
Research Brief: People's Voice Media

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RESEARCH RATIONALE

The Storycircle team is based in the Media and Communications Department, Goldsmiths College, University of London, and is a consortium partner in the Framework for Innovation and Research in MediaCityUK (FIRM). We specialise in conducting multi-disciplinary ‘action research’ with industry partners designed to explore the relationships between narrative exchange, digital technologies and citizenship. Storycircle offers both stimulus and support for testing the social processes and technological platforms that connect the narrative activity of one group or organisation with wider networks of exchange. As a result, the research aims to generate new insights and knowledge, to the benefit of those involved.

It is within this context that we are interested in working with People’s Voice Media, as an established Salford-based example of a community reporting network in the UK’s community media landscape. PVM describe themselves as “a not for profit community development organisation working across the UK and Europe specialising in using social media”.¹ As they spell out, their organisational aims are to: ‘support people to have a voice, challenge perceptions and describe their own reality’; and ‘encourage people to connect, share their experiences and successes with each other and so contribute to raising community and individual aspiration.’ Given this, we are particularly interested in the ways, like other similar organisations, PVM might address a number of current challenges for its ‘Community Reporter’ (CR) programme. Specifically these are:

1. the need to sustain the skills and networks of local community reporter groups after their initial engagement with the Community Reporter programme;
2. the need to support public engagement with community reported content in ways that align with the fast moving technologies and trends of the web;
3. and the need for PVM to position its Community Reporter programme in a climate of reduced funding and increased competition in the wider sector.

The research relationship between PVM and Storycircle is approached collaboratively, supporting PVM to plan ways of addressing the core challenges faced by the programme, and to explore the potential of further development activities and expansion, while providing the Storycircle team with a rich context in which to follow these processes as they occur. The past eight months (August 2011- March 2012) have helped establish a clear sense of common ground and shared interests between PVM and Goldsmiths, including identifying the core challenges above, and which will now be used as the foundations for the research approach taken over the next year (April 2012 – April 2013).

RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

Substantively, Storycircle seeks to undertake action research aimed at developing detailed, contextualised understandings of how digital resources can support and develop processes of:

- a) narrative production and exchange,
- b) the resulting processes of mutual recognition, and through this,
- c) how such processes might enhance individual and group agency.

This approach is informed, both ethically and politically, by a consideration of the core principles on narrative expression (Ricoeur 1984), narrative exchange (Couldry 2010), mutual

¹ From <http://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk/>

recognition (Honneth 1996). In exploring the difference 'digital resources' might play in these processes, we take a broad understanding to include digital objects (such as files, tags and links), digital technologies (including audio and video equipment, mobile devices), web sites and platforms, and the organisation of digital information through the relational infrastructures of database systems and algorithms.

Taking an outcomes approach

At the core of action research is the central role that participants' play in shaping and informing research questions towards taking action to achieve desired changes. In this, such an approach presents clear parallels with 'outcomes' centred approaches to project self-evaluation as they are commonly undertaken within public, third sector and social enterprise organisational funding structures (such as those advocated by BIG Lottery or the Charities Evaluation Service). As a result it has been possible to align the principles of action research with the emphasis on measuring and demonstrating changes or difference that an outcomes approach would entail. Thus, the aims of this specific research with PVM are guided by PVM's own existing organisational aims outlined above, and their concern to reflect on and strengthen their digital infrastructure to achieve these aims.

In the first instance, Storycircle and PVM have undertaken an extended relationship building and planning stage of this collaborative research. A central part of working together has been to identify core areas of intended actions for change that the CR programme is intended to deliver on – called 'outcomes' - in order to achieve PVM's overall aims for it. We have thus arrived at a stage where PVM have been able to explicitly articulate five core organisational outcomes that address the current challenges set out above. These are:

1. To develop the personal and technical skills of Community Reporters
2. To sustain local networks of Community Reporters
3. To stimulate the production of positive, community reported content
4. To increase public engagement with community reported content
5. To expand organisational partnerships through the social licence

These five outcomes will serve as the central reference point or 'road map' for the next stages of research, because they make concrete to PVM what they are trying to do and, as a result, help Storycircle to identify the particular processes of institutional action and reflection that it is seeking to follow. The outcomes have been organized into an evaluation framework which has been used to define the key performance indicators and relevant sources of evidence and methods for data collection, which will be used by PVM to assess the extent to which they might be achieving their intended outcomes [see Outcome Framework Sample Documents on www.storycircle.co.uk].

These five outcomes correspond with three substantive research strands that Goldsmiths will undertake in parallel with this activity. Strand 1 will examine how individual and groups of Community Reporters might build, share and sustain community reporting skills, and how these support them in the production of their own forms of digital content [corresponding to CRO1 and CRO2]. Strand 2 will centre on an analysis of the development of PVM's CommunityReporter.co.uk website, both from its back and front ends, and also its wider web presence, as a means of PVM improving public engagement with its community reported content, and in so doing, connecting communities at a range of scales [corresponding to CRO3 and CRO4]. Strand 3 will consider the processes of organisational self-definition and articulation behind the Community Reporter business model as PVM seeks to establish its CR brand, networks and institutions [corresponding to CRO5]. Overall, this research will therefore focus on assessing the conditions under which the processes of

narrative exchange, recognition and agency might be enhanced by digital resources across the core areas of PVM’s organisational activity.

The action research process

At the heart of our approach to collaborative action research is a feedback loop, which takes a cyclical pass through the processes of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (with a view to informing the planning process of a subsequent pass through the cycle). In reality these processes are more organic and intertwined, but the general structure is shown in Figure 1 below.

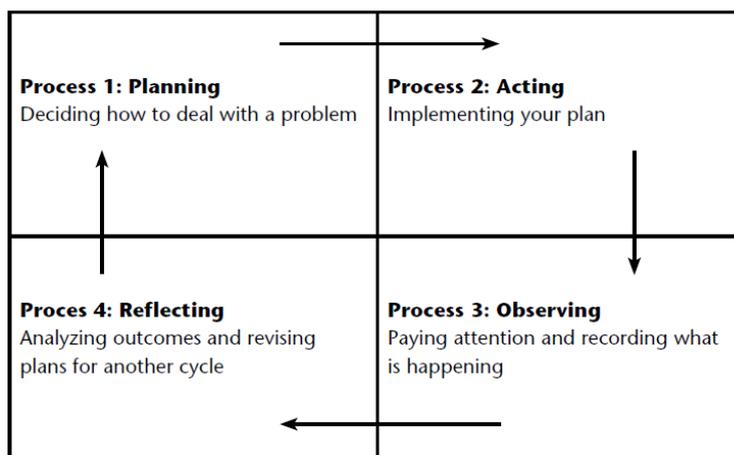


Figure 1 - Action research cycle. (from Foulger 2010)

As the timetable below shows (See pp.13-14), there are four planned passes of this action research cycle. Work to date has focused on a protracted period of planning as per the first process in Figure 1: informal relationship building; discussions and reflections about the current nature of PVM’s CR programme; observations of CR group meetings (specifically, the East Salford CR group) and events. The focus has been on establishing a baseline from which to guide our follow up assessments of the extent to which PVM might meet its intended outcomes, and the processes of narrative exchange, recognition and agency which underlie them. Our initial contact has thus served to ‘calibrate’ the research questions and tools in ways that respond to the current challenges faced by PVM, and which will now guide the next phases of this research. In this, this document is a core output from this first cycle intended to orientate all further research.

Practically, we will now undertake the second pass of the action research cycle, whereby Storycircle will support and track PVM as it seeks to implement the Outcomes Framework. This will be initiated by an all-staff meeting in Mid-May, where PVM’s CEO, Gary Copitch, and the Storycircle team will be able to explain the steps taken so far and the intention to ‘go live’ with the implementation of the Outcomes Framework, and address any questions, comments or concerns that the staff have. The Storycircle team will then provide PVM with practical guidance and background support for the collection and analysis of data – including developing and repurpose a range of analytic tools for assessing the development of its digital infrastructure - in ways that work effectively with the responsibilities of individual members of PVM staff. Overall, the action research process will be undertaken through three further cycles (starting with the current period April-August 2012, with subsequent cycles in August-December 2012, and January 2012-April 2013, subject to successful testing in the first instance) [see Research Phases and Timetable section on pp.13-14 below]. Given the importance of this system being based on the skills, knowledge and experiences of all

PVM staff, regular phases of reflection will be undertaken collectively in the form of a group meeting at the end of the cycle, whereby PVM staff and Goldsmiths researchers can come together, share and discuss findings, and consider how to address them further. Each pass through this cycle will be marked by the compilation of a short report to be circulated to all research partners [see Research Outputs section below].

Benefits of this research approach

For PVM, the implementation of the Outcomes Framework will:

- enable PVM team members to be clear about how their areas of work connect to the overall aim of the CR programme, and how each works together within it.
- allow PVM to account for what the strengths and weaknesses of the CR programme are, and crucially, reflect this information back to itself as an organisation in a way that will enable the effective targeting of future activity.
- provide PVM with a robust evidence-base in order to demonstrate the impacts of its work to external audiences, funding bodies, and policy makers.

For Goldsmiths, this collaborative research provides an opportunity to:

- conduct sustained research *with* (and not just *about*) a nationally focused community media organization as it undertakes a process of action and reflection directed towards addressing current challenges.
- develop primary research findings about narrative exchange, digital technologies and citizenship for public and scholarly presentations, and publication in international, peer-reviewed journals.

RESEARCH STRANDS

STRAND 1 - Community Reporters: building skills and producing content

Research Questions for Strand 1:

What are the processes by which PVM attempts to sustain and strengthen its production base (the knowledge and skills of CR reporters), and what role do digital resources play as part of these processes? Can the digital resources play a more effective role than they do at present?

The first core strand here focuses on the training and networking of Community Reporters. At present, many of the community reporter groups have been established to meet the specific needs of particular community groups and funded from a mix of sources. To date PVM have supported approximately 1,000 people through their Community Reporter programme, which “has enabled us to engage with a variety of different groups and connect with often isolated or marginalised people”.² In so doing, PVM have sought to nurture ‘community empowerment’ by bringing community voices and perspectives to bear on local housing policy, schooling and public space for example.³ However, a core challenge for PVM is how to sustain these community groups beyond this initial training and funding, and ensure they are able to continue to produce community reported content on the issues that concern them. This strand, therefore, centres on the processes behind PVM’s support for community reporters to build the appropriate skills and knowledges both individually and collectively.

Research Methods

The empirical focus of this strand will be on the East Salford Community Reporters group, attending their monthly meet-ups, and undertaking formal and informal ethnographic contact. In particular, this will entail observations at the meetings to follow the learning and sharing of social media skills, and the group dynamics of such face-to-face networking. It will also entail tracking the production community reported content by the group. We will also seek to account for the group’s own reflections on these processes by undertaking individual interviews and/or group interviews.

Data-sets

Existing and continuing data-sets:

- Fieldnotes from East Salford CR group monthly meet-ups
- Audio recordings from East Salford CR group monthly meet-ups
- Photographs of East Salford CR group monthly meet-ups
- Emails re: CR meet-ups
- Web captures and content pertaining to PVM’s support for the CR programme

To collect in addition:

² From <http://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk/case-studies>

³ For case studies from Salford see: Watton, E. (2009) ‘The contribution of social media to community empowerment and regeneration’: an investigation of Peoples Voice Media’s community reporters programme’, A report for PVM, University of Salford. National examples include training groups in Norfolk, East Sussex and Yorkshire; see ‘Groups’ and ‘Areas’ pages on the CR site but also note inconsistencies of categories.

- CR skills and progression data from CRO1
- CR sharing and networking data from CRO2
- Transcripts from individual and group interviews with East Salford CR group
- Transcripts from monthly reflexive discussions with Michelle Reckless, Teresa Wilson, David XXX and Gary Copitch on progress of CR group support

Relevant literature:

- **Media literacies.** Adult Media Literacy evidence review on behalf of Ofcom (Livingstone, Van Couvering et al. 2008). They note the importance of content creation for developing media literacy (alongside ‘access’ and ‘understanding’), especially and increasingly for cultural expression, citizen participation and developing a skilled workforce (p.46). They also identify a number of research gaps, such as the relationships between amateur production and the creative industries, and how “an experience of production encourages a critical understanding of media products” in adults. Overall they conclude that interacting with and creating media are areas “where the least work has been conducted” (p.51, see also p.61). Digital storytelling is cited as a good example of pioneering work in this regard (pp.49-50).
- A second key source of thinking about **digital literacies** is the broad body of work by Howard Rheingold. As he notes, “The difference between seeing Twitter as a waste of time or as a powerful new community amplifier depends entirely on how you look at it – on *knowing how to look* at it.”⁴ He sees this process as a “blend of craft and community” (Ibid.). Has tended to focus on these capacities in young people, so useful to consider how his work can apply to older people. Links with engagement through digital media, see for example Lance Bennett, ED. (2008) Civic Life Online: learning how digital media online can engage youth. MIT (esp. chapter by Rheingold).
- **Digital exclusion and empowerment.** PVM has focused on using training to empower marginalised groups in challenging circumstances, such as residents of care homes, hospitals, and low-income neighbourhoods, so literature exploring the intersections between social and digital exclusion would be useful (Livingstone and Helsper 2007; Eynon 2009; Helsper 2010; Eynon and Helsper 2011). Links between community development using social media and regeneration, especially Eileen Wattan (and her PhD supervisor Prof. Ben Light, Salford) who has worked with PVM on this topic.
- **‘Communities of practice’** literature (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999; Wenger, McDermott et al. 2002; Barton and Tusting 2005; Wenger, White et al. 2010). Also, how these might relate to action research literature on work with community groups, such as (Stoecker 2008; Stoecker 2009).

⁴ <http://blog.sfgate.com/rheingold/2009/05/11/twitter-literacy-i-refuse-to-make-up-a-twitchery-name-for-it/>

STRAND 2 - Website development: connecting content, connecting communities

Research Question for Strand 2:

How can PVM more effectively use digital resources to build a sustainable public for its productions (ie. CR stories)?

Following the development and launch of their CommunityReporter.co.uk⁵ website early in 2011, a remaining challenge for PVM has been how to make CR content appealing to an outside audience or wider national CR network, as at present, it primarily attracts localised audiences with some direct knowledge or existing contact with PVM. Thus while Strand 1 is about considering ways of supporting Community Reporters to have a voice, this strand is about the ways that such a voice might be listened to or otherwise recognised and engaged with in an online environment by wider publics. Meeting this challenge would seem to necessitate finding ways to connect this kind of ‘hyper local’ content together through more macro themes and societal interests, while maintaining a sense of local integrity and authenticity. PVM currently view this being achieved in both directions: firstly, by ‘sending up’ local content to a national level using meta-themes; and secondly, by ‘sending down’ by seeking local responses to national stories (Gary Copitch sites an example of using a recent *Daily Mail* article on single mothers to solicit the views of local mothers). Overall, the concern here is with the ways individual narratives (individual stories or content) might be more productively and publically exchanged, circulated, responded to and acted upon.

Research Methods

This strand of research is approached through the ways content on the CR website is structured and organised. In particular, the organisation of metadata on the site was identified early on in this research as an area requiring significant attention in order to improve public engagement with, and navigation of, CR content, which has otherwise tended to be posted to the CR site as a repository rather than platform for interaction. Salford University’s ThinkLab provided support last year in order to pilot a redesigned metadata system for the CR site, and the results of which will be used as a basis for informing further research by the Storycircle team.

This Strand will employ what we term ‘social analytics’, whereby PVM will be supported to reflect and act on their site development through the systematic, iterative analysis of content interactions as they occur through the front end, back end, and wider web presence of the CR site. This approach will draw upon a range of proprietary and repurposed analytic web tools - such as ‘Google Analytics’, ‘Topsy’ and the DMI’s ‘IssueCrawler’ – to collect and visualise data on the ways CR site content is engaged with in social terms. This approach combines these quantitative datasets with the tracking of the emergence and circulation of qualitative content themes, and presents them in ways that will allow both PVM and users of the CR site to further shape the exchange of these narratives. While our ‘social analytics’ method with PVM is focused primarily through an online analysis, it will also extend to include undertaking observations and assessments of PVM’s overall implementation of the Outcomes Framework outlined above.

⁵ www.communityreporting.org

Storycircle will approach this strand initially as a means of examining PVM's reflexive developments achieved through using and acting upon these analytic tools and approaches, but later 'action' phases of research will aim to initiate a series of creative experiments in collective modes of content production and circulation – such as that undertaken with the Jubilee Time Capsule, or those proposed in other Storycircle projects such as Bus TV, Secret Gardens Festival or Salford A-Z - aimed at more actively stimulating dialogue and narrative exchange both within and beyond its CR site. Thus we hope to link a consideration of individual and group capacities for content production in Strand 1 with its on-line circulation in Strand 2.

Data-sets

Existing and continuing data-sets:

- ThinkLab's pilot research into PVM's metadata
- PVM site review by Louise Brown
- Web captures of front end CR site
- Fieldnotes from planning meetings with PVM staff
- Transcripts and audio recordings from planning meetings with PVM staff
- Tracked versions of Outcomes Framework document
- Emails re: Website development, planning and outcomes framework

To collect in addition:

- Content production data from CRO3
- Content engagement data from CRO4
- PVM staff logs of Outcomes Framework implementation
- Transcripts from monthly reflexive discussions with Michelle Reckless, Teresa Wilson, David XXX, Peter North, Louise Brown and Gary Copitch on progress of CR site development and content, and of Outcomes Framework implementation
- PVM reported findings by outcome for each action research cycle
- Transcriptions of quarterly all-staff reflection and planning meeting

Relevant Literature

- **Digital Methods Initiative.** An important methodological contribution here is the work of Richard Rogers and his team at the Digital Methods Initiative in Amsterdam.⁶ They have developed a distinct approach concerned with the 'natively digital', and thus contrast their 'digital methods' with 'digitised methods' that seek to translate existing methods online, and which have dominated much research into the internet to date (c.f. Jones 1999; Rogers 2009). This approach is developed in a body of work around '**informational politics**' of the web - (Rogers 2004; Rogers 2009; Rogers 2009; Rogers 2009; Rogers, Jansen et al. 2009; Rogers 2010; Rogers 2010).
- Also thinking on tagging, taxonomies and 'folksonomies' (see for example Mathes 2004; Shirkey 2005; Guy and Tonkin 2006; Simons 2008). See also, 'Sorting things out' (Bowker and Star 2000) and consider the relationships between categorisation and understandings of 'infrastructure' (Star 1999; Star 2002; Star and Bowker 2006). Work on 'Deep Search' is also relevant here (Becker 2008; Becker 2009; Becker and Stalder 2009). This was developed as an idea by The World Information Institute [<http://world-information.org/wii>]- Becker has worked with them. They organised the Deep Search conferences and produced the book. Has some useful videos

⁶ <https://www.digitalmethods.net/>

(http://world-information.org/wii/deep_search/en/videos). See also (Halavais 2008).

- Emerging debates about **digital democracy** (cf. Novec 2005; Hindman 2008; Novec 2009; Papacharissi 2010). This sits well alongside work by Becker and Stalder, but also David Beer's writings (Beer and Burrows; Beer and Burrows 2007; Beer 2008; Beer 2009) are especially useful in helping us get back to a more critical appreciation of some of the rather obtuse politics in Rogers' 'informational politics'.
- **Tools for self-evaluation.** Much of the thinking here comes from finding a paper by Carolin Gerlitz who is an instructor and phd student here at Goldsmiths in sociology. I circulated a copy of this last week - see (Gerlitz and Helmond 2011). The paper links business models of the Internet with the social organisation of the Internet by social media through a notion of the 'like economy'. This paper is forthcoming in *New Media and Society*. I met with Carolin to discuss this, and she pointed me to a number of further ideas for the application of digital tools with PVM, particularly through her work looking at self-evaluation (to be forwarded to me once she has finished it).
- **The 'Social Web'.** Rogers on 'post-demographics' and the significance of profiling. See also 'Profiling Machines': Mapping the Personal Information Economy by [Greg Elmer](http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/?ttype=2&tid=9945) see: <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/?ttype=2&tid=9945>. Links with **Participatory web cultures** – see standard social network stuff from danah boyd et al. and critiques, especially in the excellent work by David Beer (Beer and Burrows; Beer and Burrows 2007; Beer 2008; Beer 2009)
- Work on, and critiques of, **user generated content** from perspectives of political economy (van Dijk etc) on 'prosumers'.
- Practical literature on **enhancing online social interaction and engagement, search engine optimisation, and web presence.** The 'Social by Social' guidance report by NESTA (Gibson, Courtney et al. 2009).
- Research on the **intersections between 'citizen journalism' and web 2.0**, such as work on 'Journalism 2.0' (Rebillard and Touboul 2010), Twitter and modes of communication (Murthy 2011), Twitter and imagined audiences (Marwick and Boyd 2011), participatory online communication (Gulbrandsen and Just 2011), and comparisons of social capital in traditional and online news media (Beaudoin 2011).
- **Online listening and recognition.** Literature on voice and narrative for reflecting on what online listening might entail. Recent pioneering work in Australia on The Listening Project, and special issue of *Continuum* (23:4, August 2009), especially (Couldry 2009; Crawford 2009; Dreher 2009; El-Gawley and O'Donnell 2009; Lee-Shoy and Dreher 2009; O'Donnell 2009; O'Donnell, Lloyd et al. 2009; Dreher 2010). See also (Gulbrandsen and Just 2011). Politics, democracy and listening. Susan Bickford's book, 'The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship' (Bickford 1996) and relatedly, John Dryzek's work on 'Discursive Democracy' (Dryzek 1990). Andrew Dobson and Gideon Calder both work on democracy and environment draws on listening as key concept in ways that is readily applicable to wider reflections on politics of listening (Calder 2009; Dobson 2010; Dobson n.d.).

STRAND 3 - The Community Reporter model: growing networks, building institutions and the processes of organisational self-definition

Research Question for Strand 3:

How does PVMs reflexive self-definition at the summative level, ie. narrative – change as a result of the adjustments made and tracked in strands 1 and 2? Given those changes, how do they use these understandings as a way of positioning themselves in this competitive landscape?

This third strand focuses on the PVM business model. This is about the discourses PVM employ to articulate their organisation, business model and ‘product’, and ways this may be drawn in distinction with other business models (especially, Comparisons and contrasts with traditional and mainstream modes of journalism). In a sense this strand looks in detail at PVMs narrative of itself. Specifically, research will explore what it might mean to become “the Reuters of the community”, to be “hyper-local” and so on. This strand also entails the on-the-ground development and expansion of the PVM national network via its ‘social licencing’ model; thus examining the processes through which these discourses might become realised in practice.

Defining in discursive ways: self-definition within this crowded landscape, of which branding is one strategy. NB. social licensing!

Significantly, PVM emphasise local and grass roots media communities as being vital to the production of social media content. Part of what they do is support the training and networking of local groups of ‘community reporters’ (CRs), and they distinguish ‘community reporting’ as a critical alternative to what they view as the professionalising, corporate and mainstream modes ‘citizen journalism’. PVM are rooted in their locality, having undertaken work in Salford in various guises since 1995, but they also operate a social licensing model to support CR groups nationally. They are also currently exploring expanding with partners in Europe. Therefore, these aspects of PVM demonstrate synergies with the interests of the Storycircle project, and confirm a shared commitment to taking seriously the role of community media in the wider media landscape at a range of scales and in socially just and critical terms.

We will ultimately approach the question - what is the wider replicable CR model, beyond the local context, that emerges as a result of this research (anticipating Qs for future consideration).

Research Methods

Baseline and on-going follow-up interviews and updates with Gary, as chief advocate for this self-definition. Published articulations of organisation, business model, brand, product and so on in online and off-line media. In terms of web tools, the core one to use with PVM is the ‘Issue Barrometer’ (or Issue Crawler) (see also Rogers 2010)⁷ In particular, the Issue Crawler (and a number of related tools) explores ‘issue spaces’. Explore in what ways the PVM ‘web

⁷ Alternatives to the DMI Issue Crawler tool are: <http://linkanalysis.wlv.ac.uk/> and <http://lexiurl.wlv.ac.uk/>

presence' is indeed present, by comparing it to the wider and emerging networks of other organisations concerned with 'community reporting', 'community reporter', 'citizen journalism', the 'hyperlocal' etc. Taking these literally as search terms would be the first phase of preparing a considered list of the correct URLs to use the Issue Crawler to gather and return web data on this. It would also help us move closer to a study of the narrative ecology that PVM is situated in. Achieved by a focus on the PVM business model, and the language PVM (especially GC as a very passionate advocate of these ideas!) employ to articulate their intentions, their business and their 'product' as related or distinct from a range of other organisations (esp. comparisons and contrasts with traditional and mainstream modes of journalism, The Media Trust, My Square Mile and so on – as identified by GC in particular). (NB these sites are potentially 'authoritative spaces' in Rogers 2004). But more broadly, in a sense this strand looks in detail at PVMs narrative of itself and, following principles of both action research and grounded theory, is an account that can be used to structure the terms used to calibrate the analytical tools discussed above. We can ask of this exercise what it might mean to become "the Reuters of the community", to be "hyper-local" and so on.

Data-sets

Existing and continuing data-sets:

- Publicity materials pertaining to PVM's CR programme
- Web captures and content pertaining to PVM's CR programme
- Public debates (on and off line) between PVM and third parties as to the definitions of CR
- Fieldnotes from meetings and discussions
- Transcripts and audio recordings from discussions

To collect in addition:

- CR business model data from CRO5
- Transcripts from monthly reflexive discussions with Gary Copitch (but also potentially Michelle Reckless, Teresa Wilson, and David XXX) on understandings and articulations of CR.

Relevant literature:

- Definitions of, and distinctions between, 'citizen journalism' and 'community reporting', and the 'hyper-local'.
- Literature on business models in new media: 'wikinomics' (Tapscott and Williams 2006; see also Tapscott and Williams 2010) and 'long-tail' (Anderson 2006; see also Anderson 2009) economic models, and capacities of crowd sourcing to organise without organisations (Shirkey 2009).
- US team explore funding models for 'hyper local' media organisations (HLMOs), (Kurpius, Metzgar et al. 2010). Same team also establishes a definition and framework for analysis of HLMOs, and also identifies areas for further research (Metzgar, Kurpius et al. 2011).
- Critical literature of such models. Critical literature on the political economy of UGC (van Dijck 2009) and the limits of 'Wikinomics' and its 'discontents' (Van Dijck and Nieborg 2009). Critique of Shirkey's 'Here Comes Everybody' in (Merrifield 2011). See (Macnamara 2010) on reasons for urgency in searching for new media business models. Also, corporate co-option of citizen journalism, see for example (Kperogi 2011) on using

the example of CNN and iReporter. Also blurred boundaries of production and consumption by user generated content (UGC), see for example (Oernebring 2008) on tabloid content in *The Sun* (UK) and *Aftonbladet* (Sweden), and (Wardle and Williams 2010) on the BBC.

TIME TABLE SHOWING PRIMARY ACTION RESEARCH PROCESSES AND CYCLES

The table below shows the four proposed action research cycles (numbered 1-4) and the primary research processes (colour coded).

| Primary Action Research Process | 2011 | | | | | 2012 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2013 | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|--|
| | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | |
| PLANNING | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | 3 | | | | 4 | | | | | |
| ACTING | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | 3 | | | | 4 | | | | |
| OBSERVING | | 1 | | | | | | 2 | | | | | 3 | | | | 4 | | | | | |
| REFLECTING | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 2 | | | | 3 | | | | 4 | | |

Cycle 1 (August 2011-March 2012) was an 'orientation' cycle. It was intended to establish working relationships between PVM and Goldsmiths teams (Planning process), identify the core challenges faced in the everyday operation of the PVM core business (Observing process. There is no acting process in this first cycle as action research of this kind first requires partners to define the aims, questions and lines of enquiry to be pursued), and to draw these together into an agreed course of further action that has been captured within this document, including the research questions, methods and so on (Reflecting process).

Cycle 2 (March 2012-August 2012) is a 'foundation' cycle. This cycle has begun by designing the CR Outcomes Framework (Planning process). The task now is for PVM to implement the framework in their working practices and undertake the data collection with Goldsmiths support (Acting process). PVM staff will keep notes on how this implementation works in practice, while the Goldsmiths team will also follow progress with regular debriefings with PVM (Observing process). Both teams will then assess both the overall findings from the collected data and assess its overall usefulness as a system at the PVM AGM in August (Reflecting process).

Cycle 3 (August 2012-December 2012) is an 'experimentation' cycle. This is intended to focus on Community Reporter content and the ways it might be organised, engaged with and circulated through the website. Goldsmiths will help PVM to design and deliver a series of creative experiments intended to stimulate collective, 'curated content' production (Action process), while using the established outcomes frameworks to track the progress and impacts of such experiments (Observing process). These will be drawn together into a web-based output for the site, which will include participant reflections on the process (Reflection process).

Cycle 4 (December 2012-April 2013) is a 'consolidation' cycle. This cycle is intended to support PVM to take ownership of the previous cycles of collaborative research, and identify where sustainable benefits might be secured. Goldsmiths will provide background support only for this cycle, but will conduct a series of short, formal and structured 'exit interviews' with staff and community reporters in January to finalise the collaborative relationship.

RESEARCH OUTPUTS & DISSEMINATION

1. **PVM Outcomes Framework document and guidance [April-May 2012]**. Developed to guide further phases of action research. Supported by completion of this document outlining the Research Strands to be undertaken by Storycircle.
2. **Baseline report (from Cycle 1). [2-3k words, May 2012]**. Developed as a result of the initial relationship building, data gathering and reflection stage of the first cycle, and intended to support planning and action stages of the second cycle. Internal document for research partners only.
3. **Cycle 2 report. [2-3k words, August 2012]**. Developed as a result of the reflection stages of the Cycle 1, and intended to support planning and action stages of Cycle 3. Internal document for research partners only. To accompany Cycle 2 PVM Outcomes Report.
4. **Cycle 3 report. [2-3k words, December 2012]**. Developed as a result of the reflection stages of the Cycle 3, and intended to support planning and action stages of Cycle 4. Internal document for research partners only. To accompany Cycle 3 PVM Outcomes Report.
5. **Presentation of findings to national and international academic audiences [January 2013 onwards]**. Opportunities to be identified and confirmed.
6. **PAPER 1 (Social Analytics/Strand 2). Publication in international peer-reviewed journal (Journal of Information Technology and Politics), [8k words, submitted March 2013]**. This will be developed as a result of the cumulative research contact with PVM, and is intended to stimulate and sustain academic engagement with the core findings of the research.
7. **PAPER 2 (Community Reporting/Strands 1 & 3). Publication in international peer-reviewed journal (Media, Culture, Society), [7k words, submitted March 2012]**. This will be developed as a result of the cumulative research contact with PVM, and is intended to stimulate and sustain academic engagement with the core findings of the research.
8. **Cycle 4 report. [2-3k words, April 2013]**. Developed as a result of the reflection stages of the Cycle 4, and intended to support PVM sustain the outcomes and impact of the research contact with Goldsmiths after formal completion of research (in June 2013). Accumulated, edited reports from cycles 1-4 may also be prepared for national practitioner and policy audiences.

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