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# WORK AND SOCIALITY IN BRIGHTON'S NEW MEDIA

# INDUSTRY

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

**Signature**:

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PHD IN SOCIOLOGY

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SUMMARY

This study explores the relationships that form among practitioners in the new media industry – focussing on a particular locale, Brighton, UK. An aim is to understand the meanings that work and peer relationships have for practitioners. Another is to explore how peer relationships affect practitioners' careers. Through the use of qualitative methods – semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and ethnographic observation – the research highlights the importance of locality and of interaction in shaping the meanings and practices around work and sociality in the new media industry. Drawing on Bourdieu's ideas on field, habitus and capital it is suggested that the meanings practitioners attach to work are reflected in the aspirations inscribed in their habitus and the position they occupy within a geographically specific new media field. It is also suggested that social relationships among peers are constructed through interaction within Brighton's new media community where personal biographies, industrial and local cultures structure and reproduce each other. The importance of interpreting practices within intersections of fields, in which people are embedded, is also emphasised. Drawing on Goffman's ideas on the social organisation of co-presence, the logic of the new media field and the strategies that practitioners utilise – which are reflected in the ways practitioners manage their personal preserves inside a co-working organisation – is described. How career opportunities differ based on the position people occupy in the industry and how the use of different types of capitals effect career changes is also demonstrated. This study contributes to the research literature on the clustering of new media industries, to research looking at work and employment in the new media industry and, finally, to the literature on the networking practices of new media practitioners.

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# List of Abbreviations

**BCoC**: Brighton and Hove Chamber of Commerce

**BHCC**: Brighton and Hove City Council

**BMC**: Brighton Media Centre

**BNM**: Brighton New Media mailing list

**CWO**: Coworking organisation

**HEFCE**: Higher Education Funding Council for England

**SEEDA**: South East England Development Agency

**SIC**: Sussex Innovation Centre

**UKTI**: UK Trade and Investment

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose and significance of research

The purpose of this research is to explore the social relationships among practitioners working in the new media industry in Brighton and the impact of such relationships on practitioners' careers. This focus translates into a set of specific questions that are addressed in this thesis:

- What do peer relationships – meaning social relationships that develop among new media practitioners inside and outside of the workplace – look like?
- Which meanings do practitioners ascribe to peer relationships?
- How are these meanings constructed?
- Do peer relationships impact on new media careers and, if yes, in which ways?

The research presented in this thesis is important in multiple ways. Firstly, it makes a significant contribution to the growing literature on new media industrial clusters by presenting an empirical analysis of a key case study. While Brighton is one of the most important creative clusters in the UK (Chapain *et al*., 2010), literature on its development and the practices of actors therein is limited. This research aims to address these shortcomings in existing literature by providing an in depth investigation into the ways in which spatial proximity and high concentration of new media practitioners affects economic and social practices in the sector. Secondly, with its emphasis on peer relationships, this thesis contributes both to a better understanding of the multitude of factors that affect such relationships and an alternative approach to the common interpretation of peer relationships as networking. Thirdly, it offers a detailed examination of coworking, a novel type of organisation in the creative sectors. Finally, by drawing on Bourdieu's and Goffman's ideas, this research seeks to understand the practices of workers within a coherent theoretical framework which has not been used before for an analysis of work and sociality in the new media sector. This novel application on the empirical findings of this research emphasises the importance of the

concept of *field intersection* and therefore contributes to the expansion of Bourdieu's ideas.

The new media industry, since its birth in the mid-1990s which saw the development of the internet, has been a focal point of academic and policy research. An important reason behind this increasingly prominent scholarly interest towards the new media industry is that it has been identified as an important driver for economic growth (Bakhshi *et al*., 2013; Pratt and Hutton, 2012; Mateos-Garcia and Sapsed, 2011; Thomas *et al*., 2010; O' Connor, 2007; Tay, 2005). One other reason behind academic interest shown in the new media industry lies in the fact that it embodies most of the characteristics associated with the idea of the 'new economy'. The latter is a term which has been used to convey the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, the drastic changes in the economy effected by the rapid advancements of the internet and communication technologies, and the broader social and cultural changes that have accompanied these processes (Beck, 2000; Castells, 1996; Castells and Hall, 1994; Kumar, 1995). New media production is project-based, it involves the combination of skills and it relies on the autonomy and creativity of workers, rather than control and deskilling which were the central principles of Fordist production (Pratt, 2009; Damarin, 2006; Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005; Christopherson, 2004). As such, the new media labour process has been identified as creative, autonomous and flexible (Hesmondalgh, 2007; Pratt, 2000). Other commentators have interpreted the labour process in the context of contemporary methods of corporate governance, whereby workers are given autonomy so that companies can harness creativity and effort (Smith an McKinlay, 2009b; Storey *et al*., 2005).

Commentators have also stressed the precarious conditions experienced by new media workers (Kennedy, 2010; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Pratt, Gill and Spelthann, 2007; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Gill, 2002; Pratt, 2000). Accordingly, relationships among new media practitioners have predominantly been interpreted from the point of view of the material position they occupy in the industry, namely workers operating in an environment of uncertainty and rapid technological change. These interpretations have contributed to the idea that new media practitioners are, as part of the 'creative class' (Florida, 2004), the poster children of the 'new precariat' (Gill, 2010; Gill and Pratt, 2008), a term assigned to those who experience the precarious conditions of work in the new

economy. The precarians have been viewed as driven by individualism rendering any possibility of solidarity unlikely (Bauman, 2011). According to this approach, social life has been viewed as completely commodified. As such, peer relationships in the new media industry have mainly been understood as networking, referring to interaction driven by the need of practitioners to seek employment and upgrade their skills (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Wittel, 2001; Batt *et al*., 2000; Pratt, 2000). However, there is need to recognise how practitioners themselves perceive their position in this field and how they experience their work and interactions.

In this thesis I draw on Bourdieu's ideas on field, habitus and capital (1996; 1990; 1986; 1977) and Goffman's ideas on frames (1974) and the social organisation of co-presence (1971; 1963), to put forward the argument that the social relationships among new media workers in Brighton are much more multifaceted than usually presented in the existing literature. What peer relationships mean for different new media practitioners is shaped through various processes that take place at the local level, through interaction and on the basis of the different positions occupied within the new media field. What is more, peer interaction creates the conditions for both resistance and subjugation of practitioners in the new media industry.

## 1.2. Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters. After introducing the research and structure of the thesis in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 reviews the literatures on the spatial organisation of the new media industries, new media work and sociality. I discuss the ways in which new media sociality has been approached and point out some of the limitations and strengths of these approaches. I briefly outline Bourdieu's key ideas of field, habitus and capital (1996; 1990; 1986; 1977) and Goffman's ideas on frame theory (1974) and the social organisation of co-presence (1971; 1963), upon which I draw to put forward my argument. Finally, I explain how my engagement with these key ideas are central to the arguments put forward in this thesis and how these arguments contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

In Chapter 3, I present my methodology and explain why this thesis adopts a qualitative methodology. The methods used for the collection of data were semi-structured

interviewing and ethnographic observation, complemented by desk-research which involved the collection of secondary data, such as government and non-governmental statistics and reports on employment, salaries and growth rates. My fieldwork took place between the winter of 2010 and autumn of 2011. I conducted 36 interviews in total, 33 of which with new media practitioners and three with local industry experts. All participants worked, either as self-employed practitioners or in companies, in Brighton's new media sector, predominantly in web development. The ethnographic part of the research took place mainly in one of Brighton's coworking organisations (hereafter CWOs). The latter was an organisation that rented workspace to freelancers and small companies working predominantly in the new media industry. These methods generated a wealth of data that were analysed through a non-linear iterative process which involved transcription, immersion within the data, coding and engagement with theory, identification of themes, re-immersion within the data and, finally, further engagement with theory.

In Chapter 4, I present the context within which my study took place, namely the Brighton new media cluster. Secondary and tertiary data on Brighton's new media cluster were at times corroborated with my own primary data. The discussion starts with a demonstration of some statistics on the cluster's size, growth and geography. I move on to a brief history of the cluster. Next, I describe the institutional environment in which new media activities were embedded. I engage in a detailed discussion about the role of Brighton and Hove City Council, the local universities and, finally, the role of local new media associations. I conclude the chapter with the prominent role that grass roots groups and social networks have played in the development of the cluster, introducing some of the topics I examine in the remainder of the thesis.

In Chapter 5, I examine what the new media labour process can tell us about peer relationships. I put forward the first part of my argument, namely that work becomes satisfactory and fulfilling through peer interaction which provides certain roles in the industry with the opportunity for symbolic compensation. I start by presenting evidence which shows that peer interaction is central in the labour process, not only within companies but also among freelancers who work among their peers in coworking organisations and cafés. Then I move on to suggest that central in my participants' accounts is the desire for creativity, initiative and for working among like-minded

people. I also present evidence suggesting that, beyond the intrinsic desire for creativity or the inculcation of the desire for autonomy, new media specific cultural capital (*i.e.* skills and knowledge) is highly valued among new media practitioners, and that through demonstration of this capital, new media practitioners achieve recognition – symbolic compensation – which is important in itself, but potentially more important under conditions of precariousness and relatively low economic rewards. As such, the pursuit of recognition is an important component of new media peer relationships.

In Chapter 6, I further pursue my argument that peer interaction cannot be reduced to networking, by expanding my focus on different occasions where my participants socialise with each other. These occasions include formalised industry events, informal gatherings, hybrid events (*i.e.* formalised informal gatherings) and, finally, workshops. I also present the activities in which my participants engage during these occasions. Then I turn to the different meanings that my participants ascribe to these instances of peer interaction. I demonstrate that the meanings associated with peer interaction range from strategic interaction (reputation building and learning) to solidarity and peer support. I then move on to describe the process of the social construction of socialising. I argue that this process involves widespread ideas about networking which imbue capitalism, the opportunities that arise in Brighton through social connectedness, the proliferation of such ideas through the various local associations and prestigious actors in the local new media scene, the logic of Brighton as a bohemian city and, finally, personal embodied histories and circumstances.

In Chapter 7, I combine Bourdieu's ideas with Goffman's ideas on the social organisation of co-presence to describe the social organisation of one of Brighton's CWOs and how the meanings associated with peer interaction are translated into practices, habits and rituals. I further provide concrete examples of how peer relationships are constructed and negotiated within the organisation.

In Chapter 8, I reflect on the arguments made and the data presented throughout Chapters 5 and 7, and argue that through the conversion of different types of capital which takes place within the social relationships that form among new media practitioners, different career trajectories are effected. Some of these trajectories represent a form of resistance and others a form of submission to domination in the new

media field. However, resistance and submission do not merely represent improvement of one's position or maintenance of the *status quo* in material (*i.e.* financial) terms. Instead, different people attach importance to different aspects of their work and career. Different dispositions tend to reflect both the different aspirations inscribed in the habitus, and the differences in the position occupied in the field, alongside the opportunities available based on such positions.

In Chapter 9, I conclude with a recapitulation of the arguments made, the contribution and implications of this study and, finally, the potential for more work done on the topic in the future.

In light of the chapters detailed above, the literature review which follows addresses topics such as the organisation of the new media sector, how new media work and sociality have been represented in existing literature, some of the strengths and gaps in existing accounts and, finally, how I think Bourdieu's and Goffman's ideas can help in addressing these gaps.

# 2. Literature review: The clustering of the new media industry, new media work and sociality

## 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I review the existing academic work in the areas upon which this research touches, namely work and sociality within Brighton's new media cluster. The first aim of this review is to offer the necessary background information on what constitutes the new media sector and what is meant by new media clustering. The second aim is to situate this research within specific strands of existing literature that have addressed the issue of new media work and sociality and to identify strengths as well as limitations in this literature that need to be addressed. The third aim is to discuss the theoretical ideas used in this thesis to investigate the phenomenon in question and address those gaps in the literature.

The review begins with a discussion of the definition and structure of the new media industry, namely which economic activities it includes, what the production process looks like and who the various actors are. In section 3, I discuss the spatial organisation of the new media industry. The latter tends to be geographically concentrated in what has widely been defined as *clusters* (Porter, 1998; 1994). In this section I describe how new media clustering has been theorised and empirically explored and what kind of knowledge this literature has produced regarding the lives of new media practitioners. In section 4, I discuss how academic and policy literature has viewed new media work and sociality. New media work has been seen as passionate (Gill, 2010; Perrons, 2003; Pratt, 2000), insecure and excessive (Smith, 2010; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006). The social relations among new media workers have predominantly been seen as commodified networking relationships emanating from the material position of new media practitioners within the new media industry (Wittel, 2001; Batt *et al*., 2000; Pratt, 2000). As such, peer relationships have been seen as merely fulfilling the need for skills-upgrading, team-formation and job-seeking. In section 5, I propose that Bourdieu's

(1996; 1990; 1986; 1977) ideas on field, *habitus* and capital and Goffman's (1974; 1971; 1963) ideas on frames and the social organisation of co-presence are valuable in understanding how the different characteristics of new media work and sociality are connected and how the meanings that my participants communicated are constructed.

## 2.2. The new media industry

## 2.2.1. The definition of the new media industry

The rapid development of the internet and communication technologies has been argued to have advanced globalisation and to have induced changes that, according to many commentators, have brought about a fundamentally new socio-economic system, namely the 'new economy' or 'information economy' (James, 2011; Perrons, 2004; Cooke, 2002a; Beck, 2000; Castells, 1996; Castells and Hall, 1994; Kumar, 1995). The rapid developments in communication technologies and the internet during the last two decades has been at the centre of the new media industry. The term 'new media' used to describe this industry and the older – and perhaps more appropriate – term 'multimedia' (Lash and Wittel, 2002) refer to the convergence of image, sound and video that became possible with the advances of computing technologies and the internet (Pratt, 2009; Cooke, 2002b; Pratt, 2000). This highly interactive nature of the internet has been commonly referred to as Web 2.0.

Which economic activities are included in the new media industry has been the topic of dispute (Pratt, 2009; Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005; Christopherson, 2004; Gill, 2002). The confusion surrounding research on the nature of the new media industry is reflected in the policy and academic literature where the new media industry has been seen as part of the cultural industries (Hesmondalgh, 2007), the creative industries / creative economy (Pratt and Hutton, 2012; Chapain *et al.,* 2010; Smith and McKinlay, 2009a; Thomas *et al.,* 2009; Ross, 2008), the digital content industries (Pratt *et al.,* 2007) and the internet industry (Lash and Wittel, 2002). It has commonly been agreed that the new media industry refers to activities in which the internet and computing technologies are key productive factors (Gill, 2002, p. 78; Batt *et al.*, 2000, p. 2). In fact, part of the ambiguity has been derived from the dynamic nature of the internet and the computing technologies utilised in the new media industry. As Pratt

(2009, p. 197) has accurately noted '[t]he definition of new media can be problematic, not at least because it is an emergent and fast changing industry'. The industry emerged 20 years ago and since then it has transformed itself, by constantly creating new types of products and services. Due to the centrality of the internet, new media activities seem to fit better within the technologically more proximate internet and digital content industries, rather than within the much broader cultural or creative industries.

The new media industry could be defined as the sum of economic activities combining 'elements of computing technology, telecommunications, and content' (Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf, 2009, p. 214) and being concerned with the provision of digital information-based services and products. In this sense, new media activities should be limited to those aimed at the creation of new media products, such as websites, web applications and online games, rather than be extended to those activities that utilise new media (mobile phones, the internet and the various web applications) for non-productive activities, such as marketing or distribution. Even though "new media" such as the internet have become a common denominator across the economy, not all economic activities qualify as new media activities. Instead, as Christopheron and van Jaarsveldt (2005, p. 79) have noted, the new media industry should be seen as effecting the transformation of conventional industries. Lash and Wittel (2002, p. 191-2) have described new media activities as part of the internet-related industry. The latter has been broken down into four categories although, as Lash and Wittel have pointed out, they are not strict since many companies are involved in more than one of these activities at the same time. These categories include: *internet infrastructure companies*, including large enterprises which provide the hardware and software, *e-commerce companies*, including companies involved in web-based economic transactions, *content providers*, including companies which provide the content of websites and, finally, *new media agencies*, including companies and practitioners involved in web development. These latter activities, which have evolved over the last two decades from simple forms of media, such as text, to richer forms such as image, sound and video, mainly include the building of websites, web applications for mobile phones, internet games and e-learning. Within these parameters, the term 'new media industry' is used in this thesis to denote primarily activities undertaken in the context of web development.

## 2.2.2. The structure of the new media industry

### 2.2.2.1. Companies, freelancers and projects

Discussing the creative economy, part of which is the new media industry, Pratt and Hutton (2012, p. 3) have described a 'bifurcated structure, comprising a few extremely large organisations and many thousands of micro-enterprises or self-employed, single-person companies'. Davis and Scase have identified four different types of organisation, in terms of control and coordination of work, in the cultural industries (Hesmondalgh, 2007, p. 190-1). This typology includes commercial bureaucracies, traditional/ charismatic organisations, cultural bureaucracies and micro-companies which operate within networks with other companies. Leaving aside large multinational corporations such as Microsoft or Apple, on which the rest of new media activities are to a large extent technologically dependent, new media activities, such as web development and web and mobile application development, largely fit the fourth type, namely micro-companies operating within networks. Based on a different typology of the creative industries, the new media sector could also be described as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) 'with a mixture of permanent staffs and more use of freelancers and other small firms to meet variations in workflow or to create capacity to undertake large projects' (Smith and McKinlay, 2009a, p. 10).

The project-based character of creative work is deemed to be the reason behind this particular type of organisation. According to commentators, the more relevant unit of analysis in the creative sectors is not the company or the individual practitioner but the project (Grabher, 2002; Ó Riain, 2000). Project-based production is organised in networks of different actors (companies and independent practitioners) that form *ad hoc* and dissolve once the project is finished (see Pratt, 2009; Christopherson, 2004; Grabher, 2002). As Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt (2005, p. 80) have explained, 'projects make sense because they meet requirements for flexible responses to rapid changes in markets and enhanced innovative capacity'. After each project is finished, teams consisting of different actors become re-configured to work on a different project, where a different set and combination of skills is required. This accounts not only for the network relations between micro-companies, but also for the character of the company itself, which has been characterised as post-bureaucratic (Damarin, 2006). Although traditional new media companies with more or less clear hierarchical

structures do exist, most new media companies 'exhibit the characteristics of 'postbureaucratic organisations'' (Damarin, 2006, p. 430). Pratt (2000, p. 432) identified the requirement for 'informality and mixing of different skills' as the main reason behind the obscure structures and hierarchies in the new media industry. The innovation literature, which is relevant to the extent that new media work is based on constant innovation, has also stressed the changing nature of innovative activity from being individualistic to being situated within formal and informal networks of cooperation (Rothwell, 2002).[1]

Within this context, permanent employees have been seen as an economically inefficient choice. Instead, companies prefer to draw on a variety of freelancers depending on the specific set of skills they require at any given time. Freelancers have been defined as 'self-employed workers who provide labour services, usually to several employers, on a fixed-term, temporary or intermittent basis' (Heery *et al.,* 2004, p. 21). Their high presence in the new media industry and the creative industries in general is often noted in the literature (Bilton, 2007; Henninger and Gottschall, 2007, p. 44; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006, p. 234; Perrons, 2003; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999).

### 2.2.2.2. The new media workplace for company employees and self-employed practitioners

*Open plan spaces and remote work*

In new media companies, the company workplace has traditionally been organised around open plan arrangements (Pratt, 2009, p. 203-4) rather than separate offices or cubicles. Open plan arrangements have been seen as appropriate for facilitating the frequent communication and feedback loop procedures required for creative work (Leung, 2005; Pratt, 2002). Open space arrangements are also supposed to allow the

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[1] Rothwell (2002) identified five generations of innovation process. The first generation (50s – mid 60s), which others have termed the 'technology-push' model, sees the creation of new products as a direct result of technological advances; the second generation (mid-60s – mid 70s), the so called market-pull model, sees innovation as driven by market needs; the third generation (early 70s – mid 80s) introduces non-linearity in the innovation process, with back and forth movements between market needs and technological capabilities; the fourth generation (early 80s – early 90s) introduces network relations with suppliers (strategic alliances) and internally in the company; finally the fifth generation process (mid 90s onwards) stresses the importance of networking, flexibility, strategic alliances, and flatter organisational structures (see also Landry *et al*., 2000; Dosi, 1982).

easy reconfiguration of teams as a project comes to an end and a new one starts (Pratt, 2009, p. 204).

*Homeworking*

ICT has allowed remote communication with employees and, eventually, the workplace has lost its rigid and spatially bound character (Castells, 1996).[2] People's homes have provided common workplaces not only for freelancers but also for employees who work remotely. Gregg (2011, p. 40) has demonstrated that the benefits of working from home include '[a]mbient lighting, freedom of movement, lack of stress ... ability to take regular breaks from the keyboard to stretch, make a cup of tea, or move from room to room depending on the task' as well as 'the possibility of combining paid work with other tasks and activities', among which is childcare. Of course, home-working comes with disadvantages which include 'patchy infrastructure support' and technical problems in general, absence of social interaction, and effectively the blurring of labour and leisure boundaries (ibid., p. 41). According to Henninger and Gottschall (2007, p. 58), renting an office may, for some freelancers, constitute a strategy to keep work and family life separate. However, renting an office can be a relatively expensive choice, given the income uncertainty associated with freelancing, so for many it potentially represents a luxury they cannot afford.

*Public space work*

Remote company workers and freelancers who do not work from home have the option to work at cafés that provide broadband access, rent an office, or work in a coworking space, a practice made possible through the advances in internet and communication technologies (Ling and Campbell, 2010; Henninger and Gottschall, 2007). Ling and Campbell (2010) have argued that working in public places is not necessarily indicative of a need to seek social interaction. They have identified two types of outdoors work, namely *cocooning* and *camping* (ibid., p. 78). The former refers to the process whereby freelancers are in public places but are sheltered from their environment through the use of ICTs, and the latter to viewing cafés as attractive urban places which combine sociality with work.

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[2] Although homeworking has traditionally been common in industries such as textiles and clothing (Gill, 1985, p. 25), it has become a much more common practice with the introduction of modern communication technologies.

*Coworking*

There has been little academic work on the phenomenon of coworking as it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Its origins can be traced back to places like Citizen Space, Hat Factory and Spiral Muse in San Francisco and Independent Hall in Philadelphia, United States (Fost, 2008). Brad Neuberg, founder of Hat Factory among other early coworking organisations (hereafter CWOs), is often cited as a pioneer of the coworking movement (Buczynski, 2012; Fost, 2008).

A CWO can be broadly defined as a workspace where freelancers and small companies rent space and work in close proximity to each other. This broad definition encompasses many different organisations which can be characterised as CWOs, yet they can be markedly different. Spinuzzi (2012), for example, presented several organisations which used the "coworking" moniker but were characterised by quite different types of service provision. In some cases CWOs were community work spaces which provided, alongside workspace, services such as childcare, yoga and acupuncture (Spinuzzi, 2012.). In other cases, CWOs were more focused on services related to the provision of workspace and relevant services, such as WIFI connection, IT facilities, conference rooms, and so on – depending on the type of membership – to members and the fostering of relationships among users (Spinuzzi, 2012; Leforestier, 2009).

Specific types of CWOs which emphasise social interaction among their members have been celebrated by users and new media industry figures as the vanguard of a new business model which renders old organisational models obsolete. According to the Citizen Space website (Citizen Space, no date) the basic elements of the coworking philosophy – directly linked to social interaction – were collaboration, openness, accessibility and community. Core values of coworking, according to DeGuzman and Tang (2011, p. 22), are collaboration, community, sustainability, openness and accessibility. Commentators have pointed out that these principles behind coworking are also associated with the open source movement (Leforestier, 2009; Fost, 2008). In business literature, such as the recent book by DeGuzman and Tang (2011, p. 1), coworking is presented as the 'perfect set-up for startups and freelancers, small organisations and the remote worker'. The supposed benefits it has been seen to offer include cost reduction emanating from economies of scale through sharing resources

such as the internet and office space and the fostering of cooperative relationships which are conducive to innovation (ibid., p. 7). Spinuzzi (2012, p. 402) describes coworking as a solution to work-related drawbacks such as isolation, inability to build trust and relationships and restricted opportunities for collaboration and networking, resulting from the technological advances in ICTs.

According to DeGuzman and Tang (2011, p. 4) there were 820 CWOs in 2011, 380 of which were in the US and Canada. By October 2012 the number of CWOs grew to 1,779 (Buczynski, 2012). While there are no official data on CWO presence in the UK, their numbers seem to have been increasing over the years. According to an article in the Economist (2011), the proliferation of CWOs could be attributed to new technologies such as cloud computing, the increasing presence of women in the workforce and the increasing number of freelancers. Moreover, the role of the on-going economic crisis should not be ignored when accounting for the proliferation of CWOs, which represent a cheaper option than renting an office.

## 2.3. The spatial organisation of the new media industry

### 2.3.1. New media clusters

It has been observed that creative industries in general and new media activities in particular tend to concentrate in geographical space (Bakhshi *et al*., 2013; Pratt and Hutton, 2012; Chapain, *et al*. 2010; Pratt, 2011b; Lazzaretti *et al*., 2009; Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005; Perrons, 2003; Cooke, 2002b). The phenomenon of spatial concentration of economic activity is known as clustering. Porter (1998, p. 78) defined clusters as 'geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field'. According to the European Commission (2008, p. 7), '[c]lusters are defined by the co-location of producers, service providers, educational and research institutions, financial institutions and other private and government institutions related through linkages of different types'. Two basic defining characteristics of clusters have been identified: a) related firms and industries which focus on innovation and, b) upgrading of competitive advantage (Ketels *et al*., 2008, p. 5). Enright (2003, p. 102) provided a more elaborate typology of clusters based on a series of dimensions such as geographic scope, breadth, depth, activity base, reach, strength of competitive position,

stage of development, nature of technical activities, innovative capacity and ownership structure. Accordingly he has identified five types of clusters: working clusters, latent clusters, potential clusters, policy driven clusters and wishful thinking clusters (ibid. p. 104). The first three types refer to clusters that either have a critical mass of companies and surrounding institutions, and have developed dense channels of interaction, or have the potential to achieve these. The last two refer to cases where government policies try to nurture a cluster environment without being successful in doing so, or where other conditions favouring the policy are not present. Pratt (2011b) has referred to clusters where social and economic interaction among the various actors is present as actually existing clusters. Researchers referring to industrial clusters have usually implied that a shared culture exists which allows flexible cooperation and facilitates communication (see Maskell and Lorenzen, 2004; Wolfe, 2002). Institutions such as universities and local associations have been identified as being responsible for creating this culture by providing continuity and the conditions in which business and other relationships can be forged.

## 2.3.2. What sparks new media clustering?

Research has noted the presence of various initial favourable conditions that regions might have, which act as forces that stimulate further economic development. The place that becomes the locus of initial economic concentration is subjected to the law of cumulative causation as described by Myrdal (1957). The latter refers to the process whereby a force attracts economic actors to a location and as economic activity increases, so does the attractiveness of the location. Scholars who expanded on Myrdal's ideas, such as Fujita and Krugman (2004) have described in more elaborate manner the centripetal and the centrifugal forces which are present in an area with an initial advantage and tend to respectively attract (*e.g.* supply of labour) and repel (*e.g.* high cost of living) economic activity.

The presence of a scarce resource or factor of production (*e.g.* specialised labour) has been identified as a common force responsible for kick-starting a process of industrial clustering. In addition to the presence of a specialised factor of production, Enright (1998, p. 317) has identified demand conditions and supporting and related industries among the creating forces of clusters. Others have emphasised the impact of the

presence of a big successful company on the attractiveness of a certain location. Brenner and Muhlig (2007), for example, found that the most crucial triggering factors were a leading firm and special policy measures. Public policy has been a potent force in the creation of clusters. Many policy initiatives taken at the European, national or regional level have also been encouraging industrial clustering throughout the European Union since the late 1990s. Creative clusters specifically were promoted by policy makers and academics alike as potent forces for economic development/recovery (Ross, 2008, p. 32-3).

In the case of the UK, the potential role of the creative sectors in the revitalisation of the economy was high on New Labour's policy agenda (Mateos-Garcia and Sapsed, 2011; Thomas *et al.*, 2010; O' Connor, 2007; Tay, 2005). It has been noted that the establishment of creative cities was part of New Labour's economic strategy (Tay, 2005, p. 220; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999). Policy makers have also emphasised the importance of creative industries in supplying 'other sectors with creative inputs that increase innovation and productivity' (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2013, p. 14). According to Pratt and Hutton (2012, p. 2) the creative economy, with a growth rate of 14% during the period 2002-2008, has shown good signs of resistance to the recession.

## 2.3.3. New media clustering and agglomeration economies

Access to natural resources, access to specialised labour, being close to the market, or policy initiatives have all been identified as forces which help kick-start a concentration process. However, there are more reasons which render clustering economically desirable, namely the agglomeration economies that are endogenously produced within clusters over time and make clustering an economically rational choice. These refer both to urbanisation economies, namely benefits accruing from the accumulation of economic activities such as local infrastructure, commuting, or even a citywide broadband, and to localisation economies, such as access to a pool of tacit knowledge (Lazzaretti *et al.*, 2009; Lorenzen and Frederiksen, 2008; Marshall, 1923). In industrial clustering literature, these agglomeration economies have often also been considered as forces behind the starting of clustering.[3] This ambiguity is reasonable in the sense that

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[3]   This conflation can become problematic in cases where, for example, localisation economies are presumed to constitute forces of collocation whilst there is no prior concentration of economic activity

clusters are dynamic entities and, as such, both the potential reasons to locate in a particular area and the economic benefits associated with such a location change according to the stage of development of the cluster. Thus, even though it may appear that economists have viewed clustering as the result of the collective rational organisational response of economic actors, this is not the case. The agglomeration economies resulting from collocation, which might not have been a force of collocation in the beginning of a cluster, eventually become a force of collocation once they start to exist. In the remainder of this section I elaborate on the agglomeration economies associated with clustering, a phenomenon which can provide helpful insights into the economic factors affecting new media work and sociality.

The development of clusters is often attributed to the decision of firms to choose an organisational alternative to hierarchy, networking and free market transactions. Morgan (1992, p. 151), for instance, has seen networking and clustering as solutions in cases where markets and hierarchies are not appropriate, that is, when transactions are complex, uncertain and iterate. Maskell and Lorenzen (2004) have argued that firms decide to organise their relationships inside the flexible and informal framework that characterises clusters because they face either market ambiguity or market uncertainty. When a large number of specialised firms is concentrated in an area, then firms can easily draw on a large pool of skills according to changing patterns of demand. The supplier of firm A may soon become the supplier of firm B, or competing firms inside the cluster may even share common suppliers.

Implicit in this organisational approach is that the choice to cluster is linked to the capacity to innovate. Indeed, a large part of the industrial clustering literature (see Nooteboom, 2004; Basant, 2002; Cooke, 2002a; Maskell, 2001; Porter, 1998; Audretsch and Feldman, 1996; Porter, 1994) has not focused on production-cost minimisation but rather stresses benefits accruing to firms which cluster in terms of knowledge creation. Marshal (1923) was the first to speak about localisation economies to describe the positive effects of the geographical concentration of economic activity. These included

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in place. Localisation economies potentially constitute forces of (further) concentration only when there already is some concentration of economic activity (and, hence, localisation economies are operating).

the mysteries of trade 'in the air', information spillovers and innovation through the combination of ideas (Marshal, 1923, p. 152-3).

More recently, scholars have elaborated on the processes associated with innovation. According to Porter (1998; 1994), the nature of competitiveness changed as a result of an increasingly globalising economy. His argument was that minimisation of production costs could be achieved through methods that were ubiquitous to most firms, such as access to cheap labour and other cheap inputs, or even outsourcing of certain activities to distant markets. Most resources have become readily available from anywhere in the world to anyone through sourcing, thus economic actors do not have to migrate to take advantage of specific resources necessary for production. However, commentators have suggested that the intangibles of production are not readily available and that tacit knowledge constitutes the contemporary source of competitive advantage (Howells, 2002). Tacit knowledge represents the outcome of individual specialisation; the personal experience gained from the division of labour. The production of new knowledge depends on the re-assemblance of these bits of knowledge (Maskell, 2001). That is the reason why the innovation process has been seen as a non-linear and interdependent process within and between firms and other organisations (Ostergaard, 2007; Landry *et al.*, 2000; Todling, 1998, p. 4). Informal communication has been identified as the key factor leading to innovation (Enright, 1998, p. 318; Saxenian, 1994). Dosi (1982) stressed the significance of institutional variables in the function of innovation. According to Cooke (2002a, p. 2), the real sources of innovation are neither the entrepreneur nor the research and design laboratory, but instead the network of social relations. Therefore, geographical proximity among firms within industrial clusters appears to provide a conducive environment to the diffusion and creation of new knowledge, as demonstrated by many studies in the field (for an overview of the literature see Basant, 2002). According to Maskell (2001), innovation becomes possible through the nurturing of a shared language through frequent interaction within the cluster, which allows actors to overcome the cognitive gap resulting from different processes of knowledge creation and successfully combine different bodies of knowledge. One stage central in this process is the localised spillover of knowledge (Alcacer and Chung, 2007).

Several studies on creative and new media clustering stress both the production-cost benefits and the knowledge-creation benefits for companies associated with new media clustering, and the employment benefits for new media workers. With regard to the former, research suggests that new media activities and creative industries in general concentrate in space in order to exploit agglomeration economies (Lazzaretti *et al.*, 2009; Lorenzen and Frederiksen, 2008; Perrons, 2003). Pratt and Hutton (2012) have argued that the reason behind creative clustering lies in the efficiency of handling information. Unpacking this claim points towards either transaction cost concerns (in the sense that proximity minimises costs related to information about clients, partners and consumers), or knowledge creation concerns (in the sense that proximity enhances the ability to create new knowledge). As discussed earlier, the new media industry includes activities that have been characterised as uncertain and ambiguous (Indergaard, 2004, p. 13-4) and, as Lash and Wittel (2002, p. 1985) have noted, 'ability to cope with uncertainty has been one of the fundamental requirements in the new media business'. Accordingly, 'projects make sense because they meet requirements for flexible responses to rapid changes in markets and enhanced innovative capacity' (Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005, p. 80). Within clusters, then, the ability to put together teams to work on different projects is improved because of the presence of many actors. When creative companies cluster, they can easily adapt their production to changing demands (by having easy access to many potential business partners and skilled labour), an ability particularly important since both technology and trends in consumption in these industries are very volatile. In turn, creative workers within creative clusters have access to opportunities that they would not have if they were more isolated. Especially in the creative sectors, the presence of many related companies in an area provide a variety of job opportunities to freelancers (Thomas *et al.*, 2010, p. 15; Gill and Pratt, 2008). In that sense, the fast rate of technological change and the high level of risk attached to new media production make this type of organisation more appropriate compared to other more traditional types of organisation.

### 2.3.4. The role of culture and the preferences of workers in the new media industry

Labour force requirements regarding cultural amenities affect the location decision of companies. Salvesen and Renski (2003), for example, argued that labour force preferences regarding quality of life are more likely to have a strong impact on the location decision of companies in skills-short markets, where the labour force has relatively strong negotiating power. With regard to the cultural industries in general, 'the presence of culture and artistic heritage' is deemed important for the emergence of cultural clusters (Lazzaretti *et al*., 2009, p. 3). Leadbeater and Oakley (1999) and Perrons (2004) have identified the physical environment and cultural characteristics as important factors for the attraction of a skilled workforce in the new media cluster in Brighton. Pratt (2002) has also demonstrated that the bohemian lifestyle of San Francisco played an important part in the development of the South of the Market new media cluster. The reason new creative workers are attracted to such a lifestyle has been explained by Florida (2003, p. 8-9) in terms of tolerance, diversity and innovation. Creative people, according to Florida, prefer environments that are tolerant and open-minded because they offer them the opportunity to express their creativity. Pratt (2011a) criticised Florida's tendency to overlook the social construction of the creative workers' identity and referred instead to the *habitus* of the creative class, hinting towards the social factors that shape the tastes of creative workers. Eikhof and Haunschild (2006) have offered a different interpretation of the relationship between bohemia and the creative work. They argued that the bohemian lifestyle has the function of reconciling two identities which are inherently in conflict with each other: the *artist* and the *entrepreneur*. In the case of creative workers, of whom they assumed art as being a cornerstone of their identity, the bohemian lifestyle allows them to commodify and market their artistic output by neutralising their sense of guilt. All of these interpretations can be criticised as being either essentialist, in the case of Florida, or reductionist in the case of Pratt, Eikhoff and Haunschild, in the sense that they adhere to the idea of a creative class or of a homogeneous group of creative workers and, as such, end up being insensitive to the different meanings that different creative workers might ascribe to their choices. The relationship between bohemian lifestyle and new media work is among the issues that are addressed in this thesis.

## 2.4. New media work and sociality

Commentators have usually described an agreement between the objective characteristics of the industry and the character of new media work and sociality. As described earlier, new media work is organised in projects – processes which tend to take place within clusters. This type of organisation is deemed to be necessary for the creation of novel products and services. As such, new media work has been characterised as work which involves intensive interaction and combination of skills (facilitated by companies' flat hierarchical structures) and continual upgrading of skills. In the sense that new media work entails opportunities for the development of skills as well as being interactive and challenging, it could be characterised as high quality work in what Sayer (2011, p. 7) described as 'the unequal division of labour'. On the other hand, as Pratt, Gill and Spelthann (2007, p. 934) have argued, 'rapid turnover of work, low barriers of entry to the field as well as uncertainty over costing jobs has created very unstable conditions for web designers'. As Murray and Gollmitzer (2011, p. 4) noted, even though '[t]he creative sector has always been characterised by complex working arrangements … currently cultural work is more intensively casualised'. As such, new media work has been seen as bulimic, insecure and pervasive (Kennedy, 2010; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Pratt, 2008; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Gill, 2002; Pratt, 2000). The social relationships outside of formal working hours among new media practitioners have been seen as stemming directly from the nature of new media work and they are rarely examined. They have usually been viewed merely as derivatives of their material position in the industry, in the context of the extensification of work (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006). In the remainder of this section I review how new media work and sociality have been portrayed in the literature.

## 2.4.1. Insecurity and extensification

New media work has been seen as insecure because new media workers (both employed and self-employed) cannot rely on having a steady job and career. Uncertainty and insecurity have been seen as broader trends in the new economy (Gill, 2002; Beck, 2000). However, 'in the UK limited evidence from the 1990s supports the insecurity thesis' (Perrons, 2003). Doogan (2001, p. 434) has talked about a 'manufactured insecurity' induced by the government and reinforced by selective media coverage.

Fevre (2007) also argued that data do not support the insecurity thesis and talked about the role of social theorists, such as Beck and Giddens, in manufacturing insecurity. Nevertheless, research on the new media sector has repeatedly made the link between insecurity and the so called extensification of work, a term which has emerged to describe the resulting spillover of work into the rest of life.[4] Research on the extensification of work in the new media industry has suggested that the extension of working hours and time spent in networking can be explained by this context of insecurity inherent in new media work. Networking or attending the right parties in order to secure work have been identified among the practices that are examples of extensification (Smith, 2010; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006). Several researchers have noted the importance of informal ways of recruitment – such as word of mouth, social networking and mailing lists – of freelancers and new media workers in general (Perrons, 2004; Batt *et al.*, 2000; Pratt, 2000). However, extensification has not only been interpreted as a function of the imperfect labour market. Long working hours in the workplace might also reflect the effort to maintain one's job. Hyman *et al.* (2003 p. 217), for example, viewed extensification (in terms of long working hours) resulting from the need to demonstrate organisational commitment in an environment of insecurity. Workers may feel that by being over-zealous at work they can ensure their position in the company.

Precariousness is another notion that has been linked to the issue of extensification and insecurity experienced in the creative industries. Workers in these industries have been described as the poster children of the *new precariat* (Gill, 2010; Gill and Pratt, 2008), a term combining the terms precarity and proletariat. It refers to work 'which is no longer definable by fixed rules relative to the labour relation, to salary and to length of working day' (Berardi, no date). Some have argued that precarity is a 'more general existential state' which includes not only work-related concerns but 'affective personal relationships' as well (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008, p. 52). These conditions of precarity of information workers have often been seen as capable of dividing and separating them, rendering any 'calls to solidarity ludicrous' (Bauman, 2011; Bourdieu, 1998a).

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[4] Extensification primarily refers to work spilling over to the rest of life rather than the changes that globalisation and ICT advances have effected on the working day (Land and Taylor, 2010, p. 398). As communication software has allowed companies that have clients and partners around the globe to arrange meetings online, the working day can extend well beyond the nine-five structure in order to 'match the working hours of different time zones' (Perrons, 2003, p. 69-70). The issue of extensification is also closely linked to the issue of work-life balance and how the former impacts on spheres of life other than work. Most of the literature on this topic mainly looks at family life rather than the "rest of life" (Chang *et al.*, 2010).

Indeed, while Neilson and Rossiter (2008) have pointed towards the European precarity movement and have argued over the potential for the emergence of new political subjectivities of resistance, Ross (2008, p. 42) has questioned the prospects of a cross-class alliance among the precarious by stressing that 'precarity is unevenly experienced across this spectrum of employees'.[5] With regard to the new media industry, Leung (2005) has suggested that the temporary and casual context within which relationships are formed render the possibility to form alliances difficult, and Gill (2010) has further noted that there have only been a few examples of resistance. In this thesis, I put forward the argument that several practices taking place in Brighton's new media sector constitute forms of resistance to domination.

## 2.4.2. Excessive working hours and the nature of technology

Regardless of whether insecurity is manufactured or not, the technological environment and the organisation of production in new media work have been seen as added elements which push new media workers to excessive working hours. Kotamraju (2002) has pointed out that the skill-set of the web designer was constructed as one that includes the ability to keep up with technological change. Existing literature suggests that networking in the new media sector is not merely a practice aimed at finding work, but also a source of skill acquisition and skill upgrading in a rapidly changing technological environment (Batt *et al*., 2000; Adams and Demaiter, 2008). According to recent government statistics, the actual number of weekly hours of work in the information and communications sector was 33.8 (October-December 2012), which was above the average for all workers (31.9), yet lower than the weekly hours of work for the South East of England (37.7) (Office for National Statistics, 2013). However, the extra hours that new media workers might be spending on upgrading their skills and networking are not reflected in these figures.

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[5] This argument echoes the broader discussion regarding the shift from the employment aggregate approach to researching class, to one that takes into account different capitals, assets and resources of which people make use and produce class effects (see Savage, Warde and Devine, 2005).

### 2.4.3. 'Bulimic careers'

The nature of new media work has also been identified as responsible for the instability present in new media workers' lives (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Pratt (2000, p. 432) has talked about 'bulimic careers', hinting at the instability and uncertainty that characterise new media work. New media work has been characterised as bulimic because practitioners who are self-employed or in companies do not have a steady stream of work. At one point there might be many projects at the same time, which require exhausting work, and at other times there might not be any work available. People work exhaustive schedules when they get the opportunity to work, followed by periods of no work at all.

### 2.4.4. Casual work and freelancing

#### 2.4.4.1. Freelancing in the service of flexible production

The high presence of freelancers, as well as the volatile careers of new media employees, have been seen as central in the organisation of new media production, in the sense that the organisation of production around projects requires drawing on a pool of skills rather than stable and permanent employment. In industrial relations literature, freelancers have been seen as workers who become self-employed involuntarily, either 'due to weak bargaining power with employers' (Burke, 2011, p. 2) or as a 'symptom of labour market deficiencies' (Bogenhold and Staber, 1991, p. 224). In the new economy literature and the new media industry literature, freelancing has often appeared as merely a function that serves the requirements of flexible production (Mythen, 2005; Castells, 1996; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999). In this sense, freelancing and insecure careers have been consistent with the particular type of organisation that characterises new media production (*i.e.* project based, changing and uncertain). Freelancing, as distinct from employed work, involves flexible working conditions in terms of working hours and place of work (Henninger and Gottschall, 2007, p. 44). It has been noted that since work cannot be guaranteed for freelancers, neither can a steady stream of satisfying income (UKWDA, no date), an observation that is in line with older studies on self-employment (see Scase and Goffee, 1982).

### 2.4.4.2. Freelancing and the enterprise culture

Some commentators have shifted attention towards the broader social context within which new media work was born. Leadbeater and Oakley (1999), for example, have emphasised both economic and political conditions that effected the shift to self-employment. On the one hand, they have argued that this shift took place within a context of downsizing and public cuts in the arts in the 1980s and 1990s. On the other hand, they have posited that new media workers who grew up in the advent of neo-liberalism learned to be anti-establishment, anti-traditionalist and individualistic, which, in turn, are values which 'predispose them to pursue self-employment' (ibid, p. 15). Along the same lines, others have argued that 'the youthful were urged to break out of the cage of organisational work and go at it alone as self-fashioning operatives' (Ross, 2008, p. 35-6). Ray (1995, p. 12) has also stressed the vested interest of conservative governments in individualism, success through hard work and the 'free flow of the entrepreneurial spirit'.

### 2.4.4.3. Freelancing and passion for work

Other strands of literature have been more sensitive to the issue of self-determination when looking at the phenomenon of freelancing. Research has shown a 'strong aspiration of many new media workers ... to freelance, or to be self-employed' (Pratt, 2000, p. 431). Freelancing trends of new media workers have been interpreted along the lines of craftsmanship. Freelancing has been seen as the choice of people who are passionate about their work and cannot tolerate the politics of organisations (Perrons, 2003; Pratt, 2000), in spite of the latter being heterarchical. Perrons (2003, p. 80) has noted that 'job dissatisfaction from the nature of work or wider context were important reasons for new media people to set up their own business'. Quantitative research in economics has shown a strong association between freelancing and happiness, compared to working in a company, due to the 'higher measure of self-determination and freedom' of being independent and not subject to company hierarchies (Benz and Frey, 2008, p. 362). Nevertheless, research has also suggested that the quest for non-pecuniary benefits, such as happiness, may require sacrifices in terms of monetary benefits (Hamilton, 2000). Indeed, the shift from employed to self-employed status in the new media industry might harbour financial difficulties (UKWDA, no date). The

issue of happiness or passion over material benefit can be linked to the concept of lifestyle entrepreneurship. For lifestyle entrepreneurs profit is not the primary objective for starting a business. They instead prioritise personal goals, such as happiness, moral values and passion for work (Morrison, 2006, p. 195; Bolton and Thompson, 2003; Ateljevic and Doome, 2000). Nevertheless, lifestyle entrepreneurs may manage to secure their viability by exploiting certain niche markets that share similar values with them (Ateljevic and Doome, 2000).

### 2.4.5. Passion for creative work

Many of the things said specifically about freelancers in the new media industry regarding their values, which bear similarities with craftsmanship, can be extrapolated to employed new media workers as well. Love for work is a characteristic often noted in research on new media work (see Gill, 2010). The extensification of work has often been explained not in terms of insecurity but in terms of passion for technology and creativity. According to Smith and McKinlay (2009b, p. 44) long working hours are not forced upon the creative worker but rather reflect 'the individual's attachment to their aesthetic practice'. Scholarios and Marks (2004, p. 56) and Hesmondalgh (2007) have maintained that high company commitment and long working hours on behalf of employees could be seen as an exchange for being provided with interesting work and with opportunities for personal development. New media work has been seen as potentially having positive effects on the personal autonomy of workers in terms of skills' acquisition and satisfaction and fulfilment at work. For example, getting involved in different projects allows new media workers to obtain new skills (Pratt, 2000, p. 432; Ó Riain, 2000, p. 195). More studies on knowledge-intensive work – including creative work – have documented the link between long working hours and love for work (see Gregg, 2011; Christopherson, 2004; Indergaard, 2004; Perrons, 2003, p. 78; Massey, 1996; Massey *et al.*, 1992, p. 94).

The aforementioned accounts are reminiscent of theories of work and leisure. Parker (1983, p. 75-76), for example, has posited that people who do demanding jobs may end up seeking the same absorption in their leisure time. In that sense, we should not talk of extensification but of isomorphism between work and leisure instead; isomorphism relating to the impact of work on individuals working in specific professions. The

origins of computing have been associated with a hobbyist quality and passion for work (Raymond, 2001) and sacrificing the rest of life to the technological realm has been identified as a typical characteristic of male IT workers (Woodfield, 2000, pp. 14-15).

## 2.4.6. Skills, tasks and the gendered nature of new media work

The skills required in the new media industry vary from computing and art and design, with roles including programmers and designers, to more administrative/managerial ones, performed by project and business managers (Mayer-Ahuja and Wolf, 2009). People working in new media have computer engineering degrees, multimedia design and development degrees, digital marketing, project management and creative business management degrees, obtained through formal university or college education. However, it appears that, similarly to software workers in general (Scholarios and Marks, 2004, p. 55), there is not one 'single qualification entry route' into the profession. Some people working in the industry are self-taught (Batt *et al*., 2000, p. 4); for many, computing starts off as a hobby and evolves into a job. To quote Becker (1963, p. 153), one's 'preoccupation may become his [sic] occupation'. Technological advances have rendered many of the activities related to digital media less technically demanding. For example, web applications such as CMS (Content Management System) allow people to organise website content without requiring computer programming skills. Wordpress, Joomla, or Drupal are some examples of CMS which are used for blogging, writing wikis or creating websites that the end user can intervene in and modify. Moreover, these new and affordable technologies have lowered the entry-barriers to the industry (Bakhshi *et al*., 2013, p. 37). Finally, it has been identified that many people working in new media industry cross over from other occupations (Christopherson, 2004, p. 547).

Technologies used by new media "techies" differ according to which part of the development process one is involved in. There are people who are concerned with creating the interface, which is what the user experiences and interacts with, called front-end developers and use technologies such as XHTML and CSS. Front-end developers are more commonly known as web designers (Codesido, 2009) and are associated with the artistic dimension of digital work. Back-end developers are those concerned with programming and use technologies such as PHP, CGI, Access, Python,

and so on. These technologies are continuously changing, partially due to the hobbyist origins and the subcultural traits associated with the industry (see Grantham *et al*., 2008, on how users are the driving force behind innovation). Of course, as has already been mentioned, new media work, and freelance work in particular, requires the combination of different skills (Kotamraju, 2002; Batt *et al*, 2000, p. 4). Damarin (2006) has argued that web production 'has a modular occupational structure ... in which distinct sets of tasks are not permanently assigned to workers but rather mixed and matched in the composition of jobs' (p. 431). As such, new media workers are often seen as requiring awareness of different technologies beyond their particular speciality.

The gendered character of new media work has usually been identified in the different roles that men and women occupy within the sector. In the high technology sectors, such as in new media, men traditionally occupy technical positions like programming, whereas women occupy positions which require "soft skills", such as project management (Guerrier *et al*., 2009). In the words of Reich (2000, p. 55-57) women are *shrinks,* good at communicating with people, while men are *geeks,* good at interacting with machines. The reason often provided to account for male-domination in the IT sector is that technology is identified with reason and science (and the idea of transcendence), which in turn are socially constructed as masculine (Guerrier *et al*., 2009; Panteli *et al*., 2001; Woodfield, 2000; Massey, 1996 ). It has been argued that men working on computing perform 'a particular form of masculinity that involves the technological skills and the demonstration of this expertise' (Duerden Comeau and Kemp, 2007, p. 217). These gendered stereotypes – the man of reason and the woman of emotion – are performed and reaffirmed throughout people's life during school, the university and eventually the workplace (Guerrier *et al*. 2009; Panteli *et al.*, 2001; Woodfield 2000). A series of practices at the workplace have been identified, which perpetuate the under-representation of women in technology-intensive jobs: firstly, women are excluded from men's networks; secondly, the internalisation of work practices which reflect social constructions of gender make women appear less capable of dealing with technology, while the breaching of such norms is interpreted by men as aggressive behaviour; women also fail to conform to male-normative success models; finally, men's behaviour in the workplace erodes women's confidence over time (Panteli *et al.*, 2001). On the other hand, those qualities that have been socially attributed to women are often seen as presenting an opportunity for women in the new economy,

where social labour is growing in importance (Woodfield, 2000, p. 186-7). Soft skills are important in an economy that relies on the commodification of ideas. According to Reich (2000), the successful entrepreneur must be both a geek and a shrink.

## 2.4.7. Social relationships outside of formal working hours

In this section I discuss the two main ways new media sociality has been understood. The social relationships outside of formal working hours among new media practitioners have not been extensively examined. Peer relationships have sometimes been seen as the instrumental-rational responses emanating from the objective position of new media practitioners in the new media industry. Other times they have been understood in terms of what Wittel (2001) has termed 'network sociality'. These approaches are consistent with a broader tendency in social theory to view contemporary social life as entirely commodified (Bauman, 2011; Sennet, 1999; Bourdieu, 1998a). I argue that both approaches neglect to look in depth at new media practitioners' subjectivities and how they play into the formation of meanings surrounding new media work and sociality.

### 2.4.7.1. Strategic interaction

With regard to the high tech and creative sectors in general, and new media specifically, social relationships among peers have been primarily seen as strategic interactions (see Blair, 2009; Randle and Culkin, 2009; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005; Neff, 2004; Gill, 2002; Batt *et all.*, 2000; O' Riain, 2000; Pratt, 2000). Socialising among peers has mainly been portrayed as networking within a technologically volatile and insecure environment. Networking refers to the practice whereby people pursue 'relationships with those with ... the potential to assist them in their work or career' (Singh *et al*., 2006, p. 459; Forret and Dougherty, 2004). The practice of networking and the value of social connections have been central components of the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Networking has occupied a prominent position in economic development literature (Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Morgan, 1992), management and innovation literature (Gloor, 2006; Ardichvili *et al*., 2003; Rothwell, 2002; Landry *et al*., 2000), learning literature (Wenger, 1998) and popular best-sellers that promise business success in the new

economy (see the best-selling books *Never Eat Alone* by Keith Ferrazzi (2005) and *Networking: the art of making friends* by Carole Stone (2001)).

Coming back to the creative and new media sectors, Pratt (2000, p. 335) has described new media workers spending time 'being at the right parties' and 'making the right contacts' in order to secure future work. Neff (2004) presented social events in New York's new media industry as opportunities for establishing profitable connections; socialising as work rather than play. Blair (2009) has seen social relationships among creative workers as purposefully sought, and their selective maintenance, or abandonment, as consciously calculated based on their expected benefits. Randle and Culkin's (2009) research on freelancers in the film industry has shown that networking is a key strategy in conditions of work scarcity. Practices during networking involve carrying updated resumes at hand and handing them out to people and 'avoiding being seen as over-instrumental' (ibid., p. 101). Additionally, according to some research, fast technological change in the technologies used by new media workers pushes 'the workforce toward continual learning' (Gill, 2002, p. 80). In an early study on new media workers in New York City, Batt *et al*. (2000, p. 8) discovered that most workers acquire their skills on their own or through their colleagues and friends. Thus, there is a lot of evidence suggesting that seeing social relations in an instrumental way entails practical benefits for the new media worker.

Life choices, such as starting a family, are seen as having a detrimental effect on success in new media work because of the centrality of networking. When people become older and have family commitments, they cannot dedicate enough time on networking, which is a 'young persons' game' (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006, p. 335). This raises the issue of gender, to the extent that these commitments tend to weigh more heavily on women. James (2011) demonstrated that women in the Irish IT sector still bear bigger parenting responsibilities than men. Similarly, Durbin and Tomlinson (2010, p. 632) pointed out that there is a 'trade-off between family and career' for female managers, and Craig *et al*., (2012, p. 717) showed that it is more common for women than men 'to become self-employed to juggle work-family'. Research in computing cultures has posited that masculinity has been constructed as shunning domesticity (Massey, 1996) and privileging the technical over the social realm (Woodfield, 2000; Kendall, 1999). Even beyond the world of computing, freedom from domestic responsibilities, which has

been associated with the notion of the ideal worker, has been seen as a male characteristic (Whitehouse and Preston, 2005, p. 271). Nevertheless, being a man and committing to one's family is not incompatible with working in the IT sector. When age and familial responsibilities are introduced to the equation it has been noted that men who grow old and have families are more likely to partially give up their passion for technology in favour of their family (Duerden Comeau and Kemp, 2007, p. 227). In this sense, having a family may have similar effects on the networking practices of men and women in the new media sector.

Of course, networking has long been identified as an important source of occupational attainment (Kim, 2013; Huang and Western, 2011; Singh *et al*., 2006; Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Ibarra, 1992). Literature in social network analysis has been devoted to exploring causal relations between features of networks, people's location within them and the benefits associated with networking. Social networks have been viewed as efficient means for job seeking under conditions of under-developed labour markets (Huang and Western, 2011, p. 270). Granovetter (1974) was among the first scholars who explored the advantages of weak social ties in the search for work. He found that personal contacts were the most common route for finding out about jobs. But what really mattered in the search for a job was one's position in a social network (Granovetter, 1974, p. 17). This body of research, however, is not concerned with the motivations of networked actors or the meanings they attach to their actions and social relationships.

Interestingly, research in the economics of industrial clustering has devoted more attention to the relationships of practitioners outside of formal working hours, than has the sociology of work. The fact that they have been identified as channels of information spillovers, which are deemed important for innovation, explains the interest shown in such relationships. Even though most research seems to have focused more on the more formal channels, such as labour mobility and formal business partnerships (see Basant, 2002; Maskell, 2000), the so called "informal" channels of knowledge spillovers have also been addressed.[6] In this literature, informal socialising has been

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[6] Breschi and Lissoni (2006) have argued that knowledge spillovers do not accrue within informal social contacts but rather within conventional market processes, such as labour mobility and joint research projects and that such externalities are of a pecuniary nature.

portrayed as chance encounters whereby people "bump into" each other and share knowledge (Bathelt *et al.*, 2004; Howels, 2002). However, the portrayal of socialising as *strategic interaction* is ever-present in studies of socialising within clusters (see Alcacer and Chung, 2007; Bathelt *et al.*, 2004; Storper and Vennables, 2004; Dahl and Pedersen, 2003; Shrader, 1991). Storper and Vennables (2004) have stressed the importance of face-to-face interaction, what they term "local buzz", in economic coordination. They have argued that despite the advances of the internet, face-to-face communication is particularly important 'especially in environments where information is imperfect, rapidly changing and not easily codified' (ibid., p. 351). In this framework, social relationships among peers are viewed strategically, as screening procedures used in order to choose appropriate business partners. People feel scrutinized under the watchful eyes of their peers and hence they strive to over-perform. Participation in professional communities requires a high level of skill, and reputation is important as a safeguard of reciprocity (Dahl and Pedersen, 2003, p. 4). Rogers (1982, pp. 114-5) suggested in his research on Silicon Valley's semiconductor companies that there were two explanations for informal information sharing. The first was that some people realised that in order to obtain information on a technical issue they should be willing to give some information in return. Rogers, however, did not explain why the first person would choose to reveal a piece of information without being sure that the other person would reciprocate. The second explanation of why informal sharing occurs was simply that people in the region became friends after years of working in the area and they could trust each other. The issue of trust has been central in studies of information sharing within social networks, where people have been viewed as self-interested individuals. Trustworthiness has been explained as being 'generated through numerous interactions between agents or ... created through indirect ties if they have social contacts in common' (Ostergaard, 2007, p. na). Bathelt *et al.* (2004) have viewed social encounters within clusters as organised or accidental and information sharing as unintended or intended. They too described information sharing as "buzz" and argued that people did not have to invest to access it; rather, it was free for those who were located in the particular region (Bathelt *et al.*, 2004, p. 38). They went on to argue that norms such as trust or malfeasance, which they perceived as something static, would create "buzz" of different quality within a region (ibid.). Dahl and Pedersen (2003) investigated the role of informal contacts within a Danish cluster and found that engineers acquired valuable knowledge through "keeping in touch" with former

colleagues. Informal information sharing was seen as 'information trading', involving actors that were dependent on other colleagues for the provision of technical advice on the grounds of reciprocity (Dahl and Pedersen, 2003, p. 5). Other factors that have been considered with regard to sharing behaviour are whether the two actors are competitors (or whether one is likely to pass the information on to a competitor), whether the piece of information in question is on the domain in which the two actors compete (*e.g.* prices, quality, etc.), or whether disclosure will allow indebtedness of one to the other (Dahl and Pedersen, 2003, p. 5).

The phenomenon of knowledge spillover through social encounters has been of particular importance in innovation studies, where new ideas have been thought of as very valuable and should be guarded. According to Von Hippel (1988), if given a piece of information, an actor will be expected to reciprocate if more information may be needed in the future. Von Hippel (2005) has also argued that under certain conditions user-innovators are likely to allow proprietary knowledge to spill over, and thereby increasing the innovation activity overall. The reason why they are willing to do so is firstly due to their inability to safeguard their innovations, secondly because they benefit as users from improvements made on their innovation, and thirdly, because their status is enhanced by being the first to reveal a novelty (Von Hippel, 2005, p. 9-10). Raymond (2001, p. 80-81) has explained 'giving away' in hacker communities as gift-giving in a context of information abundance in an effort to build social status. Findings from the knowledge management literature have also suggested that peers within organisations are likely to share knowledge in order to be recognised as experts (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003).

An exception to the rule has been Wilson and Spoehr's (2009) work, which shifts the attention from instrumentality to solidarity as a determinant of professional sociality within industrial clusters. They argue that knowledge sharing among skilled workers can be a result of epistemic solidarity and can represent a form of resistance. However, Wilson and Spoehr do not attribute this solidarity to the embeddedness of economic actors within a system of moral norms, as moral economy theorists (see Banks, 2006; Sayer, 2004; Booth, 1994) would suggest. Instead, they point to literature which sees the precarious conditions of employment as the underlying factor of solidarity, and to literature which emphasises subcultural loyalty.

Finally, Saxenian (1996) has examined professional sociality within clusters from the point of view of local culture, albeit in an over-socialised way (*i.e.* privileging culture in explaining social action). Through an exploration of the success of regions like Silicon Valley in California, Saxenian suggested that a series of factors such as common business and education origins, as well as similarities in gender, ethnicity and social class, created a regional cooperative culture. Furthermore, she argued that newcomers felt obliged to conform to that culture. This means that regardless of the fact that new actors collocated who did not share social bonds, they eventually conformed to the existing norms. What is of great significance in Saxenian's study, and at the same time points to an omission in sociological studies of new media clusters, is the element of the *regional culture*. Massey's work has been an exception to this trend. In her work on science parks she pointed out that the imagery in the case of Cambridge's science park complemented a logic whereby employees saw themselves as autonomous and creative (Massey *et al*., 1992). As I demonstrate in the present study of Brighton, locality played a significant part in shaping new media workers' behaviour.

## 2.4.7.2. Network sociality and identity

Beyond strictly instrumental understandings of peer interaction stemming from one's objective position in the industry, scholars have also addressed the role of subjectivity in structuring social relationships outside of formal working hours. Although Pratt (2000), for example, has described socialising among new media workers in terms of networking, whereby new media practitioners sell themselves to investors, he has also talked about mixing work and pleasure. Wittel (2001) has described new media sociality as *network sociality*. In his approach he took into account not only the objective position of new media workers in the industry – which pushed practitioners to socialise in order to secure work or to upgrade their skills – but also the fact that they exhibit passion for work, mixing work and play. In these approaches, however, the emphasis continues to be on instrumental objectives related to work (*e.g.* finding clients, securing recommendations, upgrading skills) rather than on different meanings associated with socialising. Network sociality is mainly centred around work-related concerns and, as such, represents one of the manifestations of extensification.

Nevertheless, such research has suggested that social relationships among peers in new media are not necessarily driven by self-interest. They may rather reflect a passion for computing or design which cannot be entirely fulfilled during working hours. As mentioned earlier, IT workers have tended to prioritise work over life (Woodfield, 2000, p. 15) and have generally been seen as passionate for work. Massey (1996, p. 110) has identified love for one's job as one of the reasons why workers in high-tech industries work late hours. Indergaard (2004, p. 2) has identified the lifestyle of new media workers in the Silicon Alley district in New York as *technobohemian*, a concept which combines technology, creativity, mutual support among practitioners and contempt for corporate business. Social relationships among new media practitioners were initially governed by a mutual passion for the internet and contempt towards the competitive values of corporate business. According to Indergaard (2004), this peculiar type of work and sociality contributed to the success of small business and of the New York new media scene in general.

## 2.4.8. Exploitation in new media work

A recent study on creative work has suggested that the creative occupations are characterised by low economic rewards, namely lower salary level and poor career prospects (Communian *et al.*, 2010). Hesmondalgh (2007, p. 207) has also noted the uneven nature of rewards for creative work, 'with very high rewards for the few superstar creative workers and much less for other workers'. More evidence has contributed to the claim that new media workers are not very well compensated (see Gill, 2010). The median annual earnings for 2013 for web developers were estimated to £24,268 (Payscale, no date), which was lower than the median gross annual earnings for the average full time employee in 2012, which was estimated to be £26, 500 (Office for National Statistics, 2012). However, government statistics and existing literature have also pointed out that the earnings of new media practitioners also depend on seniority, experience, formal qualifications, company size, location, and so forth (Office for National Statistics, 2013; Communian *et al.*, 2010). The South East of England, for example, has been identified as the region with the second highest earnings level after London, with average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees at £614 (£737 for London) (Office for National Statistics, 2013). As suggested earlier, earnings are expected to be worse in the early stages of freelancing.

A pertinent issue with regard to the power relations between new media practitioners and companies relates to intellectual property (IP) rights. As Smith and McKinlay (2009a, p. 7) have pointed out, many creative workers control the means of production and may seek to retain rights over intellectual property, which may lead to employer-worker conflicts. In new media specifically, even though '[c]opyright automatically resides with the creator unless assigned to someone else', IP is indeed usually assigned to the client (Design Council, no date).

Love for work, though not specifically in the context of the new media sector, has also been seen through the prism of self-exploitation. Some interpretations of this phenomenon describe the role of the state in fashioning a particular work identity in line with neo-liberal prescriptions, often echoing Foulcaudian notions of self-regulation. Scholars like Cross and Payne (1991), du Gay (1996), Garrick and Usher (2000) and Storey *et al.* (2005) have argued over an 'enterprise culture', or a 'culture of excellence', which has been inculcated in workers. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have suggested that management and organisation have experienced a paradigm shift, namely, that emphasis is put on the autonomy of employees. Employees are given increased autonomy but, in return, are endowed with increased responsibility (Gregg, 2011, p. 12-13; Doherty, 2009, p. 86; Gill, 2010; Gorz, 1999). Workers are required to be passionate about their work, are given increased autonomy in their job and, in turn, perceive themselves as micro-enterprises and become self-managed. These arguments are also reminiscent of Burawoy's (2012; 1979, p. 27) claim that by presenting workers with a false sense of autonomy in the labour process, they consent to self-exploitation. Obtaining an enterprising relationship to the self allows companies to harness creativity from their casual (*i.e.* freelancers) or permanent employees. Creativity is deemed necessary for flexibility which in turn is important for competitiveness (Garrick and Usher, 2000). On the other hand, this type of work, to the extent that it allows workers to constantly obtain new skills and engage in fulfilling activities, could effect the change Gorz (1999) talked sceptically about in *Reclaiming Work*; the shift from unskilled-alienating work, which is in decline (Rifkin, 1995), to a re-appropriation of work that is creative and liberating. However, as Gorz (1999, p. 40) argued, resistance to domination cannot be achieved merely though autonomy in the sphere of work. Autonomy should also be 'carried into the cultural, moral and political spheres' (Gorz, 1999, p. 40).

The issue of extensification is clearly linked to this discussion. As shown earlier, new media workers tend to work extensive hours and to network outside of formal working hours. The spillover of work to the rest of life is in line with the imperatives of the innovation-driven economy. The mobilisation of social relationships, what Hardt (2012) would call *affective labour*, in the production of capital represents the total commodification of social life. Within this context, the precarious conditions of new media work have been met by public policy discourses in the UK emphasising passion for work and creative work for creativity's sake (Gill, 2010). While in some cases a genuine passion might be involved in new media work, the mobilisation of discourses concealing precarious conditions of work behind a façade of love for creativity represent a new form of managerial control over the workforce.

Some scholars have addressed the issue of freely generated online content, an issue which extends beyond new media workers' exploitation. Terranova (2000) has drawn attention to the phenomenon of free labour on the internet. This free labour involves 'building websites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists and building virtual spaces' (ibid., p. 33). Andrejevic (2011) explained user generated online content in terms of affordances and separation. He argued that while on one hand companies appropriate people's online activity by having 'private control over online resources of sociability' (separation), on the other, people are offered an entertaining way to socialise online (affordance) (Andrejevic, 2011, p. 87-88). However, while Andrejevic addressed the appropriation of online sociability, Terranova tried to understand more straightforward phenomena of online labour. Terranova (2000, p. 36) has attributed the phenomenon of free digital labour to a 'historically rooted cultural and affective desire for creative production and the current capitalist emphasis on knowledge as the main source of value added'. She has therefore viewed collaborative norms situated within discourses of creativity, emphasising the aesthetic dimension of creative work. However, she did not see creativity as simply being appropriated by capitalism. These dynamics of passion for work and free labour 'are the results of a complex history where the relation between labour and capital is mutually constituted, entangled and crucially forged during the crisis of post-Fordism' (Banks and Deuze, 2009, p. 424).

## 2.5. Bourdieu, Goffman and new media work and sociality: meanings and practices within Brighton's new media sector

My participants' accounts suggested that the processes and the meanings associated with new media work were more varied than what has usually been portrayed in the literature. As demonstrated earlier, existing literature has not been sensitive to the construction of meanings ascribed to phenomena such as freelancing and peer interaction. Instead, the meanings associated with new media work and sociality have often been read off from objective facts about them, such as their material position in the industry. My participants, however, communicated a plethora of meanings associated with these phenomena, which did not merely emanate from the fact that they were precarious creative workers. Furthermore, while certain theoretical concepts such as creative class, enterprise culture, or networking sociality were indeed helpful for approaching phenomena such as freelancing and the independent character of much of new media work and peer relationships, they were not sufficient for doing justice to my participants' experiences of new media work and sociality in Brighton.

Bourdieu's (1996; 1990; 1986; 1977) ideas on field, *habitus* and capital and Goffman's (1973; 1971; 1963) ideas on frames and the social organisation of co-presence, provided valuable interpretive tools for deciphering the meanings ascribed by my participants to work and sociality. In the creative and cultural industries literature the practice of networking has often been identified as a source of social capital. For example, Lee (2011) explored social capital and cultural capital as important resources for finding work in the British independent television production sector. Siebert and Wilson (2013) questioned the role of unpaid work in facilitating social connections in the creative sectors and in granting access to paid employment. The role of networking as a means for the acquisition of skills in the IT sector was explored by Adams and Demaiter (2008). Mentions of social capital can also be found in the existing literature on the new media sector. The networks created among new media workers which allow them to access work has been conceptualised in terms of social capital. Wittel (2001), for example, demonstrated how social capital within new media networks was translated into economic capital. The concept of *habitus* has also been utilised on occasions. For example, Pratt (2011a) mentioned in passing the *habitus* of the creative class in an attempt to account for the tendency of creative workers to be attracted to bohemian

places. However, as Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) have pointed out, the concepts of field, capital and *habitus* were not meant to be used in isolation from each other. Eikhof and Haunschild (2007) have been an exception to this trend, in that they tried to incorporate Bourdieu's ideas of field, capital and *habitus* in understanding actors' work practices in German theatres. However, by not making explicit the symbiotic relationship between field and *habitus*, they tended to privilege the role of the field as the overarching structure which determined social practices. In my research, loyal to Bourdieu's ideas, I do not assume the field as a given structure with objective characteristics, independent of the *habitus* of the actors who occupy it. Furthermore, alongside Bourdieu, I draw on Goffman's ideas on framing in order to understand how several actors end up ascribing similar meanings to peer interaction. I argue that Goffman's ideas constitute valuable complimentary interpretive tools for understanding how the logic of the field got communicated to local new media actors. Finally, I use Goffman's ideas on the social organisation of co-presence to provide an innovative and rigorous discussion of social life in a new media coworking environment, by demonstrating the embodiment of the meanings found in the *habitus* and the local new media logic. In the remainder of this section I start by presenting these ideas and proceed to demonstrate how I use them in my study.

### 2.5.1. *Habitus* and frames

Bourdieu's theoretical work was a constant struggle towards the discarding of dominant dichotomies in social sciences, or 'antinomies' (1990, p. 55) as he called them, such as agency and structure, and subjectivity and objectivity. The concept of *habitus* represented a decisive contribution in this struggle. Bourdieu posited that people embody their histories, their past experiences, in what he called the *habitus*. The *habitus*, a repository of past experiences, refers to durable and transposable dispositions which offer cognitive and regulatory structures that function as organising principles of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). The *habitus* provides the logic upon which all perceptions, thoughts and actions are based. As such, the *habitus* regulates everyday life in a non-explicitly coercive way and reproduces the reality from which it originally stems. In that sense, people have limitless choices in their everyday life, as long as they are in accordance with the logic of their *habitus*. The *habitus* then is a structure informed by past everyday social life which prescribes social action and, eventually,

reproduces present and future everyday life along the similar principles that it was structured to begin with.

The *habitus* represents a type of cognitive structure (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 468) and in this sense can be associated with Goffman's (1974) notion of 'frames'. The latter were defined as 'principles of organisation' (Goffman, 1974, p. 10), 'schemata of interpretation', 'a perspective' (ibid, p.21) or, according to Scheff (2006), contexts upon which definitions of situations are built and actions are based. What Goffman called *primary frameworks*, work as tools of contextualisation which provide an initial understanding of – or a perspective on – a situation. A key point of convergence with Bourdieu is Goffman's idea that primary frameworks are to some extent attuned among actors that are present in a social situation, by bringing into attention the same situational variables, so people more or less have a similar primary understanding of a situation (Diehl and McFarland, 2010, p. 1717). While Goffman attributed this tuning to the culture in which someone is embedded (Snow, 2001, p. 371), Bourdieu would claim that the element which ensures this tuning is that certain people share a similar *habitus*. People with a working class background, for example, tend to have similar understandings of situations and behave in similar ways. Moreover, I think that Goffman's frame theory adds to Bourdieu's theory an elaboration of the way in which *habitus* translates into practice.[7] Frames orient our behaviour, and subsequently *keys* (Goffman, 1974), which represent conventions of which people are mutually aware, are used as signs to further determine the situation among actors. It could be argued that the embodied histories which constitute the *habitus* provide the elements of both frames and keys that are being applied in different situations.

## 2.5.2. Capital

The concept of *habitus* is linked to the four types of capital identified by Bourdieu (1986), namely economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. These types of capital shape the dispositions and aspirations inscribed in the *habitus* of social actors. For example, the possession of specific types of cultural and economic capital shapes one's

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[7]  Goffman's theory can also benefit greatly from Bourdieu's ideas. Goffman has often been criticised of focusing too much on the structure of social situations and not paying attention to the meanings that people ascribe to their actions (Manning, 1992, p. 129), a subject on which Bourdieu can provide invaluable insights.

tastes: a person whose parents are wealthy and cultivated will grow up having different habits and aspirations to a person whose parents are poor and uneducated. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), refers to the different forms of the accumulation of cultural labour. In its embodied form it takes the shape of cultural dispositions, ways of presenting oneself, skills and tastes (the embodied state); it can also be found in cultural goods, such as articles of art, records, paintings (the objectified state); and, finally, it can the take the form of formally approved qualifications, such as university degrees or a music diploma (the institutionalised state) (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243-48).

Social capital reflects the accumulation of personal labour (and also economic and cultural capital) in building social relationships which grant access to different types of resources. According to Bourdieu (1986, p. 248-9), it refers to the resources available by virtue of maintaining social connections and group memberships:

> The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.

Bourdieu (1986, p. 248-9) also went on to argue that the profits accruing from membership in the group guarantee the feelings of solidarity that makes the profits possible to begin with. In that sense, Bourdieu's idea of solidarity, one which involves reciprocal benefits, is congruent with Durkheim's notion of organic solidarity, a notion which proved useful in my research in describing one aspect of Brighton's new media sector. Durkheim (1933) saw a new type of solidarity emerging with the advent of industrialisation, making possible the integration of society. This type of solidarity, which he called *organic* as opposed to *mechanical* solidarity of pre-industrial societies, was based on the complementary nature of human activities. This presupposed the organic re-configuration of society made possible through industrialisation, which rendered each person a vital component of the social organism. Social bonds became possible because people needed each other.

In different circumstances, different types of capital can be legitimated and give their possessor symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998b, p. 47). In order for a specific type of

capital to be converted to symbolic capital it needs to be perceived as legitimate by others who value this type of capital. For example, in specific social contexts it might be cultural capital in its embodied form – as part of the *habitus* – that gives its possessor symbolic capital, 'capital that is accorded positive recognition, esteem or honour by relevant actors within the field' (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008, p. 12). In other social contexts it might be the possession of economic capital (*i.e.* being wealthy) that is valued and respected by actors, or having famous friends (social capital).

The concept of symbolic capital is potentially of high significance, because it represents the type of capital responsible for determining an aspect of the self. While Bourdieu is not explicitly concerned with self-consciousness, that is, the actor's consciousness of her or his own *habitus*, symbolic capital could be linked to Mead's (1934) idea of the "me". According to Mead (1934), the self is comprised of two aspects, the "me" which is the social aspect of the self, how I see myself through others' eyes and the "I", which is the active and impulsive aspect of the self. The former represents the impact of social structures on oneself and the latter one's reaction to such structuring forces. It could be argued that the pursuit of symbolic capital, of being recognised by one's peers for capital possessed or embodied, represents the act of being defined by others or being re-affirmed of one's identity. This can be seen especially in *Distinction*, where Bourdieu (1984) is implicitly concerned with techniques of managing the self, particularly in cases where people try to present themselves in a way that is inconsistent with their *habitus*. In this sense, symbolic capital can be viewed as both a resource and as a source of identity.

### 2.5.3. Field, positions and institutional role frames

#### 2.5.3.1. The field's logic

The concept of the field is another cornerstone within Bourdieu's theory. Our knowledge of the *habitus* would be incomplete without a knowledge of the field and vice versa. Everyday social life is divided into different *fields* of experience. A field, according to Bourdieu (1990), may be any social space that is imbued with a certain logic regulating the actions among actors who occupy different positions therein. These positions are objectively related to one another (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 97):

These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions.

### 2.5.3.2. Field intersections

Those occupying the dominant positions in different fields themselves constitute a distinct field, the *field of power* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 76). However, each person occupies positions within different fields. A woman can simultaneously be the employee in a company, mother or wife in a family, member of an orchestra, member of a sports team, and so forth. In that sense, I suggest that people are embedded in intersections of fields. The idea of field intersection shares similarities with the concept of intersectionality. The latter is a concept mainly associated with third wave feminism and gender studies. It is meant to convey that identities are constituted at the intersection of social categories and, accordingly, inequality also originates in such an intersection (Walby *et al.*, 2012; Rahman, 2010; Grenshaw, 1991). The focus is thus shifted from gender to multiple 'categories of difference' (Walby *et al.*, 2012). As Fowler (2003) points out, Bourdieu understands male supremacy as constituted at the intersection of fields, such as education, the state, the church, the family, and so forth. While intersectionality refers to the intersection of social categories such as social class, gender and ethnicity, I rather refer to the intersection of social fields in this thesis. Of course, social categories can also be re-conceptualised as fields, considering that a social category such as gender also has a specific logic (*e.g.* the rules of gender) and specific positions are involved (*e.g.* men, women, transgender). However, I think that by considering field intersections we can be more imaginative as to what qualifies as a social category. Accordingly, the neighbourhood can be the field responsible for the birth of a social category (*i.e.* neighbour), the company (*i.e.* the boss, the employer), the industry (*i.e.* occupation), and so forth. Moreover, I argue that *age* is a field in which everybody is embedded and that this field is responsible for putting the intersection of the rest of the fields (within which one is embedded) though different *stages*. For example, the circumstances will be different for a young man (gender) working in the

new media industry (occupation), than for an old man (gender) working in the new media industry (occupation), because they are in different stages of (the same) field intersection (*i.e.* one is young the other is old).

### 2.5.3.3. The field's relation to the *habitus*

Fields have their own logics which reflect the *habitus* of the people that occupy them, since the latter has been formed, at least partially, within the former (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 56). Even though Bourdieu (1977) indeed privileged young age in the constitution of the *habitus*, he also thought that people also embody the logic of the fields they end up occupying into their *habitus*. To quote Bourdieu (1992, p. 127), 'the field structures the *habitus* which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field'. At another instance, even though Bourdieu argued that people are born into the field and so attach subjective meanings to it and remain unaware of its objective status, he also argued that some people enter a field later in life than others, with the result of being more aware of its objective logic (*i.e.* its rules) (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 66-67). On the basis of this latter point, it could be argued that the structuring effect of the field can be more readily identifiable when somebody is a latecomer in a field, in the sense that she or he is aware of its objective logic and acts accordingly, while if the logic of the field has been embodied, practices are natural to the logic of the field. Goffman (1959, p. 18-19) turned our attention to instances where we perform a role with which we do not feel comfortable and to how we strive to manage the less governable aspects of our performance, that is, our body language. The reason we strive to manage these aspects is because our body is not used to the specific performance, because it is not our *habitus*. The latter is instead associated with a bodily performance, a *bodily hexis* (Bourdieu. 1977), which is different. As such, when we enter into a new field, a social reality which is new to us and whose logic we have not yet embodied, we have to struggle to convince others that we actually belong to this new social reality. Bourdieu (1990, p. 58) thought that the *tuning* between the *habitus* and the field is a condition for the viability of the latter.

### 2.5.3.4. Frames: communicating the field's logic

In my study Goffman's writings provided potentially useful insights on how the logic of the new media field and practitioners' meanings and practices shaped one another. Goffman (1959, p. 21) argued that certain people have a privileged position in the division of *definitional labour* by virtue of occupying a prestigious position is society. In Goffman's terms, these people provide the *institutional role frame,* which according to Diehl and McFarland (2010, p. 1721), provides an answer to the question "what is going on here?". In my study, I argue that certain prestigious figures strived to define new media work and sociality. These actors resembled what Becker (1963) termed moral entrepreneurs. According to Becker, moral entrepreneurs are actors who occupy a privileged position and who take up moral crusades; they mobilise social and political processes in society and they believe that what they profess can help the people that are in a more disadvantaged position than them. In the case of Brighton's new media sector, they do so by using their knowledge of the field's logic to provide practitioners with particular ways of framing social situations of peer interaction. As I demonstrate in this thesis, the existence of those prestigious actors is important in Bourdieuian terms, in the sense that by trying to help people take advantage of the opportunities available to them within the new media field, they communicate the logic of a specific field – or their own interpretation of its logic – to these people. Once this logic becomes internalised in the habitus it provides a basis of mutual awareness – without however, as Bourdieu (1977, p. 72) posited, providing strict rules of action – which facilitates further improvisations on the basis of negotiations of definitions and different endowments of capital – due to different positions within a field. Both Goffman and Bourdieu viewed primary frames and *habitus* respectively as structured by society (internalisation) and structuring society (externalisation).

### 2.5.3.5. Field positions, resistance and subordination

Social actors occupy different positions in each field and they are engaged in a struggle to increase their power in terms of capital endowments (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 11-13). More specifically, the dominated within a field try to change the status quo of the field while the dominant ones try to preserve it (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008). A term which can be associated with the logic of the field is the term 'doxa', which refers to the 'self-

evidence of the common sense world', the 'definition of the real' (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 167, 169). Within a field there are those who defend the integrity of doxa (those who dominate) and those who push back its limits (those who are dominated) (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). The struggle on behalf of those who are dominated to improve their position in the field constitutes at the same time resistance to domination (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 80). These acts of resistance can be more or less conscious or more or less mechanical, but more accurately can be seen as part of strategies which, just like *habitus*, are 'located outside and inside the agents themselves' (Risseeuw, 1991, p. 165). However, acts of resistance, just like any practice, cannot be understood as mere effects of the *habitus*, of the aspirations inscribed into people's embodied histories. Social practices are the result of the combination of *habitus* with the position people occupy within any given field (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 56; Maton, 2008, p. 51). In his work *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu (1996, p. 9-10) explained that each person's action can be understood on the basis of her/his own inertia (*habitus* and capital endowments) and the forces of the field. As such, resistance is a function of the embodied desire to resist domination, the reasons given to resist, the logic and the opportunities available within the field. Research has shown that in some cases, despite the desire to resist, the forces of the field render attempts of resistance difficult. In the case of women in Sri Lanka, for example, Risseeuw (1991) demonstrated how the absence of resistance in the form of acquiescence reflected a logic whereby resistance would weaken a family's interests as a whole.

The different types of capital and the subjective meanings they have to different people make the processes of resistance and improvement of one's position in the field ambiguous. In his example of lads opposing the school system, Bourdieu described a dilemma faced by them, namely performing well in school or maintaining one's lad integrity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 82-3). Bourdieu argued that the latter choice, which is consistent with the lads' *habitus*, will result in poor education and eventual inability to improve one's position in the field. However, what Bourdieu did not point out is that through these practices of opposition to the school system the person in question preserves his dominant position is the sub-field of lad culture. Certain behaviours (*e.g.* not studying, swearing at the teacher) grant the lad symbolic capital in his sub-cultural milieu. However, this type of behaviour is not possible to be legitimated within the field of power, in which a different type of cultural capital

matters (*e.g.* having a university degree) alongside economic and social capital (in which case they give their possessor symbolic capital). Moreover, as Bourdieu (1992, p. 99) noted, the value that different types of capital have in a field is open to contestation. In that sense, and in Bourdieu's terms, we should always be aware of the different capitals that operate in a sub-field and the broader fields in which it is embedded, as well as the ways in which these capitals operate.

**2.5.3.6. The integration of Bourdieu's and Goffman's ideas**

The integration of Bourdieu's and Goffman's ideas provide an original and valuable theoretical framework for understanding new media work and sociality in Brighton. The value and originality of this framework lies in two distinct qualities of this framework. Firstly, it suggests that in order to understand the performance of the self and the meanings associated with such a performance (*e.g.* why we perform certain roles, how we know the rules involved in such a performance, how do we give a credible performance) one should take into account the intersection of fields in which a person is embedded, the logic of each field and the person's biography. In this study, this aspect of the integration between Bourdieu and Goffman allowed me to understand why certain new media practitioners desire to appear enthusiastic about their work (and the implications this had for their work practices), as well as a performance's implications in terms of becoming a part of the local new media community. Secondly, it is suggested that socialisation and the constitution of the habitus can better be understood through the mediation of the concept of "frames". In this study, "frames" allowed me to understand the ways in which the logic of the local new media sector becomes communicated to local new media practitioners.

## 2.5.4. Brighton's new media sector as a field

As I demonstrate throughout this thesis, Brighton's new media field had a particular logic, within which the economic logic (the imperative of profit) prevailed. Profit in the new media field is achieved through constant innovation. The project-based production that characterises the new media sector is tailored to this end. Collaboration among practitioners and the presence of independent practitioners, on which companies can tap to carry out their projects, are basic requirements of the imperative of profit in the new

media field. Independence and collaboration are necessary for company and potentially individual success. However, new media work and sociality in Brighton was taking place within the context of a bohemian city. The latter would lend its logic to meanings that work and sociality had for new media practitioners, resulting in a Brighton-specific new media logic in which individual success was re-imagined as collective success through peer support.

Eikhoff and Haunschild (2007) demonstrated how the economic logic and the artistic logic overlap in the field of theatre production. They explained theatre actors' practices and the meanings they ascribed to them as reflective of the negotiations between these two logics in the field of theatre production. However, while Eikhoff and Haunschild (2007) accurately noted the conflict between these two logics, they also tended to treat them as structures within which actors found themselves confined and were less attentive to the interplay between the logic of the field and the *habitus* of the actors, or their conditions in terms of capital possession.

It could be argued that the project-based character of new media production reflects the idiosyncrasies of creative workers; workers desire independence that explains the innovative character of the field. However, Bourdieu would not be concerned with questions such as, 'is the field's logic created by the *habitus* of the people populating the field, or vice versa?'. As explained earlier, Bourdieu thought that the *habitus* and the logic of the field are shaping each other. In the case of Brighton's new media sector, I suggest that there is crucial point of agreement between the field's logic and practitioners' *habitus*. As demonstrated earlier, IT professionals have been portrayed as being passionate about technology and as building their identity through work. Their job is a way of life. In his book *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu (1996, p. 8) explained how art dealers leave the symbolic profits to the artists and reserve the economic profits for themselves. In the case of small-scale cultural production, what matters most is symbolic capital, while in large scale cultural production it is economic capital (Hesmondalgh, 2006). New media employees and freelancers, whose *habitus* is one of relative material dispossession but cultural wealth, are more likely to be motivated by love for technology and art. In the case of my participants, being good at computing was not merely a qualification. Having the technical skills, having embodied the parlance of computing and demonstrating passionate commitment to it might be considered merely

a form of human and cultural capital which might not give their possessor symbolic capital in the *field of power* (occupied by media tycoons, multinational software corporations, bankers, and so on), where money and politics are more important, but within the field of new media production it was a form of cultural capital which could give their possessor recognition. The conversion of cultural to symbolic capital happened through interaction and the sharing of knowledge, a practice which was consistent with the new media field's logic.

However, as I also demonstrate, the desire for this specific type of recognition depended not only on the different intersections of fields (*e.g.* family, community, age group, education), but also on the different stages of the intersection of fields in which practitioners found themselves. I therefore suggest that my participants' practices reflected the new media logic as well as the strategic actions and habitual reactions effected by their *habitus* and the positions they occupied in the different intersections of fields.

Finally, through the conversion of these different types of capital that took place within Brighton's new media networks, different career trajectories were produced. These trajectories in some cases represented resistance to domination within the new media field and in other cases subordination. Acts of resistance represented both strategies aimed at improving one's position in the new media field and, in some cases, strategies with the potential to challenge the logic of the new media field's doxa. These instances of resistance reflected the potential for solidarity in the new media sector and, as such, rejected the more pessimistic accounts of the precarians in the new economy.

## 2.5.5. Brighton's new media sector and the social organisation of coworking

The meanings ascribed to peer relationships and work in Brighton's new media sector were a function of the logic of the new media field, practitioners' habitus, the capitals with which they were endowed and the different intersections of fields within which they found themselves. Goffman's (1971; 1963) ideas on the social organisation of co-presence were particularly useful in understanding how these meanings were translated

into practices in the context of coworking. Goffman's ideas, in that sense provide a valuable set of tools for exploring Bourdieu's ideas in practice. Coworking is a type of organisation which differs from typical business organisation in the sense that the individuals who work there are not employed by the organisation in question nor are embedded in a formal set of rules which define roles and responsibilities within the organisation. They rather find themselves in the co-presence of others with whom they have the choice to abstain from any interaction. Through a description of the social organisation of a CWO in Brighton I demonstrate how the particular norms and rituals and the meanings these have for members of the organisation reflect the logic of the local new media field and the way in which different types of capital are used according to this logic. Brighton's new media logic as well as variations of that logic internalised within new media practitioners' *habitus* imbued the social organisation of new media CWOs in Brighton.

Goffman offered a rich set of analytical concepts which are invaluable in understanding how social order is maintained in everyday co-presence and in describing how social interaction is organised. According to Goffman (1971) we can make sense of social order in terms of the rituals which develop among people in co-presence to settle differences with regard to actors' territorial preserves. As I describe later on in this thesis, the specific type of norms and rituals observed in the case of the Werks, one of Brighton's CWOs, tended to reflect the logic of the local new media field, the culture of the organisation and the local culture within which they took place.

A certain set of basic analytical concepts can be identified which are central to the analysis of the social organisation of co-presence. Social actors are *vehicular* and *participation units* (Goffman, 1971, pp. 5-27). The former refers to the signals that people convey with their bodies, their clothes, their gestures, and so on. Participation units refer to the number in which people come. The notion of *territoriality* is central to the study of social order (Goffman, 1971, p. 28). It refers to things or states to which people feel they are entitled. Goffman (1971, pp. 29-40) argued that preserves are spatial, situational and egocentric and, accordingly, identified several different dimensions of territoriality, such as personal space, the stall (a scarce resource), use-space, the turn (order of claiming a good), the sheath, possessional territory, conversational preserve and information preserve. Around this notion there is a set of

other concepts such as the good (the desired object), the claimant (the party that claims), the impediment (the act that threatens the claim), the author (the party that makes the threat), *markers* (signs indicating one's claim to a preserve), and so forth (ibid., p. 28-41).

When people (vehicular and participation units) who are in possession of certain goods that constitute their personal preserves (territories) find themselves in public spaces, they can engage in face-to-face interaction with other people. These interactions can be explored on the basis of the scope of the interaction and the rules of engagement and disengagement (Goffman, 1963 , pp. 83-111). Unfocused interaction refers to what can be 'communicated between persons by virtue of their presence together in the same social situation', while focused interaction refers to 'individuals who extend to one another a special communication license and sustain a special type of activity that can exclude others who are present in the situation' (ibid., p. 83). Focused gatherings can be *fully-focused* ones (situations with only two participants who are engaged), *partly-focused* ones (when there are disengaged participants present in a gathering), or *multifocused* ones (when more than one encounter is carried on during the same gathering) (ibid., p. 91).

Goffman also offered concepts that help us understand how an encounter starts and how it ends. Interactions happen between people who are acquainted and share an *anchored* relationship, and people who are unacquainted and share *anonymous* relationships (1971, p. 189). *Tie-signs* refer to signals which convey the relationship status among social actors (ibid.). For example, the caress of a hand (a tie-sign) is likely to convey the presence of a romantic relationship or a manifestation of concern. A concept useful in the case of interaction among the unacquainted is the *openness* of people to social interaction (Goffman, 1963, p. 125). Different factors affect the openness of a person to social interaction, such as social or occupational status (ibid., p. 126). For example, being the secretary or administrative staff renders one readily *exposed* to interaction (more open to engagement). Rules of *face engagement* also determine the openness of a person to social interaction. For example, avoiding eye contact can be used in order to *avoid cooperative claims* (ibid., p. 94).

When people – who have several types of preserves – are engaged in interaction and even though they may be performing acts with the aim of securing a preserve (*e.g.* setting *markers*), there is always the possibility of *violation* of their preserves (Goffman, 1971, p. 44). Territorial offences include intrusion (contamination of a preserve) and obtrusion (making others feel intrusive) (ibid., pp. 50-51). If an intrusion is followed by assurances by the offender and the offended accepts them, then we have what Goffman (1971, p. 64) termed a *remedial interchange*; a type of ritual meant to restore the social order as it was or else move towards the establishment of a new social order. Another type of ritual which is indicative of mutual respect among people is a *supportive interchange*; a statement of respect followed by a show of gratitude (ibid.). Different rituals can be classified, according to Goffman, according to their functions or themes, such as identificatory sympathy, tactful avoidance of open exclusion, reassurance displays, and so on (ibid., pp. 65-67).

Of course, this list of themes is in no way exhaustive and different themes and functions can be identified depending on different social situations. In the case of my fieldwork, these analytical tools were considered alongside the knowledge of the logic within which new media practitioners were embedded and their own accounts of their personal interpretations of situations.

## 2.5.6. Brighton's new media sector and the localisation of the new media logic

From my research it occurs that Brighton constitutes a unique type of new media sector. It could be argued that there is a specific logic that characterises the new media industry overall and that Brighton represents a localised version of this logic. The generalised new media logic – which includes elements such as market ambiguity, project-based production, domination of SMEs, big presence of freelancers, the conflict between art and business, precarious labour conditions, strong identification with work, blurring of work and play boundaries – is experienced within the specific culture in a specific time period and produces a localised new media logic. As I describe in detail in the remainder of this thesis, this localisation is effected by the local culture, how this culture is constructed by a variety of forces – such as local associations, industry veterans,

policy makers, and the local economy – and how people interpret this culture within which they experience new media work.


## 2.6. Conclusion

Through this review of the literature, I present the broad themes which this thesis addresses, namely new media clustering and new media work and sociality. I provide a description of the new media industry and discuss the reasons why clustering might constitute an attractive choice for new media companies and practitioners, alongside the reasons why new media practitioners might be attracted to specific types of urban environments. I also suggest that new media work has been seen as a pervasive type of work. As illustrated by studies done in new media clustering and new media work, employment and sociality, new media practitioners have been portrayed as precarious workers. Practices such as mixing work and play and networking are perceived to reflect either the imperative of profit or simply practitioners' efforts to secure their livelihood. While in some studies practitioners' "workaholism" is also attributed to intrinsic passion for work, to the neoliberal project of inculcating enterprising subjects, and to the social construction of the new media skillset which requires one to stay up to date, I argue that ultimately new media workers are described as rational utility maximisers operating in an environment of precariousness with the result of treating social relationships as commodities. I suggest that a lot about the experiences of new media workers have been read off from "objective facts" about them, such as their position in the industry. I suggest that more attention should be paid to peer relationships and the subjective meanings ascribed to these relationships. I further suggest that the different experiences and practices of new media workers, such as exploitation, insecurity, freelancing and networking have not been explored within a coherent theoretical framework. By drawing on Bourdieu's ideas of field, capital and *habitus* and Goffman's ideas on frames and the social organisation of co-presence, I argue that a more coherent picture can be provided within which new media workers' practices can be understood, the connections between them can be made clear and new facets of these phenomena can be revealed.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Introduction

This research focuses on the social relationships that develop among new media practitioners, the resources that become available within social networks and the effects of such networks on their careers. These questions were initially approached from the point of view of the social determinants of economic relations and the embeddedness of economic actors in social networks of mutual support (Cooke *et al.*, 2005; Woolcock, 1998; Putnam, 1994; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1985). However, the pilot study signalled the need to extend my focus to my participants' work experiences and the meanings they attach to their work and their relationships with their peers. This is despite the fact that my interest remained with the social networks that develop among knowledge workers. This shift of focus resulted to a broader engagement with academic literature that encompasses the ideology of work (Storey *et al.*, 2005; du Gay, 1996; Anthony, 1977), computing cultures (Woodfield, 2000) and the field of art (Eikhoff and Haunschild, 2006; Bourdieu, 1996).

The approach I used to investigate new media practitioners experiences of work and sociality and the meanings they attach to these phenomena is a qualitative one. In the remainder of this chapter I present my methodology in detail. I begin with a short section on the pilot study I did in the early stages of my research and the ways in which it effected changes to my research interests and methodological approach. I move on to the philosophical underpinnings of my chosen methodology. Next, I refer to the selection of research sites and research participants and I describe in detail the methods used to collect data. The main methods employed were semi-structured qualitative interviews with new media practitioners and industry experts in Brighton and ethnographic observation in one of Brighton's coworking organisations and pubs where practitioners meet with their peers. I conclude with a brief discussion on the data analysis process.

## 3.2. Pilot study: methodological problems and shifting of research interests

The pilot study took place in a small computer games cluster located in Guildford, Surrey in the South-East of the UK, between June and September of 2010. During the time of my study there were about 12-15 computer games companies in Guildford. For the initial identification of computer games companies, I used online networking websites such as Linked-In. However, since many firms were not registered in these services, initial interviews also helped in identifying other local firms. A problem that became apparent fairly early in my fieldwork was that recruitment was very difficult. I conducted interviews with three people working in computer games companies and a managing director answered some of my questions, almost monosyllabically, through e-mail. Arranging those interviews involved multiple e-mails, telephone calls and failed appointments, whereas the companies that finally accepted to participate where among the smaller ones, since bigger companies either refused to participate or did not return my numerous calls and emails. Many of the small companies were also impossible to reach as they did not reply to my emails, did not take the calls and in some cases did not provide a telephone number on their websites. Therefore, by the end of the pilot study I decided that it would be sensible to change sector and move from computer games development to another new media sector, the much more widely populated sector of web/mobile development.

For this pilot study, social network analysis techniques (Hanneman and Riddle, 2005) were considered alongside the more qualitative methods. The purpose of the former was to produce data on measures such as network size, network density, geodesic distance, and so on, which would then be used to test associations between the positions of people in the network and the amount of information they receive and economic performance. The use of these techniques was associated with several problems. Answering some of the questions proved to be very difficult for my participants. For example, being asked to fill in matrices related to social contacts, frequency of interactions, sharing of knowledge, and so on, proved to be frustrating. Some of them had many contacts, thus filling in the matrices properly required substantial time investment from their part. Ultimately, they preferred to arbitrarily mention some contacts and leave out others. They also forgot to mention some people and remembered

them later in the conversation; they were not aware of their contacts' contacts; they were very vague about knowledge sharing practices, and so forth. My participants also hinted that measuring knowledge-transfer was difficult. Most importantly, I sensed the need of my participants to deviate from the questions that they were being asked and introduce topics that were important in their work and everyday lives. Work experiences were subjective and participants had issues that were deemed important to be raised. My attention shifted to issues of work cultures, the meanings that people attached to their work and the relationships with their peers. This interest coincided with the personal conviction that social relationship are not commodities. By exploring the social relationships in a sector where relationships have predominantly been portrayed as commodities, I hoped to find evidence of the opposite. Moreover, this shift led to engagement with new types of academic literature which, coupled with the discouraging performance of social network analysis techniques, further boosted my interest toward a more qualitative type of inquiry and the inclusion of questions relating to work experiences and social activities.

## 3.3. Methodology: Philosophical underpinnings

Capturing people's experiences of working in Brighton's new media sector, trying to understand the meanings they attached to work and peer relationship and how these meanings were constructed in a specific historical and cultural setting, required a specific methodological approach which was qualitative in its nature.

Qualitative research is affiliated with interpretive epistemological approaches which reject the idea 'of any foundational, mind-independent and permanent fixed reality that could be grasped or even sensibly thought of without the mediation of human structures' (Schwandt, 2000, p. 201). As such, qualitative research rejects an absolute scientism and the corresponding assertion that the social world is independent from the meanings that people attach to it. Accordingly, central in qualitative research and the epistemological traditions within which it is situated is the attempt to make intelligible the meanings that people ascribe to their actions. Divergent traditions within the interpretive epistemological spectrum understand 'meaning', and how sociological enquiry can access it, slightly differently. For instance, for certain strands of *interpretivism*, meaning is perceived as something static which can be discovered through empathic

understanding (Schwandt, 2000, p. 192; Weber, 1958), by putting oneself into the shoes of the research subject (Scott, 2009, p. 16) and understanding the meanings behind social action. In projects guided by *social constructionism* the interest lies with understanding the meanings of social action by relying on the 'participants' views of the situation being studied' (Creswell, 2003, p. 8), rather than trying to project meanings to their actions based on seemingly objective facts about them and circumstances. According to the *interactionist* paradigm (Blumer, 1969; Goffman; 1959) meanings are not static entities but rather dynamic ones that are negotiated within the social process. Accordingly, qualitative research – and specifically ethnography – owes much to symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School, which emphasise the fluid nature of meanings as they are negotiated through interaction (Scott, 2009, p. 24, 193). Exploring the meaning of social action with reference to the specific context within which this action takes place (Schwandt, 2000, p. 200) is therefore one of the basic elements of qualitative research. The farther we are removed as researchers from the process of the construction of meanings – negotiated and understood by the research subjects – 'our knowledge becomes ... less authentic' (Benton and Craib, 2001, p. 87).

Because of its emphasis on meaning, subjective experience and the context within which social reality is produced, qualitative research produces knowledge which corresponds to the subjective interpretations of both the research subjects and the researcher in a given time and place. The researcher unavoidably assumes an active role in the construction of knowledge. To quote Schwandt (2000, p. 198), 'meanings are not fixed entities that can be discovered and exist independently of the interpreter'. Instead, the researcher always interprets action through their own conceptual frameworks (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197). Any kind of knowledge – possessed either by the participant or the researcher – is always situated in specific historical and cultural contexts (Burr, 2003, p. 3).

## 3.4. Data collection: Qualitative interviewing and ethnography

Due to the basic belief that people ascribe meanings to social phenomena and that these meanings are socially constructed within a specific culture, researchers closer to the interpretive end of the epistemological spectrum are more likely to engage in qualitative research (MacKenzie and Knipe, 2006), utilising methods which allow them to explore

social experiences and meanings closer to the relevant context within which such experiences and meanings are born and make sense. The methods that allowed me to explore new media practitioners' experiences of work and their relationships with their peers and try to capture the meanings associated with these experiences were qualitative interviewing and ethnography. The utilisation of both interviews and ethnographic observation produced rich data and contributed to the aim of understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, the combination of the two methods allowed for the triangulation of data produced through self-reporting with data produced through real-time observation, and for the addressing of different dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation.

During my fieldwork, I conducted interviews with 36 participants, undertook observations in pubs and industry events during which I engaged in numerous informal conversations with other new media practitioners, bringing the total number of participants to over 50. On several occasions during fieldwork I was given the opportunity to observe the workplace environment of my research participants. Four of my interviews were conducted in the actual workplace, among my participants' colleagues. In another case, I met with my research participant in his office and subsequently went out to do the interview in a nearby café. Also, outside of the study, I was casually employed by a new media company as a data analyst. At a later date, I was able to interview my former supervisor and draw on my experiences as a paid employee. Apart from the interviews with new media practitioners and the observation of various social events around Brighton, I also undertook observations over a three month period at one of Brighton's coworking organisations, which involved detailed field note-taking and informal discussions with the members of the organisation. Primary data were further complemented by secondary data on employment, salaries and working hours, which were obtained from government services (*e.g.* Office of National Statistics, Nomis) and non-governmental organisations associated with the new media industry (*e.g.* UK Web Design Association), as well as information found on company websites, participants' websites and blogs. All formal interviews but four were formally recorded. Detailed notes of these discussions were kept during both recorded and non-recorded interviews. Interview times varied between 30 minutes and two hours, depending on the mood and talkativeness of the participant. Twelve out of 36 participants were women and 24 were men. Thirty-three of them were practitioners and

the remaining three were industry experts and policy makers. Almost all of my participants worked in the web/mobile development sector. Three of them were occupied in online games development. The majority of my interviewees were freelancers. However, distinguishing between freelancers and company workers is problematic since, as became clear early on in my fieldwork, some people who worked in companies did freelance work on the side and even two of those who primarily identified as freelancers held a part-time post in a company as well. Almost all interviewees had a long experience in the industry. Only two of them were relatively early career workers. Setting clear boundaries with regard to roles in the industry also appeared to be problematic, since some project managers did some design work on the side and, sometimes, the other way round. Almost all of the male participants occupied the more technical and artistic positions (programming and design) while almost all of the female participants occupied business and managerial positions (business manager, project manager). Almost all of my research participants had been employed by companies at some point in their careers. Almost all expressed strong opinions about being employed by a Brighton new media company. Some of my participants had also been employed by companies outside of Brighton in the past. I tried to control for some variation in my sample by recruiting predominantly people working in web development. However, the fluidity regarding roles and employment status within the industry, which became evident early on in my research, rendered further attempts to control for variation in the sample meaningless. The inclusion of both women and men, company workers and self-employed practitioners, proved critical to the identification of various emerging issues and the illumination of the ways in which they are interconnected, and resulted in a more varied and accurate account of the phenomenon.

### 3.4.1. Qualitative interviewing

My interviewing approach draws on what Rubin and Rubin (2005) have called 'responsive interviewing'. This interviewing approach entails a flexible research design which facilitates depth rather than breadth of understanding (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 21). It is an open-ended type of interviewing which allows participants to 'suggest topics, concerns, and meanings that are important to them' (ibid. p. 33). As such the interview schedule is comprised of a set of main questions with the aim of ensuring that the main research themes will be explored (ibid., p. 35). Probes serve as an

encouragement for the interviewee to continue talking (ibid., p. 41), or as a compliment (*e.g.* 'can you elaborate on that?', 'this is very interesting, please continue!'). This approach was in line with my two aims of understanding the way in which participants constructed meanings with regard to the topic of research and allowing participants to raise topics which they thought were important to them (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, pp. 36-7).

A common element in research closer to the interpretive end of the epistemological spectrum is viewing the interviewing process as a conversation, during which the interviewer actively engages with the interviewee (Byrne, 2004, p. 181). In responsive interviewing the interviewer and interviewee are conversational partners (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 34). As such, the interview is not only meant to benefit the interviewer. Instead, the latter should find ways to benefit the participant, which is what I aimed to accomplish in my interviews as well.

Finally, an approach which is in line with qualitative research is one which sees the collection of data as a process which does not begin and end with the audio-recording of the interview. Halcomb and Davidson (2006, p. 41) have emphasised the importance of concurrent note-taking during the recording of the interview, as well as the importance of 'reflective journalising' immediately after the interview. The latter consists of writing down thoughts and interpretations of the discussion that took place. During the data analysis process, the researcher draws on these different types of data that result from the interviewing process.

### 3.4.1.1. Recruitment[8]

Finding people who were willing to allocate one-two hours for an interview proved to be a difficult task. Gaining access to participants has been considered a common problem in qualitative research (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 8). Among the techniques I used for recruiting people included posting on a local new media mailing list, talking to friends and colleagues and using social media. Another intuitive method that I tried in the beginning of my fieldwork, when I realised that recruitment was difficult, included using the mailing list of the Psychology Department, at the University of Sussex.

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[8] A list of the people who were formally interviewed can be found in Appendix 1.

Undergraduate and postgraduate psychology students often offered participation in the subject's research in exchange for participation in their experiments. I would therefore have accepted to take part in their experiments if they could introduce me to a web developer who would have been interested in participating in my research. This method did not bear any fruits. The issue of access becomes especially difficult when there is no monetary or otherwise benefit for the interviewee. This became clear after all my efforts to secure an interview with somebody from an important local organisation came to nothing. However, the same organisation became involved in a funded project similar to mine after a while.

Gaining access to people who can provide access to other potential participants, a process known as snowballing (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 8), is a common method of recruitment in qualitative research. In the early stages of fieldwork I encountered reluctance on behalf of some of my participants to pass on my details to their contacts. After the interview was over and my participants were convinced about the non-threatening nature of my questions, I asked them if they could forward my contact details to people who could help me. Some explicitly expressed their reluctance to forward my details to their contacts. The reason seemed to be that giving out industry acquaintances or putting them in contact with researchers, was usually frowned upon. In fact I did not manage to get any contacts from more than half of the people I asked. I came to realise that most reluctant were people who did not have close contacts in the industry, who were relatively new in the industry and did not want to give "the wrong idea" to prospective clients of business partners. People who were already established were less reluctant of putting me in contact with their peers. Moreover, different participants showed different degrees of commitment to helping me secure interviews. Some gave me people's e-mails, others asked me to write a small paragraph which they forwarded to friends and a couple of them wrote their own emails, on which they improvised from their interview experience and created very attractive invitations. Potential interviewees that belonged to – or had an affiliation with – my University were easier to approach and less reluctant to participate in the research. Furthermore, people who were also researchers themselves were more eager to help me out of "academic solidarity", as a couple of them put it. However, there were also occasions where members of the faculty at the University refused to answer my emails and refrained from helping me even after visiting them at their offices.

### 3.4.1.2. Being a conversation partner

As explained earlier, responsive interviewing sees the interviewer and the interviewee as conversation partners (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 34). As such, the researcher should also strive to benefit the participant in some way. Being a competent conversational partner was the least I could do to show gratitude to my participants for the time they allocated for my research. Doing some research before each interview allowed me to be a competent and pleasant interlocutor. Collecting information about people, especially in knowledge-intensive industries, was relatively easy. Many of my participants were quite visible on the internet. Their companies had websites, freelancers had their websites or blogs, their profiles were available on Linked-in and their twitter account was public. Moreover, during interviews I was open to sharing personal experiences and feelings with my participants. I shared my personal ideas and stories with a participant who was interested in music and used to play in a band and I talked about my financial difficulties with a participant who worked as a web designer in order to fund her studies. Many of my participants told me at the end of the interview that it had been a positive experience for them.

Being a competent and pleasant interlocutor also had practical benefits. Knowing in advance what people did worked well on different levels. Before the interview, it allowed me to dispose of irrelevant questions from the interview schedule and introduce more relevant ones. For example, by knowing in advance that someone who was a freelancer also run a workshop allowed me to consider questions about his workshop. Additionally, it allowed me to make relevant comments which worked as probes, letting the interviewee know that I knew what I was talking about and making myself more pleasant an interlocutor.

### 3.4.1.3. Protecting participants

Research participants were initially contacted through e-mail invitation. In this e-mail message they were asked to participate in the study and were given a general idea of what the study entailed. Informing participants about the nature of the study and the risk it entailed fell within the ethical considerations of research (Ali and Kelly, 2012, p. 65).

My research was concerned with new media work and the social relationships among new media workers, but it also addressed the aspect of knowledge exchange among new media workers. I felt that potential participants had the right to know that the interview would include questions on knowledge sharing so that if they felt that sharing knowledge was a sensitive issue they could decide not to participate. By keeping this information hidden I could have deceived people into participating in research which they might have not wanted to participate if fully informed. However, the danger that this information carried was to raise false expectations of what I wanted to hear, with regard to knowledge sharing. This potential trade-off between full disclosure of the aims of the research and spontaneity of answers is an often cited problem (Ali and Kelly, 2012, p. 67). Communicating the purpose of the research should not lead the participants but at the same time should fully inform them of the potential dangers involved. On my emails, I gave two hints about the study which I felt that both communicated in an honest way the content of my research without compromising the findings. I explained that I was interested in people working in new media and that my research was concerned with the social relationships that form among people that work in new media and with the sharing of knowledge. By providing this information I felt that I was being honest about the nature of my research. Moreover, I doubted that mentioning knowledge sharing was likely to compromise the findings. It has been identified in several studies in the new media industry (Kennedy, 2010; Smith, 2010; Batt, *et al*. 2000; Pratt, 2000) that new media workers share knowledge and skills at work and outside of work. My study was partly looking at the meanings associated with sharing, however this was not explicitly stated in the e-mail. Additionally, knowledge sharing could mean many different things. My e-mail was not specific, for instance, about knowledge sharing with regard to job opportunities, or knowledge sharing with regard to technical problems, or market information. Therefore, I think that I protected my participants who were informed that the questions might deal with issues sensitive to them, but nevertheless managed to not compromise my findings.

Before the interview, research participants were given an informed consent form which included a small description of the study and that the participant was expected to dedicate two hours for this study. It assured the participants that no commercially sensitive information would be discussed and that they would remain anonymous.

Participants were given pseudonyms throughout the writing of the thesis. Names of companies or other things that could give away a person's identity were changed.

### 3.4.1.4. Interview schedule[9]

It is common with constructivists to start research with no particular theory in mind (MacKenzie and Knipe, 2006). Nevertheless, a backdrop of concepts, theories and understandings unavoidably affects the design of the research and, accordingly, the interview schedule. Theoretical and empirical work on theories of work and leisure (Urry, 1990; Parker, 1983; Clayre, 1974), work identity (du Gay, 1996; Anthony, 1977), corporate cultures (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) and computing cultures (Woodfield, 2000), social capital (Putnam, 1994; Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986; Granovetter, 1985) as well as empirical work on the creative industries and concepts such as precariousness (Gill, 2010; Gill and Pratt, 2008) and creative class (Florida, 2004; 2003) influenced the formulation of questions regarding people's personal histories, education and past jobs, leisure activities, and so forth.

The design of the interview schedule was loyal to the principles of responsive interviewing (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The broad themes around which my research was situated, namely relationships with peers, knowledge sharing and work experiences, informed the construction of the initial interview schedule. Several open-ended questions were assigned to each broad theme. Some of the questions were non-exclusive in the sense that they implicitly moved between themes, with the aim of eliciting as much information on each theme as possible. All questions were open-ended in order to allow participants to elaborate and raise their own issues. Double-barrelled questions (Warwick and Lininger, 1975, p. 141), which tend to confuse participants and could jeopardise the study by failing to produce important types of data, were avoided. Leading and loaded questions were also avoided because they would manipulate the participants' line of thinking, guiding them towards specific answers (ibid., p. 142-3). Probes were used during the interview which allowed me to further pursue emergent issues. Finally, after the first few interviews some questions were dropped and new ones were introduced, leading to the partial re-constitution of the interview schedule according to the emergent issues. In several occasions during the course of fieldwork I

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[9]    The interview guide can be found in Appendix 2.

contacted participants I had already interviewed and asked for more information on new topics that had risen since the time I first interviewed them.

In order to make the interviewees reflect on their everyday routines and share their experiences from work, I found ideas from key studies in corporate cultures particularly helpful. Deal and Kennedy (1982, pp. 132-3) asked their research subjects questions such as, 'what kind of people work here?' and 'what kind of place is this to work in?' Similar broad questions were asked to elicit information about their experiences from work, working with their colleagues, socialising with friends, working in Brighton, such as, 'tell me about your job', 'tell me about your work history', 'describe an average working day/ describe your day today', 'what is like working in Brighton?', 'what are your experiences from working at your company/a former company?', 'how would you describe your colleagues/ the people you hang out with?', 'what is the business environment in Brighton like?' These questions were often supplemented by improvised probes based on my participants' answers.

My interest in exploring peer relationships in detail, resulted in asking a series of questions on peer relationships outside of formal working hours and the activities that such relationships involved, such as, 'do you socialise with your peers?', 'how often?', 'what do you do in such occasions?', 'do you share work-related information and knowledge?', 'why do you do this?', 'would you share with competitors?', 'do you socialise with people outside of the industry?', and so forth. By the time I arrived to these questions many of these topics had already being mentioned in the course of the interviews. For example, many people were talking about socialising with their colleagues and sharing knowledge and often pointed toward reasons for these practices, even before I ask them about it. However, the more relevant questions asked, the richer the data that were produced and also the bigger the possibility for more nuanced understanding of people's motives, values, and practices.

One of the questions near the end of the interview had a more directly instrumental aim. My research did not involve social network analysis so I would have to speculate on the

levels of connectedness based on participants' accounts of social whereabouts.[10] Moreover, even if I had data that suggested high levels of connectedness among my participants in Brighton, it would not necessarily mean that people are aware of this situation, or its implications. In order to tackle these difficulties the question 'would it be easy to find out whether somebody is knowledgeable or trustworthy in Brighton?' was introduced to produce data regarding connectedness in the local scene.

## 3.4.2. Ethnography of the coworking organisation

The appropriate occasion that provided the opportunity to observe social interaction among people working in the new media sector presented itself in the form of coworking. The aim of the ethnographic stage of my research was complementary to the interviewing stage and consisted in experiencing first-hand the practices about which some of my participants talked (six out of my 36 interviewees were working at the Werks). I was interested in the way that co-presence would be organised among people who were not colleagues and who found themselves in the peculiar and novel setting of the coworking environment. I also hoped that direct observation would grant me access to ideas and practices regarding peer interaction that could not be conveyed through the interviewing method. Finally, given the accounts of my participants regarding the highly interactive nature of new media work, a more ambitious expectation was to be given the chance to explore the negotiation and construction of meanings through people's interaction within the organisation.

### 3.4.2.1. The site

As mentioned in Chapter 2, coworking refers to the practice of several unrelated to each other people working in the same physical space. CWOs are therefore organisations that consist of freelancers or companies (one-person or a few people companies) that do not share the same business objectives. The Werks was Brighton's first CWO. Freelancers could either rent a desk or rent a working space and interact with other like-minded

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[10]   However, even with proper social network analysis it would be extremely difficult to determine measures of connectedness such a geodesic distance. The reason is that my sample was relatively small and nowhere near a full network.

individuals while working. My participation in the organisation allowed me to experience peoples' face-to-face interaction and work habits and practices.

Four participant observer roles have been identified on the basis of the degree of involvement with the members of the setting (Bryman, 2004, p. 301). These roles include the *complete participant* (covert, full functioning member of the setting), the *participant-as-observer* (overt, engaged in regular interaction), the *observer-as-participant* (mainly interviewer, some observation but hardly participation) and the *complete observer* (unobtrusive observation, no interaction with people). My role in the Werks was between the *complete observer* and the *observer-as-participant* roles. On the one hand, I was present in the workspace and I was involved in extensive observation and note-taking. On the other hand, I was not completely detached from the setting. I participated in some of the members' activities, such as lunch-breaks, I often had casual discussions with the members of the organisation and I also did some interviews. I paid 25 visits in the organisation as a *complete observer/observer-as-participant* over a period of three months.

### 3.4.2.2. Gaining access to the organisation and protecting the anonymity of research participants

It has been argued that, generally, the presence of a researcher in an institution represents a 'disruptive factor for the system to be studied, to which [the system] reacts defensively' (Flick, 2006, p. 56). Moreover, granting access to a researcher opens up the possibility of disclosing the limitations of the institution's activities (ibid.). As Smith (2007, p. 226) has pointed out, 'organisational gatekeepers' tend to delay or deny access to an organisation for fear of the negative impact the research findings may have on the organisation in question. However, as Smith (2007, p. 226) has also shrewdly observed, ideas, norms and the philosophy of the organisation are reflected on the gatekeepers' behaviour. For my study at the CWO I first arranged a meeting with one of the founders in which I explained the scope of my study and we had a brief talk about his business philosophy. At the time of the interview I was not sure if I would ask him to spend time in the organisation and observe how people interact. But near the end of our discussion he suggested that it would be interesting for me to do some research there, a suggestion that coincided with my interest. He explained that after my research was over we could

organise a workshop to present my findings to the members of the organisation. Offering something in return is common with research on formal organisations (Bryman, 2004, p. 297). I accepted the offer and I explained that I would spend time in the office observing people and conducting some interviews. I also explained that he should communicate our plans to the people working there, in case somebody raised objections to these plans, and assure everyone that they will retain their anonymity. He circulated an e-mail in the organisation's mailing list where he communicated our plans and nobody objected. On the first day I spent time in the office I was introduced to the workers by one of the administrative staff. Those who were formally interviewed were provided with, and signed, informed consent forms.

Following Smith's (2007) line of argumentation, the gatekeeper's attitude generally reveals something about the organisation in question. Indeed, he did not try to delay or deny access to his organisation. Instead he encouraged me to do some research there. His actions were indicative of a certain philosophy in which openness – and not secrecy – was central. As noted in the previous chapter, openness is one of coworking's central principles (DeGuzman and Tang, 2011) and this was mirrored in the gatekeeper's attitude towards me. Furthermore, his willingness to be studied potentially meant that he was convinced that any research would show "positive" results, which was in turn indicative of a conviction that his organisation was doing good things and that the world should know about it.

### 3.4.2.3. Field notes

Foreshadowed problems constitute the basic ideas of what is being researched when researchers enter a research site (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 175). My foreshadowed problems included habits of work and socialising, patterns of socialising, collaboration and competition among the members of the organisation.

Field note taking is, to quote Emerson *et al.* (2007, p. 353), 'inevitably selective' since careful observation can generate an overwhelming plethora of information, potentially relevant for the researcher. This situation results in a trade-off between the concreteness and the scope of field notes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 184). I think that it would be more appropriate to argue that there is an *incompatibility triangle* with

ethnography, comprised of the scope of research, the large number of participants and, the concreteness of notes. One can only achieve any combination of two factors each time. If someone wants to successfully collect evidence (concreteness) on as many foreshadowed problems as possible (scope), they cannot observe more than one or two people. Venturing the collection of accurate data (concreteness) on most people of a group (number of participants), makes touching on several foreshadowed problems difficult. If someone wants to collect evidence on many aspects (scope) from the entire group (number of participants), it is unlikely to make good field notes. The first of the above combinations can be achieved better through interviewing. The second combination can ensure validity and reliability of measurement, albeit not shedding light to many different facets of the problem. The last one is not desired because it is bound to produce unreliable data. In my case I tended to move back and forth between the first two configurations based on the type of social situation was taking place.

During my time at the Werks, I took detailed notes of people's interactions, I engaged in numerous informal discussions and I also conducted some formal interviews. My observations of interactions did not only include the use of language amongst members of the organisation, but also the use of paralanguage (voice qualities and vocalisations), body language, proxemics (personal and social space), haptics (touching) and the use of artifacts (Duncan and Fiske, 1977, p. 5-6; Goffman, 1971). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p. 126) have noted, the content of language that participants use is not the sole thing that matters in a conversation. The way they say it, the gestures they make, the clothes they wear may also convey interesting messages for the researcher. Along the same lines, Spradley stressed the importance of identifying the 'context' of social interaction (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 185). This includes an account of the physical space, the people involved, the activity, the physical things present, the emotions felt and expressed, and so on (ibid.). It was thus important for the purposes of this research to account for those complementary aspects of interaction.

It could be argued that the process of data collection in qualitative inquiry, is not entirely independent from the analysis process. The belief that the process of witnessing and documenting the social construction of social reality involves active processes of interpretation is central in social constructionism (Burr, 2003; Schwandt, 2000). As Emerson *et al.* (2007, p. 353) put it, field notes are intended to provide descriptive

accounts but they also involve 'active processes of interpretation and sense-making'. My interpretations, thoughts and feelings regarding the things I observed were often compared to those of my participants. After specific events or during formal interviews I would approach those involved and ask them to explain how they understood certain situations. A conundrum that appeared to me during fieldwork was on which situations I felt I could ask my participants to reflect. I would have liked to ask clarifications on mundane activities that took place such as 'offering coffee to others', 'engaging in casual talk about the weather', 'using the same seat', and so on. However, I felt that through this tactic I could make a nuisance of myself, potentially endangering the fieldwork process or even bringing about changes in the ways people behaved. Moreover, I felt that by asking questions about activities which were considered common sense could undermine my role in the organisation which could lead to a situation where participants would not take me seriously. Therefore, during the discussion of the social organisation at the CWO (Chapter 7) I point out that some of the observations represent my own interpretations, based on inferences induced by my experience in the field, rather than how my participants negotiated and understood given situations.

Apart from the process of interpretation which inevitably took place during observation, 'analytic ideas' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 191) often emerged as well during fieldwork. My field notes often included not only literal descriptions of the situations observed, but also my own on-the-spot analytic ideas.

### 3.4.3. 'Hanging-out' in events

Apart from interviews and the ethnographic study at the Werks, I also attended industry social events and social gatherings in local pubs. In all cases I was invited by someone who either attended or organised those events. During the industry events I was openly keeping notes on my field diary. Social gatherings in pubs were occasions during which I felt that taking field notes openly would disrupt any ''natural' participation' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 177) and would probably generate discomfort among those being researched, even though my interlocutors were aware of my identity as a researcher. It is common during fieldwork in such conditions to focus on attending on-going situations and to take 'mental notes' (Emerson *et al.*, 2007, p. 356). At

frequent intervals I would go to the rest-room, where I would jot down notes of the discussions I had and the observations I made, a tactic commonly employed in covert research (see Bone, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 178). Right after returning home I would transfer those notes on a word document and I would elaborate more on the things I had observed.

## 3.5. Analysis of the data

Data were organised and analysed following Bryman (2004), Halcomb and Davidson (2006) and Raisborough's (2006) adaptation of Gordon, Holland and Lahelma's process of analysis. Bryman's (2004, p. 268-70) stages of qualitative analysis includes the interpretation of data, formulation of concepts and engagement with theory. Halcomb and Davidson (2006, pp. 41-42) described the data management process (combing data collection and analysis) into six stages: audiotaping of interview and concurrent note-taking, reflective journalising immediately after the interview, listening to recording and revisiting notes, preliminary content analysis, secondary content analysis and, finally, thematic review. Raisborough (2006, p. 249) described the three stages of analysis as follows: identification of emerging themes (through immersion within the aural data and field notes), interpretation of data through these themes, extraction of examples and illustrations. As a result of the combination of these approaches, my method of analysis remained loyal to the necessity for the rigorous organisation of data, with the help of the qualitative analysis software, while not losing touch with my participants' narratives. The analysis process was organised in the following four stages:

- transcription of interviews and field notes and immersion within the data,

- coding with the use of the qualitative analysis software 'Nvivo' and initial engagement with theory,

- identification of themes among and within coding categories,

- further engagement with theory, re-immersion within the data, reconsideration of categories and themes.

Although the above stages can be identified, the process of analysis was by no means a linear one. The transcription of the interviews allowed me to obtain a general idea of my

data. The coding process, an interpretive process which was partially informed by theory, lead to the identification of themes. Subsequent readings of the transcripts allowed me to move back and forth between those themes and my participants' narratives. This process was accompanied by continual note-taking on my research diary and further engagement with theory which often led to questioning the concepts I used to organise my data into nodes as well as the emergent themes. I now turn to discuss these processes in more detail.

## 3.5.1. Transcription and immersion within the data

The first stage involved the transcription of the interviews and the field notes. Interviews were transcribed by myself using Win-amp software with the Slow-me-down plug-in.[11] Note-taking (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006, p. 41) was used for non-practitioner interviews and those with poor sound quality. Interview data were complemented by field notes and memoing, following Halcomb and Davidson (2006), which took place immediately after each interview and informal discussion. The transcription process took about four months. During transcription, I consulted the individual interview sheets that I used in the interviews, on which I often kept comments about the attitude of the participants, the way they presented themselves, their clothes, what they chose to drink during the interview, and so forth. On some occasions I used some of those notes on the transcription, even though I was not sure whether my observation would be of interest. For example, I noticed that several of the people I met in cafés ordered a 'flat white', a type of coffee beverage of which I had never heard before I started fieldwork. None of the people with whom I socialised had ever had this type of coffee so I thought it was a noteworthy observation. Problems I encountered with transcription included background noise and bad articulation. The few interviews I did in cafés were also difficult to transcribe due to the very loud background noise. In two cases, background noise was so loud that rendered the exact transcription of the interviews impossible.

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[11]  Win-amp is a freely available media player. The Slow-me-down plug-in is a  software component which – when used with Win-amp – allows the user to increase or decrease the speed of the speech without changing the pitch of the voice.

The transcription process was not merely a practical necessity of the process of analysis. During transcription I often opened up parentheses in the text in which I took notes of analytic ideas that occurred to me and connections I made while I listened to the interviews. Transcription was also a process which allowed me to immerse myself into my participants' narratives and 'obtain a sense of the whole' (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). An often cited problem with coding qualitative data is that though the process of data fragmentation the narrative flow can disappear (Bryman, 2004, p. 211). The fact that I conducted the interviews myself, I transcribed them and I read the transcripts several times allowed me to be attentive of my participants' narratives throughout the process of analysis.

## 3.5.2. Coding and engagement with theory

The Nvivo 9.2. software for qualitative analysis was used for the organisation of my interview data.[12] Once interviews were transcribed they were imported in Nvivo. The first stage of the coding process involved the identification of broad umbrella categories. This happened with parts of data which corresponded to research questions which were explicitly stated, such as, 'why were new media practitioners attracted to Brighton?' In these cases, a basic conceptual ordering (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 19-21) of the data took place, according to the different reasons expressed in association with a particular action. In the previous example (*i.e.* why people choose to come to Brighton), coding resulted in a series of nodes such as, 'the industry', 'lifestyle', 'proximity to London', 'acquaintances' and 'business culture'. Another example of umbrella category was the node 'company work experiences', which was eventually sub-categorised into 'contents' (positive company experiences) and 'discontents' (negative company experiences). Only after re-reading the data on this node, on a later stage of the analysis process, I started differentiating between different types of discontents (*e.g.* bureaucracy, tedium, neglect, lack of social interaction) and making theoretical connections.

In other cases, data were coded into analytic categories loosely based on theory, making the process of analysis more akin to directed content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon,

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[12] A list of the codes is available in Appendix 3.

2005). For example, lower-order codes were created such as 'reputation' and 'reciprocity' (Bulmer, 1986) or 'social capital' (Bourdieu, 1986). Another tool used for conceptual ordering was loosely based on Weber's (1947) typology of meaningful social actions. This typology was used for initially coding the motivations behind knowledge sharing into nodes such as 'instrumental-rational' and 'altruistic'.

### 3.5.3. Identification of emergent themes

The process of conceptual ordering in some cases led to themes which were more encompassing than others, in the sense that a large number of participant accounts were converging toward a specific theme. A good example was that the motivations behind knowledge-sharing were widely rational-instrumental. In other cases, the emergence of themes was the result of the cross-referencing of existing themes with certain descriptive data. For instance, the realisation that those occupying managerial and business development roles did not express any feelings regarding work satisfaction, that they did not have a problem with company work, or that they spoke about networking, were all examples of themes emerging out of the cross-referencing of data under the descriptive node 'role', with data on 'network perceptions', information sharing', 'work-fun-happiness', and so on.

### 3.5.4. Further engagement with theory

The identification of themes was an iterative process. As explained earlier, various theoretical ideas inevitably provided interpretive frameworks through which the data were organised in codes, through which themes emerged. Although specific themes emerged though the coding process and more themes emerged through the combination of codes, continual engagement with theory lead to different ideas on how these themes could be connected and, additionally, challenged the analytic value of existing theoretical ideas. The engagement with new theoretical ideas and the identification of new themes was done in parallel with a continual re-reading of the transcripts. This process kept me from losing sight of my participants' narratives. Keeping notes on my research diary proved valuable throughout the analytic phase of my research, whereby themes were continually tested against different theoretical ideas.

After engaging myself with a range of theoretical approaches, familiarising myself with the empirical work done on the new media industries, I came to the conclusion that Bourdieu's (1996; 1990; 1986; 1977) ideas on the field of art and his writings on field-*habitus*-capital provided helpful tools for integrating my participants' experiences into one coherent narrative. Whilst the concept of social capital was something of which I was aware since the beginning of my research – due to my interest in social networks – through my fieldwork and the exploration of my data I realised that the other types of capital and the ways in which they were interrelated were crucial to be considered for interpretive purposes. Through increasingly engaging myself with Bourdieu's work I incorporated into my analysis his ideas on field and *habitus*, which also proved valuable for the interpretation of the ways in which new media workers in Brighton constructed their meanings around work and peer relationships.

The decision to start using Bourdieu more methodically to interpret my data led once more to the re-reading of my transcripts and to reconsider the manner in which certain themes were interrelated. Certain theoretical ideas proved to be inadequate to help me understand the meanings that work had for my participants. Social exchange theory (Bulmer, 1986; Emerson, 1976), for example, proved inadequate to provide the interpretive frame that could do justice to my participants' accounts. While it provided interesting insights on how certain themes, such as reciprocity and disinterested generosity (Bulmer 1986, p. 106), could be connected, it was neither flexible enough to include different meanings ascribed to work and peer interaction, nor sufficient for accounting for the different resources and capitals at play in social processes. Only after careful re-reading of the transcripts alongside theoretical engagement with Bourdieu's ideas was I able to re-evaluate the analytic strength of social exchange theory. As described in Chapter 2, I viewed my participants as actors within the field of new media, whose practices reflected the interplay between their *habitus*, the resources available to them (by virtue of the position they occupied within the field and their *habitus*), and the logic of the new media field.

The arguments made throughout this thesis are accompanied by participant quotations. These quotations are either representative of the data or indicative of the variations within themes. The provision of numerous examples gives the opportunity to readers to

evaluate the internal validity of my claims, namely the extent to which causal statements are supported by the data (Seal, 2004, p. 72-3).

## 3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I present my research questions, the philosophical underpinnings of my methodology and I elaborate on the methods that I used during my research. I start the discussion by presenting the ways in which my research interests shifted after a short pilot-study. I move on to position my research within the interpretive end of the epistemological spectrum. Next, I present in detail the methods that I used. The primary method which allowed me to explore new media work, as well as the meanings that work and peer relationships had for my participants, was qualitative interviewing. The method that I used was closer to what Rubin and Rubin (2005) have called responsive interviewing. Next, I describe the method I used to explore the social organisation of coworking. The role I employed during fieldwork could be described as complete observer/observer-as-participant role (Bryman, 2004). Finally, I describe the data analysis process. The latter took place in four stages, namely transcription and immersion within the data, coding and initial engagement with theory, emergence of themes and, finally, further engagement with theory. My insistence on asking questions related to situations of peer interaction and knowledge sharing was central to the success of my study. By focusing my attention in one activity which proved to be central in peer relationships, rather than rely on generic questions about "networking", I was allowed to ask poignant questions and explore in a profound way the variety of meanings associated with this phenomenon. These questions generated a wealth of data which were particularly illustrative of the different types of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that were relevant in the new media sector, of how different types of resources beyond economic ones mattered and how they were central in the way in which the new media sector was constructed. Moreover, by being attentive to all possible resources which could supplement my data, such as company websites, personal websites and blogs, I came across themes which incited ideas that would not have been possible through a simple interviewing process. Finally, by choosing to observe work and socialising in the CWO and through my creative use of note taking, through being attentive to verbal and non-verbal interaction, and Goffman's (1971; 1963) ideas about the maintenance of public order, I produced knowledge which did not only include the social construction

of meanings but also the ways in which those meanings translated into practice and created a peculiar public order within one of Brighton's CWOs.

# 4. The new media sector in Brighton

## 4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the context within which new media work and sociality take place in Brighton. A discussion of the emergence of the Brighton new media cluster is important in its own right, since Brighton is one of UK's leading new media clusters, yet little is known about its origins and the factors that have impacted on its development. Brighton is a vibrant city by the sea in the South-East of England with a population of 258,800 people (Nomis, 2010) 'known for its ability to embrace diversity and encourage creativity' (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 5). It has traditionally been a popular holiday resort and, according to Leadbeater and Oakley (1999, p. 65), 'Brighton has long been a popular destination for London day-trippers and summer tourists and a small colony of artists and writers who mainly worked in London'. In the centre of Brighton, social interaction flourishes in and outside cafés and pubs, around street-music and street-art, performances, art events, small independent food-markets and picnics in communal gardens. Brighton hosts around 60 festivals every year (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2011, p. 22), which make a significant contribution to the local economy, including the Brighton Festival, England's largest arts event, and Digital Brighton, as well as other important events such as Pride. On first appearance, Brighton is an exemplification of a creative city along the lines described by Florida (2004; 2003). Famous for its tolerant and artistic culture, diverse population and home to two universities, Brighton appears to meet the criteria for attracting and nurturing creativity. Tolerance and diversity, according to Florida (2003), attract people who are prone to experimentation. Combined with a pool of skilled labour and technology from the local universities, an environment conducive to creativity that can be commercialised is bound to emerge.

Despite this creative environment, an observer might be able to notice a socio-economic divide in different parts of the city, such as the villas of Hove as opposed to the council houses of Moulsecomb. In that sense the new media sector emerges, as Perrons (2004, p. 57) has noted, more as 'a small and volatile part of a divided locality', rather than a

new media cluster. This uneven development and increased diversification is also paradigmatic of the new economy (see Castells 1996, p. 106). Although this chapter and the thesis overall do not deal with socio-economic inequalities and rather seek to unpack some of the processes associated with the development of the new media sector in Brighton, it is important to note these inequalities as indicators that Brighton is a heterogeneous social environment.

The chapter is structured as follows: the first brief section provides some descriptive statistics regarding the sector's size, growth and geography. The next section moves on to present the institutional environment within which the sector is embedded alongside some structural factors which have contributed to its emergence and development. Specific attention is paid to the roles of the Brighton and Hove City Council (hereafter BHCC), the local universities and local new media associations, such as Wired Sussex. The final section addresses the role of informal institutions such as social networks and other grass roots initiatives in the development of the local sector. The chapter draws from the limited academic and policy literature regarding the emergence and nature of the Brighton new media sector. However, these tertiary and secondary data are corroborated by my own primary (interview) data in order to provide a fuller picture of Brighton's new media sector.[13]

## 4.2. The new media sector in Brighton

### 4.2.1. Size

In 2006, there were 10,224 people working in the creative industries in Brighton and Hove (Hackett and Massie, 2008, p. 16). In 2005, 35,5% of those working in the creative industries worked in digital media (Hackett and Massie, 2008, p. 17). In 2007 the digital media sector in Brighton had approximately 500 businesses (Hackett and Massie, 2008, p. 10). Most of the large scale production in this sector was traditionally done by computer games companies and, accordingly, some of the biggest and most successful companies were involved in computer games development. Some multinational computer games companies had located subsidiaries in Brighton. Disney's

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[13] The terms "digital media" and "new media" are used interchangeably across this chapter, as policy reports prefer the former in contrast to academic literature which predominantly use the latter to refer to, more or less, the same sectors of the economy.

Black Rock and Club Penguin were based in Brighton, as were NCsoft, Sony and Zoe mode, a subsidiary of Electronic Arts. New media production in Brighton in the narrower sense, such as web-development, mobile development and E-learning, has mostly been small scale production, performed by small (one-two person) and medium-sized companies and freelancers. There have also always been a handful of bigger new media companies with big public and private sector clients, the latter including Nokia, Apple, Virgin, Tesco and other big companies in the UK and around the world. Beyond companies, a large number of freelance web-developers, web-designers and other IT professionals have been present in the area, the exact number of which is difficult to determine. The number of freelancers working in Brighton's creative sectors was estimated to be around 5,800 in 2008 (ibid., p. 4). If the percentage of digital media freelancers working in the creative sectors is directly proportionate to the *employed in digital media-employed in creative industries* ratio, then the number of digital media freelancers would be estimated at 2,030. However, to quote Smith and McKinlay (2009a, p. 9), one should 'be very cautious of employment statistics' when it comes to the creative industries. Brighton's high presence of self-employed new media practitioners has been in line with the general trends in this industry (see Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999, p. 11; also see Ross, 2008; Perrons, 2003).

## 4.2.2. Growth

Brighton has been recognised as a 'Diamond for growth' (Hackett and Massie, 2008, p. 10) and as one of the ten creative hot-spots in Britain (Chapain *et al*., 2010, p. 4). The share of digital media in the broader creative sector in Brighton increased from 19.5% in 2000, to 33.6% in 2004 and 35.5% in 2005 (Hackett and Massie, 2008, p. 17). The average employment growth in the Brighton digital media sector between 1998-2005 was estimated to be 30% (Webber, 2009, p. 40). The predicted annual job growth for the digital media sector was estimated to be 263 jobs in 2008 (Hackett and Massie, 2008, p. 5). The sector was therefore identified by BHCC as a central driver for growth, and support for the sector was central to Brighton's growth strategy (Webber, 2009). Likewise, quality of life, creative buzz and proximity to London were identified as elements that contributed to the good prospects for future growth in the sector (Webber, 2009, p. 8).

Workspace availability was identified as a weakness and even potential impediment to future growth by policy-makers (Webber, 2009). Increasing the availability of affordable workspace to accommodate the needs of this sector which is so important for the local economy has been a focal point and several measures have been taken in order to tackle this problem (*City News*, 2012, p. 7). Finally, housing, with prices 36% above the national average (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2011, p. 15), is likely to impose further barriers to the growth of the sector.[14] Indeed, some of my participants mentioned expensive housing as a disincentive for moving to Brighton.

### 4.2.3. Location

Much of the activity in the new media sector was concentrated around the city's bohemian district known as the North Laine. This is a shopping and residential district with various galleries, restaurants, pubs, cafés, record stores, antiques shops and street-store traders. Some buildings in the area have been modified over the years to accommodate small companies and many of them constitute new media hives. Some of them were just a few minutes' walk away from each other. Other new media companies can also be found close by in the Lanes area of Brighton, such as the Brighton Media Centre (hereafter BMC) one of the first creative hubs, as well as around the town centre, but still within walking distance from the North Laine cluster.

The concept of the geographical concentration may be less relevant to understanding the new media sector in Brighton, since, as already mentioned, a large part of the new media sector consists of freelancers and one-person companies. Freelancers have traditionally been seen as homeworkers. However, many freelancers and small entrepreneurs in Brighton are also concentrated in geographical space, as they choose to work in the several CWOs. This is in accordance to new trends regarding workspaces for new media entrepreneurs that have emerged over the last few years. Such trends, primarily developing in the US new media sector, have had an impact on the organisation of new media work in Brighton. After 2008, inspired by the so-called "coworking revolution" taking place in the US, some local entrepreneurs started setting

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[14]    When I first downloaded the report from BHHC's website in 2011 the specific statistic was 36%. However, when I downloaded the same report in 2013 (in the context of checking my bibliographical references for the submission of this thesis), I realised that some of the data had been changed. For example, in the case of housing prices, the statistic had changed to 25%.

up new spaces for new media workers, such as the Werks and the Skiff. The latter is also located in the North Laine, literally a few steps away from several other new media companies. These places offer cheap desk-space and office-space to freelancers and small companies and facilitate interaction and collaboration, further empowering the freelancing community. I refer to coworking in more detail in Chapter 8, where I present the case study of one of Brighton's CWOs.

## 4.3. Institutional environment and the development of the Brighton new media cluster

Brighton's new media sector is embedded in a rich institutional environment which is the outcome of various political, economic and social developments. I present the most important of these institutions and developments in the remainder of this section. At the same time, I present the joint trajectories of development of these institutions and the new media economic activities. The various components of Brighton's new media sector and related institutions are connected through the principles of *supplementarity* and *complementarity* and are subject to the law of *cumulative causation*. These principles/laws are ubiquitous in the literature on industrial clustering (see Chapain *et al.*, 2010; Thomas *et al.*, 2010; Lazzaretti *et al.*, 2009; Lorenzen and Frederiksen, 2008; Brenner and Muhlig, 2007; Breschi and Lissoni, 2005; Perrons, 2004; Basant, 2002; Malmberg and Maskell, 2002; Enright, 1998; Morgan, 1992).

Supplementary institutions have emerged over time and have provided support to Brighton new media companies and individual entrepreneurs. Indeed, in Brighton, these institutions can be thought to represent urbanisation economies which tend to come into existence when a sector starts becoming prominent in a location. As noted in other studies of industrial clustering, they have emerged 'in response to the special requirements of the activities performed by firms' (Malmberg and Maskell, 2005, p. 3). Wired Sussex and other organisations facilitate the functioning of the local labour market and the fostering of partnerships. Another supplementary institution is the BHCC which markets Brighton as a creative city. At the same time, the complementarity between local universities and the new media sector has been another important factor in the development of the local new media sector; universities need a

strong new media sector to absorb their graduates and, eventually, to strengthen their departments and reputation, while businesses need new skilled employees. As the sector gained momentum over the years it became more popular and attracted more workers and more companies which eventually gave the sector more momentum, setting off a cumulative process. Myrdal (1957) introduced the concept of *cumulative causation* to account for the concentration of economic activity in geographical space. The principle behind this concept, which has been adopted by contemporary economists and economic geographers such as Fujita and Krugman (2004) or Porter (1998; 1994) to explore similar phenomena in a more sophisticated way than Myrdal, is that initial economic advantages work as centripetal forces and tend to reinforce themselves. In what follows, I confirm and further elaborate on Perrons' (2004) finding that even though the development of Brighton's new media sector is reminiscent of the Marshalian agglomeration model (Marshal, 1923), in which factors such as the advantages of collocation, the skilled labour pool and the presence of supportive institutions are central to the development of the cluster, there are other significant factors, such as social networks, which need to be accounted in order to get a more complete picture of the phenomenon of new media clustering in Brighton. These latter factors are endogenous and are reminiscent of more recent approaches by new economic and cultural geographers (Nooteboom, 2004; Maskell, 2001; Camagni, 1992).

## 4.3.1. The origins of the cluster: local economy, geography, lifestyle and policy initiatives

In the 1980s and 1990s Brighton's economy was dominated by financial institutions and the tourism industry. The latter also included internal tourism since, as mentioned earlier, Brighton has traditionally been a popular destination for artists and writers who work in London (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999, p. 65). Banking, finance and insurance continued to be at the vanguard of economic growth in Brighton (Webber, 2009, p. 4). However, Brighton was also home to many design companies, which after the advent of the internet transformed into web design companies. In that sense, the origins of the cluster can be partially attributed to new developments in computing technologies which effected the transition from analogue design to digital design.

Lifestyle has been identified as an important factor in the early development of the new media sector in Brighton (Perrons, 2004; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999). Evidence provided by my research participants further supported the existing findings that Brighton's cultural environment offers the social and cultural amenities that new media practitioners value. Regarding their decision to either move to or remain in Brighton once they had moved, my participants often mentioned the attractiveness of the sea, the weather, the cafés, the variety of restaurants and the diverse cuisine, vegetarian food, art and the 'laid-back' pace of life. Local employability initiatives, supporting institutions and other aspects of the local economy have also been important for keeping graduates in Brighton, but the main reason has been that they feel 'welcome', or even 'at home', in Brighton. As one of my informants put it:

> Brighton [is] fun. It's also a lifestyle choice as well. I love to be by the sea. My brother and I grew up in Herdfordshire in the fields and the forest. Now, the sea is now my forest and the sea is amazing to look at. ... One of the things I've found over the last eight years; when I am stressed I'll just walk out to the sea. (Matthew, Mobile Developer/Managing Director)

Another factor that facilitated the birth of the local new media sector was local policy and grass roots initiatives. Even before the arrival of the internet, a synergy between local entrepreneurs, financiers and the local government set the foundations for the emergence of the cluster. In the early 1990s Brighton was severely hit by the recession and had a high export rate of creative workers. A number of local actors including the BHCC, Sussex Enterprise, the Arts council and local companies such as Lighthouse, Seventh Art and Midnight Communications, put together a strategy for the regeneration of the local economy. As Indergaard (2004) has shown in the case of the new media district in New York, the availability of physical spaces was of central importance for the emergence of the district. New media industry builders (local financiers) sought a cooperation with real estate interests in order to develop physical spaces to accommodate the new media entrepreneurs (Indergaard, 2004, p. 6). In the case of Brighton, the availability of workspace for creative businesses, crucial for the development of the cluster, was one of the things that came out of this regeneration strategy. The BMC was a regeneration project aimed at the accommodation and business support of start-up creative companies. It was established in 1992 by Ian

Elwick, an entrepreneur whose design company was located in Brighton (the BHCC's support consisted in providing a water cooler). Throughout the years the BMC increased its size and the amount of workspace available and continued pooling money for the support of local businesses. In 2011 it had about 70 creative companies. Other grass-roots initiatives that involved a more active role for local authorities and strengthened the new media sector in its early days included the creation of new media venues, such as Fabrica (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999, p. 65).

The neoliberal environment of rapid expansion and financial de-regulation was another factor that facilitated the emergence of the sector. The promise of, and hype surrounding, the internet led to the emergence of a cluster of E-learning companies during the 1990s, led by Epic multimedia. The financial climate of the times favoured internet-related ventures during the Dot.com boom, so both public and private funding for start-ups that had the potential for fast growth during the late 1990s was readily available. Associations like Wired Sussex were eager to inject public money into promising new media ventures.

Moreover, Brighton has also been identified as a favourable location for starting a business due to its proximity to London (Perrons, 2004). London is a locus of economic activity and only an hour away by train from Brighton and thus offers many opportunities for new media companies. My participants' accounts suggest that proximity to London and lifestyle were the two most prominent reasons for choosing to move to Brighton. Many of my participants' clients were located in London. Face-to-face communication with clients was deemed necessary by my participants, even in an era of advanced internet communication technologies. Additionally, Brighton constituted a cheaper location option compared to London. Sustaining a company in Brighton, utilising the local workforce, paying them Brighton wages and in turn selling the services to London-based clients allowed Brighton companies to achieve higher profit margins.

The sector was further reinforced by the success of some local companies. For instance, when local company Victoria Real won the Big Brother webcasting contract in 2001, this entrepreneurial event boosted Brighton's reputation as a new media hub. Many local new media workers were recruited and more were attracted from London, who

stayed in Brighton after the company was bought out by Endemol who moved the operation to London. The company also built relations with one of the local Universities, the outcome of which was the creation of a Media course at Brighton University which still runs to this day.

## 4.3.2. Brighton and Hove City Council and image marketing

### 4.3.2.1. Image marketing

The BHCC has been central to the way that the media sector has been shaped. The local government became more involved in the development of the new media sector as the latter started gaining momentum and as the general political climate changed. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the creative industries became central to government plans for economic regeneration after New Labour's victory in 1997 (O'Connor, 2007, pp. 41-42). At the same time city councils were endowed with economic planning competences thanks to the creation of Regional Development Agencies (O'Connor, 2007, pp. 41-42). The role of the BHCC in the development of the local new media sector has been important. In an earlier study on the new media sector in Brighton, Perrons (2003, p. 74) pointed out the role of the BHCC in constructing Brighton as 'The place to be' and the 'focal point of creative industries in Europe'.

According to the work section of the BHCC website, Brighton offers favourable conditions for actors in the creative industries. These characteristics included the creative culture and the excellent quality of life:

> Brighton and Hove provides a fantastic base for creative companies. We know that entrepreneurs, freelancers and staff teams like to do business here because of the creative culture of the city and the excellent quality of life that can be enjoyed by the sea (*Creative Industries*, no date).

The promotion of an image of diversity and tolerance is equally high on BHCC's economic development agenda. For instance, on the first page of last year's Brighton and Hove State of the City Report, it was mentioned:

> [H]ome to more than a quarter of million people, our city is renowned for its
> vibrancy, culture of tolerance, its independent shops, historic lanes, vast array of
> pubs, restaurants and clubs, its festivals, stunning architecture and 11 kilometres
> of coastline (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2011, p. 2).

The report stresses that '48 per cent of our residents are described as young, well-educated city dwellers' (ibid., p. 3), having 'the largest proportion of same-sex couples of any area in England' (ibid., p. 4) and having an increasing population of Black and minority ethnic groups.

The Council's efforts can be seen as *image marketing* in the context of on-going *place wars*, whereby cities struggle to secure a competitive advantage in a globalised economy (Robins, 1997, p. 31). Brighton's competitive advantage lies in its creative sectors so it makes sense to mobilise a rhetoric designed to appeal to creative workers. As presented earlier, creativity, diversity, tolerance, "cool" lifestyles are elements central to this rhetoric (Pratt, 2011a; Florida, 2004; 2003). As such, the use of words such as 'sea', 'tolerance', 'independent shops', and so forth, reflects the mobilisation of aesthetic and cultural capital (McCarthy, 2006, p. 246) in order to attract creative investment and creative labour.

### 4.3.2.2. Reputation and the location decision of new media practitioners

My participants' accounts support the claims of Perrons (2003) and Leadbeater and Oakley (1999) that Brighton's reputation both as a digital city and as place which offers high quality of life played a role in the decision of new media practitioners to move to Brighton and, effectively, in the formation of a pool of new media labour. Some of my interviewees mentioned that the BHCC had done 'a great job' in selling Brighton as a digital city and hence helped a lot in the development of the cluster. The same people thought that BHCC's efforts were partly responsible for the fact that Brighton was attracting creative workers.

Many of my participants chose to move to Brighton because of the lifestyle and even more people chose to remain to Brighton after they had experienced life in Brighton first-hand, usually after they had graduated from college or one of the universities.

Among the most often cited lifestyle-related reasons for coming to Brighton – alongside purely economic factors such as proximity to London and cost of living – were the sea, the weather, the laid-back way of life, the restaurants and the pubs. Some had friends or family in Brighton who advertised Brighton's lifestyle:

> It was the lifestyle down here … It was slightly unusual that I had two friends that wanted to move here, so we decided to buy a big house between us, be on the seafront, being by the sea. It was the fact that there were other people here. (Roger, Web/Mobile Developer)

Brighton's reputation as a diverse city or as a digital city did not seem to have had a direct impact on my participants' location decision, although two of them did point out that living and working in a diverse place like Brighton was enjoyable. In that sense, Florida's (2003) claim that creative workers are attracted by tolerance because it encourages creativity, did not find support in my data. Furthermore, only a few of my participants argued that they were aware of the local new media sector before moving to Brighton. Some did mention the galleries and others mentioned the vibrant new media community, but these were secondary factors. While it would be understandable for new media workers to be attracted to art and technology (since new media work involves both art and technology), the elements of Brighton's culture that were more prominent in my participants accounts – such as the weather, the sea, the pubs and the regional cuisine – cannot be readily associated with a new media *habitus*. These predispositions rather reflect middle-class aspirations for a comfortable life in a sunny seaside town. However, as I discuss in Chapters 6 and 8, these middle class aspirations are realised in Brighton and are experienced in parallel with work, with the result of shaping the new media work experience itself.[15]

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[15] Brighton's material culture allowed my participants to pursue their middle-class aspirations. Through cultural consumption, my participants' aspirations were experienced as reflective of a new media culture which was laid-back and anti-corporate.

### 4.3.2.3. New media workers' lifestyle preferences and the location decision of companies

Reputation also mattered when big companies sought to meet the social requirements of their valuable workers. It has been noted that companies which increasingly compete for talent (Brown and Tannock, 2009) and knowledge workers who realise their advantageous position locate in places with a high quality of life (Salvesen and Renski, 2003, p. 24). According to one of my interviewees, the decision for Linden Labs, the company that produced Second Life, to move to Brighton in 2007 was largely based on quality of life. The US-based company surveyed the places that workers would be willing to work and Brighton emerged as the most popular place. Having been chosen as the European headquarters for an important American company like Linden Labs, Brighton's reputation was boosted in new media circles:

> Linden labs, they made a big thing about moving to Brighton. They decided they needed a European headquarters. When they were going around Europe inviting people to work for them and looking at the lists of places people were willing to work, Brighton was really high on the list, and the [Brighton and Hove City] Council does a lot of work. They are marketing Brighton to the world. (Miles, Web consultant/ Web developer)

Although it is unlikely that any company would base its decision to locate somewhere solely on the preferences of its employees, this factor should not be overlooked when accounting for the forces of new media clustering in Brighton.

## 4.3.3. Local universities: A new role for higher education

### 4.3.3.1. Bringing universities and businesses together: the complementarity of university-business relations

The two local universities, the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton, were involved in forging research and business relationships with the new media sector. The role of the universities could be traced back to the *Government White Paper on RDAs* of 1997 (DETR, 1997) and the establishment of the Regional Development Agencies. In this report, alongside the more traditional educational role, universities

were given new responsibilities, such as that of economic development. Through technology and knowledge transfer university research was linked to the attainment of economic and social objectives (Goddard and Chatterton, 1999, p. 686). Interaction between business and the university was seen by policy-makers as a *quid pro quo* relationship for the two parties. In their study, Leadbeater and Oakley (1999, p. 68) stress the universities' important roles in helping the local industry, one of which is supporting the growing demand for graduates from local new media companies. The two universities located in Brighton provide a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses around new media and are engaged in research relevant to the creative industries. Moreover, universities can be seen as sources of knowledge, technology and problem-solving, which allow businesses to broaden their scope, enhance their innovative capacity and gain a competitive advantage (Mateos-Garcia and Sapsed, 2011, p. 3). On the other hand, working with businesses offers employment opportunities to academics, an arena for research and a chance to obtain different perspectives on how the "real world" works.

My fieldwork provides one such example of the ways in which such relationships have developed, looking at the arrangement between a local games development company and Brighton City College. One of the company's employees, a quality assurance tester, co-authored a quality assurance course, ran it for two years and, in addition, often lectured in a games design course. In exchange, the college allowed the company to do focus group tests, which were a crucial part of games development. Another one of my informants, a local new media industry veteran who co-founded coworking initiatives, a local creative association, as well as working as a new media consultant, delivered several courses over a matter of years at the Universities of Sussex and Brighton (Creative entrepreneurship, Sustainable development), thus passing on his experiences and knowledge of creative management. Moreover, the two local universities have created joint research projects with the purpose of transferring knowledge to the local business community. An example of such a joint research project between the University of Brighton and local games development studios was the 'Creating Games' project, which lasted two years and aimed to understand and upgrade the games development process (Mateos-Garcia and Sapsed, 2011, p. 3).

Finally, numerous events have been organised by the universities with the purpose of bringing businesses and researchers together. Events such as *Enterprise Thursdays* organised by the University of Sussex have been designed to make students think of their employment prospects after graduation. The *Open Coffee* meetings was an initiative run by two Masters students at Sussex who went on to become successful new media entrepreneurs in Brighton. The initiative's purpose was to give academics and new media companies the chance to meet and discuss potential collaborations. The initial effort was unsuccessful, mainly due to the unwillingness of academics to participate, but efforts to reinstate these meetings in 2011 were met with success.

### 4.3.3.2. Commercialising knowledge and the creation of new media businesses

Another relevant development concerns the role of universities in commercialising knowledge. The commercialisation of the university in the UK has been embraced and supported by the contemporary neoliberal order and the more market oriented disciplines, and has been criticised and opposed by the more progressive ranks of academia (usually found in the social sciences and humanities) as a marketisation of academia which 'undermines academic freedom' (Dalakoglou, 2012). Two events, according to Wright *et al.* (2008, p. 1), have had an impact at an international level regarding the commercialisation of academic research: a steady decrease of public funding for research since the mid-1990s and the adoption of the *Bayh-Dole Patent and Trademark Amendment Act 1980* on university patent activity in the US, permitting researchers to file for patents. These developments have fuelled political mobilisation around the commercialisation of academic research and, at the same time, have provided incentives to universities. In the UK, one of the policy initiatives that aimed to instil the entrepreneurial spirit in British academics was the Science Enterprise Challenge (SEC) initiative, launched in 1999, which offered training to academics on how to identify and realise the commercial potential of their research (Wright *et al.*, 2008, p. 49).[16]

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[16] The SEC was part of a series of initiatives designed to foster the commercialisation of research. The other initiatives included Science Enterprise Challenge, the Public Sector Research Exploitation Fund and, finally, the Higher Education Innovation Fund (Wright *et al.*, 2008, p. 49).

Local universities in Brighton have contributed to the commercialisation of academic knowledge in their own right, increasing the birth-rate of new media businesses. The Business and Development Unit of the University of Sussex, for example, aims to stimulate students and academics' entrepreneurial thinking. This can either lead to the creation of spin-off companies or the licensing of students' ideas. In the latter case intellectual property (IP) rights would be fully retained by the inventor, while in the former case profits would be split 60-40% between inventor and university. Spin-off policy in the UK has been decentralised and permits universities 'to negotiate the relative equity stakes division between the university and the researcher' (Wright *et al*., 2008, p. 49), meaning this arrangement is specific to the University of Sussex and not necessarily representative of other UK institutions. Another example is the Sussex Innovation Centre (hereafter SIC), a facility created and owned by the University of Sussex, which was one of the key institutional actors that fostered the new media cluster. It was founded in 1996 and, following the Research Park model, it invests in knowledge intensive ventures that have their own intellectual property and have the potential for fast growth. It provides office space and technical and business related services to companies that meet the criteria and want to locate themselves at the Centre. However, it also aims at harnessing the business potential of research undertaken in the University. Some of the companies that were nurtured in the SIC developed into some of the most successful Brighton new media companies. Over 70 companies were located in SIC at the time of my fieldwork, several of which were born from university-based research.

### 4.3.3.3. Channelling government funds and supporting new media businesses

Another role reserved for the universities was that of mediator between local businesses and the government. The universities have played a mediating role between government agencies such as UKTI, the now defunct SEEDA, Business Link, and businesses to channel available funding (interview with Valerie, member of Business and Enterprise - University of Sussex). None of those who participated in my research were ever the beneficiaries of such help or had business contacts with the local universities. My participants suggested that those in most need of such resources, such as small companies and freelancers, were not aware of funding opportunities from the government. In cases where they were aware of such opportunities, for example tax-

credits, they were discouraged to pursue them by bureaucratic difficulties. Small businesses and freelancers in particular were disadvantaged *vis-a-vis* big companies in applying for public funding, because the former lacked the administrative resources necessary for these processes. According to one of my participants:

> It's quite hard to navigate some of those waters and the process of applying for those things is more onerous than the benefits that you get from it. Every single time so far my experience is that the reward is far less than the payment. It's almost like all of these things are set up for people who can afford to have admin staff who can do that. (Philip, Front End Developer)

This suggests that small entrepreneurs who were in more need of a mediator between them and the government did not have access to such an assistance. This also raises the related issue of freelancers and small entrepreneurs who, lacking material and – potentially – cultural resources subsequently have limited aspirations and hence do not seek funding and support for their business activities.

### 4.3.3.4. Graduates, quality of life, and the local economy

The presence of the two universities combined with a desirable lifestyle and other aspects of the local economy contributed to the formation of a pool of skilled labour. Graduates are increasingly likely to stay in Brighton because of the established presence of the sector and the overall attractiveness of the area. In a study on graduate employment in Brighton (Pollard *et al*., 2008, p. 13, 39), quality of life appeared as an important factor for both the decision to study at the University of Sussex (third most important factor after 'offering the right course' and 'teaching quality') and the decision to stay in Brighton after graduation. One of my research participants, who was the manager of one of the most successful and fast-growing companies in Brighton, came to Brighton to attend a postgraduate course at the University of Sussex without knowing about the local new media industry. He explained about his first days in Brighton:

> I missed the open days so I had to arrange my own open day; met some of the lecturers, some of the students. The students took me down very close to here, they told me, 'if you choose to study at Sussex you'll never leave Brighton'. It

was my first day; I was 'you're so wrong', but they knew. Eight years later I'm still here, my brother moved down, his girlfriend moved down, my girlfriend moved down, I've got a flat here, I've a grown company here, doesn't look like I'm going to leave. It's kind of scary. How will I ever leave Brighton? (Matthew, Mobile Developer/Managing Director)

However, especially in the 1990s when the new media sector was not particularly big, there were not always jobs available for computer scientists and designers. Yet, the presence of big employers like American Express allowed IT graduates who liked Brighton, but could not find a job in the new media sector, to remain in Brighton. One of my research participants described Brighton as the place with the most over-qualified café service. Indeed, some of the people to whom I talked during my fieldwork opted for doing relatively under-qualified jobs in the beginning of their careers, in the café and restaurant industry or the caring industry, until they managed to find employment in their field.

### 4.3.3.5. Graduates, jobs and circular causation

Graduates and companies are caught up in a process of circular causation whereby graduates are staying in Brighton because there are jobs and companies are coming to Brighton because of the endless supply of new graduates. The high presence of skilled graduates has been identified as an important factor for the location of new media companies in Brighton (Perrons, 2004, p. 55). Company owners to whom I talked during my research argued that the local knowledge pool was an important incentive for the location of their company in Brighton. Moreover, beyond skilled new media workers, such as computer designers and programmers, new media companies also tap into the multilingual student workforce. One example is Babel Media, a global provider of outsourced specialist services to the games and interactive entertainment industries, which drew heavily on the local multilingual student population. Having registered myself on the University's job mailing list I often received e-mails from Babel Media, looking for people who could speak different languages. According to an interviewee, Babel's decision to locate in Brighton was determined by this fact alone. Other local companies, such as one successful social media monitoring company, also exploited the area's multilingual student and graduate population. Students were registered as

freelancers, paid the minimum rate and were marketed by corporations to their clients as university qualified transcribers or qualified data analysts.

### 4.3.4. Wired Sussex

Wired Sussex, previously known as Media Development Association, is an independent non-profit organisation dedicated to the development of new media companies in Brighton. It serves as a prime example of what economic geographers call *urbanisation economies* (Lazzaretti *et al*., 2009; Lorenzen and Frederiksen, 2008; Morosini, 2004). The term refers to economies of scale resulting from the concentration of economic activity. In other words, as the new media sector grew bigger so grew the need for – and potentiality of – institutional infrastructure which supported the sector. Wired Sussex was created in 1997 in the heyday of the internet hype by SEEDA, the then newly then founded Regional Development Agency for the South of England. While it started off as a government funded organisation it gradually became self-funded, a development that reflected the relative fall of optimism around the internet with the Dot.com bust. During the time of my fieldwork, Wired Sussex relied exclusively on membership fees. Registered with Wired Sussex were well over 2000 companies and freelancers. It provided services in areas as diverse as games, web and mobile design and development, virtual worlds, animation, digital marketing and social media (Wired Sussex, no date). It was also involved in running events, festivals and conferences in support of companies working in new media and supported a number of initiatives which provided networking opportunities, such as 'Women in Media', 'Brighton animators networking group' and 'Digital horizons'.

#### 4.3.4.1. Wired Sussex's role in the labour market

Interaction between universities and businesses has been facilitated by local institutions like Wired Sussex. Graduates are often streamlined into the local sector through internship programmes provided either by the universities or Wired Sussex. The Sussex Internship Programme was a scheme funded by the BHCC, SEEDA, HEFCE and participating companies, delivered by Wired Sussex and supported by the University of Sussex (Mateos-Garcia and Sapsed, 2011, p. 33). From 2008 until 2011, 250 businesses benefited from graduate talent and over 200 graduates found employment, almost half

of which were appointed to a permanent position by the end of their internship (ibid.). I interviewed both companies and freelancers who used to work in companies at some point, and both had found interns through Wired Sussex. Most of the companies I interviewed and people that used to work for companies in the past had, or used to have at some point, interns that they found through Wired Sussex. A popular service that Wired Sussex provided and new media workers and companies in their early stages found useful was its jobs board. The Wired Sussex's jobs board constituted the most common place for graduates and new professionals to find a job, and alternatively for new companies to advertise job openings.

### 4.3.4.2. Wired Sussex as a socialisation mechanism

Wired Sussex's role in the new media sector proved to be particularly important in the early stages of a practitioner's career. Through its numerous events it effectively offered crash courses on how the new media sector works in Brighton. The importance of networking was probably the most important lesson it taught to new media practitioners. Many practitioners got in contact with freelancers and employees of other companies through Wired Sussex's networking events and workshops. Several of my participants mentioned that Wired Sussex was their first point of contact with the new media scene in Brighton when they first moved there. Some participants also made their first connections which developed to business partnerships through events organised by Wired Sussex. I refer to these events in more detail in Chapter 6.

## 4.3.5. Other local institutions: Creative Brighton and the Chamber of Commerce

With the turn of the century, Brighton's new media institutional environment became much denser. Usually those organisations were endorsed by local industry veterans. Creative Brighton was a local non-profit organisation which focused on the representation and support of Brighton's creative sector. It provided networking opportunities, organised events, provided business support (workspace, funding, business advice) and training for local companies. The Creative Brighton website provided web links to other local networks related to the creative sector, such as the Brighton New Media mailing list, BLIP (Forum for creative arts, science and

technology), BANG (Brighton Animators Networking Group), BMN (Brighton Music Network), Creative People, and so on.

Another institution, the Brighton and Hove Chamber of Commerce (BCoC hereafter) is a non-profit business organisation which represents local businesses interests in Brighton. It used to be funded by the BHCC but by the time of my fieldwork its funds were coming from membership fees. Members would pay a nominal fee which would grant them access to several services provided by the Chamber, such as business events (*e.g.* State of the city, breakfast events), advertisements, business support and workspace. It also built business relations among its members through facilitating the provision of certain services, such as human resource training. Over 200 local businesses were members of the Chamber, some of which were new media businesses, although only one of my research participants had a company which happened to be a member. A lot of the emphasis in the BCoC, as well as in the other organisations (Wired Sussex, Creative Brighton), was put on networking. In fact, the importance of institutions such as Wired Sussex and BCoC was greater in the early stages of a business or a freelancer's career. These institutions have had a continued impact on the development of the cluster through facilitating university-business interaction, offering recruitment/employment opportunities and providing mediation. Their significance, however, tends to get smaller as one's career develops.

## 4.4. Social networks, grass roots initiatives and entrepreneurship: the present and future of Brighton's new media sector

Previous studies that looked at Brighton's new media sector (see Perrons, 2003; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999) identified social networks as important for the organisation and development of the sector. In the remainder of this section I briefly refer to these networks and the role they played, in the context of the cluster's development. In Chapters 6 and 8, I return to the examination of these networks focusing more on the meanings associated with networking and the ways in which networks operate.

### 4.4.1. A plenitude of new media social networks

The formation of a critical mass of new media practitioners in Brighton led to, and further supported, one of the most important developments in Brighton over the last decade; the emergence of numerous social groups around new media work. Some of these groups have been around for a few years while others cease to exist or transform to adapt to the most recent technological environment. UX Brighton, a user experience group, was created in 2007, while Flash Brighton transformed to Dot Brighton. The Farm was one of the oldest informal meeting events for freelancers in Brighton. It started in 2003 as an event meant to get freelancers out of their isolation, to interact with like-minded people and support each other's entrepreneurial activities. Other successful groups included Async, a JavaScript group; a Ruby on Rails group; Barcamp, a yearly conference for digital media people; Five Pound App, a show-and-tell group for web applications; the iphone group, and many more. Some other groups were based less in specific technologies and had a hobby character, like Build Brighton which was a robotics group. Through these groups, new media workers built friendships which evolved beyond these groups. They discovered other common interests and formed other groups, unrelated to new media work, such as the reading group or the Wine-geek events (described as wine-tasting event for people who like tacky things), which even though they were not exclusive to new media workers, were largely attended by them, further indicating the middle-class aspirations of new media workers.

### 4.4.2. The role of social networks in the organisation of the labour market

As I discuss in more detail in Chapters 6 through 8, these groups ended up taking on many of the tasks of the big established institutions, such as finding jobs, partnership building and learning. This supports findings in the industrial cluster literature that the forces that allow firms to cluster are different to the forces that sustain the cluster (Brenner and Muhlig, 2007; Enright, 1998). The role of these groups in providing inspiration, business support and job opportunities cannot be overemphasised. Social networks constituted, as it has often been identified in new media literature (Kennedy, 2010; Smith, 2010; Grabher, 2002; Tay, 2002; Wittel, 2001; Batt *et al*., 2000; Pratt,

2000), channels for knowledge diffusion, sources of information regarding market trends and resources for job-seeking and recruitment.

Leadbeater and Oakley (1999, p. 11) identified informal networks as the primary mechanism for the organisation of work among the self-employed in the new media sector. The collocation of many companies and people working in new media resulted in increased specialisation within the sector. The presence of a large number of freelancers and companies allowed them to focus on individual parts of the development process or to use different technologies to create differentiated products. The high degree of specialisation in the Brighton new media sector was clearly reflected in the variety of social groups and workshops organised around different computing technologies. Some of the new media practitioners that I talked to were confident about belonging to a niche and, in contrast to what Perrons (2004, p. 54) discovered a few years ago, they did not feel that they competed for the same work. Within the social networks described earlier, new media workers were getting the opportunity to allocate work, try out new technologies, learn from each other and be motivated to get better in their respective speciality and gradually build a comparative advantage.

The processes I describe potentially affect not only entrepreneurial activity but innovative activity as well and are reflective of what scholars have termed *localisation economies* (Lazzaretti *et al*., 2009; Lorenzen and Frederiksen, 2008; Morosini, 2004; Marshal, 1923). The combination of all these different bits of specialised knowledge potentially results in novel products and services. Moreover, production could become more efficient because actors do not feel compelled to be up-to-date with technological and business developments in different areas. Access to localisation economies can potentially constitute another factor that makes Brighton attractive to new media practitioners and companies.

## 4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I offer a description of Brighton's new media sector and I touch upon some of the more salient issues in its development, such as the institutional, political, economic and cultural environment, as well as the emergence of numerous new media grass-roots groups over the years. Brighton is a town with a high presence of the new

media sector. The sector was encouraged by political and grass-roots initiatives. The universities and local businesses have been entangled in a symbiotic relationship, supporting each other's activities. Several local supporting institutions developed over the years which mediated between businesses, universities and further supported the sector. The Council has played an important role promoting Brighton as a place that fulfils the criteria of alternative lifestyle and creativity (Perrons, 2004), elements that have been deemed important for new media companies and practitioners. It is not a coincidence that the new media sector is vibrant around the bohemian part of the city, the North Laine. Indeed, factors such as the sea, the restaurants, pubs and cafés, and the characteristics of a small town, had a big influence on the decision of many of my participants to come to Brighton. However, arguments regarding the role of lifestyle should not be exaggerated. Even though lifestyle played an important role in the location decision of both companies and practitioners, there were other equally important factors, which were also identified in earlier studies of Brighton's new media sector (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999; Perrons, 2004), such as the geographical proximity to London. The synergy of all these factors led to the creation of a big pool of skilled labour. Many new media practitioners studied in the local universities and decided to stay because of the lifestyle and the high presence of the new media sector. Supporting institutions were streamlining those graduates into jobs in the sector. The role of these institutions was central in forging social networking among practitioners, a mechanisms which was of paramount importance in this sector. However, the creation of a critical mass of new media practitioners over the years led to bottom-up processes of social networking, beyond the top-down processes mobilised by supporting institutions. Those networks were important in the sector because they allowed the reconfiguration of project teams, facilitated labour market processes and increased the potential for the sector's innovative activity, a process crucial to its survival.

After having presented the context within new media work and sociality take place in Brighton and the significance of peer relationships in the viability of the sector I move on to investigate peer relationships in more detail. In the next chapter I start the more detailed investigation of the social relationships among new media workers in Brighton and the meanings that these relationships had for different people.

# 5. Work and peer interaction in Brighton's new media sector

## 5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the context within which new media work takes place in Brighton. I suggested that the small size of the city, the proximity of new media companies, the activities of new media organisations and local universities and, finally, Brighton's cultural environment, facilitate interaction among peers in the local new media sector. In this chapter I begin a more in depth exploration of peer interaction within the new media sector by looking at interaction within the workplace and the meanings it had for my participants. I put forward the argument that, in some cases, peer interaction was not merely a practice in line with the project-based organisation of new media production. It was also central in the pursuit of the aspirations of those who occupied the technical positions in the new media field (*i.e.* programmer, designer). Many participants occupying the more technical positions in the industry communicated the desire for creative and autonomous work which, some argued, had to take place among passionate like-minded individuals. Moreover, my participants' accounts suggested that computing skills were valued among new media practitioners. Passion for work and creativity should not be necessarily interpreted as reflective of creativity for creativity's sake. Instead, I suggest that creativity and passion for work had value when they were performed within a community of like-minded individuals within which they could be recognised and appreciated. Valuing skills such as programming and design was inscribed in the *habitus* of new media "techies". Such skills represented cultural capital which, once legitimated, could grant them recognition within their professional community. Moreover, because in the new media field the position of a freelancer or a worker within a company was often precarious, symbolic compensation became even more important for new media practitioners. This type of symbolic compensation could actualise itself within peer interaction. However, I also present evidence suggesting that both peer interaction and love for new media work were less pronounced among those participants who occupied the non-technical positions in the industry and those with families. This reflected the different aspirations of people who possessed skills that were not appreciated within the new media sector, and the different

stages of the intersection of fields and the different priorities present within such intersections.

I start the discussion by describing the environment in which new media labour takes place. Through a presentation of the company workplace and the freelance workplace I demonstrate that the new media labour process is highly interactive. I continue the discussion with a description of the company and freelance working day. Next, I shift my attention to the meanings that new media work has for my participants. I argue that those occupying the more managerial positions and those occupying the technical positions ascribe different meanings to new media work. The former view new media work merely as an occupation while the latter view it as something that involves creativity, initiative and passion. I also note that the life stage at which people find themselves is also associated with different meanings ascribed to work. I move on to evaluate the interpretive potential of theoretical concepts such as 'enterprise culture' (Storey *et al*., 2005; Fenwick, 2002; du Gay, 1996; Cross and Payne, 1991) and propose an interpretation of my participants accounts drawing on Bourdieu's (1990; 1986; 1977) ideas on field, *habitus* and capital.

## 5.2. Peer interaction in the labour process

It has long been identified that the organisation of new media work is project-based (Pratt, 2009; Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005; Gill, 2002; Ó Riain, 2000). Teams consisting of different skill sets form around a project, dissolve once the project is finished and, eventually, new configurations form around new projects (O Riain, 2000). Team work is characterised by 'informality and mixing of different skills' (Pratt, 2000, p. 432). The nature of the workspace reflects these characteristics of project-based work, namely frequent reconfiguration, informality and mixing of skills. The open-plan organisation of the workspace, as noted in existing literature (Pratt, 2009; Leung, 2005; Pratt, 2002), is meant to facilitate communication and intensive interaction between the different members of the team. As I demonstrate in the remainder of this section, the new media labour process is no different in Brighton.

## 5.2.1. Peer interaction and the workspace

### 5.2.1.1. The company workspace and interaction

In line with the post-Fordist organisational paradigm and previous research on the new media sector (see Pratt, 2009; 2000) all of the companies I researched had open-plan arrangements. There were no offices or closed doors separating employers from employees. The managing director, developers and project managers were all in the same room. During an interview that took place in the office, one of my research participants, who had worked for several companies in Brighton and London, felt the need to compare the two cities:

> In London office space is with closed walls and closed doors, they are opening up slowly but surely but everywhere I've worked in Brighton they are open plan offices and, more importantly, your bosses are either very close to you or somewhere as part of the open plan office. They are not in a separate room with the door shut. (Patrick, Quality Assurance Tester)

I observed some variations in terms of the general ambience of the office, the desk arrangements, the amount of personal space and the decor. Some offices were arranged more neatly than others. In big companies there was abundant space, desks were arranged symmetrically, workers had a lot of personal space and the decor was more conservative throughout the office. Elements of playfulness in the office environment, such as stickers on walls, post-it notes of "insider" humour, and so on, would be found in a specially designed "entertainment area" where employees would have lunch, take breaks play foosball and generally relax. In other cases, offices were smaller, workers were more crammed together, the desk arrangement seemed chaotic and there were coffee machines, boxes of fast-food and posters on the wall. Employees or the management would sometimes order pizza for everyone in the office and eat it at their desks. As a participant explained, the company for which he used to work kept adding desks in a small office to accommodate more workers, eventually ending up with a huge desk which they called the "last supper table". A small company that grows fast eventually goes through this latter phase before it moves to new fancier premises. In two cases companies moved to a new location between my first and second visits. In both cases the move was dictated by the growth in personnel and in both cases the new

premises were much "fancier" than the previous one, particularly in one case, where the old and new spaces were diametrically different. The transition from a small workspace to a big one was welcome both by bosses and employees.

### 5.2.1.2. The freelance workspace and interaction

Freelancers generally had a wide array of choices as to where they could work. Some people worked from home, others in cafés, others in the CWOs[17] around Brighton. As such, freelance work did not always involve peer interaction as some freelancers chose to work from home. Nevertheless, most freelancers preferred to work either in cafes, usually in the presence of other freelancers, or in any of Brighton's CWOs.

*Homeworking and domesticity*

Various factors informed people's choices to work at home or elsewhere, including taking care of the children or avoiding the cost of renting an office. Working from home constituted the cheaper and often more convenient option, although some of my participants thought that homeworking was detrimental to their work-life balance, observations which agree with Gregg's (2011) findings of homeworkers in Australia.

Most of my homeworking participants and freelancers I met at freelancer events held at a local pub described freelance work as 'lonely'. New media freelancers experienced loneliness in two different ways: being physically isolated from the rest of the world, in the case of homeworkers, and being unable to engage in work-related discussions. Many of these homeworking freelancers had been attending freelance pub meetings for many years and argued that these meetings provided the opportunity for freelancers, who work isolated in their homes and never interact with other people, to meet people and talk about things that interest them.

The accounts of my participants suggested that both mothers and fathers were actively engaged in familial and domestic affairs. For the only homeworking self-employed single mother I interviewed, homeworking allowed her to be involved in her children's everyday life and to attend to their needs. One of the two homeworking self-employed

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[17] As explained in earlier chapters, CWOs are organisations that rent workspace to freelancers and small companies.

fathers I interviewed often mentioned his role in taking care of the children and doing house chores, without – unlike women in my study – explicitly suggesting that taking care of the children was his reason for working from home. In the following quotation he describes how homeworking allowed him to attend to his children's needs while his wife was away at work:

> An average day is getting up, having breakfast, getting the girls at school, get back here at 9:00, do the work, do the schedule of what the day should be like, doing trying to see what's coming overnight from clients in the US or Asia, go through that, start work. I work closely with a company in London called CCC and around nine we would have a production meeting to talk about what we are doing that day, and then it would be: if it is a day when I have the girls then I work 'till three, I pick them up, take them to after school activities, come back make the dinner and then work at night, and on other days I take them to school and work till 17-18:00 … I go [to London] once or twice per week. I work there basically there all day, try to be back by 18:00, or try to attend a social event in London. (George, Front End Developer)

George's involvement in domestic affairs and his relationship with his children were prominent in his narrative around working in Brighton. As I present in Chapters 6 and 7, children and family life in general were central topics throughout the interview for some of the parents who participated in my research. Even for non-homeworkers, and specifically women, children were always a relevant parameter in work-related decision making.

*Coworking*

There were two organisations that offered coworking services in Brighton during the time of my research. One of them was the Werks, where I did my ethnographic study, and the other one was the Skiff, which was located in the North Laine at the centre of new media activity in Brighton. I will refer to the Werks in more detail in Chapter 7. The Skiff and the Werks also cooperated with one another and provided their respective members with the opportunity to work at either venue (a practice they called roaming coworking). Four of the freelancers I interviewed occasionally worked in either of the two coworking places and six of them worked exclusively in one of them. As I discuss

in more detail in Chapter 7, new media practitioners chose to work in CWOs for different reasons. Some mentioned that loneliness inherent in freelancing led them to work in CWOs in search of social interaction; some chose CWOs in order to introduce some structure to their days; others took a more pragmatic view of coworking mentioning the potential for getting jobs and forming business partnerships.

*Public-space work: work in cafeterias*

It was common for freelancers to work, alone or in groups of friends, at cafeterias around Brighton. People mentioned different venues at which they worked, although preferences changed over time and people found new venues. Apart from having wireless internet, the elements that made a café appropriate for work were relative quiet and, most importantly, a friendly owner/manager. One of my participants mentioned one particular cafeteria located in the North Laine, which he argued was famous among freelancers because it did not have loud music and the owner used to allow him and his friends to spend all the day there. In some cases, whether a certain cafeteria would become a new media freelancer's "gig" depended on personal acquaintances with the manager/owner. One of my participants talked about a friend who installed wireless internet for a café and became friends with the owner, resulting in the participant's friends coming to hang out in in that venue. In general, however, cafés were interested in a high turnover of customers and tended to frown upon people who, to use Ling and Campbell's (2010, p. 78) terminology, set up camps. Some cafés had signs, such as 'this is a cafeteria not a library', meant to discourage prospective campers.

## 5.2.2. Peer interaction throughout the working day

### 5.2.2.1. Structure of the company working day

Most of my participants either cycled or walked to work as the office was not very far from where they lived. People would usually turn up for work between 10-11:00. Team meetings would take place at the beginning of the day. During these meetings people would inform their colleagues of where they had left off the previous day and that day's plan. After these meeting people would move on to their workstations.

My participants' accounts suggested that their companies were archetypal postbureaucratic organisations (Damarin, 2006) in the sense that they exhibited flat hierarchical structures and the production process required cooperation among the different roles in the organisation. Going through the websites of the companies that were included in my research showed that women predominantly occupied managerial posts, while the technical work, such as programming, was usually done by men. Among my nine male participants who were primarily involved in companies, all but one had studied computing or programming. Three of them were company owners, three others worked as programmers, one worked as a tester, one worked as a product manager and, finally, one person who had studied environmental management worked as online community manager. All five of my female participants who worked in companies occupied managerial positions. Three were project managers, one was a marketing manager and one business development manager. While all of them had university level education, it was not always related to their role in the new media sector. While the marketing manager and business development manager had studied digital media, the project managers had degrees in social sciences, psychology and business studies. Both the business studies graduate and the social sciences graduate started working in their companies as translators and were eventually given the position of project manager, a role which included training new translators. Despite these different educational trajectories, my participants argued that information needed to be distributed among the members of their organisations since employees were expected to contribute to every part of the production process, and that information was not gathered by a central authority. Solitary work was frequently interrupted by conversations regarding the project they were working on, seeking assistance and feedback:

> Having input from different people is valid. Most people have, if they are user experience designers they will know front end development or visual design. Everyone has experience in different areas. (Karen, Project Manager)

More accounts pointed towards collaboration throughout the development process and the need for workers to have a rich palette of skills:

> I would work with design team, tech-team and the production team, we were trying to be integrated in the way we worked, so the departments were collaborating all together, both at the conceptual stage and, if you got the project, the implementation. (Katherine, Business Development Manager)

> We get everyone involved with every side of the business, so not only being able to come up with technical solutions but also at a conceptual level it is very important for us. We want to have everyone involved with everything. (Jim, Managing Director/Mobile Developer)

Interaction in the office also involved more casual chat. Some of my participants tried to communicate that there was a casual and playful atmosphere in the office:

> We don't tend to take things way too seriously, we do whimsical projects, there's a lot of playfulness at the things that we do. (Jim, Managing Director/Mobile Developer)

Another participant suggested:

> We're kind of a casual office so we don't need to go and let loose, and people are not suit and straight laced. We tend to have stress-balls and throw at each other and have fun. (Maria, Marketing Development Manager)

Later on in the day, people would usually go out for lunch or bring fast-food into the office. The most common places for lunch were nearby cafés or restaurants. Since many of Brighton's new media companies were clustered at the North Laine and the South Lanes, new media workers from different companies and freelancers would often bump into each other. The day would continue with more cooperative work among the employees, including frequent communication and exchange of ideas.

Most of my participants were quick to suggest that they would usually leave work between 17-18:00. Quite often they juxtaposed London to Brighton in order to describe work schedules in the latter. Many argued that workers in London were both expected to

work late hours and were satisfied with doing so, while in Brighton people were more reluctant to work late hours:

> I think the people I work with here are a lot less self-conscious, a lot more relaxed than people in London and a lot less stressed, ... when it's 17:30-18:00 people want to take off, so it's not the same stress level [as in London]. (George, Front End Developer)

The work experience of practitioners who worked for non-new media-related companies was different to the one described so far. Although none of my participants worked in such companies at the time of the fieldwork, some of my self-employed participants had worked for non-new media companies in the past and their descriptions of the of the typical workday in such companies were different. Work in such companies did not necessarily involve interaction among co-workers throughout the day, their colleagues were not usually new media practitioners themselves and the nature of work did not require interaction to begin with, all elements which participants found made work frustrating. I will come back to this topic later on in this chapter.

*(The occasional) Late hours*

Even though many participants argued for the laid back character of work in Brighton, in the course of the interview they often described situations where work would go on until late. The reasons for working late differed according to the role one occupied in the company. While those responsible for business development identified networking events as the reason for working late, the main reason behind late hours for programmers was meeting deadlines for important projects. Two of the participants argued that there were instances when the workload was too heavy and extra hours were required:

> It felt like a family, there was a lot of cooperation and a lot of dedication as well. Quite a lot of late nights and when the pizza and coca cola came out you knew [what] it was; we're working tonight! (Matthew, Mobile Developer/Managing Director)

Another participant stressed the differences between web development and the – much more demanding – gaming industry:

> The 3G guys doing 3G models they can work until 10 at night if they got a big project on. But they come from the gaming industry where they were working even longer hours. It's a really hard industry so this one probably seems easy. (Maria, Marketing Development Manager)

Thus, even though late hours were often part of new media work, they occurred less frequently than in the games industry. Late hours, according to the same participant, were balanced out by off-work days:

> We do stuff like staff days out, this kind of thing, and I guess this isn't really a reward but if a guy from the 3d team puts a lot of late nights in, they'll order pizza on the company or they'll give him a day off. But that's more balance than a reward. (Maria, Marketing Development Manager)

Moreover, it was argued that hard work was rewarded by means of symbolic actions on behalf of the management. Participants talked about company outings, team meals and going out for beers to celebrate a successful project:

> We didn't have a kind of bonuses, well the company would get a bonus, it wasn't individualised, even for the sales person, you would have team meals if you launched the project successfully, there would be low level celebrations, team celebrations, there'd be company outings. (Katherine, Business Development Manager)

> If the production team complete it in time they're going to have beers. (Maria, Marketing Development Manager)

These can be viewed as examples of traditional management techniques in the Mayoite tradition of community building (du Gay, 1996, p. 9). Community building is deemed to be a crucial element for intra-firm cooperation (Bartol and Srivistava, 2002). This evidence also suggests a more active role for management than is often described in the

literature on new media work, where management is presented as passive and workers are expected to manage themselves solely by being given increased autonomy and being encouraged to mobilise their creativity (Storey *et al*., 2005).

One participant who worked as a project manager presented a grimmer picture of late hours and described subtler governance techniques. She described her colleagues as workaholics. Both her bosses and many of her colleagues skipped lunch-breaks in order to cope with the heavy workload and frequently stayed in the office until late. Although her colleagues were not directly compensated for this extra work, they received bonuses when contracts were renewed – which was often a result of working late. She also claimed that even though she was against working extra hours, she felt pressure to do so because her colleagues and her bosses did it. She was afraid that her practices would be interpreted as a lack of commitment. This is partly in line with the claim that 'a forced display of enthusiasm becomes a requirement for all office workers to survive in late capitalism' (Bachmann and Wittel, 2009, p. n/a). It could be argued that for some new media workers, a subtly forced display of commitment was a requirement.

Finally, there was further evidence of late hours in two of the companies that I researched, although these occasions were not perceived as work. In one case, the programmers often challenged each other to learn a new programming language over weekends. This practice was not necessarily encouraged by the company. In another case, programmers used to organise what they call 'Wicked Wednesdays'. These events took place every other Wednesday and involved programmers remaining in the office to do 'a project that they ha[d] in their minds, so they [we]re not working in their normal stuff' (Elena, Project manager). Everyone was really excited in the office when these events took place and, even though they were not work-related, the results of these projects ended up being functionalities for the application used by the company. According to Elena, 'that happens all the time to be honest'. The latter example was also indicative of peer interaction within the company even outside of formal working hours. As I elaborate  later on, these examples of hidden labour can be viewed in the context of the aspirations of new media practitioners (namely, recognition) and the capitals required to pursue such aspirations (namely, human/cultural capital).

*(More) Peer interaction after formal working hours*

The few participants responsible for business development and marketing would often attend industry social events in the evenings, after the formal working day was over. They explicitly viewed their participation in these events as part of work. People occupying these roles attended these events in order to make contacts, learn about market trends and gather information about prospective clients and employees:

> We're socialising with clients, but that's more like a business schmooze; taking your clients out and buying them lots of drinks trying to keep them happy, trying to win more business. That's not a personal thing. It's almost like you're still at work, except you're in the pub. (Natalie, Business Development Manager/Front End Developer)

As explained in the introduction, scholars and policy-makers alike have been concerned about the supposed adverse effect of long working hours on the institution of family. This phenomenon has been identified with the concept of 'extensification' of work (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006). However, as suggested in the following quotations, attending events for work purposes points toward flexible work – meaning highly varied hours – rather than extensification of work – meaning long hours:

> It varies. Really flexi-time, as long as you're there core hours 10:00-16:00 you can work any time, ... but there's nights I've been there till 10 o'clock, or maybe I have networking events after work so I'll go and do that and I'll be extra hours. (Maria, Marketing Development Manager)

In the quotation that follows, the participant argues that meetings with people for networking purposes would take place both during formal working hours and after work:

> If there were people just to keep in touch with, because you share knowledge with each other [and] get recommendations, I would meet them during lunch times, working hours or just straight from work. So it would be work time to

have meetings with those people, because it's more work. (Katherine, Business Development Manager)

At the same time, as I explain later on, these work practices also served the purpose of building personal – rather than just company – social capital. Connections made through networking practices in the context of company work represented social capital which remained with the worker rather than being expropriated by the company.

### 5.2.2.2. Structure of the freelance working day

Freelancers did not have steady employment, they chose to be self-employed for various reasons and, as already mentioned, their workplaces varied. Thus, the structure of the day was at the mercy of how much work one had, who their clients were and where they were located, and whether they had a family or not.

*'There's no such thing as an average day': Homeworking and public-space work*
Those of my participants who worked at cafeterias, at home and occasionally at the coworking places had less structured days. This was either evident in how they described their average day or in their argument that there was no such thing as an average day:

> Changes quite a lot, it doesn't exist. (Manuel, Back End Developer)

> There's not really [an average day], it doesn't exist. (Roger, Web/Mobile Developer)

In the following quotation, my participant hints that coworking provides a more productive work environment compared to homeworking:

> There are two types of average day: one is when I work here for [name of company he does some work for] … When working for myself, typically I'd be working from home and if I want to get things done sometimes I'll go to cowork and go to a coworking environment. (John, Programmer)

As mentioned earlier some new media practitioners divided their work between holding a part-time position in a company and freelancing. Among my participants, those who combined employed- and self-employed work described the most fragmented schedules:

> This is difficult because my life is so fragmented, so there's no average day really. I do a lot of travelling as well. Sometimes I work at home, sometimes I work at the Skiff, sometimes I have to go to [name of company he does some work for]. (Tagg, Back End Developer)

*Coworking and peer interaction*

Apparently, freelancers who worked exclusively in one of the coworking places had a relatively clearly structured day. In addition, it appeared as if coworking shaped freelancing along the temporal lines of employed work. My participants described schedules similar to those working in companies (although, as discussed earlier, employees often had to stay at work until late), such as coming to work around 9:30-10:00 and leaving at 17-18:00, having brief talks with coworkers in the morning and hanging out with them for lunch in the afternoon:

> I wake up, spend an hour in my chair, get my bike come to the office have some breakfast in the office, spend some time corresponding check my emails, talking to my co-workers for a while, about 10:00 I start doing some development work. During the day I probably have four or five different conversations about projects with people I'm co-working with some of whom I might be working on specific projects with, or speculative projects. Other times I might be asking people for support, asking for things I struggle with, they may be asking me for support, things I can help them with and work at my desk through lunch, and then maybe work until 17-18:00. (Bill, Web Developer)

As I describe in more detail in Chapter 7, working in CWOs was a varied social experience, as opposed to working from home, which partially confirms recent business studies' literature on coworking (see DeGuzman and Tang, 2011). Although members could be working on completely different things, and and would spend most of their time working on their own projects, they would sometimes talk with each other about

their projects, exchanging ideas, helping each other when problems come up, or talking about things unrelated to work. Coworking also involved the formation of teams among freelancers in order to work on big projects, being hired *ad hoc* by companies, and sharing work with other freelancers. The broad range of specialties in Brighton and the large number of freelancers, combined with the existence of dense social networks among them, allowed for the easy pooling of skills to create such teams. These teams usually dissolved after the respective projects reached completion. However, some freelancers were not involved in this team building and going after big projects, instead choosing to work on their own and settling for smaller projects, such as doing web design for local entrepreneurs and small local businesses.

## 5.3. The different meanings of new media work and the role of peer interaction

I have so far argued that peer interaction among new media practitioners was something which took place both within and outside the boundaries of companies, during and after formal working hours. In this section, I present evidence suggesting that peer interaction was not merely a necessity emanating from the organisation of new media production. New media practitioners attached different meanings to new media work. Some emphasised the importance of being creative, taking initiative, working among like-minded people, or simply earning a living. However, at the same time, it appeared that for certain practitioners showing creativity and taking initiative among like-minded individuals served the purpose of achieving recognition among their peers. Through peer interaction, people occupying the more technical roles in the industry sought recognition from their peers, which represented a type of symbolic compensation for the tasks they performed. In this sense, work was necessary in order for these people to build their self-esteem and hence was a source of identity. This function gave work part of its meaning. Work provided those occupying the technical roles the opportunity to be recognised for something, namely their skills which were valued within the sector. For other more managerial roles in the industry, however, peer interaction did not seem to be a necessary component in making work meaningful. For these latter roles, work represented more a means to secure one's livelihood.

## 5.3.1. Work beyond economic remuneration

Most of those in technical positions were concerned with work that was meaningful beyond economic remuneration. Some of these participants' accounts, particularly freelancers but also company employed workers, suggested that new media work should be creative and provide the platform to use one's skills and initiative. It became apparent that computing skills were held in high regard among new media practitioners. Some, along with the desire for creativity, emphasised the need for working among people who are equally passionate about it. Finally, some of these participants' accounts also suggested that rather than merely practices driven by an intrinsic creative desire, being creative and demonstrating one's skills to their peers were a way to gain recognition.

### 5.3.1.1. Creativity, initiative, passion for work

Achieving these basic aims of new media work was not, according to my participants, always possible within the industry. The rigidity of hierarchical structures often found in large companies represented a major source of frustration and an impediment to creativity and initiative. New media practitioners felt that an environment with different levels of organisation and middle-managers (people who were not new media workers themselves) deprived them of the freedom to be creative and to use initiative:

> It wasn't particularly inspiring, so I became very frustrated by working in big companies, having to constantly ask permission and find ways to get money to do good ideas and do projects and might take two years to get permission to try an idea. I felt like a piece of popcorn that's not allowed to pop. (Philip, Front End Developer)

In the following quotation my participant explains the way in which technological rigidities associated with bureaucracies induced boredom and frustration within large organisations:

> Just so much bureaucracy and, from a technology point of view, working with technologies which meant that it would take hundreds of thousands of dollars to

do things that now you can do in a couple of hours with new technologies, and that was quite frustrating and really boring ...big companies tend to be filled up with software that has been bought because they go along well with the company, not because it's the best. (Manuel, Back End Developer)

The desire to engage in work that was creative and interesting was present in other accounts too. In these accounts, creativity was not hampered by hierarchies or managers, but by the nature of projects that companies undertook. According to Jim, the managing director of a successful local company, keeping the workers interested was a difficult task. He attributed this difficulty to the unchallenging and boring nature of many of the projects undertaken by new media companies. According to another participant (Luke, Programmer/Project manager), the boring nature of new media work explains the high turnover of employees in new media companies. He explained that many new media practitioners tend to change jobs frequently because they get bored.

My participants' passion for their craft was apparent in those elements of company employment which they identified as positive. Several freelancers, for example, argued in retrospect that company employment did offer fulfilling work in terms of skills acquisition. This aspect of company work was particularly strong with early-career new media workers, who got the opportunity to learn from their colleagues and exposure to real work and responsibilities after the completion of their studies:

I loved it initially. I was just soaking everything up. (Anastasia, Front End Developer)

There's a lot of opportunity to learn things and a regular salary. (Philip, Front End Developer)

Another participant, Matthew (Mobile Developer/ Managing Director), also emphasised the importance of being creative and suggested that company employment could provide an outlet for creativity and even provide the opportunity for increasing one's influence within the organisation. He explained that he was not entirely satisfied with the development process in a company he used to work for, because not enough attention was paid to the design of the product. However, thanks to his strong

advocating of his vision, the management eventually allowed him to have an increasingly large input about the final product. Two other participants' accounts also suggested that there were good possibilities for improving one's position, especially in a growing new media company.

**5.3.1.2. The desire to work among the 'gifted': computing skills held in high regard**

The desire to be surrounded by like-minded individuals was central in several of my participants' accounts. In the following quotation, my participant distinguishes between being politically cunning and being gifted:

> My greatest frustration is working in organisations full of politics, full of middle-managers, working for people whose opinion you don't respect and who have gained the position by being politically cunning, as opposed to being gifted and other things. (Philip, Front End Developer)

Being able to communicate with people that were passionate about new media work was considered a basic element of work. Not being able to communicate with people who shared the same passion for work resulted in an unhappy professional life. One of my participants described the frustration stemming from working among people he could not relate to and the need to communicate with people who were passionate (intrinsically motivated) about work:

> When I worked my first job in Brighton I really hated it 'cause we couldn't relate to each other. I felt I was given responsibility without power. It was incredibly frustrating [and] professionally very unhappy time for me. I used to punch my screen all the time, and when I finally quit the job I was tidying around and there was a hole in the wall where the monitor kept hitting the wall! Shit, what have I done? So, it was a testament of how unhappy I was and I don't want anyone to go back to that. So, yeah, [freelancing involves] working with people who you know they enjoy what they do, intrinsically motivated to do a good job. (Nick, UX Developer)

My participants' accounts also suggested that in Brighton's new media sector, practitioners gained recognition for their skills. On several occasions, my participants showed their respect and admiration for their skilled peers:

> Even though they [a competing company] actually are a year older than [name of my participant's company], and they've written some of the most popular books on web development. The guys on their team are all absolutely brilliant, genius. (Manuel, Back End Developer)

> Greatly advanced and very intelligent people, who were very open about sharing their skills. (Katherine, Business Development Manager)

While admiration of others' skills was a common thing among my participants, in some cases there were also displays of personal admiration:

> I flatter myself but I'm fairly good at my bit of little specialism and I happen to talk to people who at their specialisms are very good. Last year, more so than this year, I hang out with a little group of really good geeks. (Nick, UX Developer)

On another occasion, a participant felt that within large organisations his efforts and contributions were not recognised by the management, which also suggested that he held his practice in high regard:

> Their attitude toward developers was not that great. I found it neglectful. Also when I got there they were already thinking about abandoning their systems so we were learning their systems just so they would abandon them. When I learn something I study principles. Coming and learning a piece of software and throwing it away is my idea of hell. I really didn't respect that at all. (Costello, Programmer)

The same participant felt that the developers in the company he used to work for were not fairly compensated – compared to the salaries of other employees in the company. He went on to argue that even though company employment was a source of steady

income, working as a freelancer among people who showed respect for each other was much better.

### 5.3.1.3. Recognition

These latter pieces of evidence suggest that like-minded individuals were not only desirable in the workplace simply by virtue of being like-minded nor was creativity desirable for the sake of creativity. The desire for opportunities to be creative, to take initiative, to fully utilise one's skills, as well as the desire for these things to take place within a context of peer interaction, should not be interpreted as mere idiosyncrasies of new media work. Instead they should be viewed in light of other evidence regarding the culture within which new media work took place. Evidence suggest that within the context of a new media professional community, some new media practitioners wanted to be creative among people who could appreciate their creativity. Within such a context, they could be recognised and be thought of as brilliant. The following quotations illustrate how people sought to be recognised within their community by demonstrating their skills:

> You get to demonstrate that you know this stuff and your knowledge is valued, you know? Yes, it's a scramble to be the first to tell someone something. (Nick, UX Developer)

> A lot of the time you make things that you couldn't commercialise and are valuable to other people, so they have value to you in other ways ... So, even if that takes time to make the code good enough for other people to use in an open source way, it's still worth putting that time because of the reputation and visibility you get ... I would prefer to be known as the guy who came up with an idea, which someone else implemented and became famous for, than being known for nothing. (John, Programmer)

In the quotation that follows one of my participants explains that demonstrating one's knowledge within the local new media community allowed people to be thought of as interesting:

> People want to be thought of as interesting, doing interesting stuff. So, you
> know, if I find something interesting, if I spread it out, that makes me
> interesting. (Roger, Mobile/Web Developer)

Thus, in light of this evidence, my participants' discontent with working in companies full of managers and people with whom there was no connection, working on projects that were boring and denied them the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and, finally, working within hierarchies which discouraged initiative, did not only – nor necessarily – mean that my participants were inherently creative and passionate about work. Such discontents also meant that my participants were denied the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and subsequently be recognised for them. The desire to work among like-minded individuals could be interpreted as taking the joy in sharing a passion, but it also suggests a sense of being entitled to appreciation for the important task one performed.

## 5.3.2. New media work as an occupation

The accounts given by my few participants in positions such as business manager, marketing development manager, or even project manager, were markedly different from the accounts of most of those occupying the more technical positions. The former found it difficult to talk about their work. Other than describing their daily routines they did not say anything which implied that they were passionate about work, about the creative potential of their work, about initiative or about working in an environment of like-minded individuals. Moreover, it was nowhere mentioned that the roles of project, business or marketing manager were highly regarded in the industry, nor that the people in these roles sought some kind of recognition.

The fact that project management positions did not require specific skills and were sometimes filled by people who did not have a digital media-related education appeared to be linked, in some cases, to feelings of frustration. As presented earlier, my participants in project management positions did not have any internet/multimedia related education. One of them ended up working as a translator in a local new media company when the company was in its early stages. As the company grew bigger and because she had gained a tacit understanding of how things worked, the post of "project

manager" was created for her, although, according to her 'it wasn't easy at the time to have a clear idea of what was [her] job' (Elena, Project Manager). Another one of my participants, Rachel, was also hired as a translator by a different company before becoming a project manager. Rachel, who did business studies, pointed out that if she worked in a job in which she could use her business skills, she would probably earn more money than being a project manager. However, the fact that finding such a job would be difficult discouraged her from quitting.

Participants in these roles did not seem to show any particular commitment to, or passion for, their jobs. One project manager mentioned that she was unwilling to work late hours and that she felt pressure within the company environment to do so. For this reason she hated her job and made plans to pursue her interests by returning to higher education. My participant who had studied politics argued that sometimes she got bored and that she would like to quit and find a job in the area she had studied or even return to higher education. Even though these participants wanted to quit and either find a job in a field that matched their skills or further pursue their studies, they did not quit for financial reasons.

Financial insecurity was also reflected in networking practices. As briefly mentioned in an earlier section, apart from being part of their company role, networking also served as a practice for securing future employment. For the marketing manager in my sample, meeting up with clients and prospective clients in the evenings was part of work, but it was also a practice that served the purpose of building connections which would increase her chances of finding a new job if she was made redundant:

> I'm realistic in this environment. I've got a great job in a company that's really successful, but I don't know what might happen in the future with my job. So, if I build these networks and, suddenly, if one day I find myself without a job, I can call someone and hopefully in five minutes I'll have a job. (Maria, Marketing Development Manager)

As presented earlier, those in the more technical roles were particularly vocal with regard to issues of creativity, initiative, and the desire to work among like-minded individuals. Notable exceptions to this trend were four web designers, two men and a

woman in their forties with families and another woman in her mid-thirties with family. For all four of them new media work represented no more than the means to securing their livelihood, similarly to those occupying the more managerial positions. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, George, whose account of working from home I presented earlier, suggested that work had assumed a secondary role in his life after his family. Another participant's account, pointed not only towards the prioritisation of her family, but also – as with the project managers earlier – frustration stemming from not following her passion. In her case, web design represented an uneven compromise between her real passion for art and her duty to secure a steady income for her family:

> When I got pregnant and had to find a way to make a living I realised I had this skill I have to use. It doesn't require a car, equipment, anything. I can do in my laptop and that's when I started freelancing as a web designer … I struggle with that. It's like losing someone. It feels like a hole in your heart. The truth is, I always wanted a family. For me there was never going to be an easy decision to make it … an artist's life is a very selfish life ultimately. I don't know too many artists who managed to suppress their own artistic self to raise a family successfully. (Joan, Front End Developer)

Although the evidence in this section suggests that managers and "techies" were different it also points towards a similarity. In the previous section I argued that "techies" were frustrated when they were not given opportunities to use and demonstrate their skills. In this section I argued that practitioners who performed roles which did not utilise their skills were also frustrated. These frustrations could be interpreted as reflective of the desire to be recognised for what one does best. While "techies" expected to be recognised within the new media community, those whose skills were not appreciated within the new media community (*i.e.* artists, social scientists, economists, etc.) did not have the same expectation. Instead, the latter focused on the economic benefits of new media work and hoped someday to be able to find a job where their skills could be utilised.

## 5.4. Discussion: Symbolic compensation and a culture of excellence

Throughout this chapter I have described new media work as a highly interactive affair. Interaction was ever-present in the labour process within Brighton's new media companies. New media production within local firms involved the interaction of practitioners and the mixing of skills, a finding which agrees with existing literature (Pratt, 2009; Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005; Gill, 2002). It represented the 'general social knowledge' that Gorz (1999, p. 31) talked about as the basis of productivity in post-Fordist production. Interaction was also common among freelancers, although in a different context. Freelancers would interact with their peers, getting involved in the creation of teams in the various coworking places and cafés around Brighton.

However, I have also argued that peer interaction was not merely a necessity dictated by the project-based organisation of new media production. Interaction also appeared as the element responsible for giving meaning to new media work for some new media practitioners. Even though the genuine drive for creativity should not be underplayed, there are reasons to consider that new media work and creativity became meaningful through peer interaction. In the remainder of this section, I argue that the meanings associated with new media work, namely creativity, initiative and cooperation, reflected the desire of those new media practitioners occupying the more technical positions (*i.e.* web development, web design) to be recognised within their respective professional community. These new media "techies" worked as employees in various new media and non-new media companies or as freelancers, and were often not well-compensated in economic terms, but had the aspiration, rooted in their *habitus*, to be recognised for their skills, to be compensated in symbolic terms. This symbolic compensation was more likely to happen within the new media community but not necessarily within the context of company employment (especially in cases where the company was not a new media company).[18] However, I also argue that the intersection of different fields should be considered in the different meanings that work had for people.

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[18] As explained in the literature review, new media workers, such as web developers and designers, do not only work in new media companies. As Wittel (2001, p. 53) has noted, in every sector 'even the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have at least a few employees with new media skills'.

### 5.4.1. Creativity for creativity's sake?

My participants communicated a desire to be creative and to be allowed to express their creativity. Several of my participants mentioned the rigidities associated with company employment and the absence of opportunities to use their initiative. The issue of creative desire as an intrinsic motivation for creative work has been frequently noted in existing literature (see Smith and McKinlay, 2009a; Bilton, 2007). Smith and McKinlay (2009a) also point out that this characteristic of creative workers is subsequently exploited in the capitalist system of creative production. According to them, creative workers attach 'high craft value' to work (p. 12). Craftsmanship has been associated with intrinsic satisfaction, with rewards that are inherent in the actual labour process (Scase and Goffee, 1982, p. 71-5). Gorz (1999) has wondered whether the passage from manufacturing work to knowledge work would allow people to earn intrinsic satisfaction and reclaim work. Furthermore, as Sennet (2008, p. 269) pointed out, play involves rule-making, discipline and creativity, which are also important characteristics of work. In that sense, work basically constitutes institutionalised play. This is particularly relevant for computing cultures, since the origins of computing are associated with a hobbyist quality and a passion for work (Raymond, 2001). It can be argued that my participants indeed sought to achieve intrinsic satisfaction through indulging in creativity. However, this interpretation tends to present an under-socialised version of workers; a version whereby there is intrinsic satisfaction involved in creative work which exists independently of society. As such, I think that there are additional reasons behind the desire for excellence.

### 5.4.2. The culture of excellence and the new spirit of capitalism

The desires for creativity, autonomy and initiative that my participants communicated, could also be interpreted as qualities that are valued and encouraged within an enterprise culture (Storey *et al*., 2005; Fenwick, 2002; du Gay, 1996; Cross and Payne, 1991). The project of enterprise culture aims at the cultivation of enterprising subjects. The latter represents a type of control imposed on workers through introducing qualities in the workplace which are 'in line with prevailing ethical systems, political rationalities and ... the profitability imperative' (du Gay, 1996, p. 59). Through this process, managers seek to harness the creative potential of workers, by encouraging workers to

seek and value autonomy, initiative and responsibility. In a somewhat similar manner, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have argued that in the new spirit of capitalism employees are given increased autonomy but, in return, are indebted with increased responsibility. If workers' accounts of responsible work, initiative-seeking and so forth, were indeed reflections of a new spirit of capitalism, if companies cultivated enterprising subjects in order to harness creativity and devotion (du Gay, 1996), then something that was not anticipated by the controllers of this discourse could be seen in Brighton. The evidence suggest that companies did not fulfil the employees' desire for excellence, because the opportunities presented therein fell short of the heightened expectations of the workers. Thus, instead of companies harnessing the creativity of workers, the latter, with a reconstituted work ideology, either found that there were not enough opportunities for autonomy or excellence within companies. However, as is the case with the intrinsic creative drive argument, I stress the importance of addressing the issue of autonomy and excellence not in terms of the intrinsic satisfaction creative workers would get by being creative and autonomous, but rather in terms of the importance of being autonomous and creative within a community of peers.

## 5.4.3. The quest for recognition

### 5.4.3.1. The new media field and symbolic compensation

I would argue that the desire for initiative and creativity and the – occasional – adjacent desire to be among like-minded individuals, along with the value that is placed on computing and design skills in the new media industry, should be considered from a Bourdieuian perspective. I suggest that the workers' need to engage in challenging work, the need to interact with people who understood them and shared their values, could be understood as reflective of a desire to be *recognised* and *appreciated* for the work they did. My participants possessed high endowments of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), in the form of their skills and the technical parlance that they accumulated through education and subsequent experience. Some of my participants' accounts suggested that they thought highly of themselves and their skills and that they looked up to their skilled and knowledgeable peers. Members of the computing culture have been seen as passionate about the technological realm and as contemptuous and arrogant towards those who do not understand computing (Woodfield, 2000, p. 14-15).

It has been argued that 'technical skills and brilliance' are valued in IT professions and that men in the IT sector perform 'a particular form of masculinity that involves the technological skills and the demonstration of this expertise' (Duerden Comeau and Kemp, 2007, p. 217). Scholarios and Marks (2004) suggested that software workers derive a strong sense of identity from their jobs. As such, they are not satisfied with boring work that is not up to their standards. Work that is challenging can give them not only intrinsic satisfaction but also status among their peers. Some of my participants' accounts suggested that because the cultural capital specific to new media (skills and technical expertise) was so highly valued in the new media community, positioning themselves within the professional community meant this cultural capital was legitimated and converted into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), a resource that gained them recognition and, at the same time, re-affirmed their identity as computer geeks.

This type of symbolic compensation can prove itself to be even more significant for new media workers because of the precarious condition in which they often find themselves. Moreover, new media work has not only been identified as precarious but also as poorly compensated work. Several studies suggest that new media workers and creative workers in general tend to be poorly compensated, compared to the level of skills they have and the sacrifices they make to earn these skills (ONS, 2013; Communian *et al.*, 2010; Gill, 2010).[19] Generally, the financial situation of my participants varied and depended on many factors, including experience in the sector/career stage. However, it was clear that substantial monetary profits were well out of reach for many of the practitioners in the lower echelons of the industry to whom I spoke, especially at the beginning of one's career. As such, workers who felt that their chances to accumulate economic capital and build a career by working in new media companies were limited, sought to at least be recognised for what they did and to be respected as important practitioners. Symbolic compensation – or to put it another way, gaining recognition – represented the most immediate and realistic aspiration in their *habitus*; a *habitus* of low economic capital but high cultural capital. Indeed, those who were more comfortable in financial terms (the three managing directors/company owners which I interviewed) were less vocal about creativity and passion for work.

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[19]  The earnings of new media practitioners are variable and depend on seniority, experience, formal qualifications, company size, location, and so on. The South East of England is the region with the second highest earnings after London, with average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees at £614 (£737 for London) (ONS 2013).

Nevertheless, some of my participants whose accounts suggested that they sought recognition argued that they were relatively comfortable and that they managed to secure their livelihood. This observation suggests that symbolic compensation in the new media industry is important regardless of the economic compensation, although the significance of the former might decrease when the latter increases.

The idea that IT workers seek to build their status within their professional communities is not new. Raymond (2001, p. 80-81) explained 'giving away' in hacker communities as gift-giving in an effort to build social status in a context of information abundance. Findings from the knowledge management literature also suggest that peers within organisations are likely to share knowledge in order to be recognised as experts (Ardichvili *et al*., 2003). Furthermore, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, new media workers would try to build their reputation with economic benefits in mind. However, here I suggest that seeking recognition – and, as such, building one's reputation – was not necessarily a strategic move. It was rather a disposition in line with the aspirations written in the *habitus* of new media practitioners and the position they occupied within the field.

However, as I also demonstrated, this recognition would not necessarily occur within companies. Companies not related to new media lacked peers who shared the values of new media workers, so the latter could not enjoy recognition. Within new media companies, although there could be initial recognition, it quickly lost its significance once employees got to know each other and accolades became less frequent, or when boring projects kept coming in potentially limiting the opportunities to show-off one's skills. Nevertheless, even within circumstances unfavourable to recognition-seeking, new media workers found ways to pursue their aspirations. The aspirations of new media practitioners – aspirations which originated in their *habitus* of rich skills and little money – were evident in the relative satisfactions they enjoyed within companies: the work was not that great, but one could learn a lot. New media practitioners placed value on learning new skills, which can be translated as 'increasing their cultural capital' not only because it gave them a better skill set to compete in the marketplace, but also because this could earn them recognition from their peers. Through company work new media practitioners could increase the cultural capital relevant to their field – that being new media parlance, programming languages, CMSs, and other tools – which was the

type of capital most likely to offer them substantive compensation. In some cases I demonstrated that new media workers would play games, such as challenging each other to learn a new programming language, or engage in projects after work with their colleagues. The concept of the game is reminiscent of Burawoy's (2012; 1979) account of the autonomy that workers enjoyed on the shop floor, which offered a compensation for tedious work. In the present case, these games can be interpreted as ways of demonstrating skills and earning a different type of compensation, namely the symbolic reward of being appreciated among one's peers. As I elaborate on Chapter 8, eventually the search for symbolic compensation led to either the subjugation of new media practitioners or resistance within the new media field. A form of subjugation appeared in the form of free labour, done after formal working hours, as workers searched for meaning within the boring context of company work. Workers' resistance manifested itself in the form of quitting their job and becoming freelancers. Working as freelancers among other like-minded new media practitioners could guarantee "techies" the appreciation they did not get in large companies. Moreover, through immersing themselves within Brighton's new media community, ample opportunities emerged which allowed them to convert symbolic capital to economic capital.

### 5.4.3.2. Field-intersection stage and different priorities: age, families and occupation

Certain evidence supports existing research on masculinity in computing cultures which suggests that, even though men in computing tend to shun domesticity and privilege the technical over the social realm, starting a family and growing older are associated with a partial giving up of one's passion for technology (Duerden Comeau and Kemp, 2007, p. 227). George's daily routine involved cooking and taking care of the children. In several moments during my discussion with him, he argued that his passion for work was not as strong as when he was young. It could be asserted that when somebody is young, they are more likely to seek recognition within their professional field, in this case the new media field. Growing older would situate people in a different stage of the intersection of fields (middle age and career) compared to when they were younger (youth and career). Nevertheless, placing greater value on the recognition they can get for being a good parent or a good spouse does not mean that they do not place any value on their occupation. They still seek a type of symbolic compensation, but within a different

stage of the intersection of fields, the type of capital that is endowed with the capacity to grant recognition changes, namely to the social capital found in familial relationships. In other words, the social pressures felt at a later stage of life are associated with having a family, not necessarily with being a computer geek.

As demonstrated, both men and women with families appeared less passionate about work or about seeking recognition. Their family occupied a large part of their narrative despite the fact that none of my questions were concerned with their families. However, as I also discuss in Chapters 6 and 7, although children were a priority for both men and women, women still appeared to make more work-related sacrifices for the benefit of their children.

### 5.4.3.3. Managerial skills and the potential for legitimation in the new media sector

Finally, those occupying the more managerial positions – especially project managers – did not demonstrate particular love for their work. This should be interpreted in the light of evidence which suggested that the skills required for these roles where obscure and did not require a specific type of education. Although, project managers did have university education and were skilled, their skills usually appeared to go unused. The potential for achieving recognition of their skills within the new media industry was particularly small. As such, their work was merely a job to which they were not highly committed. The appointment of women in such positions, positions that tend to be unsatisfactory, could reflect gendered preconceptions of the capacities of men and women, namely that men are competent with machines and women are competent with people (Guerrier *et al*., 2009; Pantelli *et al*., 2001; Woodfield, 2000; Massey, 1996). Their frustrations with their job reflected the logic inscribed in their *habitus* of relative material dispossession and of cultural capital (education) that was difficult to redeem in this industry. Their reluctance to quit reflected the 'complicity of the destabilised *habitus* produced by insecurity and the existence … of a reserve army of labour made docile by insecure employment and the permanent threat of unemployment' (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 98).

## 5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I present the workplace and the working day routines of company-employed and self-employed new media practitioners in Brighton. My findings support existing literature which sees peer interaction as a central component in the new media labour process. However, I move on to argue that peer interaction was not merely a condition necessary for the organisation of the labour process, but should also be understood as an element which allowed new media work to be meaningful for those occupying the technical positions in the sector, such as web developers and designers. I present evidence suggesting that the desire for creativity, the opportunity to use initiative and the need to work among like-minded individuals pointed towards not simply the intrinsic need for creativity or work satisfaction, but also to the practitioners' aspiration to be recognised among their peers. This aspiration reflected both a *habitus* in which technology and design held a privileged place and workers' position in the new media field which often denied them high economic compensation. Under the circumstances I describe, new media work became unfulfilling because new media practitioners' need for recognition could not be satisfied in organisations that did not provide challenging work, opportunities for showing-off and, eventually, being appreciated by a community of peers. However, I also suggest that some practitioners who found themselves in a different configuration of fields, namely being older and having a partner and children, also thought of work more as an occupation. The reason they did not emphasise the importance of creative and autonomous work was because they potentially sought recognition in other fields. Finally, the likelihood of symbolic compensation was lower in more managerial positions in the new media field and, as such, this form of work was usually seen merely as a job.

In the next chapter, I carry the idea that peer interaction had many different meanings for new media practitioners in Brighton farther. By exploring my participants' socialising activities and the places such activities unfolded, I explain that peer interaction served strategic purposes based on the positions actors occupied in the intersection of the new media field with other fields and their *habitus*. I also discuss the role of the environment in which peer relationships developed and the role of local new media associations and of local new media veterans in the construction of the meanings of peer interaction.

# 6. Beyond networking: the social construction of new media sociality in Brighton

## 6.1. Introduction

I have so far demonstrated that peer interaction was both a central component of the new media labour process and, in certain cases, an element that made work satisfying by making practitioners achieve recognition for what they do. More specifically, I argued that creativity, initiative and passion for work became meaningful not solely in terms of intrinsic satisfaction but also in terms of peer recognition. For many practitioners who occupied technical positions (programmers, developers, designers) peer interaction provided a platform for skills demonstration, a process through which cultural capital was legitimated, giving practitioners symbolic compensation. In this chapter I further pursue the argument that interaction among new media practitioners hid different meanings. By looking at peer interaction activities outside of formal working hours, I explore other meanings associated with this phenomenon, which in existing literature is often reduced to networking, that is, strategic interaction aimed at securing work under conditions of precariousness (see Kennedy, 2010; Smith, 2010; Blair, 2009; Randle and Culkin, 2009; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Christopherson and van Jaarsveldt, 2005; Gill, 2002; Batt *et all.*, 2000; Pratt, 2000).

The chapter is organised as follows: First I demonstrate my participants' contacts in Brighton's new media scene and their origins. I stress the central role played by Wired Sussex in bringing new media practitioners in contact. I move on to discuss the occasions in which peer interaction happened in Brighton, the activities involved and the role of moral entrepreneurs. The instances of interaction include informal gatherings, industry events, "hybrid" events and workshops. In the section that follows I discuss the different meanings that my participants ascribed to the activities involved in socialising. The main themes that emerged included peer interaction as a way of peer support, a way of learning, the way of building a reputation, exhibiting passion for work and, finally, a habitual act. I conclude that the social construction of new media sociality reflected the dispositions and strategies of new media practitioners based on the

positions they occupied within the local new media field. These dispositions originated in their *habitus* which was partially shaped within the logic of the local new media field through the intermediation of actors that, following Becker (1963), I referred to as moral entrepreneurs. The latter communicated, through the various positions they occupied in the local new media sector, a particular idea of what peer interaction means in the new media sector. Finally, Brighton's bohemian logic as well as the spaces within which interaction took place symbolically shaped these actions, lending to them the meanings of camaraderie and solidarity.

## 6.2. Origins of social contacts in the local new media sector

Most of my participants had many social contacts in the local new media industry, some of which were merely acquaintances while others were close friends. The origins of these friendships and acquaintances varied from being ex- or present colleagues or having met at some industry event, to having met accidentally in a pub or at the beach. In the remainder of this section I start by discussing my participants' peer relationships and move on to the origins of these relationships. This discussion serves the purpose of identifying different forces that contribute to the construction of sociality in Brighton's new media sector.

## 6.2.1. Contacts in the local new media sector

Most of my participants identified between ten and twenty contacts in the local new media scene, while for some the number exceeded the fifty. Distinctions were often made between people with whom they were merely acquainted and those with whom they shared more friendly bonds. Although the majority of the participants' social contacts were varied and included a mix of new media workers and people unrelated to the new media sector, there were some participants whose social contacts came exclusively from the new media sector.

### 6.2.1.1. Factors affecting the composition of social contacts

Differences regarding the composition of social contacts appeared to be dependent on the existence of a partner (*i.e.* wife, husband, boyfriend, etc.), the partner's profession,

and whether new media work was one's main source of income or occupation. For example, two of them were also students, so web development/ programming was not their main occupation. One of them did not socialise with other web developers at all. The other one had some contacts in the industry but most of his friends were other research students or past colleagues that were not located in Brighton. Among people for whom new media work was their priority, the ones who had a partner who was not also a new media worker had social contacts outside the industry which were usually their partner's friends. Those who had a partner that worked in the new media industry either had many contacts in the industry or had social contacts exclusively from within the industry.

Differences in the frequency of meeting with their social contacts from within the new media industry also appeared to be associated with having a family or not and with having a partner who is also working in the industry. Both women and men with children socialised less with their peers. Family occupied a privileged position in the participants' lives:

> People who are a bit older, who have families, can't participate so much in social events or go out, because they have wife and kids and it's understandable. That runs the risk of putting us into a two-step culture. I think we have four-five in our teams [that] are parents, they're the guys who leave work on time and go to their families, which is absolutely fine, and there are people who don't have these responsibilities and they can go out. (Jim, Managing Director/Mobile Developer)

Although my data suggested that both women and men socialised less, it was women who were more vocal about motherhood affecting their social life. Joan (Front End Developer) argued that her decision to have a family involved sacrifices in the extra-work activities such as socialising. In the following quotation, another participant points out that having kids, and in spite of her partner sharing caring responsibility, impeded her from socialising as much as she would have liked to:

> Well, I have a family. I have a son of 15. He's always been my priority so in terms of socialising I had to give up a lot because I had to look after him, although I've got a partner and we share. (Martha, Front End Developer)

Older people, regardless of family status, claimed to socialise less frequently. In some cases they explained their lack of interest in socialising in terms of becoming boring:

> It varied over the years. As I got older I became more boring and stayed in more. I've probably done it less. (Katherine, Business Development Manager)

The evidence provided in this section, which will be corroborated by evidence that will be provided later on, indicates that relationships among new media practitioners are situated in the intersection of different fields, which include occupation, education, family and romantic relationships. As such, the practices which develop in the context of peer interaction should be interpreted keeping in mind the position people occupy within such intersections.

### 6.2.1.2. High levels of (subjective) connectedness

It is also worth noting that my participants, without any exceptions, displayed a high degree of awareness of the levels of connectedness within the Brighton new media community. Although the fact alone that my participants had many contacts in the local new media scene could not guarantee that there were high levels of connectedness among new media practitioners in Brighton, there was other evidence that points towards this conclusion. Everybody was convinced that it would be relatively easy to find information about other people in the local new media industry because 'someone you know knows someone who knows someone', and so on. The following quotations are illustrative of this last point:

> Yes, [other new media workers] tend to know someone we know, so it would be easy to ask and find out through friends and acquaintances. (Karen, Project Manager)

> I think that within the community everyone knows [each other]. It's so small so I can ask a couple of people and ask if it's a good person to work with. (Bill, Web Developer)

These quotations are also indicative of the informal ways in which the labour market in the Brighton new media sector worked. Formal qualifications would rarely matter; what mattered was getting a reference from someone you know and can trust. These findings agree with the existing literature on new media labour markets (Batt *et al.*, 2000; Pratt, 2000).

## 6.2.2. Origins of social relationships

The conditions under which new media workers made their social contacts can be classified into accidental encounters, the workplace and, finally, formalised industry events.

Many of my participants who had been living in Brighton for a long time argued that they had been friends with many of their social contacts from the local new media scene for many years. In some cases, the formation of short- or long-lasting social relationships was the result of having been colleagues in the past:

> I have friends who are friends because I used to work with them and they were nice people. (Ned, Quality Assurance Tester)

Other social relationships, as the following quotation suggests, originated in accidental meetings, a testament to the high presence of new media practitioners in Brighton:

> The ones I know the longest I know for eight-to-nine years. Again, the thing is, being in Brighton you bump into people. You meet someone in the nursery and you go 'what do you do?', 'in the web?', 'oh me too'. So, [I have known] some of them eight years and some of them a year. That's what I like about Brighton. Let's say you're at a party. [Let's say there are t]wenty people. At least three-to-four have something that's media related, web related, art related, design related.

> I think it's fascinating. You hang out in the beach-front and you can say, 'this one is a web designer or a graphic designer'. (George, Front End Developer)

In the last part of the above quotation, my participant suggests that there is something distinctive about the appearance of new media practitioners, what could be described in Bourdieu's (1977, p. 87) terms as a new media *bodily hexis*. The latter would include distinct ways of dressing and acting, which are more or less shared and identifiable among new media practitioners.

In other cases, connections originated in the context of company outings in pubs where other new media workers used to 'hang out' or at events organised by local new media organisations:

> [I] probably met them through socialising. [I met] most of them though socialising, or events like conferences rather than work specific situations. As to how long I know them for, it depends on different people. Some since I started three and a half  years ago. (Karen, Project Manager)

Local organisations such as Wired Sussex and Creative Brighton played a key role in the creation of social relationships among new media workers. Wired Sussex was the most visible organisation in the city. It was widely advertised in industry magazines, flyers and posters around town and was intended to be the first point of contact with the new media community for every newcomer to the new media sector in Brighton. Through Wired Sussex many of my participants learned about the local new media community:

> I had a friend of a friend that had a connection with Wired Sussex and said 'why don't you go to one of their speed-dating events to mingle in the local community?', and I met another Danish guy who worked in an E-learning company and we got along, so I started working for them. (George, Front End Developer)

One of the ways through which people would find out about networking events was the Brighton New Media (hereafter BNM) list. This was an electronic mailing list for new

media practitioners in which people posted questions, problems that sought solution, job advertisements, and so on. The BNM list was founded in the late 1990s and was a very popular mailing list among new media workers even beyond Brighton. One of my interviewees argued that he registered on the BNM list in the early 2000s, when he used to work in London, due to its popularity. He also claimed that some of the people who managed the list were located in London. The presence of both lists such as the BNM list and industry organisations such as Wired Sussex made the environment in Brighton particularly conducive to the formation of peer relationships:

> There was one [Wired Sussex] event [but] I don't know how I heard of it. It was [on] this aspect of web design and I went along to that and through that I spoke to one or two people. Some said 'you have to be signed to BNM' and through that I found out about more events. The event was called skill-swap. And through that I suddenly realised there were lots of other interesting people that were doing things and meeting up and that's when I started to organise. It helped quite a lot when I started [name of his company] cause it's a thing others are interested in so I was invited to speak to things. (Roger, Web/Mobile Developer)

> A friend of mine had been to some event and he found out about the BNM list and I posted some questions, kind of nervously I suppose a few years ago, and I realised there was this community and I went out to a couple of events and I found out all those nerds that I could talk about nerdy things. It was brilliant. There were pub events. The farm. I went to a couple of them. They dangerously get too drunk. (Nick, UX Developer)

The large number of events around new media, combined with the small size of the city and the relative concentration of new media activity at the town centre, increased the potential for building social relationships. People would attend many events where they would come across the same people. These unplanned encounters formed the basis for anchored relationships (Goffman, 1971, p. 189). When people repeatedly saw each other they established precedents which were used for starting up conversations, which then evolved into more lasting relationships:

They're people that you talk to and they're quite interesting, or maybe you have common interests, or I do music as well; so completely different stream of interest. That's the other thing; that's a constant thread, because Brighton is the way that it is, there's always other links. If we were not at a meeting together we've been at a party. Two people come to your house, 'nice to meet you', 'we have already met we share the same babysitter'. (Roger, Web/Mobile Developer)

Only rarely social relationships originated in formal business arrangements. It was very unlikely for new media workers, both employed and self-employed, to create social relationships with old or new clients. However, many ex-colleagues ended up being friends and kept their relationships after they stopped being colleagues.

To sum up, besides the workplace which tends to serve as breeding ground for social relationships among peers, the various organisations, such as Wired Sussex, and new media initiatives, such as the BNM list, played an important role in bringing new media practitioners together. The small size of the town and the proximity of new media companies and venues of socialising further contributed to the formation of social relationships.

## 6.3. Where the interaction is

In order to obtain a more complete picture of how sociality within Brighton's new media community was constructed attention needs to be turned to the actual places, the occasions of peer interaction and the activities this interaction involved. At this point it should be reminded that meeting up with their peers in new media events or pubs, was perceived as socialising by those in technical positions, while those in managerial/business-related positions distinguished clearly between networking for business-related purposes and socialising. It is also worth recalling that for freelancers who worked in cafés or CWOs, as demonstrated in Chapter 5 – and I will elaborate more in Chapter 7 – working and socialising took place simultaneously. The various occasions of peer interaction included formal industry events, informal gatherings, hybrid events and, finally, workshops.

## 6.3.1. Informal gatherings and discussions about work

Many social gatherings would take place in pubs in the evening right after work. All types of members from the local new media community would meet in such occasions. Company colleagues would go out for a beer and they would end up meeting workers from other local companies, freelancers that would in turn meet with other freelancers or company workers, company owners, local new media financiers, and so forth. As described in earlier chapters, many new media companies were located in the area known as North Laine, around which many pubs and cafés also happened to be, making the *milieu* very conducive to chance encounters. New media workers would often go to a venue in which they knew that a drinking event was taking place. In such social situations the discussion themes would vary. However, new media practitioners would not go there, to quote Scott (2009, p. 109), to remove their ''work' personae and prepare themselves for their 'home' ones'. My participants agreed that work was the predominant topic of discussion:

> We go to all sorts of different extremes. There are times when we just drink, talk rubbish, other times we talk socially about families and friends, not so much about sport, quite a few conversations are philosophical, talk about religion; most of us are atheists in this community … Normally in socialising evenings we talk about web or some geeky topic. (Manuel, Back End Developer)

In the following quotation, a participant referred to the different things he used to do with his peers during pub meetings. According to John, 'things that [he was] working on' could also be about playing:

> [I] talk about things that I'm working on, which is work and play. Sometimes [I] ask them whether they have leads to people I am looking for, [I] ask them what they've been up to and follow up something that sounds interesting. For me a lot of it is about things that I find pleasurable like flying, learning to be a pilot, skiing, mountain biking. (John, Programmer)

Work-related discussions were not the norm for a few of my participants, or at least they claimed that they would rather talk about other things than work. One of the older

participants, who also had a family, argued that he would not talk about work with his social contacts and would overall try to avoid work-related topics. On the quotation that follows, he presents a varied account of why he preferred to abstain from work-related discussions. He draws a link between being young and deriving his identity from work. His account includes ideas about a more holistic lifestyle which involved interests beyond work and an inverse relationship between maturity and the *need* to talk about work:

> When we meet we don't talk about work. We are the same stage in life, married with children and don't really *need* to talk about work, we are mature enough not to talk about work. We talk about things that don't really matter, our general family life, children, holidays, and things like that, not Internet and interface design, it is what we do so we just have a beer and socialise ... I think when you are younger you haven't really qualified and quantified yourself. You're looking at things and say 'that's me', a successful business you can attach yourself to. Because I was running my own company back then and because there was the potential to be successful, you kind of hung your identity around your company and it's easy to talk about it and I don't feel that's necessary. I am more whole as a person so I don't necessarily want to be identified with what I do. I think it's me as a person, more complex life, a sports life, a professional life, a social life, a family life, a more holistic view. (George, Front End Developer)

This account is supportive of the claim that IT professionals tend to derive their identity from their work (Scholarios and Marks, 2004). It also supports the argument put forward in Chapter 5 regarding the aspirations and dispositions of new media practitioners, namely that the new media "techie" aspires to be recognised for her/his skills and that the only way for this to happen is through talking about work. However, it is also indicative of how meanings associated with work intersect with meanings ascribed to age and familial relationships.

Another participant, who did not have children, also chose to draw a line between work and leisure by staying away from work-related discussions. However, Bill worked in one of Brighton's CWOs. Even though he said that he tries to stay away from technological discussions when he socialises, he also said that he talks about work in

social occasions in the CWO, because he is in work mode:

> I suppose when I socialise I don't really talk about my work so much. Even when I'm in circles that are in the profession, I try to stay away from technological discussions. I do it when I am here at work (coworking place) when I am at work mode. (Bill, Web Developer)

In summation, my participants' accounts regarding peer interaction in social events suggest that while work-related discussions were the norm, the content of socialising activities was also dependent on other aspects of a person's life such as having a family. These observations are in line with what I demonstrated earlier regarding the composition of social contacts and the frequency with which different people socialise with their peers. Having a partner who is not a new media practitioner, having children and growing older, are all factors associated with less frequent peer socialising and smaller obsession with work.

## 6.3.2. Industry events

Many social gatherings would take place in the context of various industry events. As discussed earlier, local bodies such as Wired Sussex, Creative Brighton and the BCoC put a lot of emphasis on networking and promoted it as a widespread and important practice in the new media industry. Accordingly, they often organised networking and speed-dating events for the new media community. These organisations would take the idea of networking further than merely organising a speed-dating event. They considered that freelancers and entrepreneurs needed guidance and to develop skills in order to network. The following quotation from an interview with a BCoC employee supports the last point:

> A lot of people are quite nervous of networking, so a lot of people turn up to their first event and they are not sure how it's going to work … we were thinking about actually throwing a session about how to network, because I think some people are nervous and we've got a member of the Chamber who is an expert on that. (Synthia, BCoC Employee)

As demonstrated earlier, many of my participants made their first contacts in the local new media scene through events organised by Wired Sussex. As such, these formalised industry events were central in the building of social relationships within the industry.

### 6.3.3. Hybrids between formal social events and informal gatherings: The Farm

One of the most popular events, which combined the idea of a pub meeting with the idea of a more formalised social event, was the case of the Farm, a networking event for freelancers, which many employed workers also attended. The Farm was a grass-roots event in the sense that it was organised by freelancers and aimed at freelancers, without the involvement of formal organisations. The event used to take place every Wednesday evening. The venue changed over the years. The pub that had accommodated the event for several years changed during the time of my fieldwork because the pub manager started ignoring the requests of the group for keeping low music volume in order to enable discussions.

The organiser of this event played the role of the gatekeeper. He was responsible for advertising the event on the BNM list on a weekly basis, managing the event's website, being present at all events and taking care of newcomers. These meetings were often attended by local industry veterans, some of whom had been attending the event for many years. However, new people would join in on every meeting. The organiser was the first point of contact for all newcomers. He would ask them about their speciality and accordingly introduce them to people with whom they had something, in terms of work, in common.

During my visits to this event I had the opportunity to observe some of the interactions. The events I attended took place in pubs and attendants drunk alcohol. Some people held their business cards and were ready to hand them out to whomever they spoke. Discussions varied from personal ones about people's romantic relationships, to discussions about politics and of course, computing. The latter tended to dominate the conversations. Distinguishing between regulars and newcomers was easy. Although the first thing that was usually asked when starting a conversation with a  person they did

not know was 'what are you doing?', regulars were clearly more relaxed, making jokes and often talking about things unrelated to the industry before eloquently introducing the next technical subject into the conversation. They were the ones more likely to joke around with me and talk with their peers about sports or politics. Newcomers appeared, however, much more disciplined and reserved. They focused exclusively on their work and their career. Their questions and remarks were forthcoming even for me, an outsider. Their first question after shaking hands would be 'hi, what are you doing?' to which they would respond 'I just started freelancing' or 'I am helping this company with digital audio production'. Then the conversation would go into some typical subject among new media freelancers, such as the difficulty of being a freelancer, often followed by generic advice on how to manage client relations.

### 6.3.4. Workshops, conferences and presentations

Some workshops had a particular technological orientation while some others were more informal events where prolific local new media figures often shared their experiences of the industry. Some of the former were loosely organised around a specific technology and participants met and shared experiences, problems and solutions with regard to the technology in question. Some workshops/events took the form of games or challenges, whereby participants demonstrated an application that they had made using a specific technology by giving short presentations. Such events were advertised on mailing lists such as the BNM list, local organisations such as Wired Sussex and on the blogs of local new media practitioners. Almost all of my participants who worked on the technical side of new media work (*i.e.* programmers, developers, designers) attended such events on a weekly basis. As mentioned earlier, frequency of attendance was contingent on employment status, age and family status.

During those events activities revolved around the topic of discussion or the purpose of the group in question, usually followed by drinks in a local pub. In one of the non-technological events I attended, the person giving the presentation talked about his childhood, his first job and the success of his mobile app development company. He emphasised that he had the entrepreneurial spirit since he was very young. He joked about putting together small profitable enterprises when he was in primary school. Later on, during a private conversation with him, he argued that he was always fascinated by

'creating products' (Mathew, Mobile Developer/Managing Director). During his presentation he gave some general tips about the workings of the industry, but mostly boasted about the success of his company. After the presentation the audience asked questions and eventually the discussion moved on, as was the case with most of these events, to a nearby pub.

## 6.4. The meanings of socialising

Through my participants' answers I identified different motivations and, accordingly, meanings ascribed to peer interaction. My research participants communicated different – on first appearance conflicting at times – ideas regarding their motivations behind peer socialising and practices such as knowledge sharing that took place among themselves and their peers. Some communicated ideas about moral values and peer solidarity, others pointed toward residues of their educational experiences. Most of these ideas were usually expressed in conjunction with instrumental considerations, reflecting ultimately the potential of improving my participants' positions in the field of new media, in symbolic or economic terms.

## 6.4.1. Peer support

Several of my participants articulated ideas about *what good is* when asked about information sharing during socialising. Some of them argued that they shared information because it was the right thing to do while others' accounts were more subtle yet indicative of moral concerns, such as equality of opportunity or providing support to one's fellow human beings. Accounts that reflected altruistic motives were indicative of a specific view of knowledge sharing as a practice meant to help others. Indeed, some of my informants talked about sharing in terms of others asking for their help, rather than in terms of them seeking to give or to receive knowledge:

> [I am] always trying to help other people. I ask people to sum up what they do in two sentences, so I know that when I talk to another person that this person would be great fit for them. (Matthew, Mobile Developer/Managing Director)

> If someone asks something I usually give it, and if in a conversation I think that something is useful for someone I give it, … I rarely would not share if I knew that it would be of use to people. (Manuel, Back End Developer)

> I like that, I like being able to do things for free. That's important to me. (Tagg, Back End Developer)

In the quotation that follows one of my participants gives a moralistic account of sharing knowledge:

> Because it's the right thing to do. (John, Programmer)

In some cases, informants who called upon moral motives presented knowledge sharing as unconditional. However, the two following informants argued that they would not help somebody unconditionally. The latter should be in the same spirit, that is, eager to help others too:

> Whether it's advice, say 'this is the best technique to use', [or] 'do you know this book?', [I help]. When you find people saying 'I can offer you these services', then you find that they become less interesting than people saying, 'hey, how can I help you?' It's about giving rather than taking. (Roger, Web/Mobile Developer)

> It's kind of a personal thing. If you feel that they share stuff with you then I'm happy to go the other way. (Jack, Programmer)

Another example comes from a participant who worked in the CWO in which I undertook my ethnographic research. She argued that if someone was opportunistic – something that was against the philosophy of the organisation – she did not feel comfortable helping them:

> I think I feel uncomfortable sharing with someone [whom] I have the sensation wasn't feeling in the spirit, or wanted to just profit in a way that was not in line

with that kind of philosophy. The thing about here [CWO] is that everybody has the same kind of attitude. I don't think many people here have that kind of profit-making personality that's all about profit. There are few, not that much, generally everyone is following the same values. (Joan, Front End Developer)

The account of another participant pointed towards peer solidarity by arguing that if he had to choose between valuing a non-disclosure agreement with his company and helping his peers he would choose the latter:

> The most important relationship, as far as I'm concerned, is not between me and a company, it's between me and my peers. So, if sharing information is against company policy but it's going to benefit my peers in some way, then I'm willing to make that compromise. Companies don't last very long but people do. (Bert, Programmer)

These accounts were further supported by numerous claims during interviews that Brighton's new media community was cooperative and that people were eager to help each other. My participants often used the word camaraderie and collegiality to describe the local new media community. Openness and peer support, as opposed to secrecy and competition, were for them practices that reflected this spirit among new media workers in Brighton:

> A colleague who lives in London comes down here to work here because he says that you don't get the same attitude. It's far more cut-throat and competitive in London. (Philip, Front End Developer)

> It's very different. My experience from when I was working in London is [that it is] far more competitive [than Brighton] and people were more likely to view each other as a threat, I'd say. (Mark, Programmer)

Camaraderie was closely related to the idea of informal help among peers, which often took place outside of work, in other social occasions, in pubs, in social events and workshops. Certain negative experiences from company employment appeared to

inform the practices of my informants when they became self-employed and either shaped or reinforced their existing values. This resulted in a desire to treat their peers with the respect and appreciation that they themselves did not receive within companies:

> I enjoy what I do and I want people around me to find the process enjoyable. I don't want to be someone who just shouts at their staff. Not that I consider these people staff. They're co-workers. I work for them they work for me. We help each other. (Nick, UX Developer)

The spirit of camaraderie in the Brighton new media scene presented itself in the practice of open sharing among new media workers. My participants would often counterpose London in order to emphasise Brighton's distinctiveness:

> I used to work in London and live there and I wanted to move out because it's dirty, smelly, not very nice place to live and I felt that the industry, this is sort of subjective, but I thought that the industry in London was cold and harsh and very much about money and status. Coming to Brighton I've noticed the difference that people want to be creative for the sake of being creative and businesses are a lot warmer ... People tend to know each other in businesses in Brighton and there's a lot of knowledge sharing and a sense of camaraderie. (Maria, Marketing Development Manager)

Thus, according to the participant presented above, the tendency to support one's peers – alongside the love for creativity – is a characteristic that applies to the entire new media scene in Brighton. The spirit of openness, passion and support is present again in the quotations that follow:

> People in general seem to be quite passionate about what they do and are really willing to give you some input on a project for nothing. (Anastasia, Front End Developer)

> In the web and geeky and artist communities in Brighton there's an attitude of giving and sharing. So, there's the collaborative attitude which makes Brighton unusual. (Philip, Front End Developer)

The last participant gave a particularly interesting account, elucidating an important aspect of the supportive values of Brighton's new media scene. He described a process whereby new media practitioners learned over time that the act of helping others had a symbolic meaning in the local new media community. Knowledge sharing did not necessarily set a reciprocal claim. Instead, the very act of sharing was underlain by the value of altruism and because sharing signified that one was altruistic, people would reciprocate. My participant asserted that some people would initially choose to help their peers without thinking of the benefits. This would be followed by the realisation that if one was open and shared information people would reciprocate because they would appreciate the *underlying values* of that action:

> It's much better to be free and open with it and, also, you don't think about actively doing this. But if you watch the pattern of what happens, the act of selflessly giving a lot of the time to people, it comes back to you. It builds trust and people come back and want to work with you because they understand values that underlie that, recognise them. (Philip, Front End developer)

The above quotation suggests that giving out a piece of information which could be helpful to somebody would be valued by the latter, whilst demonstrating unwillingness to help one's peers would be perceived in a negative way.

In summation, peer support was central in my participants' accounts. In Chapter 8, I discuss the effects of such acts of peer support on the careers of different new media practitioners. Yet, while some of my participants expressed a moral commitment to helping their peers in the shape of unconditional peer support, most of my participants provided accounts which suggested that peer support would take place among people with similar values and that the act of sharing itself had a symbolic meaning. Moreover, as I explain later on, peer support among those who share similar values had implications on who would benefit from peer interaction. If someone appeared selfish, this person would be unlikely to access the resources available in the local networks.

Accordingly, I also explain the importance of being aware of the practical value of selfless helping and the role played by specific actors in the local new media scene in communicating these values to new media practitioners.

## 6.4.2. Learning and staying up-to-date through reciprocal exchange

All my participants, even those who initially argued that they shared in order to help others, eventually claimed that helping others involves personal business-related benefits. The most common expected benefit was the opportunity for learning. Some participants made the connection between knowledge sharing and the "nature" of technology. They argued that knowledge sharing allowed new media workers to stay up-to-date with technological developments and solve technical problems in, what they considered to be, the vast and ever-changing environment of computing. This evidence supports Kotamraju's (2002) finding that the ability to keep up with technological change is an unquestionable feature of the web design skill set. Learning took place through the reciprocal exchange of knowledge:

> I help them with their training they help me with my training. We got a lot to share with each other. (Tagg, Back End Developer)

> Generally speaking, my view is that what goes around comes around. So, if you share knowledge and ideas, that's how you benefit from each other's knowledge. (Katherine, Business Development Manager)

Particular attention should be paid to the account of one of my participants. He was the co-owner of one of the most successful local new media companies. I first heard him talking in a social event and later on I interviewed him. In both occasions he articulated that the new media sector was regulated by a very specific type of reciprocity. During his talk he argued that he first started working in a very prestigious London web design company, where he learned a lot by being located among very talented people. He then stressed that everybody should strive to be located among talented people and learn from them. He continued by saying that after one becomes successful they will be able to give back to the community. Below there is one quotation from the interview I conducted with him a few days after the event:

There was [a time] back in 2001 when I felt that I can't inspire, I can't give anything back at the moment. But let me learn, give anything I can have and I'll do the best of it. I'll make some mistakes but I'll continue learning and in 10 years' time I'll be able to give back and that's why we talk on subjects of mobile [development] around the world, and also the general advice, ... and also advising people, so be it a small company, big company or individual seeking advice from me. I try at least to go for a coffee with them and listen to their story. (Matthew, Mobile Developer/Managing Director)

This account suggests that my participant had a sense of duty towards a community of new media practitioners. He had an initial expectation of being offered help. Then he would reciprocate but not necessarily to the ones who offered him help in the first place, but rather to a loosely defined community.

Another one of my participants, who at an earlier point in her account had argued that she would help people who shared the same values as her, also argued that learning through reciprocal knowledge sharing was a habitual practice whose origins could be traced back to educational experience. Joan talked about her studies at the university and identified them as a central driving force behind her practices. She argued that the philosophy of her undergraduate degree was about openness and learning through mutual knowledge sharing among peers:

In the course that I was in, we all come with some knowledge and appreciation and we learn from each other but what we don't know we go out and bring back and we share. So, the stuff you're talking about [knowledge sharing among peers] was the basic foundation of my course, and all of that within the fine art context that actually it's about expression, it's not about communicating something for a company. So, it was about community, about society and about bringing knowledge in and saying you are already the expert but you know that you and your mates and everyone else around here, you got to share and become more knowledgeable. (Joan, Front End Developer)

In that sense, her earlier account regarding 'the sharing of similar values' (see section 6.4.1.) can be understood more accurately through the specific meaning – embodied in her *habitus* – that learning had for her. In the case of Joan, thus, the effect of the intersection of different fields can clearly be seen in her practices. Joan's decision to share knowledge reflects the interaction of logics found at the intersection of two fields, namely, education and the CWO. Sharing of knowledge was both in line with the philosophy of the CWO and with the philosophy of her degree.

The accounts presented here offer a more elaborated view of peer support to the one demonstrated in the earlier section. Firstly, helping out people who were also likely to help one out in return, entailed benefits which were deemed crucial in the new media sector. As such, it was more desirable to associate with people who had the same values rather than with people who had different values, a situation which would not lead to peer support. Secondly, learning was a basic element of peer support. Thirdly, these practices could be instrumental and intentional but also unintentional, coming naturally as part of one's *habitus*. Finally, it is also worth noting that learning occurred in unintended ways simply through co-presence. People ended up giving advice or passing on knowledge while talking about their work without thinking about it. I explore this topic in more detail in Chapter 7, where I demonstrate how the practice of coworking exposed people to learning and the relationship this exposure had to self-promotion.

## 6.4.3. Building a reputation: finding work, self-publicising and showing off

My data also suggested that for some participants the motivation behind peer interaction was the potential of building one's reputation and advertising one's services. In that sense, socialising was closer to the idea of networking, namely strategically pursued relationships that can assist one in their career (Singh *et al*., 2006). In the quotation that follows, Roger explains that through talking about his work he hoped to create a "buzz" around his name and his vision in order to establish his niche area. In the following quotation, he provides an answer to the question, 'do you also share knowledge with competitors?', which reveals even more nuanced instrumental ways of thinking:

I would do. I don't have any direct competitors in my particular field, because it's a field you try to establish. Anyone [who is] working in the field, you would encourage them. (Roger, Mobile/Web Developer)

It is worth noting that Roger initially (*i.e.* at an earlier point in the interview) explained his tendency to share knowledge in terms of 'giving rather than taking', thereby omitting any instrumental motivations behind his actions. This further contributes to the notion that appearing selfless is considered important in the local new media scene.

Another informant argued that demonstrating one's expertise can put one in an advantageous position in the industry. In the quotation that follows he explains that the practice of being involved in open source projects, where one voluntarily contributes their labour to community-based projects, entails business-related benefits:

Drupal is all open source and if companies have something to contribute they tend to because they get a lot of marketing. They get a lot of connections if you get seen as somebody who has expertise in a particular area that can drive huge amount of business. There's a local guy called Bob Dolan who has this company. He is the maintainer of one of the modules for Drupal commerce which is a new module of e-commerce for Drupal. Now especially, each time anyone looks up this module, his name, his part of the community will come up again and again. It's really a very influential position to be in. (Costello, Programmer)

However, as suggested in the previous chapter, reputation did not necessarily have to entail business-related implications. As some of my participants argued, demonstrating one's skills made one appear interesting and valued in the local new media community. In that sense, workshops and other industry events could serve as platforms for demonstrating one's skills and gaining recognition. The next quotation of a participant who organised a local workshop is further illustrative of this point:

All the conferences I do, I don't get paid for it. And all the time I spend on my blog, the podcast, I don't get paid for any of that thing. I do those because I want

to do them, and because they seem to be popular, which is rewarding. (Tagg, Back End Developer)

Reputation, in that sense, had a double meaning in Brighton's new media industry. On the one hand, building one's reputation allows them to reap the symbolic fruits of being knowledgeable, and thereby respected, practitioners. On the other hand, it allows them to demonstrate that there are good practitioners and advertise their services.

Another participant articulated what was implicit in the accounts of other participants who pursued socialising in a strategic way (*i.e.* to secure employment), namely, that socialising requires devotion:

[I don't socialise] very often, few times a month. I don't go, like, every week. I'm not one of those people who are really devoted. (Natalie, Project Manager/Front End Developer)

However, at the same time she claims that she chooses not to socialise with her peers too much. As with the case of Joan in the earlier section, the case of Natalie is reflective of the effect of the intersection of fields on her practices. Natalie's personal circumstances can give several hints of why she was not, in any sense, devoted. Natalie was both the only homeworking single mother in my sample who, additionally, chose to work part-time in order to take care of her children, and she saw herself mainly as a project manager. Natalie argued that she had secured all the work she needed through connections that she had already made throughout the years. In this sense, insecurity, which is the driving force behind networking, was not particularly strong. Moreover, because she did not consider herself a very competent web designer, she did not feel the need to show off and seek symbolic compensation for her skills. Finally, being a single mother redirected her attention from priorities common among new media practitioners, such as being good at one's work, to being a good mother.

## 6.4.4. Recruitment and entrepreneurial support

The potential for recruiting employees or business partners was another instrumental-rational meaning associated with socialising. Social networks appeared to be an important resource of entrepreneurship in the later stages of a freelancer's or a company's trajectory. Availability of qualified staff made the capacity for one-person companies to quickly scale up possible, because they could easily put together teams by drawing on the diverse pool of skills:

> I ran this project about a search engine before Google released its engine and Paul advised me on some people who were likely to know about the cutting edge stuff, and I had only four to five different options really and, because it was Brighton, I could find someone who could work on all five, and I found them through the Farm. (Miles, Web Consultant/ Web Developer)

One of my participants, Nick, considered his social contacts, the people among whom he worked in cafés around Brighton, as his co-workers (see section 6.4.1.). On his website he provides a description of his services. There he talks about 'collaboration with other UX specialists' and 'talking with developers about where there can be compromise'. The other UX specialists and developers he talks about are his social contacts, people who work next to him in cafés and CWOs. However, on paper he presents them to his prospective clients as co-workers.

This evidence does not point towards the absolute commodification of social relationships. It rather further supports the claim that people ascribe several different meanings to their peer relationships. On other parts of his account, Nick also claimed that he respects his peers, that he seeks recognition through talking about work (see Chapter 5) and that he loves to talk about work (see next section). However, this evidence does suggest that Brighton constituted an environment particularly conducive to entrepreneurship through the presence of a rich institutional environment, that included both formal institutions and informal social networks, which provided resources necessary for entrepreneurial undertakings.

## 6.4.5. Enjoyment from talking about work

Earlier on (see section 6.4.1.), I put forward evidence suggesting that practitioners in the Brighton new media scene are supportive of each other, and also that they are creative just for the sake of being creative. These latter accounts were further supported by some of my participants who argued that the reason they shared knowledge was simply because they enjoyed talking about their work. Discussions during social occasions shifted from work to play, but work was also play:

> It's learning and having fun. I think learning is having fun. I think it expos[es] you to different points of view. This has been a major thing for me recently. (Tagg, Back End Developer)

The two participant accounts that follow also suggest that some people talk about work when socialising because they love their job:

> Learning about interesting skills, which could be for work, but for me work, fun, is all part of the same thing. (John, Programmer)

> [I talk about work to] anyone that's interested. I love talking about it. (Nick, UX Developer)

At other points of their interviews (as demonstrated in Chapter 5), the same participants claimed that they build a reputation by demonstrating their skills. This evidence suggests that although the often cited relationship between work and play in the IT related occupations (Wittel, 2001; Pratt, 2000; Massey, 1996) and the idea that there is intrinsic value to creative labour (Smith and McKinlay, 2009b) are present, they cannot be disentangled from other meanings associated with peer interaction, such as the pursuit of recognition (*i.e.* symbolic capital) and business success (*i.e.* position improvement in the field).

## 6.4.6. Moral entrepreneurs and peer support

During the pre-mentioned occasions of peer interaction in Brighton's new media

community certain people occupied a special position. I call these people, after Becker (1963), *moral entrepreneurs*. These were local new media entrepreneurs that exhibited characteristics of moral crusaders who were genuinely interested in the success of new media practitioners and felt that what they advocated could help them. Moral entrepreneurs were moral in the sense that they were already aware of the economic benefits of peer interaction and they wanted to help others, usually small independent entrepreneurs and practitioners, improve their position within the field. They believed that socialising and knowledge sharing would allow practitioners to be up-to-date with new technological developments, allow them to form teams and create new products, and, finally, improve their employability and chances for success. They did not necessarily care about practitioners' desire for recognition (*i.e.* symbolic compensation), although, as I discuss in Chapter 8, symbolic capital can also be a good resource for someone who seeks to improve their position in the new media field. One way or the other, the focus of the moral entrepreneur was the latter. They wanted small entrepreneurs to create businesses and make them grow fast.

Moral entrepreneurs were occupying central positions and were influential figures in the local new media field. In my study, Robert was at the helm of local new media associations and the co-founder of the CWO I examined. Miles used to run a popular new media mailing list and had been involved in the new media community for more than 15 years. The Farm, through which its organiser communicated the rules of networking, was one of the most prominent networking events for freelancers in Brighton. So, moral entrepreneurs often operated either through the local formalised institutions such as Wired Sussex and Creative Brighton, or the less formalised institutions such as the Farm.

These actors were endowed with authority in the new media sector by virtue of being industry "veterans" or by exhibiting high business achievements. The message that moral entrepreneurs were trying to communicate was that of peer support. Robert, a creative consultant and veteran in the local new media industry was involved in local new media organisations and coworking initiatives. He became involved with coworking and with the independent new media community out of his dissatisfaction from working for big corporate clients. He spread the message of collaboration, peer

support and networking among small new media entrepreneurs. This business model involved:

> Collaborative working, peer support ... elements that come together to build an organic collaborative network. (Robert, Creative Consultant)

According to Robert, peer interaction was a necessary practice among small entrepreneurs. Through peer interaction new media practitioners could support each other to create viable businesses and to succeed in the industry. This was a business approach which he actively sought to communicate to other new media practitioners through his involvement in local organisations. In Chapter 7, I discuss in more detail how Robert's approach shaped peer interaction in one of Brighton's CWOs, an organisation co-founded by Robert.

Miles had been actively involved in the local new media scene since the mid-nineties as the founder and administrator of a local new media mailing list and he had been involved in numerous industry and local community initiatives over the years. His business activity was targeted to the third sector (*i.e.* charity consultation on how to take advantage of the Internet). When asked about peer interaction he replied not merely in terms of his own practices, but in terms of a broader philosophy which he communicated to his peers and his clients. He communicated a somewhat religious conviction regarding the value of peer support. He would urge his contacts to support each other and whether they subscribed, to use Latour's (Johnson [Latour], 1988) parlance, for ethical or economic reasons did not matter to him.

> I encourage people to do that in their personal lives and whether they think they do it because they can advertise their services or because they think they will end up in heaven I don't really care. If they help other people that's good, full stop. (Miles, Web Consultant/Web Developer)

The theme of peer support or peer help present in the accounts of these moral entrepreneurs could also be found in the Farm. Besides information regarding the history of the event, the Farm's website included a link which provided a description of a typical Farm evening and, more interestingly, a set of written rules meant to facilitate

social conduct during these meetings. One of the more interesting points concerned a piece of advice regarding how people should present themselves:

> When someone asks what you're doing at the moment, don't say "I'm doing some e-mail marketing for this company". Try for "I'm helping this company out with their marketing, we've gone for an e-mail campaign and it seems to be working well. They make blue widgets so we've been going from this angle…". (Freelance Advisor, 2008)

What was interesting about this piece of advice was not just the suggestion to elaborate on one's work and thereby demonstrating that one was knowledgeable, but rather the suggestion to substitute *doing work for a company* for *helping out a company*. In this instance, moral entrepreneurs offered advice regarding the easily governable aspects of one's performance, namely, their spoken language, rather than the less easily governable aspects, such as body language (Goffman, 1959, p. 18-19). As I argue later on, the emphasis on help and peer support constitute central elements of Brighton's new media logic.

Finally, it should be noted that while these participants performed the role of moral entrepreneur, it does not mean that this role was necessarily limited to these categories of actors. Any actor to whom others look up and who gives advice to her or his peers, assumed the role of moral entrepreneur. In Chapter 7, I discuss in detail how a member of the CWO undertook this role. Company bosses could also perform the role of moral entrepreneur. One of my participants, whose account about the obligation of industry veterans to mentor industry newcomers I presented earlier, reflected on the practices to which he was exposed as a junior designer in a big London company. Those involved pub outings with business partners and clients, drinking and talking about work. He then reflected on his own narrative and considered the possibility that those experiences impacted on his current, at the time of the interview, practices:

> Now that I think about it, it goes back to 2001 when I was working in [name of London company], where I learned all this industry pub-chats in the evenings

> [that] I'm doing myself right now. I just realised that! (Matthew, Mobile
> Developer/Managing Director)

This account shows again that certain practices were embodied in the *habitus* and were done on automatic, regardless of the ways that people were trying to make sense of them.

In conclusion, evidence suggests that certain actors in the local new media scene, who were endowed with a relatively high level of authority by virtue of being industry veterans, encouraged new media practitioners to engage in practices that would help them succeed. The basic practice prescribed by those moral entrepreneurs was peer support. Success, according to them, would not come through individual effort and competitive behaviour but through a process whereby peers would interact with each other in a collaborative and co-supportive manner. However, the idea that was emphasised in these practices was that of collective success, not of personal success; of helping each other, not of merely working with each other.

## 6.5. Discussion: the social construction of new media sociality

A series of factors originating in personal experiences from the entire spectrum of life conspired to construct the meanings that new media sociality had for my participants. Indeed, the phenomenon of socialising among peers in Brighton's new media scene was endowed with several meanings. However, the ubiquity of more rational-instrumental meanings in my participants' accounts as well as widespread ideas regarding camaraderie, pointed towards the embodiment of a specific-to-Brighton new media logic; one that emphasises peer support alongside profit-making. I argue that ostensibly moral motivations, such as peer support, should not always be interpreted as reflective of some kind of solidarity in the new media community of Brighton. At the same time, economic-rational motivations should not always be interpreted as reflective of the commodification of social relationships. Instead, the desire to help one's peers whilst enjoying economic benefit could represent the internally consistent system of Brighton's new media logic, a logic which cannot be reduced to its constituent parts.

### 6.5.1. Networking and the logic of the new media field

Networking is part of the logic of Brighton's new media field. Ideas about *networking* proliferate in industry news and associations. As discussed in Chapter 2, strategic socialising is an encompassing idea which proliferates contemporary capitalist societies and not an exclusive characteristic of the new media field. There is, however, another structural characteristic associated with the knowledge-intensive sectors which also brings the idea of networking to the fore. That is the nature of technology. Technological progress faces new media workers as an inevitable reality. It is the reality to which scholars (see Smith, 2010; Wittel, 2001; Batt *et all.,* 2000; Pratt, 2000) have resorted in order to explain new media workers' networking practices. Networking is not important only because it offers access to job opportunities, but also because it allows skills-upgrading which is important for securing a job. New media practitioners – situated in a new media cluster – see technology changing every day, new programming languages, new applications, as well as new 'new media', and feel the need to be up-to-date.

Of course, the valuing of social connectedness is particularly pronounced in the new media industry for another reason, closely linked to trends in technology. Continuous innovation and the creation of new services/products, is necessary for the viability of the industry. The new media industry, as part of late capitalism, is governed by ideas of expansion and constant innovation (Bachmann and Wittel, 2009; Castells, 1996). Project-based organisation facilitates innovation. As Maskell and Lorenzen (2004) have argued, it makes sense for creative sectors to cluster because clustering allows the quick identification of skills that can be utilised quickly according to the quick shifting of market demand. Moreover, as Maskell (2001) has described, the creation of new knowledge (*i.e.* innovation) requires the successful combination of distinct pieces of knowledge which can only be achieved within communities of shared understanding. The varied channels of peer interaction found within clusters allow for the cognitive gap to be overcome and new knowledge to be created (Maskell, 2001).

## 6.5.2. Brighton's new media logic

There were two reasons why Brighton had its own particular new media logic which represented a particularly consistent version of the field's logic. The first reason was related to the high concentration of the new media industry in Brighton. The second had to do with Brighton's imagery. These two factors contributed to making Brighton an exemplary new media town.

### 6.5.2.1. High level of new media activity

There were economically rational reasons for networking in Brighton's new media community. As presented earlier on, several of my participants argued that the concentration of a large number of new media workers in Brighton has resulted in increased specialisation. Several of my freelance participants argued that they form their own niche. Specialisation led to a situation whereby, in many cases, people had complementary rather than competing skills. Furthermore, one of the things that became evident fairly early in my research was that most people tended to attend similar events and hang out in similar pubs/cafés. The possibilities for meeting with each other were therefore ample. Moreover, so called 'branching processes' (Granovetter, 1974, p. 92) created the conditions for indirect connectedness. Even though many of my participants did not know each other, it was highly likely that they had common friends in the area. As presented earlier, all my participants thought that it was relatively easy to find information on other people working in new media in Brighton. Irrespective of the "objective" level of connectedness among new media workers in Brighton, the "subjective" level of connectedness was high. If people were aware that they could ask and receive information on people they did not know, it could be inferred that they were aware of the possibility that others could easily access information about them as well. At the same time, new media practitioners were aware that information regarding their skills could also travel through the channels of the social network. The latter, thus, served as a reputation mechanism – similar to what Platteau (2000) argues about business networks. As demonstrated earlier, and as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 8, this high level of connectedness allowed the building of teams, recommendations and the upgrading of skills. In other words, the economic value of social connections –

(Boltanski and Chiappelo, 2005) emphasised in the new economy – made sense in a place like Brighton where social connectedness among peers could actually materialise.

### 6.5.2.2. Brighton's imagery

The imagery of Brighton lent the laid-back/anti-corporate element to the local new media community. Massey *et al*. (1992) poignantly described how the science park environment symbolically shaped work practices. They argued that the imagery in the case of the Cambridge science park was 'held to mean that employees are relatively autonomous and creative' (Massey *et al*., 1992, p. 90). As suggested in Chapter 4, Brighton was marketed as a bohemian city, with specific cultural and aesthetic elements mobilised to attract creative workers. Beyond image marketing, Brighton indeed offered an artistic and laid-back environment, with its exotic cuisine restaurants, cafés and pubs, the beach, its arts festivals, and the student population. These cultural elements shaped the social fabric of Brighton's new media scene. Leach (2002, p. 292) argued that through our interaction with an external environment we make sense of it, develop a feeling of belonging and eventually identify with it. It is important, thus, to consider that new media workers' practices were interpreted by them through the imagery of the place within which practices took place and the incorporation of this imagery into the *habitus*. The intersection of the new media logic with the logic of this other field, *i.e.* Brighton's cultural environment, and their embodiment into the *habitus* put an additional anti-corporate spin on both networking and succeeding. Eikhof and Haunschild (2006) ventured a similar connection with regard to the practices of actors. They posited that the bohemian lifestyle that actors take on serves the function of reconciling the two conflicting features of their identity, namely the artistic and the entrepreneurial. It can then be argued that socialising and organising workshops – through which workers built their reputation, found work and upgraded their skills – were often dissociated from their instrumental character because of the incorporation into the *habitus* of a logic that emphasises relaxation and art, which, in turn, are elements not readily associated with the corporate world.

**6.5.2.3. Functional interdependence with an anti-corporate spin**

The contrast frequently drawn between Brighton's openness and peer support and London's secrecy and competition, is reminiscent of Saxenian's (1994) account of Silicon Valley and Route 128. She argued that two distinctively opposite cultures accounted for the success differentials of Silicon Valley in California and Route 128 in Boston. A distinctive culture based on trust and cooperation, which was built from the bottom up in Silicon Valley allowed entrepreneurs to be more innovative than their peers in Boston – whose regulatory principle was competition. In Brighton, the size of the city and the high concentration of new media practitioners created the conditions for functional interdependence which, in turn, gave an economic-rational justification for the practice of networking. Brighton's laid-back, anti-corporate imagery further supported the tendency to network by encouraging an anti-corporate (cooperation rather than competition) behaviour and by lending to it the meaning of camaraderie. The result was a Brighton-specific new media logic suggestive of what Durkheim (1933) called *organic solidarity*, but with an anti-corporate spin; a type of solidarity that was based on the organic complementarity of roles – that is, the functional interdependence between new media specialities – coupled with a more obscure *cult of man* (Durkheim, 1933.), or, to adapt Durkheim's concept to the present case, *cult of the geek*. This sacred quality assigned to members of the new media community in Brighton – manifested as peer admiration and support – did not stem only from subcultural loyalty (the computing culture) and the practical benefits associated with peer solidarity, but also from Brighton's anti-corporate spirit.

## 6.5.3. The role of moral entrepreneurs

It should not be assumed that all new media practitioners took Brighton's new media logic for granted. It was rather communicated to some of them through various channels. A potent force in the process of the social construction of socialising was reserved for moral entrepreneurs. As explained earlier, moral entrepreneurs were endowed with authority in the new media sector by virtue of being industry "veterans" or by exhibiting high business achievements. These characteristics placed moral entrepreneurs at a high position in the hierarchy of credibility. I suggest that their position granted them privilege over defining the situation of socialising. In his earlier

works, Goffman (1959, p. 21) argued that certain people have a privileged position in the division of *definitional labour*. I argue that their role is central in defining the *institutional role frame,* which according to Diehl and McFarland (2010, p. 1721), is the answer to the question "what is going on here?". Moral entrepreneurs, through occupying central positions in the local community, would affect many new media workers' understanding of socialising by providing a scheme of interpretation, a *primary framework*, namely that peers should be in contact and support each other. In that way, moral entrepreneurs socialised other new media practitioners into the logic of the local new media field.

The role of moral entrepreneurs was important in one particular way. As explained earlier, networking has not been an element specific to the new media logic. It has rather been a central element of the new spirit of capitalism in general. In this sense, networking could be assumed to constitute part of (everyone's) *habitus* regardless of the logic of the particular field in question, that is, the new media field. The practice of networking – that is, socialising to pursue material goals – would come naturally to new media workers, making the role of moral entrepreneurs obsolete. However, as demonstrated earlier, the meaning of socialising was imbued with the idea of peer support and camaraderie. My participants interpreted their practices as manifestations of peer support, not merely instrumental interactions. As such, a person who would appear to be strictly instrumental would not be granted access to the local community. Demonstrating selfless behaviour could potentially grant someone access to the local new media scene. Knowledge-sharing behaviour could either break (if it was selfish) or institutionalise (if it was selfless) social relationships.[20] In a scene which defined itself as cooperative, sharing knowledge and demonstrating that this practice was serving the purpose of peer support was a way of proving that one was worthy of being part of the scene and, subsequently, of the benefits associated with this membership. Moral entrepreneurs, who cared about helping people in the local new media sector in succeeding, stressed that networking was done in the spirit of *peer support*. It was not incidental that the Farm suggested the use of the word *help* in business-speak. By doing

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[20] Given the high levels of connectedness in Brighton's new media community, failing to demonstrate that one espouses the values of the community could potentially have broad consequences. Reputation dynamics is the usual explanation championed by economists when explaining the informal dynamics of industrial clusters (Dahl and Pedersen, 2003; Howels, 2002). In the case of Brighton, the network potentially posed a threat to newcomers in the scene. If one acted selfishly in one occasion she could gain a bad reputation which would proliferate within the network.

so, moral entrepreneurs would fill in a potential void in the web of meanings constitutive of the local phenomenon of peer socialising.

Although moral entrepreneurs had the power of framing work and socialising in Brighton, not all my participants were necessarily affected by the rhetoric of moral entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the latter had objectively ample opportunities to influence local practitioners. As demonstrated earlier, several of my participants learned about the local new media scene through networking events organised by Wired Sussex and others worked in CWOs run by moral entrepreneurs. It could be argued that moral entrepreneurs are more likely to affect newcomers to the scene and particularly those who do not seek peer interaction on their own initiative. In that sense, the practice of knowledge sharing would prove crucial for someone who was making her way into the local new media scene.

For a "noob", sharing knowledge might reflect the quest for recognition or a desire to help her or his peers, but more crucially it also reflects a practice responsible for determining if one would be welcome in a scene which defines itself as cooperative. The role of moral entrepreneurs, who have a good understanding of how the scene interprets its practices (*i.e.* not as showing off or as instrumental in the context of functional interdependence but rather as a sign of camaraderie), was to *distil the knowledge of the scene into practical tips* for new media practitioners. In this case, the practical tip consisted in that if one wants to benefit from being part of the scene, one had to demonstrate that they rightfully belong to the scene by sharing knowledge and appearing selfless. The cultural capital required to access the local new media scene was both new media skills and anti-corporate social skills. The use of this piece of advice merely as 'a means to other ends', namely, accessing the local community, would make the practitioner in question a 'cynical' performer (Goffman, 1959, p. 28). On the one hand, none of my participants' accounts suggested that their altruistic peer interaction practices were insincere. Altruistic motives just happened to coincide with various personal benefits. On the other hand, it could be said that altruistic motives have been appropriated by market imperatives, and so appear cynical, even though to the actors themselves, they felt sincere. Most of my participants had been working in Brighton's new media industry for a long time. In that sense, new media practitioners' ethical rhetoric potentially reflected their successful socialisation into the logic of the new

media field or, as Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) would put it, the embodiment of the local new media culture, endowing them with a prediscursive comprehension of its logic. In the local new media logic, personal benefit and communal benefit have been fused together, making the distinction between sincere and cynical behaviour difficult.

### 6.5.4. The social construction of new media sociality

As demonstrated earlier, a variety of meanings which reflected experiences embodied in the *habitus* informed my participants' practices. For one participant, socialising and sharing knowledge with her peers was a practice consistent with past practices in the university, so their logic was incorporated into her *habitus*, it came naturally to her. For another participant, it was a practice that he had embodied during his first job as a designer in London. Moreover, we cannot ignore the evidence suggesting that socialising provided opportunities for people to demonstrate that they were knowledgeable and to gain recognition. However, more evidence presented in this chapter support the argument made in Chapter 5 that the importance of symbolic compensation appeared to be contingent on the specific life-stage – the specific stage of the intersection of fields – in which my participants found themselves. As demonstrated, Martha identified her son as her priority and George argued that being a good web designer was one source of identity alongside being a good parent, husband, athlete, and so on. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the female participants with children – who like men identified networking as an important practice for their careers – were those who felt that being a mother constituted an obstacle to networking. This together with what I demonstrated in Chapter 5, regarding the choice of women to cowork and to work part-time, suggests that parenthood is likely to weigh more heavily on women than men, a finding which agrees with existing literature (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010).

Some other participants made sense of socialising in terms of a passion for work. Accordingly, they would socialise to have fun and they would talk about work because work was fun. It has long been noted that part of the culture of occupational and non-occupational programming is to privilege work over the rest of social life (Woodfield, 2000). Mixing work and play has long been identified as a basic characteristic of new media workers (Wittel, 2001; Pratt, 2000). So far, I have put forward several reasons why this could have happened. The social construction of work and play as distinct

spheres of social life was a project of modernity (Urry, 1990). It also resonates with the capitalist project of rationalisation of work, a project which has the tendency of rendering work alienating and, hence, not something to be pursued outside of formal working hours. This does not, however, rule out that certain types of work can be fulfilling and, thereby, be pursued as a leisure activity. As presented in the previous chapter, intrinsic rewards from new media work should not be discarded. In that sense, socialising with peers outside of work could represent a leisure activity which, at the same time, provided the opportunity to continue the desired preoccupation with work (see Parker, 1983). Indeed the possibility that my participants were passionate about their work is high. Nevertheless, we should not ignore the symbolic value of demonstrating passion for work and showing one's skills.

Peer interaction also carried the meaning of networking which is a pervasive idea in contemporary capitalist societies. In Brighton, industry associations were the main channels through which networking was promoted. Furthermore, networking with an altruistic spin was promoted by moral entrepreneurs. The frame provided by moral entrepreneurs was not created by them. It was a frame deducted from their experience in the new media field in Brighton. Networking constituted the appropriate strategy for improving one's position within the industry and helping their peers do the same. I demonstrated that most people viewed the exposure to the local new media community through belonging to the local new media social network as an opportunity and, in that sense, viewed the reputation mechanism as something of which they could take advantage. Von Hippel (2005) demonstrated that inventors may have good reasons to reveal their innovation even if it ends up being imitated by others. He explains that under certain conditions revealing one's innovation will grant this individual status within the respective epistemic community. A similar principle seemed to be at work with some new media workers in Brighton. They seemed to be aware of local social networks within which they could cash-in on reputation by revealing ideas that could not be readily commercialised. If someone had come to a breakthrough but not to the point that they could earn economic compensation from it they were likely to reveal it and gain symbolic compensation instead. In the case of Roger, who experimented with a novel technology in mobile applications development, the desire to improve his position in the field was apparent. He was engaged in research that was new so it was not established yet. In that sense, his position in the field of new media was a rather

disempowered one, because publishing companies were not interested in his work. The only way for him to improve his position was by sharing knowledge on what he was doing, create a "buzz" around his name and work and, hopefully, establish his niche area. In this case, symbolic capital (gaining recognition by demonstrating one's skills) served the purpose of improving his material (economic) position in the sector. However, it would be wrong to ignore the possible embodiment of moral values, the belief that helping one's peers was inherently good. As I discuss in Chapter 7, evidence of selfless help appeared through observation of practitioners in the workspace which gave credence to my participants' accounts. However, I also argue that the logic of the field which irrevocably linked peer support and personal success should always be kept in mind when trying to make sense of these seemingly altruistic motivations.

Finally, special mention should be made to the logic of the *spaces* within which social interaction took place. Peer support might be the result of some practitioners' tendency to demonstrate their skills. It might also be a practice taught by moral entrepreneurs. However, it can also be interpreted as a practice consistent with the logic of the spaces within which it took place. As Bourdieu (1977, p. 89) pointed out:

> [i]t is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to the mythico-ritual oppositions that one finds the form *par excellence* of the structural apprenticeship which leads in the embodying of the structures of the world.

Within cafeterias and pubs, it was not only the practices to which new media workers were exposed and, like children observing their parents, ended up imitating them, but also the spaces themselves. Cafeterias and pubs are places we tend to go with our friends to socialise. To quote Scott (2009, p. 109), '[d]rinking together is a bonding activity'. The spaces themselves are structured according to the logic of communication and camaraderie. Within a pub or a cafeteria a work-related discussion is bound to be imbued with meanings of friendship. As such, new media workers in pubs and cafeterias were exposed to the logic of practices and the logic of the space which they embodied into their *habitus*.

What stands out as particularly interesting was the consistence between web developers' *habitus* and the logic of the field. By being up-to-date and situated within professional networks, new media "techies" performed their expert self. In that sense, their *habitus* further encouraged peer interaction and knowledge sharing. What can be seen here is a symbiotic relationship between the logic of the field (a need for networking in order to update technology and create new services/products) and the culture of the "techie" (a need for socialising to gain new skills, to be recognised and to get a job),[21] an almost perfect tuning that allows the viability of the sector. It is reminiscent of what Bourdieu (1990, p. 52) calls the dialectic between the *opus operatum* and the *modus operandi*. New media practitioners' actions bring about the desired effect not only onto them but also to the new media field, resulting in the two logics being caught up in a circular process whereby one simultaneously structures and is being structured by the other.

## 6.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I put forward the argument that peer interaction among new media workers in Brighton cannot be reduced to networking and instrumental-rational interaction. The first point to be made is that the conditions present in Brighton, with its high number of practitioners and the high level of social connectedness, were conducive to the materialisation of the practical value of social connectedness which is emphasised in the new spirit of capitalism. In other words, networking in Brighton represented a practice which entailed practical, material benefits. The second point is that networking was, at the same time, presented as a manifestation of altruism, as camaraderie. While this might have reflected the embodiment of moral values and of solidarity, it can also be argued that this specific shade given to networking was effected by Brighton's imagery. Nevertheless, and this is my third point, demonstrating openness and the willingness to support one's peers appeared to be crucial for harnessing the benefits associated with networking. I argue that while openness, manifested as knowledge sharing, would come naturally (as part of the *habitus*) to new media practitioners who were predisposed to share knowledge in order to gain recognition, it would not come natural to others who did not care about recognition or who merely wanted to succeed in

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[21] It could even be suggested that it is imperative for the viability of the new media industry to maintain imperfect labour markets. The lack of formal organisation of the labour market guarantees that new media practitioners have one extra reason to seek socialising which is in turn important for innovation and the viability of the sector.

the industry. Moral entrepreneurs, who were interested in helping practitioners succeed in their endeavours, were endowed with the responsibility to socialise practitioners in the logic of the local new media field and, by doing so, offered them a short-cut to success. Even though my participants ascribed additional meanings to their practices, the logic of peer support and collective benefit were ubiquitous in their understandings of socialising. It should be noted that although the conditions present in Brighton's new media field were conducive to the success of independent practitioners, this was not hostile to the viability of the field overall and the success of companies too. Networking, upgrading of skills and highly qualified workers were crucial to the innovative activities of companies.

In the next chapter, I move on to discuss how these different meanings attached to peer interaction were reflected in the social organisation in one of Brighton's coworking organisations. I demonstrate how the new media logic, with the opportunities it offers and the constraints it imposes on people, as well as people's different aspirations are translated into norms and practices in the coworking environment.

# 7. The social organisation of "cowerking": working and socialising in a coworking organisation

## 7.1. Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I suggested that peer interaction is a complex phenomenon: my participants – new media practitioners who worked in companies, in cafés, at home and in CWOs around Brighton – attached many different meanings to it. The current chapter aims to additionally illustrate the ways in which some of the meanings that my participants communicated were reflected in their habits and rituals within the context of one of Brighton's CWOs. In a sense, I demonstrate these meanings and the logic of the local new media field in their embodied form. By linking meanings and observations and demonstrating how my participants' motivations and the logic that imbued them were translated into practice, I aim to offer a richer picture of new media sociality in Brighton, albeit in the specific context of a CWO. This chapter contributes to a better understanding of new media sociality at the place and in the time it actually unfolded. Moreover, it offers a detailed look into the practices of coworking.

The chapter is organised as follows: I begin with a description of the Werks, the services that were offered, the philosophy of the organisation, the different memberships and the organisation of space. I move on to describe an average day in the workplace and I argue that the ostensibly simple social organisation hides a subtle logic which can be understood by analysing interaction in terms of territorial claims (Goffman, 1971; 1963). I proceed to discuss how different habits with regard to personal space reflected different types of relationships in the workplace. I continue with an exploration of use space preserves. I argue that through the manipulation of use space, sound specifically, members of the organisation learned new skills, got acquainted and networked. I conclude with a discussion of the different meanings associated with coworking. While the social organisation reflected the imperative of business success, through skills-learning, finding clients and building partnerships, coworking also involved the potential of achieving work-life balance and the creation of friendships.

## 7.2. Description of the Werks

### 7.2.1. History and role

The Werks has been described as one of the 10 best coworking spaces in Britain (Cowan, 2010). It was created by two local entrepreneurs in 2007, and it emerged out of consultancy work one of them was doing in various places in the UK. The two entrepreneurs met during a course on creative entrepreneurship that one of them was delivering at the University of Sussex. There were three "Werkspaces" in Brighton at the time of my fieldwork. The first one, Coachwerks, was located in the North Laine and was designed for the accommodation of artists. The second one, Westwerks, was oriented towards people working in social enterprise. The Werks was the headquarters and mainly accommodated freelancers and small companies working on web and mobile development. The Werks and Skiff, the other CWO in Brighton, provided their respective members with the opportunity to work at either venue, an arrangement they had termed *roaming co-working*.

### 7.2.2. Services and organisation of space

Among the services that the Werks provided included open plan desk-spaces (for casual coworkers), personal desks (membership for more regular coworkers) and self-contained units (for people who wanted a more formal office atmosphere and small companies). During my fieldwork there were 70 people working on and off in the Werks, spread out in the three-floor building. Twenty-four of them were casual coworkers (*i.e.* open plan desk space) and 46 rented workspace (*i.e.* personal desks and self-contained units). Most of them worked in web development, some in mobile applications development, web consultation and management and, finally, a few belonged to other industries (*e.g.* financial sector, a music industry, journalism). Open plan desk spaces were located on the first floor. Casual coworkers (*i.e.* members who used open plan desk – coworking – space) brought their own laptops and settled, on a first come-first serve basis, on any of two large oval tables which they shared with other members. The two large coworking tables were big enough to accommodate six-to-seven people. These tables were located closer to the entrance, right after a small lobby which had two small sofas and a coffee table. Six single-person desks were also

available in the same space, located at the back of the room. Most of the single-person desks were used exclusively by people who paid a higher fee and tended to be more devoted Werks users. On the same floor, a separate small room could be found closer to the entrance, which was occupied by a graphic design one-person company. The administrative assistant of the Werks used a desk among the coworkers. The second floor consisted of three separate rooms. One of these rooms was the headquarters of a small web development company owned by three-four people. The other room was occupied by five web developers and designers who worked together, on and off, on various projects. The third room was not being used in the beginning of my fieldwork, but was later occupied by a small group of people who met in the building and started working on projects together. The third floor was occupied by freelancers who rented desk space, most of whom worked in mobile applications development. The ground floor had a kitchen, a dining area, two meeting rooms and an office space used by one of the founders of the Werks. This was also the place where various events in the Werks would take place. One of the members was offering yoga lessons there to other *werkers* (Werks members) every Wednesday morning. The management had plans about transforming this space into a proper cafeteria so that people could spend more time there. I chose to focus my observation on the open plan desk-space at the first floor and the office spaces at the second floor.[22]

## 7.2.3. Membership

The formal organisation of the Werks was relatively straightforward. As anticipated the Werks employed a hands-off approach with regard to formal rules which governed members' relations. There were different membership levels and respective price ranges. "The regular Joe" was the cheapest coworking option (£77 per month) and included use of coworking space for up to three days per week, from nine to six. "The non-conformist" was the second cheapest option (£112 per month) and included use of coworking space for four days per week, with 24 hour access to the building. Prices were higher for those who rented desk space (£175-£210 per month) or office space (£300 per month). However, the enforcement of the rules associated with some of these

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[22] The rationale behind this decision was that spreading my time to all three floors would be counter-productive as the third floor was much less occupied than the other two floors. An outlay of the first and second floor can be found in Appendix 6.

membership levels was almost non-existent in practice. I met people who paid to use coworking space up to three times per week, but actually they often spent four or even five days per week in the office. Others who paid for space at the coworking tables would use on occasion the more expensive desk space. The organisation was managed by the two founders and one administrative assistant who dealt with standard running costs, publicising, events, and other business (in the beginning of my fieldwork there were two administrative officers). Responsibility regarding decisions over the interior design, development of new spaces (*e.g.* a cafeteria), purchase of new desks, and so on, which was bound to affect interpersonal relations, lay with the founders. Members posted their suggestions on how to improve the Werks on a board near the main entrance. These suggestions were taken into account by the founders, who often took action.

## 7.2.4. The philosophy of the Werks

I have identified one of the founders of the Werks, Robert, as a moral entrepreneur in Chapter 6; he was a prolific figure in the local new media sector who was interested in helping independent new media practitioners and small entrepreneurs to succeed in the industry. As described in Chapter 6, the business model he communicated to new media practitioners through teaching, through his involvement in local new media organisations and, of course, through the Werks, was one that emphasised peer interaction, peer support and collaboration. This "philosophy" was in line with the ideas of the international coworking movement (DeGuzman and Tang, 2011; Leforestier, 2009; Citizen Space, no date). Although in Chapter 6 I argued that anyone could take up the role of moral entrepreneur, by communicating tips that encapsulated the logic of the field and, thereby, allowing practitioners to take advantage of the resources found in the local new media scene, the founders of the Werks were an exceptional type of moral entrepreneurs. They were proper crusaders who would take their activities one step further to pursue their task, through the creation of coworking organisations. As one of the founders claimed, the Werks was not a profitable organisation and was not meant to be one. The aim was to strengthen the local new media community. However, the founders were not necessarily involved in mentoring those who worked in the organisation. As one of the founders argued, they did help those who explicitly asked for help, but the idea was older members to take up the role of mentor and start helping

each other. The fact that Werks members could use the Skiff and vice versa showed that their idea of a community was one that was inclusive, not only concerned with the promotion of the interests of their own-members. In the words of Putnam and Goss (2002, p. 11) it was *outward-looking* rather than *inward-looking* social capital.

## 7.3. An average coworking day

My fieldwork observations indicated a significant degree of routinisation with regard to the organisation of time. More precisely, freelance work in the Werks appeared to be organised along the lines of employed company work. The formal opening hours were from 9:00 to 18:00, and most members would arrive at work between 9:00-9:30. On average there were 11 people in the coworking room out of which on average three were women. The beginning of the day involved casual chat about the weather, cycling to work, their tasks for the specific day, offering each other coffee and tea, and so on. Certain members' habits during the early hours would affect the general sociability in the coworking space. For example, Bill and David were two of the most talkative members and many of the early morning conversations were initiated by them. Members who worked jointly on some project would usually discuss the plan for the day with each other. Others refrained from talking with anyone and would instead start work straight away. Between 10:00-12:00 most people would be working and would occasionally talk to each other. Most people would take their lunch later on in the day, between 12:30-14:00, and almost all of them would leave their desks for lunch. Some either ate outside or would buy some food and return to the kitchen at the ground floor to have lunch alone or with other Werks members. Others members would carry their own home-made meal. Many werkers tended to adjust their lunch break according to what their friends in the organisation wanted to do. The people who usually made plans to have lunch together were those who worked together in the office space. Nevertheless, some people would either skip lunch or take it at a different time during the day. After lunch, the office was usually very quiet. People would have tea and continue working, usually with less interaction, until 17:00-18:00 when they would return home. By that time the office was almost completely empty, although a few werkers who had a key were sometimes staying until 19:00-19:30.

On first appearance, interaction in the workspace was very limited. The most common supportive interchange (Goffman, 1963, p. 63), that happened frequently during the day, was the offering of coffee or tea among people who shared a coworking table. This interchange consisted of two actions: the action of the person offering, carrying and serving coffee for the others and the action of the others taking the time to thank and exchange a few words with that person. Coffee or tea offerings were usually accompanied by one-two minute long conversations. Apart from this particular interchange members would spend most of their time quietly in front of their computer. Silence was frequently broken by telephone calls of members talking to clients or business partners. In rare occasions members would seek help from their peers, usually in business related rather than technical issues. However, as I demonstrate in the sections that follow, more careful observation revealed more subtle forms of organisation and social interaction among the members of the organisation.

In the office located at the second floor of the building, interaction was slightly different. The people occupying the office space, in which I spent some time, were business partners, working on and off on common projects. Each person had their own desk and worked with their backs turned to each other. Work never went on uninterrupted for long periods of time. Random discussions happened very often. These discussions rarely had to do with work. They were almost exclusively concerned with non-work related topics, such as cinema, music and food. One would usually turn around on their chair and start saying something to the rest of the people, who would usually respond directly by turning around as well. These discussions were always lively and light-hearted and people were always eager to participate. One of the people in the office usually put on music to which everyone in the office listened and on which they often commented. Most of the times they took their lunch break together. These lunch breaks were relatively lengthy (half-an hour long) and usually took place on the basement floor where the kitchen was. Sometimes they brought food and ate in the sitting area joined by other werkers. Overall, people working in the office never showed signs of tiredness or stress. Instead they were laughing, exchanging jokes, teasing each other and interrupting each other's work for reasons unrelated to work. Supportive interchanges similar to the ones found in the workspace, such as offering tea, coffee or buying something from a nearby convenience store, were frequent.

## 7.4. Personal space claims and violations

In a CWO like the Werks, one would expect that territorial demands to make way for other concerns such as the objective to come closer and interact with one's coworkers. However, as I demonstrate in more detail later on, coworking meant different things to different members. Some members looked for work, others wanted to get away from home and achieve work-life balance, others wanted to meet people. Accordingly, members of the organisation demonstrated varying degrees of acceptance regarding conventional rules of territoriality and these practices reflect varying configurations of personal circumstances.

Ten out of the 14 more frequent coworkers always chose to sit on the same spot. Others also preferred to work around a particular table but occasionally sat somewhere else. Two of those who occasionally changed table usually chose one of the single-person desks, when available, or the less populated coworking table each time. Certain co-workers, like Geezer, Tony and Ariadna, preferred to use the single-person desks when available. When these three people were absent single person desks were almost always vacant. People sitting at the single-person desks usually never interacted with other people. Moreover, some of their personal possessions were left on their desk when they were not present. In that sense, books, notes and mugs functioned as markers of personal space (Goffman, 1971, p. 41). Ariadna had her books carefully placed on the left side of the desk, her coffee-mug and some notes. Tony had his coffee mug and notes and correspondence scattered around on his desk. When a person's usual spot was taken by another person then the former usually chose a seat nearby. Newcomers would often accidentally sit on the spot of one of the older coworkers when the former arrived early in the morning. When these minor breaks to the routine occurred the older coworkers would pick the closest spot available on the same table.

Most coworkers would usually reserve a big enough space for their laptops and a coffee mug. Sometimes people placed books that had titles such as, "Javascript", "HTML" or "Linux Programming", behind their laptops, although they never seemed to actually use them.

Variations regarding peoples' seemingly respectful or offensive behaviour towards others' preserves were indicative of different types of relationships. These behaviours constituted what Goffman (1971, p. 89) called *tie-signs*; signs indicative of an anchored relationship among those involved. The majority of anchored relationships (Goffman, 1971, p. 189) within the Werks were either work/collaborative relationships, or had originated in collaborative relationships. Such anchored relationships were evident in the dyads that people came, the mutual encroachment of personal space, the frequent conversations and the sharing of lunch-time and other breaks. In most cases where people exchanged more than just a simple "hi" or "see you", it meant that people worked together on a project. In some cases, for example, people sat very close to each other, even in cases where there was a lot of space to go around, yet this behaviour was not followed by actions which would indicate a personal space intrusion. Moreover, the people involved often looked at others' computer monitors, actions which again were not interpreted as an information preserve violation. These tie-signs predominantly indicated business relationships (partnerships) among members in the organisation who had a history of collaborating and who would likely repeat such collaboration in the near future.

## 7.5. Use space claims and violations

The organisation of use space – that is, many people who shared the same space – rendered violations related to sound likely to occur. Violations related to sound represent *use space* rather than *personal space* violations because the former is associated with instrumental needs, such as one's need to be concentrated in order to work. As Goffman (1971, p. 35) has argued, 'circumstances can allow the individual to offer instrumental grounds for demanding limits on the level of noise and sound'. Often people talked to each other, or talked on their phones to clients without leaving their desks. Leaving one's desk was, of course, difficult when people talked over Skype or a similar voice-over-internet software application. It is interesting to note how on the first day of my fieldwork in the Werks I was surprised by what I thought was a clear encroachment of use space. Within the first five minutes of my arrival in the office, two administrative assistants and a werker started talking loudly and laughing. While this was taking place I looked around the room and I noticed that nobody seemed to care. One of the first notes on my notebook reads: 'I cannot believe that people keep a

straight face'. Throughout my fieldwork, I did not perceive any kind of reaction to noise by other coworkers apart from rare occasions when many people would speak loudly, which is something on which I will elaborate later on. As I demonstrate in the remainder of this section, what on first appearance seemed to constitute use space violations served various instrumental purposes in the coworking environment.

## 7.5.1. Use space violations and networking

The most common way of finding out about what others worked on was through eavesdropping. By talking about one's business activities people around would get an idea of one's skills. Accordingly, talking about one's business activities was important in order to be considered for a job or recommendation. Such rules got communicated among members of the organisation. In the occasion I presented earlier (when Rick's friend came to visit the Werks) Rick explained the unwritten rules of *networking* to a newcomer. He first explained how the coworking space was better for networking. He then told him that he needed to introduce himself to people and ask them what they do and that he had to be available if someone needed help, because that way he would get jobs. He also told him that even if he did not want to play the 'sociable game', he would start picking up what everybody did just by spending time in the office. In this sense, talking out loud on the phone in the presence of others could work as a strategy to inform others what one did. People often talked on the phone with clients or business partners and at other times they talked with each other about their projects in the office. Although in some cases members, would consistently leave their desks and go to the waiting area when speaking on their phone, in most cases they would remain at their desks. Werkers were aware of this indirect form of communication and were attentive of their colleagues' phone- and other private discussions. Hence, talking on the phone while being among their peers could also work as an intentional method for advertising one's skills and services. Working at a place like the Werks, in that sense, allowed the transformation of what Goffman (1963, p. 91) calls 'partly focused gatherings' (*i.e.* gatherings where some of the people present in a situation are excluded from the encounter) into 'fully focused gatherings' (*i.e.* interaction in which everyone is engaged in the encounter), due to spatial proximity and the shared stakes and interests of people occupying the room. Not only everyone listened when two people had a conversation, but also the two people engaged in the conversation expected others to listen to them.

When one talked others would take note and when others took note one would talk. Vacuum periods (Brooks Gardner, 1990, p. 315), namely periods of no direct or indirect communication among those present at the workplace, were possible only when everybody was silent.

### 7.5.2. Use space violations as opportunities for learning

Eavesdropping was not important just for finding out with what people were preoccupied, but also for learning business practices and skills. Numerous opportunities appeared for indirect and unplanned help and knowledge sharing in the Werks. Usually people engaged in casual conversation or asked for non-technical information. The latter included advice on how to deal with clients, write CVs, which accounting company to use, and so forth. Out of the numerous conversations that I recorded over my stay at the Werks, only a few were concerned with technical issues. More dealt with non-technical work related issues. Most discussions, however, dealt with casual non-work related issues. Two members mentioned that they had indirectly learned from others in the Werks some of the most valuable things related to their job. Just by listening to them talking with each other, they learned practices such as how to manage a project, how to negotiate hours and financial issues with clients. Joan mentioned that when she first started working at the Werks she became friends with another coworker, Marline, who used to sit at a desk across from her. Marline would often talk on the phone with her clients and Joan picked up many tips on what kind of language to use with clients and how to negotiate with them.

Other observations suggested that learning could occur by hearing and observing other members engaged in problem-solving activities. An example of this was when in one occasion Monica asked Alex to help her out with a technical problem she had. Alex's table mate who sat nearby, Lars, soon joined in. Lars and Alex gathered around Monica's computer monitor. Alex was making a series of suggestions and Monica was either replying that she had already tried some of them or applying the ones she had not tried out. The situation lasted about 45 minutes. During the first 30 minutes Lars was standing silent without contributing anything to the conversation. Near the end he addressed Monica but instead of Monica using what he told her she moved away from her computer for the first time since the conversation had started and begun a more

face-to-face conversation. This whole process could more accurately be interpreted as Monica mentoring Lars, rather than him providing help to Monica.

### 7.5.3. Use space violations as opportunities for getting acquainted

Despite the high likelihood of use space violations, the coworking space was very quiet for most of the time. The only instances when silence was disrupted was whenever someone spoke on the phone or online to a client, whenever someone offered coffee to someone, or when someone asked for help. The engagement of more than two people in a relatively vibrant discussion had usually immediate implications for the rest of the office. The realisation of this phenomenon occurred after noticing that although silence usually prevailed, there were also moments of relative chaos in the office. In these moments almost everyone in the office spoke with each other. These occasions lasted only a few seconds or at most a couple of minutes. The following example demonstrates how these situations used to develop.

During one of my visits at the Werks the office was generally quiet although the coworking table on the right was fully occupied and some coworkers sat on desks and on the coworking table to the left. At the right table Laurel was sitting next to Kate. Kate was relatively new in the office and had not been introduced with Laurel. Ruth and Dora started to talk but they soon got up and went to sit in the waiting area. At that point David walked in the office and said hi to everyone. David was probably the most sociable person in the office. He always spent some time to engage in small talk with people in different tables and desks. He stopped by Jade's desk on the back of the office and said 'hi'. Then he exclaimed 'wow' while looking at her monitor and they started talking relatively loudly about an illustration program she was using. The catalyst, however, was a person I had never seen before who walked in and started talking with Guillaume, sitting at the coworking desk on the right, as loudly as David. About a minute after this discussion started, Kate and Laurel looked at each other and Kate made a remark about the noise. She then moved away from her laptop and introduced herself to Laurel. They shook hands and they started talking about what they work on. At this point almost everyone in the office was talking to each other. After a few minutes people started withdrawing from their conversations and soon silence prevailed again.

In this specific occasion, the engagement of a few people in discussion lightened the atmosphere, making the ground ripe for discussion among others. After this event took place, I got the chance to talk to Kate and asked her what made her talk to Laurel. At the beginning Kate was not sure about which occasion I talked, so I had to describe to her my interpretation of the situation as a "noisy" one. She then argued that it is generally easier to start a conversation when there is noise around. People who may want to engage in conversation may abstain from it because they do not want to distract others from their work and may, instead, find an opportunity when there already is noise. In the situation I described, the mutually felt encroachment of use space served as an opportunity to start a conversation not only in order for them to express their discontent with others, but also because there was one less type of preserve to be worried about (because there already was noise) in case the other person did not want to engage in conversation. The Werks members in question in such occasions usually engaged in eye contact, which represented a strong guarantee with regard to the mutual desirability of interaction (Goffman, 1963, p. 91-95).

However, similar situations could have also constituted remedial interchanges. The term remedial interchange refer to rituals that aims to remedy a violation among two parties (Goffman, 1971, p. 64). In this case, noise disruptions in the Werks could be understood to operate as follows: the first party would consist of those who made noise and violated others' use space. The others would communicate their discontent by doing the same thing, that is, speaking out loud. The violators would notice that there was chaos in the office, although they would not necessarily think that they were the ones who started it. In any case they would feel partially responsible and even partially intrusive – in which case the action of the violated would be seen as the tactic of obtrusion (Goffman, 1971, pp. 50-51) – and would stop what they were doing. Maybe the reason why these phenomena were short-lived was that those responsible for them realised that work was unsustainable in such an environment. In that sense, a *noisy public order* was undesirable.

## 7.6. Limiting one's information preserve as a practice of networking

As demonstrated earlier, werkers would find out information about their colleagues through listening to their conversations and their phone discussions. This type of

information was important for werkers who looked for prospective clients, business partners and, even, mentors. Moreover, after Rick's advice to the newcomer, one should strive to communicate their skills and interests among the members of the organisation in order to be considered for jobs in the future. In that sense, giving out personal business-related information was an essential part of networking.

Additionally, evidence suggested that asking directly for personal business-related information was not considered information preserve violation. Discussions among the unacquainted, such as the one that follows, support these claims about the limited information preserve of new media workers. Donna was new at the Werks and she would come almost every day. She would always sit on the coworking table on the left which happened to be the least populated one, thus her chances of starting up a conversation were limited. However, one day David came in, sat down close to her, introduced himself and told her about how good the weather was. Donna replied that it was indeed lovely and then, following a short pause, said, 'let me ask you, what kind of work do you do?' David started explaining that he was a back-end developer and that he enjoyed his job a lot. He went into more detail and she listened without talking. After he finished talking she said 'that's very cool, thank you', to which David replied 'you are welcome', and the discussion ended there. In this situation, David assumed the role of the *opening person* – a person with 'a built-in license to accost others' (Goffman, 1963, p. 129) -  by virtue of his role in the office as the "chatty guy", the guy who chats with everyone. Donna, on the other hand, found herself exposed (ibid., p. 126) because her body language, the (seemingly) unguided aspects of her conduct (Goffman, 1959, p. 20), suggested that she was in an awkward position (*i.e.* sitting by herself at a coworking table, occupying a small space and not talking to anyone). Once the right to engage in conversation has been extended to Donna, she took full advantage of it by asking a series of business-related questions not necessarily suggestive of a dialogue between two random people who met for the first time. The almost mechanical conversation between Donna, a newcomer, and David, which resembled a job interview suggested that networking norms, whereby social relations are perceived as business relationships, predominated in such a setting and straight-to-the-point questions were accepted in casual conversation. Asking abruptly a question like 'what kind of work do you do?' was both legitimate for Donna to make and acceptable for David to answer in detail. The instrumentality in this case was evident not only in the practice of asking

work-related questions, which served the purpose of limiting asymmetrical information about each other, but also in the absence of supplementing casual dialogue after the primary aim had been accomplished. This display said something about the logic of the new media field and the organisation in question, regarding people's limited information preserve (Goffman, 1971) in the case of business related information. Even people who just met for the first time had the right to ask detailed questions regarding the other person's business endeavours.

## 7.7. The different meanings of coworking

The social organisation of co-presence at the Werks reflected some of the meanings described in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6. As demonstrated so far in the current chapter, the various interactions among members of the organisation tended to serve the purpose of networking, skill upgrading or getting acquainted. Although networking and learning were indeed central concerns at the Werks, they were not the only ones. Multiple social realities (Goffman, 1963) – people with different ideas, concerns and priorities – coexisted in the Werks. In many cases, networking and learning concerns constituted the space where these multiple social realities overlapped. However, other meanings associated with coworking and which often underlay interaction, such as the pursuit of work-life balance, friendship and solidarity, should be taken into consideration here.

### 7.7.1. Business success and peer support

Socialising with business partners, limited information preserves, as well as the manipulation of use space preserves reflected the need for interaction, cooperation and upgrading of skills. These findings support the idea that in some cases, socialising among peers translated to networking; a strategic move in order to secure work (Wittel, 2001; Pratt, 2000; for creative industries in general see Blair, 2009; Randle and Culkin, 2009; Eikhoff and Haunschild, 2006). Bill was among the participants I presented in Chapter 6, who talked about openness and peer support as things that take place among people who have similar values. Bill was generally ideologically opposed to the power of big corporations and people who put business before human relationships. The reason that Bill offered for becoming member of the Werks reflected Brighton's new media

logic. In particular, he identified the sense of *camaraderie* found in the organisation as a type of business resource, by claiming that his 'main aim was to work in a friendly environment and tap into the sense of camaraderie' (Bill, Freelance web developer). He went on to say that members quickly realised the personal benefits of this approach; the fact that people who follow this approach can flourish (in a business sense). This suggests that for some werkers camaraderie could constitute a performance that allowed them to access the organisation's resources, in terms of social and cultural capital.[23] Indeed most people in the organisation were more concerned with securing work and finding business partners. These concerns were also reflected in that since many werkers' business partnerships, *clientèle* and learning needs were fulfilled in the Werks, they were less enthusiastic participants in the broader new media scene. People who were business partners were also those who would hang out with each other outside the working place.

Most of those people argued that they had eventually met their career expectations. Careers were likely to be positively affected through the various processes I have mentioned throughout this chapter, some of which have already been illustrated in the existing literature (Spinuzzi, 2012; DeGuzman and Tang, 2011). Apart from knowledge sharing and informal help, people looking for business partners to work together on different projects tended to look for them at the Werks rather than somewhere else around Brighton. There were two reasons for this. The first one had to do with cost effectiveness and specifically with minimising monitoring and recruitment costs. A variety of skills could be found at the Werks which was readily communicated through gossip and direct interaction. The second reason was related to the endogeneity of projects. This means that people would often create projects on the basis of skills that were available in the building.

Some of the business-related benefits of working at the Werks took the form of resistance to market logic. For instance, David hoped that by joining the Werks he would manage to outflank an institutionalised stage of contemporary employment,

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[23] In that sense, it could also be argued that on the one hand, members of the organisation would undergo a process of personal reconstruction, namely performing as friendly and altruistic in line with the culture of the organisation. On the other hand, and following the example of Rick who offered advice to newcomers on how to act, members of the organisation would also drive the process of reconstruction, a phenomenon reminiscent of Scott's (2011, p. 39) discussion on Reinventive Institutions.

namely doing an unpaid internship in some company. Even though David did not formally do any unpaid work he did get involved in an open source project with another member of the organisation, for which he worked for free. At the same time he argued that working on open-source projects gives you market credibility and proves to your peers that you are open to sharing and helping others, which grants one access to a rich pool of resources. In that sense, following Andrejevic (2011), open source work can be seen as both a separation and an affordance; a form of appropriation of one's skills and, at the same time, an opportunity to improve one's employability.

Finally, while business opportunities were present at the Werks, success was also dependent on other personal circumstances. Uncertainty, anxiety, exhausting work schedules and 'bulimic careers' (Gill, 2010; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Pratt, 2000, p. 432) were dependent on personal circumstances, such as having a family or not. For example, Perry, one of the people working in the office space told me that he was still searching for a way to live comfortably without having to work a lot. He confessed that web development can be stressful for someone like him who had a family, because it involved uncertainty and a constant effort to secure the next project. For Joan who also had a family, making ends meet was also challenging. Nevertheless, she also hinted on the difference between being a beginner and having established oneself in the industry. On the contrary, the werkers I talked to, like David, Erin and others who did not have families but instead were living with their partners, were far less stressed and far more satisfied with their careers. A lifestyle of precarious employment could be more easily tolerated by people with no family responsibilities. Moreover, even though some of these concerns existed, they did not necessarily preclude opportunities for relaxed work in a friendly environment of support and fun.

## 7.7.2. Work-life balance

Some people who chose to cowork had additional to securing work reasons for doing so, such as work-life balance or social support. During formal and informal discussions, some members of the organisation used explicitly the term work-life balance as the main reason for starting to work at the Werks. One of my participants mentioned that before she joined the Werks she had reached a point where she was coming out of the shower and had to answer the phone and speak to clients and that this situation was no

longer desirable. In that case, the much sought after separation between work and life was explained in terms of a belief that work should not interfere with other aspects of life. Another participant mentioned that he was sharing a small flat with his girlfriend and that he was looking for a chance to escape from home. This is somewhat reminiscent of Hochschild's (1997) finding that people may sometimes choose excessive working hours over the stress and tedium of family life.

For another participant, maintaining a nine-to-five routine reflected negotiations among partners/parents on how to manage work and family obligations. Joan (Front End Developer) – whose account arguing in favour of supporting people who shared similar values with her I also discussed in the previous chapter – was the mother of two kids and had a partner and mentioned the need to achieve a healthy work/life balance. As a parent who was freelancing and hence was not required to be working outside of the house, she ended up bearing all the parenting responsibilities. Thus, coworking offered a solution to a more fair allocation of responsibilities among partners. Although work-life balance has been criticised as a discourse produced by the UK government which places the responsibility for the incapacity to tackle excessive working hours on the individual (Walker and Fincham, 2011), in the case of Joan it was appropriated to represent a certain form of resistance to the gendering of familial responsibilities.

Other evidence suggested that the environment of the Werks provided social support. Joan was the only participant who mentioned the social support aspect. (As demonstrated in earlier chapters, women participants were those who appeared to make work-related sacrifices for their children.) This is reminiscent of Ibarra's (1992) observation that women were more likely to use their networks for social support while men were more interested in promoting their careers. Joan said that the Werks was an open, friendly place which supported her choice to work as a freelancer and embraced her and her family. She mentioned how important it was that several people, both at the management and members, had families and could understand what is like to work as a freelancer and have kids and empathised with that.

### 7.7.3. Networking *vs.* serious work

Some people attached different meanings to the practice of coworking. For Rick, who worked in one of the offices, the type of coworking done by Joan or Bill did not represent serious work. For him, serious work was having partners whom you have established over time and do not "shop around" for new partners. Networking without having stable partners was ascribed the meaning of non-serious work. This distinction became apparent for the first time when Rick showed one of his acquaintances around the Werks. The latter came in to visit for the first time. He arrived while people in the office had gathered around to have lunch. Rick asked him in front of the others if he was more interested in networking or in serious work in the Werks, to which the latter replied, after some hesitation, that he was more interested in networking. Then Rick told him that when it comes to networking the best thing he could do was to rent a coworking space downstairs, because up there in the offices they were 'more serious' about work. When I spoke to Rick later on he argued that 'people upstairs [third floor] do not cooperate with each other at all. At the first floor, ok maybe sometimes, but still not so much collaboration as here [second floor], both informally and formally'. According to Rick the long-term and frequent collaboration that was taking place in his office reflects serious work. The diacritic factor consisted in the supposed tendency of people downstairs to be shopping around and, hence, being perceived as less "loyal" and of people in the offices to be more settled with their business partners. Instead of having said that some members in the organisation did serious work while others networked, he claimed that themselves in the offices (self-contained units at the second floor of the Werks) did serious work and others downstairs (coworking space) networked. In that sense, serious work as distinct from networking was also being mediated by the membership status of the different werkers.

### 7.7.4. Negotiating the meanings of coworking

Moreover, it became apparent that the ideas of *camaraderie* and hostility towards the corporate world that Bill communicated, became negotiated through interaction at the Werks. On a different occasion, Bill argued that the Werks crowd was characterised by an anti-corporate ethos. During the Werks' Christmas party he introduced me to another coworker, the investment broker, and joked about the fact that 'he is not one of us'.

Throughout my fieldwork it became apparent that Bill and that person were in very good terms in the workspace, spending a lot of time talking, joking, and so on. When I asked Bill later on that he meant by 'not one of us' he explained that the other coworker was involved in a profession that he did not respect and which did not fit in the philosophy of the Werks. However, he also argued that 'despite that, he is a great guy', pointing towards the negotiation of meanings such as "anti-corporate" through interaction, and that when a person has other positive qualities, things which could otherwise be considered central sub-cultural norms might be overlooked.

## 7.7.5. Friendships

Finally, specific evidence challenges the more pessimistic accounts of the so called new economy and the purely economistic logic of social relationships (Bauman, 2011; Rifkin, 2000; Sennet, 1998). Even in the cases of participants who appeared to be instrumental about their peer relationships and the reasons they joined the Werks, displays of peer support and altruism were also present. This claim can be illustrated with the example that follows where a job recommendation, which would be commonly regarded as support towards a colleague, could also be something negative. As demonstrated earlier, as well as in the previous chapter, my accounts suggested that through socialising and knowledge-sharing people advertised their services, gained a reputation and got recommendations. People passed on clients sometimes, usually when they were not very qualified to take up a certain job or when they were very busy. Redirecting a client to a more reliable and appropriate person could be perceived as a win-win situation since one person would get some work and the other person would not disappoint a client. Being in a place like the Werks where people had different sets of skills made this process easy. Some jobs were not very attractive in which case it helped if people shared a friendly relationship. In one occasion, Jade approached David and asked him about his workload. David said that it was 'so and so' and Jade asked him if he could 'help' another person from the office with some technical consulting. It should be noted that the use of the word 'help' instead of the words 'do' or 'work' indicates a consistency with the logic of the new media field.[24] Somebody from the

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[24] As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the advice of the Farm is that instead of saying "do" some technical consulting people should say "help" with some technical consulting. Another member of the Werks also happened to use the word help to refer to doing some work for a company. He said that

office had asked Jade to do some consulting for him and Jade had accepted. However, later on she realised that she did not have enough time because of other more important jobs she had undertaken. David was reluctant to accept. However, Jade seemed persistent and David accepted after all. After the incident, when I asked David what the job was about he told me that it was a paid three-hour job. When I asked him if he was dissatisfied with Jade passing this job onto him he explained that although being referred to clients was a good thing, it usually involved the least interesting jobs. He further explained that a job like the one he had eventually accepted would be detrimental to his overall working schedule, because for the benefit of a few hours' worth of work he would have to redirect his attention and lose focus from other, more valuable for him, projects. When I asked him the reason he accepted, he told me that it was because Jade was desperate and he wanted to help her out because he thought she was a nice person.

Phenomena such as this one have often been referred to as the negative side of social capital, in the sense that familial and other obligations may often have negative adverse effects on entrepreneurship rather than the more commonly emphasised supportive role that they play (Egbert, 2009; Molina-Morales and Martinez-Fernandez, 2009). A proponent of rational choice theory could, of course, argue that doing someone a favour is a strategic move, involving the sacrifice of short-term benefit in the interest of building a relationship which can be beneficial in the long-term. In the case I described my participant did not express such concerns. Of course, this does not preclude that the possibility of future benefits was not considered. However, this does not necessarily mean that the consideration qualifies as rational-instrumental. While it could indeed hide rational-instrumental considerations it could also be reflective of a particular interpretation of the new media logic. Such an interpretation would entail the belief that any act of solidarity involves a diffuse reward. In that sense, the action of helping out someone at a personal cost and without an apparent benefit in sight could indicate a logic according to which any display of solidarity implied some personal benefit even if the latter was not readily apparent.

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'even people that are working on the commercial and corporate sector and are honest and want to do a good job for their client, I'm more than happy to *help*' (Bill, Freelance web developer). The fact that werkers use the communicative prescriptions suggested by prolific figures in the local new media community, are indicative of the proliferation of such practices and the existence of a certain logic in the new media field; one that blurs the boundaries between morality and profit, leisure and work.

## 7.8. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I discuss the social organisation of one of Brighton's CWOs. In line with the arguments made in Chapters 5 and 6, business concerns were at the heart of the social organisation of the Werks. Seemingly personal actions, such as talking to the phone, were in fact social because they were mediated by the logic of the new media field. The search for new partnerships and for tips on how to deal with clients demanded from new media practitioners to advertise their services and to keep their ears open for valuable business-related information. The logic of the field permeated the manner in which strangers would become acquainted. Information sharing and the creation of relationships was also a result of being caught up in the inertia of working in a small room with many people, as it became evident in the various unscripted situations that enabled interactions; situations whereby noisy coworkers broke down social barriers to interaction. The variety of skills in the Werks got communicated in the aforementioned ways and as a result new partnerships were built and projects created. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to argue that the Werks sold social interaction and solidarity to people who viewed them as commodities. This, however, neither precludes the existence of practices which were altruistic, nor denies the positive impacts of each person's seemingly instrumental actions on others. As demonstrated, instances of (seemingly) selfless help were also present in the Werks community. While the importance of informal networks in getting a job has often been stressed in the creative industries literature (Randle and Culkin, 2009; Blair, 2009; Eikhoff and Haunschild, 2007; Storey *et al.*, 2005; Christopherson, 2004; Batt *et al.*, 2000; Pratt, 2000), what usually goes unaddressed in these approaches is the role of friendships and that people might agree to take up less satisfying work just in order to help a colleague/friend (or even for other reasons such as love or attraction). People formed friendships which could end up being more important than economic objectives. However, even though there was evidence of displays of selflessness, peer support was very likely to be framed in instrumental terms. This does not mean that selflessness was not part of people's behaviour or the field's logic, but rather that selflessness was likely to be associated with material benefits; the doctrine of the local new media field that being selfless will eventually pay off. Although such behaviour could reflect strategic motives in one case, it could reflect the embodiment of the logic of the field (Bourdieu, 1992) in another

case, where altruism and personal gain are one. In that sense, the Werks presented itself as a *milieu* within which forces such as the functional interdependence among new media practitioners, the quest for recognition, the quest for securing their livelihood and the socialisation of practitioners into the field's logic – taking place within the objective structures provided by the new media field – were concentrated, and regulated everyday interaction.

In the next chapter, I revisit the discussion on the different practices and meanings associated with peer relationships in Brighton's new media sector focusing on how peer interaction affects the career trajectories of my participants. I suggest that peer relationships are central in effecting changes to such trajectories and that these changes can be described in terms of resistance and submission to domination within the new media field.

# 8. Peer relationships and new media careers in Brighton

## 8.1. Introduction

In Chapter 5, I put forward the argument that peer interaction was not merely a necessary component of the new media labour process but also a practice which gave meaning to new media work for those working in technical positions. Practitioners who put high value in their practice would seek opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, not solely because of the intrinsic personal satisfaction it entailed, but also because through such demonstration they could pursue the aspirations inscribed in their *habitus*. It has been argued that peer interaction should not be interpreted as mere networking within a context of precariousness. I further pursued this argument in Chapter 6, where I demonstrated that peer interaction outside of formal working hours hides several different meanings. Although economic-instrumental rationales were ubiquitous in my participants' accounts – reflecting the industry's structural influences on my their practices – there were also ideas relating to recognition, embodied educational practices, as well as peer solidarity. The latter is pertinent in the accounts of my participants. I argued that this is indicative of the – more or less perfect – embodiment of Brighton's new media logic; a logic which combines the doctrines of the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) and the logic of the new media industry with Brighton's bohemian spirit. Peer interaction within Brighton's new media logic presents itself as a practice which can help independent practitioners succeed, as well as the industry overall.

To expand these arguments, in the first part of this chapter I demonstrate in more detail how the conversion of different types of capital affects new media practitioners' careers. Next I move on to describe the different career paths of practitioners in terms of resistance and submission to domination in the new media sector. I conclude that both opportunities for resistance and the threat of submission are present within the various processes of capital conversion that take place among new media workers in Brighton. However, both resistance and submission are ambiguous. In particular, submission appears to be inherent in the pursuit to limit precariousness and to build one's reputation, both of which are outcomes positively evaluated by my participants.

Moreover, resistance – when manifested in the form of freelancing – involves both pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits. However, in order to secure steady income as freelancers, my participants often had to work longer hours, to upgrade their skills, and so forth. These processes were not only imposing a burden on freelancers but also potentially benefited companies that, through casually employing them, harnessed their skills. In this sense, acts of resistance do not necessarily threaten the logic of the field – the new media sector *doxa*. In other cases, they carry the potential for challenging the rules of the new media sector.

## 8.2. Capital conversion and different career paths

Peer interaction can be understood as one cause of the mobility of practitioners within the new media field and, subsequently, society in general. This is because different opportunities emerge and roles shift, whereas place-specific subjectivities are created within the closely woven new media community of Brighton. The conversion of different types of capital, as Bourdieu (1986) described, is central in this process.

As indicated throughout the previous chapters, my participants had relatively high endowments of skills and knowledge. However, all my participants had already been working for several years in the new media industry when my fieldwork took place. There was also evidence to suggest that new media practitioners in the beginning of their careers, albeit having some skills, did not possess a skillset rich and wide enough for them to be recognised within their field. In some cases, participants communicated nervousness, with regard to talking about their interests with their peers, in the beginning of their careers:

> A friend of mine had been to some event and he found out about the BNM list and I posted some questions, kind of nervously I suppose a few years ago. (Nick, UX Developer)

It appears that things learnt at college or university courses ended up being at best insufficient or, at worst, irrelevant by the time my participants started working in the industry. Actual new media practice allows practitioners to put acquired knowledge both in perspective and to the test:

> I felt I hadn't learned that much on my college course, all the things they had taught me about web design, as soon as I started working I had to learn them. They were wrong. (Anastasia, Front End Developer)

Moreover, many participants agreed that new skills were being acquired day by day and that keeping up-to-date with new developments was necessary in order to remain employable. These findings support the existing literature (Adams and Demaiter, 2008; Kotamraju, 2002; Batt *et al.*, 2000; Pratt, 2000). The implication of the changing nature of new media knowledge is that a good education does not suffice for ensuring a practitioner's new media cultural capital endowments. This is important because it shows that cultural capital richness is an on-going process.

Indeed my fieldwork suggests that the refinement of new media cultural capital is achieved through practising one's role in a company, as a freelancer, through following online blogs, reading online *fora* and, last but not least, interacting with their peers:

> Books are the second most useful thing [after socialising]. And then there's podcasts, blogs … I used to listen to podcasts loads, two-three hours a day and learned tons of stuff, really intense technical stuff I never really used, just interesting. And blogs, blogs are overwhelming. But I would say that if you don't have interpersonal knowledge-sharing you're putting in too much effort. You're spending much time reading the wrong stuff. (Nick, UX Developer)

Peer interaction is both the process through which they acquire human/cultural capital and the process through which – as I demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6 – they demonstrate their skills and gain recognition among their peers. Face-to-face peer interaction, in that sense, rather than the solitary task of reading books and blogs and the relatively anonymous interaction within forums and mailing lists, constitutes the main process through which the acquisition of skills can lead to their legitimation within the community of peers and their conversion to symbolic capital.

As demonstrated in Chapter 6, there are important reasons for choosing this mode of skills acquisition over others. In line with either embodied moral values or the logic of

the local new media field, some of my participants would exchange knowledge in order to support their peers. The exchange of knowledge was also attributed, in certain cases, to the enjoyment resulting from talking about computing and design. The most pertinent reason, however, also in line with the logic of the local new media field, was to secure employment or to succeed in their business endeavours. Securing employment and succeeding would become possible through tapping into the social capital found inside local new media networks. As explained in Chapter 6, being part of the local new media networks, and accordingly having access to its social capital, involves the sharing of knowledge and sharing the values of the local community, which in this case was *camaraderie*. It can be said that while this would come naturally to those seeking recognition – and hence would become involved in the new media community anyway – it would not come naturally to those who would not seek recognition and hence would not seek peer interaction. While many of new media "techies" I interviewed suggested that they sought the appreciation of their peers, there were also people who placed more value in family life and their life outside of work. The role of moral entrepreneurs is potentially significant for people belonging to that latter category and the chances they have for accessing the local social capital. Through accessing the social capital embedded in local new media networks, practitioners are granted access to economic capital. Practitioners who prove their skills will be recommended for business partnerships and their details will be forwarded to clients. This process is particularly important for freelancers who do not have a steady income stream.

However, as shown earlier, socialising and the demonstration of skills would not happen only among freelancers but among company workers as well. This process was partially fuelled by the desire to achieve recognition. The effort put in fulfilling this desire led to three phenomena: engagement with the company colleagues, engagement with the broader new media community, and, finally, switch from company- to self-employment.

Before addressing these three trajectories, I will refer briefly to Baldamus and his research on manufacturing workers. Baldamus (1961) identified problems related to manufacturing such as *impairment* and *tedium*. These were the result of physical and repetitive work. He also identified a number of relative satisfactions which function as solutions to these problems, namely, inurement and traction respectively. In the case of

manufacturing labour these endogenous and passive solutions allowed workers to deal with the strains of work.

The case was different with new media work workers. In new media work, people did not experience problems related to routine, physical or repetitive work. They instead experienced boredom and discontent, which could be understood as the result of being impeded from using their skills and from not being appreciated. The problem they faced was incapacitation, a state which was both intrinsically and socially frustrating, because they were denied the intrinsic satisfaction of being creative and the social satisfaction of having their technological/ artistic prowess appreciated. As opposed to manufacturing workers, many corporate workers addressed their problem in an active and exogenous manner.

The first way in which this problem was addressed was by setting up challenges among themselves. This was a practice which happened in two of the companies I researched. In one case, programmers would meet over the weekend and challenge themselves to learn a new programming language over the weekend. In another case employees organised what they called 'Wicked Wednesdays', where they worked on a project among themselves after work. Through these "games" corporate techies found ways to express their creativity, demonstrate their skills (*i.e.* human/cultural capital) and gain recognition within their proximate professional community (*i.e.* their company).

The second way this problem was addressed was through meeting up with peers from other companies or freelancers outside of work, in the various pubs, social events and workshops. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, new media practitioners spent many of their evenings away from work hanging out with their peers in pubs, workshops and other industry events. During these extra-company meetings company workers would exchange skills and knowledge (human/cultural capital) for recognition (symbolic capital) that was not available in the workplace. The desire for symbolic compensation would substantiate Parker's (1983, p.75-76) claim, that people who perform demanding and absorbing jobs often look for the same kind of absorption in their leisure. While Parker attributed isomorphism to habit, I argue that the element of recognition should also be considered when trying to decipher the relationship between work and play.

Freelancing represented the third, more radical, solution to the discontents associated with company work. This was a finding that supported Perrons' (2003) argument that work dissatisfaction constitutes an important reason behind entrepreneurship in the new media sector. In an early study on self-employment, Scase and Goffee (1982) also pointed out that workers whose orientations to work resemble the ideals of craftsmanship are likely to seek job satisfaction through self-employment. In my fieldwork, freelance "techies" presented themselves as independent, free from the chains of company and corporate work, pursuing their passion for work. They argued that work quality could not be pursued within companies, where new media workers had negative experiences. As such many of my participants chose to either become self-employed or even start their own small company.

Building social connections among peers would ignite an important process. Company workers would meet their peers, demonstrate their skills and seek recognition. At the same time, sharing knowledge led to further accumulation of skills. Once company workers felt sufficiently embedded within the new media social milieu, they started realising that cultural capital and the ensuing symbolic capital could be translated to economic capital through the gradual build-up of reputation. Under these circumstances they would make the decision to quit their job and become freelancers. For example, for Manuel, one of my participants, working in companies was frustrating. He did not think about freelancing or starting his own company in Brighton until he discovered the vibrant local new media scene and found out about local groups such as the Geek dinners, Deconstruct (web conference run by a local company), Five pound app (demo series organised by a local entrepreneur) and the Farm. Likewise, Nick decided to work as a freelancer after he discovered the local scene and the environment of support. He explained that working as a freelancer was much better for him, both in terms of work satisfaction and financial security:

> That's what I've been doing since [freelancing] and it's much more happy professional life for me. It almost feels like you're cheating. You know you have the off days and the odd email from a client, but mostly it's a breeze. I don't even have to try and get work, people just ring me up and, generally speaking, I get the work not having to work hard enough. (Nick, UX Developer)

The above described processes of skill-accumulation, capital conversion and shifts in employment status taking place within Brighton's new media sector were associated with benefits and drawbacks which were evaluated differently by my participants. Moreover, these processes have the potential of effecting changes in the logic of the new media sector. I move on to describe these benefits, drawbacks and the transformative to the new media field's logic potential in terms of resistance and submission to domination.

## 8.3. Resistance to domination and submission to domination

In this section I put forward the argument that the different aspirations inscribed in new media practitioners' *habitus* and the opportunities made available within the new media field, which materialised through the conversion of different types of capital, resulted in either resistance or submission to domination in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1977). I refer to resistance as instances whereby new media practitioners improved or strived to improve their position in the new media field, or as acts that had the potential of pushing back the new media field's *doxa* (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Submission refers to instances where new media practitioners who occupied a disadvantaged position in the field, for example company workers, either accepted their position in the field and did not try to improve it, or engaged in activities through which they satisfied the aspirations inscribed within their *habitus* but failed to improve their position in the field.

### 8.3.1. Resistance

#### 8.3.1.1. Improving one's position in the field

Through the various processes of capital conversion, which became possible by virtue of Brighton's closely knit new media community, some new media practitioners strived, and others succeeded, to either change or improve their position in the field of new media. Indeed there were many instances whereby socialising and freelancing reflected, as Bourdieu (1977) would argue, practices of resistance to domination – although, those practices were not necessarily trying to push back the limits of *doxa* of the new media industry, that is, to challenge its definition of what real is. In the previous chapter I

demonstrated how some of my participants used peer interaction in order to advertise their services or to establish their niche field. That was an instance of trying to improve one's position in the field. Both managing directors I interviewed started off as company workers. However, after years of networking and of building up their contacts they managed to start their own companies – through taking clients from their former jobs and the reputation they had built in new media circles – which ended up being quite successful:

> People recommending us through London … When I was at [company he used to work for] I would go to London for the more social events … I 've always been interested in meeting people … Even though we didn't know the clients, there was a group of people in the industry who knew of us and, yes, suddenly people recommending, or suggesting, and the same thing happens now. We still don't advertise, it's [through] recommendation [that we find clients]. How we got the [name of British supermarket chain] contract? Through a number of recommendations, when they heard [our] name once, twice, three times they thought 'ok, we have to talk to these guys'. (Mathew, Mobile Developer/ Managing Director)

What also became clear through my research was that objective positions in the field should not be taken at face value. For example, freelancing is generally considered a precarious and involuntary type of employment (Burke, 2011; Berardi, no date). However, several of my participants argued that they manage to lead a more comfortable life as freelancers compared to working in a company. This finding supports Ross's (2008, p. 42) argument that 'precarity is unevenly experienced across this spectrum of employees'. This phenomenon may also explain why new media practitioners aspire to freelance, which has been discussed in the existing literature (Pratt, 2000). As John explains, freelancing can be a more secure employment option than being employed by a company:

> It was horrible being at the wrong end of it, knowing that you are going to be sacked very soon, and I did [get sacked]. Very unpleasant. And it was the point when I decided that I wouldn't work entirely for anybody ever again. I would only work for myself and be employed by many people and have products and

> have several income streams so not one person could ever take my life off my professional grip. (John, Programmer)

This form of resistance was organised in Brighton. New media workers who were dissatisfied with company work were not alone in their struggle. They were encouraged by other, more experienced, independent practitioners in the local new media scene. In the quotation that follows, John goes on to explain how an environment of peer support in Brighton allows people to reclaim their careers:

> It's nice to live in a city where a large number of people work for themselves. That's very liberating. You're confident that you are not doing something crazy, since a lot of other people are doing that ... I run the [name of programming language] event which encourages people who have built something interesting to tell their story, to motivate others to tell their story, and generally encourage people to stop working for the man in a job, especially when they are not happy, and go and start their own company. (John, Programmer)

Such forms of resistance can be thought to encourage entrepreneurship, in that they represent a form of entrepreneurship capital (Audretsch, 2007), that is, a resource which encourages entrepreneurial activities. Adding this resource to the opportunities for learning and advertising one's services, as described in Chapter 6, it could be argued that despite a site where resistance was possible, Brighton constituted an environment particularly conducive to entrepreneurship.

Moreover, as was also evidenced in Chapter 7, positioning oneself within a peer community and gaining access to the social capital embedded within, allowed other forms of resistance such as the possibility for early career workers to avoid working for free in the context of unpaid internships. The effort to outflank unpaid internships is a paradigmatic instance of opposition to the *doxa* of contemporary capitalism.

### 8.3.1.2. Resistance and solidarity

The conviction of certain practitioners to support their peers to take their career "in their own hands" was not only a sign of resistance to domination. It was also a sign of

solidarity reminiscent of Wilson and Spoehr's (2009) argument that epistemic solidarity can represent an avenue of resistance. Such acts of solidarity go against Bauman's (2011) claims that the sufferings of the precariat 'deny commonality of fate' and that they 'render calls to solidarity ludicrous'. Examples of acts of solidarity such as the ones discussed above, were ample in my research.

However, it is also true that several of the arguments made so far would give credence to the pessimistic claims of those who theorise the total commodification of social life (Bauman, 2011; Wittel, 2001; Sennet, 1999). To begin with, there was evidence suggesting that cooperation and peer-support took place in Brighton because it was directly linked to economic success. The local scene was characterised by functional interdependence, the organisation of the labour market was largely informal, whereas my participants argued that through interaction with their peers they could advertise themselves and learn new skills. Moreover, moral entrepreneurs mobilised meanings that were ubiquitous in the local new media scene, *i.e.* camaraderie, in order to help new media practitioners and, by doing so, they reproduced those meanings. This phenomenon raises scepticism with regard to the validity of altruistic values present in the accounts of my participants, without however denying their presence altogether. In other words, if moral entrepreneurs actively taught new media practitioners to appear to be altruistic, how can we be sure of the frankness of my participants' altruistic motivations?

It could be inferred that if people did not expect to have personal gain they would not be interested in helping their peers. From a moral economic perspective, 'economic activities are influenced and structured by moral dispositions' and these 'may be compromised, overridden, reinforced by economic pressures' (Sayer, 2004, p. 2). Moral economy scholars use morality and ethics 'to refer to norms, values, dispositions, regarding behaviour that affects others and imply certain conceptions of the good' (ibid., p. 3). One of the central ideas of the moral economy perspective is that in capitalist society what appears to be ethical/ good can be instrumentalised 'by considerations of what is profitable' (p. 4). From a moral economy perspective then, it could be said that moral entrepreneurs who were interested in helping new media practitioners to succeed, urged new media practitioners to be, or to appear being, altruistic for the sake of business success. However, I think it would be reductionist to argue that anyone was

only altruistic, or only utilitarian. Although some would see their peers instrumentally in order to secure employment, many of my participants developed long-lasting friendships with their peers. Relationships in that sense were not exclusively short-lived, instrumental and informational, as Wittel (2011) or Sennet (1999) would describe them. Furthermore, some people's career expectations involved symbolic rather than economic compensation. Similarly, it would be wrong to question the altruistic motivations of somebody who wanted their peers to be involved in satisfying work, free from corporate chains, just because this action might also involve material benefits for the former. Finally, even if we consider the role of moral entrepreneurs in appropriating moral values for the sake of profit and eventual perpetuation of a digital capitalism of incessant expansion, we should not ignore that this appropriation happened in a moral context; that is, in order to help people who occupied a materially disadvantageous position to succeed. It should be reminded, as suggested in Chapter 6, that in the context of Brighton's new media scene, altruism and utilitarianism tended to become indistinguishable. Through one's immersion into the local scene and the gradual embodiment of its logic into the *habitus*, these two elements tended to become inseparable. Even if moral entrepreneurs did happen to define the situation of socialising, they did not automatically socialise new media practitioners. The embodiment of the local new media culture – that is the intertwining of the pursuit of personal and collective benefit in the *habitus* of the new media worker – would happen over time.

Freelancing can also be seen as an act of resistance in terms of pursuing one's aspirations, even when these aspirations are humble. Symbolic compensation, in this case, constitutes the non-pecuniary benefit (Hamilton, 2000) associated with self-employment. As described earlier and in more detail in Chapter 5, certain new media practitioners sought jobs through which they could express their creativity and work among interesting people. Through this process they would pursue their aspiration of gaining recognition for their skills. In that sense, pursuing the aspiration inscribed in the *habitus* provides a second explanation for the choice to become self-employed and the dissent towards company politics elsewhere noted in the literature (see Perrons, 2003; Pratt, 2000).

### 8.3.1.3. Laid-back work and lifestyle entrepreneurship?

Another practice which could be considered to be an act of resistance, and challenged Grove's claim that 'only the paranoid survive in the new economy' (Reich, 2000, p. 35), had to do with the apparent unwillingness of new media workers in Brighton to work long hours and their tendency, generally, to engage in "laid-back" work. A common theme in almost all my discussions was that new media workers in Brighton were relaxed and did not take their job very seriously. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, quality of life held a pertinent position among the reasons my participants gave for locating to Brighton. The logic of playfulness also permeated the practices of big companies. New media workers often presented themselves as Fourier's utopian horticultural workers, performing work that they enjoyed doing among people whom they found interesting (Clayre, 1974, pp. 22-23). My participants made comments about new media workers choosing to spend time at the beach or at some local pub rather than working. They also often made references to London (and often to its size) in order to describe, or reinforce, the image of relaxed work that purportedly took place in Brighton:

> In Brighton it's a fundamentally slower pace [than London]. There's a lot of freelancers. You can lead an easy life. Most people only work part-time. Much better quality of life and as I say you can still go up in London if you need to. You know, walk to work, have lunch in the Lanes, come home, you're home by six. It's much nicer. (Natalie, Project Manager/Front End Developer)

> Being able to take ideas and try them out is a lot easier in Brighton than in London. But then the problem is that when the sun comes out you want to be on Brighton beach. (Abbot, CMS Developer)

In the accounts of some of my participants it was suggested that feelings about the effects of this work ethos was sometimes ambivalent. Some talked about relaxed work as being something positive and others as something negative. In one of the informal discussions I had with a freelancer, she argued that working in Brighton could be bad for performance because it was so relaxed and there was 'a lot of fun going on'. Another freelancer (Natalie, Project manager/front end developer) mentioned that it was common knowledge that freelancers in Brighton were lazy and a bit 'rubbish'. In the

quotation that follows, another participant points towards the negative effects of the relaxed work ethos:

> It very much feels like in Brighton there's loads of people who are really, uhm, they enjoy working here and they keep a very good work-life balance to the point where they are doing lifestyle jobs, which is great because they enjoy themselves and do what they want to do, and that's the biggest difference between London and Brighton. Most of the people you meet are very casual about what they do they don't take work very seriously. So we don't have so much, there's a lot of freelancers, smaller agencies lot of agencies which would be bigger if they put a bit more energy. (Manuel, Back End Developer)

Commentators have used the concept of lifestyle entrepreneurship to talk about entrepreneurs for whom profit is not the primary objective for starting a business. The main reason behind this is deemed to be the prioritisation of personal over business goals (Morrison, 2006; Bolton and Thompson, 2003; Ateljevic and Doome, 2000). Thus, people may not be growth-motivated due to socio-political values, or in other words one's ideology, or because they do not want to put too much effort into their work. However, it has also been noted that lifestyle entrepreneurs manage to eventually benefit, or at least secure their viability, through exploiting certain niche markets that share similar values with them. One of my participants seemed to be freelancing both by conviction, in the sense that he was against corporate work, and also sought to have small clients operating in the charity sector. In that sense, his personal values agreed with a specific segment of the market, in which he was also personally involved through volunteer work. However, the rest of my informants did not seek to exploit any niche markets which espoused their personal values which, in this case, were the pursuit of relaxed and fulfilling work.

Because of this situation, it would be impossible for most new media freelancers, especially those with kids (and more specifically the mothers among them), to pursue the goals of doing satisfying work, relaxation and earning a living, at the same time. People would only be able to pursue combinations of two goals. Doing relaxed work, pursuing satisfying work and earning a living were partially in conflict with each other. As we saw, satisfying work could be achieved through self-employment. However, self-

employment has usually been associated with insecure work and risk (UKWDA, no date; Beck, 2000; Scase and Goffee, 1982). In order for both security of income and satisfying work to be pursued simultaneously, relaxation and free time would have to be sacrificed, because workers would have to continually be upgrading their skills, looking for new projects, making new connections, and so forth. It also means that people who want to do interesting jobs but at the same time do not want to sacrifice their free time, will have to settle for less money. In the case of one of my participants, John (see section 8.3.1.1.), freelancing might have been a less precarious type of employment, however this did not mean that securing different income streams constituted an easy task. Yet, many of my participants presented themselves to be leading a laid-back work life, enjoying the beach, socialising with their peers, enjoying lunch and coffee at the various local restaurants and cafés. At the same time, they argued that some of them led a relatively comfortable life and, in some cases, they even became famous and successful in their field. They presented themselves as self-fulfilled and relaxed 'independents'.

The key to the positive self-appraisal of Brighton's workers lay partially in the meanings they attached to work, which provided a very specific prism through which new media workers sometimes viewed the practice of socialising. All the time spent learning new technologies, socialising with their peers, building social connections, were not considered to be part of work. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, socialising was not merely perceived as a strategy to succeed or a necessity to secure one's livelihood. Both those who succeeded and those who managed to make ends meet, earned symbolic profits, shared their passion and broke free from company chains, hence socialising was stripped of any connotation related to excessive work. This partially explains my participants' positive self-appraisal as independent and at the same time relaxed.

The role of Brighton's broader cultural environment should also be considered when accounting for the self-perceptions and actual practices of new media practitioners regarding laid-back work. I argued earlier on that claims about laid-back work and relaxation referred to practices such as "hanging out" with peers, walking or cycling to work and working by the beach. The positive appraisal of working in Brighton also referred to the consumption of cultural goods – that is, objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246) – such as the variety of restaurants, cafés, pubs, galleries, and

so forth. Indeed, the rhetoric of relaxation either involved the combination of work and bohemian lifestyle (*e.g.* working by the beach or in a café), or disguised a process of mere consumption of material culture. As Pratt (2011a) pointed out, creative workers are attracted by specific consumption spaces, remarks which agree with Harvey's (2008, p. 31) more general comment that quality of urban life has been commodified. Even though many of my participants stressed the importance of being next to the sea and being able to work or cycle to work, things that did not represent commodities *per se*, the latter did represent a specific organisation of space in a bohemian city. As argued in Chapter 6, the beach, the cycle lanes by the beach, the two piers, the festivals, the galleries and arts shows, all shaped the social fabric of Brighton's new media scene and the ways in which it interpreted its work practices. The experience of working by the sea, in cafés, pubs, having lunch breaks at the bohemian quarter and so on, meant that work itself acquired a bohemian character. Brighton's material culture in this case represents, to quote Bourdieu (1977, p. 87), the 'symbolically structured environment which exerts an anonymous pervasive pedagogic action', signifying that work is bohemian. As these experiences, that involve interpretations of work and leisure through the prism of Brighton, become embodied in the *habitus* of new media practitioners, negative elements of work (long hours, insecurity, etc.) that are not consistent with the bohemian logic of Brighton's culture – and as such are not symbolically supported by the environment – tend to be overlooked. Also in companies, the consumption of objectified cultural capital was central in maintaining a bohemian self-image at work. New media companies were not particularly reluctant to shed part of their bohemian look for a more bourgeois one once they grew, shifting their attention from symbolic (the warmth and artistic environment of a small studio) to economic capital (the prestige and convenience of a big office). However, the bohemian element was still represented in the consumption of objectified cultural capital, *e.g.* creation of entertainment rooms with pool tables and games for the workers. The symbolic presence of Brighton's cultural artefacts, such as the two piers, on new media company websites further indicated the incorporation of this imagery into the *habitus* of the new media scene.

Nevertheless, the positive impact of Brighton's cultural environment and geography on new media practitioners' experiences of work should not be understated. People who had worked both in London and Brighton argued that quality of work-life in Brighton was considerably higher than in London. Being able to enjoy the natural environment,

work by the sea and not having to deal with traffic and pollution, were understandably factors contributive to better quality of life compared to living in a big city. Being able to combine work with family responsibilities was also important for many of my participants. Brighton could indeed offer a lifestyle which did not focus entirely on work, but also included entertainment and relaxation; which did not necessarily privilege work over life, but instead embraced domesticity alongside work.

### 8.3.1.5. Resistance?

What becomes clear through this discussion is that practices of resistance to domination should not only be judged according to objective rankings in the field. Choosing to become a freelancer and taking advantage of the capital conversion possibilities available within the local new media community was as much an act of resistance to domination as the practice of tapping on social capital to grow one's own company. At the same time, freelance work and the constant striving to become more knowledgeable in order to secure employment benefited companies which required a broad range of skills for the different projects they undertook. As Gorz (1999, p. 27) pointed out, the end of Fordism meant that companies could fight stagnation either through winning additional market share or though renewing their product range (*i.e.* innovation). It has been argued elsewhere in the existing literature, that by relying on freelance-casual employment rather than permanent employment, companies manage to stay competitive (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999; Castells, 1996). As Maskell and Lorenzen (2004) pointed out, it is common for creative industries to cluster in order to take advantage of the large pool of skills. In that sense, acts of resistance to domination cannot be viewed independently from the manner in which the industry works. Moreover, peer support in Brighton's new media sector exemplifies Gorz's (1999, p. 40) argument that '[a]utonomy in work is of little significance when it is not carried into the cultural, moral and political spheres'. In other words, many forms of resistance are more concerned with improving personal circumstances, rather than being reflexive of one's role in the reproduction of a consumerist society. Under the present conditions in Brighton, some freelancers were given the chance to achieve higher degrees of financial security and autonomy than in company employment. This way of resisting domination can only go so far and is unlikely to pose a serious threat to the political and economic system, unless it is accompanied by organised forms of political resistance.

Nevertheless, the opportunities presented to practitioners to resist against, to quote Fincham (2004, p. 163) on his study of bike messengers, 'a form of alienation from a form of working that they [found] undesirable', should not be understated. This is a form of resistance with the potential to critically address both the capitalist tendency for incessant expansion and alienation in the labour process.

## 8.3.2. Submission

### 8.3.2.1. The *habitus* of managers in the new media field

Accessing the social capital available in Brighton's networks required active involvement in the latter. As demonstrated in several occasions so far, access to social capital was neither merely nor always the outcome of the strategic pursuit of the business-related resources available in social connections, namely recommendations and business-related information. In some cases, it was the outcome of the pursuit of recognition. Accessing social capital was, in this sense, easier when the process associated with accessing it was consistent with one's dispositions, reflecting aspirations inscribed in the *habitus*. This became apparent also in the case of those who did not occupy the technical positions in the new media field. Computing and design skills were valued in the new media field, whereas a project management position often did not require specific skills. As shown in Chapter 5, project managers could go through a quite informal career trajectory within a company. None of my participants were formally trained to be new media project managers. Instead, they just happened to be at the right place in the right time. As such, the ones occupying these positions did not wish to show off. Socialising was usually done in the context of networking. Networking was part of their job. Sometimes it also involved learning or just having fun. However, it was not usually a practice aimed at granting them recognition or building their reputation in order to improve their position in the field.

### 8.3.2.2. Free labour

Submission also took the form of free labour. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 5, in some cases company employees engaged in games which involved learning new skills or producing new knowledge. In the case of 'Wicked

Wednesdays', the results of projects undertaken outside of formal working hours among employees of the company would usually end up being functionalities for the application the company used. The company appropriated the workers' free time and benefited from their enthusiasm, which itself stemmed from the desire for recognition. In this sense, the "game" represented one of the most blatant examples of free labour (Terranova, 2000), the subjugation in the established status quo of the field, whereby more and more surplus labour is consensually expropriated from creative workers. Accordingly, the company can be interpreted as a formation which institutionalises social relationships of domination. For Bourdieu (1977, p. 184), the institutionalisation of social relationships, in other words the objectification of social capital, can guarantee the free appropriation of capital by the dominant actors. Workers accept that they are the company's property and the company freely appropriates the human/ cultural capital that workers accumulate in their extra-company activities.

In other cases too, there was evidence suggesting that new media practitioners experimented with and learned new technologies which could be applied to their company work. One of my participants argued that some new technologies could not be directly applied in the work he did in his company. He further argued that his engagement with local workshops gave him the opportunity to safely experiment with these technologies:

> Valuable for me is using new programming languages and using new techniques. In a work situation it can be really hard to actually use them cause it's like taking a risk, so if I have things like hack days I can play with new stuff and it doesn't matter if it goes wrong. And also, like, things develop so quickly, it's really hard to keep up, and if you don't make the effort, you get left behind. (Jack, Programmer)

Although I did not ask my participant if he actually applied the new technologies that he learned on his free time to his work, based on evidence provided in Chapters 5 and 6, it could be safely argued that significant amounts of free labour took place within Brighton's new media community, in order for my participants to stay employable. Another participant, Karen (Project manager), argued that socialising with other project managers was a way of learning new methods and to solve problems in the workplace,

especially in the early stages of her career. This links to the issue of autonomy and self-exploitation. Existing literature has addressed the issue of autonomy in the post-Fordist mode of production as a covert way of control and subjugation of workers (see Storey *et al.*, 2005; Gorz, 1999; du Gay, 1996). As demonstrated in Chapter 5, my participants had to take up many different roles, both within and outside of the workplace, which was more pronounced with freelancers, but also applied to company workers. The fact that my participants, both "techies" and managers, would continue the process of information exchange and learning outside of the company could be interpreted, to quote Gorz (1999, p. 31), as the 'subjugation of workers to new heights'.

### 8.3.2.3. Submission?

As with cases of resistance, there was a flipside to submission. There was evidence to suggest that more skills corresponded to higher rates of pay, a finding which also supports existing literature (ONS, 2013; Communian *et al.*, 2010). Several of my participants argued that the rate they charged their clients had increased over time and that experience was one of the parameters to be considered when pricing one's work. One of my participants actually argued that Brighton could no longer afford him, so he looked for bigger clients elsewhere. As Andrejevic (2011, p. 86) pointed out, with regard to user-generated online content, appropriation should not be mistaken for expropriation. Although companies took advantage of workers' skills they did not deprive them of these skills. The effort put in learning new skills, which could indeed be appropriated by companies, at the same time contributed to becoming more experienced, building reputation and, as a result, commanding better rates of pay.

Moreover, when it comes to those occupying the business/project management positions, I do not mean to suggest that those roles did not take any advantage of the resources available in the local new media community. As presented in Chapter 5, for Maria (Marketing development manager), making contacts as part of her job was important for securing that she would have a job in the future. Finally, Rachel (Project manager) refused to do anything that exceeded the formal job requirements. She did not work outside of formal working hours, did not talk about work outside of formal working hours and, as opposed to her workaholic colleagues, she would not miss a lunch break. She was probably the only person in my study who actively practised

work-to-rule and, thereby, deterred any attempts on behalf of the company to harness surplus labour.

## 8.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the effects of peer interaction, sharing of knowledge and peer support, on my participants' careers in terms of resistance and submission to domination in the new media field. I analysed resistance and subjugation by taking into account both the workplace and activities beyond the workplace. I suggested that instances of resistance involved the shifting from employee to employer status through taking advantage of the social capital that can be harvested through networks. Entrepreneurship was one of the possible outcomes of building social capital through intensive networking. The other possible outcome was managing to make ends meet by being self-employed. The shift from company employment to self-employment was also a form of resistance in the sense that workers sought to satisfy their aspiration for recognition and independent work. This shift was encouraged by new media practitioners who wanted their peers to break free from company employment and assume control over their own careers. However, I suggested that resistance ultimately took place within the logic of the new media field, which was effectively regulated by the imperatives of capitalist expansion. Independent practitioners who worked hard to upgrade their skills in order to secure work played an integral part in the capitalist imperative of continuous innovation. As such, existing practices of resistance entailed personal or even collective benefits, but rarely had the potential of challenging the broader structures within which exploitation occurred, the new media sector's *doxa*. Submission to domination took the form of free labour (Terranova, 2000) and self-exploitation (Storey *et al*., 2005; Gorz, 1999; du Gay, 1996). These instances referred to activities through which workers would potentially satisfy their need for recognition but, at the same time, find the skills attained through this process harnessed by companies in which they worked. However, I also pointed out that submission did not necessarily mean that workers would not take advantage of the resources available within new media networks. The acquisition of new skills within networks would not be expropriated by companies. Instead these skills would accumulate and contribute to higher salaries and pay rates. Moreover, company workers who made connections in the context of company work would often keep these connections after leaving their

company. The social capital accumulated and appropriated by a company was not necessarily separated from the worker.

# 9. Conclusion

## 9.1. Revisiting the research questions

This study looked at the relationships among people working in Brighton's new media industry. The research questions it set out to address included what work means to practitioners in Brighton's new media industry, what peer relationships look like and how these relationships affect their careers. In order to address these questions I delved into a qualitative exploration of Brighton's new media industry. I interviewed new media practitioners, freelancers, company employees, company owners, as well as local policy makers and industry experts. Furthermore, I attended industry events, I socialised with practitioners in workshops and pubs and I undertook an ethnographic study of a local coworking organisation. Through the combination of interviewing and ethnographic methods I succeeded in exploring these questions in depth, elucidating different facets of work and sociality in Brighton's new media industry and how they are constructed through a variety of processes at the micro and macro levels.

The aforementioned research questions are addressed in Chapters 4 through 8. In Chapter 4, I present the institutional environment in which new media relationships and meanings are shaped, which included Brighton's cultural environment, the local universities, institutions like the BHCC, Wired Sussex and the broader new media sector. In Chapter 5, I explore how meanings ascribed to new media work and peer relations depend on the different positions that practitioners occupy in the sector, their simultaneous positioning in other social fields, and the characteristics of the new media labour market. In Chapter 6, I further explore the social construction of new media sociality by looking at interaction outside of formal working hours, the ways in which this interaction is organised, and the discursive effect of influential actors and places. In Chapter 7, I demonstrate how the various meanings attached to new media work and sociality are translated into rituals in a coworking space. Finally, in Chapter 8, I present how the different capitals produced and exchanged in Brighton's new media community affect practitioners' careers and generate conditions for both resistance against, and subjugation to, the precarious conditions of new media work.

## 9.2. Key findings and contribution

The key findings and contribution of this study can be summarised in the following six points. Firstly, it proposes a coherent theoretical framework that combines Bourdieu's and Goffman's ideas in understanding new media work and sociality. Secondly, it offers an updated qualitative investigation of Brighton's new media cluster using a methodology that utilises qualitative interviewing and ethnography. Thirdly, this study offers an understanding of the relationship between *work and play* in the new media sector as a function of the social construction of the computing culture and the reasonable aspirations of new media practitioners by virtue of the position they occupy in the intersection of the new media field with other fields. Fourthly, it offers a deconstruction of new media sociality by looking at the various experiences, such as education and previous jobs, that – in conjunction with the localised new media logic – provide frames that practitioners use to make sense of peer relationships. In doing so it emphasises the localised character of new media culture. Fifthly, it offers am understanding of new media workplace sociality in terms of personal preserves. Finally, it discusses the exchange of capitals within the new media community in terms of resistance and submission, hence emphasising the ambiguous position – in terms of power – of new media practitioners in the new media field.

Through the methodical exploration of peer relationships, both inside and outside of the workplace, I presented their multifaceted character. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1996; 1990; 1986; 1977) ideas on field, capital and *habitus*, I demonstrated how peer relationships were at the centre of practices that constituted the means by which new media practitioners realised the aspirations inscribed into their *habitus* – and pursued the strategies available to them – based on the positions they occupied within different stages of the intersection of the new media field with other fields, in order to improve their position within these intersections. Peer relationships constituted the platform within which different types of capital conversion took place, effecting changes in career trajectories. These trajectories – albeit always reflective of the aspirations which were a function of the positions people occupied in different social fields and the resources available to them by virtue of these positions – in some cases allowed practitioners to resist domination, while in others established their submission to domination.

I put forward the argument that peer interaction, which took place both within and outside the actual labour process, had many different meanings for new media practitioners. I demonstrated how different forces interacted with the practitioners' *habitus* and, based on the position they occupied within the new media field and the resources at hand, contributed to the construction of meanings ascribed to peer relationships within the local new media field. One of the most potent forces that interacted with practitioners' *habitus* was the capitalist imperative of profit which tended to incite the commodification of social relationships. Networking is a central part of the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) and, accordingly, its logic imbued social relationships. The high concentration of new media practitioners in Brighton ensured that the economic potential of social connectedness could be achieved. The project-based organisation of the production process reflects that new media sector relies on innovation. In this sense, the mixing and matching of skills was necessary for practitioners to find employment and for companies to make profit. However, this logic was reinterpreted within Brighton's new media sector, through the frame of Brighton as a bohemian city. The BHCC advertises Brighton's cultural amenities and constructs it as a bohemian city. The bohemian imagery lent the anti-corporate logic to Brighton's new media field. Networking was re-imagined as peer support by practitioners who had immersed themselves in Brighton's culture and had introjected its logic into their *habitus*. The definition of peer interaction along the lines of peer support, a process by which the logic of the local new media field structured and was structured, was achieved through the various channels of peer interaction within the local new media community wherein prestigious figures – moral entrepreneurs – communicated these ideas. Moral entrepreneurs who took up the crusade of helping independent new media practitioners to succeed on their own terms, communicated these ideas and effectively shaped social interaction. These ideas meant to communicate a certain behaviour which was important for accessing the social capital embedded in the local new media community.

Although this local new media logic was communicated through different channels, it did not have a uniform effect on people's experiences of peer interaction. New media practitioners experienced their relationships with their peers based on their previous lived experiences – which could not be reduced to the logic of the new media field. Peer interaction, collaboration, knowledge sharing in the context of peer support did not

suffice to define social relationships. The latter were also friendships, relationships that were secondary compared to family, relationships based on mutual passion for technology and design, commitment to learning, business relationships, and so forth.

The different types of capital, that Bourdieu described, are at play throughout a person's life. However, their relative importance and means of acquisition change on the basis of different intersections of fields and the particular stage of such intersections in which a person finds her or himself. For young new media practitioners the type of capital which was endowed with the capacity to grant them recognition through its legitimation, was their human or cultural capital, namely their skills and knowledge. During a later stage of their lives, however, examples were presented where new media practitioners emphasised the significance of their families rather than their artistic or technical competence. Being a good parent and a good spouse mattered more during that specific stage of fields' intersection. In other words, building a specific type of social capital, namely familial relationships, became a priority at a specific life stage. This reflected the values of the society in question, namely that as people grow older they should start a family. As people found themselves in the intersection of fields which changed the relevance of different types of capital in the pursuit of recognition and of presenting one's self, the meanings ascribed to work and the meanings ascribed to peer relationships changed accordingly.

The different meanings attached to peer relationships among new media practitioners in Brighton were reflected in their habits within one of Brighton's CWOs. Although the logic of the new media field was prominent in these habits, so was the logic of friendship and of work-life balance. The concentration of many people who shared, to some extent, similar interests and aspirations, allowed for the transformation of partly-focused encounters into fully-focused ones (Goffman, 1963) and of vacuum periods into gatherings. This transformation, that was central for networking, required the imposition of limits to people's informational, and occasionally personal space preserves. However, not everyone shared exactly the same interests nor aspired to the same things. Parents also sought the moral support and understanding of other parents who were self-employed in the new media sector. At the same time, they did engage in networking and strived to take advantage of the resources available within the organisation. These findings reflected the different stages of the intersections within which people found

themselves. The use of Goffman's conceptual tools for the analysis of co-presence in the CWO shows their relevance for exploring and presenting in a methodical way the specificities of work cultures.

The importance of using Bourdieu's ideas of field, *habitus* and capital in conjunction rather than in isolation from each other was emphasised throughout my research. For example, solely the aspiration to be recognised for her/his skills, originating in the *habitus* of a computer programmer, could not account for her/his socialising practices. One's position in the field of new media (*e.g.* employees and owners, managers and developers?) and other fields (*e.g.* age, education, family), as well as their particular capital endowments, should also be considered in order to start grasping their practices. People's practices within a specific field, for instance the new media industry, cannot be understood independently of the position they occupied simultaneously within other social fields, such as their neighbourhood and their family. All types of capital generated returns in all the different fields in which people found themselves, rather than just one field at a time. The big success of one's web design company might not mean a great deal among practitioners who were passionate about computing, but it might be more likely to grant the owners of the company symbolic capital in the field of power. One's computing skills could be fully appreciated by one's peers and this did not preclude that one's neighbours would also appreciate them to some extent. However, the neighbourhood was more likely to appreciate that this person was a good spouse and parent. The fact that especially the mothers in my research privileged their children over their careers suggested that motherhood is a social construct that assumes its primacy over other fields (*e.g.* career, social life) within which a woman is embedded. A contribution of this thesis, therefore, is to turn the attention to the intersections of fields, the stages of such intersections, the different ways in which different types of capital operate within them, and to suggest that practices within one field cannot be understood in isolation from the wider narrative of each person's life.

As such, in terms of its theoretical contribution, this study offers a successful coupling of Bourdieu and Goffman. Bourdieu's ideas provide a valuable framework for applying the "sociological imagination" in work practices, because it brings to attention the various forces of history, the structural determinants, the personal biographies and how these interact to produce practices that shape social life and structures. Bourdieu's ideas

render the researcher aware of the different social categories – the different fields – that people find themselves embedded in, the rules that regulate conduct within these fields, the stakes within each field and the opportunities and constraints available within, based on different positions. For example, in Chapter five, participants' different positions within the new media industry and their aspirations based on the opportunities available by virtue of such positions (*e.g.* career advancement, pecuniary benefits, recognition), were considered alongside the position the participants occupied in other fields, such as education and family. Bourdieu's ideas also point towards the importance of the embodied histories and how these provide the frames through which people will interpret the rules of different fields and will affect their aspirations within different field intersections. For instance, in Chapter six, in order to interpret the meanings that participants ascribed to networking – a common practice in the new media field according to which peer interaction is defined – their different lived experiences in past employment or education were taken into account, alongside their material interests in the field. The deployment of Goffman's frame theory and his ideas on the social organisation of co-presence offer valuable interpretive tools for making Bourdieu's ideas more intelligible. For example, in Chapter six, the shared understanding of peer relationships as networking was interpreted in terms of the capacity of certain practitioners to frame social situations by virtue of their privileged position in the definitional hierarchy. Moreover, Goffman provides a valuable ethnographic tool for future research in terms of how the meanings that people attach to social reality and how these interact with the logics of different fields are translated into practice. For example, in Chapter seven, Goffman's framework allowed for the exploration of the verbal and non-verbal elements of interaction through which practitioners pursued the strategies available to them based on the positions they occupied in the new media field.

The integration of Bourdieu's and Goffman's ideas can provide a valuable framework beyond the analysis of work and sociality in the new media industry. Indeed, it can offer a strong interpretive tool for understanding any social practice. Bourdieu's ideas provide a set of principles regarding the functioning of the social world and Goffman's ideas can contribute to the set of mechanisms and concepts of how social life is organised according to these principles. Bourdieusian ontology sees social life as a series of games across several arenas, many of which take place simultaneously. The objective of these games is for social actors to satisfy different needs, physical, cultural and social, needs

that also have implications in terms of power. Goffman offers a variety of interaction mechanisms that social actors use to manage themselves within such games, as well as some conceptual tools useful to illustrate the interplay of the forces of society structuring choices, aspirations and agency that is inherent in Bourdieu's work.

Another contribution of this study is the attempt to evaluate the potential for resistance within the new media sector. I suggested that not all practices of resistance represented practices aimed at pushing back the limits of new media sector's *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977) – at reconstituting the definition of this reality. Many practices of resistance represented efforts to change one's position in the field (changing from employee to employer) and not necessarily efforts to challenge the "objective" positions that constituted the field. The once dominated would assume positions of dominance by successfully exploiting the opportunities available within the field. In other cases, however, acts of resistance aimed at negotiating the relationship between positions through practices such as, strengthening the position of freelancers, reacting against unpaid internships or refusing to be over-zealous at work. Brighton's material culture played a double role in this latter case. On the one hand, experiencing work within Brighton's objectified cultural capital – its material culture (the bohemian quarter, restaurants, cafés, pubs, the beach) – made work enjoyable for new media practitioners and, according to some, not as productive as it could have been if people were less lifestyle conscious. On the other hand, albeit an apparently enjoyable experience, excessive work and exploitation ended up being hidden behind the veil of cultural consumption and enjoyment.

## 9.3. Directions for future research

Near the end of my study I encountered more evidence of awareness on the part of new media practitioners of the forces of domination within the new media sector, as well as of the willingness to resist. Practitioners engaged in heated discussions on mailing lists on the topic of unpaid internships and "free labour", with some of them positioning themselves passionately against the market's logic of exploitation, while others providing various justifications for free labour and accepting it as an unavoidable reality of the system. This evidence appeared during the very final stages of writing of this study and, unfortunately, was not included in the analysis. Nevertheless, this evidence calls for a more comprehensive exploration of the ways in which practitioners can resist

domination, while negotiating the very concept of domination within a logic in which exploitation appears to be legitimated along the lines of fairness – justifying personal sacrifice on the road to capitalist success. To what extent can these acts of resistance pose a threat to the logic of the field? Does resistance only take place within the confines of the new media logic, aiming at improving the positions of the dominated *vis-a-vis* the dominant ones, reconfiguring the logic of the new media field by giving it moral foundations and thereby securing its survival, or it also harbours the potential for challenging the broader *doxa* of contemporary capitalism?

Much research remains to be done in the areas of new media work, sociality and on new types of organisation such as coworking. What role can coworking play in the negotiation and social construction of familial responsibilities? Further research in the topic of peer networks might include more questions regarding the potential for challenging neoliberal practices, such as unpaid internships, through the resources found in networks. At the same time, this issue opens up further questions: who has access to networks? In this study it is suggested that the specific cultural capital that was required to access networks did not only consist in the new media skills – and the aspiration to seek recognition by demonstrating the skills one possesses – but also in the social skills which are culture specific, such as presenting oneself as anti-corporate/bohemian. Another relevant question relates to who can reap the benefits of networking. How do people who come from cultures that are not imbued with the idea of networking – and as such they have not embodied it in their *habitus* – engage in the practice of networking? This thesis also raises questions relating to the issue of place and the effect it has on the *habitus* and the way in which people experience work. These questions are among many that emerged from this thesis. Addressing them has important implications for the future of the new media industry and the careers and work experiences of those who occupy it.

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# Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

The 'Web Developer' position in this table is used as an umbrella category referring both to Front End Developers, Back End Developers and those who did both Front End and Back End. Throughout the thesis, however, participants are being identified with their more specific speciality.

| Alias | Position | Employment status | Workplace |
|---|---|---|---|
| Abbot | Web Developer | Freelancer | CWO/ Public |
| Anastasia | Web Developer | Freelancer | CWO |
| Bert | Programmer | Employee | Company |
| Bill | Web Developer | Freelancer | CWO |
| Katherine | Business Development Manager | Employee | Company |
| Costello | Web Developer | Freelancer | Home/ Public |
| David | Web Developer | Freelancer | CWO |
| Elena | Project Manager | Employee | Company |
| Liz | Web Developer | Freelancer | Home/ Public |
| George | Web Developer | Self-employed/ Employee | Home/ company |
| Harry | Project Manager | Employee | Company |
| Jack | Programmer | Employee/ Freelancer | Company/ Public |
| Jim | Managing Director/ Mobile Developer | Owner | Company |
| Joan | Web Developer | Freelancer | CWO |
| John | Programmer/ Web Developer | Freelancer/ employee | Company/ Home/ CWO |
| Karen | Project Manager | Employee | Company |
| Luke | Programmer/ Project Manager | Employee | Company |
| Manuel | Web Developer | Freelancer/ Owner | CWO |
| Maria | Marketing Development | Employee | Company |

| | Manager | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mark | Programmer | Freelancer | Home/ Public |
| Martha | Web Developer | Freelancer | Home |
| Mathew | Managing Director/ Web-Mobile Designer | Owner/ Freelancer | Company |
| Miles | Web Developer/ Web Consultant | Freelancer | Home/ Public |
| Natalie | Project Manager/ Web Designer | Freelancer | Home/ Public |
| Ned | Quality Assurance Tester | Employee | Company |
| Nick | Web Developer | Freelancer | Home/ Public/ CWO |
| Patrick | Online Community Manager | Employee | Company |
| Philip | Web Developer/ Consultant | Freelancer/ Owner | CWO |
| Rachel | Project Manager | Employee | Company |
| Robert | Creative Consultant | Freelancer/ Owner | CWO |
| Roger | Web/Mobile Developer | Freelancer/ Owner | Home/ Company |
| Simon | Managing Director/ Programmer | Owner | Company |
| Synthia | PR Officer | BCoC employee | Company |
| Tagg | Web Developer | Freelancer/ Owner | CWO/ Public/ Company |
| Valerie | Member of Business and Enterprise Team | n/a | University |
| Vince | Researcher/ Digital Sector Expert | n/a | University |

# Appendix 2: Interview schedule

These are the questions around which interviews were organised. However, due to the open-ended character of the interviews, additional questions were asked along the course of the discussion when these arose from participants' comments or my own attempts to clarify what they were saying, or elicit further information on a topic they were pursuing.

Tell me a few things about yourself (plus probes such as: where are you from? Where did you grow up? What have you studied?)

Tell me about your work

What's an average day like?

Do you have any experience of working in companies? Tell me about it?

What was/is it like working there?

What kind of people worked/work there?

How would you describe your colleagues?

How would you describe your peers?

Why did you choose to come to Brighton?

What is it like working in Brighton?

What is the business environment like?

Why do you think Brighton is a new media hub?

Do you socialise with any people in your field?

How many?

How often do you hang out with them?

Where do you hang out with them?

What do you do?

How long have you known them for?

Where did you meet them?

Are any of those people business partners? Colleagues? Competitors?

Which are your information needs?

Where are you looking for information?

Do you share knowledge and information with the people you hang out with? (This question was then followed by probes such as: Why do you share? Do you also share with competitors? Would you share knowledge with someone who was not knowledgeable?

Do you ever receive helpful information? (This question would then be followed by probes such as: In which ways is it helpful? Do you look for information online?)

Can you recall a time that you received some helpful information?

Have you ever been part of online user communities?

If you wanted to know if someone in Brighton was trustworthy or knowledgeable, would it be easy to find out?

Do you have friends outside of the industry?

# Appendix 3: List of codes

Altruism and solidarity

Art

Bad side of social capital

Benefits of socialising

Brighton

Client base

Company work experience

- Contents

- Discontents

Competitors

Co-workers and peers

Education

- Education and sharing

- Location affecting education decisions

Entrepreneurship

- Business contacts

- Clients

- Institutions

- Knowledge gap

- Labour pool

- Problems

- Social contacts

- Work experience

Games industry

Government funding

Groups and events

Identity and community

Information and knowledge sharing

- How often?

- Online-offline comparison

- Others outside of Brighton

- What do people share?

- What is valuable?

- Which topics?

- Why?

- With whom?

Innovation

Institutional contacts

Instrumental-rational interaction

Emotional support

Interesting trivia

Learning

Local business partnerships

Location factors

- Accidental factors

- Acquaintances

- Business culture

- Industry

- Institutions

- Lifestyle

- People

- Proximity to London

London

Network perceptions

Open source

Reciprocity

Reputation

Role

- Back end

- Business

- Front end

- More than one

- Programming

- Project management

- techie

Self-work perceptions

Socialising

- frequency

- friendship and family

- number

- occasions

- origins of contacts

- topics of discussion

Technology

Werks

- avoiding cooperative claims

- attire

- casual talk

- clients

- community

- expectations

- informal rules

- newcomers

- personal space

- population

- rituals

- work

- work talk

Work

- both freelance and company

- career paths

- freelance work

- office work patterns

- tasks

- work-fun-happiness

- work-rest of life

# Appendix 4: Informed consent form

**Industrial clusters as social capital formations: how is their success explained?**

**Principal Investigator: Lefteris Zenerian**
DPHIL
Sociology Department
LPS
University of Sussex
Friston 269
Phone 07932956511
E-mail ez28@sussex.ac.uk

**Background:**
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear of if you need more information. The purpose of this study is to explore the social environment of firms co-locating in a certain geographical area. Further it aims to explore in what ways this environment affects the competitiveness of firms.

**Study Procedure:**
Your expected time commitment for this study is: up to 2 hours
Participation in the study will take the form of interviews.

**Confidentiality:**
For the purposes of this research project your comments will be anonymous unless you request that they are not. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all researcher notes and documents.
- Notes, interview transcriptions, and transcribed notes and any other identifying participant information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.
- Information from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result from this study.
- Each participant has the opportunity to obtain a transcribed copy of their interview. However not all collected material will be transcribed.
- None of the information collected will deal with commercially sensitive issues.

**Person to Contact:**
Should you have any questions about the research or any related matters, please contact the researcher at Phone 07932956511, E-mail ez28@sussex.ac.uk

**Consent:**

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

Anonymity

☐

 Not Anonymity

☐

Name   (in capital letters)  _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Researcher _____      _____ Date _____

# Appendix 5: Email correspondence with gatekeeper confirming permission of access to the organisation

From: ██████ <███████@werkshop.org.uk>
Sent: 24 November 2010 16:31
To: Eleftherios Zenerian
Cc: ████ █████
Subject: Re: (no subject)

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Ok lefteris
That sounds fine. ████ - cd u send out to all at the Werks that lefteris will be starting a social study at the
Werks soon to try to track our habits at werk and play. He will start by observing what we do and follow
up with interviews. If u can help him it will give us useful feedback on how effective we are as a working
community. Thanks ██

Sent from my iPhone

On 24 Nov 2010, at 16:01, Eleftherios Zenerian <E.Zenerian@sussex.ac.uk> wrote:

> Dear ██,
>
> I wanted to thank you for your time today. I am happy you find my
> research interesting and that you want to help me. I'll contact you
> sometime next week with more details. In the meantime you could
> communicate our plans to the people working there. Bye for now.
>
> Best regards,
>
> Lefteris
>
>
>
>
>
> --
> Lefteris Zenerian (Sociology PG research student representative) DPhil
> candidate - Department of Sociology School of Law, Politics and
> Sociology
> Office: Friston 247
> mobile: 07932956511

## Appendix 6: Fieldnotes sample

Thursday 13.01 (13:15-16:15, 2 women - 5 men)

Today I'm upstairs in one of the offices. Perry, Jake, Ralf, Rick and Anastasia have desks in this office. Most times they collaborate on projects with each other.

I arrived during lunch time. There are a lot of people in the office. Both people who work here and others from around the building. Anastasia, Rick, Perry, Ralf, Julie from downstairs. Everyone is casually dressed, as usual, jeans, t-shirts, sneakers, etc.

There's also a guy called Jason who is thinking of starting working at the werks.

Anastasia made fun of me. Told me to take a note that Perry picked up a cookie and ate it. Nobody else made fun of me. I wrote down "Perry ate cookie" and showed it to her. She laughed.

They all talk loudly and laugh. They talk about casual stuff. Rick talks about his childhood. Ralf is talking about his teen years and recalls when he was playing arcade games and won money. They try to remember the name of an old game show host...

Jake talks about a class he and Mike attend.

Rick, Ralf and Jake talk about their business cards. The discussion ends.

Rick asks Julie about a project she's working on, she replies casually and the conversation ends there. She didn't seem to want to share too much and he didn't ask anything more.

Jason has been sitting quietly, not very capable of participating in the conversation.

Julie asks Jason what he does and he explains.

She asks him if he came here mainly to work, or to network. He answers mainly to network. Rick explains to him that if he wants that he should go downstairs (coworkers) because up here it's for people who work seriously (didn't use these words).

Ralf goes on explaining how the werks is organised. What services are available.

Julie says that it is really irritating downstairs when people talk on the phone.

Rick advices Jason that he must be available if someone needs help because he gets jobs this way.

People help the new guy get work.

They advise him to come frequently and just inform people about what he is doing.

Anastasia talks a lot and others notice very attentively what she says.. Lunch lasted about 30 minutes. Now they all go back to work. Anastasia told me that if I wanted she'd be happy to do an interview with me.

Now Rick talks to the new guy about his work. He gives him networking advice. He says that even if he doesn't want to play the sociable game, just looking around he'll start picking up  what others do.

Rick tells the new guy about a project he is working on with David. He then asks whether he things it is interesting and capable of being commercialised and he casually replies "yeah...". He seems kind of lost...

That guy knows nothing about the Brighton scene. Rick talks about the skiff. That it is better and more creative and more things go on there.

Jason says that working by yourself is not very productive.

Rick now tells him whom he should try to hang out with from downstairs.

He tells him that there is a massive perpetual learning curve. He talks about himself and that he constantly discovering new things.

Jason leaves and says bye to the others, not me.

Perry is also moving.

They talk about moving and carrying things like movies, books around and that they don't throw them out cause they are awesome. They turn their chairs around and they talk about movies now. They like Alien.

Ralf put some music on. It's pretty loud. The others don't seem to mind. It's ambient and a bit folky, sounds like Calexico.

Jason came back and Rick is trying to convince him to come in for a while so they get to know each other.

The guys stop working every five minutes or so and say something funny.

Ralf answers the phone and turned the music off. Then he puts it on again. Now it sounds like Radiohead.

Perry went away. He came back after 20 minutes and went back to work. Jake put on headphones.

Perry teases everybody. He now asks people if they want tea. He cannot concentrate at all.

They turn around their chairs and talk about movies again. Jake didn't turn his chair around but still participates in the discussion.

They talk about Al Pacino and that he is different in his 70s movies. Cruising, Dog day afternoon, Serpiko.

# Appendix 7: Interview sample

**Tagg Interview**

**Why don't you tell me about yourself**

Sure

**What you do?**

I am a media consultant and trainer. The short version is I have a background in design and programming. My first job as a designer illustrator, it was a small studio so I was doing some programming as well, a company called X in London. I took some years out to become a rock-star with limited success, so I was doing web designers work paying the bills, then the web bubble burst did some e-learning. Got back into multimedia and Flash, set up XX, now it is large. I've got three partners, 15 employees, one-two Bafta awards for BBC, that's it really. So now I spend my time doing conferences, I blog which is you know a pretty major thing to maintain I'm sure you know, I do training and consultancy any kind of additional programming, of course most of my experience is in Flash, I'm doing a lot of research on HTML 5 and doing a training course on visual java script programming, doing a series of small conferences...

**Where are you from?**

I grew up in south London. I went to school in Wimbledon, I did two terms of the computer science degree course in Kingston polytechnic, but was rubbish, so I left.

**Why did you choose Brighton?**

(I've) been here for 10 years. Initially because we were getting priced out of London, so we decided to leave and we liked the sea so we came to Brighton to check it out, because it is quite creative, and also things like lots of cafes that are vegetarian, and over the last few years I've come to enjoy it for its digital scene

**You didn't know about it?**

I think I was aware of it, but because I worked from home I guess there were a few companies I applied for, I don't remember being a major reason

**Which companies did you apply?**

All the usual ones, Epic, Victoria Real. Epic is an e-learning company, very trendy they got swallowed up my Endemol, moved to London. I ended up getting a work for a start-up I was doing Java script.

**How was working for a company like?**

We were only three, I was there for three days per week, but I was still in music,

**What instrument did you play**

The bass, but I play a lot of things. I'm sure this must be very important for your study.

**No, but I'm a musician and I find interesting talking to people about music**

I find a correlation between technical people and musicians. Seems to, or at least in Brighton. When I moved here, everyone I met was a web designer and a dj. Most programmers are seem to be bass players.

**What is working Brighton like?**

I like that I live close to the town centre so I can walk into work. I like that there are lots of good places for lunch and coffee. I like that there's a little cluster of companies. Of course I like the Skiff and other co-working places like the Werks. In terms of networking and the fact that there are so many high profile digital people here, across all areas and technologies, is really important to me. Almost by accident I meet very well-known people in different areas, not just the areas that I am expert in, Python, Janko. Almost by accident you can meet very famous experts, like Jeremy Keith and Simon Witherston.

**Do you bump into them on pubs?**

I guess it's more the geek events that happen.

**You organise XY. Are you involved in any other events?**

I am involved with Build Brighton which is the hacker space, but I'm not actively involved. I am a regular attendee of things like 5poundapp, and I spoke at the Java script meetup. (I am) trying to think of the others... The Farm.

**Try to describe Brighton in a few words, what Brighton means to you.**

Ok, I like the sea. I really like the sea. That's cool. Convenience really. Socialising, creativity, technology. There you go!

**Try to describe an average day.**

This is difficult because my life is so fragmented, so, there's no average day really. I do a lot of traveling as well. Sometimes I work at home, sometimes I work at the skiff, sometimes I have to go to XX.

**what are you doing today?**

Today I'm going to write a blog post about a particle effect I made in canvas, and also there's another post for HTML 5 optimisation techniques. I'm preparing for java script training course in a couple of weeks, and more long term projects. I'm also doing an installation for a conference, writing a report for XX, one of its clients, preparing for other presentations.

**So no relaxation for today.**

No, also I have another client in NY I'm finishing up, 3d Flash consultancy.

**did you ever have any connections with the universities of wired Sussex?**

Yes, I'm very close friends with Wired Sussex and also probably when they did more events, and I designed their website and made their templates. At the time it was all HTML and CSS, so one of the first websites I did! Does not represent the more effective practice!

**Did you receive any funding or advertising?**

They support XY, I believe they are helping XX with some sort of consultancy.

**Any connections with the Universities?**

I've just been teaching for Sussex downs an 8 week module for them in processing, interactive installations, motion detection, the digital media degree course third year. I've spoken to their students a few times. I just had a meeting with this guy from Brighton to talk to her(?) students as well.

**How did the link with Sussex occur?**

I went to speak to their class a few times and one time I told them how to make particle systems, and they thought it would be good to get someone from the industry. It was bit of an experiment but it seems to work well.

**Do you hang out with people in your field?**

Yeah, all the time

**How often per week?**

Well, probably three times on average, maybe four.

**Does that happen here at the skiff or like events like XY?**

Both. All of those things

**How many people do you usually hang out with?**

No idea. Loads!

**Any people who are more close to you?**

People that run the events I tend to know very well. Like Bert and regular attendees to events plus there are people with whom I work with. I help them with their training they help me with my training. We got a lot to share with each other. As someone who is very used to doing visual programming I can help him out with getting into [incomprehensible] with java script and he is helping me out with practice for java script.

**Are any of these people competitors?**

I don't see anyone as a competitor, because there is overlap but, even if they did exactly the same thing. There is a good example. XX, as a digital media agency we do a lot of Flash work for TV companies and there's another company in Brighton called Little Loud who does pretty similar things to us, have similar clients, but we are friends with them. So, yeah. And Andy (points at another person who works in the skiff). We sometimes go after the same projects with Andy but we are friends with them to, so although there is competition and competitiveness we take it quite lightly and sort of, and we've collaborated on projects with them so from a company point of view it's very healthy very friendly. We share a lot and from the people working here, the individuals. I don't feel any sense of competitiveness at all. I feel like we are doing very similar things. Well I feel like I've got a very niche area. I don't really go for projects anymore. I do consultancy, my workshops, most of my work is unpaid, the majority of it. Blogging and learning and the creative projects, all these installations, I don't get money for it. It's just one of the things I do. I like that, I like being able to do things for free. That's important to me.

**In what sense, try to elaborate a bit.**

Well, because the training and the consulting is very well paid, means I am very free to do what I want with the rest of my time. Of course the rest of the time I need to learn and research and experiment in order to be a good consultant and trainer but it's really nice to choose what I learn and build and make, so I have many personal projects. So the fact that I can work and make this really cool thing for them and of course they got no money for it, I don't mind that. It's something I really want to do, learn in the process it's really cool to have that freedom to do it. All the conferences I do I don't get paid for it. And all the time I spend on my blog, the pod cast I don't get paid for any of that thing. I do those because I want to do them, and because they seem to be popular, which is rewarding. Of course I'm building my profile as well [*Something is moral if they have an idea of what is right? If action however is linked to a material benefit does it mean it is no longer moral? Does it point towards moral norms being appropriated by economy, or a culture that has reflects rational maximisation concerns?...*] which helps when comes to selling training or getting consulting, whatever, but mostly it is because I want to.

**Where do you hang out with people?**

Well it's usually here. Everyone seems to like working at Cafe Delice. They all seem to like hanging out at Taylor Street coffee.

**Do you know them for a long time**

I've known X for a year because he used to be (…), you know I'm primarily known for my Flash work and he was also well known in the Flash circuit, so that's how I know him. He doesn't do any Flash now. I'm still doing Flash. The other guy I probably know him for a year or two, we have a lot in common in terms of our approach.

**Try to reflect on what valuable information or knowledge is for you**

Most of my work is learning, right, and I like learning on my own but I prefer if I can ask the experts, and that can take many forms. So that's why I don't have any friends I socialise with outside the industry, which is a bit sad, but I always think that if I can socialise and learn stuff as well then I find that particularly rewarding. So just the fact that I get access to the experts, it means I can learn really effectively.

**What kind of knowledge or info is valuable to you?**

Sometimes its business oriented but I don't really concentrate, although I have a successful business and individually I am business, I concentrate on cool stuff and just hope this works and it usually does. With X of course is different cause I have two business partners so I'm not interested in business as such. I'm much more interested in best practice, technology, what happens in new languages, new research, conferences, you know.

**When you hang out do you share knowledge**

I do, if someone wants my help I very happily talk them through it and likewise I will grill anyone on a particular subject,

**Are people happy to help you?**

Yeah seems to be, I hope so. They may get annoyed..

**If someone was not very knowledgeable, would you be willing to help them, someone whom you would not expect them to reciprocate?**

If I got time I'll help them. Probably less patient with those people that cannot help me, which sounds selfish, but if I can't help them directly there are things I can point them to. Plus also things like when I present Async, XY in Brighton. That's teaching! So if I can do it to lots of people I'm much happier. [and I guess that then it becomes an event, and he builds his reputation much easier to just talking to individuals]

**When this sharing takes place is it for you a conscious?**

I'm not very calculating not usually anyway. Sometimes I'll specifically meet up with someone because I have a problem, most times it's just part of my lifestyle.

**Would you go to a friend first or online when having a problem?**

I usually go to the internet first because I know how busy my friends are. If it happens I can meet them at the same time, because I have a particular problem, that's good.

**Are these friends from around here or do you contact them through Skype of whatever?**

Both, I think it helps if they're nearby.

**How do you think it helps?**

Because it's less like, I'm asking you for help and it's more like, we're hanging out. [so, he doesn't want to appear instrumental! Also, another instance where proximity and volume matter]

**Would it be easy here in Brighton to find out if someone is trustworthy or knowledgeable?**

Yes!

**Why is that easy?**

Because if you go to all the events you see who's speaking and that's how you get to see what people do. Watching them present or chatting afterwards, they're showing you what they do.

**What are you doing when you are hanging out with people?**

It's usually in events so there's usually a presentation, and then chat afterwards I suppose. These are social situations where you can engage in those technical discussions. Sometimes I'll arrange to meet someone at a cafe or whatever and probably work together on our computers a bit, but most of the time is information transfer rather than low level technical questions,

**Which is the most important aspect of these interactions?**

It's learning and having fun. I think learning is having fun. I think is exposing you to different points of view. This has been a major thing for me recently, because, as someone who's very involved in the Flash community ...(inaudible) feedback from people interested in Flash. If I was surrounded only by Flash people I would get a very different point of view from what I get now, from [getting a] point of view from people outside it and use other technologies. I think it's very important all these points of view, otherwise you become insulated in your own thing, especially now that everything's changing and fragmenting, especially  when technology changes so frequently. You don't want to get yourself stuck with one group of people with one way of thinking, this is the most valuable thing about Brighton.

**That you can keep up with technological change?**

Yeah, but also that I get to meet people who are experts in all different areas of technology and that's really important, because it's not just the technical knowledge that I need. I also need to understand their attitude towards their chosen field. I need to understand what, as someone who's specialised in Flash for a long time, I need to understand what other people think about Flash, you can see it in this all Flash against Flash, a lot of hatred going on. It's really important for me to see why that is, rather than just be angry about it, rather than being bitter. A lot of the Flash community has helped me to understand why what's their experience of Flash that led to that attitude, and when you understand, once you've seen the worst uses of Flash ever, or you get annoyed, then you can start understanding then you can maybe present another point of view where Flash is still relevant and can be used. I understand what java script is capable of, I can say "actually for this thing, Flash is better".
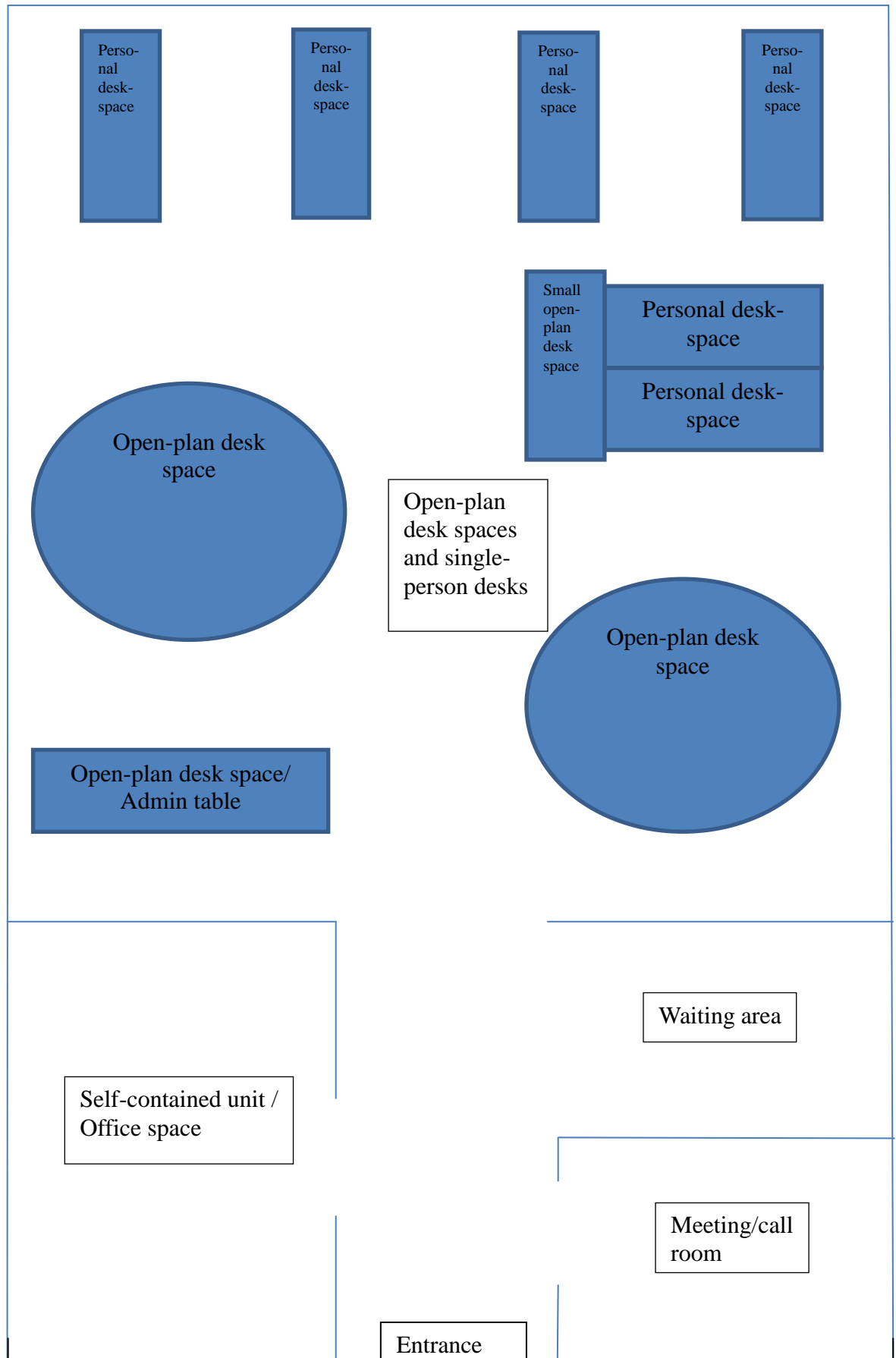
**Try to imagine yourself in another city where there would not be a digital media industry no events no people...**

This whole thing started for me 6 years ago when I went to my first Flash conference in NY. It opened my eyes to this Flash community. I met some people who were running a user group in NY so I started a user group here. Some of the most important people that I met, I'm sure you can make a career on your own, especially with the internet and twitter and your blog and Skype and that stuff, but it's not the same as meeting people. Definitely it would be a lot harder, even in London where so much happens, it's still hard to get there. When I lived in London, something could happen in Camden and it would take an hour. In Brighton it's 15 minutes. In London it's much more fragmented, much more secular. I'm a Flash guy, I'm going to go to this Flash event and that's the only effort I'm going to make.

**Did you ever participate in any online user communities, open source projects etc?**

Yeah, I am still in the paid vision team, worked with ...(inaudible) project through emails. Everyone was a different nationality, different language barriers, very strong feelings about particular things. Every project that works like that is very difficult. I think it's not just the language barriers but communicating by email forums is difficult. I've done big software projects with a lot of programmers. I have no idea how you would do that unless all the programmers are in the same place. I know some people do but I don't know how. I think it's critically important to maintain that communication, even when everyone is in the same room it's still hard to do it. [checks his mobile] Nine emails since we sat here.

**Appendix 8: Coworking space layout**

Personal desk-space

Personal desk-space

Personal desk-space

Personal desk-space

Small open-plan desk space

Personal desk-space

Personal desk-space

Open-plan desk space

Open-plan desk spaces and single-person desks

Open-plan desk space

Open-plan desk space/ Admin table

Waiting area

Self-contained unit / Office space

Meeting/call room

Entrance

**Office space (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)**

Entrance

Self-contained unit

Self-contained unit

Self-contained unit

Book shelves