argued that state policy which reinforces the ethnic configuration of Nigeria has led to a situation in which same university affiliation, religion and ethnic language contribute to the silent and subtle mobilization of ethnicity as a means of recruiting colleagues and securing work among new media workers.

From these findings, what conclusions can be drawn about the social networks and the networking practices of new media workers in Nigeria, and how do these compare with similar practices amongst new media workers in parts of the globe which have been the focus of research into new media work to date? My research indicates that new media skills play an important role in the networking lives of workers. The different ways in which my respondents spoke about how the possession of skills served as their passport to finding work and new opportunities in new media attests to the value placed on skills as a vital form of human capital in the industry. However, the mere possession of skills is not enough. New media workers in Nigeria must be able to find avenues to demonstrate those skills to prospective employers and clients. They have to go through the process which Christopherson (2004) described as 'selling skills in a marketplace.' My fieldwork showed that the marketplace where some new media workers were able to sell their skills included conferences, meet-ups and other industry-specific events where they could connect directly with other professionals, employers and prospective clients. These connections rarely developed at social events as some writers have suggested is the case in parts of the developed world but, rather, they were usually formal events which were often directly related with new media work. This is understandable because such social events are not ingrained in the Nigerian culture as they are in some countries of the West (such as the pub culture in the UK). Furthermore, the costs of engaging in such events were prohibitive for most of the workers in my research. Indeed, my research interviews rarely took place outside their offices or working spaces.

Industry events provided those who attended with the opportunity to display their knowledge and expertise and, in that way, to widen their professional networks. Through their professional networks, new media workers were able to find work opportunities from those contacts by means of referrals. Their practices of networking therefore depended on ‘who’ they knew but this was often initially negotiated through ‘what’ they knew (their skills). Put differently, the probability of finding work was potentially higher for new media workers who had wider professional networks which depended to a large degree on the skills and expertise that they demonstrates at events such as those described above.

However, the professional ties of my respondents formed only part of their wider social networks. I argued that, in the Nigerian context, social networks among new media workers also include their ethnic or kinship ties and what Brautigam (2003) had referred to as social or associative ties. Associative ties are those which are negotiated through shared social histories such as ‘attendance at the same school or membership in the same clubs’ (Brautigam, 2003). They can be described as are a hybrid of professional and ethnic ties because they make up of contacts that cut across both spheres. In associative ties, individual contacts are both professional and ethnic and therefore they incorporate properties from both from the human and social capital of their members. As professional contacts, they hold informational resources (Wittel, 2001) about work opportunities and new skills which are vital for new media work. As ethnic contacts, they are strong ties which, according to Granovetter (1973) are characterized by the intensity of their relationship. Because of this hybridity, associative ties are an important feature in the social networking practices of new media workers in Nigeria.

To conclude, my research indicates that although participants in my research stated a preference for weak ties (professional networks) over strong ties (ethnic networks) among new media workers in Nigeria, the existence of associative networks suggests that the pattern is more complicated than it appears – ties that are simultaneously strong and weak are important in the Nigerian new media industries. Despite the focus on skills in new media work, the cultural and policy context of Nigeria has ensured

that ethnicity still plays a role, albeit a subtle one, in the networking practices of workers.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter of the thesis, I discuss the findings and arguments of the study. The chapter presents a synopsis of the whole thesis and attempts to demonstrate how the overarching argument threads through all its chapters. Essentially, my arguments in the thesis can be summarized as follows:

1. In Chapters 2 and 3, I showed that precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking, which have been identified as defining features of new media work in the Western-based literature, are better understood more broadly as features of the Nigerian cultural context. Therefore, rather than focus on these three features, I identified three specificities of the Nigerian cultural context which apply more directly to new media work in the Nigerian context. These were software piracy, entrepreneurialism and ethnicity.
2. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, using my empirical data, I used various theories and concepts to explain how the new media workers in my research negotiated the above-listed specificities of the Nigerian cultural context. I showed how these notions take into account the intrinsic features of new media work and those of the Nigerian cultural context to play positive, instrumental and emancipatory roles in shaping the experiences of those I researched.

This chapter is a presentation of the main arguments of the thesis. It also outlines the contribution of the thesis to studies of new media work, creative and cultural labour and, more generally, media studies. I begin by summarizing the contributions of each of the chapters to the overall arguments of the thesis. Next, I highlight the broader arguments of the thesis, including its identification of new theories and concepts that emerge from the cultural industries in Nigeria as well as their practical applications in the development of creative labour markets. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the research and make recommendations for future research.

8.2 Summary of Findings and Arguments

As stated in Chapter 1, my study had two aims: first, to find out the extent to which claims about new media work that result from research in the Global North apply in countries like Nigeria in the Global South; and second, to investigate how new media workers in Nigeria negotiate the specificities of the socio-cultural context in which they carry out their work. The purpose of my research was therefore to examine the experiences of new media workers in Nigeria, how these diverge from claims made around such work in Western-based literature and what these experiences suggest about new media and cultural labour in Nigeria and, more generally, the Global South.

Thus, my first research question was concerned with understanding how the experiences of new media work in Nigeria differ from those in developed countries of the Global North where much of the research on new media work has so far been conducted; and the second question required identifying those aspects of the Nigerian cultural context which specifically characterize the conditions of new media labour there as well as investigating how new media workers negotiated those conditions. Through my engagement with the available literature and my empirical data, I came up with two main findings. First, that the specific features of new media work in Nigeria are manifestations of broader themes which define the cultural context or ‘way of life’ of people in Nigeria. Thus, the prevalence of software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and the salience of ethnicity experienced by new media workers in Nigeria can be understood as manifestations of broader features of the Nigerian cultural context, namely, precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking respectively. I argue that this approach to the study of new media labour, which foregrounds the relevance of cultural context, differs from how current research about new media has been undertaken. It has also demonstrated that, as a result of variations in cultural context, some of the claims about new media work made in the West do not perfectly apply in the Nigeria. The second major finding of my study revealed how the negotiation of the specificities of the Nigerian cultural context by my respondents (that is, the adverse conditions they experienced) produced outcomes that were positive, instrumental and emancipatory. Using existing theoretical frameworks or formulating

new conceptual ideas, I showed how these positive outcomes were applied to each theme in the study. In the next sections, based on these findings, I outline the major contributions of different sections in the thesis.

8.2.1 Arguments of the introductory chapters

To effectively address my research questions, I needed to first identify those features of new media work that are specific to the Nigerian context and are not accounted for in the available literature. I therefore began with a literature review on new media work in Chapter 2. This was to engage with current findings on the experiences of new media workers. After analyzing the different features of new media work highlighted by various scholars, I found that some features were useful but insufficient for explaining the particular situation in Nigeria. I developed a classification which served as the framework for my own research. The purpose of this classification was to indicate those features discussed in the literature which were dependent on context and those which were not. I identified three main categories of features: first, those which were intrinsic to new media work and therefore independent of context (for example, the freedom, autonomy and control it allowed workers which lead them to be passionately attached to it); second, those which were extrinsic to new media work and therefore dependent on the external context (such as precariousness, entrepreneurialism and networking); third those which were the result of a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic features (such as long hours cultures and the pressure to keep up).

While the intrinsic qualities were based on inherent characteristics of new media work such as the opportunities it offers workers to be autonomous as well as to exercise freedom and control over the labour process, the extrinsic ones were dictated by prevailing circumstances in many affluent Western societies such as the transformations in advanced capitalism, developments in information and communication technologies and the influence of globalization (Gill, 2010; Pratt and Gill, 2008). For example, while the precarious conditions of work have been traced to global economic, political, and social changes which began in the 1970s (Gill, 2010;

Gill and Pratt, 2008; Kalleberg and Hewison, 2013), entrepreneurialism in the literature has been articulated by some writers as a response to the growing trend in the postindustrial economy toward nonstandard employment or as the result of the glorification of risk-taking in contemporary society (Neff et al, 2005; Neff, 2012; Beck, 1992). Similarly, networking practices among new media workers are linked to the precarious and informal character of the sector (Gill, 2010; Kennedy, 2011).

However, I found that these extrinsic features apply differently in the Nigerian context. Rather than merely features of new media work, I showed that precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking are broader characterizations of the Nigerian cultural context. To explain this, I drew on Karin Barber (1987) analysis on the informal economy in which she identified it as being ‘swamped by an excess of *would-be entrepreneurs*’ who employ their ‘skillful *manipulation of contacts* and opportunities’ to get a foothold ‘in a fluid and *precarious economy*.’ In this description, Barber highlighted three key features of the informal economy: entrepreneurialism, the recourse to social networks and precariousness which coincide with the extrinsic features in the literature. Since these features characterize the broader context of the informal economy where the vast majority of my research participants operated, they are not useful for understanding the specific experiences of new media work in the Nigerian context. Rather, precariousness, entrepreneurialism, and social networking can be understood as constitutive of the ‘way of life’ of those I researched. Thus, while these features refer to broader characteristics of life and labour in the *Nigerian context*, those in the literature are used as descriptors of new media work in *Western contexts*. As I noted, this point is central to my argument: features which have been identified as relatively recent phenomena in many countries of the Global North, already constitute a ‘way of life’ in contexts like Nigeria in the Global South. In other words, the long tradition of the informal economy in Nigeria mean that processes like precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking apply differently than in countries where informality has not historically been a *modus operandi*.

Based on this, Chapter 3 examined the specificities of the Nigerian setting mainly from the perspective of how they specifically affected labour in the new media

industries. Thus, I carried out an analysis of the Nigerian context in order to uncover those features which applied specifically to the conditions of new media workers there. I highlighted three of these: software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity. The first was related to the prevalence of software piracy in the country. The second was concerned with the endemic unavailability of stable electricity supply and internet access in Nigeria. The third feature of the Nigerian context my research focused on ethnicity and the salience of ethnic differentiation among people. In identifying these three features which were dominant in Lagos, I noted how they were particularly visible within the informal economy, where most of my research participants operated and mapped on to the broader features of precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking highlighted above. In engaging with these themes, my empirical research adopted a two-layered approach. At the bottom layer were the broader features of the Nigerian cultural context enumerated above: precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking. As I have mentioned, these constitute the ‘way of life’ of many Nigerians (particularly in the informal economy). On top of these are the specific features of the Nigerian context which manifest the above-mentioned features and directly impact on the practice of new media work. They include software piracy, infrastructural and technological breakdown, and ethnic differentiation in Nigeria.

In the next sections, I discuss the main contributions of each of the empirical chapters to the overall argument of the thesis. In each one, I show how each of the specificities of new media work (software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity) manifested the broader features of the Nigerian cultural context (precariousness, entrepreneurialism and social networking) and how my research participants negotiated these conditions.

8.2.2 Arguments of the empirical chapters

8.2.2.1 *Software piracy and the negotiation of precariousness*

In Chapter 5, I examined how the practice of software piracy among my research participants contributed to their precarious conditions of work in the Nigerian cultural context. In line with the broader argument of the thesis, the chapter helped to underline

how understandings of precarious labour can be broadened to take account of the conditions that exist in regions outside the Global North. In the chapter, I also demonstrated how the negotiation of their insecure and precarious conditions which result from the use of pirated software contribute to the sustenance of a moral economy in new media work.

As I discussed in the chapter, the practice of piracy is a prominent feature of the Nigerian cultural context (BSA, 2011; Larkin, 2008; Mattelart, 2010). I showed how the reason for this prevalence among those in my research is traceable to the high cost of most of the software they use. As I explained, the average earnings of these workers are insufficient to invest in software like Adobe Dreamweaver for web design, Adobe Flash for video game design and Autodesk Maya for digital animation. The criticalness of this situation for new media workers has resulted in their widespread practice of software piracy and this, in my view, deserves attention in discourses about new media labour – not least of all in the Nigerian context.

My analysis of precarious in the practice of software piracy was based on the discovery that, for my participants, the use of pirated software had disruptive consequences on their work. Drawing on the comments from my interviews, this was evident from their experiences of defective software or pirated software that were deliberately altered by fraudulent retailers. The tendency towards disruption was also manifested by the anti-piracy strategies of software companies either through technologies designed to impede the functioning of pirated software or through direct enforcement. In discussing this theme, I showed how my research participants find themselves within sites of tension in their attempts to negotiate these precarious conditions. As a result of these conditions, they are often confronted with tensions which I identify as occupational ('will the software work?') or legal ('will I get caught?'). While some were driven by the fear of being found out and apprehended by anti-piracy agents, others were concerned that the quality of their work was adversely affected by pirated software. In both cases, my respondents felt insecure.

These legal and occupational tensions contributed to my respondents' experiences of ethical tensions. Basing my analysis of these ethical tensions within the theory of moral economy (Sayer, 2000), I argue that such tensions emerge when the use of pirated software among my respondents leads to a conflict between their moral dispositions (built on social or religious values) and the economic challenges associated with purchasing software. By their use of pirated software, my respondents appear to yield to the economic pressures that lead to choosing pirated software over licensed ones. However, while doing this, they indicated an awareness of going against moral or ethical obligations towards 'the other' (referring, in this case, to software developers) or against religious or professional expectations of 'the self'. This awareness led to feelings of guilt among some of my participants. To deal with this, some of them used aspirational language to suggest that the temporality of their present choices. This helped them to justify their actions and ease their ethical tensions. Others adopted free open-source software despite the challenges of network and lock-in effects. In both cases, my respondents appeared to uphold the tenets of a moral economy despite the illicitness of their practice of software piracy.

I highlight two contributions of this chapter to the overall argument of my thesis. The first is related to the significance of cultural context. One relevance of my treatment of software piracy in the study of new media labour is that it calls attention to workers' interaction with one of the vital tools of their trade, namely, software. This interaction does not simply involve their use of software, but also the processes involved in the acquisition of them, the sites where they are acquired and exchanged; the people or systems which interface during such exchanges, and the circumstances around which such exchanges take place. I argue that this is important because attention to the economy of software potentially introduces useful ideas and themes to studies on new media and creative labour. However, as my research demonstrates, the ideas which will emerge from such discourses will depend on the context where new media workers operate. For example, I have shown how the highly informalized economy of (pirated) software shapes the experiences of workers in the Nigerian new media sector. In my view, such experiences are likely to vary from place to place and will be determined by empirical research. The absence of such themes in the current literature

potentially implies that the experiences of new media workers in the West with respect to pirated software are not as relevant as they are in countries like Nigeria. Once again, this draws attention to the variation of context between both regions which needs to be recognized and asserted in theories made about the new media work.

The second contribution of this chapter pertains to suggestions about the sustenance of a moral economy through the economy of software piracy. I argue that practices of piracy in developing contexts like Nigeria are a reaction to the forces of neoliberalism and globalization which are fast encroaching into those economies previously characterized by pre-capitalist markets and activities. In my view, these forces represent a shift towards the perfect ‘market society’ which is ‘disembedded, autonomous, selfregulating and entirely economic in nature, purpose and outcome’ (Bolton, n.d, p.1) – an antithesis of the ideal moral economy. It would seem therefore that the practice of software piracy, since it stands in opposition to these forces, is instrumental to the sustenance of the moral economy. Yet, such a thesis may appear tenuous because, if software piracy is generally considered as part of an illicit economy, it would be contradictory to suggest that it contributes to a moral one. However, I argue based on my analysis of pirate practices among new media workers in Nigeria that software piracy does contribute to the moral economy – but only within the wider context of the economy of software piracy. This ‘economy of software piracy’ constitutes what I referred to as the dynamics of informality and legality that develop around practices of piracy. It necessarily includes those precarious conditions which, as I discussed, ensue as a result of these dynamics and which were experienced by my respondents who used pirated software. In my view, it is these conditions that sustain the moral economy. It is from this perspective that I make the argument about the positive contribution of software piracy to the moral economy of new media work in Nigeria. Software piracy can therefore be construed as a ‘necessary evil’ – at least from the context of labour in the Nigerian new media industries.

8.2.2.2 *Entrepreneurialism and the negotiation of infrastructural breakdown*

The challenge of infrastructural breakdown in new media work demonstrates the entrepreneurial mindset which, as I argued, is a characteristic feature of the Nigerian

cultural context. To this end, Chapter 5 discussed how my research participants adopted entrepreneurial strategies to negotiate the deficiencies of electricity supply and internet access in Nigeria. The chapter addressed two points in relation to the arguments of the thesis: first, I showed how entrepreneurialism among new media workers as discussed in the literature can be understood differently in the Nigerian context; second, how this form of entrepreneurialism in Nigeria, specifically applied to the practice of new media work, contributed to the ways in which my respondents negotiated the challenges of infrastructural breakdown.

For the first, I argue that a discussion about entrepreneurialism brings the issue of context to the fore. As a result of the differences that exists in areas like work history, practices and motivation, theories found about new media workers appear to be at variance between countries of the Global North and those of the Global South like Nigeria. I argue that since theories about the entrepreneurial practices in occupational fields like new media (Gill, 2010; Neff et al, 2005; Neff, 2012; Christopherson, 2004) are based on the transformations in labour in many advanced countries and represented as a departure from standard and secure employment, they diverge from those of less developed countries such as Nigeria which has undergone different histories characterized for long periods by informalized conditions. In other words, since the historical context of work in both regions vary, notions about entrepreneurialism also potentially vary. In the chapter, I discussed the kind of entrepreneurial behaviour that new media workers exhibit by showing how those in my research responded to conditions of infrastructural failure which are specific to and prevalent in the Nigerian context. I also argued that, for my respondents, the motivation to be entrepreneurial was rooted mainly in their desire to negotiate the obstacles in their work.

The second main argument in the chapter concerns the positive dimension of the entrepreneurial practices lived by my respondents. This was encapsulated in the term ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ which I used to describe the kind of entrepreneurial behaviour found among my research participants. My conceptualization of ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ is based on a self-propelling attitude to adapt and improvise as a way of negotiating adverse conditions. I found this spirit of improvisation and

adaptation to be the key driver to the entrepreneurial practices of my respondents in their negotiation of infrastructural challenges. In the chapter, I revealed how features of new media work highlighted in chapter 2, (namely, freedom, autonomy and control over the labour process) contributed to this form of entrepreneurialism. For example, I showed how the opportunities new media work offers for working autonomously with flexible working hours (Gill, 2007) encouraged some of my research participants to take on work schedules that corresponded with periods of access to electricity and internet. Similarly, the control over the labour process as well as the opportunities to experiment which is characteristic to new media labour (Neff et al., 2005; Perrons, 2003) made possible, for some participants, the adoption of various techniques and strategies that allowed them to take maximum advantage of internet access or electricity when it was available. Also, some of my participants benefitted from what Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) have referred to as ‘workplace autonomy,’ which enabled them to determine the contractual arrangements and work situations they were involved in, based on whether it provided them with access to internet facilities and electricity. In the same vein, workplace autonomy allowed workers the freedom to choose which sites and workspaces they operated. Thus, because of the possibilities new media work offered them, employees were able to work from sites where electricity and internet access were available.

In proposing this form of entrepreneurialism as a description of my respondents’ behaviours, I am not suggesting that they are so engulfed by infrastructural concerns that they are unaffected or isolated from the transnational forces of globalization and neoliberalism shaping world economies. Rather, what I am arguing is that the way entrepreneurialism is lived in new media work (and, potentially, other cultural work) is shaped by the adverse circumstances of their cultural context. Here, the notion of self-realisation is a key one. While it has been identified as a capacity which can be obtained only through individual activity or ‘narcissistic forms of competitive individualism’, I argue with Hesmondhalgh (2010) that self-realisation through work involves ‘a life narrative in which current activities promise to lead into a desired and valued future’ (p.239). I showed how this was evident in my research – through my respondents’ desire to overcome the present difficulties experienced in their context.

Because of this, they were motivated to attain a ‘valued future’ which was shaped by the present. In this sense, ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ refers to a life project directed at self-realisation. Unlike some of the notions of entrepreneurialism in creative labour based on studies in the West which seem to emphasize the negative aspects of self-employment, ‘making-do entrepreneurialism’ focusses on the positive dimension. Indeed, as I mentioned in the chapter, ‘making-do entrepreneurialism is ultimately a positive concept which, in my view, more closely captures Schumpeter’s characterization of the entrepreneur as the one who displays the ‘impulse to fight’ and the ‘will to conquer.’

8.2.2.3 *Social networking and the influence of ethnicity*

In chapter 7, I examined the relationship between ethnicity and social networking among new media workers in the Nigerian context. In doing this, the chapter focussed on how new media workers in my research negotiated the demands of ethnic and kinship ties along with those of new media work in the formation and mobilization of social networks. Drawing on various social network theories, I showed that the social networks formed and mobilized by new media workers are made up of strong (ethnic) ties, weak (professional) ties and associative ties which are based on cross-cutting factors like same university affiliation, religion or language (Brautigam, 2003).

Although social networking is a dominant theme in literature on new media work, it has rarely been analyzed from the perspective of ethnicity. The theoretical framework I employed for my analysis drew on the writings of Burt (1993), Granovetter (1973) and Brautigam (2003). First, I discussed Burt’s (1993) theory on capital. According to him, there are at least three kinds of capital: economic, human and social. While both economic and human capital are a property of individuals (because they refer to a person’s financial assets and one’s natural abilities and acquired skills respectively), social capital refers directly to the extend of one’s social networks. For Burt, social capital (‘who you know’) is more important for competitive success because through it, both economic and human capital (‘what you know or have’) can be transformed to profit. Applying this to the field of new media work, human capital can be translated

as the skills workers possess while their social capital refers to their social networks from whom they try to obtain new projects and jobs (Christopherson, 2004; Gill, 2002). I argue that the logic which ascribes greater importance to ‘who’ new media workers know (their social capital) over ‘what’ they know (their skills) (see Gill, 2002) potentially applies in very competitive new media labour markets (as found in Western countries) where many highly skilled workers operate. In these situations, ‘whatever [one] brings to a production task, there are other people who could do the same job’ (Burt, 1993, p.59).

On the other hand, my research data showed that, in Lagos, which has a less developed new media industry and potentially a much less competitive labour market than those in advanced economies, new media skills are not in abundance and therefore the converse prevails. This means that, in contrast to the view above, I found that the possession of skills was sometimes valued higher than social networks. Therefore, the ability of new media workers to grow their social capital depended on how much skills they possessed. In other words, ‘who they knew’ depended largely on ‘what they know’ and not the other way round as some of the research in Western countries contend – for example, Gill (2010) and Wittel (2001).

Also, my findings were at variance with those from the West regarding the spaces where new media workers networked. The networking practices of my respondents were rarely at social events and as some writers have suggested is the case in the West (Gill, 2009; Gregg, 2008; Kennedy, 2011; Wittel, 2001)). Rather, I found that networking usually took place during formal events such as conferences, seminars and other industry-specific events where workers could connect directly with other professionals, employers and prospective clients. For those I researched, the high cost associated with such social events suggests the effect of economic capital (or its lack thereof) on their networking practices in comparison with those in the more affluent countries of the West where current research is based. Again, this highlights the importance of context in research about new media work and explains why, as I argue in this thesis, current findings about the conditions of such work do not always apply in contexts of the Global South.

My analysis of the role ethnicity in Nigeria played in the networking practices of my respondents also revealed the presence of a different set of ties within the networks of new media workers. These ties have been identified as associative ties by Brautigam (2003). Based on people's shared social histories, they can be described as a hybrid of ethnic and professional ties because they are made up of social contacts derived from both. The existence of associative ties therefore raises questions about Granovetter's (1973) strong ties/weak ties dichotomy in the context of new media labour in Nigeria. It also queries the relevance of strength of weak ties since both of them complement each other in the formation of associative ties which incorporates properties from the strong (ethnic) and weak (professional) bonds within the social network. While the former is characterized by the intensity of the relationship and can provide access to connections, the latter holds informational resources about work opportunities and new skills.

From a normative point of view, I argue that associative ties introduce a positive dimension to the social networking practices of new media workers because they provide balance in the face of extremes. At one extreme, ethnicity fosters a non-egalitarian industry which potentially limits its development. In the chapter, I gave examples of how this took place and the negative impact it had on my respondents. At the other extreme, total dependence on skills would promote an industry based on meritocracy, one which would arguably lead to intense (and potentially unhealthy) competition among workers. In my view, such an outcome would produce the ideal market economy driven solely by the dictates of labour and market forces independently of social values. From this standpoint, associative ties introduce some equilibrium into social networks: a hybrid of egalitarianism and meritocracy evident in the networking practices and, consequently, to the mobilization of networks among new media workers.

8.3 Overall arguments of thesis

8.3.1 Relevance of cultural context

My study has shown that the factors which determine the conditions and experiences of new media work vary with cultural context. While this might seem to be an obvious point, I argue that it has not been emphasized enough in the literature especially in relation to the conditions of labour in the Global South. In my view, cultural context matters in new media work in large part because ‘culture’ is the background on which such work takes place. In other words, I argue that the experiences of new media work (particularly in less developed countries) depend not only on the economic and political changes which took place in developed countries like the US and UK in the 1990s (Neff et al, 2005) or on transformation in advanced capitalism under the impact of globalization, information and communication technologies (Gill, 2010), or on the political and regulatory variations in different countries (Christopherson, 2004), but, (and crucially), on the history, practices and culture specific to the context where such work is carried out. In my research, this was shown, for example, by the way new media workers mobilized networks of ethnicity and kinship in relation to skills or used mobile phones to negotiate everyday problems of electricity – practices which are possible only because of the specific characteristics of their context.

My study also contributes to the broadening of empirical research about new media labour. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the research is a direct response to calls made for more contextual nuance in the field. As Kennedy (2010) noted, there is a need for current claims about media work ‘to acknowledge the specificity, diversity and particular local conditions’ of the geographical locations in which media industries research takes place. In her view, understanding the conditions that exist in a variety of contexts ‘can only emerge through empirical investigation.’ Thus, she argued for the need to examine the extent to which the well-rehearsed features of risk-taking, creativity and social networking are lived and experienced by workers in a particular period and locale (p.190). In examining the specificities of the Nigerian cultural context and its effect on the experiences of new media workers, my study recognized the importance of contextual variance in the field. As I discovered, how new media

workers experience, perceive and accept their conditions depend in large part on the cultural context or 'way of life' which, in part, emerges with the passage of time.

8.3.2 New media work as positive, instrumental and emancipatory

Along with reinforcing the notion that cultural context matters in the study of new media work, my research also contributes to discourses about conditions of labour by emphasizing the positive dimensions of those conditions. Thus, while contrasting some of the writings about new media and creative work which are highly critical of the working conditions of contemporary cultural labour, my research resonates with other findings which stress the positive dimensions of such work (for example, Deuze, 2007; Kennedy, 2010, 2011). However, my study goes further by suggesting that, beyond acknowledging the pleasures that can be derived from them, the negotiation of those conditions plays an *instrumental* and *emancipatory* role in the lives of new media workers in Nigeria. This is particularly relevant in contexts like Nigeria where, as I discussed in Chapter 3, risky and precarious conditions are a 'way of life' for many people, including new media workers. I explained that this 'way of life' is the result of what Beck (2000) referred to as the 'long tradition' of informalized labour in many countries of the Global South (p.97), in which insecure and generally unfavourable conditions have existed for long periods of their history. In Nigeria, these long-term conditions have shaped people's experiences and have led to the development of common meanings and values (such as their entrepreneurial attitude to solving everyday problems), in social practices and in ordinary behaviour (Hall, 1980; Williams, 1965).

Adopting Williams' (1965) definitions of culture as 'way of life' I examined how features of new media work interacted with the 'way of life' (or cultural context) of new media workers in Nigeria. In doing this, I showed how positive outcomes emerged from those interactions: in new media workers engagement with software piracy; in their dealings with frequent infrastructural breakdown; and in their negotiation of ethnicity. Furthermore, the study revealed how the affordances of new media labour (such as flexibility, autonomy, and the various ways it encouraged

workers to be innovative) made it possible for my respondents to negotiate the challenges of irregular electricity and internet connection. Similarly, the reliance on skills in new media work offered my respondents an escape from the limitations of social networks based solely on ethnic and kinship ties. On the basis of such findings, I argue that one of the hallmarks of new media work in the Nigerian context is its instrumental value in alleviating the adverse conditions of life and labour for those who practice it.

Finally, my study contributes in some way to concepts and ideas related to the normativity in creative labour. As the conclusions of my research point to the positive and emancipatory dimension of new media labour in the Nigerian context, it necessarily deals with issues related to human well-being at work. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) note that, since work is an important and pervasive part of our lives, it has a direct relationship to well-being. They further suggest that any kind of occupational activity that contributes to human well-being is potentially 'good' work. Although they do not explicitly include 'well-being' in their enumeration of the features of good work, it is implied by their inclusion of 'self-realisation' as one of its defining characteristics. For them, self-realisation 'in relation to labour involves a sustained sense of good work, [...] so that work may contribute to a sense that a person might have that they are developing, flourishing, and achieving excellence in forms of work activity that are valuable' (p.140). It is closely related to the term 'self-actualisation' which refers to the ability to realise and achieve one's potential; and self-determination which is ability to decide and controls for one's self, the process of achieving that potential. My study touches on these themes because it shows how new media work provided my research respondents with the sense that they are developing themselves in an activity they find valuable. This sense is manifested by the effort they put into negotiating the constraints they encounter in the Nigerian context. They can be said to be self-actualising as a result of the efforts made to achieve their potential while employing the autonomy, freedom and control available to them in new media work. Although my research did not develop these themes in detail, it has potentially paved the way for further discussion of these concepts in the context of new media work in Nigeria.

8.3.3 De-westernization of theories and concepts in media studies

My study also adds voice to calls by scholars to de-westernize some of the existing concepts and ideas in media studies. For example, Willems (forthcoming) calls for understanding and theorizing the Global South ‘on its own terms’ rather than as one which ‘emerges from, represents the negative imprint of, or features the active intervention of the Global North’ (p.1). According to her, such an approach to media studies which theorizes and sheds light on the everyday lives of people from the ‘vantage point of the Global South’ is needed to further internationalize the field. Since, as discussed in Chapter 1, new media work is a field of production that has originated from the Global North, my study of such work in a country of the Global South may, by itself, be described as a reinforcement of the tendency to view the South ‘through the prism and norms of the Global North’ (Willem, forthcoming, p.7). Rather than this, I argue that my study represents an attempt to identify the distinctions that exist between North and South in order to adequately situate the latter within media production research.

It must be recognized that, through globalization, the Global North is the primary source of cultural and technological goods which continue to impinge on the Global South. Indeed, I argue that new media work can be understood as Western invention exported to countries of the South within the context of a globalized process of neoliberalisation. However, this flow from North to South is taking place amid the inequalities and cultural differences that exist between both regions. In other words, the demands and requirements of new media work which have emerged from a context of economic affluence are being planted in another which follows a different developmental pathway and has a different cultural configuration. What this leads to is a situation in which a particular form of media production takes place in different economic and cultural milieus. In this light, my research has asked whether the conditions and experiences of workers in both settings necessarily differ. The answer I have proffered through my empirical research is that differences *do* exist as a result of the differences in their cultural context. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, this scenario is captured in the well-researched account of Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry

(Abah, 2009; Ebewo, 2007; Haynes and Okome, 1998), where the processes of filmmaking have not merely mirrored those of the developed world (where such processes emerge). Rather, according to Lobato, the industry has developed on 'its own third way' (Lobato, 2010, p.26).

Beyond merely acknowledging that there are variations in the experiences of new media workers, my research also proffers an equivalent term to the 'third way' of Nollywood for the new media sector. Essentially, as discussed in Chapter 1, I refer to an 'upward elevator effect' of new media work potentially taking place in countries like Nigeria, in contrast to what Beck (2000) described as a 'downward elevator effect' in relation to labour conditions in some countries of the Global North which, according to him is seemingly heading towards the precipice of 'informal, multi-activity work' (p.93). This 'upward effect' I refer to for workers in the Nigerian context is catalyzed by the instrumental and emancipatory role of new media work.

8.3.4 Contribution to creative industries policy in developing contexts

My research also contributes to current policy discourses on the creative industries in developing countries. For over a decades, there has been growing interest in the promotion of creative industries policies as an economic driver for developing nations. At the helm of this process from a global policy standpoint has been the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UNESCO through the publication of its Creative Economy Reports of 2008 and 2013 respectively. The underlying motive behind these reports has been to emphasize the transformative potential of the creative industries for 'generating income, jobs and export earnings while at the same time promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development' (UNCTAD, 2008).

To pursue this goal for developing countries, the pioneering 2008 report specifically addressed the challenge of evaluating the creative economy for informed policy-making and admitted that creative industries debates prior to 2007 had been skewed toward developed countries. It acknowledged that 'opportunities for value creation' in

the creative sector had hitherto gone unrealized in the developing nations of Africa as a result of obstacles ‘such as lack of investment, lack of entrepreneurial skills and inadequate infrastructure to support the growth of the creative industries’ (UNCTAD, 2008, p.40). An updated report published in 2010 which bore the subtitle, *Creative economy: a feasible development option*, presented a more optimistic view of the creative industries in African countries. Although conceding the absence of an ‘integrated coordinated framework for African cultural policy [for which] as a consequence, the potential of the cultural market in Africa is not realized’ (p.43), the 2010 report celebrated the ‘rapid growth in the creative economy sectors across the South and the growing share of creative sector trade which is coming from the South’

However, despite the commendable aims of these reports, a more rigorous engagement with the specific challenges in developing countries was needed for discourses about creative industries policies in developing countries. With only a ‘passing concern’ (Ross, 2009, p.18) for the instrumentality of local contexts, policy strategies potentially risked engendering cultural work that can be branded as ‘feel-good and free’ (Ross, 2007, p.28). As Ross (2007) had observed in his critique of the emergence of creative industries policy in developing contexts, such strategies tend to uncover policies covertly aimed at globalizing ideas about governance, exploiting intellectual property, or submerging informal cultural labour into the formal, high-value economy. According to him, these programs appear as ‘familiar features of global capital formation, with managers and investors who are on the lookout for fresh sources of value, labour and markets’ (p.27).

The 2013 creative economy report by UNESCO offered a more. By focusing on ‘widening development pathways’ with an emphasis on culture, it argued that culture, as a driver of social development, ‘can also lead to results that contribute to the overall well-being of communities, individual self-esteem and quality of life, dialogue and cohesion.’ The report stressed that evidence gathered since 2010 had led it to recognize that pathways to development ‘rest on understanding interactions, specificities and policies at local levels and how the creative economy might be practically promoted in communities, cities and regions across the developing world’

(p.15). According to the report, a focus on local settings in developing countries would enable it to ‘grasp the realities of the creative economy not as a unified logic, to be imported wholesale, but rather as an invitation to rethink – creatively – what its flourishing might mean, tangibly, in the everyday lives of people in diverse circumstances’ (p.15). This approach evidently draws on the some of the academic research carried out on developing contexts which underlined the local specificities of the cultural industries there.

One of such studies was on the music industry in Senegal by Pratt (2004, 2008) who sought to provide a conceptual framework with which to ‘understand the economic and social processes of the production of music, rather than just focussing on its output, or its static structure’ (Pratt, 2008, p.130). Adopting an approach that agreed with what is being proposed in 2013 creative economy report, Pratt (2008) explained that the intention of his study was to appreciate the local conditions, the nature of the processes, the actors involved and the regulatory contexts of music production. For him, this approach was necessary so as to ‘pick up the dynamic iterations between processes that gave rise to innovation, adaptation and learning’ (p.131). Andy Pratt’s study of music in Senegal resonates with Ramon Lobato’s research on video production in Nigeria. Lobato (2010) examined how, in Nollywood, alternative routes to development have been established by adapting to local conditions. According to him, Nollywood ‘represents an innovation in African media, one which has created – for the first time in history – a popular, accessible, and economically sustainable film culture, produced by and for Africans’ (p.10). In cultural industries discourse for developing countries, the example of Nollywood is highly significant for a number of reasons. First, it shows how the development of the industry can bypass (and largely ignore) channels that would inexorably link it with global economic policies. Second, it highlights the importance of understanding how cultural production does take place within local contexts in spite of (or as a result of) the challenges that exist in those contexts. As Okoye (2007) explains:

[T]he video film provides a counter narrative to not only the silencing of the ordinary people but a remapping of the postcolonial social, cultural, and

economic landscape by providing both entertainment and employment, by lifting countless [Nigerians] out of debilitating conditions, and offering viable possibilities for many more in other engagements. (Okoye, 2007, p.26 in Lobato, 2010)

The narrative of Nollywood serves as a testimony that local conditions are relevant in policy debates on labour and production in the cultural industries. This is especially relevant in developing countries where individuals operate in conditions potentially different from those in the West. At the core of these local conditions are the underlying social norms and cultural practices which shape and are shaped by the constraints and affordances of society. For example, as my research has shown, the long-term absence or breakdown of infrastructure (electricity, telephony or internet) determines how members of a society act to compensate for the basic privations that those amenities are designed to avoid. As I have also explained in this thesis, when such adverse conditions persist, the methods (systems or behavioural patterns) used to negotiate them eventually become inscribed in the society as the ordinary ‘way of life’. While this context has an economic dimension which, no doubt, affects how workers relate with their work and the conditions of that work, it also comprises the Nigerian ‘way of life’ which also has a bearing on those work processes and behaviours. My research therefore gives empirical support to creative industries policies (such as outlined in the 2013 creative economy report) which have begun to emphasize the role of understanding the ‘everyday lives of people’ as a way to promote development. In doing this, this thesis has attempted to show among other things that, in policy discourses the ‘way of life’ of creative labourers in Nigeria (and more broadly Africa), should not be disregarded but prioritized because understanding this ‘way of life’ potentially opens up new vistas in the development of the broader cultural industries.

8.4 Limitations and recommendations for future research

One of the main drawbacks of my research is its restricted scope. This is because it was conducted with a limited number of research participants (35) and in one Nigerian City (albeit a major one). To draw more definitive conclusions about the relevance of cultural context and the positive effects of negotiating adverse working conditions in new media, I recommend carrying out research among a variety of contexts rather than a single one, as my research has done. There are two ways I propose this can be done. First, through research projects that are ‘parallel’ to mine. This implies carrying out a ‘vertical’ comparison between the experiences in the Global North and the Global South. For example, similar research may be conducted about the experiences of new media workers in a different country of the Global South (such as in Africa or Latin America) and then compared, first, with available findings in the Western-based literature and then with my own findings as laid out in this thesis. Second, research about the relevance of cultural context in new media work can ‘laterally compare’ the experiences of new media workers in different contexts within the Global South. Such research will provide useful information about whether variations in cultural context exist among geographically, economically, and, perhaps, culturally, similar contexts.

Regarding the findings of the research, further work could be carried out with respect to the theories raised and briefly discussed such as the moral economy of new media work and the dynamics of associative ties in the social networks of new media workers. Essentially, these concepts were not treated with more depth than contained in the thesis because it was necessary to lay out the cultural context of new media practice in Nigeria which, in comparison with existing knowledge, is relatively novel to the field. Nevertheless, my study was able to prepare the groundwork for subsequent analysis on these themes and concepts.

As mentioned earlier, my attempt to contribute to calls for the de-westernization of concepts and theories in media and communication studies is potentially compromised by its focus on an occupational field which is historically rooted in the West and depends largely on technological developments that originate primarily from there. As

I explained, forces of globalization predominant in the world today have ensured that it has become practically unfeasible to carry out research on themes which do not have cross-border implications especially in fields associated with technology. As Kraidy and Murphy (2008) argued, ‘the local cannot be understood as a locus of study that is detached from the larger forces of history, politics, economics, or military conflict. Rather, the local needs to be understood as the space where global forces become recognizable in form and practice as they are enmeshed in local human subjectivity and social agency’ (p.339). However, in the study of occupational fields like new media, I argue that it is possible to separate its material prerequisites (for example, the tools needed for new media work or the physical equipment for film production) from the prevailing environmental forces (its context) which shape the practices that emerge from and around it. Since, as I have argued, contexts vary, a focus on the variation in practices also contributes to de-westernizing paradigms. Yet, a better contribution to de-westernization may be made in a study of the products of new media labour in non-Western contexts. This could be in terms of the quality of the new media produced by workers especially if such products are circulated only within the context under study. In such a scenario, it could be said that such a context in the Global South is researched ‘in its own terms’ and with little or no reference to the Global North.

Whatever the case, I argue that my own research opens up new possibilities for further research in the study of new media labour in the Global South. More importantly, from the perspective of studies which emerge from Africa, my research has taken the bold and rare step of placing findings from that part of the world alongside those from the West. As Mbembe (2001) pointed out with regard to knowledge production on the African continent, ‘[w]e now feel we know nearly everything that African states, societies and economies are not, we still know absolutely nothing about what they actually are’ (p.9). I argue that, thanks to my research, we now know something about new media workers in Nigeria.

Addendum

A Reflection on Research Findings

9.1 Introduction

In this addendum chapter, I reflect on the findings of my research as laid out in the thesis. The chapter is divided into three broad sections. In the first, I discuss the benefits and limitations of the methodological process I adopted for generating my research sample. I examine the issues such as the gender imbalance as well as the homogeneity of generation within the research sample. I also reflect on how the overall findings of the research were helped or hindered by initial expectations, preconceptions and hypothesis adopted prior to the fieldwork. In the second, I examine the relevance of ‘way of life’ as a conceptual tool for researching the Nigerian context. I discuss specific ways by which the concept applies to my study and its usefulness to my findings. In the third and final section, I examine the role of global forces (which contribute to the existence of online and diasporic Nigerian communities) in determining knowledge and resource flows in Nigeria. I also highlight the specificity of new media work in the study in comparison with other kinds of labour. Finally, I identify specific fields in which my research findings can be useful, as well as the opportunities they offer for further research.

9.2 Methodology: justifications and limitations

9.2.1. Recruitment through snowballing

As discussed in Chapter 4, my study employed a snowballing approach to recruit new media workers for the focus groups and interviews. Snowball or chain referral sampling is a widely adopted qualitative sociological research method (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) which has been described as ‘a technique for finding research subjects: one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on’ (Vogts, 1999, p.2). More broadly, Atkinson and Flint (2001) note that snowballing ‘offers real benefits for studies which seek to access difficult to reach or hidden populations’ (n.p). My

adoption of snowball sampling emerged from the fact that new media workers were 'hidden' and potentially difficult to reach primarily because of the informal nature of their activities (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). By 'informal', I refer mainly to the absence or limited presence of formal structures which characterise such activities. Beyond macro level definitions of the informal economy as income generating activities that take place outside the regulatory of the state (Castells and Portes, 1989), the informality of new media workers in Nigeria is also evident at micro and meso levels. At the micro level, I refer to the fluidity of their daily work schedules and patterns, their high rate of mobility and their flexible modes of hiring and recruitment (discussed in Chapters 4 and 6). I argue that such issues (manifested, for example, by the non-availability of a fixed office location where workers could be found) render new media workers as 'hidden' and not easily accessible for recruitment. At the meso level, the informality of new media work is made evident by the fact that the industry is not organised. This is due to the lack of regulatory bodies, such as labour unions or guilds, aimed at governing and directing the collective action of new media workers. As a result, there was no publicly available source of data about new media workers and therefore the recruitment of participants for my research was difficult. In addition to the 'hidden' nature of new media work, the small size of the industry also served to justify my adoption of this method in my research. Atkinson and Flint (2001) observed that snowball sampling is also used for obtaining respondents where they are few in number in relation to the larger population. Since, as I discussed in Chapter 4, new media work is a novel form of labour in Nigeria, it falls within this category.

Regardless of these conditions, it was still possible to gain access to workers at industry events, seminars and workshops which, as I explained in Chapter 7, were growing in popularity and regularity in Lagos. However, since the recruitment of participants for interviews was likely to require more time to schedule precise interview dates, times and venues with prospective respondents than was available at these events, such short events were potentially limited in their usefulness. Furthermore, recruitment of research participants entailed building some level of trust

with prospective respondents. To do so at such events may have required direct participation (for example, at hackathons³⁸). Although this was possible to achieve, it would have required some preparation on my part and therefore distracted from the primary purpose of the field work. The importance of trust was evident during my visits to co-working spaces where some new media workers assembled: despite attempts to recruit people, I successfully conducted interviews only with those I had previously contacted through my snowballing approach.

These experiences of recruiting participants also serve to support conclusions drawn in my research about the social networking practices of new media workers. As I explained in Chapter 7, the social networks formed by those in my study were based on associative ties which are a hybrid of professional and ethnic bonds. While ethnic bonds are rooted in the historical, social and political configuration of the country along ethnic lines, professional ties are the result of the rising dependence of new media skills for finding work and job opportunities. As I demonstrated, both sets of ties are negotiated through referrals.

However, as a method of research sampling, snowballing or chain referral has limitations which potentially influenced the findings of my study. According to Atkinson and Flint (2001), research samples derived from this method are ‘dependent on the subjective choices of the respondents first accessed’ and therefore are affected by what they refer to as ‘selection bias’. They also note that snowballing is often carried out on the assumption that ‘social networks consist of groups with relatively homogenous social traits’. This potentially results in the exclusion of individuals with characteristics that differ from these assumed traits. Although I tried to ensure that my initial leads were diverse (for example, by ensuring that they were not based in the same location or involved in the same set of activities), my research sample exhibited traces of such exclusive tendencies. For example, my study did not take into account the conditions and experiences of part-time workers also engaged in occupational

³⁸ These are events in which a large number of people meet to engage in collaborative computer programming. They typically last for more than one day.

activities outside new media. A potential reason for this is that those I initially contacted were full-time new media workers (that is, whose incomes derive exclusively from new media work) who may have referred me to other full-time workers like themselves. The absence of part-time workers in my research sample may also have been due to my lack of proactivity in recruiting them. Although dealings with part-time workers would have broadened the scope of my research and provided me with a greater understanding of informality within the sector, I contend that their exclusion from my study had minimal consequences on its overall findings.

The limitations of snowballing in my study also seemed particularly glaring in relation to the gender imbalance of my research sample. As the list of interviewees in Table 4.1 of Chapter 4 shows, there were only four women out of a total of thirty-five respondents. Since my respondents were mostly male, it would appear that male subjects referred me to other male subjects which inevitably led to the male dominance in my research sample. However, there are two things that suggest that this was not the primary cause of the disproportion between men and women in my study. First, the fact that it occurred in spite of the pro-active efforts I made to recruit more women during the field work. For example, I raised the question of gender imbalance during my interviews with both male and female participants and directly requested referrals to new media workers who were women. Thus, I gave priority to women over men during recruitment, especially when it became clear, based on my research sampling, that the former were fewer in number. Second, although, there appears to be little or no data on gender distribution in new media work in Nigeria, the disparity in numbers found in my research suggests that fewer women than men work in the Nigerian industry. This is also corroborated by research conducted in developing countries (see Hafkin and Targgat, 2001; Soriyan and Aina, 1997). However, gender imbalance in new media work is not unique to the Nigerian context or to developing countries. In a series of surveys on ‘people who create websites’ conducted by AListApart from 2007 to 2011, it was found that respondents were overwhelmingly male. The results of the survey showed that the average percentage of women in web design was

approximately 17%³⁹. This suggests that the disparity in numbers between men and women which appears to be the case in the Nigerian new media industry may be a reflection of an imbalance that also exists in Western contexts⁴⁰. Extensive research studies and commentary on the low numbers of women in technology jobs have understood this disparity in terms of more general gender and technology relations in which social representations associate technology with men (Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993; Lerman et al., 2003; Gill, 2002) while women are regarded ‘simply as members of households’ (Huws, 2009, p.5).

The responses from the women in my research showed that they were acutely aware of their position as a minority group in a male-dominated field. For them, this was evident in the fact that an overwhelming percentage of those they worked with as colleagues were male. My findings suggest that the general awareness that women are under-represented in new media and technology-related occupations contributes to reinforcing the male-dominance in such work. I argue that the commonly held notion that technology-related occupations (such as new media work) are mostly carried out by men is perpetuated by societal expectations in contexts like Nigeria where such work is associated with masculinity. For example, one of my female respondents described how she was frequently side-stepped in favour of her male colleague during meetings with clients who were often male. However, gender imbalance in the Nigerian new media industries is not the result of an active discrimination against women but, rather, an unpremeditated acceptance that may be based on traditionally held beliefs about the role of women. Since women are saddled with caring responsibilities, their position has traditionally been associated with child bearing and home making (Huws, 2009). However, in my research, the reaction to women who engage in new media work were mixed. On one hand, there were overt expressions of surprise and, on occasions, disbelief when a female new media worker was encountered. On the other hand, some reactions appeared to be supportive of

³⁹ According to the surveys, women respondents made up 16.1% in 2007, 16.2% in 2008, 17.4% in 2009, 17.6% in 2010, and 18.0% in 2011. In 2011, there a total of 15,623 respondents.

⁴⁰ In 2011, results of the survey showed that 91.2% of the respondents were based either in North and Central America (60.1%) or Europe (31.1%).

women: one of my female respondents, for example, mentioned how some of her male counterparts promised to offer her new jobs and projects since, as a woman, they felt that she could easily experience marginalisation in the male-dominated field. The desire to avoid or overcome such reactions and attitudes towards women in new media work may explain the activist roles taken up by some of my female respondents. This was manifest in their attempts to encourage more women to practice new media work. Of the four women in research sample, two of them were actively engaged in advocacy for women in technology through conferences and seminars aimed at motivating and stimulating interest in technology-related work like web design and animation.

Another potential drawback of my snowballing approach to recruiting respondents for my research was the homogeneity of the ages of those in my sample. As shown in Table 4.1 in Chapter 4, my respondents fell within the 22-35 age bracket. Without completely ruling out the effect of snowballing on this age clustering, I argue that this homogeneity is the result of the generational character of the new media industry. As I explained in Chapter 4, since the industry in Nigeria is still in its infancy (relative to those in the West), it is practiced by younger people whose occupational development coincided with the rise of the internet and digital media in the mid-2000s (NESG, 2013). Thus, those I researched belonged to a younger generation. This is not to imply that there are no new media workers whose ages fall above that range; rather, it is to emphasise that my research sample is a reflection of the generational character of the new media industry in Nigeria.

Having examined the issues arising from my research sampling, I now proceed to a reflection on my interview schedule through a consideration of factors which may have determined the research findings.

9.2.2. Interview scheduling and questioning

As explained in Chapter 4, I approached the field (especially the interviews) with preconceived notions about the Nigerian context. This was largely because of my

experiential familiarity with issues such as software piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity which are embedded in the fabric of everyday life in Nigeria. The central concern of my research was to find out how these lived phenomena affected and determined the specific experiences of new media workers in Nigeria and how, in turn, these experiences compared with concepts which have emerged from empirical research conducted in the West (as discussed in Chapter 2). Since my fieldwork was focused on observing and documenting the experiences of my research participants, I did not delve into deeper questioning about my interviewees' own understanding and subjective interpretations of concepts like entrepreneurialism or precariousness because the relevance of these concepts only emerged after the fieldwork. While engaging more deeply with those issues may have enriched my findings about new media work in the Nigerian context, I contend that my approach, which focussed on asking questions related more directly to the life and experiences of workers, was appropriately attuned to the overall purpose of the fieldwork at the time. In most cases however, the new media workers I researched did not necessarily understand their experiences in terms of concepts like entrepreneurialism or precariousness. Rather, their primary concerns involved the negotiation of obstacles that impeded the execution of their work – and this formed their experiences in new media work. So, after investigating such experiences, my post-fieldwork data analysis concerned itself with making links – where possible – between my participants' experiences and the various concepts identified in the literature. The links identified were: piracy and precariousness; infrastructure and entrepreneurialism; ethnicity and networking. I was therefore able to establish associations between the lived experiences of new media workers and concepts drawn from the literature about new media practice. Thus, rather than being imposed on my field data, the associations (and the theories they gave rise to) emerged from them.

Undoubtedly, my pre-fieldwork hypothesis that ideas about new media work developed in the West would not apply (or apply differently) in a Nigerian context contributed to shaping the procedure and outcome of the interviews with my respondents during the fieldwork. At the same time, however, this hypothesis served as a background against which new and unexpected findings could emerge while

analysing the field data. For example, although I had presumed that ethnicity would be an overt and obvious feature in the experiences of my research participants, their responses to my questions suggested that this was not the case. Instead, as I discussed in Chapter 7, the instrumentality of ethnicity was more subtle and lay hidden beneath a rhetoric of meritocracy. Networking was a function of both ethnic differentiation and professional skills, rather than simply the former, as I had presumed. This was evidently a situation in which my initial hypothesis was challenged and new insights gained.

A less obvious case occurred in my investigation of entrepreneurial practices among my respondents. Although my preconceptions were confirmed when interviewees' spoke about the problems of electricity and internet access and its effects on new media work, they were challenged by the accounts related to me by my respondents about how these conditions were negotiated. Prior to the research, I had thought that the difficulties faced by new media workers in the Nigerian context were almost insurmountable largely because they concerned infrastructural issues (electricity and internet access) which, in most part, were not under their control. I discovered, however, that negotiating these infrastructural conditions were a form of entrepreneurial practice. Thus, as I discussed in Chapter 6, entrepreneurialism among new media workers in the Nigerian context can be linked to the challenges of infrastructural breakdown in the country – even though this was not evident to me before embarking on the fieldwork and the interviews.

In sum, although findings appeared to emerge in spite of the interview schedules, this was not the case in reality. Rather, my pre-knowledge about the Nigerian context (that is piracy, infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity) led to an initial hypothesis that Western theories about new media work could not be applied to the Nigerian case. The overall findings of my study, namely, the links between lived phenomena (such as piracy) and concepts (such as precariousness) emerged from the analytical work carried out after the field research. In addition, although some opportunities were missed to deepen the analyses by probing interviewees' understanding of the concepts being investigated, I argue that my approach helped the research to focus on its

primary aim: investigating the experiences in new media work in the Nigerian context. This leads to a discussion on the concept of ‘way of life’ which served as the frame within which I conceptualised the experiences of new media labour within the local and cultural context of Nigeria.

9.3 New media work and the ‘way of life’ in the Nigerian context

As I explained in Chapter 1, the concept of ‘way of life’ is drawn directly from Raymond Williams’ social and anthropological definition of culture as ‘a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also institutions and ordinary behaviour’ (Jones, 2004; Williams, 1965/61). In his use of the term, Williams argued that culture as ‘way of life’ encompasses people’s shared meanings, experiences and social practices (Hall, 1980) which take shape within their local context. From this perspective, my adoption of the term ‘way of life’ was aimed at drawing attention to the meanings, experiences and social practices that arise in the ordinary behaviour of my research participants and to understand how these concepts interrelate with each other in their practice of new media work. Analysing my research data through the prism of ‘way of life’ led me to understand how the ‘experiences’ of people give shape to ‘meanings’ and further develop into ‘social practices’; and how these practices give rise to new or familiar experiences which, in turn, reconfigure or reinforce preexisting meanings. As I discovered, these processes take place in different spheres of society which interact with each other at various levels.

For example, drawing on Larkin’s (2008) interpretation of the origins of media piracy in Nigeria, I explained how the British colonialists attempted to use technology as a way to evoke meanings about their superiority over their colonised subjects. These meanings were reconfigured when experiences of the frequent malfunction and disrepair of these technological infrastructures began. According to Larkin, infrastructural deficiency assumed a state of banality in Nigeria when it became ‘painfully obvious to people who live there that they often do not work as they are supposed to’ (p.220). As I found in my research, these inadequacies have engendered

daily practices, such as software piracy and entrepreneurialism, which are the result of trying to overcome the deficiencies, lack of access to or unavailability of technology and infrastructure. I have argued that these practices contribute to a 'way of life' in Nigeria – no less so for the new media workers there who depend on these technologies in a specific way. At the same time however, these practices (and the meanings which underpin them) continue to evolve in response to new experiences. In Chapter 6, I discussed how the enforcement of anti-piracy laws especially by the global software companies has, over the years, transformed meanings of software piracy: from an activity that was regarded as 'ordinary' to one that was recognised by my research participants as illegal and occupationally hazardous. As I argued, this has led to experiences and practices which can be described as 'precarious'.

Furthermore, these meanings, experiences and practices interrelate across different spheres. Admittedly, one of the limitations of my study was the insufficient acknowledgement and lack of engagement with the interrelationships that exist between the phenomena and concepts I described. For example, although my research specifically links software piracy to precariousness, piracy can also be interpreted as a form of entrepreneurial behaviour in the Nigerian context since it serves as a survival mechanism and a way to negotiate everyday challenges. Similarly, manifestations of precariousness are not limited to the practice of piracy; the prevalence of infrastructural breakdown also introduces conditions that are precarious. Another such sphere to which I allude (but also do not engage with in great detail) is the moral dimension of the Nigerian cultural context. I showed how the moral dispositions and norms of some of my respondents, which are reinforced by meanings established through traditional values based on religion and customs, conflict with practices of software piracy. Similarly, my research suggests that the meanings and experiences attached to ethnic differentiation in Nigeria clashes with the demand for skills in new media work. In contrast to these, I show how the kind of entrepreneurialism (based on survivalism) which is endemic to the Nigerian context facilitates the ways by which new media workers negotiate the challenges of infrastructural breakdown.

My study therefore is an interrogation of how the Nigerian 'way of life' contributes to experiences in new media work. A subset of my argument has been that some of these experiences vary from countries in Europe or North America because of the variations in the 'way of life' between regions. These variations are due to the differences in social, political and historical trajectories which produce distinct meanings and social practices. However, this does not imply that there are no similarities. I argued that new media work has some features which are common across geographical locations. For example, my respondents expressed a passion and love for their work which resonates with what has been written in the western-based literature (In Chapter 2, I describe this as an intrinsic feature of new media work which does not vary with context). Furthermore, what I discussed as entrepreneurial practices among my research participants were similar to some of the features of new media work discussed in the literature: flexible working schedules and contract arrangements as well as mobility (Damarin, 2006; Gill, 2007; Neff et al., 2005). Also, the relevance of skills as a defining feature of new media work as found in the West (Christopherson, 2004; Kotamraju, 2002) was evident in my findings about the relationship between ethnicity and my respondents' networking practices. Nevertheless, I contend that features such as entrepreneurialism and networking should not be detached from the context in which they exist. I argue that they are features that depend on the 'way of life' of a particular locale.

9.4 New media work and a 'way of life' beyond the local

From the foregoing, it is clear that local conditions of new media labour in Nigeria was the primary focus of my research. However, it is clear that broader and macro-level issues such as the effect of global trade, migration and knowledge flows on new media labour in Nigeria are important because they also impinge on the local context of new media work. However, emphasising those global perspectives in my research risked 'viewing the global South largely through the prism and norms of the global North' (Willems, 2015, p.15). According to Kraidy and Murphy (2008), 'a richer notion of the local should enable the exploration of power relations *within* the local and not focus exclusively on power as exercised by the global on the local' (p.346).

Admittedly, this is a complicated task because new media work in the global South is intricately linked to the global North since power and control in this highly globalised industry inevitably flow from North to South (Willems, 2015).

To deal with this, my study adopted what Willems (2015) refers to as a ‘grounded approach’ that begins its analysis from the Global South and connects it to the Global North ‘only in so far as this is warranted by the empirical findings’ (p.16). Thus, I sought to understand the meanings and applications of concepts about new media labour (which have been widely applied in Western-based literature) only within a contextual frame, namely, through an empirical analysis of the experiences of new media workers in Nigeria. For example, rather than imposing Western-based notions of precariousness in my research on workers’ experiences, my findings suggest that the experience of precariousness can be interpreted in ways that pertain to the specificity of the Nigerian context. In the case of new media workers, I showed that precariousness may be more acutely manifested by and experienced in their negotiation of software piracy. Similarly, through my empirical analysis, I argued that the negotiation of infrastructural breakdown manifests a form of entrepreneurialism which, in contrast to countries of the global North, appears to be specific to the Nigerian context where such issues are commonplace. Finally, my findings reveal how, despite the growing importance of skills in the industry, ethnicity still influences outcomes of social networking (recruitment and the access to information about work opportunities) among new media workers in Nigeria. In drawing these findings, the primary concern is to ensure that global South is not ‘simply a space of “raw data” to be made sense of through “Western theory”’ (Willems, 2015, p.16) but to contribute to the development of theory that applies specifically to the global South – even if, as in my case, those theories initially emerge from Western-based research.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasise that these findings do not completely ignore the impact of the transnational forces which, in many ways, introduce and continue to shape issues like piracy, entrepreneurialism and, even, ethnicity. Rather, my study assumes these factors (and acknowledges them where necessary) while paying greater attention to the role of agency in developing local strategies for negotiating them. A

potential limitation of this approach – which is perhaps apparent in my own research – is the tendency to disengage, or insufficiently re-engage, the local context with larger structures, power relations and global processes. Indeed, as Kraidy and Murphy (2008) argue, ‘the local cannot be understood as a locus of study that is detached from the larger forces of history, politics, economics, or military conflict’ (p.339). However, for this re-engagement to be carried out effectively, I contend that it is imperative to adequately understand what actually takes place in the local context through an investigation carried out in and from the perspective of people’s everyday lives (Willems, 2015).

For this reason, my application of ‘way of life’ pertains mainly to the immediate and local setting where new media workers operate. However, further research may also examine the impact of external influences that emerge from outside the country. These influences may include those of online networks that take advantage of knowledge and resource flows from the global community of the Nigerian diaspora. During my research, some of my participants referred to their access to such resources through relatives or patrons who helped them to obtain software or work opportunities from abroad or with whom they exchanged information about the latest industry trends. Although my study did not follow up on these accounts, they could serve as the basis of future research with the aim, for example, of investigating how the experiences of workers in the Nigerian context are shaped by broader networks that transcend space and physical location. On the other hand, the application of ‘way of life’ can be expanded to other occupations within the cultural industries or other sectors such as the banking or oil and gas industries in Nigeria. Although my fieldwork was limited to Lagos, research in this broader context may pay attention to networks that cut across various locations within Nigeria. This is particularly useful for studies that aim to further examine the impact of ethnic and kinship ties which extend beyond the tight quasi-spatial dimension of Lagos to the more remote regions where such traditional networks appear to be more intensely experienced.

Here, it must be acknowledged that the concepts I raise in the thesis are not necessarily restricted to new media work but can arguably be applied to fields outside it. This is

because the contextual conditions I discuss (such as infrastructural breakdown and ethnicity) are likely to affect people in diverse occupations. From this perspective, the findings of the study have consequences that go beyond labour within the new media industries. However, there is a specificity to new media work which my study draws on: namely, that such work is solely dependent on digital computer technologies which first came into existence in the 1960s – unlike well-established occupations such as engineering, medicine or journalism which precede digital technologies. This historical dimension is important because it suggests that the growth of new media as an occupation took place alongside recent transnational developments like globalisation and neoliberalism (Neff, 2012) which affected developing countries in negative ways (Hart, 2006). In countries like Nigeria, new media began to take shape as an occupational field only in the 1990s and, as a result, has arguably remained under-represented, limited in size, heavily dependent on the West and potentially more susceptible to forces of globalisation. However, in spite of this situation (or as a result of it) there has been a gradual spread of digital technologies (computers, laptops, mobile phones and especially the internet) in the country which has facilitated the growth of the sector. Furthermore, unlike other fields, the recent history of new media work in Nigeria means that it is made up of a younger generation of workers whose educational and professional development coincided with the growth of new media in the country. It is within such a developmental and demographic milieu that my research was carried out. The study was therefore not about new media work alone but about how such work is practiced and experience in a specific place and at a specific time.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, one of the objectives of the study was to contribute to the dewesternization of research in media studies by foregrounding local, non-Western contexts where media production takes place. However, this does not imply that the application of ‘way of life’ as a frame for investigating the experiences of (new media) labour can be applied solely to Nigeria, or to non-Western contexts alone. The emphasis on the Global South in my study is due to the apparent paucity of empirical research in Nigeria and, more broadly, Africa which have either been at the periphery of academic enquiry in the field of media and communication and related sub-

disciplines or have been analysed mostly from the vantage point of the Global North (Willems, 2014). While I presume that the concept of ‘way of life’ can be employed in research carried out in Western contexts, its social and anthropological roots (based, as mentioned above, on Raymond Williams’ definition of culture), in my view, make it more advantageous for research conducted in geographic and economic contexts that are less known in the academic field. For this reason, findings from research like mine which emerge from empirical studies on the experiences of a particular segment of the labour force in Africa, potentially offer academics as well as policy makers constructive insight: for academics, to build on existing knowledge and, where necessary, to challenge prevailing theories; for policy makers, to proffer viable solutions to issues that potentially obstruct development in societies of the Global South – solutions that are not simply foreign impositions from the West but which adequately connect with the local conditions under which their beneficiaries operate.

In conclusion, even though my study (with its findings) is not without methodological and theoretical limitations, I contend that, at the very least, it prepares the ground for further research about experiences of labour in non-Western and less developed cultural contexts.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Questions

1. What is the general perception of ‘new media’ in the industry? What is ‘new media’?
2. How and why do companies decide to brand themselves as ‘new media companies’?
3. What are the typical products of new media companies?
4. Is there a real market for new media products in Nigeria?
5. When is the right time to start a new media company, in terms of skills and staff?
6. What is the typical staff structure of a new media company?
7. What are the job descriptions that can be found in a typical new media company?
8. What are the competencies expected of those job descriptions?
9. Is there a sufficient labour market for new media work?
10. Does the labour market currently meet up with these competencies?
11. What is hiring like? Is it easy to find competent workers?
12. What are the most typical challenges of running a new media company

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What kind of work do you do?
2. What are the factors that informed your choice of this kind of work?
3. What kinds of skills are required for your work?
4. Do you consider yourself to have acquired all the skills needed?
5. How did you acquire the skills you currently possess?
6. How do you intend to acquire those skills you are currently lacking or update the skills you already have?
7. What tools do you need for your work? Hardware, software etc.?
8. Are these tools easily available?
9. How often do you update them with newer versions?
10. Where do you usually carry out your work? Home? Office?
11. Why have you chosen to work from this location?
12. On the average, how many hours do you work each day?
13. What are the factors that determine how long you work?
14. On the average, how much do you earn in a month?
15. Is this earning solely from this kind of work? If yes, how much do you specifically earn from this work?
16. What kind of sentiments you feel towards your work?
17. Do you consider yourself a professional? Are you proud to call yourself a practitioner in this field?
18. How frequently do you network with other people in the field?
19. What kind of people do you network with?
20. What are the factors determine how and who you network with?
21. What are your future plans? Do you intend to continue with this field?

Appendix C

Behaviour/Phenomena Observed in New Media Company

1. How tasks are distributed among workers in the company
2. The kinds of skills that are attributed to specific kinds of products
3. How much time is allotted to specific tasks
4. The typical office schedules of different staff
5. How much of their personal time workers spend on completing office tasks
6. How workers collaborate with each other in the execution of specific tasks
7. The tools available for carrying out the various tasks
8. How much time workers are allowed for personal activities
9. How hiring of new workers is done (where possible)

Appendix D

Letter of Information and Consent Form

Cultural Contexts of Creative Labour: An empirical study of new media work in Nigeria

Researcher: **Patrick Enaholo**

Invitation to participate in research

You are being invited to voluntarily take part in *[focus groups/interviews]* as part of the research for a PhD thesis.

Purpose of the research project

The aim of this study is to find out about the experiences of new media workers in the Nigeria. The purpose of this letter is to give you the information you need to make an informed decision about whether or not you would like to participate. It is important that you understand what the research involves. Please take the time to read this carefully and ask questions if anything is unclear. You should feel free to ask the researcher any questions you may have about the study at any time. You will be given a copy of this Letter of Information and Consent Form once it has been signed.

About the [Interview | Focus Group]

You have been chosen to participate in this research because you are a worker in the Nigerian new media sector.

[Interviews]: During the interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences at work. Most of the questions will require open answers in which you will be able to discuss issues in-depth. These will include issues related to the conditions of your work and your daily interaction with the broader Nigerian environment. The interview should last for a period of not more than one hour, although you may be called upon for further clarification about your answers at a

later date. The interview will take place at the Pan-African University campus in Lagos but, if this is not suitable, you may request for another convenient location.

[Focus Groups]: During the focus group session, participants you will be asked questions about new media work. Most of the questions will require open answers in which you will be able to discuss issues in-depth and share ideas with other participants. Topics raised and discussed will essentially be related to the conditions of work in the Nigerian new media sector. The focus group session will take place at the Pan-African University campus in Lagos and will last for only one hour.

Confidentiality

The information gathered during this study will remain confidential during this project. Only the researchers will have access to the study data and information. There will no identifying names on the transcripts; they will be anonymised. Your names and any other identifying details will never be revealed in any publication of the results of this study. The tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the study. The results of the research will be published in a PhD thesis and in future research papers and may be published in a professional journal or presented at professional meetings. It may also be published in book form. The knowledge obtained from this study will be of great value in understanding how cultural contexts matter to work in the creative and cultural industries.

Withdrawal without Prejudice

Participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time before the thesis is published. You are also free to refuse to answer any question we might ask you. [For interviews: You will be able to review the transcripts of the interviews only until 4 weeks after the interview date.]

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for participating in this research, it is hoped that this work will provide new insights that will help to improve the practice of new media work in Nigeria.

Tick the box on the left if you agree with the statement on the right

I confirm that I have read and understand the letter dated _____ explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before the publication of the PhD thesis without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.

I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the principal investigator should my contact details change.

Name of participant
(Or legal representative)

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent
(If different from lead researcher)
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Date

Signature

Lead researcher
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Date

Signature

Profiles of New Media Companies Invited to Focus Group Sessions (Contd.)

	COMPANY	LOCATION	Mobile/App development	Animation	2D/Flash	3D/Modeling	Video/Computer games	Offline Multimedia
1	Fusion Media	Lagos		yes	yes	yes		
2	Websoft	Lagos	yes					
3	Bytesize	Lagos						
4	360 digital	Lagos						
5	K-interactive	Lagos						
6	Spiraltek	Lagos						
7	PixieTech	Lagos						
8	Mauco	Lagos						
9	GreyFactor	Lagos						
10	Prodigy	Lagos						
11	Futuresoft	Lagos						
12	Creative Studios	Lagos						yes
13	Drax Arts	Lagos		yes	yes	yes		yes
14	RightClick	Lagos	yes					
15	Macgrenor	Lagos	yes					
16	Inits	Lagos						
17	Maliyo Games	Lagos		yes	yes		yes	
18	Pledge51	Lagos	yes	yes	yes		yes	
19	Level Seven	Lagos						
20	Web Media Vault	Lagos						
21	Webthinkers	Lagos						
22	CKDigital	Lagos						
23	Unotech Media	Lagos						
24	Ennovate Nigeria	Lagos	yes					
25	Wildfusion	Lagos						
26	Brimwell	Lagos						
27	Kuluya Games	Lagos						
28	iNove Media	Lagos						
29	TwinPine	Lagos						
30	LagosLabs	Lagos						
31	Arttitude360	Lagos						
32	DigitalCraft	Ibadan						