

MURDER AS NEWS. AN INVESTIGATION
INTO HOMICIDE AS STORY CONTENT IN
BBC REGIONAL TELEVISION NEWS
OUTPUT

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an original insight into the reporting of instances of murder by BBC regional television newsrooms and to answer the question why do some murders receive media attention and others little or none at all. This will be achieved through the use of Actor-Network Theory, developed by Latour (2005, 1996, 1984), Law (1987) and Callon (1986, 1980), to analyse specific murder events and show how networks of actors, both human and nonhuman, are enrolled within the storytelling process. In so doing this thesis builds upon a growing body of work including, Wiard 2019a, 2019b, Spöhrer and Ochsner 2017 and Ryfe 2017. The thesis advances the practical application of Actor-Network Theory to the news process and as such directly helps to address the call from those who seek further application of the theory to journalism studies, specifically to look at how ‘technologies influence the way news is produced and consumed’ Wiard (2019a p.9).

Claims to originality within this thesis lie firstly in the area of research. No previous study has produced such an in-depth and considered analysis of how murder stories become news content on British television nor has Actor-Network Theory been applied in such circumstances. Secondly, the thesis will argue that previous ideas about news values, Harcup and O’Neill (2016, 2001), Brighton and Foy (2007), Harrison (2006), MacShane (1979) and Galtung and Ruge (1965), miss a fundamental feature about what factors can influence the choices made by journalists when it comes to understanding which events become stories. It will be claimed that only by looking closely at the news production process, tracing the various alliances actors make and break, as the process is happening that a true notion of what journalists’ value as news will be achieved. This theoretical approach will show that newsworthiness is mutable and fluid and not something which can be

defined or confined by pre-existing beliefs. The methodological rigour of Actor-Network Theory applied using observational fieldwork will demonstrate that what is considered newsworthy alters as different sources of action struggle for supremacy and that these sources of action can only be identified by examining the news production process; crucially it will be seen that technological actors, including social media have been identified as sources of this mutability. The thesis furthers academic understanding of which factors influence this heterogeneous news process by identifying previously under considered or invisible actors. It shows that actors such as temporal, geographic and internal programme dynamics can have as influential a part to play in the reporting of murder events (or any other story) as journalists' preconceptions about who is an interesting victim.

Television news is a technological endeavour which is widening its newsgathering and storytelling to social media platforms as sources of news and as a way to engage audiences. Actor-Network Theory is concerned with material relationships Law (2009), Callon and Law (1997) Latour (1999, 1990, 1987) between human and nonhuman actors. This original investigation extends examination of the news process from television to social media in order to demonstrate how Actor-Network Theory is ideally matched to the task of identifying the specificity of actors within the fluid news production process which enrolls and is enrolled by social media. By extension, this actor network examination of the use of social media further develops understanding of the mutability of news values and the appropriateness of Actor-Network Theory as a theoretical approach to understanding social media.

Acknowledgements

This project set out to answer a question I have cogitated on for many years, why do journalists like murders? It has been many years in gestation and I wish to extend my thanks to those who have helped me along the way.

To colleagues across the BBC who have allowed me to observe them at work and to interview them. Their insights to the news production process and choices made have been invaluable. As has the supply of paperclips and stickie notes provided by Sharon and Sandra. Special thanks to The Newshouse in Nottingham for providing a place to think and write.

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Research Purposes of the Thesis

Each day millions of people watch the regional news on the BBC; the collection of stories compiled and broadcast at 18:25. For the audience the stories these programmes contain are a *fait accompli*, the culmination of the efforts of a team of journalists and technicians. The audience probably knows very little of the specific news production process which lies behind the broadcast and which ultimately shapes it. What they see is what they get. But this programme is only an outward facing surface of a production process far more complex and arbitrary than its appearance might suggest. This description may seem like a contradiction and that is precisely what makes Actor-Network Theory such a good methodology for explaining the complex news production process.

If that evening's programme has a story about a murder the audience will not know how the news team decided to report on it and not some other event. This thesis uses an actor network approach to look behind the finished news product. It will explore the production process in order to show that news making is far more than the routine process previous studies, Schudson (2011), Berkowitz (1997), Gans (1979), and Tunstall (1971), have suggested it is.

News content is now available 24hrs a day across various media platforms and how people receive news is changing. According to Ofcom (The Office of Communications) 49% of British people now get news from social media platforms.

¹ Therefore, a study of news must necessarily involve an examination of social media.

¹ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/tv-radio-and-on-demand/news-media/news-consumption>

One specific story type, murder, will be used to show how the television news production process is contingent and mutable. Appreciating the fluid characteristics and story specific nature of each individual production process is critical to understanding the new insight this investigation provides. This thesis will demonstrate that although the news process may appear routine, within these routines are certain *ad hoc*, fluid network translations which are different in every case and on every node of the network. By applying this approach to the reporting of murder stories on BBC regional news programmes in England a better understanding of homicide reporting will be developed. This investigation will explore why journalists believe some murders are ‘newsworthy’ while others pass unnoticed. What are the forces and influences at work inside newsrooms and news teams as journalists make their selection regarding which murders to report? What part does technology have in the process? And how has the development of new social media platforms and devices which utilise these applications affected the news production process?

Social media is changing the way humans interact with each other in a similar way to previous epoch changing technologies such as the wheel and printing press. It has become so influential that it is to be found in almost every aspect of modern society. It has become a series of digital, internet-based platforms on which people can find life partners or casual sex; it is a market place for corporations the size of Amazon with its massive warehouses and individuals selling from their own homes; it has been held-up as the ultimate democratizing public sphere and condemned as the source of modern day evil. It is all these things and much more. In recent years there have been thousands of academic papers and books looking at social media and journalism. Neuberger, Nuernbergk and Langenohl (2019) studied

the changing nature of journalism which social media has created. Noting that the profession was now more complex as a result of being multi-channel. Tandoc Jr (2019) examined how users of Facebook rated the credibility of news from their friends and news organisations. Knight (2017) used the murder trial of Oscar Pistorius in South Africa in 2014 to explore the use of live Tweeting from a court. Khaldarova and Pantti (2016) showed how the internet and social media users were countering what they saw as fake news by the Russian government during the crisis in Ukraine. Hermida (2012, 2010) studied how Twitter was changing the way reporters worked and the role of journalists as top down delivers of news. Bastos (2014) compared the sorts of stories being reported on social media and in newspapers while Artwick (2013) looked at the use of Twitter by reporters.

This thesis will argue that social media has demolished the boundaries between traditional producers of news content and consumers of news content and in so doing will highlight the inadequacies of traditional approaches to understanding media. Interactions on social media, are both *ad hoc* and exact for specific moments in time; they are instant and global; they are momentary and contiguous; they constantly evolve but leave traces of their previous selves behind. In order to understand these shifting relationships it will be necessary to use a theoretical approach capable of revealing these complex character traits.

In the following chapters the case will be made for using Actor-Network Theory, demonstrating how it is methodologically suited, to exploring the connections made between human and nonhuman actors. Television newsrooms are busy and technologically complex and decisions on what stories to cover and which to ignore chop and change throughout the day as situations change. Critically, Actor-

Network Theory allows the identification of these specific moments as it maps the relationships between humans and the technology they interact with.

One of the core assumptions of ANT is that what the social sciences usually call 'society' is an ongoing achievement. ANT is an attempt to provide analytical tools for explaining the very process by which society is constantly reconfigure-ed. What distinguishes it from other constructivist approaches is its explanation of society in the making, in which science and technology play a key part.

(Callon 2001, p.62)

By using Actor-Network Theory to look at the news production process of reporting murder events, a fresh understanding of how story selection actually takes place will be revealed. Newsworthiness can sometimes seem a slippery description, used by journalists to support their choice of story selection. Actor-Network Theory gets behind this label, showing how important it is to study all the actors within a network in order to fully understand how it is created and to explore the continuing dynamic nature of news production.

One only needs to open a newspaper, turn on a television or visit a cinema to see why the act of murder is worthy of academic consideration. From the bloodthirsty broadsheets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through the early detective novels of Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle to Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler and more recent incarnations of the police detective, for example Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse and Henning Mankell's creation Kurt Wallander, crime and murder especially, continue to fascinate us. The same fascination appears to be at work when one considers the content of television news programmes which on any night of the week will have a smattering of crime stories. This study will

explore the reasons why this is the case and to do so it will focus on regional news output on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), specifically the regional news programmes *East Midlands Today* and *Midlands Today*. At this point it is worth noting that the half hour BBC English regional news at 6.30pm each evening is watched by a total of almost three million people (BBC figures averaged over first three months of 2019).

Until an upturn in murders in 2017 and through 2018, murder rates over the past twenty years, except for acts of terrorism and the deaths attributed to Dr Shipman², remained fairly static at around 800 per year across the United Kingdom. In recent years the number of murders has begun to climb again and the focus has been on an increase in street violence and knife crime. Each one a loss and personal tragedy for those closely involved but some, such as the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence³ and investigation into the reporting of Milly Dowler's⁴ murder can create such public concern they have repercussions far beyond their initial impact.

One of the most significant developments in communication and broadcasting is the expansion in portable video recording technology and the connectivity which is possible with social media applications. These twin developments in the hands of both media professionals and the public have had a noticeable effect on reporting, not just what events are reported but who is doing the reporting and this will be a specific focus of this thesis.

² Convicted of 15 counts of murder at his trial in January 2000, Dr Shipman may have been responsible for the deaths of up to 250 people. He committed suicide while serving a life sentence on 13th January 2004.

³ Stephen was stabbed to death on the 22nd April 1993. Five men were originally accused of his murder. Two men, Gary Dobson and David Norris were convicted of murder in January 2012.

⁴ She went missing on her way home from school on 21st March 2002. Her body was discovered in September that same year. After an extensive police investigation and trial Levi Bellfield was convicted of her murder in June 2011. Milly's death and the reporting of it played a large part in the closure of the *News of the World* newspaper when it was revealed, as part of an investigation into phone-hacking, that journalists at the paper had listened to her mobile phone messages.

The killing of soldier Lee Rigby outside his barracks at Woolwich in south east London, on the 22nd of May 2013, stands out as a murder reported as much by the eyewitnesses and the perpetrators on social media embedded in telephones as by professional journalists. The horrific terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, committed by Brenton Tarrant on the 15th March 2019 was notable for many things. Perhaps most disturbing of all was his live sharing of the murderous killing spree on social media and the subsequent sharing of the video images by thousands of other users of social media. Facebook said it had removed more than 300,000 copies of the video from its Facebook and Instagram platforms within 24 hours of the attack. In May 2019 copies of the video were still circulating on both platforms. This was not the first incident to generate questions about the control social media platforms actually could and should have over the content being shared on them. At the time of writing (September 2019) the footage remains on an online application called Storyful. It is a site which monitors and analyses social media feeds and describes itself as the ‘first social media newswire’. There are many other companies providing similar services, some of which are used by the BBC, including Crowdtangle, Hootsuite and Dataminr.

Before returning to the growth in the study of social media it is important to acknowledge some of the many academic studies into television and how it operates. Some have focused on the relationships inside newsrooms and how that influences story selection Breed (1955). Tunstall (1971) suggests the gathering of news by correspondents was predictable, routine managing of ‘institutionalised’ news. Halloran et al (1970) explored news as valued by journalists’ previous experience of similar stories when it came to reporting anti-Vietnam protests in London. The Glasgow University Media Group (1982, 1980 and 1976) maintained that bias in

story selection and construction favoured the Government's view on industrial relations at the exclusion of the workers and was a reflection of the opinions of those in charge of media organisations. Hall (1977) argued journalists and news serve the dominant ideology, while for Herman and Chomsky (1988) news reflects the ruling elite. What these previous studies have in common is they are all political in nature in that they deal with dominant pre-existing hegemonic ideologies. The journalist is seen as a tool, unwitting or not, used by various forces both external and internal to the process of story selection.

Cottle (1993), like researchers before him, Fishman (1980), Schlesinger (1978) and Tuchman (1978), carried out detailed ethnographic research of his chosen field. He spent time at Central Television's news operation in Birmingham and studied the reporting of inner-city issues in particular. He examined the routines and roles of the media professionals he observed and the content they produced. For Boorstin (1964) much of what passes for news is actually 'pseudo-events' specifically staged to attract media attention. This 'predictability' of news is a factor in story selection highlighted by Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Harcup and O'Neill (2016, 2001). Harrison (2000) visited several news organisations and suggests that different news orientated programmes have different concepts about what constitutes newsworthiness. Hemmingway (2008, 2005), a former television journalist, conducted ethnographic research into newsroom practice inside the BBC. She examined relationships between technologies and humans in the newsgathering and broadcasting process but not the newsworthiness of the actual content.

The growth in social media has opened up a completely new field of academic study investigating various aspects of the new phenomena, Rauchfleisch et al (2017), Jones and Pitcher (2015), Bro and Wallberg (2014), and Artwick (2013).

There has been a separate but related development of ‘digital sociology’ a term used to describe both the new fields of investigation which digital technologies offer researchers and also the new ways of investigating traditional areas covered by sociology, Carrozza (2018), Daniels et al (2017), Lupton (2012).

Building on these new developments and previous landmark investigations this thesis will further develop the understanding of newsroom practice and the production process with special attention to the telling of murder stories.

The thesis is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter will cover the theoretical basis for the thesis. This will include an explanation of Actor-Network Theory, its antecedents, development and some of the criticisms levelled against it. Some important Actor-Networks concepts, terms and methods of investigation will be introduced and explained. The chapter will also examine some of the key approaches traditionally used to investigate media along with a short description of some earlier attempts to explain media.

The second chapter will show how more recent technological developments have affected the newsgathering process. Case studies will explore how the growing use of mobile technology is changing who and what do news. How the police use social media to connect to the public and journalists will also be examined in this chapter.

In the third chapter on storytelling an actor network account of the news production process will describe how actors are enrolled into a specific news event. The actor network mapping methods of sociogram, technogram and chronogram will be used to show the fragility and mutability of networks during a live television broadcast.

The fourth chapter will explore ideas about what events constitute news. It will begin with a reintroduction to the news values approach and by using original case studies from the BBC Nottingham newsroom it will show how news is mutable and fluid and not easily defined.

Chapter five will develop an understanding of journalists' interest in murder as news. There will be an appraisal of academic research into the reporting of murder followed by case studies of murder reporting from the BBC television newsroom in Birmingham. Specific case studies from BBC *East Midlands Today* will explore the nature of live broadcasting and show how social media is being used by television news teams to connect with users.

The conclusions will draw the various arguments made throughout the thesis together and summarise the claims to originality of the thesis as a whole.

Chapter one: Theoretical Approach, Methodology and

Methods

This chapter will outline the rationale for selecting Actor-Network Theory as the theoretical approach for this thesis investigating the reporting of murder on BBC regional television news and social media. Actor-Network Theory will be compared with the cultural and political media-studies tradition broadly known as the News Values approach. It will be argued that, although the News Values approach offers an insight into the story choices made by journalists, it fails to read the news production process and therefore fails to provide a complete ontology for understanding media. The antecedents of Actor-Network Theory will be examined and a short history of its development and controversies which surround it will be outlined.

The chapter will also include a short review of the work of media theorists including Innis, McLuhan and Postman. It will be shown how these earlier attempts to interrogate media, although raising the importance of the materiality of technology, they didn't explore the role of technology as a specific actor in the creation of news products. This is precisely why the development of Actor-Network Theory chosen for this thesis is ideally suited for examining the part technology plays in the news production process. It treats all actors, be they human or nonhuman as equals (Latour 1999) and the specificity of its focus allows attention on precise moments of the production process. This 'freeze frame' (Latour 1987, p.138) allows for a targeted analysis of the production process and the relationships between the various actors. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the methodological

foundations of Actor-Network Theory and how they relate to the particular methods employed in the research conducted for this thesis.

Traditional approaches to understanding television news and journalism in general have often focused on the routine nature of newsgathering, Schudson (2011), Berkowitz (1997), Gans (1979), and Tunstall (1971). Watching the evening television news programme or reading the morning newspaper may appear the final product of a routine and regular process. But looking at the finished product does not explain the journey to that point. On the surface the television news production process may appear to be routine however that is not the case. This thesis will show how television newsrooms are environments in a state of flux where the various components necessary for the making of a broadcast are ever changing even during the live transmission of a programme. As such the outcome of this production process is not as pre-determined as may be assumed. Using Actor-Network Theory to follow the various elements or actors within the news production process allows a better understanding of the way these individual networks are formed. Hemmingway (2005) used Actor-Network Theory to show the effects of the introduction of Personal Digital Production (PDP), now widely termed video journalism, to BBC newsrooms. Her study paved the way for the use of the theory to explore technological innovation within television newsrooms and is a springboard for this current research tracing the use of social media and investigating the reporting of murder and the mutable nature of social relations within networks.

In an era of 24-hour news reporting and social media platforms, what is considered to be news, and the ways stories are gathered and reported are constantly shifting. Although the costs of becoming a broadcaster have plummeted and are now only as expensive as a telephone and internet access, for traditional television

journalism the process remains complex because of the vast array of technological and human actors involved. Journalists must combine with cameras and usually camera crews to tell a story. They seek out and record interviews with contributors before they are edited into a visual representation of that story. Technological and human infrastructures are required to accomplish this and to transmit the finished reports. In this production process the journalist needs a camera and the camera needs a journalist to fulfil their storytelling potential. Actor-Network Theory as it has been developed by Bruno Latour (2005, 1996, 1984), John Law (1987) and Michel Callon (1986, 1980) provides a way to address the constantly changing relationships between humans and nonhumans which occur through the processes of news creation. The methods of study employed by the proponents of Actor-Network Theory emphasise case studies, fieldwork and the observation of the actual processes under investigation and not necessarily the result of that process.

The turn to performance is sometimes seen as constructivist, but it has particular implications. It suggests that technologies, knowledges, and working may be understood as the effects of materially, socially, and conceptually hybrid performances. In these performances different elements assemble together and act in certain ways to produce specific consequences.

(Law and Singleton 2000, p.774)

This assessment encapsulates the general overview of the focus which Actor-Network Theory introduced and the methodological approach to understanding processes as performed which is a specific form of constructivism favoured by Actor-Network Theory.

Similar to the production of sausages or cars, news production has been described as being manufactured, Fishman (1980), Tuchman (1978), Cohen and Young (1973), not manufactured in the sense of made-up or fictitious, although of course there are many occasions when fabricated stories find their way into or onto all media platforms, but made-up in the sense of constructed. All news stories are the result of the elements which come together to form them. As with sausages and cars, the ingredients of news stories can be altered either deliberately or unintentionally. The changes will lead to different outcomes such as an outbreak of food poisoning if rotten meat is used in the sausage recipe or the recall of millions of vehicles if a faulty part is introduced into the car assembly line. These sausages, cars and television news reports are clearly socially constructed; they exist because they have been manufactured, assembled and edited. In this sense social constructivism is used to explain things which happen as a result of specific choices rather than a belief in such things (Berger and Luckmann 1991) and it has its roots in the early work by pioneers of sociological investigation including Marx and Durkheim.

Television news production processes alter over time as different ingredients are introduced, for example video tape, satellite links, and most recently social media. On a more mundane level than the introduction of ground breaking technology what events become news stories can differ on a daily basis because of human choice. For example, stories which one producer of a regional news programme may consider important on one day may only be considered as such because of the other stories available to them on that particular day and on another occasion, with an alternative range of stories from which to select, the choices made may be quite different. Accepting this shifting materiality of events, humans and technology and their fluid connectivity is at the heart of the actor network

explanation. The theory argues that artefacts have agency (Latour 1992) therefore grounding materiality at its centre, (see page 48). This fundamental methodological assertion will be used to demonstrate how critical it is to study the news production process as it happens and not judge the final result since that offers no explanation of its creation. It will be shown through this thesis that ‘things’, nonhumans, such as flat camera batteries, court papers emailed to journalists and Wi-Fi signals, for example can all have an important part in the process which decides what murder stories are actually broadcast.

News Values

The idea that there was a definable set of criteria or conventions held by a newspaper which favoured one story above another was examined in-depth by Galtung and Ruge (1965) in their study of foreign news. This often-cited piece of research analysed the way stories from the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus were reported in four Norwegian newspapers. They produced a list of ‘factors’ which they believed made it more likely for events to be reported. Today, more than fifty years after they were first published, television journalists would recognize many of them including: *unexpectedness*, was the event out of the ordinary? And *meaningfulness*, does the event have a relevance to the audience? This is of particular interest to the examination of the reporting of regional television news where local events, be they murders or school closures, are much more likely to be covered by BBC regional news, than events outside of the transmission area.

Interviews conducted for this thesis show there are a number of characteristics an event must have to be of interest to television news teams. Some of

these are specific to the technology of television, such as a strong visual content. However, there are events which would be considered newsworthy by most journalists working on any media platform and across any epoch because they are ‘just news’.

Seventy years before Galtung and Ruge put forward their twelve points the Reuters news agency outlined what it considered to be news. The internal memo to its agents filing copy from around the world in 1890 could be considered a blue-print for today’s international news operations.

The wreck of an ocean liner or steamship.

A calamitous railway accident.

A fire or explosion involving serious loss of life.

A destructive earthquake, cyclone or inundation.

Especially startling crimes and outrages. (‘Mere brutal murders and domestic tragedies, such as occur almost daily in every part of the world, should not be noticed at all.’)

Popular disturbances.

The sudden or tragic demise of any illustrious or famous personage.

An attempt upon the life of a monarch or statesman, or the discovery of some far-reaching plot.

(Storey 1951, p.110 italics in the original)

The importance of negative news revealed in this memo is something Galtung and Ruge believed would make an event more likely to receive coverage as is the involvement of ‘elite people’ (1965, p.68). The desire amongst media to tell stories which are negative or involve people classed as ‘celebrities’ is demonstrated on a daily basis across newspapers, television and social media.

Since 1965 there have been several attempts to refine and develop Galtung and Ruge’s original study. Harcup and O’Neill have examined it twice (2001 and 2016). In their first study they looked at national papers in the United Kingdom and

found stories had to satisfy one or more of ten criteria, several of which are similar to Galtung and Ruge. Among them; the involvement of elite people, bad news, relevance to the audience and an element of surprise. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) also included the category of entertainment which they found to be 'pervasive in all newspapers' (2001, p.277) where stories included sex, show business, animals or human interest are involved. In 2016 Harcup and O'Neill, as well as looking at the content of newspapers, also examined the most popular stories on social media platforms. Here they found that entertainment was the top news value, 'such stories seem to be shared by online readers because they are fun, and sharing them can brighten the day,' (2016, p.11). In addition to the news values they listed in 2001 Harcup and O'Neill include two which draw directly from the growth of social media in their revised 2016 study. These are the strength of '*Audio-visuals*' within stories and their likely '*shareability*' (2016, p.13 italics in the original) on social media platforms.

The desire for strong audio and visual content is accepted within the television news industry but they are news values missing from many studies which have based their research on newspaper content. Tunstall in his 1971 sociological account, *Journalists at Work*, did apply the factors identified by Galtung and Ruge (1965) to television reporting. He also highlighted the medium's requirement for 'visual' content and 'new film material' and he identified the limited amount of air-time news bulletins have to cover stories which naturally means they can only show a 'small faction' of events, Tunstall (1971, p.22). Harrison (2006), who studied the television news process inside several organisations, is another researcher who does include the ready availability of pictures among her updated list of factors which are important as criteria for deciding what stories are covered by news organisations.

Hall (1973) looked at the decisions which inform the selection of photographs used in newspapers and although he agreed with the broad principles of Galtung and Ruge he questioned the neutrality of their 12 points. He saw value in an approach which looked behind them at what he called ‘an ideology of news’ (Hall 1973, p.182)

‘News values’ are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society. All ‘true journalists’ are supposed to possess it: few can or are willing to identify and define it. Journalists speak of ‘the news’ as if events select themselves. Further, they speak as if which is the ‘most significant’ news story, and which ‘news angles’ are the most salient are divinely inspired. Yet of the millions of events which occur every day in the world, only a tiny portion ever become visible as ‘potential news stories’: and of this proportion, only a small fraction are actually produced as the day’s news in the news media. We appear to be dealing, then, with a ‘deep structure’ whose function as a selective device is un-transparent even to those who professionally most know how to operate it.

(Hall 1973, p.181)

Hall’s observation about the number of events which actually happen is of course quite correct; newspapers are limited to the number of stories they can carry and most radio and television bulletins are constrained by the number of minutes they have in which to broadcast on any given day. Of all the fires, train and plane crashes, murders and natural disasters which happen across the world journalists need a way to whittle them down into a number they can deal with. Journalists often speak of gut instinct or nose, (see pages 162, page 251 for more detail), as ways of knowing which events to cover (Hemmingway 2004, 2008). However, this does not

help in defining what news actually is, rather, it gives an idea of what journalists think news is. In that sense Hall is also right that there is opaqueness to understanding where this gut instinct comes from or how it is informed. The use of Actor-Network Theory in this thesis to explore the production process inside television newsrooms will show how this perceived opaqueness can be successfully overcome. Gans makes a similar point to Hall, that of all the ‘billions of potential activities’, Gans (1979, p.78) which could be reported each day news teams must select those they actually want. Since this process is repeated every day, Gans suggests that journalists ‘routinize their tasks to make it manageable’ (1979, p.78).

An early attempt to explain this way of whittling down the number of potential stories is the ‘gatekeeper’ theory developed by White (1950). The term ‘gatekeeper’ is one he used to describe the wire editor’s role on a newspaper who had responsibility for selecting which of the stories coming from three wire news agencies would go into the paper. Analysis of the stories selected and rejected showed that ‘Mr Gates’ preferred human interest and political stories and those which were more conservative in outlook. Although he accepted he had prejudices he rejected that they affected his choice of stories for his paper but clearly as White discovered the personal preferences of the wire editor had a major influence on what stories made it into the paper.

The gatekeeping analysis has been revisited many times since White used it; Shoemaker et al (2001), Shoemaker (1991), Bleske (1991) and Snider (1966). In Bleske’s study ‘Ms Gates’ the copy editor gave similar reasons to ‘Mr Gates’ for rejecting stories, top among them was a lack of space in the newspaper. Their story choice was also very similar despite differences in the size of the papers they were working for and almost forty years between the two studies. Berkowitz (1990)

applied the gatekeeping metaphor to a local television station in Indianapolis and found that it didn't really fit the way television news was made. Rather than decisions over content being taken by a single individual he observed groups discussing when deciding on which events to cover. Breaking news was seen as more likely to make it on screen than planned events as were stories which were more easily explained. Those people interviewed by Berkowitz also identified the constraints on resources and the need to fill gaps in programme running orders as factors having an influence over what events became news. Berkowitz noted that filling the gaps in the programme became more important as the transmission time for the news bulletin approached.

Although in traditional newsrooms, television, radio, print or online, choices are still having to be made about which events to cover, social media has played a significant part in breaking down the gatekeeper role. On social media platforms people can exchange 'news stories' directly between themselves or follow the threads of news feeds which are recommended by complex algorithms. The restrictions on what is seen as 'newsworthy' and the boundaries around what and who controls 'news' have been obliterated. Social media platforms can provide an 'afterlife' for news stories following their transmission on news programmes and bulletins. Journalists can share them and the audience can engage with the journalists directly via the platforms and with each other (see pages 127 and 296). There is now a plethora of actors which can be described as news producers and it would seem that Actor-Network Theory is specially tailored to investigate these multiple, disparate and interwoven media networks which are quite different to traditional methods of news production. As Latour suggests,

in situations where innovations proliferate, where group boundaries are uncertain, when the range of entities to be taken into account fluctuates, the sociology of the social is no longer able to trace actors' new associations. At this point, the last thing to do would be to limit in advance the shape, size, heterogeneity, and combination of associations. To the convenient shorthand of the social, one has to substitute the painful and costly longhand of its associations.

(Latour 2005 p.11)

In other words, traditional methodologies used to understand news are not agile enough to fully explain the upheaval wrought by social media platforms. Instead a methodological approach which specifically looks towards the specificity of interaction between heterogeneous, fluid actors is required and that is Actor-Network Theory.

Another early study which looked at the production of news to answer the question: What is news? was Breed (1955). He examined the relationships which existed inside newspaper newsrooms and how they might influence story selection. He defined six factors which controlled the actions of new reporters which ensured they adhered to the newsroom's established ways of working. These include a desire to fit in with their new surroundings and develop their own careers. In order to achieve these aims the newcomer usually falls into line with the way more seasoned colleagues work.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) see news as a reflection of the interests and values of the ruling elite; they describe their interpretation of news as a 'propaganda model'. They proposed a set of filters which are used to decide what events became news. These include the ownership of the media organisation; how much it relies

upon official government sources for stories and a level of ‘anti-Communism’ rhetoric. ‘The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place’, Herman and Chomsky (1988, p.2).

The Glasgow University Media Group (1980, 1976) approached television news from a left-wing perspective. They maintained there was a bias in television news story selection and the way reports were compiled which favoured the Government’s view on industrial relations which excluded the workers and this, they claimed, was a reflection of the opinions of those in charge of media organisations. This historical materialism, which looks at the way society operates as a way of explaining how change happens, is different from materiality as defined by Actor-Network Theory. Actor-Network Theory is a material semiotic approach, Law (2007), Latour (1990), meaning the materiality which it considers is the heterogeneous nature of relationships between actors and the networks they form. Each actor network case must be considered afresh without reference to prior explanations.

In the nineteen seventies there were a number of studies undertaken within newsrooms which placed more emphasis on the way news was produced rather than explaining what news actually was. They included, *Manufacturing the News* by Mark Fishman (1980), *Deciding What’s News* by Herbert Gans (1979), *Making News* by Gaye Tuchman (1978), *Putting ‘Reality’ Together* by Philip Schlesinger (1978), *Creating Reality* by David Altheide (1974) and *Making News by Doing Work* by Gaye Tuchman (1973).

These ethnographic studies showed how news workers organised themselves or were organised in order to satisfy the demands of covering news and providing content within specific deadlines. However, a criticism of these teleological approaches to understanding newsrooms and media is their *a priori* idea of what to look for in terms of the production process, (Hemmingway 2008). Schlesinger's study of the BBC was based on fieldwork conducted in the early to mid-1970s inside the organisation's main London news operation. While many of his findings may now seem outdated, within a more modern integrated and enlightened BBC, part of his analysis showed the importance of time as a measure of a stories worth. He describes how much time a particular item is given in a news bulletin or if it was left out altogether, (1978, p.98-99). He also shows how journalists relate time and the immediacy of news events and the speed of their transmission to news value, (1978, p.88). Although changing technology and broadcast platforms have influenced the ways news is delivered and the speed of transmission, time is still an important element in defining the worth of any story. This will be looked at in more detail in the chapter on the technology of news production.

Fishman (1980) describes the way newsrooms divide the areas they want to cover into 'beats' and assign reporters to them. These could be courts, local government or the fire department for example. Reporters given these beats get to know who can help them generate a regular supply of stories. For Fishman 'it is no exaggeration to say that *the world is bureaucratically organized for journalists*' (1980, p.51 italics in the original). This structuring allows reporters to know where to go for news and provides those with things they want to publicise a ready place to say it. This 'predictability' of news is a factor in story selection highlighted by Galtung and Ruge (1965) and feeds into Boorstin's (1964) assessment that much of

what passes for news is actually ‘pseudo-events’ specifically staged to attract media attention. Methodologically these studies are ethnographic in their approach and as such share something with Actor-Network Theory. They also examine the news production process, which again, makes them akin to network theory. However, they are quite different from Actor-Network Theory as they originate from an *a priori* political or social standpoint predisposed about what and where to study. Latour on the other hand urges us to clear our minds of prejudice and ‘to follow the actors’ (Latour 2005, p.12) and only them.

These various definitions of news values and explanations of how newsrooms operate became the perceived approach for researching what journalists consider newsworthy. The News Values approach to reading news, is a starting point for this research but as will be seen, when investigating specific cases of murder, the decision-making procedure and production process is subject to constant change, which critically, can feedback into the original selection process and affect the choices journalists make. It is this shifting materiality of both human and nonhuman elements which either coalesce to become a story or not which this thesis will use Actor-Network Theory to explain.

News values as a term of reference brings together ideas around what news can actually be described as into a theoretical approach to analyse what events are considered newsworthy. The work of Harcup and O’Neill (2016, 2001), Brighton and Foy (2007), Harrison (2006), MacShane (1979) and Galtung and Ruge (1965) have contributed to this theory.

It is news values that give journalists and editors a set of rules – often intangible, informal, almost unconscious elements – by which to work, from which to plan and execute the content of a publication or a

broadcast. In its purest sense everything that happens in the world is a new event, and somebody, somewhere, will have some level of interest in that occurrence. But what takes it from being new to being news? The set of values applied by different media – local, regional, national and international, print, television, radio, internet, bulletin board – are as varied as the media themselves.

(Brighton and Foy 2007, p.1)

This way of reading news, with its roots in Galtung and Ruge's (1965) study of Norwegian newspapers has emphasised the importance of culture and politics in the news process but neglected the importance of news making as practice. This approach becomes an exercise in deconstructing journalists' opinions, attempting to weed-out their unconscious bias and personal judgments in an attempt to find untainted objective news content and the news values which underpin their choices. But this approach, which ignores the practice of production within which events actually become news fails to provide a proper understanding of what news is and how it comes into being. It overlooks the complex and technological nature of news production and the importance of the relationships between humans and technology.

The actor network approach overcomes these shortcomings and by applying it to the study of media it is possible to develop a clearer understanding of news (Hemingway, 2008, Van Loon, 2008). That is because, as one of the founding fathers of the theory puts it, 'Structures do not simply reside in the actions of people, or in memory traces. They exist in a network of heterogeneous material arrangements.' (Law 1991, p16). News production is a fluid process and Actor-Network Theory has specifically evolved to allow researchers to trace the fluidity, to look at the networks

of actors, both human and nonhuman, which are created as the process is taking place.

unless we begin to dismantle the epistemological straightjacket within which the analyses of media have been hitherto confined, and adopt a new methodology for discovering the ontology of media production, as well as a new language to describe the fluid and heterogeneous nature of news production and content, we will continue to neglect this undiscovered terrain.

(Hemmingway 2008, p.15)

Hemmingway's battle cry to change approach seems even more important now if we wish to properly understand a broadcast landscape which is evolving through social media connecting humans together through nonhuman intermediaries. The internet of things has become an internet of news producers. What is considered news has changed as has the way it is created. In part the evolving technology which allows anyone with the right device and internet access to be a broadcaster has redefined what it means to be a broadcaster in the traditional meaning of the term understood by television journalists. This has significant implications for understanding and studying journalism, technology and broadcasting. It is no longer possible, if it ever were, to explain the concept of journalism and news by looking at the finished product of individual journalists.

The enrolment of more ubiquitous technology has widened the network of actors involved in the newsgathering process. Understanding how this takes places matters because it informs our understanding of what news actually is and how events end up as news. News is not a preconceived given; news values cannot provide an adequate explanation to what is news when news is the result of constant

actor network enrolment and negotiation between heterogeneous and fluid actors. (see page 196 for an example which shows this process.)

It is the contention of this thesis that the methodological pathway espoused by the actor network approach provides a better, more complete and clearer understanding of the news production process and the evolving role played by technology than that offered by the news value school.

This study is focused on the television news production process; the nitty-gritty of making a visual account of a specific incident or subject. Although understanding news values plays a part in these ideas about what constitutes news, they are of limited use in explaining the transmitted result of the production process when other factors which can influence the actual broadcast of a story are put under the explanatory microscope of Actor- Network Theory. Even within an organisation like the BBC, with specific guidelines and editorial standards, there are no absolute certainties about what becomes a broadcast television news report. Original research examples will show this is because news stories are the result of constantly changing influences and although the various selection criteria helpfully documented by the Academy offers a direction of investigation, they fall short in properly understanding television newsroom practice as it is taking place. To arrive at a conclusion as to why and how murder is treated as news by journalists it is necessary to be like journalists and seek answers to a series of simple questions, ones about who chooses what stories to cover, where and when do these decisions take place and why do outcomes change?

The next part of this chapter will chart the development of Actor-Network Theory as an analytical tool. Its lineage and differences from previous approaches will be examined with a brief account of some of these key antecedent ontologies.

Having charted these ideas, the evolution of the specific approach being used in this study and a review of the criticisms laid against it from within the Academy will be developed. Key actor network terms will be introduced and explained in order to show their relevance to this particular investigation. This will be followed by an explanation of the methodology and methods evolved by the practitioners of Actor-Network Theory. At this point it is worth emphasising that there is no single Actor-Network Theory (Mol 2010), (Law 1997). In the years since it was first introduced it has evolved as different practitioners have used it in different areas of investigation, Hemmingway (2008), (Latour (2005), Couldry (2004), Mol (2002), Law and Hassard (1999), Singleton and Michael (1993). Much like news, Actor-Network Theory is methodology adaptable to its surroundings and adapted by those who chose to use it for their research.

The Antecedents of Actor-Network Theory

The following section of the thesis will provide a concise description of the antecedents to Actor-Network Theory before looking in more detail at the theory itself and some of the key concepts which underpin its methodology. These ideas will be introduced to demonstrate their usefulness as part of the methodological approach to improve the understanding of the news production process.

Along with Comte and Marx, Durkheim is widely acknowledged as one of the founding fathers of sociology and as such the developer of the first widely accepted framework of enquiry for the discipline. He built upon Comte's positivism, a view which saw true knowledge as being that which was verifiable through observation. For Durkheim (see Levison 1973, p.50-55) social phenomena could be examined through objective scientific understanding of the structures of society. He favoured quantitative techniques which sought 'social facts', for example his work on suicide which showed a lower suicide rate amongst Catholics than Protestants and a higher rate for men than woman (Durkheim 2002). The lower rate amongst Catholics is explained by the more closely knit communities in which they live and the emphasis on 'control of the conscience' (Durkheim 2002, p.112). The other side of this explanation is the freedom afforded to individuals who follow Protestantism 'We thus reach our first conclusion, that the proclivity of Protestantism for suicide must elate to the spirit of free inquiry that animates this religion', (2002, p.112). For him 'there are ways of acting, thinking and feeling which possess the remarkable property of existing outside the consciousness of the individual' (Durkheim 1982, p.50). These could be the obligations placed on an individual as a brother or husband or the social use of money for example.

..they consist of manners of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him. Consequently, since they consist of representations and actions, they cannot be confused with organic phenomena, nor with psychical phenomena, which have no existence save in and through the individual consciousness.

(Durkheim 1982, p.53)

He saw importance in the way social structures could be used to study and explain society as a whole rather than the actions and motivations of individuals. However, he was in no way following Marx and his materialist concepts. Far from it. He dismissed the structure of historical materialism as ‘a few scattered and disjointed facts, which together make up no methodical-series and whose interpretation is far from being settled’, (Durkheim 1982, p.172).

Weber rejected both the Marxist account and Durkheim’s approach, preferring a method which was more interpretative.

...we are in a position to go beyond merely demonstrating functional relationships and uniformities. We can accomplish something which is never attainable in the natural sciences, namely the subjective understanding of the action of the component individuals. The natural sciences on the other hand cannot do this, being limited to the formulation of causal uniformities in objects and events and the explanation of individual facts by applying them.

(Weber 1978, p.15)

According to Weber, only humans could have a sense of consciousness and therefore it was the role of the sociologist to seek an explanation for the actions of

the individual as distinct from their behaviour. For this it was necessary for the researcher to bring their own 'subjective understanding' to bear as 'interpretive understanding' to explain the actions of others, (see Levison 1973, p.59-62). For Durkheim such a position was unthinkable as it put subjectivity ahead of the 'brute facts' of science (see Rubinstein 2007, p.28-29). Both men sought answers for actions but in quite different ways. Durkheim's position was positivistic; he favoured understanding through empirical measurement of social institutions while Weber's interpretive position looked for meaning through peoples' actions, beliefs and language (see Macionis and Gerber 2010).

It was in America during the 1920s and 1930s that the quantitative approach to understanding had most success with the development of what became known as the Chicago School at the city's university. Empirical studies looked at, among other things; vice, gangs, crime and immigration into the city (see Bulmer 1984). Merton conducted empirical sociological studies into subjects as varied as housing, business, and race (see Calhoun 2012). The roots of these ideas, which became widely known by Frederick Suppe's term, the 'received view' (see Hands 2001, p.71) are found in the Vienna Circle and the logical positivists of the 1930s. As Hands explains, according to the logical positivists, apart from the *a priori* knowledge of mathematics and logic, the only other 'type of genuine knowledge was produced by empirical science' (Hands 2001, p.73-74) This position dominated practical sociology for many years and positivism in the sense of large quantitative research projects still enjoys considerable success. For example, medical trials to test the effectiveness of drugs; and surveys conducted to measure household expenditure and attitudes to crime, such as the Crime Survey of England and Wales.

It was Kuhn (2012) and his reassessment of the way several key scientific ‘discoveries’, including oxygen and knowledge of electricity, developed that marked a sea change in the philosophical approach towards understanding science, although when his book was first published in 1962 his ideas were met with criticism. He examined the historical development of these breakthroughs to better articulate how they actually occurred. He found they were driven by momentous revolutions in agreed ideas rather than the result of incremental change. The reaction to the acceptance of these discoveries was a shift in the shared belief of the scientists replacing old ideas with what he describes as a new ‘ruling paradigm’. In essence Kuhn suggests a new theory gains support and draws scientists and resources to work in and with it. ‘...men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for science practice’ (Kuhn 2012, p.11). In the preface to his ground breaking work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, he describes a paradigm as ‘universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners.’ (Kuhn 2012, xlii) Although this is by no means his only definition of the word used in the book it does provide a starting point for understanding how it has evolved over time. The book was itself a collection of ideas which challenged the ruling explanatory paradigm of his time which saw science as the definition of objective description.

He proposed that rather than describing objective truth, scientific communities operated within a framework of dogma and clung to previous theories until they were superseded by the maturing new paradigm. The possibility this position posited was that science and scientists were not acting in a wholly logical, rational way; that they were not always the heroic figures depicted in history but were instead influenced by other stimuli. Science was seen as a way of ‘puzzle-

solving' (Kuhn 2012, p.42) and that the dominant ideas of any given scientific moment are the guide for others in that field to follow. This leads to Kuhn's radical claim that paradigms are not in themselves ways through which the scientific community seeks truth; rather that even if science 'grows in depth' 'We may, to be more precise, have to relinquish the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth' (2012, p.169). This conclusion pre-figures the work Latour and Woolgar were to initiate with their ground breaking study of the Salk Laboratory in the 1970s and what they saw as the construction of reality by scientists (Latour and Woolgar 1986). Kuhn suggests science is not about seeking objective truth, despite the protestations of the scientific community to the contrary; rather the paradigms within which they work set relativistic ambitions for those that work within them.

Towards the end of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, in response to criticisms of subjectivity and 'unanalyzable individual intuitions' (Kuhn 2012, p.190) Kuhn says that any intuitions he has been discussing are not individual. Rather they are the tested and shared possessions of the members of a successful group, and the novice acquires them through training as part of his preparation for group membership', (2012, p.190-191). For Kuhn this understanding becomes the property of the epistemic community. This shared training and the specialist skills and knowledge gained through a lengthy apprenticeship lead scientist to create work in an insular environment away from the oversight or questioning of the outside world (2012, p.163). This 'unparalleled insulation' has implications for the work done and how it is judged and valued. These scientists,

..must be seen as the sole possessors of the rules of the game or of some equivalent basis for unequivocal judgements. To doubt that they

shared some such basis for evaluations would be to admit the existence of incompatible standards of scientific achievement. That admission would inevitably raise the question whether truth in the sciences can be one.

(Kuhn 2012, p.167)

These ideas challenged the prevailing view that only those from within the scientific community were in a position to understand how it worked and were capable of judging its output. Kuhn saw science as a social process undertaken in a social environment influenced by the paradigms held by the community. Importantly Kuhn's work showed science could be treated like any other 'social behavior' (Hands 2001, p.175) and this led to the growth of what was referred to as the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK). Sociology of Scientific Knowledge grew from the earlier work of theorists such as Karl Mannheim (1985) who sought to understand how people understood the world around them. He argued that peoples' ideas were a 'function' of their place in society and if we wanted to understand how they perceive the world then it was necessary to understand how their specific position in society formed their perception.

Kuhn's work paved the way for the approach developed by Latour and others investigating the process of science production rather than the result of the science. Knorr-Cetina was among a number of researchers to follow the microscopic study of laboratory work. She agreed with Latour and Woolgar that facts were arrived at by the interactions, negotiations and the machinations, within a laboratory.

...we constructivists believe that the world as it is is a *consequence* rather than a *cause* of what goes on in science, we have reversed the arrow between the scientific account and the world, considering the

latter as a consequence rather than a cause of the former. The focus of attention has shifted to *what goes on in science when it produces these accounts*. That has opened up a whole new area of research.

(Knoor-Cetina quoted in Callebaut 1993, p.180. Emphasis in the original)

Knoor-Cetina's study of a laboratory in Berkeley California was one of a number which developed the approach which proposed that facts within scientific establishments were a construct, that scientists were 'selective' in their research. In fact, she uses the word selective or selections almost 200 hundred times in *The Manufacture of Knowledge*. She shows how subjects to be investigated are selected because they resonate with current trends, because they are 'hot' (Knoor-Cetina 1981, p.7) and not because they are a result of scientists seeking the truth. It is clear that a process of selection takes place within a television newsroom and at certain moments specific events or subjects are 'hot' news stories. The way stories are selected by journalists will be explored in more detail within this thesis as the news production process is examined.

Knoor-Cetina found the scientists she studied based their selection of investigations on a number of things one of the most important being the previous selectivity which had taken place within the laboratory and which had yielded results.

The selection of a substance, technique or composition formula "because it works" refers us to the greater relevance of success than truth in actual laboratory work. Successes, as suggested before, do not share the absolute quality of truth. Not only is success, as one scientist said, "a different trip for every one of us", but what works- and what consequently counts toward success-depends as much upon

routine translations arising from the practical concerns at a research site, as on the dynamics of negotiation and renewal, or the modification of these translations.

(Knorr-Cetina 1981, p.41)

Importantly in this early work, Knorr-Cetina also makes the point, which Latour (2005, 1987), Callon (1986), and Law (1987) make that causal agency is not limited to humans. This is a unique principle which separates the development of Actor-Network Theory from the preceding ideas of Sociology of Scientific Knowledge. It was also highly controversial when it was first proposed and still is. The origins of this idea and criticism of it will be developed in the following pages.

The great achievement of SSK was to bring the human and social dimensions of science to the fore. SSK, one can say, thematized the role of *human agency* in science. It thus partially displaced the representational idiom by seeing the production, evolution, and use of scientific knowledge as structured by the interests and constraints upon real agents. Scientific beliefs, according to SSK, are to be sociologically accounted for in just those terms.

(Pickering 1995, p.9)

For David Bloor, who along with Barry Barnes and Harry Collins, is seen as leading the way with the first major developments in Sociology of Scientific Knowledge, the sociologist is concerned with knowledge as a 'natural phenomenon' (Bloor 1976, p.5). For them it was important to understand why scientists were doing what they were doing and what had formed and influenced their ideas. In this respect they were continuing to probe areas first questioned by Kuhn and they received a similar negative response from the scientific community. The move was a departure

from previous investigation into the results of science work, shifting the emphasis away from the scientists as objective observers and towards understanding the social conditions of science production.

Bloor proposed four tenets with which all investigations would proceed, ‘causality, impartiality, symmetry and reflexivity’ (Bloor 1976, p.5) and described this approach to understanding science as a Strong Programme. It was in response to what he believed were the shortcomings of previous weak attempts to explain science through sociology rather than to understand how scientific knowledge was arrived at within the social context and how the process could itself be justified. Hence his first tenet urging an understanding of ‘the conditions which bring about belief or states of knowledge’ (Bloor 1976, p.5). With a clear methodological structure embodied in these beliefs Bloor proposed investigating science as it was undertaken by scientists in an empirical way. For Hands (2001) the demand of the Strong Programme’s methodology was to seek the cause of the beliefs held by scientists based upon their social interest alone and not to seek an explanation for them.

These interests are based on, and emerge from, the scientists’ particular place in the overall pattern of social relationships; therefore, at any particular point in time, the relevant interests could take a variety of different forms – personal, group, professional, class, national or others – but regardless of the specific form, the Strong Program’s story always reduces to the argument that certain beliefs were in the “interests” of the relevant scientists and that such interests explain (causally, impartially, symmetrically and reflexively) why the scientists have the beliefs they have.

(Hands 2001, p.189)

In their study of the Salk Institute, Latour and Woolgar (1979) took the search for an explanation of the world of science and scientific knowledge in a quite different direction than previous SSK analysis. They introduced the methodological concept of looking at what was taking place in the laboratory as it happened, seeking to understand the construction of facts as it was being 'performed' or 'enacted,' (Law and Singleton 2000). This and the insistence of recognizing and evaluating the part played by nonhumans led to specific actor-network ontology and the developments of Actor-Network Theory. Their findings were the result of a micro-level analysis which demonstrated how such an approach could yield compelling evidence as to how scientists actually went about their work.

Laboratory Life was one of a number of micro-sociologies conducted by researchers whose lineage can be traced back through Sociology of Scientific Knowledge. But the methods and methodology employed by Latour and Woolgar differed from SSK research. They sought answers not only empirically but also practically as they observed and took part in the life of the institute over a two-year period. The starting point was one which assumed no link between social structures and science. There was to be no *a priori* knowledge, a methodological principle of the later developed Actor-Network Theory, and one which differed from the more traditional SSK approach which looked for the social relationships which took place within the creation of science. They also presented their research in a unique way, as a semi-fictional account by a participant observer. The result was an explanation, in which Latour and Woolgar claimed,

Scientific activity is not "about nature," it is a fierce fight to *construct* reality. The *laboratory is* the workplace and the set of productive forces, which makes construction possible. Every time a statement

stabilises, it is reintroduced into the laboratory (in the guise of a machine, inscription device, skill, routine, prejudice, deduction, programme, and so on), and it is used to increase the difference between statements. The cost of challenging the reified statement is impossibly high.

(Latour and Woolgar 1986, p.243)

They identified the part played by nonhumans, for example, the laboratory equipment and the academic papers written by scientists in the production of the results. This emphasis on nonhuman actors is crucial to the reading of news acknowledging as it does the part technology and other nonhuman actors can have in the process of news production. It also shows the importance of looking beyond what may initially look like embedded, stable aspects within the production routines of the newsroom, for example, the use of technological facilities to provide live reporting from the scene of a story. As will be shown later (see page 176) performance of technological actors embedded in practice may be subject to change at any moment.

Although this early approach has much in common with Sociology of Scientific Knowledge, for example, they share the common goal which is to better understand how trustworthy knowledge is generated. They also shared an inheritance from the wider discipline of Science and Technology Studies (STS). For Law both approaches '*seek to describe rather than to prescribe*' (Law 2011), while Woolgar (2004) the arguments were 'turf wars' as academics sought to 'define the kinds of analysis and explanation associated with scientific knowledge' (Woolgar 2004, p.342).

If claims to Scientific truth can be shown to be socially constructed then it is relatively easy to demonstrate that all other forms of (less hard) knowledge have similar features. That is, if we can demonstrate the social basis of the production of scientific knowledge – purportedly the apogee of all systems of knowledge generation by virtue of its rigorous respect for ‘reason’ and ‘experience’ – then the social basis of political, ethical and all other kinds of (relatively softer) knowledge is in principle amenable to similar kinds of analysis and deconstruction.

(Woolgar 2004, p 342)

Interest in science and technology studies grew in response to the expansion of technology in all areas, domestic, social, military and the workplace. Among the questions raised were ones over the political nature of technology, the affects various technologies may have on society and what influences society may have upon the development of technology. *The Social Shaping of Technology* edited by MacKenzie and Wajcman (1985) brought a collection of influential academic papers together. They included practical case studies such as James Fellows’ investigation into *The American Army and the M-16 rifle* which showed how a far superior weapon, the AR-15 was frozen out of contracts with the Army. It was a smaller calibre weapon than the Army had previously used and much better under all conditions than the weapon being developed by the Army itself, the M14. However, some officers within the Army Material Command vehemently opposed the AR-15. They disliked the small calibre of the bullet and the type of explosive powder used in them. They didn’t like the weapon’s plastic construction and perhaps most importantly it was the invention of an external company and not a military product. These and other

prejudices, led to the rigging of tests which saw the AR-15 fail (Fellows in MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985, p.239 - 251).

Fellows articulates the notion so well made by Winner in *Do Artefacts have Politics?* (1980) that technologies can have political and social consequences. Winner illustrates his point by discussing the effect of bridge design in New York and the McCormick iron moulding machine (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985 p.28-29). With both examples Winner highlights how technologies can embody 'purposes far beyond their immediate use' and even '*prior* to any of its professed uses' (Hughes in MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985 p.30). For example, the bridges designed by Robert Moses in New York. They created social segregation because they prevented public transport from reaching certain parts of the city, limiting access to those reliant on buses which were the poor of all races; while McCormick's iron moulding machine broke the power of the unions within his work force. For Winner technology is not neutral. A third paper in the same collection (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985) by Hughes shows how the inventor and entrepreneur Thomas Edison developed his electric light network in New York in the 1880s. It draws on Hughes' detailed investigation into the creations of electricity grids in the developing world of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, *Networks of Power* (1983). His study of the notebooks left by Edison show how the designs for the electricity generating power and size of the network were determined by the specific requirements to provide the same level of lighting from electric lamps as was then available from gas lights at a reasonable cost.

The prime desideratum was an incandescent light economically competitive with gas; the major flash of insight was realizing that Ohm's and Joule's laws defined the relationship between the

technical variables in his system and allowed their manipulation to achieve the desired economy.

(Hughes in MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985, p.50)

This reading provides a system building interpretation of Edison's electric lighting network; one where the technical elements of the proposal fashion and frame the outcome of the problem being overcome, in this case providing electric light but only within the parameters set by Edison to ensure his new lighting competed on price with gas. Hughes offers a view of technology which evolves through its own momentum and social conditioning. A bleaker critique of technological development comes from the perspective of technological determinists such as Postman (1992) who suggests that technological change is 'ecological'.

One significant change generates total change. If you remove the caterpillars from a given habitat, you are not left with the same environment minus caterpillars; you have a new environment.....a new technology does not add or subtract something. It changes everything. In the year 1500, fifty years after the printing press was invented, we did not have an old Europe plus the printing press. We had a different Europe.

(Postman 1992, p.18)

The examples of the AR15, the bridges in New York, McCormick's machine and Edison's lighting network all show the consequences of technological choices. For example, the introduction of the electric light fundamentally changed how people lived and worked and interacted with each other and their surroundings.

Latour's interests in the relationships humans have with technology led him and some of his colleagues at the *École des Mines* in Paris in the 1980s-'90s to try

new approaches in their research in to technological innovation. Along with Michel Callon and John Law, Latour proposed a radical departure from previous Sociology of Scientific Knowledge and Science and Technology Studies methodologies. They rejected the traditional notion that only humans had agency deliberately including the part played by nonhumans. They were interested in how the interaction of nonhumans conditioned relationships and how relationships were mediated by the materiality of objects.

For Durkheim (1982) an understanding of the material was necessary to explain the social processes which lay behind social phenomena. To do this it was essential to study ‘things and persons’ (Durkheim 1982, p.136). Under the label ‘things’ he included ‘material objects incorporated by society’ and ‘law’ and ‘customs’ (Durkheim 1982, p.136).

But it is plain that neither material nor non-material objects produce the impulsion that determines social transformations, because they both lack motivating power. Undoubtedly there is need to take them into account in the explanations which we attempt. To some extent they exert an influence upon social evolution whose rapidity and direction vary according to their nature. But they possess no elements essential to set that evolution in motion. They are the matter to which the vital forces of society are applied, but they do not themselves release any vital forces. Thus the specifically human environment remains as the active factor.

(Durkheim 1982, p.136)

In contrast to Durkheim’s position the materiality of ‘things’ and their agency is central to Latour’s Actor-Network Theory. For him materiality goes beyond the

physicality of an object, although this remains important, to include its geographic and temporal location and the influence and effects that it can have upon those it comes into contact with, Latour (1992). Latour (1993) argues that modernity led to the separation of the human and the nonhuman, with the human taking centre stage in sociological investigation, and in order to understand what it is we wish to analyse we must treat them equally, which was a polemical departure from previous thought. Understanding materiality is crucial to explaining the relationships which are formed between things and the resulting networks which are created. It is these relationships which Actor-Network Theory is interested in and which moved Science and Technology Studies in a different direction than that associated with Bloor (1976) and the Strong Programme and which also differentiates Actor-Network Theory from the Marxian sense of materialism which shaped the earlier analysis of news values developed by writers such as the Glasgow Media Group as discussed above (see page 28).

Similar to Actor-Network Theory the Strong Programme was concerned with understanding the causes behind beliefs held by scientists (since at the time of its development that was the focus of attention) and, like Actor-Network Theory, the Strong Programme sought a symmetrical approach which would allow the same investigative criteria, for example using social context, to explain both true and false beliefs and facts. But the pioneers of Actor-Network Theory saw no distinction between the natural world and the world of science, technology and society and so they developed an ontology which concerned itself with material assemblages of all things rather than an ontology which considered people and things as distinct entities Latour (1999, 1990, 1987), Law (2009), Callon and Law (1997). This was a radical departure from the previous sociology. Actor-Network Theory specifically

dismantles the transcendental subject, the 'I' that is the human subject and that is so often seen as the driving agent in all scientific explanations. Instead the theory proposes an ontology where agency is not the sole preserve of humans.

In *Pandora's Hope* Latour offers a simple example of how the materiality of physical things alter as they enter hybrid relationships with other actors and how they form a network. He begins with a gun and a man, two separate actors, coming together, connecting to create a hybrid, the gunman. Individually they are quite separate entities, a man without a gun cannot be a gunman; a gun without someone to fire it is harmless. Combined they are a new entity with the potential to be lethal. Neither actor is any longer an autonomous individual. They are both materially different.

You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it. You are another subject because you are holding the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered into a relationship with you.

(Latour 1999, p.179)

Latour's interest is in the contingent heterogeneous networks which emerge from the material interactions between humans and nonhumans. Here the adjective contingent explains the changing nature of relationships between actors and their position within networks. It denotes a sense of continuous affirmation of the relationship which needs to be constantly reconfirmed in order to maintain the network they have formed. It is a process of production which only ends when the mutable network of connected actors becomes stable; an entity which no longer needs to be questioned. Paradoxically it is the opening of these stable 'black boxes' (see pages 73-74 for more explanation) which Latour and the other early developers

of Actor-Network Theory were advocating. The methodology would allow the discovery of how such networks were actually created. Reading Latour critically, can provide an insight which allows a fresh approach to understanding the mutability of television news production and the telling of murder stories which is the focus of this thesis.

The pioneers of Actor-Network Theory used their new theoretical approach across a wide field of study including, aircraft projects (Callon and Law 1988), Pasteur and his pasteurization process (Latour 1988), scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay (Callon 1986), and the electric car in France (Callon 1980). Through these early studies they developed the theory; building upon the methodological imperatives which Callon in 1986 described as *agnosticism*, *symmetry*, and *free association*. That is showing impartiality towards all actors, both human and non-human, a commitment to explain conflicting view points in the same terms and avoiding *a priori* distinctions between nature and the social, (Callon 1986). Latour, Callon and Law, and others, undertook ethnographic investigation, the close observation of what was going on, and occasionally participatory observation, when researchers took part in the social process being studied. This form of participatory observation has been successfully used in television news studies for a number of years, Hemmingway (2008), Altheide (1974). The use of close observation and participant observation as research methods remain central to the methodological underpinning of Actor-Network Theory.

This thesis will make use of close observation of the news production process, where the relationship between the various actors involved are monitored and analysed but there is no interference into the observed process by the author. In some cases human actors involved in the process will be questioned about their

decisions or the decisions of others as close to the moment as possible. There will also be times where participant observation will be employed when the author of this thesis is directly involved in the news production process. These examples will be clearly sign-posted as this close involvement creates specific ethical issues in an investigation where the methodological foundations of the theory require no *a priori* distinction between any of the actors which form news production networks.

Participant and close observation of any area under investigation requires the necessary identification and description of those ‘actors’ as the title of the theory infers.

An “actor” in ANT is a semiotic definition – an actant - , that is something that acts or to which activity is granted by others. It implies *no* special motivation of *human individual* actors, nor of humans in general. An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action....There is no model of (human) actor in ANT nor any basic list of competences that have to be set at the beginning, because the human, the self and the social actor of traditional social theory is not on its agenda.

(Latour 1996, p.373)

Considering the role of nonhumans was a crucial shift in approach. The new French school of Actor-Network Theory was putting distance between itself and other sociological perspectives such as the Strong Programme. For Latour there is no *a priori* superiority bestowed upon any actant. He uses this term specifically to avoid the confusion of terminology he believes can arise when the word actor is used to describe nonhuman component parts of any network and he reserves the noun actor for use in describing those actants which have the ability to create translations in

other actants. In Latourian terms everything is an actant (Latour 1990), hotel keys, speed humps, viruses and soil depending on what the focus of study and explanation is. He shows how they form alliances with other actants and materially evolve. For example, the hotel key. It is a piece of shaped metal which lets guests in to their rooms. However, this convenience alters when it is combined with other actants: a hotel manager's wish to have guests leave their keys at reception when they go out, a cumbersome lump of metal and a sign of instructions. Now the key has become an object which is uncomfortable in the pocket, weighs guests down and reminds them that it needs to be left at reception when they leave, (Latour 1990). Latour develops this understanding of actants and actors throughout his work to underline the methodological importance of heterogeneity within the theory. He states that Actor-Network Theory wants to describe the nature of society.

But to do so it does not limit itself to human individual actors but extend the word actor -or actant- to non-human, non individual entities. Whereas social network adds information on the relations of humans in a social and natural world which is left untouched by the analysis, AT aims at accounting for the very essence of societies and natures. It does not wish to add social networks to social theory but to rebuild social theory out of networks.

(Latour 1990, p.3)

Actors act or have the potentiality to act and actants are acted upon by actors and have the potentiality to become actors (Latour 1996). An actant may become an actor, if it is granted the power to act, but it is the actant which is acted upon by the actor. And each one can change at any time with a new configuration of the network.

Various actors and actants will be encountered in this thesis when specific examples of the news production process are examined more closely. To ensure there is no confusion between these terms it is worth highlighting examples of both at this point to demonstrate working definitions of them which will be used throughout the remainder of the thesis. In a television newsroom a journalist known as a producer oversees the daily routines of the other staff. They select stories and direct reporters and camera crews in order to cover events. In this example the producer, reporter and camera crew are all actors. The producer acts towards the reporter and crew getting them to cover a specific story. By so doing the reporter and camera operator are turned from actants to actors since they are given the necessary autonomy to gather material in order to tell the story. An example of an actant within a television newsroom which remains an actant could be the on-air time of a news programme. It could be described as the ultimate actant since it ensures that action among actors takes place in order to satisfy the needs of filling the news programme with stories. But this duration could also become an actor if it were to change, for example if the programme duration was shortened or lengthened.

For Latour an actor is defined by the relationship it has with other actors, hence the use of the word ‘network’ to describe the way in which various actors and actants interact with each other. Callon sees these networks as a,

series of heterogeneous elements, animate and inanimate, that have been linked to one another for a certain period of time. The actor network can thus be distinguished from the traditional actors of sociology, a category generally excluding any nonhuman component and whose internal structure is rarely assimilated to that of a network. But the actor network should not, on the other hand, be confused with a network linking in some predictable fashion elements that are

perfectly well defined and stable, for the entities it is composed of, whether natural or social, could at any moment redefine their identity and mutual relationships in some new way and bring new elements into the network.

(Callon 1987, p.93)

This insistence on the role played by nonhumans in the creation of these socio-technical networks is crucial to Actor-Network Theory and to its applications for studying the technologically dependent process of news production. For Law the conclusion of the studies they conducted using the actor network approach to look at science, was that 'it [science] is a process of "heterogeneous engineering"' Law (Law 1992, p.2), the putting together of all the various parts of the process to reach a scientific conclusion. Importantly these investigative methods could be applied to any field of study.

Accordingly, the family, the organization, computing systems, the economy and technologies – all of social life – may be similarly pictured. All of these are ordered networks of heterogeneous materials whose resistance has been overcome. This, then, is the crucial analytical move made by actor-network writers: the suggestion that the social is nothing other than patterned networks of heterogeneous materials. This is a radical claim because it says that these networks are composed not only of people, but also of machines, animals, texts, money, architectures -- any material that you care to mention. So the argument is that the stuff of the social isn't simply human. It is all these other materials too.

(Law 1992, p.2-3)

Granting nonhumans agency and insisting on equal treatment between all actors exposed the theory to a barrage of criticism from within the discipline of Sociology of Science Knowledge, Bloor (1999), Collins and Yearley (1992) and from outside the discipline, Sokal and Bricmont (1997). Reviewing Latour's book *Science in Action*, Amsterdamska suggests that he must be having a joke by suggesting nonhumans have agency.

In what way is enrolling the microbe the same as enrolling a group of interested farmers or enrolling someone to finance a given project equivalent to the enrolment of a group of colleagues? Does each actant contribute to success or failure in the same way? Do scientists enrol electrons for the same reasons they enrol industrialists? Is the recruitment of a police force or an army equivalent to the enrolment of a group of other scientists? Does enrolment really mean the same thing in all these cases? It seems to me that the goals, the means, and the results of enrolling such different kinds of "allies" are hardly comparable, and that the elimination of differences among them leads only to confusion. It would be absurd to use arguments to try to convince a microbe to give a scientist some extra funding for further research.

(Amsterdamska 1990, p.501)

For Latour and Actor-Network Theory this level of criticism misses the fundamental point, confusing agency with intentionality or a will to act. Actor-Network Theory maintains that things, be they microbes, scallops or speed bumps, may become a part of a network, have agency and therefore a position in the actions and should be considered in the evaluation of the network. Critically however they

do not necessarily have any intention or motivation as it is traditionally understood; nor can the role played in a network be appreciated unless all the relationships formed by actors are investigated. For that reason, these nonhuman entities should not be ignored.

If action is limited a priori to what ‘intentional’, ‘meaningful’ humans do, it is hard to see how a hammer, a basket, a door closer, a cat, a rug, a mug, a list, or a tag could act. They might exist in the domain of ‘material’ ‘causal’ relations, but not in the ‘reflexive’ ‘symbolic’ domain of social relations. By contrast, if we stick to our decision to start from the controversies about actors and agencies, then *any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor—or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant.

(Latour 2005, p.71)

Under these terms proposed by Latour, television news can be seen as a composite of various participants all of whom are required in order for a finished product, the transmitted programme, to be delivered.

Television news production is a highly technical process, but also one which relies upon human input and sources of information such as texts and images. This environment of human and technical actors is the ideal one for investigation using Actor-Network theory and for extending the academic reach of the theory by applying it to the reporting of murder and use of social media. The methods of research favoured by the theory include observation and interviews. In this thesis this means interviews with journalists, technicians and police media teams. But there are many other actors including the cameras used to record interviews and the equipment needed to edit stories. The network could also include a set of guidelines about how

to treat interviewees bound up in a document such as the *BBC Producer Guidelines*⁵ or an email from the scheduling department specifying how long a particular programme can be. All of these elements which can be the ‘source of an action’ (Latour 1996, p.373) could be described as actors and the connections they make to create a news story, a network.

It is possible to rework Latour’s (1999) example of the gun-man hybrid for television news, if a camera is substituted for the gun, to show how a new entity is created and is understood in actor network terms. What is also clear is how the language used also has significance in shaping understanding. For example, is Latour’s gunman good or bad? Perhaps he is a bank robber or a sheriff defending a town from a gang. The camera is a stable collection of electronic circuitry, wires, plastic, glass and metal but it is transformed into another actor when an operator uses it to record pictures and sound. When the hybrid camera-operator is formed the camera and human become a new entity. In actor network terms the development of the hybrid does not stop here but it continues to spread and empower other actors. The camera and the human form an association and in so doing create something new, they change each other to form a new entity, it is in the combining that their materiality also alters but if the relationship ends, for example the camera operator pushes the stop button and the recording ends, the network is broken. The new entity of camera-operator is sustained for as long as the association between the two actors is maintained. Latour argues that it is in the creation of the network that the actors are defined as they make associations and *translations* – forming ‘a relationship that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexisting’ (Latour 2005, p.118).

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines>

Actants can either be changed by translational effects of other actors or they can resist the attempts to enlist them into the network. Latour says ‘I used translation to mean displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies the original two’ (Latour 1999, p.179). In a shifting landscape of constantly fluid alliances actors may resist the force from one network but acquiesce to another. As Latour states in *The Pasteurization of France*, events are individually specific ‘In other words, everything happens only once, and at one place.’ (Latour 1988, p.162). Which means there can be ‘slippage’ in translation in several different ways. For example, reporter A, who is filming with camera-operator C, may wish to continue filming with C who has already been asked to work with reporter B. C may resist the request from both A or B or accept from either of them or may have already been assigned to another story and reporter D. Following these interactions allows us to monitor the development of a network. In this scenario the translation would occur once those decisions/choices have been made by the actors. It is what comes next that is the translation, who translates who and into what?

Throughout his various studies Latour (1999, 1996, 1988, 1987) demonstrates the way Actor-Network Theory helps chart technological innovation through the specificity of actors at key moments in the translation process. For example,

If you propose to build a 16-bit computer to compete with the DEC’s VAX 11/780 machine I’ll know who, where and when you are. You are West at Data General in the late 1970s. I know this, because there are very few places on earth where anyone has the resources and the

guts to disaggregate the black box DEC has assembled and to come up with a brand new make of computer.

(Latour 1987, p.139)

It is the actions of the participants that are of interest and that allow processes to be understood hence his (Latour 1987) insistence upon studying them in action. Of course, actors can exist in isolation from each other but it is in the formation and breaking of networks, the forging, sustaining and melting of alliances that the observer will witness the change and the cost of these transformations paid by the actors. In other words, how they and the actors and actants they interact with change as a part of the process of translation.

If some causality appears to be transported in a predictable and routine way, then it's the proof that other mediators have been put in place to render such a displacement smooth and predictable... I can now state the aim of this sociology of associations more precisely: there is no society, no social realm, and no social ties, *but there exist translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations.*

(Latour 2005, p.108. Italics in the original)

This is another radical departure from previous sociological ideas. Actor-Network Theory says actors are only defined by their existence within networks and the continued series of trials they undergo in the formation and maintenance of networks. In Actor-Network Theory there is no separation between natural and social phenomenon either ontologically or as causal agents. They need to be investigated as one.

Instead of being the opposite causes of our knowledge, the two poles are a single consequence of a common practice that is now the only focus of our analysis. Society (or Subject, or Mind, or Brain,) cannot be used to explain the practice of science and, of course, Nature cannot either, since both are the results of the practice of science and technology making.

(Latour 1992, p.281)

Within Actor-Network Theory this symmetry refers to the attention accorded to both human and nonhuman actors and is central to the principles of investigating the associations they make. It is claimed that without accepting symmetry the researcher is liable to label and prioritize relationships and actors. It is a point Latour seems weary of making as he discusses the methods of tracing translations in *Reassembling the Social*.

And yet both ends of these chains, the social and the natural, have to be dissolved simultaneously. This symmetry is rarely understood by those who define ANT as a sociology ‘extended to non-humans’—as if nonhumans themselves had not undergone a transformation as great as those of the social actors. And yet, if both are not put aside at the same time, it is in vain that we will do our fieldwork: whatever new connections we will have traced, some agencies will take up the label ‘social’ and others the label ‘natural’, and the incommensurability between the two will render invisible the drawing of what we mean by social connections.

(Latour 2005, p.109)

In order to provide a successful actor network account, the researcher must avoid the possibility of imposing hierarchies usually associated with the nature/social dichotomy. The process of symmetry allows us to take into account that which can be seen without having to fall-back on the 'social' or on 'nature' for explanations of that which is unobservable. In order to monitor these, by definition, hard to see events, users of Actor- Network Theory must look for the moments when the relationships between actors are in a state of flux. This methodological principle and the theory's rejection of *a priori* assumptions concerning the worth, power, or status of individual actors has left it open to much criticism. As has the theory's insistence on symmetry of explanation for both human and nonhuman actors.

Two scientists, Sokal and Bricmont (1997), were critical of any attempt by what they saw as relativist approaches of Science and Technology Studies to explain, be that Kuhn, Bloor or Latour, (Sokal and Bricmont 1997 p.79). They assert that many of the ideas are relativist beliefs without the objective truths found in empirical explanations. They accuse Latour of 'playing constantly on the confusion between facts and our knowledge of them,' (1997, p.88). That is a similar charge levelled at Latour by Bloor (1999), an inability to distinguish between 'nature itself and beliefs about it,' (Bloor 1999, p.87). Bloor claims Latour misreads the Strong Program's stance on the agency of things 'The Strong Program does recognise agency in naturally occurring, non-social things and processes, namely causal agency. For example, things have the power to stimulate our sense organs.' (Bloor 1999, p.91) but he does not go as far as to accept Latour's insistence on giving all nonhuman actants such agency. Collins and Yearley (1992) take issue with the way Latour and Callon allow for the consideration of nonhuman actors, specifically scallops and automatic door closers, but they also attack the developing field of the '*Actant*

network school' Collins and Yearley (1992, p.370 emphasis in the original) for its use of networks as anything more than metaphors (1992, p.376) and its methodological approach.

The absence of methodological control over fantasy allows Latour to develop his concept of “delegation” unhindered by traditional problems. Using imaginative license to the full, he is able to tell convincing stories about the way we delegate power to technological artefacts. The lack of control over method allows control to be given to things. This way he appears to resolve a major philosophical problem – the distinction between action and behaviour – but *appears* is the operative word.

(Collins and Yearley 1992, p.320)

This criticism may seem understandable since the approach developing within the actor network school was a radical departure from what had gone before. There was to be no distinction between humans and any other material objects or things which formed a network and such objects were seen to have agency. Such a proposal was bound to cause a critical reaction. However, Actor-Network Theory stood its ground with a strong defence of methodology and methods. After all it was advocating an ethnographic approach to study similar to the observation widely used by all previous forms of sociological enquiry. The justification for including the study of nonhumans into this multi-causal process, it was argued, was precisely because their part had been overlooked previously. Collins and Yearley were critical of Callon's lack of expertise as a marine biologist while writing about scallops. They also believed Latour had insufficient scientific knowledge to comment on such entities as automatic door closers (see Collins and Yearley 1992). For Callon and

Latour criticism of this type was absurd since they believed the proper role of all sociologists of science was to fight against the hegemony of scientists.

In effect, they are forbidding sociologists to document the vast diversity of positions entertained by scientists, either because scientists are supposed to have special access to nature and be naive realists, or because sociologists have no scientific credentials and should stick to human realms; this is an extraordinary step backwards – since backwardness appears to be the issue. Forbidding such documentation is a serious error concerning the nature both of society and scientific activity.

(Callon and Latour 1992, p.358)

These ‘Science Wars’ as they became known were a civil war, especially in the United States, within the broad sociological school and saw entrenched positions about methods and methodology and focus of study being dug by the opposing groups. Further criticism came from one of the most distinguished French sociologists of the twentieth century, Pierre Bourdieu (2004). He turned his attention to the study of science late in his long career. He was critical to the point of disdain of the ‘micro-sociological level’ studies undertaken by Latour and others.

We are trying to understand a very complex practice (made up of problems, formulae, instruments, etc.) which can only be mastered through a long apprenticeship. I know that some ‘lab ethnographers’ may turn this handicap into a privilege, convert the shortcomings into an accomplishment and transform the outsider’s situation into a deliberate ‘approach’, while giving themselves the air of ethnographers.

(Bourdieu 2004, p.5)

He believed that concentrating enquiries at the laboratory level as Bloor, Collins, Latour, Merton and others were doing was to miss the ‘*structure* which orient scientific practice’, looking for answers inside the laboratory which actually lie outside it. He claimed what was needed was for researchers to think in terms of his notion of ‘field’.

Only through an overall theory of the scientific space, which understands it as a space structured according to both generic and specific logics, is it possible truly to understand a given point in this space, whether a particular laboratory or an individual researcher.

(Bourdieu 2004, p.33)

But in Actor-Network Theory there is no over-arching structure as Bourdieu perceives it; in Actor-Network Theory there are only the actors and the networks they are associated with. These networks can grow as more actors are enrolled but they are neither at a micro or macro level. Latour explains this in terms of landscape. The actors and associations they make with other actors are to be followed through a flat landscape (Latour 2005) through which the Ant, as Latour describes the ethnographer, must travel.

The metaphor of a flatland was simply a way for the ANT observers to clearly distinguish their job from the labor of those they follow around. If the analyst takes upon herself to decide in advance and a priori the scale in which all the actors are embedded, then most of the work they have to do to establish connections will simply vanish from view. It is only by making flatness the default position of the observer that the activity necessary to generate some difference in size can be detected and registered.

(Latour 2005, p.220)

By conceiving the networks as a flat landscape, the researcher can trace the connections being made and un-made more clearly. They won't be drawn into the temptation of imposing a social dimension, an external structure, or boundary onto the actors being mapped nor retreat into the structure of nature for an explanation (see Latour 2005, p.214). For Latour the flat landscape leaves tracks to follow like footprints in a dry river bed (2005, p.205). The metaphor is easy to grasp, conjuring up images of Native Americans looking for the tell-tale signs of what they are looking for. Sticking with Latour's horizontal terrain keeps the scholar from looking elsewhere rather than focusing on what is in front of them. This is a fundamental point for Latour since the only situation we should be interested in studying is the one under observation

However, the metaphor of an endless landscape, attractive as it may be creates another focus of criticism from many quarters, including Bourdieu. In his work on capital, field and habitus, (2010, 1994, 1992) Bourdieu stresses the importance of the historical relationships between agents and where they are located. It is worth noting that agents in this sense can mean nonhumans. "In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants", (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.97). Within these structuring fields agents act according to the concept of habitus, described by Bourdieu as itself being "a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices," (Bourdieu 2010, p.166). For Bourdieu there are structures which frame the actions of agents while for Latour there are no such constraints, no boundaries. What Bourdieu and others see as a weakness of Actor-Network Theory Latour sees as a vital epistemological point.

the notion of network allows us to get rid of a third spatial dimension after those of far/close and big/small. A surface has an inside and an outside separated by a boundary. A network is all boundary without inside and outside. The only question one may ask is whether or not a connection is established between two elements.....The notion of network, in its barest topological outline, allows us already to reshuffle spatial metaphors that have rendered the study of society-nature so difficult: close and far, up and down, local and global, inside and outside. They are replaced by associations and connections...

(Latour 1996, p.6)

Within the television news landscape, the network of associations is constantly changing. Developments in journalism in recent years, specifically the introduction and use of new technologies such as cheaper video cameras, 3G/4G, mobile editing and social media applications have altered the media industry. The effects of these technological changes will be looked at in detail in subsequent chapters dealing with what is considered to be news and the technology of news production.

The huge growth in the number of events which are now electronically documented with ubiquitous technology also raises questions about who is providing news content. For example, in May 2013, the killers of soldier Lee Rigby actually asked eyewitnesses to make recordings on mobile phones of their statement justifying the attack. Within minutes the images and video had been spread via social media applications. The television newsroom had been bypassed by this public interaction on various interconnected broadcast platforms. These social media sites

not only shatter the monopoly traditional broadcasters once had they also create a broadcasting medium without boundaries. This was a news event created without the traditional methods of news production and to understand how this happens requires an examination of the specific moments different human and technological actors are translated into a news network.

These changes are influencing the way news programmes are made and consumed and the relationships they have with their audience. Examples from inside the BBC show the emphasis now placed on engaging audiences through social media.

There is a need for us to connect on as many levels with the viewers as possible, we might read their emails, or Tweets, show a picture sent in for the weather or send them off to look at a story which is sitting on our Facebook site. It's the same across all BBC regions, all programmes, everyone is looking for ways to connect with as many people as possible and I don't think anyone knows where it will end.

(BBC news producer)

The materiality of technology and its use is changing the human relationship with the physical world and how it is reported by television journalists. These issues will be explored throughout this thesis. One only need study people watching events to see how our ability to witness them with our own eyes is changing. It could be a royal wedding, pop concert or a child's school nativity play, and there will be many people physically present but experiencing the event mediated through the media of their mobile phone, tablet or video camera. This raises the question of how their relationship to such events differs when mediated by the media they are using. Actor-Network Theory requires the mapping of these associations with the express

intent of understanding the heterogeneous character of the relationships, to see how they mobilize and define other actors and are defined and mobilized themselves.

Everyone knows that societies involve technologies, texts, buildings and money. But what to make of it? Often in practice we bracket off non-human materials, assuming they have a status which differs from that of the human. So materials become resources or constraints; they are said to be passive; to be active only when they are mobilized by flesh and blood actors. But if the social is really materially heterogeneous, then this asymmetry doesn't work very well. Yes, there are differences between conversations, texts, techniques and bodies. Of course. But why should we start out by assuming that some of these have no active role to play in social dynamics? The principle of material heterogeneity says that there is no reason to do so. Instead it says that all these elements and materials participate in social ordering.

(Callon and Law 1997, p.166)

In order to provide an actor network approach to understanding how heterogeneous actants create networks Latour urges researchers to follow the associations actors make; to 'map the way in which they [actors] define and distribute roles' Law and Callon (1988, p.285).

We don't know yet how all those actors are connected, but we can state as the new default position before the study starts that all the actors we are going to deploy might be *associated* in such a way that they *make others do things*. This is done not by transporting a force that would remain the *same* throughout as some sort of faithful

intermediary, but by generating *transformations* manifested by the many unexpected *events* triggered in the other mediators that *follow* them along the line.

(Latour 2005, p.107 italics in original)

This process of translation produces the network and will continue to do so for as long as the actors induce each other to motion or, in the terminology of Actor-Network Theory, they become constant and resist any further translation. It is the change through which, using the example given earlier (page 59), a camera must go to become more than a network of wires, silicon chips, glass, metal and plastic to become a means of recording images when associated with an operator. The camera and the human operator must continue this translation to sustain the relationship. For Callon (1986) the process of translation is one in which actors are identified and possibilities for interaction are negotiated.

Translation is the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form. The result is a situation in which certain entities control others. Understanding what sociologists generally call power relationships means describing the way in which actors are defined, associated, and simultaneously obliged to remain faithful to their alliances. The repertoire of translation is not only designed to give a symmetrical and tolerant description of a complex process which constantly mixes together a variety of social and natural entities. It also permits an explanation of how a few obtain the right to express and to represent the many silent actors of the social and natural worlds they have mobilized.

(Callon 1986, p.75)

In *Pandora's Hope* Latour provides an elegant example of how results can be achieved through various means of translation. The use of 'sleeping policemen' on a campus, installed at the behest of the chancellor who wishes to protect pedestrians by slowing traffic. Does the driver slow down because of a sense of responsibility or a desire not to damage their car? Either way the result is the same.

The driver modifies his behaviour through the mediation of the speed bump: he falls back from morality to force. But from an observer's point of view it does not matter through which channel a given behaviour is attained. From her window the chancellor sees the cars are slowing down, respecting her injunction, and for her that is enough.

(Latour 1999, p.186)

Perhaps the speed bumps make Latour's driver act in a different way than a sign alone instructing him to reduce his speed might do. The terms and definitions which have been examined thus far are important for a proper understanding of Actor-Network Theory and its suitability as a methodological approach to understanding the production of murder stories within BBC newsrooms. The production of news stories is one involving many different actors which interact with each other, for example; journalists, engineers, computers, cameras, emails, telephone calls, interviewees. Each time an event develops into a news story these actors and many others are formed into networks. From the perspective of the audience the story appears on their television news as a complete entity and they probably know little about the news production process; for them it is a mystery which they may or may not care about. But ethnographic field research for this thesis will demonstrate that news is far from being a 'given', rather it is the result of the

struggle between different actors to interest others within a network; it is a continuously evolving assemblage of heterogeneous actors.

When a collection of actors, or a network, finds equilibrium and when it is no longer mobilized to act by other actors it can be described as a 'black box.' 'A black box contains that which no longer needs to be considered, those things whose contents have become a matter of indifference' Callon and Latour (1981, p.285).

...a network which is relatively stabilised also tends to become an entity, a black box, a black box that (as the sociology of science sometimes puts it) translates the various materials that make it up. It translates them by co-ordinating them, by fronting for them, and by standing for them in a simple and coherent form. This means that for the moment the fronted network acts as a single unit. It does not fall apart. And (again for the moment) that it can be distinguished from its environment, distinguished as an object with its own consistent identity. So - to the extent that it is stabilised.

(Callon and Law 1997, p.5)

According to the Belgium mathematician Vitold Belevitch (1962) the work on electronic two-port networks by Franz Breisig in the 1920s was treated as a black box. Since then the term 'black box' has become widely used by those working across many disciplines including science, technology, economics, philosophy and cybernetics. It describes a state of a network which is, to all intents and purposes in equilibrium. What the box contains, be it a complex collection of electronic circuits or Canon Law of the Catholic Church, it has reached a level of stability and agreement of its contents is accepted by other actors in the network. It has become an actant itself without the necessity to be opened-up for more detailed examination. In essence all that is

important are its input and output. On one hand this seems like a rational move, accept the accepted givens and follow other actors and translations. After all, why waste time and resources retracing accepted paths? However, given the methodological directive to investigate on a level playing field, without imposition of the macro upon the micro, the acceptance of black boxes without a matter of thought seems rather strange – a little too easy or convenient. Of course, failing to accept some black boxes would require the researcher to retrace the steps of all the investigators before us, Copernicus, Newton, Pasteur, for example and conduct experiments and investigations, before actually focusing on the subject of current enquiries.

In Latourian terms a highly complex Diesel engine is a black box but one which can only remain stable if cared for and that requires intervention. ‘Even when the phases of development and innovation have ended, the darkest black box still has to be *maintained* in existence by not so simple customers,’ (Latour 1987, p.137). Television news has its own black boxes as explored by Hemmingway in *Into the Newsroom* (2008) but occasionally they are broken open and fresh associations are made as actors begin the process of forming new networks.

Actors which had previously been immune to change became vulnerable with the introduction of new actors and the cumulative effect was as Latour puts it ‘made feasible (if not easy) by moving in time and space’, (1987, p.4). It is in the opening of black boxes, watching the scientists in action, that we achieve a greater understanding of the whys and wherefores of their creations and so it will be with this investigation into the production of murder stories for television news. Instead of analysing the types of murder stories shown on BBC regional news at the moment of the finished product this thesis will use Actor-Network Theory to scrutinize the production process itself. It will open the process to examination as decisions are

being made, as the ‘makers’ of news stories are at work, to show what murder events are chosen and why.

With a working definition of several key actor network terms and an understanding of their usefulness to the current investigation in place, it is important to return to Latour’s description of investigation upon a flat landscape and the ways in which actors within any given network may be followed and investigated. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Actor-Network Theory has been criticised for being too broad in its approach with too many leads to follow to make it a useful tool for investigating anything which raises questions of how to identify which actors are significant to the study, how to perform observation and how to recognize when to end the research? In an age of ubiquitous technological connectivity and ways of recording and publishing ‘news’ the criticism about the boundaries of an investigation becomes more important to consider since networks can appear almost unlimited in their scope.

To help identify which actors should be taken into account when tracing an actor network Latour (1987) introduces the concepts of the sociogram and technogram as ways of testing how strong an actor’s associations within a network at a specific moment are. Using the examples of the development of the Diesel engine, the Curies’ work on Polonium and the Post-it note he shows how the alliances an actor has at any given time reflect the technological and social interests around them.

If you take any black box and make a freeze-frame of it, you may consider the system of alliances it knits together in two different ways: first, by looking at who it is designed to enrol; second, by considering what it is tied to so as to make the enrolment inescapable.

We may on the one hand draw its sociogram, and on the other its

technogram. Every piece of information you obtain on one system is also information on the other.

(Latour 1987, p.138)

Each actor can be located by this sociogram and technogram which are intertwined and reflect changes in each other. The sociogram describes the set of social alliances which an actor has while the technogram expresses the relationship with nonhuman ties which make enrolment within the network more stable. Latour states the relationship clearly in his 1996 book *Aramis or The Love of Technology*, 'to the sociogram, which charts human interests and translations, you have to add the technogram, which charts the interests and attachments of nonhumans, (1996, p.58). It is important to note that the sociogram and technogram are entwined so that changes on one axis affects the other. By using these two axes it is possible to see where they intersect and it is at this point where a clear understanding of the actor's network strengths can be assessed.

The usefulness of these ideas in understanding the news process were further developed by Hemmingway (2008) in her study of BBC newsroom practice. She added a third axis to Latour's two. The chronogram enables the plotting of an actor's temporal position. This allows an actor to be more accurately mapped at specific moments within a network allowing an even more detailed examination of the translation process and a better understanding of newsroom practice. Using the three axes Hemmingway analysed various systems within the newsroom including the technological hub through which all material used in the production of stories must

pass. She also applied the tools to map the introduction of Personal Digital Production (PDP)⁶ techniques into the newsroom.

actors are constituted as much by their specific temporal location, what we refer to as their chronogram, as they are by their sociogram and their technogram. And just as these alter depending on specific network locations, and are subject to change if actors become realigned, so it is with the chronogram. Networks are thus determined by the inextricable meshing together of the technogram, sociogram and the chronogram, and only by the mapping of actors along all three axes can network translation be performed.

(Hemmingway 2008, p.80)

Hemmingway's chronogram helps to overcome concerns that Latour fails to give the notion of time enough consideration within actor networks. In television news production time is a constant influencing factor so the addition of the chronogram is particularly important in developing the usefulness of Actor-Network Theory in explaining the news production process. News producers have a set amount of time to 'fill' with stories each day, they work to time defined deadlines; they may have too much material or too little. Hemmingway illustrates the necessity to develop the chronogram with examples from live broadcasting in which a political correspondent is both present within a recorded news package and genuinely live via a satellite link (2008, p.168-169). Television time can be both real and a construct of the process and as actors move through it or come into contact with it they can alter in meaning. For example, the sepia photographs of soldiers from the First World

⁶ That is the training of staff to film and edit their own news stories using a new generation of smaller cameras and laptop editing software rather than working in the conventional newsgathering team of separate reporter, camera crew and picture editor.

War have a reality as representations of the sons, fathers, brothers they were when they were taken. However, a hundred years later they have lost that connection with their own time. Instead they have become archive footage, a short hand device for illustrating everything that took place between 1914-1918. The black and white images of Moors murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley are still being used more than fifty years after the shocking events for which they were convicted. The images have not altered but their meaning has and it is for this reason that a way to map an actor's temporal position within an actor network is a useful development of the theory. The relevance of the three axes will be used in later chapters to further support the theoretical imperative of the actor network approach to understanding the news production process.

The issue of interpretation and reinterpretation, such as that of an old photograph or text, is one of the criticisms raised by Couldry (2004) as he explores the usefulness of Actor-Network Theory to explain media. He also takes issue with what he sees is the theory's lack of attention to 'questions of time' and 'neglect of the long-term consequences of networks for the distribution of 'social power', (2004 p.7) although he does describe the neglect as more a 'matter of emphasis' than 'absolute neglect'. Taking the last criticism first, Couldry seems to disagree with the point that is made again and again by Latour and others using Actor-Network Theory that it deliberately does not impose an *a priori* sense of position or power on any actor. It is through the developing translations and networks that power is displayed, as Law says, power is a 'network effect' and not a cause, (1992).

It doesn't say there are many more or less equal centres of power or order. What it says is that the effects of power are generated in a relational and distributed manner, and nothing is ever sown up. And

that, to use the language of classical sociology, ordering (and its effects including power) is contestable and often contested.

(Law 1992, p.388)

Latour gives his own explanation,

Once again, we don't want to confuse the cause and the effect, the explanandum with the explanans. This is why it's so important to maintain that power, like society, is the final result of a process and not a reservoir, a stock, or a capital that will automatically provide an explanation. Power and domination have to be produced, made up, composed.

(Latour 2005, p.73-74)

Both Law's description of power as a 'network effect' and Latour's explanation that it is the 'final result' of the network building process deny that power can reside within an actor. It is not something which exists in and of itself, rather it is part of the process of enrolment, you cannot 'hoard' it as Latour (1984) explains, 'Power' is always the illusion people get when they are obeyed,' (1984 p.268.) Examples later in the thesis will show how the news producer is able to get other actors to do what they want, that is they are able to enrol humans and technologies into networks as part of the production process and in so doing appear to have power within the newsroom.

Couldry's criticism of Actor-Network Theory for failing to consider time seems equally significant. He explores the issue of 'liveness' in relation to media and points to the 'continuous contact' that a group of friends may have while using mobile devices and what this might mean for our understanding of mediation through such devices and the long-term consequences for networks.

This suggests a third limitation on ANT's usefulness for a general theory of media, which concerns interpretation: its lack of interest in the possibility that networks, and their products, go on being reinterpreted long after they have been established. This is an especially important problem in relation to networks that produce objects whose main purpose is to generate interpretations (such as media). Once again, ANT was path breaking in showing how processes that apparently are purely 'material' (the production of cars or the distribution of electricity) depend crucially on interpretations and contests over interpretation by various actors, and how certain interpretations come to acquire dominance as their picture of the world gets 'hardwired' into the patterning of action. However, this tells us little about the life of objects, such as texts, which are produced to be interpreted, nor about how other objects, as they circulate beyond their original context, remain to various degrees open to reinterpretation by uses, consumers and audiences.

(Couldry 2004, p.8)

This is an interesting point especially as it was written before the explosion in social media and the domineering influence that it has subsequently had on a plethora of levels. Hemmingway (2008) shows how Actor-Network Theory can be successfully applied to media and the process of television news broadcasting. But if Actor-Network Theory is only concerned with the creation of a network, the assembling of actors and the sustaining of them, how can it be useful in looking at what happens next with what has been created? On page 77 the example of an old photograph was used to explain how the sense of an actor's being can change

overtime as it moves from situation to situation. In the incidence of a murder event a photograph may be used to show the victim of a crime or the perpetrator. They will have been certainly taken in much happier times, perhaps at a family wedding or function.

One example will demonstrate the point and show how a complete and stable network, in this case a video, undergoes a sense of material change when it is used in a different context. The wedding of Chanel Rodgers in Nottinghamshire in June 2004 was videoed. She is seen with her proud father Terry in the recording designed for personal consumption. Viewers of *BBC East Midlands Today* were never meant to see it but they did. The video and photographs taken on the day of her wedding had already been endowed with a sense of the occasion, the joy and love of her marriage. However, six weeks after Chanel and Terry were filmed, Terry Rodgers killed his daughter and when the pictures of the wedding were used to illustrate the story their intrinsic essence was materially altered. They became endowed with a different sense of meaning, creating a different reaction within the viewer than they were intended to have.

Social media networks, which have become tightly integrated into human activity, are sustained by the content being 'sharable'. That means the users of social media recommend or like the content and pass it on to their contacts on the social media platform, (or this is done automatically by the algorithms of the social media platform). Sharable content is one of the key requirements for the BBC online team in the East Midlands, and across the BBC, when they are looking for stories to cover and who they are aimed at.

Obviously, we are targeting a younger audience but in the back of your mind you have the notion 'is this easy to like, will people click

the like button on Facebook?’ Is it shareable? On Facebook you get immediate feedback, this post is doing really well, or this one is doing really badly so you can adjust what you are putting out. It can be a bit soul destroying to see when your work bombs! Big events do well. For example, Diwali, I did a text over video on that one and put it out for the light switch on, that got around 200,000. Big events where people are going to go along and possibly share it. They do really well. Drier subjects like council issues or the story is hard to tell they don’t do well at all.

(Heather Burman, BBC digital team East Midlands)

Heather’s answer perhaps shows the way that Actor-Network Theory can be deployed to analyse the growing use of social media and the role it may have in murder events and news production. In so doing it may also be possible to overcome Couldry’s concerns about the theory’s lack of interest in the reinterpretation of networks once complete. This study, like Hemmingway (2008) previously, will show how Actor-Network Theory is interested in a continued understanding of networks after they may appear stable. This will be done by mapping the digital footprints, the traces, left behind by the users and content shared on social media. Far from being hard to map, social media does the mapping for the researcher and this is further aided by the development of the chronogram.

Hemmingway (2008) developed a third axis, the chronogram, to help anchor the actor’s temporal specificity within the network and in so doing provides a more accurate mapping of their location and importantly, where power resides within a network. As she points out,

...it is only through means of an association of the human with the nonhuman, that either actor can be fully defined, but they are still different. By recognising the very *specificity* of actor positions that these three axes define it is possible to reveal more clearly how each separate network location provides actors with radically different power configurations, and that human actors are both aware of and able to use these positions strategically in order to stabilise their associations with others. It is thus both their subjectivity, and their intentional agency that sets them apart from nonhuman actors.

(Hemmingway 2008, p.184)

The significance of an actor's specificity should not be underestimated since the more focused the mapping of specific moments within a network, the more detailed will be the analysis of the associations actors make.

Throughout this thesis the chronogram, sociogram and technogram will be used to provide close examination of the news production process through the analysis of various murder events. They will show how the specific mapping of actors provides a detailed and ultimately relevant understanding of actors and the networks they are in at specific moments; all critical for providing the fullest, most transparent, account of the news production process.

Latour repeatedly demonstrates the theory's effectiveness to trace associations with numerous technological examples such as Pasteur and his efforts to galvanise support for his work on microbes and vaccination (Latour 1988). He shows that innovation in the science and technology of Pasteurization was only achievable through the stable associations created by a range of heterogeneous actors. Latour also charts innovations which failed to succeed, as was the case with the French

Personal Rapid Transportation devices (PRT), known as Aramis. Latour's (1996) study illustrates how the highly innovative technology failed because of a lack of agreement between all of those involved. No single actor or group of actors were capable of enrolling all the necessary elements together to create a stable network.

The rationale for using Actor-Network Theory to explore the highly technical and innovative process of television news production seems foundationally secure. But there still remains an issue within Actor-Network Theory regarding the temporal and geographical boundary of networks. Where does one network end and another begin? The theory has been criticised for failing to provide a satisfactory explanation. It is a point raised by Elder-Vass (2019),

.... how is a researcher to identify an actor/assemblage in the first place, when the boundaries of actors are so open and fluid? And do actors exist in forms that the researcher is to discover, or is the extent of the network of connections that make up an actor a construction of the researcher? Can boundaries ever be drawn between actors? How can we identify the constituent elements of actors when those constituents themselves are to be conceived of as assemblages rather than as conventional physical objects? How is the researcher to resist the collapse of analysis into a melange of vague influences between unbounded networks?

(Elder-Vass 2019, forthcoming)

He suggests that some researchers navigate their way through these issues without properly defining the assemblages, instead selecting what they believe is important rather than what is ontologically accurate.

For Callon (1990, p.148) ‘The boundary of a network can be related to its level of convergence.’ In other words, the network ends at a point where to continue including other actors ‘weakens the alignment and coordination’ (1990, p.149). However, how this differs from the network actually being broken-up is not explained. Latour is even less forthcoming, for him the network is over when adding more actors to it adds nothing to the explanation (Latour 2004). Neither of these definitions seems particularly useful since, as Elder-Vass suggests, it’s conceivable that networks of actors simply link with other networks of actors in unending union.

This thesis provides two answers to concerns over the potential boundarylessness of the scope of research and an inability to identify the relevant actors. Ordinarily in murder events, the number of identifiable actors is relatively low and the scope of the murder networks created is usually defined from an internal momentum within the event. That is, a murder takes place, it is investigated, someone is arrested and prosecuted or not and a trial takes place and guilt is established or not. Although this is a simplistic assessment of murder events it does provide a boundary within which to work.

In the television reporting of murder stories there are procedural boundaries in both the process of the investigation and in the news production process. The boundary is twice defined, once in the actual telling of the story where it is possible to follow the connections of the various actors from the moment of first interest to the point of conclusion which is when the story is actually broadcast. Secondly in following actors to the conclusion of a complete investigation into a specific murder means following them from the first discovery of a murder to conviction or acquittal in a court case. In this way the procedural boundaries surrounding a murder report

on television are neatly demarcated and the associations made by actors can be more readily mapped using the three axes of Actor-Network Theory.

However, the massive expansion in media, specifically internet based and social media, has introduced a new range of actors into the news production process, both technological and human. They have become a source of information for journalists, Krumsvik (2018), Tandoc Jr (2019, 2014) and Herminda (2013, 2012). They have also become platforms on which journalists can make their stories available, Neuberger et al (2019), Knight (2017), Thurman and Newman (2014), Vis (2013), and a place for non-journalists, both human and nonhuman, to publish their own journalism, Holton and Belair-Gagnon (2018), Primo and Zago (2015).

Even before the current wave of analysis of social media by the academy many writers have looked at the evolution in connectivity and convergence of media and what it means for human interaction, socialisation and media organisations. Levinson (2009, 2004), Deuze (2007) and Van Loon (2008) all consider the ubiquity of media in modern life, the use of technology to connect people and the convergence of personal and public space. Their work goes beyond McLuhan's description of media as an extension of man (McLuhan 1964), as Van Loon puts it, 'Media are thus part of the fundamental ontology of our own being.' (Van Loon 2008, p. 132).

The analysis of media technology is not new. For Postman it was essential to study and understand how people are affected by communication media, both in how they perceive the world and how they interact with it.

The information, the content, or, if you will, the "stuff" that makes up what is called "the news of the day" did not exist – could not exist – in a world that lacked the media to give it expression. I do not mean

that things like fires, wars, murders and love affairs did not, ever and always happen, in places all over the world. I mean that lacking a technology to advertise them, people could not attend to them, could not include them in their daily business. Such information simply could not exist as part of the content of culture. The idea – that there is a content called “the news of the day” – was entirely created by the telegraph (and since amplified by newer media), which made it possible to move decontextualized information over vast spaces at incredible speed. The news of the day is a figment of our technological imagination.

(Postman 1985, p.7-8)

To illustrate the point Postman notes the first use of the telegraph to relay news was on the day following a demonstration by its inventor Samuel Morse in 1844 (see Postman 1992, p.68). Technology created a relationship between disparate information and a disparate public. Over time and with changes in technology the relationship between the traditional television news producer and the audience for what they create has become more fluid; it no longer adheres to the adage ‘appointment to view’⁷ television structured around set broadcast times dictated by analogue transmission technology and regulations. Furthermore, it is no longer a one directional relationship from broadcaster to audience. The technological revolution has imbedded broadcasting software such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube into devices capable of capturing and inscribing moments in time, cameras in mobile phones for example, Levinson (2009, 2004), Van Loon (2008). To

⁷ That is television programming where the audience would work their lives around the specific time to watch a broadcast. With the development of digital platforms broadcasters are catering for On Demand television, that is viewers watching what they want at a time of their choosing.

some extent this has reversed the relationship matrix which previously existed between broadcasters and audience. Traditionally programmes were made by television companies; the BBC, Granada, Central TV, London Weekend and Sky, for example. They were broadcast by the same companies along transmission networks they controlled or had access to. They had a monopoly on the means of both production and broadcasting. They decided what programmes would be made and when they would be shown.

Audiences have had little direct power to influence decisions about production and scheduling of programmes. However, the media ecology is constantly changing; just as video recorders meant the audience did not have to be sitting in front of their television sets at the time of transmission, developments in mobile communication now mean viewers can watch programmes without the need for televisions altogether. Traditional broadcasters are losing audiences to rivals based on internet platforms such as Netflix, Amazon and YouTube, where almost anything is available for viewing via computer, phone and tablet. Actor-Network Theory lends itself to an investigation of this evolving digital media ecology since it demands an examination of the connections between the various actors to map their translations, rather than beginning at a fixed starting point, such as the news editor's desk or a social media post in a world without boundaries.

..it also asks us to treat different materials – people, machines, "ideas" and all the rest – as interactional effects rather than primitive causes.

The actor-network approach is thus a theory of agency, a theory of knowledge, and a theory of machines. And, more importantly, it says that we should be exploring social effects, whatever their material

form, if we want to answer the "how" questions about structure, power and organization.

(Law 1992, p.389)

In this extract from a paper explaining the theory of the actor network, Law espouses the usefulness of the approach and its applicability to various areas of study. In recent years it has been taken up by many to explore the digital worlds of social media and the implications social media has for journalism and those studying it.

following how journalists connect to other actants during controversies has allowed ANT scholars to understand contingent network configurations. They have shown that news is, and arguably always has been, the product of diverse competing actants in specific contexts.

(Wiard 2019a, p.9)

This recognition of the nitty-gritty, mutable and fluid process of news production and the usefulness of using Actor-Network Theory to better understand it is acknowledgement of the ground-breaking analyse of Hemmingway (2008). This thesis is part of the developing body of work which is using Actor-Network Theory to explore areas not previously researched or those that have been under researched. Ryfe's (2018) study shows that more investigations of news production and performance are being conducted using ideas from Bourdieu, Giddens and Latour specifically 'from the underlying view of social activity they share,' (2018 p.218) which he describes as a 'practice approach' (2018 p.218). For Anderson (2020) 'practice theory (and the practice-orientated sociology that stems from it) argues that regular, routinized practices help create stable meaning and social structures, which

themselves then feedback into these practices themselves,' (2020 p.344-345) Of course for Latour and Actor-Network Theory the inclusion of nonhumans into this process is essential (Latour 2005).

Pantumsinchai (2018) makes use of Actor-Network Theory to look at the way rumours and fake news about the 2013 Boston bombing and the 2015 Bangkok bombing, spread. Not surprisingly both of these terrorist attacks generated large amounts of material on social media. Among the many posts Pantumsinchai found various avenues or threads of discussion which incorrectly identified those responsible for both bombings. Her analysis of social media content shows how difficult it is to find the truth, however it also demonstrates the usefulness of Actor-Network Theory in mapping the paths these assertions of 'truth' take.

ANT has demonstrated that there are no objective 'facts'. Facts are heavily embedded in a network of beliefs, discourses, imagery, statements, and of course, people, be it individuals or institutional bodies. If the network becomes robust enough, it can be maintained, stabilized, blackboxed, thus forming society's so called 'common sense'. However, there is always the possibility for the network to collapse if new information or new actants enter the network. Even blackboxed statements may be unravelled and revealed to be 'false'. Such is the shifting and evolving nature of networks and 'truth'.

(Pantumsinchai 2018, p.774)

Morlandstø and Mathisen (2016) used Actor-Network Theory to explore the relationship between journalists at a Norwegian newspaper and how they interacted with readers online. The editorial staff at the paper had hoped the online interaction would take place on its own webpages. However, in practice the debates they wished

to generate, took place on other social media platforms which the users were already familiar with because that is where users chose to be. Through their use of interviews and analysis of internet traffic Morlandstø and Mathisen were able to trace the changing relationships between journalists and the readers and how these networks were shaping a new type of journalism.

Domingo, Masip and Meijer (2015) build upon Hemmingway's (2008) idea of news networks to look at how social media is 'blurring boundaries' between journalists and the public. They use Actor-Network Theory to go beyond the newsroom in search of news, 'ANT may let us trace how it is constructed, who (and what) participates in constructing it and how they change it or perpetuate it.' Domingo, Masip and Meijer (2015, p.57). Significantly for the theoretical development of Actor-Network Theory in this thesis they observe that social media leaves behind clear traces of connections made by users which are the trails Latour (2005) says should be followed myopically.

Primo and Zago (2015) urge for a reappraisal of digital technologies which they claim are more than tools in the hands of journalists. They are 'intricate' to understanding a new definition of journalism because they have 'agency' (2015, p.39). They question journalism studies which are focused on traditional newsrooms and fail to look beyond to the wider environment in which technology '*does* journalism' (2015, p.40). For Primo and Zago traditional sociological approaches to understanding journalism are ontologically flawed as they have restricted journalism to humans, specifically professionally trained humans, and failed to consider the role of technology. These few examples, out of many, show how Actor-Network Theory is successfully being applied to both journalism and social media at the same time and reinforce the suitability of it as the approach in this thesis.

Social media appears to be a technological and human interface without boundaries. For many people life is generally more mediated, that is, it is lived and experienced through media of all types and in all situations. Once a Tweet is sent or a Facebook page updated the content is given a digital life of its own and the originator of the message can lose control or influence over what happens next. Social media stretches in all directions at once, across all time zones and geographic locations. Once information is published on anyone of the many social media platforms what happens next depends on the traction it develops. In social media parlance, it has the potential to 'go viral', spreading like a disease from host to host. There appear to be no natural boundaries for a social media post and this may be true of social media content emanating from incidents of murder. Even the normal legal restrictions which may be placed upon the information may not be adhered to. Unlike the content of a traditional television news broadcast, which usually only happens once, content on social media may have an apparently infinite 'lifespan.'

This raises two points, firstly to what extent is social media an actor in the news production process of murder events? Secondly, is the perceived boundarylessness of the theory a weakness which makes it inappropriate to use to map associations on social media? Taking this last point first. It is clear from the examples of Latour's work already mentioned in this thesis, (page 59), in which he shows the analysis of innovative processes, that Actor-Network Theory has plenty to contribute to the understanding of technological and human associations and developments.

The theory is already being used to explore social media without criticism of a perceived lack of boundaries. The fact that social media appears to be boundaryless works to the advantage of a theory which is focused on actually mapping specific

actors within a disparate network through the sociogram, technogram and chronogram. Actor-Network Theory relies on looking for traces left behind by the associations actors make. Users of social media leave traces wherever they go and these can be mapped through various analytical tools provided by social media platforms themselves at different stages of metamorphosis. The usefulness of analysing social media in relation to the reporting of murder events, and looking at it through the methodology of Actor-Network Theory, will both be addressed more fully in the following chapter looking at the technology of news production.

In conclusion, the theory does not overvalue or undervalue any actor or interaction in relation to any another and that is one element of its strength, nothing is prejudged before analysis of the field is undertaken. At its core Actor-Network Theory requires the consideration of all the available influences there are when looking for explanations for the actions of any actor. It explicitly rejects blind acceptance of the world as explained by the scientist, the inventor or any other attempt at explanation. In many ways the theory has an inbuilt sense of journalistic enquiry, tackling the fundamental questions of: Who? What? Why? Where? When? and How? After all, as any journalist knows, people do not always tell the truth nor do documents, photographs or film. Seeing is not always believing and people do not always act independently of their antecedents whether they act consciously or not and technology certainly does not always operate in the way it is expected to.

This unpredictability of actors has implications for the methods used in this thesis and it again highlights the importance of understanding the specificity of actors and accurately mapping them within a network. The fluid nature of news production and the enrolment of many complex technologies means that networks of actors cannot be relied upon to act in the same way each time they are enrolled

within a process. For that reason, the research methods used for gathering quantitative data and the analysis of the news production networks must be consistent and robust for all case studies within this thesis.

Returning to the example of a camera-operator outlined at the start of this chapter, the camera-operator does not act in isolation. They are influenced by all the other actors or as Latour describes them (2005, p.71) '*participants*' (italics in the original) which feed in to the process of their own action, they are the sum of the network.

ANT is not the empty claim that objects do things 'instead' of human actors: it simply says that no science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored, even though it might mean letting elements in which, for lack of a better term, we would call *non-humans*.

(Latour 2005, p.72)

Latour proposes a 'sociology of associations' (2005) instead of the traditional 'sociology of the social'; a framework of enquiry which dismisses a notion of a pre-existing phenomenon which can be labelled 'social'.

For sociologists of the social, such terms designate the many avatars that the same social order can take or the variegated tools with which it 'represents' itself or through which it is 'reproduced'. For them, 'social forces' are always already present in the background so that the precise means to achieve their presence matters a great deal—but not that crucially.

For the sociologists of associations, they make all the difference in the world because there exists no society to begin with,

no reservoir of ties, no big reassuring pot of glue to keep all those groups together. If you don't have the festival now or print the newspaper today, you simply lose the grouping, which is not a building in need of restoration but a movement in need of continuation. If a dancer stops dancing, the dance is finished. No inertia will carry the show forward.

(Latour 2005, p.37)

The sociology of associations combines nature and the social rather than striving to keep them apart as is the case in the sociology of the social. It is constructivist in approach, seeking an understanding of how the networks are built by the participants. It is '*hands on*' (Hands 2001) with a focus to explain the specific case under investigation rather than seeking wider, more general, results. The ontology under consideration must, under these conditions, expand. The call to the researcher using Actor-Network Theory is to be open-minded, to rule nothing out of consideration before proper examination. As Latour suggests we should tread carefully and methodically.

Clearly there are serious criticisms of the actor network approach as a method of explaining social entities; the concerns raised by Hemmingway (2008) and Couldry (2004) about its underdeveloped reference to temporal influences on network formation and stabilization, the failure to properly explain how a boundary to an investigation can be defined without arbitrarily imposing one, the differences raised by Latour and Law as to the definitions of power and how it is distributed and of course the insistence on symmetry between actors.

It was never a theory of what the social is made of, contrary to the reading of many sociologists who believed it was one more school

trying to explain the behaviour of social actors. For us, ANT was simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology: actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it.

(Latour 1999, p.19)

But it is not quite as simple as the above quote may suggest. The years of infighting between different strands of sociological analysis cannot be waived away with the maxim ‘follow the actors’ (Latour 2005) and learn ‘how and why’ they do things. Actor-Network Theory deliberately broke away from previous sociological ideas, provocatively insisted on all actors, human and nonhuman, being taken seriously and without preconditions. These are significant and fundamental challenges to previous ideas and it is incumbent on the ethnographer to identify methods which they believe can provide an insightful understanding of the area of study and develop the application of the methodology.

Methodology

The focus of this thesis is to develop a greater understanding of the reporting of murder stories on BBC regional television news. The research enquiry postulates that different murders receive different amounts of coverage and that in order to explain why this is the case it is essential to go beyond the news value approach to news (see page 21) and look at the news production process as it is taking place, as humans and nonhumans are enrolled into actor networks. Only by careful analysis of individual murder events is it possible to see how and why coverage varies. Primary research will look at the news production process within television newsrooms taking in to account the part played by humans and technology, specifically recording equipment and social media. Social media is itself a series of networks which include both human and nonhuman actors.

In the preceding pages the case has been made for using Actor-Network Theory since it has specifically evolved to look at the relationships between people and things. In an age of interconnected media which creates extensive networks of actors, its explicit methodological focus on the material associations between heterogeneous actors allows the media researcher to look in all directions for evidence and avoid the restricted frameworks of other approaches.

Methodology is the set of ideas upon which a theory sits. It is a way to understand and evaluate the rationale of the research theory and therefore it informs the specific research methods used. In the case of Actor-Network Theory the methodology is focused on a clear understanding of materialism which is at its core, Law (2009), Callon and Law (1997) Latour (1999, 1990, 1987). Mapping this materialism, the network building processes of heterogeneous human and nonhuman actors, is achieved through ethnography. All forms of Actor-Network Theory posit

that knowledge is *a posteriori* and follows from experience and observation. The theory rejects the idea of *a priori* propositions (Latour 1999, 2005) and this is fundamentally demonstrated by the theory's most controversial but essential methodological position, the rejection of distinctions between humans and nonhumans as actors within networks. No actor is assumed to have a greater role within a network before the network has been mapped and the actors identified. This leads to a further essential part of the methodology, that of relativism, Law (2009), Latour (1991, 1990). The relations between the heterogeneous actors enrolled in to networks are fundamental to an actor network account, as Law says, 'interaction is all that there is' (1992).

By following actors through the enrolment process an understanding of their position within any network is discovered and with it their importance within the network. In order to produce an actor network account, it is essential that the research methods follow the demands of the methodology, that is, to neutrally map the relations between actors and judge their strengths and importance inside the network relative to other actors.

Methods

Studies of television newsrooms have often followed a trajectory involving ethnographic fieldwork, (Hemmingway, 2008; Harrison, 2000; Cottle, 1993; Schlesinger, 1978 and Altheide, 1974), where the researcher spends a period of time inside an organisation. The precise methods of the fieldwork will vary from case to case. For example, Hemmingway (2008) combined observation, interviews and overt participant observation in her study, at one point even being enrolled in the news production process as a member of the team (2008, p.188). As a former journalist her methods had to overcome the methodological issues of balancing objectivity and subjectivity when faced with her own prior knowledge of the television news environment. For Altheide (1974, p.200) one of the main methodological issues raised from his study of an American news station concerned the level of trust he was able to engender from those he was observing. Without sufficient trust in the researcher the observed may remain tight-lipped.

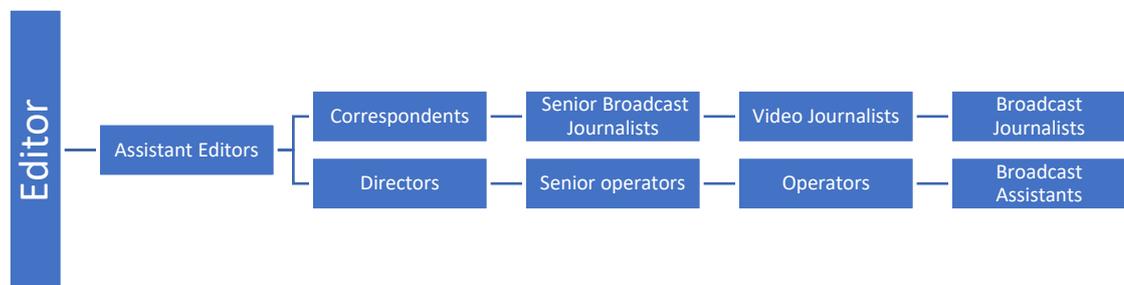
The quality of information a researcher obtains in a setting will depend on how the members define him. How a researcher fits' or is made to "belong," in a setting will influence whether his presence is natural or disruptive. I learned to let the members define me.' I mentioned that many newswriters at Channel B believed I was trying to get a job by "hanging around."

(Altheide 1974, p.205-206)

Like Hemmingway, Altheide became involved in the actual production of news by carrying equipment for camera crews and reporters, setting up lights and acting as a sound recordist holding a microphone.

At the outset of this investigation it is important to acknowledge my own position with the organisation under investigation. I am a paid member of BBC staff with the job description of Assistant Editor. The main focus of my role within the BBC is to plan and produce the regional news programme *East Midlands Today*. On a daily basis I come in to contact with members of staff who were observed and interviewed for this thesis. In some cases, I manage them. This raises a question about research ethics as well as procedure; as a manager and the staff I work with and the relationship with me as a researcher. It also informs the type of research methods involved and how they were conducted and regulated. This point will be explored in more detail in the following pages.

At the time the field research was undertaken the structure of the television operations across all of the BBC regional newsrooms was similar to that outlined in the diagram below.



Staff are organised within a grading system which will put them into a banding between 2 and 11. This reflects both their skill level and managerial responsibility. In some cases people may have achieved a grading through length of service. The editor of a regional news operation will usually be grade 11 (but experienced AEs will act as editor in the absence of the substantive incumbent), the assistant editors and correspondents 9, senior broadcast journalists 8, video journalists' band 7 and broadcast journalists 5/7.

On the technical side of the newsroom staff are similarly graded, directors would be grade 7 and 8 if they took on more managerial responsibility. Camera crews and video editors would be 5/7, graphic designers 7/8 and broadcast assistants and equivalent job descriptions would be 3/5. During 2019 a new grading system was being introduced across the entire BBC as a programme of restructuring and redundancies announced in the summer of 2015 by the Director General of the Corporation, Lord Hall, was implemented. Although the grading structure has now changed the positions of authority and the hierarchical nature of the newsrooms remains the same. Editors still lead the local news operations with a team of Assistant Editors taking day to day charge of output and allocation of resources. One area where the balance of power has shifted is with the introduction of a Head of News for England. Prior to 2019 the editor of each of the regional news programmes was responsible to the head of their BBC region, known as a Head of Regional and Local Programmes (HRLP) who in turn answered to the Head of English Regions. However, the new post of Head of News for England has done away with local oversight by the HRLPs. For more on the BBC regional structure in the East Midlands and reporting terminology see appendix A.

As an Assistant Editor my role within the newsroom is to decide what stories to cover, how to cover them and allocate resources, both human and technological, accordingly. One respondent was quite clear about where she thought power within the East Midlands Today newsroom lay.

I would say with the producer of the programme. There are always editors to refer up to but producers ultimately, from what I see, they decide what goes in their programme, they plan it the day before, they know what they want, they structure it the way they want it to be,

they have a vision of how they want it to look so ultimately the producer has the power.

(Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

These thoughts are echoed by a colleague who expands on the role as producer as she sees it from her position within the news operation.

The producer is ultimately in charge of making the decisions about what goes into the programme. But there are also lots of other people in control of their different bits and working together to get the programme on air. But in ultimate control it's the producer. We obviously have the BBC guidelines to follow and we should stick to them. So in a way they influence what we put out and what we don't put out. I suppose there is a greater being watching over us making sure we toe the line. You are controlled to a certain extent but it's down to the producer of the day to decide what he or she is running and if it will cause any problems.

(Gerry Lloyd, Broadcast Assistant, BBC East Midlands Today)

Not all respondents thought the same as Gerry but most believed that on a day to day level the producer was in charge of the news operation. However, this does not mean that the producer can do exactly as they like, after all, they operate within a frame-work of rules and guidance set-out by the BBC through the *Producer Guidelines* and the wishes of their editor and other BBC managers.

(see appendix B for a complete list of interviewees and the questions asked).

Before field research began I discussed the scope of this thesis with various people within the BBC and was given permission by the Editor of *East Midlands Today*, the Head of Region for the BBC in the East Midlands, the Head of Region

for the West Midlands and the Head of English Regions.⁸ They were fully aware of the purpose and methods being used in the research. Before starting the period of observation, I informed all members of staff about the thesis, outlining the general area of study and how it was to be carried-out.

A mixed investigative approach was chosen for the fieldwork, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. These different investigative methods allowed for specific analysis of news content across BBC English regions, questioning of individuals involved in the news production process and an observation of their work as news stories were selected. This combination of approaches provided the widest possible methods to capture data from the actors involved within the news production process while offering opportunity for further specific scrutiny of them. The observation conducted within the newsrooms in Nottingham and Birmingham was fundamental to understanding story selection as part of the news production process, how decisions were made and resources allocated to stories. There were occasions when I was more than an observer and was an active participant in events. (see page 267).

The primary source of information on the decisions concerning the operation of any newsroom is the people who work in it. They can crudely be divided between the editorial or journalistic pool of staff and the technical side of the news production process. In the past fifteen years or so the boundaries between the once distinct groups has become more blurred (Hemmingway 2008, 2005) as the BBC English Regional operation has tried various approaches to integrate teams and broadcasting

⁸ In the spring on 2019 changes to the structure of this senior level of management was underway with a reduction in the numbers of heads of regions from 12 to 4. These changes came into force during the summer of 2019. Subsequent changes to the entire news operation within the English region were proposed following the Covid 19 virus pandemic of 2020. The changes are likely to be implemented towards the end of 2020 and in to 2021 and involve several hundred job losses and redefining of newsroom roles and output requirement.

platforms of television, radio and online more closely. Across the BBC, journalists have taken on the skills historically reserved for the technical staff such as camera operation and editing while camera crews, directors and editors have been trained to work as journalists. The diffusion of skills is not limited to crossing between these groups but also within them where journalists have learnt production techniques for broadcasting platforms or studio production staff have been trained to direct or operate the newsroom facilities hub. Some aspects of the news operation in the *East Midlands Today* newsroom remain strictly limited to staff from specific backgrounds for example production of the main evening programme is carried-out by a senior journalist of Assistant Editor grade.

As would be the case in any organisation, each member of staff at the BBC, will have their own views on news and news production. In order to ensure I gathered as wide a number of opinions as possible I specifically sought a cross-section of employees based on position, gender and age for interview for this thesis. Some biases are inherent within the organisation, for example all members of staff undertaking the roles of camera crew were, at the time of researching the thesis, male. They were predominantly in the 45-55 age group and were also all white. This balance is one which is slowly shifting as older members of staff retire and are replaced by younger staff. However, imbalances regarding ethnicity and gender continue. With regard to reporters the *East Midlands Today* newsroom is fairly evenly split between genders. Both the Nottingham newsroom and Birmingham newsroom are overwhelmingly white with more men being found in technical positions. As appendix B shows television newsrooms are also not particularly places where younger people will be employed although this too is changing as older members of staff retire.

These interviews were conducted in two specific circumstances, either as prearranged interviews or as *ad hoc* interviews carried-out as closely as possible to the time of a specific incident under investigation. All interviews were recorded on an iPhone S4 for later transcription. Interviews with police and police staff were conducted in the same manner. Handwritten notes and the iPhone were used to record observations and off-the-cuff responses to events as they unfolded. These immediate records were followed by supplementary interviews where possible. No member of staff within either the East Midlands Today nor Midlands Today newsroom refused the request to be interviewed. In all 58 members of BBC staff were interviewed in face to face sessions which each lasted between 30-60 minutes. They included journalists from both television, radio and online; camera operators, engineers, graphic designers, secretarial staff, librarians; directors, editorial management and a court artist.

In order to capture experiences from other regional newsrooms within the BBC a series of questions were drafted and emailed to the entire cohort of assistant editors across all English regions. A third of respondents, (10) gave full answers to the questions asked. Others preferred not to take part in the survey for a number of reasons including fear of retribution from senior management and time constraints. Among the 10 completed responses, which came from six of the English news regions (other than the East and West Midlands), some wished to remain anonymous and this request for anonymity has been honoured.

The field research in the BBC television newsroom in Nottingham began in 2012/13 and continued until 2018. Between April and November 2015, I was on attachment in the BBC regional newsroom in Birmingham. During this time, I

produced the main evening news programme *Midlands Today* and I was granted permission to observe and interview members of staff for this thesis.

Close observation in the Nottingham and Birmingham newsrooms was an *ad hoc* process and often conducted as part of my salaried role within the BBC. There were occasions when my role within the newsroom meant I was also an actor within the examples I have chosen to include as part of this research. These circumstances are highlighted within the thesis. In these cases, interviews were conducted with third parties to ensure a neutral approach to the incidents under observation. Clearly this does raise issues about my own involvement in the news production process and these are explained in the body of the thesis where applicable.

Once interviews were conducted, they were written up and responses were collated in to separate topics, each of which was a specific part of the research. For example, use of technology, murder as news and police and media relations. The inclusion of responses within the thesis was in proportion to responses and the answers given.

In the section looking at murders as news stories, (page 217), a sample of output from across BBC English regions news output was analysed to explore how much on-air broadcast time was devoted to the coverage of murder events. The sampling framework for this original content analysis included the actual time in seconds for each programme across the same five-day period given-over to murder events. The events included in the analysis were those mentioning an unlawful killing and an update of a previously reported incident. This included court appearances and police appeals for information.

In the world of television news production various elements must come together in order for a story to be broadcast. Relationships or associations between

different building blocks or participants need to be forged and sustained long enough for the story to be researched, filmed, edited and broadcast. There is a finite amount of time in which to broadcast allotted to each region each day; it equates to about one hour each week day and between 10-15 on Saturday and Sunday. A process of selection about which stories to include, be they political, health, transport, education, crime or any other has to take place. There has been plenty of research into how this is done, Aldridge (2007), Brighton (2007), Harrison (2000), Allan (1999), Cottle (1993). However, the decisions on which murders receive coverage and how they are reported on television remains an under investigated area of study and is one of the unique lines of investigation within this thesis.

Incidents of murder are fairly uncommon across England and there is no way of knowing when one will happen within a given BBC news region. The last complete set of figures from the Office of National Statistics shows there were 671 homicides in England and Wales in the year ending March 2019, 33 fewer than the previous year. For an academic researcher to be in the right place at the right time to witness the reaction of news teams to such breaking news is unlikely. As a television news journalist with almost thirty years' experience of working in newsrooms I have witnessed this reaction at first hand on many occasions. However, in order to separate me the journalist from me the academic researcher I have endeavoured, where possible, to use case studies in which I was not directly involved but was on-hand to witness the reaction as an observer. Therefore, the reaction of news teams to actual incidents of murder I was able to witness as a researcher inside the two newsrooms was limited. However, I was able to achieve a level of access unavailable to most researchers outside of the news environment. This access extended to the days following an initial reporting of a murder and to the various meetings,

conversations, emails and archives relating to each incident. Different murder incidents were selected for this thesis specifically to demonstrate the different ways news teams would report on them. An actor network account of some of the most common forms of television news production techniques are examined in appendix C.

News production processes alter over time and different elements are introduced, for example video tape, satellite links, and lightweight video cameras. These specific technologies have been seen as critical in influencing what becomes television news content, how it is realised and our relationship to it, Lax (2009), Van Loon and Hemmingway (2005), Hesketh and Yorke (1993), McLuhan (1964). In this study, after establishing why television journalists report on murders, it is possible, to some degree, to step away from the academic approaches which investigate sources of news such as Harcup and O'Neill (2016, 2001), Harrison (2006) and Gultang and Ruge (1965) since these are addressing where news comes from and what considerations may be made before deciding what events count as news. Historically newsworthiness is defined from the perspective of the journalists deciding what stories to include in their newspapers, radio broadcasts or television programmes, Schlesinger (1978), Altheide (1978), White (1950), Andrews (1910).

However, in an era of social media platforms which allow for instant feedback on engagement with audiences do these definitions still hold true? Interviews for this thesis will show how this perception is perhaps starting to shift. Those working on BBC social media platforms judge the worth of a story by how well it is received by the users of social media. They use specific media applications, such as Crowdtangle and the metadata from platforms such as Facebook to see what users of social media are interested in.

It is clear from data released by Ofcom and referenced earlier in this thesis, (page 8), that the way news is consumed by audiences is changing and that different media technologies lend themselves to specific styles of storytelling. This study is focused on the news production process, the nitty gritty of the making a story into the visual representation of a specific event. Although news values may play a part in the initial impetus as to what journalists decide qualifies as news, ways of reading news which fail to account for the fluidity of the production process are limited in what they can explain.

It is important to understand what events individuals and organisations consider to be news because it informs the selection processes made by journalists. Journalists will have their own areas of interest which are likely to colour what they consider newsworthy and these preferences may affect the news selection process. As will be seen television news production is a fluid process. Individual elements within a specific bulletin or programme may appear more stable than others, for example the decision to film the visit by the Queen to the opening of a new hospital. It may have been agreed weeks before the actual day of the visit, but that intention to film, however firmly held established in the planning process of a newsroom, is still subject to change. Any number of factors may influence those plans, from a terrorist attack, camera fault, sickness of the royal visitor or a power cut at the television station. Clearly there is an overlap between the criteria of news values and how those values play out in practice. What may be considered news one day may not be considered as news the following day for many reasons which this research will show. It will demonstrate that there are no hard and fast rules about what becomes television news. Instead it will be seen that news stories are the result of the coming

together of various actors who are in a constant state of flux until they have been transmitted.

Medium Theory

The theorist most closely associated with developing the field of reading media and communication through technology is Marshall McLuhan. The Canadian professor was popular during the 1960s when he proposed a materialist interpretation to the way technology influenced the development of culture and society. For McLuhan type face was the force which helped forge the European nation states (McLuhan 1962) while he saw the electronic inventions of radio, telephone, telegraph and television as shaping modern human activity (McLuhan 1964).

He developed his ideas while broadly following in the footsteps of his academic mentor Harold Innis. Innis had spent many years as a political economist before turning to study communications (Innis 1951, 1950). Innis' most significant contribution to the field is seen as his explanation of time and space bias with regard to media and their influence in the development of societies through history. He said media could be time biased or space biased. For example, a clay tablet is durable, but can only be seen by a few people at a time while space biased media, such as radio and television can be heard or seen by millions of people but have a short window of availability.

The concepts of time and space reflect the significance of media to civilization. Media that emphasize time are those durable in character such as parchment, clay and stone. The heavy materials are suited to the development of architecture and sculpture. Media that emphasize

space are apt to be less durable and light in character such as papyrus and paper. The latter are suited to wide areas in administration and trade. The conquest of Egypt by Rome gave access to supplies of papyrus, which became the basis of a large administrative empire. Materials that emphasize time favour decentralization and hierarchical types of institutions, while those that emphasize space favour centralization and systems of government less hierarchical in character.

(Innis 2007, p.26-27)

Attractive as these ideas once were, in an age populated with various instantaneous multi-media storage and retrieval systems, the difference between time and space bias may now seem to have irretrievably collapsed. Almost all media content is available on all media devices; war records; birth and death certificates; old radio shows; pirated movies and personal photographs. That said media which is not reliant on electricity and electronic playback devices may still prove to be the most durable. McLuhan developed these ideas and focused on the message that the technology being used created. Like Innis his background was not in media studies but McLuhan found fame with a series of books and confident assertions about communications technology (1987, 1964, 1962, 1951).

Having dominated the field for several years he fell out of fashion for a number of reasons; Levinson (1999) notes that McLuhan's use of pithy metaphors to announce his ideas such as 'the medium is the message' were often taken at face value and misinterpreted. Another reason for McLuhan's fall from favour was his failure to fully explain or develop his sometimes oblique one-liners into a coherent theory of media. This perceived lack of academic rigor combined with allegations

that he was a technological determinist meant his ideas were side-lined for many years. However, with the development of the internet and true methods of mass communication he has undergone something of a revival, Van Loon (2008), Stevenson (2002), Levinson (1999, 1997).

Levinson approaches the role of technology and its use in television production and consumption from a material perspective which is complementary to Actor-Network Theory. He builds upon the foundations of Innis, McLuhan and his own university mentor Neil Postman, and their work in which technology is seen as part of the human landscape. McLuhan (1964) stated the medium through which the message was transmitted was so influential its technology was the message since it 'shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action' (1964, p.9). For Levinson the ubiquitous nature of technology, its material influence, conditions all our relationships; for example, television, its programme production and viewing. He believes we are no longer able to stand back from technology since it is a part of us. In this he echoes the views of McLuhan.

In the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action. It is no longer possible to adopt the aloof and dissociated role of the literate Westerner.

(McLuhan 1964, p.4)

This could have been written today as a commentary on the growth and connectivity of social media which has spread across the globe. With near global Wi-

Fi⁹ and telecommunications coverage there is little room for people to remain detached from what is going on around them making the earth a ‘global village’, a description made in 1967 (McLuhan and Fiore), where we inhabit a world of ‘simultaneous happening’ (1967, p. 63). Through technology the dimensions of space and time were collapsed (McLuhan 1964). At the time they were writing the ‘global village’ was not a technological reality but the image was prescient. With social media technology the world truly is a village. For McLuhan, electricity provided the means to redefine what it meant to be human.

The electric light ended the regime of night and day, of indoors and outdoors. But it is when the light encounters already existing patterns of human organization that the hybrid energy is released. Cars can travel all night, ball players can play all night, and windows can be left out of buildings. In a word, the message of the electric light is total change. It is pure information without any content to restrict its transforming and informing power.

(McLuhan 1964, p.57)

Levinson builds upon McLuhan’s analysis developing it into his own theory of the evolution of media and uses it to assess the growth of computing, the internet, social media and connectivity of the technology we now use and the connections that are forged between humans and their technology.

The crux of the theory is this: media evolve in a Darwinian manner, with human beings acting not only as their inventors (obviously) but their selectors (i.e., the selecting environment, in Darwinian terms).

⁹ W-Fi or WiFi is the trade name given to the technological standards required for wireless local area networks overseen by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

We make our selection on the basis of two criteria: (a) boundaries of naked seeing and hearing (this only restates McLuhan's view of media as "extensions" across time and space...(b) we want media to recapture elements of that biological communication which early artificial extensions may have lost – we want, in other words , our hearth of natural communication even as we exceed it in our extensions.

(Levinson 1999, p.52)

With an emphasis on how humans develop and control the materiality of technology Levinson may seem at odds with Actor-Network Theory. But he does maintain that it is humans alone who have intentionality while at the same time not ignoring the importance of technological agency in any network building process. Through a series of books and articles Levinson (2009, 2004, 1999, 1997, 1986) examines the developments of computing, mobile communications and the internet and demonstrates the network building which actors undergo to transform the materiality of technology.

The common sense view of technology on the question of its good and evil consequences is that it is most like a knife which can easily be used for good, as in cutting food, or bad, as in cutting people. The knife, and technology in general, are thus in this view thought to be thoroughly under human control. Let's explore this a little further. Can we think of technologies that are intrinsically biased--to use the phrase introduced by Harold Innis (The Bias of Communication, 1951) --toward good or bad purposes? Well, surely a gun seems weighted toward doing people harm; and a pillow seems intended as

an innocuously beneficial convenience. But notwithstanding their biases toward bad and good, a gun or a pillow can also be used for an opposite purpose: A gun serves a good end when used by a hunter to procure food; and a pillow can be no less an instrument of murder when the cause of death is deliberate suffocation. So it seems that guns and pillows are but special kinds of knives: They may be intrinsically weighted toward evil and good, respectively, but ultimately they can be made to perform (or not perform) in whatever ways humans intend.

(Levinson 1986, p.303)

This materialist view of technology is echoed in Latour's gun-man hybrid (Latour 1999) and the translation processes which actors undergo in the formation of new network associations. How a technology is employed, its location both geographically and temporally and the relationships it forges with other things; people or other technologies for example, all influence the outcomes of its use. Suchman (2007) makes a similar point that the physical nature of an object is not everything when it comes to defining its materiality; what also matters is how it is employed.

Although the durable materiality of the hammer supports the statement that it exists before and after the moments of its use, it is nonetheless clear that its status as a hammer rests on its incorporation into the practices of some form or carpentry. By the same token, being a carpenter involves, *inter alia*, the competent practice of hammering. The possibility of uncoupling the hammer from its use in carpentry does not mean that the two are separable in practice.

(Suchman 2007, p.2)

Here it is necessary to restate the importance and meaning of materiality introduced in the opening chapter of this thesis. Materiality of technology has been defined as the physical object which can be touched, a phone, a knife, a hammer and the effects that something can have upon other things. This is causal, creating a reaction within another being or object that the first 'thing' comes into contact with. For example, the law about the use of mobile phones materially alters their use in cars and the intention someone has can define how a knife is used either to cut food or stab someone. As Suchman describes above, the hammer exists as a collection of parts before it is used by a carpenter but it requires a carpenter to define what it actually is. This echoes the claim made by the founders of Actor-Network Theory who say that the interactions and associations actors make is all that there is when it comes to understanding networks (Latour 2005, Law 2003). To fully appreciate the materiality of technology in the news production process it is important to reiterate that it can also be broadened to include non-tangible aspects of matter such as computer software as proposed by Leonardi and Barley,

Materiality matters for theories of technology and organizing because the material properties of artefacts are precisely those tangible resources that provide people with the ability to do old things in new ways and to do things they could not do before.

(Leonardi and Barley 2008, p.161)

The effects of technological change on journalism are not new and the approach taken by the proponents of medium theory has gone some way to explain the part played by technology in the newsgathering process. Since Pheidippides ran from Marathon to Athens to announce the Greek victory over Persia in 490 BC faster ways have been sought to send and receive news, Flanders (2011), Storey (1951).

The role of Samuel Morse and the telegraph in providing a means to link distant and distinct parts of America and in so doing creating a new way for newspapers to generate news has been charted, by media theorists including Levinson (2003, 1998), Postman (1992), McLuhan (1964) and Innis (1950).

Prior to the telegraph, information could be moved only as fast as a train could travel...Prior to the telegraph, information tended to be of local interest. Telegraphy changed all of this...The telegraph removed space as an inevitable constraint on the movement of, and, for the first time, transportation and communication were disengaged from each other. In the United States, the telegraph erased state lines, collapsed regions, and, by wrapping the continent in an information grid, created the possibility of a unified nation-state. But more than this, telegraphy created the idea of context-free information - that is, the idea that the value of information need not be tied to any function it might serve in social and political decision-making and action. The telegraph made information into a commodity, a "thing" that could be bought and sold irrespective of uses or meanings.

(Postman 1995, p.67-68)

Where the telegraph began the many networks of the world-wide-web and social media have followed. Each day millions of users exchange billions of pieces of information. There were 1.2 trillion searches on Google alone in 2012¹⁰. It may seem that information has now become uncontrollable and therefore impossible for analysis. However, each time a social media user visits a site, makes a post or uploads a picture they leave behind a digital trace. By analysing these pieces of

¹⁰ <https://archive.google.com/zeitgeist/2012/#the-world>

information left behind, or the direct appeal to users to like or forward social media posts, it is possible to extend the actor network inquiry into the realms of social media.

This chapter has advanced the rationale for using Actor-Network Theory to explore the news production process inside BBC regional television news. A concise history of its evolution has been given. This included an examination of the most serious criticisms levelled against it. The methodology and the methods used in the research of this thesis have been outlined along with a brief account of medium theory and other key works on the reading of television news.

Chapter two: Technology of News Production

The main difficulty of integrating technology into social theory is the lack of a narrative resource. We know how to describe human relations, we know how to describe mechanisms, we often try to alternate between context and content to talk about the influence of technology on society or vice-versa, but we are not yet expert at weaving together the two resources into an integrated whole.

Latour (1991, p.111)

The previous chapter introduced Actor-Network Theory and outlined the rationale for using it to investigate the journalistic interest in murders as news content and the growth of social media.

In this chapter the technology of the television news production process and the changing nature of news gathering and broadcasting will be examined using the theory. The theory's specific interest in how innovation, comes in to being, Latour (1996, 1988), Law and Callon (1988), Callon (1980) would seem to suggest it is the right approach for examining social media. Especially as social media can be seen as having no easily defined boundaries and as shown in the previous chapter Actor-Network Theory is criticised for having a lack of boundary to its application, (page 83). The theory's grounding in the material relationships between heterogeneous actors also provides a methodological way in to developing an actor network understanding of social media. The suitability of the theory for both understanding the technologically complex and fluid nature of news production and developments were made in the previous chapter, (see from page 87).

With the introduction of the chronogram, Hemmingway (2008) showed how Actor-Network Theory could be developed to provide a more refined and specific approach to understanding news production. However, the temporal constraints of appointment-to-view news broadcasts she examined have been bypassed by the growth of near instant, near global, mobile connectivity.

This chapter will show how Actor-Network Theory may be applied to the reading of news which is published and shared on social media applications. For researchers of broadcast communications social media use introduces a vast number of new human and nonhuman actors into the networks of news production. Therefore, this chapter will examine some of the consequences of social media for traditional news broadcasters using Actor-Network Theory while developing some of the theory's key theoretical ideas.

The Use of Social Media

The BBC approached the use of social media in a rather tentative way, constrained by both an internal reluctance to use third-party platforms and by regulation regarding new broadcast services. However, in recent years social media has become a focus for production effort across the corporation. In the BBC English regions teams are using platforms such as Twitter and Facebook for both finding stories and for publishing them, Belair-Gagnon (2015), Harrison (2010), Newman (2011).

Social media is a new technology just as were satellite trucks, Wireless Multiplex Technology (WMT) and small cameras. These technologies came with their own training requirements, operational manuals and working protocols and so does social media. It has required a shift in working practices, new members of staff, special

training and rules about its use. Using Actor-Network Theory, the introduction of iPhones into the East Midlands television newsroom will be examined. The case study will map the network building process within BBC *East Midlands Today* and will allow the introduction of key actor network concepts and terms.

Smart phones were introduced into BBC regional television and radio newsrooms as part of an English Regions Smartphone project which was rolled-out towards the end of 2011. In November of that year the editors of television and radio were asked how they would use the new technology, for what purpose and what sort of “Apps” might they utilise?¹¹ This was the moment, described in actor network terms, as the start of the translation. It is the first moment of four translational moments identified by Callon (1986).

Translation has a specific meaning within Actor-Network Theory one which it is important to understand before continuing. The theory is rooted on the understanding of this translation process, here briefly explained by two of the theory’s key architects, Michel Callon and Bruno Latour.

By translation we understand all the negotiations, intrigues, calculations, acts of persuasion and violence, thanks to which an actor or force takes, or causes to be conferred on itself, authority to speak or act on behalf of another actor or force:

(Callon and Latour 1981, p.279)

It is through the continual process of translation that the focal actor assumes the authority to act on behalf of other actors. This authority can be challenged if

¹¹ Information from BBC document seen by the author who at the time was involved in the roll-out of smart phones within the East Midlands Region.

actors the focal actor tries to enrol reject their advances. This renewal of the bonds that bind actors is central to the ongoing process of translation.

Callon develops the understanding of translation in his study of the scallops and fishermen of St Brieuc Bay (1986) providing three methodological principles which the ‘sociology of translation’ (a precursor to Actor-Network Theory) should observe.

These principles of agnosticism, symmetry and free association were introduced in the previous chapter, (page 52), and strictly adhering to them is essential for an effective application of Actor-Network Theory.

The three researchers from Callon’s case study had a simple question to answer: could the Japanese method of encouraging scallop larvae to anchor on to artificial devices and subsequently develop be successfully transposed to the waters of St Brieuc Bay? If they could there was the potential to restock the bay’s scallop beds, securing the future income for the fishermen and pushing forward the scientific understanding of scallops. Callon studied the researchers’ efforts using the new approach.

Similar to Latour, he insists that ‘the observer follows the actors in order to identify the manner in which these define and associate the different elements by which they build and explain their world’ (Callon 1986, p.4). Rather than imposing pre-existing defined ideas upon events the researcher must trace the ‘evolution of power relationships’, map the translations, the process, or mechanism through which relationships between actors are made and defined. The researcher must assess ‘the capacity of certain actors to get other actors – whether they be human beings, institutions or natural entities – to comply with them’, and that will depend ‘upon a

complex web of interrelations in which Society and Nature are intertwined,' (1986, p.4).

In order to ensure proper understanding of the actors involved in these translational acts Callon identifies four 'moments' of the translation process, problematization, *interessement*, enrolment and mobilisation. Callon's researchers were interested in the future of scallop fishing in St Brieuc Bay. They wrote reports and papers on what they had seen in Japan and posed questions about the viability of providing similar artificial breeding environments for scallop larvae in French waters. They identified the different actors who might play a part in answering the questions about the transfer of techniques from the Far East to Europe. For this reason, Callon describes the researchers as an obligatory passage point which 'renders them indispensable in the network.' (Callon 1986, p.6). This is the first stage in translation, the moment of problematization.

In the example from the BBC, the email circulated among the managers of the BBC English regions was the first moment of translation. The new technology of smart phones and iPads had been seen as potentially useful to news teams in England and the senior technical manager in charge of the project was looking for ways to use them. He need support from colleagues, he had to persuade them to buy in to the project. This is done through the second moment of translation, *interessement*.

'*Interessement* is the group of actions by which an entity... attempts to impose and stabilize the identity of the other actors it defines through its problematization. Different devices are used to implement these actions.', (Callon 1986, p.8). In the original French, *interessement*, is used to describe financial profit-sharing and this translation into English may seem a little out of place. However, it is used in another way to mean incentive and it is in this form that its application in

describing the actor translation process can be best understood. What can the focal actor, in this case the production manager who sent out the email, offer or need to do to enrol other actors into the network? The carrot dangled in front of his colleagues was thousands of pounds worth of new technology for teams to use and the kudos of being amongst the first within the BBC to show what the technology could be used for.

Over the following months BBC iPhones were allocated to a select number of staff within the *East Midlands Today* newsroom. These reporters and producers were enrolled into a growing network of actors all coming together to make use of the new technology. This was the third moment of translation. Callon describes the process thus:

Enrolment does not imply, nor does it exclude, pre-established roles. It designates the device by which a set of interrelated roles is defined and attributed to actors who accept them. *Interessement* achieves enrolment if it is successful. To describe enrolment is thus to describe the group of multilateral negotiations, trials of strength and tricks that accompany the interessements and enable them to succeed.

(Callon 1986, p.10, italics in original)

The select group of staff, set apart from their colleagues by the new devices, were sent on courses explaining how the phones worked and what they could be used for; staff were sent on courses to learn how to use social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter; accounts were created for *East Midlands Today* on these platforms; and some members of staff created their own accounts and began using them for their work. The *East Midlands Today* news team began to use @bbcemt as the programmes' username on Twitter. It became the embodiment of the programme

on the platform. This act of mobilization is the fourth moment identified by Callon as part of the process of translation. For him the researchers of St Brieuc Bay became the representatives and spokesmen for all of those involved in that project to restock the bay; the scallops, the fishermen and their fellow scientists.

They have mixed together learned experts, unpolished fishermen, and savoury crustaceans. These chains of intermediaries which result in a sole and ultimate spokesman can be described as the progressive mobilization of actors who render the following propositions credible and indisputable by forming alliances and acting as a unit of force: ‘Pecten maximus anchors’ and ‘the fishermen want to restock the Bay’.

(Callon 1986, p.14)

In a similar way the social media presence of @bbcent became the representation of all the actors which formed the news production network on *East Midlands Today*. For news items to appear on television or social media platforms a process of material translation occurs evolving from physical events and human ideas into visual broadcasts. In order for this to happen various elements are required to create and enable the transmission. These elements are in a state of flux, forming associations, enrolling other actors until they reach a point of *irreversibility* when they become stable as a finished broadcast or social media post.

Irreversibility is described within Actor-Network Theory as a measure of a networks ability to resist change and further translation (Callon 1990). It demonstrates how the existing translations between actors are made durable and repel further efforts of translation. At moments of such strength the network of actors may be considered to have reached a point where they cannot return to a point previously passed (1990).

The concept of irreversibility is an important one which will be explored in greater detail later in this thesis.

However, the use made of iPhones in the BBC continued to evolve. Quite quickly the network of associations formed following the introduction of smart phones began to develop as more and more actors were enrolled. These included the physical technology such as smart phones and computers; the social media applications; BBC rules governing their use; the training which staff had to undergo; the shifting news values of journalists using the platforms; and the audiences the BBC was hoping to reach by using social media. This last point is interesting for the affect it had on the relationship between news provider and audience. The BBC encouraged audiences to interact with the social media platforms. People were asked to comment on posts or send in pictures or video of events. This raised serious issues including copyright, veracity of images and content and problems of libel and deformation. Various internal documents offering advice on how to engage with social media use were issued to BBC staff, for example, *'Advice on Operating on Third Party Platforms'*, and *'Social Networking, Microblogs and other Third Party Websites: BBC Use.'*

The internet, email and various social media applications have made it much easier for the audience to contact journalists. They may be offering instant feedback on stories or highlighting events they want reporters to cover. This increased connectivity can add to the pressure journalists are already under.

There is a demand for you to Tweet something. We work to our deadlines which are the broadcasts but now you have constant broadcasting on social media and people demand things of you when they pick-up their phone or tablet. They expect to get an answer from

us now at all times. It's no longer appointment to view it's become 'you're the BBC and we want answers.'

(Maurice Flynn, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

This opinion was widely held amongst those interviewed for this thesis, social media was a source of information and a way of connecting with the public, but that was not always welcome. However, the technology of social media is now embedded within the news operation of *East Midlands Today* and all other BBC news programmes. How it is used continues to evolve with a growing number of journalists now working on these internet services providing material for the BBC's own news pages and connecting with audiences through third party platforms. Heather Burman is one of them and she says there is a real demand to deliver content as quickly as possible.

We want material there and then so I see a point where we are going to have to go out more to grab things. Some television reporters are great at sending material back for us. Others, understandably, have got other demands, a lot to do, so asking them to do an extra thing for digital isn't always going to work. But sometimes it's great. I think we are going to get out more. We did a Facebook Live from the Diwali in Leicester on an iPad and we now do a lot of those, that one was for the main BBC news page. With that we were getting instant feedback on the pages, I was in the office and giving those comments to the reporter, Sandish who was doing the live broadcast and she was able to instantly react to people from all over the world who were watching the feed, people in Nigeria, America. It's what people want. To be heard.

(Heather Burman, BBC digital team, East Midlands)

Postman (1985) talks about the unifying effect of the telegraph and this touches a dichotomy within the BBC. One of the key responsibilities the organisation has as a public service broadcaster is to be a force which can bring different parts of the country together, especially for national events; this has been witnessed on days of royal weddings, funerals and days of significant political or terror news. In contrast to this universal aim the regional news output is focused on specifically separating the country into smaller parts. This action is intensified through the various BBC local radio and television social media accounts and Local Live online sites¹² where news is specifically selected and chosen for each particular technological platform.

Author: Do you sense that what you do as journalists has changed?

Heather: A little, we took over Facebook around a year ago from the radio stations and you did go from writing important stories, court reports, murder stories and now you're putting a post-up about a pot noodle machine in Nottingham so you could see it as dumbing down but really it's just trying to get to as many people as we can and unfortunately many people do get their news from Facebook so we as the BBC do have to be out there and do a good job of that so we are putting a big emphasis on it now. Each region is doing its own thing and we need to be on social media, it's a big audience, you know we can get eight million people reached for a dancing gorilla! It means you put it out there; they like your page and hopefully they will come back to your page and absorb more content.

¹² In April 2017 the three separate online news sites associated with the radio stations for Nottingham, Leicestershire and Derbyshire were merged under one all-encompassing East Midlands banner.

Delivering the news which audiences want is seen as a key function for the social media platforms used by the BBC and all staff are encouraged to provide content for them. Using metadata tools it is instantly possible to see how well a story is doing and react accordingly. That could mean dropping stories which do not attract much attention, rewriting them or promoting those which are doing well. As seen above in the example of a Facebook live broadcast, (page127), the interconnectivity of social media allows for immediate feedback from audiences which can be enfolded into the live broadcasting process.

The introduction of new forms of technology has introduced new actors in to the news production process and created new associations between actors involved in newsgathering and broadcasting. The emphasis placed on delivering content for social media platforms strengthens the sociograms of those platforms. They enrol more actors into the networks with which they are linked and as the examples above demonstrate the audience involved in sharing the stories reaches far beyond the traditional geographical audience for local BBC television.

The immediacy of interaction between broadcaster and audience also strengthens the chronogram of the various social media actors. Mapping the translations between actors in the Facebook live example shows how the relationship between broadcaster and audience is continually being redefined as the journalist responds 'in real time' to questions they are asked. There is no resistance offered by the journalist and so they are doubly enfolded into the news production process, firstly as broadcaster and then as respondent, which feeds back into itself. The technogram of that specific social media platform at that moment of interaction is also strong with relation to the ease of broadcasting and the audience they can reach.

It should be understood that social media is not a single network and cannot be analysed as such. Each human user of a social media application, Twitter for example, becomes part of an actor network when they begin to interact with the platform and other users. The speed with which this happens means the moments of translation are often concurrent. Separate users of the platform, sitting on separate nodes of Twitter's system, are enrolled within their own actor networks. They can be enrolled or enrol other actors into their own actor networks, by their interaction with the platform. For example, they may send a Tweet which is read by other users or they may automatically find the Tweet of an actor they follow is sent to them. Actor networks which use social media are forged instantly and can collapse just as quickly but they leave behind a digital footprint which is seldom erased and therefore possible to follow.

For years television broadcasters have been looking at ways to involve viewers in the programmes they make and social media has allowed them to move beyond reading out viewers' comments to 'real time' interaction. Technological innovations help shape the delivery of news. Events captured by film and television cameras are the ones which people remember, those which take place but are not recorded, in a form which can be shared, do not have the same resonance. Occasionally the moment caught on camera is of chilling significance. The assassination of American President John F. Kennedy in November 1963 was recorded by just a handful of cameras; the most famous of which was that of Abraham Zapruder. More recently there have been events which demonstrate the changing nature of technology and reporting; the terrorist attacks in New York on 11th of September 2001; the bombings of the London transport system on the 7th July 2005; the Boxing Day tsunami in the same year, the Japanese tsunami in March 2011

and the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis in May 2020. All of these incidents and many others in more recent years show how quickly the users of technology adopt the new functions they are offered.

The attacks on the World Trade Centre, the Twin Towers in New York, were recorded by far more witnesses than the assassination of JFK. In part due to the proliferation of cheaper and more widely available cameras and perhaps to a greater degree by the time interval between the two attacks which was about fifteen minutes. That was enough time for the American TV networks to be broadcasting live when the south tower was struck by a second aircraft.

Today any event that takes place in the world has, because of the proliferation and embedding of video technology into a growing array of products, more potentiality to become news rather than pass unrecorded as merely moments in a linear temporal flow. Without the means to capture these instances in a recorded form which allows them to be replayed or revisited, then they are lost to the visual medium of time constrained television.

The South Korean ferry, the *Sewol* began to sink on the morning of 16th April 2014, in an era when every aspect of human experience can be shared live through technology. The ubiquity of media technology materially changed the event from one only witnessed and experienced by those within the proximity of it into one which shared with millions. In the process the event itself is changed, in the case of the sinking of the *Sewol* from an intimate and personal fight for survival to an exposed and public race to save the survivors watched in real time. In March 2017 the ferry was lifted from the seabed in an operation shown live on South Korean television. The televising of the operation turned it into a theatrical performance for a global audience of millions and in the process, it became another live television

event detached from the context of physical immediacy and personal connection; just one more story to fill the demands of news running orders.

Developments in portable media devices and the ubiquitous nature of technology now in the hands of consumers can deliver a story far faster than traditional news media can respond. A graphic example of how the utilization of technology for both the committing of a murder and the public dissemination of it is the murder of an off-duty soldier in London in May 2013. The way it was actually orchestrated and implemented can be described as a performance of a murder with the killers encouraging onlookers to participate in the horrific spectacle, to record it on their mobile devices. One of the attackers even delivered justification rants defending their actions directly to the audience both on the street and via the broadcast platform of social media. A confluence of various actors, both human and nonhuman allowed the incident to happen and be broadcast over social media before mainstream media could respond. If the attack had taken place five years earlier it would not have received such instantaneous coverage. The power of social media publishing sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube meant news of the attack was circulating around the world within minutes of it happening. This is just one of hundreds of Tweets sent during the minutes after the murder of Lee Rigby.

RoxLewington@roxlewington122 May
so apparently someone got their head cut off in Woolwich?! Please
say that's a sick joke! What the hell is this country coming too??!!
2:58 PM - 22 May 13

A few minutes after this Tweet images and video of the attackers and their victim were being published across different platforms. Traditional media including radio and television had to catch-up with the power of the publishing technology in the hands of members of the public. The image below was taken from the first moments of a video recorded soon after the attack. It shows one of the men who took

part, Michael Adebolajo, talking to a member of the public who recorded his justification of the killing. He and his companion Michael Adebowale drove a car into 25 year old Fusilier Lee Rigby outside the Army barracks at Woolwich in London. They then attacked him with knives. Adebolajo handed a letter to a woman who arrived at the scene shortly after the murder. It was a handwritten explanation for the attack.



As someone who watched news of the attack unfolding on live television and on social media it was reminiscent of previous events broadcast as they happen. I remember the Twin Towers attack in New York unfold before my eyes, I remember the horrific scenes of the Bradford fire in May 1985. There is a sense of unreality amongst the reality of what you are actually witnessing. It is almost as if you can touch the event but it is out of reach and because it's not being censored in anyway by producers or editing but is an actual killing, terror attack, blazing fire, you are numbed by it but don't realise it.

(Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

During 2016 a spate of fatal shootings by police officers took place across America. Figures compiled by the *Washington Post* show 962 fatal shootings by police and that these incidents are not uncommon.



Facebook Live feed of Diamond Reynolds

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings-2016/?noredirect=on>)

However, what made these shootings more notable than previous years was the high number of them that were caught on camera. Some were recorded by witnesses, some by those involved, some by the police wearing body cameras. Diamond Reynolds streamed the aftermath of a police shooting on Facebook Live. Her boyfriend, Philando Castile, had been stopped by police while driving through Falcon Heights in Minnesota in July 2016. The above image has been taken from the

Facebook Live feed of Diamond Reynolds and shows police officers approaching the car after the shooting. Philando Castile died later in hospital. The shooting became a national story across America and was also reported in other countries including the United Kingdom; in part perhaps because it fitted a news narrative about police shootings of black people in America and perhaps because of the availability of incredible moving images and testimony recorded live from the event.

These few examples demonstrate how the technological actor, in these cases a camera which is, by happenstance, geographically close to an event taking place can create news values because it captures a significant moment. This is particularly relevant with the growth of embedded recording devices in phones and autonomous devices such as vehicle dashcams, CCTV systems on homes, businesses and in public places. News values are not fixed but mutable and changing as actors create networks and change positions within networks.

The use of Facebook Live circumvented traditional broadcasters and their technology. Diamond Reynolds became a citizen journalist. She used the technology she was familiar with to tell the story which was unfolding before her and she was enfolded into the story. The enrolment of the means to broadcast were instant with all four stages of the translation process identified by Callon (1986) and outlined above, (page 121), happening concurrently. Perhaps it was not what might be understood as traditional citizen journalism (Gillmor 2004, Bowman and Willis 2003) but social media developments are continually redefining the boundaries of what it actually means to be a journalist (Steensen and Ahva 2014) and how traditional media interact and use the audience as a source of news (Johnson and St. John III 2015, Xu and Feng 2014, Muthukumaraswamy 2010, Messner and DiStaso 2008). Each new social media platform, app or software modification alters the way

a network operates. It is precisely because this live social media streaming is not 'traditional' broadcasting that a flexible, more technological approach to understanding the relationships between the various actors involved is required.

The ubiquity and speed of use which these social media platforms are put to raises series challenges to those wishing to map and explain the dissemination of news stories with the methodology of Actor-Network Theory. In the example of Philando Castile, fatally shot by police, it may seem impossible for the actor network researcher to map the translation processes in such cases where data, video and text, are distributed across the globe. Where does the network stop? Here it is necessary to bring a sense of actor network perspective to the investigation and show how arguments about the theory's failure to define boundaries are without merit when investigating social media. Mapping actors of significance on social media is relatively simple. Social media platforms allow users to like, share and comment on each other's posts. In order to see how networks develop and enrol actors researchers can follow the spread of the comments.

One example from the *East Midlands Today* newsroom will illustrate that what might appear as the seemingly endless expanding universe of social media posts around a murder can be recognised and a boundary for research drawn quite quickly. It will also show how quickly an actor can be enrolled into a network and just as quickly be discarded. This illustration is purely to see how Actor-Network Theory can be used to examine social media and provide defined actor network boundaries.

Gedling Murder

It was morning on the 12th June 2013 and the *East Midlands Today* news team were holding their usual morning meeting at 09:15. There was a possible breaking story; a ‘police incident’ on a street in Gedling, Nottinghamshire. The road had been closed overnight and the producer in charge of the television output had already sent a camera crew to the scene. During the meeting there was an update from the police. The incident was a fatal stabbing being treated as murder. The news team now had a specific location which could be interrogated through social media. As an actor network, the number of actors enrolled into the news process rapidly grew, to include reporters, camera crews, police, computers, Google maps, emailed documents, telephones and Twitter.

In less than five minutes reporters had a strong idea who the victim of the attack was and pictures of him were circulating on Twitter. One reporter sent this message to her colleagues.

‘Named on twitter as Josh stabbed in the neck at the shops. Search #ripjosh’, and this led her to the first image of the murdered young man. The speed with which the stabbed man’s name spread on social media was rapid. So fast in fact the police acknowledged it in one of their news updates.

Joshua was widely named locally on Tuesday, with hundreds of tributes posted online.

Notts Police said yesterday he had been formally identified and named him officially.

A new picture of Joshua, a former pupil of the nearby Gedling School - now the Sherwood E-ACT academy - was also released.

Tributes continued to be posted on Twitter and Facebook yesterday.

Demi tweeted: "RIP Josh, can't get over it such a nice genuine guy! What a cruel, cruel world, will never forget you and all the memories, sleep tight."

Rochelle added: "24hrs since you were taken. We'll treasure the memories. RIP Josh."

(Nottinghamshire Police news release 16th June 2013)

However, in the rapidly evolving social media environment where information can spread incredibly quickly, following the actors (Latour 2005), can lead reporters in the wrong direction. Replying to this Tweet it looked as if the news team in Nottingham had found a close friend of the murder victim.



An exchange of direct messages on Twitter took place and it seemed @bexxy_ was just the contact the journalists needed. However, it soon became clear, after more searching of Twitter and several other messages about Josh that the Tweet was about another person entirely, actually a young man from Wisconsin in the United States. The specific focus which social media gave the news team in this example allowed then to create a new network of actors which evolved and collapsed within minutes. The boundary of the network expanded with the enrolment of @bexxy_ and other Twitter users talking about Josh and then contracted as it became clear they were false leads. The specificity of actors was identified through the interrogation of

various combinations of hashtags and search words. By cross-checking pieces of information, the dead end of the American Tweets was abandoned. Efforts both in the newsroom and at the location of the attack led to true links to Josh from Gedling being established. The news team sought permission from the online community to use pictures of Josh they were sharing. The network surrounding Josh's death continued to enrol actors until the first television broadcast that lunchtime.

For viewers watching the report there was nothing more to the story than what had been presented to them. But by using the actor network approach to map the movements of actors within the network created around Josh's death it is possible to understand how the broadcast story was achieved.

The boundary of the murder expanded from a street in Gedling to police investigators, family liaison officers, forensic scientists, press officers, local politicians and a Member of Parliament. It enrolled social media platforms with a flurry of Tweets, posts and messages. It also enrolled his old school and some of his teachers. It enrolled the television newsroom of *East Midlands Today* with all of its technology and human resources and the BBC protocols and procedures for dealing with stories. At one point the news production process, which began inside the Nottingham newsroom, seemed to be enrolling @bexxy_ in to an association of actors it was assembling. However, when the specificity of her Tweet was interrogated further that particular direction of network expansion contracted.

In an email sent at 10:01 by one of the reporters in Nottingham the surname of the victim was identified as Strumkyte and not Davis as mentioned in @bexxy_'s Tweet. Such pinpoint accuracy identifies the moment when the network enrolment of @bexxy_ failed and the journalists began using the new information to enrol other actors into the news production process.

This example shows how fluid and hidden from view elements of the news production process can be. But it also establishes the credentials of Actor-Network Theory as a way of investigating social media since the specificity of metadata which social media contains allows accurate identification and mapping of social media actors. The criticism levelled against the theory for being boundaryless and unending, (page 84), seem to be unfounded in this case since it was quite simple to identify the point at which enrolling more social media actors was not worthwhile.

The digital time stamps associated with emails provided a similar moment of identification. In fact, the ability to connect with people who knew the victim was made simpler and quicker because of the specificity embedded within social media platforms. This example also illustrates some of the potential pitfalls for journalists using social media as a way of chasing stories.

Speed and Veracity of Social Media

It is quite clear that social media has multiplied the number of sources through which journalists find out about incidents which may be of interest and in the process it has speeded-up their reaction time. One example will illustrate this point.

We had an interesting example of how social media can affect our coverage and how speedily you can learn about things. I was working on Boxing Day and there had been a murder on Christmas Day which we went out to cover, to get some shots and talk to neighbours if possible and we went to cover that and we came back to our base in Nottingham to edit. While we were editing it for the lunchtime bulletin we were told there had been another murder that morning - where a man had attacked his neighbour with a machete, a hatchet, but we learnt about that from Facebook and Twitter and a colleague who lived nearby and we were able to get there much faster than in the past if we had been responding to what the police might tell us. So social media and communication did enable us to deploy much faster than we would otherwise have done in the past.

(James Roberson, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

This is only one example of many told during the research for this thesis but it demonstrates the clear shift in how journalists find out about stories. Historically people have phoned or written to television newsrooms to let them know about events. However, this rarely happened with breaking news; to do so anyone calling in would need to know the right telephone number and have the motivation to contact the newsroom. Social media has changed the dynamics with users being

more willing to film anything that takes place and to share it via social media applications which are increasingly monitored by media organisations using specific software such as Crowdtangle, Hootsuite and Dataminr.

Social media allows those who join the various networks to post their own comments and respond to the comments of others. In effect these sites are creating the environment for a conversation and exchange of information which may or may not be true but whatever the veracity of the information the users can take part without the intervention of traditional media. This creates two specific problems for traditional media outlets who wish to make use of stories from social media; firstly, ensuring what is being said or shown is actually true and secondly in the case of images or video the ownership rights of material.

Traditionally the gatekeeping role, extensively investigated (Shoemaker 1991, Berkowitz 1990, Giber 1956, White 1950), has allowed journalists to control the flow of information released to the public. However, social media has created peer-to-peer broadcasting, removing journalists as intermediaries, while introducing a myriad number of new sources of possible stories for journalists. (see appendix D for examples of the popularity of some social media accounts). Traditional media have been cut out of the network and are no longer required by those people who receive their news over social media. But that does not mean the end of traditional journalism nor does it mean the end of their gatekeeping role (Bro and Wallberg 2014). It should also be remembered that news remains a construct created by journalists who are in the business of engaging with audiences by whatever means they chose. Events become news at the point journalists describe them as such. There is still an audience for television, radio and print news which necessitates it be selected by someone and when the sources are unknown to the journalists the

veracity and ownership of the information or images becomes more important, (Rauchfleisch et al 2017, Schifferes et al 2014, Webster et al 2012, Brandtzaeg et al 2010 and Levinson 2007).

Social media has become a global public space providing various platforms through which people can have their say on events of the day. For example, these messages were just a few of dozens written on the Leicestershire Police website following the murder of Leicestershire teenager Kayleigh Hayward in November 2015 and the arrest of two suspects.

Alexandra Jane Warren They should be hung if Leicester crown courts are to go by then they will walk free like the pedo yesterday raped a 5yr old girl and admitted it and got let off and 2 1/2yrs on sex offenders register. Makes me sick and they wonder why people have start...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [550](#) · [19 November at 21:35](#)

33 Replies



Fiza Khan Heartbreaking to think of the ordeal she went through. The law needs to be toughened these sick vile animals get away with a few years inside and then are protected when released...bring back capital punishment no mercy for peados, rapists and murderers!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [230](#) · [19 November at 21:41](#)

8 Replies



Christine McDonald Absolutely heartbreaking! My heart goes out to this poor girls family! Hope these 2 vile, sick and disgusting wastes of space get what's coming to them. Well done to the police on quick action.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [203](#) · [19 November at 21:26](#)

5 Replies



Jackie Langham Terrible week in our little village, God bless Kayleigh and her family, To Leicestershire Police - you didn't mess around, you kept everyone up to date, you worked tirelessly from the outset, you caught them - MASSIVE RESPECT- Thank you x

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [139](#) · [19 November at 22:27](#)

Before social media sites such as Facebook there were few ways people could publicly express their feelings or make themselves heard. Journalist would

describe the people who turned-up at court cases as ‘van bangers’, the people who shout abuse at prison vehicles driving suspects to or from court. Social media provides an effortless way to comment or protest without the need to organise a physical demonstration. It is also worth noting that comments posted on social media often show a disregard or a lack of understanding for the laws which govern the reporting of ongoing investigations and courts.

Police and the Media

The relationship between media and police evolved as policing became a profession and laws developed to cover the reporting of crime and the courts. In recent years the relationship has undergone forensic examination, for example the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999), the Filkin Report looking at the ethical issues of police and media relations (2012), the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press (2012) and Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) investigation into corruption in the police service in England and Wales (2012). These separate inquiries followed a number of allegations of police corruption, unprofessional relationships with journalists and poor practice. This in turn has led to a change in the relationship noted by, among others Colbran (2017), Mawby (2010a, 2010b) and Campbell (2013).

One of the biggest changes has perhaps been the relationships with the police and crime reporting. When I first started in newspapers you were actively encouraged to go out to police stations and meet police officers who could tell you what had happened that day. They’d tell you background information and little bits that you wouldn’t pick-up

any other way. And you were encouraged to meet them after hours, senior CID officers, to go and have a meal with them, go down the pub with them, cultivate your relationship with them. But that's one of the biggest sea changes, the loss of contact with the primary source of the news, and the way that the press office machine and PR people have stepped in to create rather a barrier.

(Mike O'Sullivan, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

The development of police press relations teams has certainly grown over the years and their relationship with journalists has been well documented, Dell (2012), Rowe (2008), Mawby (2010a, 2010b), Emsley (2009,1996), Wade (2007), Innes (1999), Marks (1979), Hall et al (1978). and Chibnall (1977).

For journalists interviewed for this thesis the post-Leveson era has led to restrictions which have acted as an immutable mobile Latour (1987, 1986) upon the cultivation of relationships with individual offices. Journalists are finding it harder to discover information and suggest that in some cases the police are being deliberately vague in information they do release.

It's changed completely, particularly after Leveson where most police officers are told they have to organise everything through the public relations. So a lot of my contact building is now with the press teams, media officers and they have to trust us and the building up of trust is important.... I think the police would love to completely by-pass us and provide everything on Twitter and some forces do that more than others. I'll give you a really good example of that. There are a number of forces very sensitive about scaring the horses so they'll sort of play stuff down, so rather than talking about a shooting they will put out

an appeal about an incident, or traffic diversions caused by an incident, where from our perspective the story is a shooting or a fatal stabbing or whatever, they make appeals without giving any of the real information.

(Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC News)

As this interviewee highlights social media has provided a form of communication for the police which circumvents traditional television news to reach an audience. In the language of Actor-Network Theory there is no longer a need for the police to enrol journalists into a network in order to convey messages to the public; there is simply no translation process which includes journalists. Instead, the police are creating seemingly strong networks with technological actors leaving the journalists side-lined observing the results of the network created without them. The messages posted by police are actor network examples of inscription devices, an incident, for example a murder, can be inscribed within the message. Below is an example of a Tweet posted by Nottinghamshire Police. It concerns the fatal stabbing of a teenager and as an actor his murder becomes inscribed within the Tweet through the translation of the actor network.



Notts Police ✓

@nottspolice

Follow



UPDATE: Detectives have arrested a 16-year-old boy on suspicion of murder following a fatal stabbing in Hyson Green yesterday. He was arrested overnight in connection with the incident in Hawksley Road at around 5.40pm yesterday.

tinyurl.com/y9dazgav



2:33 am - 6 Sep 2018

5 Retweets 6 Likes



1

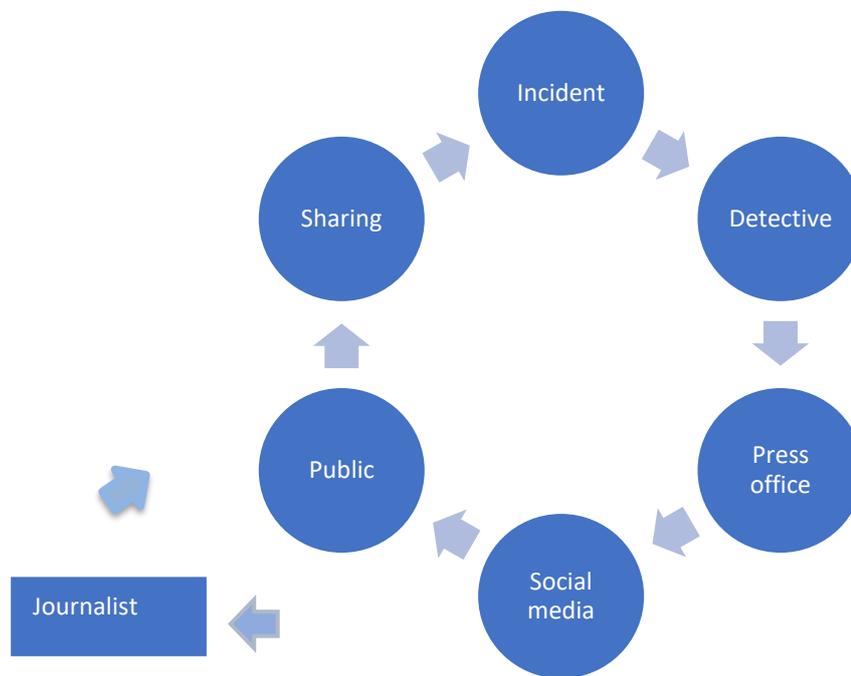


5



6

The diagram below shows how simple the network translation for a police social media post can be.



Notice that it allows the original social media post to be shared by other users of the platform. This strengthens all three axes by which the social media message may be mapped. (see pages 75-76). It is able to engage unlimited users of social media if it is shared and they become enrolled within the network strengthening the sociogram if others engage with it. This is a major consideration since the strength of social media platform's sociogram is a reflection of the number of followers it can attract to any message posted. Without enrolling followers in to the network it is trying to create information posted on social media platforms will go unread and unshared and the network will fail.

The technogram, tying the social media message to the social media platform, remains strong unless the Tweet is deleted by the person who originated it or the social media platform itself. The chronogram, mapping the social media message through its temporal position may look equally strong as social media feeds exist within the database of the social media platform and within the timelines of

users of social media. However, this apparent strength is not always the case since the sheer number of posts which appear on a user's timeline may quickly bury any previous posts. On some social media platforms, Twitter for example, users will only see the social media messages of an organisation, in this case the police, if they are 'following' their tweets or people likely to retweet such information. As an inscription device the above Tweet travels across time and space, being retweeted, it becomes enrolled within other networks created by other actors on the social media platform. Yet it cannot be defined as an immutable mobile, an actor which can effect change but remains unchanged itself, since the technology within the social media platform allows other users to alter it and pass it on through the network.

As well as retweeting the message social media users can show they like a Tweet and add their own comments and that public feedback to the police can be enrolled back into the network. For example, it may encourage police to send the message out again or respond to any comments about it. In the case of the above Tweet it was an updated message from an earlier version already circulating on social media.

Journalists understand police will sometimes withhold information and on occasion the reasons are perfectly understandable, such as operational necessity, lack of clarity about an incident or for legal reasons. The following example shows how one journalist reacted when he believed the police were not giving the full-facts. The first image is the police's original Tweet followed by the journalist's own Tweet with extra information.



Notts Police
@nottspolice



Follow

Witness appeal to Sherwood pub incident
bit.ly/JamF5U #police

RETWEETS 6 LIKE 1



11:45 am - 21 Apr 2012

6 1



Reply to @nottspolice

Nottinghamshire Police Tweet



Jeremy Ball
@jeremyball3



Follow

#Nottingham murder investigation begins after shooting reported to police
nottinghamshire.police.uk/appeals/appeal ...

RETWEETS 4



4:58 pm - 21 Apr 2012

4



Reply to @jeremyball3

Jeremy Ball's Tweet with extra information

Jeremy's actions in this case led to the creation of another network which would enrol the hundreds of people who follow @jeremyball3 on Twitter. Jeremy Ball was one of many journalists interviewed for this thesis who mentioned the issues surrounding attempts by police media teams to provide a specific viewpoint on incidents and it is something those inside the police acknowledge. An actor network analysis of the environment police officers now operate within shows a marked change in the way they respond to incidents and that is not solely down to official inquiries into police behaviour. Put simply there are more actors involved in the police response to an incident of murder than there were a few years ago. Interviews with police staff for this thesis show they now consider reputation management as fundamental to their role, not quite as important as catching perpetrators, but a major consideration nevertheless.

Ten or fifteen years ago it would have been 'let's put a press release out because there's been an old lady murdered down the road, let's get everything towards that.' Now it's 'hang on do we need to put that press release out? Yes, she's been murdered but let's just wait half an hour.' We've got to brief the stakeholders, brief the MP, we need to brief the city council leader, we need to brief community protection, we need to brief X, Y and Z, all of these people are now strategic partners. So, the first people we now tell when a murder's happened are our peers, the city council, the county council, all that sort of stuff and then we go to the media.

(Paul Coffey, Deputy Head of Corporate Communications, Nottinghamshire Police)

Creating a sustainable network with such a diverse range of actors, who may have reasons to resist the enrolment process, takes time and increasingly police

forces have turned to social media in order to provide information. (See appendix E for more information on the social media reaction to the murder of Kayleigh Haywood and F for police use of social media.)

Social media as an actor within a network may be considered as a mediator (Latour 2005) in that the outcome of its enrolment within a network cannot be predicted and it can be described as constantly changing. Latour draws a clear distinction between intermediaries which can be ‘taken as a black box’ (2005, p.39), meaning that they are stable and can resist translation or as Latour describes it ‘its inputs is enough to define its outputs’ (2005, p.39). While mediators are not necessarily so stable or resistant to translation.

Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time. Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry. No matter how complicated an intermediary is, it may, for all practical purposes, count for just one— or even for nothing at all because it can be easily forgotten. No matter how apparently simple a mediator may look, it may become complex; it may lead in multiple directions which will modify all the contradictory accounts attributed to its role.

(Latour 2005, p.39)

What is clear is the ability of the social media platforms operated by the police to enrol actors into a network. They bring, often unconnected, actors together around a subject chosen by them as focal actors. However, as the example of Facebook posts about Kayleigh Haywood show, they are not always able to control the development of the network and the police can consequently lose their position

as an obligatory point of passage. Newly enrolled actors post questionable messages which can encourage further deterioration of the original network. As this example demonstrates social media can be both a blessing and a curse for those working in police media departments. Social media in the hands of the public can force the police to act more quickly than they would like as gossip relating to events can spread rapidly.

You have to try and get information out as quickly as you possibly can because otherwise it will be out there by another source particularly social media. So, whether that is a victim's name being seen over social media because somebody has set up a tribute site or whether it be, you get pictures of victims out there, because people will search on Facebook sites or the public will tweet about something which will highlight the fact that there is police activity in an area. So we've got to be really on the ball in terms of trying to get that information out, liaising with our officers so that we've got the facts so we can be that version of the truth and get that out as quickly as we possibly can so that the rumour mill doesn't start up and obviously to try to control it as much as we can because we are dealing in facts.

(Donna Jordan, Media Manager, Nottinghamshire Police)

This acknowledgement of a downside of social media is tempered by the positives police forces see in using it as a way to solve crime and to push their agenda without the *quid pro quo* often associated with dealing directly with journalists.

We have solved or detected crime through putting stuff out on social media, be that pictures of suspects, whether it be stolen items where someone has contacted us because they've recognised them and we've been able to reunite them. But on the flip side when we are dealing with victim's families and you are trying to help them deal with whatever trauma they are going through to then have to know that that information is going to be out there and it may not be the photograph they want to be out there or it may not be the information at the time because not everybody's been informed, it can be quite difficult because you have to manage their expectations knowing that you haven't really got control over what people are putting out there.

(Donna Jordan, Media Manager, Nottinghamshire Police)

It could be argued that, although social media allows the police to bypass the media from the information network they create around events, it may actually open police forces up to more scrutiny by the public, Lee and McGovern (2014), Greer and McLaughlin (2010). For more on social media and the police see appendix F.

The relationship between journalists and police in the age of social media is worthy of much more investigation than space in this thesis allows. However, this short analysis has again shown the strength of Actor-Network Theory to provide clear understanding about the use of social media and how it has led to instability in some networks and the translation of actors into new ones. While it is clear that traditional media still need the police in order to gain access to some elements of stories and to provide an authoritative voice in reports it seems the police are becoming less reliant on traditional media.

It is within an environment of increasing social media usage and technological convergence that BBC regional news is now produced and broadcast. As the way audiences access news changes television news teams are adapting the way they work and the significance of social media cannot be underestimated.

It's now the most important newsgathering tool we have. It's often the first thing we fire up when we come in in the morning and many people are following it all the time in their home lives. If things are happening then it will be found first on social media. Also, some items which we have deemed not to be much of a story we have had to revisit and change our minds because of the millions following them on social media. If we have missed a trick, social media seems to point it out.

(David Jackson, Assistant Editor, BBC Manchester)

David Jackson is not alone in believing that social media is influencing how journalists work and how it is asking them to reconsider what they consider to be news.

We now ask for email and Twitter comments which would never have happened in the past people would have had to phone in. I think it lets the audience connect with the programme, interact a little more, so you can use them in your programme and give a range of views. I think people feel they can play a part and give their views. I mean radio is very good with that, they do phone-ins and people are used to communicating with a radio station but that's changing now and a lot more people are texting or tweeting, people are always being asked for their views and they feel they can be heard.

(Angelina Socci, Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

All of the journalists and technical members of staff interviewed for this thesis acknowledged the significant role that internet connectivity and technology plays in both newsgathering and broadcasting.

Chapter three: Storytelling

It has to have something which draws you in at the start that's compelling to watch and has interesting people talking in it, strong voices. East Midlands Today reporter

The theoretical difficulty is the following: from the moment one accepts that both social and natural sciences are equally uncertain, ambiguous, and disputable, it is no longer possible to have them playing different roles in the analysis. Since society is no more obvious or less controversial than Nature, sociological explanation can find no solid foundations. Michel Callon (1986, p. 3)

Explaining events and telling stories is something sociologists and journalists have in common. Their work seeks to explain happenings and incidents and by doing so create greater understanding of that which they study and report on.

Historically there have been numerous critiques of television reporting, often from a semiotic or political perspective. They analyse the language used and the combinations of images and scripts which are employed to tell stories, Rosenstiel et al (2007), Hall et al (1980, 1976), the Glasgow University Media Group (1976). The GUMG were critical of the television representation of industrial action which was common place in 1970s Britain. They point to the use of vocabulary such as 'strikers' and 'militants' (1976, p.24) and to perceptions of bias in the posing of questions put to those involved by journalists (1976, p.230). For the GUMG the

focus of reports they analysed was often about the effects of the various strikes and not an attempt to understand the underlying causes of the action. They looked at how images were used to accompany television news scripts, for example locked factory gates and mass union meetings, which they interpreted as negative depiction of strikes and ‘stereotypical images of working people’, (1976, p.26).

In one case study the industrial action, in 1975, by Glasgow Heavy Goods Vehicle drivers working for the council was, according to the GUMG (1976, p.245), portrayed on the television news as a story about the danger to public health and the reasons behind the action taken by workers were ignored. While they allege class bias in their interpretation of television news it is worth noting that the researchers of the GUMG were only allowed limited access to the newsrooms, the output of which, they were actually studying, which meant that although they reviewed six months of news content they were unable to make extensive study of the process by which those news reports were made. It could be argued that their methodology is both reductionist and politically biased in that the analysis of the stories is through their reviewing of the finished product and that they were influenced by their own political standpoint. The research may have been original at the time, in terms of approach, however looking at the result of the news production process from a specific political standpoint does not offer an interpretation of the process as it is performed.

However, it is clear that the process of story construction, the images and words used to form news items, are extremely important in terms of how the finished item will be understood by the audience, Meikle (2009) Postman and Powers (2008), Friske (1989). This is part of what is known as the *grammar of television*, the techniques of telling a story, Stewart and Alexander (2016), Hudson and Rowland

(2007), Fleming et al (2006), and Ray (2003), seen within the industry and on academic courses which teach practical television skills and the interpretation of television content. What is missing from many of these approaches and academic handbooks is serious consideration of the relationship between humans and technology. They either neglect or fail to recognise the role of technologies and other actors in the production of their semiotic storytelling examples.

This chapter will challenge this lack of materiality by applying some more of the fundamental concepts which form Actor-Network Theory to a detailed examination of one incident and the actors enrolled in the news production process. It will be shown that the news production process can be better understood through the specificity of an actor's position within a network, which Actor-Network Theory provides.

North Wingfield Fire

In the Nottingham newsroom of *East Midlands Today* the television producer¹³ of the day, Kathy, is hard at work. She is in charge of delivering the television news coverage for the region. For this analysis of a working newsroom, she is the equivalent of Callon's researchers, 'They determined a set of actors and defined their identities in such a way as to establish themselves an obligatory passage point in the network of relationships they were building', (Callon 1986, p.6).

Kathy has identified an event she wants the newsroom to cover and from her position she identifies the other actors to be involved in the process of telling it. She has become the focal actor described by Callon since it is her role within the newsroom to select which events to cover and which other actors are needed as part of the production process. By taking up this position she becomes indispensable. Like the researchers of St Brieuc Bay, she sets the parameters and, in essence, becomes the obligatory passage point since she has become the 'single locus that could shape and mobilize the local network *and* that this locus should have control over all transactions between the local and the global networks.' (Law and Callon quoted in Bijker and Law 1994, p.31).

Not only does Kathy decide what events the news team will be covering she also acts as the conduit for the news production process. Decisions must pass through her as the obligatory passage point. It could be argued that Kathy has achieved the status of a black box, (pages 73-74), that is an actor which has become

¹³ In BBC regional newsrooms the role of the producer is to co-ordinate each day's output, selecting the events to cover and how to transform them into television reports. Their main focus is traditionally seen as the evening programme. More explanations about their work will be seen throughout this paper.

so stable within a network that in order to understand her position within the network it is only necessary to look at the flow of information she takes in and produces. Appealing as this may be for explaining her role within the newsroom, it may not necessarily be the case. The news production process is fluid and alters from hour to hour and day to day. An actor who may appear stable in one situation may not be as stable within another network.

Kathy uses her prior knowledge and experience in the first moment of translation, the problematization stage, to explain why she thinks the events should be reported.

We've got a breaking news story that's just come out from Derbyshire Police, basically I heard on Radio Derby this morning about a serious house fire which always alerts your spider senses if I can use that analogy. It was in Derbyshire, trying to get information out of Derbyshire fire and rescue this morning I was met by a stone wall of silence – 'we can only give you the start time and address nothing else, refer to the police'. So, you immediately think fatalities, couldn't get anything confirmed at all but now it's come out that there are 2 adults dead, 2 children dead and a third in hospital, we've got a bit of a march on it because I'd already sent a reporter and now, I'm sending our truck.

(Kathy Rochford, Programme Producer, East Midlands Today)

Kathy is in charge of the day's television output. Her role within the newsroom is to oversee the main evening news programme which is broadcast at about 18:25. She is also expected to provide material for her colleagues who are producing the shorter lunchtime news bulletin which is broadcast at about 13:25 and

the late evening broadcast at 22:25. As producer Kathy is responsible for making editorial decisions about which stories the staff at *East Midlands Today* will be covering that day. She needs to use the resources she has to make sure there are enough news items to fill the programme in the evening in a way which fits in with her ideas about what makes a good news programme.

There has to be justification why you give coverage to a story. When you're compiling stories in the medium we work in, television, we have to come up with a half hour programme every day, we're looking for light and shade. Obviously, we want to give people news, the facts, information but we also want to give some entertainment as well, a variety of stories.

(Kathy Rochford, Programme Producer, East Midlands Today)

When Kathy made the decision about whether or not the house fire was worth covering, she employed her own past experience as a reporter and producer who has been in similar situations before. The decision-making process demonstrates how a journalist's long held ideas about news values can trigger a response to unfolding events and points to a shared professional intuition about what events journalists consider newsworthy.

Here Latour's notion of traces (2005) can be usefully employed to describe the previous networks created as part of the production process of similar stories. Latour uses the word trace as a verb to describe the process of following actors within a network and as a noun to show what they leave behind, (Latour 2005). 'In order to trace an actor-network, what we have to do is to add to the many traces left by the social fluid through which the traces are rendered again present,' (2005, p.133). The traces left behind by the actors of previous networks can be used to

create new networks. Journalists often describe these feelings they have, informed by prior experience and directed towards news events as ‘nouse’, as a sense of just knowing what events will make news items, (Hemmingway 2004). The idea of ‘nouse’ will be explored in greater depth and with reference to fieldwork in the chapter looking at murder as news, (see page 251). At the time she decided the fire was a story Kathy did not know there had been four deaths.

Author: That was a gut instinct to send?

Kathy: Yes, I can't explain it really but when you've been working in news a long time you develop a process, wherever there is resistance in giving out information there is usually more to it and in this case it's paid off.

She has identified the issue, coverage of a suspicious ¹⁴fatal house fire, and begins the process of enrolling other actors into an alliance around the desire to cover the fire a news story for her programme. This is the first of Callon's (1986), moments of translation, (see page 123).

Kathy has strong associations with the first of the other actors she seeks to interest in her coverage of the house fire, Simon, who is a television reporter. As producer of the programme she inherits the mantle of ‘being in charge’.

In most BBC regional newsrooms, the person occupying the physical seat of producer changes on a daily basis. Most staff accept that the producer is in charge and what they want that day should be the aim of those working with them. This convention is by no means certain and on occasion clashes between producers and other members of staff do take place and the outcome will depend on the alliances

¹⁴ The incident happened on the 20th November 2013. Two days later it was established that the fire had been started by accident, a faulty wire behind a television set was thought to be the cause.

which can be created by both parties. In this case Simon, an experienced reporter, was already working on an education story. He had been in the centre of Derby since 08:15 trying to interview parents at a school which had recently been in the headlines. Kathy and Simon formed the first association which can be traced through the telephone conversation they have about changing Simon's job. Simon was reassigned and was told that if a camera crew was not available, he would take his own pictures because as a Video Journalist (VJ) he carries the necessary equipment in his car and is trained to shoot pictures and edit them.

The ability Simon has to shoot his own video strengthens Kathy's position within the developing network. This is because Simon has extra skills and adds to the resources at Kathy's disposal. If Simon was not trained and equipped to take his own pictures he could, had he wished, been able to argue against being sent to the fire. He may have been able to resist Kathy's efforts to enrol him into the network by highlighting his lack of skills and his requirement to have a camera crew. However, Simon's camera skills, his associations with technological actors, have weakened his ability to resist enrolment. Kathy has more reasons to ensure Simon is enrolled into the network. She has finite resources with which to work. Like any producer she must adapt her desire on what stories to report to the physical number of camera crews and reporters she has on the roster for the day.

Every now and then we get reminded not to let the crews go into overtime, make sure they get a break, perhaps don't cover a story too late at night or too early if it will incur a cost. Money is an issue obviously but normally we don't let it bother us on our daily decision making. If a story is big enough you will throw all the resources you can at it. That doesn't mean you buy them in on the day of a breaking-

story, then you normally divert what you have, but if you are planning something big, then you may buy in more kit and people.

(BBC producer)

Kathy works with the resources she has, diverting them from planned stories to the breaking event. It is her editorial judgement, her nose, (see page 251 for a more detailed explanation), which focuses the use of the available staff and technology.¹⁵ Newsroom budgets clearly have an influence upon which stories are covered by news teams in as much as producers must work within them. For example, in the case of the Philpott fire story, (see from page 267), a senior reporter was taken off roster for several weeks in order to deliver awarding winning content but the consequence of doing this was a reduction in the number of reporters available for the daily news programme. However, to what extent budgets influence which individual murder stories are covered is a moot point since it is rare for regional newsrooms to call in extra resources on a given day, instead relying on diverting the resources it already has to breaking stories.

At 09:07 Kathy created an electronic document, an entry in the newsroom computer, which detailed the information she knew about the fire, its location, what was happening and who she was sending. Often referred to as a 'job sheet' these entries can be emailed to staff providing them with information. At 09:12 Lynne, who was in charge of the camera diary¹⁶ for the day, amended the job sheet adding the name of a cameraman, Richard, to the entry before emailing the job sheet to him.

¹⁵ Discussions about resources surfaced regularly during the periods of fieldwork undertaken during this thesis. Staff have no influence over how much each newsroom is allocated as a budget and little control or influence over how it is spent. There were occasions when staff passionately expressed their frustration that they could not cover stories they wanted to because they were not allowed time-off roster to research and report or use camera crews when they wanted them.

¹⁶ The camera diary position, sometimes known as the facilities desk, co-ordinates the assignment of production facilities, such as camera crews, editing, booking of external studios and transmission lines.

At this point the number of actors being enrolled increases rapidly and they in turn seek to enrol others. At the moment each new actor is approached to become part of the growing association they can choose to 'submit to being integrated into the initial plan, or inversely, refuse the transaction by defining its identity, its goals, projects, orientations, motivations, or interests in another manner.' (Callon 1986, p.8). For example, Simon may have argued against being redeployed from the story he was already on. However, he was keen to be involved in a breaking news story and happy to cooperate.

By 09:15 the house fire, which was the catalyst for action, had motivated Kathy to begin the network building process which has been outlined above. The development of the network was achieved by the enrolment of a number of technological actors which can almost be forgotten or taken for granted because of their ubiquitous nature. Other semiotic approaches to understanding and explaining the news process may simply overlook them.

There are many actors who play an important role in the evolution of the network before the camera crew and reporter arrive at the scene of the fatal fire. Many of these associations are treated as invisible black boxes, for example the computers and software used to find the location of the fire with Google Maps, and the entire telecommunications network which links Kathy in the Nottingham office to Simon on a mobile phone in the centre of Derby. These black box actors are traceable and their part in the news production process is recorded and evaluated through the actor network approach.

Kathy's network building locks a number of other actors into place; as producer her wish to cover the story of the house fire is accepted without challenge. Other members of staff are keen to be involved and she does not have to try hard to

enrol them and keep them connected to the specific news process. By creating a job sheet in the newsroom computer system her desire to cover the story exists as an electronic entity which is sent to those people not physically close to her. This is an example of what Latour (1987, 1986) describes as an immutable mobile. He encourages researchers using actor network to actively search for them in order to better understand how facts are constructed.

we should concentrate on those aspects that help in the mustering, the presentation, the increase, the effective alignment or ensuring the fidelity of new allies. We need, in other words, to look at the way in which someone convinces someone else to take up a statement, to pass it along, to make it more of a fact.

(Latour 1986, p.5)

These portable actors can cause other actors to change through the translation process but remain unchanged themselves.

The printing press does not add anything to the mind, to the scientific method, to the brain. It simply conserves and spreads everything no matter how wrong, strange or wild. It makes everything mobile. But this mobility is not offset by adulteration...No matter how inaccurate these traces might be at first, they will all become accurate just as a consequence of more mobilization and more immutability.

(Latour 1986, p.12)

Latour's view of the printing press as a way of spreading ideas is not new (see McLuhan 1962, Mumford 1934). Latour builds upon the work of Eisenstein, (1980) to put his case for the importance of immutable mobiles which he describes as mobilizing other actors to act but remain unchanged themselves. The printing

press in combination with ideas allowed for the replication and dissemination of those ideas allowing them to change what they came into contact with. They must be ‘*mobile* but also *immutable, presentable, readable* and *combinable* with one another’ Latour (1986, p.7 italics in the original). Kathy’s entry in the journalism portal and its subsequent transformation into an email is an example of an immutable mobile within the news production process. Other examples of immutable mobiles and the effects they can have will be examined later in the thesis.

At the *East Midlands Today* morning news meeting at 09:15 the fatal fire at North Wingfield was the main topic of discussion. It was the biggest breaking story of the day and if Kathy wanted to cover it, she would have to enrol her colleagues and all of the other resources into her growing group of actors.

There was no objection from the producer of the lunchtime news bulletin, she was very keen to have a report from the scene and the option of using the region’s Satellite News Gathering (SNG) truck for her was an obvious choice. Her reaction to the fire was similar to Kathy’s.

We wanted to be live because really it was the biggest story, four people dying in a house story was a national story, network BBC were there as well as us and all the other networks were there, we want to show we are there and be live at the scene.

(Carolyn Moses, Lunch Producer, East Midlands Today)

In fact, Kathy did not need to win over or convince any of the team. They were all in agreement with her or voiced no objection. The point of *interesement* and enrolment were one. Kathy has a big breaking story; her colleagues agree it is worth covering and go along with her plan on how to cover it. They join forces to achieve the best coverage of the story they can. This ‘team effort’ or cooperation is

an observable and identifiable moment of actor network enrolment. The ease with which this enrolment was arrived at can be explained by an examination of prior translations and the traces they leave behind from previously created associations. In this case it is the collective journalistic memory of fatal fire stories held within the *East Midlands Today* newsroom. The images of other fatal fires, the various reports, and in one case the awards *East Midlands Today* won for the coverage, are physical reminders of such stories and the combined response from the newsroom. Latour calls these inscription devices and within Actor-Network Theory they can be understood as having two distinct roles. Firstly,

an inscription device is any item of apparatus or particular configuration of such items which can transform a material substance into a figure or diagram which is directly usable by one of the members of the office space.

(Latour and Woolgar, 1986, p.51)

In *Pandora's Hope* Latour reiterates this earlier definition of the process of inscription as 'transformations through which the entity becomes materialized into a sign, an archive, a document, a piece of paper, a trace' (Latour 1999, p.306). A secondary role for inscription devices is also identified by Latour and Woolgar and that is the part they can play in cycles of credit, for example the building of a scientist's reputation through the publication of their work in prestigious academic publications and its acceptance by their peers (Latour and Woolgar 1986). This idea of things becoming accepted facts due to the way they are acknowledged by those operating within the same environment can be seen just as clearly within the newsroom environment and in this description by one of the *East Midlands Today* presenting team, 'Looks like news, smells like news, it is news.' Previous experience

leads to the easy acceptance that the event is newsworthy and as is the case for the scientists observed by Latour and Woolgar challenging such universally accepted perceptions can be costly in all sorts of ways (Latour and Woolgar 1986) and therefore widely accepted facts often go unchallenged.

In the *East Midlands Today* newsroom, the members of staff who crew the SNG do not usually begin their shift until 11:00. By then the camera diary entry was written and had been emailed to them. In fact, the SNG was already being used. The crew had started their day early on another job and were in Leicester awaiting the live announcement of the UK City of Culture 2017. Leicester was one of the cities bidding and a reporter, cameraman and SNG operator were doing live broadcasts into the early morning news bulletins. But by 08:30 the announcement had been made, Hull had won the contest, and what could have been a big story for *East Midlands Today* was no longer so big. Until that moment and before the producer was aware of the fatal house fire, the Leicester bid was the story previously identified as one which could lead that evening's programme. If Leicester had been successful Kathy would have had to make a difficult decision about what to do with the limited live resources.

We have to plan a programme the day before. We are looking at what diary items are around, what might pop up and we are just looking for a good selection of stories basically with which to make a good half hour programme. But obviously the very nature of news is that it tends to happen on the day. Sometimes it can be quite a slow process, for example last Thursday when we were working on the weather story where we had some really fierce winds, we weren't aware at the beginning of the day that it was as bad as it was. People had had their

homes damaged by falling trees, they were without power etc. So, we then have to chase, we have to chase the story and go after the pictures and if needs be drop other diary items if they are not as pressing as that particular story. Today is like that. The house fire beats the cultural announcement. But if Leicester had won. Who knows?

(Kathy Rochford, Programme Producer, East Midlands Today)

Kathy talks of ‘a good selection of stories’ by which she means a range of different subjects and a geographical spread across the region her programme covers. Interviews with all BBC staff conducted for this thesis produced similar responses as if the idea of ‘a good selection of stories’ was a universal given. There is a widely and long held belief that ‘news is news’ and ‘you just know news when you see it.’ This chimes with the almost mythical journalistic ideas surrounding a gut feeling (Shultz 2007) regarding news and the requirement that reporters need to possess a nose for news (Fowler 1913).

An examination of the BBC *East Midlands Today* news prospects (that is the possible stories to report on that day) for the 20th November 2013 show Kathy had seven stories she wanted to send reporters and crews to. Three were in Nottingham, one in Derby and three in Leicestershire. When *East Midlands Today* was transmitted that evening there had been several changes to the programme planned the day before. There had been the suspicious house fire in Derbyshire, Leicester had failed to win City of Culture status, a terrorism court case which a reporter had been sent to in order to gather material for a later story proved to be newsworthy that day and a local media celebrity had died. The changes meant that the news part of *East Midlands Today* that evening contained one story from Derbyshire (the fatal fire

rather than a planned report on a school), four stories from Nottinghamshire and two from Leicestershire.

The biggest potential story for Kathy was the announcement about the City of Culture. The previous day plans had been put in place for the possibility of an outside broadcast using the SNG in Leicester. Locations had been found, guests had been spoken to and all the arrangements made for staff and technical resources to be at the right place at the right time. Until the overnight house fire, the actors coalesced into a network around the City of Culture announcement were secure as part of a unified group or so it appeared to any of those enrolled actors. The fire and the subsequent failure of Leicester to win the competition both fractured the alliances which had been made. 'For ANT, if you stop making and remaking groups, you stop having groups. No reservoir of forces flowing from 'social forces' will help you,' (Latour 2005, p.35). The group in Leicester returned to a state of flux and had to reassemble itself into a smaller coalition without the satellite vehicle which had been enrolled into the assemblage of actors growing around the deaths in the house fire. By virtue of being a fatal fire involving children as well as adults the fire was able to perform the first act of translation, the successful mobilization of a response from the producer Kathy. Had there been no casualties then there would have been no interest. The numbers and type of casualties involved is also an important element within the process. As will be seen in the following chapters journalists often see child victims as more newsworthy than adult ones.

Interest in the house fire at North Wingfield was heightened because it was being treated as suspicious by the emergency services. As the interviews from this case study show a fatal fire in which four people die is invariably considered newsworthy. This can be explained by the attitudes journalists hold about

unexpected deaths, fires and tragic incidents. The suggestion that the fire was being treated as suspicious only added to this journalistic interest. An important point worth making was the collective memory within the newsroom concerning a previous fatal house fire in Derbyshire which had been extensively reported by *East Midlands Today* and other media organisations. The incident forms another case study in this thesis (see pages 267-321)¹⁷. Because it was a breaking story, treated as suspicious by police and fire service and because it fitted an historic news reporting narrative informed by previous fatal house fires the response to the incident at North Wingfield was quickly able to gain momentum.

Throughout the morning the network within the BBC newsroom in Nottingham, which had started with a fire and a producer reacting to it, grew enrolling more actors, the reporter Simon, the cameraman Richard, the lunch producer Carolyn, camera diary assistant Lynne, the newsroom computer where all story deployment sheets are electronically stored, the SNG vehicle with two members of staff, Mike and Adam. They in turn looked towards including other actors as they used satellite navigation to make their way from the office in Nottingham out to the house, a journey of about 24 miles which took them just under an hour to drive. Boris, the technical manager (TM), a role with responsibilities to co-ordinate technical delivery of output, became involved working with the SNG to decide what was required in terms of satellite bookings for their expected live broadcast into the lunchtime news. Even more actors were enrolled, the director of

¹⁷ Six children died following a fire at a house in the Allenton area of Derby on Friday 11 May 2012. The parents of the children, Mick and Mairead Philpott, were subsequently found guilty in relation to an arson attack on their own home.

the lunchtime bulletin, Bryan, the news presenter Sarah, broadcast assistant Chris, graphics designer Ben and others. They readily accepted their part in the group creating an association with the continuing problematization since their interests lay in the same direction as those previously enrolled, that is the telling of a breaking news story involving deaths in a house fire.

The incident was now making national headlines and the BBC's national news production team asked if they could use the facilities *East Midlands Today* were putting in place for a story into the *One O'clock News*. It was the second story in that programme, with network reporter Sian, speaking live from the scene for one minute and 15 seconds. The broadcast was a success. All of the alliances made held true to the original plan proposed by Kathy several hours earlier. However, the process of creating news output is a contingent one and from the actor network perspective actors remain bonded together only as long as they accept the continuous process of forming and reforming until a specific point is reached where translation within the network is irreversible, a point at which no further changes are possible. Callon (1990) defines this as the moment where it is 'impossible to go back to a point where that translation was only one amongst others'. To reach irreversibility is to test the strength of the relationships and see if the translations hold. But in the next sentence he suggests that even secure translations 'are in principle reversible' (1990, p.150). It seems Callon has moved two steps forward and one back. However, there follows a clarification which avoids the potential contradiction, quite simply if a translation fails it leads to the collapse of the existing network rather than a reversal in translation.

In such tightly coupled networks, any attempt to modify one element by redefining it leads to a general process of retranslation.

Accordingly, I venture the following proposition: the more numerous and heterogeneous the interrelationships the greater the degree of network co-ordination and the greater the probability of successful resistance to alternative translations.

(Callon 1990, p.150)

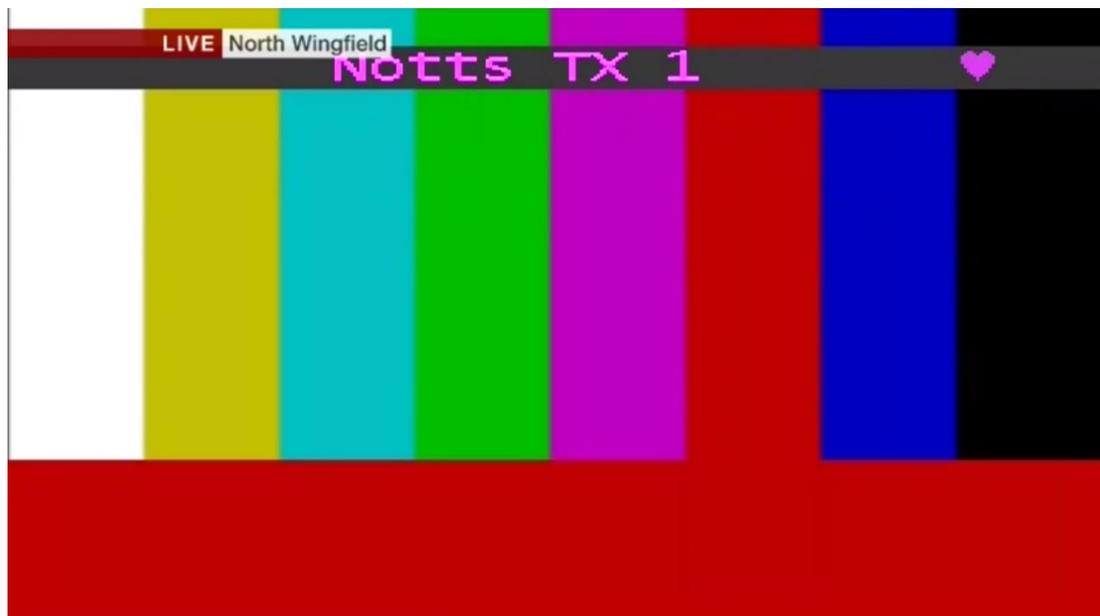
The house fire at North Wingfield demonstrates this idea very clearly as will be shown through a detailed actor network examination of the lunchtime broadcast for *East Midlands Today*. It shows how one network can fail and a new one form within moments.

The bulletin began with the titles and then the newsreader introducing herself and the programme. The images used in the following description of the broadcast were taken from the part of the bulletin referred to in the accompanying script.

Sarah: And now the news for the East Midlands, I'm Sarah Teale. First this lunchtime. Two adults and two children have died in a house fire in Derbyshire. A third child is being treated in hospital. Fire crews were called to the home just before five o'clock this morning. Simon Hare is live at the scene for us at North Wingfield near Clay Cross, Simon obviously terrible developments, what more can you tell us?



The director selects the live feed coming from the SNG and the viewers see the reporter Simon at the scene of the fire. The shot is framed to show him slightly to one side with emergency vehicles behind him. A caption is overlaid in the top left-hand corner of the screen. It is done electronically from the gallery by the director. It shows the name of the place the satellite broadcast is coming from and the word LIVE to reinforce the notion that this remote broadcast is in fact happening as the viewer watches it. A more extensive analysis of the live nature of television will be undertaken through other case study later in this thesis, (see page 304). At the moment he begins to speak Simon vanishes from the screen to be replaced by a test card image showing the signal coming from the SNG vehicle. At this moment the live caption is still on screen.



Clearly something has gone wrong and the director selects the studio camera in order to bring the presenter back in to vision. The presenter calmly continues, apologising for the fault, and reads into the next story. The careful enrolment of all the actors formed from the moment Kathy was first aware of the fire has collapsed.



Sarah: Well, we seem to have lost Simon for the moment we will of course return to him as soon as we get that signal back up.

She then reads into the second story about the disappointment in Leicester after it missed out on becoming UK City of Culture. It was a long, edited package and the gallery staff has more than two and a half minutes to work out what has gone wrong with the outside broadcast and what to do next. They are able to re-establish communications with the outside broadcast using the talkback system which allows direct contact to crew and reporters via the satellite truck. It was clear the signal from the satellite truck to the gallery and back to the regional broadcast was still in place as the images of the colourful 'bars' showed. The element missing was the link between the camera and the satellite vehicle. The staff at the outside broadcast tell the director in the gallery they have solved the problem so after the item on the failed City of Culture bid the presenter returns to the fire story and reads into the outside

broadcast using the paper script she has at her side for reference. This was because the link into the fire story was no longer on her prompt¹⁸.



Sarah: Well more now on our top story those four people who have died in a house fire in Derbyshire we can return to our reporter Simon Hare who is at the scene Simon can you give us the latest?

¹⁸ Prompt is a generic term for devices which project the scripts and links read by newscasters onto a display which either sits on top of the camera lens or below it. As they read the words are rolled upwards by a member of staff and they can control the pace in time with the reading speed of the presenter.

This time the live broadcast from the scene of the fire is successful. Simon is framed as he had been minutes before, in front of the emergency vehicles, the graphic which was used to show the report was live is used again and Simon goes on to explain what had happened at the house overnight and the current state of the investigation into the fire.



The rest of the bulletin passes without incident. Carolyn, the producer, gave her reaction to the issues as soon as the broadcast finished.

It was our top story and basically the network media were there as well as us and had used our equipment and we were just going live to our reporter and he just disappeared as we handed over. We found out it was because of the battery on the camera died, literally just as we handed over to him so it just goes to show that while technology can be the way we bring our stories and rely on it so much to be at the scene that sometimes at the very moment we need it, it can let us down.

(Carolyn Moses, lunch producer, East Midlands Today)

The network which had begun with the obligatory passage point, Kathy, and had enrolled among other things, more than twenty individuals, television vehicles, cameras, telephones, lighting rigs, a satellite, computer hardware and software, was abruptly shattered by the failure of a battery pack on the camera used to broadcast the live pictures. The explanation by the cameraman at the outside broadcast was that the battery had shown it was charged but it clearly was not and he accepted that with hindsight he should have changed it for a fresh battery after providing the live insert into the national news twenty minutes before. This simple oversight and a problem with a relatively inexpensive battery show the crucial role technology has within the news production process. It also shows the importance of specificity, of tracing the way each individual network is formed in order to understand the outcome of its formation. This example demonstrates the agency which technological actors have within any network formation and underlines the importance, insisted upon by Latour, of recognizing nonhuman actors among the heterogeneous actors which are part of the news production process.

But this successful expansion of Actor-Network Theory in to the process of television media does not stop at explaining the failure of the regional news broadcast. As described above, the original translation process failed and a new set of actors were enrolled to ensure that at the second time of asking the news production process was successful. In order to show the suitability of Actor-Network Theory as a way of reading media practice and to demonstrate its inherent strengths outside the laboratories in which it was first applied it is necessary to explore the successful network building process.

Kathy had been the obligatory passage point for the first network but when the second network was created, she has been by-passed. Her seemingly stable

position within the network is undermined by the alliance created by the disparate actors on a separate node of the network. It was an alliance which did not need her, nor the camera diary, emails or telephones, in fact it was created very quickly with almost concurrent problematization, *interessement*, enrolment and mobilization of the various actors.

In the newsroom, watching the transmission of the lunchtime bulletin, Kathy is physically detached from the process and she disappears from the second translation altogether, a detail which the actor network approach clearly shows. The methodological analysis underpinning Actor-Network Theory illuminates the mutability of the news production process, its fluidity and ability to reconfigure primary actors at the drop of a technological hat. Analysis which fails to make proper consideration of the process of production inevitably fails to fully appreciate the way networks of actors are formed and sustained since they miss the necessary specific details of the process.

As the original obligatory passage point Kathy is circumvented by the new translation and is replaced by the director Bryan in the formation of the subsequent network. Earlier Kathy's position was described as one which was imbued with a sense of authority which her role as producer endowed her with. She was seen as occupying a stable position within the network but in an instant, she is ignored as the unpredictability of the news process is demonstrated. This emphasises the importance Actor-Network Theory places on not making any *a priori* assumptions about the place and importance any actor has within a network or on their power position.

Mapping the network of the second translation shows Bryan establishing contact with the outside broadcast using the talkback system which links the

television gallery in Nottingham to the remote team. He speaks to the member of staff in the satellite vehicle, the camera crew and reporter. He is made aware of the problem with the battery pack and the efforts being made to replace it with a fresh battery. This activity on a separate node within the greater news production process takes place without any reference to Kathy. Not only is she unaware of the problems happening at the outside broadcast she has no role within the network trying to overcome them. As the person in charge of the technical delivery of output in the gallery it is Bryan who becomes the catalyst of the new translation rather than Kathy or lunchtime producer Carolyn. She wants the story in her bulletin but can offer little in the way of technical input into the problem solving which is going on or the creation of the new network. She has to deal with the consequences of the collapsed network and would have had to make other editorial decisions if the outside broadcast was not retrievable. However, as Bryan and the technical members of staff in the gallery and on location solve the problem, she becomes enrolled. Her function is to move stories within the computer running order and make a decision on what order the remaining stories will be read. The image on the following page is of the newsroom running order from the bulletin under analysis.

The running order shows how the report on the house fire was originally the lead story and then was dropped lower down the running order when the network failed. The column headed *Story Slug* is that part of the display which shows the names given to each story by the producer. It is the technological embodiment of each story event which is being told during the broadcast. The column titled *Segment* gives a description of the item within the bulletin; it can indicate a link which is to be read by the presenter, a package of an edited report or other elements. The horizontal red line shows a story which has not been broadcast and in this scenario it was

'floated', because of the necessity to cut away from the lead story and then return to it, a process which used up more broadcast time than was originally allocated to it since it had to be reintroduced. If you look closely at the column headings you can see one titled *Float* and in the row of story number 20 Missing, there is a little tick to show the story has been *'floated'*, dropped from the running order and its duration subtracted from the overall timings of the bulletin.

The process of rearranging the running order, moving stories up, down or floating them produces an automatic response from the various pieces of equipment used for the broadcast. The director may be consulted or informed about the planned changes, the programme assistant who is running a stopwatch to ensure the broadcast starts and finishes on time may be asked for a timing check, but the actual changes made to the running order, the moving of stories, is undertaken by the producer. As each story is moved the words of the link, the edited report, and any name captions

Page	Story/Slug	Segment	Free Text 1	Camera	Presenter	Float	MOS Channel	MOS Obj Slug	MOS Status	Team Appr	Final Appr	Actual	Curse
1	BBC IDENT	KITSS2009						IDENT_BBCONE_KITSS2009	STOP		✓	0:00	0:00
2	HEAD	ONE		2+ent			HL_HOUSEFIRE_201113_1300NO-001		P	✓	✓	0:00	0:00
3		TWO					HL_CULTURE_201113_OOV_1300NO		P	✓	✓	0:00	0:00
4	OPT BACK											0:00	0:00
5	PROMO	ONE		2+ent			HL_HOUSEFIRE_201113_1800NO-001		P	✓	✓	0:00	0:00
6		TWO					HL_ENTERPRISE_201113_1315NO			✓	✓	0:00	0:00
7	NETWORK											0:00	0:00
8	Titles&namecheck	Slng	WS				EMT_TTTLES_2013		P	✓	✓	0:15	0:15
9	Housefire	Handover		ws&2+is	S				P	✓	✓	0:19	0:34
13		link		2+is	S				P	✓	✓	0:19	0:53
14	Culture	Ply Geeta					CULTURE_201113_GPE_1330NO-002			✓	✓	2:40	3:33
10		OB Simon			Simon					✓	✓	1:50	5:23
11	Housefire	OOV					HOUSEFIRE_201113_OOV_1330NO			✓	✓	0:00	5:23
12		VOX					HOUSEFIRE_201113_VOX_1330NO	B		✓	✓	0:00	5:23
12a		handback to studio								✓	✓	0:00	5:23
15	Kinston	OOV Becky		3mcu	S		KINSTON_201113_OOV_1330NO		P	✓	✓	0:19	5:42
16	Bastford	OOV		3mcu	S		BASTFORD_201113_OOV_0627NO		P	✓	✓	0:19	6:01
17	Enterprise	link		2+is	S				P	✓	✓	0:17	6:18
18		ply Mike					ENTERPRISE_201113_MOS_1330NO			✓	✓	1:18	7:36
19	Gosling	OOV		3mcu	S		GOSLING_201113_OOV_0627NO-002		P	✓	✓	0:22	7:58
20	Missing	OOV Derby		3mcu	S	✓	MISSING_201113_OOV_1330NO		STOP	P	✓	0:23	7:58
23	Harvey	OOV Quentin		3mcu	S		HARVEY_201113_OOV_1330NO-001		P	✓	✓	0:23	8:21
21		link		2+is	S				P	✓	✓	0:13	8:34
22	Froch2	Ply Mark		add Mel			FROCH_201113_MSH_1330NO-002			✓	✓	1:16	9:50
24	Weather	Handover		3mcu	S				P	✓	✓	0:05	9:55

Under 00:33

1330 Lunch East Midlands Today 20/11/2013

associated with the story are automatically moved with it which means it can be moved up or down the programme or removed from the running order entirely. As each change is made the timings in the running order are automatically adjusted. A close look at the column of the running order entitled *Page* shows that the number sequence of the stories is out of order as different parts of the bulletin are moved around. The non-sequential numbering shows how things have been changed as the bulletin was actually being broadcast.

However, as has been shown, the alliances created inside and outside the newsroom between various human and nonhuman actors initially enrolled by Kathy and her allies managed to reform some of their connections in a new network. Callon says 'Translation is a process before it is result.... Translation is the mechanism by which the social and the natural worlds progressively take form. The result is a situation in which certain entities control others.' (Callon 1986, p.19). The failure of the first translation process at the outside broadcast caused by a flat battery and the subsequent realignment of actors and successful broadcast a few minutes later clearly show this in practice. This example underlines the volatility of the news production process which can only be properly understood by the use of tools such as Actor-Network Theory which dig deep into the analysis of process as it occurs looking for the detailed traces of the actors involved. Methodologically the analysis of the outside broadcast has made no distinction between the human and nonhuman actors, both have been treated equally. As has been shown the same criteria have been used to explain an unsuccessful translation process and a successful one in line with the principle of generalized symmetry required from an actor network approach. Success and failure have been described in the same terms and through the same four moments of the translation process as outlined above.

Finally, the analysis of the house fire held to the principle of following the actors without imposing any form of *a priori* boundaries or distinctions between social and natural occurrences, the process *was* the explanation. The ‘theoretical difficulty’ which Callon (1986) alludes to is overcome through the use of Actor-Network Theory and the methodological insistence on not privileging society or nature and asserting that explanation comes through tracing the associations actors make.

Importantly the example of the outside broadcast from the house fire shows how successful Actor-Network Theory is as an approach to understanding the constantly mutable news production process. It exposes the fluidity of relationships within the process which are not fully exposed by the ‘sociological explanation’ which Callon rejects. The news production process is an *ad hoc* affair involving the unpredictability of human and technological actors. Actor-Network Theory shows a way to overcome the ‘theoretical difficulty’ Callon highlights in the clearest possible way. For the reading of news, it is vital to examine news as it is being made, the actual translation process which the various actors involved undergo as a newsroom seeks to tell a story. During this empirical study various actor network concepts have been introduced, for example: obligatory passage point and immutable mobile. These and other elements of the theory will be further explained and used in the coming chapters. It is now time to take a more detailed look at what television journalists believe news actually is and how those views may influence their approach to the telling of murder stories in particular.

Chapter four: What is news?

‘News is still that which has the greatest impact on the greatest number of people.’ James Roberson BBC reporter

‘News is what I say it is’ David Brinkley, American News anchor

In the previous chapter an actor network story was mapped. It involved a fatal house fire in which four people died. By focusing on some of the key concepts of Actor-Network Theory, including the process of translation, it was possible to trace the growth of the network of actors formed to turn the event into a news product. The case study was used to introduce some of the fundamental ideas and terminology of Actor-Network Theory. By utilizing the methodological concepts of the theory to analyse how an event becomes a news product it was possible to identify the moments of translation, as defined by Callon (1986) and demonstrate the suitability of Actor-Network Theory as a way of examining the mutable news production process. As the network of actors developed an understanding of how the news team operated became clear. It was possible to trace the position of each actor within the network as the story production process evolved. The result was a degree of meticulousness not seen using other methods of inquiry.

The producer in charge of the news programme gave her reasons for selecting the incident as a story. She described her reaction to the fire as ‘breaking news’, an incident which was actively happening, one she felt needed to be covered as a report on BBC *East Midlands Today*. Unlike the stories which had been planned the

previous day she felt the fire had an immediacy which other stories did not have. Although in strictly temporal terms this was not the case since the other stories which it was proposed to cover were also happening on the same day. What the fire offered the producer was a 'newness' and an 'unexpectedness' tied to a significant loss of life which included children.

Newness and unexpectedness have, for a long time, been seen as criteria which may make an event or incident more likely to be reported, Harcup and O'Neill (2016, 2001), Hall (1981), Gans (1979), Galtung and Ruge (1965). The producer of the *East Midlands Today* lunch time bulletin on the day of the fire summed up her feelings in this way, 'We wanted to be live because really it was the biggest story, four people dying in a house fire was a national story.' What needs to be asked now is why that was the view of the news team?

The concept of a set of news values which influence which events become stories was introduced at the start of the thesis (see page 21). However, these definitions of news usually see story selection as a separate process to the actual production of the news product. The empirical study of news teams in action conducted for this thesis and interviews with staff show this to be an oversight. The example of the fire deaths story in the previous chapter analysed through the methodology of Actor-Network Theory explained the production process more clearly than traditional news values explanations of news could have achieved. It clearly demonstrated the mutability of the news production process and the importance of studying that process in order to understand how television news stories are created. Further examples taken from the ethnographic fieldwork undertaken for this thesis will reinforce the belief that the development and formation of news products is a continuous process involving heterogeneous actors.

It is not something which can be defined solely by a list of pre-existing characteristics since the news production process is fluid and susceptible to change. These cases studies will be used to extend the understanding of some core ideas within Actor-Network Theory, such as immutable mobiles and will apply the tools of sociogram, technogram and chronogram, (see page 75), which in turn will develop a better understanding of the news production process and what journalists consider to be newsworthy.

The terms news, news values, news sources and newsworthiness are used throughout the academic literature in an interchangeable way to explain the types of stories which journalists select as stories they wish to share with their audiences. These news values are qualities within particular events and stories and are separate and quite distinct to the values journalists may hold as part of a professional code. For example, a member of the National Union of Journalists in the United Kingdom ‘At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.’ (Point one of the NUJ Code of Conduct). While point six of the same code says a union member ‘Does nothing to intrude into anybody’s private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.’

Members of staff working for the BBC undergo orientation in order to understand the values which the corporation wishes them to uphold and these are collected together as the *Producer Guidelines*. These cover a whole range of working practices, the do’s and don’ts of working for the organisation. Printed on the back of staff identity cards are five key BBC Values, the first of which is ‘TRUST is the foundation of the BBC, we are independent, impartial and honest.’ For clarity it is important to distinguish between these values of journalistic practice and the news

values which may frame and inform story selection when creating news products.

An examination of these ideas will be followed by interviews with BBC members of staff which will reinforce the point being made throughout this thesis; that understanding news cannot be done in reverse, that is by looking at the finished product, but must be done by looking at the production process.

Although the wide range of cultural and political approaches examined in this chapter provide an assessment of the areas of interest and types of stories television journalist look to for news, they fail to examine the practicalities of news production and therefore do not provide a full understanding of what news actually is.

News Values revisited

There have been many studies of journalism, of news values and the factors within an event or incident that may contribute to it being considered worth reporting. (see page 21). One early contribution to the field appeared in an American literary magazine, *The Swanee Review* in 1910, several years after the circulation war of the 1890s between the newspapers owned by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer.

But what is news to the modern American?

“News?” complains the needy Correspondent, scribbling as he talks; “news is anything and everything that the news editor will buy.”

“News!” snaps the Blue-Pencil in reply; “it is something my correspondents do not seem to recognize when they meet it face to face.”

“News,” smiles the Paper-Owner, glancing over his ledgers,
“why, news, to be sure, is whatever makes my paper sell.”
“News?” whispers the Advertiser, anxiously; “it is anything
that will not warn the public against the wares I offer for sale.”
“News?” sighs the restless Average Reader, longing for
entertainment; “it is some excitement that fills a passing
moment with interest.”

(Andrews 1910, p.47)

This short quote encapsulates many of the areas of investigation and directions of approach taken by some of the most cited studies of news and news values. For Lippmann (1922), who was interested in the way public opinion was formed, there was a convention in the way different newspapers chose to cover stories and present them to their readers which reinforced the paper’s perspective on events it thought were newsworthy.

One definition of news is encapsulated in the aphorism attributed to various people including Alfred Harmsworth, founder of *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror*: “If a man bites a dog it’s news, if a dog bites a man it isn’t.” It’s been re-quoted and misquoted numerous times and journalists working in television today still refer to it as a reference point when trying to define news.

At its most basic level news has to be new, something that has happened, something people don't know about. When doing radio bulletins, I used to say there are four different things you are trying to balance. Firstly, is it news, is it fresh, the newest thing goes top of the bulletin. Secondly how significant is it, on a global scale and local - 9/11 is significant, Ebola is significant, it might not affect a lot of our

audience but it's important. The third one is its relevance which is particularly important in regional television, how relevant an obvious one for us on a nightly news programme I always look for this. It could be a national story but done at a local level, hospital stats in our main hospitals for example. The final thing is the unusual, the cat up a tree, man bites dog. How new is it? How significant is it? How relevant is it? How interesting is it? And for television you have to add in what are the pictures like? And what access have you got?

(Senior reporter, BBC East Midlands Today)

This description of news fits quite neatly into the definitions provided by among others Harcup and O'Neill (2016, 2001), Harrison (2006), MacShane (1979) and Galtung and Ruge (1965). The last sentence is telling since it points towards a pragmatism which practitioners of news production accept as this second quote also illustrates.

It's really hard to define news. When I started in newspapers, I was told it was something that has happened within the last 24 hours (LAUGHS) well if that was the definition then a lot of what we do wouldn't actually be classified as news. So, I suppose you have news and you have features.... it's a very difficult thing to describe accurately because it's open to interpretation and it definitely depends on the producer. One day a producer might say 'I don't want that story - we've done too many road safety stories recently' - and then on another day another producer might say 'let's go and do some research on how many accidents have happened without seatbelts and turn it into another story' - something like that - and they might want

to go with it even though another producer has said no. So, in some ways it's quite random, it's not scientific, stories don't fit neatly into boxes and perhaps that's a good thing.

(Rosemary Harding, Senior Planning Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

A newsroom can have a group idea of the sorts of stories which are preferred but when the individuals in charge of the output decide they want a particular story then they are at liberty to enrol other actors to a network within which they set the terms of reference since they become the obligatory passage point (Callon 1986).

The acknowledgement that different producers may opt for different stories on different days highlights the mutability of news and the suitability of Actor-Network Theory to analyse the news production process. News cannot be seen as neatly fitting pieces of a jigsaw which always go together in the same way. Instead, the process of broadcasting news products should be seen as one in which there is a fresh jigsaw each time and on occasions the pieces do not always fit together correctly,

It's a complex question. On a regional news programme, the following factors all come into play: 1. Editorial relevance. 2. Public interest and is the public interested in it? 3. Resources (or lack of resources) 4. Geographical position – i.e. if a big story breaks 65 miles away from base at 17.30, it is impossible to cover it in the same way as if it had broken 3 miles from base at 14.30. 5. And the truth is that sometimes we will cover stories that we do not really want to cover because we are desperately short of news and we have 27 minutes, 45 seconds to fill at 18.30. I'm convinced every regional newsroom will, from time to time, find itself in this predicament.

(John Lawrence, Assistant Editor, BBC Look North)

A producer, who has responsibility for the evening news programme, offers a definition of news which almost skips over those factors seen as important by the sociological approaches which have dominated the academic study of news. The last three points John Lawrence makes are pragmatic and they show an acknowledgement of the mutability of the news production process. As producer of the programme he needs to ensure that by the time the evening broadcast begins he has enough stories to fill his allotted air time.

Time and again interviewees for this thesis made similar observations about making sure the programme was filled with stories when it was broadcast. This could mean covering events just to plug a gap in the running order or making stories longer than would be normal so the programme was filled that way.

These explanations of news are taken from just three interviewees among more than fifty BBC members of staff interviewed for this thesis. The answers given here and those not quoted have many similarities in terms of their definition of news such as 'newness', 'relevance', 'visuals' and 'unexpectedness', terms familiar to the News Values approach, but they also show that there are many other factors which can influence what events actually become television reports.

They give answers which are rooted in the materiality of the various aspects of the news production process. These reasons could be the time of day of the planned broadcast, the personal opinions of those producers in charge of the output, the distance the story is from the office and the availability of resources. These and all the other possible and potential influences which arise as part of the production process demonstrate the mutable nature of the process. This problematization of realism clearly demonstrates the usefulness of the methodological approach which

Actor-Network Theory provides since it allows analysis of the real time decision making which occurs during the news production process.

The example from the *East Midlands Today* newsroom which follows shows how news values like the news production process itself need to be seen as fluid and pragmatic actors within the news production network. It highlights the dramatic influence actors outside the normal range of enrolment can have in shaping the news production process and underlines the methodological importance of engaging with news at the level of performance in order to fully understand what news actually is.

Hayley Pointon Murder

Some actors who are enrolled into a network and transform it can be defined as immutable mobiles, a description introduced in the previous chapter, (see page 167). Latour (1986) defines these as actors which pass around a network transforming other actors while remaining unchanged themselves. Analysis of the news production process in this case study will develop the understanding of immutable mobiles and the applicability of them to the investigation of murder as news. Use will be made of the methodological mapping tools of sociogram, technogram and chronogram, introduced earlier in this thesis, (see from page 75), to trace the transformations within the networks which are created.

Hayley Pointon was murdered on the 3rd February 2013. The BBC's *East Midlands Today* newsroom first became aware of the incident the following morning when the early morning newsreader was checking through local radio output and social media for news stories. Brief details had been put on the Leicestershire Police

website and these were the catalyst for the start of the news production process which turned the murder into a broadcast news item.



The early morning news team is quite small, just three people, and they did not have the ability to send any camera crews or reporters to the scene to start the newsgathering process. They begin to enrol other actors by checking with the police to see if there were any more details. They spoke to colleagues at Radio Leicester and searched the internet, specifically, social media sites for further information. However, they were unable to develop the story beyond the initial reports. The story was broadcast throughout the morning bulletins. The script is reproduced below. The words in bold are instructions for the gallery staff and newsreader. The acronym OOV stands for Out Of Vision, telling everyone that the newsreader will be hidden from view but continuing to read the story. In this case she was hidden by a map to illustrate where the incident had occurred.

[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]

Police are investigating after a shooting at a house in Leicestershire.

{OOV}

Officers were called to Sunnydale road in Hinckley at ten o'clock last night where a woman was found with a single shot wound. She was pronounced dead at the scene. A man has been arrested.



The map zoomed in from a wide shot of the East Midlands into a closer image showing the town of Hinckley.



How the story was subsequently told changed and the reason for the changes became enfolded in to the story as this script from the main evening programme at 18:25 shows.

[Live Read: PRES INV IS]

A woman's been shot dead at a house in Hinckley in Leicestershire.

{OOV}

The woman, in her 30s, was shot last night at about 10.45. Police are trying to trace two men, thought to have fled in a dark coloured car. A 27-year-old man has been arrested. We cannot identify the house or street for legal reasons.

Ordinarily the shooting dead of a woman in a street might be expected to receive more coverage than it did on this occasion. After all, deaths involving firearms, are still rare in Britain. For example, according to the Office of National Statistics, for the year March 2015 - March 2016 there were 26 murders in which firearms were used.

However, three separate networks of actors were to have an important part to play in the news production process of this particular murder story. Firstly, archaeologists from the University of Leicester announced that a skeleton found under a council car park in Leicester was that of King Richard III. This story dominated the local news coverage for the day as the team had prepared several reports in readiness for the announcement and planned to present the lunchtime and evening programmes from an outside broadcast in Leicester. It was a strong network which had enrolled numerous human and technological actors. Secondly and directly related to the murder of Hayley Pointon was the legal reason mentioned in the script broadcast at 18:25. Thirdly the decision making process around the Hayley Pointon murder was affected by the traces of an earlier network created as part of the news production process of a previous murder story and the re-emergence of an influential but absent actor.

Kevin Hill was the producer in charge of the *East Midlands Today* programme on the 4th of February 2013. He was the principal actor and the obligatory passage point as identified using Callon's (1986) methodology. Many of the networks created around the news process start with him which means his sociogram is strong. It is enhanced because he has years of television production experience and is well thought of by members of the newsroom who are more likely to accept his decisions than a producer with a weaker sociogram. His technogram maps his ties to nonhuman actors. As the person in control of the newsroom he has influence over where the camera crews and satellite vehicle are deployed. He is the access point to the graphics department and editing but he is not an expert in any of these areas and relies on specialists to provide these resources. His technogram appears strong as he is connected to various other actors all working towards the

delivery of the main evening news programme at 18:25. The programme is the final point of assembly for all the individual networks which are formed as part of its creation. The chronogram, developed by Hemmingway (2008), introduces a third axis with which to map an actor's temporal position within the network. It helps identify the specificity of any actors' position. Time is a critical phenomenon in the development of news products, which will be developed further throughout this thesis, due to the specific relationship it has to both the occurrence of events and the broadcasts of news products. The traditional news programme will be transmitted at an exact time regardless of whether or not the news team is ready for it. The chronogram of the entire news team is ultimately tied to that specific point.

Kevin spent the previous day planning what was expected to be extensive coverage of the Richard III story. He was committed to sending substantial human and technical resources to the story and this put pressure on his ability to respond to any other breaking news. When interviewed in the morning his reaction to the shooting was rather nonchalant.

I think the thing with the Hinckley story is that it's very simple, it's one dimensional at the moment unless we're prepared to send someone down there to work on a backgrounder already. I think the resources that I've got in place at the moment with Richard III mean that any other stories in that patch have to be pretty big. You have to think very carefully about whether you can pull crews off and send reporters elsewhere and I've decided not to because there is a guy already arrested and so what we can say legally is very limited. It would make sense if we got an idea that this is a really interesting story and the police have tipped us off or neighbours have phoned in

and told us there's a really good story then I might consider sending down but I still wouldn't be able to report that anyway so in terms of today's coverage it's very, very limited.

(Kevin Hill, Programme Producer, BBC East Midlands Today)

The resources already committed to the Richard III story and the fact that police had already made an arrest helped inform Kevin's decision on whether or not to deploy resources to Hinckley to gather material.

The arrest gave the impression that the police had already caught the killer. Although that was only speculation within the newsroom it did influence Kevin's decision. He described how the arrest 'limited' what could be said and reiterated the point emphasising it with the adverb 'very'. Although legally under the Contempt of Court Act 1981 the arrest does or should limit what media outlets say about a case in practice it rarely does. Most journalists and media organisations are happy to report details of a crime up to the point where someone is actually charged¹⁹ with a specific crime and even then, some organisations are prepared to flout the law. If Kevin had really wanted to allocate resources to the murder he could have done so since any restrictions on what could be reported really depended on whether or not the suspect was charged.

Other important factors in his decision making were the availability of staff, both journalistic and technical. He only had one reporter to send to the incident and they were already looking at another story. Justifying his reaction to the shooting he leaves his options open to return to it if more information is forthcoming. That is

¹⁹ At the moment a suspect is charged the consequences of breaching the law on contempt become more serious.

exactly what happened only two hours later. Police investigating the shooting updated the media and Kevin's attitude towards it changed.

Author: Kevin you seem to have changed the news agenda slightly because of an update on the Hinckley murder we discussed earlier on can you tell me why things have changed?

Kevin: Well early on it was just a woman shot dead and a man arrested. That was basically it as far as we knew the police weren't talking. During the morning they put out a press release saying there was more information it's not as simple as we first thought and it appears as if they are prepared to talk to us now that changes things completely because what the police are saying is we need your help to find two people who were at the scene at the time and what's more we are prepared to talk to you about it. So the problems I had earlier on about what we can and can't say have been solved a little bit by the police themselves saying we need your help come down and we'll talk to you so that's why I've sent a crew and why I've sent a reporter because it will make for the programme and hopefully overnights as well.

Author: Earlier on in the day you were quite adamant about how you were going to treat the story because of certain criteria but everything's in flux, is that what news is?

Kevin: I think so. You can go down a line, sometimes producers have to be fairly strong, and say this is the story as I see it and that's all we are going to do on it regardless of all the bits and pieces that you get I don't think it's very much of a story. In this case that was where I was

when you spoke to me earlier that's where I was but other factors come in to play and you think actually, we ought to look at that story because of the other information we've got.

This pragmatic approach to news values and the way stories can develop demonstrates the heterogeneous and contingent nature of the news process which is constantly being shaped and even at the moment when the network seems to have stabilized it can be rendered unstable by the enrolment of another actor. This fluidity can make it difficult to perceive the dynamics of the news production process and this is further hindered when decisions are made without any visible signs. Even in the rare event of a murder by shooting, it cannot be assumed that the event automatically takes a particular place in the news construction; all of these varied factors are at play, as an actor network analysis demonstrates. This example again shows that in order to fully explore and understand the news production process it is vital to trace the various actors throughout the process in order to see what translations affect them and the networks they are in.

Kevin's attitude changed when the police released a fresh statement about the killing. It had the qualities which make it, in Latour's words, an immutable mobile (1987, 1986.)

Latour uses the example of cartography to demonstrate what he means by an immutable mobile. Not only did map making allow knowledge to become portable but it also ensured it was stable, consistent within itself when transported from one place to another. Because of these characteristics maps were able to exercise 'domination at a distance', Latour (1987, p.223). Cartography also had the effect of constructing a new relationship between space and time since it was no longer necessary to physically visit a distant land to understand its shape. Knowledge, once

only possible at first hand, was now known by people sitting in offices thousands of miles away studying maps.

It seems strange at first to claim that space and time may be constructed locally, but these are the most common of all the constructions. Space is constituted by reversible and time by irreversible displacements. Since everything depends on having elements displaced each invention of a new immutable mobile is going to trace a different space-time.

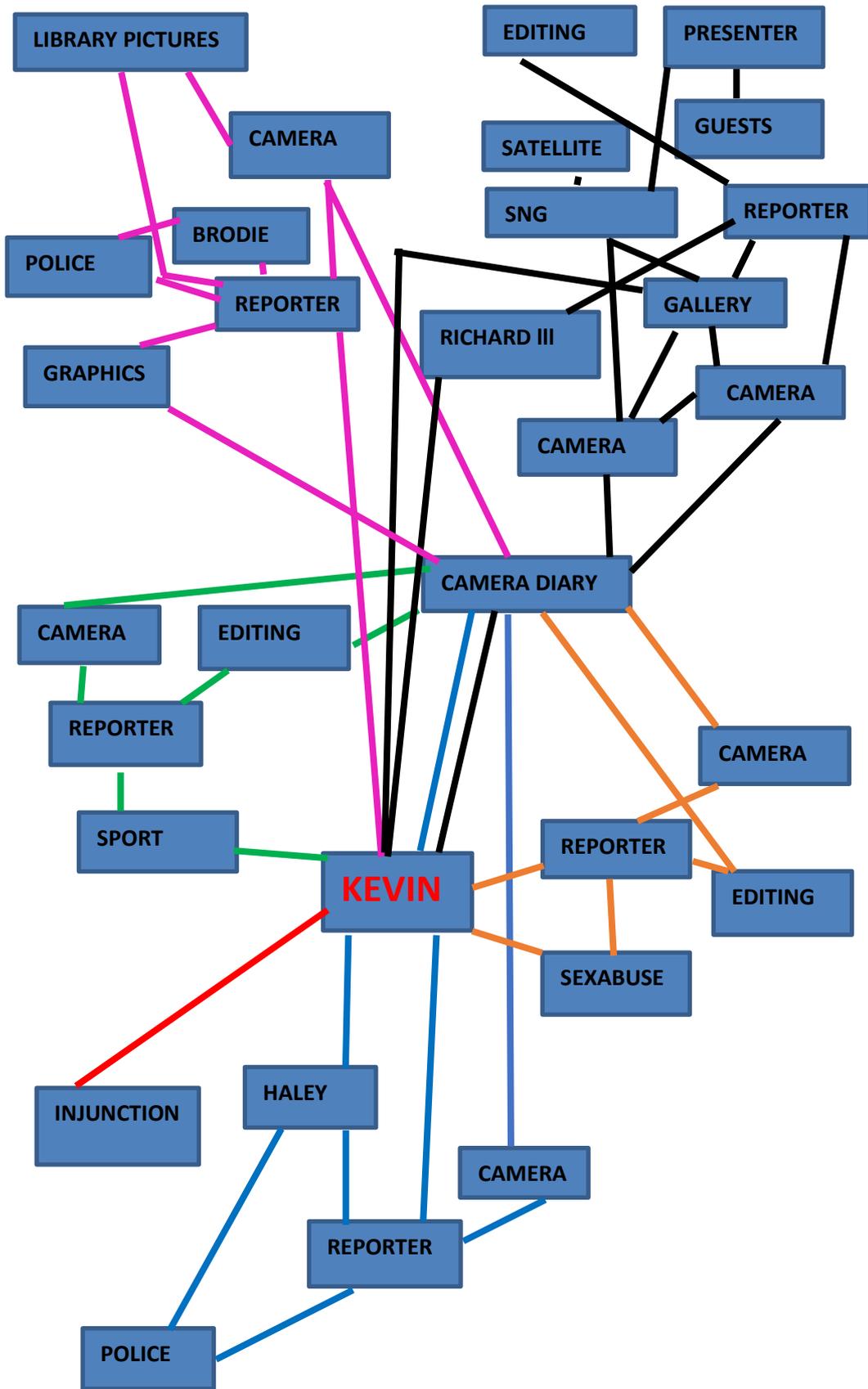
(Latour 1987, p.230)

The police update on the murder made Kevin reassess his original position on it and led to the creation of another network within the news production process. The story the one free reporter was looking at was dropped and he and a camera crew were sent to Hinckley to gather material on the murder. Importantly for this thesis and the development of Actor-Network Theory away from the laboratory, it demonstrates that Kevin's view on what news is was directly influenced by the police appeal for information and their offer of an interview. News values for Kevin are mutable and constantly shifting. They are contingent upon the relationship he has with all the other possible stories he is looking at that day, the events which could happen and the actors they may enrol. To show this more clearly and to advance the application of actor theory for the reading of the news production process Kevin's position can be mapped with the actor network tools of sociogram, technogram and chronogram, (see from page 75). Using these tools some of the key moments of the news process can be identified. For simplicity of analysis this detailed examination will concentrate on the key story areas Kevin was working on. The diagram below highlights various elements of the news production network and the actors involved.

They are a representation of some of the associations he made during the planning process and the ongoing relationships during the day of transmission.

The stories mapped in the diagram are Richard III, Sex abuse (the court appearance and sentencing of a couple for historical sex abuse), Brodie (an update on an historical and on-going murder investigation) and the Hayley Pointon murder. Sports coverage is mapped on a separate node of the greater newsroom production process network.

This simple snap-shot of one moment in the news process of the main stories shows how many human and non-human actors are involved in these few stories. It is clear to see that the actors are intertwined with one another and form a range of networks into which they join and leave at different times throughout the day. They give a different 'frame of reference', (Latour 2005), with which to look at the news process. This means all actors are considered as equals and it is their interconnectivity which is of interest. The inclusion of the *Injunction* as an actor at the bottom right of the diagram shows this 'freeze frame', (Latour 1987), of the network was made at 15:56 because that was the time Kevin became aware of a court case which would have an influential part to play in the production process of the Hayley Pointon murder story. The use of the chronogram allows the specific moment when this new actor was introduced to the translation process to be pinpointed. For the purposes of understanding the news production process this is vital as it definitively identifies the role of specific actors and the specific moments of translation within the network and therefore offers a much more robust understanding of the news production process than other approaches.



Mapping of Kevin's actor network position showing separate nodes at 15:56

Eventually the networks of actors enrolled for each individual news story coalesce around the last and most important sociogramatic, technogramatic and chronogrammatic moment of the day for all actors, the transmission of the programme. At this point, which is identifiable to the specific second of its transmission, 18:28:51, the aspiration and expectation of the news team, every plan put in place, each network connection made, each translational moment should achieve a coherent whole, the broadcasted programme. But networks are formed by associations of actors which come and go throughout the news production process. Some have the strength to solidify their relationships with others to the point where they resist further change and become 'black boxed', (see pages 73-74).

When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.

(Latour 1999, p.304)

In this way Kevin and the news team rely upon the cameras they use; the glass in the lens, internal wiring, solder, plastic, metal and intricate circuit boards they contain. They expect this network of parts to work in the way they were designed and to perform the function of a camera. Images and sound are recorded and stored on small memory cards which, when played back, show the images and allow them to be processed into news products. However, like all networks, these black boxes are only stable while the associations between the various actors remain uncontested. As the example of the live broadcast from the scene of a fatal house fire demonstrated, (see page 176), the news processes can fail at any moment and for any reason and even networks defined as black boxes can collapse. It

doesn't matter whether the breakdown is in human relations, communications or technology, the result on the network performance is the same.

The network which had been created to investigate the shooting in Hinckley seemed secure following the police update. A reporter and camera crew were at the scene gathering images and information. They recorded 29 minutes of material. This included shots of the house, police officers looking for evidence and interviews with neighbours and the police. If the network which had enrolled them and the other resources held firm it would result in a news item for that evening's *East Midlands Today*.

However, unknown to the television news team in Nottingham, events 60 miles away would again modify the news production process of the Hinckley murder story. As would a development in another murder *East Midlands Today* had been following since the 30th of September 2003. On that day Marian Bates, who was 64, was shot dead when two men robbed her family jewellers on Front Street in Arnold, Nottingham. Her killing made national headlines and in 2005, Peter Williams was jailed for her murder. However, another suspect, James Brodie, was believed to have been the gunman but he had never been caught. For years various rumours circulated in the media about what had actually happened to the 20-year-old who disappeared after Marian Bates was shot.

The local BBC reporter who had followed the story more closely than any other was correspondent Jeremy Ball. His reputation for delivering consistently strong stories meant he was highly regarded within the newsroom. His sociogram is strong because producers are willing to listen to him when he says a story is worth covering (see the references to journalistic nous on pages 162-3 and 251).

Since the time of the shooting he had reported on many updates and interlinked crimes including other murders and trials of gangsters from Nottinghamshire. The traces left by the formation of the original reporting into the murder of Marian Bates were various and strong. They included archive footage stored in the BBC video library which could be used to illustrate any subsequent stories and the ongoing public and journalistic interest in the case. On the 4th of February 2013, Jeremy learnt that police were searching an area of land in Lincolnshire for the body of the wanted gunman.

Whereas most of the other media were essentially reporting the police press release, they're searching for a bloke who's not been seen for nearly ten years he's wanted in relation to Marion Bates, what I was able to do was to go further and use by background knowledge and the fact that in my job you can go a little bit further and say actually we know there are links to Colin Gunn²⁰ and therefore this is a bigger story, this all fits in with this really big bloke portrayed in the national media as Britain's most notorious gangster who we also know is also responsible for the murder of the Stirlands²¹. So, by some careful scripting I was able to hint at the fact that this is a much bigger story than just the search of a house.

(Jeremy Ball, Social Affairs Correspondent, BBC East Midlands Today)

For producer Kevin it was another story which he felt was necessary to deploy resources to and find space for in an already over-filled programme. But it was one which he felt deserved to be covered.

²⁰ Colin Gunn was a Nottinghamshire criminal convicted in 2006 for conspiracy to murder the Stirlands

²¹ John and Joan Stirland were murdered in 2004 on the orders of Colin Gunn after Mrs Stirlands son had killed a friend of his.

Kevin: This is a long standing very significant, locally very famous, murder in which a jeweller, Marion Bates, was killed and we never worked out why at the time. The person that pulled the trigger has never been found we thought that person had either disappeared or had actually been killed by the man who ordered the robbery to take place in the first instance. It now turns out that the police may have found his body somewhere in Lincolnshire so it's the culmination of a ten-year-old murder mystery.

Author: Journalistically it's got the revelation aspect for you?

Kevin: It's also one of those things where you think this was such a big story that even people who weren't around at the time will probably have heard of the name Marion Bates and go 'oh yeah I remember her she died rather tragically in front of her husband trying to defend her husband and her daughter' and was shot by a gang and actually this is the man we think who will be found buried somewhere in the Lincolnshire countryside. It doesn't solve the problem of who killed the gunman but it solves the problem of they've found the killer of Marion Bates.

Although there had been no sightings of James Brodie from the day Marion Bates had been killed, he remained an important actor in the network formed as part of the news production process. Repeatedly, although physically absent from the network, the traces that Brodie left behind had continued to influence other actors. The notion of traces is an important idea within Actor-Network Theory. It is only by finding the traces left by an actor, Latour (2005) and following them that a full understanding of how networks are formed can be appreciated. Critically this

exercise must be repeated for every network and every situation as there is no template which fits all situations as relationships between actors are fluid and constantly changing state of affairs. See appendix G for more on this story and the use of internet technology in reporting it.

The Brodie story ran for two minutes in the *East Midlands Today* broadcast that evening and was the third story in the running order behind an eight minute section on the discovery of Richard III and a court report on a case of sexual abuse. The fatal shooting in Hinckley consisted of a map and vox pop with neighbours and ran for a total duration of 43 seconds. The majority of the 29 minutes of material from the scene which had been gathered by reporter Mike O'Sullivan and cameraman Mike Brown was never broadcast. Although the story had managed to enrol these actors and the producer had accepted it was worth covering the network could not be sustained.

While the *East Midlands Today* news team had been chasing other stories and deciding on its reaction to the Hinckley shooting a decision made inside a court room at the Warwick Justice Centre in Leamington Spa would prove crucial in defining just what they would actually broadcast. The team in Nottingham were unaware until 15:56 when an email from a colleague alerted them to a set of reporting restrictions.

An examination of the stories about the Hinckley murder broadcast by BBC *East Midlands Today* on the 4th of February show what a difference that judgement made. The first story from the breakfast bulletin at 06:25 included a reference to the road on which the killing took place (Sunnydale Road). This information is missing from the subsequent script, but interestingly, it contains a reason why the address has been omitted, '*for legal reasons.*'

The legal reasons were actually a ban imposed on journalists by a judge hearing a court case although the media were not allowed to broadcast any more detail. The judge, Mrs Justice Cox, was presiding over a case against seven men who faced various charges including murder and robbery.²² One of the defendants was the sometime boyfriend of the woman killed in Hinckley. In order not to prejudice the ongoing trial in any way Mrs Justice Cox issued reporting restrictions; these included preventing the media naming the victim, identification of the address where the attack happened and any reference to the court case she was hearing. The judge allowed the interim injunction to last two days. That gave the media an opportunity to consider a challenge to the restrictions and for the court to decide if they were still required.

On the 6th of February 2013, after representations by various media organisations, including the BBC, Mrs Justice Cox lifted part of the original order and the media were free to report some further facts about the incident. This information was received by email in the BBC Nottingham newsroom from Leicestershire Police at 22:02.

Below is the script from BBC *East Midlands Today*'s late bulletin from the 6th of February 2013 following the new court judgement. The journalist who wrote the story included a note to her colleagues that made them aware that the words had been agreed by the BBC's duty lawyer. The inference of the note was 'don't change this script.'

[Notes: LEGALLED BY JOE BLOGGS]²³

[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]

²² The men faced charges connected to the death of Ali Jawaid, a businessman from Coventry who died following an attack in November 2011.

²³ Name changed for reasons of privacy.

Detectives investigating a murder in Hinckley have named the victim who was killed.

{OOV}

Thirty-year-old, Hayley Pointon, a mother of two from Coventry died from a single gunshot wound at a house in the town on Sunday night. Three men have been arrested in connection with the incident. A 26-year-old man has been released without charge. Two other men, aged 29 and 36, have been released on police bail pending further enquiries.

The name of the victim could now be used as could a few other details about her. But there was still an order banning the media from using pictures of the scene or making mention of links to the ongoing court case. They remained in force until the end of the trial at Warwick Crown Court. These restrictions acted like a brake on the reporting of the shooting. The trial did not end until the 10th of April 2013 which put a further temporal distance between the newsroom and continued interest in Hayley Pointon's murder. Without the opportunity to use the images gathered from the scene and the arrests of possible suspects, the enthusiasm for the story waned. Over the following years *East Midlands Today* did broadcast several short updates about the case but it was not until the 31st July 2015 that two men were convicted of her murder.²⁴ She had been the unintended victim of two gunmen who had actually

²⁴ Aaron Power and Aaron Newman, both from Coventry, were ordered to serve a minimum of 31 years each.

wanted to shoot her on-off boyfriend Nigel Barwell, one of the men being tried in Warwick Crown Court at the time of her murder.

Using the actor network tools of sociogram, technogram and chronogram it has been possible to map the reaction of producer Kevin Hill to the unfolding events he was encountering and again demonstrate the mutability of news. During the course of the day Kevin's attitude to Hayley Pointon's murder changed and therefore so did the networks surrounding it. This example also underlines the importance of considering the nonhuman actors involved in the heterogeneous *ad hoc* news production process and the interaction of human and nonhuman actors.

Because of the specific restrictions imposed on BBC *East Midlands Today* at the time of Hayley Pointon's death, the television news team in Nottingham did not develop their telling of the story much beyond the initial reports of her killing. Although they did broadcast a report about the conviction of her murderers it was on the day after the verdict. Nowhere in the years of coverage did her death gather enough support for more substantial coverage.

It was just one of those stories which really got away from us. There's no definitive reason but we just didn't invest enough in it nor did we keep across the developments, it just slipped through. Perhaps because of the fact she was from outside the patch? Maybe it was the initial problems with reporting it that it got forgotten about.

(Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

Although other networks formed to give brief updates the detailed actor network analysis conducted here shows there was not the substantial effort within the newsroom required to look at the background to the attack. Specific issues at specific times conspired to prevent reporting of the story developing further.

This chapter has offered an explanation of some of the traditional approaches to understanding news and news values which have dominated the academic study of media for the past five decades. Although they are useful at helping to explain the sorts of stories journalist like to cover, they do not offer the forensic analysis of the production process of news which Actor-Network Theory provides. By using the theory to examine the networks involved in the Hayley Pointon murder a clear picture emerged of the various decisions taken and the influences which affected coverage. Interviews with members of BBC staff highlight the pragmatism which those involved in the production of regional television bring to the news production process and the extent to which actors are limited by their powerlessness in certain situations.

No theory of news values can explain everything, not least because arbitrary factors including luck, convenience and serendipity can come into play; as when a planned story falls through at the last minute, for example, and a previously discarded one is selected to take its place.

(Harcup and O'Neill, 2016 p.3)

This acceptance of the practical realities which news teams face on a daily basis when actually producing output illustrates some of the failings of the sociological and political approaches to understanding news. What events are considered as news is constantly changing because of the various connections between actors being made and broken as part of the news production process.

The examples used in this chapter have demonstrated that an event rejected one day may be considered newsworthy the following day for no other reason than the producer needs to fill a gap in the running order. Even if the coverage of news

events is planned in advance the news production process is *ad hoc* and mutable because it involves heterogeneous actors, both human and nonhuman.

Chapter five: Murder as News

‘Get me a murder a day!’

Lord Northcliffe, founder of the Daily Mail

‘Everyone loves a murder. But journalists like some murders more than other murders.’ Matt Tapp, Head of Communications, Nottinghamshire Police

The previous chapter looked at the types of stories which are generally considered to be news by journalists and some of the leading academic approaches to explaining those choices. It is clear that given the right combination of factors and circumstances that almost any event can become the product of the news production process. This chapter will look at murders as news and using actor network methods and methodology understand the news production processes involved in the construction of several television murder reports to see how they developed as news products. The quotations used to introduce this chapter show there is a long-standing interest in murder, but that some murders are seen as more attractive to journalists than others and that the organisation charged with investigating murders is well aware of the difference. It will be shown through the use of original case studies and field research that some murders are intrinsically of more interest to journalists than other murders and they can create stronger and more stable news production networks than others.

The chapter begins with the legal definition of murder to show the difference between murder and manslaughter. It will include an empirical analysis of BBC regional news programmes to see how much air-time is dedicated to murder stories. This will be followed by original actor network case studies of murders to examine the news production process within regional BBC news operations.

The legal definition of the crime of murder is a relatively modern concept which only covers England and Wales. Scotland has its own legal system and definitions of specific crimes. Murder in England and Wales has a precise legal meaning and has been committed, according to the Crown Prosecution Service, if a person:

of sound mind and discretion (i.e. sane);

unlawfully kills (i.e. not self-defence or other justified killing);

any reasonable creature (human being);

in being (born alive and breathing through its own lungs -

Rance v Mid-Downs Health Authority (1991) 1 All ER 801

and AG Ref No 3 of 1994 (1997) 3 All ER 936;

under the Queen's Peace;

with intent to kill or cause grievous bodily harm (GBH)

https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/h to k/homicide_murder_and_manslaughter/#definition

As defined by the Crown Prosecution Service manslaughter is committed in one of the three following ways:

1. killing with the intent for murder but where a partial defence applies, namely loss of control, diminished responsibility or killing pursuant to a suicide pact.

2. conduct that was grossly negligent given the risk of death, and did kill, is manslaughter ("gross negligence manslaughter"); and
3. conduct taking the form of an unlawful act involving a danger of some harm, that resulted in death, is manslaughter ("unlawful and dangerous act manslaughter")

https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/h_to_k/homicide_murder_and_manslaughter/#definition

Together manslaughter and murder are described as acts of homicide. There are additional specific charges relating to the taking of human life such as infanticide, which describes the act of a woman killing her own child if that child is less than a year old; and corporate manslaughter whereby a company can be held responsible for the death of a person. English law recognises various situations in which murder and manslaughter may be committed and sentencing guidelines provide a framework for judges when passing sentence on those found guilty, including tariffs according to age and aggravating or mitigating factors. These could play a part in interesting journalists to particular homicide events.

Reporting of Murder

The public's fascination with murder and the reporting of crime in general has a long history. It can be traced back in written form to at least the *Newgate Calendar*, but of course plays and stories depicting the seedier side of life were well known and enjoyed for years prior to the eighteenth century, for example, in the works of Shakespeare, Marlow and Chaucer. For the purposes of this thesis the starting point

will be the highly popular Broadside sheets since they represent the first visual depiction of murder which was widely available to all. These unsophisticated and sometimes untrue accounts of crimes dominated the reporting of murder events and were prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, (Crone 2012). They were crudely printed, usually just a single sheet and the narrative was simple to understand, (Knelman 1998). They flourished in an age of illiteracy providing cheap entertainment for the masses which could be read aloud or in the case of the broadside ballads sung to an eager audience. Crime and specifically murder were the content of choice and when a particular crime caught the public imagination, they could sell hundreds of thousands of copies (Hindley 1886).

As the demand for the broadsides declined the readership of newspapers increased. Some publications specialised in reporting the more violent crimes and bizarre deaths such as *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper* and *The Illustrated Police News*. It was first published in 1864 and was, as its name suggests, exploiting the development of printing technology adding dramatic and often brutal drawings to the stories which filled its pages. As Crone (2012) describes, *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper*, helped establish the custom of buying a weekly paper rather than the one-off broadsides. Lloyd's Sunday newspaper was filled with bloodthirsty, violent and sensational news but no illustrations.

As the number of newspapers grew and literacy levels rose papers continued to use salacious stories to attract readers. Altick (1970) notes that *The Observer* made great play of the amount of crime it reported, publishing extra supplements when it was warranted and it led the way in the regular use of illustrations of crimes by the weekly press. See appendix H for more detailed history of crime reporting and an actor network account of two infamous Victorian murders.

As television news developed during the second half of the twentieth century crime became a staple content within bulletins and news teams covered murder events with their new technology. The following quotes taken from interviews conducted for this thesis demonstrate how murders are viewed by BBC staff and give an insight into the reasons they believe specific murder events are chosen for coverage. Further interviewee responses are included within appendix I.

I used to work over in the east of the country, in Cambridge, it was a small opt²⁵ so we would cover every sort of crime going. If we had a murder you can be sure we would make the most of it, they didn't happen very often so they were big news.

(BBC member of staff, West Midlands)

The following comments on the news value of murders are taken from interviews with a number of BBC regional television news producers from across the country.

Murders often make strong news stories. It's the emotional connection which gives a murder story impact. So, someone killed in their own home, male or female, old or young, by a burglar is a strong story. We all can relate to the victim. So is the murder of a child. Who could do such a thing? Are our own children or those of someone we know at risk? But if two homeless men fight over a bottle of whisky and one is killed it is harder for the viewer to relate to because they are unlikely to be able to picture themselves in a similar situation. Also,

²⁵ An opt is a smaller part of a programme produced for a larger regional programme. In this example the respondent was referring to the 10-15-minute part of the programme produced from Cambridge which was part of the *Look East* programme produced in Norwich. In May 2018 the Cambridge sub region of the BBC's East region expanded its previous limited evening programme from an opted-out bulletin from the main Norwich programme into a full programme.

in television terms the story has much more impact if friends or relatives will speak about their loss and of course it is essential to have a still image or increasingly a video of the dead person. It is very hard to relate to someone who we can't visualise.

(Dave Hart, Assistant Editor, BBC Midlands Today)

This female interviewee works in another diverse BBC region with several large towns.

We have many murders in this region. If we did a full report on each one, they would often dominate the news agenda. Obviously, we don't do that – firstly because that wouldn't be serving our audience properly and secondly because most of them don't make “good stories” - they're just a tragedy for the people involved. A murder which is seen as more unusual, or particularly shocking, will also receive more coverage. So for example the murder of a child will always be extensively reported on by a regional newsroom. If the suspects are unknown, or strangers rather than a relative/partner of a relative, the story is likely to make national headlines.

(Anonymous BBC, Assistant Editor)

The response from a producer covering the South East of England deserves to be quoted at length since in his answers he identifies many of the questions television journalists ask themselves when deciding on what murder stories to cover.

In a region like the South East murder remains a rare event so is pretty much always newsworthy. However, we would not always make a murder our lead story – there's a danger that regional news

can give the erroneous impression that the streets are rife with crime and that there's so much violence that it's not safe to go out at night!

Author: Why do you think murders make good stories?

Dan: Matters of life and death are inherently dramatic, just look at the obsession with crime and murder in film, drama, literature going back centuries. At the risk of sounding callous, murders create powerful human-interest stories; we can empathise with themes of grief, betrayal, jealousy, etcetera, regardless of where the event has taken place geographically.

Author: Can one murder be more newsworthy than another?

Dan: I think we sympathise, empathise far more with murders where the victims are like us. So, murders affecting "ordinary" families are more newsworthy than, say, one homeless alcoholic murdering another homeless alcoholic in a squat. Clearly, it's more newsworthy if friends and family members are willing to engage with the media, provide pictures and give interviews. If the victim is young and photogenic, e.g., Millie Dowler, the story takes on even greater emotional resonance. We empathise with the horror of a promising young life cut short and the grief of parents who've lost their child

(Dan Fineman, Assistant Editor, BBC South East)

These comments and those from BBC journalists across the country interviewed for this thesis clearly identify an accepted newsworthiness of murder events within BBC regional newsrooms. However, as seen by the example of Hayley Pointon (from page 196), which murder becomes a news story and how they are

treated depends on the types of actors enrolled into the translation process of news production.

Academic study of media reporting of murder

There have been many studies on the media reporting of murders however, much of the research has been conducted in America (reporting of murders on British television is an under researched area of investigation) and it should be noted that the America homicide and news experience is quite different to that of the United Kingdom (not least because of the laws on gun ownership).²⁶

Sorenson, Manz and Berk (1998) concluded that some victims and murders received more coverage by the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper than others. They found a bias towards the reporting of female, elderly and child victims. Black or Hispanic victims received less coverage. Chermak (1995) agrees, 'Crime victims are influential in determining why certain crime stories are selected, how stories are produced, which stories are presented, and which crimes are filtered out of the process.' (1995, p.62). However, Gruenewald et al (2009) saw selection of murders on grounds of ethnicity of the assailant and a possible reason for this was the framing of the crime as a social threat. For example, an Hispanic killer targeting black or white victims. In part, their research in the American city of Newark, New Jersey, also supports previous studies such as Lundman (2003), which highlighted

²⁶ In England there is no real commercial competition within the supply of local television news. In most parts of the country the regional BBC and regional Independent Television news programmes are the main providers for local news and because of the way they are funded and regulated they are not really in direct competition with each other. American cities often have several commercial news operations competing for audience ratings and advertising revenue which can influence the types of stories covered and the style of reporting.

‘newsworthy’ incidents which had multiple victims, involved firearms or ‘undeserving’ victims, Grunenewald et al (2009, p.268). This reference to a racial bias in coverage of violent crime and murder by local television in America is not something discernible in reporting of similar crimes in BBC regional newsrooms.

Race does not appear to play an overt part in the story selection process. As interviews with newsmakers for this study show other factors such as socio-economic grouping and the unusualness of the crime are more important in determining coverage. In identifying an ‘ideal victim’ Christie (1986) suggests she should be old, or very young, perhaps sick and not to blame for being a victim. The offender should be big and bad and unknown to their victim (which is often not the case in many murders). She contrasts this with a young man robbed of his money in a bar by an acquaintance who is far from an ideal victim. Investigating the newsworthiness of murder victims in Canada, Gilchrist (2010), shows that native Aboriginal women receive far less news coverage than white women. ‘The lack of coverage to missing/murdered Aboriginal women appears to suggest that their stories are not dramatic or worthy enough to tell, that Aboriginal women’s victimization is too routine or ordinary, and /or irrelevant to (White) readers.’ (2010, p.385). Dowler (2004) states, following his own research into the influence of race on reporting of crime, ‘Essentially, the motto “it bleeds it leads” still rings true for many newscasts, but is not entirely accurate. It really depends on who is bleeding.’ (2004, p.841). Greer (2007) suggests there is a ‘hierarchy of victimization’ (2007, p.22) and ‘ideal or legitimate victim status’ (2007, p.23). He cites the widely reported disappearance and murder of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in Soham, Cambridge in 2002 and compares it with similar cases which failed to gain the same level of media coverage. Matt Tapp was in charge of co-ordinating the police media response to the

disappearance of the two girls and agrees there is a hierarchy of what journalists want and that police media teams are well aware of that. For him the story of Holly and Jessica had it all.

The photogenic nature of the girls, the fact that anyone reading that story can associate with the story because we have all been children a rural idyllic where stuff like that should never happen doing nothing more guilty, what could be more innocent than wandering from a family BBQ to buy some sweets and wander around the village in the fading August sunshine. It's got every component including Beckham and it's no wonder to me that it went stratospheric. What's interesting to me is the public interest in the story more messages of condolence were written in emails, books of condolence in cathedrals for the deaths of two little girls that no one had ever met outside that village than those who expressed similar sentiments about the death of Princess Diana who had been on our TV screens for day after day after day. Who were Holly and Jessica? No one had ever heard of them but there was this massive outpouring over Holly and Jessica.

(Matt Tapp, Head of Communications, Nottinghamshire Police)

For Wardle, (2006) the way the Soham story was reported fitted a growing trend in contemporary journalism with a focus on the victim and the blaming of society for creating the evil of the criminal, paedophiles, for example while in previous eras when 'focus was placed firmly on the offender' (2006, p.521). For Peelo (2006) murders are actively framed in this way by newspapers in order for the reader 'to focus on the side of the offended against and is encouraged to feel hurt,' (2006, p.168). Sexual murders are more likely to be reported in the press according

to Peelo et al (2004), which can lead to a skewed perception among the public as to the real rate of sexual and homicide crimes, Mason and Monckton-Smith (2008).

Research by Vandiver and Giacopassi (1997) shows an alarming disconnect between the perceived levels of crime and the actual occurrence. They surveyed first year students studying criminal justice at an American university about their understanding of the homicide rates. The results were remarkable, with more than 70% estimating there were more than 100,000 homicides each year. Alarmingly almost 15 % of respondents thought the murder rate was above 1 million a year, staggering in a country with a population somewhere around the 260 million level when the survey was conducted. The actual homicide rate was, 23,305 in 1994 according to government figures, (1997, p.139). One suggested reason for this overestimation in the homicide rate is the way crime is reported across American media. The authors point to other work, Gerbner (1996) and The Center for Media and Public Affairs in Virginia, USA, who both found distorted reporting of crime when compared to its actual occurrence. McArthur et al (2001) found similar over reporting of deaths caused by murder, air accidents, fires and environmental factors when analysing news broadcasts in Los Angeles. For the year 2016, there were 17,250 (in 2013 the figure was 14,196) murders in America according to the FBI²⁷ that is 47 per day. In the United Kingdom figures from the Office of National Statistics show a rate of 571 for the year ending in March 2016²⁸. That is a rate of 1.6 per day (the number of homicides in 2013 was 551 for the entire year.)²⁹ As the various News Values approaches to story selection discussed earlier (see page 21 and 191) suggest

²⁷ <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2016-crime-statistics-released>

²⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/homicide>

²⁹ The American population for 2013 is estimated by the FBI at 316m. The Office of National Statistics put the UKs population at 64m in 2013.

events which are unusual are more likely to be seen as newsworthy by journalists and the simple truth is that in the United States homicide is not that unusual while it remains so in the United Kingdom.

In the chapter looking at various competing and complimentary definitions of news and newsworthiness, news was described as being ‘routine’ Tuchman (1978, p.58), for Schudson (1989, p.265) it is ‘constructed’ and for Cohen and Young (1973, p.97) news is ‘manufactured’. Stories which become news are those which satisfy some of the benchmarks laid out by Galtung and Ruge (1965) and developed further by others; see Harcup and O’Neill (2016), Harrison (2008) and MacShane (1979). Journalists want stories which they loosely describe as “human interest”; have some element of drama or conflict; they can be both events which are expected and those which are unexpected; they should be easy to tell and easy to understand by the audience. Crime and murder stories can often fulfil these requirements of a newsroom and there have been many academic investigations into both, (Yanich, 2001; Klite et al, 1997; Sacco,1995; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1993; Lesser, 1993; Dahlgren,1988; Katz 1987). Lipschultz and Hilt (2002) chart the growth of crime as content for local news stations in America and document the use of crime as a device to drive up audience figures and ratings. Rosenstiel et al (2007) researched more than 33,000 news stories from more than 150 American news stations in an effort to improve the output. Among their concerns was the pre-occupation with crime and sensationalist reporting of it. For former detective turned journalist, Mark Fuhrman, murder is big business ‘let’s face it – just another branch of the entertainment industry’, (2009, p.1). He was one of the leading investigators in the OJ Simpson case and knows at first-hand how both the police and media operate in America. It is his contention that the American media work against the police since it is in the

interests of television shows to make newsworthy murder investigations last as long as the ratings remain high, while the detectives want to solve cases as quickly as possible. The way homicide is represented by news media was the focus of Duwe's (2000) analysis of mass murder in America. He concludes that while most mass killings will be reported by local news only those which have high body counts will get national coverage

...the higher the body count the more newsworthy the mass killing because it was more serious, shocking, and tragic. But massacres were even more tragic when strangers were killed. These incidents conjure up images of random violence because the slaughter of strangers connotes an indiscriminate selection of victims. As a result, a sharp distinction is drawn between victims and offenders: Victims are depicted as blameless or virtuous, whereas offenders are characterized as evil, crazy, and less than human.

(Duwe 2000, p.391)

These murders are the ones which make national headlines and are used, according to Duwe, to maximize television ratings. Chermak (1994) made the following observation after studying the content of a newspaper and local television station in a Midwestern city in America,

An "ordinary homicide," in which an 18- to 24-year-old black male murders an 18- to 24-year-old black male, might be transformed into a crime story, depending on the availability of other news, but generally it will not be an important story. In practice, this type of homicide occurs too frequently to make news. Not all homicides are

important news, and some never become stories because the news media recognize that not all have entertainment value.

(Chermak 1994, p.570)

These final words are echoed by the man in charge of media relations at Nottinghamshire Police Matt Tapp. Having worked at several English police forces, he has seen at first hand the types of stories and murders which interest journalists.

Journalists pander to the prejudice in the clinical sense of their audience and if a news editor who, let's face it, is likely to be white, middle aged and male is the arbiter of what is or is not news, he will be influenced by his own interest in what he thinks of that story and by what he thinks his readers or viewers will be interested in.

Therefore, you do end up with a pretty blue-eyed girl from Leicestershire goes missing from a holiday resort in Portugal and there is the most almighty surge of British bigoted tabloid imperialistic journalism via EasyJet to swamp the airwaves with news of Madeline. And in the next breath a slightly less attractive, slightly older girl from a suburb called Dewsbury in West Yorkshire goes missing and for a week there is virtually no media interest in that story at all because she is not fitting that archetypal 'model of our readers will feel sympathy/empathy. Many times, many people have said if you're black or Asian, you're male, you have a drugs problem you come from a broken home, and you live in a shit council estate forget it! No press officer in the country will generate an appropriate level of media interest and therefore public interest because of the

news values taken by the journalists on that story. Everyone loves a murder. But journalists like some murder more than other murders.

(Matt Tapp, Head of Communications, Nottinghamshire Police)

Interviews conducted during this study found BBC journalists from across the country and members of the police held similar opinions on what type of murders were actually of interest to the media and under what circumstances. In his detailed analysis of regional independent television in the English midlands, Cottle (1993) found that crime stories were a significant source of television reports. His area of investigation was the reporting of 'inner city' issues, however this focus may itself distort any results since more heavily populated areas are statistically more likely to generate more stories of all kinds. Whether crime is a suitable subject for television news stories is a separate question to the decisions taken about which murders receive coverage and, as outlined above and elsewhere in this thesis, many if not most, journalists think it is.

You'll have heard this expression before. It's dreadfully cynical but to a certain extent it does chime with what many journalists feel is news and it's this, 'if it bleeds it leads'. And it was always the case that if you got a serious crime story, a murder, by its very nature is newsworthy because it's out of the ordinary. That to me is the essence of news, something that's unexpected, a surprise, out of the ordinary. If it's particularly bad news, crisis news, by the very nature of that it travels quicker than good news sadly. My first news editor said basically for a news story to sell it had to have certain ingredients, ideally a sex scandal, a royal or somebody who was highly thought of in society, a doctor or a lawyer, either caught with their trousers down

or hands in the till that made news, if you had a cleric involved even better! And a moment of terror. So, if it had those ingredients terror, money, the royals, sex it sold, it made news.

(John Hess, Political Editor, BBC East Midlands Today)

This reasoning behind story selection is repeated time and time again in the interviews conducted with journalists from across the BBC. Here are two specific replies to the question why murders are seen as events for local television news and how a news team can make choices between different murders.

They are bread and butter. It's still viewed as the worst human crime that you can commit, to kill somebody else and therefore we assume that the taking of a life, that life has a value, and it's important and the taking of that life needs to be reflected. Some cases are more intriguing than others and the recent case where some bodies have been discovered years later in a garden in Nottinghamshire reflects that entirely, that which is unusual. It's not on the face of it a crime of passion where some poor soul has been bludgeoned to death, shot or stabbed to death in a moment of anger, which informs an awful lot of murders and manslaughter but it's one which is certainly outside the grounds of normal crime of passion. Similarly, the Philpot's [the Philpot case is examined below see from page 267] where it appears there was a plot to frame somebody which went hideously wrong and six children died similarly outside, well outside the normal realms, I've never covered anything like that in my 30 years as a journalist.

(James Roberson, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

You have to prioritise everything against other sorts of news. So if you are in a part of the country where murders hardly ever happen, when one does even, if it could be one which you might think is not as shocking as another, say you are in a quiet little village in Somerset, it will spark a very different reaction among people there than in inner city Nottingham or London. So, you do have to balance it sometimes against what else is going on. But when there are several people involved for example a house fire which kills several people, which we've had, it's a massive story, because so many died but also because of the intricacy of the story behind it. When we've seen someone particularly young or vulnerable who you wouldn't expect it to happen to and in right minded thinking shouldn't happen to, then that garners a different response. When it's a robbery or someone is shot during a raid, every murder is different, but sometimes you might dig deeper into a domestic, it's hard to do that, but sometimes there is an element in that which will make people stop and listen. They can have it. There is a story behind each murder it's just if you are able to get to it, to tell it, then you make your decision.

(Carolyn Moses, Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

As these interviews show not all murders are seen as equal and these replies from journalists go some way to explaining why that is the case. Time and again journalists and technical staff interviewed for this thesis gave a similar list of elements that a murder event needed to have to interest them; pictures of the scene, photographs of the victim, access to interviews with police, family or witnesses were a starting point. Each one of these elements is an actor within the network created

around any murder and as such their inclusion or exclusion can help to sustain or undermine the network. Other actors which can influence the creation of storytelling networks include what other stories are being covered that day, what resources can be deployed to the story, its geographical location and the time until the next broadcast. The rarity value of an event also plays an important part in the decision-making process.

Murders as news stories

In 1934, Dorothy L Sayers, the English born crime writer, summed up the public's fascination 'Death seems to provide the minds of the Anglo-Saxon race with a greater fund of innocent enjoyment than any other single subject,' Sayers (1934)³⁰. Her observation was made with regard to the world of literature and more than twenty years before television had become a serious source of entertainment. However, looking at today's television schedules it would appear that crime stories, be they fact or fiction, are indeed substantial source of entertainment.³¹ Research into news programmes might be expected to show a similar dominance of murder and homicide stories within news running orders since they clearly resonate with television audiences.

Empirical analysis³² of the 15 BBC regional evening news programmes across week nights between 5th January 2015 and 9th January 2015 shows that out of a total broadcast time of 1864 minutes and 45 seconds, 75 minutes and 43 seconds were dedicated to murder stories; a little over four per cent of all broadcast air time. Among these stories were localized follow-ups and reaction to the murder of several French journalists during a terrorist attack in Paris at the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. This accounted for more than half of all the air time dedicated to murder

³⁰ Written by Dorothy L. Sayers in her preface to *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror, Third Series*, published by Gollancz in 1934.

³¹ Among the dozens of crime-based television shows broadcast in the UK on 20/11/2020 were, *The Bill*, *Dexter*, *Law and Order*, *Crimes That Shook Britain*, *New Tricks*, *Homicide Hunter*, *Perry Mason*, *Britain's Most Evil Killers*, *NCIS*, *CSI*, *The Sweeney* and *Inspector George Gently*.

³² The criteria for inclusion of a story within the research were those identified as having a link to homicide, which is the murder or manslaughter of an individual or individuals. The duration of the entire story, that is the part read by the newscaster and any subsequent reported element of the story was included. This was done for each regional programme for each week day and the totals added together. The entire duration of each programme was totalled and added together to provide the overall broadcast time for the week.

stories, almost 41 minutes. Among the other stories reported were the conviction for a double murder, fatal stabbings, arrests of murder suspects and murder convictions.

Across the BBC regional news programmes for this week there were just two reports of murders that had been committed on the day of reporting. In one instance the killing of a young woman in Shrewsbury led the evening news on *Midlands Today* and was produced as a live event³³ between a reporter at the scene and the studio presenter. The second example of a murder story broadcast on the day it happened was a report which lasted 14 seconds. It was about the fatal stabbing of a teenager in east London and showed a few pictures of the scene of the attack. The news presenter read the script live in the studio to accompany the images. Without detailed examination of the circumstances behind the news production process behind each report it would be misleading to draw any conclusions about why the coverage was so different. However, it is accurate to say that one murder received more air-time and greater coverage and prominence than the other and the storytelling treatments were quite different.

The analysis of one week's stories is just a snap-shot of a short period in television news output and cannot be judged as more than that since murders are quite rare. The time taken for investigations to develop into court cases can be lengthy and therefore stories about convictions will appear in television news output only at their conclusion. A year later the same analytical exercise was repeated using the same criteria. The 15 BBC evening programmes for the English regions broadcast between the 4th and 8th of January 2016 inclusively were analysed. The programmes ran for a total of 1810 minutes. 21 minutes and 16 seconds was used for

³³ In television terms this is known as a live 2-way. This is television shorthand for a live report, usually from the scene of an event, involving a reporter on location answering questions from the newsroom presenter.

telling stories of murder, a figure much lower than the same period the previous year, running at less than 1.2 per cent of total air time. The following table shows the different broadcast periods included in the analysis.

Broadcast period	Total output	Murder stories
5 th -9 th January 2015	1864 minutes 45secs	75 minutes 43 secs
		34 minutes 43 secs (excluding Paris attacks)
4 th -9 th January 2016	1810 minutes	21 minutes 16 secs

However, if the coverage which resulted as a reaction to the Paris attacks from 2015 is excluded the figures look much more in line with each other; although the 2015 period still has more time dedicated to murder stories. Those stories covered in 2016 were similar to those of 2015, breaking murders, court reports, police appeals and historic crimes. For example, the programme *Points West*, based in Bristol, reported on a new police appeal to find the killers of a conman. *South Today*, which has its main production centre in Southampton, ran a 25 second story on a court appearance of a man charged with murder on the 7th January and had as its third story on Friday 8th January a report on a police investigation into the murder of a woman the previous night. It lasted 109 seconds and was an illustrated live³⁴ from the scene in Dorset. In London the murder of actress Sian Blake, who had appeared in the BBC soap *EastEnders*, was reported for two consecutive nights on the 5th and 6th January for 140 seconds and 163 seconds respectively. On both occasions the style of the report was a 'live'. On the first occasion with a reporter from the scene

³⁴ This term refers to a live broadcast by a reporter, usually from the scene of a story, which may include clips of interviews, graphics or general shots to accompany and explain the story.

where three bodies had been found and on the second night the story took the form of a live studio interview with a former police detective who had been invited to discuss the case. On Friday the 8th January *BBC London News*' third story was an interview with the family of a man murdered at Christmas. The other regional programmes carried a similar mix of court reports, police and family appeals and they took the form of short news in brief (nib) items³⁵ or more traditional packaged reports. The positioning of the reports in the programme running orders was also similar to the previous period of 2015 with, for example, a court report from *North West Tonight* being the second story on Friday the 8th January and a conviction of a killer which led *Midlands Today* in Birmingham on Wednesday the 6th. Generally, the shorter, news in brief stories, were about arrests or charges and featured in programmes as part of the general news round-up sections of the output. For several regions coverage of the flooding which occurred over Christmas 2015 and into the New Year 2016 was regularly leading the output. Various other crime stories including drive by shootings, sex attacks, and terrorism trials were also covered.

The number of murders in England and Wales had been declining over the last decade. However, figures for the year ending December 2015 taken from the Office of National Statistics, show an increase for the first time in a number of years. There were 573 homicides recorded in England and Wales, an increase of 56 on the previous year. While the population of the country has grown the number of homicides has generally been falling and according to the official figures 'the rate of homicide has dropped by more than a third between the years ending March 2005 and December 2015 from 16 homicides per million of the population to 10

³⁵ These are short stories, normally no more than about 25 seconds in duration, and take their name from the newspaper term for the same story – NIB is an acronym from – news in brief.

homicides per million.’ (Office of National Statistics, Crime in England and Wales: Year ending December 2015). These figures show a homicide rate of about 1.5 per day which would equate to 7.5 homicides across the snap-shot of five days which have been analysed. However, homicides do not happen equally across the year and therefore it is highly unlikely to see such events reported by television newsrooms in an equal way.

Knife crime and fatal stabbings dominated much of the national media’s coverage of crime during the first part of 2018. In the first 100 days of the year 52 people had been killed in London, many were victims of stabbings. On the surface it had the hallmarks of a ‘panic’ not dissimilar to the garrotting scares of Victorian England, Flanders (2011), the mugging panic documented by Hall et al (1977) and Cohen’s (1972) analysis of Mods and Rockers.

What is missing from the above snap-shot analysis of murder reports on BBC regional news output is the context within which the decisions to either report or not report them were made. Measuring airtime is a blunt instrument for examining incidents of murder as news so in order to understand why stories are either broadcast or ignored it is necessary to examine in depth how these decisions are made, to apply a methodological approach which takes the news production process into account.

Murder case studies

In *Science in Action* Latour contends that in order to properly understand science and technology it is necessary to study the course of events and linkages which lead to a result rather than accepting the result on face value (Latour 1987 p.59). Just because scientists are held in high esteem does not mean that the way they reach their investigatory results is not important or does not influence the result. For Latour science is a network building activity in which the various elements forge alliances which lead to a stabilized result, an accepted fact, or for the purposes of this study a broadcast news product on a murder. As discussed earlier in this chapter taking the broadcast duration of a murder story or looking at its position in a programme does not explain why an event was covered in that manner. A much greater appreciation of the environment within which news teams make their decisions is required for a proper understanding of story selection and the next example will demonstrate this.

In *Laboratory Life* (1986) Latour and Woolgar describe what goes into the 'construction of facts' (1986, p.40) as they are seen by scientists by following the various transformations of the results of experiments into accepted truth. By observing the practice within the laboratory and at points taking part in experiments, themselves they overturned what they saw as the accepted version of the creation of facts. 'A fact only becomes such when it loses all temporal qualifications and becomes incorporated into a large body of knowledge drawn upon by others', (1986, p.106). But how does it achieve this position? The first problem for Latour and Woolgar is that the fact loses the connection with its creation, its 'historical reference' and 'misses the process' by which a given statement achieves the status as *fact* (1986, p.106). To investigate this issue they focused their analysis on the

creation of a single fact, the search for TRF(H) Thyrotropin Releasing Factor (Hormone), to show that ‘hard facts are thoroughly understandable in terms of their social construction’ (1986, p.107). To prove the existence of the hormone, which is made in the hypothalamus and used by the body to help control growth and metabolism, Latour and Woolgar’s imagined anthropologist spends a lengthy period observing the work of scientists as they conduct experiments, produce bioassays and write scientific papers. Without the equipment used to undertake these tests, described by Latour and Woolgar as ‘inscription devices’, substances cannot be said to exist. They explain this seemingly extraordinary claim in the following way.

It is not simply that phenomena *depend on* certain material instrumentation; rather, the phenomena *are thoroughly constituted by* the material setting of the laboratory. The artificial reality, which participants describe in terms of an objective entity, has in fact been constructed by the use of inscription devices.

(Latour and Woolgar 1986, p.64)

Their contention is that substances can only be defined by their relationship to the inscription devices which are used to show that they exist. Latour develops these concepts further in later works looking among other things at the relationship between Louis Pasteur and bacteria as he developed the processes of pasteurization. Latour maintains that the process we know as pasteurization would not have been possible without the ability of Pasteur to enrol a series of actors including farmers, the public hygiene movement, politicians and the bacteria themselves. Pasteur’s success was only achieved through the transformation and alignment of each actor with all the other actors in a complex network of translation.

If, to explain the "diffusion" of Pasteur's ideas, we had nothing more than the force of Pasteur and his collaborators, those ideas would never have left the walls of the Ecole Normale laboratory and would not even have entered them. An idea, even an idea of genius, even an idea that is to save millions of people, never moves of its own accord. It requires a force to fetch it, seize upon it for its own motives, move it, and often transform it.

(Latour 1988, p.16)

Each journalist has their own motivations for the selection and telling of stories. The various loose framework of requirements has been explored in the previous chapters when several different approaches to understanding news were examined. Many of them propose the same or similar reasons for story selection but they do not specifically address the telling of television murder stories nor do they address the role played by technology in the creation of television products, nor, most importantly, do they consider the creation process itself.

A case study from the BBC regional newsroom in Birmingham will be used to explore what happens within the news selection process and production process when journalists are faced with two separate murder events on the same day.

These examples are taken from field research conducted in the BBC regional newsroom of *Midlands Today* in Birmingham on the 9th October 2015. Birmingham is England's second largest city, with a population of more than a million people. The news teams which report across all media are used to incidents of murder. Between July 2014 and June 2015 there were 29 murders within Birmingham and 66

in total across the wider West Midlands region³⁶. Homicide is a consistent part of the news agenda for the regional BBC television programme *Midlands Today*, the surrounding local BBC radio stations, and social media platforms. Some, like the terrorist bombings of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1974, live long in the memory and continue to be reported as fresh news angles are discovered, while others do not.³⁷

Thursday 8th October 2015

What follows is a chronological ordering of events surrounding the two separate incidents of murder and the reaction of the newsroom to them. They were part of an eight-month period of observation and interviews conducted by the author inside the joint radio, television and social media newsroom in Birmingham from April to November 2015.

At 14:30 on Thursday 8th October the bodies of two people were found by police at an address in Digbeth, an inner-city area of central Birmingham. Later that evening at 11:30 an ambulance was called to a street in the suburb of Hawksley. The man treated at the scene died on his way to hospital. He had been found lying in the road with serious injuries. Neither incident was reported by any BBC media on the 8th of October, they were unaware that the events had occurred. The second incident in Hawksley was the first to be publicly acknowledged by the West Midlands Police

³⁶Source: ONS Police recorded crime by offence group and police force area, English regions and Wales, number of offences, year ending June 2015.

³⁷ During 2018, there were several reports on *Midlands Today* about the inquest into the fatal city centre pub attacks by the IRA.

force at 04:39 in the morning of Friday 9th October. The following is part of the message posted on the force's Facebook website.

A murder investigation has been launched after a man was found with serious injuries in Birmingham last night (Thursday 8 October). Officers were called to Forde Way Gardens, Hawksley at around 11.30pm by the ambulance service following reports of a man collapsed.... Chief Inspector Caroline Marsh, from Birmingham's Homicide Team, said: "We still continue to investigate the motive behind the attack but believe at this stage that it may have been targeted."

(West Midlands Police Facebook site 9th October 2015)

The public acknowledgment by the police of this story was not spotted by journalists for a few hours which was later admitted as a failing by one member of newsroom staff who explained it thus,

There are so many different things we've got to be across now, websites, Twitter, Facebook and all the forces have their own and everybody Tweets and posts it's not a surprise things get overlooked sometimes.

(Newsroom Broadcast Journalist)

However, the news editor at Radio WM (Birmingham's BBC local radio station) Chris, had independently heard about the incident in the early morning from a colleague who lived close to the scene. Chris was the first person on shift who reacted to it.

We found out from somebody who works here in Birmingham that there had been a murder, she said, in Kings Norton area of

Birmingham. We got in touch with the police and asked them about it. They said they were putting it on the website, they said a guy, a teenager had died from his injuries. What we didn't know is how he died and the police wouldn't tell us because there hadn't been a post mortem. But the contact here in Birmingham was certain that it was a shooting. So I called the police back, their press release didn't mention guns, but when I spoke to them they said 'you can say that we turned-up after gunshots were heard'. Which for me made the story more interesting because there is a perception that gun crime is a real problem in inner city Birmingham and cities like Birmingham.

(Chris Blakemore, News Editor, Radio WM)

For Chris the possibility it was a shooting made the killing more newsworthy and he immediately checked this with the police. Because they would not confirm the victim had been shot but did concede that shots had been fired Chris was more curious and he alerted the television producer of the day to the new information. Interest within the television news team grew for the same reason Chris had become more interested; there had been a number of shootings in the West Midlands in the previous weeks and this was possibly another example of fatal gun crime.

There is always a journalistic interest in events which can be linked. A spate of shootings, stabbings, dogs attacking small children. Journalists like to show patterns with these incidents, it means they can put questions to people in charge, challenge authority, interview people in fear or be a mouth-piece for their viewers, listeners and readers.

(BBC regional news producer)

Inside the Birmingham newsroom there was shared interest in the story from both radio and television and their reaction was similar. This first moment of translation identifies two actors joined together with a need to report a developing story. They identify the resources they need to make this happen and in so doing become the focal actors.

Chris is in charge of providing news content for Radio WM. He makes the decisions on what stories will be covered by the station and how. Every story passes through him as the focal actor for all radio material. The same is true of the television news producer. As has been seen in previous example, (pages 121, 159 and 200), in this thesis television producers co-ordinate and control what stories are included in the evening news programme and to a lesser degree other bulletins. It is they who set the news agenda and determine which other actors will become involved. Callon describes this process as the moment of problematization, the point 'which renders them indispensable in the network' Callon (1986, p.6).

In this case Chris and the television news producer have identified a story they wish to cover, the fatal shooting, and agree to co-ordinate their efforts to report the event. They become indispensable because they are the obligatory passage points. They reinforce their positions at the morning news meeting at 09:15 by making sure that all their colleagues know what they want. It is at this point they begin to enrol other actors. Their colleagues from the local BBC online service willingly accept being enrolled into the growing network. They do not offer any resistance. In fact they are keen to receive any pictures or information from the scene of the murder to use on their website. Because their own team is small, they do not usually cover stories independently from the rest of the newsgathering structure. Instead they rely upon the radio and television reporters who will be sent

from the office. This moment is identified by Callon (1986) as the stage of *interessement* when those who have identified what their interests are and ‘confirms (more or less completely) the validity of the problematisation and the alliances it implies’ (1986, p. 9-10).

Everyone is in agreement that the murder should be covered by the various news teams and they each automatically consider what they require. For radio it is confirmation of the incident and as a minimum a script written in the newsroom from the current information; the news editor would prefer a police interview and interviews with any eyewitnesses from the scene. The online team would like to have images from the scene and any direct quotes from police or local residents; but they can publish the story with information checked against what the police are telling the media. The television team want moving pictures from the scene and preferably filmed interviews with residents and the police officers involved in the investigation.

These are three separate but interlocking outputs each with differing technograms created by the differing requirements of the technological platforms on which they reach their audience. This difference in output requirements is an important point to emphasis. Although they all want to tell the story they must do it in a different way to each other and what they say they want at the 09:15 meeting may change during the course of the day. Things do change within the networks which develop and actors’ positions alter. Latour (1999) and Law and Hassard (1999) show this fluidity within the translation process as actors negotiate their relationships within a network in order to maintain it. This is indeed true of the BBC Midlands newsroom and the different pulls on the actors involved.

Although the television staff were all interested in the murder there is no sense of urgency among them. It is still early in the day and most resources have been allocated to other stories including three teams of reporters and camera crews which are pre-filming for other days. Pre-filming helps the newsroom keep a constant supply of stories ready for broadcast and these reports can be tied to specific forthcoming events or be original off-diary stories, available to run when required, and not linked to specific transmission days.

The first crew would be available later in the morning and the television producer asks for one to be sent when they became free. He wanted the pictures gathered from the scene of the murder in case it was indeed a shooting rather than a 'run-of-the-mill low life killing'. At this point the incident has the potential to be covered as a major story, a short 'news in brief' or ignored completely. The rather dismissive assessment of the situation by the television producer explains the almost casual response to the incident among the whole team. In a region of the country where murders are fairly common, running at more than one per week according to the Office of National Statistics, staff do not always rush to cover every incident. Before committing valuable resources and programme air-time to the potential murder story the producer, although interested, was happy to wait until he had a greater understanding of the attack before committing more resources to the incident. The producer of the lunchtime bulletin took a similar line, the facts about the attack were few, and its importance as a story was uncertain.

The news production process was in a state of flux and the outcome, the newsworthiness of the incident, was at this specific moment unknown. The future for the network of alliances developing around the murder looked uncertain. The first few actors had been enrolled, the local witness had informed Chris, the radio

news editor, who in turn had told the television producer and Chris had also called the police for more information. The person on camera diary, the position within the television newsroom in charge of deploying resources, had put an entry into the newsroom computer. This process has been explained earlier, (see from page 165), and the transformation of the story from a verbal request into a tangible form, show how it has become an immutable mobile. This is the term Latour (1987, 1986) uses to describe portable actors which can effect change in other actors yet remain unchanged themselves. This 'job sheet' was emailed to the members of the Satellite Newsgathering (SNG) team Steven and Eqbal as they were the only camera available. However, they were on a meal break having been on shift since 06:00 as cover for the BBC network breakfast programme. Justine Roper-Holland, who was working on the deployment desk within the TV news team, explains how the newsroom reacts to this type of breaking-news.

When you hear about these stories you've often no idea how they are going to turn out. They can be massive or nothing. So often you send out not knowing. The first instinct is to get a crew there. The instinct is to make crews available and get them in there even without a reporter. At the time we hadn't really assessed how serious it was and we didn't at the time have a reporter to send, but we sent the sat truck anyway as we have a morning shift covered and if they aren't doing a morning job they can be used to do something else

(Justine Roper-Holland, Camera Diary, BBC Midlands Today)

This reaction is fairly typical of newsrooms, responding to an incident in order not to miss things, but judging what the level of response should be, based on the known facts and their own intuition, or nose. This is a common expression

talked about in all newsrooms and among journalists of all ages. Hemmingway (2008) rightly describes it as an 'ambiguous and ill-defined term' but it is one which journalists believe they and their colleagues have or should have and to have it is highly prized. Responses from journalists interviewed for this project support Hemmingway's conclusion,

It's one of the instincts you have if you come across something that doesn't seem right or you think something really will be of interest to people you just know about that. You have that instinct; you have to be nosy and curious as well.

(Mike O'Sullivan, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

It is seen as the innate ability journalists have to spot what events are actually worth covering as stories; it is the 'nose for news' 'the feeling in my water' which journalists believe they have.

We often get it from reporters out in the field who say 'we should stick with the story there might be more background to it,' I've often had that when there's a court case or something's happened and just because of where it's happened or who's involved you think 'maybe we ought to look into this.' and it doesn't always come out right but I think instinct is very important, yeah, I think journalists generally know when a really good story is lurking.

(Sumeer Kalyani, Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

For Hemmingway the fact nose is hard to define is a strength which allows it to have fluidity within a network and enable some journalists who are seen to possess it to define the nature of newsworthy events.

“Nouse” can be seen as the jewel in the crown of the newsroom, and those journalists who use it assume enhanced valorization from those who do not. It is the ability to define and then to “own” news.

(Hemmingway 2004, p.421)

Although those people working within the Birmingham newsgathering operation had known about the killing for several hours, the lack of concrete information about it was impeding the reaction from all broadcasting platforms. The embryonic alliance which had begun to form was almost on hold; waiting for something significant to take it forward.

12:52 **Murder inquiry after Hawksley death**

A man has died after what police are treating as a "targeted" attack in Birmingham last night, **[prompting a murder inquiry](#)**.

The 20-year-old was found collapsed with "serious injuries" in Forde Way Gardens, Hawksley at about 23:30 and later died in hospital.

A post mortem examination is due to take place in the coming days and police are appealing for any witnesses to come forward.

 Share

The local BBC online team were first to publish a report about the murder. Three quite short sentences several hours after the news operation had become aware of the incident. The link embedded within the text associates the official police news release about the attack to the story.³⁸

³⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-england-birmingham-34463312>

Radio WM were next to report the murder in their one o'clock news bulletin and it was similar in content to the online story. There was no mention that the victim had been shot as this key fact was yet to be confirmed.

From a television perspective, without pictures from the scene, the attack in Hawksley remained a radio story, although the potential for it to be a fatal shooting kept news antenna among the team twitching. A lack of pictures meant it was not included in the lunchtime bulletin. While interest in the possibility of a gun related murder of a young man grew among the television news team, the report of the discovery of two bodies in another part of Birmingham was quickly dismissed as not worthy of much consideration. The police news release dampened journalistic curiosity. It was put on the West Midlands Police website at 09:02. Although it was discussed at the morning news meeting there was agreement that it was not of interest if the police news release was accurate.

Detectives have launched an investigation after the bodies of a man and a woman were discovered at an address in Digbeth yesterday afternoon (Thursday 8 October) DCI Caroline Marsh, from Force CID, said: "We are in the early stages of this enquiry but at this time we do not believe anyone else was involved in the deaths.

(West Midlands Police website site 9th October 2015)

This statement acts as a brake upon the news operation because of the last line. The police thought the two deaths were related to each other and they were not looking further for other explanations. Journalists in the newsroom accepted the police version of events and speculated that it was an act of murder followed by an act of suicide. The feeling within the newsroom was one of indifference. The police news release is a good example of an immutable mobile, in that it is both mobile and

transportable, unchanged but most importantly in this example it generates a reaction from the focal actors. Television News Editor Tim Avis explained the reasoning behind the differing coverage of the two murder events.

Tim: The one in Kings Norton happened earlier so we were able to deploy to it pretty quickly. We've not gone to the one in Digbeth as quickly because of the information we've got from the police it doesn't look like they are looking for anybody else in particular. So off the top of our heads it doesn't feel as serious an investigation as the one in Kings Norton where they are currently looking for the killer.

Author: Is that a typical reaction in a newsroom where there is a lot of crime news?

Tim: I'd say yes, it is quite typical and I'd add that timing is a big factor especially when it gets closer to a programme and we are guilty of not sending to certain things because we might not get a camera crew back to work in the studio and that may jeopardise the programme.

This rather nonchalant response to a day when there were three violent deaths is mirrored in other BBC newsrooms within the English regions. When violent deaths become a regular occurrence the news team are looking for something which makes them less 'ordinary'.

The last part of the answer points to another network which Tim is part of, the live transmission of the evening programme, and his responsibility to help keep it together. Camera crews who film stories during the day are regularly asked to operate the cameras in the television studio. As the time for transmission approaches,

he needs to ensure the resources are in place. His sociogram is under pressure from the programme director's strengthening technogram to make sure enough camera crews are back in the office in time for transmission.

Author: Can you talk me through the logistics of today?

Tim: It's fifty-fifty how producers react, some do react to breaking news, minor breaking news I should say. This murder in Digbeth is breaking news but it's not massively significant in a crime heavy patch. Some producers would send to that, just wanting pictures, others would shrug it off, not wanting it in a programme. There's news judgement, there's logistic judgement, there's factors about where the reporters may be, the crews, all sorts of factors to take into account, come in to play.

Author: That's something you've seen before?

Tim: Pretty much every day I would say. There are decisions which have to be made about what stories are going to go into the programme. I think it's a bad habit when producers get to a certain point and say 'my programme's locked in'. You need to judge a story for what it is and if it doesn't seem to be majorly serious then you don't bother. You've got to consider different parts of our audience. Would a viewer in Shropshire care about two bodies found in Digbeth? And you have to ask that if the same story happened in Shropshire rather than on our doorstep would we be deploying to Shropshire to get pictures. Sometimes location plays a part. It's geography, it's time constraints, it's logistics, it's personal news

judgement of the producers, what they've got in the programme already.

Here Tim touches on territory mentioned by other interviewees; the personal likes and dislikes of producers, the influence of geography, the importance of time, both physically in terms of getting to locations of events and chronologically with regard to the programme's transmission time. Each of these factors clearly demonstrate the mutability of the news production process; no day is the same as any other because circumstances change and therefore to understand this fluid process it is necessary to trace it afresh each time by mapping the actors enrolled in each network.

Tim is quite clear why the incident in which two people died was ignored.

The one in Digbeth where two people actually died it seemed to be, reading between the lines, that this may have been some sort of domestic incident and because of that, to be blunt, it becomes a little less interesting because it is a personal dispute between two people rather than a random killing of some sort, which to be blunt about it, is much more interesting editorially and worrying in a sense. It's of greater public concern. The other issue with the murder/suicide for want of a better description in Digbeth was that very little information was coming out, particularly we didn't have a specific location apart from a road name and that road is quite long. It's a mix of commercial premises and some residential and it was difficult to identify exactly where to point the camera at to get a location shot. It was very short on pictures with nothing to say.

(Tim Aviss, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC Midlands Today)

These violent deaths, horrific as they may have been, were unable to gain enough traction within the news operation of BBC Midlands. Tim paints a very clear picture of the various deliberations which members of the production team make when deciding which events they will deploy resources to. Critically to the actor network investigation of murder on BBC regional news these deliberations are sometimes happening beyond the eye of the investigator. They are internalised decision-making processes taking place within the minds of journalists which only become visible when mapping the deployment of the newsrooms human and technological resources.

The Digbeth murder seemed to be solved almost as soon as the investigation had begun. The police were not making an appeal for witnesses, they were not providing officers for interview and they did not appear to need the help of the media to track down a killer or to seek witnesses. There was no compelling reason for the regional television broadcast to reflect the incident in anyway. Identified as an actor with a potential network the double murder was unable to enrol enough actors in order to become irreversible and stable. There were only weak traces of translations being attempted. Journalists were not interested enough to pursue it and deploy more resources to it. Analysis of this incident which did not look at the production process and which did not interrogate the actors involved, would not have been able to uncover the truth behind why the event was not seen as newsworthy.

Tim highlights the decision-making process which producers go through as they put together a programme and perhaps key to the decision on this occasion were a lack of pictures coupled with the police statement which deflated any interest. He also touches on other factors news teams may consider when deciding what events of murder to report. He includes the geographic location, time of day and an appraisal

of the other types of stories already being planned for broadcast. Lunch producer Colin Roobottom's reflections on the coverage of the two incidents of murder support this.

The story of Conner Smith [the victim of the Hawksley shooting] was given more prominence and the Digbeth one didn't get mentioned in the end on the programme, there simply wasn't enough to say or see. I did send a camera crew on Saturday to see if there was something to be seen, not surprisingly it was quiet with nothing to be seen, business as usual. Nothing to suggest a crime had taken place, very difficult to find something to point a camera at. Conversely by Saturday Conner Smith had been named by the police and a photograph of him had been issued as well, so straight away we had more to go at, added to that flowers were at the scene, more activity and in fact it rolled into the Sunday when the post mortem was carried out and the detective involved in the investigation was available for interview, and I'd also had a tip-off from a contact that he had been a pupil at a particular secondary school we were able to secure an interview with the head teacher.

(Colin Roobottom, Producer, BBC Midlands Today)

An 18 second story about the Digbeth bodies was written as a 'standby script'³⁹ for the main evening programme on the 9th October but it wasn't used. It remained a standby story for the whole of the weekend and was never broadcast on television. As far as viewers of *Midlands Today* were concerned these were two

³⁹A story which can be used if other stories in any given broadcast are not able to be transmitted, they are there to give presenters something to read while the production staff resolve broadcast issues.

violent deaths which never happened. The police statement that they were not looking for anyone else in connection with the deaths dampened any journalistic desire to find out more. There was an assumption in the newsroom that one of the people had killed the other before taking their own life. It was seen as a classic example of a domestic murder which wasn't deemed important enough to invest any further investigative effort. The police statement was taken at face value as the truth and the incident didn't fit the preconceived notions of what was considered newsworthy.

Cataloguing murders for the sake of it doesn't serve the audience.

We could fill our programme with such stories but to what end? It's true they are events that have happened, they are new and they reflect society but a diet of death and depression isn't the whole story of any news patch on any day so we have to pick and choose the murders we report on just as we select any other story type.

(BBC regional news producer)

This is an important point and one which interviews with members of BBC news teams from other parts of England support. Interestingly it is an opinion held by both journalists and those from a more technical background.

While the two deaths in Digbeth were being ignored the crew of the satellite vehicle brought the pictures they had filmed at the scene of the suspected gun murder back to the office. There was no urgency to use their expensive satellite capabilities to send them back for a broadcast as the lunch producer was happy with the stories he already had in the bulletin. The pictures showed police tape across the road, bunches of flowers laid at the base of a post and a temporary tent erected over the crime scene.

For the production team the pictures showed there was enough to see for a short live sequence into the main evening news. A reporter who had been pre-filming a story in the morning had already been alerted to the possibility he'd be required to cover the murder. He returned to the office for a briefing before heading out to the scene to see if he could gather any eyewitness contributions from local residents. The camera diary dispatched a camera crew to meet the reporter with the expectation that he would be able to provide live broadcast facilities with his VSAT⁴⁰ equipment. This was the first time the issue of using the live broadcast facilities to tell the story had been mentioned. There was an assumption within the news operation in Birmingham that, as was usual, there were three vehicles and crews to staff them available to provide live facilities for the programme. For the team in the office the final actors were being enrolled in the story telling process, a reporter and cameraman with live broadcast facilities.

On the murder we found a reporter, he'd been doing something else but he'd actually finished that and a crew was found for him and it was decided by the producer to make the story a live but that's when we found out the crew didn't have the right equipment. We all thought the cameraman had a VSAT which would have allowed live pictures. But on that day we wrongly assumed he'd got the kit, it should have been given to him by another member of staff who was off, but that hadn't happened. So we found out very late we couldn't do a live! That changed it again! We'd taken for granted it was going to be a live but it couldn't be a live so then we decided to still do the

⁴⁰ VSAT stands for Very Small Aperture Terminal. It is the piece of mobile equipment usually mounted on vans for use by television crews to send pictures and audio from locations back to base.

story but as an aslive⁴¹, it gives you the feel of a live moment in the programme, it feels up to date, but it was the only way to get round the fact that the VSAT vehicle was sitting on the drive at the home of a cameraman playing golf in Nottingham! And we didn't know that until 5 o'clock. It's all about communication and there wasn't any, it would have been useful for the cameraman to tell us his VSAT was on his drive. But we didn't ask, we just assumed. I assumed and I should have checked. Thank goodness we didn't get to the scene later hoping to do it live; at least we got the story.

(Justine Roper-Holland, Camera Diary, BBC Midlands Today)

This description of the deployment of staff and technical resources again emphasises the fluidity of the network which had begun enrolling actors many hours earlier. For the television producer the live broadcast which he wanted from Hawksley was an accepted fact, it was going to happen at 18:35 into that evening's *Midlands Today* broadcast. However, that was not the case. Rather than the two VSAT vans and the satellite vehicle he thought he had he had only one VSAT available. It and the Satellite Newsgathering vehicle (SNG) were already committed to other parts of the programme; the second VSAT was parked on the drive of a member of staff who was off duty that day. Because the producer did not want to change the way he had allocated his other live resources for the evening programme the network he wanted to create around the desire to tell the story of the fatal shooting as a live collapsed. Here, the fluidity of news values is again highlighted

⁴¹ As though it were live. A report which although not pretending to be live gives the impression that it is taking place as the viewer is watching it.

and shown to be anything but fixed as the technological actors influence just what is considered to be news and how it can be developed into a story.

The producer had to rework his plans which he did as an instant reaction to the news that the live was no longer an option; the reporter was asked to record an 'aslive' from the scene and using another piece of equipment, JFE,⁴² send it back to the studio. This was successful and as the image below of the *Midlands Today* running order shows it was the second story that evening and was called *Murder*. The report consisted of an extended piece to camera (PTC)⁴³ with pictures of the scene.

⁴² Journalist File Exchange is the BBC's system for sending pictures and sound from laptop computers in the field back to a central server for further distribution around the organisation.

⁴³ PTC a piece to camera is a part of the script delivered by a reporter straight to the camera as though they were addressing the audience and is used for various production reasons including illustration of specific points or in situations when other pictures are not available for example when covering a court story.

Part	Story Slug	Segment	Float	Camera	Details	Team	Final	Est	Actual	Back	Turn	MOS	MOS	MOS On
						Appr	Appr	Duration	Start	End	Time	Chan	Status	Slug
12	TITLES				SERVER B			1:10	0:00	18:25:56	1:10	A		TITLES_LONG_1830_HOLD
13	ABATTOR	INTRO		2standu	PRES + scms 2pbx	P		0:20	0:24	18:27:06	1:34			ABATTOR_091015_GLA_1830BIM
14		GLA			PKGASTONS			2:00	2:10	18:27:30	3:44			
15	MURDER	INTRO		2	PRES	P		0:15	0:13	18:29:40	3:57			
16		ASLIVE			BS			1:15	1:25	18:29:53	5:22			MURDER_091015_BS_1830BIM
17	BODIES	READ	✓	2	OOV			0:17	0:17	18:31:18	5:22			
18	BOAT	OOV		2	PRES + OOV	P		0:20	0:20	18:31:18	5:42			BOAT_091015_OOV_1830BIM
26		HAND		3 scm	PRES + 3pbx/OSS	P		0:15	0:16	18:31:38	5:58			
27	SCHOOL	LIVE 1		OSS	LCU @ OB + guests? stafford			2:00	0:00	18:31:54	7:58			SCHOOL_091015_FLT_1830BIM
28		FLOAT			OOV			0:00	0:00	18:33:54	7:58			
29		ACT			ACT			0:00	0:00	18:33:54	7:58	B		SCHOOL_091015_VOX_1830BIM
19	BOYDEATH	INTRO 1		3 scm	PRES + 3pbx	P		0:20	0:25	18:33:54	8:23			BOYDEATH_091015_MPA_1830BIM
20		MPA			PKGASTONS			2:00	2:03	18:34:19	10:28			
21		INTRO		3 scm	PRES + 3pbx	P		0:20	0:17	18:36:22	10:43			
22	NHS	KBE			PKGASTONS (Paddy in)			1:30	1:33	18:36:39	12:16			NHS_091015_KBE_1830BIM
23		INTRO2		1	MARY N VIS	P		0:10	0:10	18:38:12	12:26			
24		LIVE		2/3/1	MPA @ DESK			1:15	0:00	18:38:22	13:41			
25	CLOCKING	OOV	✓	2	PRES + OOV	M		0:20	0:21	18:39:37	13:41			
30	APPORT	OOV	✓	2	PRES	P		0:25	0:24	18:39:37	13:41		DELETED	APPORT_091015_OOV_1830BIM
31		ACT	✓		PKGASTONS			0:25	0:19	18:39:37	13:41	B	READY	APPORT_091015_ACT_1830BIM
32		OOV 1		1	PRES / BONG+MUSIC BED + KHALSA OOV (or ACT/LIVE)	P		0:10	0:10	18:39:37	13:51	A		COMINGUP1_091015_OOV_FX_1830BIM
33	COMING UP	OOV 2		1	WIFE / BONG+MUSIC BED + DURSLEY OOV	P		0:10	0:05	18:39:47	13:56	B		COMINGUP2_091015_OOV_1830BIM
34		STORES			MIX / MUSIC BED + OOV			0:11	0:11	18:39:52	14:07	A		CONTACTUS_301215_GFX_HOLD

1830 Midlands Today 09/10/15 programme running order

The short story about the two bodies found in Digbeth was called *Bodies* and was numbered 17 in the running order. The red line across the entire row shows that it was ‘floated’ and not used during the programme as was explained earlier in this chapter. The Digbeth murders story was reported on both radio and the BBC’s online

pages for Birmingham. For both these media platforms the lack of pictures, of concern to the television team, was not an issue. It provided a fresh story for both outlets and accordingly was published online at 17:42 and broadcast as a radio story at 18:00.

These examples of murder events taken from one BBC region on one day show the production process in detail and explore the reasons why journalists select one story over another. There is a common understanding and approach taken by different members of staff towards the selection of why resources should be invested in one story and not the other. The events were being judged by different journalists sitting in different roles within the newsroom using similar criteria. Earlier in this thesis, (page 21, page 191), some of the traditional news value approaches proposed for the understanding of story selection by journalists were reviewed. They offer a broad framework of explanation based upon research undertaken within newsrooms and the examination of published and broadcast stories. But this current research shows how they miss the microscopic examination of the associations which are fashioned between the various actors as stories are produced and have been so neatly explained by interviewees.

In the case study of the murders being investigated by the BBC newsroom in Birmingham, the obligatory point of passage is the television news producer who is located by both his ties to other actors who are enrolled and embedded in the translation process, his sociogram; and his ties to the technogram, the various ways the actors are connected, in this example the technology of television but also the evening programme itself. A shift on one axis is reflected by a change on the other. For example, the television producer wanted to have a live broadcast from the scene of the fatal Hawksley shooting but as has been seen this was not possible and the

moment of translation failed. In order to salvage a report on the murder the producer's sociogram shifted along its axis away from the idea of a live and towards an aslive. This was only possible because of a shift along his technogram which occurred concurrently with the enrolment of a different piece of equipment, a laptop with editing software and internet connection. The axis plotting the position of the VSAT vehicle originally assigned to the story had it located 40 miles away from where it was wanted and unconnected to any network technologically or socially. However, the axis of the other actors who had originally been enrolled to tell the story showed they were still connected. The reporter and camera crew were still at the scene of the murder. They hadn't moved and with a fresh instruction from the producer to record an aslive and by their own enrolment of the JFE system to send it back to the office the story arrived in time for the evening broadcast.

Television news is created within a temporal framework; that is both an internal timeline for each individual broadcast, its position within a network's television schedule and the temporal location of news events as they happen and are accessible to be reported. Hemmingway's contribution significantly increases the ability of researchers to map the mutability of news production. As these case studies demonstrate it is only by examining the actual production process of the murder event that the considerations outlined by the journalists involved in the decision-making process could properly be taken into account and thoroughly understood and explained. News is a fluid entity which has a continually changing journalistic meaning to those working in the creation of television news products. The relationships between humans and the technology enrolled into the process remain in a state of flux, contingent and unfixed until broadcast; even then it is not totally fixed as real time and 'constructed' time can be simultaneously performed.

Real time is just that, the temporal record of time passing, for example the time a television news programme goes on air and ends transmission. Constructed time is performed as part of live events or prerecord interviews (Hemmingway 2008) and this idea will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

Analysing the decisions taken about what events to report on and how to cover them without tracing the actual manoeuvrings thrown-up by the creation of these various assemblages would fail to map the shifting positions of actors which can alter with almost undetected movement.

This chapter has shown that there is a clear set of criteria television journalists use when considering which murders to invest their resources in and actor network analysis of the production process allows these significant moments to be identified. As was outlined at the start of this chapter these are a different set of criteria than the news values often listed as being important for the general newsworthiness of a story. Even more recent attempts to update these values, Harcup and O'Neill (2016) for example, fail to dig deep enough into the process of production. They have included values related to the growth of social media but they do not address news as a result of its production process. As has been seen in both this chapter and the chapter on storytelling, without analysis of the continuous cycle of news production, news values provide only a broad framework within which news is selected, only scratching the surface of news as practice. See appendix C for a detailed description of different television news storytelling techniques explored through Actor-Network Theory.

The Philpott Story

The fatal house fire which claimed the lives of six children from one family and the court case which followed was a significant event; one extensively covered by BBC *East Midlands Today*. It took place in the early hours of the 11th May 2012 at 18 Victory Road in the Allenton district of Derby.

Before continuing the analysis of the fire, it is necessary to consider my part in the reporting of it. I was the *East Midlands Today* producer of both the programmes which are being examined and as such I was intimately involved in their production. My direct connection raises issues far more challenging than those of the ethnographer invited to witness the process of news production undertaking participant observation (Gray 2003, Hansen et al 1998). Personal knowledge of the operational methods and editorial requirements of *East Midlands Today* put me as a researcher in a unique position. Being an actor in the instigation and decision-making process of the production network placed me in a position in which I influenced the way in which the coverage of the story developed. Giddens describes this self-reflexive position as ‘double hermeneutic’ (1984) one in which the role of the investigator feeds back into the process which is under observation.

The appropriateness of the term derives from the double process of translation or interpretation which is involved. Sociological descriptions have the task of mediating the frames of meaning within which actors orient their conduct.

(Giddens 1984, p.153)

He provides a series of considerations which the sociologist needs to keep in mind while looking to provide social descriptions of activities under investigation, including the style in which the description is written and the use of ‘mutual

knowledge' to explain the activities under consideration. In the case of my active involvement with the fieldwork examples under consideration it is necessary to consider the extra step required to ensure the elimination of any intended or unintended influence. The identification of such an issue is the first requirement in preventing me from contaminating the evidence which will explore the networks created around the events under examination. Secondly this situation has been discussed at length with my thesis supervisors and thirdly I have used third party testimony and documents wherever possible to explain the storytelling process.

The context of the production of each programme was quite different but various technologies were enrolled as actors in both. The first programme developed as a response to the breaking story while much of the content of the second programme had been prepared for the end of the subsequent trial. The following examples will show how the networks developed throughout the news production process, enrolling actors both human and nonhuman.

Breaking News Programme

On 11th May I was the producer of *East Midlands Today*. On the previous day I had worked with the planning team and had a number of stories which we expected to cover. They included; a trial linked to rioting in Nottingham a year earlier, the cost of repairing potholes in Nottingham, a story on a breakthrough on the treatment of tinnitus, a football match for people overcoming addiction, a report on all things British ahead of the Olympics, Jubilee and Euro 2012 and there was the possibility of a live outside broadcast from the Newark County Show with racehorse trainer Jenny Pitman.

Many of these plans were to change because of a story which was developing in Derby. Angelina Socci was the early morning presenter for BBC *East Midlands Today*.

I picked it up off the check calls, then I looked on the travel website. It was the nature of the call that I had with the emergency services that alerted me because they were very cagey about what they would tell me. I thought this sounds bigger than they are letting on at this stage and I think I did phone you (the author) quite early on that morning and said ‘I think there is something going on because they are normally quite open about it but they were a little bit cagey which raised my suspicions.’ I think our reporter on the Philpott case got there by 08:00 because I had phoned-up early. Radio had got there faster and their reporter emailed me pictures of the scene which I could then use which meant I could get something on the bulletin.

(Angelina Socci, Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

The check calls to which Angelina refers are a list of phone numbers which are checked on a regular basis by newsrooms. They usually include regional police, fire and ambulance services. These emergency services often leave recorded messages on a ‘voicebank’ which journalists can listen to. In recent years these systems have, in many cases, been replaced by social media feeds such as Twitter, Facebook and force websites.

In the first instance Angelina reacted to the story in the fastest way she could. Working with her colleagues she produced a story, illustrated with a map, which she was able to broadcast in the 06:55 bulletin. It showed the location of Victory Road in relation to the City of Derby. Below is the script she wrote and read; the words in

bold and enclosed in brackets are television instructions written in to story scripts for the gallery staff and equipment to follow.

[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]
{VIS}

Six children and two adults have been taken to hospital after a serious house fire in Derby.

{GFX}

Five fire crews were called to Victory Road in Peartree at a quarter to four this morning. Emergency crews are still at the scene. The road is expected to be closed for most of the day.

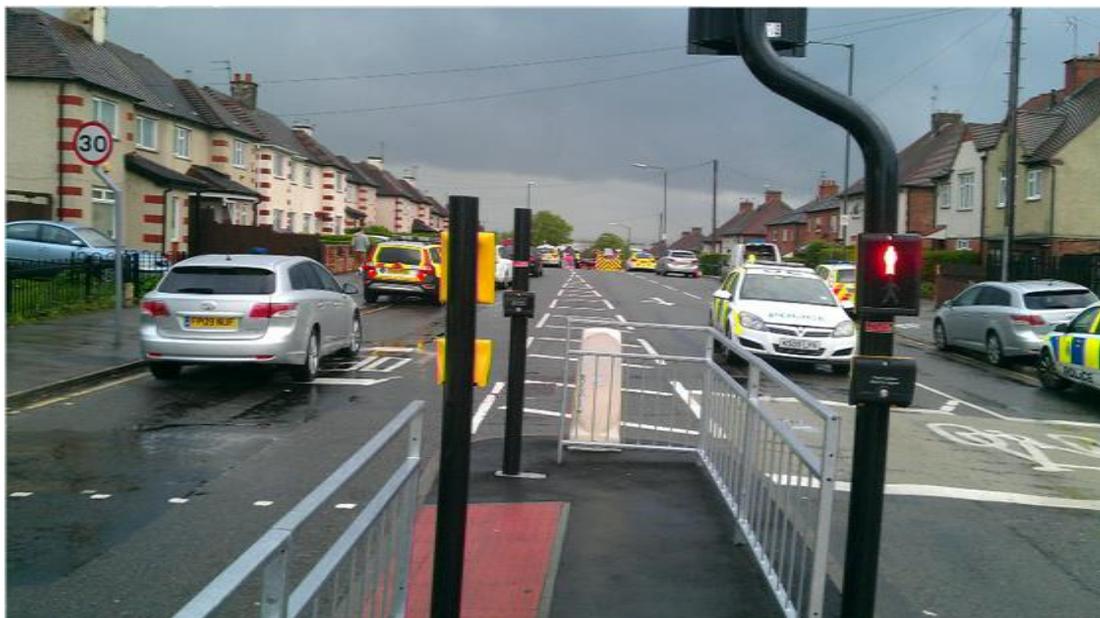
Within an hour of the first report a journalist from Radio Derby had taken pictures from the scene and emailed them to Angelina who was able to use them to illustrate the story in the 07:55 bulletin.

[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]
{VIS}

Six children and two adults have been taken to hospital after a serious house fire in Derby.

{GFX}

Five fire crews were called to Victory Road at a quarter to four this morning. Emergency crews are still at the scene. The road is expected to be closed for most of the day.



The two pictures used in the house-fire story in the 07:55 television bulletin were provided by Rob Watts, a reporter from Radio Derby, who was the first BBC journalist to arrive outside the house.

I think I got to Victory Road at about 6am. We'd been tipped off there might be deaths – but I definitely didn't expect the magnitude. I actually fell out with a resident of the street who called me a vulture,

before I realised how bad it had been. I did hits into the breakfast show at least once every half an hour – more as extra bits broke. I also did a hit on 5 Live when the deaths came through. I then did bits for mid-morning programmes on other local stations, and a load more of them at Drive.

(Rob Watts, Reporter, Radio Derby)

Radio Derby marked the fire in its 06:00 bulletin with the following short story.

Five fire crews are at a house fire on Victory Road in Derby. The road has been closed between Osmaston Park Road and Moor lane. There are no more details at present.

The first I knew of the incident was a phone call from the television breakfast presenter Angelina. I was driving into the office in Nottingham. It was shortly after 07:00 and the call was automatically routed to the speakers of my car. She explained what she knew, a road was blocked and traffic was being diverted around a ‘police incident’ in Derby. She wanted to let me know about the fire and ask what to do next. On occasions like this the first reaction is to ensure that we gather as many pictures of the scene as possible. Working out what has actually happened can be thought about later.

As I continued my drive into Nottingham Angelina began the process of organising the local BBC response to the fire. Methodologically it is possible to map the various actors involved in the creation and evolution of the network which led to the broadcast of several reports on the fire during the day. The newsgathering grid for the 11th May 2012, which is reproduced below, shows how the priorities of the day changed as updates on the fire were received. Some of the planned stories were

dropped in order to free-up resources to cover various aspects of the fire. For example, the reporter due to cover the addict's football match was switched on to the fire story. He began his day in Derby helping find eye-witnesses to the event and ended the day in Birmingham from where he broadcast live from outside a hospital where the surviving injured child was being treated.

The first *East Midlands Today* reporter to arrive at the scene of the fire was Simon Hare. Following the telephone conversation between Angelina Socci and myself she called him to get him on his way.

I found out from a call from the early morning news reader Angelina, she called and left a message. I remember my home phone ringing and not the mobile and wondered oh my god what's that. I went down and got the message and that was quite early. At that point all we knew was there had been a fire, we thought it was a big one but we didn't know of any deaths so when I got down to the scene at half eight it was quite clear that there were deaths, although we weren't being told that officially, and they were saying there were a lot of kids in the house and the kids had died.

(Simon Hare, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

NewsG-Nottingham- [11/05/2012]							
Story Slug	Segment	Operational	Editorial	Msg Info	Details	Staffing	Safety
BIG STORIES			JOBS; ECONOMY; CUTS; MILITARY; OLYMPICS; RURAL AFFAIRS; POLICE/CRIME; REGIONAL TRANSPORT; HEALTH.				
PRODUCTION			Kester - EMT				
CREWS			0800 Mike B...0900 S/E Jim/Adam 0900 Richard...0930 John				
BUREAUX	DERBY		SH (addicts)				
	LEICS		HA (midwife appt 0945)				
	NOTTM		Kester if the re				
STAFFING			RS (operations), QR, JR, ST (Tinnitus), SW , KP (Potholes - 1000-1900 - reading the 8pm -)				
HOUSEFIRE	DERBY	SH/VJ + SH + SNG(network)	Five children dead after house fire in victory road Derby. Aged 5-10. LIVE for East Midlands Today LUNCHTIME.	1	1		✓
HOUSEFIRE 2	DERBY	QR + crew + SNG(ours)	1100 Press conference on death of five children in fire.	1			✓
HOUSEFIRE 3	DERBY	JRO/VJ	1115 James tryingto get more reaction from neighbours	1			✓
HOUSEFIRE 4	BRUM	JR + SNG/JOHN	James and SNG at hospital in birmingham where teenage boy is being treated	1			✓
BABYDEATH	DERBY	SW - call for crew	Man due before mags in Derby charged with murder after the death of a baby from Chaddesden.	1	1		✓
BABYDEATH 2	DERBY	GVS ONLY	Need a few pictures of 190 waterford drive, chaddesden	1			✓
OPERATION	NOTTS	RS/JOHN	1000 - Interview with the brother of a woman who had her cancer operation cancelled three times. The disease has now spread and the family are left wondering whether it was because of the delay in her treatment.	1			✓
OPERATION2	NOTTS	RS/RF	1530 - Rob at the QMC. Meeting at the QMC this afternoon to discuss the issue of cancelled operations. Live interview with Peter Homa for 1830. Studio or SNG?	1			✓
RIOTS	NOTTM	SW	1430 - Ongoing trial at nottingham crown court. One of the key defendants, Lance Frances, giving evidence this afternoon.	1	1		✓
			1000 - Notts County Council is testing new ways of				

East Midlands Today newsgathering grid 11/05/12 page 1

Story Slug	Segment	Operational	Editorial	Assgn Info	Details	Staffing	Safety
POTHLES	NOTTS	KP/RF	1000 - Notts County Council is testing new ways of repairing potholes. It's working with experts from both local universities to come up with a new compound, which, if successful, could increase a pothole repair lifetime span to 15 years, rather than the current four. Today the team is trying out repairs in Woodthorpe, using thermal imaging cameras.	1	1		✓
ADOPTION	E MIDS	OOV/ACT/TX	It's taking nearly two years for a child in Nottinghamshire to move in with its adoptive family. Government figures for the first time reveal the average time it takes once a child enters care of the local authority. OOV + ACT from breakfast with Notts County Councillor		4		
COLLAPSED	DERBY	PIX ONLY/AW	Pub collapses after workmen take out a wall. Doh !	1			✓
TINNITUS	LEICS	ST/MB	0930 + 1130 - Academics at Uni of Leicester claim their research into hearing loss after exposure to loud noises could lead to the first drug treatments to prevent the development of tinnitus. Although hearing loss and tinnitus affect around ten percent of the population, there are currently no drugs available to treat or prevent tinnitus.	1	1		✓
ADDICTS	DERBY	JR/VJ	0900 - People who've turned their lives around will be taking part in a special football match at Pride Park this morning. The 11-a side tournament will show off the football skills of one group of individuals who are now either drug or alcohol-free, OR the other group who have lost weight and got fit, thanks in part to the help of a physical activity and sport scheme run by the local health authority, football club and council. SEE DETAILS	1	1		✓
RAIL	NOTTS	RS/TX	Rail apprentices at West Nottinghamshire College have been talking to a government minister about the importance of vocational learning. John Hayes MP, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, visited the college's rail track training facility at Beeston to see how it's benefiting students and employers. PKG FROM BREAKFAST				
BRITISH3	EMIDS	TB/TX	Part 3 of Tom's strand on the popularity of all things British ahead of the Olympics, Jubilee and Euro 2012				
BOAT	LEICS	HA/TX	A boatyard is offering a boat to a conservation group after their boat was set on fire and destroyed last week. We covered the original story - this is a follow up. ON SERVER - as a 130 pkg		1		

East Midlands Today newsgathering grid 11/05/12 page 2

While the news team in Nottingham was unpicking stories which had been set-up the previous day and starting the process of redeploying resources to cover the fire, Derbyshire Police were also putting plans into operation which would have an effect on how *East Midlands Today* would continue to react.

On that particular case the fire started in the middle of the night and the control room rang me, I was on call, at about 5 in the morning I think it was to say what had happened and that it was the Philpotts. They were known to the police and notorious locally. So I came straight in to work and prepared a press release, spoke to the ambulance service, hospital, fire service, all the PR people and put together a very basic holding statement that we could put out by about half-six, seven o'clockish and then as soon as I could speak to our assistant chief constable, again very early on, about 8 o'clock, then we decided that we needed to have a press conference that day and as early as possible. That got the ball rolling and I think that because we had a press conference very early, which is unusual, because we usually like time to assess what's happening, but we felt we needed to because there was bound to be so much interest, so we started early and continued every day.

(Jill Walden, Media and PR Manager, Derbyshire Police)

Separate networks were being formed in different geographical locations but each one was focused on the fall-out from the fire. For Derbyshire Police it was an exercise in managing what they quite rightly expected to be a huge amount of media interest in the case. Mick Philpott was something of a minor celebrity locally because of the large number of children he had fathered with different women and

his unconventional lifestyle. He had also appeared on a number of national television programmes.

The first official Derbyshire Police news release was issued around 07:00.

Emergency services were called to a house fire on Victory Road in Allenton at 3.46 this morning (Friday May 11). Eight people, two adults and six children have been taken to the Royal Derby Hospital. A joint investigation into the cause of the fire will be carried out by the police and fire service. Victory Road will be closed for several hours and local diversions are in operation. A further update will be released as soon as possible.

(Derbyshire Police news release)

A similar message was published on the Forces' Twitter account.



When I arrived in the office, I began to reorganise the staffing, this involved switching resources, human and technical on to the fire story and away from some of the stories planned the previous day. One of the first things I did was to inform

colleagues working for national BBC news about the seriousness of the fire and that we expected there to be multiple deaths. I explained what resources I had sent and was intending to send and worked with them to co-ordinate coverage. This took place before we received official confirmation of what the journalists on the ground were being told; that there had been several deaths. The police update came shortly after 08:30. It was the second of five official statements during the day.

Emergency services were called to a house fire on Victory Road in Allenton at 3.46am this morning. Eight people, two adults and six children, were initially taken to the Royal Derby Hospital. We can now confirm that five children have died aged five to 10-years-old. A sixth child, aged 13, has been transferred to hospital in Birmingham for specialist treatment. The two adults are not seriously injured. A joint investigation into the cause of the fire will be carried out by the police and fire service. As the investigation into the cause of the fire is at a very early stage and it would be wrong to speculate at this time.

(Derbyshire Police news release)

By 09:30 three reporters and three camera crews from *East Midlands Today* had been sent to the scene and the newsroom's satellite truck with two engineers onboard was heading to the location of the police press conference which was planned for 11:00. A second satellite vehicle with two engineers, two reporters and a producer were sent by BBC newsgathering in London. In addition, the helicopter used by the BBC was also on its way to gather aerial pictures of the scene. The network of resources involved in the news production process was growing rapidly. The police decision to hold a news conference away from the scene of the fire meant

co-ordinating coverage for the BBC news channel, national news bulletins, radio, online and regional television, between two locations.

The first regional television broadcast which the production team needed to provide material for was the lunchtime news at 13:30. The reporter on Victory Road, Simon Hare, presented half of the 12-minute bulletin using material which he had gathered himself and had been recorded by colleagues. For the main evening programme, I had already decided to send one of our main presenters to the scene to anchor our coverage. This production device can be seen as a tangible demonstration of how important a story is seen to be by any news operation and is repeated across all channels when particularly significant events are unfolding.

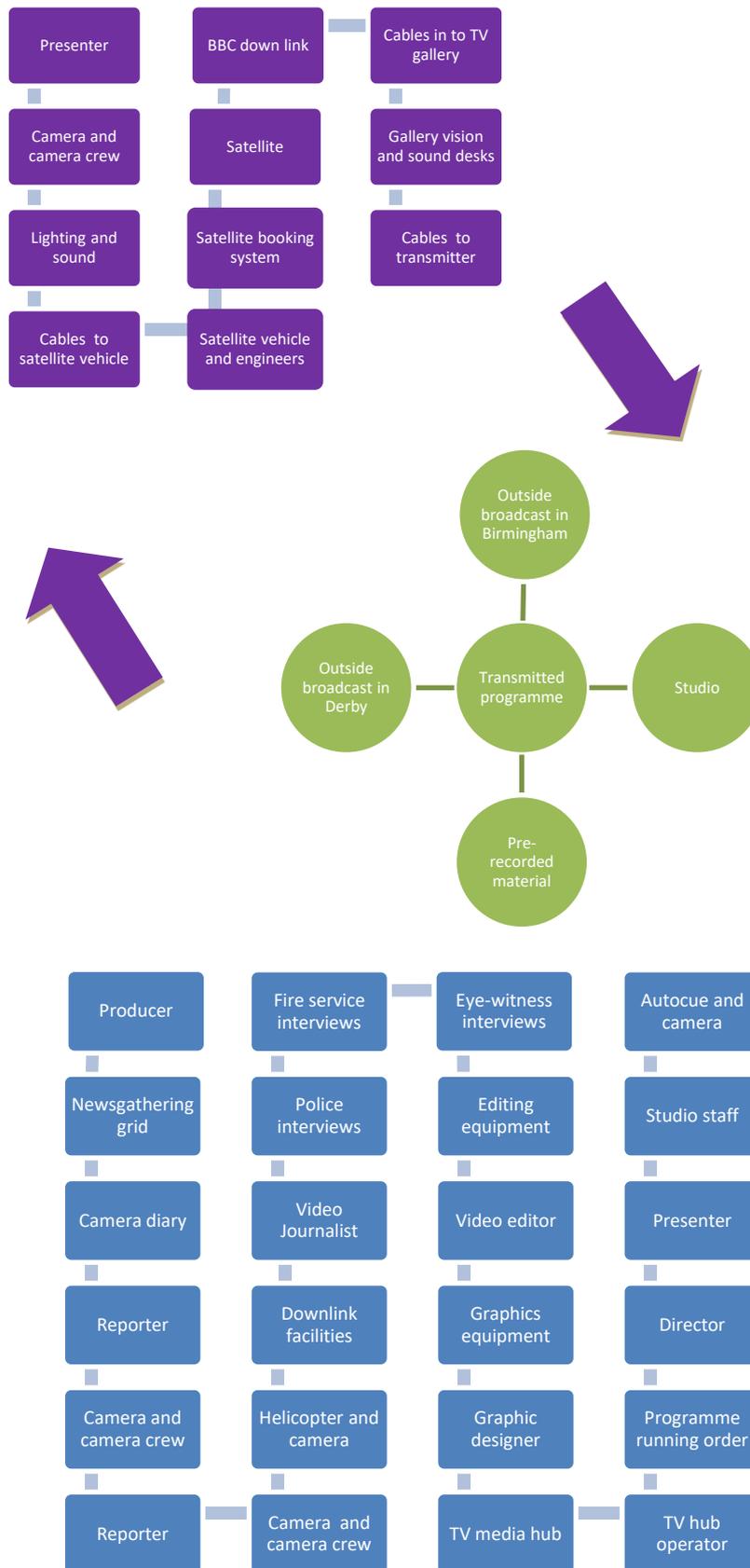
On the following page is a picture of the running order for the main evening programme of *East Midlands Today* on 11th May 2012. The various elements of the fatal fire fill the first seven minutes of the programme and the story is returned to with a minute update before the end of the programme. Ontologically it is possible to create a list of the actors enrolled in the formation of the various networks required to bring the house fire story to the television screens of the East Midlands.

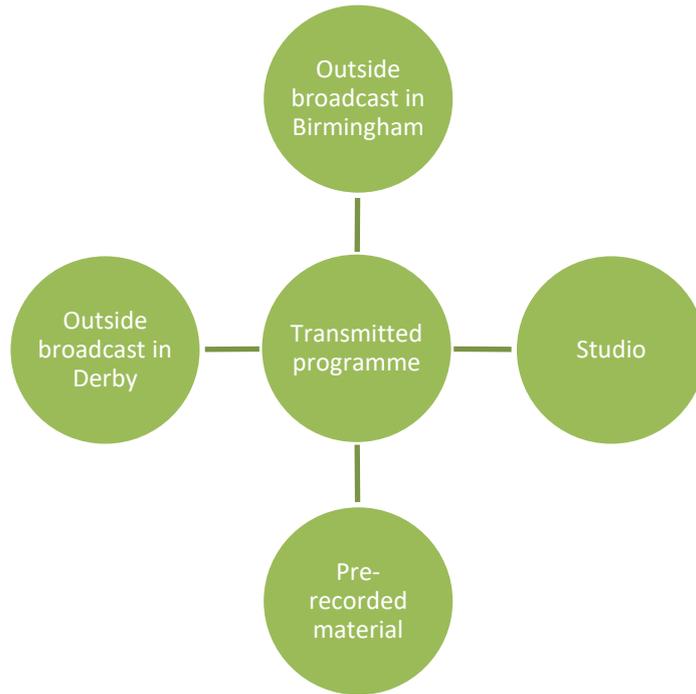
The broadcast programme is the visual representation of those different networks with all the enrolled actors coming together as a stable network. In a programme with several live elements the strength of the networks is tested in a different way to one with a less complex structure. More technologically complicated outside broadcasts rely on the enrolment of actors which are outside the direct control of the news team, for example satellite links, and with any outside broadcast there is always the possibility that members of the public will interfere with the broadcast. On this occasion neither of those were an issue.

1830 East Midlands Today [11/05/2012 18:29]												
Pa	Story Slug	Segment	Float	Camera	Details	Team Appr	Final Appr	Est Duratio	Actual	Back	Cume	MOS Chan
1	Headlines	Dom @ OB		OB		P	✓		0:10	18:30:36	0:10	
2		Pre-Rec1				-----			0:30	18:30:46	0:40	
3		Anne vis		3+emt		P	✓		0:10	18:31:16	0:50	
4		Pre-Rec2				-----			0:30	18:31:26	1:20	
5		Headlines-script	✓		PRES + TXPRO	-----			0:50	18:31:56	1:20	
6	Housefire	Live link		OB		P	✓		0:29	18:31:56	1:49	
7		Pkg simon H				-----	✓		1:58	18:32:25	3:47	
8		Live link dominic @ OB		OB		P	✓		0:10	18:34:23	3:57	
9		Live james @ birmingham OB		Boxes		-----	✓		0:20	18:34:33	4:17	
10		Live question from Dom				-----	✓		0:05	18:34:53	4:22	
11		Live James @ OB		Boxes		-----	✓		0:20	18:34:58	4:42	
12	Housefire philpott	Link dominic @ OB		OB		P	✓		0:15	18:35:18	4:57	
13		Pkg quentin				-----	✓		1:45	18:35:33	6:42	
14	Housefire	Guest@OB firefighter		OB		P	✓		1:30	18:37:18	8:12	
15		Handback		OB		-----	✓		0:15	18:38:48	8:27	
16	Tease 1	vis		2 MS	PRES + TXOOV	P	✓	0:00	0:10	18:39:03	8:37	
17	Tease Sting	Sting1				-----	✓		0:05	18:39:13	8:42	B
18		Link		2ms		P	✓		0:20	18:39:18	9:02	
19	Riots	Simon w @ newscam		2boxes		P	✓		1:00	18:39:38	10:02	
20		oov1				-----	✓		0:00	18:40:38	10:02	
21		oov2				-----	✓		0:00	18:40:38	10:02	
22	Babydeath	Oov		2mcu		P	✓		0:19	18:40:38	10:21	
23	Laserpens	Oov		2mcu		P	✓		0:19	18:40:57	10:40	
24	Pub	Oov		2mcu		P	✓		0:21	18:41:16	11:01	
25	Operation	Link		3 + is		P	✓		0:22	18:41:37	11:23	
26		Script rob				-----			1:44	18:41:59	13:07	
27		Live rob in studio		1mcu			P	✓		0:40	18:43:43	13:47
28	Potholes	Link		3 + is		P	✓		0:23	18:44:23	14:10	
29		Pkg kylie				-----	✓		1:46	18:44:46	15:56	
30	Adoption	Oov	✓	2 MS		P	✓		0:23	18:46:32	15:56	
31		Act	✓			-----	✓		0:20	18:46:32	15:56	B
33	British3	Link		3+is		P	✓		0:26	18:46:32	16:22	
34		Pkg tom				-----	✓		1:40	18:46:58	18:02	
35	Hand to Sport	VIS		3 + is		P	✓		0:10	18:48:38	18:12	
36	SPORT	clip			PRES IN VIS	-----	✓	0:00	4:54	18:48:48	23:06	
32	Drought	Oov		2mcu		P	✓		0:18	18:53:42	23:24	
37	Weather	Handover		3WS	PRES IN VIS	P	✓		0:15	18:54:00	23:39	
38		Forecast		1CSO	WEATHER PRES + GFX	-----	✓		1:42	18:54:15	25:21	
39	Housefire update	Link		2boxes		P	✓		0:15	18:55:57	25:36	
40		Live dominic @ OB		OB		-----	✓		0:45	18:56:12	26:21	
41	Prog Close	Goodbye anne		2MS	PRES IN VIS	P	✓		0:10	18:56:57	26:31	
42		Closing Sting		3WS	AUDIO DISC	-----	✓		0:07	18:57:07	26:38	
43	NETWORK								0:00	18:57:14	26:38	

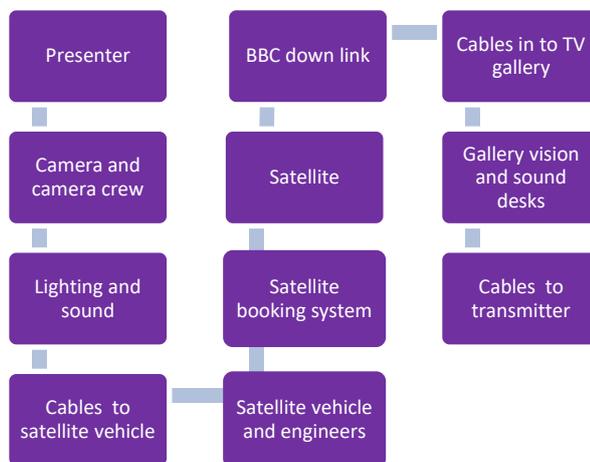
1830 East Midlands Today running order 11/05/12

The various columns and rows show the order of the stories within the programme running order, the name of each segment, the elements it contains and the duration it is expected to run. It is a visual representation of all the independent but co-dependent networks created for each part of the programme and the programme as a whole. The various actors involved can be further explained by examining the diagrams below which represent different nodes on the overall programme network.

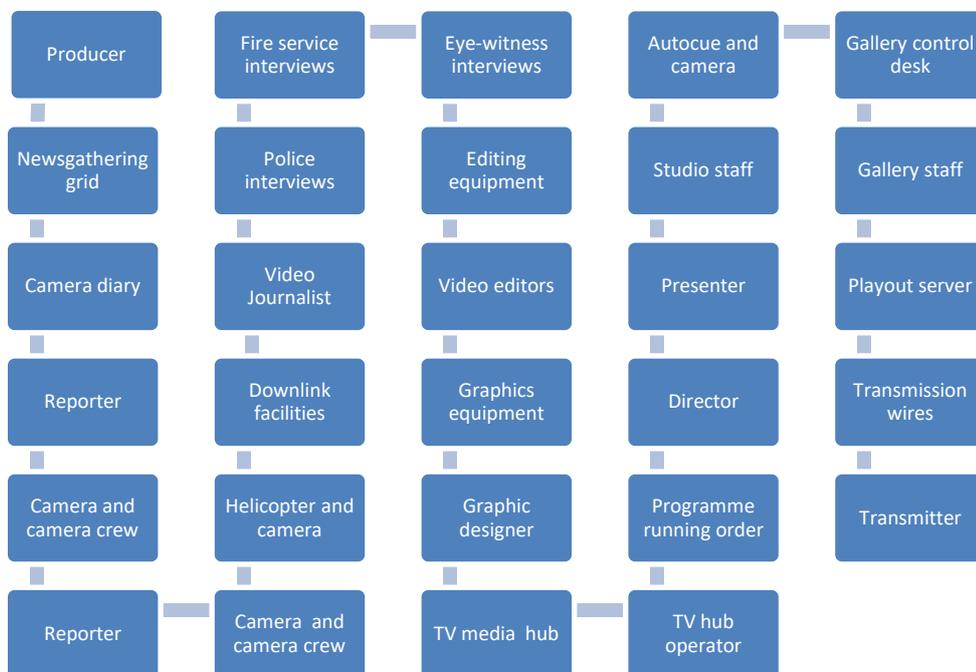




The green circles in the diagram above represent the key news production networks of the programme, the two outside broadcasts, one from Derby and the other from Birmingham. It includes all the pre-recorded and edited material known as cut stories or packages for playing when required and the studio based elements of the programme. Two of the sub-networks have been further described to show key actors and translations within them.



The purple part of the diagram is a representation of the actor network created to broadcast live from the scene of the fire. The outside broadcast was extremely reliant on technological actors which allowed sound and vision links to run between the location and the gallery. In order for the presenter to hear the director and other gallery staff there was also a reverse talkback line. This actor network was sustained throughout the programme allowing the presenter on location to broadcast live into the programme on six occasions. The arrows represent the 2-way nature of the relationship.



The blue portion of the diagram shows how material was gathered for the main news report compiled by Simon Hare and was transmitted from the computer server of *East Midlands Today* in Nottingham. It was not a simple linear process connecting one point to the next until it was a completed report; rather it was a continuous process in which resources and recorded material moved between locations and equipment. It was one which involved telephone conversations, the direction of

people, changes of mind and geography, until eventually, the fluid nature of the news production process required a final human finger to push a button which played the finished report to air. The example, admittedly a more complicated news package than is normal, describes the continuously shifting network building nature of the news production process within a newsroom at one moment in time. In the digital age the story is then encoded and transmitted before the data is received and turned back into a coherent collection of sound and pictures by the technology it is being viewed on. The blue arrows flow in one direction, from the network formed to create the package to its transmission. Similar networks were required for each of the other elements of the programme including the second outside broadcast from Birmingham and the various other edited packages and live guests.

The complex nature of television news production is exemplified by the example of this one report. It is possible to look at each larger news production network and delve into its creation, mapping the individual actors which fuse together to create them, in order to see how they are produced and which actors are enrolled within them. Some, like the Media Hub where media material is ingested and accessed, are complex black boxes, a collection of actors which are stable enough to resist further translation. Hemmingway (2008) explores the black box status of the Media Hub in detail and shows that it is an actor within the newsroom which imposes its will upon most other actors forcing them to its way of working and in so doing she demonstrates that it has the ability to influence the way other actors perform.

This tells us something significant about the socialisation of both the human and nonhuman actors within the network, and highlights the artificiality of the distinction between human and nonhuman. It also

shows us very clearly that nonhuman actors do possess agency. All actors embody the process of the network within their own selves.

(Hemmingway 2008, p.66)

In the case of any murder story the programme running order provides an external chronogrammatic boundary to the creation of all the other network fashioning actors. It is defined by a specific temporal duration with set on-air and off-air times.

Each regional news programme has the same duration and it is up to the news team to divide this time between the stories they wish to cover. The running order for the programme on the day of the fatal Philpott fire shows the first 426 seconds were devoted to the story and a further 60 seconds at the end. The remaining available time was given to other stories, sport, weather and the opening and closing programme titles.

Throughout the translation process the actor network has the potential to succeed or fail; power cuts, traffic jams, indecision, computer faults, human error and innumerable other problems or resistances can prevent actor relationships from forming or being sustained as part of individual networks which coalesce as part of the overall programme network. The failures of live broadcasts are often traced to a fault of technological or human actors. However, on occasion the broadcast network can fail for the most unlikely reasons, for example traffic on the road or the water contained within the leaves of a row of trees.

We are quite often asked to do outside broadcasts and in the past it seemed to me that older buildings were friendlier to us than modern buildings, the older buildings often had windows you could open to run cables through, places to clamp things to, whereas a modern

building is pretty much a glass cube and quite often the range of a radio camera can't reach. You can't cable in because none of the windows open because of the design for air conditioning. The reporter might think it's a lovely location for an OB but it might be impossible to get. We've also had incidents when the cladding of the building affects the radio cameras and walkie-talkies so you have to try and work these things given time. You have to ask the questions early on in the day about what is possible. We have a COFDM⁴⁴ vehicle which essentially works on microwave frequencies the same as the microwave in your kitchen. You cook a potato because wet things like potatoes resonate at microwave frequencies and absorb all the energy. Wet things like leaves on trees also absorb all the energy so when there are leaves on the trees the energy from our camera can't get very far because all the leaves are getting warm, only a little bit, but they are taking that energy from our signal. So in the winter a location may work but in the summer when all the trees are in leaf it might not. The only guarantee you can give is when you've actually tested it and have a picture coming into the building. A signal can work and then a bus goes by and it fails – it always would fail in that case but it's just that we haven't had a bus go by for a bit! It's like Russian roulette all seems to be safe until you get the wrong chamber!

(Toby Hallward, Operations Organiser, BBC Midlands Today)

The engineers of any BBC English region will have experienced the situations which Toby describes, when a broadcast network fails for a reason which

⁴⁴ Coded Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplexing

has not occurred before in a particular location from which they have previously broadcast successfully. This underlines the significance of studying individual news production processes as distinct cases since no overarching conclusion which can be applied to all other news stories can be drawn from an analysis of one event. There is no all-encompassing law which can predict event newsworthiness and production success of stories; as we have seen the newsworthiness of any story is a subjective judgement made when a wide range of factors are considered and the production process, although giving the outward appearance of being in part consistent, is nothing of the sort, subject as it is to the vagaries of continually fluctuating relationships between actors.

Coverage of the Philpott Court Case

The deaths of six children and the subsequent police investigation attracted a huge amount of media interest which continued for the weeks and months after the fire.

Fortunately the majority of murders are resolved quite quickly so we don't have to get in to a long running bandwagon, for want of a better word, but with the Philpott one we knew, we didn't know if it was an accident or not initially, but we knew that it was going to be a big story because so many people had died and the Philpotts were so well known. Our ACC (Assistant Chief Constable) at the time decided that he would do all the media.... because he quite rightly anticipated it would be more or less a fulltime job to deal with the media demands.

(Jill Walden, Media and PR Manager, Derbyshire Police)

With so much interest developing in the fatal fire it was an event which could have swamped the resources of the media relations department of the Derbyshire Force. However, they put a system in place to deal with the media interest.

Kate [the police officer in charge of the investigation] and her team got on with investigating the murder and Steve ran gold meetings with all interested parties and partners and did the media. So he was in constant contact with Kate and her team and we in the press office had links with them when we needed to but tried to keep away and not pester them too much. Every day Steve Cotterill would have a briefing from Kate Meynell about developments and then he would sit down with us to discuss what we could release to the press, how we released it.

(Jill Walden, Media and PR Manager, Derbyshire Police)

The close relationship which Simon was able to forge with his contacts within the police force put him in an enviable position when it came to a major development in the case, the charge of the Philpotts and Paul Mosley. It was a broadcast which Simon was able to do live into the late regional news on the 30th May 2012.

I had a good relationship with a very senior officer and it was coming to the end of the Philpotts time in custody and they were either going to have to be released or charged, and I rang him at nine o'clock and we were going to go back on air at 10.30, I rang him and asked any developments, half expecting him to say that they had applied for an extension to keep questioning them, and he said 'they're downstairs being charged, six counts of murder each'. He said they'd put a

release out soon. I was then able to get all our ducks in a row, I was able to get the network truck there, the network reporter, all ready to go so when it dropped on the wires just before 10 o'clock I think, I went on the news channel and did a 2-way, Chris Butler went on the 10 o'clock news and did it at the top as a 2-way and then I did East Midlands Today at 10.35. So, having that inside information allowed me to get everything ready.

(Simon Hare, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

Simon gives one explanation about how his live broadcast was organised, he was able to get all the 'ducks in a row', by which he means he was able to coordinate all the technological and human aspects necessary for the broadcast. It may have been transmitted live, with Simon updating the audience with the latest information he had, but a live broadcast, similar to any television report, requires planning and the establishment of stable networks of human and nonhuman actors. Hemmingway and Van Loon (2011) describe the 'creation' of the live news event when they explore the release of a BBC journalist held hostage in the Middle East.

Their example of how Sky News covered the release of Alan Johnston in July 2007 after more than a hundred days in captivity, demonstrates the extensive work required to facilitate a live broadcasting event. Using Hemmingway's concept of the chronogram (2008) Hemmingway and Van Loon analyse the coverage which was technologically complex, spread across several locations and time zones and heavily choreographed. They use Latour's (1999) work to show how a live news event occupies separate temporal frameworks.

The news event as it happens is the *presence* to which Latour refers.

The *representation* of this event involves a multiplicity of mediators –

both human and nonhuman – working within network configurations to enact the *re-presentation* of that event when the viewers (who themselves now become mediators) experience the event for themselves, as if in the same temporal frame.

(Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011, p.159 italics in original)

As discussed throughout this thesis the concept of time plays a significant part in the news production process. Time forms an all-encompassing boundary within which BBC regional television news has to operate. Each programme and bulletin is also defined by a specific duration. For McLuhan the use of electric media abolishes ‘the spatial dimension’ (1964, p.278), speeding up communication and creating a ‘brand-new world of allatoneceness. “Time” has ceased, “space” has vanished. We now live in a global_village.’ McLuhan and Fiore (1967, p. 63). In the chapter looking at what news is the timeliness of events was shown to be an important factor in all considerations of news values, (page 21). In his study of BBC newsrooms, Schlesinger (1978) describes the ‘stop-watch culture’ he witnesses. Clocks and stop watches are still seen everywhere within television news galleries. When it comes to be considered newsworthy events have best before dates; it is always possible to tell a story days after it happened, even after competitors have reported it, but journalists are never keen unless they have a significant update. Roshco (1975) illustrates the point in relation to weather reports,

On any news broadcast, the most recent weather conditions and the next day’s predicted readings are of high current interest to the audience in the affected area.....the report of the day before yesterday, having been superseded by more recent information, has minimal currency; therefore it has little news value.

(Roshco 1975, reproduced in Tumber1999)

Gelles and Faulkner (1978) make a similar observation in their examination of the various ways time influences newsgathering.

Time is a crucial focal point for studying the social construction of television news and the processes of news work because time is more than a variable which defines what is "news." Time bears on news work because assembling hard news involves the transformation of quickly unfolding "real life" occurrences by social organizational and technological means. News work is concerted action which involves calculating the probabilities of getting to the scene of an event, the options available for bringing electronic film technology to bear, the estimated value or utility of the event compared to other events occurring at the same time and the perceived costs of this event in terms of time and energy.

(Gelles and Faulkner 1978, p.90)

Bell (1995) looks at how time is represented in the structure of news reports, how journalists put together the pieces of a story, often in a non-sequential order.

Zelizer (1992) writing about CNN's live reporting during the First Gulf War highlights the news scoops the cable channel was able to get because of its investment in the live broadcasting technology and how this enabled audiences to witness events at the same time reporters did.

In the television newsroom of BBC *East Midlands Today* planning for the live event which would accompany the end of a trial involving Mick and Mairead Philpott and Paul Mosley began. Journalists now had time to prepare for the forthcoming trial and arrange background reports on the story which they could broadcast the moment there was a verdict. Reporter Simon Hare was given the

responsibility to work on producing material for *East Midlands Today* and he spent several months working on the Philpott case before it came to court in February 2013.

The trial saw the extensive use of two technological actors; one modern and one as old as paper and ink. For the first time BBC reporter Simon Hare used the micro blogging application Twitter to report a court case. The rules on reporting live from English courts had been relaxed following the first use of Twitter for the appearance of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at City of Westminster Magistrates' Court in 2010.

I find it quite hard not to have something in my notebook so I would write the note and then Tweet. It changed again for the appeal of Mairiad. I was live tweeting the appeal but it was pointless because it was on television, it was one of the first appeals outside of London to be televised so there was no point live tweeting because people could see it for themselves. So, I then started tweeting the things people could not see because there was a very close censorship on what could be shown on TV. They weren't allowed to film Mairiad, so I began tweeting about her reaction, what she was doing, explaining what was going on, what the process was, giving people context to what they might be watching on television. It changed my journalism utterly.

(Simon Hare, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

In 2011 shortly before the start of the Philpott trial Lord Judge, the Lord Chief Justice, issued guidance to his colleagues outlining his reasoning for relaxing the rules around live reporting from court.

..the most obvious purpose of permitting the use of live, text-based communications would be to enable the media to produce fair and accurate reports of the proceeding...As such, a representative of the media or a legal commentator who wishes to use live, text-based communications from court may do so without making an application to the court...the use of an unobtrusive, hand held, silent piece of modern equipment for the purposes of simultaneous reporting of proceedings to the outside world as they unfold in court is generally unlikely to interfere with the proper administration of justice.

(Lord Judge, Practice Guidance, 14th December 2011)

The ability to report live from court meant Simon and other journalists were providing a running commentary on what was happening during the trial. A few examples are pictured below. Ignore the time stamp on the Tweets as they are not related to the actual time the Tweet was originally sent.





Simon Hare
@SimonHareBBC

Follow



Evidence of Shell petrol found in debris taken from inside hallway of #Philpott family home. Investigators say that's where the fire began.

3:09 AM - 5 Mar 2013



On some days he was posting more than a dozen Tweets and receiving replies and questions from those people following him and the various hashtag handles associated with the trial. This introduced the social media conventions of interaction and community comment into the serious environment of live court reporting. With the level of interest in the Philpott case there was a massive appetite to hear every detail, no matter how gruesome.



Simon Hare
@SimonHareBBC

Follow



Some people are reporting Mick #Philpott collapsed during playing of 999 call. He didn't. He sat down and slumped forward. Now having break.

RETWEETS
3



8:16 AM - 13 Mar 2013

Reporters from all media platforms, print, radio, television and social media, were now effectively broadcasting live from the court to their ever-growing list of Twitter followers.

Established journalistic principles meant that you wanted to get a fast and clear shorthand note of what had just been said. But you were then in a race to Tweet the detail in 140 character chunks as quickly, but as safely as possible. And then followers often came back with questions. In the brevity of the Tweet they may not have understood something, so the context needed explaining. I was always happy to provide clarity and answered queries, usually in breaks between evidence. But many responses asked for a description of how the defendants had responded to a certain piece of evidence, or even asked for my opinion on innocence and guilt!

(Simon Hare, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

Tweeting from court may not have the same visual representation of a story as a live television broadcast but it is a live broadcasting medium and as such is subject to the same legal restrictions and journalistic considerations. It is also an important moment of translation in which the legal process which is taking place in a court of law is transformed into a string of words written by a reporter and shared



 **Simon Hare**
@SimonHareBBC Follow

Mick **#Philpott** GUILTY

RETWEETS
20

7:59 AM - 2 Apr 2013

1 20

with an audience. By utilizing the technology of social media Simon is directly influencing the news production process without the traditional reference to his producer or the traditional televisual constraints of specific linear broadcasting times. He was able to directly broadcast the guilty verdict using his own actor network. It included, the court room he was sitting in, the members of the jury, his phone and the Twitter application. His Tweet automatically enrolled hundreds of people who were following him on Twitter. In that fashion one actor network which began with Simon performed translations across various social media actor networks. These can be traced by mapping the accounts of the people following Simon.

Analysing this case in 2018, with the extensive use and acceptance of social media this development may not seem particularly significant. But these changes in broadcasting etiquette and editorial oversight represent a considerable shift in the news production process. The reporter effectively becomes their own 'second pair of eyes' on a story and their own broadcaster.

Using the methodology of mapping the sociogram, technogram and chronogram it is possible to see how the use of Twitter has affected the role of the journalist and of broadcasting. Simon's sociogram plots his relationships within the network through which he reports and the strength of alliances he forms in order to do this. His physical location places him at the centre of the action with regard to the murder trial. He was one of only a few journalists allowed into the court to cover the trial. That placed him in a privileged position in relation to the story and to the communicating of it to the audience. From the press benches of Court One in Nottingham he hears the evidence of the case at first hand without the filter of a

news agency⁴⁵ or colleague passing it on to him. He has the freedom to decide what he thinks is worth sharing via social media and what not to report. Without the constraints of a specific television or radio broadcast time Simon can share his reports of the trial whenever he decides to with people who use Twitter. For this reason his technogram is strong as the architecture of the social media application is robust and universally available. Simon can Tweet when he likes and isn't reliant on waiting for the usual television technology of a camera crew, editing facilities and playout equipment. In order to help people using Twitter find his Tweets Simon uses the hashtag symbol which allows users to follow and search for specific threads. He repeatedly uses a limited number of these, for example, #Philpott, #derbyfire, in order to maximise the number of people who will engage with his Tweet. The specificity of this social media tool strengthens all of the axes on which it is possible to plot Simon's position within the network. His chronogram places him at the centre of the story in terms of reporting and broadcasting information about the trial; he is reporting live from the court which means his chronogram converges with the sociogram and technogram for each Tweet he sends.

The changing nature of broadcasting which this use of Twitter demonstrates represents a considerable deviation from the way the news production process has conventionally been defined. The clear lines of command and control which the editorial hierarchy within the newsroom traditionally signposted are fractured by the ability to instantly create and publish content on social media. Attempts to impose editorial control over the tweeting process were soon abandoned within the Nottingham newsroom and elsewhere within the BBC as it became clear editorial

⁴⁵ A news agency is an organisation which provides news stories and information for other media outlets. For example, the Press Association covers events and stories across the UK for the media and their information, pictures and video can be used by those who pay for their services.

grade journalists could not scrutinise every Tweet before it was sent by journalists, many of whom, were not office based.⁴⁶

To be considered a success any network of actors must remain stable and sustain their connections. As the Tweet below illustrates this wasn't always possible. Simon apologised for the absence of tweets due to his need to keep on top of his own notes of the case.



This Tweet shows the problems Simon faced trying to satisfy the desire to report live from court and write notes in preparation for his later reporting for television. It also demonstrates the fluid and fragile nature of the network which is created as Simon translates the live performance of the court into micro-blogs. He is unable to sustain the connections necessary to keep tweeting and has to admit that the constant performance is not possible. However, the freedom to Tweet from court has fundamentally changed the way reporters can do their jobs. Prior to the modification in guidance they would only be preparing reports for regular

⁴⁶ iPhones were introduced as part of a project within the BBC during 2011-12. Initially the numbers of phones available inside the Nottingham newsroom issued for personal use were restricted to a few key users. Gradually more phones were made available with specific training to make best use of the new technology. See p.121.

broadcasting slots. In a 24hr news environment with multiple broadcast platforms the demands upon reporters have grown and the ability to report live from court presents a new set of technological, editorial and physical challenges. Each Tweet brought together a collection of actors; a pertinent piece of news from the court, Simon and his journalistic abilities, an iPhone 5, the Twitter app, various 3G telephone networks, computer servers, engineers, software, other Twitter users and the devices on which they follow Simon's Twitter feed.

Twitter is a relatively new journalistic tool, having started in 2006, but it is one which has been quickly adopted by traditional media outlets as both a source of news stories and platform for publishing and broadcasting them. Academic studies have considered various consequences for journalism; Vis (2013) analysed the use two journalists made of Twitter during the UK riots in 2011, both to report events and also to publish updates. Moon and Hadley (2014) found that while 'journalists working in mainstream media embraced Twitter as a new tool' (p.300) it hadn't replaced more official channels of information. Lysak, Cremedas and Wolf (2012) show how local television news in America is using social media to connect with audiences. Artwick's (2013) examination of Twitter use by newspaper journalists showed how they used the micro-blogging site for live reporting and for linking to other sources of news rather than just their own papers. See appendix J for an example of how journalists from the BBC television newsroom in Nottingham use social media.

The accommodation of technological developments such as Twitter by the legal framework of England has not stretched far enough to allow regular television broadcasting from courts. Cameras are allowed in to some Appeal Court hearings but there are tight restrictions limiting what can be shown. If a television news operation

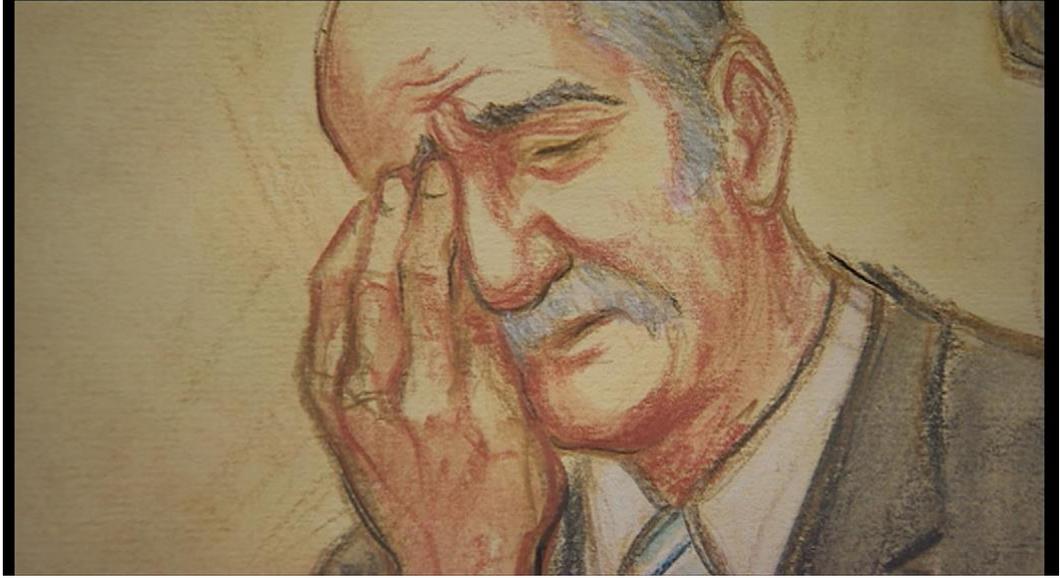
wants to illustrate a court case it must employ a court artist who is allowed to make drawings of events but is not allowed to draw while in court. Helen Tipper is one of only a handful of artists working in the English courts and has worked for the BBC in the Midlands for many years.

I just go in have a bloody good look around, try and memorize as many faces as possible, the most important is usually the defendant or defendants, just try and memorize features as much as possible. It depends how much time I have really. It depends on the deadline, then go out find somewhere to work, the press room or consultation room or if I'm really struggling then in the cameraman's car or corridor, anywhere really. You've got to be able to draw people obviously, but it's not about having a photographic memory, a lot of people think that, I haven't. It would be useful! It's not about doing portraits, a lot of the time it's about getting a likeness and giving an idea of what it's like in court but if there is something going on or action, you've got to give an impression of what's happening.

(Helen Tipper, Court Artist)

Because of the restrictions on filming in court under the Justice Act 1925⁴⁷ Helen's skills are in constant demand from news programmes. Below are two examples taken from her work during the trial of the Philpotts.

⁴⁷ Section 41 of the Criminal Justice Act 1925 makes it a contempt of court to take any photograph, make or attempt to make any portrait or sketch of a justice or a witness in, or a party to, any proceedings before the court, either in the courtroom or its precincts.



Mick was crying a bit while Maraid was quite defiant and sort of standing up to the barrister. She didn't seem like a woman who had lost six of her own children. You've got to be in court for the good bits, when things are happening, but you've got to be outside to do the drawing and it can be a bit of a struggle. There's a law dating back from 1925 which prevents us from making pictures in court. I'm now



using these different wash pens to try and be a bit quicker, I felt I was getting a bit slow and sluggish! If I can draw it with a line and get the picture done and then quickly colour. Whereas before it used to be quite a laborious process really working the colour in and it was taking too long. And I'm trying to do something which will hopefully be quicker.

(Helen Tipper, Court Artist)

The technology Helen uses to achieve her drawings, the paper and coloured pens are not as technologically advanced as the mobile phone and the infrastructure it requires which Simon Hare was using to publish his Tweets. However, Helen's technogram is very stable and strong as she is in direct command of the resources she requires for her work. Her sociogram is also very strong. During the Philpott trial she was one of only a handful of artists working in court. She was contracted to the BBC for the duration of the case which gave her a guaranteed outlet for her drawings. As she says herself, she had been trying to reduce the time it takes to create a finished drawing by using a different type of pen rather than crayons or pastels. This could be seen as an acknowledgment that her chronogram was not particularly strong before the change in equipment. To some extent this may be true however her chronogrammatic axes remains fairly strong since she calculates how much time she will need to create her pictures given the broadcast deadlines to which the television newsroom works. Her chronogram weakens the closer it gets to transmission time before leaving court to begin drawing. Although she may feel the pressure of journalists anxious for her completed work Helen must finish what she is doing before they can make use of it in their reports. It is at this moment that her responsibility to the news production process ends. The news operation relies upon

complex electronic equipment to combine with her pictures to become part of a television report. Individually finished drawings are a completely finished product, a whole and stable black box, but one reliant upon more complex networks to become an integral representation of a moment within a story.

Philpott Conviction Programme

At the conclusion of the Philpott trial, BBC *East Midlands Today* produced a special programme which was completely given over to the story. It was broadcast on the 2nd April 2013 and was the culmination of several months' work. Rather than being based in the studio it was transmitted from outside the Philpott's house in Derby. At that time *East Midlands Today* was a double-headed programme, that is presented by two people, and that protocol was kept for the special broadcast.

The programme running order is reproduced on the following page. It gives details of the different items which made-up the broadcast, their duration and the order in which they were transmitted.

1830 East Midlands Today Philpott [02/04/2013 18:29]													
Page	Story Slug	Segment	Float	Camera	Details	Team Appr	Final Appr	Est Duratio	Actual	Back	Cume	MOS Chan	MOS Status
1		Pres		OB		P	✓		0:15	18:30:34	0:15		
2	Headlines	Pre-Rec				----	✓		0:50	18:30:49	1:05		
3		Headlines-script	✓		PRES + TXPRO		✓		0:50	18:31:39	1:05		
4	OB	Intro with GFX		OB		P	✓		0:34	18:31:39	1:39		
5	Verdicts	Link		OB	PRES IN VIS	P	✓		0:34	18:32:13	2:13		
6		Act				----	✓		0:22	18:32:47	2:35		
7	Verdicts 2	Link				P	✓		0:05	18:33:09	2:40		
8		Act2				----	✓		0:21	18:33:14	3:01		
9		Link		OB		P	✓		0:23	18:33:35	3:24		
10	Investigation	Oov front page				----	✓		0:00	18:33:58	3:24	B	
11		PKG Simon				----	✓		6:31	18:33:58	9:55		
12		Link		OB		P	✓		0:21	18:40:29	10:16		
13		Oov front page				----	✓		0:00	18:40:50	10:16	B	
14	Secret	PKG dom		OB		----	✓		1:13	18:40:50	11:29		
16		Act link	✓	OB		P	✓		0:07	18:42:03	11:29		
17		Act cotterill	✓			----	✓		0:43	18:42:03	11:29		STOP
18		Link		OB		P	✓		0:18	18:42:03	11:47		
19	Mick	Oov front page				----	✓		0:00	18:42:21	11:47	B	
20		PKG Rayner				----	✓		4:35	18:42:21	16:22		
21		Link		OB		P	✓		0:20	18:46:56	16:42		
22	Maphin	Oov front page				----	✓		0:00	18:47:16	16:42	B	
23		PKG				----	✓		1:19	18:47:16	18:01		
24		Link		OB		P	✓		0:19	18:48:35	18:20		
25	Community	Oov front page				----	✓		0:00	18:48:54	18:20	B	
26		PKG sarah				----	✓		4:09	18:48:54	22:29		
34	Simon live	Link		OB		P	✓		0:05	18:53:03	22:34		
15	Secret	Live Simon Hare+ Dom		OB		P	✓		2:00	18:53:08	24:34		
28	Children (LONG)	Link		OB		P	✓		0:17	18:55:08	24:51		
29	Children	Oov front page				----	✓		0:00	18:55:25	24:51	B	
30	Children (LONG)	pkg				----	✓		1:52	18:55:25	26:43		
31	END	EMT Loop				----	✓		0:05	18:57:17	26:48	B	
32	NETWORK								0:00	18:57:22	26:48		
27	Community	live guest Anne + Jo Whitehe				----	✓		1:30				
33		Live guest Anne		OB		----	✓		1:30				
35	Simon live	Live					✓		0:00				
36	Children (SHORT)	Link				P	✓		0:15				
37		Script					✓		1:19				
38	Background (with Mosley)	Link					✓		0:18				
39	Background (No Mosley)	Pkg simon				----	✓		5:55				STOP
40	Mick (SHORT not all three)	Link					✓		0:20				

Under 00:57

1830 East Midlands Today running order 02/12/13

The audience watching the programme were only able to see what the television crew wanted them to see. The choices made by the director and producer about what shots to use were decisions taking place out of vision of the audience; the images delivered were in effect a *fait accompli* as is the case with any pre-recorded material. The significant difference between pre-recorded content and live

broadcasting is the specific reality of the event being witnessed. Within the news package the temporal nature of what has been recorded is disconnected from its own temporal location. It is reality recorded for later use. A live event happens within the same instant in which it is experienced.

Live events have the potential to be experienced in a different way by everyone witnessing them. For example, 27,709 fans watched the 2nd round EFL cup match between Newcastle United and Nottingham Forest on the 23rd August 2017 at the football stadium where it was played. It took place at St James' Park, the home of Newcastle. Those people watching from the Milburn Stand had a different view of the game from the visiting Nottingham Forest supporters in the Leazes End of the ground. Those people who watched the game on television had another perspective on the game and a different experience; the experience would have been different for people watching at home or in a public environment such as a pub. The football players involved in the game would have had a different experience and perspective on it from each other. Nottingham Forest player Tyler Walker experienced most of the match from the substitute's bench. In the 77th minute he was brought on to the pitch and scored the winning goal in extra time. Newcastle goalkeeper Karl Darlow would have had a completely different view and experience of the game. This example shows how many people can have a different perspective on a single live event, on a single reality, since it is a fact that the game did indeed take place.

However, it would be a flawed analysis to suggest that multiple perspectives of an event can adequately describe the production process of live television news. As Hemmingway (2008) states 'live' television broadcasting is more than 'a snatch of reality as and when it happens' (2008, p.147). She reaches this conclusion using ideas developed by Annemarie Mol (2002). Therefore, in order to understand what

lies behind this explanation and its applicability to understanding live broadcasting it is necessary to explain Mol's analysis.

Mol (2002), writing about the disease atherosclerosis in a Dutch hospital, advances the proposition that there are multiple different forms of atherosclerosis and they differ from each other depending upon where they exist in the hospital, at what point in time and who is coming into contact with it. As a medical condition atherosclerosis is a disease which affects the arteries in the legs of the sufferer. However, Mol describes various different multiple enactments of the disease take place in different parts of the hospital and which would not be considered a medical understanding of the condition. She chooses the term 'enact' deliberately to show that the disease is '*being done*' (2002, p.32) but it is more than a performance, a term Mol steers away from using in *the body multiple* because of various meanings it is endowed with (2002, p.32). Instead she believes that by employing the term 'enacting' she provides a more precise definition of the existence of the disease at a specific moment. For the patient the disease is 'painful legs' (2002, p.14), and 'the way they reorganize their households, their work, their family life' (2002, p.16) in order to live with the condition; in the pathology laboratory atherosclerosis is 'under a microscope' (2002, p.30) visible as a 'thickened intima' (2002, p.30). For Mol this is quite a different atherosclerosis from that experienced by the patient since it usually is only identified after amputation of an affected leg. She argues that wherever the disease is encountered and enacted it is done so as a different disease, as 'events-in-practice' (2002, p.21) and is not the same disease seen differently.

Applying this understanding to television news, Hemmingway considers various scenarios of live broadcasting to demonstrate that multiple realities of an event are actually performed simultaneously as part of the news production process.

the live news event presents more than an elaborate version of perspectivalism, which is a series of different perspectives that are simply created by ever-changing actor network positions, but that the live television event demonstrates rather a more radical illustration of multiple realities, which are continually and simultaneously performed.

(Hemmingway 2008, p.146)

When watching a live news broadcast this may seem like an overly ambitious claim to make but the viewer is only seeing what they are being shown; what has been chosen for them by members of an unseen team. They see a reporter on location but not as Mol says the ‘practicalities’ and ‘materialities’ (Mol 2002 p.13) which, if we bring them to the fore will show the live event as that which is done in ‘practice.’

Television journalists understand that the majority of television news requires a degree of planning. Most news stories covered by a television newsroom are known about before the day they become transmitted, (see earlier examples of planning pages 170 and 201). They demonstrate the complex networks of actors which are enrolled for each event. Live news is no different, whether it has been planned months in advance or is the reaction to a breaking story. What live news attempts to do is eradicate the spatial and temporal distance between the event and the viewer. Hemmingway (2008) describes how as part of the creation process some actors become invisible as can the process itself. The television news audience can only see what they are being shown and all that goes into the making of that moment is consumed in its creation. Her insight builds on the processes of construction identified by Latour and Woolgar,

Our argument is not just that facts are socially constructed. We also wish to show that the process of construction involves the use of certain devices whereby all traces of production are made extremely difficult to detect.

(Latour and Woolgar 1986, p.176 italics in original)

Hemmingway's reading of the live news production process shows just how difficult it is to detect the various network manoeuvrings which take place as a live broadcast is prepared and transmitted; and that the event itself cannot be separated from the process of its own creation.

These concepts will now be applied to the live programme which marked the conviction of the Philpotts and Paul Mosley. The pictures used below have been taken from the *East Midlands Today* programme broadcast on 2nd April 2013. The presenter's script and technical instructions are also included.

Immediately identifiable in the first image is a camera angle which deliberately shows the technological and human actors which are normally invisible in a live broadcast. The two main presenters of the programme are standing next to the house where the tragic events took place. In the foreground is one of the camera



team standing in front of his camera, beyond that is a large light mounted on a stand and the lighting engineer. Beyond him is another camera tripod offering the director another perspective on the presenters and rising high into the air is a camera on a long telescopic pole, known as a mast-cam, which offers yet another varied view of the house and presenters. It is built into the Satellite News Gathering (SNG) vehicle which can just be seen with a large satellite dish on its roof.

Throughout the whole transmission from the outside broadcast (OB) location the satellite vehicle is an obligatory point of passage (Latour 2005, Latour 1987, Callon 1986), since all the audio and visual material from the OB must pass through it back to the gallery and instructions from the gallery to the OB pass through it on the return leg. It holds a uniquely strong position within the broadcast network.

This image showing the process of production is a behind the scenes shot chosen to geographically locate the presenters. It is the usually invisible made visible and was a choice by the production team used to enhance their production and reinforce to the audience that the broadcast was live. In actor network terms it allows identification of the specific moments of translation as the actors involved in the production process, both human and technological and enrolled into the broadcast. The hidden specificity of liveness becomes visibly identifiable. It is a voyeuristic peek into the material world of news production as it is happening. In the words of Hemmingway (2008), identifying those parts of the production process usually 'eliminated by the process of transmission' (Hemmingway, 2008, p.154).

I think in very general terms, our role, those people on the technical side, is to make the producer's dreams a reality. Now of course there's only so much you can dream that can become a reality (laughs) but producers aren't stupid, we might like to think they are occasionally,

but fundamentally they know what pots of gold they've got, they know what's perhaps a bit more than realistic and they know what's beyond realism. They'll come to us and say they want to do a, b, c and then they'll go 'I want to do e, f, g as well' and I'll raise an eyebrow or two, but if we can our job's to make that a reality. They just want it to happen and they're not really interested in how it happens. We facilitate what they want and disappear into the background.

(Ian Thacker, Senior Technical Operator, BBC East Midlands Today)

Normally the producer and production team in the gallery are uninterested in the SNG and what it takes to make it work so long as it can provide what they require, a live broadcast, from an event. However, on this occasion a quite deliberate decision to highlight the production process allows the audience and the production team to see it. To reinforce to the audience what they are seeing a graphic strap runs across the top of the screen from the left-hand side; Live Victory Road, Derby. This



shot was the first one used in the programme after the opening headline sequence before either of the presenters had said anything. When the director selects the next shot from which to view the broadcast location it is a more traditional one, a medium-wide shot, of both presenters as they delivered the first link of the programme but the reality which was seen previously continues albeit now hidden from the view of the audience. It is happening simultaneously as the live pictures now broadcasting the presenters' words and pictures. The camera crews and their technology are enfolded into the process of providing the live broadcast; they have become invisible again and their reality is subsumed within the creation of the image seen by the audience.

The conversations between the director in the gallery and the operator in the satellite vehicle, overseeing operations at the OB, continue in parallel with everything else which is going on around them, instructions are passed from the SNG to the camera crews and the perspective on reality is changed as cameras reframe their shots. Of course, the same invisibility and enfolding of actors within the network is taking place within the television gallery in Nottingham where decisions over which of the offered camera angles should be shown, which script is to read next or pre-recorded package to transmit, are being made. The SNG can talk to the gallery at the same time as offering shots from the OB and talking to the staff at the location. It is performing a multiple number of roles, a multiple number of realities, at once.

[Live Read: OB]

{PRES}

Tonight, a special edition of East Midlands Today. We're on Victory Road in Derby where almost a year ago six young children lost their lives in a terrifying fire.

{GO TO MASTCAM}



It was here - at number 18 - that their parents poured petrol inside their own house and set a fire which was to kill five brothers and their sister.

{GO TO GUILTY GFX}



This afternoon Mick and Mairead Philpott and their friend, Paul Mosley, were ALL found guilty of manslaughter.

[Live Read: Change Pres]



{CHANGE}

Coming up, we'll have an insight into the police investigation. And we can now report Mick Philpott had a long history of violence including a conviction for the attempted murder of a former girlfriend.

In television news it is the director who usually decides which camera shot to select in cases such as the Philpott outside broadcast. The view of each camera at the location of is relayed back to the newsroom gallery and displayed upon a bank of television screens.

Each of the camera screens offers a different perspective on the scene they are witnessing and each camera operator can be asked to frame a different shot. As the director views the possible camera options, they, and the rest of the gallery staff, see before them multiple and simultaneous perspectives of the live broadcast. It is the director who has control over these various perspectives and ultimately the single reality which they show to the audience.

Before I worked in television, I thought everything was done in the last half hour before it went on air but obviously it has to be planned, so there's a planning process. The next process is on the day when things happen and people respond to stories that have happened and it's very much the key role of the producer of that day to decide how to use their resources. The producer holds the key as to whether that's an interesting programme or that's just a mediocre programme and different producers have different treatments. It's up to the director to interpret what the producer wants and turn it into television. We help the process along using our experience, knowing what's possible and how it will look.

(Bryan Sharpe, Director, BBC East Midlands Today)

There is a deliberate choice to manipulate the images seen by the viewers, one linked to the idea that without constantly changing the pictures they see people will switch channels.

We're told that the audience have the attention span of a gnat and what keeps the brain entertained and hooked into the story is a lot of different images whether that's a wide of the studio a close-up, a cut to a screen, then to a live location with a pan off. All of that is movement so you keep the audience watching. The alternative is a locked-off camera with a person in a suit reading straight at you as if it's the BBC in the 1950s. You have to accept that we are in the entertainment business and you have to for want of a better word dress up your coverage to keep people watching.

(Dominic Heale, Main Presenter, BBC East Midlands Today)

This assertion is supported by research evidence which shows the changing pace of news packages, the duration of content and the affect that has on audiences and storytelling, Rinke (2016), Esser (2008), Russomanno and Everett (1995), Hallin (2004) and Altheide (1987).

The network of actors required to produce a live programme as complex as the *East Midlands Today* broadcast about the conviction of the Philpotts is unseen by the audience. It took months of research and planning, interviews were recorded, news packages edited, graphics designed, court proceedings watched and reported on. The duration of the programme was 27 minutes and 45 seconds and the only genuinely live moments were those involving the presenters and guests and they lasted 6 minutes and 24 seconds.

During the broadcast complex networks of humans and technologies are co-operating in order to deliver the single reality which is the finished programme. Instructions are being sent from the gallery in Nottingham to the outside broadcast in Derby, questions and answers pass backwards and forwards using the technology of the satellite vehicle. All the time, in the television gallery in Nottingham, a broadcast assistant is counting the programme off air. She is counting through each link the presenters read, through each news package transmitted and occasionally telling the gallery that they need to speed up as the estimated reality of her computer timings is not matching the ones she is making with a stopwatch. Her main concern throughout the programme is to keep the estimated timings of each part of the programme as close to the actual times as possible and that is how she experiences the live event like everyone else involved, as Mol says as 'events-in-practice' (2002, p.21), quite differently to everyone else.

At the scene of the live broadcast the presenters' experience is different to the staff in the gallery and to the technical staff at the outside broadcast location. They are looking forwards, focused on the camera lenses in front of them. The abandoned house, the scene of the tragedy, is behind them and is seen by the audience but not the presenters. They cannot see the engineer in the satellite truck, who is experiencing the live broadcast as the images on a small screen inside the vehicle and the talk-back feed he can hear through a headset. The presenters are listening to the sounds from the pre-recorded packages and galley instructions through ear pieces which connect them to the gallery in Nottingham but they cannot see the reports they are talking about and that are being watched by the television audience. They are experiencing a quite different live broadcast than the television audience and all of their colleagues since *they are the live broadcast*.

One of the complaints, usually about profligacy, levelled at the BBC and others concerns the use of main 'anchors' to present live from the scene of a major story. It's more of an issue for network as EMT is unlikely to book me on a return flight to New York or Bogota any time soon. Nevertheless, viewers still wonder why it is felt necessary to transplant a regional presenting team from a well-lit, controlled and managed environment to a location a dozen or so miles away that is often none of those things. Couldn't a reporter do just as good a job? Sometimes the presenters wonder too. However, the reasons for doing it are, I think, as follows: Principally, I suppose, it shows the gravity of the occasion – and the importance being attached to it. It also doesn't very happen very often – which reinforces the impression of

something ‘big’ going on. On location programmes also demonstrate that the presenters are ‘of’ the region.

(Dominic Heale, Main Presenter, BBC East Midlands Today)

This quote encapsulates the broadcasting imperative felt within newsrooms to be live at events and to demonstrate the importance of a specific story to the audience. In these circumstances the links read by the presenters were written before the broadcast and projected on to the camera via the teleprompter system. The liveness of the words comes as the presenters read them but the time spent by producers writing them in the office before the broadcast is another invisible process by actors enfolded into the live event. This preparation, like the work done by the television engineers in the hours before transmission, is the unseen groundwork necessary to enable the live event to happen, (Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011).

My priority at a big OB is to get the cameras we are using up and working, I want to see those and hear those. I want to make sure the presenters’ microphones are working. I want my colleagues to know which microphone is working on which channel, let’s get all that sorted. If I’m planning a special broadcast what are the deadlines? If I need a remote camera on a Wednesday, I will have it arrive on a Monday so I can spend time checking it over, sorting it out. Making sure it’s working and I have all I need for the live on Wednesday. Once I’ve got these things sorted on location, that is what does the audience need to see, then I work on the extras. Something like an autocue you can go to a third-party supplier which comes with an operator, all the words are there for the presenters, there’s no stumbling, we can say what we want to say and it looks neat and

clean. It's not something we use every day so we have to plan for it days in advance.

(Andrew Willetts, Senior Operator, BBC East Midlands Today)

The rigging of technology, setting up cameras, preparing teleprompters, is eliminated from the live event as it happens and is in effect eliminated from the live production process. But without all of those actors being enfolded into the production process there would be no live event.

Before the use of microwave, satellite and more recently 4G technology the recorded material had to be physically returned to base for editing and broadcast. This placed geographical and temporal limits on where and when crews could film and as such it put restrictions on the events producers would choose to cover.

In the old days you had to bring the tape back to a playout area and that could have been a local radio station within the region or the regional office itself. Now you don't need to do that. If you're working in the Peak District for example you don't need to drive to Radio Derby. That time taken is eliminated. And also, you can create a finished product and send it as opposed to just sending back the raw material and have it dealt with back at base. Programme makers now know they can send to the furthest part of the region and still get a story back. You don't have to worry about the rush-hour anymore. You've got the technology in the vehicle now and the skills of the operator. The hour and a half stuck in traffic doesn't exist anymore. You've eliminated time!

(Andrew Willetts, Senior Operator, BBC East Midlands Today)

The use of technology has allowed news teams to push the deadlines for covering events closer to the transmission deadlines of the programmes on which they are working. The technological actors enrolled in these news production networks may not have eliminated time as Andrew Willetts jokes, but the networks they are part of may have eliminated traffic congestion as an actor from some news production networks.

This chapter has looked at various different ways a television news team can tell stories of murder events. They are routine production treatments, regularly used and they are selected for a number of different reasons. These reasons are mutable because they are part of the production process itself, continually feeding the results of attempts to enrol actors into the network back into the process of network creation. The examination of live broadcasting introduced ideas of multiple enactments within live events, Hemmingway and Van Loon (2011), Mol (2002). This identified separate chronograms for different actors which are being performed at the same time.

We know now, from our analysis of the ongoing fluidity of network activity that there are many more technological configurations being performed here, yet deliberately erased in the transmission of our perceived singular 'live' event.

(Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011, p.167)

By showing the various technological and human actors involved in the live broadcast from outside the Philpott house in Derby the Nottingham news team were deliberately exposing the news production process to the audience and unwittingly showing the simultaneous chronograms of the different actors. This example highlights just how important it is to follow the actor translations in order to properly

understand how the broadcasting of a live story about multiple homicides is achieved. The hundreds of hours of planning, script writing, filming, editing and technical preparation involved a vast number of human and nonhuman actors, brought together for 27 minutes and 45 seconds of television. Using Actor-Network Theory to look behind the curtain at television as *practice* a better understanding of how events of homicide become television news has been possible. The use of Twitter in the reporting of the Philpott trial demonstrates the contingent and fluid configurations of actors within social media platforms and news production. It showed how Actor-Network Theory can help read social media in a precise way though the specificity of translation, aided by the digital traces embedded within the actors themselves. By following the conversations conducted over Twitter during the reporting of the trial it's possible to see how news, which once had a short shelf-life, now has an existence away from and beyond the traditional news broadcast. The actor network analysis has shown how an individual reporter can circumvent the time constrained regional television broadcast and produce a news product which not only lives beyond its original publication but has the ability to mutate as it engages and interacts with other actors.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to provide an original insight into the reporting of instances of murder by BBC regional television newsrooms and to answer the question why do some murders receive media attention and others little or none at all. This has been achieved through the use of Actor-Network Theory to analyse specific murder events and show how networks of actors, both human and nonhuman, are enrolled within the storytelling process. In so doing this thesis responds to the call from Ryfe (2018) who believes ‘The lack of direct observation of journalistic performance’, means ‘scholars rarely observe the contingency and negotiation inherent to the choices journalists make’ (2018 p.218) which he sees as an oversight at a time when the journalistic field is changing so rapidly.

The thesis also develops the practical application of Actor-Network Theory and as such directly helps to address Wiard (2019) who seeks further developments in the application of the theory to journalism studies, specifically to look at the way these ‘technologies influence the way news is produced and consumed’ (2019 p.9). The study of media as practice has been growing since Hemmingway (2008) produced one of the first accounts which witnessed television journalism in the making. This thesis builds on those accounts.

Claims to originality within this thesis lie firstly in the area of research. No previous study has produced such an in-depth and considered analyse of how murder stories become news content on British television nor has Actor-Network Theory been applied in such circumstances. Furthermore, this research shows that rather than accepting news values as a static set of pre-existing principles they should be seen as mutable and susceptible to change for a number of reasons which can only be

identified by examining the news production process; crucially technological actors, including social media have been identified as sources of this mutability (see page 127) and how news is gathered and shared is also changed through the enrolment of technology, (see from page 137 and from page 196).

The original observation conducted for this thesis, specifically as the news process happened and the interviews with those involved conducted as part of the research project shows that any explanation which seeks to answer the question about what news actually is must consider the materiality of the news production process itself (pages 192-195). Those journalists and technical news practitioners who repeat the daily routine of filling television air time vividly demonstrate a pragmatic view towards news values and storytelling (see pages 205 and 254).

The decision-making process around the murders in Birmingham show a team of news professionals making a choice about which stories to cover and how (page 263) not least due to the technical constraints they face. Understanding the reasons behind story selection and storytelling style is only truly revealed by looking at the context of the decision-making process: television news is a result of the process of its own production (pages 254 and 303) and of the production choices around it.

Actor-Network Theory has been accused of being short on specific method and an open-ended approach which fails to define the boundaries to the area of research (see page 84). Critics claim that without knowing when an investigation starts and ends how can any constructive conclusions be drawn from it. However, application of the theory to the study of murder stories selection by journalists conducted for this thesis has discovered that is not the case. It's been shown that clearly defined boundaries to the research can be drawn. In the case of murder

stories, are defined by procedural events of investigation and prosecution, (page 85). By applying Actor-Network Theory to the use of social media as a way of finding and researching stories, (see from page 137), reaching the audience (page 127) and reporting live from court a new form of journalism is acknowledged by the practitioners themselves (page 294). Actor-Network Theory has shown how it is possible to trace possible actors through the threads of social media conversations and posts. Researchers can follow these traces, mapping the specific moments when the news process enrolls new actors or they resist enrolment. Methodologically the boundaries of a network can be defined by the points of specificity identified by the sociogram, technogram and chronogram (see page 75). These moments of translation are discovered by following the interaction of actors on and using social media. Use of social media for live reporting by journalists has shown that the boundaries to their news process can be considered elastic and have the capacity to expand or contract as interactions with audience members takes place. This fluid mutability of news is identified by the use of Actor-Network Theory and is something other approaches would fail to properly explain.

The theory has previously been used to analyse a wide-range of phenomena, from science and technology studies, where it originated, to many other areas including, education, housing, finance and media. It is concerned with material relationships, Law (2009), Callon and Law (1997) Latour (1999, 1990, 1987). In an era of technological media innovation which sees humans interacting more and more with each other through electronic means the approach seems ideally suited for developing our understanding of these relationships with regard to the production of news stories. Many of the previous attempts to understand story selection by journalists, loosely described as News Values approaches (see page 21 and 191)

have been shown to lack investigative rigour when it comes to understanding how an event actually become news. Using Actor-Network Theory has allowed this research to overcome the opaqueness Hall (1973) describes in the news selection process (see page 24 of this thesis) and it moves the research in a direction focused on news as a live product which is a fluid and contingent processes.

The theoretical tools of sociogram, technogram and chronogram, (page 75), which allow actors to be mapped within networks has been used in this thesis to show how different murder events are seen by journalists and reported, (see pages 196, 244, 257). The use of these tools has shown when and how changes within the networks altered journalists' perceptions about the newsworthiness of certain murders and the reporting of them. For example, in the reporting of Hayley Pointon's murder (see from page 196) the producer initially dismissed the incident as not worth reporting but as the day developed so did his attitude; firstly, when it became clear the police were prepared to be interviewed and secondly, when the injunction limiting reporting was issued by the judge. A theoretical approach which failed to engage with the news production process, sought information from emails and eyewitnesses, would only have seen a short presenter read story in the main evening news. From that, someone using the News Values approach may have drawn the conclusion that the story was not seen to be worth much coverage. The true feelings about how the event was seen and how those feelings altered during the day would have been completely missed since the specificity of analysis of the production process was not taken into account. By applying the theoretical approach of Actor-Network Theory it is possible to see the lengths that the news team actually went to create a network of actors which would have led to quite a different style of report and how these efforts ultimately failed and the short presenter read story

ended up in the news programme. And by extension, a different understanding of what the news team considered newsworthy is reached.

The producer of the day was unable to broadcast the report he wanted to because of an injunction issued by a judge sitting in a court 60 miles away (see page 213). This nonhuman actor, which was not part of the assembled network of actors formed to tell the story, managed to disrupt the broadcast network in an instant. The intervention of the injunction prevented the news team from using almost all of the material they had gathered. At one moment the producer believed he had a substantial story. However, the fluid and *ad hoc* nature of the news process was explicitly exposed when the producer had to comply with the intervention of an actor from a distant and unseen network. The News Values approach to the understanding of media would have missed this separate node, on a separate network, since they do not look in microscopic detail at the process of production. Without the use of Actor-Network Theory to identify the specificity of the actors' positions in the assembled network, the truth behind the creation of the final broadcast story would have remained hidden from view.

Applying Actor-Network Theory to an examination of the news production process surrounding murder events helps to develop understanding of television news content as a whole. It moves understanding of what events become news beyond the debate about the importance of news values to analysis of specific and real processes of news production around murder events and as such is a new application of the theory.

This thesis shows that the reading of the news production process is enhanced by the use of Actor-Network Theory because it demonstrates that news is not a linear progression from event through to broadcast, but rather it is continuously

changing, only achieving network stability momentarily or not at all at the point of transmission. The same methods of interrogation applied to both modern murder events reported by BBC news teams and historic examples, (see appendix H), have also been used to map the developing use of social media platforms. Because of the changes in legal reporting restrictions (pages 292-293) a reporter watching a murder trial was able to circumvent the cumbersome and traditionally technologically complex news broadcasting process and communicate directly with his audience (see from page 293) by using the Twitter social media app. Actor-Network Theory exposed the agility of his broadcasting network by mapping his social media presence and the interactions his Tweets had with other users of the micro-blogging site. This shows how the fixed broadcasting times of linear television are no longer a constraint on reporting. It also demonstrated the enrolment of the reporter within the story. He was engaging with social media users directly while watching events unfold before him. This was made visible by the mapping methods of sociogram, technogram and chronogram (pages 75-76). By tracing these axes, it was possible to pinpoint when and with whom he was interacting and how his news network was expanding to enrol other users.

This analysis develops the theoretical significance of specificity within Actor-Network Theory because it allows us to identify, to a degree not seen before, the precise moments of translation between specific individual actors within a network. This analytical application not only allows for a richer understanding of the interactions between actors it also provides a way of overcoming concerns regarding the theory's ability to define boundaries on any inquiry, (page 84).

However, social media applications operate on a level which require users to part with personal data in exchange for access and ease of use. In many instances,

the human actors interacting with social media, deliberately leave a trail which can be followed, in the form of posts, messages and likes. Many of these traces of interaction are openly visible and therefore, the networks actors are enrolled into are simple to map, if potentially expansive. The apparent boundarylessness of social media is actually bound by engagement with it and the criticism levelled at Actor-Network Theory for being an approach without end has actually been seen as a strength which helps analysis of social media.

An example of a Facebook live broadcast by the BBC online team in Nottingham showed how the immediacy of interaction between broadcaster and audience also strengthens the chronogram of the various social media actors, (pages 127). By mapping the translations between actors in the broadcast it was possible to see how the relationship between broadcaster and audience is continually being redefined as the journalist responds ‘in real time’ to questions they are asked. The analysis shows the journalist becomes doubly enfolded into the news production process, firstly as broadcaster and then as respondent, which feeds back into itself. This use of Actor-Network Theory supports the notion that boundaries of the production process are elastic as well as the process being fluid and contingent itself; and that in the real-world journalists’ news values are mutable as they adapt to the situations they are part of.

Although there has been much research on crime reporting in newspapers and television, Mawby (2010a), Greer (2007), Innes (1999), Chermak (1994) and Chibnall (1977), the use of Actor-Network Theory in this thesis to examine murders has produced the first detailed analysis of homicide as news content on BBC regional news programmes. This research also specifically demonstrates how the mutable and fluid nature of news values change as both human and nonhuman

actors are enrolled within production networks, (pages 203-204 and 259). Herein lies the biggest criticism of Actor-Network Theory, the theory's insistence that nonhuman actors have agency, (see pages 41-57). For some, Latour's flat world view with no pre-existing social hierarchies is too much. It is argued that allowing nonhumans a role as actors equates to there being no distinction between humans and nonhumans (Amsterdamska 1990). But Callon and Latour (1992) are not suggesting that each actor is exactly the same when it comes to agency. They are asking for a methodological approach which makes no distinctions before conducting research, one which does not foreground a readymade, pre-existing 'social' in which humans have the upper hand, before the research begins.

This new research has shown how some television journalists view incidents of murder and how they decide which ones they believe are worth investing resources in, (pages 161, 222-224, and 264). Innes (2003) describes crime news as 'good news' for reporters because 'it is almost guaranteed that there will be a steady supply of interesting, 'newsworthy' stories, which journalists can draw upon as and when needed,' (2003, p.55). Although this may be true, the last two words are all important, 'when needed'. Television journalists operate in a specific environment in which many competing factors are consistently influencing their choices.

Original fieldwork again shows news values are fluid and not constrained by preconceived fixed ideas. This was clearly demonstrated in an example from the BBC television newsroom in Birmingham when there were three homicides on one day, (from page 244). A detailed actor network analysis of events was conducted to trace the different actor networks each incident of homicide was able to sustain. It was shown that one murder, the shooting of a young man, was of interest to all media platforms, television, radio and online. Although the speed with which

journalists reacted was a reflection of their familiarity with events of murder. In the Birmingham news area homicide is a regular occurrence. This murder, (pages 259-262), also highlighted the role technological actors, such as cameras, can have on news values, showing them to be mutable and fluid. The second incident was of no interest to the television newsroom. The reason for this was a statement issued by police, (pages 253-254), which said the two deaths were related. Journalists speculated one was a murder and the second a suicide by the killer. Application of Actor-Network Theory identified the police statement as an immutable mobile, (page 167). That is a portable actor which can cause other actors to change through the translation process but remain unchanged themselves. It generated a reaction within the team of indifference. The close observation and interviews conducted around these two events generated an identifiable set of heterogenous and mutable actors, at least some of which were observed, in all the examples of murder events analysed during the research.

They included the murder victim themselves and whether or not the journalists thought they and the circumstances of their death were unusual or fitted a particular narrative the journalist was interested in telling. For example, the killings of six children in a house fire started by their parents (see from page 267). This particular incident was able to enrol large numbers of human and nonhuman resources into a network which was stable and sustained across a period of many months.

Drawing on the observations and interviews carried-out for this thesis Actor-Network Theory has produced an original and unique account of murder reporting on BBC television news. The methodology and methods which have been used can be successfully applied to the news production process in general. Previous studies,

including, Harcup and O'Neill (2016, 2001), Harrison (2006), and Galtung and Ruge (1965), have compiled lists of factors which can be used to judge the newsworthiness of an event. This thesis has identified areas these studies have either undervalued or overlooked because they were not examining the news production process with the specifically focused methodology and methods of Actor-Network Theory, (see first chapter).

The mapping of different murder events has shown the influence time can have on actors, for example when the television team in Birmingham realise they won't be able to have a live report from the murder scene (see page 259) because there is no time to get the right equipment into the right place. Significantly time can be an actor as well since television programmes run to a specific duration, and if the programme is already full and a particular murder does not seem interesting, the lack of available broadcast time can become a more prominent actor in the news production process.

Associated with these temporal actors is the part played by the geographic location of an event and the ability of the event to enrol actors within a news production network. The translational strength of an event's geographic location is closely aligned to the temporal circumstances outlined above and the desire by news producers to create a balance within a programme, both in terms of story type and reporting location. Social media provides a speedier source of notification about events which the actor network approach allows us to specifically map. It is possible to see the moment that stories or posts have an influence on the news values of journalists and become enrolled into a production network. It has been argued that technological actors such as social media and personal phone cameras are actually

creating news values (see page 135 and the filming of a police shooting in America.)

Their presence at an event and ability to share it with others can create interest.

Mobile phones and social media apps can provide news organisations with images and information about more incidents than ever before but responsible broadcasters will always want to verify what is happening themselves. Here the physical distance between an incident and available reporting resources can become critical. However, if a murder is seen as interesting enough, the geographical barriers to reporting are likely to be overcome; but of course, this depends on the translational strength of other actors within the network.

Geography can also be relevant to the news production process. Regional BBC news teams endeavour to cover stories from across their transmission area (see pages 170-171) to ensure viewers from all parts of the region have news of local relevance. This means that some events are selected because the programme has a lack of stories from that part of the transmission area. This characteristic of the event can increase or decrease in importance when other story content is taken into account.

This is a matter of the internal structure of a programme, balancing the needs of story content and type with geography and temporal considerations. It would be fairly easy for a news operation to fill the programme with thirty minutes of crime reports or thirty minutes of features about children or the countryside. To avoid this, producers will bear story type in mind when considering what events to report. It may be the case, as outlined by interviewees for this thesis, that once a story of a certain type, crime for example, has been commissioned for that evening's programme, a producer will steer clear of other crime stories unless the new event is judged to be more important than other content. This decision-making process has

been shown with the actor network analysis surrounding the murders of Hayley Pointon and Marian Bates (see pages 196 and 207-212).

One last influence which this thesis has identified is the way in which events are prepared for broadcast. On a day when there seems to be little ‘hard news’ to report a lesser event may get airtime it would not have on a busier day. The desire for ‘hard news’ with which to lead an evening news programme is a widely held belief. Journalists regularly talk about ‘stiffening stories’, of making them appear important and this is done in various ways.

We often build stories up, polish the turd! It’s a matter of making it seem like it’s a lead and worthy of sitting at the top of the programme. You can always beef it up with a down-the-line guest or studio interview. Get the presenters to talk through a graphic sequence and make it important, chat to the reporter off the back of the package. You see it all the time, both locally and nationally – the big guns are at the scene – then it must be important.

(Planner, BBC regional newsroom)

The production elements outlined in this quote are storytelling devices the news team in Nottingham and elsewhere within the BBC employ. See appendix C for a detailed actor network account of murder event storytelling.

Using the methodological approach of Actor-Network Theory to conduct close observational study inside two BBC newsrooms, this thesis has produced an original insight into the processes of television news production and shown the importance and applicability of using the theory for the study of social media.

It shows that the newsworthiness of any murder event is dependent upon the actors it is able to enrol and the stability of the actor networks formed around it. And

these networks include nonhuman as well as human actors. The thesis has furthered academic understanding of which factors influence this heterogeneous news process by identifying previously under considered or invisible actors.

It concludes that actors such as temporal, geographic and internal programme dynamics can have as influential a part to play in the reporting of murder events as journalists' preconceptions on who is an interesting victim or the specific circumstances of the murder are. The thesis further claims that the extension of actor network methodology to the analysis of social media has shown that its boundarylessness has distinct advantages in the explanation of social media networks.

This research has taken me down many roads, some of which proved to be cul-de-sacs, others I was unable to travel down for reasons of time or space within this thesis. The ongoing shift of news resources into digital platforms will continue to provide areas for research. The shift of human interaction from the real world to the virtual world is already having an influence on how we see ourselves and others. Many people are happy to live open media lives but many are not and the consequences for both remain an area of interest to researchers and journalist alike. So too does the shifting nature of news content with news organisations looking for social media "likes and shares".

These interactions are all being affected by the ongoing reaction to the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic. It is the backdrop to societal shifts across the world and has been the focus of media reporting for many months and will continue to be. There has been a fundamental change to the operation of the news production process within the BBC, both in terms of what is now considered to be newsworthy and how those newsworthy events become television news stories. Many members of staff

now work from home or in restricted ways and these restrictions along with significant job losses at both a regional and national level are sure to affect how BBC journalism is conducted.

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Appendix

- A: BBC structure and vocabulary
- B: Interviewees and questions
- C: Visual Representation of Murder Stories
- D: Popularity of social media
- E: Social media and Kayleigh Haywood's murder
- F: Police and social media
- G: Marion Bates murder
- H: Victorian murders
- I: Interviewee replies about murder
- J: Just one example of social media use

Appendix A

BBC Structure and TV Vocabulary

The BBC operates across the globe but its main bases of operation are within the four countries which comprise the United Kingdom. It is only in England that a regional television service exists, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own nationwide news service which are transmitted at the same time as those programmes which serve England.

The BBC divides England into 12 regions which, although they do not exactly mirror the Government's administrative division of the country, do approximate significantly enough.⁴⁸ Each BBC region has a headquarters office which houses the television production team a local radio operation, online media and administrative staff. For example, in the East Midlands BBC region the headquarters are in Nottingham and housed in the same building as the local BBC radio service for the county of Nottinghamshire, *Radio Nottingham*. There are two other radio stations in this East Midlands cluster, *Radio Leicester* and *Radio Derby*, based in offices in those cities. Small teams of journalists working for various social media services also work from the radio stations and these offices are used as bases for members of the television team.

The television team for the East Midlands has approximately 60 members of staff working in production and support roles. They provide newsroom cover for the region across the year and material seven days a week for bulletins which run from approximately 06:25 until 22:40 on weekdays and at various times on the weekend.

⁴⁸ These 12 regions actually provide 15 news services. BBC Look East has two regional news programmes, one based in Norwich and the other in Cambridge. The service for BBC South is divided between an operation for the Oxfordshire a south Midlands and another programme from Southampton. There is also a separate news programme for the Channel Islands.

The majority of journalists, technical and support staff are based in Nottingham. There are district reporters who work from the buildings housing *Radio Leicester* and *Radio Derby*. Although staffing levels vary across the week and across the year, under normal conditions, there are usually about 20 journalists who research, gather and produce the daily news output. A similar number of staff work on the technical side of production and are involved in various roles including; filming, editing and directing. Each newsroom will have a similar structure but there will be slight variations on how staff are deployed, for example, some regions have a role described as a 'news editor' while others do not. The main regional news is read by two presenters in the North West and South East for example while in Hull and London the output is 'single-headed', that is presented by one newsreader. Some programme editors like to have a sports slot in their programme each night, *East Midlands Today*, for example while at *Midlands Today* they chose not to. In some parts of England the weather forecast is pre-recorded for the late (22:30) bulletin and in others it is delivered live. Such seemingly simple and almost unnoticed differences have a significant influence on the actors enrolled into the production of any given bulletin but without using Actor-Network Theory these differences would remain hidden to the outside world. The way in which any newsroom operates and the decisions made about the types of events which are seen as newsworthy will have an influence on the actors involved. BBC regional news is not homogeneous across the various news operations which mean specific local factors, such as the personal preferences of producers or programme editors can shape the reactions of the news team to murder stories.

TV Vocabulary

Various definitions are used for television vocabulary throughout this thesis. In most cases terms have been explained at first use either within the body of the text or within footnotes. Here it is necessary to define what is meant when journalists talk of '*stories*', '*story-telling*' and '*the story narrative*'. This is done to avoid confusion when these and similar expressions could be confused with their meaning when used by sociologists, or misconstrued by the uninitiated to the television newsroom, who may believe they imply fiction or fairy-tale, which is far from the meaning journalists actually give them. The words *story* or *stories* are, for journalists, generic terms, often interchangeable with the use of the words *report* or *reports*. They are used quite freely to mean the same thing but they can also be used in a specific sense. For example, journalists usually refer to a '*court report*' rather than a '*court story*'. *Reports* are seen as newsier items, encompassing breaking news or an investigative piece of journalism, while the word *feature* describes lighter stories which are often found in the lower part of a news programme.

The word *report* has a semiotic sense of linear understanding. For example, a *court report* is a factual account of what happened inside a court during a trial. Although everything said within a court is not included in reports journalists are constrained by law to ensure their reports are a fair reflection of proceedings. This means there is little freedom to deviate from the actuality of the legal process. This endows court reports with a more rigid materiality not seen in stories found further down a television news running order. These *features* are of a more malleable construct than rigid news reports and can include subjects such as art, countryside and lifestyle subjects. They can be interpreted more freely by the journalists sent to cover them and are therefore more pliable as news events. There is a semiotic

fluidity in the production of these stories not seen in the *court report* but to ensure a symmetrical approach to all news production it is essential to apply the same methodological approach which Actor-Network Theory provides.

The news production process for a court report is quite different from that of a feature and actor network analysis allows the researcher to quantify the different actors enrolled in these different processes. The methodological imperative of Actor-Network Theory to trace the involvement of individual actors allows analysis of separate news production processes with a symmetrical approach. The uniqueness of each process means no overarching universal matrix can be applied to each case study. Rather the methodology of the theory allows for a consistency of method which can be applied universally to each fluid news production process.

Reports centred on personal testimony from interviewees are usually described by journalists as '*human interest stories*'. The term '*story count*' would be used to describe the number of individual news items in a programme. *Narrative* as understood by journalists is more than a spoken account of a story; it is the combination of pictures and words, actuality of events, reconstructions, the use of graphics and the arrangement of these elements into the story. For journalists the binary opposition of voices can also be an important part in many reports as they seek balance to ensure their own impartiality. The selection of particular shots and the interviews used along with the order they are placed all have a bearing on how a story actually looks and the way in which the audience will understand it. See Hansen et al (2010) and Deacon et al (2007) for details of communication research methods traditionally used to understand television news items.

Appendix B

Interviewees and questions

The following list is an anonymised break-down of all those people interviewed during field research. The following abbreviations have been used to identify an individual's role within the BBC:

Senior Broadcast Journalist - SBJ

Broadcast Journalist - BJ

Senior Technical Operator - STO

Director refers to those people who direct live news programmes.

Assistant Editor - AE

Senior management refers to any individual of an Editor grade or above. Other titles should be self-explanatory

Gender	Age	Role
M	40+	SBJ
F	20+	BJ
M	50+	STO
M	40+	Director
F	40+	BJ
F	40+	BJ
M	40+	SBJ
F	50+	Librarian
M	40+	SBJ
M	50+	Senior management
M	50+	SBJ
F	30+	Police press officer
F	50+	Senior management
M	30+	BJ
F	30+	SBJ
F	30+	Court artist
M	40+	Director
M	40+	STO
M	50+	SBJ
M	50+	Correspondent

F	50+	Police press officer
M	50+	STO
M	60+	Correspondent
F	30+	BJ
F	40+	AE
M	40+	SBJ
F	50+	SBJ
F	50+	SBJ
M	60+	AE
M	40+	STO
M	30+	SBJ
F	30+	BJ
F	40+	Broadcast assistant
M	50+	STO
M	50+	STO
M	40+	AE
F	30+	SBJ
M	20+	SBJ
M	40+	Police press officer
M	40+	Police press officer
M	50+	STO
M	50+	SBJ
M	50+	SBJ
F	30+	SBJ
F	40+	SBJ
F	30+	SBJ
M	40+	SBJ
M	30+	BJ
M	40+	Senior management
M	30+	BJ
M	30+	SBJ
M	50+	STO
M	40+	STO
M	50+	Director
M	20+	BJ
F	50+	HR support
F	50+	Camera diary
F	40+	SBJ
M	50+	SBJ
M	50+	Director
M	40+	Graphics
F	60+	AE

Survey questionnaire and data

Gender	Age	Role
M	40+	AE
M	50+	AE
M	40+	AE
F	40+	AE
M	40+	AE

Interviewees were all asked the same type of introductory questions which established their role within the BBC or police force and if they preferred not to be identified in anyway within the thesis. The subsequent questions varied depending upon the interviewee and their previous answers.

Thank you for taking part in this PhD research which may be used in associated papers or publications. Are you happy to be identified by name?

Describe your role/position/post – what do you do?

What does 'news' mean to you?

How would you define news – a news story – what makes something news?

Where does BBC regional news fit in to BBC output?

Describe what BBC regional news is for – does – should be doing.
Explain the newsroom structure.

How does your newsroom operate?

What do you think the role of a journalist is?

How do you decide what stories to cover?

Where does news come from?

Can you describe the process of news?

What are the most important elements for a TV news story?

What guides or informs story selection and treatment?

Are there any forces that influence those decisions?

What sources do you use to get stories - have they changed over time?

Do you ever feel pressured to cover certain stories?

What factors influence the decisions you make about which stories to cover?

What do you think about the treatment of murder as a news story?

Do you have personal experience of murder other than as a journalist? If so has that influenced the way you work?

Why do journalists report on murders?

Is there such a thing as a 'good' or 'bad' murder story? What's the difference?

What makes you report one rather than another?

How does the time of day influence your decision-making process on which stories to cover?

Are there times of the week when a murder would get more coverage?

Can you describe what is often talked of as the journalist's gut feeling towards stories?

What influence do police press officers have on story telling?

Do you feel they help/hinder/control the flow of information?

How important are pictures/video/eye-witnesses to the story telling process?

Do you have personal experience of murder other than as a reporter?

Weekends/overnights etc - they are good bulletin fodder aren't they - give a programme a hard news feel?

How do you use technology to perform your role?

What influence does technology have on you?

Does it make your job easier or harder and why?

When you are on an overnight shift what are you looking for in the stories you tell?

What use do you make of the archive?

Where does power lie in the newsroom?

Who or what has power over your working environment?

How has the set of skills you need to perform the role of a journalist changed over time?

Can you describe the hierarchy that exists in the newsroom?

How does this manifest itself in daily operation and structure?

How do you feel towards the technology you are asked to use in your role?

What role do the engineering staff play within the news gathering operation?

Under what conditions do you challenge the operational choices of the newsroom's senior staff?

How is technology used and does its use change in different circumstances?

What do you understand by the job titles within a newsroom?

What is the role of a police press officer?

Describe the relationship you and colleagues have with police and press officers.

What is your job?

How does technology affect the way you work?

What role does technology have in the newsgathering and production process?

What relationship do you have with technology?

Explain the flow of information that leads to a story?

How do ideas or events become news?

Describe the different approaches to storytelling – devices and treatments – why do you use them and when?

How has the attitude to storytelling changed and what role does technology play?

How important are the use of pictures and writing to storytelling

What do the different treatments of storytelling add to the story - infer its importance etc

How has social media platforms changed what is considered to be news?

What issues does it raise what opportunities?

Do BBC newsrooms have their own news agenda - corporate one?

Do changes in management lead to changes in the type of story seen as newsworthy?

Has the introduction of different technologies to the newsgathering and production process changed the approach to reporting/ and murder stories?

What do the changing demographics of the country mean for BBC regional news?

How do different platforms serve their target audiences differently?

What relationship should the BBC have with the police when it comes to storytelling and as a source of stories?

What is the future for regional news?

Where will technological developments take or lead regional news?

Do you think technology leads developments in broadcasting?

Appendix C

Visual Representation of Murder Stories

This appendix develops the reading of media applying the same actor network methodology and analysis to the ways newsrooms may choose to report murder stories. These will be illustrated using a series of different news production techniques from the BBC Nottingham newsroom. Each will be dissected using the actor network tools demonstrated in previous examples throughout this thesis. In each case still images taken from a news report will be combined with the accompanying script in order to show how the various actors come together into a story network. Technical instructions used by staff to allow communication between different technical pieces of equipment are also included. These will be indicated in bold type face.

By looking at these different production techniques a more complete understanding of the production process will be developed and the applicability of the actor network approach to reading media will be reinforced. The widely differing nature of these various production techniques will highlight the underling homogeneity of the heterogeneous actors. These actors may include the studio sofa on which a reporter sits, the camera used to transmit a live report from the newsroom, a letter shown by the police to a journalist or any number of different human and nonhuman actors in any specific translation. But they have one thing in common, their status as actors within a network created around the fluid process of news production.

For those working in the BBC television newsroom in Nottingham the different techniques employed in the telling of news stories are ‘tools of the trade’.

Producers, reporters, directors, we all have our own opinions on how a story can be told. Sometimes the producer will ask you to package it up or we'll be live at an event. It really depends what toys they have to play with. Is the satellite vehicle already being used or have they already got a studio guest? Some stories have to be told in a certain way because they may be breaking news and there isn't time to do anything else – so you sit in front of the newsroom camera and answer a few questions from the presenters. Other times you are asked to do it a certain way, against the big screen or on location, just to give the programme a different feel, break up the blocks of video.

(Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

This observation on news production techniques is widely supported among technical and editorial staff within the Nottingham newsroom. Without realising it this unnamed interviewee was summing up the precise reason the news production process is ideal ground for developing the use of Actor-Network Theory. As the above quote acknowledges different techniques may be used for sound editorial reasons, such as the expediency of reporting or it could be because a specific story is seen as being so important or of region-wide or even national interest that it demands extra resources. However, it is only by following the various actors (Latour 2005) with the unique set of tools offered by Actor-Network Theory that these reasons can truly be identified during the production process.

The idea of technological agency was introduced in the chapter on storytelling and the example of a faulty camera battery (page 176). Cottle (1993) describes how the use of ENG (electronic newsgathering) camera crews at Central Television in Birmingham truncated interviews with contributors into short clips for

use in news packages. He observed the developing technology having an effect on story selection and the news production process which was often not considered by the news team (1993, p.117-123).

The introduction of the Michael Rosenblum approach to news production at the BBC in Nottingham in the early 2000s influenced both the selection of news stories and their production. He advocated a form of Personal Digital Production (PDP). PDP is an approach to television news production which seeks to do away with the traditional combination of individual journalist, and individual camera operator working together to create reports. Instead, Rosenblum advocates that all staff should film and edit their own material using the opportunity offered by lightweight cameras. For him, new and cheaper technology, both cameras and editing equipment, frees journalism and television news from the constraints of both traditional methods of production and news product. At the BBC he encouraged longer news packages which were built around personality driven interviews and observational filming.⁴⁹

Interviews conducted for this thesis show the value and results of the Personal Digital Production experiment are still contested within the Nottingham newsroom. Although it has left a faint trace, PDP, hailed as a revolutionary new way to make regional news programmes, failed to sustain enough support to survive. Levinson (1999) maintains we alter our own behaviour because of the relationship we develop with technology and this is no less the case with the production possibilities afforded to the makers of television by technological developments. By looking at examples of the news production process of murder stories it will become

⁴⁹ See Hemmingway 2005 for more details.

clear that decisions about how much air time and what resources are devoted to them is dependent upon the strength of the networks which each story can enrol.

News stories come in all shapes and sizes; they can be brief in vision reads where the words are spoken by a presenter and there are no pictures or graphics to accompany them. These are most often used for 'breaking stories' which are seen as so important that they must be broadcast even if there is nothing to illustrate them. On the other end of the scale stories can be deemed so significant that entire programmes are devoted to them along with months of prior research and preparation.

The following representations of murder stories introduce some storytelling techniques used in the construction of news output by the BBC television newsroom in Nottingham. They include a verbatim script of the words accompanied with an image from the start of each shot change in the story. The range of visual representations is naturally limited since there are a finite number of pictures available in any story and in stories of murder access to images is often hard to achieve because of the context in which they take place. As Brookman (2005) shows murder is very often carried out in a domestic setting (31%) and committed mainly by men against women (76%). These figures cover 1997-2001 and are taken from Home Office homicide data.

Despite the occasional blip, such as Harold Shipman or acts of terrorism, there is nothing in more recent figures to suggest that the dominance of the domestic nature of murder has changed. It is for that reason that many murders go unreported because they are quickly solved by the police as the victim is known to the perpetrator and so the murder is classified as 'domestic'. In these circumstances the murder may be of little interest to journalists however there are occasions when

'domestic' murders are of significant interest. For example, when children kill; Daniel Bartlam murdered his mother Jacqueline following a row at their home in Nottinghamshire in April 2011. In 2012 the *East Midlands Today* team reported the murder by a man who deliberately crashed his car into a tree in Leicestershire, killing his wife, who was a passenger, after disabling the car's airbags. Initially the incident had looked like a road traffic accident but it became interesting to the news team in the East Midlands when the police investigation developed.

There is definitely some kind of pecking order to a murder; there's definitely a very quick evaluation to a murder to assess how far it will go. That sometimes depends on the pictures at the time of the murder, following the murder access to family will be a criteria, how unusual it is? We would tend not to go and follow-up a murder that's described as a domestic murder unless there is something unusual about it or tragic like the Holbrook murder, the guy who killed his former partner and their son and himself. There was a murder at the weekend on Saturday, on New Year's Day, I wasn't here but I picked it up yesterday. He was a man 35, in Hyson Green in Nottingham and the man due in court is about 50. Now I don't think we will follow it up, I don't think we will go any further with it. The reasons will be, there is a really bad picture of the victim, really grainy, a blurry still and there is no suggestion of anything more interesting to it. It may be a domestic, a relationship thing, a gay relationship and it's not going to have enough strands to it to make it more interesting.

(Kate Sassi, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

This view of the newsworthiness of murder is typical within the newsroom. Journalists are drawn to the more out of the ordinary or bizarre murders. In the following examples the actor network methodological tools of sociogram, technogram and chronogram will be used to examine different styles of storytelling with particular attention paid to the associated technology enfolded into the news products. Although reference will be made to the structure and style of the example stories this is a deliberately tangential approach to the analysis of news products described as content analysis (Deacon et al 2007, Hansen et al 1998). Content analysis, when used in isolation, fails to take into account the production processes of making news and the influences on the finished news product which occur through the continually mutable process of production. Actor-Network Theory places an analytical emphasis on these micro-relationships through the methodological imperative to ‘follow the actors’ (Latour 2005) because the associations actors make within the news production process are constantly being tested. In the following story examples words, numbers and symbols contained within brackets are technical instructions for the gallery staff and for the playout equipment which automatically cues material ready for transmission.

OOV – Out of Vision

This short oov (where the presenter is **out of vision** but reading the script live – hence the shorthand oov) story is about the disappearance of a Polish man who had been living and working in Nottingham. It was edited from library pictures on the 15th May 2014 and the script was an update based on a police news release. It starts traditionally with the presenter reading an introductory link in vision, framed at

shoulder height in the middle of the screen, before pictures relevant to the story are brought in to illustrate the script.

Presenter:
[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]
{VIS}

Police have completed the search of a house in the Meadows area of Nottingham as they continue to hunt for the body of Bogdan Nav-rot-ski.



Presenter out of vision:

The 22-year-old, who was from Poland, was last seen in January. Officers say they've found nothing from this latest search. One man has been charged with murder and three others remain on bail pending further enquiries.

[<mos>BOGDAN_150514_OOV_1830NO 0:18</mos>]

[CG in at 0'02" out at 0'06": NEWS IN BRIEF STRAP

AUTO\ \SEARCH FOR BOGDAN CONTINUES\Police finish their search at a house in Nottingham]



This frame includes a graphic strap which contains information about the story which is designed to reinforce the information contained in the short script read by the presenter.



The images are standard pictures gathered at the time of the police search of a property which began a few days prior to the transmission of this report. It was

broadcast in the evening programme as one of several short stories. It is an unremarkable update to an ongoing police investigation and its inclusion in the output was justified by one member of the news team as ‘A harder news story to beef up the programme; it was the best of the bunch.’ The circumstance of this almost dismissive comment is one in which the murder of Bogdan Navrotsky had failed to provoke much interest among the key decision makers within the newsroom.

To update and broadcast the story the production staff made use of information contained in a police media release and images which had been filmed previously. It was a case of writing the fresh script and slightly altering the sequence of archive images to provide ‘a harder news story’. The ease of translation, the process of turning the idea of the story into 20 seconds of television content, made it attractive to the producer since it didn’t need to enrol many resources, human or technical, into a network in order to produce the short update.

The ontology of this story is a catalogue of actors easily enrolled, offering no resistance to the moments of translation (Callon 1986). The translation starts with the problematization, which in this example is the programme producer’s wish to add a few short stories to the other elements of the already planned evening programme. These stories can help fulfil an editorial objective of ensuring coverage across the whole region where the programme is transmitted (specific stories from Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, and Derbyshire are selected to help balance the geographic coverage of the output) and they can also act as a production device to alter the pace and feel of the programme and increase the number of stories the programme actually contains. The story was actually written by a member of the news team asked to provide several similar length ‘news in brief’ items for the programme that evening. The network required to provide this specific story was

small. It consisted of the immutable mobile of the police news release which first sparked the producer's interest, recently filmed pictures stored on the Diva archive machine, editing computer and software, a production journalist and the playout systems and staff used to transmit finished stories.

However, as an ongoing murder story the killing of Bogdan Navrotski received little coverage in comparison to some other murders and this was a source of frustration to the Nottinghamshire Police force.

Serious crimes, murders, stabbing will always be covered because it's the sensationalist element. The one thing I do find interesting in relation to a murder is the nationality of the victim and probably the class of the victim and that significantly can impact on how much coverage we get. For instance, we have a Polish man who is missing, presumed dead, we've already charged someone with murder, we think he's dead, we just haven't got a body yet. But little interest, we've actually had to pretty much request the media to cover it, rather than the media being all that interested in covering it. Whether that's because he's Polish, it seems to be that way, whereas if you have a middleclass mum, who's a doctor, who goes missing and national media are interested.

(Donna Jordan, Media Services Manager, Nottinghamshire Police)

This assessment of the media interest supports the view of journalists demonstrated throughout this thesis that there is a hierarchy of murders; they are ranked in order of interest which is dependent upon the factors surrounding each individual murder and other, more variable, factors which have been identified as

including time of day, other available stories, existing programme content and the availability of resources with which to report.

The coverage of Bogdan Navrotski's murder by *East Midlands Today* ran for a total of 878 seconds, on 21 separate occasions, on 17 days spread across a one-year period. The first police appeal which *East Midlands Today* broadcast was on the 4th of April 2014 and the last on the 16th of April 2015. One journalist described the murder as 'run of the mill with very little in it to interest the audience or us. Many murders get even less coverage and some get none at all.'

Illustrated Studio Interview

The next example of storytelling was broadcast on 21st November 2014 during the lunchtime bulletin and shows what is known in television production terms as an illustrated studio interview. The presenter, Maurice Flynn, leads correspondent Jeremy Ball through a choreographed telling of the story which is interspersed with various visual media, in this case some graphics, pictures and a clip of an interview with a police officer. It concerned an on-going murder investigation in Nottingham which took place more than twenty years before. The same story treatment was repeated in the main evening programme.

Unlike the previous murder story about Bogdan Navrotski the murder of Ethsham Ghafoor received more coverage. In part that was due to the ongoing length of the investigation, the circumstances of his death and the mystery surrounding it.

Presenter:

**[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]
{VIS}**

Detectives investigating the murder of a Nottingham taxi driver have released anonymous letters that were sent to the police and his family.



Presenter out of vision:

{OOV}

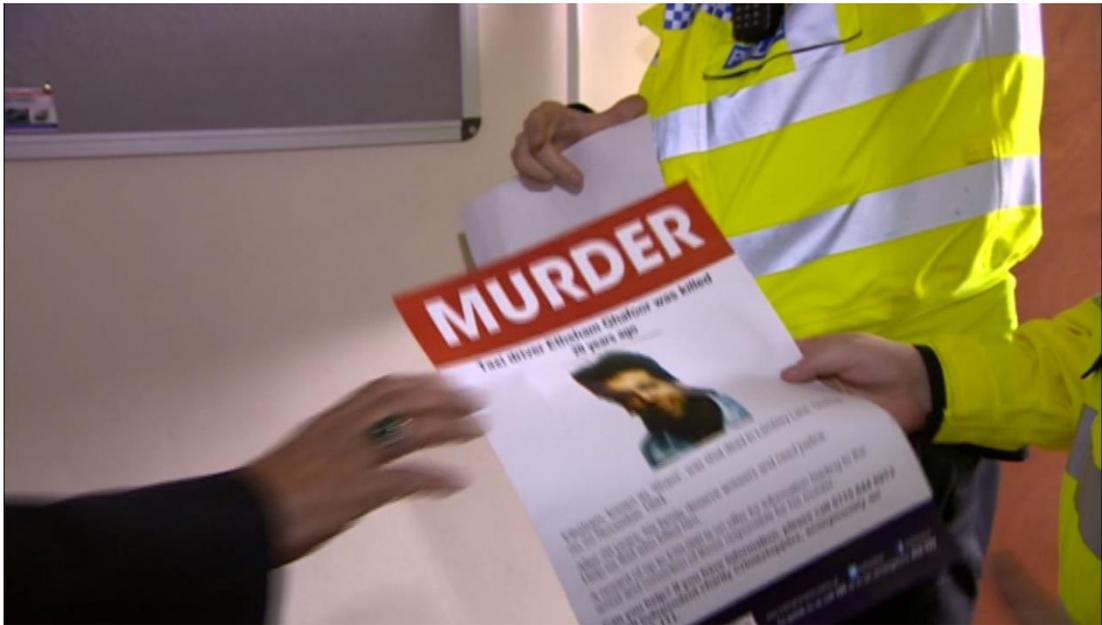
It's part of a new appeal for information about the shooting of Ethsham

Ghafoor, twenty years ago. A two-day police operation resumed this

morning, as detectives re-interview dozens of witnesses. Mr Ghafoor was

found in his cab in this car park in Gedling.

[<mos>GHAFOOR_211114_OOV_1330NO 0:20</mos>]





Presenter:

[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]

Our Social Affairs Correspondent, Jeremy Ball, has been following the investigation. What's in these letters?

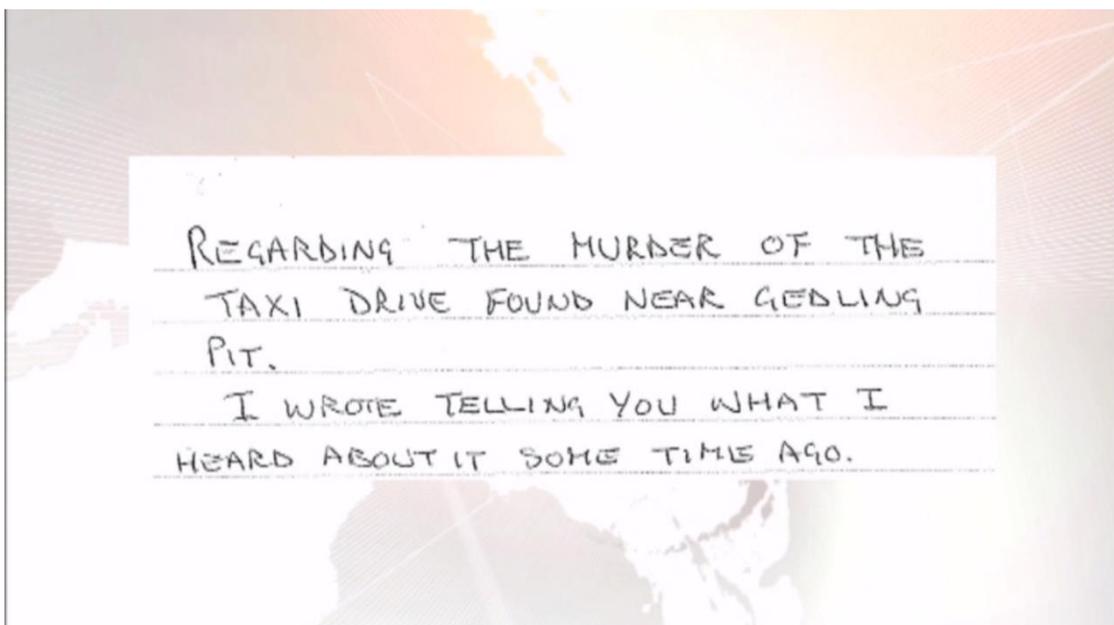


Jeremy: They're really intriguing. These are short extracts of letters that suggest a motive. And which name people who might have been involved in this the murder. They've been assessed by psychologists and language experts. But the police need to know more details.



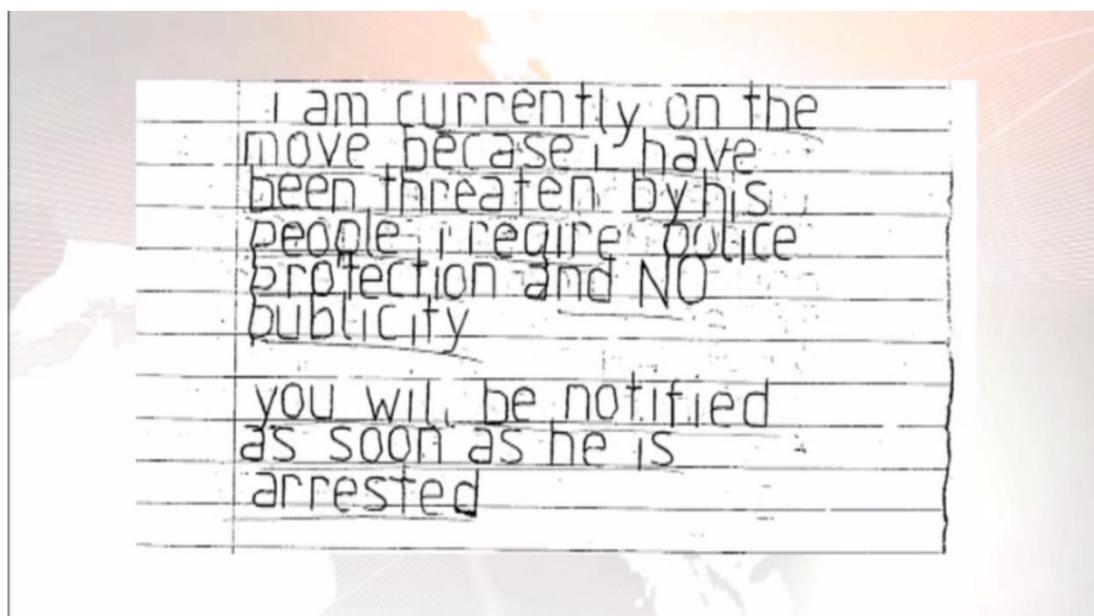
{GFX1}

Here's the first one. It was sent to detectives back in 1995. Detectives want to know if you recognise the handwriting.



{GFX2}

Then they received THIS -- carefully STENCILLED -- letter. From someone who says they need police protection.



{GFX3}

And finally, this distinctive Wallace and Gromit card was sent to Ethsham Ghafoor's family. THAT contained information that's of "significant interest" to detectives



{ACT}
[AUTOMATION: CLIP\GHAFOOR 1330 ACT\MANUAL
IN WORDS: This is unusual...
OUT WORDS: ...trying to say (second time he says it)
DURATION:0'18"]
[<mos>GHAFOOR_211114_ACT_1330NO-003 0:20</mos>]
[CG in at 0'04" out at 0'08":123 ASTON NAME SUPER

AUTO\Detective Chief Inspector TONY HEYDON\Nottinghamshire
Police\\\]

Police officer: This is unusual. The Wallace and Gromit card is particularly interesting because whoever wrote that I think was genuinely trying to help the police so I'm really interested in hearing from that individual. What were you trying to say? Just ring us and tell us exactly what you were trying to say?



Presenter: And this is day two of a big new push for information about Ethsham Ghafoor's murder. Any more on that?





Jeremy: Yes, the police say this new appeal's already prompted SEVERAL calls to their control room. They say they've been getting a good response on

the streets -- from taxi drivers, and from Nottingham's Asian communities.

But 20 years on -- they still need that breakthrough.

Presenter: Let's hope they get it, Jeremy thank you very much.



The story ends on a wide shot showing the presenter and reporter together before the director cuts to a close-up shot of the presenter who reads the link into the next story. The whole report lasted 107 seconds and was constructed using pictures and an interview clip filmed on the day before along with library footage and still images of the letters released by the police.

It is a typical example of a murder story given fresh newsworthiness because of a significant update in the investigation. The treatment of the story had been identified by the reporter and producer as a different way of giving the audience information about a story which the newsroom had followed since it had happened. The newsroom had already invested time and effort in the case and the revelation by the police of the anonymous letters was seen as an important update in the story. The importance of the picture archive for continuing news production is highlighted in

this example of storytelling as images from the original story were reused in the broadcast. They were combined with the new pictures of the letters released by the police and a fresh interview with a detective investigating the case. By telling the story in the live studio format it allowed the team to carefully construct the item. The presenter was provided with the questions to ask the reporter in order to solicit the answer he wanted to give to tell the story. It is a carefully choreographed process which was rehearsed before live transmission. The rehearsal before the actual live performance of the studio reporting exists within its own chronogram. The presenter and the reporter along with the gallery staff and technology are enrolled into a network which becomes the rehearsal. A few minutes later they attempt to repeat the exercise as the actual live transmitted performance. But this live event is a construction, made possible by the previous planning, filming, editing, scripting and rehearsal. It is more than the live event witnessed by the viewers watching the broadcast. (See chapter five and the live broadcast of the programme on the Philpott case for a full explanation about liveness in television news production.)

The translation process required to successfully transmit the studio report on the shooting of Ethsham Ghafoor was more complex than the previous example of the OOV. The various actors needed to provide the live broadcast had to be enrolled hours before the live could take place. In this way the chronogram of the various pre-recorded and edited elements were embedded within the process and happening in parallel with the actual live event. The reporter was able to record the interview and images of the letters in a relatively short period of time which had been filmed the previous day with the help of a camera operator. The reporter edited the images himself thus avoiding using the skills of a craft editor and their equipment which were therefore free to be used by other reporters. It is worth noting that because this

type of storytelling is live it allows the production team to make late changes if they receive updates. For example, if the police had made an arrest in connection with the investigation. However, because the story is more materially heterogeneous, separated into various individual parts which must be played in a specific order, there are more occasions when the network created for the construction of the story may not hold together. Simply put, in the constant reaffirmation of the network connections there are more chances of translation failing. The live performance storytelling requires specific relationships between actors. Therefore, there is the possibility of relational failures which relate directly to live broadcasting, which don't apply to other forms of storytelling, such as the incorrect camera shot being used or the presenter and reporter stumbling over their words. The chronogrammatic position of the story is simultaneous to its transmission occurring within the television studio as the images and words are broadcast live. The various media elements of the story are assembled at this same point ensuring the technogram and sociogram of the storytelling converge with the chronogram.

Package

This next example shows a relatively straightforward news report which has been filmed and edited for transmission. It was the first day of a murder trial in Nottingham, 20th April 2015. The package is the standard building block of any news programme. Material is usually recorded at the location of an event or can be edited from library pictures or a combination of both.

In this murder story a combination of library pictures, on the day court artist's drawings and pieces to camera are used to create the package. It is an example of a court report which has been packaged rather than told in some form of

illustrated live. In this case it was the lead story on the evening programme. A more complex and potentially less stable network of actors is required for the production of this type of storytelling than the previous two examples already examined. The main reason for this is the unpredictable nature of court stories. In the previous examples the sociogram, technogram and chronogram of each actor were straightforwardly mapped because the actors themselves were under direct control of the news team. However, an active court case is susceptible to various internal influences over which the news team has no control. For example, the rate at which evidence is heard by the court, the time of day proceedings will stop or a verdict will be delivered.

The context of the story is self-explanatory and as in the previous example instructions for gallery staff and technical equipment are contained within the various brackets. As this story is a programme item the link is shared between the two presenters.

Presenter

[Live Read: PRES IN VIS]

{VIS}

Good evening and welcome to the programme. First tonight, a court has heard how a 7-year-old girl was subjected to sustained violence. Shanay Walker was found dead at her home in Bestwood in Nottingham last summer.

[Live Read: Change Pres]

{CHANGE}

She had 50 injuries on her body. Her aunt Kay-Ann Morris has been accused of her murder and child cruelty. The prosecution claim that she lied about her niece's death saying she'd fallen down the stairs. Geeta Pendse reports from Nottingham Crown Court.

{PKG}
[AUTOMATION: CLIP\BESTWOOD\PKG\MANUAL]
IN WORDS:
OUT WORDS:'...SOC
DURATION:1'38'']
[<mos>BESTWOOD_200415_GPE_1830NO-002 1:39</mos>]

Script: Days away from her 8th birthday - it was last July when Shanay



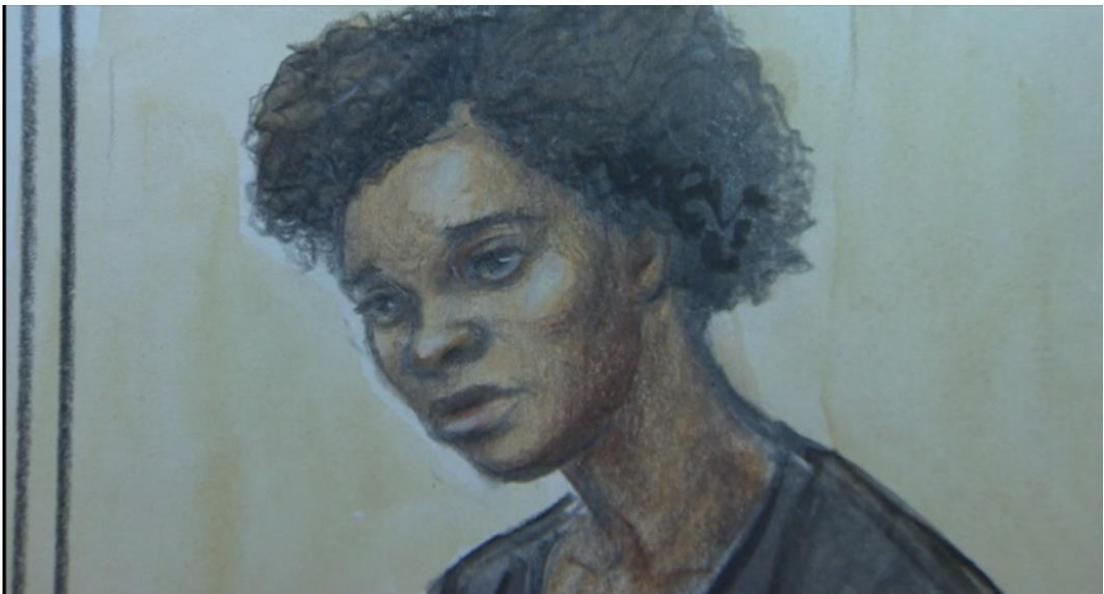
Walker's body was discovered in a bedroom at her home in Bestwood in Nottingham.







Police were called to the flat where she lived with her aunt, in the early hours of the morning. They found her dead lying under a duvet. Today Shanay's aunt Kay Ann Morris was in court accused of murdering her niece and of cruelty to children. The prosecution say she lied to officers, claiming Shanay had fallen down the stairs.





Piece to camera:



Whilst Shanay's death was caused by a head injury - the court heard a post mortem examination of Shanay's body revealed the presence of 50 injuries the vast majority of which were bruises. The prosecutor Mr Richard Pratt QC said Kay Ann had lied to cover up the truth that she had subjected her niece, a child in care, to a sustained vicious and brutal beating.



Shanay was put into care when she was 5 years old, initially living with a foster carer. In 2012 her aunt Kay Ann was granted guardianship.





The court heard teachers at Shanay's school had raised concerns about her injuries. More than one spoke of a change in personality when she was with her aunt, changing from bubbly and happy to anxious and introverted. One neighbour said she saw Shanay upset, crying and even hysterical. Also in court was Shanay's grandmother, Juanila Smikle, who is accused of cruelty to children. Both women deny the charges. The case continues at Nottingham Crown Court.

The report is a compilation exercise including the use of archive images filmed at the time the newsroom first became aware of Shanay's death. These were retrieved from the library and placed on the newsroom's active computer system ready for inclusion in the report. The court artist's drawings were sketched at court and then recorded by the same cameraman sent to court to record the pieces to camera delivered by the reporter.

It takes about five minutes to walk from the BBC offices in Nottingham to the city's Crown Court. The physical location of the court means it usually has a durable position within the network. This is because it is convenient for television reporters and camera crews at base to be quickly despatched to court. It also means reporters working at the court can return to the office in order to write scripts, edit material for bulletins and report live from the main studio. Depending on how strongly placed on their chronogrammatic axes they are, events at Nottingham Court, even if they happen quite close to programme transmission, can be successfully broadcast because of the relative strength of the actors' technograms.

Returning to the office from court to report live into a programme is a tried and tested way of successfully broadcasting. By following the traces of previously successful networks actors can be swiftly enrolled in this form of storytelling. These traces of the actor network are the muscle memory of the newsroom; human actors know what is required to achieve a task. They know which other human and technological actors must be enrolled into the network in order to satisfy demands of the translation process and to succeed. This muscle memory which responds to familiar situations in an automatic and predictable way can be found across the newsroom in Nottingham and inside newsrooms throughout the English Regions and beyond and is often categorised simply as '*experience*'.

Live from the Scene

Television on the BBC began as a live event and there remains a desire within the organisation and news in particular, to be live. In part this is borne out by one of the definitions of news that it should indeed be new. By reporting live there is an understanding that what is being talked about is the latest information on any event being covered.

News is geared towards an ideal collapse of temporal and spatial difference. The often-witnessed scramble of reporters all trying to report 'live' from the scene, is a deliberate attempt to eradicate the spatial and temporal delay between the news happening in the world and the transmission of the news event that reports it.

(Hemmingway 2008, p.146)

Hemmingway explores the way that complex networks and micro processes are involved in the creation of live events. She touches on the use of live broadcasts as a way of filling air time in bulletins (Hemmingway, 2008, p166) and having spent more than twelve years as a BBC journalist she is aware of the *tricks of the trade*. This 'going live' for the sake of it has earned the television industry its own column mocking such endeavours in the satirical magazine *Private Eye*. Within the BBC television newsroom in Nottingham there is sympathy for this view among journalists and technical staff.

Television has always done pointless lives because we can. I'm not sure the audience gets much from a reporter in the dark standing next to a brick wall where several hours previously something happened. I've been around long enough to see new things being tried all the time and the fact that we end up back where we are suggests that that

is probably the way to do things. Change does happen and the look of news has obviously changed a lot over the years because of the techniques but in the end I'm still a presenter in a studio throwing to a reporter whether that's by a satellite, microwave, WMT, V-Sat or Skype. It's just dressed up with new technology.

(Dominic Heale, Main Presenter, BBC East Midlands Today)

There is a demand from producers of the programmes for live coverage of events rather than covering events that have happened already. You can't do two things simultaneously, and if the event is happening and all you're doing is telling people it's going on behind you you're not really covering it, you're just telling them it's going and quite honestly, they already know that.

Author: And what drives that?

Mark: It's the desire to be live, live at an event and once you've got those resources there to get as much use out of those resources as humanly possible. The downside of that inevitably is that you have to send more resources because you have to send someone to cover the story and somebody else to tell people what's actually happening in the story.

(Mark Saunders, Technical Manager, BBC East Midlands Today)

These are widely held opinions within the news operation in the Nottingham newsroom however there is a significant difference in being live at the scene of an event because it is happening around you and being live because you have the technology to be live. Veteran American reporter Bob Huffaker who was in Dallas when President Kennedy was assassinated puts it this way.

Today's television makes so big a deal over being live that reporters stand at deserted scenes long after the action is over. We stayed at scenes only when there was a reason and we left when nothing was to be reported. Instead of wasting time someplace merely to be *live*, we went where things were happening.

(Huffaker et al 2004, p.45)

In the chapter looking at storytelling the news team wanted to be live at the scene of a fatal fire because it was seen as the 'biggest story' of the day and being live was the physical demonstration of that, (see from page 160). Being live may also be a pragmatic choice for producers who are looking for material to fill a programme

If it's a quiet news day you know you are going to be doing something that wouldn't see the light of day if there was a bigger story and you have to make the best of it and go out and do it and sometimes you go and do an OB which on a busy day you would never be doing - it needs to fill a minute and a half of the programme - so news values depend on a lot of other things apart from the news itself.

(Sarah Teale, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

Appendix D

Social Media Connectivity

The ability for audiences to share stories with each other and to hear first-hand from the subjects of stories without the need for third party traditional media intervention has led to the explosion in social media connectivity. It is a phenomenon in the true sense of the word and a few statistics from these different social platforms are worth inclusion for purposes of illustration.

On the 14th September 2019 American singer Katy Perry and former president Barack Obama both had 108 million followers on Twitter. Obama is a prolific user of the micro-blogging site with more than 15,000 Tweets or messages sent since he joined in 2007. However, that is half the number of Tweets from Canadian singer and Twitter user Justin Bieber who has sent more than 30000 Tweets.

Instagram, which is a picture sharing service, owned by Facebook, has traffic of more than 60 million photographs sent each day with prolific numbers of followers for its own service, 313 million on the 14th September 2019. Celebrities are the highest-ranking users, for example, the singer Taylor Swift, has 122 million followers and Kim Kardashian West, 148 million. On the Facebook platform itself interaction is measured by likes and on the same day, the person with the most likes was Real Madrid footballer Cristiano Ronaldo with more than 122m⁵⁰.

What happens on these sharing platforms becomes news in its own right and as such changes what is considered news. For example, in October 2014 Queen

⁵⁰ All figures were sourced from the social media platforms by the author on 14th September 2019

Elizabeth sent her first Tweet as part of the opening ceremony of a new exhibition at the Science Museum in London. It became a major news event covered by national news organisations. The video which accompanied the song ‘Gangnam style’ by South Korean singer Psy was an internet sensation, rapidly viewed hundreds of millions of times on YouTube when it was released in 2012. That made headlines on the BBC’s main news programmes. In June 2017 the BBC online team in the East Midlands interviewed a woman who was slowing speeding traffic driving through her village by pointing a hairdryer at them. At the time of writing (September 2019) it had been viewed more than 54 million times, a figure unheard of in regional television terms.

(<https://www.facebook.com/BBCRadioNottingham/videos/1345186368869779/>).

Appendix E

Kayleigh Hayward's murder and social media

The murder of Kayleigh Haywood shows how Leicestershire Police, like other forces across England, has enrolled the power of the internet and social media in to networks it creates in order to reach the public. The story behind the online grooming and murder of Kayleigh Haywood was developed into a short film made for Leicestershire Police to be shown online and in schools as an educational tool to highlight issues of internet safety. It was posted on the YouTube video site as it has potential to reach a wide audience, (more than a billion hours of video being watched each day: Source: YouTube 03/01/19). It gives police a specific media tool to target a younger demographic with messages aimed at them. By January 2019 it had been viewed more than three million times (Source: YouTube 03/01/19).

The table below shows when police forces in the East Midlands created social media accounts and how much they are being used. They were relatively quick to see the potential of the new social media platforms and have used them to engage directly with the public. By utilizing these forms of broadcasting the police have been able, when they chose, to circumvent traditional news outlets.

Organisation	Twitter (date joined)	Tweets	Followers	Facebook (date joined)	Likes	YouTube (date joined)	Videos
BBC EMT	July 2009	33,500	130,000	June 2010	120,865		
Nottinghamshire Police	October 2009	25,000	135,000	22 nd Sept 2010	133,938	9 th July 2009	215
Derbyshire Police	May 2009	26,500	92,200	18 th June 2009	93,646	16 th July 2008	282

Leicestershire Police	November 2009	39,600	113,000	27 th April 2009	98,619	28 th Jan 2009	547
	Source: Twitter 03/01/19	Source: Twitter 03/01/19	Source: Twitter 03/01/19	Source: Facebook 03/01/19	Source: Facebook 03/01/19	Source: YouTube 03/01/19	Source: YouTube 03/01/19

Police force, and *East Midlands Today* use of social media platforms

The investigation in to Kayleigh’s murder also demonstrates the speed with which the public respond to information they read on social media. This is how the Leicestershire Police force released the information of charges on Facebook.

Leicestershire Police

19 November at 21:24

A 28-year-old man has tonight been charged with the murder of Kayleigh Haywood.

Stephen Beadman, of George Avenue, Ibstock has been charged with murder and one count of rape.

Luke Harlow, 27, of George Avenue, Ibstock, has been charged with grooming and two counts of sexual activity with a child.

The following comments were subsequently posted on the police’s Facebook page within minutes of the police message. Not only does it show how quickly people are prepared to react to news it shows the additional burdens that social media place on responsible users of it. By opening up their accounts to allow posts to be made the Leicestershire force, like all police forces, must then find ways of monitoring them for comments which breach laws; including those of libel, contempt, privacy and racial hatred.

Kyle Lookham They both need locking up for good! Both as bad as each other

Like · Reply · 9 · 19 November at 21:36



Jo Harrison Justice needs to be done for the murder of a beautiful princess. Took to soon to young. They both need life. In it together nasty evil men. My thoughts and prayers are with kayleigh family and friends. Please be strong. You have all off the uk praying for you. Please let kayleigh family grieve in peace. Rip princess another star shines bright tonight God bless you

Like · Reply · 8 · 19 November at 21:45



Richard Bear Grogan Bring back hanging poor girl... feel so much for her family.... well done police force god bless

Like · Reply · 4 · 19 November at 21:57



Louise Bown Well done Leicestershire Police. Such an awful thing to happen to a young girl. I only hope her family can find some peace in knowing that they have been caught and that the whole local community are behind them. Sleep tight Kayleigh.

Like · Reply · 20 November at 06:15



Charlotte Meşe These two animals will wish they were dead after the other inmates are through with them. Kayleigh's family - deepest condolences from my family

Like · Reply · 7 · 19 November at 21:44



Matt Bell If their found guilty of this truly horrible crime, with DNA evidence ect 100%, let them hang or be stoned to death. Might sound harsh

These are just some of the dozens of posts made in the hours after the police charged Beadman and Harlow. Examination for this thesis of social media postings following other incidents of murder demonstrate that members of the public are either unaware of the laws of contempt and how they apply as much to social media

as they do to mainstream traditional media or that members of the public are not bothered by the legal restrictions.

Appendix F

Police and social media

The increasing use by police of social media as a method for delivering information annoyed one BBC East Midlands Today journalist so much, he took his frustration out on Twitter. The online argument started with a tweet by the chief constable of Leicestershire.



The chief constable is a prolific tweeter who, as of January 2019, had posted more than seventy-four thousand tweets, almost double the number from his forces official account. The BBC journalist at the Nottingham newsroom was Maurice Flynn, used to using a telephone-based system to get additional information from the police. His response was to the point.



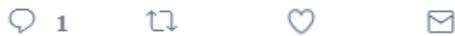
Maurice Flynn
@Maurice_Flynn

Following

Replying to @CCLeicsPolice

@CCLeicsPolice nothing on your website or voice banks. If this is the suspicious death - isn't this where you may want local media help?

9:31 pm - 8 Jan 2012



Simon Cole, the chief constable for Leicestershire replied via Twitter.



Simon Cole ✓
@CCLeicsPolice

Following

Replying to @Maurice_Flynn

@Maurice_Flynn We have given out a statement to reporters who have called us on 101 and it is on twitter too.

10:12 pm - 8 Jan 2012



However, the content of the tweet only added to Maurice's frustration that he had found it impossible to talk to a human being. He again replied to the chief constable this time sarcastically. If the staff in the media team had been replaced by the social media platform he was going to let all his colleagues know.



Maurice Flynn
@Maurice_Flynn

Following

Replying to @CCLeicsPolice

@CCLeicsPolice that reporter was me calling as a result of your twitter. Has it replaced your comms team? I'll update our contacts

10:13 pm - 8 Jan 2012



1



In August 2015 Leicestershire Police force announced that all information would first appear on its Facebook page acknowledging the shift from traditional news releases to social media updates. The once stable actor network which had evolved around the daily updates on the police telephone voice bank was dead. Before the development and ubiquity of social media police forces used telephone voice-banks to update the media about incidents. 'Doing the calls' was part of the journalists' daily routine within all news organisations. Follow-up calls would be made to the press team during office hours and the operations room when it was closed.

Making check-calls every hour or so was the way we got our information from the police and other emergency services. Some were more forthcoming than others; they would update the voice-bank regularly and were helpful when you called the control room. Others less so, you might go days without updates being put out and when you called the duty inspector to say why was there nothing on the voice-bank about the shooting or whatever it was they would just brush you off.

(Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC regional news)

All the actors who had been enrolled in the voice-bank network were redundant; police detectives, press officers, telecommunications staff, message recording equipment, telephone lines, automatic exchanges, telephones, journalists and many other actors found their network had collapsed. In actor network terms the constant process of translation required to keep the police phone bank and system of press releases stable failed to keep the necessary actors enrolled and the network of communication between police and journalists had to be reformed inside another network.

The development of police media teams over the past 40 years has led to a more professional, proactive approach to relationships between police and media Mawby (2010, 1999), Innes (1999), Marks (1979).

It's changed in many different ways for example in the number of people employed in communications teams. When I began in 1992 at Warwickshire Police, I was the entire department. Today my department is 16 strong. The Met have a department of over 70 people and something north of £35 million pounds is spent by taxpayers in their policing bills on communications teams up and down the country. But it's changed in many other ways as well in that I think we have moved from being somewhat glorified typists to be dictated at by detectives and other officers to much more regarded as strategic advisors on what to say, when to say it, and how to say it and in the criminal context in terms of homicide we are now regarded as communications strategists who can develop and implement communications strategies to catch killers.

(Matt Tapp, Head of Communications, Nottinghamshire Police)

There is an implicit acknowledgement in this statement about the way police media teams have been professionalised and are deliberately manipulating what they say to the media and when. But journalists interviewed as part of this research continue to believe in the benefits of a co-operative relationship between news organisations and the police. There is wariness among journalists against publishing elements of stories unless they have had them corroborated by an official source and, in terms of reporting murders, that source will usually be the police. While police assistance on some stories may have cooled officers are usually willing to collaborate with the media when they, the police, are aware that an event will gain media coverage whether they help journalists or not.

Appendix G

Marian Bates' Murder

All of the journalists interviewed for this thesis acknowledged the significant role that internet connectivity and technology plays in both newsgathering and broadcasting. This example involving one of the East Midlands most well-known murders, familiar to all reporters in the BBC *East Midlands Today* newsroom will be used to illustrate the point.

Marian Bates was shot dead inside her own jewellery shop in Nottingham on 30th September 2003. Although a teenager, nineteen-year-old Peter Williams was convicted of the killing in March 2005 the investigation did not end there. Detectives believed the actual gunman was James Brodie and they believed he had himself been murdered after the shooting. The investigation into Mrs Bates' murder and other related stories had been reported at regular intervals ever since her death. In one update police notified the media that they were searching a property in their hunt for the body of James Brodie. For BBC *East Midlands Today's* social affairs correspondent Jeremy Ball, it was another twist in the case. But because of a new piece of technology he was able to report it in a different way across television, radio and online. Jeremy and his camera operator Neil had driven to Lincolnshire to interview the police about the search for Brodie.

We've been given these iPhones where you can simply record a voice memo and the quality is absolutely fantastic, so I just recorded the voice memo, I've got a wind shield that the engineers have given me and the quality was absolutely fine. So I did a radio interview first with the detective chief inspector, we then filmed the TV interview and a piece to camera, we then drove 15 minutes down the road to a

McDonald's that had a Wi-Fi spot and while Neil (the cameraman) was downloading the pictures to edit the TV piece I just went into McDonalds bought a cup of coffee and emailed that radio interview back to Radio Nottingham and Radio Lincolnshire. It went straight over, they got that on air, they got clips for their news bulletins, online got material. Neil emailed a photo of the scene which he got to before I got there, so he emailed that to online, so they had what they needed. And that left us free to do the TV piece which was going to take us longer.

(Jeremy Ball, Social Affairs Correspondent, BBC East Midlands Today)

Jeremy was able to provide comprehensive coverage of the story to various BBC news outlets because of the technology he was able to utilise. Unable to use the phones own internet connection because of a poor signal Jeremy and Neil used the Wi-Fi available at McDonalds to send their material back. It also allowed Jeremy to do more research on the story by using the internet.

I just Googled the address the police were searching and I found a BBC news online article which was a report on that court case I had covered 7, 8, years previously and I recognised East Eckington, it's a small village, but then once I had that I had the name of the guy, Darren Peters, Maize Farm, East Eckington, and things fell into place. He was the guy who lived there, who was jailed for four years for being involved with corrupt police officers and Britain's most notorious gangster, hang on a minute this is the place where he lived. Before the obvious question to the police was why you are searching here, all they could say on the record was 'we've had new intelligence

we can't say any more.' I was able to say 'they can't say any more but this is what we know about this property, it links into this bloke who links to that bloke who's Britain's most notorious gangster who murdered the Stirlands.

(Jeremy Ball, Social Affairs Correspondent, BBC East Midlands Today)

The technology Jeremy was able to enrol changed the story he was able to tell, it allowed him to make it much more comprehensive and interesting to the viewers. Mapping Jeremy's three axes show him to be in a very strong position. His sociogram shows he is in control of his subject having reported on the various interlinking stories many times before. Using his previous knowledge and experience Jeremy is able to get the police to confirm the links, even if it is off the record, and provide material for two radio stations, two online sites and two BBC news programmes. His technogram is also strong since he has ability to use the iPhone to record interviews and research his story. The lack of a 3G phone signal is overcome by using the internet connection at McDonalds. While his chronogram plots him in the middle of Lincolnshire, miles from the office, facing a long journey back to edit and file his report he may look weak. However, the fact that he and his cameraman can use their own equipment to edit the story 'in the field' and send it back to the office using the Wi-Fi connection at the restaurant overcome any logistical issues.

Appendix H

Victorian murders

Until 1868 capital punishment in Britain was carried out in public and executions often drew large crowds. Among the onlookers, at what sometimes became celebrity executions, were representatives from all strata of society. Charles Dickens joined an estimated crowd of 30,000 people on the 6th July 1840 who gathered to watch the hanging of Francis Courvoisier, for the murder of his employer, Lord William Russell, just two months before. In 1846 Dickens described the scene and his aversion to capital punishment in a series of letters to the *Daily News*, the newspaper of which he was then editor. He had distaste for the ‘loathsome, pitiful, and vile sight’ and the people watching it.

From the moment of my arrival when there were but a few score boys in the street, and those all young thieves, and all clustered together behind the barrier nearest to the drop – down to the time when I saw the body with its dangling head being carried on a wooden brier into the gaol – I did not see one token in all the immense crowd of any emotion suitable to the occasion. No sorrow, no salutary terror, no abhorrence, no seriousness, nothing but ribaldry, debauchery, levity, drunkenness and faulting vice in fifty other shapes.

(Charles Dickens’ Letter to the *Daily News* 28th February 1846)

However, his revulsion at the spectacle of the execution was not enough to prevent him attending others including, in 1849, the execution of Frederick and Marie Manning. If the story behind the person to be executed caught the public imagination then the crowds attending could number tens of thousands. An estimated 30,000 witnessed the Manning’s’ final moments as they swung on the scaffold.

Cooper (1974) writes that at least 27 people were crushed to death as a crowd of 45,000 jostled for space to watch the execution of John Holloway and Owen Haggerty on 23rd February 1807 at Newgate Gaol, Potter (1965) puts the figure at forty. Public hangings were such popular events that extortionate prices were charged for the best vantage point as if it were a theatre performance. In their 1862 book *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life*, Mayhew and Binny, interviewed the deputy governor of Newgate Prison who illustrates the attraction of an execution succinctly when he describes the hanging of James Greenacre in 1837.

This case made a very great sensation at the time, and there were upwards of 16,000 spectators at his execution. The houses fronting Newgate charged three guineas for a station at their windows to witness the execution. Two sovereigns were given for a seat on the roofs of some of the houses. There were numbers of persons of distinction on the house-tops and in the windows opposite.

(Mayhew and Binny 1862, p.609)

Thousands of people made the journey to Staffordshire for the execution of William Palmer on the 14th June 1856, known as the Rugeley Poisoner, after the town where he practiced as a doctor and the method it is said he used to dispatch his victims. Palmer's story has been well documented, (Crone 2012, Griffiths 2010, Brophy 1967), and is worth noting for several reasons. As a doctor he had access to the various poisons he used to kill among others, his mother-in-law, wife, people he owed money to, and several of his own legitimate and illegitimate children, (Emsley, 2006). In some cases, Palmer had taken out insurance policies on people hoping to collect on their deaths. Burial Clubs and insurance policies were well known in

Victorian times. Grey (2011) notes that although it is impossible to identify just how many children met untimely deaths because of the incentive of burial club money, many did, with children sometimes being registered with several clubs at once. Concern over the issue led to changes in the law and in the case of Palmer an act was passed which outlawed the practice of insuring third parties, (Emsley 2006). Palmer's case was so notable at the time that rather than being tried in Rugeley the evidence against him was heard in London in an effort to give him a fair trial. This was a landmark decision but not one which saved him and after conviction he was returned to his native Staffordshire and hung before a huge crowd. One contemporary newspaper estimated the crowd at 50,000, (Cooper 1974). While thousands watched his death, there were some who felt Palmer's execution was a possible miscarriage of justice. Cooper (1974) writes that these abolitionists suggested he may have been innocent and was hung despite concerns at the time over the strength of the evidence against him. Dickens and other Victorian writers drew upon the murders which they read about for characters and plots in their own works of fiction; see (Knelman 1998), further popularizing the deeds of killers and ensuring the longevity of their crimes in the popular conscience. Despite his somewhat contradictory stance on the issue of capital punishment Dickens' observational skills of his own period were at the fore as this excerpt from *Great Expectations* shows.

A highly popular murder had been committed, and Mr. Wopsle was imbrued in blood to the eyebrows. He gloated over every abhorrent adjective in the description, and identified himself with every witness at the Inquest. He faintly moaned, "I am done for," as the victim, and he barbarously bellowed, "I'll serve you out," as the murderer. He

gave the medical testimony, in pointed imitation of our local practitioner; and he piped and shook, as the aged turnpike-keeper who had heard blows to an extent so very paralytic as to suggest a doubt regarding the mental competency of that witness. The coroner, in Mr. Wopsle's hands, became Timon of Athens; the beadle, Coriolanus. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and we all enjoyed ourselves, and were delightfully comfortable. In this cozy state of mind we came to the verdict of Wilful Murder.

(Dickens, *Great Expectations* p.111)

These crimes have found further recycling in numerous television series such as *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*, *Whitechapel*, *Ripper Street* and the comedy *Burke and Hare*. Murderers and their victims were not only preserved in print they also became a source of income for potters, theatres, showmen and exhibitors such as Madame Tussauds. See Flanders (2011) and Altick (1970) for detailed discussion of how the most notorious cases of the period were exploited for gain and the entertainment of all classes. Altick eloquently sums up the decline of the broadsides and rise of the newspapers. This was in part due to the reduction in the tax paid by the newspapers, technological changes in the printing process, and increased literacy. These changes all helped create the dominance of the papers as a source of information and their enthusiasm for coverage of crime related stories.

Whereas the broadside-makers had acquired their pittance of news from diverse sources, ranging from newspapers through rumour to sheer invention, the newspapers threw into the preparation of each daily or weekly report the resources and energies of an increasingly professional corps of journalists with expense accounts and open

telegraph lines ever at their disposal. And whereas the imprecisely named flying stationers had plodded from village to village, selling curtailed versions of a murder or execution that had happened as many as several weeks earlier, the newspapers, using the railways, could get the latest detailed news to the most remote hamlet within a few hours. The policy of new aggressive, circulation-hungry journalism was to give the broadening public what it wanted; and high on the list of what it wanted was Murder.

(Altick 1970, p.66)

During the nineteenth century the number of offences for which convicted criminals were hung declined. Potter (1965) suggests juries were less willing to return guilty verdicts for what they increasingly saw as low value crimes such as theft and burglary. They would deliberately undervalue the worth of goods if it would prevent an execution. It was not just jurors who acted in this way, in the case of Martha Walmsley, the judge colluded with the prosecution to ensure she was saved from the gallows, Potter (1965). Analysis by Gatrell (1994, p.616) of convictions for capital offences at the Old Bailey shows a steady increase in the number of those pardoned. For example, between 1796-1800, 77% of the 416 convicted were actually executed. This was reversed to 97% pardoned of the 428 people convicted of capital offences between 1831-1834, a total of just 12 hangings. As the number of crimes for which hanging was the punishment decreased there was a growing concern about interpersonal violence. Crimes against women and children were less tolerated, as were duels and forms of boxing. Wiener (2004) describes a growing societal concern about violence in general. As murder became one of just a

few capital crimes the interest in them grew 'Compared with all other criminals, accused murderers made a much greater impression on the public mind,' (2004, p.27). Newspapers battled with each other to be first with the latest updates on murder news. They employed teams of horses to deliver copy from trials in the provinces to their offices in London. As Flanders (2011) observes, when reporting the conviction of William Corder for the murder of Maria Marten, in what became known as the Red Barn murder, *The Times* was unsure what was more important, the verdict or the fact that it had managed to report and print a story so quickly on the conclusion of the case which had taken place '72 miles from London, and which was not adjourned till eight o'clock in the evening', (2011, p.52). The notoriety of the murderer encouraged tourists to the scene of the crime at Polstead in Suffolk. So many people wanted a souvenir that within a few years the barn was actually torn apart. Gatrell (1994) quotes Fonblanque who described it being 'sold for toothpicks' while 'Bits of the rope which hanged William Corder at Bury St Edmunds in 1828 sold for a guinea,' (1994, p.69).



<http://www.mystaffordshirefigures.com/blog/the-red-barn-murder>

The thriving pottery firms were quick to produce their own souvenirs of notorious cases and *The Red Barn* (depicted above) was no different to other widely reported murders. In 2004, almost 180 years after his execution, William Corder was still of interest to the media when it was announced that his bones, which had been held by the Royal College of Surgeons, had been cremated. Quoted on a BBC website a descendant of Corder, Linda Nessworthy, said, 'It's actually such a relief to get here because it has taken years to get to this point. It is nice to be able to put the final chapter together for William and lay him to rest.'

<http://bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/suffolk/3573244.stm>

As the demand for the broadsides declined the readership of the newspapers increased. Some publications specialised in reporting the more violent crimes and bizarre deaths such as *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper* and *The Illustrated Police News*. It was first published in 1864 and was, as its name suggests, exploiting the development of printing technology adding dramatic and often brutal drawings to the stories which filled its pages. De Vries (1974) and Jones (2002) compiled collections which show just how graphic they were, with the regular inclusions of decapitated or dismembered bodies, throat slashing, stabbings, burnings and hangings. As Crone (2012) describes, *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper*, helped establish the custom of buying a weekly paper rather than the one-off broadsides. Lloyd's Sunday newspaper was filled with bloodthirsty, violent and sensational news but no illustrations. Crone's analysis shows that anywhere from 68 per cent to almost 90 per cent of its contents, between 1843 and 1870, fell into this category, (2012, p.242). The paper's owner, Edward Lloyd was, like Catnach forty years before him, quick to exploit the developments of new technology. As already mentioned previously the execution of William Palmer in 1856 is notable for a number of reasons, for Lloyd it marked

another development in his business. In an editorial for the following day's paper he wrote:

THE EXECUTION of PALMER. The Execution which took place at Stafford at eight o'clock on Saturday morning was printed and published in LLOYD'S WEEKLY LONDON NEWSPAPER AT NINE O'CLOCK (within one hour of the time), when, until late on Sunday night, the publishing office was besieged by newsagents anxiously waiting for the various Editions during that period. TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND COPIES were sold, and many more thousands would have been eagerly seized if they could have been printed: but from this difficulty the proprietor in future will be relieved by HOE'S MONSTER ROTARY MACHINE.

(London Weekly News, 15th June 1856)

Technological developments were transforming the speed with which newspapers could be produced and they were also changing the ways journalists worked. In his autobiography Thomas Catling recalls a number of incidents which show how technology was used by newspapers during the Victorian era including the introduction of the rotary press. He would eventually edit *Lloyds Weekly News* but in 1861 he was a young reporter who used another fairly recent invention to his advantage. Stuck in Windsor late at night he scooped his competitors with news of Prince Albert's death.

Very few particulars were known, and the most strenuous appeals to get them telegraphed through were of no avail. The wire at the castle (said the clerks) was for Court uses only. A message, however had to go, and so I hunted out the residence of the clerk of the Electric and

International Telegraph Company. On ringing him up, he persistently begged not to be called out, stating that before going to bed he had taken nitre in gruel and put his feet in hot water to ward off a bad cold. My mission was imperative, and the clerk recognised the fact. After waiting for him to dress, we proceeded together to the office in High Street, whence I sent intelligence of the Prince's death, with such brief details as had been gleaned of his last hours and the grief of the Queen.

(Catling 1911, p.75-76)

The introduction of the telegraph system in 1837 led to a change in how quickly news of crimes could be reported around the country and also the ability of the police to capture murderers. Hughes (1983) argues that although technology could shape society the reverse is also true as societies shape technology. In his most influential work he looked at the development of power generation and distribution networks.

Electric power systems embody the physical, intellectual, and symbolic resources of the society that constructs them. Therefore in explaining the changes in the configuration of power systems, the historian must examine the changing resources and aspirations of organizations, groups, and individuals.

(Hughes 1983, p.2)

His ideas on the social construction of technology and the relationships between humans, technology and social organisations were part of the science and technology studies (STS) which were a forerunner of Actor-Network Theory (see

from page 35). Although he believed technology could lead to changes in social and business structures (Hughes 1987) he was not a technological determinist arguing instead (Hughes 2004) that the public would be able to control technological development either directly or indirectly.

The methodological imperative to consider the role of humans and nonhumans, outlined throughout this thesis and used to extend the understanding of the role of technological actors within the news production process, will now be applied to two high-profile murders which took place in Victorian England.

The Case of John Tawell

John Tawell, who killed his former lover Sarah Hart at Slough in 1845, has the distinction of being the first British murderer captured through the use of the telegraph. Having poisoned her Tawell fled her cottage as she lay dying. However, one witness, the Reverend Champnes, was quickly in pursuit and although he missed Tawell, who boarded the evening train to London, the reverend was aware Slough station had a telegraph system. The following message was sent to Paddington.

A MURDER HAS GUST BEEN COMMITTED AT SALT HILL
AND THE SUSPECTED MURDERER WAS SEEN TO TAKE A
FIRST CLASS TICKET TO LONDON BY THE TRAIN WHICH
LEFT SLOUGH AT 742 PM HE IS IN THE GARB OF A KWAKER
WITH A GREAT COAT ON WHICH REACHES NEARLY DOWN
TO HIS FEET HE IS IN THE LAST COMPARTMENT OF THE
SECOND CLASS COMPARTMENT

At the time the Cooke-Wheatstone telegraph system which was used only had capital letters, had no punctuation and it could not send the letters J, Q or Z, hence the unusual spellings, especially of Quaker which is spelt phonetically. Because of the speed of transmission, the message reached Paddington Station before the train carrying the suspect. When he arrived Tawell was followed by a police sergeant and arrested the following day at a coffee house close to his lodgings. It is unlikely that Tawell would have been caught so quickly without the use of the telegraph system. In the actor network which developed to arrest Tawell the translation process which led to the enrolment into the network of the telegraph by Reverend Champnes can be seen as a pivotal moment. Once the message was sent it could not be unsent, this could be described as a moment of irreversibility, (Callon, 1990), that is a measure of the strength that an actor network has to resist change and reverse the process of translation. Once the telegraph message had been transmitted from Slough to Paddington there was no way it could be reversed. Understanding and identifying the moment of irreversibility within a network has important implications for furthering awareness about how they develop. For example, in her investigation of the news production process within the BBC's Nottingham newsroom, Hemmingway (2008) shows how the central piece of technology used by the television team for recording and playing material, 'The Hub', reaches the point of irreversibly since it is the portal through which all material must travel.

In Slough the Reverend Champnes was passing the scene of the crime and responded to a call for help from Sarah Hart's neighbour, Mrs Ashley. He ran to the station with a description of the suspect. In that respect he was carrying an

immutable mobile, (see page 167), Latour, (1986) which would change the whole investigation.

In the case of John Tawell, the technological advances in communication offered by the telegraph reduced the time taken to send a message between the geographical distance which separated Slough and London. The journey between these two points was once only possible on foot or by horse and subsequently by train. The quick-thinking Reverend Champnes with his description of Tawell managed to overcome the obstacle of geographical distance, (about 18.5 miles by train), in a matter of a few minutes. By enrolling the infrastructure of the telegraph and its operator into the translation process they became an inscription device, (page 169), Latour and Woolgar (1986). For Latour (1986) an inscription device is anything which is mobile and immutable, that can be reproduced and that can make action at a distance possible. In effect an inscription device is an immutable mobile. The telegraph could not actually shorten the physical distance between Slough and London but as an inscription device and an immutable mobile it was able to speed up communication and enrol the police officers at Paddington Station into the growing translation.

It is now necessary to reintroduce the methods for mapping an actor within an actor network which were introduced previously, (pages 75-76). Using Latour's (1987) ideas of the sociogram and technogram and Hemmingway's (2008) development of a third axis, the chronogram, it is possible to map the specific locations of the various actors within the network. Hemmingway uses her development of the chronogram in conjunction with Latour's two axes to examine various aspects of regional television news production including the use of satellite vehicles in live broadcasts. She maps the positions of a producer in charge of a

lunchtime bulletin which is broadcast at 13:25 and shows how his chronogrammatic position is much weaker than the producer of the evening programme at 18:25, (2008, p.188-189). Using these methods she was able to explore the minutiae of the news production process and observe and record what is often unobserved and overlooked by other methods of research.

As he escaped the scene of the murder in Slough John Tawell's chronogrammatic axis mapped him in a strong position in relation to the events which had just taken place. He is on-board a train and is escaping those pursuing him putting physical distance between himself and the crime. However, his sociogram is weak because he had been seen by the witness, Mrs Ashley, leaving the scene of the murder and his description was given to the Reverend Champnes who is now following him. It might appear that like his chronogrammatic axis his technogram is fairly strong position. So long as the train keeps moving, he is creating what would appear to be an unbridgeable gap between himself and anyone following him. But he actually has no control over the train he is riding on as he is only a passenger and therefore subject to the strength of its design and build. If it breaks down there is nothing, he can do to put it right. As the Reverend Champnes description of Tawell is sent to Paddington by the telegraph operator in Slough all of Tawell's axes shift again.

Originally his chronogram was strong but now as he journeys into London, he has been overtaken by a telegraph message and the police will be waiting for him. His chronogram is considerably weakened as is the case of his other two axes. Tawell had no control over the train he was travelling on although he could have chosen to get off at a station before Paddington. The fact that he did not is not a surprise because it is unlikely he knew of the existence of the telegraph

infrastructure. If he had known about the telegraph then his choices may have been different. He had no control over the telegraph or its use by Reverend Champnes therefore he was oblivious to what was happening. Once the telegraph system was enrolled into the translation process Tawell's technogram collapses.

This is reflected in his sociogram which weakened as his description began to circulate amongst the police who then began their search for him. The influence of technology on the speed of reporting is neatly illustrated by an event just one year before Tawell was captured. *The Times* newspaper proclaimed the news of the birth of Prince Alfred, Queen Victoria's second son, only 40 minutes after it had been officially announced in Windsor on the 6th August 1844. The paper said it was 'indebted to the extraordinary power of the Electro-Magnetic Telegraph' (quoted in Huurdeman 2003).

Britain's first railway murder

One murder in 1864 demonstrates the influence three developing technologies of the nineteenth century played, firstly in the location in which the offence took place, secondly in the manner of the subsequent investigation and thirdly in the arrest of the offender.

Thomas Briggs has the dubious honour of being the victim of the first murder committed on a British train. His killer was a German immigrant, Franz Muller, who fled to America on a sailing ship but was pursued by police. Although the officers set off five days after Muller, they arrived three weeks before him having travelled by steamship. The Atlantic cable, the physical telegraphic wire stretched between Ireland and Newfoundland, was used to notify the authorities in America. In actor

network terms the collection of actors, in this case physical evidence linking Muller to the murder, eyewitness statements, humans, including Inspector Tanner and Sergeant Clarke of the Metropolitan Police force and nonhuman actors including steamships and telegraph wires, created a resilient network of associations which held together for a period of time resulting in Muller's conviction and execution. By performing a more forensic actor network examination of the case it is possible to map Muller's position within the network using his sociogram, technogram and chronogram and show how the translation process which enrolled the various technological devices formed a stable and sustainable network.

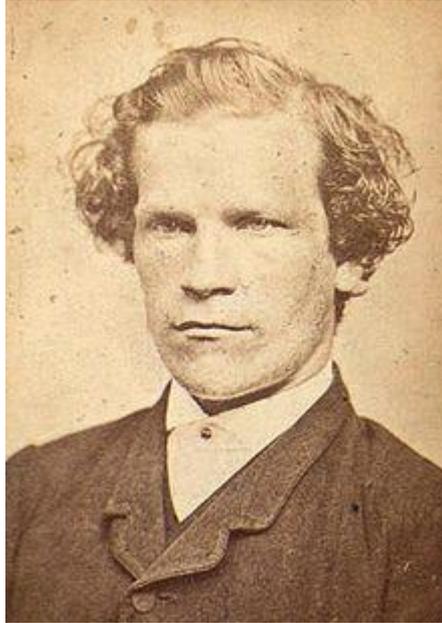
There was an enormous public and media reaction to the attack and subsequent death of Thomas Briggs. So much so his murder was discussed in parliament. From the moment two bank clerks discovered the bloody railway carriage on the 9th of July 1864 the process of unravelling the mystery began. They raised the alarm and from that moment various technologies were enrolled into the translation process. The guard at Hackney station in London used the telegraph system to notify the station master at Chalk Farm station; where the blood-stained carriage was decoupled from the rest of the train. It was later sent for examination, in itself a technological and scientific process. Thomas Briggs was found lying at the side of the railway tracks by a train driver heading in the opposite direction. That was approximately half an hour after the discovery by the bank clerks. Badly injured, Briggs died the following evening, and his death became a murder investigation.

At this point Franz Muller has no discernible link to the murder. He was unknown to the police but swift detective work soon found a connection. He was linked to the crime through belongings left on the train and a trail of stolen items,

specifically a gold chain, which a jeweller subsequently connected to a man he described as German.

The moment Muller boarded the sailing ship *Victoria* his three axes began to weaken. His flight from the scene of the crime, his abandonment of his lodgings and his decision to travel to America map a rapidly shifting sociogram. Because it was powered by sail the *Victoria* was much slower than the steamship which the police and their witnesses boarded in Liverpool. Even though they set-off several days after Muller they were expected to arrive in New York three weeks ahead of him.

Firstly, Muller's technogram is affected by the telegraph system which halts the train at Chalk Farm Station. The speed with which the technology relayed details of the crime and allowed the police to begin an investigation put Muller at a disadvantage. Secondly, the introduction of a photograph of Muller helps speed the police hunt for him. It was given to officers by a man whose eldest daughter had once been engaged to Muller. It was an important step forward in the search giving police a clear image of the man they wanted. It weakens Muller's technogram and his sociogram since he is quite distinctive in appearance and his description is quickly circulated.



British Transport Police

His choice of escaping on the sailing ship *Victoria* was Muller's final downfall. The police had sent a telegraph to the ship and to the authorities in New York. His capture was just a matter of time and the pursuit across the Atlantic was front page news throughout Britain. As was the case in the previous example of John Tawell, the technology enrolled in the pursuit of Muller contributes to his capture. Once on the slow-moving sailing ship his fate is almost certain. He has no control over the ship, the captain is aware of his identity and the police are following in a much faster vessel. If Muller had been aware of his situation he could have jumped overboard and escaped justice but not death.



The British Newspaper Archive

This image from the front page of the *North and South Shields and Daily Telegraph* is interesting for three reasons. Firstly, it is dated almost ten days after Muller arrived in New York and had been arrested by the British police officers. Secondly, it shows how the story had gripped the whole nation. From the moment Thomas Briggs was attacked the story was followed by newspapers right across the county including among many others; *The Brecon Reporter*, *The Caledonian Mercury*, *The Kentish Chronicle* and *The Bedford Times & Bedfordshire Independent*. Thirdly, it's notable for the prominence given to the technology involved in relaying the news, "by electric telegraph".

Using the sociogram, technogram and chronogram to map the positions of both Tawell and Muller it has been possible to offer a more detailed analysis of the

part played by technology in both the reporting and capture of the murderers.

Another technological innovation first used by Victorian police and newspapers was the printing of an artist's impression of a wanted man. Appropriately it was published in *The Daily Telegraph*, named after the invention, the influence of which on policing and reporting of crime, has already been established.



Police image

This picture of Percy Mapleton was published as part of the hunt for the killers of 64-year-old Isaac Gold on a train from London to Brighton in June 1881. Mapleton was on the train and got off looking dishevelled. He told police in Brighton that he had been the victim of an assault which had taken place on the train. After questioning and treatment in hospital he was allowed to return to London accompanied by a policeman. However, he managed to give the officer the slip and was on the run for more than two weeks. On 1st July the composite picture was published in *The Daily Telegraph*. According to the British Transport Police website

the publication of the picture created a great deal of interest and Mapleton was traced to an address in Stepney, London. As the century ended the newspapers continued to exploit the network of telegraph cables and connections which linked major cities of the world in order to deliver more timely news to readers who bought them in ever increasing numbers. When George Orwell wrote in his essay *Decline of the English Murder*:

It is Sunday afternoon, preferably before the war. The wife is already asleep in the armchair, and the children have been sent out for a nice long walk. You put your feet up on the sofa, settle your spectacles on your nose and open the News of the World.....In these blissful circumstances, what is it that you want to read about? Naturally, about a murder.

(Orwell 1965, p. 351)

He was describing what he saw as the archetypal working-class Sunday in the 1930s. Telling stories about murder and sex was what the *News of the World* did and until it closed the paper sold millions of copies each week doing it. There was obviously a market for the salacious and gruesome and sixty-five years after Orwell wrote his essay it is worth noting that it was the use of technology in the story gathering techniques employed by journalists on the *News of the World* while covering a murder story which finally saw it cease publication in 2011 (see Leveson 2012). Orwell contrasts various notorious English killers and their method of murder and the motivation behind their actions. He saw an attraction in specific murders cases, ‘Our great period in murder, our Elizabethan period, so to speak,’ (Orwell, 1984, p.351) when poison was the preferred method of dispatch and sex and financial gain were the driving forces for the offence. For Orwell such murders

‘have dramatic and even tragic qualities’ while the Cleft Chin Murder of 1944, which was the culmination of a brutal and short-lived violent spree by a young girl, Elizabeth Jones, and an American soldier, Karl Hulten, lacked, for Orwell, any of the ‘depth of feeling’ he saw in the cases of Dr Palmer or Dr Crippen. The Cleft Chin Murder received so much coverage, Orwell believes, because it offered a distraction from the war and in his essay, he suggests that it would not live as long in the memory as those famous poisoners. In that he was right. There have been many books written about Dr Palmer and Dr Crippen as well as plays, films, television dramas and documentaries based on their stories.

The *News of the World* was not alone in mining the seedier side of life to sell copies. In some respects, it was a late comer to the mass newspaper market starting as it did in 1843. Long before it began other newspapers with names which today are held in much higher regard by the public, including *The Times* and *The Observer* were fighting for readers by reporting on the latest sex crime or murder. Altick (1970) notes that *The Observer* made great play of the amount of crime it reported, publishing extra supplements when it was warranted and it led the way in the regular use of illustrations of crimes by the weekly press.

Appendix I

Interviewee quotes on murder

This appendix contains more interviewee responses to the questions about why certain murders are chosen as news content.

Without intending to be flippant, there are lots of ways people can be murdered. And different victims will attract more, or less, public sympathy and interest. I suppose the murder of a child comes top of the list – it provokes the most emotional reaction in people, probably more than the violent death of a defenceless pensioner. I sat through the trial of Robert Black, who sexually assaulted and killed young girls. The trial went on for around 6 weeks and was seldom out of our programme. His conviction was national and international news. At the other end of the scale, two homeless drunks who get in a scuffle in which one of them dies doesn't do it for many people. So, domestics, "run of the mill" stabbings and the like will get minimal treatment. But when Derrick Bird ran amok in West Cumbria, shooting dead 12 people, and when Raoul Moat went on the run in Northumberland after killing one man and blinding a policeman, we, and everyone else, threw everything we had at the stories. And we prepared in-depth background pieces to run at the end of inquests into their deaths. Backgrounders are another piece in the jigsaw. We will give more space to a murder where we have a good background story to run than we will to one where we don't.

(Neil Hacking, Assistant Editor, BBC North East and Cumbria)

I think there is a hierarchy of murders. When we've had the sort of the missing person and you have the relative there, film them crying, and you think about the Philpotts, the death of their six children, they're in the press conference crying and then it transpires that as the investigation goes on they are actually responsible for it. It's the horror of how could a parent kill a child, how could a parent put their children in jeopardy in that way for whatever reason, to move house, you cannot fathom. And it doesn't matter if you are a parent or a non-parent it's just the fact that that could even be entertained as a way of creating attention is astonishing. That sort of gets our attention. But are our sympathies the same if it's a gangland boss, Colin Gunn killing another gangster, well it's somebody's son, brother, nephew but the fact is we don't care because we're told Mr Gunn's a gangster and so and so is also a gangster. We kind of think well 'that's the occupational hazard' you want to be a big man and live outside the rule of law then you are going to have to accept that.

(Broadcast Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

Murders are obviously serious and often can have an impact on the community, locally to where they happen, whether they have a wider impact across the region is debatable and that depends on the type of incident, the nature of the case. But I think because they are talked about and thankfully in our region, they are quite rare we would cover a murder because of its significance and importance. If there's a case

where there are warnings by the police about people's safety then we have a public duty to inform people about that. Again, that's rare because most murders are dealt with pretty quickly but there have been cases where murders have been on the loose and are serial offenders then it is obviously in the public interest that we report it. Sometimes murders are worth covering because it might not be the murders itself but events leading up to the murder that need scrutiny because it might be that there have been failings of public bodies that are accountable and therefore that case is important because of that. Sometimes and I have to say this it's just a story that everyone is talking about and you know if it's the talk of a town that there has been a murder but sometimes, we do see the word murder and think hey there's a story and perhaps we shouldn't always think that and think a little more deeply. But often when a murder happens, we don't know in that first 24 hours when it's news, we don't know what the story really is until much later. One of the things that's important is actually geography because if a murder happens somewhere where you are able to get a crew to fairly early. Geography and timings makes a big difference. If a murder happens on a weekend, in the early hours of a Saturday morning, when there is no one around, you have fewer people on shift from your teams, Saturday bulletins are shorter, it becomes a mention. And by Monday morning another story has taken over so that case might get very little prominence. It works the other way, at Christmas when there is so little going on, bulletins need to be filled and it's then that that story gets lots of prominence.

It's all a little bit random and not at all scientific. There are a set of influences at play. Sometimes you just pick-up on something and think 'I don't know about this I want to do a little bit more, there's a story I'm looking at a little more at the moment, and I have to say I know a little bit more about this alleged murder because I know somebody who knows someone in the village, on the face of it it's a murder we might not give a lot of prominence to, but a whole family have been arrested and it happened in a miners' welfare club and the story goes that this person had been pestering people who ran the club and one night the bar manager got so frustrated he got a snooker cue and went wild and hit this person and they were found dead the next day.

(Rosemary Harding Senior Broadcast Journalist, Planner, BBC East Midlands Today)

Author interviewing Mike O'Sullivan Video Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today:

Well not all murders make news stories, here at the BBC, at East Midlands Today, not all do. It's the ultimate crime, how could somebody murder another human being and quite often there is a back story to that which is compelling or official concern that has led to those events. But a guy who is knocked over in a street by somebody during a fight at a bar, I would say that wouldn't be covered at East Midlands Today. Some murders are more interesting than other murders. It's down to scale and impact. If there's a serial

killer or there have been multiple deaths or there is a greater impact in the community, the actual identity of the victim, is it a woman? Are they children? They will all be big factors in the decision whether to go ahead and cover that story.

Author: So, there is a check list?

Mike: Yeah unconscious, unwritten law at looking at the story, yeah if they are younger victims, if they are female victims, if it's gang related perhaps they are the factors that drive the news agenda and drive the story.

Author: What else may influence if a murder is covered?

Mike: In TV terms it depends on whether we've access to the scene, the police tape, outside the suspect's house or the scene of the murder. They will always help us tell that story. Now if we haven't got that very basic material, the bread and butter of many a news package, then we may think we haven't even got those pictures we may not even cover it. We may be able to go and get pictures of the scene now but there may be problems in that now, they no longer look interesting. If it's a house there may be other people living there which presents problems for us reporting it. If there is police tape and the police guard outside it does give you the easy visual reference to telling that murder story. In TV if we have pictures that can be a factor in why we want to cover the story, pictures of the victim, of family members that sort of thing.

Author interviewing Senior Technical Operator John Barbero:

Author: Why do newsrooms spend so much time covering crime and murder stories?

John: My theory is that they are so easy to find. But it depends on the murder story. There have been directives from higher up within the BBC that we shouldn't cover chip-shop stabbings the idea in quotes of it being an "interesting" murder story is one of them, So we have the classic not long ago of the airline pilot who killed his wife by crashing the car into a tree – a story which could have been on *Midsomer Murders*, that's the sort of story which can make murder interesting. The idea of random crime, the Yorkshire Ripper for example, newsrooms love that kind of thing that there is somebody out there that needs to be caught whereas as the humdrum domestic murders it's a matter of whether they are worth covering at all. There are very rarely pictures to see with murders, perhaps the outside of a house where it happened or some police tape so that makes them very difficult to cover for television, but that we are interested in murders – just watch television dramas – they are mostly murders of one sort or another so by that logic we could be looking at murders on television, news as entertainment.

Author talking to Senior Technical Operator, Cameraman Andy Mayer, BBC East Midlands Today:

I think a murder is one of the most shocking things that can happen in a community. Quite often in a murder story, the information, the more complex it is the more it will feed the news machine. If you have an incident in which someone goes out on a Saturday night and gets stabbed, alcohol fuelled incident, I think people are quite dismissive about that, it happens it's a statistic. Journalists are dismissive and there can be a race element involved as well, 'it's the drug community,' it's the black gangs', there's an element of compartmentalising and it's not the world journalists live in, it's another world, so they look on from a distance and say 'isn't that terrible' , but if you have say a mother and a child who should have been protected by the police because of a banning order to keep a former partner away from them, if social services should have done their job, and there's a whole catalogue of things that have gone wrong and that person is murdered then that becomes more newsworthy. It's like an onion, all those layers to the story, it wasn't just alcohol fuelled, gang related, it's somebody being stabbed, right 'we've heard that a hundred times', it's more involved there's more of a story to tell.

Author: There is a selection process going on.

Andy: It's how emotive it is, does it get your juices going, do I actually feel for this person, do I feel motivated am I concerned by this story, do I feel strongly for this story? There's a scale of murder. The bottom rung of the ladder - gang related - drive by shooting - two gangs - the meadows - bang bang, that's not part of my life go and kill

each other that's fine. But if it happens on your doorstep on your street, it's class related, does it tick boxes? How much does it relate to my life? Does it touch my life in as much as did that person who was killed go to my type of school as me, what profession are they from, what sort of family are they from? It gradually builds up a picture and if that picture is something you can relate to then it becomes interesting. To the community to the mother who's just lost a son, her 15 year old son who used to sit down and have the Sunday dinner with her, she didn't even know he was in a gang or thought he wasn't involved in that gang and she's lost her son but worse than that there is news coverage that is dismissive of that. Because for people working in news there is a social-economic profile.

Author: So some murders are seen as not interesting and get overlooked?

Andy: Absolutely that happens. I think we are fortunate in the East Midlands in the way that we cover some stories with Jeremy Ball, (social affairs correspondent), who actually digs a lot deeper than a lot of regional news programmes might into communities and murders within the Black and Asian communities, certainly the Black community around the Nottingham area especially. He's done a lot of really interesting stories but across the board I think that more emphasis is given to murders that happen and that are class related and means related. Madeline McCann's disappearance, very emotive but that news coverage has been skewed because the parents have the means to elevate a news story and also to articulate a news story and

get listened to. These are intelligent educated people a surgeon and a GP and oh my goodness isn't that shocking? And then there's a black mother telling how her son, who she had great aspirations for, has just been stabbed or shot in a drive-by shooting, but there's not an awful lot of media or news coverage, it doesn't really get the right weighting. There is class, white middle-aged people working in news coverage.

APPENDIX J

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This example is one of many showing how journalists in the BBC East Midlands Today Newsroom regularly enrol social media into the news production process.

I'll give you an example. A typical Saturday for me was a couple of weeks ago when I covered three stories on one day as a sole reporter on East Midlands Today. The first was an interview with a former captain of Derby County so of course thinking, as I do as a 28 year old journalist, you get a photograph with Sean Barker, the captain, you Tweet the message 'great to meet Sean Barker' with his Twitter handle and then a hashtag rams or dcfc, that way anybody searching for anything Derby County related are going to find that, retweet it and favourite it and more likely they are to watch our programme at 5.15. So, the simple act of taking a photo and putting that out you've immediately managed to reach a few hundred or even a few thousand more people who may watch East Midlands Today. You're behind the curve if you've just interviewed someone with a Twitter following and not tweeted. Perhaps an older member of our team might not have thought to do that. That's an example where we are using new technology. Then we had a story with Nicky Morgan MP at the launch of a new charity, again it's a friendly story, got pictures of her giving a speech and a quote that was the top line and put that out. Again, she has loads of followers there was a news line about child sexual abuse and people looking for her will see the Tweet, they latch

on to that story. The third story was a paralympian, a quick clip of people playing wheelchair basketball in the city centre, upload it to Twitter. Twitter has its own app for that, and you're on. Again I got a photograph with the paralympian and her gold medal, very likely to get people liking, retweeting, or favouriting and that's all adding up to an online social media offering which, I think, if you are not doing that you are not adding value to your programme and you are missing out on audience. And I did all of that before I have actually sat down and edited anything, before I've written my script, all done before I've started editing any of that footage.

(Navtej Johal, Video Journalist, BBC East Midlands Today)

For Navtej and many of his colleagues the technological advantages of using Twitter to connect with audiences is obvious.

The example of Simon Hare tweeting from the trial of the Philpotts is another clear example (see from page 292). Mapping the axes of the network within which Navtej is enrolled would show him to be strongly placed on all three. He has made the decisions what to Tweet, which pictures to include and when to send out the messages. He faces no resistance from human or technical actors. The interviewees are happy to be involved, encouraging him to add their own Twitter handles (the unique way of identifying different users of the application) in order to spread the story to a wider audience. Navtej has the necessary understanding of what makes an interesting Tweet and how to use the technology within the application to his own benefit.