

***Community-run
hyperlocals: sustainability,
professionalisation,
citizen-owned structures
and public interest ethos***

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**We know community-run
hyperlocals are significant
democratic institutions in many
local areas**

- 2020: Murdoch local press either gone online as part of a larger metro paper or closed entirely (Hess and Waller, 2021)
- 2023: Meta announces it will not renew the news media bargaining code.



How to sustain local news is concerning scholars and industry

- Economic capital (Metzgar, et.al., 2011)
- Cultural capital (Dovbysh, 2020)
- Social capital (Chadha, 2016)
- Public Interest Journalism Initiative (2018 - current)
- Hess, Ross, Ricketson and Forde are currently working with public broadcaster, ABC to “address the local news crisis” (2023 - 2025)
- Park (2023) is piloting a program with LINA to explore new and innovative revenue streams

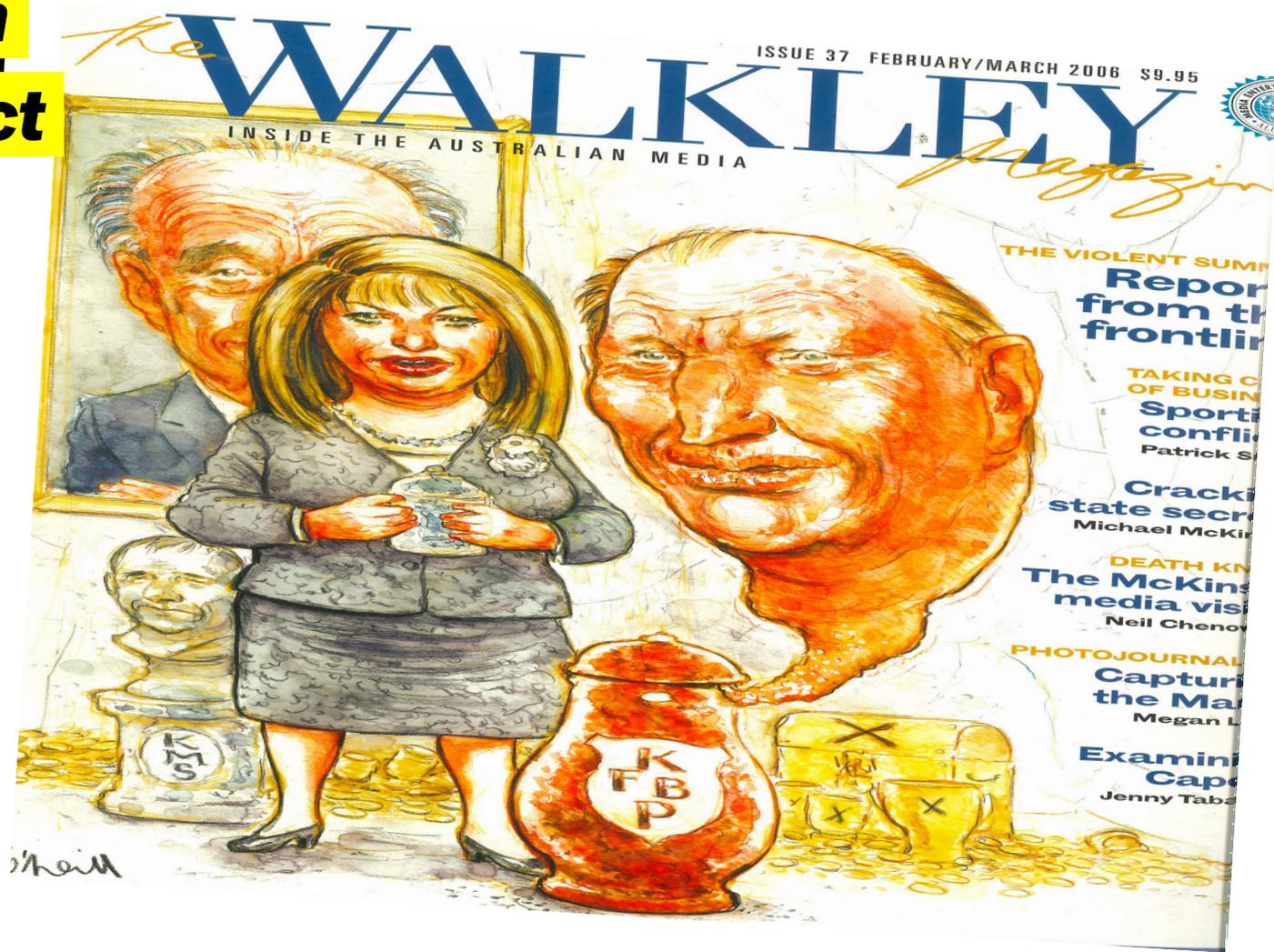
“Whole Journalism” (Rosen, 1997): an evolutionary step towards a journalistic ideal:

... things like civic participation, deliberative dialogue, cooperative problem-solving taking responsibility for the place you live, making democracy work (1997: 7).



But what has not been examined is the impact of sustainability on 'professionalisation'

Arguably, the relationship between sustainability and professionalisation founded mainstream commercial journalism's original business framework and precipitated ownership concentration issues and general distrust of journalistic integrity.



Umbrella question:

What is the impact of the relationship between sustainability and professionalization on community-run news media's citizen-led structure and public interest ethos?

What is the nature of community news media economic, cultural and social capitals?

- Interviewed six founders of community-run hyperlocals
- One from each state
- Three from suburban outlets, three from regional outlets

Viewed through Bourdieu's 'Field Theory' framework or how institutions negotiate power relations through economic, cultural and social capitals?

But first we need to ask



Economic Capital (money!!)

- Sponsors
- Advertising
- Subscriptions
- Work for the Dole
- Grants (govt and private sector)

It's a matter of being constantly on guard and doing the best you can to present public interest journalism and not allow yourself to be swayed, not just by the money or advertising, but also by advocacy groups of politicians

I'm motivated, I guess, just to make myself useful to my community ... the community wouldn't put up with it, I mean, we provide local news and we don't sensationlise, that's our point-of-difference



Cultural Capital (skills and knowledge)

Human resources in terms of

- editorial
- advertising/ marketing/ public relations
- project management
- business management
- distribution

Relied on contributions from the community, but foresaw sustainability relying on training, commitment and an ability to pay

I would have more journalism students help out, but they can take more of my time than they save, and you can't demand them to be polished because you're not paying them.



Social Capital (how other institutions view you)

- Founders aim to play a 'Fourth Estate' role, and be recognized as such
- Recognised as a community resource by the public, but some can not differentiate between legitimate journalism and PR (ie advocacy groups). A contested role.
- Recognised as legitimate and trusted sources of news and information by other institutions.

We're at every council meeting, we have more of a Direct Line to decision makers to the mayor, to the CEO, to councillors than our competition do ... we've built up those relationships over the last 10 years plus.

So we we don't have the resources to produce as broader coverage as a competitors do, but I think our depth differentiates us. I think we certainly get more exclusives than our competition do because people come to us, which is nice.



None saw traditional ‘professional’ business models as an alternative

- Varying forms of governance - from boards through to individuals
- Variable boards - conducted regular skills audits
- Varying forms of sustainability - sponsors, subscription, grant schemes, Some were DRG (Deductible Gift Recipient) status
- Demand for government for support
- Networking and collective action as a means of sustainability (Local Independent News Association)



If community-run hyperlocal news media is going to be sustainable, then some sort of professionalization process will need to take place

- * *See themselves as 'professional' Fourth Estate practitioners*
- *Are concerned with professional governance*
 - *Are concerned with economic capital*
 - *Are concerned with cultural capital*
 - *Are concerned with social capital*
- *Are concerned with more than sustainability, are concerned with growth*



Further research

How can community-run hyperlocal news media manage the relationship between sustainability and professionalization so it does not negatively impact its citizen-led structures and public interest ethos.

