



Voice of the Locality: Local Media and Local Audience

Lenka Waschková Císařová Ed.

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Edited by Lenka Waschková Čísařová



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KATALOGIZACE V KNIZE – NÁRODNÍ KNIHOVNA ČR

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PREFACE

Local media are ideal objects of interest, and similarly worthy of admiration. They are fragile yet strong, traditional while innovative, predictable and surprising at the same time. The strong force which surrounds their performance is one of emotion. And the “blame” rests not within the lifeless, general “local media”, but rather the particular, passionate people behind them – namely the local stakeholders. These include local audiences, local journalists, local media owners, local pub owners, local hairdressers, local teachers as well as you and I.

I first came to recognize the character of local media when I initially sought to create the first Czech database of local press organizations in 2007. At the time, I spoke with a local press weekly editor-in-chief about his title and promised to call him the following week for more information related to this and the history behind it. But the following week nobody answered the phone. I later found out that that editor-in-chief had unfortunately suddenly passed away. That weekly, primarily run by this one individual, had simply closed down. And yet, to this day, that local community reflects his strong contribution to the quality of local communication and journalistic integrity. This example serves to illustrate the point that local media are more about emotions than about “being sexy”, further underscoring the need and relevance for investigation into their activities and impact.

It is no longer the case that local media remain largely ignored within communication research. There are more and more scholarly articles (e.g. a special issue of the *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies* on the local and regional press), manuscripts (e.g. Nielsen, 2015; Ali, 2017; Hess & Waller, 2017), and compelling international conferences (e.g. *Local journalism around the world*, Oxford, 2014; *Is No Local News Bad News?*, Toronto, 2017).

Yet the topics of the local in general and local media in particular deserve more concentrated, regular and deeper examination. The locality needs to have a voice. Therefore the aim of this book is to stimulate further international academic discussion on the local and local media topics. They should not be understood as exotic, but rather as compelling and relevant.

This feeling illustrates my motivation behind the effort to create this book. The intention to produce an edited book on local media originated at the ECREA pre-conference *Dealing with the Local: Media, Proximity and Community*¹ which me and my colleagues organized in Prague in November 2016. The impression that all

1 For more about the conference see <http://medzur.fss.muni.cz/veda-a-vyzkum/prekonference-ecrea>

participants were engaged in similar topics but remained unaware of one another's work led to a discussion regarding the prospect of further cooperation related to achieving broader local media research goal. The first outcome from this cooperation is this book, for which I would like to wholeheartedly thank all the conference participants as well as the chapters' authors. Further heartfelt thanks are extended to my colleagues for their valuable feedback on the manuscript at its various stages, as well as my family for the time, understanding and patience.

Finally, as the editor, I would like to thank reviewers of this book, namely two distinguished scholars, Kristy Hess from Deakin University, Australia and April Lindgren from Ryerson University, Canada. Kristy Hess appreciates this book because "its true strength is the way it embraces context by fusing together a variety of international perspectives to fill an important gap in the scholarship to date. It draws on the expertise of place-based scholars who understand the media environments they research. What is equally refreshing is the placement of audience and community needs front and centre in this book. Overall, however, this text certainly provides cause for optimism when it comes to the future of local news". April Lindgren points out that "the studies selected for this collection are well chosen in that they illustrate how methodologies employed to investigate national media and reporting on national issues can be adapted to scholarly research on local journalism. The variety of methodologies is further proof of the growing maturity and sophistication of scholarly research in this field".

This book offers a kaleidoscope of views on the local media, particularly from the perspective of local audiences. The chapters are grounded in research findings from nine countries. The text is structured into four main sections, which are grouped in a manner to flesh out new grounded perspectives on research in this realm. The first, introductory theoretical chapter called *The Voice of the Locality* is focused on the emotions behind the local media/local audience relationship. The second, called *The Voice of the Voiceless: Reflections of the Local, Audiences and Community Needs* is focused particularly on local audiences. Authors of chapters in the third section, titled *Building Closeness: The Relationships behind the Local* emphasize the importance of relationships among local players. While the chapters in the final section, titled *Filling the Gap: Local Media in Specific Conditions* offer a broader, local communication context.

All of the chapters' authors reflect the specific conditions of local media from particular localities and their respective particular points of view. Nevertheless, the chapters intersect in the way the researchers' shared attitudes and assumptions speak literally "one language". For this reason, scholars and researchers must not remain voiceless. Rather, developing that voice can serve to deepen their connection and passion regarding the topic close so as to fill in the gaps around local media research.

Lenka Waschková Čísařová, Brno, December 2017

CHAPTER I

THE VOICE OF THE LOCALITY

1.

THE VOICE OF THE LOCALITY

Lenka Waschková Císařová

Locality has in its nature something irresistible, that plays on a string of emotions. We can see it every day in, for example, the adoration of local products, local dishes, local craftsmanship, or local media. Moreover, emotions associated with locality attract attention though they might be strong and negative at the same time. In my opinion, however, the former neglect of the topic of local media among academics does not mean that local is not sexy (cf. Nielsen, 2016). It rather means that researchers are less willing to deal with complicated layers of emotions (cf. Kotišová, 2017) than with more graspable facts. One can see it, often anecdotally, at media conferences where researchers admit that they do research on local media in localities where they come from. They go on the thin ice of researching emotions (maybe also their own) while at the same time knowing the locality with important contacts therein, so they still somewhat remain on the safe side of pragmatism. If it was agreed that there was something important behind the *local* in general and *local media* in particular, the problems stimulated by the strength of emotionality behind locality can emerge illustrating the vagueness of local media discourse. Underscoring the problem directly, Kitch (2008) points to how journalism scholars have been unwilling to research emotions which are often deemed “soft” and subjective.

The aim of this introductory theoretical overview is to introduce a clear set of basic concepts which underlie the local in general and local media in particular, especially as they pertain to emotions. As such, this introduction seeks to address gaps in critical reflexivity related to local media scholarship. In doing so, we seek to underline the notion that local media is an important research subject deserving more thorough analyses and understanding. In other words, the intention is to give voice to the local as an important scholarly topic without repeating the shortcomings of certain previous local media analyses that were in many cases undermined by vague definitions, shallow theoretical foundations, black-and-white frames, myths or self-fulfilling prophecies.

The Local

The times when the “local” was haughtily understood as peripheral, parochial, uninspiring and neglected are apparently gone. Nowadays, the local is empowered in

contrast to the uniformity and homogenisation of globalization (Bowd, 2006) or as universal and exportable culture (Calabrese, 2001). The local is considered important – as an inevitable part of the democratic development of society or commercial impulses. Andrew Calabrese notes that an ethos of small-town democracy has constituted a mythology of localism (Calabrese, 2001). Christopher Ali points to the “resurgence of the local in everything from commerce (“Small Business Saturday”), ecology (“Buy Fresh, Buy Local”), boosterism (“Keep it Local”), and politics (“Big Society”)” (Ali, 2017, p. 6).

Nonetheless, scholars often consider anything local to be valorous without actually considering its complexities. The local is a priori understood as positive without any deeper reflection upon its spectrum of meaning. Raymond Williams defines “local” and “regional” as synonyms and stresses that regional, unlike provincial or suburban, has an alternative positive sense: “It carries implications of a valuably distinctive way of life, especially in relation to architecture and cooking” (Williams, 1983, p. 76). Other authors express positive emotions linked with the definition of the local – according to Kleinsteuber (1992, p. 144), the “overall impression is that local means something nearby, something cosy – the connotations are positive and supportive.”

Emotions, as noted above, enter our analysis of the local at the first moment, at the moment of (not) making its definition. At the point, we are moving simultaneously from understanding the local as important to understanding it as emotionally significant, but without acknowledging its emotional bias. Let me break up this self-fulfilling prophecy and start to analyse the emotions girded within the local as a function of it conceptually. As Ali suggests, “we need to distance ourselves from the romantic and fetishized impressions we hold of the local as an idyllic and homogenous community” (Ali, 2017, p. 21).

Apart from emotional bias, the definition of the local suffers from the lack of deeper and more concentrated discussion (Ali, 2017). The local receives insufficient scholarly attention and is moreover a “slippery concept that means different things to different people depending on their place in the world” (Hess & Waller, 2017, p. 36). That creates space for an emerging *myth of the local* ingrained through vague definitions of the local (Pauly & Eckert 2002; Nielsen, 2016; Ofcom, 2009) or *default localism* (Ali, 2017). Ali defines default localism as a way of defining the local according to familiar and uncomplicated assumptions. He names three manifestations of default localism:

1. The local as taken-for-granted: Definitions are based on taken-for-granted assumptions that everyone implicitly knows what constitutes the local. As such it is never adequately defined.
2. The local

as geographic: Most often, localism is assumed to be strictly geographically based. This myopic perspective tends to reduce the local to a commercial market and obfuscates alternative proposals. 3. The local as tautological: These definitions fall victim to tautological rationalization – defining what is “local” in terms of what is “local”.

(Ali, 2017, p. 21)

However, the definition of the local starts unsurprisingly from its (often criticized) *spatial*, geographical essence, because even in its current digital media development, the local as rootedness in place still matters (Hess & Waller, 2017; Ali, 2017; Aldridge, 2007; Calabrese, 2001; Kleinstueber, 1992).

In addition, scholars point out that “local” encompasses something which “transcends place” (Calabrese, 2001, p. 265). Ali (2017) calls it “social” and defines it as “subjective, contextual, material and mediated, full of contradictions that require a thorough understanding” (p. 33). Buchanan (2009) acknowledges it as a “sense of place”, which means “identification with a place engendered by living in it” (p. 63) and among dimensions of the sense of place, she lists for example nostalgia, feelings, belonging or roots (p. 67). Kristy Hess (2013) understands *sense of place* as social, emotional or economic foundations of a particular location. And Kristy Hess and Lisa Waller (2017) offer a comprehensive definition:

“Local” is a concept that connects geography and place with a sense of belonging. To be considered a “local” implies that our feet are planted firmly on the ground somewhere and that our physical surroundings are deeply and comfortably familiar. We invest in a locality – socially, economically, culturally and psychologically. It is where we feel most like “a fish in water”. But to be “local” takes time to develop.

(Hess & Waller, 2017, p. 6–7)

Therefore, Hess (2013) develops the concept of *geo-social*, which emphasizes both sides of the local.¹

As such, in analysing the “transcendent” attributes of the local, I decided to divide them into two clearer dimensions of the local – the *temporal* and *emotional*. The temporal characteristics of the local include the extent of time living in a locality, as well as nostalgia or memories from when people no longer live there. The emotional dimension of the local reflects the subjective, personal nature of the local, “meaning different things to different people at different times” (Ali, 2017, p. 33).

¹ Cf. chapter 3.1.

Michael Conniff (1995) adds that the local is no longer where you live but who you are and what you care about. Moreover, John Pauly and Melissa Eckert (2002) note that no matter how unstable the meanings of the local are for them, the term local remains emotionally resonant.

Community

This already multi-layered definition of the local is further complicated by other concepts that are connected, confused or synonymised with it. In journalism discourse, these terms are, for example, proximity; alternative; bottom-up; grassroots; niche or community (cf. Hess & Waller, 2017; Harcup, 2013; Hansen & Hansen, 2011).

Community gets the most attention in the local communication framework. But this term has a similarly problematic definition as local. Kathryn Bowd argues there is a lack of agreement about what community is:

Instead, it is this lack of agreement and resulting imprecision of the term that forms the basis for much discussion of the topic. Further complicating attempts at definition is the consideration that it is a term sometimes used descriptively, sometimes normatively, and sometimes combining both.

(Bowd, 2006, p. 58)

Therefore, according to Bowd, definitions of community reflect more what it should be than what it is. On top of that, community can be understood (like the local) as a “warmly persuasive word”, which “never seems to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term” (Williams, 1983, p. 76; cf. Shepherd & Rotenbuhler, 2001).

Hess and Waller (2017) define community as a fluid term (cf. the aforementioned slippery concept of the local), which refers to a group of people with shared interests or activity but is, unlike the local, not inherently tied to any place. On the contrary, “to describe geographic spaces simply as ‘communities’ can mislead us into thinking their inhabitants exist together harmoniously for the sake of the collective, and overlooks issues of equality, social class and power” (Hess & Waller, 2017, p. 8).

However, local community obviously share similar characteristics with the local, meaning it can be perceived through its spatial, temporal and emotional dimensions. Gregory Shepherd and Eric Rotenbuhler (2001) interlink the spatial and temporal characteristics of local community in the following way:

Social life in general, and certainly community, is not made up of discrete moments and events; it is made up of meaningfully integrated experiences, and communication is often used to enact, construct, or encourage that integration. (...) Just as the couple's relationship is performed in talk that binds times and places, so will community be performed in time- and place-binding talk among neighbors, merchants, newspaper reporters, bankers, politicians, children, teachers, and so on. The fact, that some talk is devoted to time- and place-binding is a clue that other instances of communication may be motivated by it or may presume it, even if not explicitly devoted to it.

(Shepherd & Rotenbuhler, 2001, p. 172)

However, the nature of community is similarly strong in its temporal dimension. As Zelizer (2001) points out, the whole "constitution and maintenance of communities depend on how communities relate to time. Members of communities develop temporal practices that have to do with the content of time, the form of time, the high points and low points of time, and the context surrounding time" (Zelizer, 2001, p. 181). And whether community use time to unite rather than separate, it remains a premise of emerging collective memory (see the later notion of memory).

The third, emotional dimension of community, is connected with "sense of community", which consists of processes of feeling, belonging, or shared faith (Mersey, 2010). In addition, feelings of attachment, identification and involvement in a community are associated with communication, namely reading local newspapers (Shepherd & Rotenbuhler, 2001; cf. Finnegan & Viswanath, 1988).

However, this type of reflection upon the community phenomenon can be seen as prejudiced and non-reflexive as it presumes community as something inherently positive. According to Shepherd and Rotenbuhler (2001), the goodness of communication and community is an obvious, but typically perplexing focus. They explain this by the fact, that the words communication and community are coterminous, with both emphasizing the idea of commonality, while finding related scholar argumentation muddled or naively idealistic (Shepherd & Rotenbuhler, 2001, pp. 25, 161).

On the whole, when we compare described key composition of the local and (local) community, we can agree on a clearer usage of the first of the two terms. To summarize, in the local communication framework, we can rely on three dimensions of local – spatial, temporal and emotional. We do not need to use "the crutch" of the community reference because the local and community reflect more or less similar answers to the question of "where." But we do need to better understand the answers the questions of "who" and "why." And the way to achieve this is to consider the actors behind these terms: namely *local media* and *local audiences*.

Local media

Local media and journalism, similarly as the local and as community, are understood essentially as important and positive. Their importance is described mainly as: local media focus on local people; there is closeness in the relationship local media built with their communities; local audiences have a sense of “ownership” of local media (Bowd, 2005). At the same time, it can be pointed out that by diminishing local media, our local democracy will not thrive (Mair, Fowler, & Reeves, 2012).

Nevertheless, defining local media and *local journalism* is similarly as problematic as defining the local (Bowd, 2005). And according to critics, expectations regarding local journalism encompass deep mythologies – e.g. “the belief that newspapers are most true, pure, real, and authentic when they honor their responsibility to ‘the local’” (Pauly & Eckert, 2002, p. 310).

Furthermore, the positive expectations connected with local media performance sometimes show their darker side, e.g. in terms of access:

The local remains contested terrain. News organizations invoke the local, in part, to lay claim to it, to control the meanings that others might attribute to it. (...) Journalists’ conception of the local does not oblige them to include everyone in the community. For television as well as newspapers, local means coverage, not access.

(Pauly & Eckert, 2002, p. 321)

Actually, the positive expectations connected with local media can even be misused. Council-run media are an artificial competition for local media paid by local taxes and, moreover, these media evoke an impression about their independence and the reflection of community needs (Currah, 2009; Fenton, Metykova, Schlosberg, & Freedman, 2010; Waschková Císařová, 2015).

The importance of defining and understanding local media is again hidden in the complex view of local media specifics (Pauly & Eckert, 2002). Thus, it is inevitable and necessary to address the overall importance of local media from multiple points of view including, for example, their audiences’ understanding of them. Audiences pay attention to local topics and items that facilitate local orientation and geography. They develop individual local stories from the angle of locals and contribute to the collective memory and a collective “time-line”. They develop realist representations of locality, not only a positive image. But at the same time, they focus on specific, “bizarre” topics, which activate local conversations and thus strengthen people’s feeling of belonging and connection (Costera Meijer & Bijleveld, 2016). It is evident

from this overview that even at the level of local media, the spatial, temporal and emotional again comprise the important dimensions.

Not only the specific focus on media content, but also the areas of circulation or reach are among the most obvious assumptions which define media local. But scholars similarly agree on the fact that this definition is not enough (cf. Hess & Waller, 2017; Engel, 2009). The spatial dimension of the local media begins to gain importance nowadays as the “obvious” geographic characteristics start to emerge. Current changes in media and journalism, mainly connected with economic and technological trends, produce possible disruptions for the geographically specific content of local media, the presence of local journalists and access of local audience. Hans Kleinsteuber (1992) points out that “the simple fact of placing the media “hardware” in the locality – the newspaper being printed or the transmitter located on the spot – does not at all determine that the “software” is local in any way. All programme content might actually come from outside sources and may just be distributed locally” (p. 148). Furthermore, if local media move their newsrooms from a locality (mainly due to economies of scale), it has important consequences for the presence of local journalists in a locality, including their visibility and similarly in relation to local audience access: “local access means that (...) the medium is housed around the corner and may be easily reached and entered” (Kleinsteuber, 1992, p. 149).

The temporal dimension of local media is the most often cited element related to the everyday nature of local media production and local media as archives of *local memory*.² And both of these attributes are understood as important parts of the relationship between local audiences and local media. As Sandra Ball-Rokeach et al. sum up, “we see people and groups as having relationships with different storytelling production systems, relationships that are embedded in their everyday practices” (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001, p. 402).

Local media are also considered witnesses to local history, archivists and therefore important factors in the creation of *local identity*³ and co-producers of a *sense of belonging*⁴ in locality (Mersey, 2010). They are producers of collective narratives and local memory, helping to constitute local communities (Buchanan, 2009). And again, these important features of local media are most visible when locality loses local media:

[when this happens], [i]t also loses an institution’s memory: archives, values and community relationships that have, in many cases, been

2 Cf. chapter 4.3

3 Cf. chapters 2.3., 2.4., 3.1., 4.2., 4.4.

4 Cf. chapters 3.1., 4.3.

built through generations of work. It loses an institution that is equipped to raise the profile of a community, inform citizens and campaign on issues of local relevance.

(Currah, 2009, p. 7)

Local media as memory agent is a topic both regarded as important and yet under researched (cf. Zelizer, 2008). Some authors (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014; Kitch, 2008; Zelizer, 2008, 2001) point out that an important part of (local) media and journalists' performance is their ability to cover diverse topics from everyday life; to position ritual processes from both the perspective of producers and consumers; to help (local) communities to interpret the past in similar fashion – developing collective memory; and to be one of contemporary society's main institutions for recording and remembering (Kitch, 2008; Zelizer, 2001). Carolyn Kitch adds the following in particular to local media:

Rarely the subject of scholarship, local news has a mission and tone that is significantly different from that of national or international news organizations. (...) [and] are worth[y of] attention because of their overt points of view, their audiences' long-term devotion to them, and their open identification with those audiences. (...) journalists use an inclusive language and address their readers or viewers as members of a social group with common values, with similar problems and needs, and with a shared understanding of its past.

(Kitch, 2008, p. 313)

And from devotion, we can move to the important emotional dimension of local news, which is strongly connected to the emotional dimensions of the local in general. As Conniff (1995) states, "local is only going to get more and more personal. Newspapers can be there or be square." An alternative perspective on the emotional aspect of local media is represented by Meryl Aldridge (2007), who thinks that people's behaviour must not be confused with their sentiments. But even Aldridge later admits, that sometimes the attachment between citizens and local media is diffuse and emotional (p. 161).

According to Charlie Beckett and Mark Deuze (2016), as journalism and society change, emotion is becoming a much more important dynamic in how news is produced and consumed. They see this relationship between local media and local audience as *intimate*, but add to this *relationship* more elements, e.g. reliable sources or potential collaborators (Beckett & Deuze, 2016).⁵

5 Cf. chapters 3.3., 3.4.

And even the members of the group of people inside this relationship see and value its importance. For example, local audiences value that through closeness with local reporters comes a better appreciation of what a local community is thinking (Bowd, 2006). Moreover, local journalists understand the relationship with the local as based on emotions – “most of the journalists interviewed agreed on the importance of “connection” with the communities in which they worked” (Bowd, 2005, p. 114).

Local audiences

The focus on local audiences is of scholarly interest (e.g. Costera Meijer & Bijleveld, 2016) but at the same time, it is criticized for its insufficiency (e.g. Nielsen, 2015; Costera Meijer, 2012). If we want to understand what is “behind” the local in terms of communication, we need to recognize what audiences want, what they do with information and why (cf. Hess & Waller, 2017).⁶

To put it differently, Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2016) notes that we need to understand how people understand journalism to understand journalism properly. “We need to examine what I define as *folk theories of journalism*, actually existing popular beliefs about what journalism is, what it does, and what it ought to do” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 1). Nielsen therefore extends Hess’ geo-social concept with the dimension of how people understand media content.

An oversimplifying answer to the question what audiences want is to say that they want local information. Researchers persuade us repeatedly that the local matters (Pew Research Center, 2015; Mair, Fowler, & Reeves, 2012; Fenton et al., 2010; Hollander, 2010; Aldridge, 2007; Franklin, 2006) but it is more complex than that, as Jock Lauterer points out (2006; cf. Pauly & Eckert, 2002). The problem with this generalization (cf. Waschková Čísařová, Macek, & Macková, forthcoming 2018) can be illustrated through data from a comparative research study delivered by *Reuters institute digital news report 2015* (Newman, Levy, & Nielsen, 2015; Fletcher, Radcliffe, Levy, Nielsen, & Newman, 2015), where one of the survey questions asks respondents to select their five most important types of news. As displayed in Figure 1.1, local news in fact does not have a prominent position among geographically-differentiated types of news, and their perceived importance varies across particular countries (cf. myth of the local, Pauly & Eckert, 2002).

The problem lies in more elements, the first being the unclear operationalization of the local – we have shown that the local has different layers, so how can we

6 Cf. chapters 2.1., 3.3.

Figure 1.1: Importance of news types for audience



Sources: Reuters institute digital news report 2015. Tracking the future of news; Reuters institute digital news report 2015. Supplementary Report (Newman, Levy, & Nielsen, 2015; Fletcher et al., 2015).

reflect it in quantitative research? Secondly, the relationship is likely to be emotional which is also difficult to grasp in a survey. A third reason could be the difference among various media systems on one hand and communities as such on the other (Miller, Rainie, Purcell, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2012; Napoli, Stonbely, McCollough, & Renninger, 2017; Pauly & Eckert, 2002).

We should therefore move to the less generalizable findings about whether the audience wants local information and why. For example qualitative focus groups with members of audiences show that people turn to local news first off and the reason is to *have a voice* – “to hear stories from their local community and see their local lives reflected” (Fenton et al., 2010, p. 8). David Croteau and William Hoynes (2001, p. 157) quote Gloria Tristani, who defines media localism as covering local issues, reporting local news, doing local programming and providing an outlet for local voices.

It is evident that audiences are not alone in local communication. At least local journalists also act as representatives of local media. And local journalists understand the role of local media in reflecting audiences’ needs (see Bowd, 2006). Furthermore, Bowd sums up that media interpret their community voice role in a variety of ways, “ranging from a response to events or debate within the community, through news coverage and opportunities for community members to make their voices heard, to a more active role through news, feature and editorial coverage advocating a particular stance or action on the issue and identification of this coverage with a device such as a logo to reinforce the message” (Bowd, 2007, p. 78).

To sum up briefly, local communication and local media analyses should start with a clear and adequately thorough definition of its basic terms such that emotion as a vital part of the local per se and of local media in particular is not erased. The *local* as well as *local media* have to be defined as concepts with *temporal*, *spatial* and *emotional* dimensions where all three dimensions play a constitutive role. However, to understand the dynamics underlying the two concepts, we should also understand the forces behind the relationship among the local actors – namely the local audience, local media and local journalists.

Closeness

The central topic of this chapter is the relationship binding together local audiences, local media and local journalists – the relationship underlying the local. Is there such a relationship? And in light of the previous criticism of the simplification of perceptions of the local, can we assume this relationship as one that is necessarily positive?

There are many definitions and concepts used to explain this relationship (e.g. social capital, habitus; cf. Hess & Waller, 2017). But in my opinion, they often do not tackle the subject with the complexity of the relationship implied by considering the spatial-temporal-emotional dimensions. Some authors who attend to these relationships have, for example, obvious difficulties grasping it in a similarly complex manner with regard to defining the local or community. On the most general level, Carrie Buchanan (2009) describes an interactive relationship between human subjects and places. Nielsen, on the other hand, specifically depicts a relationship between an audience and a local paper constructed “throughout beliefs about what the newspaper does or ought to do, as well as ritual and informal cultural practices embedded in daily life (routines of reading)” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 5). In addition, Hess and Waller (2017) point out the literal closeness of the relationships between local journalists, local people and local places the local journalists report upon. Yong-Chan Kim and Sandra Ball-Rokeach (2006), applying their *communicative infrastructure theory*, approach relationships among communicative agents as connectedness; and though they propose to calculate the *connectedness* as “a factor containing multiple dimensions such as access, scope, intensity, and centrality” by the formula (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 184), their notion does not acknowledge the emotional dimension.

So far the most complex view on the relationship behind the local, formulated by Shepherd and Rotenbuhler, interestingly articulates criticisms of one-dimensional and singularly-positive approach to the concept of local community:

Affective, cognitive, and behavioural ties are all things that people feel, think, or do and all are interpreted as things that build community. There is in the literature little or no attention to the things that people do not feel, think, or do (...). There is also no attention to the things people feel, think, or do that hurt community in one sense or another. The result is that the empirical generalizations that can be based on this literature are mostly about degrees of satisfaction amongst mostly happy people who mostly like the places in which they live.

(Shepherd & Rotenbuhler, 2001, p. 166)

My definition of this relationship – here referred to as *closeness* – is related to the aforementioned dimensions of locality: To articulate assumptions of closeness, I focus again on the spatial, temporal and emotional dimensions of locality, aiming to systematize this approach in terms of particular (sub)concepts (see Table 1.1).

The spatial dimension of closeness accumulates concepts of *access*, *presence*, *visibility* and *proximity*.⁷ *Access* as one of the basic conditions of the closeness relationship is understood as an opportunity to communicate personally on a local level with local people or through local media (Kleinstauber, 1992). *Presence* generally means that local audiences and local journalists share the same locality (Fenton et al., 2010) but above that, local journalists should be *visible* in the locality they serve to gain audiences' attention (Lauterer, 2006). *Proximity* can be, on the one hand, depicted as the strictly spatial news value (Matthews, 2017) referring to the "geographic distance between an event and a media organization's newsrooms and/or its audiences" (Shoemaker, Lee, Han, & Cohen, 2007, p. 231). On the other hand, there is a significant overlap between proximity and the emotional dimension of the closeness relationship (cf. closeness as a metaphor of emotional proximity in Engan, 2015, p. 146). Therefore, proximity could be defined not only as physical but also psychological closeness (Shoemaker et al., 2007; cf. Hess, 2013).

Table 1.1: Dimensions of closeness

Spatial dimension	Temporal dimension	Emotional dimension
Access	Duration	Familiarity
Presence	Tradition	Bridging
Visibility	Ritual	Bonding
Proximity	Repetition	Linking
		Reciprocity
		Reflection
		Shared interests
		Fragility

The second perspective of the closeness definition refers to its temporal dimension. It takes time to develop a relationship, so the important elements of this closeness are at the same time *duration* and development. Local media are a persistent part of the local life (Kitch, 2008) for example through recording and conserving unfolding local rituals and rites of passage such as births, deaths or marriages and providing information about them (Buchanan, 2009). A related concept of *tradition* is demonstrated mainly by the traditional local media published in a particular locality – and being part of local life – for decades.⁸

⁷ Cf. chapter 3.2.

⁸ Cf. chapter 4.1.