Interaction and participation:

Investigating the impact of mobile technologies on screen-based industries and audiences

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification, and that it is the result of my own independent work.

James Blake

31st August 2022

Abstract

This PhD explores the changing nature of audience participation in screen-based media. The research, conducted over six years, analyses the motivations and methods of industry professionals working at the forefront of interactive television and film. It focuses on the impact of mobile devices in media production and consumption, across a range of television genres, and analyses the concept of the 'second screen' as part of the history and evolution of innovation in interactive TV and film.

Four outputs are included in this PhD by published works, including three printed research publications and a film project. Each one adopts similar qualitative methodological approaches which are rooted in interviews, content analysis and industry case studies. The research analyses media production within the scope of theoretical frameworks: the dichotomy of active / passive audiences, the notion of user agency and the converge with interactive gameplay, and the shifting concepts of immersion and digital transmedia storytelling.

The work has been informed by the researcher's own professional background as a reporter and producer in TV news and current affairs, as well as his work as a filmmaker within the academy. One of his recent 'practice-as-research' film projects has also been included in this PhD to explore how both traditional *and* practice methodologies can enhance and complement each other around the study of TV and digital interaction.

Publications included in this PhD

Blake, J. (2017) *Television and the Second Screen: Interactive TV in the Age of Social Participation*. London: Routledge

(Provided as a hard copy)

Blake, J. (2017) 'Second Screen interaction in the cinema: Experimenting with transmedia narratives and commercialising user participation'. *Participations Journal* 14 (2): 526 – 544.

(Available in Appendix A: attached as a PDF document)

Blake, J. (2018*) Our Future Scotland* film project. Available at Scotland's Futures Forum *Scotland 2030*. Available at https://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/our-future-scotland/

(View via online link)

Blake, J. (2019) 'Simulating Experiences of Displacement and Migration: Developing Immersive and Interactive Media Forms Around Factual Narratives*'. International Journal of E-Politics* 10 (1): 49–60.

(Available in Appendix B: attached as a PDF document)

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I would like to thank all the creative industry professionals who agreed to contribute to my research over the last seven years. There are far too many to mention here, but they include news reporters, producers, film directors, TV managers, artists, advertising executives, digital content creators, policymakers, politicians, and former colleagues at the BBC, ITN and STV. All were happy to share their experiences and insights for this research.

I would also like to mention my friends and colleagues at the RSE Young Academy of Scotland for their help and support with the *Our Future Scotland* film project. It was a collaborative initiative, so thanks must go to Dr. Siobhan O'Connor and Fiona MacLellan at GSA. The project would not have been possible without Rob Littlejohn, Head of Business at the Scotland's Futures Forum, and the enthusiasm (and presenting skills) of the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, Ken Macintosh MSP.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This PhD investigates the dynamic nature of audience engagement during a critical time in the development of digital technologies and TV narrative forms. The research, which focuses on the interplay between traditional screen-based media and mobile platforms, was conducted over six years from 2014. It analyses the motivations and methods of industry professionals working at the forefront of interactive television and film. Four outputs are included in this PhD by published works: three printed publications and a practice-based film and online digital media project. This critical analysis explores both the collective and individual significance of the outputs and highlights the synergies and commonalities between the published works. In doing this, I reflect on my professional background in television and how this has influenced my academic research – in both positive and negative ways. And I analyse my own research processes, including qualitative mixed-methodologies and practice-based video and digital production methods.

The research makes an original contribution to knowledge as the first large scale study of second screen interaction and TV production within the UK. As such, it offers insights into the agenda and methods of content creators and industry executives. Viewed collectively, the published outputs offer a unique comparative analysis of audience participation across TV genres, cinematic films, and video gameplay. They contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of digital interaction: as both a positive and negative influence on immersion, user agency and developing empathy.

The research outputs

Blake, J. (2016) *Television and the Second Screen: Interactive TV in the Age of Social Participation*. London: Routledge.

This monograph was the first of my research outputs to be published in December 2016. The original book proposal was approved by the peer reviewers and the editorial board at Routledge in early 2014 and I was commissioned to write a 90-thousand-word study which

investigated the notion of 'second screen' interaction. Between 2015 and 2016, I undertook more than 25 semi-structured interviews with media industry professionals for the study. Many chapters examine the problematic concept of interaction within specific tv genres: news, drama, factual, sports, entertainment, and TV advertising. The research investigates the impact of mobile platforms and social media participation on TV viewing and places such recent activity in the context of the evolution of interactive TV. In this way, I analyse media production and innovation within theoretical frameworks including transmedia storytelling, Uses and Gratifications, the dichotomy of active / passive audiences, para-social interaction, and the notion of user agency. As the book was published first, and as the longest of the research outputs, *Television and the Second Screen* represents the core of this PhD. The book's findings, and the methodologies underpinning them, laid the groundwork for my later research publications and practice-based film project.

Blake, J. (2017) 'Second Screen interaction in the cinema: Experimenting with transmedia narratives and commercialising user participation'. *Participations* 14 (2), pp. 526-544.

This journal article was a response to a call-for-papers from the *Participations Journal* who were planning to publish an edition dedicated to the notion of 'special cinema'. The research is based on three comparative case studies analysed alongside interviews with directors and film industry executives. For my book, I had researched narrative 'transportation' and interaction within high-end TV dramas where I pose the question: 'The biggest hurdle for interactive TV drama remains conceptual. Does the very nature of drama itself preclude participation and interaction?' (Blake, 2017: 126). By extending my research into cinematic forms, with this journal article, I was able to interrogate that question in greater depth. As a result, the article traces the history of interactive and haptic cinema and its growing convergence with the video gaming industry from the 1980s onwards. Whilst the book introduces the concept of *immersion* within the context of user interaction, the journal article takes this further – comparing narrative and perceptual immersion within the unique spectatorial arena of a movie theatre. It studies decision cinema from the perspective of transmedia storytelling and examines interactive devices as part of the paratext of a film.

Blake, J. (2018*) Our Future Scotland* film project. Available at Scotland's Futures Forum *Scotland 2030*. Available at: https://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/our-future-scotland/

This practice-based research project was a collaboration between the RSE Young Academy of Scotland and the Scotland's Futures Forum (SFF) – the official cross-party think tank of the Scottish Parliament. In 2017 the SFF were looking for innovative ways to engage people in its 2030 project: an initiative inviting people to share their visions of a future Scottish society. I pitched the idea of a film and digital multimedia site to showcase innovation, spark inclusive debate and provide a link between audiences, creative figures, scientists, industry stakeholders, and policy makers (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Promotional image for Our Future Scotland

The film is one of several practice-as-research projects I have undertaken since I joined Edinburgh Napier University. It is included in this PhD because I want this thesis to reflect the type of researcher I am: one who undertakes both conventional and practice-based methodologies. This film was a process of discovery for me, where I was able to explore interactive and participatory media forms by *creating* content and facing up to technological and narrative challenges myself. The film project was influenced by my traditional research

and my own professional background and a journalist and filmmaker. As such it is a hybrid artefact which combines TV industry production techniques with academic practice-based methodologies.

Blake, J. (2019) 'Simulating Experiences of Displacement and Migration: Developing Immersive and Interactive Media Forms Around Factual Narratives'. *International Journal of E-Politics* 10 (1), pp. 49–60.

The final output submitted for this PhD also derives from, and extends, research conducted for the book *Television and the Second Screen*. It is also informed by my own background as a producer and reporter for Channel 4 News where I specialised in covering news stories linked to migration and the experiences of people applying for asylum in the UK. The article comprises of four case studies of digital interactive projects on migration alongside qualitative interviews with producers, artists and filmmakers. In common with the article on second screen in the cinema, there is convergence around theories of gamification and user agency. The article highlights and analyses concerns expressed by media professionals about the shortcomings of conventional coverage of the refugee crisis. And it explores the creation of digital narratives *with choices* as a means of engendering active audiences and a feeling of empathy in users.

The structure of the critical analysis

It should be stated that none of these research projects was embarked on with the intention of it being part of a PhD submission. They were not written to explicitly complement each other or with the view to having a critical analysis read alongside them. The outputs, and the research, were designed to be able to stand alone without the need for further analysis. They came about because of my own abiding interest and enthusiasm about interactive media forms and a desire to undertake meaningful research as an academic.

The purpose of this critical analysis is not to undertake new research or extend the existing research outputs in any way. There is no scope to do that within the framework of a PhD by published works. Instead, this critical analysis is divided into four chapters: the first two

focus on the *significance, originality* and *impact* of the outputs, whilst the final two reflects on my position as researcher and the methodology itself:

1. **Significance and contribution to knowledge**

The first chapter explores the significance of the outputs in terms of their original contribution to knowledge. This is done by analysing the academic context of the work both before and after publication. This includes outlining how my work enhances understanding of industry motivations and practices by placing them within theoretical frameworks. The chapter describes how I have engaged with the academic community of researchers by presenting my work at conferences as well as exploring how others have responded to my work via citations and book reviews in academic journals.

2. **Impact and Knowledge Exchange**

This chapter explores the significance of my work outside the academic sphere by looking at the social impact of the research and its findings. This includes how I have proactively sought out opportunities for public engagement in debates around social media platforms, user distraction and growing concerns about personalised content, data, and privacy. Given the focus on social impact, much of this chapter discusses the dissemination of the *Our Future Scotland* film. As with many practice-based research projects, this had public engagement, together with social benefit, built into the project from the outset.

3. **Reflection on positionality**

Since joining Edinburgh Napier University in December 2009, I have continued to work as a producer and reporter in TV news – both at ITN in London and at STV in Scotland. I have considered this industry engagement to be beneficial to my work both as a university lecturer and as media researcher. However, does this assumption hold up? This chapter interrogates my own hybrid positionality as a scholar and as a journalist / media practitioner. The so-called 'insider status' has important implications for my research. Here,

I adopt autoethnographic approaches to investigate how my background has influenced both my traditional and practice-based research outputs.

4. Reflection on methodologies

The final chapter in this critical analysis investigates the mixed-methodological approaches across my research. For the printed outputs, this involves case study analysis and qualitative interviews. As a result, this chapter studies how academic and investigative journalism methods converge, and I reflect on my processes and assumptions as a researcher and media practitioner. I also explore the commonalities between traditional methodologies and practice-based techniques as I look back on the production process of the *Our Future Scotland* film project for the Scottish Parliament.

Chapter 2: Significance and Contribution to Knowledge

Introduction

The five years between 2013 and 2018 constituted a crucial juncture in the growth of social media together with changing patterns of TV viewership. During this time both mobile phones and digital televisions became 'ubiquitous' devices in the UK (Ofcom, 2018: 8). Such technological advances had focused, to a large extent, on facilitating user interaction and choice: from touchscreens to video streaming services. For the TV industry, it was a period of disruption which brought both opportunities and challenges for producers and broadcasters. The three print research publications which form the core of this PhD, explore and analyse the motivations and methods of screen-based content creators who sought different ways to interact with their viewers during these important years. Together these outputs study the effects of changing technologies, viewing habits and production innovation on the inter-relationship between television and mobile platforms. The practice-based research output, *Our Future Scotland*, explores the same themes of user engagement and digital interaction by means of a commissioned film project for the Scottish Parliament.

Original contribution to knowledge

The research for this PhD makes an original contribution to knowledge in a variety of different ways. In 2016, the notion of 'second screen' interaction was a relatively new concept even within the broadcasting industries and, as such, it had not yet been the subject of a significant number of academic papers. My monograph, *Television and the Second Screen*, is the first long-form study into this emerging media practice in the UK. The breadth and scale of the research makes it significant. Taken together, the published works include interviews and insights from more than 35 professionals working in media and creative industries. This has enabled a detailed and comparative analysis of innovation in digital participation across TV genres as well as TV and online advertising, sports fandom, gambling, and cinematic feature films.

The outputs are significant and original because they investigate the second screen within the context of the *evolution of interactivity* in television and film production. This sets the research apart from small industry-led studies into second screen interaction, which have been more focused on commercial effectiveness and narrative flow. Instead, the research for this PhD investigates broadcast industry experimentation and innovation by analysing digital interaction within theoretical frameworks. As a result, the published outputs make an original contribution to knowledge by exploring how media theories enhance our understanding of 'second screen' interaction. Conversely, they also demonstrate how industry innovation is prompting researchers to adapt and refine media theories around user agency, social participation, transmedia story-telling and narrative immersion.

In 2011, Deuze outlined a world where people are increasingly 'living in their own personal information space' (139). He is talking about the growth and personalisation of media consumption in general. However, within just a few years he could have been referring to one single device – the mobile smart phone - becoming the main conduit for an individual's information and entertainment needs. My research demonstrates that, by 2015, the proliferation and popularity of mobile devices was considered a threat by many working in television production. Mobile platforms both *multiplied* and *amplified* the escalating number of competitors for audience 'eyeball time' (Blake, 2017: 110). A few short years after digital TV heralded a proliferation of channels, TV programmes found themselves ranged against OTT streaming services, social media newsfeeds, youtube influencers and home-grown video content creators. My studies are significant because they demonstrate *how* and *why* this disruption applied to both mainstream and niche TV productions, long-form and short-form content, and across the wide scope of TV genres from factual, to drama, sports broadcasting and entertainment. It is part of the significance of the studies that I was able to contrast viewer interaction and narrative complexity in TV dramas with audience engagement in factual documentaries and TV news. Beyond this, for example, I was able to analyse the relatively closeted world of video advertising and compare this with the interactive nature of in-game betting and digital sports content. Such disruption continues to have both positive and negative outcomes across UK and EU broadcasting institutions and production companies as well as the individual TV producers, presenters

and reporters who had to contend with a new brand of digital celebrity and new methods of bonding with their audiences.

My research explores how the growing popularity of mobile platforms affords new opportunities for media industries: the chance to engage with audiences in different ways. Whilst it appears that some had to be dragged into this new landscape reluctantly, others embraced the moment to experiment at the vanguard of digital interaction. However, one of the important findings of my research outlines the fragmented nature of such experimentation. In many cases, such audience interaction was an after-thought, an add-on to the production process and outsourced to a small number of specialist digital agencies. Often those working on developing the 'second screen', were operating within silos and cautioned against sharing their work because of commercial considerations and the competitive nature of TV commissioning. As part of its contribution to knowledge, my research undertakes an analysis of innovation: highlighting and contrasting the aims, scope, and success-rate of a variety of screen-based projects during these significant years. It was a time when technological advances brought changes to narrative forms, professional workflows, newsgathering techniques, and production processes.

Television and the Second Screen

The Routledge book, *Television and the Second Screen* (Blake, 2016), was my first academic publication. It was published seven years after I started working as a lecturer in broadcast journalism, during which time I presented at academic conferences on TV news coverage and founded practice-based projects creating converged video content for online and mobile platforms. All activities which, on reflection, fed into my later research on interaction and participation.

I first became aware of the concept of Second Screen interaction whilst I was delivering Avid editing training at the First Train event at BBC Scotland in 2013. A member of the BBC Research and Development department told me how a small team was experimenting with creating content on mobile platforms designed to enhance concurrent TV viewing. At that stage, the concept was so nascent there was no agreed industry term for the activity. The BBC used both 'dual screen' and 'companion screen' to describe the work it was doing. At

this stage, some BBC staff members were writing about their R&D experiments on their blogs, but their focus was largely focused on the technical challenges of synchronising content on two screens at the same time.

Analysing the historical and theoretical context of interaction

It is significant that my research does not treat these 'Second Screen' experiments as new activities – but part of a wider history of innovation in audience engagement. One of the early chapters places the second screen within a chronology of TV interaction dates from early experiments in the 1950s, moves forwards to include VCRs and remote controls, explores how TV and gaming overlapped and cross-fertilised from the 1980s and takes a giant leap with the advent of the digital rollout after 2000. The research studies how other industry sectors – beyond broadcasting – had a crucial role in the process of technological and creative change. For example, the book has separate chapters which investigate the negative and positive impact of addressable advertising, sports and online in-game betting over 3 decades.

The book highlights how the *nature* and *process* of this experimentation differed between public service and commercial broadcasters. For the BBC, digital innovation has been part of its PSB remit since the middle of the 1990s. Interactive television was at the heart of the Corporation's drive for digital renewal in the new century. Under the title 'A revolution in learning' the 2004 charter renewal report stated that interactive TV would 'develop new personalised formal and informal learning opportunities for different audience groups'. (BBC, 2004: 13). The report quoted studies which claimed that 61% of users found that interactive tv services 'make watching programmes more enjoyable' (BBC, 2004: 52). In the years which followed, such ambitions were focused on Red Button services until industry priorities shifted again. My book outlines how the momentum and excitement around the Red Button was beginning to wane by 2014. At this stage, within the corporation, and elsewhere, the term 'interaction' became an outdated term with negative connotations. The reputation of BBC digital innovation had been bruised by the failure of 3D TV in 2012 and there were well-founded fears that interactive television would go down that same path. Out of all those I interviewed for the book the only people who refused permission for their

quotes to be used were two BBC staff members. Their reasons were simple: they did not know if the BBC was going to embrace the second screen or reject it and they did not want to end up on the wrong side of the debate. In the expensive aftermath of 3D TV and with the Red Button about to be cancelled, it was a sensitive time to be exploring digital innovation and future possibilities. My research outlines this complex picture for the development of BBC interactive services. At one stage it was at the forefront of second screen activity, but by 2015 the projects were kept at a distance from Red Button services and were overshadowed by investments in the BBC's new streaming and On Demand service - the BBC iPlayer. Second Screen interaction at the BBC ultimately stalled due to a cautious approach to social media and mobile platforms and a reluctance to compete with commercial rivals who were able to capitalise more on addressable advertising.

Reviews and citations for *Television and the Second Screen*

This industry analysis, underpinned by my research findings, is highlighted in two academic reviews for the book. In her review for the journal *Critical Studies in Television*, Girginova states: '*Television and the Second Screen*'s most valuable contribution lies in its detailed assessment of second screen initiatives and its industry insights across major broadcasters in the United Kingdom' (2017: 119). She continues: 'Blake highlights the unique role played by the BBC as the central, public service broadcaster in imagining and instituting interactivity' (2017: 119) The book is also reviewed by Dr Gareth Ivory in the *International Journal of Digital Television*. Ivory, a former Head of Audience Research at the Irish broadcaster RTÉ, states: 'a major strength of this work is that Blake has interviewed more than 25 individuals from across a range of related industries… this grounds the narrative in the realworld challenges facing those who seek to explore the potential of the second screen'. Ivory concludes his review: '*Television and the Second Screen* is a well-researched consideration of the fast-moving and converging broadcasting and technology sectors. It deserves to be read and mulled over by academics and industry professionals alike' (2017: 190).

It is my analysis of such 'realworld', industry challenges, across the range of TV genres, that has attracted the attention of a significant number of academic studies since its publication

in 2017. It is a revealing process, as a researcher, to explore how and why a publication has been cited by other academics. It is five years since the book was published and it is still regularly quoted by academic studies exploring interactive media, the nature of audience activity and changing tv viewing patterns. To date, Google Scholar lists more than 50 academic citations for the book. Many of these are recent research studies which investigate the evolving habits of *young* media consumers. For example, in exploring the shift of young viewers to TV streaming services and the motivations of users on *YouTube*, Sharma (2021) sums up my work: 'James Blake examines interactive television from three crucial angles: audience motivation and agency, advances in TV production and the monetisation of second screen content' (87). Chambers (2019) cites the book and my use of the term 'double attention' when researching the impact of the second screen on family viewing habits within a domestic setting. Brinson and Holiday (2021) cite the book in their study of interactive adverts aimed at children whilst Singh (2018) references my study of *Coronation Street Live* (Granada / ITV) in his analysis of the notion of 'event TV' aimed at teenage viewers. Amendola and Tirino cite the book in their Italian case study on 'post-millennials' and their concept of 'digital post-cinema' (2018: 151). These studies may come from different academic disciplines, but they share common ground in examining young people and digital engagement.

Beyond this, the broad scope of the book has enabled other relatively niche or specialist research projects to benefit from my study into second screen engagement. A number of citations also provide evidence that my research has been used to support research into the *technical* and computational challenges of interactivity. My study is quoted several times in the book *Contemporary Interfaces in the Media Ecosystem (trans)* which studies technical aspects of interactive experiments in Portuguese television (Cunha & Burgos, 2020). Another research study, focused on TV software, quotes my study as it explores the process of programming and developing TV companion apps (Marquioni, 2020).

Although the book primarily focuses on the UK television industry, it was always designed to explore interactive programmes and methods in a way that would be relevant to researchers, practice-based academics, and industry professionals from other countries. Sixto-Garcia (2021) cites the book in his study of Twitter backchannel use during political speeches and US Presidential debates – a second screen activity highlighted in my work and

which has become more prevalent since. My comparative analysis, which spans TV genres, also makes the research relevant for scholars exploring participation in news, entertainment, sports coverage, or drama. For example, the work has been cited by journal articles and book chapters on specific TV programme case studies from a number of countries, including China, Spain, Russia, Germany, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic.

One country – Brazil – merits particular mention because of the number and range of citations from studies based there. It stands out from the list as a place where my book appears to have had a significant influence. I would contend this is partly due to there being parallels between the Brazilian broadcasting industry and the UK – in terms of interactive ambitions and audience appetites. Studies exploring specific Brazilian TV dramas and entertainment shows and have used my work for comparison analysis. For example, in 2017, one study examined the commercial model around the *Superstar* TV show in Brazil (Screenz Cross Media) where the author, Marquioni, quotes my book on the nature interaction: 'Here we agree with an observation made by James Blake, according to which the ''Second screen' is better understood not as an object or a media device, but as an *experience'* (2017*).* Another Brazilian research paper used the telenovela drama *Dona Do Pedaco* (Rede Globo) as a case study and references by book to support their analysis *how* and *why* fans were engaging with the show in online discussions and via Twitter (Tietzmann et al., 2020).

Citations in sports and fandom research

Looking in more detail at these patterns of citations, sport is a key area where my outputs have had influence. One of my key research findings highlights the importance of large sporting events as a catalyst for media participation. In recent years, Brazil and the UK share common ground as both hosted the Olympics during crucial years of digital media transformation: London 2012 and Rio 2016. Innovation and experimentation in TV interaction has not been linear and gradual. Instead, my studies demonstrate that innovation can coalesce around particular social occasions or technological breakthroughs. In the UK, the Wimbledon coverage of 2001 and the 2012 Olympics are examples of these key moments where a heightened sense of community and identity facilitated new forms of media participation. My research also explored online fan engagement around the World

Cup in Brazil in 2014 and it was quoted in later studies on the topic (Marin-Montin, 2020). In Brazil, one legacy of the World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games is a broadcast industry and a viewership which is already active around creating and consuming interactive content – whether that be in sport, entertainment, news, or drama.

Academic research into the dynamics of fandom engagement in sport is a significant area where the analysis in *Television and the Second Screen* remains important and has been referenced a number of times. Hagen and Stauff (2021) refer to my book in their research article around cross-media usage and fandom during live sports events. Marin-Montin (2020) cites my work in his exploration of the second screen during live sports as 'broadening the dissemination of TV content and for making the role of viewers more participatory and interactive' (15). Gong studies the viewing habits of Chinese football fans and their use of WeChat and references my research around 'a social and participatory experience' representing a 'broader trend of media convergence' (2019).

Since *Television and the Second Screen* was published, specific apps and social media sites have changed as technologies improve and fans move from one platform to another. However, my research remains relevant as the themes of social bonding, hybrid content, user agency and distraction remain as important today as when the research was done 5 years ago.

The book states:

'The second screen is able to enhance and amplify … pre-existing passions and to be a focus for fan-based activity and communities. For broadcasters, content producers, sporting organisations, clubs, betting firms, advertisers, data-aggregators, and games companies; it is also a platform to monetise fan participation' (Blake, 2016: 130)

The structure and scope of the book enabled me to explore the vital notion of user agency across a range of interactive projects and platforms designed to engage with fandom. It is rare for digital marketing agencies and bookmakers to speak openly about their methods to academic researchers in the UK. Yet I was able to study the synergies between online gaming, the emergence of real-time gambling channels, and the impact of programmatic and addressable advertising across the sector.

Theoretical frameworks and industry contexts

In addition to exploring the historical and professional context of production, the book makes an original contribution to knowledge by analysing recent industry innovations within established theoretical frameworks. These have included the concepts of active and passive audiences and user agency, the impact of mobile interaction on para-social relationships as well as the changing notion of transmedia storytelling and evolving Uses and Gratifications theories.

Most of the industry professionals I interviewed were unaware of the background or detail of 'Uses and Gratifications' theories, but they did profess to have a clear idea about that their audiences *wanted*. One important aim, in employing mobile platforms, was to facilitate greater (and often real-time) interaction between audiences and TV personalities. In some cases, this meant that viewers could connect with writers, reporters, or producers to give them feedback or even influence the narratives and content of programmes. In other instances, users were able (and often encouraged) to use social media platforms to engage with presenters and celebrities directly.

My qualitative research approaches U&G from a different angle: studying the motivations of media creators and how well these have mapped onto the activities of TV and mobile audiences. My analysis explores how this evolving aspect of 'Social TV' had an impact on the perceived bond between viewers and on-screen personalities. This emerging audience activity disrupted established notions of a 'para-social relationship': characterised by interaction which is 'one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible of mutual development.' (Horton and Wohl, 1956: 215). The concept of 'agency' can have a variety of meanings and spans several academic disciplines: from healthcare to literature and immersion. It is within this arena that my research expands beyond traditional media theories and pulls in concepts traditionally rooted in gaming, advertising, and fandom. It explores interactive TV projects as mediated, cultural objects subject to social, psychological and institutional conditioning.

Within the context of video-based storytelling, all of my research outputs have been influenced by Murray's vision of *agency* as 'the satisfying power to take meaningful action

and see the results of our decisions and choices' (1997: 126) and explore whether such agency is real or illusory. It remains a fertile area for academic discussion and debate. As Ryan warns, interactive narratives can be 'chimeras' depending on 'what is expected of the user's participation' (2015: 235). McErlean introduces the concept of 'total agency' which, as an ideal, is never achieved within narrative forms. Instead, user agency is limited and necessarily fixed by the content creators: 'interactive narrative offers a pre-specified level of story agency or choice to the audience' (2018). The concept of user agency is at the core of my work and links all my outputs, both printed and practice-based.

Second Screen interaction in the cinema

The publication of *Television and the Second Screen* gave my research a conceptual foundation and momentum which I built upon in my other research. I had encountered second screen activity in the cinema during my work on the book, but such case studies existed in the periphery of my study and didn't fit in the remit of the monograph. Instead, I decided the topic was well suited to a stand-alone journal article. There is a long and chequered history of so-called interactive cinema dating back to the 1950s and 1960s which had been happening largely independently of similar innovation within TV – and yet the patterns which emerge are important. The article makes an original contribution to knowledge in the analysis of interviews with film directors and movie executives innovating with interaction in the cinema. In comparing my findings, I discovered that each informant had been grappling with the same practical challenges in different ways: significantly the problem of narrative flow and viewer distraction. As a result of these insights, and whilst rooted in the theme of user agency, the case studies analysed the intersection of immersion and interaction within cinematic narratives.

My article references academic texts that analyse how interactive elements within media texts actively inhibit immersion in the viewer (Ryan 2006, Murray 1997, Levi 2012). However, my research for *Television and the Second Screen*, demonstrates that a number of factual programmes and multimedia online projects developed interactive elements with the expressed intention of immersing the user within both scripted and unscripted TV programmes in the same way a video game player might be immersed within the narrative

of a game. Here the gamification of content is focused on the attempts by broadcasters to engage younger audiences in TV news and documentaries. My journal article on 'Second Screen in the Cinema' (Blake, 2018), explores the concept of immersion in far greater depth. Part of this process involved a taxonomy of the concept of immersion – special, temporal, emotional – and analysing qualitative data from industry interviewees based on this theoretical framework of immersion.

My journal article explores how directors and film companies have experimented with these themes in practice by creating 'enhanced content and narrative extension' (2017: 531). One of my case studies focuses on the interactive movie *Late Shift* (Weber, 2016) where I research how the film was constructed with multiple decision points and 'storytelling streams' all linking to a mobile app. As Engstrom states, 'authors need to comprehend the branching structure and the dynamics that emerge' (2019: 2). Creating a multitude of narrative branches and user decision points has always been at the heart of video game design. For film directors, however, it can equate to shooting and editing multiple movies in terms of the content required. There are also significant challenges in narrative flow, immersion, and audience distraction, not to mention the resistance to such projects by cinema chains and audiences alike. Overall, my research highlights how these various dynamics and production challenges compare across interactive projects in TV, Film, literature, and gaming.

Citations for Participations journal article

My research demonstrates that audience participation within cinematic narratives is rare: the films which I use as case studies are niche and specialist projects. Yet my research outputs, taken together, highlight commonalities between the aims and methods of producers and directors in both film and TV. The problem of distraction is more acute in the film industry where narratives are limited by an implicit code of audience behaviour in cinema. The articles which cite my journal study reflect this: Grundström investigates the impact interaction has on the personal cinematic experience and quotes my analysis of 'cinema etiquette' and 'cinema as the sacred space for immersive personal experiences' (2018: 20). Connected to this, other studies have referenced my work as they explore the

commercial implications of interaction. Behrens et al. cite the study describing how 'Academic research is being developed to conceptualize multi-screen usage and understand related consumer behavior' (2019: 197). Schulz explores the second screen within 'the motion picture value chain' and references my article to demonstrate how 'story-telling can be enhanced by including the audience in decisions and thereby eliminating the psychological distance between viewer and screen' (2021: 407). There have also been studies which have used my research to support their analysis of specific cultural activities within movie theatre spaces. This includes the growing practice of 'bullet screen' engagement in China (Wang, 2021) and layering images in animation films (Reinhuber, 2019). Dwyer references my study as she explores the evolution of haptic mechanisms and 'participatory auditorium effects' (2017: 574). In this way, she builds on my exploration of the 'second screen' within the realm of 'event cinema' which includes secret-cinema screenings, sing-a-long shows, and game-movie hybridity.

Migration, Displacement and 'The Other'

In the book *Television and the Second Screen*, there is a section which explores the mediatisation of the coverage of the refugee crisis within Europe. Whilst I was researching this, I became aware of several unique media initiatives designed to cover the migration crisis in a way which subverted established narrative conventions in TV news. However, these interactive stories didn't fit within the concept of the 'second screen' mould and so it evolved into a separate research project itself after the book was published. This journal article explores the limitations of traditional techniques of TV news reporting to properly convey the personal stories and experiences of refugees. Such conventions can distort the reality of the crisis by visually framing refugees into a growing stereotype: crowds of tens of thousands of 'other' people on the move into Europe. These problematic depictions, as Aiello and Parry state, illustrate the 'reification and flattening out' of group or ethnic identities 'often appearing as the 'enemy'' (2020: 91). My research highlights how some working in the media industries were increasingly attuned to these issues and devised interactive digital projects to seek a solution.

For my journal article, *Simulating Experiences of Displacement and Migration*, I researched four cases studies: all digital narratives which sought to cover the refugee crisis in unique ways. On the surface, the case studies were diverse: a virtual reality film, digital artwork and online gamification projects. However, in each case, my research shows how these projects were focused on creating experiences of empathy and understanding by means of interactive media. The significance of this research is based on my comparative analysis of the industry responses as well as the content of the projects themselves. My interviews with filmmakers, journalists and artists demonstrate a commonality in their aims and motivations: 'in all these case studies, interactive and immersive tools were adopted in conjunction with traditional forms to provide a depth of emotional and psychological understanding with the plight of refugees' (Blake, 2019: 53).

Academic conferences and events

The mediatisation of migration and the coverage of the refugee crisis remains a vital issue in Europe and across the world. Certainly, in the UK, such TV coverage continues to influence the political debates on immigration policy and our relationship with the European Union. As an academic, my research has a relevance and significance across a number of disciplines beyond media studies: including politics, sociology and social ethnography. For example, in the spring of 2021, I was contacted by a sociology professor from the University of Newcastle in Australia who was in the process of setting up an online course in migration and was planning to include my journal article in the syllabus. His taught programme will study the representation of refugees in mass media and the impact of new forms of transmedia storytelling.

My research does not exist in isolation. Much of its significance rests in being part of a wider academic and social debate – beyond the confines of a citations and text references. Part of this has involved the dissemination of the work as well as seeking opportunities to engage with academic events, screenings, and conferences during all phases of the research process. In the autumn of 2016, in the early stages of my research into migration, the German Die Junge Akademie invited me to take part in a symposium in Leipzig titled: 'The fascination with the unknown: The Other'. The three-day event brought together creative

practitioners and industry leaders to work alongside experienced academics and early career researchers from across Europe. It was a forum of interdisciplinarity which made me feel part of a wider community of researchers and practitioners who were examining 'the other' across a variety of disciplines: from computer programming (Engelen, 2018) and psychology (Breithaupt, 2018). At the event, I participated in seminars and workshops where I shared my early-stage analysis into how interactive digital media projects were designed to engender a feeling (beyond sympathy) for the experiences of refugees. It proved to be important and formative in the development of my research work and enabled me to view and understand the refugee crisis from the perspectives of people from other countries. Notably, a significant number of European academics had a very negative opinion of traditional media coverage of the migration crisis – particularly the UK press. As the only person with journalism experience at the symposium, I was able to provide an insight into the aims, pressures and working agendas of TV reporters. The conference, which acted as a real-time peer-review process and prompted me to put the notion of 'the other' at the heart of my research into migration.

Three months after the symposium event in Leipzig, I presented a paper at the UK MeCCSA conference at Leeds University titled 'Simulating Experiences of Displacement'. Shortly after the Leeds conference, I was invited to present my migration research at the Centre for Participatory Culture in Huddersfield in April 2017. Both important events in the development of the research article. My work in media and migration has enabled me to join different interdisciplinary research communities and take part in academic events in Scotland. Since 2017 I have been an active member of the Migration and Mobilities Research Network (MMRN) in Edinburgh where I help organise their annual symposium. As a member of the leadership team of the RSE Young Academy of Scotland, I was involved in organising the 'Refugees / At Risk' scheme which supported academic refugee colleagues to join YAS and work at Universities in the UK.

Our Future Scotland: Practice-as-research

In addition to migration, I have also actively involved myself within academic communities of practice-based researchers – in Edinburgh and, notably, the MeCCSA Practice Network.

Conducting media practice remains an important part of my identity and activity as a researcher. It is something which is intrinsically connected to my more traditional research methodologies: a by being a locus for practical experimentation, reflection and professional engagement with the media industries and production processes. For me, practice-based research presents a way of investigating participation and media production by *doing*. The *Our Future Scotland* film and online project is an example of this. It was commissioned by the Scotland's Futures Forum to engage citizens with the long-term policy-making process at the Scottish Parliament. However, investigating the *significance* of such practice-based work is complex. Candy states that whilst the significance of practice-based projects can be 'described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes' (2006). On this basis, part of the film's significance rests in the outcome of the project itself - how successfully it contributed to the Scottish Parliament initiative as well as the numbers involved in viewing and contributing to the video and online content. The legacy of the film is important in this context. All these aspects can be measured in the *impact* of the project which is discussed in depth later in this critical analysis.

Beyond the notion of impact, Candy suggests that practice-led projects 'lead to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice' (2006). In one important sense, all of my research outputs are doing this: exploring the nature and means of interactive production to create new knowledge and understanding with 'operational significance'. For the *Our Future Scotland* film, this includes the practice methodology I adopted and the production process itself. To this end, I have sought opportunities to discuss my practice-based methods to academic audiences. I presented a talk about the *Our Future Scotland* film project at the 2018 Media Education Summit and showed key sections of the video and online pages. Based in Hong Kong, it was a conference dominated by debates around press independence, state influence and bias. My presentation and film prompted a lively discussion on the creation of effective video content for online audiences and the notion of citizen participation as a means of democratising media platforms – which provided an important and timely dimension to the wider conference theme of censorship and media freedom.

'Second Screen' in the UK in 2022

As this critical analysis demonstrates, my published research has mostly focused on the production of 'second screen' and interactive content during six crucial years after 2014. However, this thesis also presents an opportunity for an audit and analysis of what has happened to the interplay between television and mobile devices since my book and journal articles were published.

It is a mixed picture. In many ways, during the past four years, the notion of the 'second screen' has diminished as a force for user engagement and innovation within the UK television industry. There are several reasons for this. The growing dominance of streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney Plus have forced UK terrestrial broadcasters to grow and enhance their own On Demand digital platforms including BBC's iPlayer, the ITV Hub and All4. My book highlights how the BBC was already moving away from the second screen to do this as early as 2016, and that trend has continued to date. At the same time, viewing habits coupled with technological advances mean that many interactive productions *no longer require* an additional interface to foster audience engagement. As a second device has become increasingly redundant, the term 'second screen' has become outdated for many in the UK TV and digital industries. However, this does not mean that interactive TV has become less important to viewers, users, or content creators. As my book outlines, interactive television has a chequered history where the scope of audience activity – and production processes – has been constantly evolving across the TV genres. The key themes raised by my research - user agency, immersion, distraction, and the nature of narrative interaction – are even more relevant today.

Entertainment

Looking back, in many respects, 2018 can be seen as a growth year for second screen projects. My research demonstrates how digital engagement and community building among viewers, can coalesce around large cultural and sporting events. In 2018 the British Olympic Association launched a new Team GB app for viewers to use whilst they were watching coverage of the Winter Olympics. ITV expanded its suite of companion apps with *Dancing on Ice* (ITV, 2006 -) and *Survival of the Fittest* (ITV, 2018). In the same year, Simon

Cowell's Syco Entertainment company added new second screen apps to *The X Factor Denmark* and *Denmark's Got Talent* (TV2, 2014 -). However, after a steady decline in ratings, 2018 was also the last broadcast of *The X Factor* in Britain before the show was suspended indefinitely. With it went an exemplar of second screen audience engagement and the successful monetisation of interaction. What a difference three years makes. In 2015, Kat Hebden, managing director of Shotglass Media, described the programme as "arguably the biggest multiplatform show in the world. We are the most tweeted about show on Twitter and the biggest entertainment brand based on reach and branded content" (Blake, 2017: 57). *Britain's Got Talent* (ITV, 2007 -) still remains a key element of Saturday night entertainment viewing in the UK and returned in 2022 after a brief hiatus during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, on the first night of the live show in April, presenters Ant and Dec announced to viewers that the companion app had been scrapped and viewers should go online or scan a QR code if they wanted to vote in the show. It is a decision that ITV has still not explained and has left some fans puzzled.

In the autumn of 2022, three ITV entertainment and lifestyle shows operate integrated second screen mobile apps: *Love Island* (ITV, 2005 -); *I'm a Celebrity… Get Me Out of Here!* (ITV, 2002 -) and a companion app for its lifestyle show *This Morning* (ITV, 1988 -). Compared with earlier versions of ITV second screen apps, there are fewer synchronised elements designed to be used in real time during a programme. In general, the three apps are repositories for enhanced content – clips of 'best bits', quizzes and character profiles – intended to be viewed outside of the programme itself. The *This Morning* app also has information on helplines for viewers who have been affected by issues raised in the programme. It should be stated that the entertainment apps do have a tab to enable users to vote for contestants. However, the *Love Island* voting button launches an internet browser and the ITV programme site. Voting no longer happens within the app and nor does the social engagement of fans. Those backchannels of comment and discussion happen on other established social media sites.

Drama and scripted production

There is evidence, over the past four years, that some drama productions have also moved away from the second screen as a way of engaging with viewers. As my research demonstrates, the combined issues of cost, user distraction and the quest for narrative immersion has been a constant challenge for the creators of scripted content. In the UK, neither Eastenders nor Coronation Street have repeated their Second Screen 'Live!' 2015 programmes which are described in detail in my book. In many respects, 2015 appears to be the heyday of second screen projects in soaps and drama production. The US Media giant AMC is a case in point. In 2015, it was promoting a two-screen "live, interactive experience" for both *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2003-2022) and *Better Call Saul* (AMC, 2015 -) in which an innovation called 'Story Sync' enabled users 'to weigh in' and engage around characters and plot lines (AMC, 2015). Yet, despite this early promise and promotion, by 2019 AMC had quietly scrapped second screen apps across its drama shows.

Despite this move away from companion apps and conventional, second screen projects in TV drama, this does not mean that directors stopped experimenting with the possibility of interactive narratives. In August 2022, the global streaming provider Netflix was hosting 21 so-called 'interactive' programmes on its UK platform. Fourteen of these were aimed at children, five were lifestyle shows and two were comedy programmes or dramas. Both of these adult dramas, *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* (Netflix, 2018) and *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Kimmy versus the Reverend,* were created in the mould of the film *Late Shift* – with multiple branching narratives and audience decision points in the film. The main difference is, with the growing prevalence of Smart TVs and media viewing habits using mobile as a primary screen, these interactive dramas *did not require an additional device* as an interface for audience interaction. Yet the main themes raised by my research, around distraction, user agency and the nature of user control (real or illusory), remain central. For example, the drama *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* has recently prompted scholars to study the impact of interaction on narrative flow and immersion. According to Rezk and Haahr, "it must be considered that increased agency through increased interaction could potentially lead to a decrease in the narrative momentum" (2022). Other studies have explored how viewers reacted to the interactive experience. Nee (2012) studied real-time Twitter engagement during *Bandersnatch* and discovered "tweets also contained a high degree of anxiety and

stress because of the dark and violent consequences of their choices. Users questioned whether they were making the 'right' decisions" (p. 1499).

In the interactive edition of *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, the main character encounters the man who kidnapped and imprisoned her. As a result, despite this being a comedy, the viewer is required to make some sensitive and difficult choices. In some respects, this raises similar issues as my own analysis of interactive projects in migration and displacement, where the "development of user agency within simulated narratives" was a means to "fostering empathy and shared understanding" (Blake, 2019: 51). According to Patrick (2021) the decision points in *Kimmy Schmidt* represent a "call-to-action to fans and implicating the audience as both spectators and witnesses to injustices of systemic violence against women" (p. 30) and does "introduce new possibilities for the ways in which sexual violence is represented and experienced through the media" (p. 38).

Amazon Prime, one of the main rivals to Netflix, does not advertise the same quantity of interactive dramas on its main streaming service. Instead, Amazon promotes different types of audience activity and interaction through the *Twitch* platform which it purchased for $970 million in 2014. *Twitch* started life as an online site which enabled gamers to live-stream their play and for users to comment on the stream in real time. The online nature of Twitch means that *no second screen is necessary* for engagement. Beyond gaming, producers have started using the platform to create large-scale interactive dramas. *Artificial* (Twitch, 2018 -) is the most notable of these. Created by director Bernie Su in the summer of 2018, the narrative follows Sophie Lin, an Artificially Intelligent being who desperately wants to be a real person. However, unlike the Netflix programmes, *Artificial* was not designed as a singular, individual experience. Instead, it promotes the notion of community interaction. Users align with characters and vote in real time polls at key decision points. This shares aspects of the original cinematic screenings of *The Late Shift* where audiences would use a second screen to input choices and the narrative would follow the majority decision. Like *The Late Shift*, it is "an experiment in collective decision making and group dynamics" (Blake, 2018: 530).

Artificial and the Twitch platform also enable more ambitious interactive opportunities. For example, users can ask questions of characters (which are answered in real time during the show) and suggest plot lines (which are often enacted). One recent academic study into the effects of such interaction on Twitch, examined pupil dilation and heart rates of users. Juvrud et al. conclude there is evidence that "adding an element of control significantly increases levels of arousal" (2022: 315). *Artificial* recently completed its fourth season and won an International Emmy award for best innovation in 2019.

Monetisation

This growth in the possibilities of interactive storytelling has, inevitably, afforded new opportunities for monetisation around social engagement. For example, viewers on Twitch can purchase 'Twitch Bits' which will promote and amplify their comments on screen. *YouTube* has developed a similar service with 'SuperChat' and 'Super Stickers': the more a user pays the longer their message stays in a prime location on the video feed. However, *YouTube* found it difficult to encourage such engagement for its Smart TV viewers. The TV / online interface – via remote control – is cumbersome and time consuming. As a result, in June 2022, YouTube launched a new mobile app which synchronises phones with YouTube channels on Smart TVs. Notably, *YouTube* doesn't call it a 'second screen' app in the promotion material – but it bears all the hallmarks of second screen interaction. The company blog from June 2022 states:

"Now your phone will be synchronized to the TV, so you can directly interact with the video you are watching from the convenience of your phone. That means it's easier than ever to read video descriptions, leave comments, share the video with a friend, or support your favourite creators by sending a Super Chat or becoming a member, all while you watch on the big screen." (Evans, 2022)

The companion apps for ITV shows - *Love Island*, *I'm a Celebrity*.. and *This Morning* - all contain tabs to 'shop the show' with links to purchase products highlighted in the programmes. The *This Morning* app includes tabs to 'Get the Look' with links to beauty products and clothes featured in fashion segments on the programme. It is not just entertainment and lifestyle shows that have utilised audience interaction to boost the

commercial opportunities of product placement. In *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* some of the earliest decision points require viewers to choose between cereal brands or music. Such choices don't have an impact on the narrative of the drama but do change cosmetic elements like the background and audio design. Netflix tracks such individual preferences and feeds the data into its own algorithms on customer profiles. As Elnahla states, such interaction "has led to increasingly exposing the viewers to more covert and carefully integrated advertising, blurring the line between television content and marketing message" (2019: 508).

The past five years have been turbulent for second screen projects across UK TV production. Yet my research demonstrates that the second screen occupies an important place, at a critical juncture, in the evolution of interactive TV. It was a time when TV producers seized the opportunities of audience social activity and commercial broadcasters, in particular, embraced the potential of monetising such engagement. This remains a key feature and motivation for the fostering of user interaction across TV genres in 2022, even if some broadcasters have moved away from synchronised content. The second screen also enabled film and TV drama directors to experiment with interactive, scripted narratives and this ambition has continued and expanded to this day. Since 2019, changing digital technologies and viewing habits have meant that many interactive projects no longer require a separate mobile platform to host real time engagement. As a result, over the past few years the term 'second screen' has become viewed, in some quarters of the industry, as outdated. Yet, the second screen set the stage for the recent growth and innovations in video-based interaction and, whilst changing and adapting to the industry itself, the second screen remains a key feature in the going endeavour to bring conventional TV viewing together with the possibilities of digital and mobile engagement.

Conclusion

Since these four outputs were published, I have been asked by Routledge publishers to review and comment on book proposals in the field of television and journalism. I have also been approached by a growing number of academic journals to act as a peer reviewer. I

believe this is a measure of the relevance of my work and my reputation as a researcher. To date these include: *Participations Journal*; *Media, War and Conflict*; *Media and Communication* and *Television and New Media*. Most of the articles I review have adopted a variety of methodologies to investigate forms of digital participation and visual storytelling. Many reference the influence of the 'second screen' as a crucial stage in the development of interactive production techniques.

My research connects a variety of academic disciplines: from film studies to TV production methods, from digital transmedia to gaming research and advertising. In taking this approach, I have been able to reveal rare industry insights and analyse the motivations of media professionals. One of the most significant aspects of my research, is that it presents a comparative analysis of innovation during a crucial period in broadcasting: highlighting and contrasting the scope and success-rate of a variety of interactive media projects. It was a time when technological disruption forced changes to narrative forms, professional workflows, newsgathering techniques, and production processes – changes which remain relevant and important today.

Chapter 3: Impact and Knowledge Exchange

Introduction

The significance of my research extends beyond an original contribution to knowledge within the academic sphere. It is important to me that my work reaches and benefits a wider audience. This requires strategies for the dissemination of research findings beyond peer reviewed journals, books, and academic conferences. To foster social and cultural impact, I have sought out partnerships and collaborations where I can put *my research to use*. This has involved joining or creating communities of interested stakeholders to share my methods and research analyses with. This activity is focused on facilitating understanding and encouraging debate around interactive media and the broadcasting sector. To an extent, I have utilised some of my existing networks to do this – across industry, policymaking, the arts-sector, and academia.

'Second Screen' interaction and Knowledge Exchange

Since I joined Edinburgh Napier University, I have built a profile as a media researcher and commentator. This has been useful as a bridge between my journalism work and to affirm my current identity as an academic and scholar. The process has helped to hone by research expertise and has provided me with a platform to share my research interests including digital interaction and the media coverage of migration. For example, this happened before my book was published when I was invited on the BBC's Good Morning Scotland radio show with the author Ahmed Rashid to talk about the implications of Taliban rule on refugee numbers from Afghanistan in 2013. I've written for *The Conversation* website on the changing face of public service broadcasting in my article reviewing the McTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh TV Festival in 2015. After the publication of my journal article 'Second Screen interaction in the Cinema', I was invited to take part in an episode of the Cinematologists podcast where I discussed how the themes and theories of TV participation could be adapted when exploring experiments in cinematic filmmaking (Cinematologists podcast, 2018).

The years following the publication of my book have been tumultuous ones for media coverage on television and on social media platforms in Europe and North America. The timing of publication meant that I was only just able to include a description of the Facebook Live debates around the UK referendum campaign over membership of the European Union in 2016. I encouraged my publishers to extend the print deadline a little to enable me to include some of the social media momentum around Donald Trump as a Presidential candidate. However, the final draft had to be submitted in the summer of 2016, therefore there was no scope to include the significant digital backlash that followed President Trump's election in November and following his inauguration. Yet these global events and the nature of the digital media coverage surrounding them, demonstrate the relevance and importance of the research and key themes which underpin *Television and the Second Screen.* I have sought out opportunities to share my research at public events, and to wider audiences, to amplify the impact of the work. For example, shortly after the book was published, in April 2017, I was invited to host an event at the Edinburgh International Science Festival around the topic of 'Connected TV' – a public engagement panel talk which pulled together key elements of my academic research and TV practice. My talk focused on recent issues around mobile platforms as 'devices of distraction' and concerns around children's screen-time, binge-watching and media addiction.

I have also engaged in debates around the dangers of growing media personalisation particularly around political messaging and perception bias on social media. The *Conversation* published another of my articles on the commercial implications of addressable advertising (Blake, 2015). This was written after I had completed the majority of the interviews for my book and drew upon my research findings on the recent use of 'dynamic ad insertion' on digital TV platforms. It highlights my analysis on the possibilities of personalised advertising and the need for increased awareness of data and privacy issues across interactive platforms. In 2019, based on my published research, I was interviewed by *Wired Magazine* as a specialist on the dangers and opportunities of addressable TV advertising. In the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, amid concerns around personal data, privacy, and political marketing, I am quoted: 'We need to be aware of the risks because TV adverts can be hugely powerful, and we don't want political campaigns and parties to misuse that.' My comments tackled the problem of confirmation bias in online

environments and the resultant damage to political plurality. I am quoted: 'There is a danger that you end up in a bubble of like-minded people with like-minded messages, and don't get exposed to sentiments on the other side.' (Kobie, 2019). At first sight, my research into second screen interaction may seem like a relatively specialist area for media analysis. However, five years after publication, the topic remains relevant to a number important public debates.

Engaging with policy makers

The notion of impact as *useful research*, goes beyond fostering and taking part in public discussions around TV production and digital platforms. As an academic, I have sought opportunities to engage directly with creative industry bodies and policy makers in the field of TV and journalism. For example, in 2013, I was invited to take part in a committee meeting at Edinburgh City Council to comment on its strategies to bolster TV and film production in the Scottish capital. My research has also enabled me to engage in policy debates about the future of the BBC and its funding model. One chapter of my book, focusing on factual TV and public service broadcasting, highlights the importance of digital innovation in the BBC Charter Renewal agreement in 2006. My analysis remained significant, nine years later, when the negotiations about the license fee resurfaced again. In 2015, whilst researching the book, I gave evidence to the BBC Audience Council in Scotland, on the theme of devolved broadcasting and the complex issue of a Scottish identity in broadcasting after the 2014 Independence Referendum. At this hearing, I was able to provide an analysis on the provision of news in Scotland, the notion of a 'Scottish Six' news bulletin, and the BBC's digital engagement strategy north of the border.

In the same year, I was invited to join the RSE Working Group on UK Broadcasting which was formally responding to the nationwide consultation for the BBC Charter Renewal process. The small group was chaired by the former Controller of BBC Scotland John McCormick FRSE and included other former BBC department heads. Over the following months, aware of my study into TV and digital platforms, the working group asked me to write a research discussion paper on the BBCs digital engagement strategy. Based on my existing academic research, I was able to brief the group about the impact of the iPlayer and Red Button

Services within the context of public service broadcasting, digital streaming services and the growing gulf with commercial broadcasters around audience interaction. My work had direct input into the final RSE Advice Paper, which highlighted digital engagement as an area of concern and stated: 'the organisation must ensure that it keeps up with advances and is not left behind by its commercial rivals. Currently the BBC spends £201m on BBC Online and Red Button services, compared to £653m on radio and £2.4bn on television'. Section 15 of the same document reads: 'The BBC should be encouraged to undertake a radical review of its portfolio of services across the board. This is an opportunity for streamlining and for the BBC to restate its priority for each service and define their public and social purposes' (RSE Advice Paper, 2015). As a member of the RSE working group, I was able to bring my research directly to senior broadcasting and BBC figures and feed into policy documents on the consultation on the future of the Corporation.

Impact and practice-based research

My printed research studies have a symbiotic relationship with my practice-based screen work. Both have a reciprocal influence on each other. Gaining a greater understanding of industry production methods, and the motivations behind interactive projects, has altered how I approach practice-based visual storytelling and content creation for online platforms. Conversely, the act of engaging in practice-as-research has informed my printed outputs by giving me insights into the challenges of recent technologies, and the process of video production and digital interaction. The *Our Future Scotland* film did not emerge in isolation, instead it followed similar projects which share important hallmarks: they were all transmedia collaborations with external partners, where tailored video-based content was created to engage specific audiences on digital and mobile platforms. My past projects include the '*Festival Backstage'* website which was a collaboration with Standard Life Bank and the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) in 2011 and 2012. The following year I managed the transmedia digital project for the site-specific play, 'Leaving Planet Earth' which had been commissioned by the EIF. This project involved creating specific video content to extend the narrative before, during and after the project itself.

These practice-based projects I've been involved in at Edinburgh Napier University, have had *social* or *cultural impact* at their heart. The *Our Future Scotland* film became part of an Impact Case Study for the Edinburgh Napier University REF21 submission into Unit of Assessment 34. Both outputs - *Television and the Second Screen* and the *Participations* journal article - are listed as underpinning research for this case study. According to the REF guidelines, impact is defined as 'an effect on, change or benefit to: the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.' (REF, 2019 : 68). *Our Future Scotland* demonstrates impact both in terms of the *process* of production itself and in contributing to a change in *awareness* and *attitude* in the audiences of the film and the participants of the wider digital project.

For many practice-led video research projects and participatory films, dissemination and audience engagement are essential parts of the production process and the significance of the artefact itself. In 2015, I pitched the notion of a short film and social media campaign to the Scotland's Futures Forum (SFF) based at the Scottish Parliament. The initiative became a central part of the SFF 2030 Project, and I was awarded funding from both the RSE and Edinburgh Napier University to expand the scope of the practice-based project. Given the nature of the film and the agreement with the Scotland Future's Forum, my plans for dissemination had to fit in with the schedule of screenings and events for the Parliament's 2030 initiative. As a result, the public engagement aspect of the project is less structured around working with specific audiences, data collection and contributor feedback than other practice-led research projects. On reflection, this is one of the learning points that I will take away from the project. Collaborations of this type require compromises on both sides in aims and outcomes. There were challenges here, but the benefits of working with a public organisation like the Scotland's Futures Forum are many: access to policy makers and audiences, the profile of the Scottish Parliament, and the impact of being part of a wider national policy initiative. As a measure of the success of *Our Future Scotland* itself, in meeting the aims of the Scottish Parliament 2030 project, the SFF submitted this testimonial for the REF21 Impact Case Study submission:

> ‘The Our Future Scotland film has been an excellent way to engage people from lots of different backgrounds in discussions about Scotland’s long-term future.
> We’ve shown the film as a way of opening discussions at a variety of events… At each event, the film has set the framework for challenging and deep discussions. It can often be hard for people discussing the future to leave their current preoccupations behind; this film has been brilliant in bringing everyone in the room to the same stage of thoughtful interaction on the future.’
>
> *Rob Littlejohn, Head of Business, Scotland’s Futures Forum, 2021.*

Screenings and dissemination

With the agreement of the SFF, I produced the *Our Future Scotland* film to be flexible so that it could be screened at different events, used as a trigger for different real-world discussions and *reframed* for online and social media audiences. It was not intended to be a definitive guide to the future of Scotland, but rather a starting point for debate: a launchpad for wider engagement which started immediately after the film ended and continued online. This aim is common with other practice-as-research video-based projects. For example, McLaughlin’s Armagh Stories project filmed and interviewed a variety of people who had passed through the gates of Armagh Gaol in Northern Ireland: prisoners, prison staff, teachers and the chaplain. ‘Our aim is not just to produce the work’ McLaughlin states, ‘but to have it used – directly and indirectly – as starting points for the sharing of experiences and ideas and the questioning of normative narratives by communities most affected by the violence’. (McLaughlin, 2017: 679). As MacLeod observed after showing her Govan-based community film *You Play Your Part*, the resulting discussions ‘offered new perspectives on the apparently familiar’ (2015: 509).

Our Future Scotland was first screened at a full public event at the Scottish Parliament in May 2018 with 80 people in the audience, including MSPs and civil servants. Following this first launch event, there have been other public screenings across Scotland where the film, and the issues it raises, have been discussed. I organised some of these events, whilst others by the Scotland’s Futures Forum as part of the wider 2030 initiative. This reflects the diverse aims behind the project as both a piece of research and an initiative of the Scottish

Parliament itself. One event I arranged, involved an invited audience of academics and Scottish Government civil servants at the Engine Shed in Stirling: Scotland's first building conservation hub at Historic Scotland. The screening was followed by a panel discussion with advisors from the Scottish Government's environmental team who were exploring Scotland's long term environmental targets. The environment is a key theme in the film with contributions from the renewables industries, Rewilding Scotland, tidal energy firms and the Oil and Gas sector. I also showed the film to a gathering of European Young Academy representatives who were meeting in Amsterdam in March 2018. The overall theme of the meeting was around how the Young Academy network could work together to meet some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The film was particularly useful in sparking discussion around shared environmental goals and cross-national education. Another screening I organised was in 2019, when the film was shown as part of an RSE public event focused on the likely social impact of emerging future technologies. I led a panel debate after this screening which also included themes from my other research: interactive TV and the limits and excesses of addressable advertising.

Where separate screenings were organised by the Scotland's Futures Forum, I discussed with the SFF team how the film might be used and what discussion points would come of the back of it. In some cases, this involved a small refashioning and reedit of the film to highlight specific regional issues. These included a screening at Aberdeen University, in May 2018, to discuss the economic and environmental challenges specific to the Northeast of Scotland. In April 2019, the Scotland's Futures Forum also selected *Our Future Scotland* to be shown to a transnational policy working group at the Scottish Parliament during the visit of the International Panel on Climate Change. The SFF brought the film back to the Scottish Parliament as part of its birthday celebrations in the summer of 2019.

Audience engagement

As this range of events show, the film project was designed to be flexible and adaptable so it could be shown to a variety of audiences, in different geographical locations, and would spark engagement around a range of related issues: from energy provision to economics and the environment. It was a central element of the Scotland 2030 project that the

screenings were used to foster citizen participation by gathering opinions of a future Scottish society. In the early screenings, I decided that audience members would be asked to share their visions of the future by using postcards, designed by a member of the SFF team, that were left on each chair in the audience (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Front cover of OFS postcard

From the postcards submitted after the first event at the Parliament in May 2018, about a half of the written messages expressed concerns about the future (see example in figure 3). The film covers a wide spectrum of issues and, unsurprisingly, the public comments cover a lot of ground too. A number discussed anxiety over the future of the National Health Service including a push for 'decentralisation away from big hospitals' and the need to support 'core mental health services' in particular. There was a widespread demand for 'ambitious and courageous policies' with a global dimension to Scotland's ambitions. Writing about the impact of Brexit, another audience member said that Scotland must 'remain an open, outward looking nation, one that is willing to embrace new ideas'. Some audience members used the opportunity to highlight specific regional challenges. For example, one suggested Scotland 'repopulates the Hebrides by supporting local buyouts' another called for the protection of Scotland's coastline, rivers and wilderness areas.

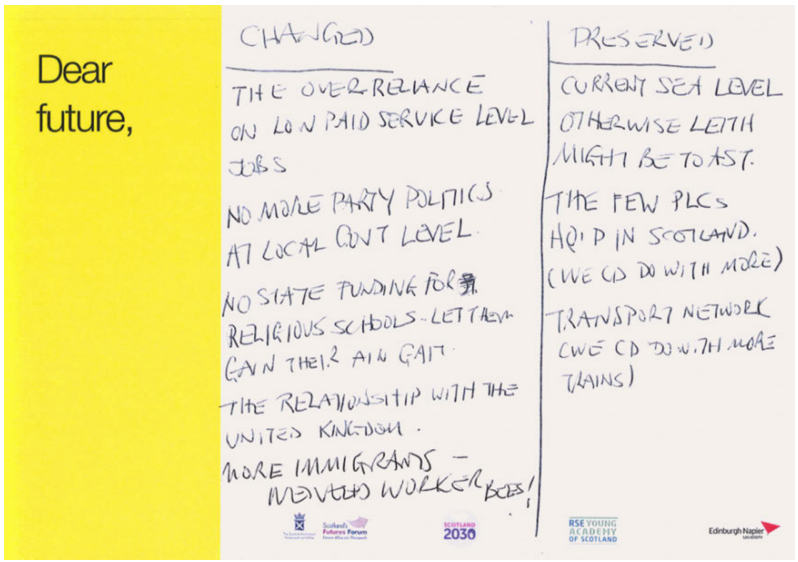

Figure 3: Example postcard following the Screening of the film in Aberdeen in May 2018

Across the scope of audience responses, I found there was a notable lack of comments about technological innovation. For example, no one enthused about the opportunities afforded by driverless cars, transport drones or holographic personal trainers even though such technologies were featured in the film. Perhaps this is a positive outcome from the balanced narrative of the film itself - that the discussions didn't lapse into the stereotypical futurology territory dominated by radical technologies. One postcard warned against 'losing the vital human touch' as technology dominates our lives. Whilst another commented that we must 'stop obsessing about 'the digital revolution''. One audience member saw a chance to admonish the parliament itself: 'The Scottish Parliament desperately needs to be bolder in its aspirations, and not reduce itself or its vision to simply the legislation it can pass. Some bold statements of principle which could guide future policy development would be good – not everything has to be reactive'. Another articulated one of the central tenets of the Scotland 2030 programme: 'this can't just be for industry and politicians to decide. Everyone needs to be encouraged to play their part in imagining the future'. It is one of the strengths of the film project that it has endured and screened at events for more than 18 months and it remains relevant for different audiences as a way of priming different public debates about the future.

Social Media and online content

Public screenings, panel debates, and audience discussions were one dimension of the *Our Future Scotland* engagement strategy. From the beginning, I designed the film as the core element in a mosaic of digital material created to engage audiences over time and across online and social media platforms. In addition to postcards, at each film screening audience members were encouraged to leave comments and feedback via Twitter using the hashtag #OurFutureScotland. A selection of tweets show the reaction of people in the audience and on the discussion panels, including academics, industry figures, research scientists, and politicians (figures 4 – 9).

Figure 4: Tweet from Ken Macintosh MSP, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament.

Figure 5: Tweet from Maggie Chapman, Co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party.

Figure 6: Tweet from Christina McKelvie MSP, Convener of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee.

Figure 7: Tweet from Professor Sethu Vijayakumar, Director: Edinburgh Centre for Robotics

Figure 8: Tweet from Dr Silvia Paracchini, Researcher in genetics at the University of St Andrews.

Figure 9: Tweet from Louise Macdonald, CEO Young Scot Organistion

It is difficult to measure political impact in terms of concrete benefits and social changes. At the 2018 Scottish Parliament screening, a small number of MSPs approached me and asked to be filmed expressing their ideas on the future. Encouraging such participation was a central element of the project. However, it did introduce some sensitive issues as balance had to be preserved and I did not want the platform to become a site for political grandstanding and point-scoring. As a result, I moderated and edited each of these contributions from MSPs but, in the end, very few changes had to be made. The politicians seemed to understand and appreciate the scope and nature of the project. Their contribution, which joined the online content, showed a willingness to engage with the ideas expressed in the film. All of these Tweets show a desire - even among politicians - to be included in the wider 'community of contributors' which the film engenders.

This online and social media strategy was informed by my traditional research into digital engagement and transmedia storytelling. For media practitioners and content creators, understanding the scope and changing nature of audience participation is vital. At a time when social media was just emerging, Fraley argued that democracy 'demands equal and unrestricted participation among active, engaged, and informed citizens' (2007, 175). Sajuria et al. explore interactive online forums which enhance 'bridging social capital' by enabling 'different groups to share and exchange information, resources, and help coordinate action across diverse interests.' (2014: 3). My own research analyses how the 'motivations of the pro-active user seem to be rooted in nurturing, enlarging and fostering a wider network' (Blake, 2016: 35) A new mindset needs to account for different forms and levels of user participation and interaction within the digital sphere. Flinders and Cunningham set out a 'multi-levelled engagement framework' which included a 'formal political level' at the top and moves down to a 'personal connection in terms of knowledge, confidence, belief,

aspiration, empathy' (2014: 6). It demonstrates how online content needs to adapt to the changing nature of political engagement and demands for interaction in the digital public sphere.

If the development process of *Our Future Scotland* was a mixture of production methods, the resulting online content was a hybrid of visual forms and transmedia content. Manovich discusses media hybrids as bringing together 'text, hypertext, still photographs, digital video, 2D animation, 3D animation…' (2013: 163) all of which were embraced by the *Our Future Scotland* project. This part of the project was a collaborative process. One of my colleagues at the RSE Young Academy of Scotland led the social media campaign and a member of the SFF team designed the website which remained active for two years. I also wrote an opinion article in the Scotsman newspaper outlining the initiative which ends with a 'call to action' for people to engage with the online content: 'It's … the beginning of a wider debate across the country ... we hope that others will now share their ideas and their vision for *Our Future Scotland*' (Blake, 2018). As producer and editor of the film, I refashioned video content from the raw footage which was then placed online to be shared and commented on to reach a wider digital audience. This comes close to the notion of *remediation* as defined as 'repurposing earlier media into digital forms' (Bolter & Grusin 2000, 59). As Morris states, 'not only can media be remixed and combined, but also extended' (2017: 48.) This was the intention with the wider *Our Future Scotland* digital project. Over 40 twenty-second soundbites, with graphics branding and music, were shared across social platforms along with a one-minute trailer. After a request from the Scottish Parliament, the film itself was re-edited with a focus on 'the future of learning' for Scotland's Festival of Education in September 2018 and an education section was created online. In this way, the process of remediation can be expanded in ways which embrace user agency and seek to grow the mosaic of online content.

Our Future Scotland was not intended to be a single, static project. It was designed to serves as a template for other initiatives: both for public sector partners like the Scottish Parliament and for colleagues within the academy. This is one important element of the *impact* of the project – the legacy. It has already inspired artists and academics to produce artwork on each of the key themes of the film: wellbeing, technology, environment, and education. In describing the art, the Scotland's Futures Forum states that "Our Future

Scotland provided a point of correlation in futures studies for the Futures Forum" (Scotland's Futures Forum, 2018). In the spring of 2021, the RSE Young Academy of Scotland launched another project inspired by the *Our Future Scotland* model of digital engagement and collaboration. The YAS 'Children's Voice' awards project worked with schools across Scotland to invite children to share their vision and ideas by creating a poster titled "The Home of the Future" (Young Academy of Scotland, 2021). I was asked to join the project as producer and editor of an online film. We had planned to film the children in the style of *Our Future Scotland*, but the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to change those plans. Instead I used video that children had recorded at home. These are some of the legacy projects that have come out of the original film project which continues to spark debate and connect people to policy makers around their vision of the future.

Conclusion

As the importance of video content in online and social media environments grows, public institutions - like the Scottish Parliament – are increasingly seeking collaborations with media and academic partners to engage new audiences. The *Our Future Scotland* film initiative sets out a model of how such a partnership might work in practice. Inspired by many of the processes of community filmmaking, the project feeds into notions of user agency and social engagement afforded by digital and mobile platforms. Scotland has a unique political climate, one in which political activism has endured and enhanced since the referendums of 2014 and 2016. As audiences actively change the way they engage with both media content *and* political institutions, the process of production and collaboration needs to change, adapt, and be flexible to foster participation. It is a crucial – and fast changing – area of media consumption and one which unites both my printed academic research and my practice-led film projects.

Chapter 4: Reflections on positionality

Introduction

This critical analysis has provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my own hybrid identity as an academic researcher and media practitioner. I joined Edinburgh Napier University in December 2009 after 12 years as a TV producer and reporter based at ITN in London. Since then, I have kept working as a freelancer within the television industry as a reporter on *Channel 4 News* in London and on Scottish Television (from both the Edinburgh and Glasgow newsrooms). I have regularly worked as a programme producer for the *STV News at Six* and the *STV Scotland Tonight* current affairs show. In these roles I have been responsible for a small team of dedicated researchers, reporters, and producers. It has required me to lead editorial meetings and devise social media strategies on audience engagement for the programmes. This industry work took place in parallel with my growing research activity within academia. Throughout these years, I pro-actively sought to use my professional practice to support and enhance my research.

It is important, in conjunction with investigating the decisions and motivations of professional 'others', that we interrogate ourselves, our own aims, and our assumptions as researchers. I undertake this reflection in a structured and analytical way as a central element of this PhD critical analysis. First this involves studying commonalities of experience between myself and other journalists who have chosen to enter academia in the middle of their career. Secondly, I explore how my industry background has implicitly informed and influenced my research. This includes knowledge of broadcast newsroom workflows and institutional hierarchies as well as 'insider-experience' of formal and informal codes of conduct. To do this I adopt some of the techniques of autoethnography as a way of 'connecting the personal to the cultural' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 739). For me, the 'cultural' in this context is the institutional culture of the broadcast industries which are at the heart of my research. I analyse how my own positionality as a hybrid academic / media practitioner provides opportunities for industry insights and a greater bond with informants. However, such an identity can prompt tension in the research process and inevitably raises questions of objectivity and potential bias.

There are good pedagogic reasons why I have maintained a level of journalism work even after I joined academia. Many of the courses I lead at Edinburgh Napier have a practical emphasis. I teach television news modules, to both undergraduate and post-graduate journalism students, which require an understanding of visual narrative techniques. Students are trained to film and edit sequences and create *professional quality* reporter packages with interview clips, piece-to-cameras, and effective broadcast scripts. The learning and teaching strategy is focused on shadowing the most up-to-date industry workflows, culminating in real-time newsdays and the creation of a TV bulletin. This is why my engagement with professional practice is important – as TV production changes rapidly, I am able to embed real-world TV newsroom scenarios into my teaching which explore practical, ethical and theoretical issues.

The Challenges for 'hackademics'

Beyond its value for teaching, my professional media background remains a formative influence on my research work. I entered academia enthusiastic and determined to use my industry background and knowledge as a basis for media research. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I was following the advice of Errigo and Franklin who recommended that 'Practitioners should play to their strengths and develop research-based publications informed by their professional experience' (2004: 48). I am one of a growing number of so-called 'hackademics' who have made the move from journalism into academia. In his study of sixty-five journalists in UK Higher Education institutions, Harcup describes an 'existential uncertainty of journalism within the academy' (2011: 45) and highlights 'dismissive … attitudes to journalists on the part of some academic colleagues' (2011: 41). Nick Davies coined the term 'churnalism' in 2008 and since then the phrase has entered academic debate (Johnston & Forde, 2017). The reputation of journalists and journalism – particularly in the wake of the Leveson Enquiry – has had an impact on the standing of the profession and the community of hackademics. Van Hout and Van Leuvan state: 'Technological innovations' have prompted a transition from traditional reporting to 'a combination of filtration and curation of existing information' (2017: 118). De Andrade highlights a 'unique tension that arises when a journalist becomes an academic' (2014: 118). Bromley describes

the growing number of journalist-academics as a 'motley crew' with the 'persistent perception among journalism faculty of the ambiguity of their situation' (2014: 9). Journalists are not alone in feeling this dislocation when joining academia. Simendinger et al. describe the experiences of business managers and highlight a period of 'disillusionment and adjustment' after they join academia which is caused partly because 'the respect and reputation they had built over several years as practitioners is lost' (2000: 106).

Journalists undertaking research

Looking back to those early years working at a university, I did expect it to be easier and quicker to undertake academic research. I found the status and position of 'hackademics' was effected by the division between practice and theory that still exists in many universities. Bromley outlines a need for the 'formation of a collective identity bringing scholars and practitioners tougher' (2014: 7). Without a PhD, I found it difficult, with some colleagues, to be taken seriously as a scholar. With a professional background of 15 years in investigative journalism, I hoped academia would be an extension of this professional work where I would be able to adopt similar approaches and methods in my planned future research. Afterall, I considered at the time, both disciplines seek out new and useful knowledge by means of gathering and analysing data. Both groups do research which can include qualitative and quantitative methods (although journalists do not often conceive of their processes in these terms). As Plesner observes: 'the professional practice of investigative journalism may offer inspiration in relation to ethnographers' methods and forms of presentations' (2011: 474). Other academics highlight these commonalities as well. Errigo and Franklin outline the similarities between journalist and academic methods: 'people who research and write for the news media can deliver in the hackademy' they state, 'such skills are generic and transferable' (2004: 48). Duffield describes academic research as having some 'peculiarly journalistic properties' including a 'methodological element in the background to the study' (2009: 582). There are many similarities between the two roles, not least that academic researchers and journalists both communicate their findings to specific audiences by a means of a 'publication'.

There are, however, significant differences between the aims and methods of journalists and academic researchers. First, it took me a significant amount of time to become grounded in specific media theories relevant to my planned research. I felt something akin to what Fournillier described as the challenge of 'participating in a dissertation culture that was foreign' (2011: 559). It was a crucial journey to make: my academic standpoint enables me to establish the distance and objectivity to analyse the programmes and projects at the heart of my research. According to Niblock, 'There is such a will to connect theory and practice by incorporating insights from the professional world of journalism into academic and scholarly thinking and writing about that practice' (2007). This is what I have sought to do in all my research. When embarking on my book, *Television and the Second Screen*, I started with those chapters which were most explicitly framed by theory because I found these sections the most difficult to undertake at the time. I was aware that the theoretical context was vital to place industry activity within wider historical and theoretical frameworks. As a result, I was able to consider recent technical and narrative innovations as events within the long-term evolution of interactive television dating back to the 1950s and which has been progressing in uneven jumps ever since.

The nature of the audience, for academic scholars and journalists, is another crucial difference between the two disciplines. Although the concept of journalist-as-gatekeeper is changing, there are still social barriers and a power imbalance between journalists and their readership. By contrast, in academia, researchers are writing for their colleagues: 'the dynamic is between peers, not the reader-writer relationship' observe Errigo and Franklin (2004: 45). It is this dynamic that puts additional pressures on the work of a new 'hackademic' looking to make their mark on research in media production.

The importance of reflection

Structured reflexive practices have become an essential element in exploring questions of identity and subjectivity in research. An effective researcher challenges their own assumptions and objectivity by questioning their position as researcher in relation to the subject of their study. For Pillow this is understood as a methodological 'power' that 'questions it's owns interpretations and is reflexive about its own knowledge production'

(2003: 178). According to Mortari, this is a necessary process 'used to legitimate and validate research procedures' (2015: 1). Across the breadth of ethnographic research, such considerations of positionality have been used to explore individual and community relationships and power structures from different perspectives: including gender, race, age, and class. For Min Ha, reflexivity is a means to 'expose the 'context' of production' (1991: 46.) A structured process of self-examination not only analyses the impact of prior experience and the existence and influence of any assumptions, it situates the researcher as an active participant in the creation of knowledge.

Autoethnography and 'insider status'

For this critical analysis, I have found many of the principles and techniques of autoethnography useful to interrogate both the implicit and explicit influence of my media background on my research. Such an approach questions my identity and assumptions as both scholar and practitioner and raises the notion of so-called 'insider status'. Ellis et al. (2011) state that the methods of autoethnography 'use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders'. This general principle can be applied to any culture and community. For example, Anderson adopts autoethnographic methods to study his passion for skydiving alongside his work as a university professor. He states, 'I draw heavily on my personal experiences in order to develop a better sociological analysis of important trends' (2011: 134). My involvement within the media communities that I research is relevant in both the micro and macro levels. It involves my understanding of the unspoken codes of a broadcast newsroom, for example, as well as a broader knowledge of the culture of TV production and broadcasting, including a tacit understanding of key industry personalities, commissioning practices and modes of production.

The notion of 'insider or outsider' researchers in ethnographic studies is a contested area. Dwyer poses the question: **'**Should qualitative researchers be members of the population they are studying, or should they not?' (2009: 54). On one side of the debate, it is argued that an 'insider' researcher has unique insights into the subject of their study. Back in the early 1970's Merton summed up the insider doctrine as 'you have to be one in order to

understand one' (1972: 15). According to Merriam et al., it is commonly assumed that 'being an insider means easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal ques, and most importantly be able to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study.' (2010: 411). My hybrid identity as researcher and media practitioner means that some of my research methods are characterised by 'interactive interviews'. Ellis describes as interactive interviews where 'this approach involves the sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers' (2008: 444). A reflexive and analytic autoethnographic approach is useful to this critical analysis because, as Elllis and Bochner state, 'in reflexive ethnographies, the researcher's personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study' (2000: 740).

It is important to state that the research outputs included in this PhD are *not* autoethnographic studies. There are no first-person narratives that characterise conventional autoethnographic research. It was a self-conscious decision not to include *explicit* personal experiences in the main chapters of *Television and the Second Screen*. Firstly, such an approach didn't fit within the style of the book itself. I couldn't include personal descriptions in the chapters on advertising, entertainment and drama, for example, so it felt inconsistent to include such sections within news, factual TV and sport (where I do have personal experience). Beyond this, such an inclusion is likely to have involved seeking permission from former and current employers and I wasn't prepared to cede editorial control in that way. However, there are sections in the book which were guided and informed by my personal experiences within the media as well as my knowledge of media culture and institutions themselves.

The chapter on TV news starts with a description of the coordinated attacks in Paris on the 13th November 2015. It was a tragic and seismic event which started with an explosion at the Stade De France and culminated at the Bataclan Concert Hall. This was a story I was working on as a journalist, and much of the description in the book is based on my experiences covering the event itself. It was a fast-moving and emotional situation where people in Paris were using social media sites for multiple reasons: to keep up with events, find loved ones, upload witness accounts, stills and video and to post memorials for victims. For myself, and other TV journalists based outside Paris, these platforms were a significant

resource of real-time information and user-generate content (UGC) which enabled us to contact contributors and interviewees. It was a moment when television and social media sites developed a synchronous relationship in the coverage of a tragic story over several days.

My professional experiences covering political events in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, also influenced and informed the content and descriptions in my book. Encouraging and monitoring user engagement around leadership debates became a central part of our work as TV journalists during the 2010 General Election. As the book states: 'this was one of the first time that people brought two screens together – this marriage of convenience – to engage with the wider media debate and participate in the political process.' (Blake, 2016: 78) The interactive potential of such engagement across digital platforms grew significantly by the 2015 election. My experience reporting at the General Election count of 2015 helped this section of the book too as I was posting live updates for STV on the Twitter Periscope video platform throughout the night. I was an overnight correspondent for STV after the results of the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum and reported the 'story of the night' for the special edition breakfast programme. During these years, I worked as a freelance programme producer for STV Scotland Tonight and, in this role, was responsible for developing the show's social media strategies and content. This included using online and mobile platforms to promote our TV discussion panels as well as forming a backchannel of participation which provided the momentum of audience interaction before, during and after transmission. The engagement fed directly into the questions the presenters asked, as my book describes: 'the presenters had to be second screen users themselves: they took a tablet into the studio to respond to social media participation in real time' (2016: 83). In each of these cases, my media work gave me access to professional colleagues to interview for the book and 'insider' knowledge about precise scenarios and issues on which to question them.

My professional background and 'insider' positionality are not only important for conveying direct experience and giving me access to key media gatekeepers, they have provided me with a working knowledge of institutional systems and cultures. As my research and observations demonstrate, journalism is evolving quickly with the onset of new technologies and with it the working patterns within newsrooms are changing (Deuze, 2018; Cancela,

2021). According to Deuze, 'journalism is transitioning from a more-or-less coherent industry to a highly varied and diverse range of practices' (2018: 166). This speed of change, and the resultant fractured nature of newsroom structures, makes it challenging to study these complex dynamics. My TV background means that I have first-hand experience of many of the processes and workflow challenges that broadcast news outlets face. Across the various newsrooms I have worked in, at the BBC, ITV News, STV and Channel 4, I have experienced a shift in the status and purpose of digital content. This started with online teams being on the periphery of the operation to being at the heart of the newsroom. The shift involved online and mobile data driving the agenda of editorial meetings – in terms of how teams respond to user comments and demands. The shift has culminated in news outlets developing new narrative techniques to engage younger viewers and creating vertical storytelling techniques and tailored multimedia content for mobile platforms.

Beyond the specifics of technical and visual narrative innovations, my research outputs rely on a detailed knowledge of organisational and power structures within media companies. This goes beyond an understanding of traditional hierarchies and lines of management. One significant element of this, is a first-hand knowledge of the subtleties of 'institutional culture'. Some academic studies have discovered many media industries to be closeted domains with often impenetrable working cultures. In his investigation of the 'private world' of the BBC, Burns describes 'the BBC manner' as 'an organised code of conduct and … a normative system, peculiar to the BBC' (1977: 13). He experienced something he described as 'corporation paranoia' which actively hindered his academic research because the BBC's 'sole interest in the report was in preventing its publication' (1977: 14-15). As with studying any community of people, understanding this 'normative system' involves an appreciation of shared values, in-group relationships and power structures as well as informal and implicit decision-making processes. In my research, I draw upon my knowledge of newsroom dynamics, the practical, daily challenges of newsgathering and documentary production and the delicate interplay between commissioning and content creation.

Researching migration as an academic and journalist

Much of the discussion in this chapter has focused on my book and my analysis of TV news in the context of second screen interaction. This is where I have the clearest personal connection with the subject(s) of my research. However, my background in TV and journalism has also provided me with subject-specific expertise which I've been able to draw upon in my scholarship. As Home Affairs Producer at Channel 4 News – and later as a reporter - I have amassed a large body of journalistic work on the treatment of asylum seekers in the UK and on the Refugee Crisis across Europe. Over several years I have built up a network of sources including refugees, politicians, lawyers, police officers and community leaders. Since joining Edinburgh Napier University in 2010, I have sought to utilise this network and build on this knowledge by crafting a body of research work around the representation of refugees in the media. My media background enables me to adopt a different approach from other academics. As Flick observes, 'often, when tackling such issues, scholars report on trends in coverage from the position of a detached observer' (2013: 383). Yet, I would contend that it is precisely my *attachment* to the media industries which has assisted my research into migration in a several ways. First, my knowledge of industry projects provided a useful supply of possible case studies for analysis. Secondly, my contacts were a vital source of data, and many became informants for my research. In addition, my experience of industry workflows meant I had inside knowledge of the practical and ethical challenges of creating visual narratives of migration.

As an academic, my first presentation at a conference was at the Africa/UK Journalism Education conference at the University of Bedfordshire in 2012. My talk was titled 'Stereotypes and Identity' where I adopted a content analysis methodology to explore TV news coverage and representations of migrants from Africa. This early academic study, combined with my growing interest in digital interaction, led me to investigate innovative case studies around digital platforms and migration. My published article 'Simulating Experiences of Displacement and Migration' came about because of this long-standing involvement in covering migration. The article uses theoretical frameworks to explore practical questions that I grappled with as a journalist and TV producer. These include: 1) How should TV production teams convey the scale of the migration crisis without visually framing large crowds of refugees as an implicit potential threat? 2) How can the media responsibly represent the personal experience of refugees, making a dangerous journey into

Europe, and not portray such groups as homogenous *victims*? And: 3) How do traditional news values and an emphasis on 'the story' distort the real and personal experience of migrants?

Authority and 'insider status'

My professional experience and insider status gives authority to my published work with both academic and industry audiences. There were two academic book reviews for *Television and the Second Screen,* and both mention my industry background as a key aspect of my identity as author and scholar. Ivory describes me as 'a television news reporter/producer turned academic' (2017: 189). Whilst Girginova highlights: 'the book is based on more than 25 interviews with members of the UK television industry, as well as Blake's own years of experience in broadcast media' (2017: 119). When contacting the interviewees for the book, I described myself as an academic researcher *and* as a journalist and a TV producer. At times, I referred to my own professional experiences in TV during the interviews: both in TV news and in documentary making. To an extent, this enabled me to break down the professional and psychological divide between informer and interviewer which is defined by Welch et al. as 'cultural distance' (2002: 617).

I have found that my professional background in television has given me a degree of authority and esteem as a *practitioner* within academia. The Scotland's Futures Forum gave me the commission for the *Our Future Scotland* film project because I combined the objectivity of an academic researcher alongside industry experience. They trusted that I would get the job done because I have a track record of producing TV reports to tight deadlines. As with my traditional research outputs, my own hybrid positionality was an important element of the film process.

In making the film, I consciously followed some journalistic and visual narrative norms. However, I was also aware which of these professional techniques I needed to adapt or abandon altogether to fulfil the aims and demands of the project. *Our Future Scotland* required a significant shift in my own mindset around the process of filmmaking. At times I had to stop thinking like a TV reporter and filmmaker and start adopting the mentality and methods of practice-led researchers. As a journalist, my primary focus has been: *what is the*

story? What can a video news report reveal that is new, important and relevant to my audience? Often this means exposing a hidden aspect of our society that someone, somewhere, does not want known. This can involve challenging people in positions of authority or holding an individual to account. For the *Our Future Scotland* project, the emphasis was less about *finding the story* and more about the co-ownership of a media product where I would collaborate with the Scottish Parliament, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the contributors in the film itself. It was an exercise bringing together industry production techniques with practise-led research methods to create a format for digital engagement.

The drawbacks of insider status

My hybrid identity has presented me with challenges and obstacles for my research. I accept there have been occasions when my background as a journalist has actively hindered my ability to create a bond with research informants. On learning that I was also a journalist, one interviewee for the film voiced concern about how their content was going to be used. I can remember two occasions when potential interviewees for my book displayed some anxiety when they learned about my background in the media. These were journalists themselves who had first-hand knowledge about the agenda of other reporters. However, it was a straight-forward process to allay these concerns by emphasising the academic foundation of the study. A small number of other media professionals wanted to know how their words were going to be used and in what form the data was going to be published.

It is understandable that some research subjects find it difficult to distinguish between an interview for journalistic purposes and a qualitative interview as part of a research methodology. Powerful figures, or those in the public eye, may have been subject to derogatory coverage in the press and therefore have a wariness or aversion to any type of concept of interview. Harvey observes that elite figures 'are often scrutinized by television and radio journalists and therefore can feel threatened in an interview' (2011: 433). This is another important area where the methods of research and journalism diverge. In both the film project and the book, it was part of the agreed ethics process that all informants consented to specific quotes – and the contexts of their use – before the work was

published. In journalism this would not happen and would instead amount to compromising editorial independence.

Autoethnography and objectivity

There is a debate around the extent to which the positionality 'researcher-as-insider' becomes an obstacle to objective study. There are legitimate questions of balance and subjectivity both in the rigour of methodological approaches and the analysis of the data itself. In outlining the oppositional voices to autoethnographic approaches, Winkler states: 'It is the conventional understanding of research and the researcher (i.e., notions of neutrality, objectivity, rationality, and universal vs. notions of irrational, particularistic, private, and subjective) that forms the source for the charges of self-indulgence that some autoethnographers face' (2018: 243). According to Ellis, 'autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist' (2011: 345). I have adopted autoethnographic techniques in this reflection for this reason: to acknowledge, examine, and (hopefully) embrace any subjectivity that comes from being a media industry insider.

It is a debate that has spanned decades and cuts across multiple academic disciplines. According to Pillow, 'being part of the community with the subjects of your research does not automatically yield the research egalitarian' (2003: 182). For Merton, insiders do not have a 'monopoly of knowledge' and have a tendency to 'glorify the ingroup' (1972: 18). As Merriam et al. outline: 'insiders have been accused of being inherently biased, and too close to the culture to be curious enough to raise provocative questions' (2010: 411). Such considerations, inevitably, lead me to reflect on my own approach and conclusions. For example, did I fail to ask 'provocative questions' in my interviews? Or, conversely, was my questioning too tough and journalistic? Have I been insufficiently critical of media institutions and of the role and impact of broadcast news outlets in particular? These are difficult issues without clear answers and require proactive and self-interrogation around methodologies, implicit assumptions, and possible unconscious bias.

Upon the publication of my book, I did attempt to be honest and transparent about my industry experience. For Routledge publishers, this was a selling point of the book, and the back cover biography describes me as someone who has 'spent more than 15 years in the TV industry and still works regularly for Channel 4 News and STV' (Blake, 2016). There is a brief biography in the introduction of *Television and the Second Screen*: 'my background has been in TV news and current affairs where I have spent nearly 20 years in various roles both as a TV producer and reporter'. (2016: 5). This declaration on my dual-status, means that readers can make up their own minds about the objectivity of the research itself – particularly where it discusses the broadcasters and production companies where I have worked. Beyond this, where I outline insights gained from personal experiences (as described above), I have been careful not to include value judgements in these sections of the book. Instead, I focus on descriptions of what was happening in newsrooms during this crucial time of social change, technological development, and audience participation in both *newsgathering* and news *output*.

In my article on the experiences of refugees, my research outlines the constraints of conventional news reporting techniques which have become 'insufficient to convey the depth and complexity of the Refugee Crisis' (Blake, 2019: 53). As such, it is critical of many of the same TV reporting traditions that I have utilised in my professional TV career. As a result, it demonstrates the objectivity that is a pre-requisite for academic research. Yet my journalism background strengthens this output too. It provides an important understanding about why such methods have been adopted by the media industry and how such narratives tie-in with established journalistic values and methods. Some of these are practical and logistical concerns around the challenges of sending teams to conflict areas, the cost involved, and the risk-assessment process required. Such limitations lead to an over-reliance on footage from TV agencies which leads to the homogenisation of content in UK broadcast outlets. Other issues involve meeting the expectations of audiences and using visual stereotypes to 'signpost' representational meaning for viewers.

Across my research outputs, I am aware that I had to reach beyond my direct personal experience to fairly investigate the *breadth* of interactive initiatives across the UK. Happily, the UK TV news industry is a relatively small community of reporters and producers. As my friends and former colleagues from ITN and STV have found new roles in other news outlets,

I became aware of other interactive projects at Sky News, ITV and the BBC. This meant, for example, that whilst researching the book, I was able to gain interviews and insights around the Sky News' live streaming innovation during the 2015 election night coverage. Harcup recognises that this professional network as one of the key advantages of being a *hackademic*: 'many traditional academic researchers have 'limited access' to journalists and journalistic organisations' (2011: 36). This access is significant for accessing data, opening doors to informants, and building trust between researcher and participant. It is a key feature of the 'interactive interview' methodology I adopted for much of this research.

In the quest for authenticity and transparency in academic research, the much-debated 'Insider/Outsider' dichotomy is problematic in other ways as well. Academic scholars have noted that the twin notions of identity and belonging raise uneasy questions around the composition of any so-called 'in-group' and necessitate the existence of outsiders as 'others'. Here the process of reflexivity is 'bound to upset one's sense of identity – the familiar distinction between the Same and the Other' (Minh-Ha, 1991: 48). For Niblock 'the term 'reflective' has become a site of struggle' (2007). Given the complexity of some of the issues raised by researcher identity and positionality, it is possible to lose sight of the initial objectives of the study. Patai describes the process as 'tiresome' and warns against 'wading in the morass of our own positionings' (1994: 63). There is a danger that the individual researcher may 'loom larger than the scientific community or the people observed' (Minh-Ha, 1991: 46).

As Louise Ryan suggests, in her research around migration, there are 'multi-layered identities of researchers and participants' (2015). This concept of 'layers of identities' also applies to the UK media industry itself where there are a number of factions and groups. For example, there are distinct divisions (and some distrust) between Scottish and UK-network broadcasters, for example, or commercial and public service outlets or between TV news and long-form documentaries to name but a few. In this context, then, it is not always clear what constitutes 'insider-status'? Given the scope of my research into TV interaction, and the breadth of professional backgrounds of my interviewees, it is likely that some of them considered me an industry 'insider' whilst others did not. Fournillier (2011) says 'the research act meant making and remaking myself' (2011: 559). Researcher identity, as I have discovered, is fluid concept.

Conclusion

Reflection is a process of actively gaining self-awareness. For this thesis, it involves an honest and open analysis of the effect my media industry work has had on my academic research and on my hybrid identity as a researcher / media practitioner. This involves viewing myself as both researcher and participant in my own studies. My TV news and documentary background has afforded me a wealth of knowledge around industry workflows, creative production processes, institutional culture, and journalistic values. As an academic, I have been able to mine this experience to support and enhance my research into media production and interaction. In this reflective analysis, I have adopted several autoethnographic concepts to investigate how my professional experiences have fed directly into my research outputs. As Ellis and Bochner describe, this is a two-step process: 'focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience' followed by a more introspective approach: 'then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self' (2000: 739).

It has been important to be open about the opportunities and drawbacks of having such a connection with the subject of my study as well as the questions around objectivity and balance that arise as a result. Yet, I continue to embrace my insider-status as a scholar of media production. It does not make me better or worse than other researchers in the academy. It has given my research a distinct focus and status. I feel part of the growing community of 'hackademics' who are all grappling with similar issues. And this identity has given me authority and direction to my research plans.

Chapter 5: Reflecting on Methodologies

Introduction

There are several distinct methodological approaches within my published research outputs. The most obvious divergence exists between my print research publications and the *Our Future Scotland* film. Certainly, there is a wealth of academic literature which explores the nature of 'practice-as-research' as separate from more traditional methodologies (Bell, 2017; Batty & Kerrigan, 2017; Candy, 2006). However, for this critical analysis, it is useful to explore and reflect on the methodologies *across this divide* within the same chapter. This will enable me to compare and analyse both connections and disparities between my adopted methods.

Across all my submitted outputs, both in practice and print, I have relied most on qualitative methodologies: particularly those based on semi-structured interviews. In this way, I have largely followed the approach of Brennen who describes an interview as 'a focused, purposeful conversation between two or more people' (2017: 28). He promotes a constructivist approach which considers 'reality to be socially constructed' where 'respondents are seen as important meaning makers' (p. 29). In exploring my interview techniques in more detail, I build on some themes outlined previously: in particular, a comparison of the methods of interviewing as a journalist and as an academic researcher.

This chapter also outlines the other methodological approaches that I have adopted by means of media case studies. These have included different forms of qualitative content analysis, literature review, and media industry analysis. The strength of these mixed-method approaches is that they provide additional data and evidence to compare with a primary source of information. In addition to this, I have outlined the initial impetus for each of my published studies and how they developed into structured research questions which underpinned my methods. The questions highlight conceptual as well as methodological connections between the topics and the outputs.

Methodology behind *Television and the Second Screen*

In *Television and the Second Screen*, I was interested in exploring emerging social and interactive technologies from the perspective of industry professionals. As I crafted my book proposal to Routledge publishers in 2014, I settled on key research questions which, although they were not made explicit in the text of the final book, were vital in informing and underpinning the qualitative mixed methodologies I adopted.

RQ1: How and why are UK broadcasters using second screen technologies to engage with viewers?

In my experience, '*Why'* questions necessitate qualitative and subjective answers – and they are a common thread through my research. This research question required me to study two connected factors: the motivations of content creators together with the processes of screen-based production itself. My research, then, is focused on industry production rather than audience reception. As my research progressed, I was soon able to refine the research topic into supplementary questions:

RQ2: Who or what has been responsible for successful innovation around the Second Screen

This question required me to explore the nature of second screen innovation and how it has been driven forward by individuals, programme teams, and organisations. In this way, I looked at the infrastructure of the broadcasting industries in the UK including the complex relationship between independent production companies, the growing influence of digital agencies and the changing influence of the BBC itself on the broadcast sector. To approach an answer, I needed to question the informants on the nebulous definition of success itself.

RQ3: How does second screen activity sit within established academic theoretical frameworks?

I found that Industry interviews were of limited use in answering this research question. Instead, before the research interviews took place, I undertook a comprehensive review of

the academic literature around the nature of TV interaction, social media participation, user agency and the nature of active audiences. I was able to explore Second Screen activity within the context of Uses and Gratifications paradigms (Blumler and Katz, 1974; Rubin and Perse, 1987; Katz, 2009). I studied how social media participation around television personae had an impact on our understanding of para-social interaction and bonding (Horton and Wohl, 1956; Sajuria et al., 2014; Putnam, 2001).

Most of the media professionals I spoke to were not aware of the details of such academic theories. Instead, I had to craft interview questions which would enable me to analyse industry strategies and workflows and within an academic context. However, I am well placed to bridge this gap – with a foot in both camps. I did find there was a significant area of convergence around the notion of active audiences and the concepts of user agency. Both industry and academia used such language and part of my analysis involved teasing out the semantic meanings of these terms in each context.

Defining 'elite interviewing'

For my printed outputs, I was able to analyse the aims of TV executives and content creators to explore the success (or otherwise) of interactive projects on TV and film. To do this adequately, the research required a diversity of voices and opinions from a range of backgrounds and professional roles. The cast of contributors included TV producers, film directors, commissioning editors, reporters, artists, company directors, advertisers, gambling executives and technology industry entrepreneurs. It was important to find a balance between the experience of public service broadcasters (notably the BBC and Channel 4), commercial broadcasters and professionals from emerging digital-only platforms.

In 1974, Nader highlighted an 'urgency' for a 'kind of anthropology concerned with power' (1974: 1). She proposed the analysis of influential individuals and the structures of authority: a research method which has since become known as a process of 'studying up' (Hannerz 2010, Harvey 2011, Mikecz 2011). Defining the members of an elite is a complex issue. The very concept of an 'elite' implies a power imbalance based on social class rather than relevant expertise and experience. For scholars of business studies, the challenge is

less acute as organisations have hierarchical structures and the senior managers are easily identified. Here, according to Welch et al., 'the elite group can be seen to comprise the top echelons of the firm' (2002: 613). For Harvey, the definition of elite is more nuanced as 'those who hold important social networks, social capital and strategic positions within social structures because they are better able to exert influence' (2011: 433).

'Studying sideways'

Much of my research around television and digital interaction is based onthe motivations of content creators, the influence of organisational systems and the effects of commercial decision making. Identifying the most relevant 'influential' individuals has been a key challenge. In both public service and commercial broadcasting institutions, the senior managers are often not the source of the creative impulse or involved in day-to-day content creation. Instead, the elite informants 'are professional media content producers with a direct access to the public sphere' (Bruun, 2016: 133). Also, a TV programme or series is rarely simply the vision of one powerful 'elite' individual. Bruun states: 'the purpose of media production analysis is to gain insight into what is going on 'backstage'' (p. 134).

In my experience, 'backstage' in television production is an area crowded with people in a search of a shared vision. It can be an intense and stressful arena of competing egos, logistical challenges, shrinking budgets and hidden agenda. In dismissing the simplistic process of 'studying up', Hannerz (2010) instead describes a process of 'tracing webs of relations between actors, institutions and discourses' and outlines a new 'notion of 'studying through'' (p.60). Within the context of media production studies, this would mean treating media professionals as members of a small creative team as well as analysing their role within the wider interplay between production companies and broadcasters and, more broadly still, as part of the evolving ecosystem of the screen-based creative industries themselves. Caldwell describes media texts as 'dynamic sites of intrinsically collective, negotiated interactions by industry' (2014: 721). For this reason, I needed to broaden the concept of 'elite' and was able to use my industry knowledge to provide insights into the real creative dynamics behind TV and film production

'Interactive interviewing'

The interviews for printed outputs were conducted, for the most part, in person with the aid of an audio recording device. I find it easier to make a respondent feel comfortable and less anxious when the meeting is happening face-to-face and where I am able to describe the nature and purpose of the research study. As Brennen states, 'Gaining an interviewee's trust is an essential part of each qualitative interview' (2017: 32). I found that informal conversations before and after the more formal interview process were often invaluable in giving me 'off-the-record' insights and directing my research into previously unconsidered areas. Often this requires a particular bond which is best formed in person. Reflecting the growing regional nature of TV production in the UK, the research for my book required a number of trips to London, Salford, Leeds, Brighton and Glasgow.

I have found it useful, across the themes of this critical analysis, to reflect on (and interrogate) my own journalistic background and positionality and this is particularly true with my methodological approaches. On the surface, at least, there appears to be considerable shared ground in the process of interviewing as a journalist and as a media researcher. For myself, entering academia for the first time since I completed my post-graduate qualification in Broadcast Journalism in 1998, it was understandable that I adopted this methodology. I have years of experience interviewing people as a radio and TV reporter including asking sometimes difficult questions. Journalists are in the privileged position of having regular access to influential and authority figures. In this respect, both practice and traditional methodologies are involved in both the creation of knowledge and understanding by analysing the responses of powerful individuals.

The process of speaking to influential figures, as a qualitative methodology, can generate an asymmetrical relationship between researcher and informant. This has the potential to generate both positive and negative outcomes for the research. On the one hand, such asymmetry can create the distance required to gain objective insights into a subject. However, it can generate barriers of understanding which have been described as 'cultural, linguistic and geographical boundaries separating the researcher from elite interviewees' (Welch et al., 2002: 617). Such asymmetry can compound the other challenges of engaging elite individuals in research projects. Within both social and professional arenas, those in

positions of power often build walls around themselves which can frustrate contact and understanding. Mikecz states, ‘elites are visible but not necessarily accessible’ (2012: 483) Without an area of common ground between researcher and interviewee, the interaction can be awkward, forced and shallow. Distrust and inaccuracies can accrue in this space. For Bruun, ‘reactions to the asymmetry can be a patronizing and impatient attitude towards the researcher’ (2016: 139). In their study on commercial corporations, Welch et al. state that with elite interviewing ‘the power imbalance is likely to favour the informant over the researcher’ with the researcher ‘at risk of being patronised’ (2002: 615).

I believe my professional journalism experience has helped me avoid such patronising encounters as it changes the asymmetrical relationship between myself as researcher and the informant. Welch et al, argue that researchers can ‘reduce the professional gap’ by adopting an ‘insider approach’ (2002: 624). Plesner describes a methodology ‘where researcher and researched share professional background to some degree’ as a form of ‘studying sideways’ (2011: 471). In this situation, the participants of research share ‘a commonality of vocabulary, ideas and common sense’ (2011: 478). On several occasions, interviewees noticeably altered their responses after they found out about my own professional background. They were able to use the jargon of the industry and felt comfortable in doing so. As a result, informants could quickly move beyond explaining basic everyday workflows and go into more depth in their answers.

In this sense, the method comes close to what Ellis describes as ‘interactive interviews’ which ‘are situated within the context of emerging and well-established relationships among participants and interviewers’ (2011: 351). My interview techniques do not bear all the hallmarks of interactive interviews. To Ellis, they are often intimate events, often involving a small group of people engaged with ‘emotionally charged and sensitive topics’ (2008: 443). However, some of my interview methods do share similarities with the aims and approaches of interactive interviewing. They are based on seeking common ground between researcher and informant, where interviews are relatively informal and more akin to conversations than interviews. It is an intersubjective situation where the researcher might describe experiences to elicit similar responses. Ellis describes interactive interviews as a process where “conversations where one person's disclosures and self-probing invite another's disclosures and self-probing” (2008: 444).

Comparing interview methods

Often the *purpose* of interviewing can be very different for journalists and academic researchers. As a journalist, on-camera interviews are often included in a TV news story to add emotional impact, or to make an issue 'human' or more relevant to an audience. Beyond this, there are many other areas of divergence between my journalistic and research methods. As a journalist, for example, I had never heard of the notion of 'elite interviewing' or 'interactive interviewing', nor gave much consideration to the theoretical underpinning of industry methods and processes. Instead, much of my daily work was curtailed by the pressures of logistics and limited time. As a result, 'interviews' often involved grabbing time with a politician or an official and quizzing them about the main news story of the day. Often those occasions could involve a confrontational doorstep if the individual did not want to speak on camera. Such practices could be 'news-making' encounters, but they did not have the depth or structure of academic research processes.

However, my industry background has given me confidence as an academic researcher: the confidence to trust my own data and analysis. This includes the confidence to stick to a line of questioning when an interviewee may wish to go in a different direction. For example, politicians have often had media training where they develop techniques to forward their own agenda both implicitly and explicitly. In this situation, it is important for researchers and journalists alike to maintain their 'independence of spirit'. Conversely, confidence is required to change tack completely when the evidence points in unexpected directions. Such flexibility is vital for journalists and researchers alike.

Visual Framing in *Our Future Scotland*

The ability to create an informal atmosphere in an interview setting has benefited my practice-led research too - including the *Our Future Scotland* film. During the production process, a small number of interviewees were anxious about the purpose and nature of the project (particularly as there was a camera present). As I am used to recognising and understanding the concerns of TV interviewees, I was able to put them at their ease. In

journalism and academic research, a relaxed informant is usually a more reliable and convincing witness. I was able to apply these 'soft skills' to encouraging people to take part in the film project for the Scottish Parliament.

However, the on-camera interview process for the *Our Future Scotland* film differed from conventional journalistic practices in notable ways. In fact, they were more influenced by the techniques of Participatory Video practice. From an ethical standpoint, it was necessary to enable contributors to have a say on their own representation on screen. Participants were asked in advance about the areas they wished to talk about, and questions were agreed. Instead of structured interviews, informal discussion and freeform 'future gazing' was encouraged (even if it often posed logistical production challenges in the edit). As MacLeod states: 'in participatory video the interview becomes a site of the co-creation of knowledge' (2015: 508). The process came close to Pink's notion of a 'collaborative approach to visual research' where researchers and informants 'maintain some degree of control over the content of the materials and their subsequent uses: (2007: 58). Contributors were involved in decisions around lighting and setting. For example, whilst the First Minister selected to be interviewed in an office environment in front of a Saltire Flag, others opted for the more informal setting of the Garden Lobby at the Scottish Parliament or outside in a park. Whilst scientists normally opted to be interviewed in their labs, environmental campaigners preferred to be in woodland or next to the sea. Notions of self-positioning, place and identity are central in a visual ethnographic context. In this regard, 'by focusing on collaboration and the idea of creating something together, agency becomes shared between the researcher and informant' (Pink, 2007: 58). This aligns with the 'different approach' offered by Guillemin and Drew in visual methodology, 'that takes seriously participants as knowers' (2010: 178). The question of visual environment, then, has a significant bearing on individual framing, personal and community identity and the tone of a contribution.

Camera shot framing is a key stylistic device which has a significant bearing on notions of authorship. Normally, within the conventions of broadcast journalism, only a reporter or TV presenter has the privilege of looking directly down the lens of the camera. It is the moment that the reporter makes eye contact and speaks directly with the viewer without any of the attendant distractions of other moving images. The 'piece-to-camera' is a crucial element of

any TV reporter package which visually positions the reporter as gatekeeper of the story and displays editorial independence. However, some participatory videos have enabled their contributors to speak straight down the camera lens. In one of these, Working Together for Change (Spatial Collective, 2015), the filmmakers worked alongside residents from deprived communities in Kenya to highlight issues around the safety of buildings and streets and to advocate for tangible political change. The film visually demonstrates the testimonies derived, unmediated, from the residents themselves. *Our Future Scotland* adopts a similar visual technique: everyone is cast in the centre of the frame and expounds their aspirations directly to the viewer thereby taking visual ownership of their ideas. At a later stage of post-production, participants were informed which soundbites were likely to be used and asked if they agreed. All of these collaborative aspects would not happen in the journalistic world of TV news or conventional TV documentary narratives.

Case studies and qualitative content analysis

Whilst adopting qualitative methods, it is sometimes important, for journalists and researchers alike, not to take interview responses at face value. Respondents can be inaccurate, exaggerate their answers or inflate their role depending on their own agenda. For me, it has been important to attribute all statements to named individuals in my research so that the context is transparent and there are no anonymous interviews in any of my research outputs. I've adopted a mixed-methodology approach to explore key interactive projects in more depth. Snelson (2016) highlights the increasing use of mixed methods as researchers tackle the complexities of social media engagement in particular: 'mixed methods research approaches involving network analysis are emerging and evolving as researchers grapple with the challenges and benefits for studies involving social networks' (2016: 12).

Most of the chapters in *Television and the Second Screen* feature one or two in-depth case studies around second screen interaction. These include the *X Factor* (ITV, FremantleMedia), *The Singer Takes it All* (Channel 4, Endemol), *Autumnwatch* (BBC), *Coronation Street and Eastenders Live* (Granada, ITV and BBC) and *Sky Bet Live* (Sky). In each case I used qualitative content analysis, in parallel to interviews, to explore technical and narrative innovation, the

nature of participation and the success (or otherwise) of such interactive projects. Depending on the case study, this could involve textual and visual analysis of second screen content, a semantic study of the language of backchannel social engagement as well as quantative data around numbers of users, followers, advertising Click-Through-Rates (CTRs) and user comments.

Defining success in the second screen

On some occasions, interviewees would attempt to convince me that their second screen projects were a success when other evidence suggested otherwise. And I can understand why many informants didn't want to be associated with failed projects (with some notable exceptions). However, for me, this made an important part of my work very difficult: the analysis of failure. As the first chapter states, 'ultimately, the history of interactive television has been a story of failure' (Blake, 2016: 9). It is a significant aspect of my research to explore contemporary projects within the context of the evolution of user participation. In his discussion around defining qualitative content analysis, Gunter argues that 'the production of meaning is grounded in conventions, codes and cultural agreement' (2000: 27). My interviews and professional grounding helped me unlock some of the conventions and codes around TV culture whilst qualitative content analysis provided additional evidence to evaluate the impact, user take-up and, ultimately, the success of interactive projects.

Success is a vague, elusive concept which is difficult to judge in the context of innovation and experimentation. Interactive adverts, betting apps, and overtly commercial projects are easier to quantify in this respect. In this realm, for example, success can be measured in numbers of subscriptions, page impressions, CTRs and audience-reach. These are all analysed in the book in the sections on addressable advertising and the monetisation of interaction. However, TV programmes and audience engagement around online companion content is more difficult to assess particularly in the post-BARB digital space of social media platforms. My research highlights examples of second screen TV projects which were not commissioned long term, but which broke new ground in innovation. For example, the mobile app for *The Singer Takes It All* (2014, Endemol / Channel 4) successfully introduced

real-time voting during each programme and, as my content analysis demonstrated, 'there was clear demand from viewers for active two-way participation in the show' (Blake, 2016: 67). Compared with the *X Factor* (2004 - , ITV) and *Britain's Got Talent* (2007 - , ITV), this show was more ambitious around embedding viewer engagement within a live programme. Yet, financially for Channel 4, the award-winning show was considered not viable, and it was axed after just one series.

Conversely, the BBC's *AutumnWatch* (2006 -) programme had all the hallmarks of a successful second screen project. It fitted neatly into the corporation's own agenda to create a digital public service space online. In the *AutumnWatch* suite of programmes there were live cameras (in birds' nests and badger setts, for example) which could make up a core element of added value content. Added to this the programme had a loyal viewership who had already proved themselves eager to engage with the show's interactive projects. As part of my quantitative analysis, I managed to gain access to the results of an internal BBC R&D companion screen report based on the programme. My analysis concluded that the BBC experiment demonstrated that the 'pros and cons of second screen use seemed to be finely balanced' even in a factual programme as (apparently) well suited to interaction as *AutumnWatch* (Blake, 2016: 99). Ultimately the BBC scrapped the Autumnwatch companion screen project as it did with many other similar initiatives.

Case studies in second screen cinema

My two journal articles follow a similar methodological approach as my book: focusing on a small number of case studies, combined with industry interviews and content analysis. In *Second Screen Interaction in the Cinema* (Blake, 2017), I studied three films all released over a two-year period: *Late Shift* (Weber, 2016), *App* (Boermans, 2015) and *Angry Birds* (Rovio, 2016). Again, my methodology was rooted in key research questions which were similar to my book but broadened out into cinematic processes and film culture. As part of this reflection, it is useful to outline and analyse those questions:

RQ1: How and why are cinematic filmmakers using second screen devices to engage with their audiences?

This central research question is focused on analysing the motivations and experiences of producers and directors primarily who had experience at creating interactive, scripted, fictional content for cinema audiences.

RQ2: Where do 'second screen films' sit within the evolution of cinematic interaction and the converged space of video game design?

The research required an extensive exploration into the history of interaction in cinema and how it had converged with the processes and principles of gameplay narratives. Often, those people I interviewed were unaware of the detail of the historical links of interactive filmmaking. My content analysis uncovered patterns and conventions which had built up over decades of experimentation in filmmaking. For example, as part of my textual analysis of *Late Shift*, I explored the narrative and visual devices adopted to best encourage audience engagement. There was a quantitative aspect to this case study too: I highlighted 180 'decision points' in the film and revealed that the production team had filmed and edited nearly 5 hours of content to enable the desired array of user choices and narrative pathways. With this content analysis, combined with an interview with the director, Tobias Weber, the research shifted the notion of second screen activity beyond being a solitary endeavour with a focus on 'collective decision making and group dynamics' (Blake, 2017: 530).

RQ3: How do the conventions of cinematic culture have an impact on the development and appreciation of interactive films?

This question required the study of recent industry and audience reaction to interactive experimentation in cinemas and an analysis of social and cultural differences. The research was placed within academic theoretical frameworks of immersion, the passive/active dichotomy and notions of user agency which are common in transmedia analysis and gaming studies alike (Zeiser, 2015; Murray, 1997; Ryan, 2015; Denison, 2016).

Case studies in media coverage of migration

I adopted many of the same mixed methodological approaches from my book in the four digital media case studies that are at the core of my journal article *Simulating Experiences of Displacement and Migration* (Blake, 2019). These included *Can you break into Fortress Europe?* (2014, The Guardian), *Two Billion Miles* (2015, Channel 4 News), *Refugee Republic* (2014, De Vokskrant / Submarine Channel) and *The Displaced* film (2015, New York Times / VRSE Works). I had been working as a freelancer for *Channel 4 News* when the project *Two Billion Miles* was conceived and produced, and the project is mentioned in the TV News chapter of my book. The more I examined the issue, the more I found that different media organisations were facing the same challenges in their coverage of the Refugee Crisis. From this initial idea emerged the key research questions:

RQ1 How and why had established media organisations adopted alternative digital narrative techniques in their coverage of the Refugee Crisis in Europe.

The inclusion criteria were specific: the methodology required engaging with established media organisations who had created interactive media projects between 2014 – 2016, at the height of the Refugee Crisis in Europe. The case studies I selected were, for the most part, very different from each other: an interactive digital map, online digital narratives with user choices, and a VR film. Some engaged with the issues around the Refugee Crisis head-on whilst others were more concerned with the personal experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in general. However, despite the variety of interactive media forms, my analysis of the interview responses exposed a commonality of creative intention: that existing coverage was 'insufficient to convey the depth and complexity of the refugee crisis' (Blake, 2019: 53). As one respondent, the artist on the Refugee Republic project, Jan Rothuizen, stated: 'with the migration crisis, we've seen quite a lot. But when you think about it, it's from the same perspective and from the same tone of voice' (2019: 53).

RD2 To what extent were interactive projects designed to engender a sense of empathy in the viewer?

This research question is closely connected to the first and led me to explore the intended impact and effect of both conventional news coverage and the digital interactive projects. Qualitative content analysis provided an exploration into visual framing as well as notions of group identity and 'the other'. The nature of this content analysis varied with the form and aim of the project itself. With the VR film *The Displaced*, it involved a visual analysis of the effects of point-of-view filming in two key scenes of the film. In *Two Billion Miles*, it focused on exploring the methods used to cross-fertilise the project with related digital news content. With the *Refugee Republic* online project, I explored how the drawings and artwork were intended to create a sense of intimacy and empathy by showing common and personal spaces within the interior of the refugee camp. As Aiello and Parry state, 'one core interest of visual framing analysis is the persistence of certain forms of portrayal, or visual tropes, and how such imagery becomes familiar' (2020: 32). My study examines such tropes in the context of media coverage of migration dominated by 'stereotypical news images of refugee camps' and portrayals of 'refugees as victims' (Blake, 2019: 56).

Visual framing was an important part in my analysis of the VR film *The Displaced*. This was aided by my experience and knowledge of traditional storytelling techniques in TV news and documentaries. As a lecturer in TV News, I train my students to answer those key journalistic 'W' questions visually – Who? What? Where? Why? This involves filming and editing sequences using established filmic conventions: close-up shots to identify the subject, wide establishing shots to reveal a location, over-the-shoulder or POV shots of an activity, and piece-to-cameras (PTCs) to visually embed a reporter within a story. Such narrative codes are so ingrained within our media and viewing habits that we often don't notice them anymore. However, they are being subverted, to an extent, by virtual reality film projects like *The Displaced* where the notion of authorship is actively obscured. There is no 'voice of God' voice-over, certainly no PTCs and the video editing is minimal and often hidden within a scene. Instead, the creative intention is sensory immersion and the notion of 'tele-presence' where the user is 'both inside and outside the action simultaneously' (Blake, 2019: 55).

Practice-as-research methods

As this chapter demonstrates, much of the methodology for my traditional research outputs has been designed to explore industry motivations and innovative media production methods around user participation. However, given my background and interest as a journalist and filmmaker, it made sense to me to also study production processes by *doing* and *creating* as well as questioning others and analysing content.

According to McDougall (2019), the debate around 'practice-as-research' is now entering 'a mature phase'. However, he observes that, in an academic environment, it can still be challenging for media practice researchers to 'join the conversation and demand a seat at the table'. For this to happen, he continues, then **'**intellectual and creative rigour cannot be a side issue for the field' (McDougall, 2019). At an earlier phase in this debate, Scrivener (2004) established a short taxonomy of methodological ingredients for practice-based research in which he states that 'the creative-production process is self-conscious, reasoned and reflective'. This leads to a virtuous cycle of 'active reflection' which informs action (making) which forms the basis of further reflection: a process which has been a vital part of the methodology behind my *Our Future Scotland* film project.

I should stress that this reflective cycle is not unique to academic 'practice-as-research'. All industry film projects I've been involved in have necessarily involved individual and group reflection on the production process with a view to what works, what doesn't, and what could be done differently during the next day's filming or post-production. However, there are important differences in the *purpose* and *process* of academic reflection which is concerned instead with rigorous research outcomes and establishing an original contribution to knowledge. As a result, reflection is more formalised and structured around existing and established theoretical frameworks.

The timing of the *Our Future Scotland* project is significant: the production was happening as my book was being published and whilst I was working on my other traditional research outputs around interaction and user participation. As a result, I was able to reflect on the findings and analysis of this research and act upon it in practice. Such considerations informed the planning process, my communication to participants, it led to changes in visually framing the interviewees as well as the creation of a website and the development

of ‘bite-sized’ video content within a social media strategy. Connected to this, a critical reflection of my own hybrid positionality and professional journalism background was also an important element of the film project. This involved considerations around borrowing journalistic and visual narrative norms and deciding which of those professional production processes to adapt or abandon.

This raises one question which has been central in the debates around practice-as-research: where is the new knowledge to be found? It is a significant issue given the wide range of subjects and disciplines accommodated within this ‘practice-as-research’ umbrella. According to Niedderer and Reilly (2007) ‘practice-led disciplines traditionally draw on a multiplicity of different kinds and formats of knowledge’ (p.2). Candy (2006) outlines an important distinction between ‘practice-based research’ and ‘practice-led research’ where the locus of research significance is within the creative *process* itself and has ‘operational significance for that practice’ (p.2). Based on this definition, then, practice-*led* research requires explanation and analysis beyond an understanding and an appreciation of the artefact itself. Bell (2017) states that ‘one of the functions of an emergent research culture for the creative arts might be to bring some degree of academic and methodological commonality to this eclectic multidisciplinary mix’ (p.51). According to Candy this would include ‘documentation of the research process. As well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and to demonstrate critical reflection’ (2006: 2). This chapter is designed to serve as this ‘documentation’ which outlines and analyses the key steps in the research and production process of *Our Future Scotland* through the lens of practice-led methodologies. In this way, this analysis seeks to explore and highlight originality and understanding in the process of practice as well as what Scrivener describes as ‘novel apprehension’ in the visual work itself (2004: 2). In contrast with my other publications, the research inherent in *Our Future Scotland* cannot speak for itself. As a result, there is more to say and *more needs to be said* to reveal and justify the significance of the project.

The production process of Our Future Scotland

The production process was informed and influenced by another film project I had been involved with at Edinburgh Napier University. In August 2012, the theatre company Grid Iron was commissioned to produce a site-specific play called 'Leaving Planet Earth' for the Edinburgh International Festival. It was a science fiction theatrical production which required various elements of multimedia content before during and after the performance. I was responsible for what became known as the transmedia element of the project. This involved creating and editing video inserts which were emailed to ticket holders, a simulation of a TV news programme which was screened on the bus to the location, and various video inserts which appeared on screens during the performance at the Edinburgh International Climbing Centre in Ratho. At the time, I didn't consider the work I was doing within the context of 'practice-as-research'. Instead, it was an opportunity to use and develop my existing professional skills and work with an external creative partner in the development of an innovative multimedia show. In retrospect, however, the project can be treated as a case study in transmedia storytelling. It also taught me a lot about using my own transferable skills in new forms of digital storytelling and collaborating with partners outside the media industry itself – all of which were intrinsic elements of the *Our Future Scotland* project.

At the start of the production process, the OFS project required a shift in my own working practices, habits, and assumptions in the process of filmmaking. As a journalist, my primary, professional focus has always been: *what is the story?* What can a video news report reveal that is new, important, and relevant to my audience? Often this means exposing a hidden aspect of our society that someone, somewhere, doesn't want known. This can involve challenging people in positions of authority, holding them to account, and requires the retention of editorial independence. However, for *Our Future Scotland*, the emphasis was less about finding the story and more about collaborating with the Scottish Parliament, the RSE and the contributors. In this way, the production methodology is more akin to academic participatory research methodologies than adhering to journalistic values and workflows. It was about establishing a trusted approach where contributors felt *involved* both in sharing their ideas and in shaping the final narrative. I gave the film the title *Our Future Scotland* as an appeal to its personal, informal and inclusive nature.

The influence of Participatory Video

In some respects, the methodologies underpinning the *Our Future Scotland* film project were influenced by Participatory Video (PV) techniques as well as its common aims and ambitions. According to White, 'the outcome of participatory communication for the people is consciousness-raising' (2003: 38). From the outset, *Our Future Scotland* aimed to make people conscious of the importance of their own vision in planning for a future society. It sought to make policy-making transparent and accessible in the Scottish Parliament and provide a route for people to participate in the process alongside politicians and other stakeholders.

Participatory video (PV) is an established practice methodology which has roots in ethnographic research and international development. Often this has involved working with marginalised communities to utilise the power of the moving image to bring people together and raise awareness of issues (Cooke et al., 2018; White, 2003; Shaw, 2017; Wheeler, 2012). On one level, Participatory Video methods can encourage community building, foster identity among the dispossessed and act as a 'call to action' on specific social problems. Wheeler states, 'this demand for recognition is part of the impulse of participatory video' (2012: 372). It is an exercise in horizontal collaboration and can be viewed as part of the wider realm of Participation Action Research (PAR). It shares the PAR goals of 'emancipation, empowerment, participatory democracy, and the illumination of social problems' (Grant et al. 2008: 591). However, as some practitioners warn, we must also be alert to the dangers of making exaggerated claims to the transformative power of participatory video. Walsh cautions against a 'hopeful naivety… around the possibilities offered by participatory video' (2014: 407). Others guard against using 'potentially patronising terms' like 'giving communities voice' (Cooke et al., 2018: 270). Instead, it is suggested, PV should be described as 'an empowering form of communication, able to amplify community voices to help these same communities advocate for change in their lives' (Cooke et al., 2018: 279).

It is important to stress that *Our Future Scotland* is not a conventional participatory video initiative: it did not involve working in a developing country with a marginalised or deprived community of people. Yet the essential mission of engaging citizens and 'amplifying voices'

was similar. The film was a layered process which borrowed from PV traditions as well as mainstream TV industry workflows (and informed by my other academic research). Instead of working with an established and clearly defined community, the project sought out individuals who could represent a diverse range of ideas and aspirations about Scotland's future. In the film, the Scots Makar Jackie Kay declares: 'the future is collaborative. The future is about finding surprising connections between the world of science and the world of poetry, between the world of football and the world of maths, between the world of music and the world of theatre' (*Our Future Scotland*, 2018). This notion of collaboration across diverse fields dominated the research process as well being the primary ethos of the documentary itself. The practice methodology involved the collection and curation of a range of visions for the future and more than 20 individuals contributed to the film including conservationists and scientists, politicians and designers, entrepreneurs and teachers, refugees, and actors.

Ethical Challenges

The origins of the *Our Future Scotland* project are rooted in the long-standing working relationship between the Scotland's Futures Forum (SFF) and the RSE Young Academy of Scotland (YAS). The final film was partly funded by both organisations and would carry the branding of each. Staff at the SFF and a small group of academic members of YAS, including myself, were involved in discussing and agreeing the vision and ethos of the film. Part of this discussion involved the notion of 'fair representation' which was a central ethical consideration when approaching possible interviewees. The film was crafted to celebrate diversity: diversity of vision, background, and experience. This meant aiming to strike a balance between gender, ethnic background and – significantly – geographical location. For Wheeler, the PV process is about 'connecting people through different identities, including social class, gender, and social positioning' (2012: 69).

In Scotland, it is a common issue that the central belt, encompassing Edinburgh and Glasgow, dominates the public sphere of social and political influence. As Hassan observes, 'Scotland's political commentariat … is a very select and partial representation of society: one heavily gendered, generationally skewed, and geographically concentrated in a

Glasgow-Edinburgh cluster' (2016: 42). After discussions with the Scotland's Futures Forum, I ensured that contributors came from *both* rural and urban areas (where the societal challenges are very different). I filmed contributors from Aberdeen, Dundee, the Cairngorms, the Scottish Borders and the Western Isles as well as from the Central Belt and member of the Scots diaspora in London. In this way, the film created a geographically diverse 'community of contributors'. For many involved, the project made them aware of each other and the work they were doing for the first time.

As Producer / Director on the project, I set up the contributors and conducted the filming and interviews myself. Because so much of our vision of a future society has been mediated and framed by science fiction narratives, I decided to seek out writers and artists to take part in the film. This aspect became a theme in the final narrative: all the contributors were asked how we might be inspired (or forewarned) by fictional depictions of utopian (or dystopian) future societies. However, there was a significant challenge in meeting the twin aims of being both inclusive *and* showcasing creativity and innovation in Scotland. The SFF wanted high-profile individuals to contribute to the film, but this had the consequence of limiting the time available for other voices. It was a fine balance to strike and one of the reasons that the online site was created: to host the contributions of any participants who wanted to share their ideas after the film had been edited and screened. Inevitably the final film was a compromise borne out of time restraints, logistics and budget restrictions. Originally, for example, we had planned to have several young people and children in the film and started working with schools to make this happen. However, concerns around filming and informed consent slowed the process down. In the end, the small working group of YAS members and myself, decided to develop a second film project with an emphasis on young people and their vision of the future.

Contextualising political links

Our Future Scotland also shares common ground with many PV projects in their aims of influencing those in positions of power. As we have seen, the collaborative process itself is an important part of any project in terms of community building and developing a sense of identity and agency. However, as Sitter states, there must be 'a dissemination component

whereby visual stories are shared in public spaces to raise awareness and reframe discussions' (2012: 541). According to Lunch and Lunch, 'participatory video is about shifting attitudes and, where possible, shifting power relations' (2006: 60). Normally this would involve a strategy to influence politicians and political stakeholders either directly or indirectly by raising the profile of an issue and inspiring debate. Within the context of international development this involves engaging with 'local and national policymakers to inform them about the work and to increase their understanding of the dynamics and obstacles affecting marginalised groups' (Lunch and Lunch, 2006: 77).

Crafting narratives of the future

As the commissioning body, the Scotland's Futures Forum was less concerned about the production *process* as much as the final content within the *Our Future Scotland* film. From a research perspective, there is value in the form and composition of the artefact - which comes closer to Candy's conception of Practice-*Based* research. In this situation, Candy states, 'full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes' (Candy, 2006). Viewed in this way, the film has research significance as a filmic artefact where alternate visions of the future have been situated and curated. It creates a coherent narrative around often disparate ideas of the future by finding patterns and highlighting connections within the individual video contributions.

The future is a contested space: an imagined world on which we project our own personal and societal hopes and aspirations. It is the 'conceptual and rhetorical domain of the possible and potential' (Dunmire, 2010: 248). Bell argues that 'the purposes of futures studies are to discover or invent, examine and evaluate… preferable futures' (2005: 73). We are living amidst significant technological and social change. In the UK, as elsewhere, political institutions are concerned with the demands of the current parliamentary cycle. It can be difficult to see beyond the urgency of the present-day political climate. The imagined future looms large over the present-day political machinations around Brexit, Scottish Independence, or the climate agreements at the COP26 summit in Glasgow. It is a charged realm of political power-plays, where visions of idealised futures can reveal more about the confrontations of the present. Dunmire argues that the future 'represents an ideologically

potent site through which partisans attempt to wield power' (2010: 241). As a society, the challenge becomes how to best foster both inclusive debate in the public sphere around long-term planning and policy making without falling prey to present-day ideological rivalries.

Conclusion

In looking to the future, the project highlights concerns around ethics and technology, human identity and increasing automation, energy supply and the environment to name a few. 'The temptation is to hunker down and weather the present story without thinking too hard about the future,' writes Susskind, 'and that would be a mistake' (2018: 4). Despite the urgency of the politics of the present, preparing for (and crafting) the 'possible and probable' future society cannot be ignored. The film required a strategy which struck a fine balance: with the narrative structure to encourage people to focus on key issues whilst being inclusive and giving people the freedom to highlight their own priorities and visions. As Hebdige warns: 'particular discursive strategies open up or close down particular lines of possibility' and 'invite or inhibit particular identifications for particular social factions' (1993: 274). This raises questions about effective methods of inclusive communication. In this film I took care not to 'close down lines of possibility'. *Our Future Scotland* was always conceived not as a stand-alone media product but as a launchpad to for wider debates at public screenings and to foster engagement online and on social media. The concept had two central aims: first the film was designed to showcase a variety of visions for the future. Beyond this, it would highlight Scottish technological and social innovations which may shape the country in decades to come. The film, accompanied by a spectrum of multimedia content online, would act as a hub to attract others to join the conversation and provide a direct conduit for people's voices to be heard by politicians and policymakers.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This critical analysis identifies the originality of the outputs individually and as a collective body of related work. Together, they make an original contribution to knowledge based on the scope and ambition of the studies and the insights provided by the findings and analysis.

Originality of research and contribution to knowledge

Television and the Second Screen is the first book-length study which explores second screen engagement in the UK. The scope of the work is extensive as it investigates digital participation as part of the evolution of interactive TV and within academic theoretical frameworks. Based on the contributions of more than 25 industry professionals, the analysis makes and original contribution to knowledge by gaining rare insights into the aims and processes of interactive projects and by making comparisons between TV genres, advertising, sports engagement, public service and commercial broadcasters, and user participation on mobile platforms.

Second Screen Interaction in the Cinema builds on, and extends, the research for the book. It enables those key theories and themes to be applied to, and compared with, the history of interactive films and its convergence with video games. Based on original qualitative research with key industry figures, it explores recent film projects with original and in-depth analysis on the nature of immersion and agency.

Simulating Experiences of Displacement and Migration is significant as academic research undertaken by someone who also has knowledge and experience of the challenges of covering stories about migration as a journalist and filmmaker. With access to key industry figures and online content creators, the research is original because it investigates the limitations of conventional representations of refugees and explores recent digital projects which seek to employ interactive techniques to generate immersion and empathy.

Our Future Scotland is a unique practice-based video research project in collaboration with the Scotland's Futures Forum at the Scottish Parliament. It is unique because it combines industry techniques with practice-based methodologies and is informed by my traditional

research into interaction and digital participation. It is also original due to the nature and scope of the project itself: screened at multiple events across Scotland to engage people directly with the Scottish Parliament in setting out a vision for the future.

Reflection

The outputs are also significant because of the positionality and professional background of myself as researcher and the mixed methodologies adopted for each project. This critical analysis has been a positive experience of honest reflection and self-analysis. It has given me an opportunity to study the factors which link my outputs into a united body of research work. The chapter on *significance* demonstrates how I have carved out an area of expertise in researching *how* and *why* screen-based media industries have engaged with the interactive potential of digital and mobile platforms. The work remains timely as traditional broadcasters, challenged by the global giants of TV streaming, seek new ways to engage with their audiences who are actively seeking participation within digital narratives. The list of citations highlights how other scholars are using my work as they investigate how television productions around the world are experimenting with new formats of second screen interaction.

The *impact* of the work goes beyond the confines of the second screen as I have actively sought to engage with public debates around the convergence of social media platforms with TV viewing. My research places recent industry activities within theoretical frameworks which remain relevant to recent social concerns: around the personalisation of content, audience privacy, the changing face of public service broadcasting and the notion of user agency within digital transmedia narratives.

For TV journalists, there is often little time to reflect on our stories – neither the methods we use to obtain them, nor our own role in the narrative itself. Once one bulletin is finished, the focus normally moves quickly to the next show and the next deadline. Yet, in academia, reflection is an essential part of the research process. This critical analysis outlines how I have drawn on my professional TV experiences to benefit my qualitative and practice-based methodologies. However, it also interrogates the drawbacks of my hybrid 'insider' postionality. It has been a learning process for me – one that I hope will benefit my future

research. It has reaffirmed the importance of a consistent and structured approach to methodologies and the need to be aware and honest about any assumptions I may have. For this practice-based research project, collaborating with partners outside the academy has entailed specific challenges, but ultimately it has benefited the scope, profile and impact of my project.

Looking ahead, I plan to extend the research work on interaction and digital participation that I have published to date. In the first instance, this will involve building on my interests and expertise in visually representing experiences of migration. For example, this includes an initiative to film and document the experiences of people and communities displaced due to the effects of climate change. This critical analysis has taught me that there is not one single mould for an academic researcher. I need to recognise and utilise my strengths as both a researcher and as a media professional – a 'hackademic'. For me, this includes seeking out ways where traditional research and practice-based video projects can inform and enhance each other. It means recognising the challenges of my hybrid positionality as and crafting dedicated research projects which can benefit from my previous experience and have an impact moving forward.

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Appendix A

Appendix B