

Media for Social Gain and Innovation

A Literature Review of Social Value Policy Guides

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1 Introduction

We are in a period of significant political and social change in the United Kingdom, in which there is a need to look afresh at the ways that we hold our communities together and help them grow. Our civic and community infrastructure is under pressure from numerous challenges, such as the upheaval of Brexit, the threat of environmental collapse, the quickening pace of technological innovation, coupled with the anxiety associated with a fluctuating global world order. It is no wonder that we find it difficult to come to terms with many of the transformations happening to the world, the increasing fragility of our sense of place, and the complexity of the relationships that we have with the people we encounter, with their different cultural histories and social outlooks. Coming to terms with this is no easy challenge, and has led some to suggest that this *Great Disruption* is the single most important test we are facing, and how we respond to this disturbance being the single most important priority of our generation (Fisher, 2016; Gilding, 2012).

The choices before us are fraught with risk. They are complex and suggest seemingly contradictory solutions, with no easy or clear pathways visible ahead. Some offer (and many take) refuge in easy explanations, made by people who tell us that they have straightforward ways of dealing with our ills, based on a simple cause-and-effect view of the world. We are told we can blame others for our problems, so that once we have excluded or degraded the social status of '*their kind*', all will be right. Alternatively, some offer universalistic solutions that purportedly encompass all facets of human nature, motivation and behaviour. If we only adopt their '*unique methodology*', or way of doing things, then it will be easier to keep everyone on track in a common enterprise. This is what Michael Oakeshott called a *universitas* (Oakeshott, 1975), a common enterprise in which we are compelled to engage, and based on which we are supposed to make the *right* kind of progress (i.e. *their* kind of unwavering ideologically defined progress).

Some go further, and ask us to put our faith in *magical solutions*. Solutions that originate in the seemingly neutral processing of data, and the deployment of algorithmically controlled autonomous technology and AI. Give ourselves over to the power of technology, they suggest, and we can reap many rewards and leave behind our humdrum, grounded lives, and achieve an almost god-like status as we roam freely in a digital paradise. Alternatively, some encourage us to submit before the plethora of choices with a fatalistic attitude. If we only give up trying to find new ways forward, so they claim, then we can find a degree of blissful contentment in our relative ambivalence. A certain level of personal satisfaction can be achieved, so this argument goes, by being comfortably

ensconced in nostalgically absorbed groups, constructed from romantically imagined descriptions of the past, and living off former glories, with a limited worldview of casual concerns and a chauvinistic sense of superiority and national exceptionalism (Anderson & Björkman, 2017).

Furthermore, we are relentlessly encouraged to act as happy consumers, who need only worry and obsess about cars, fashion, cooking, sports, superheroes, and so on. Our somatic stimulation is provided for us in shopping malls, on the internet and across numerous expanding entertainment platforms, keeping us addicted to extrinsic forms of novelty and stimulus (Eyal & Hoover, 2014). Adopting any of these outlooks is easy, so it is suggested, because they don't require us to expend any intrinsic mental energy thinking about the damage they might potentially cause. The thinking is conveniently done for us. The process and work involved in coming up with innovative collective solutions for ourselves, that would enable us deal with our most urgent social problems, is disassociated and deprioritised. For many, and as Robert Kegan reminds us, it is easier to live vicariously in a relatively undeveloped manner as an "*embeddual*," holding on to what we already know because it is carried with us naturally in our culture (Kegan, 1982, p. 116). It is useful to be reminded of what Carl Jung said when he described the difficulty dealing with the collective moral, social, spiritual and psychological challenges of each age. Jung cautioned that "no doubts can exist in the herd," because, "the bigger the crowd the better the truth," and consequently "the greater the catastrophe" (Jung, 1968, p. 481).

When it is easier to reduce everyone's place in the world to a set of functional transactions, motivated by self-interest, and measured by a financial record of profit and loss, or as a set of socially desirable behavioural responses, then it is possible to negate the more difficult and complex work involved in forming social alliances, figuring out how our interests can be affiliated and reciprocated through mutual inter-subjective understandings, and then coming up with a plan and model for future action that can be agreed by most. While being based on commonly defined and recognised standards of behaviour grounded in personal and community ethics. The difference between the former and the latter, however, is the extent to which the complexity of these problems are stated and outlined in advance, and the extent to which corresponding multifaceted and intricate solutions are needed. The question is, therefore, to what extent are we actively preparing ourselves to deal with them? Thankfully, these aren't the only options before us. Our starting point, moreover, is to recognise, as Hanzi Freinacht suggests, that in order to deal with these problems we may need to call upon a group of people

“Who are complex thinkers, who never resort to magic beliefs or reductionism, and who are moved by a profound inner depth, who can work transnationally and work to create a more listening society, and who can treat all of the other value memes with kindness and respect” (Freinacht, 2017, p. 350).

It is because we can look at things in different lights and from different perspectives that we can adopt, if we so desire, a range of different outlooks and attitudes by which we can address and deal with our pressing concerns, and thereby seek solutions to these challenges using more meaningful, developmental and resilient techniques of creative social expression and human-centred values. A set of values that start with the human experience, and which are grounded in the recognition that all have worth and all have agency. To what extent can we ensure that all will have a part to play in giving shape to the solutions that will serve the greater good? As John Ruskin reminds us, ‘the highest reward for a person’s toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.’ Personal self-interest has proven to be only a limited yardstick for defining human motivation and endeavour, and if we continue to pursue the largely selective and self-interest idea of the individualistic self, then, as the proverb goes, we will never plant trees for others to sit in their shade. The question, therefore, is how do we find meaningful ways to navigate through these challenges without resorting to a sense of entitlement, despondent wistfulness, isolationism, or fantastical thinking? How do we use our ingenuity, talent and creative potential for the good of all? How do we consolidate our presence in a changing world, and thereby ensure that we bequeath a socially just, fulfilling, sustainable, resilient and happy world to future generations?

This report questions if we have the right social, economic, cultural and civic mechanisms for us to engage with the challenge of the *Great Disruption*. It asks, in broad terms, what do we need to do in order to find ways to share both the responsibility for imagining the solutions we will need to meet the challenge of the *Great Disruption*, and also what the equitably rewards might be if we are to encourage shared, collaborative, innovative and forward-looking solutions? Principally the focus of this report is on the role that community and civic media might play in addressing, or helping to address, the many ongoing social, ecological, technological and political concerns that are challenging us. The aim of this report is to sketch out an initial framework in which our understanding of community and civic media can be realigned and incorporated along with the shift to a more socially defined set of processes that are happening elsewhere, specifically the social economy based on social value principles. These values have not yet been fully incorporated into the outlook or practices of the community and civic media movement, which is one of the main factors limiting the publicly accepted

role of community and civic media in the UK, and therefore its resilience, sustainability and effectiveness in practice. The aim of this discussion is to examine how community and civic media can be better aligned as part of the social economy, based on social value principles, both in practical terms, but more specifically in policy development terms.

The social economy is founded on the development of the model of social value. At its heart is a renewed sense of engagement between the state, the private sector and the social sector (i.e. not-for-private-profit social enterprises, charities and other socially focussed independent agents). This is what Adam Lent and Jessica Studdert call the *community paradigm*, which is recognised as

“A convergence around the idea that if we are to meet the short-term challenge of austerity and the long-term challenge of rising demand, citizens need to take more responsibility for their own and their communities’ well-being. That means doing something that the state and public sector find very hard: sharing and even handing over power and resources to communities” (Lent & Studdert, 2019, p. 5).

It is impossible to be comprehensive in any attempt to sketch this framework, so this must be regarded as a first step along the way. Indeed, given the complexity of the social economy and the social value ethos that community and civic media might be better aligned with, then it follows that the primary assertion of this report is that a much more detailed and strategic consideration of the role of community and civic media in relation to the principles of social value needs to be undertaken. There is an active network of researchers in the UK who study and evaluate community media, but there are no recent attempts to develop any long term or comprehensive studies of the community and civic media phenomenon that have gathered and tested this work in practice. Especially in relation to the emerging development of the social economy and social value movement. The last large-scale study was Destination Local, the Nesta supported investigation into the rise of the *hyperlocal* media phenomenon (Harte & Turner, 2015; Pearson, Kingsbury, & Fox, 2013). Many others are considering and testing these associated ideas and issues in different ways, so this report can only be one view among many, and is therefore limited by the capacity of its authors to assimilate an expanding and wide-ranging account of the interactions of different aspects of community and civic media as they interrelate with the renewed and emerging social economy.

A number of initial questions have helped to frame this discussion:

- Why is community and civic media absent from the social policy development process in the UK?

- Why are social economy reforms supportive of participatory and civic engagement in most other sectors, such as healthcare, digital engagement, local public service provision, but not for media?
- Why is it that many of the proposals to reform media only demonstrate a limited understanding of the practices and policies that define community and civic media?
- Why is it that approaches to social and economic resilience and diversification don't make reference to community media as a set of viable practices and approaches?
- Why is it that people media literacy models don't trust people to make their own media in socially accountable ways, except in limited and narrow circumstances?
- What is it about the studies of social change and social value that means there is generally no long-term investigation of community and civic media that test different models and theories of change, including collaborative and participative forms of media?

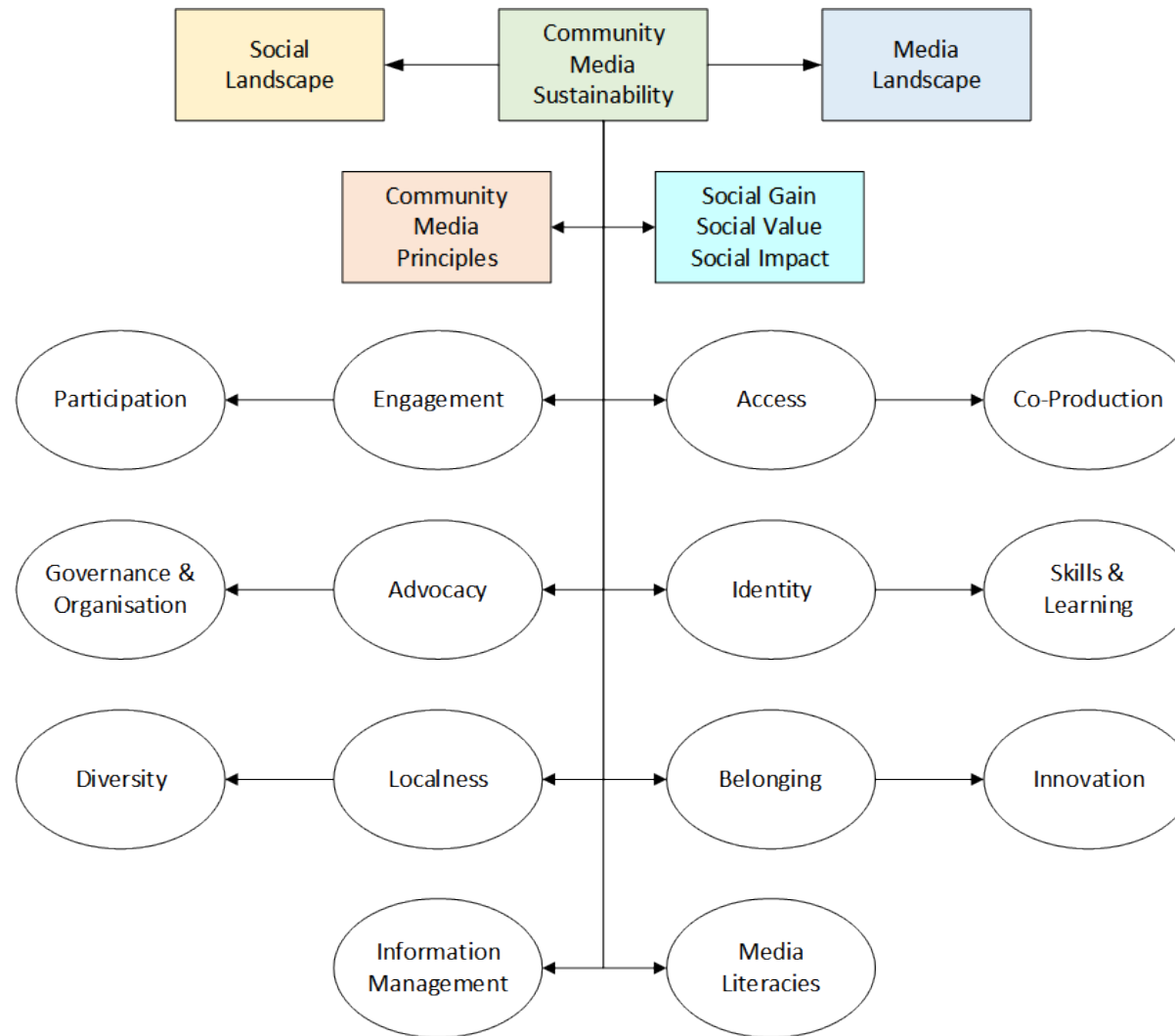


Figure 1 Scope and Overview

1.1 Terms Used

Bridging Capital: is a type of social capital that describes connections that link people across different communities, groups, or organisations. Bridging capital is found in the number and quality of the relationship and network that a person has with groups outside their core social group.

Bonding Capital: is a type of social capital that describes connections within a group or community based on their similarities and shared social experiences. Bonding capital is seen in the way that people identify with a group and share a common sense of belonging and relationships.

Civic Media: A broad term to include small, hyperlocal or specialist interest publications of projects focussing on civic engagement issues. It may be supported by members, and serves a geographic location with news and information on a not-for-profit or cooperative basis.

Community Media: A broad and pragmatic approach is taken here, but the core component is a group or project that is not-for-profit, which is managed and governed principally by volunteers, and which serves a specific geographic community, a community of identity, or a community of interest.

Cultural Capital: is a type of social capital that describes the available cultural assets that a person has in the form of education, style of speech, style of dress, and so on, and which enable social interaction between people acting in different social classes and communities.

Deliberation: is the ability of groups in a community to pool their thinking to look at difficult social problems and explore potential solutions that can contribute constructively to the development of innovative, resilient and sustainable solutions.

Hyperlocal Media: Is a term that is broadly used in by journalism-focussed publications, both online or print that create content designed to provide news or content services relating to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community.

Resilience: is the ability to change and adapt to circumstances, and to meet a wide range of challenges and problems by offering creative and developmental solutions on multiple levels and in collaboration with multiple partners and co-producers.

Social Media: Any forms of social interaction via media might be classed as social media, however, the specific use of data-driven group messaging and content sharing platforms would be largely recognised as the main form of group or community interaction.

Social Sector: Previously accounted for as the Third Sector or the Civic Sector, this is the combination of social, civic and public bodies that interact to provide services to the public on a not-for-private-profit basis, and separate from governmental control.

Sustainability: is the process of managing change in society that ensure that any investments that we make based on technology, social institutions and organisations will be made in a way that is balanced and in harmony, enhancing our potential to meet our present and future needs.

2 Political and Social Landscape

- Austerity – shift in provision of public services.
- Neoliberalism – dominant political and economic views.
- Brexit – recognition of anxiety about ‘left-behind.’
- Social diversification, technology shifts and generational change.

2.1 Austerity

The deep effects of the global recession of 2007-2011 are still being felt across the industrialised world, having had a profound impact, not only on the spending power of workers and businesses, but also on the capacity of public service providers to demonstrate how and why they invest in healthcare, policing, education, scientific development, physical infrastructure, and the many other forms of social services that hold modern societies together. Across the United Kingdom, for example, traditional approaches to public investment have been questioned and put under the spotlight. Challenging both the amount of money that is available to spend from the public purse, while simultaneously questioning the logic and thinking processes that local authorities and public bodies use to explain how this public money is spent. In addition to how value-for-money for the taxpayer is achieved. According to Claudia Wood and Daniel Leighton, public services “have been facing a period of unprecedented cuts as the economy, and the public debt recovers from one of the worst economic declines in living memory” (Wood & Leighton, 2010, p. 9).

The National Audit Office report that since 2010 successive governments have significantly limited funding for local governments in England as part of their “efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit.” The National Audit Office (NAO) states that “government funding for local authorities has fallen by an estimated 49.1% in real terms from 2010-11 to 2017-18,” which “equates to a 28.6% real-terms reduction in ‘spending power’ ([i.e.] government funding and council tax)” (Morse, 2018, p. 7). When this reduced level of funding is combined with new pressures on demand, such as an aging population, these new funding arrangements can themselves be said to have created “further pressures for the sector” (Morse, 2018, p. 5). The risk, moreover, and according to Social Enterprise UK Chief Executive Peter Holbrook, is that continuing austerity is “dismantling communities and local amenities,” thereby “deepening the UK’s social problems and leaving many people out in the cold (Temple, Emmerson, & Ruyver, 2017, p. 6).

While in purely narrow fiscal terms these extended austerity actions might be argued to be achieving their political objectives, they are, nonetheless, at risk of storing-up major problems in many other ways. Problems that will burden public authorities for years to come, and further reduce the collective capacity of society to innovate, act and intervene to prevent or alleviate systemic social failure. As Stephen Brien has argued for the Centre for Social Justice, it is a difficult balancing act to ensure that cuts and productivity improvements can be made in such a way that they can “avoid burdening future taxpayers with the ongoing and increasing costs of social breakdown” (Brien, 2011, p. 40).

Post-Brexit civil society has a difficult task in adapting to the nature and the mechanisms that will address the structural financial and social problems that affect the UK. Indeed, many of the solutions that have been used in the past will no longer be suited to the challenges of the future, especially given the scale of social change and division that needs to be dealt with. British society is less inclusive and less equal than at any time since the 1920s. According to The Equalities Trust, the “UK has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the developed world” (Wyporska, 2018), and local communities feel less empowered to do anything about this than at any time before (Kerslake, 2018; Unwin, 2018a). At the same time, demands on public services have been rising and creating a squeeze, not only on basic living standards of many low-income individuals and families, but also on the ability of the population more generally to access and use shared and collectively provided services that have traditionally given strong forms of social identity, security and protection from the wider fluctuations of the market economy. The recent report from the Work and Pensions Committee of the House of Commons highlights the risk that more people are “trapped in poverty” as a result of government administrative changes and policies, than are being assisted (Committee, 2019). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation calls this an *unravelling* of efforts to reduce poverty levels. An unravelling which is particularly pernicious when “in-work poverty is increasing faster than employment,” leaving many trapped in a cycle of financial forces beyond their control (Barnard et al., 2018, p. 6).

The austerity agenda was first endorsed by the coalition government of 2010, and then the successive Conservative administrations from 2015. The austerity agenda has focused on driving down service-based expenditure in local government and social infrastructure spending more generally. Catherine Walker points out that the “effects of these two drivers is still very much being felt,” and that

estimates suggest that a “£14.4 billion supply-and-demand gap in public services” will have become embedded in public finances by 2020 (C. Walker, 2018, p. 7). In addition, the response to the recession and the austerity measures that followed, have not been uniformly applied. Some places have been hit harder than others. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the “poorest places and the poorest people are being the hardest hit, with those least able to cope with service withdrawal bearing the brunt of service reduction” (Hastings, Bailey, Bramley, Gannon, & Watkins, 2015, p. 3). At the same time the recovery from the downturn has been slower and less evenly distributed among social groups and geographic regions than in periods of recovery from previous recessions and downturns (TUC, 2019). This means that there are more places in which poverty and deprivation are acutely and structurally embedded, which can be seen in the growing divide, for example, between London and the South East, and the rest of the United Kingdom, resulting in a “geographically unbalanced economy” (Kibasi et al., 2018, p. 18). According to Catherine Walker in a report for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

“The recession and austerity measures hit some places harder than others – particularly those with already higher levels of deprivation – which are also the places least likely to be benefitting from the current economic recovery. There are now ‘hidden pockets of poverty’ and ‘doughnuts of deprivation’ (inner city areas) all over Britain, as well as an increasing divide seen between the wealth of London and the South East, and the rest of the country” (C. Walker, 2018, p. 7).

Alongside reductions in funding, local authorities have also had to deal with a significant growth in demand for key services, which are additional to the capacity of local government to absorb other cost pressures. According to the National Audit Office, demand has increased for homelessness services and adult and children’s social care. From 2010-11 to 2016-17 the number of households assessed as homeless and entitled to temporary accommodation under the statutory homeless duty increased by 33.9%; the number of looked-after children grew by 10.9%; and the estimated number of people in need of care aged 65 and over increased by 14.3%” (Morse, 2018, p. 7). As has been noted by successive political administrations, however, “the public sector currently spends significant sums treating the symptoms of social problems, but considerably less tackling their causes.” This is because, as Emily Bolton and Louise Savell note, “budgets are so tied-up in crisis expenditure that there is not enough available to tackle the underlying causes” (Bolton & Savell, 2011, p. 11). Local authorities have therefore been forced to change their approach to managing reductions in income, while simultaneously attempting to maintain their capacity to provide essential services. Local authorities have, according to the National Audit Office, been offsetting funding by significantly

reducing non-statutory forms of spending, in addition to reducing their contributions and drawing from their reserves, while more aggressively seeking ways to increase “alternative income such as commercial trading profits or external interest” (Morse, 2018, p. 7).

In the ten years that austerity has been enforced in the United Kingdom much has changed, and what was once regarded as a relatively stable political and administrative environment, is now regarded by some as increasingly unbalanced and subject to disruptive forces of social, technical, environmental and global-political challenges. For example: Brexit, the rise of populist political movements, and the failure of market-based policy programmes (i.e. the failure of public contracts with companies like Corillion),¹ are all part of a pattern of political interaction in which there is an overall lessening of businesses and public authorities ability to plan ahead when compared with pre-austerity and pre-Brexit indicators. As Nick Temple argues in his survey of enterprise attitudes for Social Enterprise UK, the landscape now looks very different and the signs are that there has been an overall reduction in the capacity of the state to meet the future needs of its population. What has changed in the preceding ten years, according to Temple, is the “operating environment,” meaning that both private providers and public services are faced with “an increased demand for working capital, cashflow pressures, and an overall reduction in business optimism” (Temple, 2017, p. 3).

As the National Audit Office indicates, while many local authorities have done well to stabilise their finances, there has been a considerable reduction in their “scope for local discretion in service provision.” Austerity is limiting and eroding the ability of local authorities and other public bodies to act independently, as they “strive to generate alternative income streams.” The National Audit Office points out that the “current pattern of growing overspends on services and dwindling reserves exhibited by an increasing number of authorities is not sustainable over the medium term,” and that the financial future for many authorities is “less certain than it was previously.” As austerity continues to be applied in the form of deeper cuts to local authority budgets, there is a concern, according to the National Audit Office, that “much needed reforms to the local government financial system are themselves becoming a risk factor in the search to provide “longer-term value for money” (Morse, 2018, p. 11).

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-44383224>

2.2 Neoliberalism

To put the challenge of austerity in context, it is worth noting how the cuts agenda has accompanied an economic philosophy which has dominated and informed British political thinking and economic practice for more than four decades, and which is increasingly critiqued under the banner of 'neoliberalism' (Mason, 2019). Originating with the economic reforms of the 1970s and 1980s, and associated with the political programmes of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the USA, neoliberalism has been described as a "crusade of popular capitalism that would enfranchise the many in the economic life of the nation" (Dunning et al., 2017, p. 3). However, since the financial crash of 2008, neoliberalism has become a target of increasing criticism, particularly on the basis of the now well documented failure of 'trickledown economics'" (Hutton, 2011; Unger, Stanley, Gabriel, & Mulgan, 2019, p. 23). The philosophy of neoliberal economics posits that wealth which is created in the globalised speculative financial markets are expected to 'raise-all-boats'. This rising-tide hypothesis is said to be able to deal with both absolute and relative poverty by introducing a radical marketisation of the economy. Hence, in the 1980s governments and local authorities were compelled to privatise what were regarded formally as essential public services which had previously been regulated and run by the state as part of the post-war settlement associated with Keynesian demand management policies (Blyth, 2013).

Keynesian economics aimed to promote growth by way of full employment, the provision of universal services in a contributory welfare state, coupled with a mixed social democratic approach to the economy, i.e. as a combination of regulated private and state-backed industries. The neoliberal model, however, rejected this approach, and resorted to a neoclassical economic outlook that argued that more efficient economic decisions would take place if they were unhindered by government in the marketplace, and that government's job was to remove impediments and barriers to the free operation of the market (Lent & Studdert, 2019). Following the economic ideas of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, neoliberalism posited that public wellbeing is more effectively driven by people acting in their self-interest in the form of private profit, when they are able to interact in open and publicly tradable stock exchanges. This ethos was translated into policy in the UK through reforms leading to financial de-regulation and privatisation, with the marketisation of the housing provision through right-to-buy, and with the enforcement of economic procurement and tendering in the marketplace by public authorities. The so-called guiding hand of the marketplace, according to the neoclassical economic approach, is said to be sufficient to promote both positive individual outcomes and positive social outcomes, because they originate in a *de facto* rational framework of

transactions and exchanges, which take place internationally, and which occur through global flows of financial interaction, financial innovation and investment. Many have argued, however, that neoliberalism provided only a partial and incomplete conceptual and political framework which was reductive and narrow, and which ultimately resulted in the financial crash of 2008, and the subsequent need for trillions of dollars of government bailouts to prop-up failing banks and a dysfunctional financial market, from which we are still struggling to extricate ourselves (Piketty, 2014).

It is now clear that the central problem of neoliberal economics is its inability to deal with rapidly expanding inequality, and the swift reduction in the wider distribution of wealth. Neoliberal economics has demonstrated over time that its economic policies have resulted in a displacement of the benefits of social growth away from the general population and into the hands of a private 'elite' made up of oligarchs and billionaires, the so-called 1%, who are profiting from the exploitation of their privileged positions in structurally biased markets. According to the Centre for Local Economic Strategies,

"The UK is the fifth largest economy in the World, yet many of its local areas experience economic stagnation, falling wages, rising levels of poverty, and public sector austerity. The economy is not working for all; inequality is now entrenched with 10% of households owning 45% of the nation's wealth" (CLES & Council, 2019, p. 8).

Counter to the promise of the deregulated market economy, evidence now suggests that rising inequality has the effect of limiting economic growth and reducing the capacity of anyone but the richest communities to innovate, invest and deal with productivity lags. According to Social Enterprise UK the "long-run increase in income inequality not only raises social and political concerns, but also economic ones," because it "tends to drag down GDP growth" (S. E. UK, 2016, p. 6).

The unintended outcome of this is a monopolistic bias, which has not been corrected by governments in any significant ways, is leading to a narrowing of the number of self-regulating free agents and companies who are able to act independently in these markets. This has subsequently resulted in waves of unchecked consolidation, as companies are bought-up by larger players in order to capture intellectual property, or to consolidate their market position. Business competition is now justified on global and supra-national terms that spread-out well beyond individual consumer, local community or national concerns, thereby reducing the ability of any individual country to regulate businesses that have a global footprint, like Google, Amazon, Facebook and so on. The result is that

global markets are now controlled by fewer people, thereby concentrating wealth creation in ever narrower elites, and less through market investment and innovation. Instead of competition, market advantage is gained through monopoly practices of aggressive acquisition and rentiering. Ironically, the neoliberal principles that purport to promote competition and market diversity, have themselves ended up reducing the scope for diversification and merit-based innovation. They have, moreover, promoted an economic culture which, at its extremes, has become a form of muscular monopolisation that sees market domination as a virtue, and which is opposed to forms of economic diversity and social democracy.

However, and as Unger *et al* argue, “no economic regime forms an indivisible system, there simply on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.” Instead, as Unger *et al* argue, “institutional and ideological orders are ramshackle constructions,” in that they change, and we change with them, “step by step and part by part.” The neoliberal economic model, therefore, does not operate in isolation, but is part of a wider set of processes and dynamics that must also be accounted for if we are to understand the context of our present predicaments. As Unger *et al* state, “fragmentary, piecemeal, and discontinuous change is not only compatible with the transformation of such structures; it is close to being the only way in which they change” (Unger *et al.*, 2019, p. 26). The question is, moreover, what are the other associated structures that characterise our present social and economic malady, and what can we do about them? As Unger *et al* argue “the central task for policy in the next few decades is to make the... economy radically more inclusive.” Undoubtedly, we cannot maintain our collective faith in the outdated and dysfunctional neoliberal economic model, which has taken us down so many blind alleys. At the same time, we also need to resist the temptation to return to earlier forms of systems-based economic regulation and centralisation, that we might (somewhat nostalgically) associate with past securities, i.e. as nationalisation or a centrally managed state service. Nor can we, as Unger *et al* urge, “rely solely on retrospective redistribution if we want to build a more ‘human economy’” (Unger *et al.*, 2019, p. 30). Instead we must build and advocate for an economic and social model that has its own combination of deep-rooted virtues and practices that are suited to the future needs of a rapidly changing climate, to the globalisation of our social, cultural and economic experience, and are able to cope with the technological disruption that comes with globalised information and communication technologies. The social economy is a response to these challenges, but it needs to be considered in its proper context and against the background of a full range of changes and challenges.

2.3 Brexit and Decision Making

The all-consuming presence of Brexit in British political debate has many subsidiary and precedent roots that set the frame for the ongoing analysis and discussions that continues to take place both in parliament and across the media - for which many are hoping to resolve before long-term damage is done. According to Sophie Gaston and Sacha Hilhorst, while a “nostalgic rhetoric” played a part in the Brexit debate, there was also a clear indication that long-standing grievances were also being addressed in the referendum (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018, p. 16). For example, de-industrialisation casts a long shadow in many UK communities, who believed that successive governments had “turned a blind eye” to the concerns of their communities, and that the “decline of many of the institutions that have traditionally given representation and voice to the working classes,” has meant that many people felt alienated from the civic process and believe that they have no effective representation. But as Gaston and Hilhorst go on to note, “the ongoing effects of the global financial crisis, which accelerated labour market shifts towards short-term, insecure contracts, has [also] expanded economic precariousness to the middle classes” (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018, p. 17). This shift has added to the feeling of dislocation of many people across Europe, not just working class communities in the UK. Nowhere is this more prominent than in the dysfunctional UK housing market that favours property in London and the Southeast, while introducing a divide between those who can buy and those who must rent. According to the Social Economy Alliance

“Our housing market is dysfunctional. In London and the South East, supply does not meet demand. In other parts of the country, entire streets lay empty. Elsewhere, second or third homeowners have changed the face of entire communities. Wealth is increasingly concentrated in one corner of the country, and with those already on the property ladder. Buy-to-let has helped segregate asset owners on the one hand and those who are excluded from ownership on the other. Meanwhile 1.8 million households are currently on the social housing waiting list. Half a million households are overcrowded, and house building is at its lowest rate since the 1920s. The house building market is increasingly concentrated in a handful of volume housebuilders —just eight companies were responsible for half of the houses built in 2013. These housing providers dominate the market and make assumptions about what housing consumers want, need and can afford” (Dunning et al., 2017, p. 10).

Moreover, there is an additional sentiment associated with Brexit that is documented in the report of the Civil Society Futures commission, where it is noted that

“Decision making, ownership and power [have] become further and further out of reach for most of us, and we face the prospect of a future in which more and more people feel unheard, feel a loss of control and lose trust in the institutions that frame their lives” (Unwin, 2018a, p. 10).

This feeling of not being heard cuts across social boundaries, and highlights a different set of tensions within the social mindset, which can't in themselves be explained simply as a consequence of globalisation or technological change. Instead they must also be considered as part of an ongoing shift in expectations about where power resides, and who has a meaningful say in the way that our communities are organised. As Tom Crompton *et al* note, our political and social leaders seem "incapable of taking the leadership decisions necessary to bring about transformational change" (Crompton et al., 2016, p. 1). Which, as the Cynthia Gibson suggests, has the potential to lead to "backlash against the 'establishment'" if people believe they have little say in the principles and the decision making process that affects them (Gibson, 2017, p. 4).

The successful message of the leave campaign in the Brexit referendum was to 'take back control', which resonated across a wide range of communities, fuelled in part by a cynicism towards those involved in the decision-making process, the values that they represent, and the institutions that facilitate the decisions that they take. But as Tom Crompton and Paul Hanel argue, the appeal of this message was also rooted in a deeper set of values, including a strong desire for "self-direction," which was activated despite the incessant warnings of negative economic consequences that were framed by the remain campaign, the so called 'project fear.' Elena Blackmore, Bec Sanderson and Richard Hawkins have identified a framework of values that suggest that motivations and patterns of relationships can be considered as an interplay between "*self-transcendence values*," a sense of "*openness to change*," a belief in "*self-enhancement*" and a preference for "*conservation*" (Blackmore, Sanderson, & Hawkins, 2014, p. 7). According to Blackmore, Sanderson and Hawkins, "values have clear influence on how we think and act," which reflect the patterns we see in the relationships between these values (Blackmore et al., 2014, p. 8). As Tom Crompton Paul Hanel note, while Brexit can be considered in many ways, it is chiefly fuelled by differing values and worldviews that anticipate a different set of goals and responses to future uncertainties (Crompton & Hanel, 2018).

In the Brexit debate the focus is often expressed in terms of narrow constitutional, economic, technical and administrative functions. Whereas the decisions are most often led (and perhaps won) by emotional appeals to different forms of personal, collective or inherent social values, such as a sense of belonging, a sense of community, and a sense of agency and autonomy over one's basic life functions and wellbeing. The increasingly precarious nature of much of the modern economy is robbing people of their sense of stability and continuity, and so many fixate on the perceived failings and

barriers to full social, economic and community participation. Which are in turn perceived as harder to access by people like themselves, which in turn leads to a distrust of others who are perceived to benefit from access to universal social security and welfare services, which are described by politicians as an ongoing luxury we can no longer afford (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010).

2.4 Social Change

The Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy notes that "if our political institutions lose their authority, people will cease engaging with them and/or seek answers elsewhere" (Economy, 2019, p. 7). Similarly, and as Emily Redmond, Alice Mathers and Anna Osbourne note, if the political process is reduced to a series of transactions, then we are unlikely to be able to build a "sense of belonging" in which people are recognised as a "valued part of a supportive community" (Redmond, Mathers, & Osbourne, 2018, p. 2). There have been many warnings given, and attempts made, to address the perceived loss of community associated with contemporary social life (Robert D. Putnam, 2000; Robert D Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2003). Perhaps most prominently in recent years was the Big Society initiative (Office, 2010), which was an attempt at social devolution of public services, which unfortunately become entangled in the austerity drive, the Brexit debate, and the various attempts at responding to the associated shifts in civic society structures and our contemporary patterns of living. In recent years these have included: Sir John Timpson's report for the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's on changes affecting the highstreet (Millington et al., 2018; Timpson, 2018); Dame Casey's review for the Department for Communities and Local Government, into the practice of social migration and integration in the UK (D. L. Casey, 2016); Dame Frances Cairncross' review for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport of journalism and civic reporting practices in the UK (Cairncross, 2019); the UK Governments Civic Society Strategy (Office, 2018) and the UK Governments wellbeing strategy calling for a Connected Society to tackle the scourge of loneliness (DCMS, 2018a; Office, 2018).

Each of these policy reviews are rooted in the need to improve the quality of life of people living in different communities, by seeking to address, what Catharine Walker calls the sense of "community spirit" (C. Walker, 2018, p. 8). They also set out the parameters and interactions by which the UK government's role as a provider and enabler of public services is defined, and the extent to which government is willing to offer support for civil society capacity building to underpin those services. As Julia Unwin, chair of the Civil Society Futures commission notes, we are at one of those times, "a time of huge opportunity and possibility," when "technological advances can help us to

communicate and collectively develop solutions in ways that our grandparents in civil society could never have imagined” (Unwin, 2018a). The question is, though, to what extent, and in what way are we gearing up to meet these challenges, and how urgent is the need to respond and plan if we are to avoid significant social breakdown and dysfunctional civic responses? As Adam Lent and Jessica Studdert argue in their report for the New Local Government Network

“People’s growing desire for influence over the decisions that affect their lives can clearly result in extremely negative outcomes. It can lead to alienation and frustration if people observe they do not have their desired influence. That alienation can turn to anger: there are always opportunists ready to channel a sense of being aggrieved into social division and scapegoating in order to advance their own political careers” (Lent & Studdert, 2019, p. 31).

The important point, according to Chilton *et al*, is to recognise that these are “bigger-than-self problems,” which are likely to be easier to address if we understand the way that they are framed in relation to the diversity of our values, and the tools that we have to support and enact those values, rather than just the economic or technical capacity that they depend on (Chilton, Crompton, Kasser, Maio, & Nolan, 2012, p. 10). According to Catherine Walker “a loss of community spirit in 21st century Britain appears to be widespread” (C. Walker, 2018, p. 8). The challenges of social change are therefore demanding of our attention, and require responses that come from all quarters of society, and not just the usual suspects, and those who feel they are entitled through their assumed social position to control the mechanisms that facilitate change; or those who are empowered through their qualifications, social status or their wealth to express subjective social views and exercise their voices. As Armstrong *et al* noted in their report for Nesta on the need to foster a creative and experimental culture over the next decade, much of the social change that we are likely to experience will “flow from external drivers and technological progress,” such as Brexit (i.e. changes in trading mechanisms), the ageing population (i.e. changes in medical treatment), the effect of automation on work expectations (i.e. middle-class professions being subject to machine operations), the expansion of autonomous learning technologies and AI (i.e. in data analysis and predictive capability), and the advance of other technologies such “virtual and augmented reality” (i.e. in terms of improved mediated interaction and techno-social engagement) (Armstrong et al., 2018, p. 4). The implications of the deployment of these technologies go far beyond the lab, the workshop and the IT department, and will undoubtedly define the wider landscape of politics, civic engagement, social communications and community resource management for years to come (G. T. Foundation, 2018a).

This means, however, that we must occasionally pause and foster moments in which we can reflect and redefine the basis on which we collectively move forward. It is essential, therefore, that we keep looking for ways that we can facilitate an inclusive response that addresses people's needs and desires for a more cohesive feeling of community, as a human issue, rather than seeking to impose technical and behavioural policies as part of an administrative series of solutions. As Uffe Elbæk points out, we are facing three major challenges that will to define our societies for the foreseeable future:

1. "We have a crisis of empathy that blocks us from really putting ourselves in the other's place, and which fuels xenophobia, nationalism and narrow-mindedness.
2. We have a structural crisis that makes it difficult for us to renew our welfare societies, and we are structurally discovering that neither the market, the public sector nor the NGOs can solve the problems within their own closed systems, but really need to find new ways of collaborating across sectors.
3. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, we have a resource crisis that means we are approaching the limits of how many "western" lifestyles our planet can sustain. All this means that we need to find radically new ways of communicating, of living, of working, travelling and creating value" (Uffe Elbæk in Money & Cause, 2013, p. 7).

At the same time, and as Sophie Gaston and Sacha Hilhorst suggest, we also have to address these problems while continuing to deal with the "turbulence of de-industrialisation." With its potential to lead us into an age of isolationism, coupled with a perceived "erosion of respect, as societies emphasise rights over responsibilities," and combined with a feared "collapse of public safety," in which crime and opportunism are feared to be menacing our communities (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018, p. 18). According to Ingrid Abreu Scherer the crisis of isolation and loneliness only add to this anxiety. Isolation is about the "number and type of social connections we have, not about how we feel those relationships are going." So according to Scherer "being socially isolated could mean having few or infrequent social relationships, while loneliness reflects our feelings about those relationships." In these circumstances a "person could be isolated but not lonely, or could feel lonely while being surrounded by other people" (Scherer, 2019, p. 4). Ironically, as our social connections expand online, the valuable real-world connections and forms of social capital that we have treasured in the past are threatened with becoming obsolete. As Jennifer Wallace notes when describing the potential role for an enabling form of civic engagement, the benefits of social collaboration are well documented, and include:

- "Making better use of resources by tapping into individual / community capacity.
- Increasing service effectiveness by increasing user satisfaction.
- Tackle service failures.
- Identify solutions to complex problems.

- Strengthen existing reform approaches (ie e-government).
- Improve democratic governance and build public trust.
- Strengthen communities and build social capital” (Wallace, 2013, p. 42)

Adam Lent and Jessica Studdert draw a distinction between two underlying trends that they identify as emerging from our changing social, cultural, political and technical experience, which they suggest have “significant implications for the legitimacy of the previous paradigms” of social engagement that we have been used to. These paradigms are the difference between the state, the market and the community provision of public services. Firstly, Lent and Studdert identify the “challenge of rising demand”, in which we have to recognise that there is a tension between the “shorter-term financial and policy factors” that we deploy to manage social change, and the “deep underlying structural shifts including demographic change and entrenched socio-economic inequalities” that are challenging the “long-term viability of public services as currently constituted.” Secondly, they note that there is also a growing “popular desire for more influence” in the way that social life is regulated and managed. According to Lent and Studdert, this has to be seen in the “context of the breakdown of traditional social structures” which are being “catalysed by the possibilities of technology and social networks,” which in turn are leading to a growing expectation that people should be able to exert more “meaningful control over their lives” (Lent & Studdert, 2019, p. 21).

When we add the urgent and pressing need to respond to climate breakdown, which according to Institute for Public Policy Research “will fall hardest on the poorest” and the “most vulnerable” in society (Laybourn-Langton, Rankin, & Baxter, 2019, p. 5), we have to consider how negative effects on the human capacity to form relationships might be squeezed by the potential to accelerate and spread these destabilising effects in ways that have never been experienced before in human history. As Laybourn-Langton *et al* note,

“Environmental change resulting from human activity has reached a global scale and is occurring at unprecedented speed. Aggregate human impacts on the environment range from local to global scales and are overwhelmingly negative, altering and destabilising the function of the natural systems on which human societies depend” (Laybourn-Langton et al., 2019, p. 9).

There are therefore many challenges to be addressed, and we need to be sure that we have the prerequisite mix of resilient (i.e. adaptable) social systems, policies and cultures that will enable us to deal with them in a way that is flexible, robust and timely manner, which in turn is likely to generate sustainable innovation based on creative endeavour, knowledge and analysis, rather than relying on precedent or pre-ascribed roles in the existing social order.

2.5 Change in the Social Sector

The last couple of years have seen some major reviews into the role of civil society and the social sector in the UK framed around the Localism Act (Government, 2011), the Big Society regulations (Office, 2010), and the Social Value Act (Office, 2016). At the same time there have also been a series of independent reviews into the nature and role of civil society in the UK, such as the Civil Society Futures project chaired by Julia Unwin (Unwin, 2018a), the DCMS/OCS Civil Society Strategy (Office, 2018), the review of the Social Value Act by Lord Young (Young, 2015); Locality's Commission on the Future of Localism (Kerslake, 2018); the IPPR's Future of Civil Society in the North programme (Raikes, 2019), and more recently the establishment of the Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy (Economy, 2019). Each of which, according to Catherine Walker, "underline the importance of a strong civil society in underpinning a strong economy and a strong Britain" (C. Walker, 2018, p. 8). Each of these reviews, it should be noted, has to be seen in the context, and against the backdrop, of continuing government austerity policies and practices, meaning that the social reform and civic society ethos of recent policy frameworks continues to be defined in terms of governments, public bodies and social sector organisations learning how to "deliver more for less" (Brien, 2011, p. 10). As the National Council for Voluntary Organisations notes, smaller charities and social sector organisations have also been subject to significant cuts and a consolidation of funding, despite the projected growth in the need for their services (NCVO, 2019b). Which means that we need to be cautious about what we claim as success in terms of civic engagement if it is not being funded and supported for the long term.

The social sector, as has been noted, has not been immune from the effects of austerity, though it has benefited to some extent from a shift in thinking and practice about where and how public services are delivered. At the same time as the cuts have been imposed on local government there has been a move away from the legacy view that only governments and public bodies are able to provide public services to any reasonable standard; or, that private companies who are contracted in the free market are typically best able to provide efficient services that are value for money to the public purse. As Claudia Wood Daniel Leighton note, "third sector organisations have increasingly been used to deliver public services over the last decade" (Wood & Leighton, 2010, p. 16). This process has continued over the succeeding decade, which means that we are now witnessing "an unprecedented shift towards plurality in public services, with commercial, state and third sector organisations working alongside one another" (Wood & Leighton, 2010, p. 15). As the author of the private members bill that introduced the Social Value Act, Chris White MP notes, it is estimated that

“Social value is already shaping £25bn worth of public sector spend - delivering training, apprenticeships, improving the environment, supporting local businesses, supporting charities and social enterprises, supporting British Steel manufacturers, helping people with disabilities into work, employing ex-offenders, tackling homelessness, reducing food waste and more. In short, the taxpayer is getting more for their money. Yet the Act is still only scratching the surface of what is possible. The public sector spends around £268bn annually. Extending the Act to cover all public-sector spending would generate more than ten times its current impact” (White, 2017, p. 4).

What we have seen recently, then, is an increasingly pragmatic and integrated approach to the procurement and development of public services as defined in the Social Value Act (NCVO, 2019a). The Social Value Act provides a framework, specifically for local government procurement in England, in which a set of social sector providers (i.e. a mix of charities, public mutuals and not-for-private-profit organisations) are able to bid to run services as long as they are able to demonstrate a defined social value character in the provision of those services (S. E. UK, 2012b). There are similar approaches in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which as Geoff Mulgen *et al* note, “have also passed similar initiatives.” In 2014, for example, the Scottish Government passed the Procurement Reform Act, while the Welsh Assembly developed a model for Community Benefits Guidance. As Mulgen *et al* note

“The Scottish model of procurement includes public services and goods focusing on a business-friendly and socially responsible procurement approach. The Welsh proposal highlights the idea of sustainable development as the central organising principle” (Mulgan *et al.*, 2019, p. 9).

What ties these approaches together, however, and as Paul Breckell, Kate Harrison and Nicola Robert note, is a recognition that “in an environment when funding is tight, it is likely to be increasingly important for charities [and other social sector organisations] to be able to demonstrate the impact of their activities” beyond that of the bottom line financial cost of providing the service (P. Breckell, Harrison, & Robert, 2016, p. 6). Instead, and as Social Enterprise UK note, it is now essential to enable and support “businesses that exist primarily for a social or environmental purpose,” which are able to “tackle social problems, improve people’s life chances, and protect the environment.” It is also possible, according to Social Enterprise UK, that social sector enterprises have the added benefit of creating a greater capacity for “shared wealth” and for giving people an enhanced “stake in the economy” (S. E. UK, 2012a).

We are moving, then, according to Adam Lent and Jessica Studdert, towards a “community paradigm,” in which there is a “transfer of power” between the state, the private sector and the social sector. This transfer of power is said to have the capacity to mobilise communities in the “cause of prevention” rather than recovery, and is said to ensure that the “future sustainability” of each community is considered before factors of economic efficiency. According to Lent and Studdert this shift to a mixed and pluralistic model of public procurement “both responds to, and makes positive use of, the public demand for greater influence over elite decision-making.” In that it “seeks to transform this into increased civic participation and a willingness to take responsibility for beneficial individual and collective outcomes” (Lent & Studdert, 2019, p. 33). As Emma Taylor-Collins notes, “we are living through a time of profound economic, social and technological change and the environment in which charities are working is altering dramatically.” At each point in these changes there is a whole set of new challenges that need to be addressed. Occasionally this may result in some high-profile failures, notes Collins, so it is important that organisations and enterprises operate in a social environment that is prepared to facilitate “greater scrutiny of the sector than ever before” (Taylor-Collins, 2018, p. 5).

It is essential, therefore, as Nick Temple, Charlie Wigglesworth and Chris Smith note, that the “response of legislators and progressive organisations across sectors” has to be aligned. As Temple, Wigglesworth and Smith describe, we have to

“Look at value not in purely financial terms, but to also think about social and environmental value as a means of engaging and involving customers and communities; and to do this to ensure the best possible use of available resources” (Temple, Wigglesworth, & Smith, 2014, p. 7).

If organisations in the public, private and social sector can’t be trusted to deliver social value, and value for money, and politicians and regulators can’t ensure that the economy and the services that are supported by the state are well governed and regulated, then it is likely that citizens’ willingness to support public investment and welfare services may be undermined. As Eivind Hoff-Elmari notes,

“Appeals to economic growth as an end in itself may undermine voters’ willingness to finance welfare services to fight, for instance, child poverty. Arguing for investments in renewable energy primarily as a competitive necessity to prevent trading partners from “catching” future jobs could reduce voters’ support for strong climate change policies in general” (Hoff-Elmari, 2014, p. 6).

It is essential that trust is once again built up in our social institutions because there are greater problems and challenges to be dealt with that we are not able to turn away from.

3 Social Value

- Principles of social return on investment beyond transactions and costs.
- Alternative models of commissioned public services and finance.
- Showing that social improvement and change happens.

3.1 What is the Social Value Act?

The Public Services (Social Value) Act, gained Royal Assent in March 2012 and started being implemented from January 2013 (S. E. UK, 2012b, p. 3). Under the Social Value Act (SVA) public bodies are required to consider how the services they commission and procure “might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing” of the people that they serve (S. E. UK, 2012b, p. 5). The aim of the Social Value Act has been to shape the procurement approach and design of public services by opening them up to a more diverse range of potential contractors and providers, from what has previously been called the Third or Voluntary Civic Sector (VCS), but which is now referred to as the Social Sector. As Mansfield, Towers and Philips describe “the Social Value Act was originally intended to broaden the provider market and make it easier for social enterprises and voluntary and community organisations to bid for and win public sector contracts” (Mansfield, Towers, & Phillips, 2019, p. 37). The Social Value Act encourages local and public authority commissioners to go beyond the established value for money approach when they are planning and commissioning contracts for service delivery. The Social Value Act thus allows contracts to be agreed, not solely on the basis of the lowest cost, but also with regard to the accompanying social value benefit that might be generated in providing the contract, which may be in addition to the fundamental operational and contract costs. This means that the Social Value Act, for the first time, adds a legal requirement for public bodies in England and Wales to “consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing” of the people in the area they serve (S. E. UK, 2012a, p. 2).

The Social Value Act covers any public service contracts (including service contracts with a works or goods element) and the frameworks for developing and applying such contracts. The regulations and principles associated with the Act are mostly concerned with the pre-procurement stages of the commissioning process, and specifically asks commissioners of those services to consider how the process of procurement might itself secure identified improvements to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. Commissioners are expected to show regard for these objectives by undertaking consultation with market players from both commercial and social sector groups in

their areas (Cook & Monk, 2013, p. 7). The Social Value Act applies only in England, and in limited circumstances in Wales. The Act does not “affect the actions of devolved administrations” (Dobson, 2012, p. 3).

Local authorities have been under a duty since the 1980’s to achieve best value for the contracts and service that they run. Usually this has been identified and calculated as the lowest price offered in the commercial contracting tendering process. The Social Value Act, however, extends the requirement for ‘best value,’ to also include due consideration for the “social, economic and environmental value” of those contracts (S. E. UK, 2012a, p. 6). The Act does not specify how procurement practices should incorporate a specific model of social value, nor does it provide a designated framework for how social value should be measured. As guidance from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) notes, “the Social Value Act (SVA) applies when you are procuring the provision of services, or the provision of services together with the purchase of hire of goods or carrying out of works” (DCMS, 2018d, p. 3). The Act represents, therefore, a significant change in the thinking underpinning local authority financial management, as they have not previously been permitted to “take non-commercial considerations into account in their contracts,” but can do so now if they can demonstrate that they are complying with their social value duties (Cook & Monk, 2013, p. 8). Both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party are committed to extending the Social Value Act, though the clear difference in emphasis still needs to be specified (Office, 2018; Party, 2019).

3.2 Social Value Duties

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 places a duty on commissioners in councils, the NHS and other public bodies across England and Wales, to consider how they might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing – the ‘social value’ – of an area when they commission and procure public services. The Act states that: “The authority must consider:

1. How what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the relevant area, and
2. How, in conducting the process of procurement, it might act with a view to securing that improvement” (Voice, 2014, p. 3).

Contracting authorities following the Act must take reasonable steps to consider whether additional social, economic or environmental benefits can be achieved through the delivery of a service or the procurement of any goods by that authority. In this way social value must be considered in a way that is “proportionate and relevant” to the service that is to be commissioned, with authorities being

asked to “consider the economic, environmental and social benefits of their approaches to procurement before beginning the process” (Voice, 2014, p. 4). The Act therefore asks commissioners to consider how they can secure these wider social, economic and environmental benefits before they start the procurement process. Commissioners are asked to define and outline a set of social objectives, and a model for achieving change in relation to those objectives, before they consider what it is that they are contracting for. This is in addition to the conventional methods they might use for service design and procurement, as used in traditional financially driven procurement processes. Commissioners are therefore asked to consider if they can secure identified social benefits for stakeholders, service users and residents in their area, with the Social Value Act functioning as a tool that can help commissioners realise more defined ‘value for money’ out of the procurements they offer, while also encouraging commissioners to “talk to their local provider market or community to design better services, often finding new and innovative solutions to difficult problems” (Office, 2016, p. 2).

The Social Value Act only applies to public service contracts and those public services contracts with an element of goods or works over the EU procurement threshold. “This is currently £106,047 for central government bodies and £164,176 for other bodies (including local authorities)” (Jones & Yeo, 2017).² Included in the procurement framework are all services that are offered in public service markets, from health and housing to transport and waste. Commissioners are therefore required to factor-in “social value at the pre-procurement phase, allowing them to embed social value principles in the design of the service from the outset” (S. E. UK, 2012b, p. 6). In making this consideration, the Social Value Act asks commissioners to consider “new and innovative solutions to difficult problems” (School, 2017, p. 47) that might otherwise get overlooked or crowded-out of the normal commissioning and procurement processes. The objective of social value commissioning is to help achieve the “wider strategic priorities” of the authority, and to ensure that these are used to “drive inclusive growth” (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 7). As Social Value UK note, the Act “asks public bodies, by law for the first time, to consider the ways that it most benefits society as part of each decision” (S. E. UK, 2012a, p. 5). The Act requires public sector commissioners, therefore, to “have regard to” an area’s economic, social and environmental wellbeing in making procurement decisions. Additionally, the Social Value Act represents a marked shift from procurement practice over recent decades, which has previously focused on cost reduction rather than value creation. As Mansfield, Towers and Philips point out, “since the early 1980s, government has outsourced and procured services

² 2017/18 Figures are £118.133 for central government contracts and £181.133 and £181.302 for local government contracts
<https://blog.tendersdirect.co.uk/2018/01/04/new-public-procurement-thresholds-2018-2019/>

believing that private businesses can do more with less and make the books balance.” However, the recent high-profile failures of businesses such as Carillion have “tested this theory to destruction” (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 11).³ So, and as the Transition Institute argue, “embedding social value into the commissioning process is therefore the key to push forward the agenda of public services reform in a way that allows those who can provide better value (social value) for money to deliver public services in our communities, independently of their capital structure” (Institute, 2016, p. 10).

3.3 What Does the Social Value Act Do?

As previously stated, the Social Value Act amends the Local Government Act 1988, which prevented local authorities from taking non-commercial considerations into account when undertaking public service procurement decisions. The Social Value Act therefore removes a long-standing obstacle that was seen by officers and councillors as a drag when addressing efforts to look at social value considerations when devising public contracts. However, commissioners operating under the terms of the Act are only allowed to consider issues that are “relevant to the services being procured,” meaning that they can’t ask service providers to “offer benefits that are not directly connected with the contract, such as contributions towards the cost of public works” (Dobson, 2012, p. 6). The Social Value Act is therefore designed to encourage, not prescribe, a set of practices or outcomes. Likewise, to comply with EU procurement rules, the description of the tenders must be open to bidders from across the EU, though they may be asked in the contract to address particularly local and locally defined priorities. The “principle of equal treatment,” which decrees that all contestants should have an “equal opportunity to compete for the contract” applies, ensuring a level playing field based on EU principles of “transparency” (Commission, 2010, p. 10).

There are, however, no sanctions if an authority fails to comply with the Act, and there are no prescribed specifications as to how commissioning bodies might fulfil their duties under the Act, except those already applied to procurement and competition regulations. Instead, commissioners and councillors are asked to demonstrate that have taken their duties seriously. Given the complexities of social value accounting (and their associated SROI approaches),⁴ and the very wide range of projected benefits that can potentially be sought in addressing these objectives, many organisations have found it helpful to create a framework of social value that they can include within all their

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jan/16/six-warning-signs-that-the-carillion-collapse-was-coming>

⁴ Social Return on Investment

procurement activities (Voice, 2014). So, rather than simply responding to the requirements of the Act contract by contract, effective social value-led authorities have been creating a culture within each commissioning organisations in which “social value is given greater weight within financial decision-making.” This means, in theory at least, that it is possible to provide an “opportunity to restate the organisation’s values and purpose and align spending more closely with those values” (Dobson, 2012, p. 9).

As has been previously stated, the Act requires authorities to consider that what is proposed as an object of procurement might contribute towards the improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of each relevant area or population, and how in conducting the process of procurement that secures these services and goods, it might be possible to secure wider and more relevant social benefits. In addition, authorities also have to contemplate in what way they will consult with relevant stakeholders and partners when setting these objectives. The DCMS recommends that commissioners consider the potential for social value gains at each of the following consultation stages:

- **“Service Design:** writing the service specification (with input from users, the wider community and the market including VCSEs).
- **Tendering:** writing procurement documents (such as supplier questions and evaluation criteria) and evaluating bids.
- **Post-Procurement:** performance management to ensure that any social value requirement that you specified, or that the supplier offered, was delivered (DCMS, 2018d, p. 3).

According to Mansfield, Towers and Philips, the Social Value Act is itself a “permissive piece of legislation,” in that it “supports councils to be able to proactively procure with purpose,” but that the Act does not define what social value is or specify how it should be applied. This means that the models of social value that are used can be adopted and adapted in the “best way possible for each local area.” However, the “permissive nature of the legislation means that it does require a certain kind of culture and approach to fulfil its potential.” It is suggested by Mansfield, Towers and Philips that officers and councillors who are used to more “directive guidance” might struggle with the flexibility that the Act offers. In order to maximise the potential of the Social Value Act, then, councils have been advised that they will need to “develop a more permissive culture that is supportive of innovation” (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 34). The wider aims of the Act, therefore, include the embedding of a culture of innovation in procurement and service design, combined with enhancements to that

service design, and a more holistic view of ‘value for money’ which is aligned with the needs and requirements of the stakeholders and commissioning organisations. This process is promoted, moreover, as a collaborative and co-developmental set of activities that form part of a regularly maintained and ongoing set of relationships between market providers, social sector innovators and local authority commissioners. The general aspiration associated with the Act is that the social value commissioning process, as Butler and Reading argue, will be able to “find new and innovative solutions to difficult problems” (Butler & Redding, 2017, p. 3).

Because there is only limited guidance on applying social value in practice, there is the potential for great variation in how a “duty to consider” is interpreted. Many advocates of the social value approach recommend that local authorities and other public bodies can only give an approximate or look at proxy indication of what social value is, and how it might be accounted for. To this extent councils and authorities are being asked to work within a culture that is *interpretive* and *subjective*, and which relies on informed estimates as to “what is going on rather than research which can be absolutely relied upon” (Butler & Redding, 2017, p. 15). The Social Value Act requires commissioners and partner organisations to consider, at the pre-procurement stage, how procurement would improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the relevant area in particular and specific ways, i.e. in ways that can be described, quantified and evaluated. This means, therefore, that social value contracts have to be clear at their inception about what the potential social benefits that are being addressed, and how the mechanisms that are used to bring about change can be measured. As the guidance from the DCMS points out, commissioners are expected to “think about the potential social benefit of a service from the start of the commissioning process” (DCMS, 2018d, p. 3), which means that commissioners have to consider the wider social ambitions of the authority, and then link the procurement process with these strategic aims. The aim of the Act, therefore, is to combine the “economic, social and environmental objectives and embed them across all the strategic procurement functions instead of approaching them in silos” (S. E. UK, 2012b, p. 14).

3.4 SROI Context

The general climate in which social value has been introduced to the process of service provision and procurement originates with the international drive towards SROI (Social Return on Investment) (Tomlins, 2015; S. V. UK, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d). This is a model of financial accountability that seeks to break-down barriers between economic and social objectives, as found in both commercial, social sector and public service organisations (Wood & Leighton, 2010). The SROI approach provides

a framework for evaluating the investment and procurement choices that have been made by organisations, helping them to identify the extent to which they have produced socially beneficial outcomes in different situations. As Andrea Westall describes, Social Return on Investment is the technique that is perhaps the best known in this regard. According to Westall:

“It is currently being promoted as a good way to show ‘social value’. A simple way to understand it is as an extension of Cost-Benefit Analysis which incorporates wider social and economic outcomes. The SROI Network has suggested a definition of value as: ‘The relative importance of changes that occur to stakeholders as a result of an activity’” (Westall, 2012, p. 17).

According to the New Economics Foundation, SROI is part of a “long tradition of valuation methodologies” that have become “readily accepted in the field of environmental and health economics,” because they provide a suitable framework for evaluation of the social outcomes that stakeholders desire and wish to be measured against (N. E. Foundation, 2009, p. 2). SROI is an analytic tool for measuring and accounting for a broader concept of public value. SROI incorporates social, environmental and economic costs and benefits into the decision-making process by providing a wider picture of how value is created or destroyed. According to Wood and Leighton, “SROI is able to assign a monetary figure to social and environmental value which is created” (Wood & Leighton, 2010, p. 19).

However, and regardless of the merits of the austerity agenda, it is now widely viewed that by enforcing two major changes to the financial provisions of local government at the same time, the core desire of reform based on innovation and diversification that forms the basis of the SVA/SROI approach, has been obscured. As the recent Nesta report on Public Value has noted, any “failure to tie finance into evolving ideas about public value, and the related debates on innovation and evidence, risks becoming a major barrier to progress” (Mulgan et al., 2019). When political energy is spent justifying cuts and reductions to overall costs through the search for efficiencies alone, with a focus on centralisation and the closure of local operations, then the mood for innovation and diversification (and thereby economic resilience), in the form of a dynamic social economy, gets stymied. When faced with the enormity of the cuts that local government has been charged with pushing through, combined with this shift in the model of financial administration that has simultaneously been encouraged, it is clear why they might be considered as uneasy bedfellows. Opportunities for change, therefore, to the way that social value is used as a policy and planning measure for realising enhanced social benefits have been diluted, both in the minds of the commissioners and procurement officers, councillors and members of the public, and in the social sector who might otherwise have engaged in entrepreneurial bids to run and develop services. The danger is that social value simply

becomes “pigeon-holed” as a concern within procurement functions, and as a way to save money or offload costs, rather than as a wider “expression of what is important to a council” (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 32).

Moreover, as significant cuts have been implemented to core services in local government, this has also restricted the capacity for a new tier of social enterprises to gain traction with the social value process. Any attempt to shift from a centralised model of public services to a decentralised commissioning model would be difficult enough in times of surplus, but when combined with financial restrictions and a comprehensive and enduring austerity agenda, the job becomes more difficult. As Mansfield *et al* somewhat optimistically point out:

“As public sector budgets, especially those of local authorities, have been cut and they become more reliant on local revenue, social value has never been more important. As councils struggle to make budgets balance, social value can help commissioners think long-term, and can provide community resilience, increase employment opportunities and ensure early intervention to avoid future problems, driving down costs in the long-term” (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 7).

There are clearly questions that need to be raised about the benefits of driving innovation as a response to an imposed austerity political agenda. It should go without saying that part of the process of evaluation and appraisal of the policy process should seek to separate notions of cause from effect. Social value as a model of good governance has to be appraised in its own terms as a progressive measure for social inclusion and resilient economic development. Whereas austerity measures and service delivery cuts have to be considered in the context of the political agenda that drives the desires of politicians to gain temporary electoral advantage, however popular and satisfying that advantage might seem at the time. Social value isn’t primarily regarded as an agenda solely to achieve cost reductions, though that might be a welcome outcome. Instead, the strength of the social value agenda lies with its concern for inclusivity, collaboration, diversity, accountability and long-term thinking. One set of objectives is about expediency, the other is about sustainability and resilience.

The Public Services Bill was introduced to Parliament in 2010 as a private members bill by Chris White MP, gaining cross-part support. As has already been stated, the Act of 2012 incorporated the principles of social value into the procurement process for local authorities and public bodies and was said to put the UK at the “cutting edge of developing social value within commissioning and procurement” (Institute, 2016, p. 5). The Act does not require contracts for public works or the supply of public supply under the EU threshold to be considered, although commissioners may be able to

apply social value principles should they wish (S. E. UK, 2012b, p. 6). Seen in isolation the Act might be considered as a singular innovation for effective governance, however, as Social Enterprise UK argues, the Act merely reflects “wider trends in society and business” in which the ‘answers’ to realising the potential of social value as a model to administrative governance and accountability do not lie with “one set of people or one sector” (S. E. UK, 2014, p. 6). Given the scale of local and national government procurement in the UK, attempts to diversify the market-based process have demonstrated mixed result. The Social Value Act is an attempt to remove obstacles faced by social enterprises and other community organisations in order that they are able to bid for contracts and engage in procurement activities. It is expected that a pluralistic approach to social value is better realised if different types of organisations are able to participate in service delivery. According to Temple, Wigglesworth and Smith:

“As the Act says, the consideration of social value should be at the ‘pre-procurement’ stage, and this early engagement and involvement of key stakeholders, regardless of whether they are local community groups, charities, social enterprises or individual residents, is critical to achieving the right outcomes for all” (Temple et al., 2014, p. 22).

This is because organisations that are embedded in local social, environmental and economic activities are said to have the advantage of being able to address specifically local concerns and needs in order to address local economic regeneration. The question of financial efficiency is temporarily put aside because social value models accept that there are other factors that are of equal importance and relevance to the sustainability and resilience of local communities and economies.

3.5 Social Procurement

It is argued by proponents of the social value approach, however, that social enterprises, and other community organisations, often miss out on contracts because they do not have the technical capacity to write large-scale bids for services that have been grouped together by commissioners. Service contracts often go to large national providers, either commercial or charitable organisations, because they have built the capacity and sustained management support to write technically defined documents. As Mansfield *et al* point out, “there is evidence that smaller organisations often deliver social value benefits for their local authorities but are frequently too small to consider bidding for contracts with social value clauses” (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 22). What is lost when these smaller organisations are excluded from the social procurement process, according to Social Enterprise UK, is the higher rate of social return that local social sector organisations offer, with their local knowledge and locally employed staff. In some areas, given the capital costs and investment requirements involved, it isn’t possible for services to be offered locally, but as Social Enterprise UK point

out, there is often a “very small pool of suppliers in many areas of public services such as waste and welfare, which inevitably limits competition, choice, innovation and value for money.” Moreover, the limitations on the capacity of locally run social sector organisations makes it difficult for commissioners to “always best meet the needs of their communities.” The Act therefore aims to change this by “encouraging “civil society organisations to enter public services markets” (S. E. UK, 2012b, p. 13) by shifting the way that contracting authorities assess and account for social value in service contracts. In this way commissioners can prioritise a wider range of social considerations, such as skills development, local economic resilience and wellbeing, over and above the normal expectations of the lowest cost provider. As Compact Voice notes, this has “opened the door for VCS organisations to demonstrate their capabilities and achievements in delivering additional social value through service delivery” (Voice, 2014, p. 11).

Despite these difficulties, however, this does not mean that the principle of social value, and the attempt to fashion a pluralistic social economy based around increased access to social value opportunities, is moribund. If anything, the social value approach is becoming more deeply embedded in policy thinking and is being extended to other areas of national and local government planning processes. According to Mansfield *et al*, social value has been addressed in the UK Government’s recent Civil Society Strategy, and has been embedded in the UK Treasuries Green Book planning models, which are used to assess public spending choices (Mansfield *et al.*, 2019; Mulgan *et al.*, 2019; Office, 2018). The problem, however, and according to Mansfield *et al*, is that the concept and principles of social value are not applied across all government departments or incorporated in all government spending planning processes.

There is potential, therefore, and according to Mansfield *et al*, for the “Social Value Act to have a significant impact,” as long as it is “articulated clearly in key economic strategic policies like the Industrial Strategy” (Mansfield *et al.*, 2019, p. 17). In 2015 Lord Young was asked to conduct a review of the Social Value Act. The review pointed out that there is a lack of development around the use of social value as a measurement indicator for government investment and spending, which makes it difficult for public bodies to differentiate what is meant by social value when each body might be working with a different set of reference points and a different set of metrics. This problem is multiplied, moreover, when public bodies are asked to compare one body with another, or one bidder with another, as they seek to engage with the commissioning process. Lord Young acknowledged, therefore, that “fewer organisations had fully developed a strategy or had a policy in place and

therefore, there were inconsistent practices” (Mulgan et al., 2019; Young, 2015, p. 9). Following Lord Young’s report, organisations such as Nesta, Social Value UK and Social Enterprise UK have each indicated similar concerns (Gregory, 2018; Mulgan et al., 2019; S. V. UK, 2015).

In 2018 the UK Government announced its intention to extend the scope of the Social Value Act, thereby making it an “explicit requirement in central government contracts to the private and third sectors” to consider social value when determining those contracts. As Mulgan, *et al* point out, however, this “extension does not seem to include a fully developed measurement of social value” (Mulgan et al., 2019, p. 9). Indeed, the perception is that there are many initiatives coming from central government that fail to mention social value or reflect the existing social value ethos that has been established, however incomplete it might be. As Mansfield *et al* note, one council official pointed out to them that “there are major things coming from central government with no mention of social value in them.” The perceived problems are then compounded because “there are no guidelines around social value, no measures, no acknowledgement of social value” in these new policies (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 17). As has already been established, the Cabinet Office guidance on the Act does not define what social value is, instead, it largely sticks to economic, environment and social benefit terminology. As Cook and Monk point out, however, these are primarily a conflation that “social value is value for money” (Cook & Monk, 2013, p. 16). The guidance from the DCMS continues to suggest that social value models of service development can, when used to full effect, deliver a more innovative set of holistic solutions to difficult social problems. What perhaps needs to be demonstrated, however, is whether social value practices are simply a “cost-saving tool”, or if they can be used to deliver services that offer meaningful “wellbeing benefits to those users” (DCMS, 2018d, p. 4).

3.6 What is Social Value?

It is worth summarising what is meant by the term social value in general terms. Social value has developed as a concept within the private sector, the public sector and the social sector in the course of the last decade. Social value is often projected as a way of meeting different, and possibly incongruent expectations of what businesses, public authorities and civic and charitable organisations go about what they are seeking to achieve. There is a cycle of expectation, therefore, that oscillates between periods of dominant public concern, in which the virtues or the vices of each operational economic model are held up for either praise or contempt. For example, for some time public services have been told they should be more ‘business-like’ in their operations, as during the period of public

service reform characterised by the third-way mantra of ‘modernisation’ and ‘choice’ under the Blair and Brown governments. More recently, charities have raised concern that they are being placed in a position where they are expected to be a provider of last resort for social welfare, as suggested by Cameron and Osborne’s Big Society programme. This is something that most charities do not feel is their role to undertake, because they do not have the guaranteed funding or the powers to make changes to the legal systems that ensure that an individual’s access to social services is guaranteed. Nor are charities able to provide long-term infrastructure investments that would enable the universal access to these services as public authorities have done for many decades. In turn, private companies are often reminded of their social responsibilities, particularly when campaigners raise questions about corporate responsibility and the impact of a business’s trading arrangements in relation to the environment, labour rights, ethical conduct, consumer protection, and so on.

Private businesses, or to be more precise their shareholders, are often reminded by many different campaigners that in order to operate freely in society as an independent enterprise, they are expected to conduct themselves in a way that goes beyond simply observing minimum governmental regulations, or offsetting some of their worse practices by undertaking supposed good deeds, such as supporting high-profile charities and foundations. The suspicion by many campaigners is that these are offered as part of a corporate marketing and public relations strategy, rather than as a genuine expression of social concern. Wherever the truth lies in each of these domains, it is relevant to consider how the social value approach and ethos straddles the boundaries of these different administrative and business cultures. This in turn suggests that by taking a less differentiated and more collaborative approach to improving social provision, then the extremes of any of these models of provision might be mitigated. Which is a role that social value has not been explicitly asked to play, but which might be regarded as a secondary benefit. The considerable resources of the state that are now being used as a tool to hold together what are otherwise potentially competitive business interests. This is an approach which, as Social Enterprise UK argues, recognises that “social enterprises are businesses that exist primarily for a social or environmental purpose,” though they “use business to tackle social problems, improve people’s life chances, and protect the environment.” In this way they operate within a model of capitalism that seeks to enable a shared access to wealth that gives people a “stake in the economy” (S. E. UK, 2012a).

As has been repeatedly stated in this summary, the Act does not provide any actual definition of ‘social value’ in the way that key terms are defined within the legislation. Instead, it has been left to

other organisations to champion the role of social value, either as part of their core mission, or within their emerging funding strategies when they are seeking to support other organisations. The absence of a legal definition therefore enables stakeholders to define what they mean by ‘social value’ in relation to their own individual context, their individual ethical trading policies, their individual governance and accountability structures, and the specific needs of their stakeholders. Because the Act makes reference to ‘social, economic and environmental benefits’, some organisations choose only to use only these terms to explain a minimum requirement of ‘social value’, however, many other organisations are working with a broad range of stakeholders to “create their own definitions” (School, 2017, p. 47). As Compact Voice argue, a social value strategy best developed from local definitions, with contributions from the social sector, and with local needs in mind, such as Locality’s campaign for buying local,⁵ would be a clearly visible model for others to follow, leading to a process of engagement in which the locally identified measures that are put in place to meet these locally defined needs, are able to provide a “more concrete concept of social value” that can be “embedded into the local council’s corporate policy and practice, and gain stronger commitment through adoption by all local commissioning bodies” (Voice, 2014, p. 14).

The Social Value Act should be recognised, then, as an enabler of a process or change, and not as a legal framework or rule book that dictates or specifies actions and adherence to technical requirements. As Mansfield *et al* suggest, the “provisions of the Act can further the wider strategic objectives of local authorities, and the communities they represent, by mobilising a council’s purchasing power to support the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of a place.” This means that the partnerships that are established are able to go beyond traditional models of funding, such as grants and bloc-funding, and explore the possibility of social funding, such as community shares, crowd-funding, subscriptions, or consumer business models (Old, Bone, Boyle, & Baeck, 2019). This is what Mansfield *et al* point to as the wider consideration of social value that helps to “focus priorities outside procurement such as through asset transfer or access to finance” (Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 14). The benefit, as Temple, Wigglesworth and Smith note, is that Act has the potential to be a tangible “catalyst for action within organisations: improving procedures, providing focus, creating buy-in and helping drive new activity” (Temple et al., 2014, p. 14).

⁵ <https://locality.org.uk/policy-campaigns/keep-it-local/>

3.7 Why is Social Value Relevant to Community Media?

The question, then, is why is the principle and practice of social value relevant to the sustainable and resilient future of community, local and civic media in the UK? The introduction of a new tier of Small-Scale Digital Audio Broadcasting in the UK will enable an increase in capacity for the provision of many more broadcast radio stations (DCMS, 2019), and for a further increase in the number of community radio licences that will allow many more not-for-profit and social sector groups to bypass the capacity restrictions that limit the FM and AM broadcast frequencies, and which in effect exclude many groups from actively taking up broadcast programming in areas where there is a strong interest in community radio provision. To qualify for reserved spaces on the new local DAB multiplexes, these groups need to apply for a digital community service licence from Ofcom, which they are likely to receive as long as they can meet three distinct tests. First, Ofcom will need to know the extent of the ‘social gain’ that will be offered by the digital community radio service; second, Ofcom will want to know the extent to which participation will be enabled in the operation and management of the digital community radio service; and third, Ofcom will want to know the way in which the digital community radio service is accountable to the community (Section 7.40 in the Draft Order DCMS, 2019).

Community Radio is the only regulated form of broadcast media in the UK that has this responsibility, both on analogue radio and now on digital radio. The terminology that is employed in the legislation, however, does not seem to have been updated or cross-referenced with the principles and experience of the Social Value Act. The Social Value Act demonstrates that legislation can be enacted to promote a pluralistic and open process of commercial and public services development, especially in relation to the allocation of scarce and limited public resources. So, if the principle of social value can be enacted for public procurement policy, then it must be possible to apply an appropriately adapted set of values and principles to media regulation, frequency allocation and public interest subsidy support? One qualification, however, is that commercial media services and community media services should be considered in the same regard, and against the same set published values and principles, which are linked to full social accountability associated with the social value economy if they are to be receiving any form of direct or indirect subsidy.

This issue is increasingly important as both direct and indirect subsidies are being offered by the government to the established commercial news industry through various mechanisms, such as the BBC Local News Partnership, the Audio Content Fund, and now the Future News Fund. For example, and

in response the Cairncross Review (Cairncross, 2019), the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has announced a £2 million “Future News Fund to boost local public interest journalism.”⁶ The fund will be administered by Nesta, and will be used to help providers of local and regional news to “test or expand new ways of providing sustainable public interest news.” These funds are, on the whole, made available to commercial providers, however, they come without a wider set of social governance frameworks or tests that will ensure that they will be delivering social value for money. There is only limited evidence that they are addressing pressing economic, social or environmental concerns, and there is little evidence that the priorities that they are working towards have been defined locally by stakeholder groups who know the needs of the communities and areas they are supposed to serve. Likewise the extent to which these subsidies are accounted for by requirements to consult with and engage with local authorities, social sector organisations and other business is unclear.

Indeed, there is no specified or coordinated measurement framework associated with the implementation of these subsidies that can be referred to that will demonstrate if they have met any of the desired social value outcomes these subsidies are supposed to deliver. If the Social Value Act can be enabled and incorporated into the functions of public authorities in England, and similar approaches are being developed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, then building the capacity for Ofcom and other regulating organisations to upgrade their approach to social value driven media should not be that complex, especially given the wealth of emerging experience that social sector organisations, public bodies and commercial companies have reported from the operation and implementation of the principles and practices defined by the Social Value Act. Media and communication are undergoing significant change and adaptation in the present social and technical climate, and despite the level of anxiety about the pace and scale of change, if public subsidies are to be increased to help mitigate the extremes of this change, then they should be held to account in the same way and at the same standards and principles that procurement for local goods and services are held to. The Social Value Act does not determine the definition of social value as it is applied to procurement and the development of services, which means that it can be adapted to promote economic resilience, civic deliberation and diversity of engagement and media supply relatively easily.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-million-future-news-fund-to-boost-local-public-interest-journalism>

4 Social Economy

- What is different about the social economy compared to the linear, traditional economy?
- What are the main challenges that we can expect to face when working in the social economy?
- Why is the social economy relevant for the sustainability and resilience of community and civic media?

The social economy represents a change in the way we handle the longstanding and deep-rooted social, political, environmental and economic challenges in the developed and developing world. As Lord Adebawale remarks in the Front and Centre report for Social Enterprise UK, “we need to change the way that our society and economy functions,” and in order to do this “we must re-evaluate the fundamentals of what we are trying to accomplish and how we should achieve it” (Adebawale in Mansfield et al., 2019, p. 5). The problems that we face are ingrained in the way that we do business and the way that we run our public services; in the way that we engage and communicate with one another; in the way that we apply technology to generate growth; in the way that we plan infrastructure, as well as in the way that people are assisted in preparing for the demanding changes that they face, both in their local communities and internationally. As Shelagh Wright argues, “things have to change, and we need to act fast if we are to find new economic and social paradigms that recognise the limits of our finite planet and enable all lives to flourish” (Shelagh Wright in Money & Cause, 2013, p. 4). The scale and complexity of these challenges means that we must rethink how we understand our world, and how our role is made meaningful. This includes: the way that we connect and communicate; the way that we access public services; the way that we deliberate and decide things as a civic society; how we develop knowledge and skills, and how we do business with one another. Most important are the changes that we need to introduce to the way that we come up with solutions which will allow us to put in place imaginative new lines of action, so that we are ready for the challenges of the future. As the Social Research Unit point out, “a ‘pushed’ innovation will die out as soon as the start-up support is withdrawn. A ‘pulled’ innovation will gain traction, and spread, and endure” (Unit, 2012, p. 7).

In the past it would have been relatively easy to predict how our social and economic models of business and social engagement would work in practice. To some extent there were easily identifiable winners and losers, alongside easily identifiable villains and victims. In the past political differences were easy to characterise as between the interests of those who are business friendly or those who are worker friendly, with their associated cultural differences that tapped into inherited

cultures and community expectations. Now, though, the complex levels of global interaction, alongside the increasingly dynamic nature of social communication, combined with the high levels of cultural diversity, means that contemporary citizens are expected to assimilate and grasp a picture of society that is noticeably more complex and multifaceted than in previous times. As Uffe Elbæk suggests, we won't be able to engage with these issues by using the same technical and process-driven strategies we have used in the past. Instead, we are going to need to invest in different forms of "art and culture to fuel the social innovation that we, our societies, and the planet so desperately need." According to Elbæk "we need new ideas, we need new ways of doing things and we need a whole new way of approaching each other with much more empathy and understanding" (Uffe Elbæk in Money & Cause, 2013, p. 7).

The social economy, then, is a retort to the linear, transactional, carbon-based, industrial and consumer economy, in which *efficiency* is held as the highest practical virtue. Unger *et al* calls efficiency the typical way that a company gains a "decisive advantage in dealing with the fixed cost" of running their business (Unger et al., 2019, p. 18). In the traditional, systems-driven economy, there is a predisposition to focus on models of economic determination that are *rationalistic* and *behaviourist* in origin, and which seek to achieve enhanced economic value by standardising and productising manufacturing processes, technical interventions and commercial services. There is an obsession with bringing products and services to the market that can 'scale.' Being able to scale-up the production system and distribution network is fitting when one is producing engine components or consumer goods, but we have to ask if there a need for all products to be scalable in this way, especially when it comes to human services and the social forms of interaction they enable? While the traditional and linear economic outlook is well suited to providing efficient and scalable solutions, there is a limit to the effectiveness and social value that might be deliverable by this approach. Especially when little regard is given to the pollution and carbon that is often generated in the manufacturing process are not accounted for; or when the global race for mineral resources is destroying complex and fragile ecosystems from which the core minerals used in the manufacture of consumer goods are extracted; or when labour is exploited to manufacture cheap products, which goes unchecked and unsupported by active trade unions, so that vulnerable people work long hours at poverty pay rates with no social safety net; or when the displacement of people, and the resulting mass migration that is caused when factories are built in developing countries, is not managed (Lanham, Jordan, & McDaniel, 2016).

Industrialisation produces both good and bad examples of development, but there are generally only limited circumstances when deep and full-scale environmental and social impact assessments are commissioned and factored into the cost-benefit analysis when a product or service is being planned and developed. Yes, modern, industrial factory processes are a marvel of engineering and systems thinking, enabling cost-reductions and the global distribution of the products they make on a scale previously unheard in human history. However, the problem that many now recognise, and are calling for urgent reforms to address, is that the traditional economy does not view these matters holistically, or in accord with an underpinning set of common values that prioritises social accountability, nor the longer-term cost and the environmental impact of its operations on the eco-sphere (Monbiot, 2016, 2017). In their worst forms of operation, companies and businesses in the linear economy tend to act only in the interest of shareholder value, while social stakeholders and the environment get relegated to the role of irritant or aggravating impediment to efficient compliance. Social wellbeing and the sustainability of the environment have long been regarded as justified collateral damage in the drive for competitive advantage, growth and private profitability.

4.1 Social Enterprises

Businesses and public services that focus on social value are operating in the economy in different ways than that which many classic economic theories and schools of practice might otherwise describe. As Nick Temple, Charlie Wigglesworth and Chris Smith point out, “social value is delivered by organisations in different sectors in a variety of ways.” The difference, however, is that when it comes to social enterprises, rather than looking for private profit, they seek instead, “to balance a business head with a social heart” (Temple et al., 2014, p. 4). So, rather than simply thinking about products and services that can be delivered to the market at a scale, and which prioritise the minimisation of costs and the maximisation of efficiencies, the social enterprise ethos seeks, instead, to achieve *social impact* at the widest possible scale by diversifying forms of community-led investment. This is what Rosalyn Old, Jonathan Bone, Dave Boyle and Peter Baeck identify in their report for Nesta on community forms of investment. When “more business-oriented models” of social enterprise have emerged, such as crowdfunding and community bonds, then there has also been a growth of interest from people who are prepared to “make social investments into projects that focus on making a social impact” (Old et al., 2019, p. 9). This is because, as Aps et al of the Social Impact Forum points out, “impact thinking means focusing on creating as much net positive impact as we can with the resources we have, where ‘impact’ means the changes in people’s lives caused by our activities, whether directly or indirectly” (Aps et al., 2017, p. 16). Furthermore, and according to

the Social Research Unit, this then involves turning “our thinking and our methods upside down,” so the primary question of what we want to achieve becomes: not how can I marketise and productise a service in the consumer economy, but “how can I reach the community?” (Unit, 2012, p. 3).

Nick Temple, Stuart Emmerson and Charlotte De Ruyver, writing for Social Enterprise UK about building inclusive and resilient social economies, identify four ways that social enterprises, along with social value-led businesses and services, offer a distinctive approach to building socially just and robust economies.

- First, “social enterprises are more likely to be based in the most deprived areas, so growing social enterprise helps tackle these problems in the areas it is most needed.”
- Secondly, “building inclusive economies, which are resilient and sustainable, means supporting local people into employment and enterprise, and developing solutions fit to a [specific] geography.”
- Third, social enterprises are more likely to develop “cross-sectoral support to create environments which are not over-reliant on private sector trade, public sector resources or charitable intent, but can [if needed] draw on all three.”
- While finally, the use and provision of “sustainable, lean and effective local social sector infrastructure is critical” if social economic activity is to be served with a basic level of capacity and functionality (Temple et al., 2017, p. 4).

There is, however, and according to Nick Temple Charlie Wigglesworth and Chris Smith, a clear challenge for all agents, policy developers and regulators acting in the social economy, because “creating social value is difficult and complex to achieve.” Which means that defining and measuring what is meant by social value, social impact and social gain is likewise difficult to understand and integrate across different types of activities, services and products” (Temple et al., 2014, p. 7).

Mulgan *et al* in their report for Nesta describe how the generation of public value tends to fall into three main categories:

- “The first is the value provided by services...
- The second category of value is outcomes...
- A third category of value is trust in its widest sense...” (Mulgan et al., 2019, p. 10).

Further indicating that determining and identifying the way that value works in different parts of the economy and society is not straightforward or easy to compare and track. How do we encapsulate what is meant by the potential value of services as a transaction? What are the forms of outcomes that we should be looking for to see if we are making a difference? And how do we measure and

track generalised levels of social trust in ways that are relevant to the people and communities that are involved? We tend to follow accountancy and process management techniques in mapping and comparing different social value approaches, particularly SROI and metrics approaches, which are often only “broad-stroke” approximations of financial and transactional measurement (Mulgan, 2010). We still need, therefore, to build meaningful narrative frameworks around these findings in order to make them emotionally and culturally resonant, as opposed to simply being technically valid. As Mulgan *et al* go on to note,

“There has never been greater potential to understand people’s valuations of culture due to the advances in technology which have increased our capability for measurement and to involve the public in decision-making processes. Policy initiatives to improve understanding of the public’s values about cultural activity using digital tools represent an exciting, new approach to valuation in the sector which should be explored” (Mulgan et al., 2019, p. 25).

In the past procurement commissioners for public services were not allowed to take social factors into account when they drew up contracts for competitive tendering, other than the price of the service (Cook & Monk, 2013, p. 8). However, with the increased use of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) models of service development, it is now common for public service contracts to be weighted so that they give regard to how they might promote local employment opportunities, raise the standard and quality of work for those employed, and how they might comply with universal standards of social and labour rights. As the New Economics Foundation point out

“Measuring the wrong things can mean that we do not know whether policy has a positive or a negative impact. In order to reach a better understanding of impact, new ways of undertaking measurement and of demonstrating the achievement of outcomes need to be developed and accepted, both by those delivering services and those funding them” (N. E. Foundation, 2009, p. 1).

In addition, commissioned services can now also encourage social inclusion and the growth of social enterprises in a mixed economy of for-profit and not-for-private-profit organisations, particularly among small to local enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives and public mutual organisations. According to Dan Gregory, Claire Mansfield and Mark Richardson

“The social economy is a very significant source of job creation around the world: in the UK alone, 100,000 social enterprises contribute £60bn to the UK economy and sustain over two million jobs (5% of the UK workforce). In the UK, the creative economy is vital, growing twice as fast as other sectors, contributing £91.6bn to the economy, and employing over two million people (i.e. one in 11 jobs). The sector has the potential to grow employment and entrepreneurialism across the UK” (Gregory, Mansfield, & Richardson, 2018, p. 13).

The purpose of social value enterprise, moreover, is to uphold socially inclusive ways of working that are based on *accessibility* and a *design-for-all* mindset. This means taking into account the ethics of socially responsible trading arrangements, and promoting ways of doing business that voluntarily commit enterprises and social sector service providers to corporate social responsibility standards (CSR), while also promoting respect for human rights (Commission, 2010, pp. 7-9). A general framework for social value-led enterprise is rapidly becoming recognised internationally with, for example, the European Commission stating how

“Social standards have come to play a central role in building Europe’s economic strength, by developing what has been described by EU institutions as a ‘unique social model’. Economic progress and social cohesion have come to be regarded as complementary pillars of sustainable development and are both at the heart of the process of European integration” (Commission, 2010, p. 10).

Embedding social value in the public service commissioning process, then, is now regarded as an essential element in the agenda for wider public services reform, and a major factor in the growth of the social economy. These reforms are put in place in order that “those who can provide better value (social value) for money to deliver public services in our communities, independently of their capital structure” are able to do so (Institute, 2016, p. 10). Social value and social enterprise are therefore emerging as some of the most useful tools for “promoting economic growth alongside social wellbeing and minimising environmental damage” (Mulgan et al., 2019; Temple et al., 2014, p. 4).

4.2 Social Justice Values

The Preston Model is often cited as an exemplar in this regard. Using an approach based around “community wealth building,” the experience of shifting to a social enterprise model of economic development by Preston City Council, was based on the need to “use local economic assets to develop the economy in ways that have tangible benefits for its citizens, communities, organisations and businesses” (CLES & Council, 2019, p. 19). This meant looking at and considering a wider diversity of suppliers and potential contractors who would meet a broader range of social objectives over and above financial costs. As reported by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and Preston City Council,

“The goal of the progressive procurement work undertaken in Preston has always been to increase competition, allowing a plurality of providers, including but not limited to local suppliers, to compete and bid. In this work we have found that maximising social value through public procurement does not always mean going with the most local firm, but instead demands a careful balancing of geographical, social, environmental, and other factors” (CLES & Council, 2019, p. 24).

Public authorities and social enterprises increasingly recognise how they can benefit from partnership working, in which the objective of community integration can be seen as both a “goal and a process simultaneously.” As Emily Redmond, Alice Mathers and Anna Osbourne note in their report on building inclusive communities for the Good Things Foundation, it is unlikely that community cohesiveness can be achieved and maintained if we are unable to demonstrate to what extent the social enterprise policies that we apply are meaningful and participative. According to Redmond, Mathers and Osbourne, moreover, we need to understand what is meant by community integration to be fully grounded in meaningful participation across four areas. These include:

- “Social participation.
- Political and civil participation in democratic action at a local and national level.
- Economic and community participation.
- Cultural participation” (Redmond et al., 2018, p. 3).

As Cynthia Gibson points out, forms of participation works at a number of levels, perhaps most significant, though, is the extent to which “participants continually emphasize how much they learn from their participation,” because they have been able to “connect with other organizations or people” in their associated movements and are able to see the “benefits of solidarity and learning from peers.” Which in turn enhances their “skills, adds knowledge to their work, and generates ideas and inspiration” (Gibson, 2018, p. 8).

Social enterprise and social value are perhaps best seen, then, as part of a more wide-ranging trend towards a social justice-focussed reconfiguration of the economy and public services provision. As the Public Interest Research Centre suggest, “to build a more sustainable, equitable and democratic world, we need an empowered, connected and durable movement of citizens.” We cannot, however, “build this kind of movement through appeals to people's fear, greed or ego.” (PIRC, 2011, p. 1), but must, instead, focus on the cultural values and the mechanisms for supporting the best practices of equitable social gain that emerge both from public debate and discussion, combined with a coherent evidence base on which government and business policy can be built which foregrounds the best interests of civic society. As Tom Crompton argues, “there is a crucial and exciting role for civil society organisations in ensuring that this becomes the case” (Crompton, 2010, p. 5), but to do this we will need, according to Crompton, to systematically address our difficulties on the basis of:

- “An understanding of the effect of cultural values upon people’s motivation to change their own behaviour or to demand change from political and business leaders.

- An understanding of the range of factors that activate and strengthen some values rather than others.
- Widespread public debate about the ways in which government, business and civil society organisations serve to strengthen particular values through their communications, campaigns and policies” (Crompton, 2010, p. 11).

As the UK Government has itself recognised in its Civil Society Strategy, there is a danger that attempts to formally legislate and direct policy for the emerging social economy might stifle and not strengthen civil society. If administrative guidance and policy provided by governments are not flexible and well designed, then they might end up compromising the ability of civil society to act independently. As the Civil Society Strategy notes,

“The government wants to build a partnership with charities and social enterprises, with volunteers, community groups and faith groups, with public service mutuals, socially responsible businesses and investors, and with the institutions which bring sports, arts, heritage, and culture to our communities” (Office, 2018, p. 18).

Encompassing this wide range of cultures, traditions, motivations and ways of working might not be achievable under a single strategy, so adapting an agreed set of social value principles in different circumstances will be essential. For example, Social Value UK has campaigned in the past for stronger action from government with regard to the effectiveness of the civil society strategies that are being developed. In their manifesto prior to the 2015 general election, Social Value UK put forward the case that:

“One of the root causes and potential solutions to inequality lies in the extent to which organisations – businesses, charities and public sector, can be held to account for how their actions create or destroy value for different groups of people. This is why we are campaigning for a world where both financial and social value matter” (S. V. UK, 2015, p. 2).

Likewise, Social Enterprise UK has campaigned vigorously in recent years for a more ‘social-centric’ model of social value procurement, in which supply chains are diversified and the risk of negative impacts from dysfunctional market practice is minimised. The shift to the social economy has the potential, according to Charlie Wigglesworth, Jennifer Exon, Neha Chandgothia and Andy Daly, to “substantially contribute to the positive impact businesses have,” because diversity and inclusion in the supply chain is a “win-win for business and society” (Wigglesworth, Exon, Chandgothia, & Daly, 2019, p. 13). As the Civil Society Strategy itself acknowledges,

“A healthy, independent and influential civil society is a hallmark of a thriving democracy. Charities and social enterprises – the social sector – are the core of civil society. A strong social sector is a sign of a strong democracy, which offers many ways in which citizens’ views and concerns can be communicated to decision-makers” (Office, 2018, p. 14).

The challenge, then, is how this is to decide how the social economy is facilitated and put into action. If managers, administrators and policy developers in the traditional, transactional and linear economy find it difficult to articulate long-term and holistic goals, and the processes that are needed to achieve these goals, then we have to look for new ways to ensure that business and public services cultures are responsive to the pressing environmental, technological and social changes that we are subject to. It is imperative, therefore, that we look elsewhere for new ideas that can help to build a more environmental and socially responsible enterprise culture. Kate Bell and Matthew Smerdon specify in their review of the role of relationships in public services, that there are six elements on which more social-centric model for the social economy can achieve enhanced and meaningful interactions and relationships:

1. **“Understanding** – the service provider seeks to understand the needs and circumstances (economic, personal, emotional, cultural) of the person using services and treats people with dignity and respect demonstrating that they are ‘on their side.’ In return people using services acknowledge the pressures on service providers and their need to make judgements about good use of public funds.
2. **Collaboration** – there is trust, founded in part on demonstrable competence of the professional, both sides have confidence in each other, both are honest and achieve a position where agenda-setting and decision making are shared.
3. **Commitment** – where both sides demonstrate dynamism and commitment and is thorough and well prepared for meetings.
4. **Communication** – where the service provider listens and opens new lines of questioning to draw out relevant deeper issues.
5. **Empowerment** – where relevant, an aim of public services should be to support people to change thinking and behaviour so as to cope differently with challenges in the future. This may involve challenge and confrontation but if the other elements of effective relationships are in place, the result can be powerful for the individual and cost effective for the public purse.
6. **Time** – having the time is important, but this is not open-ended. With the right skills and systems in place people can quickly put these elements of effective relationships in place” (Bell & Smerdon, 2011, p. 6).

Because companies in the traditional economy have often used only a narrow range of impact values and measurement approaches to assess and evaluate their operations, it is important that we take time to think about the way in which forms of management, planning, development and engagement that companies and social organisations of the future might be based on. Especially if we want to enable a radical form of transparency, decentralisation and dispersal of the flow of value that is generated becomes the norm. Companies in the traditional economy don’t, as a matter of course, have to commit themselves to open forms of management and governance, nor do they have to continually engage with clients, customers, contractors and employees on an equal footing. Their expectations are tilted towards symmetric returns on privately controlled investment, unless

companies are working in a high-risk and high-yield marketplace, in which case the promise is that the winner takes all. Classically oriented companies, however, tend to do little to invest in their publics, audiences and their stakeholders, preferring instead to prioritise short term market value above social value, environmental responsibility and public development and engagement. The exception, of course is the long history of social investment associated with the cooperative public mutuals movement, and the principles of workplace democracy, social governance and commitment to community development that exists within the international cooperative movement. As Dan Gregory and Charlie Wigglesworth point out, co-operatives and other forms of social enterprise are rooted in their communities, they pay taxes in their countries of origin, and they have a strong role to play in a “balanced and diverse economy – from public services, to financial services, to technology.” Thereby adding significant “value across the economy” (Gregory & Wigglesworth, 2018, p. 4).

In contrast to the state and market paradigms, the social economy, or what Lent and Studdert suggest is constituted within the realm of the ‘community paradigm,’ seeks instead to place practical and financial power “in the hands of communities and their networks,” which in turn engenders a “sense of responsibility and incentivise engagement” (Lent & Studdert, 2019, p. 42). As Adam Lent and Jessica Studdert argue

“One of the most malign aspects of the hierarchy of the State Paradigm and the transactionalism of the Market Paradigm is the way they infantilise service users and citizens. The State Paradigm at its worst treats them as voiceless, passive recipients of care. The Market Paradigm regards them as insatiable consumers with no greater responsibility than making sure their own needs are met. Both adopt a fundamentally deficit-led approach which begins with people’s problems rather than by assuming they themselves might hold the solutions” (Lent & Studdert, 2019, p. 43).

However, it may be more useful to think of this in terms, as Stumbitz *et al* suggest, that social value organisations and enterprises are part of an “entrepreneurial ecosystem,” in which there is a rich, meaningful and purposeful interaction between community business, private enterprises, public policy managers, regulators, governance bodies, community groups and citizens, who are working together across different levels of the public realm. As Stumbitz *et al* point out, it “helps to understand the multiple factors involved and their interaction” (Stumbitz *et al.*, 2018, p. 11), and the variability of the organisation and governance structures that these entrepreneurial actors adopt. As Sophie Reynolds, Madeleine Gabriel and Charlotte Heales note in their report on social innovation in Europe for Nesta, “the social economy has been an important forum for the development of many social innovations.” However, the concepts of the social economy and the social enterprises should be recognised as distinct from one another. According to Reynolds, Gabriel and Heales:

- “The ‘social economy’ describes the re-organisation of relationships between people, work, production and distribution in a systemic way. Organisations including cooperatives, mutuals, non-profits, social enterprises and charities are vehicles for the social economy.
- A ‘social enterprise’ is an organisation that applies commercial strategies in order to maximise social impacts alongside profits. It is an element of the social economy.

Social innovation, then, and according to Reynolds, Gabriel and Heales, is not only a “matter for the social economy,” but it should also be “embedded in the public sector, the private sector, in new technologies and in the work of civil society” (Reynolds, Gabriel, & Heales, 2018, p. 9). It may be useful, then, to identify some of the key determinants that fit within this wider ecological perspective of the emerging social economy, before asking how they are relevant to the work of community and civic media. The following tables review how these issues are related to community media.

4.3 Social Economy Principles

Table 1 Social Economy Principles

Issue	Linear Economy Limitations	Social Economy Response	Note
Decentralisation	Over-centralised organisations with top-down, hierarchical, managerialist and technocratic systems, distant regulation and opaque governance arrangements. Agents must follow approved pattern of behaviour with no local autonomy.	Empowerment of dispersed agents linked in accountable and self-governed peer-to-peer networks, acting independently and autonomously from the bottom-up (Unger et al., 2019, p. 7), with tailoring approaches according to the local needed, assets and capabilities (Brien, 2011, p. 53).	“New civic and cultural ecosystems are springing up everywhere providing alternatives to economic and social organisation and development” (Kevin Murphy and Denis Stewart in Murphy, McGlynn, & Stewart, 2018, p. 5).
Open Governance	Oversight of organisations is to private accountability shareholders or limited-access executives, with public input limited to periodic, formalistic and bureaucratic reporting and public relations, as the terms of reference, goals and evaluation is set discretely internally within each organisation.	Responsibility is shared and widely distributed to include all stakeholders, employees, members, who have regular opportunities to co-design and develop the organisations values and practices of accountability. Using open discussion forums and regular engagement via open governance platforms.	“Shifting decision-making power out of public service institutions into communities with consequent changes to governance arrangements (Lent & Studdert, 2019, p. 8).
Capacity Building	Operational expertise is limited to professionalised providers who serve narrow technical functions in discrete silos, who exclude emergent and alternative players because they lack a cultural fit, social experience or procedural familiarity with the dominant forms of organisation practice.	Capability is fostered at the lowest level with shared expertise and knowledge exchanged in open networks of discussion and collaborative learning. Emphasis is placed on training otherwise excluded participants and people from non-traditional who stand in contrast to the mainstream expectations for any roles.	“1) Increasing... engagement. 2) Increasing listening, conversation and consultation. 3) Increasing demand. 4) Enabling voice. 5) Telling stories. 6) Community development and capacity building. 7) Wider social change” (Gross & Wilson, 2015, p. 4)
Commons	Proprietorial intellectual property is used to maximise market value and control access to products and services, patents and designs. Consumers pay a premium for supposed added value of content that is mass produced and formulaic.	Shared and collaborative production of content is widely distributed and remixed, and is used to promote additional content and services with payment going directly to the content creator. Costs to users is reduced, thus fostering innovation and wider scope for developmental input.	“Cultural commons at their best should help us examine our lives and to commune with others in the achievement of a mindful and worthwhile human existence. That does not mean that manifestations of cultural commons cannot be fun. On the contrary, merriment, celebration and joyfulness are also an important part of life

			lived well” (Nat O’Connor in Murphy et al., 2018, p. 8).
Open Source	Proprietary tools and products are limited to a narrow use criterion, limited licencing and limited product lifecycle development, with excessive focus on perceived added value designed to serve consumer status, thus bloating packages with unnecessary extras and tie-ins, limiting interoperability and cross-platform transference.	Collaboration and shared input to the development of products and services enhances the opportunity for innovation, universal access and security functionality, while promoting interoperability and alternative production models. Enables independent and non-financially secure users to access tools and products at low or no cost.	“The digital revolution transformed how innovation happens. It became more open and collaborative, spurring a plethora of new business models and services across industries – today epitomised by the ‘platform’ innovation” (Nesta, 2019, p. 6).
Aggregation	Content linking and data capture systems lead to the unregulated use of shared content reuse, for which the originator remains unpaid, and the responsibility as a publisher of problematic content is evaded. Unenforceable legal terms tip balance of proof-of-value to large organisations and independents have little control.	Ability to form networks of content developers, producers and providers who work in a network of mutual exchange of content and services leading to greater exposure, ability to promote alternative services, and capacity to maintain a wide overview of topic related developments.	“Collectives function as thresholds, marking boundaries but also meeting points between different worlds and social spheres. Collectives can build infrastructure to sustain themselves, but which also can spiral off into new forms of insurgent social movement and wild creativity” (Shukaitis, 2019, p. 7).
Civic Deliberation	Putting public services and civic decision-making online limits access to meaningful interactions with public authorities and bodies. Public engagement falls into narrow, transactional and instrumental patterns that eschew civic and social rights, while promoting behaviourist approaches and expectations.	Opens up the potential for more dispersed, asynchronous decision-making, with more agents engaged in ongoing discussions, with timely interventions and rapid responses based on more widely held views. Utilises principles of wisdom of crowds.	“Increasing the proportion of public services available online would not only help to realise these savings, and thus reducing the strain on the public finances, but it would also provide a benefit to users who can reduce the time they need to spend interacting with public authorities and services through traditional means, freeing up leisure time for other purposes” (Cerb, 2018, p. 23).
Social Communication	Creates a negative and toxic environment based on manipulation, misinformation and echo chambers. Platforms are designed to foster clicks by promoting indignation or frustration with small number of actors who play-up to the social frustrations of other users, affecting	Offers a safe space for the expression and exploration of social identity, facilitating engagement outside of many real-world norms, crossing over from communities of place to communities of interest. Enhances capacity to collaborate and co-produce with actors and agents from different traditions and specialisms, and	“To think ecologically is to embrace being always ‘in the middle of things.’ This doesn’t mean giving up on leadership, strategy or clarity of mission. Quite the opposite: it opens new approaches to each of these, in ways that [people] are already beginning to explore, but which could be developed further – explicitly committed not just to a cultural programme, nor even

	wellbeing and expectations of wider social interaction.	geographically located globally in multiple time zones.	to a 'place', per se, but to nurturing the inter-connections and interdependencies within a cultural system" (Gross & Wilson, 2015, p. 12).
Participation	Limited to people who are culturally experienced and capable of engaging in traditional forms of public and civic organisations, and who are given prominence in the organisation because of their social role, cultural identity and professional status. Promotes a culture of entitlement and assumption normalising and limiting social diversity.	Greater opportunities for direct activity based on more widespread social involvement and access to production facilities, decision making and techniques for the development of products and services. Grounded in learning for empowerment that is tested in practical social situations with a diverse range of co-producers.	"Participating in culture as a process through diverse forms of culturally creative activity is something that many people love to do - and everyone has the inner potential to do - not just privately but in a civic space. When people 'do culture' in collaborative association with others, they are engaging in a form of civic participation. They are being creative citizens whose caring about the common good finds expression in their working together creatively to make things happen. Such cooperatively creative acts - often small, always significant - are what cultural commoning is about. And people engaging in conversation is at the core of this process" (Denis Stewart in Murphy et al., 2018, p. 12).
Collaboration	Silo operations prove difficult to manage and resource, requiring considerable additional project management processes and protocols, with additional layers of people management systems. Agents act in set roles and work within prescribed functional boundaries or specialisms. This makes change hard to anticipate and adapt to.	Enhanced autonomy for people working as interoperable agents in a flat network, enhancing creative potential for innovation and change. Generalist and mutual co-production practices enhance to cost-effectiveness and timeliness of team working, which share knowledge and learning openly and as a matter of course for the benefit of all.	"Across sectors... there is growing public demand for more accountability, transparency, and collaboration. Within the social sector, more and more conversations are taking place around equity, community engagement, and inclusive processes. Participation itself has had decades of traction in pockets of the social sector, as well as in other fields such as international development, deliberative governance, community development, and community organizing" (Gibson, 2018, p. 6).
Knowledge Transfer	Organisations foster specialist and functional knowledge which is developed along narrow pathways with little opportunity to exchange and learn from different cultures and schools of thinking. Knowledge is handed-down on a	Organisations share and discuss knowledge in open communities of learning and engagement that seek to explore and test new ideas in non-judgemental and creative spaces. Learning is driven by values that are collaboratively shared	"A knowledge economy in which many can take part holds the promise of advancing human freedom and realisation. But so long as the vast majority of people, even in the richest countries, are excluded from forms of economic

	transactional basis, with a focus on steps-to-take and goals/outcomes to reach.	and which focus on the joy of knowledge informed by the benefits of shared emotional, cultural and social experiences.	activity which give adequate expression to their imaginative powers and humanity, their potential is denied” (Unger et al., 2019, p. 4).
Creative Industry	Expertise is limited to specific roles and task in a command-and-control, status-based organisation that centralises creative development, and which maintains a strong focus on traditional models of behaviour, practice and expression.	Dispersed creative practice and development are fostered through an organisation with high regard given to innovation-led relationships. Creative practices go beyond design/art expectations and facilitate innovation, risk taking and cross-cultural interaction.	“Creative clusters do not grow on their own: what happens in their neighbourhood is also important. Discrete interventions to support cluster development need to take into account the situation around it, and also consider potential growth spill-overs which might benefit the creative industries nearby. There is a risk that these spill-overs might not be given due attention even though they are a positive outcome for UK creative industries regionally and nationally” (Garcia, Klinger, & Stathoulopoulos, 2018, p. 33).

4.4 Social Economy Outline

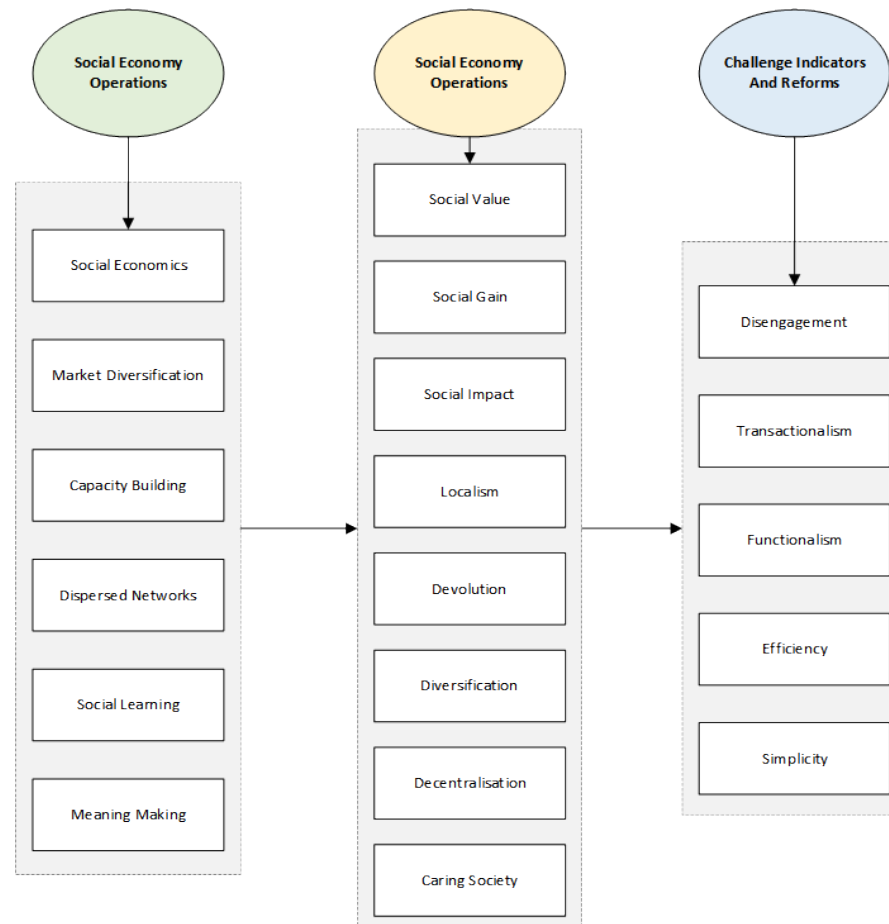


Figure 2 Social Economy Outline

4.5 Community and Civic Media in the Social Economy

Table 2 Social Economy Operations

Theme:	Seeks To:	In Response To:	For Example, and Which Report Highlights This?	Why is this Important?	Why is the Relevant to Civic & Community Media?
Social Economics:	Promote diverse business models between state, market and civic enterprises.	Economic imbalance and risk of concentrated market capacity. Economic inertia due to sustained austerity policies. Recognition of social responsibility countering negative social and ecological sustainability indicators.	Precarious nature of work in the creative economy (Genders, 2019). Need to raise awareness of cross-sector partnerships (Temple et al., 2017). Support for non-state run public services (Temple, 2016).	We are likely to see increased economic dysfunction and a pronounced lack of legitimacy if the economy is not reformed by diversifying the players involved and the models for economic activity that they use. Dealing with market, ecological and social failure should be a high priority for policy development and organisational practice.	Community and civic media are not separate from the general economy and are affected by the same issues. Demonstrating the link between community media and the social sector is essential. Closer integration with the needs and modes of working in the social and civic sectors, based on forms of governance that are accountable and responsible, will be valuable in the future.
Market Diversification:	Encourage alternative emergent economic actors who are socially informed, resilient and adaptable.	Productivity and innovation stagnation. Loss of competitiveness through rentiering. Limited market resilience in face of disruption and change.	Need to support localised economies through 'buying social' programmes (S. E. UK, 2017, 2018a; Wigglesworth et al., 2019). Focus on the knowledge economy (Unger et al., 2019). Alternative models of finance-led growth (Haley, Blitterswijk, & Febvre, 2019).	We have significant challenges caused by technical, environmental, social and ICT disruption that need to be addressed. If we don't promote diversity of economic activity, then we will lose the capacity to innovate.	Community and civic media seek to promote alternative and diverse forms of creative media engagement that encourage participation and critical thinking. This builds capacity to challenge the status quo in constructive, accountable and responsible ways.
Capacity Building:	Ensure that minority and non-traditional economic actors are viable, resilient and sustainable.	Countering market crowding-out by established players. Countering aversion to divergent identities and capabilities. Empowering non-traditional and historically marginal actors.	Encouraging participatory approaches to finance and development funding (Gibson, 2017). Encouraging multistakeholder and collaborative platforms (Borkin, 2019).	The echo-chamber effect of social institutions and social media is proving to be counter-productive, but any intervention by the state has to be tempered and limited to maintain social freedoms and independence of thought and action.	Community and civic media promote voice empowerment and human rights through participatory practices that are responsive to change. There is an understanding of cognitive and social diversity that can lead to positive social transformation.
Dispersed Networks:	Recognise the shift towards distributed and	Countering centralised and top-down information management	The rise of the platform economy (Lockey, 2018).	The world becomes meaningless if solutions are imposed according to other people's expressions of will and intent.	Community and civic media can counter the damaging effects of toxic and dysfunctional marketised forms of

	decentred social/business ecosystems.	and economic development models. Countering narrow, technocratic and elitist management cultures. Alleviating risk aversion and establishment of elite and managerialist social bias.	City challenges to support creative economies (Gregory et al., 2018). Widen the scope of what is said to be 'good' and socially valuable (Irvine, White, & Diffley, 2018).	Local self-determination plays an essential role in reform and transformation as long as it is tempered with clear expectations of social accountability and civic responsibility.	media, which see no connection with local communities other than as providers of consumerist services and entertainment. Raising ambition and having a higher level of expectation of what can be achieved is essential to good social progress.
Social Learning:	Identify how social value is generated through insight, creativity and innovation.	Eschewing neo-classical, transactional and hierarchical value models. Countering extrinsic frameworks of social utility. Countering passive enculturation models of community development.	Focus on Social Impact Investing (DCMS, 2018b). Prioritise social change above transactional efficiency (T. Walker & Lawson, 2018).	The race to the bottom that many commercial forms of business take is not sustainable. It is damaging to the environment, to our social wellbeing and to our ability to imagine new and credible solutions to our problems. SROI models need to be extended and integrated more widely.	Community and civic media draw strength from diversity, from its ability to adapt and change to local circumstances and needs, while seeking to make a positive and welcome contribution to the lives of volunteers, readers, listeners and partners. Value is generated through development, not transaction.
Meaning Making:	Explores how social value is shared and reciprocated in meaningful ways.	Discarding transactional communication models. Removing communication bottlenecks and shifting gatekeeper control. Lessening monological, narrow and professionalised communication biases.	Incorporating social responsibility principles in company reporting (A. Breckell, Campbell, & Nicholls, 2014). Expanding use of social economy business (S. E. UK, 2018b, 2018c). Counter simplistic and populist trends (Gaston & Harrison-Evans, 2018).	Standardised and large-scale media is highly profitable, but it is increasingly difficult to determine how they contributing to the general good of society. The government cannot subsidise outdated business models in perpetuity, which means new business models need to be fostered.	Community and civic media thrive in a pluralistic media economy, in which opportunities for sustainable development is fostered by engagement and participation. Media literacy and communication capacity is best gained in having opportunities to access and engage with other practitioners and civic-minded advocates.

4.6 Community and Civic Media - Social Concerns?

Table 3 Social Concerns

Theme:	Seeks To:	In Response To:	For Example, Which Report Highlights This?	Why is this Important?	Why is the Relevant to Civic & Community Media?
Social Value:	Describe criteria for investment based on needs analysis and fiscal/social resource expectations.	Social, civic and cultural needs in addition to purely economic factors. Interrogating evidence of utility and outcome measurements suited to public benefits. Movement towards SROI principles.	Change as a response to austerity (Morse, 2018). Movement to economic models working across different sectors (Gregory & Wigglesworth, 2018).	Evidence-based policy development is a mantra that all policy makers seek to implement, but the practice is more complex and takes longer more than assumption-based linear methods. This goes counter to the electoral cycle. Establishing cross-party consensus for cross-administration implementation will be increasingly important.	Situating community and civic media within the social value policy framework will provide supplementary cross-reference indicators for the social gain considerations that are stipulated by Ofcom for Community Radio, and will focus attention on the interconnections and alignments with the wider social sector and civil society reform agendas.
Social Gain:	Define changes in relation to social assets and social capability expectations.	Lack of data and measurement criteria for social change. Inability to incorporate non-tangible resources and diffuse values. Limited modelling of social change capacity.	Shifting balance of funding from outcomes to needs (Fund, 2018). Shift from top-down to bottom-up decision making (Gibson, 2017). Shift to place-based decision making (C. Walker, 2018).	Not all evidence that can be collated and evaluated will provide clear or numerically clear indicators. Policy planning and service commissioning will have to rely on non-specific and asymmetric criteria, meaning robust justifications will have to be expressed using non-instrumental models and descriptive narratives.	Community and civic media share operational and evaluation characteristics with other social sector activities and thus should be judged and evaluated on the basis of indeterminate and subjective outcomes. This is more difficult to demonstrate and requires a long-term commitment to evaluating the effectiveness of models of change.
Social Impact:	Explain outcomes in relation to measurable or narratable social change expectations.	Lack of data and evidence of changed outcomes. Fixation with qualitative models at expense of experiential models. Misfit between top-down metrics of change clashing with grassroots views.	Focus shifts to impact and change outcomes (Lumley, Rickey, & Pike, 2011).	Transactional accounts based on capacity and user interaction can be clearly indicated in evaluations of social programmes, but they can't easily explain the longer-term social and environmental changes that take place at secondary and wider environments. Policy and resource planning models will need to be adapted to suit this limited capacity.	There is a tension between <i>participation</i> and <i>audience</i> development as the primary concern of community and civic media. This legacy of assorted expectations means that consistent metrics and evaluation frameworks that demonstrate impact are hard to put in place, which becomes a self-reinforcing inhibitor to policy and resource development.
Localism:	Shift where any criteria and responsibility for changes are	Inaccurate assessment of local need based on uniform metrics. Concentration of governmental expertise	SROI investment models focus on where interventions are successful (Steed & Nicholles, 2011).	Administrative centralisation is being challenged as an ongoing response to top-down government models, but attempts at localism have been skewed by austerity and a lack of investment	Corporate and centralised models of media have become more pronounced with little protection for local or small-scale media organisations in practice. There is a lack of engagement with

	positioned and located.	and power, i.e. White-hall. Top-down approach not mindful of local wishes.	Recognise that place-based policy making is crucial for wellbeing (Pennycook, 2017). Support social sector organisations and build capacity to act locally (Menzies, 2017).	in capacity building, local accountability and civic participation.	local social sector organisations about their communication and participatory media needs.
Devolution:	Relocate where decisions and accountability for resource deployment is maintained and held.	Upholding democratic deficit. Resort to standardisation and monocultural identity. Rejection of all government models not just bad models.	Shift in perception of community rights to direct investment decisions (Dunning et al., 2017). Strengthening the power of local communities to act independently of government (Kerslake, 2018).	Devolution is challenging to central governments. The default objective of governmental and policy models should be based on forms of distributionism, i.e. that which can be done at the lowest level, should be done at the lowest level. Which should be enshrined in competition and procurement regulation.	Community and civic media are primarily driven by local needs, specific identities and self-defined representation requirements. Administration and regulation is too often managed centrally and away from the communities that are served.
Diversification:	Change what forms of information gathering are enabled, and what players are recognised.	Standardisation of data forms and collection techniques. Fortification of monocultural data gathering mindset, i.e. technical experts. Imposed metrics-based justifications.	Alternative models of finance that fund non-traditional projects (Old et al., 2019). Moving beyond purely market-based evaluations to incorporate SROI principles (Twill, Batker, Cowan, & Chappell, 2011).	The assumption is that evaluation and analysis is not something that can be done by delivery agents themselves, and that high levels of technical expertise are needed to model and assess impact. This reduces both the range of measurement factors and the type of people who are recognised with the capacity to do them.	Community and civic media, as with other social sector groups, often lack resources and in-house expertise to undertake effective evaluation and analysis. There is often an expectation that any evaluation models have to imitate the large-scale longitudinal and metrics models, further reducing their effectiveness and lowering their local relevance.
Decentralisation:	Shift at what levels decisions get made and by who?	Embedded command and control public service management ethos. Corporatism and monocultural mindset that brooks no dissent. Groupthink established and systems gaming predominates.	Promoting social enterprises that operate at a neighbourhood and local level (Temple, 2017). Responding to loss of sense of community (Gaston, 2018). Facilitate devolution (MacLennan & McCauley, 2018).	Centralisation of corporate management systems counters local expertise, knowledge and decision-making, while stymying innovation, expression and local identity. The linearity and hence sterility of the corporate model runs counter to local needs and flexibility, blocking innovation, diversification and problem-solving capacity.	Decentralised decision making that is responsive to the needs and wishes of the participants and communities that are being addressed is at the heart of community and civic media practice, but the capacity to undertake this successfully needs to be continuously nurtured and tested via a development mindset and cyclical theory of change models.
Caring Society:	Contests the reasons that decisions get taken?	Empathy removed from decision making process.	Introduce socially-motivated principles and measurement criteria to the service development process (Bolton & Savell, 2011).	Successful and sustainable social environments are created on the basis of multiple and even conflicting motivational models. Reducing human	Understanding the motivations for participation in community and civic media is under-theorised and lacks systematic testing. It is easy to reach

		Behaviourist instrumentalism underpins change models. Systems thinking dominates at expense of alternatives.	Prioritise social criteria, such as kindness and belonging in the public policy process (Ferguson, 2017).	behaviour to a simple transaction of cause and effect is reductive and limits the capacity of people to explore their potential and experiences as meaningful and transformational.	for assumptions based on limited social expectations. The strength of these models is that they open-up the potential avenues for participation and engagement as opposed to shutting them down.
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4.7 Community and Civic Media - Challenge Indicators and Reforms

Table 4 Challenge Indicators and Reforms

Theme:	Seeks To:	In Response To:	For Example: Which Report Highlights This?	Why is this Important?	Why is the Relevant to Civic & Community Media?
Disengage-ment:	Address low levels of civic participation and engagement.	The decline in engagement with democratic processes and institutions. The distrust of media and civic institutions who relate public and social policy matters. The centralisation of decision-making powers.	Shift from service-delivery to a responsibility and civic engagement paradigm” (Lent & Studdert, 2019). Promote radical transparency and hold actors to account for public interventions (Adshead, Forsyth, Wood, & Wilkinson, 2019).	Social and civic development are enhanced and made more relevant with increased levels of participation and co-development. Direct engagement in the decision-making process legitimises a range of views in a way that is accountable and encourages innovation, local solutions and enhanced civic capacity.	Community and civic media are not simply a way a relating information, but a mechanism for the development of understanding and the improvement of knowledge. They provide opportunities for civic deliberation and learning that go beyond the transactional view of media, thereby ensuring that communities feel part of the decision-making process.
Transactionalism:	Deal with the narrowing of motives and limiting of engagement rationale.	A narrow focus on cost-effectiveness and limited fiscal parameters. An over-reliance on technical and quantitative data analysis methodologies. The loss of trust in descriptive and discursive forms of social debate and reporting.	Refocusing and renewing the role of civic society (Unwin, 2018a). Go beyond funding and skills models to include participatory engagement (Phillips, 2018). Focus on quality of life factors that look holistically at people’s lives (Brotchie, 2017).	Siloed and distant decision-making bodies create cynicism and breed anxiety that the processes of resource allocation are being run for the benefit of a few, based on limited technical criteria, and without fostering real change or generating higher levels of engagement and trust. Social objectives will not be realised if a development approach evaded.	Community and civic media are viable platforms for the discussion of complex and challenging issues. Because the ownership structure and governance process is civic and participatory minded, there are potentially more opportunities to experiment with progressive forms of development and deliberation at locally relevant scales and across longer time periods.
Functionalism:	Halt the reduction of social experience to measurable inputs and outputs, defined by efficiency and productivity.	A focus on symmetric decision making, numbers and outcomes. The outdated competence models designed for prior ages and conditions. The promotion of a reductionist mindset that proposes that everything that can be	Enhancing collaborative potential of community partnerships (G. T. Foundation, 2018b). Reach out beyond technical and transactional processes to include emotional and human concerns (Unwin, 2018b).	The transactionalist planning model is reductive and denies the richness of human experience and the multivalent ways that people arrive at their views. Adapting to non-symmetrical policy and resource development means considering how people are motivated in different ways and for different reasons at different stages of their lives. Service delivery is no longer suitable as a one-size-fits-all model.	Because the range of individual social experiences that shape the worldview of the participants in community and civic media projects is so varied, it is difficult to plan programmatic and linear services. Breaking with the transactional model mass media is effective because it is representative of people’s values, sense of identity and sense of belonging. Accounting for this needs new models of evaluation and assessment.

		measured should be measured.			
Efficiency:	Challenge the standardisation and dominance of uniform systems management logics.	The Focus on limited aspects of human cognition. Seeks to impose limited response to human needs and conditions. Acts deterministically to avoid divergent models and mindsets.	Frame discussion and the decision-making process in human terms (Scot, 2019). Co-production and enabling become drivers of policy and accountability processes (Wallace, 2013).	Uniform services can be highly effective and efficient, but the challenge of contemporary life is that these increasingly feel devoid of human values, experience and concern. They limit the range of options and processes by which people can engage with one another and develop independent and resilient social outlooks that have the capacity to deal with globalised challenges.	The grassroots nature of community and civic media means that it isn't possible to provide coordinated services at scale, making efficiency the engine of social change. Instead, they improve resilience by offering a wider range of adaptable options within a richer ecology of associated and interdependent social activities that recognise mutuality, collaboration and cooperation.
Simplicity:	Contest the reduction of social experience to measurable variables via deductive reasoning.	The offer of simple and populist solutions to complex and multi-layered problems. The intimation that magical thinking will provide answers. Negation of the need for open discussion, debate, challenge and reasoning.	Challenge systems thinking and goal-oriented models with values-based approaches (Wilson, Cornwell, Flanagan, Nielsen, & Khan, 2018). Focus on existing community assets as key factors to drive change (Sloccock, 2018).	The challenges of climate change, technical innovation, migration and globalisation will not recede if those offering simplistic solutions are to be believed. Social preparedness for complexity and multifaceted interaction between social challenges needs a different mindset that can address these issues.	Listening to and empathising with a range of human experiences and points of view will be essential to the future mindset that deals with complex and multi-layered challenges. Community and civic media deals with these challenges in practice because they are not viable in traditional economic and transactionalist terms. Instead they offer greater social value potential.

5 Media Landscape

- Consolidation of ownership in newspapers, radio.
- Marketisation and globalised content competition.
- Introduction of social media/tech giants.
- Resilience of traditional media forms.

5.1 Dissatisfaction with mainstream and corporate media

The Cairncross Report is the latest in a series of demands for urgent reform of the news and media economy in the UK. Appointed by the government in 2018, to investigate ways of securing the future of high-quality journalism in Britain, Dame Frances Cairncross has recommended that “there should be a public investigation into the dominance of Facebook and Google in the advertising marketplace.”⁷ Dame Cairncross recommended that a new regulator be established to “oversee the relationship between news outlets and technology giants, which have taken much of the advertising revenue that used to subsidise reporting” (Cairncross, 2019). At the same time, Lord Tony Hall, the Director General of the BBC, has proposed the establishment of a new media democracy foundation, building on the work of the BBC Local News Partnership, that will be charged with reversing the decline in local democracy reporting in the UK. Lord Hall wants to “reverse the damage that has been done to local democracy in recent years and bring about a sea change in local public interest journalism.”⁸ According to Lord Hall, there is “potential to unlock millions from a range of business and institutions who are open to the idea of supporting the foundation.” Lord Hall added that there is a “chronic underreporting of events, issues, politics and crime in local communities.”⁹ These high-profile interventions come in addition to the report from the Parliamentary Committee for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport into disinformation and ‘fake news.’¹⁰ The report calls for a new regulator to be established that would be funded from a levy on the tech and social media companies that operate in the UK, with the power to impose large fines on companies that are shown to be in breach of a proposed new code of conduct that would ensure that citizens’ rights are established in statute.

Damian Collins MP, the then chair of the DCMS committee, said “we need a radical shift in the balance of power between the platforms and the people. The age of inadequate self-regulation must

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/feb/11/public-funds-should-be-used-to-rescue-local-journalism-says-report>

⁸ <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/bbc-suggests-local-democracy-foundation-to-save-local-journalism.html>

⁹ <https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2019/news/bbc-and-publishers-in-government-talks-over-launch-of-new-local-news-body/>

¹⁰ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/fake-news-17-19/>

come to an end.”¹¹ Adding that “the rights of the citizen need to be established in statute, by requiring the tech companies to adhere to a code of conduct written into law by parliament and overseen by an independent regulator.” In 2018 the UK government abandoned its commitment, however, to a second phase of enquiry by Lord Leveson into press standards following the phone hacking scandal.¹² The inquiry followed a “series of high-profile cases in which journalists had obtained confidential information by gaining access to the mobile phone messages of celebrities and, in the case of the murdered teenager Milly Dowler, victims of crime.” Ministers had promised a second stage in which the relationship between the police and the media was examined, but this was later dropped. In addition, Ofcom is now undertaking a review of the BBC’s news provision, to check that the corporation’s online media platforms are not distorting the news marketplace by taking advantage of the broadcaster’s dominant market position. Ofcom’s review will “assess whether the broadcaster gives due credit to news outlets when following up their stories.”¹³ According to Ofcom “the role of the BBC as an impartial provider of news and current affairs across all its platforms is just as important as ever. The challenge the BBC faces is to remain a relevant and trusted source of news, which delivers high quality content for all audiences. The aim of this review is to understand how well the BBC is adapting to meet that challenge.”¹⁴

Each of these inquiries and reports indicates that there is a deep disquiet with the way that news and media is understood and regulated in the UK, especially as the formally dominant legacy news providers lose ground to the emergent tech companies. The role of traditional news broadcasters and newspaper publishers is clearly changing, but it would be simplistic to pin the responsibility for this change simply on the shoulders of the tech companies, without having examined any of the more fundamental social changes that are also taking place, which are now becoming more pronounced. With the shift to smartphones, for example, and other internet enabled devices, we are experiencing an accelerated process of change for which the legal, regulatory and governance models of the past are ill-prepared to deal with the emerging economic and civic processes that support news and information provision, let alone adapt and change to meet the needs of the future.

5.2 Breakdown of Trust

¹¹ <https://www.digitaltveurope.com/2019/02/18/dcms-committee-calls-for-regulation-of-online-platforms/>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/mar/01/leveson-inquiry-part-2-cancellation-condemned-by-labour-as-breach-of-trust>

¹³ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ofcom-to-investigate-bbc-news-clickbait-2zbxj0p75>

¹⁴ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/bbc-operating-framework/performance/review-bbc-news-current-affairs>

It is said that social media companies, such as Facebook, Google and Twitter, cannot any longer hide behind the privilege of being regarded simply as a ‘platform,’ and that they can’t continue to claim to have only limited responsibility for the content that they share on their sites.¹⁵ Platform neutrality and self-governance only go so far, but with the data-manipulation techniques used by the tech companies to shape and channel the newsfeeds of millions of users being entirely opaque and shrouded in business confidentiality, there are many questions that need to be asked, and which are often left unanswered. The scandal surrounding Facebook, for example, and the manipulation of data by Cambridge Analytica in the Brexit and Trump campaigns, has been partially reported, but remains largely unexplained by any regulatory and legal authorities.¹⁶ A significant air of mistrust surrounds what might be described as a murky set of business and political practices. Even Chris Hughes, who along with Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 was one of the co-founders of Facebook, now says that “the Facebook that exists today is not the Facebook that we founded in 2004;” and that “the one that we have today I think is far too big. It’s far too powerful. And most importantly, its CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, is not accountable.”¹⁷

The question that needs to be considered, then, is are these phenomena independent of one another, or are they linked and thereby represent a more fundamental set of challenges? Furthermore, are these individual concerns the evidence of systemic failures in the existing model of media engagement and governance; or, are they the result of external pressures from forces and challenges that are happening elsewhere, but aren’t quite so apparent in the reporting and the back-and-forth of the contested claims and counterclaims that are staked out in the media itself? Do these problems, moreover, amount to a systematic crisis that is able to undermine and challenge the certainties that our social and civic foundations have been based on? For example Habermas’ model of the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas, 1989). One might ask if they are the birthing-pangs of a new regime of media and information engagement that has yet to assume its full status as the natural paradigm of interaction and engagement across the world?

5.3 Networked Society

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/feb/08/instagram-heads-off-regulations-with-ban-on-self-harm-images>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/22/cambridge-analytica-scandal-the-biggest-revelations-so-far>

¹⁷ <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-co-founder-says-zuckerberg-not-accountable-calls-government-break-n1003606>

In 1995 Don Tapscott coined the term “*Networked Intelligence*” (Tapscott, 2015), which he used to describe how a “network would be smarter than its smartest node in one domain after another.” Since then, the network society he was writing about has grown substantially, bringing considerable transformation to many of the ways that we do business. By lowering the cost of transactions, enabling faster data processing and communications, and with the ability to store large amounts of data from these transactions at a minimal cost, it has been possible to speed-up supply chains, lift small businesses that would otherwise have only operated locally onto a global stage, and introduce marketing techniques that are focussed on individual preferences and needs, as opposed to mass marketing which is focussed on whole populations. The business models that emerged with what has been called Web 2.0 promoted interactive functionality, based on the use of algorithms capable of reading and coordinating multiple, large-scale databases that had been used to sweep-up data linked to our personal preferences and life experiences. We gave this data freely in return for access, and we self-reported vast amounts of information about ourselves into this system, without even thinking about the consequences, or how and for what purpose it would be used. This link-up, between engagement and participation, with data surveillance, data-recording and large-scale analysis techniques, has been the dominant - but largely unaccounted for - engine of communications and information exchange for the last twenty years. It is only now, however, as the remaining legacy industries that it has displaced finally start to crumble, that it is being challenged and questioned. As the potentially undesirable outcomes of “civil passivity” or extremism are being felt, which as Tapscott and Tapscott suggest, “remains constant” in whatever forms of representative democracy we choose to look at (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2018, p. 211).

The network society, it must be said, has given us many valuable and desirable resources that we would now find difficult to live without. Online shopping, electronic maps, real-time travel information, international hotel bookings, secure knowledge and information exchanges, collaborative production tools and social communication platforms. These, and many more like them, have all been provided as part of a set of packages that we get when we subscribe to an online service. They are either given to us freely, or at a significantly reduced cost when compared to trying to access and maintain these tools separately. The bundles of tools that we get from Google, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft and Facebook, to name only some, are well organised, responsive to human interaction, responsive to business, social and cultural needs, and are priced at pretty-much next to zero, thus facilitating a wide take-up and use by the global population. As Casey and Vigna describe, however,

“The ‘freemium’ model, in which we view these companies’ services as ‘free content,’ is a myth. While we might not be paying US dollars to Google, Facebook, and co, we are handing over a much more valuable currency: our personal data. Control over that currency has turned these players, quite simply, into monopolies” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 39). If your preference isn’t for full-blooded commercial applications, however, there is an alternative and plentiful supply of open-source and creative commons-based software applications, platforms and media that exists outside of the corporate digital supply chains. These commons-based tools are built around models of peer-to-peer collaboration. They have given us Linux, Wikipedia, WordPress, Apache, Android and many other platforms that drive access to and content for the Web. Not only that, but they are also increasingly influential with consumers and are capable of driving widespread and non-expert take up of these systems. In a mark of their success, many of the tech companies are moving to open-source and peer-to-peer network and collaborative production models, in order to take advantage of the enhanced development ethos and crowdsourcing mindsets that they are based on.

With these broad changes in mind, Don and Alex Tapscott, writing twenty years later, note that a further set of challenges and innovations are feeding into the global marketplace as we speak, and that these innovations are going to significantly affect the systems and the cultures that connect a greater proportion of people with information and news services in more significant ways than ever before. According to Don Tapscott and Alex Tapscott, “blockchain technology will accelerate this process,” which when it is linked via 5G mobile network technology to create the Internet of Things, “these trends will go into hyperdrive” (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2018, p. 164). It is these trends and technologies that will be looked at and summarised here.

5.4 New Paradigms

It seems that we are living in curious times. It seems we are facing two ways at the same time. We have embraced the flow of digital innovation and the network intelligence, with its offer of surplus digital value. However, and at the same time, we are increasingly disillusioned and mistrustful of the people, institutions and civic processes that we use to manage and negate the social and existential risks that we are faced with and are challenged by as we act out our social relationships, build communities and invest in institutions. As Michael Casey and Paul Vigna note, this mutual mistrust is seen in the way that institutions are forced to keep information from one other. They are forced to “keep data in closed, inaccessible corporate silos,” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 153), which means that efficiencies and value has to be found elsewhere in the supply chain. In Facebook’s model this is

extracted by using the data in these silos to link advertisers with user profiles based on a model of their underlying social-psychological biases. However, Facebook keeps tight control of this vast and plentiful supply of data, warehousing it and charging a considerable amount of money for access to the datasets that it creates.

We have entered, it seems, a new paradigm of social engagement, but have we done so without properly planning and thinking about the capacity and capability that we have as individuals, communities and societies, to transition from one state of cognitive engagement to another. The institutions that we have built up over centuries, and in which we have invested our trust to handle these issues, such as courts, universities, national and local governments, the press and broadcasters, etc., are now being challenged by new forms of social engagement and information exchange. As Casey and Vigna ask, are we at risk of undoing the “centuries of cultural and social formation that goes into the creation of institutions”? (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 256). Are we undermining the very principle of “institutionalised trust [as] a societal virtue” itself? Furthermore, and according to Casey and Vigna, “It seems that trust as a form of social capital is in short supply across the world, and “in those places where we have it, it’s not clear that we should be doing away with it.” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 257). In each case where trust has been built-up its value to society is arguably greater than the specific purpose that the institution plays. But this long-term practical and symbolic capacity and institutional investment is being eclipsed by emergent counterforces that are creating a complex of disruptive tensions pulling in opposite directions. As Tapscott and Tapscott explain, the “new communications and data analysis tools have also allowed ideologically driven groups to hijack social and political debates,” and that “both liberals and conservatives are using them to create echo chambers that undermine the potential for compromise, let alone consensus” (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2018, p. 213).

5.5 Control and Centralisation

The tech giants dominate our day-to-day lives and our mundane daily living experiences, in ways that other social organisations and social systems have never done so before. The church might have dominated the mindset of the middle ages in its totality, but it could not find out about what impact it was having in real time across the whole population, and where the variations in behavioural response might be happening. The church of the middle ages could only influence a population symbolically and holistically, and it usually did this with overwhelming force and emblematic power. The tech companies of today, on the other hand, can influence the micro-decisions and gestures that we

make continuously as we move about in our homes, in the street, as we drive about, as we work, and even as we sleep. They not only govern our global outlook, they also shape our civic and social experiences, which is in addition to shaping our private and individual experiences. We are using technology to enhance our sense of personhood, while also using the technology of networks and social interaction to share and exchange these experiences within globalised marketplaces and so-called social networks. The problem, however, is that we have very little control over these processes, and there is marginal accountability and scrutiny of the way that these networks and organisations operate. There is a democratic deficit.

How the data interactions are set and designed, how the algorithms are managed and regulated, remain largely unknown to the vast majority of the global population. As Casey and Vigna note, “the Net was designed to let anyone publish and send information, at near-zero cost, to anyone else anywhere. That opened up vast new economic opportunities, but it also posed unique challenges for trust management” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 49). The resulting surveillance culture that has come with the network society, and the sweeping-up of vast amounts of data from seemingly innocuous personal and social interactions, has thus become the norm, and is extenuating this pervasive sense of mistrust in our public institutions and civic processes. As information is monopolised and processed using secret algorithms, by parties that are not publicly known or publicly facing, and who are un-willing to interact with the people they make money from, the principles of trust that regulate our social interactions are being disrupted by shadowy corporations who centralise and control these processes.

5.6 Gatekeeping and Manipulation

Data regulation is largely inaccessible to the general population. Fees for admission to the warehouses of data are set in a way that excludes most people from being able to access that information (gatekeeping), while the analytic methods that are used to interrogate the datasets are massively complex and complicated (value warehousing). There is a need for high levels of technical expertise to navigate and understand these systems, so no wonder the economics of data management are restricted to intermediates who reinforce the inaccessibility of these data resources. The rewards and wealth that can be accumulated by those fortunate enough to be able to access them, goes largely to the small number of people who act, as Tapscott and Tapscott call them, as “data frackers” (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2018, p. lii). Clearly, the potential profits are considerable, and in a dog-eat-dog, winner-takes-all casino-style capitalist economy, they are seemingly unfailling and inviable.

While the day-to-day interactions of the apps on our smartphones have remained novel, we have failed to notice that they are also designed to exploit our psychological weaknesses. Nir Eyal calls this the habit-forming “superpower” of the digital tech industries, which keeps us hooked and constantly engaged with our smart phones and tablets (Eyal & Hoover, 2014, p. 10). Furthermore, and as our attention has been focussed on these psychologically engrossing interactive transactions, we have failed to notice the much bigger set of problems that have formed in the background. Problems related to the formation of new techno-social scenarios that have created a bias toward individualised and atomised social experience, or the “zombification” of social life, at the expense of an interdependent, connected and truly meaningful social experience (Vervaeke, Mastropietro, & Miscevic, 2017).

The problem, moreover, is that there has been a hollowing out of our faith in the principles of notions of “‘democracy’ and ‘citizenship’... as compass points for a free society” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 224). As Filippi and White point out, with the tech companies operating freely as intermediaries of our social experience they have

“Taken a larger role in shaping the information that billions of people access worldwide. They influence the type of content that people can view and consume by using proprietary algorithms, which often are not publicly disclosed, and unilaterally decide what content should be allowed or prohibited on their platforms” (Filippi & White, 2018, p. 118).

What was promised in the early surge of optimism associated with the first stage of development of the Internet, was a radical decentralisation and diversity of supply, propelling forward the early growth of new forms of business interaction and social network-building that was only possible via the Internet. This has now largely been negated, as we have chosen to replace one set of seemingly immutable intermediaries and gatekeepers, with another set of seemingly immutable intermediaries and gatekeepers.

As Filippi and White point out, “online intermediaries stubbornly persist” (Filippi & White, 2018, p. 118). Only rather than the broadcasters, newspaper publishers, libraries, schools, universities and record stores of the past being the pivot-points for information and cultural exchange in society, the intermediaries of today are the tech-giants, Google, Apple, Amazon, Samsung, and so on. They sell the hardware, the platforms, the applications, and the content they produce in sealed and vertically integrated complexes, defined by entertainment and productivity eco-systems that are designed to maintain the ‘walled-garden’ mentality of user benefits. Like a shopping mall experience, they don’t mind which consumer items you purchase and use, as long as you are paying for it

in one of their shopping complexes. Even in this scenario, the institution remains the focal point for trust, only in the marketplace it goes under another name. It's called a 'brand' and is supported by marketing and public relations manipulation that ensures that trust is communicated and understood in particular ways – i.e. as consumer utility. The value that is invested in a brand is ultimately realised in consumption and spending patterns. Retaining the position of trust as an institution, or as a brand, requires considerable levels of investment in relationship management and market-positioning techniques, i.e. price-points and celebrity endorsements. This means that the potential users and subscribers of these services can identify with the promise of the brand, perceiving the simulated symbolic value as a practical or social utility, with a perceived use-value associated with the purchase of the products on offer. Indeed, with social media applications like Instagram, it is now entirely possible for this approach to dominate the way we construct our 'selves' and our public persona, and many people live in the hope of emulating successful celebrities and become *influencers* in their own right. This is what Theodore Levitt described as the interplay between the "miniscule segments and niches" of personal consumption, and the "interstices of global homogenisation" (Levitt, 1986, p. xvii).

However, and in considering the wider processes of social trust, a set of challenges and issues have grown around these ways of thinking, due in part to the sheer scale and speed by which transactions and exchanges can be undertaken. The simplicity of tracking trust in a face-to-face or word-of-mouth social environment, is vastly different to the global scale and magnitude faced by transactions carried out via the Internet, and across all other forms of networked, synchronous and interoperable computing systems. At the present time we largely handle issues of trust by continuing to invest in the intermediaries and institutions that validate and assure the trustworthiness of the people and the transactions that are being undertaken. These institutions and the brands, when done well, represent *immutability*, *reliability*, *dependability* and *accountability*. They come in the form of state institutions, non-governmental organisations, public service broadcasters, or as independent firms that are recognised as providers of services in the marketplace. Trust is a valuable commodity, however, and once lost, as happened in the 2008 financial crash, it is difficult to regain.

5.7 Monopoly Marketisation

We assume that when we make a transaction, either with governments or with commercial agents, that we can trust and believe in the integrity of the organisation that is vouching for that transaction. That they are not going to rip us off, nor are they going to double-deal with anyone else for the

same service or product. In the marketplace we can shop around and compare other services for better prices, better value and for better capacity to provide a service we are seeking. This mantra has also been used to inform policy planning about public services for the last forty years, and has been at the heart of the so-called modernisation agendas of most governments since the 1980s. Schools, hospitals, universities and other social value-based institutions, have all been told, and continue to be told, that they should emulate the market mechanism of free enterprise businesses, as this will improve efficiency, accountability and performance, while offering more choice to the service users who are dependent on them. If the public sector can't get this right, then they are told to make way for the private sector to use its commercial management skills to achieve higher levels of capacity and engagement. Or so has been the mantra.

In the marketplace, however, trust, as with all forms of rational decision making - and contrary to Adam Smith's belief in the virtue of the unseen guiding hand of the market - is not a neutral process. Trust does not remain undistorted by other factors, but is clearly subject to cognitive and other psychological biases. Instead of being part of a seemingly free-flowing rational exchange, trust is subject to the living conditions, histories, biographies and frailties of the people who are seeking to establish meaningful relationships in their communities. Trust, like all human endeavours, is subject to the contortions of human fallibility and emotionality. Emotional states of being, such as greed and avarice, at one extreme, are as important to recognise as altruism and selflessness. However, in the logic of shareholder value and perceived competitive market advantage, these emotional states are often denied and suppressed.

Similarly, in the supposedly rational public sphere, trust can also be distorted by political interests that capture the process of social deliberation for group or class advantage. The suspicion that populations are being asked to give their trust to so-called elites of different kinds, be they technocratic, metropolitan or cultural, is at the heart of political populism. There is a complex interplay between these issues. They can be accounted for as market-based advantages on the one hand, or, they can be accounted for as – increasingly - nationalistic or class advantages on the other hand. At each point there are insiders and outsiders who stand to benefit or lose from the maintenance of the status quo, and the markers and boundaries of trust that they are prepared to battle for, and which are played out in the marketplace, or in public-political discourse. They are, however, heavily weighted to pre-determined biases, and can be contested by alternative frameworks of self-interest, cognitive development, or even just being left to pure chance and random luck.

What we lack, then, and too often in either scenario, is a recognition that transparency in the process of engagement is too often absent. The market claims of commercial confidentiality get rolled out even when they are used to mask illegal and criminal activities. In the public realm any suggestion that governments are engaged in social engineering is quickly frowned upon, even though maintaining the status quo is, itself, a form of social engineering. In both cases, the suspicion is that the systems of business and government are being run without any form of widespread public engagement, participation and deliberation is widespread. Either way, the opaque nature of the algorithms and record keeping processes that govern the collection and use of data and economic value are closely guarded and important secrets, meaning that they are subject to the struggle for control of the ability of an organisation to set the parameters under which they it will operate. They are the digital means of production and social control. The people who control the means to record information and data exchange are the ones who have the power to shape the world. There are very few ways to bypass the gatekeepers who control these social exchanges, and they maintain the inviolable position because of the complexity of tracking transactions and records without resorting to centralised intermediaries and record keepers.

Globalisation has been used as an excuse, moreover, in the name of efficiency, to centralise and monopolise, rather than to extend and diversify the marketplace. The mantra of shareholder value has taken over from freedom from social accountability. Local taxation is simply an irrelevance, and a commitment to communities has become a hindrance. This process of value gauging has led to significant “social capital deficits” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 6), in which a lack of empowerment and control by users or consumers is the result of an overbearing empowerment of the gatekeepers and intermediaries that monopolise the distribution of content, tools and services. Far from giving us a marketplace that supports the common good, the Internet has been colonised by anti-commons forces who viscerally defend their contractual rights over digital services and property, while they seek ever higher returns on their investments. They do this by warehousing the vast quantities of data and information that they collect.

Economically this has created a systemic imbalance between the end-producers and users, as proportionally very little value is returned to the originators of content and services, even as significant amounts of value are siphoned-off to pay the intermediaries who hold the keys to the database. As Casey and Vigna point out, “our collective content has generated great value for the corporate owners of those platforms but rarely converts into the same for us, the creators” (M. J. Casey & Vigna,

2018, p. 237). Like a Ponzi scheme designed to suck-in new, naïve investors, there is a promise of getting rich by developing our own YouTube channel, or becoming an Instagram influencer. But to engage in these practices one has to be attuned to the dominant transactional model of self-presentation. One has to have a product and a brand to sell which other people have been designated as likely to purchase.

This should not be mistaken, though, for the same motivations and drive for community-building or meaningful social exchange. It would be essentialist to conflate and collapse the two. Yes, there is a powerful argument to be made that social media platforms allow people to experiment with alternative forms of creative self-presentation, however, we must also be realistic and accept that the algorithm that selects the content and the performers who are going to be most prominent, are not subject to public scrutiny. Indeed, they have as likely to produce a dangerous nexus or web of voices and personalities who advocate for alternative realities, often based on nefarious and reactionary views by people who wish to destabilise the democratic and liberal consensus of the last couple of centuries. We have been down this route before, and it leads to mass destruction. When actors of bad faith seize the memes of production, there follows a struggle to return to pragmatic common-sense. When we lose transparency, we lose our ability to make judgements. As Casey and Vigna summarise

“In the twenty-first century economy, power is defined by whoever has authority to collect, store, and share data. Currently, that authority is centralised. It is concentrated among a narrow number of giant tech companies. A societal system of trust, identity, and record-keeping that ties our past to our present, anchors us as human beings, and lets us participate in society. The amalgamation of information that goes into proving that we can be trusted as a member of society has historically depended upon institutions that record and affirm our life events and credentials – bank accounts, birth certificates, changes of address, educational records, driver’s licences, etc. – and keep track of our financial transactions. To lose all of that, as refugees often do when thrust into ‘statelessness,’ is to be put in a highly vulnerable position, one that’s inherently easy for the worst of the world’s criminals and terrorist organisations to exploit. If you are unable to prove who you are, you are at the mercy of strangers” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 3).

5.8 A Chance to Think Again

Given these challenges, this is clearly an opportune time to rethink how models of public and institutional trust are enacted in our community and social lives, and how news, community discussion and civic deliberation can be supported and enhanced. In the light of the aforementioned challenges, a useful starting point will be to identify and map-out the values and principles that that might help

provide, if not a complete solution, then at least a partial solution to some of these problems? If we are to enhance the social processes and technologies that support democratic and civic engagement, what can we learn from discussions and debates about blockchain technologies, and how might they be used to help us reappraise existing and emerging forms of media engagement? If we do this, in what way might it be possible to reconfigure our media in order to maximise the principles of trust and validation that are essential to the common good and a healthy community life?

Blockchain is one technology, or combination of technologies, that is attracting considerable attention and investment in the search for solutions for many of these issues. In some quarters the combination of transparent network-based ledgers and cryptographic security protocols, is being heralded as the basis for Web 3.0. While there are many questions about blockchains future development, there are some significant concepts and principles associated with the underlying techniques and ideas that are worth exploring in the context of community media, citizens journalism and mass media engagement. If we are to find a long-term solution to the problems of trust and the viability of our media democracy, then the principles of the blockchain may be helpful? Even though they are designed to go beyond many of the issues that have been identified here, there is little doubt they will prove to be useful in helping us to identify the route to a radical shift in the way we think about economic activity, civic discussions, information exchange and personal identity expressions, or as we might call it, a new paradigm of social value. As Casey and Vigna have noted, the “blockchain is seen as capable of supplanting our outdated, centralised model of trust management, which goes to the heart of how societies and economies function” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018).

The introduction of blockchain technology brings with it an opportunity, it seems, to look in more detail at these issues, and to make policy choices based on our emerging understanding of the potential that these technologies offer to decentralise and promote dispersed participation, engagement and innovation. Whereas the old world was slow to change, because it was based around strong hierarchies that sought protection in their relatively fixed and immutable social structures of the past, the new networked world has to go beyond the opaque, closed and fixed. It has to reduce, if not eliminate, the control exerted by established and inherited gatekeepers and intermediaries – though only if they have limited utility and serve no useful purpose. This will be a world that will be strengthened by peer-to-peer solutions but will disrupt and eliminate the remaining vestiges of centralised command-and-control thinking. Blockchains aim to operate, moreover, from a different paradigm of security, transparency, inclusivity and innovation (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2018, p. 86).

In looking at blockchain technologies and practices, then, the impulse is to recognise how the present system of information distribution fails to benefit everyone. While this new approach may not be able to create a platform in which everyone is treated equally, it can at least, as Casey and Vigna assert, seek to ensure that “those with most access to these tools don’t abuse others and that the opportunity to harness innovation and new ideas is spread as widely as possible” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 245). Consequently, the challenge for civic leaders, business leaders and managers, as Tapscott and Tapscott identify, is to think about how we can “take advantage of these new opportunities to change and grow?” How will our organisations respond to the further disruption of their existing operational concerns? Indeed, how will we “compete with the creative new models of start-ups and collaborations” that emerge from the development of the blockchain mindset (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2018, p. 155)?

The potential of blockchain technology, as with network technologies before it, are quite radical and will impact not only on the jobs that are done now, but also the type of lives that we want live and are enabled to lead. As Casey and Vigna describe

“One potentially constructive way to think about [blockchain] is that we must design a post-industrial existence that puts at its centre the encouragement of human creativity, regardless of whether that creativity is monetarily rewarded” (M. J. Casey & Vigna, 2018, p. 225).

As Tapscott and Tapscott remind us, moreover, “technology, especially the distributed kind, creates opportunities for everyone, but inexorably humans determine the outcome” (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2018, p. 307). The question is, how can we form a society that is able to maximise the contribution and creativity of all? To answer this question means challenging the warehousing, gatekeeping, intermediation and hoarding of social value, the opportunities for social and economic value creation, and most importantly, the tools that enable this value creation to take place. There is a surfeit of information and opportunities available in the digital domain. It is the first time that human engagement is defined by a resource surplus, combined with an extended capability that means that virtually all people will be able to contribute in some way to the global discussion. What we need next above all else, though, is to establish some governance and civic engagement principles that will ensure that as many people benefit from that contribution, that all are held accountable for their contribution, and that as much social good is created as possible.

6 Social Value Media Principles

- Internationally recognised as alternative model of media development (C4D).
- Social Gain as the foundation for UK community radio legislation.
- Commonly understood as media sector, but in practice aligned with social sector.

Community and civic media is social value media. Community and civic media share the same root social concerns as other contributors to the social economy. These concerns are based on the same civic and social sector values, regulatory approaches and standards, and they are motivated by the same expectations and desires for socially accountable opportunities for self-representation, communal engagement and ethical governance. The difficulty, though, is that community and civic media are largely unrepresented and unaccounted for in recent social sector policy debates, the planning models used for sustainable community development, and the discussions about systematic support for the social economy that are taking place in the UK. Discussion between regulators, between public authorities, between funding organisations, and between those prominent advocates for change in the social sector itself, seldom comment or note that community and civic media is a recognised process by which we can bring about progressive and inclusive forms of social change. This is a shame, because agents and organisations operating in the social economy are motivated by largely similar principles and practices of social value, including participative and socially democratic forms of engagement and development (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013). As Rosalyn Old, Jonathan Bone, Dave Boyle and Peter Baeck point out in their report to Nesta on community forms of funding:

“The opportunity to invest in local projects can empower communities with increased self-determination over the future of their local area. It can also help build social cohesion by bringing people together around a common cause. Community ownership not only gives a group of people a financial stake in an organisation – it enables them to hold the power of decision-making within it and therefore, in the future design and regeneration of their area. This is particularly important in the context of urban regeneration, where much development by private developers has been critiqued for focusing too much on short term financial gains and profits rather than catering to the needs of and improving the area for the existing community” (Old et al., 2019, p. 56).

In principle, then, what Old, Bone, Boyle and Baeck describe indicates that there shouldn't be any difficulty in bringing together community and civic media policy with the more encompassing forms of social value policy and practice that is described in other sections of this report. Approaches to social value-led media, which might be a better description of its role and purpose, should fit easily with both the social sector and the community and civic media movement. The challenge, however, is to figure out how to do this in practice, and how to maintain a constant level of visibility in the policy development process.

It is worth noting that general perceptions of media and communication methodologies and systems tend to be locked in a combination of:

- Transactional models of engagement (i.e. marketing and advertising);
- Consumer models of service provision (i.e. as purchasers of services and entertainment);
- Industrial supply models of production (i.e. as a scalable and globalised production process, known as the creative industries);
- Information delivery and exchange (i.e. as audiences for news, public relations information or facilitative data provision).

In the UK there is little acknowledgement, regard or status for participative, empowering and social-centric forms of media that operate outside of the marketplace. While considerable policy and critical attention has been given to the unaccountable social media platforms and systems that are offered by the global tech companies, little work has been done to develop and test models of participative, grass-roots self-governance that might mitigate many of the challenges of disinformation and manipulation that is evident from reported failings and exploitation of these platforms (Digital, 2019; Krasodonski-Jones, Smith, Jones, Judson, & Miller, 2019). As a result, expectations of media as a transformative social process have been limited and undervalued. Community and civic media are seldom given endorsement and validation for their capacity to operate as a social development practice on their own terms. The Ofcom Media Literacy strategy, for example, downplays the participative potential of media, opting instead for a largely consumer and industry skills view of media development (Ofcom, 2018, 2019a, 2019b).

Despite this, it is worth noting that community and civic media activists and advocates have a long history of promoting social change based on democratic access to independent media platforms, but, as Salvatore Scifo notes, they often have to “fight to get access to the airwaves, either in radio and TV form” (Scifo, 2015, p. 85). There is little recent evidence from policy and planning discussions in the UK, however, that outlines how community and civic media is regarded as a purposeful social development resource that successfully prioritises participation and civic engagement. For example, recent reports from Ofcom that evaluate the impact of the Community Radio Fund are limited and cursory, simply listing the bids that have been approved (Ofcom, 2019c). Similarly, the UK Government’s strategy for civic society engagement makes no mention of community media, and nor does the UK Government’s strategy for tackling loneliness and social isolation (DCMS, 2018a; Office, 2018), despite international recognition that radio plays a significant role in mitigating social

isolation (Order, 2017, 2018). The last major enquiry into the role of community media in the UK was in the late 1990s, which culminated with the legislation that paved the way for the introduction of community radio (Everitt, 2003). This has not, however, been superseded by any comprehensive enquiries or proposals since. Community and civic media, therefore, sometimes feels as if it has been relegated to the footnotes and afterthoughts of the media reform and civic engagement agenda, which itself has given rise to regulatory tensions between community radio operators and smaller commercial radio operators (Lloyd, 2018).

The lack clarity in social policy development in relation to community and civic media is also evident in the recent report on media ownership in the UK by the Media Reform Coalition (Ramsay, 2019), who rightly challenge the market consolidation of newspaper and radio ownership in the UK in recent years. Unfortunately the report does not draw from the existing experience and templates that have been established by over two hundred and eighty community radio stations that are presently operating across the UK. Concern about consolidation and the loss of local radio services is expressed in equally forthright terms by the Local Radio Group, who point to failures in regulation by Ofcom as a primary cause of many problems in the UK local radio industry, rather than the suggestion that the radio industry is facing serious competition problems and profitability drops as a result of the rise of the global tech players (Communications, 2018; DCMS, 2018c; Group, 2019; Radiocentre, 2016).

Furthermore, the absence of community and civic media is also evident in the Civil Society Futures report which focuses on the much-needed reforms to the roles that civil society organisations play, and the manner by which these organisations will achieve change. It is regrettable, however, that community and civic media is not specifically outlined as part of this process (Unwin, 2018a). Likewise, it is evident in the Cairncross Review into the role of quality local journalism offered no role for non-traditional community media organisations to develop and foster a civic news culture (Cairncross, 2019). While hyperlocal journalism is often discussed in this regard, there is little mention of the wider needs of civic society and the public bodies that news organisations and media projects must interact with. Public authorities spend considerable amounts of money on communications and information, so why aren't the needs of this sector being aligned in partnership with the community and civic media movement? The fundamental problem with the hyperlocal model is that it does not go far enough in considering, holistically, the role of local media as part of the wider civic democracy networks and social economy. When the UK government announced the provision of £2

million for the Future News Pilot Fund, it was notable that no provision for engagement with civil society and public service bodies was cited in its brief. Nor was there any governance and social accountability provision that would ensure that the money is spent according to the UK Government's already stated civic engagement policies. If bodies and projects like the newly formed Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy are unable to specify a rationale for a citizens-focussed process of media accountability, then there is little reason for other bodies to pursue citizens panels and juries to help determine local media priorities. The Citizen's convention does describe a 'media plan' that will enable communication between participants and stakeholders, but it does not have a plan that will ensure that the forms and processes by which this media is produced and shared is itself accountable and itself meets the civil values of the project (Economy, 2019). Finally, it is also evident that the BBC Local News Partnership governing principles and arrangements are free of any social value assessment and governance principles. As the BBC is channelling licence-fee money into the commercial media sector, it would seem appropriate that the aims and objectives of the fund would be developed or reviewed in accord with the needs of the civic society and public sector. The remit of the Local News Partnership also falls short of promoting and building capacity within the community media sector for broadcast media news projects to gain access to the funding that is offered to the members of the partnership. While this funding is being used to support the work of already profitable commercial newspapers and radio stations, it does not fit with the ethos of social value that is applied elsewhere.¹⁸

Perhaps these problems are pressing because of the limited volume of systematic evidence that has been collated and analysed in recent times. Evidence that demonstrates benefit and impact of community and civic media projects. Particularly as they might demonstrate consistent and unbiased accounts of their social outcome achievements that can be tracked and measured across a range of communities, and using a diverse range of media content forms, platforms, systems, and organisational approaches that they operate from. While there is plenty of discussion and debate about the principles and the role of community and civic media in academic communities of the UK, this tends to be fragmented and limited in its scope, and suffers from a lack of cohesive structure to shape the prevailing policy debates. This is something that the newly formed Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) Local and Community Media Network seeks to address.¹⁹ By bringing researchers and academics together to look at the scope and scale of the challenge of

¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/lnp>

¹⁹ <https://www.meccsa.org.uk/networks/local-and-community-media-network/>

ensuring that community and civic media, it may be possible to develop a rigorous and sound evidential underpinning that can be used in the development of public policy resources. Community media survives, mostly, despite and not because of the prevailing support and recognition that it receives from government, funding organisations and partner groups in the UK social sector.

The challenge, then, is to shift this perceived view. For example, the longstanding work of the Community Media Association, which seeks to promote access to all forms of media as a social and civic good, has been driven in recent years largely from its grassroots membership and network approach, rather than by any strategic support that has been offered by government.²⁰ In contrast, significant funding is being targeted by government at digital engagement research, services, and policy development practices. Work by Nesta and The Good Things Foundation are exemplary in this regard, and demonstrate what can be achieved when policy priorities are fully supported by government, public bodies and civic society. One area in which community and civic media practices do have a strong track record in the UK, of course, is community radio. There is a solid and demonstrable body of experience that can be drawn from to inform research, the development of policy models, and to demonstrate how, and in what way, community media can be recognised as a valuable asset in the social economy.

The recent passage of legislation in Westminster that paved the way for the introduction of the small-scale digital broadcasting model in parliament (SSDAB), with the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport reaffirming its support for the principles of social gain access to radio broadcasting. As written into the legislation, it has been reaffirmed that the essential principles of community radio in the UK are that services are founded on a not-for-profit basis, and that they must demonstrate social gain to the community they seek to serve. In addition, community radio stations must be accessible and open to content production and participation from members of the communities they seek to serve, and they must be accountable to their communities by being open and accountable in their governance practices. According to the order, ‘social gain’ is defined as the “achievement, in respect of individuals or groups of individuals in the community that the service is intended to serve, or in respect of other members of the public, of the following objectives:

- the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion,

²⁰ <https://www.commedia.org.uk/who-we-are/charter/>

- the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and
- the better understanding of the particular community and strengthening of links within it,
- and may also include the achievement of other objectives of a social nature” (DCMS, 2019).

Likewise, the delivery of these objective may be supported by local and public authorities in relation to the social nature of knowledge and awareness of service provision in a local area, which can include:

- “The promotion of economic development and of social enterprises;
- The promotion of employment;
- The provision of opportunities for the gaining of work experience;
- The promotion of social inclusion;
- The promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity;
- The promotion of civic participation and volunteering” (DCMS, 2019, p. 2).

Community and civic media both operate in line with the principles of social value and social enterprise that are identified throughout this report. There is a strong correlation between the principles and the practices of community and civic media and the principles and practices of social value, community development and community enterprise that are commonly promoted and championed across the wider social sector. Each, after all, is driven by the desire to improve social wellbeing, enhance and spread accessible forms of civic deliberation, improve opportunities for representation, while developing resilient and sustainable organisations and communities, based on learning and personal growth, that take into account the needs of all members of our society, especially those who are underrepresented and underserved by our established and mainstream media. Community and civic media advocates and practitioners, volunteers and supporters, are primarily motivated to ensure that we all have opportunities to act independently and autonomously, with a strong voice in the social economy, by using, producing and sharing media that is accountable and self-governed. The test is to bring different activists, producers and advocates of social value together so that they can use their knowledge and skills in creating content for different media platforms, thereby enhancing social and civic communication, debate, discussion and storytelling. Community and civic media have a significant role to play in enhancing understanding within and between communities, promoting and encouraging a sense of belonging, while helping to promote and support participants who are otherwise not gaining entry into the established media industries.

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8.2 About the Author

Dr Rob Watson²¹ is an independent researcher currently working with a number of community media organisations to help identify their strategic objectives and explain key change processes in accessible and inclusive manner. Rob has extensive experience developing collaborative ICT systems and literacies for social media learning and development. Rob's work focusses on the promotion of community media and digital inclusion by looking at training, governance, advocacy and support for community media and social sector organisations. Rob publishes regular blogs, and podcasts about community media, hosting regular professional issues-based discussions.

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