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Yorkshire's Folk Culture in Digital Spaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cultural Practice, Digitalisation and Localisation

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By
Charles Tennyson Sewell, BA

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Abstract

This thesis critically assesses the digital spaces where Yorkshire's folk community practiced sonic and material cultures and developed identities of communal belonging during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using data gathered throughout the UK's first national 'lockdown' in 2020, it examines how a social group previously reliant on physical space and face-to-face community began to use digital spaces in a period of rapid cultural shift. By doing so, it reflects on the process of enacting folk culture in digital spaces, and the extent to which these spaces can nurture localised and collective perceptions of being part of a balanced, tightknit and tangible folk community.

Defining the term 'folk' as established, localised and grassroots cultural practices, with emphasis on sound (folk music and voice), visual (text and artworks) and material (craft), this thesis is positioned between the established field of folk geographies and emerging studies into digital geographies. It aims to revitalise folk geographies by modernising research into the spatial variations of localised cultures within developing digital worlds, such as social media. In order to explore these issues, the research used an experimental multimethodology including (online) ethnography, art-elicitation and interviews within social media groups with strong connections to Yorkshire folk culture. This enabled the thesis to present an empathic but critical narrative of the Yorkshire folk community's cultural shift to digital spaces, based on researcher and participant experiences and the expressions represented through various sonic, visual and material digital artforms.

The thesis makes three key arguments. Firstly, that there are spatial frictions between physical spaces and emerging digital spaces as cultural practices are digitally reproduced, and that these frictions are powerful enough to reshape spaces of folk culture. Secondly, that the COVID-19 pandemic created unique digital geographies, which encouraged experimental practices of culture and redesigned cultural groups by placing new importance on online identities. Thirdly, that tensions between different geographical scales (the local to the global) developed as Yorkshire's folk culture was digitally reproduced, with both productive and destructive consequences for folk communities. Collectively, the frictions, experimentations and tensions related to digital spaces substantially restructured and drove the practices of small-scale cultures into alternative networks of access, control, inclusion, intimacy, heterogeneity and hybridity.

Facebook cover photo for the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Facebook Group.

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Introduction

1.1: Overview

Using a case study investigation of the folk community local to Yorkshire during the COVID-19 pandemic, this thesis will uncover significant ways in which local scale cultures (can) operate in the digital and online world. It critically assesses the digital spaces produced through social media where Yorkshire's folk community practiced sonic, visual and material cultures and subsequently developed identities of belonging to online communities. Using data collected throughout the United Kingdom's first national 'lockdown' (from the 2nd of March to the 18th of August 2020), this thesis examines how a social group which was previously reliant on physical spaces and face-to-face community began to use digital spaces in a period of rapid cultural shift, made necessary through the pandemic.[1] By doing so, it will reflect on the processes of enacting folk cultures in digital spaces, and the extent to which these spaces can nurture localised and collective perceptions of being part of a balanced, tightknit and tangible folk community.

The term 'folk' in the context of this research refers to the products and practices of tradition, historical continuity, place, belonging and grassroots establishments (Carney, 1998b; Revill, 2005; Wright, 2014; Miller, 2018). Therefore, the idea of a Yorkshire folk community refers to a group of people who share a common cultural identity revolving around meanings and practices that have become associated with Yorkshire and thought of in terms of tradition. As reflected in recent academic literature analysing folk cultures, there are also increasing displays of emergent practices, including utilisation of modern technologies, to nurture these identities and perceptions of place and tradition (Blank, 2012; Revill, 2014; Buccitelli, 2017). Of these folk cultural practices, there is an emphasis on sound (including folk music, voice, accent and dialect), the visual (including text and artwork) and the material (including craft products). This is because the digital worlds that this research is concerned with are

[1] The term 'lockdown' within this thesis refers to the emergency state of quarantine implemented by the government of the United Kingdom as a response to the COVID-19 global health pandemic (Johnson, 2020). This includes the temporary closure of public buildings and spaces, and the time when the population of the UK were told to "stay-at-home". The dates (02.03.2020 – 18.08.2020) were when the data collection portion of this research took place but also represents a similar timeframe for the UK's first full national lockdown.

experienced through two main human senses: sight and hearing (Blank, 2012; Ash et al., 2018; Miller, 2020). We *see* the displays of our computer monitors or phone screens and *hear* the sound produced by accompanying speakers. By analysing local scale folk cultures in emergent digital worlds such as social media, this thesis will aid the revitalisation of the established field of folk geographies by linking to and comparing them with emerging studies into digital geographies.

In order to explore these issues, this research uses an experimental multimethodology including (online) ethnography, art-elicitation and interviews. These were conducted in social media groups with strong connections to Yorkshire folk culture and where the term 'Yorkshire folk' had significant connotations to the formation of the groups. This includes, for example, small-scale Yorkshire village community groups, webpages where Yorkshire folk music is shared and social media hashtags through which local artworks are engaged with. Not only was this methodology adaptable to the everchanging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic but also enables this thesis to present an empathic and critical evaluation of the Yorkshire folk community's cultural shift to digital spaces, based on researcher and participant experiences and the expressions represented through various sonic, visual and material artforms.

It is of significance that this project was conducted during the initial wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's subsequent lockdown. Novel digital geographies emerged as people were spending more time at home on social media and less time in physical spaces associated with folk culture; as such, the digitalisation of folk cultures took place at a rapid rate (McLean & Maalsen, 2020). This project aimed to observe and analyse how this digitalisation of folk cultures was happening and the implications of digitalisation for both physical and digital worlds. It is also projected that the impacts of the pandemic will have long-lasting effects, which includes a greater reliance on digital technologies for matters of work, communication, leisure and culture in the foreseeable future (Collinson, 2020; Mustoe & Espiner, 2020; Morris, 2021). So instead of the pandemic being a brief popularisation of digital cultures, the discussions presented in this thesis will retain significance as local and folk communities begin to recover from the impacts of the pandemic (McLean & Maalsen, 2020; Miller, 2020; Gao et al., 2020).

In the end, this thesis will make three key arguments. Firstly, that there are spatial frictions between physical spaces and emerging digital spaces as folk cultural practices are digitally reproduced. These frictions are powerful enough to restructure all spaces of folk culture. Secondly, that the novel geographies created by the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged experimental practices of culture and redesigned localised cultural groups by placing new importance on the relationships between online and offline identities. And thirdly, that tensions between different geographical scale (from the local to the global) developed as Yorkshire's folk culture was digitally reproduced. These tensions had both productive and destructive consequences for folk communities. Collectively, the frictions, experimentations and tensions related to digital spaces of Yorkshire folk culture substantially restructured and forced the practices of small-scale folk cultures into alternative networks of access, control, inclusion, exclusion, intimacy, conflict, heterogeneity and hybridity.

1.2: Background

As someone affected by tinnitus, I have always been more comfortable in places with soundscapes neither too loud nor silent. I first discovered the link between sound(scapes) and geography through Carney's (1998a) *Music Geography* and *The Place of Music* by Leyshon et al. (1998). As opposed to what have sometimes been dubbed the 'loud' or 'noisy' sonic geographies often associated with large-scale, industrial and sometimes globalised soundscapes (MacFarlane, 2019: 1), which can be problematic for people with tinnitus, I was drawn to the sonic geographies of specific, smaller-scale and localised spaces, which overlapped and interlinked with the field of folk geographies through succeeding work by Carney (1998b) and Revill (2004; 2005). Consequently, during my undergraduate years, I wrote an essay titled *Festivals and the Folk Geography of the United Kingdom* (2019) for which, as part of the data collection process, I attended a folk festival where drinks were served in 4-pint milk cartons, unusual musical instruments were commonplace and everyone cleaned up after themselves. It was unlike anything I had ever witnessed but the sense of unfamiliarity piqued my curiosity. *Why* did this festival feel unusual and different to me? When I applied for my postgraduate master's course, I submitted a research design which would evaluate Yorkshire folk culture at local 'folksy' institutions, including traditional pubs and grassroots music venues, and compare to contemporary trends of localisation in human geography. However, just a couple of weeks into data collection, the University of Hull and

the sites I was using for fieldwork were forced to close due to growing implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. With this closure, my investigation into folk spaces as bastions for contemporary localisation trends ceased. Through the few connections I made during my fieldwork, I was reliably informed that Yorkshire folk culture was placing greater emphasis on social media as a response to the pandemic. I found myself inquiring: how can a culture that is perceived as local function on a fundamentally worldwide platform? Through significant redesigning of my methodology, I managed to transfer my case study investigation onto social media using an experimental framework. Instead of looking at physical institutions, my project shifted focus to the digital spaces of Yorkshire folk culture.

As illustrated by over 50 years of research into folk geography, there is no *one* thing identifiable as 'folk'. Instead, the term in a sociocultural sense refers to a multitude of cultural practices and community shared perceptions of tradition, historical continuity, space, place and belonging; all of which have significant spatial differences (Lornell & Mealer, 1983; Carney, 1998b; Revill, 2005; Revill, 2014; Wright, 2014). For example, some folk studies in England by Dorson (1968), Revill (2005), Billingsley (2010) and Jay (2020) have highlighted a particular idyll that has considerable value to folktales and has contributed toward aspects of community building and placemaking on local and regional scales. This idyll is one of a small, rural, quaint and fairytalelike countryside village that is untouched by time, where doors can be left unlocked and everybody knows each other's name. In the real-world, such idylls have never existed. However, this idyll becomes involved in placemaking as people who associate it with their folk identities and romanticise these ideas are drawn toward the local scale geographies presented through small-scale, vernacular and countryside villages and other rural spaces alluding to these idealisations (Revill, 2005; Billingsley, 2010; Jay, 2020). Recent studies have argued that folk cultures are also becoming increasingly accessible through contemporary practices and networks that aim to connect people, such as the use of digital technologies and social media (Blank, 2012; Buccitelli, 2017). As such, contemporary folk culture is far more than just the sociocultural practices of small and rural villages. Folk culture had to become especially adaptable to exist in a world affected by COVID-19, as key public spaces in which it was practised became inaccessible, and thus had to break further away from these stereotypes. This meant the communally shared meanings and perceptions of place, tradition, historical continuity and local scale geographies associated with the studies

of folk geography had to be practiced through evermore modern and emergent ways (Blank, 2012; Revill, 2014; Buccitelli, 2017; Miller, 2018). This includes increasing engagement with modern technologies, digital spaces and social media.

Over the past decade, the number of users of social media has increased exponentially to the point where billions of people engage with social media on a daily basis (Kinsley, 2013; Gao et al., 2020). It is now an online world where cultures are fundamentally produced and reproduced (Miller, 2020; Zhang, 2020). Social media is situated in what is often regarded as the online and digital world or realm (Thulin et al., 2019). In the past, academics have distinguished the digital realm from the "real-world" (known as the physical realm), suggesting that the digital world is de-realised as it is immaterial and placeless (Benford et al., 2005; Lehdonvirta, 2010). Whilst this does bear some truth in the fact that the connections between a person and their online accounts are imagined connections and social media consists of constructed 'imagined' communities, it is also a problematic viewpoint because of the real implications social media is having on everyday lives and cultures (Kanno & Norton, 2009; Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). Through the development of digital technologies as platforms where culture is accommodated and practiced, cultural identities and communities are becoming increasingly intermingled between the online and offline, the digital and the physical (Wilson, 2006; Miller, 2020). The impact of this mixture, in that people are increasingly assimilating their online and offline identities, means that the labelling of the digital world as somehow divergent from reality is now arguably unjust (Benford et al., 2005; McLean & Maalsen, 2020). Contemporary research into the formation of cultures in the digital world, as well as into how these digital cultures are coupled with physical cultures and vice versa, has been growing rapidly (Wilson, 2006; Ash et al., 2018). However, what has often been neglected is how *local* scale cultures function on social media and other digital worlds associated with global scale interconnectivity (Blank, 2012; Kinsley, 2013; Miller, 2020). Writing on folk geographies has shown interesting relationships between local scale geographies and folk cultures since the late-20th century and is, therefore, an ideal field to interlink with emerging digital geographies.

Both within and beyond the human geographies regarding scale, including the relevant folk geographies, there are trends of contemporary (re-)localisation. Whether this is a response to modern globalisation which can be perceived as "smothering" and "homogeneous"

(Schnell & Reese, 2003: 45), or whether it is produced through an idealisation of local scale geography, remains debatable (Flack, 1997; Schnell, 2013; Nevert & Lapointe, 2017). More people are engaging with lifestyles perceived to be local and, as a result, spaces that accommodate these local ways of life are developing (Shortridge, 1996; Schnell, 2013), including archetypes such as the microbrewery (Flack, 1997; Schnell & Reese, 2003), the farmers market (Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000; Lyon et al., 2009) and local housing associations (Parnwell, 2007; Southard, 2014). Cultural geographies following these contemporary trends of localisation have shown that the feelings and identities of becoming local, especially regarding the practice of local cultures, are powerful factors in the reshaping of communities and spaces (Schnell & Reese, 2003; Jackson, 2004; Brain, 2011; Schnell, 2013). This geographical contemporary localisation is significant to the formation of identities, communities and spaces of culture and is very important to the ways in which we view geographical scale (DeFillipis, 2001; Boland, 2010; Schnell, 2013; Nevert & Lapointe, 2017). And yet the question remains: (how) do these contemporary trends of localisation relate to increasingly prevalent digital and online worlds, such as social media, which are inherently global?

There is crossover between the folk geographies, digital geographies and human geographies of scale that warrants further exploration. This thesis will connect and expand upon these three relevant fields of research by illustrating and critically evaluating the processes of enacting folk cultures local to Yorkshire on social media.

1.3: Aim, Research Questions and Objectives

The overarching aim of this research project was to evaluate the processes of enacting Yorkshire folk culture in the digital spaces produced through social media as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The achievement of this aim means this thesis will uncover significant ways in which local scale cultures are formed on social media through practice.

To achieve the aim, the three research questions listed below will be discussed and answered throughout this thesis. They critically question how local folk cultures function on social media and how they differ from the conventional folk cultures of the physical world:

- **Research Question 1**
  How were digital spaces produced and controlled by the Yorkshire folk community as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and what were their relationships with physical space?
- **Research Question 2**
  How did Yorkshire folk cultural practices change as they were digitalised and developed (new) online identities?
- **Research Question 3**
  What do these digital spaces and online cultural practices suggest about the relationship between the Yorkshire folk community and global scale networks, particularly those produced through digital devices, internet connection and social media?

To answer these three research questions, the following four Objectives were devised:

Objectives

1. Connect to, engage with and build a relationship with the Yorkshire folk community through social media.
2. Through (online) ethnographic fieldwork, record observations of the digital spaces and practices of Yorkshire folk culture – and how people engage with these elements of culture.
3. Conduct art-elicitation and interview research with members of the folk community on social media.
4. Compare observational and participatory datasets and conduct comparative qualitative data analyses.

1.4: Thesis Structure

Following this introductory chapter, a literature review will be presented. This project creates a triangle connecting and expanding on the literature produced through the fields of folk geography, digital geography and human cultural geographies of scale. But first, this project's stance within the literature on cultural geographies regarding cultural practices and, moreover, representation is discussed, especially concerning the sonic, visual and material cultures of special interest to this project. The concept of the imagined community is also reviewed regarding folk communities, digital communities of social media and perceptions of regionalism, nationalism and internationalism – and compared to conceptions of "Yorkshire-ness".

After the literature review, there is a methodology chapter which details the case study investigation of this research project: the (online) folk community of Yorkshire. This methodology chapter presents field study sites and justifies why the case study was selected, as well as describing the data collection techniques and how they were utilised. The experimental nature of this research project is reflected in its methodology, especially in terms of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The series of adaptations that this project was forced to make as a result of the everchanging effects of the pandemic are also detailed in the methodology.

Following the methodology chapter, there are three empirical chapters dedicated to the presentation and critical analysis of the data and findings obtained in the case study investigation. The first focuses on the digital spaces of Yorkshire folk social media. This is regarding the production, formation and control of these digital spaces with 'folksy' characteristics and communities local to Yorkshire. The second concerns the digital practices of folk culture entertained on Yorkshire folk social media. This is regarding the sonic, visual and material cultural practices of contemporary Yorkshire folk cultures, and how these practices of culture contribute to the formation of online, offline and local identities. Finally, the third empirical chapter concentrates on the online Yorkshire folk community's relationship with global scale networks synonymous with social media and the internet. This evaluates the various connections, tensions and conflicts exhibited by local-global geographical scales as small-scale folk cultures are (re)made on social media.

Finally, a concluding chapter summarises the contents of this thesis, reflects on the research process and relates everything back to the three research questions and overarching aim of this project. It clearly displays how this research has achieved its aim and objectives and provides detailed responses to the research questions. The concluding statements end with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

This project was inspired by the work of various academics and their corresponding fields of research. Therefore, it is important to embed this research project within its academic context. This chapter critically reviews the academic literature which both inspired and is relevant to this research.

This thesis is strongly positioned in the discipline of human geography. This is mostly from a cultural geographical perspective, with engagement with the folk geographies, digital geographies and geographies of scale. The literary aim of this thesis is to connect the disciplines of folk geography and digital geography, by expanding both fields through contemporary conceptualisations of geographical space and scale. Although this investigation was predominantly grounded from a human geographical point-of-view, many of the themes explored are interdisciplinary. Themes, arguments and theories from other bodies of research, including anthropology, business, and sociology, are incorporated throughout. This chapter begins by reviewing this research's position in the cultural geographies, regarding practices and representations of culture, and extends to more specific literature on sonic, visual and material cultural geographies. In the context of this research, these forms of culture are heavily associated with the practices of local scale geographies. So, the following section analyses the current geographies of scale, particularly those concerned with contemporary trends of localisation. As a field that has a strong connection to local scale geographies, the folk geographies are then discussed through a comparison between the established and emergent conversations within the field. One of the main criticisms of folk geography, however, is that contemporary discussions have struggled to progress into the modern (cultural) age of digital technologies, so the succeeding section evaluates emerging digital geographies regarding culture, social media and how the discussions of local scale and folk geographies need to be combined with discussions of the digital realm as a place of culture. The final section assesses the concept of the 'imagined community'; folk and social media communities are both novel examples of communities made through imaginary connections

and networks. This section briefly reviews the relevance of nationalism, internationalism and regionalism and conceptions of 'Yorkshire-ness'.

2.2: Forces of Culture

Firmly positioned in the field of cultural geographies, it is important this research affirms its stance within the subject following contemporary discussions and discourses in the field. This section reviews this project's position in the cultural geographies, especially regarding the practices and representations of culture as *forces*.

Anderson (2019) offered a revitalised way of viewing cultural representation that has, until recently, not necessarily been utilised in the repertoire of new cultural geography approaches, which have often favoured representations as spatial reflections of social, political and cultural meaning or diverged to the more-than-representational (Cresswell, 2010; Crang, 2013). This is by looking at cultural representation in terms of *forces*. In principle, this approach would mean that representations have capacities to effect, affect and overall make a difference as they have power over people and can shape human discourses both within and beyond cultural worlds (Anderson, 2019).

To exemplify this mode of thinking, one of the more relevant examples of this cultural representational power was produced by human geographer Last (2017) and concerned the cultural and affectual impact of contemporary artforms regarding climate change. Last's research evaluated environmentally conscious poetics dubbed 'geopoetics', questioning if and how this artform influences readers and listeners into rethinking their personal and collective involvement in modern life, regarding politics and consumer behaviours (Last, 2017 in Anderson, 2019).[2] It was hypothesised by Last (2017), as well as Last (2013) and Mirzoeff (2014), that cultural representations which draw attention to issues around climate change have the power to make people alter their lifestyles to become more environmentally friendly. In this example, geopoetics as a representational force, was not the only observable force at play. It conflicted with consumer behaviour, especially the reality that unsustainable and environmentally negligent lifestyles are conventional and comfortable, particularly in the Global North (Jackson, 2004). This establishment and comfort created a counterforce against

[2] Geopoetics are literary workings that discusses geographical and geopolitical positioning within the contemporary world of the Anthropocene and climate change.

the effect of any cultural representation of geopoetics (Page, 2013; de Mooij, 2019). Last (2017) concluded that Anthropocene-themed artforms do have an influence on human environmental awareness, but as long as they are linked to capitalism and globalised consumption habits, their value as agents of changing human culture, politics and consumption behaviours will be limited (Bosco, 2006; Anderson, 2019). I would also argue that environmentally sensitive representations of modern culture, such as geopoetics, are vessels of awareness and education, and it is within the education and information regarding the current climate crisis that incites changes in human ways of life (Ferretti, 2017). These representations do, however, display directional forces which influence people down these pathways (Anderson, 2019).

Therefore, representations of culture can be analysed in terms of their forces over people's engagement with the world around them. Whereas this new approach to cultural representation is exciting to cultural geographers, it is not the be all and end all. While Anderson's (2019) article did reflect on established views of cultural representations, there could have been more detail regarding a blend of cultural geographical methods, which I believe is the intention in upcoming instalments. Thus, I add that representation as a force can crossover and be utilised alongside conventional views of cultural representations. Referring again to climate-orientated artforms, Brode-Roger (2020) used the example of a well-known photograph depicting a starving polar bear amidst the melting arctic ice. This photo, as a representation produced through a culture of contemporary climate activism (which might not have been its initial intention but was used as a symbol by climate activists irrespectively), created a mediated response from viewers who found that the striking force of the piece outweighed the comforts of their consumer behaviours, thus inciting change. However, this force was generated through the emotional affect of the piece, which usually evoked reactions of shock and grief (Kanngieser, 2011; Last, 2017; Brode-Roger, 2020). Such cultural representations, as forces, firstly affect and then, dependent on how they affect, they can make changes to the ways in which humans interact with the world (Anderson, 2019).

This section has focused on cultural representation but the concept of forces of culture is unlimited. As argued by Hall (1997), the cultural practices which produce representations (such as the processes of writing, photographing, singing, dancing, painting and so forth) can and should also be considered in the discussions surrounding cultural representation, which

would signify cultural practices as forces too. Since this research is interested in namely three forms of cultural practice and representation: sound, visual and material, this chapter will continue by looking at some of the geographical literature on sonic, visual and material cultural geographies.

2.3: Sonic, Visual and Material Cultures

In the case study investigation of this research, the relevant digital worlds are predominantly experienced by humans through the senses of sight and hearing (Ash et al., 2016). Therefore, sound, visual and material cultures are all significant in the formation of cultures both in physical and digital worlds in the context of this research, all of which will be discussed in this section.

Firstly, sound is a considerable factor in the ways people experience and make sense of the world around them (Brain, 2011; Crang, 2013; Holloway, 2017). As such, sound is foundational to the creation of spaces and placemaking (Boland, 2010; Revill, 2016). Every landscape has a soundscape and every soundscape has a landscape. This is when a soundscape denotes the acoustic environment as perceived by humans (Southworth in Crang, 2013). In a study into the music scene of Portland, USA, Brain (2011) displayed how local geographical identities are produced through individual and communal perceptions of localised soundscapes, namely those perceived as 'the sound of Portland'. This is compared to the increasingly creative industries of cities like Portland, where cultures and identities can seemingly get lost in an urban maze of gentrification and nascent practices (Blank, 2012; Schnell, 2013). Perceptions of localised geographical identities coinciding with the sound(scape)s associated with certain places can help people make sense of the local worlds around them, especially in distinctive spaces such as local and independent music venues, which create a platform for the expression of locally shaped experiences (Carney, 1996; Lovering, 1998; Hudson, 2006; Brain, 2011). Spaces like the local independent music venue appear to have forces of attraction with identities trying to make sense of local surroundings and geographies, through associated practices and representations of culture (Kearney, 2010; Anderson, 2019). Boland (2010) obtained similar findings in terms of accent and the role of place and accents associated with place. Soundscapes forged through (shared aspects of) voice, accent and dialect, such as those associated with any prominent region, can strengthen senses of community identity

but also create groupings of sameness and homogeneity, which can be perceived as undesirable (Boland, 2010; Kanngieser, 2011; Stehle, 2012).

Moving onto visual culture, cultural geographies are quite extensive when it comes to visualities. It encompasses essentially anything with ocular value and cultural significance, including artwork, photography, sculptures, architecture and landscapes, to name a few. Referring again to Brode-Roger's (2020) research regarding images of starving polar bears and the effects this has on perceptions of the arctic, as well as the changes in human lifestyles they invoke, there is an apparent correlation between images and human behaviours. Transferring this knowledge to more localised worlds, Rose (2008) highlighted the illustrative purposes of photography in terms of illustrating and perceiving place. A photograph provides an ocular lens through a person's view of the world at a particular place and moment in time (Knoblauch et al., 2008). This is exemplified through community orientated photo-elicitation, in which the photos produced through a community are collated to display how the community collectively views and perceives the (local) worlds around them (Collier & Collier, 1986; Bignante, 2010). When viewing online populations on social media as online communities, such as Instagram for example, the photographs and imagery uploaded to these platforms can therefore be viewed as spatial reflections and illustrations of online communities (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). The cultural forces of photography uploaded to social media is characterised through the labelling of some popular users as 'influencers'. An Instagram influencer is someone who has built a reputation around a certain photographic niche on the platform, such as fashion, travel, wildlife, landscapes, music and many more (Keenan, 2021). Researchers have described a certain power associated with these people and their photos to affect followers, in terms of consumption habits, places to visit, environmental awareness and so forth, all through use of imageries (Al-Kandari et al., 2016). The emergent practices associated with social media and the visual worlds they create not only reshape digital landscapes but also make a difference to the physical world and everyday lives (Miller, 2020; Zhang, 2020).

Finally, material culture denotes a range of practices and representations that reveal the relationships between people and objects (Hall, 1997; Slatter, 2019). This encompasses any *thing* with value of monetary or sentimental significance (Jackson, 2000). Lash & Lury (2007) suggested that these objects are representative of consumer's relationship with

consumerism. Academics following trends of local craft and small business have shown increasing demand for locally sourced and crafted products since the late-20th century (Jackson, 2004; Crang, 2005). This has been epitomised through the rise of microbreweries and farmers markets across North America and Europe (Flack, 1997; Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000; Lyon et al., 2009; Holtkamp et al., 2016). It has been argued countlessly that this increasing demand can be viewed as acts of resistance against capitalism and the corporate machine but the relationship between people and locally made craft is far more complex (DeFillipis, 2001; Lash & Lury, 2007). In the instance of the world's third most popular beverage, beer, the relationship between beer drinkers and their beverages becomes a story of identity (Patterson & Hoalst-Pullen, 2014). The consumption of local beer opens doorways for people to reconnect with local scale geographies and discover identities through flavour (Schnell, 2013). Locally produced craft beers have attraction to local and independent drinking establishments, such as the microbrewery and traditional pub (Clarke et al., 1998; Schnell & Reese, 2003). These spaces and institutions of retail and consumption are significant factors in the overall sensory experiences of drinking craft beverages, as they are further disconnected from what can be perceived as the corporate machine and have an enhanced attachment to local scale geography and identity (De Solier, 2013; Schnell, 2013). Thus, the production, retail and consumption of locally sourced beer is highly geographical (Patterson & Hoalst-Pullen, 2014). While the geographies of beer have displayed attractive forces behind the cultural practices and representations associated with locally sourced beer and local independent drinking establishments, much less research has gone into the retail and consumption of craft beer in more creative networks that are disembodied from conventional institutions (Lehdonvirta, 2010).

By comparing the cultural geographic literature on soundscapes, visualities and material cultures with local scale geographies and the view of cultural practices and representations as forces, it appears that there are both attractive and detractive forces in the spaces where local scale cultures are enacted. There are forces which pull (attract) local identities to spaces perceived as local because of associated cultural practices and representations. Equally, there are push (detractive) forces exerted by nonlocal, corporate and global entities, which can be perceived as homogeneous and undesirable to localised identities. This results in the relationships between local spaces and cultural practices as being metaphorical magnets for

local identities. Following gaps in the literature, this thesis looks at the digitalisation of sonic, visual and material cultures. This is in terms of how the practices and forces behind these modes of culture change as they enter the digital realm – and evaluates how these forms of culture can be made local in highly globalised online environments.

2.4 Contemporary Localisation Trends

Emphasised in the previous section, human geography remains highly interested in the mechanics of geographical scale, from the local all the way to the global. As one of the poles in the discussions of local-global geographies, the local scale is an important level for the ways in which cultural geographers view concepts of community, belonging and identity (Crang, 2013). Studies into local scale geographies are becoming progressively hazy as the processes of contemporary globalisation are continuing to connect and interconnect nearly all aspects of human worlds into a global network of human social, political, environmental, technological and cultural activity (Cloke et al., 2005; Gergen, 2012). The idea of a 'global village' has been discussed and contested across the geographies of scale since the mid-to-late-20th century (Crang, 2005). This is where the global village refers to the (development of an) entire human world being linked through telecommunications and other developing networks that strongly connect geographically distanced people and populations (McLuhan, 1962). For example, the worldwide connectivity facilitated by the internet is considered to be contributing towards the development of a global village (Kinsley, 2013; Ash et al., 2018).

As research into concepts such as globalisation and the global village show that the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, there are also many coinciding studies showing human worlds also becoming more local. This research follows many different terms for trends of contemporary localisation, including re-localisation (Southard, 2014), reflexive localism (Carey et al., 2010) and neolocalism (Flack, 1997), each with (slightly) different meanings for the role of local scale geography in the modern world. This project looks in-depth at the theories behind the concept of neolocalism because the literature behind this concept is heavily linked to institutions that this research is concerned with.

The term 'neolocalism' was coined by regional geographer Shortridge (1996) in a longitudinal field study of Kansas, USA, during the 1990s. During their investigation, Shortridge noticed that a growing number of Kansans suffered from a lack of geographical identity. Situated in

the southwestern edge of the Midwest United States, the flat rectangularly-shaped state had all too often been a forgotten member of the American Midwest (Fridirici & White, 1986; Alanis, 2018). Shortridge (1996) found that Kansas was perceived by people within the state and beyond as overwhelmingly “ordinary”, “normal” and even “boring”. Moreover, they discovered groups of people across smalltown Kansas, likeminded in the sense that they viewed these descriptions connoted a geographical identity as undesirable, which encouraged them to forge a renewed identity for themselves, their compatriots and their state (Shortridge, 1996). This inspired Kansans to build identities based on local, regional and historical lore, which was epitomised through the unlikely example of stone fenceposts (Alanis, 2018). Old, forgotten stone fenceposts scattered across abandoned fields were retrieved and adapted as contemporary domestic mailbox supports, holders for house numbers, garden ornaments and other household decorations (Shortridge, 1996). The stone fenceposts were cumbersome, uneconomic and arguably unsightly but, most importantly, they were Kansan (Fridirici & White, 1986). Salvaging these state relics and placing them in everyday domestic settings gave Kansans heightened senses of character and was just one of the ways populations are going about reinventing “ordinary” geographical identities (Shortridge, 1996; Schnell, 2013; Alanis, 2018).

Shortridge’s article provided an introduction to the concept of neolocalism but it was very much a discussion which showed what neolocalism could be, rather than what it is. Flack (1997: 38) likened neolocalism as a “counter-current” to globalisation, where people actively attempt to connect or reconnect with the local scale as a reaction to contemporary global scale activity. This was expanded on by Schnell & Reese (2003: 45), who suggested that neolocalism is a process fuelled by ‘the desire of people to break away from the smothering homogeneity of popular culture’ – essentially a form of resistance against the idea of a global culture. Other academics, such as Nevert & Lapointe (2017) have suggested that neolocalism is not necessarily a form of resistance to globalisation but perceived heightened senses of place attached to the local scale creates attraction to smaller scale geographies. Combining these juxtaposing point-of-views, it appears that there is both a repulsive force pushing people away from contemporary global scale “popular” cultures, due to perceptions of homogeneity and sameness, as well as an attractive force pulling people toward localised

lives, produced through substantiated senses of geographical identity (Flack, 1997; Schnell & Reese, 2003; Schnell, 2013; Holtkamp et al., 2016; Nevert & Lapointe, 2017).

Following Shortridge's initial field study, the majority of following research tended to latch onto single entities and institutions which were viewed as 'bastions' for emerging local scale geographies, including archetypes such as the microbrewery (Flack, 1997; Schnell & Reese, 2003; Holtkamp et al., 2016), farmers market (Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000; Lyon et al., 2009; Carey et al., 2010) and local housing movements (Parnwell, 2007; Schnell, 2013; Southard, 2014). In fact, a criticism of the neolocalism and general re-localisation literature is that it has latched too firmly onto these archetypes and struggled to identify new frontiers in terms of spaces of culture and contemporary localisation. Therefore, (especially pre-pandemic) this research transfers these discussions to traditional pubs and grassroots music venues as potential bastions for the contemporary localisation of cultures. Unlike the microbrewery and farmers market, traditional pubs and grassroots music venues did not suddenly sprout in the 1990s (Flack, 1997; Lyon et al., 2009). The traditional pub and, to a lesser extent, the grassroots music venue share similarities with the microbrewery as they are institutions that function around the retail of alcoholic drinks. Thus, some of the conversations should be transferrable whilst still analysing new spaces of local scale culture. Furthermore, this research's extended field into the digital worlds of social media (especially during the pandemic), proposes a revitalised frontier for local scale research.

2.5: Folk Geography, Community and Identities of Belonging

The idea of a *folk* population has been defined, redefined and argued across various fields of social and cultural academia since the mid-to-late-20th century (Lornell & Mealer, 1983). This is understandable since the word 'folk' was not derived from academic origin; it is a word which simply denotes "the general people" (OED, 2020). This definition was far too vague to build a focused research project on. Although this project could have looked at other fields of research with a defined folk population, I chose to refer to the discipline of folk geography due to the field's acknowledgement of the importance of (especially local) scale, space and place (Lornell & Mealer, 1983; Carney, 1998; Revill, 2005; Blank, 2012; Buccitelli, 2017). One of the more referenced definitions by Reed (1976: 925) described folk geography as 'a study into the spatial patterns and ecology of folk-life'. This description underlines the field's

investigative interest in sociocultural space and, moreover, geographical scale and edges us closer to a precise definition of the word 'folk'. To gather more detail, however, what has already been said within the field must be reviewed.

Prior to recent research into folk geography of the 21st century, the term 'folk' conventionally referred to individual populations who share a common cultural identity surrounding the products and practices of tradition, historical continuity, space, place, grassroots practices and senses of belonging to communities with shared perceptions of culture and identity (Lornell & Mealer, 1983; Carney, 1998; Revill, 2005; Wright, 2014; Revill, 2014). Literary work on especially more westernised folk geographies, such as those of the USA (by Reed, 1976; Lornell & Mealer, 1983; Bohlman, 1988; Carney, 1996; 1998a; 1998b), have regularly displayed the value of communal perceptions of freedom to folk populations. Aspects of historical continuity are significant to these populations because it is understood that ancestors are the ones who contested socio-political oppression and "fought" for liberation in the States (Gordon, 2000: 305), which has been passed down through generations of ancestral acknowledgement and gratitude (Carney, 1998b). Folk *communities* are produced when clusters of people with similar values of freedom and ancestry are brought together, either through rural residency or eruptions of folk culture, such as a folk festival (Carney, 1996). And thus, the freedoms perceived by contemporary folk populations in especially rural and smalltown America are, in some cases (epitomised through festivals and jubilations), products of ancestry, folklore and generational continuity (Reed, 1976; Carney, 1998b; Newman, 2007).

Comparing the Americanised folk geographical literature with other regionalised folk geographies, it appears that the terms like 'freedom' and 'ancestry' are interchangeable with other shared and valued qualities sentimentalised by regional and local folk communities, so discussions are spatially transferrable. In England, especially in the region of Yorkshire, there is an idyll that recurs throughout folk literature, such as folklores and folktales (see Dorson, 1968; Revill, 2005; Billingsley, 2010; Holloway, 2017; Jay, 2020). This 'idyll' is one of a quaint, rural, countryside and fairytalelike village that is untouched by time, where doors can be left unlocked and everybody knows each other's name. We know through contemporary studies into globalisation and modernisation, such as the concept of the global village, that this idyll does not exist – it is an impossibility in modern England (Sánchez & Bouso, 2015). It is,

however, the romanticisation of this idyll that can bind folk communities in England, through shared thoughts and idealisations, and gathered in more vernacular rural spaces, villages and townships (where the vernacular is often viewed as near-enough to this idyll (Brocken, 2003: 110-145; Revill, 2005)). These descriptions of the folk and folk culture remain important to today's research but, as space and place change over time, what can be considered as 'folk' has also changed. Nothing remains untouched by the modern world (Bohlman, 1988; Crang, 2005).

More recent studies into 21st century folk cultures have indicated that they are becoming increasingly connected to contemporary consumption habits, heterogeneity and emergent practices (Revill, 2014). This was typified by Buccitelli's (2017) research comparing locative gaming and folk geography. They showed that mass-produced and globally consumed video games are displaying new modes for cultural heritage. Within these games, people create augmented realities and experiences of living, somewhat bypassing the need for conventional modes of historical continuity (Jones & Osborne, 2020). Locative games, such as *Pokémon GO,* which require a mobile device and encourage the player to travel and visit local places in order to progress are connecting gamers to heritage sites through the lens of video gaming (Buccitelli, 2013; 2017). The mapping systems coded into these games often have strong attraction to special locations, including Cultural Heritage Sites (and Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as other examples), thus encouraging players to go to and explore these locations to strengthen in-game experiences (Balasko, 2020). Jones & Osborne (2020) analysed the virtual environment of a video game depicting London in the 1860s, which they suggested created post-memories in the minds of players as to what it might be like to experience Victorian London, all of which was augmented by game mechanics and player choices. Related to the idea of the idyllic countryside village, the Untitled Goose Game (2019) is an indie video game set in an unnamed, trapped-in-time and idyllic English village. Although the main aim of the game is to wreak as much havoc in the village as is possible for an unassuming goose by uprooting garden vegetables, stealing reading glasses and much more, the game also provides a digital world in which people can experience the relaxed escapades of a sleepy and fairytalelike English village (Balasko, 2020). Residents of a small town in Derbyshire felt represented by the Goose Game but acknowledged the game portrays a perfectionist alternate reality of smalltown English folk

culture (Aggeler, 2019). So not only do location-based video games provide a platform of identity, as people can engage with (their) augmented local and regional cultures in new realms of existence, they also provide a platform for the expression of these identities as people across the world can play and experience cultural heritage available in-game (Benford et al., 2005; Blank, 2012; Buccitelli, 2017; Balasko, 2020; Jones & Osborne, 2021).

Whilst this contemporary research has helped revitalise folk geography in the modern digital age, there was little engagement with the importance of geographical scale, especially local scale geography which was significant to conventional discussions in the field. Instead of dismissing the discussions of pre-21st century folk geography by labelling them as 'outdated', as has been the case in some recent articles, these discussions should be built upon and compared to newer findings in contemporary folk geography. This research incorporates and expands upon all discussions regarding folk geography and folk populations presented in this section. Therefore, in the context of this research, the term 'folk' denotes a relatively small group of people who share identities of belonging to localised communities and practice (what are valued and perceive as) historical continuity, spatial traditions and placemaking. The ways in which folk populations practice these values is, however, continuing to take on more contemporary, emergent and heterogeneous forms. This includes increasing use of modern digital technologies and online platforms, such as social media, of which this research is particularly interested in. This research contributes to the field of folk geographies by critically analysing both how local folk cultures function on social media and the effects of enacting folk cultures in digital and online environments.

2.6: Culture in the Digital Age

In the modern technological age, digital technologies are playing increasingly vital roles in human worlds. This has both created cultures of digital technology (Gergen, 2012; Page, 2013) and vitalised the use of digital technologies to enact culture (Kinsley, 2015; Miller, 2020). This section looks at some literary examples of small-scale cultures being enacted in digital worlds and the role of social media as a place of culture.

As mentioned at the beginning of the section on contemporary localisation trends (2.4), digital technologies such as the internet and social media are creating networks across the globe that are connecting and interconnecting people on a worldwide scale, through a web

of digital interaction (Crang, 2005; Ash et al., 2018). As such, the rise and expansion of social media and the internet are contributing to concepts such as the global village (Sánchez & Bouso, 2015). With so much vigour behind the academic narratives regarding social media and the internet as globalised entities of connection, their role in smaller-scale and local geographies has tended to take the backfoot (Kinsley, 2013). However, in the instances where the impact of digital technologies on local scale geographies and cultures have been reviewed, the findings have been both interesting and important to the ways in which we view the formation of cultures and localised worlds (Gelder, 2005; Crang, 2013).

Kornai (2013) underlines the role of digital technologies, such as smartphones and the internet, in the diminishment of globally less-spoken and smaller-scale 'endangered' languages, as well as regional language cultures and dialects. The argument formulated in two ways. The first suggested that common 'internet speak', including the abbreviation of words and phrases for quick and easy text-based communication, is damaging to conventional language styles (Miller, 2020). The second suggested that digital technologies tend to ignore or omit special characters unique to smaller-scale languages, rendering them impracticable in the digital world (Kornai, 2013). On the other hand, Lenihan (2014) disagrees with this viewpoint and asserted that the capacities of digital technologies, especially social media, in terms of communication and translation are only helping and continuing to help the development of smaller-scale languages, language cultures and dialects, as these technologies are perfected (Stehle, 2012).

Taking an approach more connected to smartphones, Ash et al. (2016) asserted that these technologies are also highly location orientated and localised. When connected to the internet, smartphones using global positioning systems provide individualised experiences based on the geographical location of the user (Kinsley, 2013; 2019; Ash et al., 2018). On social media, one of the more pertinent examples of this is through digital marketing. Social media users are highly likely to receive online advertisements based on their locality (as well as various other factors) (Truong & Simmons, 2010; Tucker, 2012). This includes adverts for local and independent businesses and attractions. However, while these digital marketing schemes and their relationships with users of digital technologies *can* be tailored around local scale geographies, they are simultaneously connected to much larger-scale and globalised entities (Blank, 2012). The worldwide marketing industry, of which digital marketing is becoming

increasingly prevalent, is a multibillion-dollar industry spread across the globe (de Mooij, 2019). The very nature of smartphones is also tied into global corporations, mass production and multibillion profits (Page, 2013). For every person with a smartphone, there is someone with the same model on the other side of the world (Thulin et al., 2019). This all highlights the complexities between local and global geographies regarding modern digital technologies. Nonetheless, these complexities need to be explored.

The message is clear from emerging digital geographies. Blank (2012), Kinsley (2013), Ash et al. (2016; 2018), Miller (2020) and many more have all exclaimed that the role of local scale geographies and cultures requires further exploration in the field, especially regarding the emergent dynamics of social media.

2.7: The Imagined Folk Community, Nationalism and Internationalism

This literature review has mentioned the term 'community' on multiple occasions, including local and folk communities. Even social media platforms can be viewed as communities (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). Communities that are produced through shared thoughts, perceptions and identities of belonging have been grouped under the label of 'imagined communities' in human cultural geography since Anderson's (1991) work comparing nationalism and imagined societies. They argued that the nation is a politically imagined region and its inhabitants are all joined through imaginary political networks linked to the state. To conceptualise this theory, Sarsembayev (1999) suggested that even in the smallest of countries, it is impossible for one compatriot to know everyone else in the country. But everyone is still grouped within the same national populace. Two people can share an identity of being English, having never met, but still be connected through shared thoughts and meanings associated with England, as well as shared perceptions of being English (Morley & Robins, 2001). Present discussions surrounding the imagined community have stretched to supporters of sports teams (Fletcher, 2012), inhabitants of cities (Newman, 2007), people who associate with a particular culture (Gelder, 2005) and much more. This means the idea of local, folk and social media communities are all novel examples of imagined communities. However, the archetypal example remains as the nation and discussions regarding the imagined community have always been closely related to concepts such as nationalism,

internationalism and regionalism (Anderson, 1991; Sarsembayev, 1999; Kanno & Norton, 2009).

Human geographers have been split regarding the effects of nationalism, where the term 'nationalism' refers to the identification with of one's own nation and support of its best interests (Grufford, 2005). On the one hand, nationalism can be productive. Nationalism can build imagined communities with powerful senses of belonging to a nation and its population (Anderson, 1991). On the other hand, nationalism can be destructive when there are hard borders between what is national and what is not. This view of nationalism shows that it seeks to discriminate between the nation and what is seen as *other*, as well as ostracise and marginalise through the exclusionary practice of civic and ethnic nationalism (Sibley, 1995; Spracklen, 2013).

In a study of Yorkshire regionalism or "Yorkshire-ness", Fletcher (2012) described the regionalist views of Yorkshire folk as comparable to those of a nation. Regionalists in Yorkshire describe the region as "God's own country", due to the outstanding natural landscapes and wildlife, also attaching these viewpoints to ideas of ruralism and romanticism (Billingsley, 2010; Fletcher & Swain, 2016). Fletcher (2012: 227) described a domestic arms race in which 'some [people] are more "Yorkshire" than others', based on various factors such as strength of accent, fashion sense and which sports teams one supports. Ultimately, this regional contest in which people can be (perceived as) more or less associated with Yorkshire fuels exclusionary practices and ideas of a Yorkshire 'elite' (Sibley, 1995; Spracklen, 2013). This demonstrates both productive and destructive consequences for the practices of Yorkshire-ness.

However, with the worldwide and interconnected networks of globalisation becoming more significant to human worlds, humanities academics have suggested that people are also becoming more disassociated with their (local) geographical locations (Smith & Katz, 1993; Lovering, 1998; DeFillipis, 2001). Ideas of internationalism and global citizenship are progressively replacing patriotic mindsets (Glassman, 2009). On a similar note to the discussions of nationless-ness, Thulin et al. (2019) reviewed the idea that people are finding greater senses of belonging to digital worlds, such as those used by smartphones and video games. With the progression of digital technologies, people are affiliating to placeless and

international digital worlds (Page, 2013). Thulin et al. (2019) also likened mobile phones and other technologies as like virtual homes for people's digital lives. The reality appears to be that the divide between people who are practicing forms of nationalism and those who are taking on a more globalised approach to their identity is growing (Grufford, 2005). As this divide extends, both the constructive and damaging elements of nationalism, internationalism and overall imagined communities are becoming clearer but also more entangled in larger-scale networks (Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995; Morley & Robins, 2001; Spracklen, 2013).

Demonstrated throughout this literature review chapter, there are significant gaps in human cultural geographical research connecting the folk geographies, digital geographies and geographies of scale. This creates somewhat of a triangular void between these fields. To fulfil this specialist area of research, this project evaluates the ecologies and cultures of folklife within the digital world of social media. This is communicated through the case study investigation of the folk cultures and communities which operate on local scale geographies and are strongly associated with the region of Yorkshire. The following methodology chapter provides in-depth detail on this case study investigation and critically analyses the research processes.

Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1: Introduction

This methodology section outlines and critically analyses the design and research process of this project. Firstly, a synopsis of the investigation will be outlined, followed by a more detailed account and critical reflection of the case study and data collection methodology, respectively. Lastly, I will discuss my positionality as the primary researcher of this project which will detail any issues regarding ethnographic research and bias.

3.2: Investigation Synopsis

This research was a two-year project starting in the September of 2019, the investigation being conducted from the 2nd of March to the 18th of August 2020 (02.03.2020 – 18.08.2020). This was an experimental multimethodological investigation interested in exploring the cultural practices enacted by the Yorkshire folk community on various social media platforms, how these digital cultural practices differ to more conventional methods and what this all signifies about the folk community's relationship with geographical scale. This was a data-driven investigation that entered physical to digital spaces, institutions and communities of Yorkshire where the term 'folk' had significant connotations in terms of culture, identity and practice. The methods involved were as follows:

- Ethnography and online ethnography "netnography"
- Art-elicitation
- Online semi-structured interviewing

The investigation was divided into 3 distinct phases for comprehensibility, organisation and effectiveness. Figure 3.1 is a flowchart that details each phase of the investigation.

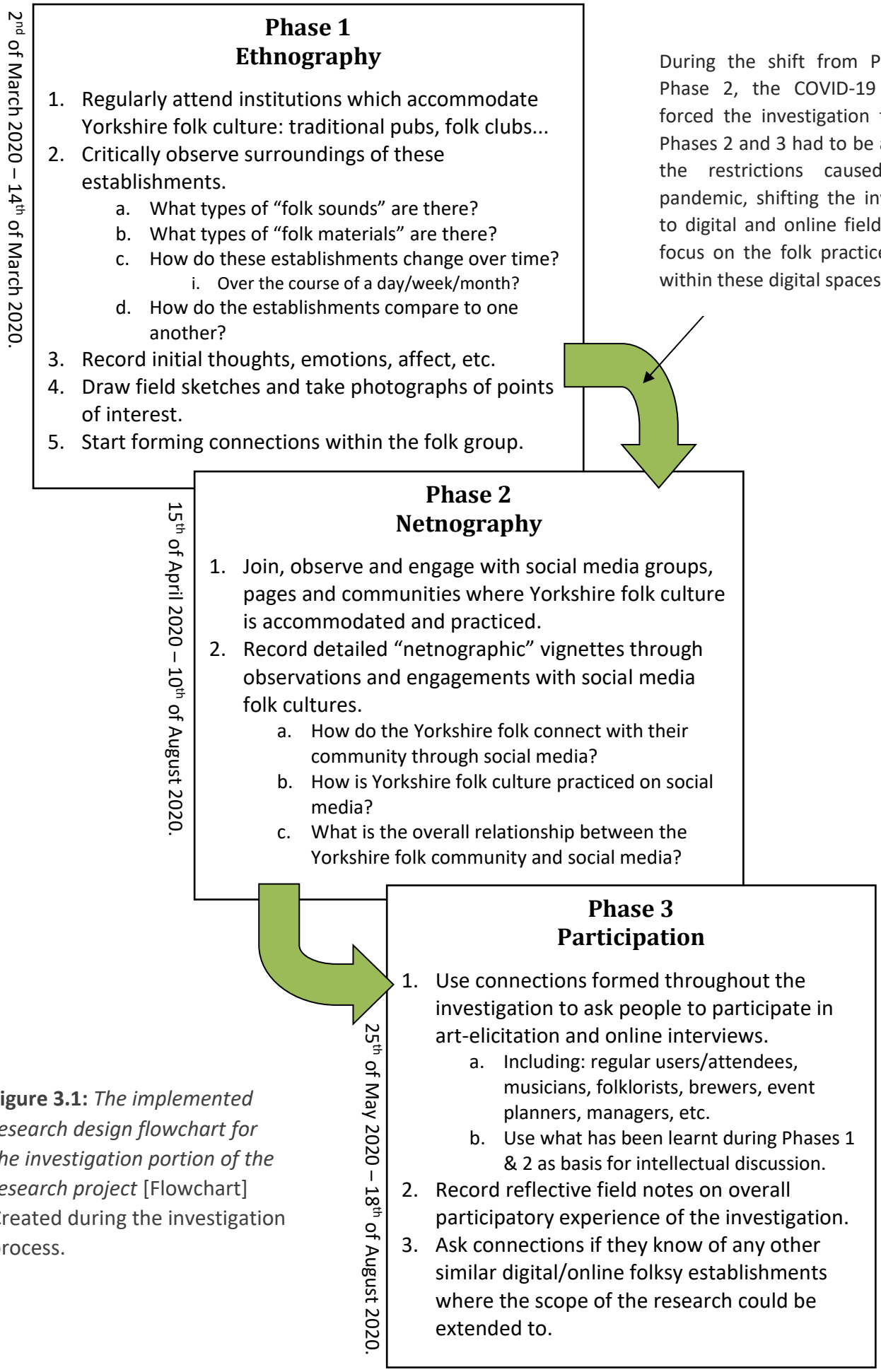


Figure 3.1: *The implemented research design flowchart for the investigation portion of the research project* [Flowchart] Created during the investigation process.

3.3: Case Study: The Yorkshire Folk Community

This research project revolved around a case study investigation which contained elements of both a regional and sociocultural group case study model (Castree, 2005; Yin, 2014). This was the folk community of Yorkshire, United Kingdom. Yorkshire is a historic county and geographic region in the northeast of England in the United Kingdom (see Figure 3.2). Yorkshire was chosen as the regional case study for this investigation primarily for its active and vibrant folk community. Although one can visit almost any region in England and find displays which fit into the category of folk culture, as defined in the literature review, Yorkshire contains a diversity of spaces which accommodate contemporary folk cultures. For physical spaces, this includes 400 traditional and independent pubs (CAMRA, 2020), over 50 grassroots music venues (MVT, 2020) and over a dozen folk festivals (Hull Folk and Maritime Festival, 2020). There are also bountiful groups on social media where Yorkshire folk culture is enacted digitally and online communities developed (Spracklen, 2013), meaning this investigation could compare physical and digital spaces of folk culture. For the most part, Yorkshire is a region which embodies the archetypal image of the English countryside, which is conventionally viewed as the ideal platform for folk-life (Dorson, 1968; Revill, 2005; Billingsley, 2010; Revill, 2014; Wright, 2014). Consequently, this meant that this geographical investigation had the added dynamic of the relationship between space and folk culture.

Figure 3.2: *The historic region of Yorkshire, United Kingdom, encompassing North Yorkshire, East Riding of Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, highlighted in green* [Map] Pictures of England, 2020.

Phase 1: Ethnography

Yorkshire is a large region in the UK with an area of 12,000 km² and a human population of 5.3 million (Yorkshire Enterprise Network, 2011; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013). Therefore, for comprehensibility and manageability of the investigation, 3 precise study locations were chosen during Phase 1: Ethnography (Figure 3.1; Flowerdew & Martin, 2005). These were the city of Kingston upon Hull, the town of Beverley and the village of Cottingham. These locations were all limited to the East Riding of Yorkshire because there was insufficient time to branch out to the other regions of Yorkshire before the pandemic hit, thus ending Phase 1 relatively early.

A "starting point" in the form of an institution which accommodated some form of folk culture was chosen for each location. From these starting points, other institutions comparable in terms of the associated folk practices were also identified and studied. The terms 'traditional pub' and 'grassroots music venue' recur throughout this thesis to describe some of these initial institutions. Clarke et al. (1998) and the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA, 2020) describe the traditional (English) pub as an institution with significantly unaltered historical architecture that is open to the public and serves locally sourced draught alcoholic drinks without the requirement of ordering food. Moore (2020) and the Music Venue Trust UK (MVT, 2020) define a grassroots music venue (or GMV) as a small-scale institution with cultural activity as its main purpose and acts as a significant platform for the accommodation of local, original and up-and-coming musicians and their listeners. These types of institutions were chosen because the traditional pub and grassroots music venue share common qualities with the archetypes in the geographical literature on contemporary (re-)localisation (by Flack, 1997; Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000; Schnell & Reese, 2003). Therefore, some of the discussions within the literature should be transferrable, yet just dissimilar enough to extend this research to different spaces (Clarke et al., 1998; Schnell, 2013; Holtkamp et al., 2016). These institutions also played host to sonic, visual and material folk cultural practices that this project is interested in, including folk music, dance and local craft. Table 3.1 overviews and provides a brief description of the physical traditional pubs, grassroots music venues and their study locations from Phase 1.

Table 3.1: *The field sites of Phase 1 (Figure 3.1) listing their primary institution, location and a brief description. The first 3 field sites were the "starting points" referenced in Phase 1.*

Institution (and community)	Location	Brief Description
The Duke of Cumberland	Cottingham, East Riding. -Large Conservative village with a population of 17,000 people.	Traditional pub. 2 music nights per week dedicated to local musicians. The Cottingham Market takes place on the Duke's doorstep every Thursday.
The Sun Inn	Beverley, East Riding. -Conservative historic market town with a population of 30,000 people.	Traditional pub and grassroots music venue. Oldest pub in the East Riding of Yorkshire (est. 1530 AD). Advertised as the "home of live music and real ale". Hosts multiple events every week dedicated to local and original musicians. Sells some locally sourced drinks. Member of the annual Beverley Folk Festival.
The Three John Scotts	Kingston upon Hull -Labour-voting city with a population of almost 300,000 people.	Previously a traditional pub known for its sale of locally sourced alcoholic beverages. Traditional pubs status has recently come under scrutiny due to a recent renovation and change in ownership. Located in the "Old Town" of Hull.
The Monks Walk	Beverley	Traditional pub. Sells many locally sourced alcoholic beverages. Hosts multiple nights dedicated to local musicians, particularly in summer.
The White Horse Inn "Nellies"	Beverley	Traditional pub describable as old-fashioned. Owned and supplied by regional scale Yorkshire brewery Samuel Smith's.
Ye Olde Black Boy	Kingston upon Hull	Traditional pub. Oldest pub in Hull (est. 1729 AD). Sells locally sourced drinks. Occasionally hosts "jam nights" for amateur musicians to improvise.
Ye Olde White Harte	Kingston upon Hull	Traditional pub. Historic relationship with Ye Olde Black Boy. Sells locally produced alcohol.
The New Adelphi Club	Kingston upon Hull	Grassroots music venue. Often described as the grassroots music capital of Hull. Hosts music nights nearly every day for all levels of musician.

---------- Starting points ----------

Phase 2: Netnography

On the 14th of March, the University of Hull was forced to cease all field-based research as a result of the worsening effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the physical spaces, institutions and communities in Table 3.1 and Phase 1 became inaccessible. I was reliably informed by participants in the Yorkshire folk community that the practices of folk culture were subsequently shifting to digital spaces, like social media. Therefore, a revitalised online field was made to spearhead the investigation in Phase 2: Netnography (Figure 3.1). The investigation shifted focus from traditional pubs and GMVs to their online institutions made available through social media. The accessibility of social media meant that I could also widen my scope to Yorkshire folk communities who were more detached from these institutions. This included groups exclusive to social media dedicated to folk music, local photography, craft and even a virtual folk festival. Table 3.2 provides an overview of these social media study locations.

Table 3.2: *The online groups, pages and communities of various social media platforms that formulated the digital study locations of Phase 2 (Figure 3.1), including their media and a brief description of the relevant cultural practices.*

Social Media Group, Page or Community	**Social Media Platform**	**Brief Description of Relevant Cultural Practices**
Traditional Pub and GMV-orientated Folk Communities		
The Virtual Pub Quiz	Facebook YouTube	The Virtual Pub Quiz was an online quiz that attempted to digitally mimic a traditional pub quiz synonymous with English pub culture. The event interested 400,000 people on social media.
The Sun Inn	Facebook	The Sun Inn maintained its significance as a space for the accommodation and practice of pub-based folk cultures, even when the physical institution was forced to close. It continued to regularly post on Facebook detailing changes. It acted like a catalyst which continued to reconnect their community to social media (pub-based) folk cultures. It also continued to sell 'takeaway pints and meals' during the pandemic.
Ye Olde Black Boy	Facebook Instagram Twitter	Ye Olde Black Boy posted regular photographs of its traditional pub institution and surrounding area onto social media while it was closed. These photos were often atmospheric and continued to remind viewers of physical world pub life.
The New Adelphi Club	Facebook Instagram Twitter	The Adelphi Club in Hull started to livestream local, original and up-and-coming musicians on their social media throughout lockdown.

Online Folk Music Groups		
The Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group	Facebook Instagram YouTube	This group was one of the more significant to my research as it helped reconnect me to other (smaller) folk groups across social media. The Yorkshire Folk Music Group had over 2,000 members who shared or advertised original folk music and interacted with other user's uploads.
#QuarantineSessions #LockdownSessions #IsolationSessions	Twitter Facebook Instagram YouTube	These were a significant set of hashtags that people in the Yorkshire folk community (and beyond) attached to various pieces of artistic content published on social media during lockdown.
Online Village Folk Groups		
Cottingham Community	Facebook	Private Facebook group with 7,500 members. 'A page for Cottingham and surrounding area folk'. Mostly dedicated to storytelling and local photography.
Brilliant Beverley	Facebook Twitter	Public group with 5,200 members dedicated to the "good" things happening in Beverley town. Includes local storytelling, photography and craft.
Walkington What's On	Facebook	Public Facebook group with 1,400 members dedicated to local amateur photography and the sale of local craft.
Online Folk Festivals		
Góbéfest 2020	Facebook YouTube Twitter Instagram	Góbéfest is usually a physical folk festival conducted in the city of Manchester and parts of Yorkshire. Due to lockdown, the 2020 festival was described as 'the virtual folk festival' and conducted across multiple social media platforms. Góbéfest is a blend of Transylvanian and Northern English folk cultures, including music, dance, craft and folklore.

Collectively, this variety of online spaces allowed me to observe, interact with and investigate how a sizeable portion of the Yorkshire folk community engaged with sonic, visual and material cultural practices on social media amidst the global pandemic. Spaces produced through digital technologies, including social media, are increasingly significant to human geographies (Crang, 2013). Progressively, people are using social media as a platform to engage with and practice culture (Gordon, 2008). As stated within the literature review, folk geographies have shown signs of outdatedness regarding these important and emergent digital worlds (Blank, 2012; Buccitelli, 2017). This includes scarcity of academic folk geographical discussions regarding the significance and implications of social media as a platform for contemporary folklife and cultural practices. Utilising the online and digital realm within this case study investigation, which is essentially a study into the ecology of contemporary folklife, allows this research to modernise relevant discussions from folk

geography regarding space and geographical scale (Reed, 1976; Blank, 2012; Spracklen, 2013; Wright, 2014).

3.4: Data Collection

3 main techniques were utilised as part of the data collection of this investigation. These data collection techniques were:

- Ethnography and online ethnography ("netnography")
- Art-elicitation
- Online semi-structured interviewing

By using these data collection techniques throughout my investigation, I obtained:

- 1 extensive field diary
    - Complete with over 40 ethnographic vignettes, secondary data and over 50 audio-visual pieces of practices and representations of culture.
- 20 elicitations of art
- 6 online interview transcripts

The following subsections precisely define each technique and outline their advantages, disadvantages and limitations with reference to academic methodological literature as well as my own experience of using them within the context of the investigation.

3.4.1: From Ethnography…

The first and most prominent data collection method used throughout the investigation was various modes of ethnographic research. This technique was firstly utilised in Phase 1 (Figure 3.1). Ethnographic research is a qualitative research method in which the researcher actively observes, engages with and examines a specific human population who are grouped by a particular culture or other homogenising feature (Cook, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This method enables the researcher to systematically study the group's customs, habits and mutual differences over a prolonged period (Laurier et al., 2001; Kozinets, 2015).

Figure 3.1 shows how my investigation began with real-world ethnographic research in Phase 1: Ethnography. I attended a range of traditional pubs and grassroots music venues in East Yorkshire which accommodated various forms of sonic, visual and material folk culture (see Table 3.1). I visited each institution in Table 3.1 at least once per week. Each visit was between

1 and 4 hours in duration, depending on how much cultural activity was available to observe, examine and synthesise. In my field observations, I paid particular attention to soundscapes, visual cultural practices and material cultures. This included displays of folk music, storytelling, voice, accent, dialect, dance, artwork, craft food and drink and the décor of the institutions. Firstly, I accessed my own embodied experiences within these institutions and questioned how the various cultural practices and representations affected my time at the pubs. I also observed how other attendees interacted with each element of culture, whilst questioning the relationships between the attendees and the cultural practices and representations. I wrote ethnographic vignettes based on my experience and observations every one or two visits. By the end of Phase 1, I had written 6 ethnographic vignettes which encapsulated raw qualitative data on the relationship between the pub and GMV-orientated Yorkshire folk community and the relevant sonic, visual and material cultural practices and representations. I also recorded points of interest through various audio-visual recordings and field sketches and attached them to my vignettes.

Phase 1 was brought to an abrupt end due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic and subsequent lockdown of the United Kingdom, as all pubs and similar institutions were forcibly closed (BBC News, 2020). In terms of ethnography, this investigation was very short-term at about 2 weeks' worth of research. Ethnographic research is designed to be lengthy, calculated and even time-consuming (Miles & Huberman, 1994). High quality results yielded from ethnographic fieldwork are made available by spending a prolonged period within the field (Cook, 2005). This concerns greater time periods than just a couple of weeks. In fact, some of the most reproducible and data-stimulating ethnographies are years in duration (see Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) for some good examples of long ethnographic research). This is to allow the researcher ample time to gain a thorough, reproducible and reliable understanding of the inner workings of the group or culture (Laurier et al., 2001). Although the social, political or cultural narratives may never reach a natural conclusion, Thomson (2010: 46) proposed that in order to "complete" ethnographic work, the researcher should continue to conduct research until they are not necessarily finding anything *new*; a means labelled 'theoretical saturation'. Although my field-based ethnographic observations were too sparse to draw any reproducible findings from (Cook, 2005), the process did introduce me to Yorkshire folk culture and allowed me to form valuable connections with members of the

community. This included contact with regular attendees, staff, folk musicians, event planners and managers of folksy institutions.

3.4.2: To "Netnography"

As this research project progressed and adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, an online ethnographic technique known as "netnography" became the more pertinent data collection technique in Phase 2 (Figure 3.1). "Netnography" is an online research method derived from the more established technique of ethnography. Netnographic research is essentially a translation of ethnographic research from the physical world to the online and digital world (Kozinets, 2015). Specifically, netnography is a qualitative research method utilised in an online research capacity in which the researcher actively observes and engages with an online group of people or a specific online culture, while systematically studying their digital customs, habits and mutual differences (Cook, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Kozinets, 2015). This is typically done through an understanding of online social interactions made by a group of people or a specific culture through contemporary digital communications contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Kozinets, 2015). The main difference between physical ethnography and netnography is that online social interactions can be made within a multitude of online and digital institutions and spaces, from social media to emails to multiplayer videogames to discussions forums and many more (Nardi & Harris, 2006).

The advantages, disadvantages and limitations of netnographic research are very similar to those of physical world ethnographic research. Some academics have criticised ethnographic research for being too dependent upon the researcher's personal observations and interpretations (Androutsopoulos, 2008). Ethnographic research is subjective, meaning it is particularly open to research bias (Tunçalp & Lê, 2014; Kozinets, 2015). Furthermore, the researcher's judgement and impartiality may potentially be compromised as they are exposed to or immersed in culture for an extended period of time, generating subconscious research bias as the researcher essentially becomes a part of the community they are investigating (Flyvberg, 2006). On the other hand, within geography, every scale is important. This includes perspectives from the individual level, which is prevalent when concerning themes such as culture and identity, which fundamentally operate on an individual basis (De Ruyter, 2002; Boland, 2010; De Solier, 2013; Nevert & Lapointe, 2017). Situated knowledge and hermeneutics are valuable means in which human geographers can access culture and

cultural practices and representations at a research capacity (see Ferretti, 2017; Simandan, 2019). These techniques make sense of unquantifiable information and lived experiences and are, thus, increasingly valuable to human geographers (Laurier et al., 2001). As for the problems arising with research bias, essentially every qualitative research method is open to research bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As long as the researcher is aware of their positionality and potential research bias', and as long as they do not disregard anything which could be considered as data relevant to the research, then problems arising with potential bias can be mitigated (Engin, 2011; Yin, 2014).

Cook (2005) proposed that ethnographic research is amongst the most fertile qualitative research methods, suggesting that forms of ethnographic work can even be intimidating since there is simply just so much information available in a given space over time. Netnography is no different. In fact, there is probably more data available within a microcosm of the internet than there is within, for example, a pub or music venue (Gordon, 2008). Just one Google search for 'The Duke of Cumberland pub Cottingham' yields about 68,800 results (see Figure 3.3). Although including more specific criteria in the search does significantly narrow down the results, navigating the internet through netnography can be a very tall order. Moreover, Androutsopoulos (2008) criticised netnographic research by suggesting that it is impossible for a researcher to record every piece of relevant information made available in their investigation. This means significant data could be missed out, either consciously or accidentally, ultimately skewing results (Tunçalp & Lê, 2014). It is difficult to argue against this point. Ethnographic and netnographic research is very much a case of "how do you eat an elephant?" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Kozinets, 2015).

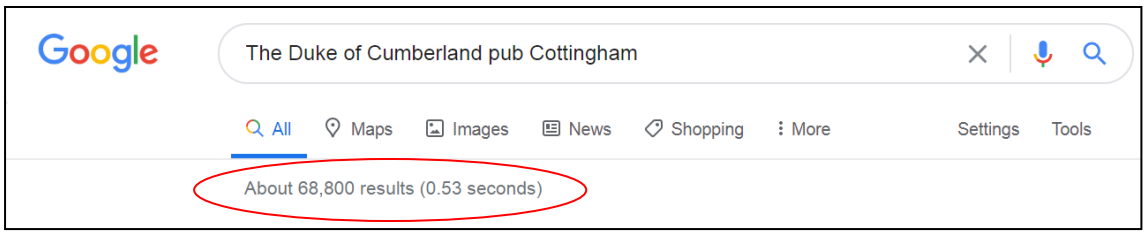


Figure 3.3: *Google search for 'The Duke of Cumberland pub Cottingham' highlighting the number of results available* [Screenshot] Google Search Engine, 2020.

My *net*nography was much more long-term than my *eth*nography. I conducted almost 4 months' worth of online ethnographic research between the 15th of April 2020 and the 10th of August 2020. I started this netnography by simply translating my physical ethnography to

an online setting. Hence, I closely followed the online presences created by the traditional pubs and grassroots music venues I was initially interested in (Table 3.1). This netnography encompassed a variety of digital and online groups, communities and institutions on social media, all revolving around various sonic, visual and material folk cultures (Table 3.2). By 'following', I was recording and analysing the posts, status updates and communications contexts made public by these social media folk groups, as well as how others interacted and engaged with these publications (Kozinets, 2015). It was not long before I noticed the oversaturation of the digital world proposed by Androutsopoulos (2008). To combat this issue, I opportunely found the ethnographic framework proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994: 81) to be very useful in simplifying the process. This framework was as follows:

1. What is the context of your research?
2. What do you hope to achieve by conducting this research?
3. Who does this research involve?
4. What did you do?
5. What did you find?
6. What is the impact of your findings?
7. Why did this happen? (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 81)

This framework was particularly useful in writing ethnographic and netnographic vignettes which encapsulated and supported my observations when online. Every time I navigated a relevant social media environment, I would consider each of these points to formulate my vignettes and supplementary notes.

Due to the application of Miles & Huberman's (1994) ethnographic conceptualisation, it was not long until I found more local communities to follow which also nurtured folk culture. This was also made straightforward by Facebook's 'Related Pages' features when visiting a particular page (see Figure 3.4). Other platforms had similar features. These features would typically recommend up to 5 similar (digital) folk groups, communities and institutions. Due to these streamlined features, I was soon following the digital spaces created by the 10 social media folk groups in Table 3.2. The streamlined and time-efficient nature of this online environment and netnography meant that I could increase the scope of my study and follow social media pages from folk communities all over Yorkshire (Thomson, 2010; Tunçalp & Lê, 2014).

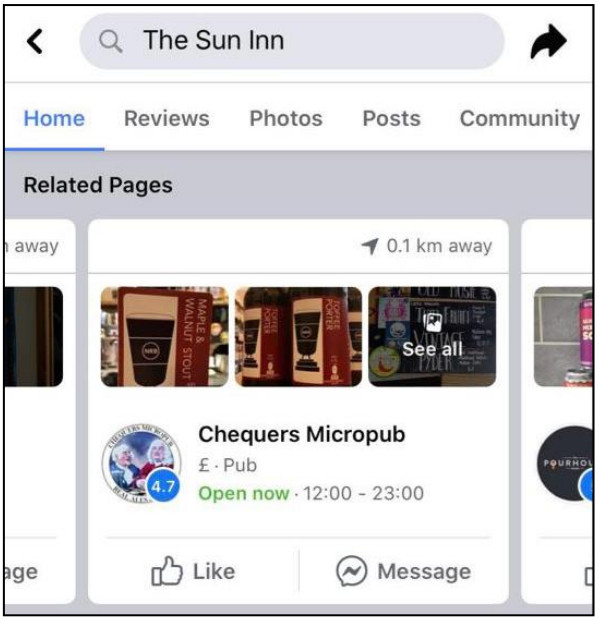


Figure 3.4: *An example of Facebook's 'Related Pages' feature* [Screenshot] The Sun Inn's Facebook page (2020).

Once I found my extensive online field, I continued to ethnographically observe, record and examine the happenings and interactions within the online institutes. However, now the element of the online was significant to the investigation. Therefore, I examined the available sonic, visual and material cultures along with the online Yorkshire folk community and their experiences of enacting folk culture on social media. I concluded my ethnography and netnography (Phases 1 and 2) with an extensive field diary full of vignettes outlining my observations, experiences, interpretations, analyses and reflections whilst in the digital field produced through the Yorkshire folk community engaging with social media.

Referring to some of the limitations of ethnographic research, I agree with Androutsopoulos (2008) that it is impossible to formulate the upmost complete picture in netnography. However, in my case, I managed to create a detailed account following the narrative of Yorkshire folklife shifting from a relative normality to the abnormality of lockdown, to an unfamiliar digital realm created by social media and back again to some semblance of normality in the summer of 2020. This online research method allowed me to take advantage of the circumstances created by the global pandemic and use the situation to gather a unique dataset reflective of the Yorkshire folk community at that specific time, especially regarding the digitalisation of folk cultures. My engagement with the folk community of Yorkshire, including the various interactions and dialogues I had with others, co-produced a web of intricate and detailed knowledge. I may not have captured every single discourse within this

cultural narrative. However, what I did formulate speaks of an embodied, disembodied and reflexive story, rich in qualitative human cultural geographic data (Dewsbury, 2003; Lorimer, 2003; Revill, 2004; Castree, 2005; Cook, 2005; Engin, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Simandan, 2019).

3.4.3: Art-elicitation

'Art-elicitation' is an experimental method which diverges from the more established technique known as 'photo-elicitation'. Art-elicitation in social research can be defined as the acquisition of pieces of art which have been created by participants following some form of prompt in the context of the research project (since there is a diminutive methodological discussion on art-elicitation, this definition was inspired by literature on photo-elicitation by Collier & Collier (1986); Rose (2008); and Bignante (2010)). The intention of this technique is that the produced pieces of art will elicit information about the participant and their embodied or disembodied experience through a creative and nonverbal context (Wevers & Smits, 2020). To gain an understanding of how art-elicitation can be a useful technique for social researchers, it is necessary to understand its roots in photo-elicitation.

Photo-elicitation is a qualitative data collection technique devised by anthropologist Collier (1957) and relies on participants to take photographs of an aspect of their lives for a given amount of time and submit their photos to the researcher (Collier & Collier, 1986; Bignante, 2010). This method focuses on the data which can be "seen" in a nonverbal sensibility (Ferretti, 2017), providing visual insight into a part of the participant's life. It provides a window for the researcher to see what the participant sees at a specific place at a specific time (Rose, 2008). The data from photo-elicitation embodies the participant's view of the world and can be hermeneutically interpreted by the researcher (Ferretti, 2017; Simandan, 2019). Photo-elicitation has recently been developed to include other visual materials including video recordings, paintings and graffiti (Bignante, 2010); however, this technique is still limited to the ocular. With an interest in sound and the digital world, my investigation needed to include more-than-visual material, hence I opted to use the term 'art-elicitation'.

Using the connections formed throughout Phases 1 and 2, I found 11 participants willing to engage in art-elicitation. The following is the prompt I provided once they agreed to partake in my study:

> ‘Please create a piece of art which reflects upon your experience(s) of engaging with what you would consider to be the current folk culture of Yorkshire, UK. This “piece of art” could be anything, including (but not limited to): a sketch, drawing, painting, sculpture, photograph, piece of music, poem or short story. Anything artistic goes as long as you have created it based upon your experience(s) of folk culture.’

From my 11 participants, I received 20 pieces of art. This included:

- 5 sketches
- 4 photographs
- 1 digital painting
- 9 pieces of music – including full song recordings, melodies, chord progressions, lyrics and demos for potential/working songs.
- 1 poem

Most of the participant’s appeared very happy or even eager to partake in this creative task. I conducted most of this data collection amidst the lockdown of the UK and, from talking to these participants beforehand; many did seemingly suffer from boredom because of lockdown. This technique provided participants the opportunity to be involved in something engaging and productive. This all has implications later in the thesis. Some of the elicitations, however, were not produced purely for this investigation. Evident in some of the professionally produced pieces of music, some participants felt that they already had a piece of art that reflected their current engagement with Yorkshire folk culture and, therefore, reproduced it within the context of the investigation.

Once I received the artworks, I began analysis. For the visual artforms, I conducted visual and image analysis as recommended by the discussions on photo-elicitation (Collier & Collier, 1986; Bignante, 2010). This is the process of extracting meaningful and relevant information from imagery (Knoblauch et al., 2008; Rose, 2008). As for the auditory and literary pieces, I looked into the field of musicology which highlighted the significance of music analysis (Crang, 2013). Similarly, music analysis searches for meaning within auditory mediums and artforms (Middleton, 1993; Boland, 2010). From a human geographical perspective, the meaningful information available from these photo and auditory sources reflects upon a reflexive and embodied experience at a specific place at a specific time (Rose, 2008; Crang, 2013; Ferretti, 2017).

In spite of how many detailed interpretations I could gather from each piece, I could not possibly know what was thought and felt by the participant as they produced their art (Androutsopoulos, 2008). Although it was very interesting to analyse these artworks, they were a slender insight into Yorkshire folklife experienced by others (Rose, 2008; Holloway, 2017). Therefore, I wanted to see how my own analyses and interpretations compared to the elicitor's experience in the form of art-elicitation interviews (Bignante, 2010).

3.4.4: Online Semi-structured Interviewing

A semi-structured interview can be defined as an inquiry which utilises a set of predetermined, open-ended questions with the intended effect of prompting intellectually stimulating discussion, and the opportunity for the interviewer to explore themes in greater detail (Piercy, 2003; Valentine, 2005). An online interview translates this definition to an online and digital communications context (Janghorban et al., 2014).

Online interviews can be more flexible than their physical face-to-face counterparts since there is a multitude of modes in which the interview can take place (Markham, 2005). The online interview can almost imitate a regular interview if conducted via online telecommunications applications, such as Skype or Zoom (Janghorban et al., 2014). Through these mediums the interviewer and interviewee can meet face-to-face using a webcam and monitor. This method relies heavily on both members having a stable internet connection and good quality webcam. If either of these is compromised, then the researcher will lose the ability to effectively read the participant's body language and gestures (Janghorban et al., 2014). If this is the case, then a phone call interview might be more appropriate. This method limits the interview to voice, which can be sufficient (Roulston et al., 2003). Another form of online interviewing is epistolary interviewing. Epistolary interviewing is an exchange of text-based messages between the researcher and respondent (Ferguson, 2012). This mode contains a certain flexibility which allows the respondent time to consider the questions they receive and formulate a meditated response before replying to the interviewer (Ferguson, 2012). Although this does sacrifice that *in the moment* dynamic typically evident in other modes of interview, some studies do value the time flexibility (Markham, 2005; Bryman, 2016).

In the end, I utilised each of these methods. I conducted 6 online interviews and wrote subsequent transcripts. These were split into:

- 1 telecommunication interview
- 1 phone call interview
- 4 online epistolary interviews

These interviews were split into 2 sections. We always started by discussing the participant's elicited artwork, particularly what their piece meant to them and how it represents experiences of contemporary Yorkshire folk culture. Then the interview would naturally shift to a broader conversation about the participant's embodied experiences of Yorkshire folklife, how these experiences have shaped their view of the world, and ultimately challenged what the word 'folk' meant to them. The Interview Schedule is presented in Appendix A, which was followed loosely in the interviews. I carefully picked questions based on responses and the discourse of the interview (Roulston et al., 2003). Often, provided the participant's response, I would ask follow-up questions based on a particular theme (Bignante, 2010).

These online semi-structured interviews were advantageous to this study in multiple ways. Firstly, they provided a window into more personified experiences of Yorkshire folk culture than just my own (Atkinson, 1998; Valentine, 2005). There was significant crossover, conflict and stimulation between the discussions of the interviews and my own ethnographic reflections, which ultimately strengthened my field diary (Markham, 2005). By dissecting the participant's art-elicitations in the interviews, the pieces became more than just interpretative pieces of art. They transformed into embodied and disembodied representations of folk culture with associated stories (Collier & Collier, 1986; Bignante, 2010). However, my sample was relatively small in comparison to the overall folk community of Yorkshire (Thomson, 2010). Although this relatively small sample was sufficient for the purpose of this project, it is important to note that these types of interviews are limited in their representation of the larger strata (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Roulston et al., 2003; Valentine, 2005).

3.5: Positionality

This case study investigation relied heavily on situated knowledge, research hermeneutics and the position of the researcher to make sense of lived qualitative data. This was most prominent in my ethnographic and netnographic field observations of Phases 1 and 2 (Figure 3.1), in which I, as the primary researcher, systematically studied, observed, participated in and interpreted the cultural practices and representations of the Yorkshire folk community during the rapid cultural shift which placed greater emphasis on digital technologies. This also includes the interpretation and analysis of art-elicitations, especially those for which I could not secure art-elicitation interviews. Therefore, it is important to briefly outline my positionality as the primary researcher, so that we may identify where this web of situated knowledge came from and how it manifested through my personalised socio-political and cultural perspective of Yorkshire folk culture.

'Positionality' in research refers to the stance and positioning of a researcher relative to the social, political and cultural context of a case study investigation (Dewsbury, 2003; Cook, 2005; Ferretti, 2017; Simandan, 2019). In the context of this research, my positionality as the primary researcher refers to my position relative to the social, political and cultural context of the Yorkshire folk community.

First and foremost, I have lived in the East Riding of Yorkshire and Kingston upon Hull region all my life. As such, I had very little issue with navigating my study locations, all of which retained some form of familiarity to my residency. As someone who was privileged to grow up around and learn from 21st century digital technologies, including social media and the internet, I was also relatively comfortable navigating the online world. I am a White British male, which is comparable to images of conventional English folk communities that have been described as relatively white, heteronormative and homogeneous (Revill, 2005; Fletcher, 2012; Spracklen, 2013). Whilst this might indicate that I have had previous relations with the Yorkshire folk community, I can assure that these relationships were minimal. My only engagement with what is described as the Yorkshire folk community in the context of this research was during a short research project as part of my undergraduate degree, in which I attended a three-day folk festival in the East Riding. The folk cultures, spaces and people I engaged with during this investigation were all new to me. Although I did meet the

classification as a Yorkshire person and ethnic categorisation of the community which possibly helped me gain access to study locations, I was still very much an outsider in terms of folk culture and the practices thereof. It is noteworthy, however, that this all might have affected my judgement of concepts such as inclusion and exclusion. Especially in my analysis of voice and language, I occasionally struggled to identify subtle regional colloquialisms that have become normal to me throughout my time living in Yorkshire. These are all things to keep in mind as the findings from this case study investigation are presented and critically analysed in the following empirical chapters.

Chapter 4
Local Spaces on the World Wide Web

4.1: Introduction

The title of this chapter *Local Spaces on the World Wide Web* might appear contradictory. (How) can a localised entity exist within a network that is both by name and by nature worldwide? It is questionable whether the geographical concept of locality is even transferrable to such a globalised and interconnected network as the internet. This chapter challenges the position of local scale geography within digital and online settings of the internet. By looking at the spaces of social media where sonic and material folk cultures local to Yorkshire were fundamentally (re)produced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, this chapter critically analyses these digital spaces in terms of their production, control and relationship with both physical world and local scale geographies. This spurs further evaluation of the overall digitalisation of Yorkshire folk culture, as the rapid cultural shift from the material to the immaterial was fuelled as a result of the pandemic and lockdown. The focus of this initial empirical chapter concerns whether local worlds can subside within digital spaces created through social media, as represented through the case study of the Yorkshire folk community.

This chapter is split into three sections. The first section highlights the general development of some of the traditional and independent pubs in Yorkshire (the institutions this research was initially interested in), as physical institutions became inaccessible as a result of lockdown. It assesses the (attempted) digital replication of folk spaces perceived as traditional and authentic on social media. The second section examines the (re)energisation of pre-existing folk communities, groups and pages on social media and the niche digital spaces where these communities flourished. It analyses the foundations and (re)production of Yorkshire folk spaces on social media in terms of access, rulemaking, boundaries and communally shared principles. The chapter concludes with a section exploring the dynamics of authority and power behind the production and control of digital spaces with connections to Yorkshire folk culture. This final section evaluates expressions of power in social media folk groups and the relationships between digital technologies and control over cultural experiences on the online world.

4.2: The Virtual Pub

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown in England in March 2020 was a time dominated by public apprehension, uncertainty and unrest (Collinson, 2020). Like most, members of the Yorkshire folk community were confined to their homes. Media sources from the *BBC* (2020) to Yorkshire regional newspapers, such as the *Yorkshire Post* (Westby, 2020), produced articles which showed that to cope with this unprecedented time, people throughout England indulged in various domestic activities, such as baking, cooking, exercise, reading, music and much more (Rodgers, 2020). The digital and online world, available through household computational devices, including mobile phones, smartphones, personal computers, laptops, electronic tablets and television, also offered people virtual environments which differed from the monotony of stay-at-home life (Thomas, 2020). As such, people engaged with the digital realm through gaming, social media, text and telecommunication correspondence, streaming music and televised entertainment on a national scale (McLean & Maalsen, 2020). Digital services, such as Netflix, Spotify and Facebook, increased in subscribers between 15% and 30%, with a strong correlation to the restrictions of lockdowns across the globe (Rodgers, 2020; Thomas, 2020). For people with experience in using digital technologies for recreation, the transition from 'normality' to a digitalised lockdown might have been relatively smooth. The Yorkshire folk community, however, had recreation deeply embedded in social and cultural practices which took place in the physical world (Spracklen, 2013; Westby, 2020), with an initially very small number of opportunities for folk culture available in the digital realm. Themes of disconnection, disembodiment and detachment recurred in some of the interviews with participants in the early months (during May and June 2020) regarding community, which sometimes manifested through senses of loneliness and isolation. As people across the nation began to accept enhanced relationships between digital technologies and culture, the Yorkshire folk community, too, scoured the internet for outlets of social and cultural activity. The narrative of my ethnographic investigation suggested that this journey often resulted in folk seeking cultural guidance from their independent, traditional and folksy institutions, such as local pubs and grassroots music venues, via means such as social media. Although these institutions have practices deeply rooted in the material world (Clarke et al., 1998), they

maintained their position as symbols for social interaction and folk culture throughout lockdown (Mustoe & Espiner, 2020).

This first section analyses the development of the institutions that this project was primarily interested in, traditional Yorkshire pubs and grassroots music venues, as folk culture was forced to become more virtual and digitalised and reasons why this development ultimately faltered. The first half of this section follows the material cultures of the local craft beer and food industry, as institutions for the retail and consumption of locally sourced craft products became inaccessible. This section progresses by following the digitalisation of pub-orientated folk communities and the 'Virtual Pub Quiz'. The term 'virtual pub', then, refers to the indirect and nonphysical practices and unfamiliar networks outside of traditional pubs, music venues and their folk communities, particularly those that arose in place of redundant institutions, including the online and digital (Kendall, 2002; Glen, 2009). The intention of this section is, firstly, to present an overview of the Yorkshire folk community's rapid cultural shift which placed greater emphasis on digital technologies and, secondly, describe what happened to the Yorkshire folk community and their culture throughout the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will lead to analysis of the transition from a predominantly physical culture to a predominantly digital culture, and the implications this had on the relationships between physical and digital spaces, as well as local scale geography.

4.2.1: Craft Beer and Creative Networks of Retail and Consumption

"We will be open until late tonight but unfortunately have been told to close from close of business. Thankyou everyone for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you all on the other side of all this…

On a brighter note we are still doing our Sunday Lunches tomorrow and pints as a take away service (weather permitted). Stay safe and take care of each other"

– The Sun Inn social media, 20-21st of March 2020.

This was a statement issued by the Sun Inn, Beverley, the night before pubs across England were forced to close and the United Kingdom prepared to enter its first national lockdown of 2020. All bar two of my sample physical institutions posted similar statements upon their social media outlets (Table 3.1). Hundreds of pubgoers reacted to these statements in the form of comments, reactions, shares and retweets, generally portraying a collective air of

desperation and sadness due to the cut connection between the local pub and its community. Underneath this social loss was concern for the uncertainty of both folk and pub cultures:

> "Can't wait to be back listening to live music." – Facebook commentor (20.03.2020)
>
> "Weekends won't be the same." – Facebook commentor (20.03.2020)
>
> "Missing the Sun, the musicians and playing at the Sun." – Facebook commentor (21.03.2020)

These were some of the reactions to the closure of pubs and similar venues. One comment which gained over 20 "likes" stated:

> "I, for one, REFUSE to succumb to drinking Carlsberg on Saturday nights!" – Twitter user (22.03.2020)

Carlsberg is a large-scale mass-produced lager sold in most UK supermarkets and contrasts the type of locally sourced drinks synonymous with traditional pubs (CAMRA, 2020; MVT, 2020); indicating that this commentor believed their choice of alcoholic beverages was diminished due to the accessibility restrictions placed on pubs. Physical institutions were forced to close but demand for products and services, including craft beer, remained. In fact, a third of people in the UK admitted to drinking more alcohol during lockdown (Alcohol Change UK, 2020), and the sale of alcoholic drinks, outside of pubs, was up by as much as 25% in the first 3 months (Keating, 2020). Following advice from organisations such as the Campaign for Real Ale (2020) and the British Beer and Pub Association (2020), breweries and pubs across England entered more creative networks of production, retail and consumption to maintain the financial viability of craft beer (Mustoe & Espiner, 2020). The Sun Inn, like many other pubs at the time, decided to offer takeaway services for craft food and drink (CAMRA, 2020; Mustoe & Espiner, 2020). The only way these institutions were able to effectively communicate these changes in business was via social media.

The following are 2 ethnographic vignettes extracted from my field diary. The first of which was recorded from the first field day of my investigation at the Sun Inn, prior to any lockdown restrictions. The second was recorded from another field day at the Sun Inn, but this time after the closure of physical pub institutes.

A Drink at the Sun Inn (pre-lockdown)	*A Takeaway Drink from the Sun Inn (lockdown)*
Today I am starting my fieldwork investigation with a visit to the Sun Inn in Beverley… The bar staff greeted me and asked if I would like anything getting. "Just a glass of water, please." I replied. After receiving my water, I sat on an empty table in the top room. This early into my investigation, I felt more comfortable observing and sitting further away from the action because I did not want to necessarily step on anyone's toes this early into my investigation. The pub was warm, very warm, especially when compared to the harsh cold of the winter outside; and there was easy listening (70s and 80s) music playing quietly in the background… There were about 8 people in the Sun Inn, 2 of them being staff. So, I sat on an empty table in the warm, quiet top room with my glass of water. However, I did not really feel as though I was sat by myself. The other 8 people were constantly chatting and occasionally engaged me in their conversations about the weather, the town (Beverley), and the news which was being played on a television in the corner of the main room… I went to the Sun Inn as an observer. However, once there, it was impossible not to be a participator in the sociality and mundane cultures of the pub institute. – Field Diary Excerpt 1, 20th of February 2020.	Various pubs in my sample have started offering takeaway/delivery services for the drinks and meals they would normally serve indoors. Since today is a nice sunny day, I thought I would head down to the Sun Inn in Beverley and purchase a beverage to experience this new network of retail and consumption… The walk to the Sun Inn took about 20 minutes. Once I got to the pub, there was an outside area from the beer garden to the driveway in which takeaways were ordered and served in adherence to social distancing guidelines. I ordered a pint of alcohol-free York Guzzler. It took about one minute to receive my order, during which time I stood, distanced from the other 4 pubgoers awaiting their orders, in near silence. My drink arrived in a firm plastic cup with a lid to avoid spillage during the 'takeaway' process. When I arrived home with the takeaway drink, I did not really know where to go and enjoy it – this process of being at home with a pint from a pub did not really feel normal... The guzzler was good, yet compared to physically being in the Sun Inn, with others and experiencing the sociality and mundane pub cultures, this drink was socio-culturally lacklustre… I went to the Sun Inn to participate in this new network of retail and consumption; however, there was not as much of a social or cultural experience to participate in. – Field Diary Excerpt 2, 19th of April 2020. [3]

[3] To keep a clear head, I did not want to consume any alcohol during my investigation. I ordered a glass of water in Excerpt 1 purely to simulate a wider experience of drinking at the local pub and the experiences attached to pieces of material culture, such as a craft beer. During Excerpt 2, however, due to the economic hardships that local pub institutes were clearly suffering at the time, I expected myself to order something more substantial, to help support an institution that allowed me to conduct research on their premises.

Field Diary Excerpts 1 and 2 both look at the material culture of craft beer as part of an experience within a larger folk and pub institution. Excerpt 1 shows how the purchase of a drink at a local pub can become more than just a consumer experience; it connects the buyer to a sociocultural discourse facilitated by the pub and the people inside. By making a purchase inside the institution, I was granted access to the pub's soundscapes and the social discourses created by other pubgoers and staff (Clarke et al., 1998; Jackson, 2000). Once the institution was removed in Excerpt 2, the agency of the drink as a piece of craft material culture which attached the consumer to a broader pub-based folk culture seemed to diminish. The beer became disengaged from the larger network of folk culture and pub-based socialisation, and the consumer experience overpowered that of the sociocultural experience displayed in the first excerpt. Consuming the pub's products outside of its walls was abnormal: '…I did not really know where to go'. Inside, the pub was arranged for efficient and pleasant seating, providing the consumer with a streamlined environment for the consumption of drinks and cultures (Clarke et al., 1998), a luxury less available outside of the institution's walls.

In one of my first examples of art-elicitation, a participant set up a scene in a photograph which exhibited their domestic experience of engaging with and consuming craft beer during the UK's first lockdown (see Figure 4.1). In their art-elicitation interview, the participant implied that the photograph depicted their sense of isolation as they attempted to reanimate their local pub-based folk culture at home. Comparable to my participatory observations, the loneliness depicted by the empty seats and glasses in the photograph atmospherically outweighs any cultural elements connected to the craft beer at the forefront of the photo. It appeared that the participant felt disembodied from being part of a tangible community-orientated folk culture, with pub drinks and their material cultural acting as devices of connection and, in this instance, disconnection. This implied that the more creative and virtual networks of craft beer retail and consumption were limited in preventing this experience of cultural seclusion when stuck at home (Collinson, 2020; Gao et al., 2020).

Figure 4.1: *Art-elicitation of (half-) empty glasses and seats at a dark table* [Photograph] Domestic setting (Participant, 2020).

The participant who contributed Figure 4.1 admitted that their engagement with Yorkshire folk culture was, at that time, "peculiar", and when questioned on the nature of the drink replied:

> "I believe it was a blonde called Acorn or something… It's good not great. Would taste that little bit sweeter down the pub." (03.06.2020)

The participant's suggestion that their drink would have tasted "sweeter" served at a pub implied material folk culture can be attracted to specific spaces, like how craft beer is associated with local drinking establishments and its sensory experiences (Jackson, 2004), as displayed in Excerpt 1. Although new networks of retail and consumption of craft beer were creative attempts to reenergise a struggling industry (Mustoe & Espiner, 2020), their agency as devices which connected a broader experience of Yorkshire folk and pub culture were largely diminished when the beer was unavailable at traditional institutes. The idea that folk cultures have attraction to specific spaces has a resonance throughout this thesis, especially as these cultures become further entwined in even more alien and digital environments.

4.2.2: The Virtual Pub Community

Confined to their homes and suffering from senses of isolation associated with lockdowns (Collinson, 2020), many members of the Yorkshire folk community reached out to their local institutions and communities, outside of the new networks of retail and consumption, via social media. As a researcher, I found this to be the most direct manner to reconnect with my case studies after the pandemic was announced. Three institutions from Tables 3.1 and 3.2 set up a mixture of community pages on Facebook, group chats on WhatsApp and hashtags on Twitter and Instagram, so that their communities could keep in regular contact and continue community bonding and cultural practices. I wrote in my field diary:

> Sample pubs have begun to set up special folk communities through social media. The one in which I, personally, found the greatest sense of being part of a tangible group was within a WhatsApp group called 'The Sun Shines On…' This group has around 30 members, varying depending on who left and joined the group. I would say that I have observed the greatest sense of belonging within this particular group as opposed to other community pages because, perhaps due to the small and intimate setting of the group, I was greeted and conversed with by several other members when I joined. This was almost reminiscent of my actual adventures to the traditional pubs of Yorkshire. With such a small population, everybody's involvement is heard, including my own, which is not necessarily the case with other, larger social media communities…
>
> Most of the content in the group has simply been the members checking in on each other, sharing what they have been up to, and just general correspondence, which is not necessarily anything new. There have been some attempts to digitalise culture in this group, including one attempt to reproduce the Sun Inn's renowned Tuesday open-mic night.[4] A few amateur folk musicians within the group were encouraged to share a handful of home-recorded acoustic songs. However, once these musicians posted their music into the group and it was consumed by other members, it became difficult to digitally engage with the music, the musicians and the other members of the group. I would describe the group space as "messy". People engaged and commented on different pieces of music at the same time, creating some confusion as to which song

[4] *Open mic* (derived from 'open microphone') is a live event at an institution in which audience members, who may be amateur or professional musicians, get to perform music onstage.

> people were referencing. It appeared the members did not really know how to react to this new sound space, and there were long awkward spells of silence and inactivity.
>
> As important as this sense of community is to these folk, the digital pub communities have largely been limited to socialisation and correspondence. These digital spaces as platforms for the practice, sharing and consumption of actual folk cultures have shown a lack of structure and been relatively insufficient when compared to the (now redundant) physical pub, where culture can manifest from mundane background music and locally produced drinks to overt displays of folk music and dance. This cultural insufficiency was exemplified through posts and text messages depicting frustration, disappointment and even boredom through lack of engagement with traditional folk culture.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 3, 16th of April 2020.

Although these communities on social media did reconnect pub orientated and folk communities alike and provide an intimate space for reflection, they were relatively unsuitable for hosting any substantial folk cultural practices, especially those of sonic, visual and material significance. These 'virtual pub communities' retained a sense of community for a time but faltered at their lack of a substantial cultural experience (Kendall, 2002). The lack of cultural capabilities was comparable to the new networks of craft beer retail and consumption in Field Diary Excerpt 2 and Figure 4.1. In terms of a cultural experience, there was a lack of structure in these social media communities, which contrasted the structure of physical pub experiences. The positive attraction of folk culture to physical pub spaces was not translated to these online pub groups. At the end of my investigation, no one had posted in the once lively 'The Sun Shines On…' group chat for almost 2 months.

However, the online world during my investigation was expansive and other digital reproductions of folk culture were inevitable (Miller, 2020), including perhaps the most accessible of these digital reproductions dubbed 'The Virtual Pub Quiz' (2020). Opposed to the digital pub communities, which were mainly made by managers and owners with management skills tailored toward physical pub institutions (Mustoe & Espiner, 2020), people with the technological skills to produce digital spaces suitable for traditional pub activities began to recreate such events virtually. Arguably, the pub quiz is one of the more identifiable examples of English pub activity and is a popular form of community bonding and intellectual

stimulation amongst traditional Yorkshire pubs (Clarke et al., 1998; Kendall, 2002). Therefore, it was almost expected that this would be one of the first and biggest online pub activities to surface (Stokel-Walker, 2020). Observing the Virtual Pub Quiz over the course of 3 weeks, I wrote in my field diary:

> The Virtual Pub Quiz is a weekly online event, accessible to all with a suitable device and internet connection. Eventgoers clicked a link at about 8 o'clock on a Thursday evening, which directed them to a YouTube livestream. The quizmaster would then ask a series of questions for about 1 to 2 hours, which the audience would attempt to answer on a separate application, after which the quizmaster would administer the correct answers. According to the Facebook group page, the first Virtual Pub Quiz interested up to 400,000 people and recorded an attendance of 200,000 profiles (see Figure 4.2)…
>
> As for the Yorkshire folk, this event was particularly well received, gaining hundreds of "Likes", "Shares", and "Comments" across social media. 4 pub media pages that I have been following have produced posts which directed people to the Virtual Pub Quiz. This event was outside of their institutes and would not financially benefit them, but they distributed this information anyway. Many people were grateful for this communication, including an elderly pair who commented:
>
> "Doubt it'll be as good as [X]'s quiznights but sounds like fun, I'll join if everyone else is, Cheers!!"
>
> "Thanks - Wouldn't have heard about it if weren't for you. Looking forward 😊"
>
> The positive reception to events like the Virtual Pub Quiz represented an understated sense of anticipation for the digitalisation of folk culture and the new environments it could now occupy. This appears to be the factor that online folk communities thus far have been missing: genuine cultural practice…
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 4, 2nd to 24th of April 2020.

Figure 4.2: *The Virtual Pub Quiz event page, cover photo, title and attendance figures* [Screenshot] The Virtual Pub Quiz main Facebook event page (2020).

The possibility of connecting the sociality of a digital pub community with a familiar cultural practice created a communal sense of anticipation and excitement (Stokel-Walker, 2020). This highlighted the level of interest for the digitalisation of folk cultures. Furthermore, the social media pages of Yorkshire pubs exchanged roles as facilitators of culture to catalysts for (re)connecting their followers to digitalised folk cultures on social media, such as the Virtual Pub Quiz. Yet again, however, the digital environment of the Virtual Pub Quiz created problems for a sustained folk and pub culture. In this case, I observed that these problems were largely a product of spatial friction with the physical counterpart of the virtual pub. Following from Excerpt 4, I wrote:

> …The idea of a sociocultural Virtual Pub (Quiz) has not entirely gone to plan. Firstly, since so many likeminded individuals (up to half a million) tried to connect to one single event, the Virtual Pub Quiz was plagued with many issues related to IT and communication. Internet lag, buffering, drops in video quality, and YouTube advertisements were pertinent throughout the events, which prompted mass complaints from the audience. The chat or 'comments' section of the YouTube livestream was inadequate for community-orientated social activity since there were tens of incoming comments every second. If I were to comment anything, it would

> simply get lost in the chat, was very unlikely anyone would engage with the comment, and it would simply disappear after a few minutes, which was a stark contrast to the intimate social setting of 'The Sun Shines On…' pub group chat. Furthermore, it was also incredibly difficult to maintain communication with external group chats whilst completing the quiz to simulate participation of the pub quiz as part of a community. Consequently, this all left many eventgoers now disinterested. Typically, complaints compared the Virtual Pub Quiz to past quizzes situated in "real pubs", suggesting that the latter was more streamlined, communal, unproblematic and just overall "better". As of the writing of this vignette, weekly attendance to the Virtual Pub Quiz is around the 20,000 mark and dropping, well below its initial interest. I have observed very little recent interaction from the Yorkshire folk community with this event, and the interaction I have observed leads me to believe that most are disinterested.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 5, 8th of May 2020.

The Virtual Pub Quiz was a taste of what pub-based folk culture could offer within the digital realm. The idea of a 'pub quiz' was familiar to the Yorkshire folk, regardless of its online setting. However, the Virtual Pub Quiz appeared to be more of an online quiz than a digital reproduction of a pub game. It was constantly compared to the experience of a pub quiz situated at a physical pub institution and never truly accepted as something different. Again, as something newer and experimental, especially at the scale it was conducted with up to 400,000 quizzers, the Virtual Pub Quiz was largely seen as more problematic than a regular pub quiz. IT problems such as lag, buffering and drops in audio-visual quality were a hinderance but fixable (Miller, 2020; Stokel-Walker, 2020). The problem behind events like the Virtual Pub Quiz were closely related to the ties between the sense of community, social bonding and the practice of culture. The comparison of Figures 4.3 and 4.4 uncovers some of the reasons the digital replication of folk and pub institutions perceived as traditional were seen as flawed in the case of the virtual pub and Virtual Pub Quiz. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 are digitalised field sketches from my ethnographic and netnographic investigations, respectively.

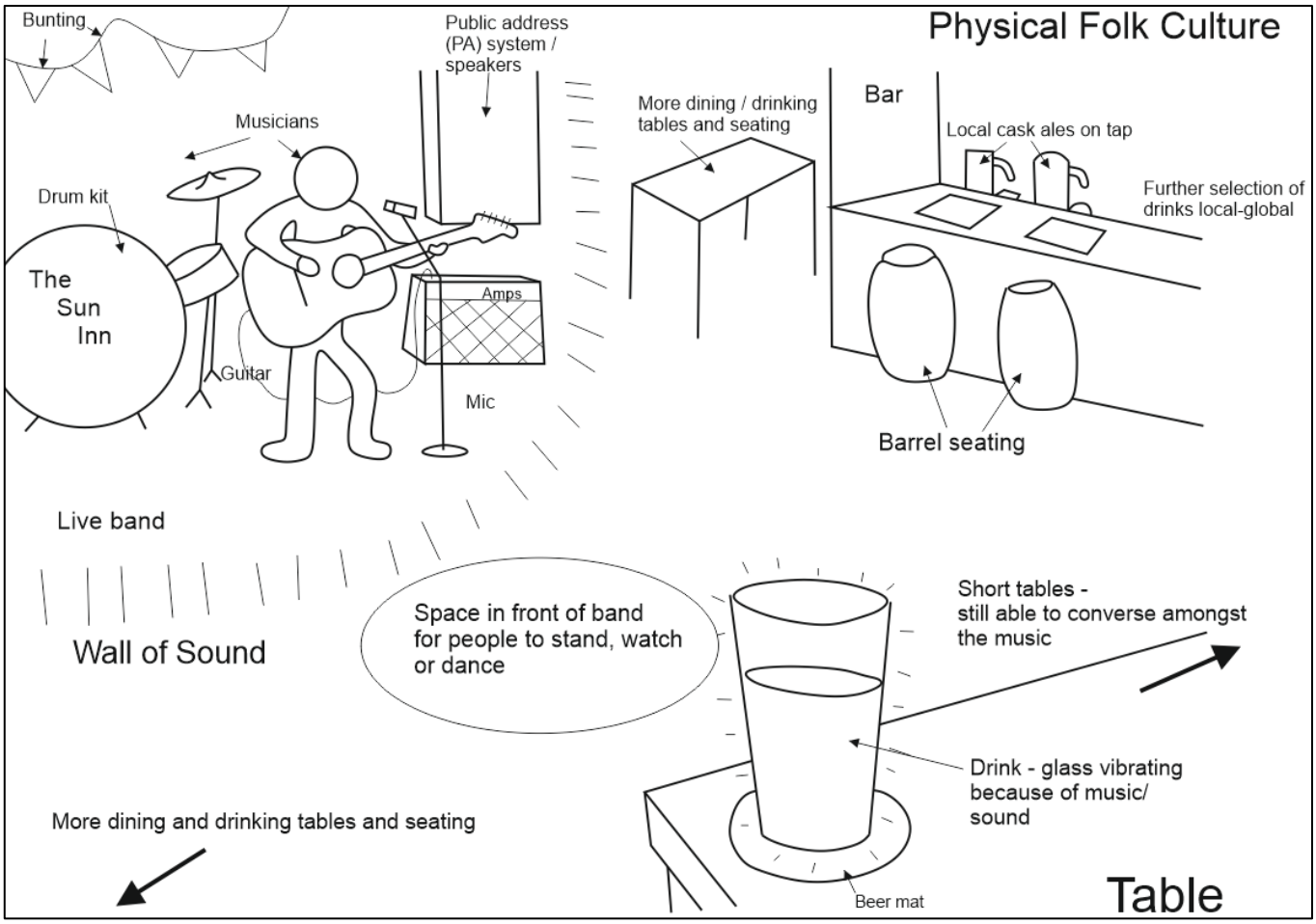


Figure 4.3: *Field observations from my ethnographic research engaging with physical pub-based folk culture* [Annotated Digitalised Field Sketch] The Sun Inn, Beverley, East Riding of Yorkshire, UK (10th of March 2020).

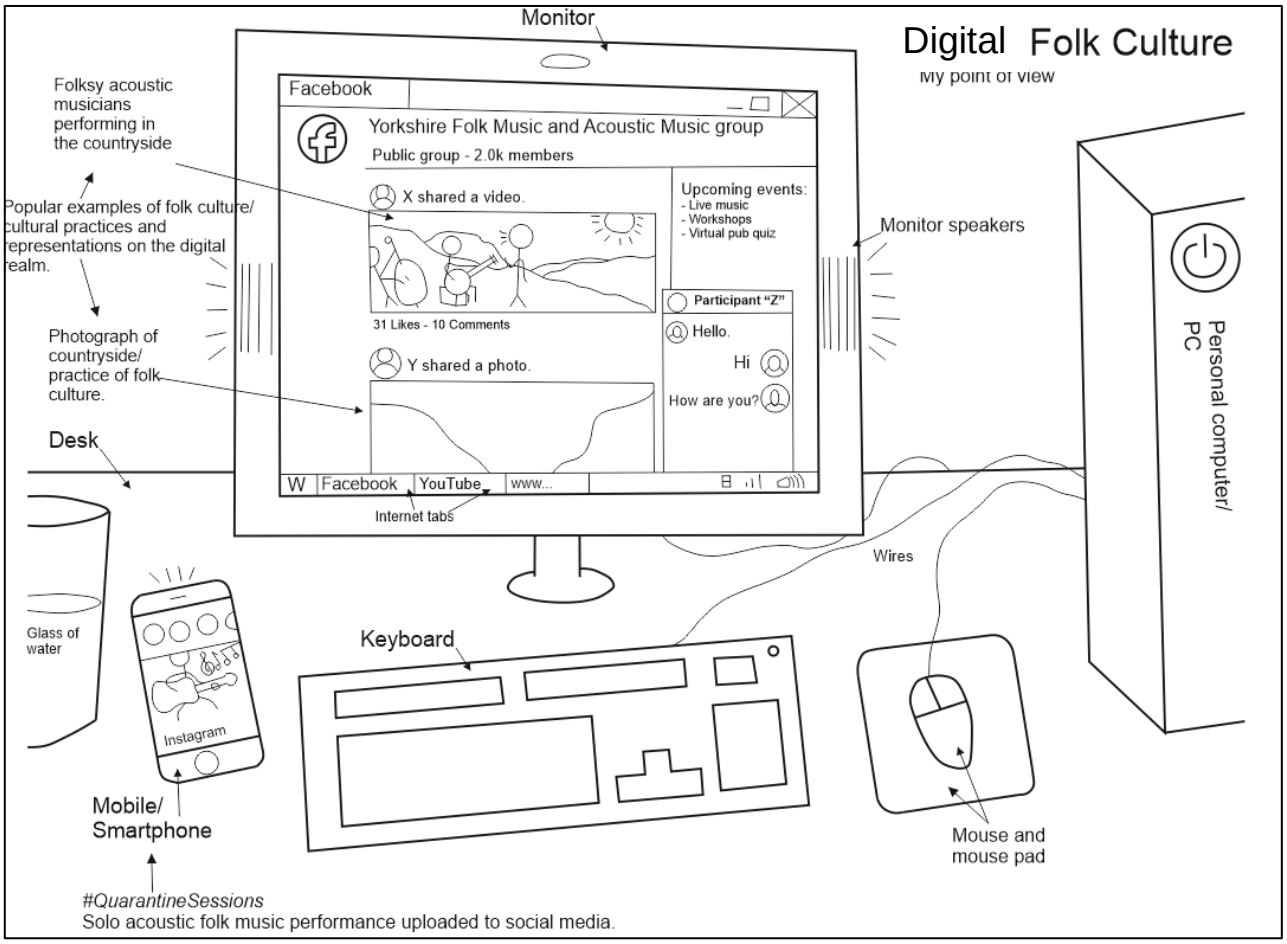


Figure 4.4: *Field observations from a typical day of netnographic research, engaging with digital folk culture* [Annotated Digitalised Field Sketch] Yorkshire folk social media (3rd of August 2020).

Figure 4.3 depicts my personal observations when studying the physical sound and material pub-based folk cultures of Yorkshire, by attending an 'open-mic night' at the Sun Inn, Beverley. Within this scene, it is important to note how every illustrated folk practice almost seamlessly blended into one another. At the centre of the scene, the folk band not only performed their folk music, but amplified and transmitted through the large PA speaker system at a volume which principally transformed the soundscape of the pub. The blend of the different instruments played through the amplified speaker system created a considerable intensity which I could only describe as a "wall of sounds". Prior to the bands' performance, what could be heard was a muddy ensemble of voice, the occasional clinking of glasses and flurries of laughter. However, once the band started performing, the amplified music domineering the previous soundscape and shaped one through rhythm, tempo and folk music traditions. This new soundscape urged people to begin dancing in the small clearing in front of the band. Some people who remained seated at their tables still engaged via toe-tapping or finger clicking in time with the music and gave a round of applause after each song. No longer could the mundane background sounds be heard. It was just possible to hear the voices of people sat next to me or across the narrow tables, which were suitable for some conversation in the loud soundscape. Certain frequencies of this soundscape were potent enough to cause vibrations in my drinking glass. Therefore, the folk band, connected to the PA system, created a "wall of sound" great enough to transform the soundscape of the pub to one which enabled pubgoers to interact with the music via dance, clapping, or toe-tapping. This mass movement exerted energy and warmth throughout the pub, which encouraged people to drink their cool beverages and purchase more cask ales, ciders and other chilled drinks, which would then vibrate because of the intense soundscape.

In contrast, Figure 4.4 depicts my personal observations while studying and engaging with forms of folk culture on social media during my netnography. Although Figure 4.4 was not a scene that would have been experienced by everyone engaging with Yorkshire folk social media, it does highlight some key aspects of the functionality of folk culture in digital spaces. When compared to the seamlessness and flow of sound and material folk practices in Figure 4.3, Figure 4.4 shows very defined borders between the various displays of folk cultures. For example, the video of the band performing folk music and the photograph just below were each displayed entirely within same-sized but separate boxes in the social media forum.

Consequently, each individual representation of folk culture could only tangibly be consumed separately. Equally, socialising with 'Participant Z' and other members of the online Yorkshire folk community was, too, allocated a chat box separated from the other practices of culture. The combination of digitally socialising whilst concurrently engaging with the various digital folk cultures became disembodying and disjointed. It felt, at times, that there was a choice between engaging with the digital folk culture or socialising with the online folk community, and that these aspects could not truly be experienced or coexist simultaneously (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013; Miller, 2020).

To clarify, in Figure 4.3, every element of folk culture blended to create one overall multidimensional cultural experience. Conversely, in Figure 4.4, similar elements of folk culture were more separated from one another, as the digital mechanics of social media were limited in simultaneously fusing together one "full" experience.

This section has displayed how the digital realm can be regarded as an unsuitable environment for the virtual and digital replication of physical institutions and spaces of folk culture. As conventional elements of Yorkshire folk culture shifted to unfamiliar networks of production and consumption in the online world, important aspects of an actual folk community were disengaged. Aspects of sound, visual and material cultures and socialisation all became disconnected from one another on social media, as each aspect was attached to a specific process or box separate from everything else. Compared to traditional pubs and grassroots music venues, in which the material culture of craft beer supplemented the soundscape created by the spoken word or folk music, all housed within a single entity – these elements of folk culture were starkly disconnected when recreated outside of the institutions. Although the online world made folk cultures more accessible and reconnected folk in a time of crisis, the borders which separated one sociocultural practice from another made the digital realm culturally disjointed (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012).

Social science research into the formation of online institutions, such as those by Kendall (2002) and Flores & James (2012), have highlighted success in the (re)production of virtual networks from physical institutions. These studies have suggested that social relationships from institutions like the pub can effectively be maintained virtually, through social media and digital communications contexts (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). However, these studies have focused on small-scale social groups who have had special interest and

proficiency in digital technologies. They have often neglected the direct relationship between culture, community and the spatial friction between physical and digital environments. My investigation concerned a Yorkshire-wide population and both the observational and participatory data suggested that virtual replicas of institutions perceived as local and traditional were largely unsuccessful. This is not to say that some people did not enjoy the connection to a wider virtual pub network and events such as the Virtual Pub Quiz (Stokel-Walker, 2020). However, through the comparison of my early investigation into the physical folk culture of Yorkshire and subsequent online investigation of digital folk culture, it can be argued that most of the Yorkshire folk community became uninterested in digital pub-orientated folk culture due to its sociocultural disembodiment, disjointedness and lack of a multidimensional experience. In terms of local spaces on the world wide web, local-physical institutions like the traditional pub and its folk community could not effectively be digitalised on a Yorkshire-wide scale.

4.3: Local-Digital Space: (Re-) Production, Access and Boundaries

The virtual and digital translation of the (traditional) Yorkshire pub was, for the most part, unsuccessful in terms of providing sustained spaces for pub-orientated folk social and cultural activity on social media. This was largely because of the frictions between longstanding physical spaces and newer digital spaces and the persistent comparison thereof, which ultimately reshaped and disadvantaged the virtual and digital spaces of pub-based folk cultures. Nevertheless, the expansiveness of the digital realm offered the Yorkshire folk community many other digital spaces in which folk culture could be produced and reproduced (Miller, 2020). This section concerns folk groups and clusters on social media which mostly existed as secondary outlets for Yorkshire folk culture when compared to conventional physical folk spaces prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the role of these digital spaces changed as greater emphasis was placed on social media for interhousehold social interaction and folk culture. These spaces became energised as the community connected online and ultimately became a primary source of folk culture. Specifically, this section concerns digital spaces which could also be regarded as localised entities. The literature review showed that folk geographies have a unique interest in the spatial variations of local cultures (Reed, 1976; Carney, 1998b; Revill, 2005; Revill, 2014), whilst there are also significant gaps in digital geographical literature on the role of local cultures in the digital world (Crang, 2013; Kinsley,

2013). Therefore, it is important to understand how the local scale can (and cannot) be made and remade through culture in the digital world. I use the term 'local-digital' to describe communities, cultures, institutions and spaces that I describe as both local and digital. This section explores the (re)production of folk spaces situated firmly on social media but use imagined aspects of placemaking, including geographical identity and cultural practice, to structure and organise. It draws on ideas of inclusion and exclusion regarding physical geographical location and online identity, and how local-digital spaces of inclusion and exclusion are shaped by the principles held at a communal level.

4.3.1 Local Communities, Digital Spaces

Although the Yorkshire folk community actively engaged in events like the Virtual Pub Quiz, these experiences were considerably disconnected from the function and ethos of a local, traditional and independent pub institution for the accommodation of folk and pub cultures. Most of the spaces and events in the previous section were heavily tied to national and international scale networks, as they were accessible to everyone with a suitable device, social media account and internet connection. There were no boundaries between who was and was not allowed to participate, and as a result no real sense of being part of a tangible and compatible folk community was developed. Boland (2010), Schnell (2013) and various other human geographers have suggested that local scales and, moreover, direct and tangible communities create boundaries. These "boundaries" effectively differentiate between what is local and what is nonlocal. While the borders between the local and nonlocal can be obscure, imaginary and entwined with larger scale geographical networks (Anderson, 1991; Visser, 2002), difference is an important discussion on local scale geographies (Sibley, 1995; Jackson, 2004; Crang, 2005; Bosco, 2006; Crang, 2013).

This section critically analyses digital spaces on social media of Yorkshire folk culture which were produced through imagined aspects of placemaking and subsequently formed folk communities on social media based around the practices of local significance. It displays the importance of shared trust in the formation of small-scale folk groups on social media and, equally, the significance of mistrust in the development of exclusionary practices. The village-orientated communities, including Cottingham Community, Brilliant Beverley, Walkington What's On and the Yorkshire Folk Music Group (in Table 3.2), are of special focus to this and the following subsection to underline these points. Collectively, these groups were all

interested in the grassroots and folksy activities of local villages, towns or music. It is notable that, despite being digital communities, each of these groups maintained a local or regional geographic location in their title. This was the first instance of attempted localisation and represented a geographic transfer from the physical to the digital (Benford et al., 2005).

Each of these groups had their own rules, regulations and spatial boundaries concerning who was and was not allowed access to the groups, and what forms of social and cultural activity could be engaged with. In terms of rulemaking, these groups all had crossover and similar frameworks. This was typified by 'Cottingham Community'. Cottingham Community is a Facebook group with 8,000 members who engage in general online discussions about the village of Cottingham, share amateur photography of ongoings and the village landscapes, advertise and exchange homemade craft products and occasionally discuss small-scale business and events. Aside from the name, Cottingham Community deployed other strategies for maintaining a social media page based around the imagined place-makings of a small-scale village. Figure 4.5 is a screenshot from the Cottingham Community Facebook group page and is the first thing a visitor would see as they joined the group. Atop the page is a cover photo picturing a hospitable ornamental sign, with the words 'WELCOME TO THE VILLAGE OF COTTINGHAM' embossed below an idyllic illustration of the village church. Equally, this sign would be the first artefact an outside traveller would see upon physically entering Cottingham village. However, as I delved deeper into this group, it appeared the warm welcome was conditional. The first piece of written communication asserted the group as a space 'for Cottingham in East Yorkshire and surrounding area folk.' This statement was reaffirmed in the group rules section, which indicated that the group was primarily dedicated and exclusive to residents geographically located in and around Cottingham.

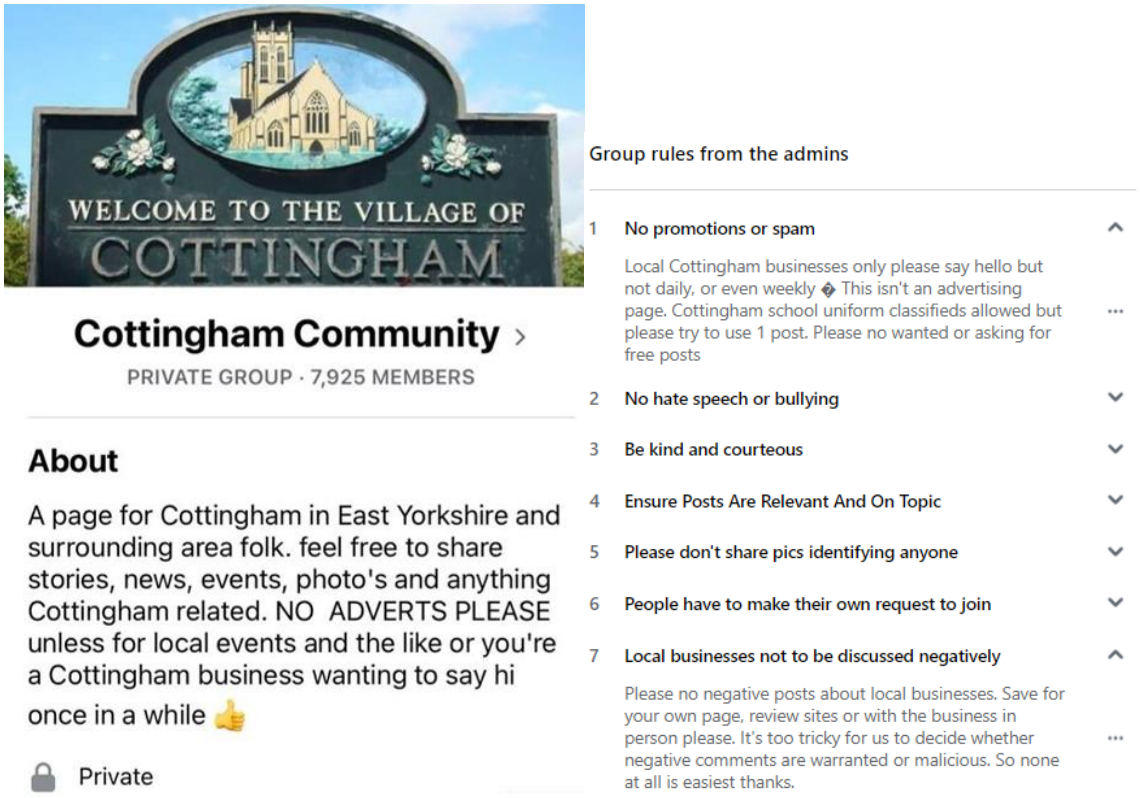


Figure 4.5: *Cottingham Community Facebook group* – cover photo, *"About" the group, initial information, and "Group rules" to the right* [Screenshot] Cottingham Community, Facebook group (2020).

I wrote in my field diary:

> Cottingham Community, like the various other digital groups local to the Beverley and Hull areas, was a space where people practiced, engaged in and consumed grassroots and folk cultures. Reminiscent of my brief ethnographic spell at the pub, the 'Duke of Cumberland'; storytelling, photography, business, events, arts and crafts, localised entirely within Cottingham, were abundant amongst this digital space.
>
> Unlike the Duke of Cumberland, I did not simply walk into this space and begin my engagement with the local community. To join this private group, I first submitted a 'join group' application which, after a couple days, connected me to one of the group administrators. As per my duty as a researcher, I outlined my project and intentions as a researcher. Though, the administrator appeared more interested as to whether I was "from Cott" (short for Cottingham) or not.
>
> After explaining that I qualified as "surrounding area folk" and some correspondence with the admin to develop a sense of trust, my application was accepted. However, I

> could not shake the idea that the only reason I gained access to this digital space and the group's cultural practices was down to my positionality - more specifically: my geographical location and identity. It was apparent that everyone whom I encountered in this group had, at some point, lived in Cottingham, or, like me, qualified as "surrounding area". Subsequently, I question how much of a factor my physical geographical identity has affected my access to other digital folk communities. It would not be difficult to gauge my whereabouts after a quick peak at my social media profiles. Perhaps 'Walkington What's On', 'Brilliant Beverley' and the 'Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group' studied my media identity to determine if I was a suitable person to access their private digital spaces. Perhaps this is also why I have struggled to gain access to groups further afield from my research hub in Hull, including some located in North and West Yorkshire, and one online folk club I was particularly interested in in Bridlington, on the opposite side of East Yorkshire… I have observed similar criteria amongst many digital folk spaces separating the local from the nonlocal using geography as a significant factor of access.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 6, 24th of June 2020.

As discussed in Field Diary Excerpt 6, positionality and geographical identity appeared to be a deciding factor regarding access to local-digital spaces (Marwick, 2012), like Cottingham Community. I was made to develop a relationship of trust with someone in a position of power – an administrator who acted as a gatekeeper separating the cultural experiences of the Facebook group and my social media profile – before I was given access. This relationship of trust was developed through conversations regarding geographical identity and locality, specifically my connection to the village. The element of trust was important since it is relatively easy for people to be not who they say they are on social media. The formation of a tangible community requires knowledge of who is a part of the community, while the shared trust of people being who they say they are in local-digital spaces is the only way people can make sense of the people around them (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). If I was not trusted or considered local, then I would have been excluded from the community and the cultural experiences offered by these digital spaces, which was sometimes the case. As stated in Excerpt 6, I was denied access to similar online spaces related to other locations, or rather my applications to similar folk digital spaces in which I could be perceived as nonlocal were

unaccepted. It has been affirmed that “you can be whoever you want online” (Marwick, 2012;). However, the exclusionary practice displayed by local-digital spaces such as Cottingham Community also showed that people can remain tied to their physical identity when online, and that this affects and shapes online cultural experiences. The relationship between members of local-digital communities and the shared trust that people are who they say they are was the cornerstone in the production of online spaces based on the practices of significance to local places (Wilson, 2006).

4.3.2: Local-Nonlocal Boundaries

The exclusionary practices exhibited in the previous subsection were a result of imagined boundaries between what was perceived as local and what was perceived as nonlocal. These boundaries were what separated the 8,000 members of Cottingham Community from the billions of other social media users across the world. They were significant because they highlighted the locally scaled differences of small-scale folk communities on social media. This subsection continues to look in-depth at some of the boundaries between the local and the nonlocal in digital spaces of Yorkshire folk social media, especially regarding principles of locality. It concerns the production, reproduction and enforcement of these boundaries through communally shared perceptions and consciousness of local scale geographies and explains why these shared perceptions are important in terms of community bonding, belonging and identity in digital contexts.

The boundaries separating the physical institutions that this project was initially interested in, including traditional pubs and grassroots music venues (Table 3.1), from other nonfolk and nonlocal spaces were arguably more tangible than those displayed on social media. Vernacular architecture, rural spaces and soundscapes forged by folk music can help distinguish these spaces of folk culture (Hoey, 1984; Revill, 2005). However, there were also more imaginary lines drawn. During one of my first field days at a traditional pub, the White Horse Inn (Table 3.1), I noticed various signs inscribed with the words ‘NO MOBILE PHONES’ placed boldly throughout the establishment (see Figure 4.6). These rules were a modern response to a contemporary social issue, fashioned to give the illusion of a pub cemented in the past and distinguished the White Horse Inn from other establishments, as a ‘haven for social conversation’ (Flores & James, 2012; Kemp, 2019). Digital devices are heavily connected to contemporary emergent practices and global consumption habits (Page, 2013). Yet, I

observed that people would still carry and occasionally glance at their devices under the ruse of regular activity, suggesting that the agency of these written rules was limited. The consequences of carrying and using a mobile phone were unclear. Rather than contesting contemporary emergent practices to affirm locality, social media folk groups needed alternate methods to develop senses of locality since these groups were already firmly situated in a modern and highly globalised platform.

Figure 4.6: *Sign disclosing the institution's rules on using digital technologies inside the pub* [Photograph] The White Horse Inn, Beverley, United Kingdom (Kemp, 2019).

The relationships between people, space and culture, which tended to nurture localised activity as presented in the previous subsection, was transferrable to the culture behind local businesses: 'NO ADVERTS… unless for local events… or you're a Cottingham business' (Figure 4.5). This was a rule to deter nonlocal business from operating within the group. For the most part, the rules and regulations were adhered to throughout the groups I joined during my investigation. But every so often, there was member who did step outside the boundaries of locality and, for example: advertise for a nonlocal business or event:

> Recently, there has been some public concern about a shortage of essential goods, including toilet roll, tinned foods and pasta, due to panic/bulk buying. An employee of [a nearby supermarket, which belonged to one of the 10 largest supermarket chains of the UK] in Cottingham posted in Cottingham Community about a substantial restock

> of pasta. This person's intentions were honest. However, group members saw this as an ample opportunity to reinforce the rules of the group, alluding back to the "Cottingham business only" rule. A few ordinary group members, who did not appear to be admins or moderators, asserted that large-scale supermarkets did not qualify as 'Cottingham businesses', adding that smaller-scale local shops and businesses were options more relevant to the group. The employee then issued a short acknowledgement and apology in the comments section, and the post was soon after deleted, leading me to believe they removed their own post… Although the supermarket was principally situated in Cottingham and, thus, did concern the village, it appears the store is too large-scale and not part of the locality affirmed in the group rules.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 7, 26th of June 2020.

Group members did sometimes misinterpret the rules, as not everyone's perception of "local to Cottingham" appeared equivalent. The boundaries between the local and nonlocal in these groups was often obscure and open for interpretation. The stringent enforcement of locality was, in this instance, performed by everyday users and was, most of the time, universally accepted. Although there was the argument that a supermarket located in Cottingham could be perceived as a 'Cottingham business', generally people sided with what was considered most local. Enforcers referenced smaller-scale retailers to demonstrate what they perceived as local, that is less directly connected to corporate and national scale consumption. In this case, the enforcement of locality was more important to the local-digital group than people potentially being informed about a development in the local food economy. This moral balance was significant because it ensured that the rules were not just guidelines, they were effective.

In contrast to the rules of the White Horse Inn, which could be relatively easily overcome; the rules for digital groups like Cottingham Community appeared to have some form of alternative and arguably substantiated agency, which I questioned during my netnography:

> Continuing from the Cottingham supermarket employee, whose "nonlocal" actions were penalised; it was not uncommon for people – ordinary members – of these digital groups to enforce rules. Afterall, these rules are comprised of just a few

sentences, in 12-point font, in a small box, in an isolated section of the group page. Why then are they so stringent and powerful?

– Field Diary Excerpt 8, 26th of June 2020.

Responding to Field Diary Excerpt 8, it is notable that everything posted to these digital groups was visible to everyone in the group. Surveillance and the possibility of being caught breaking the rules can be a significant deterrent to potential rulebreakers (Geçer & Serbes, 2018). However, the fact that I observed people publicly "rule-breaking" by using their mobile phones in my ethnography of traditional Yorkshire pubs can counteract the surveillance argument. The fact that nonlocal activity was both directly and indirectly deterred, and the fact that I had to form a relationship of trust concerning my local identity with a group administrator to gain entry to these group spaces, showed that these rules and regulations had alternative forms of agency. This inquiry was met in an online interview with one of the moderators of the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group:

Q: The group admin mentioned that the Yorkshire Folk Music Group expanded by 30% since lockdown. What do you think of this increase?

A: "We [the administrators/moderators] have loved how the group's expanded over the past months. Initially we envisaged a Yorkshire wide group for Yorkshire musicians (and we are probably still far from but headed a good direction). But we did not want to OVER-populate the group and become just another Facebook music page people join and forget about. There's plenty of those. Keeping it to do with Yorkshire music keeps the group going. We have managed that and the increase means there's more Yorkshire folk music to go around." (2020)

There is one sentence in the moderator's response that resonated with not just the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group, but with all similar local-digital spaces: "Keeping it to do with Yorkshire [music] keeps the group going." The affirmation of keeping these groups strongly connected to Yorkshire in terms of imagined boundaries and exclusionary practices distinguished these local-digital spaces from everything else on social media and the internet.

Although it was a space of culture and community, this digital space had formalities that were adhered to or corrected if misunderstood. The rules and guidelines of such local-digital spaces were the overarching factors that allowed Cottingham Community to stay local to Cottingham, Brilliant Beverley to stay local to Beverley, Walkington What's On to stay local to

Walkington and for the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group to stay local to Yorkshire. As shown through displays of communal self-governance (Excerpt 7), there seems to be a level of consciousness regarding the importance of local scale geography, for this system of rules and its relationship with locality directly impacted back upon these digital communities. Members of these social media groups appeared aware of the consequences of allowing nonlocal discussions to take place in these digital space of culture. If the locality of these groups became compromised through, for example, rule-breaking, then the localised identity of members within these local-digital communities was, too, compromised (DeFillipis, 2001). This is where the principles of these digital groups as local-digital communities were produced. Rule-breaking, especially through the introduction of nonlocal entities, risks the group's locality, which has consequences on the cultural practices and communal identity of the group as something fundamentally local to Yorkshire (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013).

Research into social media rules and regulations have shown that the agency of these online policies often has limited agency because they generally have unclear, insubstantial or unsubstantiated consequences with the physical or "real-world" (Banks, 2010; Mathew et al., 2019). This is oftentimes related to discussions on the increase of online hate speech and other negative subjects on the internet. Furthermore, as a result of these limited policies on social media, some preliminary research into spatial cultures on the internet has suggested that online culture is boundaryless (Flores & James, 2012; Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012; Miller, 2020). However, this research project has illustrated authored rules and policies in digital spaces of culture can also be powerful in the production of communities and identities at a local level. It is therefore important to recognise that digital access, rules and principles have different implications and agencies at different contexts and scales of the internet.

4.4: Power, Administration and Moderation

The previous sections have outlined the production and reproduction of local-digital spaces on social media with connections to Yorkshire folk culture. This was predominantly regarding the (re)production of these spaces as a result of rules, regulations, boundaries, inclusion, exclusion and principles surrounding perceptions and consciousness of local scale geographies. They focused on the distinctions between the local and nonlocal, and the agencies of rules and guidelines implemented to distinguish local-digital spaces from nonlocal-digital spaces. Although it has been touched upon, precisely how these rules are created and how these rules contribute to dynamics of control and power within online Yorkshire folk cultural communities needs clarification. This section shows two main ways in which dynamics of control and power functioned on folk social media: 1) there are hierarchies of power on social media created by the ways in which digital spaces are constructed in local cultural contexts; and 2) the position of people within these hierarchies are relative to their knowledge and skills in digital technologies and ability to digitally reproduce folk cultural content.

4.4.1: Admins, Mods & Users

Firstly, it is important to understand the main positions in the hierarchies of power on social media. Generally, there are three "roles" that people fulfil while engaging with social media groups and communities. These roles are the administrators, the moderators and the users (Miller, 2020; Zhang, 2020). This subsection briefly defines each of these roles and lists and criticises the relevant quantifiable elements of control and power, as well as how these dynamics functioned in the Yorkshire folk case study. The following subsection assesses how these roles and their connected powers produced digital spaces of knowledge, ability and control over online cultural experience in the Yorkshire folk community.

Firstly, social media pages and communities are typically created by a single online account, known as the 'primary administrator' (MacDonald, 2011). An 'administrator', or "admin" for short, of an online group is typically regarded as in command and presides over any substantial changes or reproductions of the digital space (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012). Secondly, a 'moderator', or "mod", essentially aids administrators in terms of day-to-day management of the digital group and are tasked with the policing and enforcement of rules

and regulations, and the monitoring of comments and feedback (MacDonald, 2011; Miller, 2020). Finally, users or members of social media groups are people with access to the group's digital landscape and can engage with the publicised content and with other members (Flores & James, 2012; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). Each of these roles within social media groups have predetermined actions of what they typically can and cannot perform in the digital space. These actions are embedded in the digital codes that principally create social media platforms (Siegel, 2019). In terms of power, such digital divisions of control have produced unique dynamics comparable to social stratifications (see for example Zhang, 2020; Woods, 2020). Table 4.1 shows what typically can and cannot be done by administrators, moderators and users in social media groups.

Table 4.1: *What (typically) can and cannot be done by administrators, moderators and users/members of social media groups and communities within corresponding digital spaces* (with reference to MacDonald, 2011; Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012; Facebook, 2020; Unify Square, 2020; as well as my own netnographic observations).

	Administrator	**Moderator**	**User/Member**
Can (re)create and edit the digital space.	✓		
Can edit settings and rules.	✓		
Can assign and remove admins and mods.	✓		
Can approve or deny membership requests.	✓	✓	
Can remove and block users/members.	✓	✓	
Can remove posts, activity, and comments made by others.	✓	✓	
Can engage in sociocultural contents of the digital group (posts, discussions, audio-visual sharing, etc.)	✓	✓	✓
Can provide feedback, recommendations, or complaints about the group, and report other members/content.	-	✓	✓

Evident in Table 4.1, administrators have the greatest and most uninhibited control over social media groups and communities. They can essentially do anything in line with the templates of the digital spaces set by the specific social media platform (MacDonald, 2011; Zhang, 2020). During my investigation, the only contact I had with administrators was touched on in the previous section, in which I was approached regarding my geographical location and identity. This was for a screening process where the admin gated my access to Cottingham Community. Although this exchange was brief, it was very apparent that I was engaging with an authoritative person, significant in terms of my access to the cultures of the Cottingham Community Facebook group. This actualisation of power was created through a small symbol attached to the admin's profile; that of a crude star upon a shield (see Figure 4.7). Other than this brief exchange, administrators appeared rather elusive. In smaller groups such as Walkington What's On, admins would often engage in the everyday conversations and practices of the group space. In larger-scale groups, such as the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group, I only ever noticed them outlining or reinstating the rules and boundaries of the group. Regardless, the small symbol of Figure 4.7 remained attached to their profiles and whenever the admins directly engaged with the group these symbols appeared to stimulate discussion regarding the sociocultural politics of the online group. These politics were namely to do with what content could and could not be uploaded to the group.

Figure 4.7: *The symbol that appears before the profile name of an administrator of a Facebook group or community, such as that of 'Cottingham Community'* [Screenshot] Facebook (2020).

Although direct contact with administrators was limited, their presence and effect on the online folk communities was pivotal for the (successful) functionality of Yorkshire folk social media. For example, the (primary) administrators of the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group had to perform the actions of:

1. Create the 'Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic' Facebook group.
2. Setup the page to ensure that it is a suitable online environment for the sharing of audio (music), including the relevant rules, regulations, guidelines, etc.
3. Advertise the group to its intended audience: people interested in Yorkshire folk music – and gather a substantial following so that there becomes some form of tangible sociality.
4. Maintain the group as a space suitable for the production and consumption of folk music local to Yorkshire.

Although I observed no direct policing of rules by admins, the background work done by these social media group administrators largely dictated what cultures were engaged with. They were important figures in the production of group guidelines, which had significant agencies as presented in the previous section (Flores & James, 2012). And these guidelines would collectively determine how everyone in the group engaged with the digital space, ultimately producing the local-digital niche fulfilled by the digital group (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013; Miller, 2020).

Referring to Table 4.1, moderators, with less power than administrators, still shared a substantial amount of control over other users of the digital group (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012). Moderators in Yorkshire folk social media communities were considerably less elusive. I was able to interview one of the mods for the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Facebook Group online. This participant suggested that they were made a moderator because their "envisagement" of what the group could be was in line with that of the administrator's – and that they could help achieve this vision whilst furthering their own online experiences. This led me to contemplate that the Folk Music Group was not necessarily the "natural" discourse for a community-orientated online hub of Yorkshire Folk Music. Instead, it was produced through and nurtured by the ideas and visions of a select few individuals in high-up positions within the group (Gordon, 2008).

As for the policing of rules, the moderator stated that there were “very few rulebreakers”, which is why the group does not need so many admins or mods, and that people who did overstep boundaries were usually just politely reminded of the rules. This indicated a form of communal self-governance of content (Geçer & Serbes, 2018), which reflected my netnographic observations in Field Diary Excerpts 7 and 8. In the few instances which I saw posts to digital folk groups which overstepped the boundaries of the group before they were deleted, it was mostly what appeared to be other users commenting, reminding the poster that a rule had been breached. Most of the time, the rules and guidelines appeared to be there to nurture that sense of a friendly, localised community centred around local folk practices. Thus, in terms of a local-digital identity and experience, it would usually be self-defeating for any members, who wished to be part of the community, to rule-break, as discussed in the previous section.

With reference to MacDonald (2011), Stutzman & Hartzog (2012), Gruzd & Haythornthwaite (2013) and Zhang (2020), both administrators and moderators in my case study required and displayed a broad skillset, including:

- IT skills; including social media navigation and online security.
- Organisational and management skills.
- Digital communication skills; including clarity when it comes to the disclosure of rules, regulations and guidelines for the online space, so that users can understand.
- Knowledge and awareness of the folk cultures being produced and reproduced within the communities.

Arguably, the skillset required to be placed within these positions of power within online folk groups could feed into a sense of online elitism within the Yorkshire folk community. There are perceptions that admins and mods had heightened understandings, experience and IT ability to govern the digital spaces – and that this knowledgeability was highly constructive to the production of online Yorkshire folk cultures and communities (Spracklen, 2013; Omidvar & Kislov, 2014; Woods, 2020; Zhang, 2020).

4.4.2: Knowledgeability and Control Over Online Experiences

Administrators and, to a lesser extent, moderators were able to control and produce the foundations and functionality of the Yorkshire folk community's social media spaces. In comparison to these roles, users and members of these groups were those with seemingly the least amount of control, disregarding nonusers (see Table 4.1) (Sibley, 1995). However, these users formed the majority of the online folk population and had control over what, how and when they, as individuals, contributed to the digital community (Gergen, 2012). Regarding the user-administrator power dynamic, I wrote in my field diary:

> In my online investigation, it is a fair assessment to say that, aside from a researcher, I have been a user, a member, a consumer, a participant and an observer in the digital folk communities of Yorkshire – positions fulfilled by most others in these groups.
>
> As a collective, these were the people that forged digital folk communities from digital spaces. They provide the vast majority of social and cultural content to these groups in the forms of posts, discussions, comments and audio-visual and material cultures which ultimately shapes the sociocultural discourses of the groups. These are the people who shared their handmade crafts and artworks online to create a digital space of material culture. These are the people who uploaded their folk music to these groups at a capacity which produced a collective digital soundscape. Without the common user, there is simply no tangible folk culture and community in the digital realm…
>
> Admins and mods created the guidelines and boundaries within these digital spaces, it is then up to regulars to decide what fits between these margins.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 9, 4th of August 2020.

The everyday users of these Yorkshire folk social media groups used their collective ideas, skills and knowledges of the digitalisation of folk culture to provide substance to the digital Yorkshire folk community. This was done at a level powerful enough to produce senses of online community and digital culture. And since online systems created by social media are becoming increasingly user-friendly, these users did not necessarily need to be proficient at online and digital technologies to consume online cultural content. However, having certain proficiencies in the IT world could be beneficial to the user in gaining more control over their

own multidimensional cultural experience (Kendall, 2002; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013; Miller, 2020). For example, a folk musician who posted a music video with good lighting, recorded with a high-quality camera and microphone, and perhaps even mixing with other tracks would generally gain more interaction ("likes", "comments" and "shares") than a similar music video recorded on an old mobile phone in contrasting conditions. One of my participants, who was a local amateur musician, suggested that one of their gripes with digital folk culture was that the attraction to good mixing and film quality in an online music video often outweighed that of a good song, which would not usually be the case in local live music settings. Comparing this with the open-mic event in Figure 4.3, in which everyone in the traditional pub was forced to consume the music produced by each musician at an equal capacity, this digital cultural discourse appeared to be layered differently (Gordon, 2008; Miller, 2020). The capacity at which an individual could consume, engage with and produce digital folk culture was typically dependent upon 3 aspects: knowledge, ability and access. Knowledge of social media and digital cultures; ability in utilising these digital systems and online spaces; and access to digital technologies and relevant online spaces. These aspects were predominant factors in terms of user's control over their own online cultural multidimensional experiences (Clarke et al., 1998; Lorimer, 2003; Crampton & Eldon, 2007).

Interview responses from my participant's helped to challenge this knowledgeability, access and control dynamic of using digital technologies to enact folk cultures. One of my participants, who did not live in Yorkshire but actively engaged in the folk culture of Hull, implied that they were already experienced at using digital and virtual means to access Hull's folk culture due to their pre-pandemic physical detachment from the region. In an online interview, they responded to the following question:

> **Q: Has your involvement in Hull's folk culture changed since lockdown? If so, how?**
> A: "To an extent, yes, especially considering travel was restricted. But personally I think culture is just as much, if not more, found within people than in place. And although not in person, the people who form my perspective of Hull were reachable through social media… Additionally, contact with friends and family from Hull was possible through social media." – Participant who resided outside of Yorkshire but strongly identified with the region's folk cultures (01.06.2020).

Ultimately, this participant stated that their lockdown experience of digital folk culture was "rather positive". Dotted throughout the interview, this participant alluded to the use of many social media services to activate their culture, including Facebook Messenger for weekly videocalls with their Hullensian social group and Instagram for sharing visual artworks and ongoings. This all also hinted that their family and friend networks were also adept at using these services to exchange and reproduce culture. However, this participant's perception and consciousness of culture, in that it is "just as much, if not more, found within people than in place" also would have shaped their online cultural experiences. Evidently, this participant appeared to show control over their personal and domestic digital culture due to their knowledgeability of social media and perception of culture. In contrast, I had participants who exhibited frustration as they appeared to be disengaged with online folk culture. One participant alluded to their inexperience of socialising online:

> **Q: How happy are you with practicing [Yorkshire] folk culture online?**
> A: "It's not really for me; I get irritated by the screens - only just got the hang of sending emails ha!" (10.06.2020)

The participant's statement "It's not really for me" suggested that they understood that some people could be satisfied with the digitalisation of folk culture. However, their personal discontent with the online cultural realm was due to an exasperation with digital environments and hinted that this was due to their inability with digital technologies. Consequently, this participant appeared to lack that sense of control over individual online cultural experiences exhibited by the previous participant.

The relationship between knowledge, control and digital space is important regarding digital culture and the hierarchies of power in social media communities formed around local cultures (Flores & James, 2012). Initially, digital Yorkshire folk spaces are produced and maintained by individuals with skill in digital and sociocultural management. Then, the collective knowledgeability of the online Yorkshire folk community in digitally reproducing folk culture provided content and substance for groups such as Cottingham Community and the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group. Equally, lack of knowledgeability in digital folk environments was significant in terms of what was unavailable (Crampton & Eldon, 2007; Omidvar & Kislov, 2014). In a general sense, people with the knowledgeability of Yorkshire folk culture and digital technologies could find greater accessibility and belonging within the

cultural world of social media, whilst those lacking the necessary skills for an inclusive, multidimensional experience were more likely to feel excluded (Ferretti, 2017).

Woods (2020) highlighted the power behind the performance of grime music in the digital world. They showed how the use of grime across digital environments was effective in resisting social inequalities and fuelling empowerment movements which had significant sociocultural effects on both digital and physical worlds alike. However, Woods' research focused on relatively large-scale and professional musicians and experts at the digital (re)production of music and musical cultures. Whilst this research agrees with Woods', it is also important to acknowledge that, in a cultural context, digital spaces are produced and reproduced by power relationships of knowledge and the ability to apply this knowledge. This can be productive in creating and reproducing online cultural spaces. However, it can also be excluding and unempowering for people with limited access to digital technologies or unyielding control over online experiences (Lorimer, 2003; Crampton & Eldon, 2007; Blank, 2012; Omidvar & Kislov, 2014; Miller, 2020).

4.5: Conclusions

This chapter has displayed and evaluated the nature of digital spaces on social media produced by the Yorkshire folk community as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has criticised the role of local scale geographies and perceptions of local cultures in an otherwise worldwide and globally interconnected digital environment. It has mainly responded to Research Question 1. Firstly, there were unique digital geographies during the initial wave of the pandemic, as people had further time to spend on social media and other digital technologies at home (McLean & Maalsen, 2020). In the Yorkshire folk community, these unique digital geographies created a demand for new and reenergised spaces on social media for which the enactment of folk cultures could take place. This resulted in the production and reproduction of many groups, communities, pages and other networks on social media each with focus on individual folk cultures. Unsuccessful spaces for the enactment of folk culture on social media attempted to digitally replicate physical institutions of conventional folk cultures, such as the traditional pub and grassroots music venue, through concepts like the virtual pub and Virtual Pub Quiz. These digital spaces were relatively unsuccessful for the sustained enactment of local folk cultures because they were too heavily attached to their physical counterparts, which created spatial friction manifest through comparison. These

spatial frictions ultimately favoured conventional physical institutions of folk culture as they were perceived as traditional. More successful digital spaces, on the other hand, such as Cottingham Community and the Yorkshire Folk Music Group accepted the emergent practices associated with digital technologies and social media and tended to base groups around more imagined aspects of placemaking and community bonding, including geographical identity and cultural practices associated with Yorkshire. This structure for digital folk communities was able to nurture perceptions of localness by shaping boundaries which separated the local from the nonlocal, as well as folk practices from nonfolk practices. However, this did raise issues to do with discrimination and exclusion as people remained tied to their physical geographical identities – especially in groups more stringent in their enforcement of rules and boundaries of locality. *How much* of a cultural experience could be siphoned from the digital world was largely dependent on user knowledge of digital technologies and folk cultures and the ability to merge these knowledges to produce, share and consume content online. While social media is becoming increasingly comprehensible and easy-to-use, the knowledgeability of navigating, accessing and utilising social media services to connect to folk practices and communities correlated to greater control over individual sociocultural experiences. This created a stark contrast to the relationships of control and power in the physical realm, where knowledgeability of social media and digital technologies is far less relative to positions of power and control over one's own cultural experiences.

Whilst this chapter has detailed the (re-)production of digital spaces connected to Yorkshire folk culture, the actual contents of these groups require further discussion. In terms of formation, these digital spaces were largely identical as they are all made using the same templates predetermined by whatever social media platform they were part of (MacDonald, 2011). The content uploaded to these spaces is what differentiated them. For the Yorkshire folk social media community, this was done through the enactment of folk cultures and production of cultural representations, all uploaded to their respective social media. The next chapter will thus look in detail at specific sonic, textual and visual cultural practices in digital spaces and assess how these practices helped produce, reproduce and remake folk identities local to Yorkshire during the pandemic.

Chapter 5
(The Practices of) Digital Folk Culture and Formation of Local Identities

5.1: Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the nature of localised digital spaces on social media, in terms of how they were established and controlled in the case of the Yorkshire folk community. The (re-)production and control of these digital spaces formed the platform for related folk cultures. As such, the previous chapter looked at these digital spaces in terms of spatial foundations for cultural activity. This chapter, however, is more interested in the actual cultural substance of these spaces. For example, what kind of folk culture is uploaded to these social media and how is this content engaged with by other members? There is a greater emphasis on the more imaginative practices of Yorkshire folk culture in the digital realm during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the digital world is mostly experienced through two human senses; sight and sound, this chapter concerns how the Yorkshire folk community utilised digital spaces as platforms to (re)make, display and express sonic and visual folk cultures – and how these expressions of culture relate to broader human geographical discussions. The theme of belonging is pertinent throughout this chapter, in terms of a shared identity of belonging to online communities centred around the folk cultures local to Yorkshire. Therefore, this chapter critically analyses the relationship between local sonic and visual folk cultural practices and the human geographical conception of identity on social media.

This chapter is split into 3 sections. The first presents Yorkshire folk music as it was produced, transformed, shared and consumed across social media. This section analyses the relationship between folk music and space, namely how folk music and associated identities changed in nature and in practice between the physical and digital realms during the pandemic. The second section looks at voice and how voice can and cannot be an instrument of identity on social media. Accent has always been an important aspect of Yorkshire folk culture but when online, the pervasive use of text-based communication contexts renders accent all but impracticable. This section evaluates attempts by the Yorkshire folk community to forge a unique online voice and accentual identity. The final section of this chapter looks at visual

digital cultures and how the digitalisation of imagery on social media shaped worldly perceptions of folk culture. This section looks at the manipulation and engagement with various visual digital artforms elicited and observed throughout this investigation across folk social media.

5.2: Social Media Soundscapes

Digital music, from storage to audio effects to auditory modelling and instruments (such as digital keyboards and synthesisers), has been around since the late-1970s (Morris, 2015). These digital formats of music have been used by musicians and producers and heard by listeners ever since. Contemporary digital music formats have evolved to become far more prevalent and all-encompassing (Rojek, 2011; Miller, 2020; Woods, 2020). For example, in the first summer of the COVID-19 pandemic, entire music festivals were shifted from large, open countryside fields to digital landscapes (such as Góbéfest 2020 (Table 3.2), Fairport's Cropredy Convention 2020, and elements of the 2020 Glastonbury Festival were conducted online). Popular audio streaming service, Spotify, added 'Group Sessions' so that people, connected via the internet, could join interactive online groups, stream songs and listen to them simultaneously on separate devices, in different places but still together (Moore, 2020). As for the Yorkshire folk community, social media groups like the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Facebook Group and networks such as #QuarantineSessions (Table 3.2) created revitalised hubs for the distribution and consumption of folk music, digitalised in the forms of sharable music videos, audio files, livestreams and digital sheet music documents (Knoblauch et al., 2008; Zhang, 2020). This all meant that people could produce and listen to music together, whilst physically disconnected. But how does a sense of togetherness, as was evident in events of live music in the physical world (Figure 4.3), manifest as music is mutually digitalised (Parsons, 2020)?

This section is split into two subsections which formulate two overarching arguments regarding the enactment of local folk cultures on social media and the digitalisation of folk musical conventions. The first section argues that the emergent technological and interconnected practices of social media forced the practices and displays of Yorkshire folk music into networks which encouraged creative experimentation and expression through sound. The second section looks at how these networks of experimentation on social media bonded strong online folk communities through the sharing of experimental and oftentimes

emotive music. Overall, the practices behind experimental folk music styles and the communities produced around these networks all produced strong communal displays of emotion, togetherness and belonging to a folk community of Yorkshire.

5.2.1: Experimental Folk Music

Folk music styles categorised as 'experimental' have been expanding across English folk music communities since the 'folk revivals' of the mid-to-late-20th century (see Brocken, 2003). This subsection looks at the emergent practices of social media and how they specifically developed further experimentation into folk music styles during the COVID-19 pandemic. Often, this experimental folk music came across as more evocative and hybridised with other nonfolk and nonlocal music genres. The subsection concerns a reenergisation of folk music as people (re)connected to Yorkshire folk cultures through social media during lockdown. The specific case studies of the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Facebook Group and #QuarantineSessions (Table 3.2) are critically analysed in detail during this and the following subsection.

My first musical participant in the art-elicitation portion of my investigation was a good example of the transition to experimental folk music styles during the pandemic. This participant, an aspiring musician local to Yorkshire referred to as Dean (2020), stated that the unpleasantries of isolation during lockdown encouraged them to become more expressive with their music. This can be heard through comparison of their music in Audio Files 1 and 2. Initially (pre-pandemic), Dean performed solo-acoustic songs inspired by their experiences of the Hull and East Yorkshire region, such as the title *Andy Palmer* in Audio File 1. Dean said this song intended to mirror the "simplicity" and "habituality" of recreational life in the city of Hull through the repetitive verses and piano leads. However, as Dean found more time to explore their musical taste during lockdown through social media and other music networks, the songs they composed appeared to become more experimental and, in their words, "introspective". This was exemplified in their second elicited piece titled *No Harm* (Audio File 2), some months after I was first sent *Andy Palmer*. To clarify, Audio File 1 was sent to me as part of my investigation in May 2020, relatively early into the UK's first lockdown, whereas Audio File 2 was elicited in August, near to the end of the country's first full lockdown. Dean described their present music as a "mess of bluesy-folksy-alternative-rock'n'rollness", exemplifying experimentation and hybridity of musical genres.

Andy Palmer	***No Harm***
Song opens with a piano/keyboard riff Flurrying drums are introduced in the second bar Andy Palmer Was a simple man. Coming back from Valbon Flagging down black cabs In a bomber jacket, Just needed a lift. Andy Palmer Was a simple man. (Was a simple man). Andy Palmer Was a simple man. Flagging down black cabs In a bomber jacket. *Short rhythm and lead piano solo* Andy Palmer Was a simple man Coming home down Spring Bank, Spring Bank Road. Andy Palmer Wanted to sit in a conservatory With a can of Fosters And have a think about his life. Andy Palmer Andy Palmer Andy Palmer Was a simple man… *Song ends with dissonant, sub-octave piano chords*	*Consistent two chord strumming pattern on an acoustic guitar throughout* On my deathbed, I will pray For forgiveness Of any wrong that I may have done. For I know that I Am far from perfect, But I never meant no one no harm. I never meant Never, never meant no harm. Never meant No harm. Tiptoe a fine line Around my selfish design. Acting like a baby, Sensitive all the time And if you dare to wrong me, I will sharpen my knife. Now I know that I am far from perfect, But I never meant no one no harm. I never meant, Never, never meant no harm. Never meant No harm. *Strumming becomes more aggressive and chaotic, and tempo increases as song begins to fade out* Now I close my eyes, My soul soars to the sky. Clouds part and give way, For the stormy seas have once again settled They have settled.
(Follow link to Google Drive folder below): https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-Z8wY2rXSfNyFfutarh8EOYSOuj--MN4?usp=sharing	
Audio File 1: *'Andy Palmer'* [Song demo] Elicited in May 2020, based on participant's experiences of Kingston upon Hull, pre-lockdown (Dean, 2020).	**Audio File 2:** *'No Harm'* [Song demo] Elicited in August 2020, a retrospective song written by the participant during lockdown (Dean, 2020).

Dean (2020) became an avid user of social media to present, share and engage with their music during lockdown. Not just to this participant but to the overall community centred on Yorkshire folk music, social media was apparently an ideal place to interact with folk music on a level that conjoined the digital and the domestic practices of music. Comparing the interview and observational data between two of my participants, both with special interest in Yorkshire folk music, the premise of *why* practicing music in this way was appropriate for experimentation and creativity can be explored. I highlighted this in one of my ethnographic vignettes, recorded at a phase in my investigation when I was heavily engaging with specific participants and conducting art-elicitation:

> As stated by one of my musical participants, responding to the question: 'Where and when do you get or feel the most creative? In terms of music, song writing, or developing any other artwork?' (see Figure 5.1):

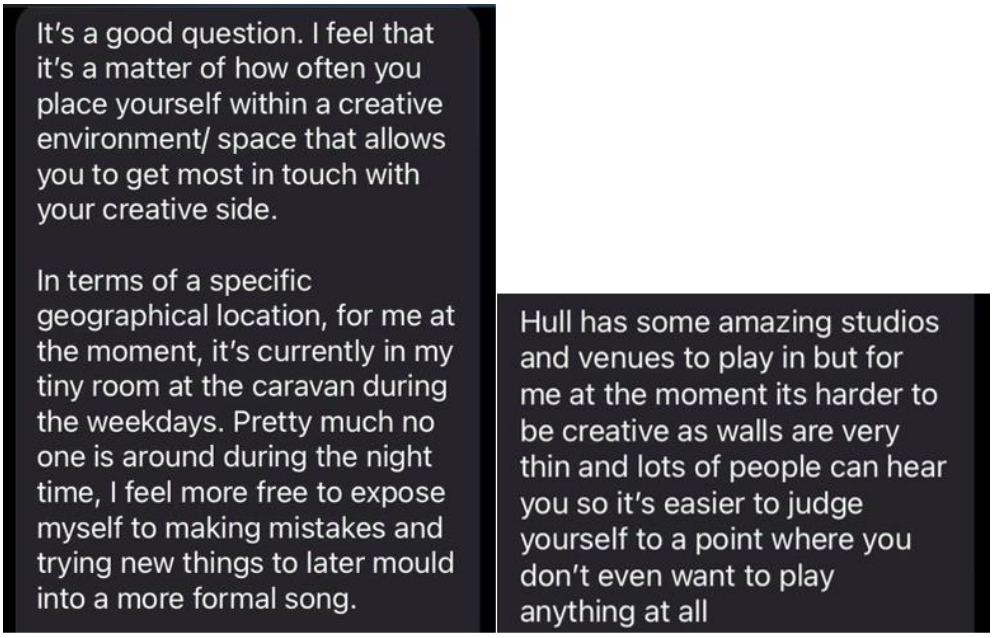


Figure 5.1: *One musical participant's response to the question: 'Where and when do you get or feel the most creative (musically)?'* [Screenshot] From a text messaging-based interview (2020).

> This participant, who is someone who has regularly gigged to live audiences in GMVs around Yorkshire but now consistently presents their music on social media, showed that they find the best place to access their musical creativity is within a "tiny room" where they feel isolated. This is because "thin walls" or a lack of isolation can breed (often self-) negativity and judgement. This participant was also an enthusiastic user

> of Yorkshire folk music groups on social media, where they would upload videos of themself practicing and playing music during lockdown…
>
> I question: why is social media a space where people are comfortable uploading their intimate workings, especially those produced in such a private setting, like a bedroom or household?
>
> …I saw one person in the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Facebook Group showing a screenshot of what their 'Recently Deleted Photographs' folder looked like on their mobile phone. It was full of attempts to record music. Pieces in which they admitted they made a blunder. Their point in doing this seemed to be that social media and digital spaces like the Yorkshire Folk Music Group and #LockdownSessions allow people to make mistakes. Because the final upload masks all previous errors and can ultimately be the polished product of learning and many failed attempts…
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 10, 9th of July 2020.

The participant who formulated the response in Figure 5.1 suggested the place they felt most comfortable accessing their musical creativity was in a domestic setting during the pandemic. In contrast to the music venues and recording studios in Yorkshire, domestic settings are detached and solitary, creating an atmosphere suitable for freedom of expression (Leyshon et al., 1998; Kearney, 2010; Miller, 2018). Combining the creativity and freedom of expression associated with domestic spheres with the publicization of uploading music to social media can all be done simply through a mobile phone or other recording device (Gergen, 2012; Page, 2013). Responding to the question posed near the end of Excerpt 10, the combination of performing folk music at home and uploading to social media allows for both the creative experimentation of music and the sharing the creative expression when it is ready to be publicised. Other social scientists, including Gruzd & Haythornthwaite (2013), Panger (2017), Hannan (2018) and Bashir & Bhat (2020), have also found that the reasons people can be so 'open' on social media (in terms of the content uploaded) is because: 1) they can gain virtual forms of social acceptance; 2) content is available to a large audience, so the chance of it reaching someone relatable is high; 3) we can never truly know who is behind the profiles viewing or engaging with content – in essence these profiles are strangers and revealing oneself to these other profiles feels relatively low risk. These viewpoints lead to further

questions into the relationships between people, their music and social media, namely how social media shapes people's experiences of music (Miller, 2020; Woods, 2020).

As Yorkshire folk music was uploaded to social media, it entered a largely globalised world of intertwined social, economic, political and cultural networks. None of these networks were more archetypal than #QuarantineSessions. #QuarantineSessions was a popular hashtag used on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and many other social media platforms to caption pieces of music produced during COVID-19 lockdowns across the world. It was referenced in Excerpt 10 under '#LockdownSessions'. Through social media groups such as the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group (and individuals such as the participants in Excerpt 10), I observed that performers and listeners of Yorkshire folk music also used these hashtags to caption content. #QuarantineSessions opened my investigation to a world of social media where folk music strongly attached to Yorkshire and senses of locality became entangled in a network of emergent practices as well as nonfolk and nonlocal genres. The function of #QuarantineSessions and the ways the Yorkshire folk community engaged with this globalised entity is highlighted in the following passage from my field diary:

> #QuarantineSessions is a special hashtag and network on social media that categorises musical content produced during lockdown. It is important to my investigation, as I have seen countless pieces of content with this hashtag on Yorkshire folk social media groups, but it is also prevalent far beyond the boundaries of my case study, as the hashtag is not limited to any specific genre. According to Brand24 (2020) there were 2 million posts across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram from the 1st of April to the 30th of June 2020 with the captions #QuarantineSessions, #LockdownSessions or #IsolationSessions and a further 50,000 amateur musicians from across the globe in the Quarantine Sessions Facebook and Instagram groups. Large-scale musicians with multimillion fanbases also engaged with the network, including Tom Misch, the Streets and Wolf Alice. Through these statistics and distribution of this hashtag across nations in lockdown, it can be ascertained that #QuarantineSessions is a global movement and network.
>
> Considering the displays I have observed regarding the Yorkshire folk community attempting to nurture local scale geographies on social media, I am quite surprised at the number of uploads captioned as #QuarantineSessions – something clearly

nonlocal (and nonfolk for that matter). But when the nature of this movement is pulled apart, it becomes clearer as to why the community established around folk music local to Yorkshire on social media assimilated with this large-scale network. The majority of uploads with this hashtag, whether they contain folk music or not, are of a single person sitting in a bedroom, kitchen or household garden – singing or playing an instrument, usually a guitar, ukulele or piano. Each individual piece is created on a very small-scale domestic or individual level but can gain anywhere from 2 to 20,000 views/listens. Every upload contains a musical performance that is reflective of the taste and identity of the musician, the individual. So, while these millions of uploads all across the world are connected by 2 or 3 hashtags, each piece is a reflection of the individual. For those in the Yorkshire folk community that engaged with this hashtag, #QuarantineSessions provided a platform for the expression of both their individual and communal identities, centred around the practices of folk music associated with Yorkshire.

Regarding what I mentioned at the start of this vignette, perhaps individuals in this movement do not necessarily regard it as something 'global'. Instead, it appears that the content captioned #QuarantineSessions is viewed in terms of the individual; just one person in their bedroom intimately performing their lived experiences through music – and it does not really get any smaller-scale than that…

The function of #QuarantineSessions on social media has also captured my interest. Whenever I watch a performance under the #QuarantineSessions label, I enter a thread (or a small network) in which the platform continues to present more content with similar hashtags once the initial video is finished. This is known as the 'auto-play' function (see Figure 5.2).

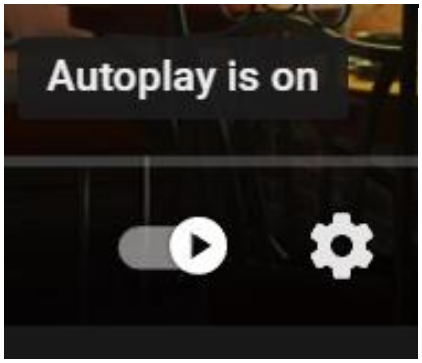


Figure 5.2: *The 'Autoplay' function on YouTube* [Screenshot] An example of the 'auto-play' function available on most social media platforms with video playing capabilities (2020).

> Interestingly, the further I go into this auto-play network (the more videos I watch), the less associated the music is with Yorkshire folk culture. As I let this network of #QuarantineSessions play out, I have been presented with other genres such as rock, world music, surf, Hawaiian ukulele music, grime, grunge, punk and classical, to name a few. But these 'other' genres are still presented in remarkably similar ways to what I have seen of the Yorkshire folk – typically one person in a bedroom or living room, with a couple views or couple thousand views. The function of social media through the auto-play function seemed to hybridise my experience of observing online Yorkshire folk culture by gradually connecting me to nonfolk music styles and networks nonlocal to Yorkshire. And some of the observations I have made during my netnography have suggested that this hybridisation of experiences has expanded to the point where Yorkshire folk cultures are becoming hybridised with nonlocal, nonfolk cultures through social media's presentation of content.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 11, 10th of July 2020.

Audio File 3 supports the assertations made toward the end of Excerpt 11, suggesting the connections created through social media developed hybridised Yorkshire folk cultures with nonlocal and nonfolk music cultures. Audio File 3 is an example of a folk-pop band local to Yorkshire which incorporated musical styles and effects associated with electronic music into a previously acoustic recording of their song. This can especially be heard in the beat and percussion which sits in the mix behind the folksy vocal harmonies, which creates a rather jazzy mix of folk-pop and electronic music. I first came across Audio File 3 by searching the terms '#QuarantineSessions Yorkshire folk music' on social media platforms with a designated hashtag function, including Twitter and Instagram. The auto-play function highlighted in Excerpt 11 was what connected me to this hybridised form of auditory Yorkshire folk culture.

(Follow Google Drive link): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ooUyaxV6jw6eZBFq_xWvoakNn56TtAu9/view?usp=sharing
Audio File 3: *Turn with the Tide sample* [Song] An example of folk music being fused with electronic music styles and effects (Birds and Beasts, 2020).

Highlighted through the comparison of Audio Files 1 and 2, Excerpt 11 and the context of Audio File 3 in the international #QuarantineSessions network, the emergent technological

practices of social media which fuel global (inter)connection encouraged the online Yorkshire folk community to become experimental in their music styles (Kwan, 2004; Blank, 2012; Miller, 2020). This was evident in the ways in which Yorkshire folk music was presented, shared and listened to on social media during the pandemic. Not only this, but the ways people practiced and produced content was also conducted in a way only made available through the digital technologies and practices of social media. Prior to the first lockdown of the UK, the idea of an 'online band' appeared rather trivial, unconventional and uneconomic (Parsons, 2020). During the pandemic, however, the concept of an online band was the only viable way in which bands with interhousehold members could operate. Social media platforms like Zoom and Skype, both of which have meeting functions as well as audio and screensharing capabilities, were some of the finite ways bands could get together online to rehearse and perform (Moore, 2020). Figure 5.3 is a field sketch depicting an 'online Yorkshire folk band' using Zoom to perform live folk music. The sketch simulates a screenshot of the online performance. I chose to represent this method of digital Yorkshire folk culture in the form of a sketch as it anonymises the local musicians involved. This practice was especially prevalent during the 'festival season' of the summer of 2020, when essentially all live folk music festivals in Yorkshire were cancelled, while the online band and settings such as Figure 5.3 were the only tangible ways the Yorkshire folk community could see and listen to live folk music.

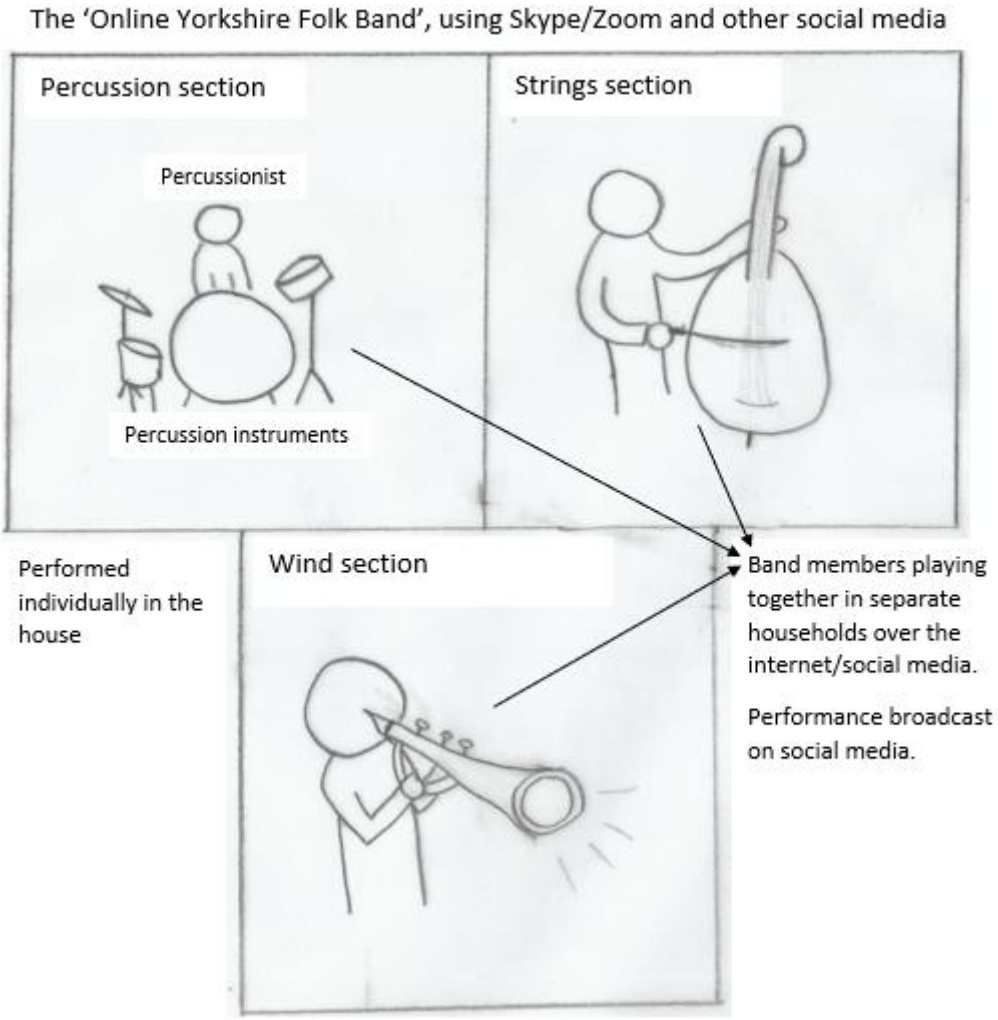


Figure 5.3: *The online Yorkshire folk band* [Annotated Field Sketch] This was my observation of an online Yorkshire folk (orchestral) band and sketched in a way that mimicked a screenshot of the performance. Original performance conducted via Zoom and uploaded to Facebook in August 2020.

The idea of an 'online band' was normalised during the first COVID-19 lockdown by large-scale musicians and producers with millions of listeners across the globe, including Lady Gaga, the Rolling Stones and Beyonce during a benefit concert titled 'One World: Together at Home' in April 2020 (see Figure 5.4). Following this digital concert, the method of practicing music via the online band was normalised to musical groups and shared with other musical cultures, including Yorkshire folk (Figure 5.3) (Parsons, 2020; Moore, 2020). Figure 5.4 also shows a more realistic version of what an online band (such as that depicted in Figure 5.3) would have looked like.

Figure 5.4: *The Rolling Stones performing on the One World: Together At Home online concert in one of the first and most popular examples of an online band during the UK's first COVID-19 lockdown* [Screenshot] One World Together At Home benefit concert, in association with Global Citizen and the World Health Organization, curated by Lady Gaga (18th of April 2020).

According to folk geographers who have studied the distribution of different folk music styles in physical worlds, including Bohlman (1988), Brocken (2003), Revill (2005), Blank (2012), Howes (2016) and Miller (2018), experimental folk music such as Audio Files 1 and 2 and hybridised folk music such as Audio File 3 are relatively niche compared to what is perceived as traditional and conventional folk music (not to say that these styles cannot be interchangeable). Yet, on social media, these types of folk music became exposed to much larger audiences, through online groups and communities, and networks such as #QuarantineSessions. Thus, these experimental and hybridised folk music styles could not be described as elusive, obscure or niche as they became normalised in the digital realm (Blank, 2012; Buccitelli, 2017; Miller, 2020). Ultimately, this produced folk music that was not as strongly associated with Yorkshire, as they were produced and reproduced through various geographical scales, networks and genres made accessible through social media. However, the perception of locality and 'Yorkshire-ness' remained significant to these displays of experimental and hybridised forms of folk music, as will be discussed in the following subsection.

This subsection has shown that the practicing, uploading and sharing of Yorkshire folk music on social media influences the ways in which music is composed, performed and listened to.

Due to the emergent dynamics of social media and the relationship that users have with their individual accounts, this digital platform is ideal for the experimentation of folk music, shown in Field Diary Excerpt 10 and Audio Files 2 and 3. This allowed participants in this study and general members of the Yorkshire folk community to discover alternative methods of expression through digital cultures. Furthermore, the connections made through clusters and communities of folk music, including the Yorkshire Folk Music Group and #QuarantineSessions, situated Yorkshire folk music in networks of *other* music styles. This caused engagement with Yorkshire folk music on social media to become hybridised with the experiences of other, nonfolk and nonlocal music genres, shown in Field Diary Excerpt 11 and Audio File 3. Nevertheless, *how* these experimental and hybridised folk music styles produced and shaped communities, especially of local scale significance to Yorkshire, needs clarification. The following subsection outlines the ability of Yorkshire folk music on social media to produce strong senses of belonging to communities local to Yorkshire. This is with reference to the concept of 'Yorkshire-ness'. It will draw on some of the examples in this section, especially those of more emotive value. It will also present additional examples of Yorkshire folk music which were produced, shared and listened to through the experimental and hybridised means of social media, all of which will continue to strengthen the arguments made in this subsection.

5.2.2: Emotional Togetherness

This subsection analyses how online communities were forged around experimental folk music styles produced through the practices of social media, and how these communities were fundamentally connected to the folk cultures of Yorkshire. It looks at the synonymity of emotional togetherness and Yorkshire-ness on social media, and subsequent identities of belonging to an online folk community that is expressive in its sonic practices of local scale culture and geography. The aim of this subsection is to display how the Yorkshire folk community produced sonic cultures that were communicative of the dire circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how these sonic cultures formed communities through shared thoughts and feelings. One of the more pertinent examples is the famous Yorkshire folksong *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at,* which is used to demonstrate the Yorkshire folk community's shift to more emotive music, with the effect of bonding a community around emotional togetherness and perceptions of Yorkshire.

Referring to my informant Dean (2020), whose elicited work was described in the previous subsection, their style became emotionally expressive and introspective. In Field Diary Excerpt 10, the complex relationships between domestic life and users of social media were analysed and justified the use of social media as a platform for emotional openness (Panger, 2017). What was not mentioned in Excerpt 10 was that this openness created social media networks of shared thoughts and feelings and, moreover, strong and tightknit online communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this openness was emphasised through negative emotional responses (Gao et al., 2020; McLean & Maalsen, 2020), as discussed below.

Academics who studied human psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns have shown there were heightened senses of pessimism, including widespread emotions of uncertainty, apprehension and dismay (McLean & Maalsen, 2020). Studies of social media users showed a specific decline in mental health as people became overexposed to upsetting news from around the world (Bashir & Bhat, 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Collinson, 2020). For musicians, both professional and amateur, as well as for live music audiences, there was frustration as music venues were made inaccessible and economically vulnerable, and there were very few contingency plans for musical cultures (Moore, 2020). Parsons (2020) stated that this not only had an impact on the ways music was practiced during the pandemic (such as through more technological means) but was also represented in the music itself. The findings of my investigation tended to agree with those of other academic disciplines regarding emotion on social media during the pandemic:

> I have noticed that there has been an increase in the music that is being uploaded to Yorkshire folk social media that is describable as melancholic. This is especially so in groups such as the Yorkshire Folk Music Group and #QuarantineSessions. This melancholy is exemplified in the expanding use of haunting lyricism and overall tones of the music… Of the 6 musically orientated participants currently involved in the investigation, 3 suggested that their engagement with sound-based folk cultures have become reflective of the unsettling times of the pandemic. Participants used adjectives such as “plaintive”, “melancholic” and “darker” to describe this reflection. My observations have tended to match this. I have noticed captions of musical content uploaded to Yorkshire folk social media have adopted (generic) phrases such as

> "Apologies if this one's a bit dark", "Here's one to cry to" and suchlike (quotations observed in the Yorkshire Folk Music Facebook Group in August 2020).
>
> - Field Diary Excerpt 12, 4th of August 2020.

Figure 5.5 is a sketch of a guitarist's perspective of playing music, provided by a participant found in one of the Yorkshire folk music groups. The participant did not provide a detailed interpretation of the piece, as I did not have the chance to explore the artwork through an art-elicitation interview, so the following interpretations are based on my own observations. As a pencil sketch, the piece is naturally dark in terms of shading effects (Rose, 2008; Jay, 2020). It shrouds the piece in a mood of darkness but also makes it appear timeless, placeless and emotive (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lury & Wakefield, 2012). The dark shading in front of the guitarist (to the top of the sketch) captured my interest, as I questioned exactly what it represented. It creates a hazy, shadowy effect which isolates the guitarist but also makes the subject and their guitar the only identifiable elements of the piece. So, referring to the art-elicitation prompt of: 'Please produce a piece that represents your current experiences of Yorkshire folk culture' that inspired Figure 5.5, it can be interpreted that the participant felt isolated and solitary as they practiced playing their guitar during the pandemic. Just as these observations can be represented in the sketch, they can equally be represented in music. This was the case with participants who produced auditory artworks in response to my prompt.

Figure 5.5: *A guitar player's perspective of playing music on their guitar* [Drawing] Art-elicitation from participant who was discovered in one of the music orientated Yorkshire folk social media groups (2020).

Moving onto the auditory data, Figure 5.6 presents the lyrics (both original and in standard English) for the popular Yorkshire folksong *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at. On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* is a grisly and cannibalistic song about love, death and revenge (Billingsley, 2010). The narrative of the song follows an unnamed character as they chase the object of their affections (Mary Jane) and subsequently die from exposure to the cold winds of Ilkley Moor, West Yorkshire, for simply not wearing a hat. The narrative then follows the energy and matter from the courter's corpse as it is consumed and re-consumed through the localised food chain (Kettell, 1998). Unattributed to any specific composer, this pre-19th century song is typically sung in a (West) Yorkshire accent and dialect. This ballad unequivocally meets the criteria of a traditional folksong and is labelled the 'unofficial' anthem of Yorkshire (Brocken, 2003; Howes, 2016).

On Ilkla Moor Baht'at	
On Ilkla Moor Baht'at **(Original)**	***On Ilkley Moor Without a Hat*** **(Standard English Translation)**
[1]Wheear 'ast tha bin sin' ah saw thee, ah saw thee?	[1]Where have you been since I saw you, I saw you?
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at	On Ilkley Moor without a hat
[3]Wheear 'ast tha bin sin' ah saw thee, ah saw thee?	[3]Where have you been since I saw you, I saw you?
[4]Wheear 'ast tha bin sin' ah saw thee?	[4]Where have you been since I saw you?
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at	On Ilkley Moor without a hat
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at	On Ilkley Moor without a hat
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at	On Ilkley Moor without a hat
Tha's been a cooartin' Mary Jane	You've been courting Mary Jane
Tha's bahn' to catch thy deeath o' cowd	You're bound to catch your death of cold
Then us'll ha' to bury thee	Then we will have to bury you
Then t'worms'll come an' eyt thee oop	Then the worms will come and eat you up
Then t'ducks'll come an' eyt up t'worms	Then the ducks will come eat up the worms
Then us'll go an' eyt up t'ducks	Then we will go and eat up the ducks
Then us'll all ha' etten thee	Then we will all have eaten you
That's wheear we get us oahn back.	That's where we get our own back.

Figure 5.6: *'On Ilkla Moor Baht'at' original (left) and standard English translation (right)*
[Folksong] Unknown authorship, composed in the mid-19th century, Yorkshire. The first section is the central verse, with lines one, three and four interchanging with the supplementary lines (with reference to Kellett, 1998).

The use of space and place is a common device in English folk music (Stradling, 1998; Brocken, 2003; Howes, 2016). As the setting for *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at,* Ilkley Moor is a large expanse of moorland in West Yorkshire and provides the backdrop for the anthem (see Figure 5.7). Moors are often imagined as desolate yet romantic settings, making them ideal for tales of affection and death (Billingsley, 2010). To maintain moorland, the purple heather synonymous with Yorkshire moors is slashed and burnt every 12 years, so that new heather, may flourish (Imeson, 1971). This nurturing of moorland ecosystems is tied into both tourism and a controversial economy of grouse shooting (Edensor, 2000). This tantamount process of death and rebirth throughout moorland can be seen to reflect the continuity and flow of the energies within the corpse in *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* (Kellett, 1998).

Figure 5.7: *Visitors looking across Ilkley Moor from the Cow and Calf Rocks on Yorkshire Day 2020* [Photograph] Ilkley Moor, West Yorkshire, United Kingdom (Bilton Park Village Farm Campsite, 2020).

Despite *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* being heavily attached to the grotesque, represented by the lyricism and narrative of the song, and its association to Yorkshire moorland, the song is conventionally performed in a manner that is upbeat and joyful (Kellett, 1998; Billingsley, 2010). Some of the most popular covers of the song since the early-20th century are covers by Leslie Sarony (1934), Bill Oddie (1975) and the Band of the Grenadier Guards (2011); all of which are humorous renditions of what might be understood as a morbid subject matter (listen to Audio File 4). The verses in *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* (Figure 5.6) and Audio File 4 are repetitive, catchy, unchallenging and easy-to-follow, making it ideal for others to sing along to and create senses of joy and togetherness (Kellett, 1998).

(Follow Google Drive link):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dBqd3wRioyPMjKiRHhU-99XOsTzJ0eZq/view?usp=sharing

Audio File 4: *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at cover* [Folksong] a popular cover of the folksong which has inspired many contemporary performances over the years (Leslie Sarony, 1934).

On Ilkla Moor Baht'at is perceived as a traditional Yorkshire folksong (Kellett, 1998). However, during the pandemic and lockdown, the song was practiced, performed and listened to in very

unconventional ways. Oftentimes, this unconventionality was a result of the emergent technological and interconnected practices necessary to reproduce music on social media (Parsons, 2020). Instead of the song retaining its upbeat and cheerful characteristics, with the effect of creating communally experienced senses of joy, performances of *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* during the pandemic became reflective of recent times and evocative of deeper human emotions. Audio File 5 is an example of a cover of *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* produced during the pandemic and lockdown of the UK in the summer of 2020. Specifically, the cover was released on Yorkshire Day 2020, typically a day of celebration in the region.[5] Audio File 5 retains the classic melody of *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* depicted in Audio File 4 but is played more slowly and creates discord tension between some of the instruments by staggering and holding certain notes. Referring to Figure 5.3, Audio File 5 was also an example of an 'online Yorkshire folk band', as the piece of music was produced at a time when physical bands could not get together. In fact, the performance of Audio File 5 inspired the sketch of Figure 5.3. Also streamed and uploaded on Facebook, the ways in which Audio File 5 was performed and listened to were facilitated by the digital technologies and connective capabilities of social media.

(Follow Google Drive link below):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1l0omlJbkhqVsDK4NJ0zT_cOJqD6hlVzg/view?usp=sharing

Audio File 5: *On Ilkley Moor Baht'at brass band cover* [Folksong] uploaded to Facebook on Yorkshire Day 2020 (Strata Brass, 2020).

Further to the ways in which Audio File 5 was performed, shared and listened to, the ways in which people engaged with the piece and the networks of people who also listened the folksong was also transformed by the features of social media. Figure 5.8 shows all the quantifiable Facebook engagements with Audio File 5. Evidently, it was most common for people to react to the music by providing a digital "thumbs up" ("like") or heart or provide a comment in the comments section.

[5] **Yorkshire Day** – An annual day of celebration to promote the historic English region of Yorkshire. Took place in 2020 during a more relaxed period of COVID restrictions.

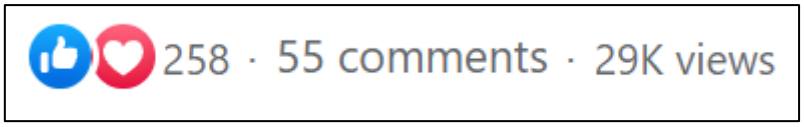


Figure 5.8: *The Facebook "likes", reactions, comments and views for the upload of Audio File 5* [Screenshot] Strata Brass, Facebook (2020).

Additionally, the comments section allowed people to converse and share their thoughts and feelings regarding the content. These comments either gave praise to the musicianship and composition of the piece or reflected on their individual thoughts and emotions evoked when listening. The following are 3 individual comments from the comments section of Audio File 5:

> "Brilliant. Missing brass band concerts every summer"
>
> "Hope it will not be long before live performances will be back soon"
>
> "Really great, makes me proud to be Yorkshire"
>
> – Three commentors on the Facebook upload of Audio File 5 (01.08.2020).

Evident in these three comments, there was reflection on the musicianship of the composition, some which reflected on personal experiences of lockdown and disconnection from live music, as well as one which displayed a strong sense of Yorkshire-ness through the digital performance, transmission and hearing of Audio File 5. Referring to Parsons (2020), these are also comments that musicians in the physical realm are likely not to hear, again relating to the emotional openness of social media (Panger, 2017).

As per Audio Files 2, 3 and 5, it appeared that it was more acceptable during lockdown for music performed in the home and uploaded to social media to be atmospherically less playful and more evocative, when compared to Audio Files 1 and 4. This was not only the case for *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* covers. Audio File 6 is an original piece composed by a couple of instrumentalists local to Yorkshire during lockdown as they discovered, watched and were inspired by videos of boatbuilders in a seaside town called Whitby in North Yorkshire (see Figure 5.9). This band, Ciderhouse Rebellion (2020), was formed during the UK's first lockdown, with the name 'Ciderhouse' being Yorkshire linguistic wordplay meaning 'inside the house' (Whitehouse, 2020). The spare time, or freedom of expression as stated in the previous subsection, available during lockdown provided the band the time to access archived

material on the internet of working-class coastal Yorkshire practices, which would then help inspire their music (Whitehouse, 2020). The black-and-white footage in Figure 5.9 produces evocative video imagery of hardworking, working-class ship carpenters and seafarers, which is reflected in the sullen, swashbuckling and counterpart tone of Audio File 6.

(Follow Google Drive link):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lOu9cHwM96WNmBLPPpNWqJH-AKGz54ny/view?usp=sharing

Audio File 6: *The Whitby Rose* [Song] Inspired by the footage from Figure 5.9 during lockdown (Ciderhouse Rebellion, 2020).

Figure 5.9: *Archive footage of boatbuilders in a Yorkshire maritime town* [Screenshot from archived video footage] This footage inspired the composition of Audio File 6 (Ciderhouse Rebellion, 2020).

Spracklen (2013) described a sense of elitism often associated with artisan English folk cultures, including virtuoso music like Audio File 6; whereby specialist folk musicians and listeners thereof in the physical world tend to socio-culturally disengage with people who might be less knowledgeable on the matter. The interconnectivity of social media meant this type of folk music was not exclusive to any elitist folk cultural groups but instead shared between specialists and amateurs alike (Blank, 2012; Parsons, 2020; Miller, 2020). This was reflected in the comments of social media uploads of Audio File 6. Whilst some commentors of Audio File 6 were discussing the complex musicality of the piece, others were simply able to describe how the song individually affected them. Similar to the social media responses to

Audio File 5, comments on Audio File 6 were again open to emotion, typically of sentimental value such as the following:

> "It could justifiably be described as a folk symphony, possessing cyclical completeness yet creating a form that is, at once, both elemental and pastoral." – A review of Audio File 6 (Fatea in Whitehouse, 2021).

> "Wonderful film and music… Memories of watching traditional boat building… A very very evocative piece." – Facebook commentor on Audio File 6 (2021).

The previous section explored the emotional openness of Yorkshire folk music on social media, through a range of experimental and hybridised emergent, technological and interconnected practices. This section has shown how these otherwise experimental and hybridised forms of Yorkshire folk music (in the sense that they were produced and reproduced through various unconventional practices associated with social media) created relatively small-scale networks where people (both musicians and listeners) felt free to express their thoughts and feelings. Ultimately, this created networks around these experimental (practices of) Yorkshire folk music, and communities produced through deep senses of emotional togetherness on social media. In some cases, this was senses of joy and playfulness, as per Audio Files 1 and 4. Increasingly, however, there was evidence for another range of emotions and mental processes: sadness, grief, empathy, sentiment, introspection and many more. This emotional togetherness was also strongly attached to Yorkshire through various elements of music, such as: 1) the musician was from Yorkshire and regarded "one of our own" (Fletcher, 2012), as was the case with all artists in this section; 2) lyrics used place as a device of folk music (Stradling, 1998), including the recreational life of Hull in Audio File 1 and the cold Ilkley Moorland in Audio Files 4 and 5 and Figures 5.6 and 5.7; or 3) the music was inspired by the past memories of traditional Yorkshire practices such as Audio File 6 (Jones & Osborne, 2020). Regardless of how experimental or hybridised the music became or how abstract the technological practices of producing, sharing and listening to the music on social media was, there was always a strong association with Yorkshire. And, thus, this sense of emotional togetherness on social media was also synonymous with shared perceptions of Yorkshire-ness. This chapter will progress by looking at other sonic forms of culture, including voice, accent and dialect, as well as other nonauditory cultural forms in Yorkshire folk social media communities.

5.3: An Online Voice; Accent and Dialect

As another form of sonic culture, this section critically analyses the extent to which accent and dialect were instruments of a vocal cultural identity for the Yorkshire folk community on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.[6] It has been documented in the folk geographies of Yorkshire and studies into Yorkshire folk music and folklore that the spoken word, accent and dialect are very important to Yorkshire folk cultures and communities in terms of a shared communal identity (Brocken, 2003; Billingsley, 2010; Fletcher, 2012). For folk music, most regions in England have a specific instrument that makes their regional music styles stand out. In Yorkshire, this regional distinguishment comes through use of accent and dialect (Howes, 2016). However, as this folk culture shifts to the online world, the pervasive use of text-based communication contexts renders these elements of spoken language mostly impracticable in their regular auditory contexts (Kozinets, 2015; Miller, 2020). Hence, some digital soundscapes are often transcribed into textual soundscapes, or "textscapes" (see Stehle, 2012). This section begins to evaluate some of the attempts by the online Yorkshire folk community to revitalise or translate important elements of language to produce a distinct online voice and accentual identity at a time when face-to-face communication was limited. It follows from the previous section by looking at some emergent practices and communications styles synonymous with social media to (re)produce important elements of the spoken word, including internet memes, inspirational quotes and hashtags. Whilst a broad "language of the internet" was the most prominent force in terms of an online voice during my investigation, this section shows how the practices of social media and Yorkshire language were combined to produce powerful statements of togetherness during a time of crisis.

Before the data from the Yorkshire folk community case study is presented and analysed, it is important to look at ways in which other regional language cultures have prospered on the internet, through relevant textscapes. In an example of a regional language culture that has prospered, about 300 kilometres north of Yorkshire, there has been an exponential increase in the use of the Scots language variant since the popularisation of social media, especially on

[6] In this research, 'accent' refers to the pronunciation of language, with regionalised nuances; whilst 'dialect' refers to the region-specific characteristics of a language (Kanngieser, 2011).

Twitter (Livingston, 2019).[7] The most prevalent of these include the comedic storytelling and performance of witty anecdotes in what has been labelled 'Scottish Twitter', or 'Scottish Patter' on other platforms, which has garnered increasing attention in recent years due to its Celtic wit and purveying use of a distinct language (Jamieson & Ryan, 2019). The light-hearted and semiprivate context of Scottish Twitter has enabled even the most amateur Scots speakers to comfortably practice the language variant in a playful and informal manner. Instead of correct Scots spelling, most amateurs can phonetically spell out words in Scots with similar effect. The increasing use of Scots language on social media has connected people through a niche humour. It has even attracted attention outside of Scotland, by English speakers who can comprehend the language and are fascinated by its effectiveness in cultural and humorous online contexts (Jamieson & Ryan, 2019; see Figure 5.10).

'Scottish Twitter/Patter' Example	**Standard English Translation**
"aw haet wen yer dentist start talkin in code to their wee pal aboot yer teeth, yer got suhin to sae sae it to ma face"	"I hate when your dentist starts talking in code to their small friend about your teeth, you got something to say, say it to my face."

Figure 5.10: *An example of 'Scottish Twitter/Scottish Patter' in Scots (left) and standard English translation (right)* [Tweet] Anonymous authorship, from Jamieson & Ryan (2019).

Scots language has been labelled 'endangered' by UNESCO (2010) for many years. The use of Scots on social media is, now, injecting more life and attention to the language. This revitalisation was only feasible in the advent of social media, allowing people outside of Scotland to engage with the geographically regionalised language, as well as providing a platform particularly for younger Scots speakers to practice the language (Livingston, 2019). The accessibility and inclusivity of Scottish Twitter has helped develop local and regional online identities through the playful practice of provincial language (Jamieson & Ryan, 2019). Scots, however, is a recognised language, which likely gave it greater power and will to be used online, in comparison to smaller, more regionalised dialects.

[7] **Scots language** – a West Germanic language spoken in Scotland and part of Ireland. Scots (Modern Scots especially) is usually comprehensible, understandable, and decipherable to most English speakers (UNESCO, 2010).

Moving onto the case study of this investigation, it is important to note that Yorkshire accents and dialects do differ staggeringly between individual regions, such as East and West Yorkshire, as well as between cities and rural areas. However, a general or stereotypical Yorkshire accent might drop certain consonants, such as the 'g' in words with the suffix '-ing', for example: eatin' and hearin'; and h-dropping, for example 'Hull' might become: 'ull. In the previous section, it became evident that Yorkshire folk music produced, shared and listened through social media was a viable platform for the expression of voice, accent and dialect (Morris, 2015). This was observable in some of the more lyrical pieces of music, such as *Andy Palmer* (Audio File 1) where colloquial terms and phrases were used to give the song a strong connection to the recreational life local to Hull. The use of a Yorkshire accent was also significant to the performance of *On Ilkla Moor Baht'at* (Figure 5.6; Audio Files 4 and 5) on Yorkshire Day 2020, as it helped strengthen senses of regional pride, togetherness and Yorkshire-ness.

The Yorkshire accent and dialect were also significant in the poetic practices and representations of folk culture that circulated around social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Proper Yorkshire, Together* (see Figure 5.11) is a poem that was written and performed in a (West) Yorkshire accent and dialect, and was circulated across social media during the UK's first lockdown. It served to inform people of the changing circumstances and correct procedures regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. In this instance, accent and dialect was used as a poetic device to convey an important message in a manner that was both appealing and understandable to localised Yorkshire populations. Relatable to the previous section, the poem also has significant recurring themes of togetherness and Yorkshire-ness throughout. As it was shared across social media, these senses of togetherness and Yorkshire-ness were also shared regarding the dire circumstances presented as a result of the pandemic (McCafferty, 2020). Thus, accent and dialect were practiced in the digital realm through the sharing and consumption of Yorkshire folk music and poetry. In the physical realm, however, the spoken word, accent and dialect are factors of a local culture that are practiced in less-formal and less-overt sociocultural contexts than performances of music and poetry, both of which use voice as devices to convey messages and meanings (Leyshon et al., 1998; Carney, 1998a; Boland, 2010; Kearney, 2010; Strong, 2011; Miller, 2018).

Proper Yorkshire, Together

Whether t'sun comes up in Yorkshire, or t'rain begins to fall,
We proper stick together, when t'Covid comes to call.

When tha's flummoxed by t'gubbins abaht masks and tests and t'rules,
Keep apart to stay together, like us Yorkshire folk allus do.

Wash tha mitts for 20 seconds as often as tha can,
Tha won't see t'muck of Covid if it's gotten on tha hands.

If tha's spluttering, feeling mafted or stuff don't smell or taste quite reight,
Those are symptoms of t'Covid, so it's time to isolate.

Stay 'ome if tha has symptoms, TEN days should do t'trick,
For t'rest o't' family? 14 days, get t'online shop booked quick!

Pick up t'blower; book a test when t'symptoms start to show,
It teks 2 minutes in your gob'oil – wouldn't you rather know?

Mek sure tha covers tha cake 'oil and tha neb end at t'same time,
Tha friendly Yorkshire smile can still be seen in tha eyes.

Treat tha face covering like tha underpants,
Swap it regular, don't share it abaht,
Don't gadabaht commando,
Doff it safely and chuck it out.

Keep tha distance when tha's gadding and tha group o'folks small,
Big throngs of folks together will mean Covid's come to call.

Two metres apart is magic, or perhaps to you and me,
T'length of a chip'oil counter, two sheep or one Sean Bean.

So stay safe for tha nanna, for tha grandad, for t'bairns,
Stay safe and follow t'rules until t'pandemic ends.

Cause whether t'sun comes up in Yorkshire, or t'rain begins to fall,
We'll proper stick together, apart, but together, all.

Follow link to watch the official reading on YouTube:
(377) Proper Yorkshire, Together - a poem about Yorkshire Day during COVID-19 with Ian McMillan - YouTube

Figure 5.11: *Proper Yorkshire, Together* [Poem] Performed by Ian McMillan in association with NHS Bradford District and Craven (McCafferty, 2020).

In their article *Digital Language Death,* Kornai (2013) suggested that the abbreviation and initialisation of words in most languages on the internet was endangering authentic and traditional language. They implied that the overall shortening of words and language, which is synonymous with digital communication, is simply faster and more efficient, especially

when typing. For example, it is quicker to use a common abbreviation such as 'BRB' than it is to use the more punctual counterpart 'I'll be right back!' (Lenihan, 2014). While the example of the Scots language variant on social media might strongly disagree with Kornai's assertations, the Yorkshire folk community appeared more conflicted between the attraction of using quick and efficient 'internet speak', and the heightened senses of individual and communal identity when using language styles associated with Yorkshire:[8]

> I have begun to realise throughout my time in the online Yorkshire folk communities, the fundamental ways in which people communicate barely differs from outside of these folk communities (the rest of the internet). Even within niche groups, a more common "language of the internet" is utilised, including the shortening, abbreviating and initialising of words, as well as the use of emojis and other abstract symbology. Although I have observed some digital translations of the Yorkshire accent and dialect within these groups, these are normally short-lived and attached to specific pieces of content, such as a meme, a song, a story. Once this content ages and falls ever lower in the newsfeeds of social media, the faster and more efficient abbreviations and initialisations of English words again becomes the norm. Even in isolated local-digital spaces, the potential for communal online identity attached to "Yorkshirisms" appears to be no match for the efficiency of regular SMS and internet speak. When people do incorporate Yorkshire accent and dialect into online communications, it does sometimes seem a bit forced, gimmicky and perhaps it would be too unnatural to completely change an online community's instinctive online writing and communication styles…
>
> In this instance, the norms of global internet culture might have permeated local-digital spaces and online Yorkshire folk communities…
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 13, 12th of August 2020.

As stated in Excerpt 13, in folk social media groups such as the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group, Cottingham Community and Walkington What's On, even subtle use of everyday Yorkshire accents and dialects were uncommon. From an observational point-of-

[8] 'Internet speak', 'SMS language' or 'textspeak' is abbreviated language or slang commonly used within digital communications contexts (Kornai, 2013).

view, the sparing use of dialect and accent in my investigation was surprising, because when such 'Yorkshirisms' *were* used, they produced unique pieces of online content where people temporarily amassed to practice, share and engage with their local language cultures. This will become clearer in the following examples of internet memes and inspirational quotes with connections to Yorkshire language cultures. These are both examples in which Yorkshire folk and languages cultures were reproduced in the format of an emergent practice associated with globally popular social media cultures (Kornai, 2013; Miller, 2020). Beginning with memes, an internet meme is an image, video or piece of text, typically with humorous value and is briefly circulated across the internet (Börzsei, 2013). Internet memes were popularised in 2005, when the social media platform YouTube was created. Ever since, these memes have been a form of humour, entertainment and even acts of political awareness and resistance in common internet cultures (Fang, 2020). Memes have been a special area of research in various fields of discussion within the social sciences since the late-20th century, as they have been related to forms of cultural inheritance and changes in generational cultures (see Griesemer, 1988; Sterelny, 2006). These fields have had renewed interest since the dawn of internet "meming", as they have now been branded as significant to worldwide internet linguistics and culture (see Börzsei, 2013; Fang, 2020).

In the context of my case study, Yorkshire-orientated memes often took formats similar to Figures 5.12 and 5.13, with captions such as "How to speak Yorkshire", "How to understand a Yorkshire person" and "If you can read and understand these phrases, then you are from Hull/Leeds/Sheffield/York". Figure 5.12 presents a phonetic hodgepodge of syllables and phrases which might be incorporated in some stereotypical Yorkshire dialects. Juxtaposed with the clear and succinct description in standard English just below, the Yorkshire "phrases" become rather absurd, which is where the element of humour is produced (Börzsei, 2013). Figure 5.12 was also deliberately designed to resemble the packaging of Yorkshire Tea, a popular tea brand in the UK originating from Yorkshire. This design added a subtle familiarity

and regionality to Yorkshire to the image. It was also quite brazen to relate the Yorkshire accent to something as trivial as Yorkshire Tea.

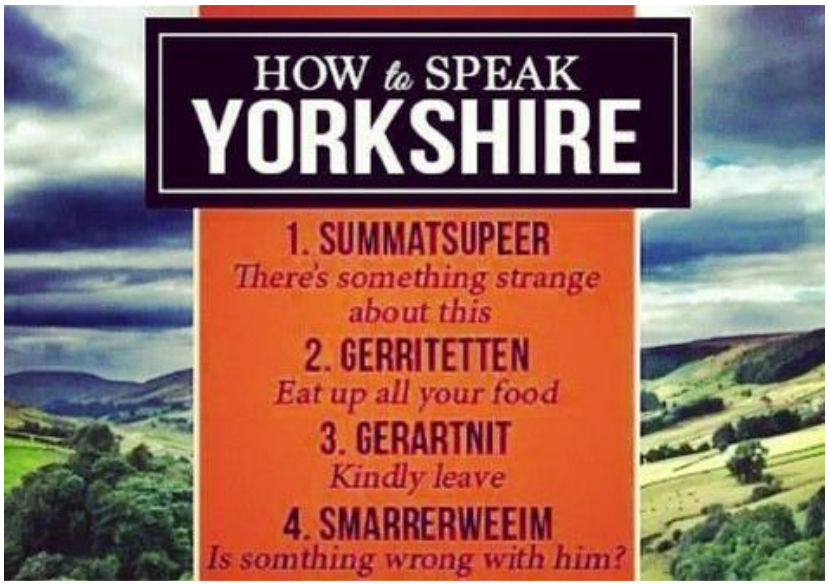


Figure 5.12: *'How to Speak Yorkshire'* [Internet meme] Observed on Pinterest (2020).

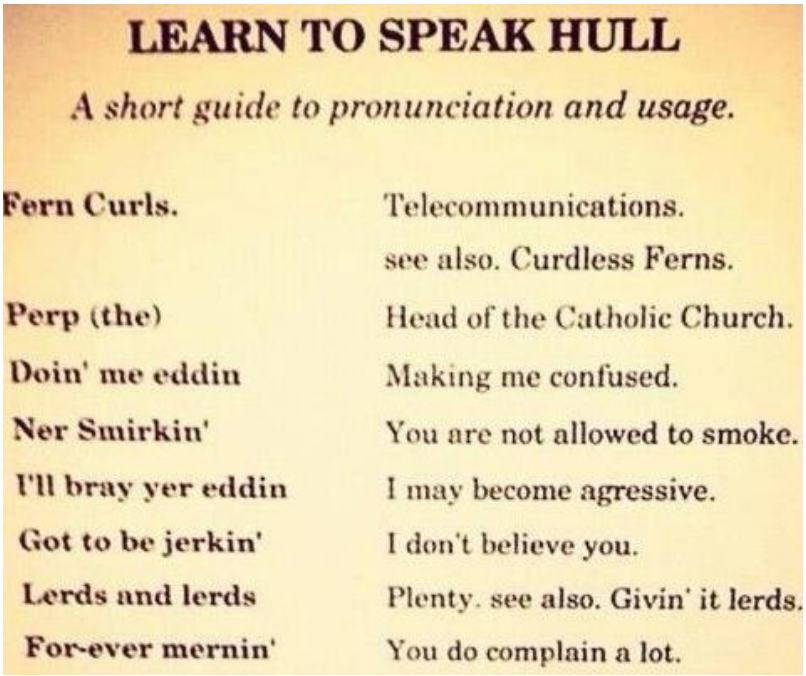


Figure 5.13: *'Learn to Speak Hull'* [Internet meme] Observed on Facebook. Posted by Hull Daily Mail (2020).

It can be difficult to distinguish content of playfulness from sincerity within digital contexts (Androutsopoulos, 2008), but the use of local and regional language in content such as Figures 5.12 and 5.13 across Yorkshire folk social media was largely done in a playful manner, as shown through the following observations. This playful manner was often tinged with a

community-orientated self-mockery. The collective self-mocking surrounding these memes connected people across social media with comparable accents and regional dialects (Livingston, 2019). When posted in Yorkshire folk social media pages, this content was predominantly met with reactions depicting laughter and amusement (see Figure 5.14) and comments which mirrored these reactions.

Figure 5.14: *The Facebook 'reactions' and comments to the original post containing Figure 5.13* [Screenshot] Observed on Facebook. Posted by Hull Daily Mail (2020).

Often, people would add their own Yorkshire "phrases", to add to witty discussions on accent and dialect. Some did apparently treat maintaining the distinction between local and regional language as a matter of importance. In one comment, a member of the online Yorkshire folk community made it clear that the dance known as the 'Twerk' (or 'Twerking'), which is a globally popular and provocative dance move, should not under any circumstances be mistaken with the common Yorkshire phrase: 'T'werk' (or 'to-work'), which is what a Yorkshire person might say when they are headed to work. Although this crude juxtaposition was presented in quite a formal textual manner, the theme at hand and the fact that others who engaged with the post reacted with laughter and flippant agreement suggested that this was done playfully. It was comparable to the Scots speaker in Figure 5.10 regarding their grievance with the dentist. There was no real emotional grievance with the dentist. The post extracted crude humour from real-life scenarios and used it as a platform for the expression of local language cultures (Livingston, 2019; Jamieson & Ryan, 2019). These memes used a template created by popular internet culture but the humour was generated through use of local and regional language contexts. People were finding humour within their own accent and dialect in a wittingly and non-demeaning way, alongside others with shared characteristics of language identity. It was another way in which a sense of togetherness could be produced, as well as belonging to a community based on localised humours. Although this "meming" occurred before lockdown, it had a greater online presence during lockdown, as people were unable to physically see or talk to each other. Like 'Scottish Twitter', the shared humour was a network which connected people. And, particularly in a time of crisis, a shared humour over such things which could be perceived as trivial, provided a friendly reminder not to take such

things too seriously. Thus, online contexts provided the only means to create this distinct vocal identity and togetherness made through accent and dialect (Börzsei, 2013; Fang, 2020; Bashir & Bhat, 2020).

Another notable use of Yorkshire language culture in the digital realm was slightly more detached from internet "meming", but could still entertain playful contexts, was use of local dialect and phrasing in digital illustrations and inspirational quotes, such as Figure 5.15. Figure 5.15 is a digital illustration of the words 'be reyt', which is a common (South) Yorkshire phrase (sometimes 'be reet') meaning 'it will be alright' and can be used either sincerely or insincerely, depending on context. I observed this image attached to discussions on the effects that the pandemic was having on people's mental health. This discussion was often linked to emotions of anxiety about the destruction of physical cultures and cultural institutions because of the economic collapse brought about by the pandemic, including traditional pubs, grassroots music venues and folk clubs (Trendell, 2020; Bashir & Bhat, 2020).

Figure 5.15: "*Be Reyt*" [Digital illustration] Sheffield, England. Observed on Twitter (Be Reyt, 2019).

There were shared and unspoken undertones behind the term 'be reyt' as it circulated online folk communities which differed from the actual words of the saying. People used the term as reassurance (a form of coping mechanism) that physical world cultures, as well as other

economic, social and political factors, would be okay once the pandemic ended, even if it were likely that they would not necessarily be okay. For example, the term was heavily attached to discussions regarding the state and potential bankruptcy of traditional Yorkshire pubs and grassroots music and arts venues. It was documented during the summer of 2020 that up to 920 grassroots music venues across the UK were facing permanent closure (Trendell, 2020; Moore, 2020), whilst it was estimated 2,000 pubs were forced to permanently shut as a result of the financial instability created by the pandemic and lockdown (CAMRA, 2020; BBPA, 2021). In one case, a grassroots live music venue in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, known as the Leadmill, which accommodated many varied local and regional artists and musical cultures, including folk, indie, rock, jazz and many more, was a fundamental venue for up-and-coming musicians and their listeners. When facing speculation from the public and local media outlets such as *the Star, Sheffield* (2020) regarding a potential bankruptcy, threads across social media linked to this speculation were packed with the words "It'll be reyt" and "#BeReyt". These words were echoed by attendees, musicians, workers and management of the Leadmill, especially on Twitter and Facebook (see Figure 5.16). Seemingly inspired by the local community standing with the Leadmill, Alex Turner, the frontman of the Sheffield band the Arctic Monkeys, raffled their iconic Fender Stratocaster guitar, raised £128,000 and used the money to buy back essential music equipment for the Leadmill (Roche, 2020). After this, Turner and the Arctic Monkeys joined the #SaveOurVenues movement, helping raise awareness for other struggling local music establishments (Hargreaves, 2020; Moore, 2020). This created another flurry of social media tweets and comments with the words "It'll be reyt" and "Let's make it reyt" surrounding this interaction (see Figure 5.17).

Figure 5.16*: A collage of the use of the term 'be reyt' on social media in threads, comments and online discussions regarding mental health and issues around mental health related to the impacts of the pandemic on local cultures and institutions* [Screenshots] Observed and collected on Facebook and Twitter during my online ethnography (2020).

Figure 5.17: *Digital art depicting the Arctic Monkeys frontman Alex Turner in a mugshot holding a sign with the words 'BE REYT'* [Digital illustration] Observed on Facebook in August 2020 (Cockayne, 2020).

These few and simple words created a localised sense of camaraderie on social media between not just the Yorkshire folk community but also shared across other communities that valued these local and grassroots establishments (Haubrich, 1997; Stehle, 2012; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). Although spaces of culture in the physical world were suffering a harsh economic fate, local accents and dialects were used on social media to bond the communities attached to these spaces. This togetherness, forged through language in the digital world, dampened the angst attached to the loss of significant local cultural spaces, because people realised their grief was shared across Yorkshire communities. When reading these comments, I felt as though the words were almost implying: "We are not alone".

Although the use of local accent and dialect was few and far between on Yorkshire folk social media, these irregular pieces of content proved significant as they reflected a vocal identity parallel to the Yorkshire folk cultures of the physical realm (Billingsley, 2010; Fletcher, 2012; Starkey et al., 2017). International and global scale internet speak was the most prevalent force in terms of shaping an overall online voice during my case study investigation. Even in digital spaces perceived as local. Still, the small-scale use of accent and dialect in folk social media networks showed that these aspects of a localised language culture were (momentarily) powerful in producing senses of belonging to a Yorkshire folk community when

online. In the case of the Yorkshire folk community, senses of communal belonging were produced through displays of togetherness, shared humour, solidarity and values of local cultures and geographies. Ultimately, these powerful moments were created through a blend of the vernacular language(s) of Yorkshire and the emergent styles of communication on social media, including memes, inspirational quotes, digital illustrations and hashtags. So, whilst academics such as Kornai (2013) have underlined issues regarding the relationship between digital media and language, digital technologies such as social media and the ways that people communicate in these digital worlds can also develop localised language cultures and bond the communities surrounding these language cultures (Boland, 2010; Kanngeiser, 2011; Stehle, 2012).

5.4: Visual Digital Landscapes: Creativity, Imagination and the Fairytalelike Folk Village

So far, this chapter has looked at sound and text-based Yorkshire folk cultures on social media. The next step is to look at visual cultures. This final element will detail a broad and "full" experience of local cultures enacted on social media, as digital worlds are experienced through 2 main human senses: sight and hearing (Ash et al., 2016). This section critically analyses the use of visual digital materials (or digital visualities) on Yorkshire folk social media. It shows how visual digital cultures, utilised on an online community-wide scale can manipulate distinct social media landscapes with emphasis on local scale cultures and geographies. Specifically, creativity and imagination are significant to the use of digital visualities on social media, in terms of how they are creatively implemented into everyday digital and cultural worlds, and how they are understood by users. The visual digital materials presented throughout this section are namely images and artworks, including digital paintings and photography, and were a product of the art-elicitation portion of the investigation. The online village folk groups and traditional pub-orientated online folk communities (Table 3.2) are of the most importance to this section as they were significant spaces for the sharing and viewing of digital visual materials and construction of social media landscapes.

According to Merolla (2002), digital worlds require an element of imagination from users to function properly. Imagination allows people to make sense of digital environments and the ways in which they function (Wevers & Smits, 2020). This is exemplified in video gaming. In Jones & Osborne's (2020) analysis of virtual landscapes, using the example of the popular title *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* (2015), which is set in 1860s London, they showed that the player must use their imagination to virtually place themselves in the alternate historical world. Similarly, on social media, "likes" (such as Figure 5.14) have little significance except for the value placed on them by users (Panger, 2017). As such, it requires a certain amount of creativity and imagination to make sense of the digital world and to use it as a place of culture (Merolla, 2002; Wevers & Smits, 2020; Miller, 2020). Outlined in the literature review, English folk communities, as imagined communities, place great significance on the cultures and connections that can be envisioned (Brocken, 2003; Blank, 2012). This was typified through the idyll of a small, quaint, fairytalelike and rural countryside village as a romanticised place for folk culture, recurrent throughout the folklores and folk literatures of England (Dorson,

1968; Revill, 2005; Wright, 2014; Jay, 2020) and, specifically, Yorkshire (Billingsley, 2010; Fletcher, 2012). Although this idyll is unrealistic in the physical world, it has sustained significance and shaped both folk cultures and the spaces thereof through the shared thoughts and imaginations of folk communities (Sánchez & Bouso, 2015; Holloway, 2017). This section explores the new forms that this idyll has taken through visual digital materials and the effect this idyll has on Yorkshire folk cultures on social media.

Figure 5.18 was the most direct piece of visual digital culture elicited during my investigation. It is a digital painting depicting a chameleon in a hazy woodland, tentatively holding onto a tree branch. The idea was inspired by the striking wallpaper plastered on a wall at one of the participant's favourite Yorkshire pubs (also included in Figure 5.18). The reason this was the most direct representation of visual digital culture was because the piece was created using a digital painting application. Whilst inspired by physical things such as a specific plot of wallpaper and a creature in its natural habitat, the painting, as an object which could be manipulated through various artistic techniques and digital commands, was wholly situated within a digital medium (Benford et al., 2005; Gergen, 2012; Miller, 2020).

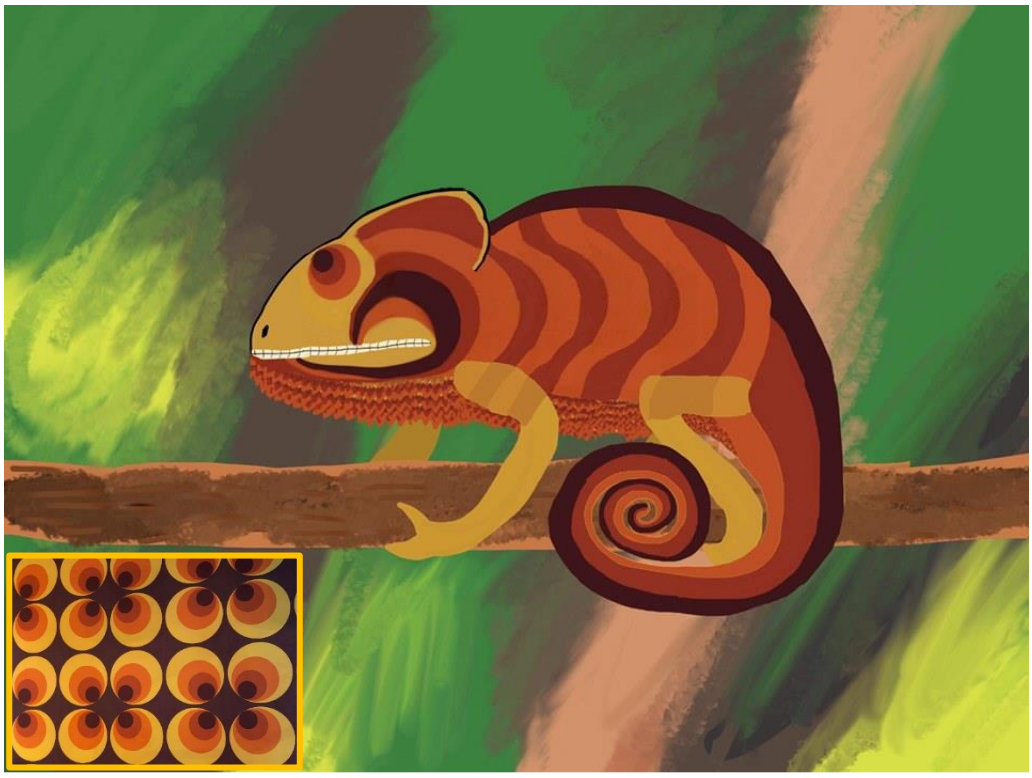


Figure 5.18: *Chameleon and the wallpaper that inspired the piece in the bottom left* [Digital painting] Created using digital painting software (Le Vine, 2020).

The participant who created Figure 5.18 stated that their artwork represented their embodied experiences of Yorkshire folk culture through digital means. It especially symbolised expressions of belonging and, to an extent, unbelonging. They talked openly about their visual impairment, for which they have suffered prejudice in regular society. Yet, within their favourite pub, these discriminations can be lessened through the unusual fashion of the space. The use of the chameleon in Figure 5.18 represents the participant's ability to "blend in" to the surroundings of the institution:

> "I feel like I blend in… the wallpaper is like eyes watching everyone" – The participant who created Figure 5.18 discussing their artwork.

In this example, the participant's experiences of Yorkshire folk culture were represented entirely through a piece of visual digital culture.

In contrast to Figure 5.18, Figures 5.19a and 5.19b are visual artworks far more situated in a conventional physical medium. Figures 5.19a and 5.19b are physical drawings (using graphite pencilwork) of the Humber Bridge and a Game of Pool, respectively, and are representative of the participant's memories of the city of Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire and the city's folk culture. The Humber Bridge in Figure 5.19a is a significant symbol for the city while the Game of Pool in Figure 5.19b represents a much more mundane activity associated with Yorkshire pub-life.

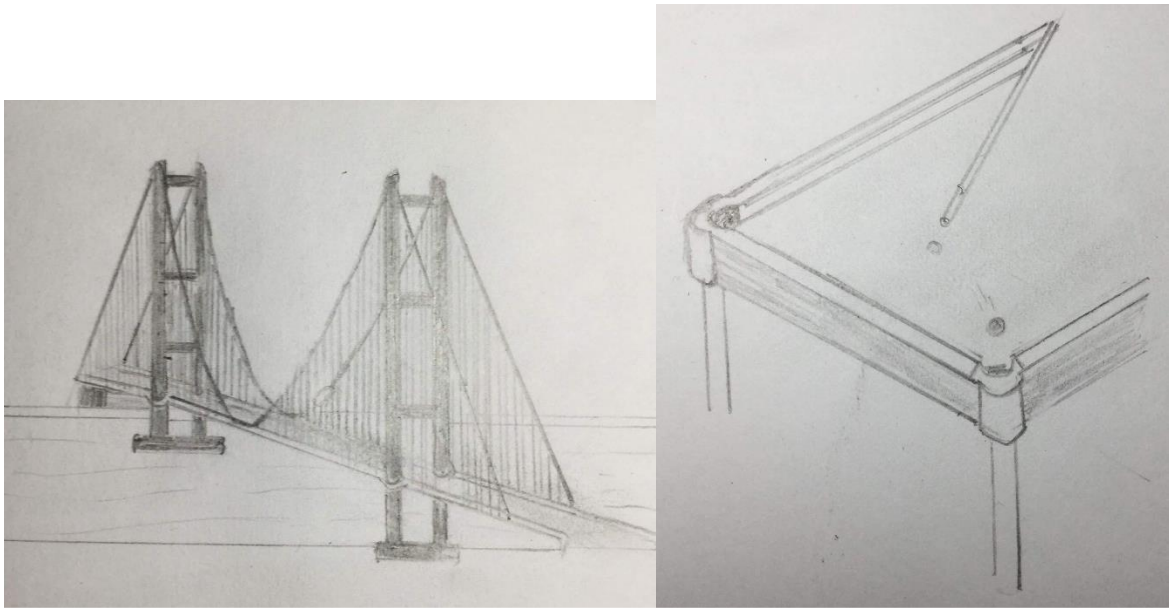


Figure 5.19a (left) and Figure 5.19b (right): *The Humber Bridge (left) and a Game of Pool (right)* [Drawings] Based on the participants physical experiences of Hull culture (Anonymous, 2020).

Talking about the significance of the Humber Bridge in Figure 5.19a, the participant said:

> "…it symbolises the welcome to Hull… To me this was a key meeting spot for both family and friends over my lifetime. Additionally, this also sparks memories of the story my granddad told me about the traditional crossing via boat." – Participant who created Figure 5.19a discussing their artwork.

Like the chameleon in Figure 5.18, the sketch of the Humber Bridge had a symbolic relationship to the participant. Instead of the piece purely representing an introspective experience of folklife, the drawing had a broader sentiment attached to the participant's family and, moreover, storytelling and historical continuity. The participant managed to capture their experience of a "welcome to Hull" and their senses of belonging and cultural identity to the city. Overall, this piece had power of representing cultural belonging and the sparking of sentimentally valued memories (Anderson, 2019). Comparable points were drawn around the first-person sketch of the lone guitar player in Figure 5.5. What makes these pieces important to the digital realm, however, is that the participant who created Figure 5.19a regularly used photo-sharing social media like Instagram during the pandemic to communicate their style of art. While these were hand-drawn sketches, they were also digitalised through the processes of photocopying and placed in the digital realm to share the participant's artwork and the associated stories.

Figures 5.18 and 5.19a are different pieces but comparable in the sense that the meanings and practices behind these artworks changed as they entered the digital world. The idea of a chameleon being associated with a small pub in the northeast of England was inconceivable before the participant created that link via digital technology and art. Equally, personal stories of the Humber Bridge were only shared across a Yorkshire folk social media-wide scale because of the ability of social media to facilitate connections of sharable artforms and the associated knowledges. The digital and digitalised artforms elicited during my investigation displayed cultural powers; the power to produce shared thoughts and experiences through the connections made available on social media.

Whilst Figure 5.18 was a piece made entirely through digital processes, some visual material elicitations such as Figure 5.19a were situated in the physical realm, only to be captured and later manipulated by digital technologies. Figure 5.20 is a collection of digital photo-

elicitations from my investigation. I found these participants in online village folk social media groups, including Brilliant Beverley and Walkington What's On (Table 3.2). Collectively, their use of photography in social media contexts shaped online Yorkshire folk landscapes through various digitalised visualities. These photos were all captured in 2020 during the pandemic.

Figure 5.20a: *Village pond* [Photograph] Yorkshire, UK (Participant, 2020).

Figure 5.20b: *A couple of red cap mushrooms called Amanita muscaria, commonly known as 'fly agaric'* [Photograph] Yorkshire, UK (Participant, 2020).

Figure 5.20c: *A vernacular Yorkshire street at night* [Photograph] Yorkshire, UK (Participant, 2020)

Firstly, Figure 5.20a is a photograph of a pond in the Yorkshire countryside, taken from one of the banks during the summer of 2020. It shows a picturesque environment with plenty of sunlight, lush and vibrant landscaped vegetation, vivid reflections in the water and ducks swimming in the foreground. Although the photograph's picturesqueness is subjective (Rose, 2008), this image strongly relates to the rural landscapes which English folk view as idyllic, as is described by folk geographers and folklorists (Dorson, 1968; De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002). It is important to note, however, that this photo only captures a fleeting moment in which everything might have appeared 'idyllic' (Knoblauch et al., 2008; Bignante, 2010).

Figure 5.20b is another photograph of Yorkshire wildlife but focuses on a much smaller entity than the ecology of a pond. It shows a couple of red cap mushrooms, commonly known as 'fly agaric' (*Amanita muscaria*), in what appears to be the undergrowth of a woodland. In northern European cultures, including England, the fly agaric has been popularly depicted in children's stories as seats and homes for small mythical creatures, such as gnomes, fairies and Smurfs (Arora, 1986; Jay, 2020). Figure 5.20b does seem to capture that mystical quality about the fly agaric, with its distinct colour combinations and peculiar form, it is a complete contrast to the rest of the forest floor. The participant later uploaded this photo to social media, which other users commented in awe of the seeming magic radiated by the mushrooms.

Finally, Figure 5.20c is a photograph of an urban Yorkshire landscape. It shows an empty town street at night. The urban structure of the landscape indicates more vernacular architecture and urban composition, with weathered, pre-20th century buildings and narrow, uneven pathways (Hoey, 1984). However, the lighting and direction of the photograph create an interesting dynamic within this traditional Yorkshire township. The street lighting can be described as colder and harsher. The way the camera captures the light flare on the righthand side makes the streetlamp appear even more piercing. Conversely, the light emitting from the inn on the left, as well as some of the houses in the background, is much warmer and inviting. There is also an ominous purple haze hovering above the inn, which draws further attention.

Although different in many ways, the Figures in 5.20 each have an aspect regarding the spaces of Yorkshire folk culture that appeared to be romanticised by the photographer (and sometimes the viewers), which was focused on and captured. The images in Figure 5.20 all seemed to allude to the ideas, conceptualisations and perceptions presented in the folk geographical discussions on what English folk strive for (Revill, 2005; Billingsley, 2010; Jay,

2020). When collated on social media, these photos create a broader image associated with Yorkshire and folk culture. By uploading idealised digital photography to Yorkshire folk social media groups, such as Brilliant Beverley and Walkington What's On, the idylls behind these local spaces can be shared with a much wider and geographically disconnected population.

Each individual Figure in 5.20 can be considered as contributing to the idea of a little and fairytalelike countryside village, town, or other landscape where everything operates simplistically and on a small scale. Figure 5.18 was one of the ways in which this online perception could be made, highlighting the limitlessness of digital artform contexts in terms of how they can create digital artistic worlds. Figures 5.19 and 5.20, on the other hand, show how a blend of physical world spaces and digital technologies (namely digital cameras and editorial software) can produce worlds situated between the physical and digital as they are shared on social media. However, how these photographs were utilised as digital visualities in online Yorkshire folk groups still needs clarifying, as noted in the following field diary excerpt:

> There seems to be a morning ritual with the use of visual material across Yorkshire folk social media. Just before noon, social media groups, such as 'Walkington What's On', 'Cottingham Community', and 'Brilliant Beverley', are bombarded with photographs, images and other artworks made by various group members, captioned "from my morning trundles" or "taken last night" and suchlike. This imagery seems to almost "set-up" these groups for the day. Many of these photographs seem to allude or pay homage to the folk sensibility of a small, fairytalelike village, idyllic in both nature and character, where everyone knows each other's name and doors can be left unlocked. In reality, there is probably no such place. However, within these social media spaces, depicted by these photographs and their engagements with folk culture, perhaps this idyll does exist on some level. These photographs always depict what is good about small and local places such as Walkington, Cottingham, Beverley and Hull. And the way in which people engage with them is always optimistic – there are rarely any negative comments. The production and consumption of these pieces of digital visual culture ignores anything bad about these local places and communities. And within social media, if these "bad" aspects are never addressed, do they exist in this digital realm? Although the concept of a perfect small-scale

> countryside village is unreal in the contemporary physical world; perhaps this idyll is made accessible in the digital world. Through collections of these photographs, for example. Through the imagery and imaginary networks that the photos create. And through the folk who idealise this local-scale sensibility.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 14, 11th of July 2020.

Figure 5.20 was not simply a set of representations of my participant's experiences of folk culture. Collectively, the photos became an experience within themselves on social media, related to ideas and imagined conceptions of Yorkshire folk culture. An illustration of folk idealism (Rose, 2008). The selection of the subjects and the way they were taken were produced and influenced by prior experience of these cultural forms, showing that these are circulating references (Collier & Collier, 1986; Bear et al., 2017). They were digital objects which could be manipulated and used in cultural contexts to become what the Yorkshire folk *want* to see of their local villages – as in what they might view as idyllic regarding local spaces. Almost half of my photo-elicitation participants admitted to using filters or editing their photo(s) to make them more appealing. Although this photo editing could be perceived as distorting the 'reality' of the physical space where the picture was taken, it seemed to create a new reality within social media, where space and matter were more photogenic and appealing to the ideas of Yorkshire folk culture (Knoblauch et al., 2008; Ferretti, 2017). And, as stated in Excerpt 14, "within the folk who idealise this local-scale sensibility" – just like my participants who, when asked to submit art depicting their experiences of Yorkshire folk culture, provided visual pieces which represented what they thought was special about their local spaces and cultures.

For further comparison, Figure 5.21 is a photograph of the Sun Inn in Beverley (Table 3.1; Table 3.2) which has been heavily manipulated by digital technologies. The Figure reads the words: "Covid might have closed the door for now… but… guess what… It'll never shut out The Sun!" Below these words are illustrations of the coronavirus in its cellular form being beaten, stomped and bashed into submission. Although this image relates to the internet memes presented in the previous section with its crude sense of humour, Figure 5.21 also represents a sense of (cultural) empowerment. Although COVID did physically force the Sun Inn to close, the image empowered pubgoers, that the spirit of the Sun cannot be suppressed. This was displayed in some of the responses to Figure 5.21:

"Dam right it won't 🤘" – Comment from the Facebook upload of Figure 5.21 (2020).

Figure 5.21: *The Sun Inn's Facebook cover photo* [Edited photograph] The Sun Inn, Beverley, East Riding of Yorkshire, United Kingdom (The Sun Inn, 2020).

In the cases of the visual digital materials in this section, emergent cultural practices associated with digital technologies and internet connection allowed for the imagination and reimagination of folk cultures local to Yorkshire. Yorkshire folk cultures became connected to the inconceivable, such as an abstract chameleonic scene in Figure 5.18, an idyllic and fairytalelike village in Figure 5.20 and alternate worlds where the COVID-19 global health pandemic is quelled by a few fists and baseball bats in Figure 5.21. The capacity at which these artforms were uploaded to social media folk groups, outlined in Excerpt 14, meant these digital spaces were not only spaces but also landscapes. These landscapes, formed through the collective uploading and engagement with digital and digitalised artforms on social media, highlighted how the Yorkshire folk community collectively interpreted their more imaginary aspects of placemaking and community bonding. This included association to traditional Yorkshire folklores and recurrent idylls, as well as the digital restoration of identities surrounding these practices of creativity and imagination.

The emergent technological and interconnected practices of social media enabled Yorkshire folk to re-access imaginative folklores, idylls and imagery associated with the region. Not only this but these imageries were also visualisable through the visual digital cultures displayed throughout this chapter, as well as other materials archived in the Yorkshire folk social media groups. Together, these images formed landscapes which function through the technological practices of social media. And within these digital landscapes, Yorkshire folk communities bonded over shared thoughts, meanings, creativities and imaginations regarding the region; thus, completing the circulation of imagination, digital implementation and sharing of visual digital folk cultures.

5.5: Conclusions

This chapter has contributed to the answering of Research Question 2. It has demonstrated the ways participants of the Yorkshire folk community sonically, textually and visually practiced their cultures on social media. These practices were largely contained within specific online spaces and communities associated with Yorkshire folk cultures, such as those analysed in the previous chapter. This chapter has specifically evaluated the changes to Yorkshire folk cultures as they were enacted digitally and how these digital enactments of folk culture reshaped local identities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Firstly, Yorkshire folk music uploaded to niche social media groups with associations to Yorkshire produced distinct digital soundscapes. These soundscapes differed from conventional spaces of Yorkshire folk music in the physical world because the digital realm affected how music was produced, listened to and engaged with. The emergent nature of social media, in that it is heavily attached to modern digital technologies and increasingly interconnected networks, encouraged folk music to take on more experimental forms, exemplified through the online Yorkshire folk band. Often this experimentation led to folk music becoming more emotionally involved and reflective of the difficult times of the pandemic. Geographically distanced people who related to the invigorated emotional value of Yorkshire folk music on social media then bonded and formed digital folk communities, based on experimental folk music practices and emotional togetherness.

Secondly, in comparison to the profound senses of community produced through Yorkshire folk music on social media, voice, accent and dialect were less effective in strengthening forms

of sensory belonging to local and online communities. The relationship between Yorkshire language cultures and 'internet speak' was skewed. Common writing and communication styles which have been practiced over the past 30 years of the internet largely remained the norm within even the most isolated of local-digital spaces on social media. Attempts to permeate this common internet language with conventional and stereotypical Yorkshire communication styles merely entertained some fleeting playful contexts, which were typically engaged with in an almost gimmicky manner. Nevertheless, some examples did demonstrate strong displays of solidarity and community, showing that folk language cultures *can* be used to bond local folk communities on social media.

Finally, the collective use of visual digital cultures in Yorkshire folk social media groups forged digital landscapes. These digital landscapes enabled the Yorkshire folk community to access idylls such as the quaint, fairytalelike and countryside village using networks of individual and communal imagination. During the crisis of the pandemic, these imaginative and creative worlds based on Yorkshire folkloric idylls were used as spaces of escapism. Surrounding these digital landscapes on social media, Yorkshire folk communities bonded over shared thoughts, perceptions and imagined geographies regarding the visualisation of their local cultures. All of this was only made possible through the technologies used to manipulate visual digital cultures on social media and the online connections facilitated by the internet.

The Yorkshire folk cultural practices and representations presented in this chapter have all been affected or produced through the emergent technological and interconnected practices associated with social media. Whether cultural representations were constructed solely through digital software as per Figures 5.12, 5.13, 5.15 and 5.18, or whether more conventional practices were communicated through the interconnected web of social media such as Audio Files 2 and 5 and Figures 5.3, 5.11 and 5.19, or contained a blend like Audio File 3 and Figures 5.20 and 5.21, the function of digital technologies and social media always had an impact. The data analyses of this chapter extend to the art-elicitations and observations available in Appendices B and C, which provide collages of auditory, textual and visual materials not specifically referred to in text.

As has been presented throughout both this and the previous chapter, social media was a significant platform in reconnecting the Yorkshire folk community to their practices of folk

culture during the pandemic. However, this connection also overtly linked Yorkshire folk culture to nonlocal networks. As presented in both the previous chapter, with local spaces on the world wide web, and this chapter, with the relationships between Yorkshire language cultures and internet speak, there are both productive and destructive consequences as local folk cultures are practiced in environments heavily connected to globalised activity, such as social media. These productive and destructive relationships were so intricate, detailed and overall significant to the case study investigation that they need to be outlined and critically analysed in their own chapter. Therefore, the following chapter looks at the varying relationships between local-digital spaces and cultural practices within the immensely globalised world of social media.

Chapter 6
Online Local-Global Tension

6.1: Introduction

The previous chapter critically analysed the overall practice of Yorkshire folk culture on social media. It showed that the emergent technological and interconnected practices infused in social media forced the practices and representations of Yorkshire folk culture to become entangled in alternative networks of connection, experimentation, hybridity, heterogeneity, accessibility and imagination. This final empirical chapter unpacks the relationship between the folk cultures of Yorkshire and the interconnectedness of social media. It will analyse the details of enacting local scale cultures in a highly globalised digital world, specifically how local and global geographies can become conflicted as they are integrated. This is important because the previous two chapters have both had significant themes regarding global scale geographies and their influence on local cultures, all of which needs to be explicitly evaluated in an individual chapter. As just one example of this global scale influence, social media during the pandemic became a world in which a Scottish postman would gain 70 million views on TikTok singing traditional sea shanties (Jenkins, 2021).

In order to explore these issues, this chapter critically analyses both sides of the local-global relationship, as folk cultures local to Yorkshire were (re)produced in the highly globalised world of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter is divided into 4 sections. The first two sections evaluate the relationship between Yorkshire folk culture and social media as both a productive and destructive relationship, respectively. These sections demonstrate the productive and damaging consequences of enacting local scale folk cultures on social media and their impact on the Yorkshire folk community, and ultimately shows the tension and fluidity of (local) cultures in the digital realm. The third section flips the argument and suggests that folk cultures local to Yorkshire oppose the ethos of social media as an online world of global connection. The final conclusionary section compares all arguments in this chapter and evaluates just how suitable social media is for the enaction of local scale cultures and geographies.

The main case study used throughout this chapter is Góbéfest 2020 (Table 3.2) and how the Yorkshire folk community engaged with Góbéfest. Góbéfest is a folk festival established in

2017 and takes place annually on the final weekend of June. The festival creates a fusion of folk cultures, practices and folklores from Northern England and Eastern Europe, namely Hungary and Romania. It is set on the theme of Transylvanian culture and folklore.[9] Whilst geographically distant from England, Transylvania has strong connections to parts of Northern England, with a history of trade networks, as well as more creative and imaginary workings, such as that of author Bram Stoker's (1897) *Dracula*, which was (partly) written in and inspired by the gothic architecture of Whitby, North Yorkshire, UK (Light, 2008). For these reasons, the Yorkshire folk community showed specific interest in this festival; it entertained a blend of their cultural traditions as well as those of more imaginary and creative networks which connected them to other European locations (Light, 2008). As such, the Yorkshire folk community joined a broader folk culture of Northern England to engage with this festival's international Northern English-Transylvanian folk relationship.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Góbéfest 2020 cancelled its physical world activities, which were planned to be held in the city of Manchester, England, with activities stretching as far as West and North Yorkshire. Instead, the festival transferred its activities to the digital realm, where they could be engaged with on their official website and social media pages, dubbed 'The Virtual Folk Festival: Góbé at Home'. The contents of this Virtual Folk Festival ranged from virtual gigs of English and Eastern European folk music to virtual presentations of folk-dance, including Morris and Romanian Folk Dance. There were also workshops which told folklores and stories from Transylvania and Northern England, as well as some which taught viewers how to play various folksongs, how to dance folk-dance forms and even create some traditional Transylvanian textiles (Góbéfest, 2020; Barlow, 2020).

6.2: International Hybridity of Folk Worlds

The previous two chapters have both highlighted significant implications of the relationship between Yorkshire folk culture and social media, especially the productive elements of this relationship in terms of producing digital spaces for the enaction of local folk cultures, the strengthening of individual folk identities and the bonding of online communities revolving around Yorkshire. They have shown how the Yorkshire folk community produced digital spaces of culture and practiced folk cultures online, all with emphasis of these spaces and

[9] Transylvania is a geographic region located in Romania and, historically, Hungary.

practices as being local to Yorkshire and subsequently forming communities with shared senses of belonging to Yorkshire. This section specifically looks at the cultures (co-)produced and hybridised through social media by two geographically distanced and international regions. It will expand on the discussions of the previous chapters regarding the hybridity of cultures associated with different geographical locations, facilitated through the (inter)connections made available through social media. Three levels are significant to this section, all of which reside within the overarching local-global theme of this chapter: the interlocal, the interregional and the international. This is represented through the international hybridisation of the folk cultures local to Yorkshire (within a broader folk culture of Northern England) and the folk cultures local to Transylvania. The aim of this section is to show how social media can specifically connect two geographically disconnected regions and cultures, and how people find senses of belonging within the hybridisation and interrelation of these cultures. More specifically, this section argues that the coproduction of geographical knowledge, cultures and folklores was a direct result of the social restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global connections of social media.

The hybridisation of Yorkshire folk cultures with nonfolk and nonlocal cultures was briefly outlined in Chapters 5.2 and 5.3, specifically through Yorkshire folk music being fused with internationally popular electronic music and jazz styles in Audio File 3 and through the integration of Yorkshire language cultures in the format of popular internet memes and inspirational quotes in Figures 5.12, 5.13 and 5.15. These were examples in which Yorkshire folk culture was connected to popular global cultures of both the internet and world music. The following examples are cases of Yorkshire folk culture being hybridised with Transylvanian folk cultures at the 'Virtual Folk Festival' Góbéfest 2020. They show that, on social media during the pandemic, Yorkshire folk culture was heavily connected to and coproduced with the customs of an*other* specific geographical region, by which the hybridisation of cultures occurred on an interlocal, interregional and international level.

In the introduction to this chapter, I explained how Góbéfest 2020 accommodated a blend of Northern English and Transylvanian customs, traditions and cultures; specifically, those of the

Székler people.[10] Not only was this fusion of folk culture at the root of the festival (see Figure 6.1) but it was also the stem that tied every person, practice and experience together. The relationship between Northern English folk, the Székler folk and their analogous cultures was what differentiated this virtual folk festival from other festivals and digital spaces on the internet. But before the significance of this English-Transylvanian relationship can be fully assessed, it is important to ask precise questions: What experiences were made as Yorkshire folk engaged with Transylvanian culture in this 'virtual folk festival'? And: What were the experiences from the perspective of the Székler people engaging with Northern English folk culture?

Figure 6.1: *Digital artwork of a tulip and rose* [Graphic] One of the main logos used on the Góbéfest 2020 website. The tulip representing the national flower of Hungary and the rose representing the national flower of England (Góbéfest, 2020).

Góbéfest 2020 recognised that many English people when hearing the name 'Transylvania' will think of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as it remains a literary icon of popular gothic horror (Light, 2008). This was hinted during one of my first encounters with the virtual folk festival, as the official Góbéfest (2020; 1) spokesperson stated: "You have heard the mysterious myths and legends, now come and experience the magic of Transylvania". As a researcher, my initial thoughts regarding Góbéfest 2020 were:

> I have recently noticed a lot of talk surrounding a virtual folk festival called 'Góbéfest' across, especially sound-orientated, Yorkshire folk social media. Through preliminary

[10] The Székler people are largely an ethnic Hungarian population living in Romanian Transylvania. The term 'Góbé' in 'Góbéfest' refers to the craftly nature of the Székler people – especially in terms of the production of textiles, pottery, folklores, stories and music (Góbéfest, 2020).

> observations, this festival appears to be situated around Transylvanian folk culture. I know very little about Transylvania, other than it is connoted to literature on vampires and Dracula. Although the festival is not primarily interested in Yorkshire folk culture, it would be foolish not to attend given the overwhelming reception on Yorkshire folk social media. There does seem to be plenty of involvement by the Yorkshire folk community within this festival over the years. I look forward to learning more about Transylvanian folk culture and how it subsequently concerns my case study investigation.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 15, 19th of June 2020.

As depicted in Field Diary Excerpt 15, with my preconceived perception of Transylvania, *Dracula* represented something familiar and comfortable when entering Góbéfest. However, through yearly press releases, Góbéfest (2020) has asserted: 'There is more to Transylvania than Dracula'. Equally, the festival has stated: 'There is more to Manchester than football' – the city of Manchester being the main hub for physical activities at the pre-pandemic festivals (Székely, 2017; Barlow, 2020; Góbéfest, 2020). Compare Field Diary Excerpt 15 with Excerpt 16, which was written near the end of Góbéfest 2020, once I had engaged with most of the available cultural practices. It articulates how my perception of a largely Yorkshire orientated folk experience changed, became attached to and coproduced with the folk culture of ano*ther* geographic region:

> I have learnt so much about Transylvanian folk culture at Góbéfest… I have noticed the creativity of the folklore – and the vitality of this storytelling for the physical and imaginary placemaking of the region (in terms of tourist attraction and overall conceptualisation). I have been drawn to the more gothic legends and tales, those which predate but inspired Dracula. Often, this darker side to Transylvanian folklore is closely tied to more religious contexts, with discussions of Evil and the Origins of Evil. Folklore suggests that the hilly and mountainous landscape of, especially rural, Romania acted as somewhat of a gravity well for fallen angels turned demons. These demons and devils can manifest many abhorrent forms, most infamously the 'Strigoi' – which, in English, encompass ghosts, zombies, witches, werewolves, gargoyles, vampires and essentially most other undead and bloodthirsty monsters… I suppose I have just listed what I have learnt from Transylvanian folk culture, not from Yorkshire

> folk culture. However, this relationship of absorbing knowledge, mythologies and imaginative geographies was not purely one-sided. There was a similar, but opposite interest in English folklore and mythology…
>
> In one workshop, Transylvanian folklorists were discussing a famous building named the Sighisoara Clock Tower, which has a large golden globe placed atop the pinnacle. Legend suggests that an unknown giant placed the globe there, challenging anyone tall enough to remove the globe, which they could then sell and become rich. Adding to these discussions, English folklorists joined the conversation and speculated that the giant could have been Gogmagog from English mythology, who was known for travelling and being a rather competitive giant.
>
> Regardless of which viewpoint, English or Transylvanian, the mythical remains at the heart of many of the practices at Góbéfest. And this blend of culture has created this sort of mythological embellishments and coproduced new stories (as well as music, dance and textiles) alluding to the mythical. It reinvigorates that sense of wonder and magic regarding people's native folk culture by placing it side-by-side with an interregional folk culture.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 16, 28th of June 2020.

The placement of Northern English folklore beside Transylvanian folklore allowed for the embellishment and hybridisation of stories and folktales, especially surrounding what was mythical and fictitious. These stories and the products of their embellishments created momentary, digital worlds surrounding what could be imagined and put into practice on social media (Kanno & Norton, 2009). Speculation surrounding the English giant Gogmagog joining a Transylvanian narrative of folklore produced this specific instance of imagined placemaking within the digital world in Excerpt 16. It was all not too dissimilar from the discussions regarding digital photography and idyllic placemaking in Chapter 5.4. Although, this fictitious, mythological and imagined world at Góbéfest was produced as a result of gaps and crossover between Northern English and Transylvanian folklores, which fashioned a hybridised mythos of the two folk cultures (Kwan, 2004; Culhane, 2006; Light, 2008; Coman, 2017). Although this English-Transylvanian storytelling would occur when the festival was held in the physical realm, the fact it was conducted digitally meant these folkloric embellishments could be scaled up and were instead blended through digital media. Reviewing the gallery on the

Góbéfest (2020) website, which essentially formed an archive of all the festivities conducted at the yearly festival, this 'scaling-up' and 'blending' became clearer. 59 acts including folklorists, musicians, dancers and weavers appeared at Góbéfest 2020, compared to 24 in 2019 and 19 in 2018, which shows a significant increase in the number of acts as the festival was performed digitally. I would argue that this growth was down to the fact the festival was held online, meaning acts would not have to travel to Manchester and face physical geographical barriers and related costs, creating a broader geographical inclusivity (Das, 2011). This is supported by a quote from one of the non-English acts at Góbéfest 2020, in their speech before they performed:

> "…even with your Brexits and Coronaviruses, GóBé at Home means we can still be with you guys…" – Quote from one of the Eastern European performers on the first day of Góbéfest 2020.

In this instance, Góbéfest 2020 being conducted online meant geopolitical barriers such as Brexit and health related barriers such as COVID-19 could be overcome. Simultaneous national lockdowns at the time of the festival in England and Hungary also provided more time for people and acts to be involved in festivities. The combination of time to participate in the festival and the online setting of Góbéfest meant the festival was more accessible to people both within and beyond Yorkshire and Transylvania.

Expanding on the embellishment and hybridity of English-Transylvanian folklore shown in Excerpt 16, Figure 6.2a is a creative field sketch outlining what some of the folkloric, musical and dance workshops looked like at Góbéfest 2020. This technique was inspired by work on creative and experimental methods in human geography by Lury & Wakefield (2011) and Dowling et al. (2018). Figure 6.2a depicts a screenshot of a Skype call, with various performers and viewers situated within their individual "squares", which was broadcast on the Góbéfest Facebook Live page. I decided to capture this exchange of cultures through a field sketch because, firstly, it protects the anonymity of the performers and festivalgoers, and, secondly, allowed me to represent the exchange of cultures in a nonverbal manner (Lury & Wakefield, 2012). The colourful wavy lines in yellow and pink which flow throughout the sketch represent this exchange of culture, derived from empirical observations of the actual flow of cultures and practices at Góbéfest (Dowling et al., 2018).

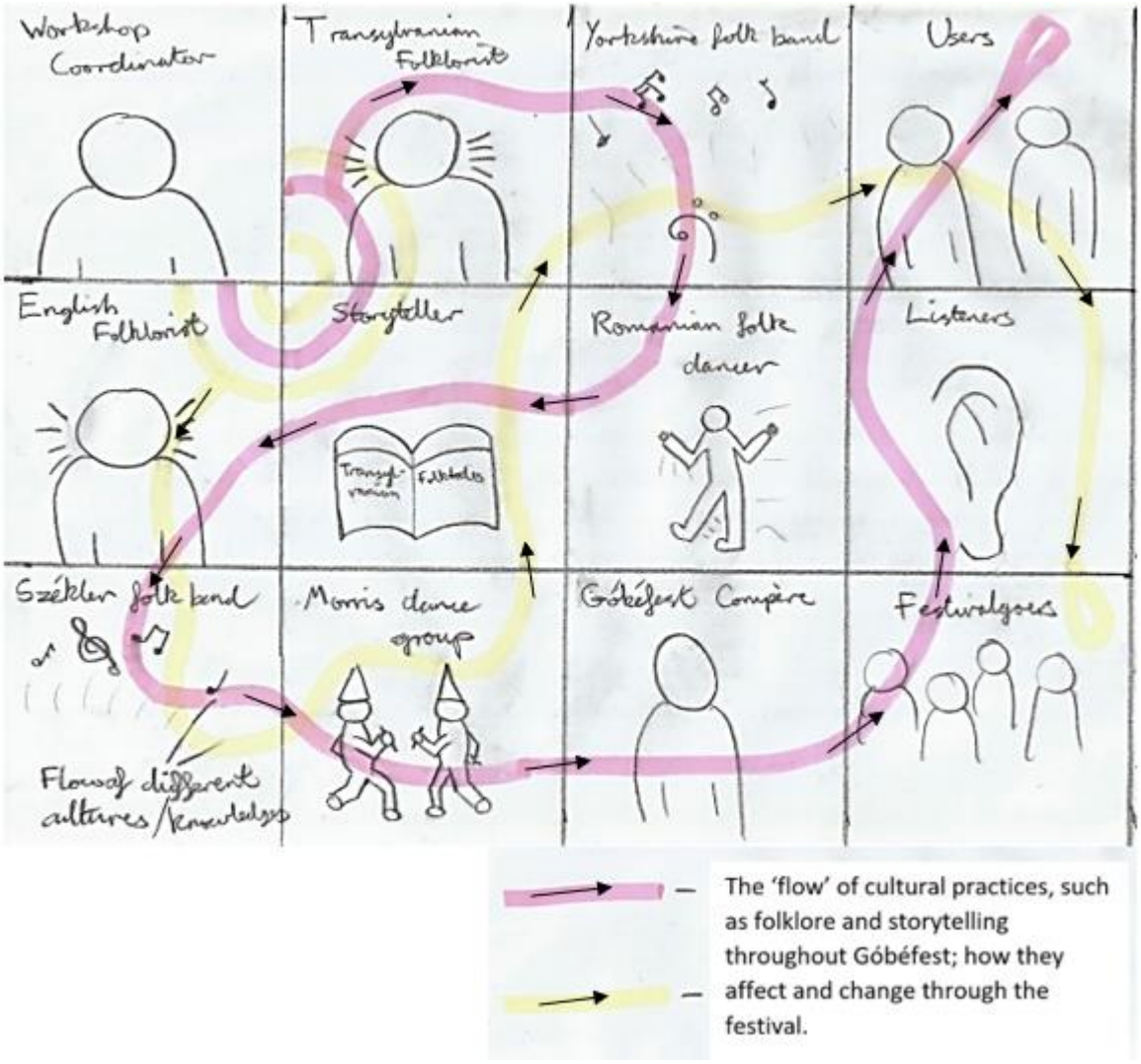


Figure 6.2a: *The function and flow of folklore, storytelling, folk music and folk-dance workshops over Skype at Gőbéfest, including annotations representing how the various imaginative practices of English-Transylvanian folk culture spread, shift, change and impact the workshops* [Annotated Creative Field Sketch] Produced as a result of observations made at 3 workshops and livestreams at Gőbéfest 2020, method inspired by Lash & Lury (2012) and Dowling et al. (2018).

The intent of Figure 6.2a is to depict how the fables told by the English and Transylvanian folklorists were more than just momentary glimpses into the fictional. They had a reverberation throughout the festival. For example, the various folk bands in Figure 6.2a maintained the themes of spoken folklore told by the adjacent folklorists and storytellers through their choice of songs and lyricism. Folktales would thematically be remade in musical ways. Often these performances of English and Transylvanian folkloric music would be supplemented with dances by traditional folk dancers. The musical soundscapes made through this folk music would rhythmically create a digital space in which these folk dancers

could perform (Wright, 2014). Finally, all this content would be heard and seen by the festivalgoers, as the creative and imaginative cultures were passed from person-to-person through the networks created by both Skype and Facebook Live (Light, 2008; Kanno & Norton, 2009; Gibson & Connell, 2016). Figure 6.2b is a simplified version of 6.1a as a digitalised field sketch and was designed to show a more condensed flow of culture from folklore to folk music to folk dance at Góbéfest 2020.

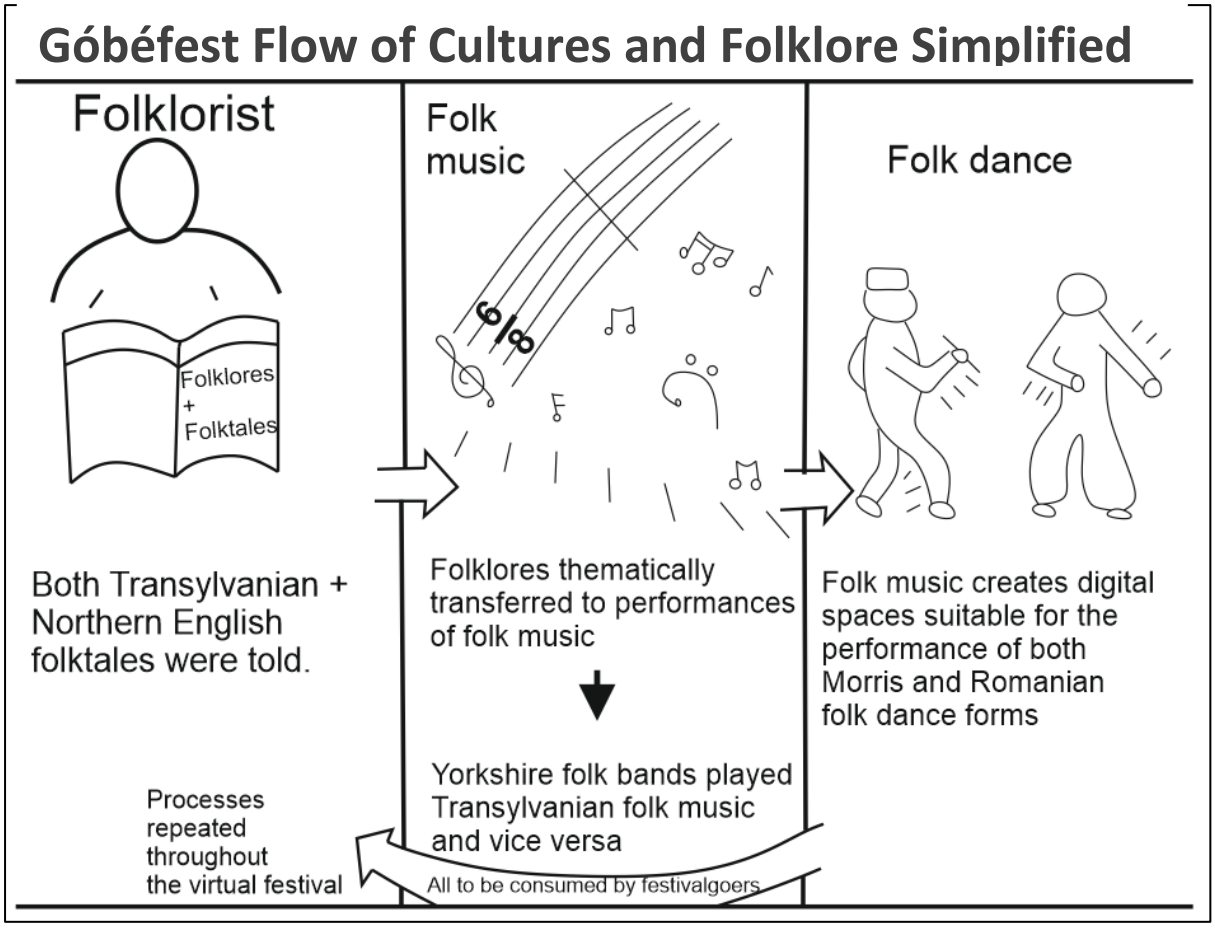


Figure 6.2b: *The cultural flow of folklore at Góbéfest 2020* [Digitalised Annotated Field Sketch] Simplified/condensed version of Figure 6.2a, depicting a screenshot of some of the festivities and how the various cultural practices engaged with one another.

Displayed in Figures 6.2a and 6.2b, the embellishments and hybridity of English-Transylvanian folklore extended to musical and dance cultural practices. As discussed in Chapter 4.2, these festivities still had the disjointed and clunky characteristic of online folk practices as they were performed within the separate boxes of the Skype call (Figure 4.4). However, the actual sharing and reproduction of English-Transylvanian folk cultures was still effective. This was exhibited in my personal development of knowledge and understanding of English-Transylvanian folk cultures in Field Diary Excerpt 16, the flow of cultures in Figures 6.2a and

6.2b and the positive reviews left by festivalgoers on Facebook, which gave the 2020 Góbé festival 4 stars out of 5. In essence, these new modes of online coproduction of knowledge and mythology became possible because of the social restrictions created by the global pandemic, and the subsequent cultural shift which placed greater reliance on social media (McLean & Maalsen, 2020; Parsons, 2020; Morris, 2021).

The exchange of English-Transylvanian folklores, traditions, customs and practices at Góbéfest 2020 created a network that could be described as an interregional and international hybrid of culture, produced by the sharing of two geographically distanced and localised cultures (Kwan, 2004). As a virtual folk festival, Góbéfest was the digital link between folk in the North of England (including Yorkshire) and the folklore and cultures of Transylvania during the pandemic. These two physically disconnected populations were compatible in the sense that they were eager to share their local and regional folk identities but were also interested in discovering new practices. Whilst the central link between these cultures was digital, the product of this relationship such as the folklores, folk music and dance were based on creative and imaginary discourses made accessible through social media during the pandemic (Light, 2008; Lehdonvirta, 2010; Coman, 2017).

This section has showed how the emergent technological and interconnected practices of social media were productive in terms of (re)producing cultures, communities and identities shared between different geographical scales and localities in the digital realm during the COVID-19 pandemic. The connections shared between Yorkshire and Transylvanian folk culture and social media produced new hybridised, interlocal, interregional and international practices of culture, communities and identities. More specifically, this was done through the creativity, imagination and fluidity associated with cultures of localised geographical significance (Crang, 2013; Schnell, 2013). This chapter will progress by looking at elements of social media that can be damaging to local scale cultures and geographies as small-scale cultures become entangled in a web of technological practices associated with the digital world. Ultimately, when compared with the productive elements of the relationship between local scale culture and social media, these damaging elements create tension. Local cultures become stuck between the practices of social media that are productive but equally destructive, and the tension at which local cultures sit exemplifies the fluidity of culture as it is enacted in the digital realm.

6.3: Conflicts of Connection

The academic discussions presented in the Literature Review regarding the importance of geographical scale focused on the interconnectedness of networks from the local to the global. The previous section underlined this interconnectivity regarding local folk cultures in a global environment and how a web of connection on social media can be used productively to nurture and strengthen small-scale digital cultures. Building on these ideas, this section highlights the conflicts and tensions that arose in my case study investigation as local folk cultures and groups were challenged by the globalised characteristics of the internet when Yorkshire folk culture was practiced online. Three issues are explored in this section, including social media language and other geographical barriers, digital marketing schemes and the regulation of content.

6.3.1: Social Media Language Barriers

The prominent example of a conflicted relationship presented so far was the use of Yorkshire accents and dialects in social media cultural contexts (in Chapter 5.3). The pervasive use of text-based communications systems and 'internet speak' on social media, including online Yorkshire folk groups, meant language styles associated with Yorkshire were reduced to only a few instances for the practice of an online vocal identity. This created a stark contrast to the use of accent and dialect in the folk cultural settings of the physical world, where significance is placed on both individual and communal ideas of a voice of Yorkshire (Billingsley, 2010; Fletcher, 2012; Starkey et al., 2017). Compared with my investigation, it became clear that digital Yorkshire folk culture diverged from its roots in the physical world in terms of (the value and significance of) voice and accent. The use of an already widespread internet lingo meant Yorkshire language cultures struggled to gain a sustained foothold on social media. Figures 5.12, 5.13, 5.15 and 5.17 were significant yet transient attempts to digitalise Yorkshire accent and dialect on social media. The much larger and more powerful internet speak created sociocultural friction with these attempts, making them appear trivial and gimmicky (Börzsei, 2013; Fang, 2020).

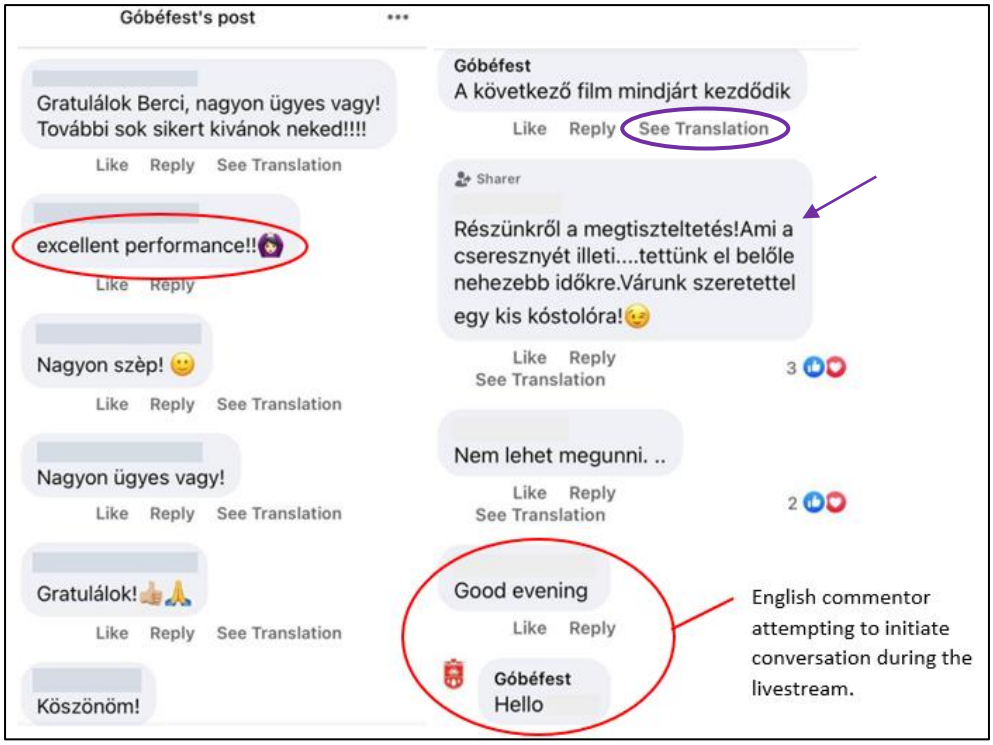
Referring to Góbéfest 2020, this virtual folk festival presented conflicts and divisions between the Yorkshire and Transylvanian folk cultures. The most immediate of these divisions was in the form of a geographical language barrier, which was emphasised as the two cultures

integrated on social media. With Góbéfest taking place on an inter-European scale, it included a variety of English, Hungarian and Romanian speakers. This subsection focuses on the English-Hungarian language divide. It shows that the strong (inter-)connections between Yorkshire and Transylvanian folk cultures facilitated by the networks of social media emphasised these divisions created through language.

On the first day of festivities at Góbéfest 2020, there were events in which users would be given the option of which language they would prefer to listen to proceedings in, with links to both English and Hungarian versions of video workshops (see Figure 6.3). This tended to segregate the different language speakers and was, as a festival spokesperson said in a Tweet "…not what Góbéfest stands for". I did not observe any separationist features such as Figure 6.3 after the first day.

Figure 6.3: *Example of English-Hungarian language divide at Góbéfest 2020 when following a link to a video/livestream; link for "English/Hungarian"* [Screenshot] Góbéfest website (2020).

Henceforth, the online presentation of events was normally done in both languages. For example, a coordinator would say a statement in Hungarian and then a translator would repeat the same statement in English, or vice versa. Although this meant festivalgoers were all consuming the same material, at the same time, in the same online spaces, there were still identifiable cultural divisions. In the 'chat' section of online workshops and livestreams, there were prolonged periods where either Hungarian or English was the only language being used, which typically mirrored the language that the workshop was currently being presented in (see Figures 6.4a and 6.4b). Although in these earlier festivities, there was no apparent conflict between the different language speakers, there was separation between the conversations in Hungarian and English.



Figures 6.4a (left) and 6.4b (right): *Examples of the language barriers in the 'chat/comments' section on social media* [Screenshots] Góbéfest 2020.

Referring to the 'See Translation' tool circled in a purple oval in Figure 6.4b, according to language analysts Lenihan (2014) and Stokel-Walker (2020), the accuracy of translation on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter is highly accurate at around 90% for lexically similar languages, such as two languages descendent from Latin, as well as for globally more spoken languages, such as English to Spanish. However, social media translation accuracy remains relatively low amongst lexically dissimilar languages and languages that have less prominence within global networks (Lenihan, 2014; Stokel-Walker, 2020). This includes English to Hungarian translations on Twitter and Facebook. So, while this feature did offer an immediate translation and element of transparency between the two languages (as in it is possible to sometimes gauge themes or topics being discussed), its accuracy remained problematic (Kornai, 2013). For example, the 'See Translation' results from the second comment in Figure 6.4b (bookmarked with a purple arrow) read: "we are honored! to hear about the cherry…" This was odd because the comment was under the livestream of a folk band ending their set at the festival, which had nothing to do with cherries. In another instance, I recorded in my field diary:

> …an English comment in a sea of Hungarian comments read: "I wonder what they are saying" – I believe referring to the livestream which was not yet translated to English.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 17, 26th of June 2020.

The use of "they" in this context implied a sense of otherness and their genuine curiosity in what the Hungarian speakers were saying suggested a feeling of exclusion (Sibley, 1995; Fletcher, 2012). Another, more subtle example was when a viola tutor was explaining a specific musical technique and someone commented: "Can you repeat that, please, in English?". Whilst the features in Figure 6.4 opened new possibilities for translation, understanding and transparency between populations, there was still an apparent divide between English speakers and Hungarian speakers. I did not observe any cross-language socialisation at Góbéfest using social media translation tools. Yet the festival prided itself on its accommodation of Northern English and Eastern European cultures. And it did, to a sizeable extent, regarding the Northern English-Transylvanian hybridisation of culture presented in the previous section. However, the online context of Góbéfest 2020 limited some of the nonverbal ways in which people communicate and would have communicated if the festival remained tied to the physical world. For virtual festivalgoers, communication was largely limited to text messaging. Whereas, in the physical festivals of previous years, shared body language and facial expression between English and Hungarian cultures helped overcome some issues with the language barrier and form a nonverbalised sense of inclusivity (Kanngieser, 2011). Again, this was observable in the galleries and archives of past festivals, particularly regarding the social engagement between the different European cultures. Nonverbal human communication styles were, however, mostly redundant as the folk festival was conducted on the internet and social media (Benford et al., 2005; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013; Fang, 2020). The use of emojis and reactions in parts of Figure 6.4 can be regarded a form of nonverbal communication, but without an accurate and reliable translation of the supplementary comments, their meaning can be difficult to gauge and appear relatively expendable (Gallucci, 2019).

Interested in how the festival's proceedings would normally take place in the physical world, I noticed that festival acts would take place in the native language of whoever was performing and then be translated offstage. There would also be preliminary workshops which taught people some basic, friendly and interactive phrases of their opposing language. Yet, these

workshops were unavailable at the virtual folk festival. Whilst there was no clear explanation for this decision, I presumed it was due to a lack of interest and demand in learning basic language in an online context, or an overreliance on the digital translation technologies (Székely, 2017; Barlow, 2020; Góbéfest, 2020).

While the online and geographical language barriers presented in this subsection were not necessarily damaging to specific local cultures, including the Yorkshire and Transylvanian folk cultures, they were segregating. Segregation of populations is tied into exclusion, such as Figures 6.3, 6.4 and Excerpt 17, and creates its own forms of social and cultural detriment (Sibley, 1995). The geographical differences and language barriers between two regional cultures were emphasised as Góbéfest was conducted on social media. This type of sociocultural detachment inhibited further development of the interlocal, interregional and international hybridisation of cultures discussed in the previous section.

6.3.2: Digital Marketing in Local Cultural Contexts

Geographical differences and language barriers are issues mainly concerned with the differences shared between two geographical locations and are problematic for the hybridisation of digital folk cultures (Visser, 2002; Kwan, 2004; Culhane, 2006; Kanngieser, 2011; Kornai, 2013). In contrast, I had not been attending Góbéfest 2020 long before I encountered a practice synonymous with the internet and social media which resulted in a much more universal set of experiences: digital marketing. Digital marketing schemes and techniques used by large-scale corporate brands and woven into the fabrics of social media (Truong & Simmons, 2010; de Mooij, 2019) created various tensions as perceptions of local scale Yorkshire folk cultures in the digital realm became warped through these practices. This subsection evaluates the relationship between digital marketing on social media and localised cultures which share these digital spaces.

The following excerpt was recorded after my first noticeable encounter with digital marketing during my case study investigation at Góbéfest 2020:

> *Ads, ads, ads!*
>
> I must admit that I got a tad frustrated at the number of advertisements forced into the YouTube livestream of [a folk music group & tutor], as part of Góbéfest 2020. I thought that they were interfering with my investigation and that I might have to

> upgrade to YouTube Premium for the "low, low price of £11.99/month", to reduce the number of adverts. That was until I realised that these ads are essentially part of my investigation. They are contributing to my authentic online folk cultural experience…
>
> A funny thing was YouTube seemed to notice that I was engaging with the music workshop-y type videos and livestreams of Góbéfest and decided to give me ads marketing other online music lessons and services. 'Fender Play' was one of these services. "An online learning platform designed to get you playing your favourite songs in minutes." – the Fender Play ads would usually (briefly) present the learning curve of amateur guitarists playing songs like '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction' by the Rolling Stones, ultimately suggesting that Fender Play was the most efficient way of learning. YouTube decided to give me these adverts - as if the musical workshop it interrupted was not suffice. Realistically, I do not think the people in this Virtual Folk Festival, who were at the time observing and learning some Transylvanian folk and baroque styles of music would necessarily be interested in the lessons of classic hits courtesy of Fender Play.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 18, 26th of June 2020.

While folk culture progressed, reproduced and changed on social media throughout my investigation, one of the constants was the digital marketing and various advertisements publicised on social media. In the UK, the digital marketing industry is worth over £16 billion and almost £300 billion worldwide (Statista, 2021). Almost 50% of this net worth is controlled by large-scale, globalised and corporate business (FSB, 2021). Hence, the marketing and advertising industry is usually associated with globalised economic activity (Feiock et al., 2008). The example in Field Diary Excerpt 18 was essentially the first instance where I realised that this globalised market was having a notable effect upon my investigation. Reportedly, exposure to televised and online advertisements increased by 15% throughout lockdown in the UK, as people were spending more time on digital devices (Oakes, 2020). The fact that the advert for 'Fender Play' in Excerpt 18 influenced my field study experience while I was engaging and interested in musical workshops and lessons exemplified an intrusive point to do with digital marketing. My recent search and internet history and online data from my investigation was used to tailor advertisements and marketing strategies around my specific online experiences (Tucker, 2012). This historical online data is implemented into formulas

and algorithms within the digital codes of search engines and social media platforms which ultimately decides what adverts targeted me, based on what I *might* be interested in (Truong & Simmons, 2010; Rose, 2015). Although these adverts neglected the fact I was engaging with more regional and local cultures by providing me with larger-scale corporate ads, this digital marketing strategy was still an invasive element in my investigation (Koetsier, 2020).

Once I noted the effect of digital marketing, the magnitude of advertisements became clearer. Figure 6.5 is a screenshot from a Góbéfest 2020 livestream, which was later uploaded to YouTube as a video, highlighting the number of midroll advertisements. Each of the yellow strips or markers represents an ad-break. The event in Figure 6.5 was 2 hours and 32 minutes in duration and there were 13 ad breaks, including one at the beginning and end of the event. This meant, on average, there was an ad break every 11.5 minutes. Bear in mind that these adverts can vary from 5 second and skippable advertisements, to 30 second un-skippable ads, double ads up to a minute in length, or surveys which might ask which gambling websites you are most likely to use, these midrolls can become time-consuming and intrusive (Sharman et al., 2019; Koetsier, 2020). Digital marketing is something that everyone using social media must deal with in different ways, based on their geography (it can be assumed that Transylvanians at Góbéfest would have different marketing experiences due to regionally locked content and juxtaposing laws) and personalised advertising algorithms (Truong & Simmons, 2010; de Mooij, 2019). The introduction of local cultures to social media means that these local cultures become attached to these globalised regimes, which can be undesirable (Jackson, 2004; Schnell, 2013).

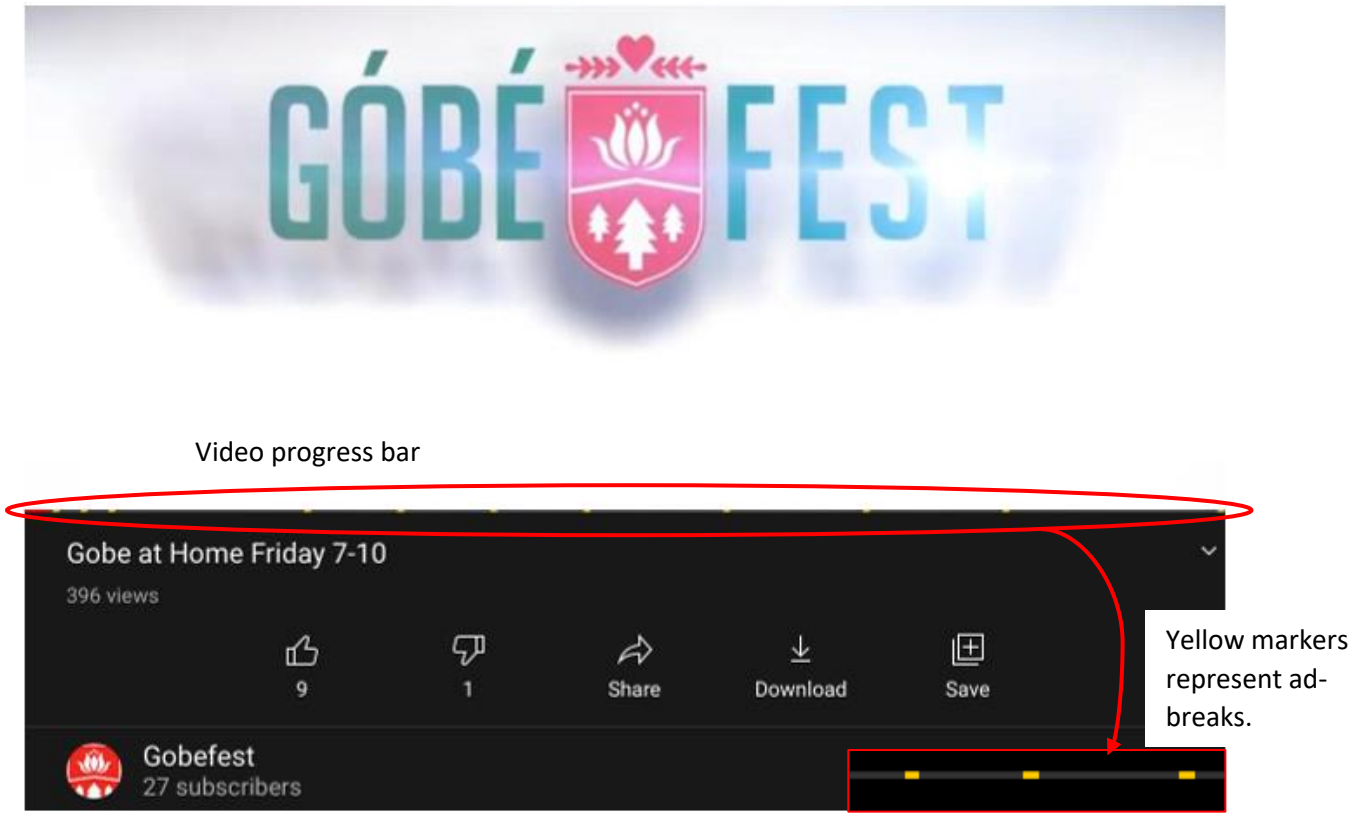


Figure 6.5: *'Gobe at Home Friday 7-10'; an example of a YouTube livestream/video from Góbéfest 2020, outlining the number of midroll advertisements in red* [Screenshot] Góbéfest 2020, YouTube.

Regarding Figure 6.5, the advertising at Góbéfest 2020 and digital marketing being woven into the fabrics of small-scale social media within my case studies, the following is a rather blunt quote derived from Koetsier (2020: 1) regarding an investigation into the ethics of forcing advertisements on small-scale social media profiles: "If you're a small channel, struggling to grow and haven't yet gotten monetization, YouTube will run ads now and take 100% of the profit from your work." Since, at the time of my investigation, Góbéfest had a relatively small and new YouTube channel, it was likely it did not financially benefit from these midrolls. So not only were these advertisements invasive to small-scale digital cultures, but they did not monetarily benefit anyone on a local level (Tucker, 2012; Nevert & Lapointe, 2017).

As I continued to reflect on the impact of digital marketing on my investigation, I continued to analyse the implications, which extended beyond Góbéfest and entered online networks more closely associated with Yorkshire folk culture. As shown throughout Chapter 5.2, #QuarantineSessions had strong and apparent connections to global scale activity, even when engaged with by the folk music local to Yorkshire (see Field Diary Excerpt 11). Referring to #QuarantineSessions, the following is an excerpt from my field diary regarding what I

described as “little global obstacles” when trying to engage with the local Yorkshire folk community through this specific network of connection:

> …Recently, I have come across some seemingly minor obstacles when trying to gain access to folk Quarantine Sessions, as well as the Yorkshire Folk Music Group. Trying to find new pieces of content under the Quarantine Sessions label, I have been searching phrases such as: ‘#quarantinesessions folk Yorkshire’. Especially on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, however, the top two or three results for each search this week have mostly been promotions for Taylor Swift’s (2020) new album titled ‘Folklore’. Even with more specified searches: ‘Yorkshire folk music, Hull, piano guitar, #quarantinesessions’, the music of an American pop singer-songwriter still headed the results. The algorithms which fuel these search engines identify the term ‘folk’ as the title of an album by a famous musician more so than a defined localised culture. Although the search algorithms of social media might contest, I believe that most people in the Yorkshire folk social media community are uninterested in the chart music of a global pop artist. This inconvenience could be overcome relatively easily by a few scrolls down the search results, until something more relevant pops up. Nevertheless, this promotion did somewhat “break a fourth wall”. It momentarily detracts from the idea that I am engaging with the musical practices of local (and interlocal) significance. Instead, the process of searching for local Yorkshire folk culture online became attached to larger and even capitalist regimes of marketing… And I can’t help but think that the process of searching for folk cultures is more streamlined in, say, a traditional pub – and the effect of any present marketing techniques would be dampened…
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 19, 28th of July 2020.

Excerpt 19 refers to the breaking of a “fourth wall”, in which these advertisements momentarily disengage the user from the local cultures they are trying to engage with by attaching them to more globalised economic systems. Digital marketing seemed to be focused on short and punchy advertisements but bombard users with such frequency that they become engraved in the patterns of digital cultural life (Tucker, 2012; Miller, 2020). And so, this visual and experiential detachment from what is local becomes less sporadic and more continuous within social media. Figure 6.6 is a digitalised field sketch I made at about the

same time as Field Diary Excerpt 19. It presents the rather generic format of the social media platforms I was engaging with, especially regarding the role of advertisements. Personally, my eye was drawn toward the flashier and more eye-catching content which headed and surrounded the search results. There are, however, patterns in Figure 6.6. Content relevant to Yorkshire folk culture was sandwiched between obtrusive and irrelevant content. Once these patterns are realised by users, which de Mooij (2019) suggested we do subconsciously, then the relationship between user and digital marketing (and localised culture, to an extent) is normalised and almost nondescript.

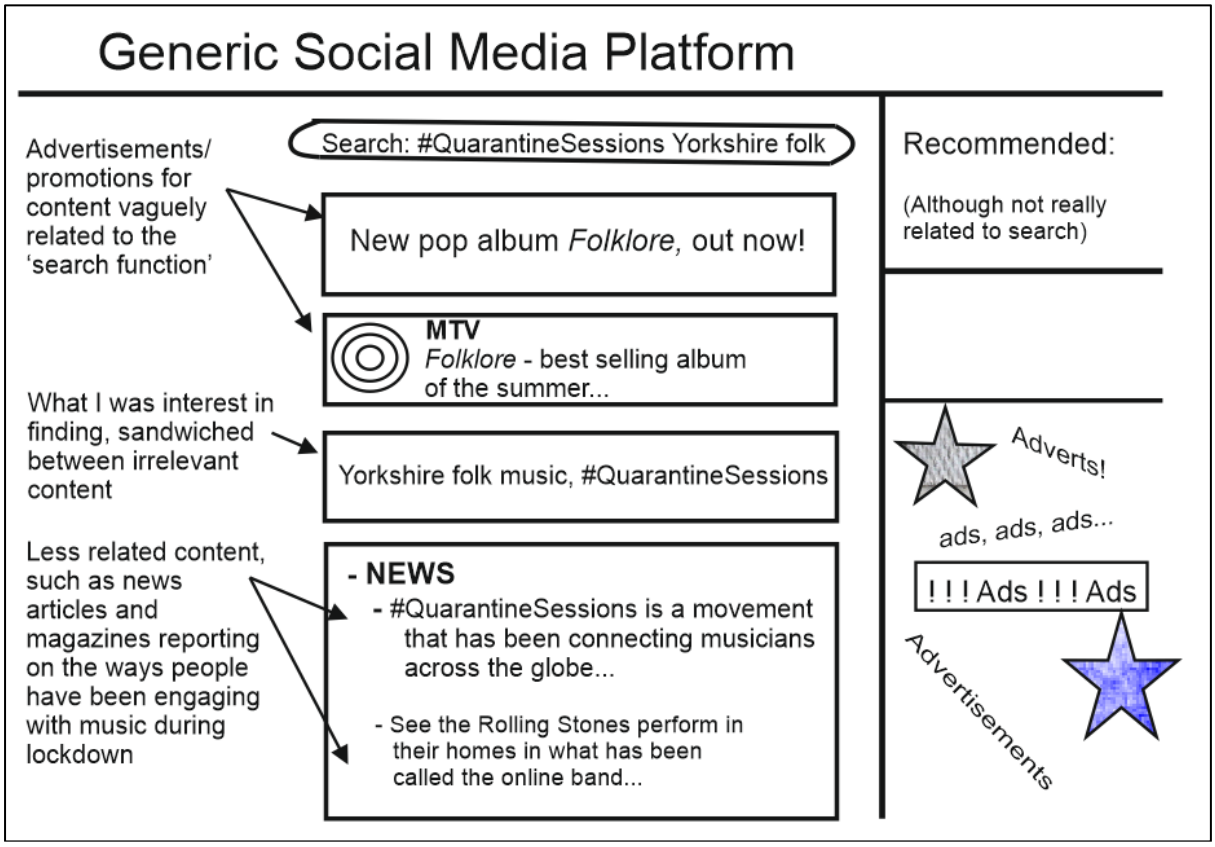


Figure 6.6: *The generalised landscape of social media when searching for '#QuarantineSessions, Yorkshire folk', including the advertisements, promotions, recommendations and relevant results of the search* [Field sketch] Based on observational data from Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (2020).

Generally, there was little publicised conversation among the Yorkshire folk community regarding marketing, except for a blunt 'No Adverts!' in the rules sections of various folk groups (see Figure 4.5). Online, it is very much a case of *what can you do?* Apart from invest in AdBlock or upgrade to a premium social media platform for a price – and perhaps become further entwined in a globalised economy of the internet (Tucker, 2012). However, the following are a couple of quotes from the online Yorkshire folk community, which suggested

the perception of these advertisements was that they were intrusive. Again, these quotes fall under a much more universal experience and complaints of using social media (Truong & Simmons, 2010; de Mooij, 2019; Gao et al., 2020; Miller, 2020):

1. "Apologies for the adverts out of my control 😦" – Quote from the caption of a music set linked to the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group.
2. "Anyone know how to reduce/stop seeing drinking/gambling adverts as much??!!" – Quote from a user in one of the village-based Yorkshire folk groups.

The first quote came from the caption of a musician in the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group, who provided a link to a live set of original folk music on an external website. The musician's folksongs can be described as mellow and so the artist seemed concerned at the disruption caused by uncontrolled, punchy and flashy midroll adverts. Whilst the second quote came from a member of another Yorkshire folk community group, who, through their use of exclamation, seemed perturbed at the number of alcohol and gambling advertisements they were seeing online. Both indicate a lack of control of online user experiences (Sharman et al., 2019; Zhang, 2020). This was comparable to my initial worry as a researcher concerned with the number of ads on Góbéfest livestreams in Excerpt 18.

Despite the problems faced by the Yorkshire folk community when using social media for culture, digital marketing also made some positive contributions. For most social media platforms, site-based advertising is the main source of revenue, including 85% of revenue for Twitter alone (Gadkari, 2013). This revenue sustains social media digital spaces and allows people to use these spaces for culture free of charge (Rose, 2015; Miller, 2020). It can be argued that social media generates more than enough revenue through advertising around the digital spaces of profiles who are either partnered with the platform or have larger followings than, say, Góbéfest (Tucker, 2012). It used to be the case that a YouTube video would need at least 1,000 views to have advertisements and become monetised (Koetsier, 2020). However, this skewed distribution of marketing could create even greater tension between the small-scale and large-scale. Furthermore, advertisements fundamentally promote products and services (de Mooij, 2019). If the platform's personalised marketing strategies and algorithms are finetuned, then these advertisements can be of genuine interest to consumers (Jackson, 2004; Truong & Simmons, 2010; Page, 2013).

The advantages and disadvantages of digital marketing within cultural spaces on social media are ultimately what create tension within this phenomenon. Studies into consumer behaviours in spaces of digital culture and marketing have suggested that, for most users, the negatives outweigh the positives (de Mooij, 2019). This was supported in Field Diary Excerpts 18 and 19 and the 2 participatory quotations provided afterwards, which all depicted experiences of intrusion and lack of control. Digital marketing can create "little global obstacles" for social media users trying to access local cultural content, as stated in Excerpt 19. The following subsection concerns phenomena that can dictate, mitigate and limit the types of cultural content uploaded to social media.

6.3.3: The Regulation of Content: Copyright, Censorship and Trolling

The regulation of content allowed to be uploaded to Yorkshire folk social media groups was the final prominent issue I encountered during my investigation. This regulation of content came in the forms of copyright, censorship and internet trolling, all of which had significant impacts on the type of content uploaded to these groups. This subsection analyses these phenomena and their effects on the content uploaded to Yorkshire folk social media.

When compared to, for example, a grassroots music venue, in which control over the kind of music that is played is shared between the management, organisers, musicians and audience (Figure 4.3), the control that local communities on social media have over their digital cultures is significantly altered through various factors. This was the case for online communities such as the Yorkshire Folk Music Group, which was fundamentally associated with Yorkshire folk culture and moderated by people in the group (as discussed in Chapter 4.4) – yet the broader guidelines of social media always remained prevalent. In terms of audio and visual material uploaded to these groups, the digital realm is coupled with copyright laws and censorship (Ghosh, 2013). The following is a field diary excerpt regarding an incident of copyright and censorship observed during my investigation:

> …A member in the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Facebook Group posted a video teaching their cover of the traditional folksong *The Maid Freed from the Gallows* which is a centuries-old folksong. One of the more known covers/adaptations of this folksong was *Gallows Pole* by Led Zeppelin in the seventies and was referenced by the musician. When I clicked the video, however, the audio was muted. According to comments,

> Facebook (and YouTube) have sensors that can automatically detect copyright songs and subsequently mute, demonetise, or remove videos if an infringement is made. Furthermore, the record labels that own the discographies of artists such as Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, Taylor Swift, etc. are notorious for such copyright strikes. So, the folk musician's video was likely punished because it sounded too much like Led Zeppelin's version of a traditional folksong.
>
> While beats and lyrics, even adapted lyrics, to traditional folksongs cannot legally be copyrighted, original melodies can. And the musician admitted to using a particular melody inspired by the Led Zeppelin cover of *Gallows Pole*, which is likely what triggered the copyright censors, who are known to, at times, be very aggressive on video-sharing social media like Facebook and YouTube.
>
> However, followers were quick to suggest a way around the issue. By reciting the song in an alternate musical key or unfamiliar tempo, the Facebook detection soon becomes oblivious.
>
> – Field Diary Excerpt 20, 30th of July 2020.

McCann (2001) stated that traditional music and folksongs are viewed as generational narratives, and the fact newer recordings are being subject to copyright is being perceived as immoral, as folk music should remain in the public domain. One commentor in the discourse of Excerpt 20 suggested that the word 'artist' should be replaced with 'record label' or 'lawyers', when discussing who is behind these kind of copyright strikes. The final sentence in Excerpt 20 depicts an act of resistance, through the changing of musical tempos and keys, and significantly alters the ways in which cultural content uploaded to social media is practiced. For smaller-scale musicians in general, changing key or tempo when covering copywritten music by big artists is becoming an affirmed practice that can fool even the most aggressive social media sensors (Ghosh, 2013; Morris, 2015). A problem with netnographic research in this context is that it is difficult to observe copyright and censorship in motion. Usually, the content is promptly removed unbeknownst to the researcher. I had to rely on the content provider delivering a statement, such as "Sorry – video got taken down" to know when this occurrence was happening.

A more visible way that content was controlled or influenced on Yorkshire folk social media was through 'internet trolling'. Internet trolling is a phenomenon in which a user of the internet provokes other users through inflammatory and digressive language, often for the amusement of the person conducting the trolling, who is known as an internet 'troll' (March & Marrington, 2019). It is a phenomenon that has been tied into social media activity since the early 2000s and has been increasing in both frequency and severity, to the point that internet trolling now involves a range of destructive socio-political ideologies, such as racism and misogyny (Hannan, 2018). Like digital marketing and copyright and censorship, internet trolling falls under a range of universal experiences had by contemporary users of social media (Miller, 2020). As such, the online Yorkshire folk community was subject to engagements which could be considered trolling and proved damaging to the local cultures, through the content uploaded and social engagements made.

Figure 6.7 is an exchange in the comments section of a post concerning the topic of hunting in the local area, from the Walkington What's On village-based folk group. The two commentors in Figure 6.7 appeared to have contrasting views on the subject, which fuelled a toxic exchange of messages that were publicised to everyone in the group.

Figure 6.7: *An example of a toxic exchange of public comments* [Screenshot] Walkington What's On Facebook Group (2020).

Evident in Figure 6.7, the first commentor is attempting to regulate content or the 'post', whereas the second commentor responds with an insulting rhetorical question. Due to the provoking language used and the effect that it had on the content (the topic of hunting in the group), this exchange could be grouped as trolling (March & Marrington, 2019). I did observe more severe moments of trolling during my investigation, which had more severe effects on

content and online folk communities. Figure 6.8 is a statement issued by another member of the community, around the same time as the exchange in Figure 6.7, suggesting that the statement was a response to this toxicity as well as some other issues in the group at the time that could also fall under the categorisation of internet trolling. As represented in Figure 6.8, these issues created an upsetting atmosphere for some users.

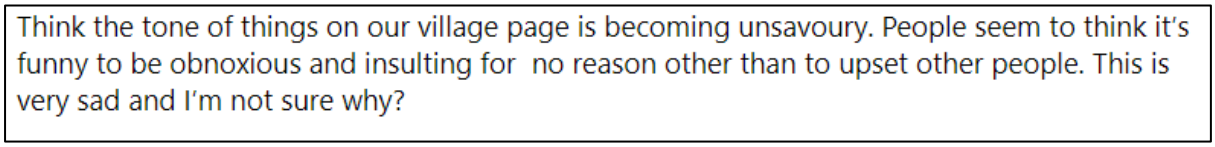


Figure 6.8: *A response by a member in one of the village-based folk communities, ushered at a similar time to Figure 6.7* [Screenshot] Walkington What's On Facebook Group (2020).

Internet trolling occurs as the people conducting the trolling are protected by the anonymity or disassociation from their online account (Hannan, 2018). The element of not talking face-to-face with someone and instead messaging another online profile empowers these trolls to continue to be unpleasant and create social tensions (March & Marrington, 2019). As such, social media is an ideal platform for internet trolling to function and all cultures operating online must deal with these issues. People in the online Yorkshire folk community had to be mindful of these issues when uploading content that could potentially be targeted by trolls. This created specific issues for the musically orientated participants in Chapter 5.2, who regularly expressed their emotions through music and bonded communities founded on emotional togetherness. Vulnerabilities as people opened up emotionally could be exploited (Panger, 2017; Bashir & Bhat, 2020).

What I described as "little global obstacles" earlier in this section accumulated and became something that was intrusive, uncontrollable and ubiquitous across Yorkshire folk social media. Geographical and cultural barriers, digital marketing, copyright and censorship regulations and internet trolling were all issues that the Yorkshire folk community were forced to deal with as they enacted their culture online. Collectively, these "little global obstacles" had a powerful force which imposed upon and sometimes damaged the ability to practice Yorkshire folk culture in the digital realm. The heightened exposure to these globalised elements of social media during the pandemic meant local-digital cultures became further affixed to these issues (Oakes, 2020). So, as Yorkshire folk culture shifted to the digital realm during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became visibly more attached to global scale activities

synonymous with the internet and social media (Ghosh, 2013; Sharman et al., 2019; Miller, 2020). This impacted individual identities and communities founded on Yorkshire folk culture in both productive ways, as outlined in the previous section, and destructive ways, as depicted throughout this section.

6.4: Localised Disruptions in a Global World?

The arguments in this chapter have largely considered the impact of global scale social media activities on small-scale Yorkshire folk cultures. This section turns the argument on its head and considers Yorkshire folk culture as the invasive component to social media, which is fundamentally a platform for global interconnectivity (Kinsley, 2013; Ash et al., 2018). Thus, it can be argued that localised cultures and communities are the perpetrators of conflict within the local-global relationships on social media.

Referring to another previous example, 'Cottingham Community' and other Yorkshire folk groups on social media, which desired a very specific localised identity, were stringent in their definition of the local (Chatper 4.3). Their definition of the local would fundamentally determine who was and was not allowed access to the group (see Figure 4.5). This was to affirm an online folk group which was more intimate, tangible and mirrored the formation of local place of the physical world (Flack, 1997; DeFillipis, 2001). However, this strict implementation of rules, through policing and (self-)moderation, and distinction between the local, the nonlocal and the 'other' fuelled exclusion (Sibley, 1995). While this distinction was viewed as necessary to nurture the respected cultures of the group, its prejudice against the nonlocal was pervasive (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012). This also undermines the nature of social media as a globally interconnected entity (Crang, 2005). The very definition of the internet asserts this, as a network of information sharing and communication that connects digital technologies all over the world (Ash et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be said that the rules and guidelines of social media groups strongly connected to Yorkshire folk culture, like Cottingham Community, which seek to include only people with comparable geographies and perceptions of locality, whilst excluding people and cultures viewed as other or nonlocal contests the fundamental design of the internet. From this perspective, the global style of the internet cannot be viewed as the only primary instigator of local-global tension in the relationship between Yorkshire folk culture and social media.

6.5: Conclusions

In an interactive livestream titled *The Future of Folk*, veteran folk band and club 'The Green Ginger Club' (2020), named after the Land of Green Ginger – a 'creative commercial cluster' in the Old Town of Hull (Riddell, 2018), invited their fanbase to complete a survey. The results suggested that 2 out of every 3 respondents, as of the end of August 2020 (toward the end of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK), remained interested in online live folk music and other digitalised folk cultures. From a "glass half empty" perspective, these results show a third of people were uninterested in social media-based Yorkshire folk culture. This contrasted with that communal sense of anticipation about enacting Yorkshire folk cultures on social media described in Chapter 4.2. The most common reason given by these participants for why they were no longer interested in online performances was that it was "not the same" as live physical performances. Again, this shows that folk cultures have attraction to specific spaces, such as a traditional pub or grassroots music venue in the physical realm, as discussed in Chapter 4. The digital realm differs from the physical in various spatial ways, shown through the necessary changes to Yorkshire folk culture in terms of emergent technological and interconnected practices displayed in Chapter 5. Aside from this, there is something embedded in digital, digitalised and online Yorkshire folk culture that is unappealing to these people.

This chapter has contributed toward the answering of Research Question 3. Yorkshire folk culture's relationship with global networks like social media during my investigation was one of both productivity, creativity and cohesion *and* contradiction, limitation and conflict. Joining these factors, this relationship exhibited extreme tension. On the one hand, the relationship between the Yorkshire folk and social media produced experimental, heterogeneous and multicultural hybrids between Yorkshire folk cultures and non-Yorkshire folk cultures. These were enjoyed by local and nonlocal populations and facilitated broader senses of intimacy, inclusion and identities of belonging to online communities. But, on the other hand, by joining these networks of connection, folk cultures local to Yorkshire became subject to and influenced by the unavoidable globalised design of social media. Language, geographical and cultural barriers, global and corporate digital marketing schemes, international copyright and censorship laws and internet trolling were all issues that Yorkshire folk culture came into proximity to as it was enacted on social media. These issues were considerably oppressive

and damaging to small-scale cultures when reproduced online. In essence, they warped perceptions of local scale cultures and geographies as ideas of the local became entwined with those of the nonlocal and the global. Displayed through the findings from the Green Ginger Club's (2020) survey, whether the digital realm of social media is a suitable environment for the practice of Yorkshire folk culture is an individual decision – but this is heavily linked to the (perceived) boundaries that separate what is local and what is nonlocal.

Regarding the human and cultural geographical literature on contemporary trends of localisation, from my case study investigation it is difficult to argue the digital spaces of Yorkshire folk culture as "bastions" for local scale cultures and geographies. This is because their boundaries were too hazy and overtly interlinked with globalised networks. Unlike the archetypes for contemporary localisation, such as the microbrewery (Flack, 1997), the farmers market (Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000), the traditional pub (Clarke et al., 1998) and the grassroots music venue (Miller, 2018), the digital spaces of Yorkshire folk culture have relatively undefined boundaries between what is local and can produce deep senses of localised belonging and identity, and what is nonlocal. Ultimately, this creates significant local-global tensions. The tensions exhibited as local folk cultures engage with global networks significantly affect the practice of folk culture on social media, as cultures become entangled between the productive connections facilitated by the internet and the damaging practices strongly associated with the digital world.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the rapid digitalisation of folk cultures, which consequently forced these localised cultures into alternative networks of access, control, inclusion, exclusion, intimacy, heterogeneity and hybridity. The emergent technological practices necessary to produce and reproduce digital cultures were the driving force behind this shift to alternative networks. These networks changed perceptions of folk cultures with meanings and practices associated with local places, as these cultures are interwoven into broader cultures of modern digital technologies that are otherwise nonlocal. This all has both constructive and destructive consequences for localised cultures, communities and identities. Yet, the labels of 'folk' and 'folk culture' remain attached to digital worlds of folk practices and retain importance to the development of social media communities and identities of belonging surrounding these labels.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital realm represented an exciting new world for Yorkshire folk cultures. Social media held the potential to be a platform for interhousehold, interlocal, interregional and international exchanges of folk culture. It provided a level for the expression of identities of belonging to Yorkshire folk communities through different sonic, visual and material cultural practices. Such is the nature of social media, however, that the Yorkshire folk community became entangled in a network of practices that reproduced local cultures but was also in conflict with them through the networks of globalised internet activity. The worldwide interconnectivity and corporate practices of social media were ever-present throughout my investigation and the impact this had on my case study appeared increasingly substantial the longer I stayed in the online folk community. For the practitioners of folk culture, there was a compromise between what could become of a local culture on social media and what could never become. Digital expressions of Yorkshire's folk cultural practices contributed to the development of a folk community due to the connections facilitated by social media. Yet, these connections simultaneously connected folk cultures to the nonlocal practices of social media. This compromised people's senses of locality and perceptions of a tangible online Yorkshire folk culture that mirrored conventional that of the physical world.

Having thought specifically about Yorkshire's folk community and its practices, this thesis raises broader questions about the extent to which social media is a viable platform for the accommodation of local cultures. Answers to these questions remain in community level perceptions and consciousness of local scale cultures and geographies – and how much these are valued. This thesis argues that digital spaces on social media can be appropriate for the accommodation of local cultures but can also be regarded as conflicted environments. As displayed through the Yorkshire folk case study, local cultures are showing increasingly complex relationships with modern digital technologies. This was exemplified through the digitalisation of local folk cultures via social media as a response to the geographical disconnections created by the COVID-19 pandemic, which reproduced local cultures through the emergent practices of digital technology and connection. By doing so, however, social media is problematic in terms of the continuity of meanings and practices perceived to be local and traditional in a strictly and spatially secluded sensibility. This research has showed that perceptions of locality and Yorkshire-ness in folk communities connected through social media became experienced through an array of cultural practices shared across the interconnected digital world, unbound to any specific place. Subsequently, this thesis has made 3 key arguments, each related to one of the 3 research questions:

Research Question 1.) How were digital spaces produced and controlled by the Yorkshire folk community as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and what were their relationships with physical space?

The COVID-19 pandemic created a range of unique digital geographies as people were confined to their homes and had further time to spend on digital technologies, such as social media. A demand for digital spaces that accommodated cultural practices that were then inaccessible in the physical realm ensued. In the Yorkshire folk community, this demand for online spaces manifested through the production of many new and redesigned folk groups, communities, pages, institutions, networks and spaces on social media, all of which were designed by people with relevant skills in digital technology to accommodate an assortment of folk cultures. Concepts such as the virtual pub were invented to retain elements of a pub-based Yorkshire folk culture and community through lockdown. Takeaway drinks offered by pub institutions supplemented with virtual pub quizzes hosted across social media, all to simulate conventional pub-orientated folk cultures whilst online and at home. Participants

and netnographic observations indicated that these attempts to digitally reproduce physical spaces of folk culture perceived as traditional and authentic were rivalled by conventional spaces and institutions of folk culture, such as traditional pubs and grassroots music venues, even when these physical institutions were inaccessible during the pandemic. This created friction between physical spaces and digital reproductions of these spaces through comparison and perceptions of a lack of tradition and authenticity in digital spaces. Some digital spaces such as the original Virtual Pub Quiz Facebook group were abandoned entirely. Others were forced to change their design.

Digital spaces successful in their accommodation of Yorkshire folk cultures tended to be produced through a re-energisation and revitalisation of pre-existing digital spaces. These spaces retained connections to physical Yorkshire spaces through more imagined aspects of placemaking, including geographical identity and spatialised cultural practices. They thrived because local identities and communities were produced through a range of sonic, visual and material cultural practices attached to Yorkshire. Folk communities were formed through the sharing, engagement and togetherness produced by these spatial cultural practices, through which people discovered identities of belonging to small-scale communities of folk cultural practices, as opposed to any physical place. However, these digitalised perceptions of locality raised issues of discrimination and exclusion regarding differentiation between the local and nonlocal. Boundaries separating the local and nonlocal were fabricated by people with influential roles including social media administrators and moderators, and then enforced through demonstrations of self-governance to affirm the locality of the digital spaces. These power roles, in terms of control over the production, development and access to social media spaces of folk culture, were fulfilled by people with knowledgeability in both digital technologies and folk cultures.

In response to Research Question 1, there were spatial frictions between physical spaces and emerging digital spaces as folk cultural practices were digitally reproduced. These frictions were powerful enough to significantly reshape and restructure the spaces of Yorkshire folk culture during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was exemplified through the relationships of control and power in online folk groups. People with knowledgeability in both digital technologies and folk culture tended to have substantiated control over production, access and control of the folk cultural spaces of social media and their individual experiences within

these spaces. Fundamentally, these spaces all followed the predetermined design and structure of spaces on social media, meaning they were relatively homogeneous and designed around the templates of large-scale corporate social media platforms. It was the actual folk cultural practices of sonic, visual and material value that distinguished these spaces from one another. This links to Research Question 2.

Research Question 2.) How do Yorkshire folk cultural practices change as they become digitalised and developed (new) online identities?

The matter of copying practices from physical world folk cultures and pasting them into digital contexts was problematic due to the spatial frictions and comparisons highlighted in the response to Research Question 1. Enactments of folk culture on social media were forced to adapt to the everchanging circumstances presented by the pandemic. By Yorkshire Day 2020, almost 5 months into lockdown, experimental practices of folk culture on social media were commonplace to overcome these issues. These were experimental in that they differed from conventional practices of the physical world.

Expressions of folk music, voice and visual artforms became reflective of recent events and experiences as they were digitalised. Folk communities bonded and identities of belonging to these communities strengthened as emergent, experimental and experiential practices were conducted and shared across social media. Firstly, folk bands used auditory features on social media to perform together. The online Yorkshire folk band was a novel practice for most involved but allowed musicians and listeners to experience alternative displays of musicianship, composition and representations of pandemic folk culture through digital means. Moreover, as people became acquainted with their online profiles, social media enabled them to publicly express experiences and emotions through the sharing of digitalised artforms and folk practices on a global scale. Representations of experiences were pooled together in public communities such as the Yorkshire Folk Music Group and #QuarantineSessions, and formed resolute senses of communal and emotional togetherness. And while some displays of Yorkshire folk culture including practices related to voice, accent and dialect struggled to enter this experimental network of digital cultural practice, there were signs of progression as steps were made to establish the foundations for a vocal online Yorkshire identity for which people did find senses of togetherness and empowerment – even if through trivial means such as internet memes.

Responding to Research Question 2, then, the practices of Yorkshire folk culture were forced to adapt as they were digitalised during the pandemic through the developing worlds of social media, pushing these practices into alternative networks of experimentation. These alternative networks became connected to displays of experience and the connectedness of social media publicised these displays, pooled them together and aided the production of strong bonds of togetherness on an almost worldwide scale.

Connection, inter-locality, hybridity and heterogeneity were all recurrent throughout the investigation and significant to the digital reproduction of a Yorkshire folk community. Largely, these phenomena were made possible due to the interconnectivity and globalised characteristics of social media during the pandemic, which leads to questions concerning the relationship between Yorkshire folk culture and global networks of connection.

Research Question 3.) What do these digital spaces and online cultural practices suggest about the relationship between the Yorkshire folk community and global scale networks, particularly those produced through digital devices, internet connection and social media?

The connections facilitated by social media meant Yorkshire folk communities could reconnect while geographically distanced. These connections also enabled Yorkshire folk cultures to connect to other cultures, many of which functioned on their own local scale as well as on international scales. The virtual folk festival Góbéfest 2020 was archetypal in its accommodation of both Northern English and Transylvanian folk communities and subsequent hybridised folk cultures. #QuarantineSessions also connected displays of folk music to nonfolk music styles across the world through categorisations of music produced during lockdowns. In this sense, the relationship between the Yorkshire folk community and global networks of social media was productive as it aided the development of experimental and hybridised folk cultures.

On the other hand, the relationship between Yorkshire folk culture and social media also emphasised differences between local and nonlocal entities. Local Yorkshire folk cultures became entangled in the practices of global and corporate networks. Geographical and cultural differences fuelled exclusionary practices, as represented through language barriers and cultural divisions at Góbéfest 2020. Globalised digital marketing techniques contested the digital spaces of folk culture. Issues of internet trolling targeted representations of folk

communities. These experiences synonymous with the digital realm of social media damaged perceptions of locality in the Yorkshire folk community and manipulated the cultural content shared across these digital spaces.

Responding to Research Question 3, the digital spaces and online cultural practices exhibited on social media through the Yorkshire folk community meant the relationship between the Yorkshire folk community and global scale networks of social media was one of productivity, heterogeneity and hybridity *and* one of tension, conflict and detriment. Collectively, the frictions between digital spaces of folk culture, the experimental practices of digital folk culture and the tensions between these spaces and practices as they were produced through social media substantially restructured the Yorkshire folk community. This restructuring was emphasised as a result of the unique digital geographies which emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. These elements of the digital reproductions of folk culture all forced Yorkshire folk cultures into alternative networks of access, control, inclusion, exclusion, intimacy, heterogeneity and hybridity. Regardless of how perceptions of local scale geographies changed, identities of belonging to folk communities based around the cultural practices associated with Yorkshire remained significant throughout.

In this thesis, I have evaluated the relationships between Yorkshire folk cultures and communities, and the global scale networks related to internet connection and social media. I emphasise the importance of the experimental multimethodology and case study framework in facilitating this investigation. The adaptability of (online) ethnography and the ability to offer participants a high degree of control in terms of how they contributed to the investigation, either through art-elicitations or platforms for interviews, meant this research remained successful throughout the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrospectively, if there was one thing I could have done differently, I would have liked to have been more of a participant within the Yorkshire folk community. This would have been in terms of posting frequently in social media groups, commenting on and reacting to content posted by others and overall engage with the community in a more participatory manner, perhaps by even sharing my own folk content. This would have allowed me to have gained a more complete first-person perspective on the Yorkshire folk community in its cultural shift to digital technologies. Instead, I was describable as more of a participant-observer. The sensitivity of

the times during the early pandemic precluded forms of engagement that I would have liked to have carried out. Nevertheless, this only reveals opportunities for further research.

There needs to be more overall research into the formation of local cultures in digital contexts as a specialist area of study. Further research should continue to investigate the relations between contemporary local scale cultures and emergent digital practices. The experimental multimethodological framework of this investigation could be implemented in different localised case studies across the world, including folk and nonfolk cultures alike. Ultimately, this would expand the relatively small but important area of research connecting local scale culture and digital technologies, as well as challenge the repeatability of this investigation. I would, however, recommend taking on a more participatory role to gain an increased first-hand experience of (online) ethnographic research. This would be greatly advantageous as it could really highlight and critically assess the minute and individual experiences of ethnographic research of local cultures in digital contexts, produced through researcher participation. Future research projects could also evaluate local-digital cultures in digital contexts beyond social media, as well as look at different cultural practices and representations in greater depth, such as livestream and video.

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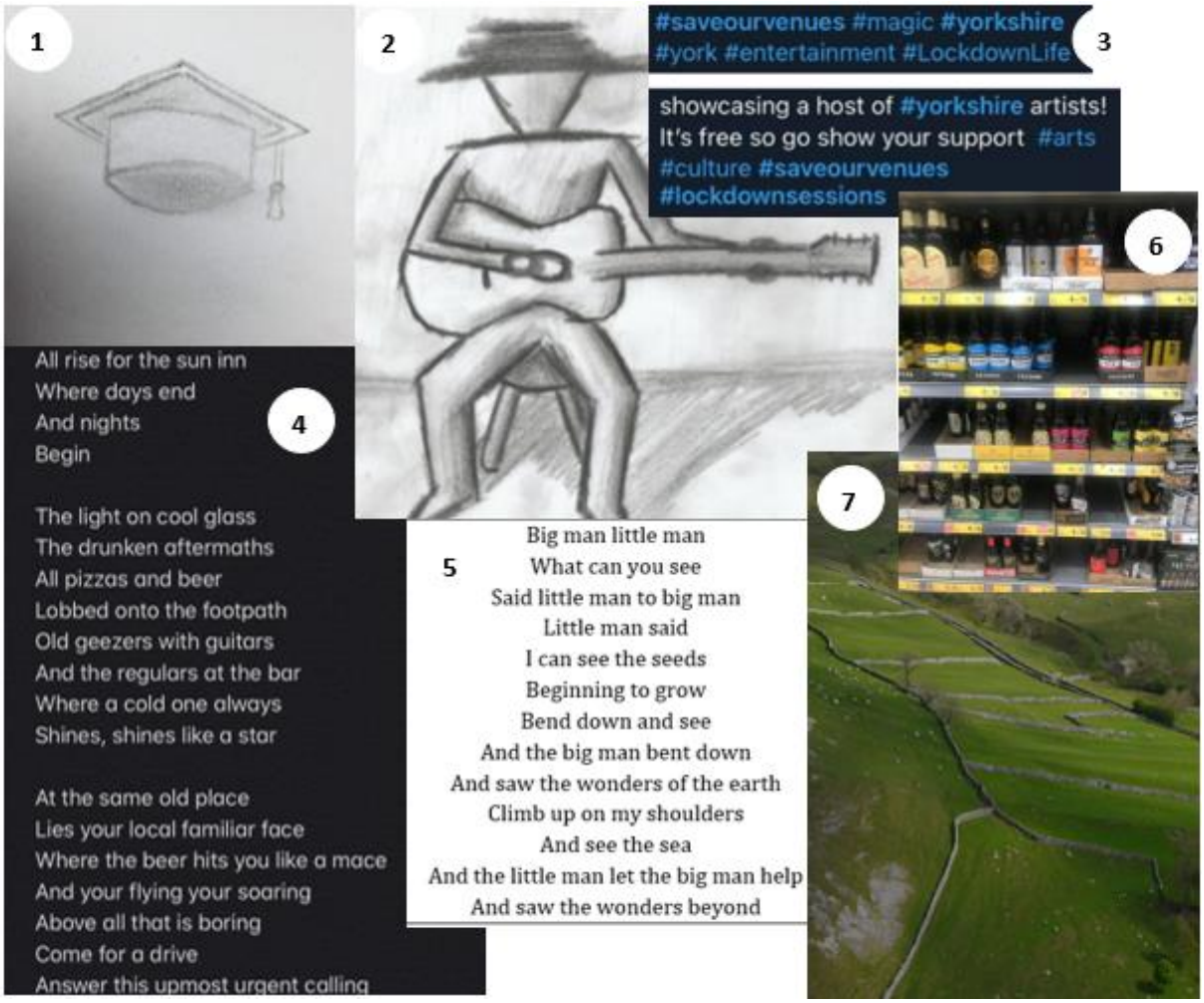
Appendix A
Interview Schedule (Predetermined Semi-structured Interview Questions)

1. Introduction to the interview.
2. Could we talk a bit about the [piece of art] that you created and provided to my research project?
    a. How did you find creating this art? Good/bad enjoyable/boring?
    b. What was the inspiration behind this piece?
        i. Is there a particular place attached to this piece? **Pay attention to any particular spaces and institutions.*
        ii. Are there any particular people (a group, community, or individuals etc.) attached to this piece? (No names)
    c. What does this piece *mean* to you?
    d. How did you feel while creating this piece? How did you feel whilst reflecting on experience(s) of [folk-life]?
    e. How long did you spend creating this piece?
3. How would you define the word 'folk'?
    a. Who qualifies as 'folk'?
        i. Who doesn't qualify as 'folk'? Excluded?
    b. What does folk culture mean to you?
4. Has your involvement in [the folk community] changed since the start of the pandemic or start of the UK's lockdown?
    a. If so, how?
    b. How have you been practising [folk culture] at these unprecedented times? Different to "normality"?
5. How happy are you with the current online environment of the folk community? *Perhaps reference an online group that the participant is a part of.*
6. Since the start of lockdown, it's fair to say that (cultural) practices have been largely limited to the household. Have you been practising [folk culture] whilst at home? How happy are you with this?
7. In terms of [folk culture], what are your plans for when lockdown ends, pubs/clubs are reopened and life regains some sense of 'normality'?
    a. What are you most looking forward to?
    b. Which pub/folk club will you go to first?
8. Do you think [folk culture] will be permanently altered as a result of this global pandemic?
    a. Do you think [folk culture] will retain a significantly heightened online/domestic presence after the pandemic?
9. Thank you very much for your participation!
    a. Give the participant the opportunity to revise any responses or ask any further questions about their contribution or data.
    b. Would you like to add anything else?
10. End.

Appendix B
Collage of Art-elicitations and Observations Not Referenced in Text



1: *Graduation* [Sketch] Art-elicitation (Anonymous participant, 2020).
2: *Guitarist* [Sketch] Art-elicitation (Martin, 2020).
3: *#saveourvenues, #lockdownsessions, #yorkshire* [Screenshots] Hashtag observations on Twitter (2020).
4: *Potential lyrics for a song about the Sun Inn* [Notes] Art-elicitation (Anonymous participant, 2020).
5: *Big man little man* [Poem] Art-elicitation (Wendy, 2020).
6: *The 'Brewed in Yorkshire' alcoholic drinks section at Morrisons* [Photograph] Observed at a time in lockdown when pubs were closed (April 2020).
7: *Facebook cover photo for the Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Group* [Photograph] The Yorkshire Folk Music and Acoustic Facebook Group (Lacey, 2016).

Appendix C
Audio Files Not Referenced in Text

(Follow Google Drive link): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tz1YMMvp5Wf2_MEMz7GbqlcygTLXrc57/view?usp=sharing
Audio File X: *Sample of 'Everybody's Grotty'* [Live song sample] Folk on the Farm (Skinner & T'witch, 2020)

(Follow Google Drive link): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xn_InI9JxjXZt8QiRSGnHlVNV-D3-ITY/view?usp=sharing
Audio File Y: *'Sun of my Summers' melody noodle* [Potential song melody] Participant inspired by their past experiences of the Sun Inn. Access to the Sun Inn became limited during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions of the summer of 2020 (Participant, 2020).

(Follow Google Drive link): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TtlgyBME2-IC3Hcfds4AKxeV1secQJUy/view?usp=sharing
Audio File Z: *Entropy* [Song demo sample] Art-elicitation by participant in June 2020, inspired by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dean, 2020).