

Research Project: *Investigating the Impact of Channel 4's Move to Bristol*

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FIRST BLOG – About

This research project, funded by Bristol + Bath Creative R+D, investigates the effect of Channel 4's move to Bristol in 2018-19 as it transformed from a London-based to a regionally based public service broadcaster, with its new headquarters in Leeds and two 'creative hubs' in Bristol and Glasgow. My research will examine how this relocation has changed the ways in which Channel 4 operates and the impact it has had on Bristol's screen ecology.

This first blog is quite lengthy because it sets out the aims and objectives of the research and the context of this relocation in a longer history of the relationship between broadcasting and the UK's nations and regions. As the project progresses, I will post additional blogs that discuss developments in the research and any interesting issues that have arisen. They will be much shorter!

Andrew Spicer, Bristol, January 2022.

The UK's Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) and Regional Diversity

Established in 1982, Channel 4 is one of the UK's four public service broadcasters (PSBs). The others are the BBC (established in 1922); Independent Television (ITV) (established 1955) and Channel 5 (established 1997). The BBC and Channel 4 are both not-for-profit organisations but funded differently. The BBC is funded by a mandated licence fee; Channel 4 largely through advertising revenue. ITV and Channel 5 operate as commercial entities. One of the principal obligations of the PSBs is to reflect and serve the cultural diversity of the UK *as a whole* rather than a particular section. For instance, the BBC's charter contains the corporation's commitment 'to reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all the United Kingdom's nations and regions, and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom' (Public Purpose 4). All the PSBs are regulated by the communications regulator, Ofcom, which tries to ensure that they fulfil this commitment by setting quotas for the percentage of primary production expenditure in the nations and regions. Ofcom understands its quotas as a mechanism to encourage the PSBs to produce 'regional stories, characters, places and issues', and thereby ensure that television 'reflects and responds to all the identities and communities of the UK's increasingly diverse society, and ... helps to maintain viable communities in the nations and regions' (Ofcom 2005: 56). According to Ofcom, the PSBs should help 'to disperse and stimulate investment and job opportunities in the [broadcast] sector throughout the UK ... [which] benefits the viewer by ensuring a diverse range of programming and editorial perspectives'; they also help 'to address geographical imbalances within the national television production industry' (June 2019, pp. 1, 4). This commitment to nation and region diversity is particularly important because historically the UK's broadcasting industry has been overwhelmingly London-centric. This economic and cultural dominance has meant that the small nations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and the English regions (the North-East, North-West and South-West)

have been starved of resources and decision-making powers. (The South-East is usually bracketed in with London).

Channel 4 and the Regions and Nations

Channel 4, which began broadcasting in November 1982, was set up in order to be something new and distinctively different in British television, then dominated by the ‘cosy duopoly’ of the BBC and ITV. Its founding remit was to experiment and innovate in the form and content of its programming, to offer a space for minority voices and cater for diverse audiences. Equally critical was Channel 4’s status as a publisher-broadcaster that commissioned programmes from independent companies rather than, as with the BBC or ITV, to use in-house staff. However, according to Maggie Brown in her recently extended history of Channel 4 (2021), Channel 4’s central London location meant that the majority of its early programmes were made by London-based indies, thereby reinforcing broadcasting’s metropolitan bias and limiting its regional reach. Channel 4 did have an office in Glasgow and created a new senior post, Director of Nations and Regions, based there, who had overall responsibility for Channel 4’s strategy and corporate development outside London. The first post-holder, Stuart Cosgrove emphasised that the broadcaster’s regional strategy was rooted in its mode of operation as a publisher-broadcaster: ‘My work for Channel 4 is driven not by a dull plea for regional television, but for the more exhilarating thought that some of Britain’s best companies work from a regional base in creative cities far from London. We work in an industry that seems myopically obsessed with one creative city – London. It would be a great step forward if regulators and broadcasters could escape from this deeply parochial mindset.’ (quoted in Kidd and Taylor 2002: 27). Cosgrove argued that these small, dynamic companies ‘by their nature, are closer to ideas, popular influences and cultural change’ and therefore represented a new force that could embody a diverse and sustainable spectrum of regional production.

Channel 4’s Move Out of London – 2017/18

The major change occurred when, under government pressure, Channel 4 decided to move out of London. In 2017 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) published a regional cost/benefit analysis modelled on a range of different relocation set-ups. The following year, Channel 4 launched its ‘4 All the UK’ strategy, whose mission statement proclaimed: ‘Our goal is to reflect the full diversity of contemporary Britain on and off-screen ... we want our production partners to produce challenging and creative content that tells the stories of an inclusive Britain.’ Channel 4 invited ‘pitches’ from regional cities and from more than thirty city bids, drew up a shortlist of seven: Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and the West Midlands (Birmingham and Coventry). After site visits and interviews, Leeds was chosen as Channel 4’s new headquarters, Bristol and Glasgow as two additional ‘Creative Hubs’ (Lee, Champion and Kelly 2021). My contention is that Channel 4’s coming to Bristol – delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the doors of its new offices in Finzels Reach opened on 1 January 2020 – is the most significant event in the City’s screen history since the establishment of the BBC’s Natural History Unit in 1957. It is therefore worthy of close scrutiny and analysis within the context of the changing history of Bristol’s screen industries (Spicer and Presence 2022).

The Project’s Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim is to explore the impact of Channel 4's move to the Bristol region and its context within national debates about the significance of creative industries to regional economies and cultures.

The project has four specific objectives:

- 1) A detailed scrutiny of why Channel 4 chose to locate one of its two regional 'creative hubs' in Bristol, examining the application process, '4 All the UK' and conducting interviews with Channel 4 executives.
- 2) A forensic analysis – using unpublished documents and interviews – of the reasons why Bristol's bid was successful, by scrutinising how its application, 'Invent the Future of Channel 4 with Bristol' represented Bristol as a 'creative city'.
- 3) Examining, through interviews and a scrutiny of commissioned programmes, how Channel 4's commissioning practices in its reconfigured role as a regionally based publisher-broadcaster have been reshaped? How has Channel 4 been able to work with regional organisations and local institutions? Has it become more 'embedded' in particular communities; if so, in what ways?
- 4) Understanding, through interviews and a wide-ranging analysis of academic studies and grey literature, the broader significance of Channel 4's relocation regionally and nationally within the context of the increasing internationalisation of the television industries.

The Context of the Project

The project's focus on Channel 4 will be framed within the following four contexts:

The History of Regions and Nations Broadcasting

Channel 4's move out of London was the latest episode in the long struggle between the 'centre' (London) and the 'peripheries' (the nations and regions) in UK broadcasting history. ITV was set up in the 1950s as an interlocking set of strong, autonomous and distinctive *regional* broadcasters, a conception specifically designed to counteract the BBC's London bias, which had been criticised in the 1951 Beveridge Report (Briggs 1995). By 2000, this 'experiment' was over as the separate companies had coalesced into one corporate entity, based in London with only vestigial regional ties (Fitzwalter 2008). The inauguration of Channel 5 in 1997 was subject to a prolonged, though unsuccessful, lobby that it should be regionally located to address broadcasting's 'deep historical imbalances'. The BBC's London-centricity was broken in 2011 when the corporation moved five departments and around 3,000 staff to Salford Quays in Greater Manchester (Spicer 2019). In March 2021, The BBC announced its 'Across the UK' policy that committed it to a substantial increase in regional expenditure; a rise in network commissions from the nations and regions to 'at least' 60 per cent. These commissions included 200 'new and returning' drama and comedy series that would 'reflect the lives and communities of audiences outside London'. 400 jobs are to be relocated outside London (BBC March 2021). Rhodri Talfon Davies, the BBC's Director of Nations and Regions, argued that the policy will enable the BBC To get 'much closer to communities across all four nations, really embedding ourselves in those places and

getting regional centres to tell the stories of their localities and feel rooted in those communities' ('In Conversation', 2021).

Changes in the Television Industry

UK television is no longer determined nationally, but forms part of the increasing internationalisation of television and the radical transformation of audio-visual production and distribution markets arising from the proliferation of satellite channels and the massive growth in Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) providers – increasing 86 per cent in the last five years – which have very different priorities. Although they invest significantly in UK production, satellite channels such as Sky, or SVODs such as Netflix or Disney+, do not have national or regional responsibilities nor are they regulated by Ofcom. As Ramon Lobato argues in *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution* (2019), internet-distributed television 'changes the fundamental logics' of broadcasting, accelerating and intensifying the dynamics of satellite broadcasting. Whereas the PSBs' historical role was to define the audience *politically*, as citizens of 'the nation', satellite broadcasters and SVODs operate to a global *commercial* logic in which 'territories' are not defined by national boundaries because they are conceived as markets not cultures. As Lobato argues, this new logic does not entirely displace or supersede the older linear logics of analogue broadcasting but introduces new layers of spatial complexity.

Understanding Creative Clusters

Many economists have argued that the creative industries (and industries in general) benefit from co-location. The Harvard economist Michael Porter argued that 'clusters' – which he defined as 'geographical agglomerations of firms that collaborate and compete with each other' – provide 'enduring competitive advantages in a global economy' through local knowledges and relationships 'that distant rivals cannot match' (1998: 78). Porter's work has been the subject of significant critique for underestimating the importance of long-term cultural traditions, and failing to engage with the interactive and iterative relationship between cultural production and place. In his seminal *The Cultural Economy of Cities*, Allen J. Scott argues that place has a particular significance for creative production because of the ways in which locality and culture are intertwined (2000: 3). Scott contends that, as social as well as economic entities, places 'leave deep traces on the form and cognitive meanings of products (and above all cultural products) as they emerge from localized systems of industrial activity'. He argues further that creative producers, 'tend to accumulate place-specific cultural associations' and these 'symbolic and sentimental assets' derive from the 'distinctive historical associations and landmarks' that make each particular place unique. Places are always both actual locations and what Benedict Anderson terms 'imagined communities' (1983: 15), which, as cultural constructions, generate 'place-images' that, over time, accrete to form a 'place-myth', which defines a locality as much as its geographical features and built environments (Shields 1991: 61). This project scrutinises how Bristol operates as a 'cluster' or 'hub' and how Channel 4 has affected its dynamics.

Regional Economies

In his magisterial *The UK Regional-National Economic Problem: Geography, Globalisation & Governance* (2016), Philip McCann delineates the profound structural imbalance of the UK's economy. He demonstrates that the UK is 'one of the most interregionally unequal large high-income country' globally, its sub-national government funding & capital

expenditure among lowest of any large OECD economy (p. 409). Thus although some regions, notably London and South-East England, have high productivity, other regions are among the lowest in Europe. As McCann points out, these inequalities are experienced ‘almost entirely by lower 40% of the income spectrum’, and that the government, business elites and the media collude in making sure this issue is not prominent in public consciousness and thus well down list of voter priorities. McCann argues that these destructive interregional inequalities are compounded by the UK’s ‘highly centralised, top-down, largely spaceblind and sectorally-dominated governance system’. The present Conservative administration has declared its commitment to ‘levelling up’, and therefore has a direct interest in urging the PSBs to address ‘geographical imbalances within the national television production industry’ as part of this process. What has been the role of Channel 4 in these wider processes? Did ‘4All the UK’ and its choice of regional centres address or exacerbate these imbalances? Has the choice of Bristol rather than Cardiff increased these cities historic rivalries or will it contribute to the development of the Western Gateway super-region? These concerns show that the role of television, unlike film, has always been a profoundly political concern in the Britain, as elsewhere in Europe. At the time of writing (January 2022), Channel 4 is embroiled in a government initiated move to privatise the company, which Channel 4 itself and most commentators are resisting strenuously. Privatisation would almost certainly have a deleterious effect on the relocation strategy and, even if it does not go ahead, is an unwarranted and unwelcome distraction.

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SECOND BLOG – Privatisation, levelling up; Channel 4's Bristol hub

Privatisation and Levelling Up

I mentioned at the end of Blog post#1 that Channel 4's reinvention as a regionally-based broadcaster has been undermined by the government's attempt to force through a sale by which this public service broadcaster would be privatised.

Privatisation commands few supporters outside the Conservative Party. There is a widespread feeling that this is, as a former Channel 4 CEO David Abraham put it in 2016, 'a solution looking for a problem'. Many fear that the virtues that Channel 4 has demonstrated over 40 years – its commitment to diversity, plurality of voices, experimentation and minority programming – would be severely eroded if it was privatised. It is also profoundly worrying that the broadcaster is coming under attack from a government that seems determined to implement the, reasonably consistent, Conservative mantra that television is a commercial operation rather than a public good. (The irony being that Channel 4 was inaugurated during a Tory administration). This is also evident in the freezing of the BBC's licence fee revenues and in the intended review of a mandated fee. While there may well be other ways of funding both the BBC and Channel 4, what I would contend is central is that they remain not-for-profit organisations. That is to say ones that operate to a cultural logic whereby innovation and diversity remain foregrounded and where choice of programming is determined by civic

values – an informed citizenship – rather than some form of audience measurement or ratings. They should operate on the principle of free access rather than be behind a pay wall, as is the case with Sky or the SVODs such as Netflix. The argument that Channel 4 (or the BBC) would be ‘liberated’ by privatisation, their entrepreneurial energies given free rein is, I think, bogus nonsense. It’s worth mentioning that Channel 4 costs the tax payer nothing. So even the ostrich-like ‘why should I pay a licence fee for something I don’t watch’ (the BBC), can’t be invoked.

Channel 4 remains in good financial health despite the pandemic and is making significant moves to increase its online offering and lessen its dependency on advertising revenue. While there are long-term challenges – competition from streaming services, fragmenting audiences, declining advertising revenue – these would exist were the broadcaster privately owned, and it would also have to generate revenue for shareholders.ⁱ Consequently, the move has been seen as an ideologically-driven attack on public service broadcasting and perhaps an attempt to silence a critical voice.

The focus of this project is on regional broadcasting and one of the arguments against privatisation has been that it is highly likely that any prospective buyer would want Channel 4’s operations ‘streamlined’ - i.e. returned to London. That would make the company cheaper to run. It would, of course, reverse everything that the move out of London was trying to achieve: to lessen London’s historical dominance; to increase diversity and the plurality of voices on UK television; to help augment regional centres of production; to embed itself in local and regional cultures, thereby encouraging and nurturing talent in those areas and helping to forge sustainable media careers that do not necessitate moving to London. Thus there is a significant concern that a privately-owned Channel 4 would roll back on its commitments to the nations and regions and revert to being a London-based company in the interests of ‘efficiency’.ⁱⁱ

The present government made much of its ‘levelling up’ agenda at the last election. According to the government’s website, levelling up means:

- boosting productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging
- spreading opportunities and improving public services, especially in those places where they are weakest
- restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost
- empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agencyⁱⁱⁱ

The irony, of course, is that Channel 4’s move out of London would seem to *fulfil this agenda*, or at least parts of it, and to provide a very tangible instance of the levelling up agenda *in practice*. (There has been widespread critique of the policy because the government is not releasing substantial amounts of new money and therefore how this impeccable rhetoric will be implemented is not clear).

How Channel 4’s Creative Hub in Bristol Operates

Channel 4's Creative Hub in Bristol houses commissioners in Daytime (Kate Thomas), Drama (Gwawr Marthan Lloyd), Factual and Popular Factual (Daniel Fromm) and part of the broadcaster's national Creative Diversity team (Izzy Francke) together with a complement of ten full-time staff that will rise to twenty in 2022. It is headed by Sacha Mirzoeff, an experienced ex-BBC, award-winning documentarist and former head of an indie, Marble Films, who is well-known in Bristol having worked in the city for twenty years. Mirzoeff sees strong synergies 'a "natural match"' between Bristol and Channel 4 as mirror images: 'Innovation and originality have always been our traits, just as they have been with Channel 4. We both have a long history of being questioning, subversive and at times cage-rattling. Bristol provides the perfect countercultural ecosystem for a channel with the core value of championing the underrepresented and daring to go where others fear to tread ... [it's] a strong and natural home for us.'^{iv}

In contradistinction to the BBC's model of regional production – a combination of various 'centres of excellence' and locating five departments in MediaCity Salford, Greater Manchester – Channel 4's three sites form an interlacing network in which commissioners at all sites are free to work with indies anywhere in the UK, with commissioning decisions based predominantly on merit rather than geography. Therefore, although the regional commissioning teams do have a strong regional focus and aim to build on existing strengths and embed themselves in the local ecologies, not all Channel 4 shows made by Bristol independent production companies ('indies') will necessarily be commissioned from Bristol.

When I interviewed Mirzoeff, he argued that his particular focus is to cultivate Bristol's countercultural diversity through Channel 4's Emerging Indie fund, which is specifically targeted at small indies working in any genre in the nations and regions, and which is designed to help fast track their development through funding, mentoring and commercial advice. Four Bristol companies have so far benefitted: Indefinite Films, Drummer TV, Blak Wave Productions and Proper Job Films. Channel 4 also targets two other funds at regional producers. The Indie Growth Fund invests in selected companies in return for a minority equity stake, offering business advice and commercial expertise. Film Mile Films, a new Bristol factual company set-up by Channel 4's former Head of Documentaries, Nick Mirsky, was the first Bristol indie to access this fund, which has also been refocused to prioritise the nations and regions. The Accelerator Fund, launched in July 2020, is specifically targeted at Black-owned companies to speed their development. Channel 4 chooses the indies it works with on the basis of the quality of its ideas but also its commitment to using a broad range of personnel, which is facilitated and monitored by the Creative Diversity team. In 2020, Channel 4 launched its training and support arm, 4Skills, to work with the Bristol City Council and other agencies to address the widespread skills shortage the current production boom (money pouring in from the streaming platforms such as Netflix) has created. Although 4Skills is part of a broader outreach programme that has a specific focus on entry-level schemes and internships, the scheme aims to target appropriate support for personnel at different levels within the industry and at different stages of their careers.

Although it is early days, particularly because of the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Channel 4 has made an initial assessment of its regional presence.^v The broadcaster has already commissioned a number of Bristol-based programmes that implement its commitment to diversity, inclusivity, under-represented groups and new voices. For example, Mirzoeff has commissioned several projects by producers of colour, including Blak Wave's *The Shadow of Slavery* for Channel 4's *Take Your Knee Off My Neck* series exploring British filmmakers' response to George Floyd's killing in May 2020. In addition,

Mirzoeff is keen to attract companies such as Twenty Twenty, producer of the hugely successful *First Dates* reality format (now in its sixteenth series), to relocate to Bristol. As he explained in interview, ‘that’s as important to us as the actual programmes, that we’re changing the workforce on the ground here ... bringing in a wider range of voices from different communities’. Furthermore, Bristol is trying to recover its position as a centre for drama and having a drama commissioner as part of Channel 4’s Bristol team will encourage that growth. Finally, Channel 4 also conceives its Bristol location as providing the locus for working with indies throughout the South West and in Wales, where it is actively working with Creative Wales to help get ideas into production.

In the next blog I will report on the four Bristol companies which have worked with Channel 4 since it set up its Bristol hub – Indefinite Films, Drummer TV, Blak Wave Productions and Proper Job Films – based on with interviews with their CEOs.

THIRD BLOG: beneficiary company profiles; writers scheme; Glasgow hub.

Introduction

In the previous blog I mentioned that the government intended to press ahead with privatising Channel 4. This took a more concrete form as part of the Government’s White Paper, *Up Next: the government’s vision for the broadcasting sector*, published on 29 April 2022 and was included in the Queen’s Speech to Parliament on 10 May 2022.^{vi} However, such has been the political turmoil since that time and such is the Government’s current disarray, that on 5 November the papers carried the story that privatisation has been shelved, at least for the life of this parliament, which could extend to January 2025.^{vii} If the Conservatives lose, then Labour’s policy is that Channel 4 continues in its present form. Thus it is very pleasing to state that Channel 4 now appears to be ‘safe’ and therefore that the gains that have been accrued from regional relocation look set to continue.^{viii}

The substantive topics for discussion in this blog are: profiling those companies that have benefitted from Channel 4’s funding schemes (detailed below); the introduction, by the Bristol hub, of the New Writers Scheme, launched in September 2022; and finally a brief profile of Channel 4’s other Creative Hub in Glasgow.

Funding Schemes and Beneficiary Company Profiles

1) Indie Growth Fund

A number of Bristol based companies have benefitted from Channel 4’s relocation to Bristol through its three schemes to support and stimulate independent companies to grow and prosper: the Indie Growth Fund, the Emerging Indie Fund and the Accelerator Fund. Two of these schemes were introduced as part of Channel 4’s relocation package, but the Indie Growth Fund was already established – originally launched in 2014. Its purpose is to enable UK indies to grow and develop their business with Channel 4 acting as a ‘strategic partner offering support, guidance and strategic advice to help grow the company *towards an ultimate sale*’.^{ix} Channel 4 contends that this fund’s future strategy will be to focus ‘on investing in companies in the Nations and Regions as well as interesting digital and diverse businesses across the UK’.^x That last phrase is especially noteworthy as Channel 4 has announced its Future4 plan, which ‘builds upon our strong track record of digital innovation and will accelerate Channel 4’s pivot to digital by driving both online viewing and new

revenues. It's an ambitious and comprehensive plan to transform Channel 4 into a digital PSB that retains its distinctive brand and public service impact.^{xvi} The impact of that 'pivot' to Channel 4's regions and nations strategy is beyond the scope of this project but will certainly revise the ways in which we will need to think about the future relationship between media, including television, and space, place and location.

The Indie Growth Fund is both a way of supporting UK indies, but also a fairly hard-nosed commercial activity. The head of the fund, Caroline Murphy, stated bluntly: 'we want to make a commercial return on our investments, so we can plough the profits back into the country's creative sector'.^{xvii} In return for a 25 per cent investment, Channel 4 aims to help 'young, promising indies across the country to help them take their business to the next stage'.^{xviii} This does not automatically mean that the broadcaster commissions their shows, nor does it preclude companies from seeking commissions from other broadcasters; in fact that is encouraged. Channel 4 withdraws its stake after four to five years with the expectation that the indie will be a viable purchase for another company. To date, two Bristol-based companies have been recipients: Five Mile Films and Uplands Television.

Five Mile Films

Five Mile Films was founded in June 2018 by Nick Mirsky, who had spent six years (2012-18) as Channel 4's Head of Documentaries after working for the BBC for 23 years.^{xix} The programmes he commissioned ranged from the popular and repeatable (*24 Hours in A&E*, *First Dates*) to the controversial (*The Paedophile Hunter*, *The Romanians Are Coming*). Some, including *My Son the Jihadi*, won awards. Mirsky decided to start an independent company rather than go further up the executive rungs because of his desire to 'stay close to programmes'. Five Mile Films also has some very experienced senior staff, including Emily Assael as Head of Production and thus a company likely to secure a range of commissions.

Mirsky thought locating outside London would be commercially advantageous – lower overheads, cheaper office accommodation – and would also benefit from the pressure on the public service broadcasters to commission beyond the M25. His choice of Bristol was determined by the talent he knew was available there and its reputation for both the popular factual and high-end documentaries that would form the basis of Five Mile Films' portfolio. 'There was significant emigration of production talent [from London] ... some to the north but more to Bristol. The first two people I employed had left London two or three years earlier'. From an initial room in Films@59, Five Mile Films moved further up the Whiteladies Road, the traditional centre of Bristol's screen community. Although Mirsky's decision predated the choice of Bristol as one of Channel 4's Creative Hubs – a move that has had little direct effect on Mirsky's relationship with the broadcaster – he considered that relocation was a clear 'statement of intent ... saying we really mean it' by Channel 4, an unequivocal commitment to the regions and nations.

In May 2019 Channel 4 acquired a 17.5 per cent share in Five Mile Films rather than the customary 25 per cent but applied the usual commercial reasoning. Murphy commented: 'Nick has an excellent track record as both a commissioner and programme maker so we're looking forward to helping him build a creative team who [sic] can *produce at scale outside London*'.^{xx} Channel 4's expectation is that 'as it grows [Five Mile Films] will specialise in producing innovative cross-genre projects often mixing drama with documentary, popular factual multi-part series as well as authored and observational factual output'.^{xxi} The first

commission was *The Dog House*, a series of eight one hours programmes set in an animal rescue home, focusing on ‘the back stories of the abandoned strays, the unloved family pets, and the unmanageable canines who find their way to the rescue centre. At the same time we learn the stories of the dog seeking prospective owners and the dog shaped holes in their lives that they want to fill.’^{xvii} The series reflects Mirsky’s understanding that the key to success is to make programmes that are ‘distinctive but not over-clever’, the latter being the flaw he perceived in some Channel 4 series that did not last beyond an initial season – ‘get really simple, obvious subjects but make them better than anyone else would make them’. Applying this logic, *The Dog House*, now in its eighth series, has proved to be very popular. Other Channel 4 commissions include a topical, single observational programme *The Pandemic at No. 47* (2021) and *The Simple Life* (2022), a six-part series asking ‘whether we have made the right choices about how we live our modern, consumer-focussed Western lives’. Guided by ‘world renowned psychologist Barry Schwartz’, the series focuses on 30 British people – selected to represent a diverse range of modern Britain – living the simple life of an Amish community. *Murder in the Valleys* (2022), a four-part series for Sky, investigates the largest murder mystery in Welsh history. *Five Mile*’s carefully assembled portfolio looks on course to produce significant growth making the company ripe for acquisition when Channel 4 withdraws its investment in 2023 or 2024.

Uplands Television

Co-sited in Bristol and London, Uplands Television was founded in 2017 by the British-Nigerian historian filmmaker and broadcaster David Olusoga, Professor of Public History at the University of Manchester, and an experienced broadcasting executive, Mike Smith. Uplands Television specialises in making documentaries that focus on challenging aspects of British history, notably imperialism and the deep scar of slavery. These include *Statue Wars* (2021) for the BBC and *One Thousand Years of Slavery* (2022) for the Smithsonian Channel, and, for Channel 4, *The Battle for Britain’s Heroes* (2018), which questioned whether some of the country’s historic heroes deserve their exalted status, and *Unremembered – Britain’s Forgotten War* (2019), which revealed that thousands of Africans who died on their own continent serving Britain during The First World War were not even given an individual grave. Aired by Channel 4 on Remembrance Day, the film prompted an official apology from the government and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for ‘entrenched prejudices, preconceptions and pervasive racism’.^{xviii}

Uplands Television, which received the Accelerator Fund (see below) in August 2020 and the Growth Fund in February 2021, was thus a known quantity for Channel 4, one which could be expected to deliver high quality, well-crafted programmes that fulfilled the broadcaster’s brief to commission works that widen the scope of public history in both form and content and reach diverse and under-represented audiences. Murphy stated that the fund would enable the company to scale up the range and ambition of its programmes. Olusoga, thought the partnership would help Uplands be ‘an agent of change’, Smith that it would help the company ‘grow and widen its slate’.^{xix} Olusoga also considered that the Growth Fund has ‘given us development firepower, so we can get all of our ideas out to commissioners’ and connected the company to ‘some of the most significant players in the industry’; Smith commented: ‘Any time we think we’re in the weeds or need strategic advice, we can just pick up the phone and ask for support.’^{xx}

Channel 4 announced in March this year that it has commissioned Uplands Television to make a ‘revolutionary new history format’ for More4, the *Museum of Us*, four hour-long

programmes presented by Sir Tony Robinson in which ‘ordinary people from one street in towns and cities across the UK have a week to investigate and curate a museum about the history of their “ordinary” residential road’.^{xxi} The format is really not that ‘revolutionary’, clearly indebted to Channel 4’s hugely successful *Time Team* (1994-2014) and also to Olusoga’s *A House Through Time* (2018-21) for the BBC, which focused on the history of a single dwelling in an English city, including Bristol. *Museum of Us* encourages ‘ordinary people’ to dig where they stand, starting with their own personal connections and gathering evidence of the story of their street through time and how this forms part of Britain’s national history. It will again feature Bristol as one of the locations.

The company’s website carries the announcement that Olusoga and Smith have decided to close the company after five years in order that Olusoga can ‘dedicate more of his time to presenting work and the writing of new books’.^{xxii} This is probably not the outcome Channel 4 would either have anticipated or welcomed – it is only 18 months after it invested in the company – but demonstrates that the major decisions rest with the indies themselves and not the broadcaster.

2) The Emerging Indie and Accelerator Funds

Both these funds were introduced as part of the relocation package. The Emerging Indie Fund ‘provides financial assistance to indies for slate development and offers direct access to a Channel 4 Commissioning Editor, and expert advice from a variety of departments within Channel 4 including commercial affairs, legal and ad funded programming’.^{xxiii} The Accelerator Fund is a partnership with the TV Collective, a community interest company that promotes diversity within the UK’s screen industries through a variety of ways. The fund offers indies led by minority ethnic talent (at least 25 per cent), with a turnover of less than £5 million and without investment from a multi- or pan-national studio the opportunity to ‘grow their networks, increase their screen business skills, and gain increased access to commissioners and other departments within Channel 4’ and so ‘achieve sustainable growth’. The relevant commissioning editor meets with the indie on a regular basis to discuss their slate, and indies selected can take part in ‘masterclasses, executive coaching, and networking opportunities ... We’re looking for new, distinct voices and stories that are aligned with Channel 4’s editorial priorities and Future4 strategy.’^{xxiv} Two Bristol-based indies – Angel Eye Media and Honey Bee Media – have benefitted as well as the four profiled below, all of which I interviewed.

Blak Wave^{xxv}

Founded at the end of 2019 by producer-writer-director Michael Jenkins and producer-director Dr Somina ‘Mena’ Fombo, Blak Wave and is one of the few Black-led production companies in the Bristol. It was established with the aim of creating imaginative non-fiction content for broadcasters that reflects the experiences of the Black community and is committed to producing documentaries for television as well as digital platforms or online. It has also branched into fiction filmmaking. Blak Wave has been supported by the BFI, the Arts Council and the BBC as well as Channel 4. Both Fombo and Jenkins were attracted to the idea, however difficult, of running an indie because they felt alienated from a white-dominated industry and disillusioned with mainstream film and television culture. As Jenkins commented in interview:

I wasn't happy with what I was seeing on TV and was angry at the media because of all the racism and stereotypes. I hated platforms like the BBC, the news – I thought they were the enemy. So I never thought working with the BBC was an option for me. I thought, “they're never going to give me a voice, and they haven't got any black people there anyway, so I've just got to do it myself.

Fombo went to London initially after graduation from university to try to forge a career in the media but Jenkins has no desire to relocate to London: ‘I don't have any aspirations to go to London – I want to see what sort of opportunities can be created from here. Now, with BBC and Channel 4 here, I'm thinking, “why do I need to move out of the region? Maybe we can make something work here”’.

Blak Wave has been awarded both Emerging Indie and Accelerator funds from Channel 4. Sacha Mirzoeff commissioned *The Shadow of Slavery* for Channel 4's Take Your Knee Off My Neck series, which explored British filmmakers' response to George Floyd's killing in May 2020.^{xxvi} In the programme, Bristol's mayor, Marvin Rees and protestors discuss the impact of toppling the statue of the slave trader Edward Colston on 7 June 2020. Channel 4 also supported *Time to Shine*, a celebration of black music and culture through the activities of a female DJ.

Drummer TV^{xxvii}

Established in 2012 by Tamsin Summers and Rachel Drummond-Hay, Drummer TV is one of the few production companies in the UK owned exclusively by women. Both women are passionate about supporting the local film community, particularly nurturing and helping to develop new talent. They acted as mentors for Fombo and Jenkins as they created Blak Wave. Drummer TV is part of the Cultural Diversity Network, which is committed to promoting accurate and up-to-date information about cultural diversity. Drummer TV has a diverse workforce, 20 per cent of whom are from ethnic minorities and 20 per cent are Deaf or disabled; the company has made several programmes for the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust, including RTS winner *I Want to Change the World* (2020), *Summer in Lockdown*, *You, Me, Garden*, and *Where Is the Interpreter*, which took the government to task for not providing sign language support for public announcements during the pandemic.

Although long-established, Channel 4 chose to support Drummer TV through the Emerging Indie fund in order to enable the company to progress to making more ambitious documentaries enabling it to make the transition into prime time, mid-evening, broadcasting schedules. Previous documentaries, including the brilliant *British Workers Wanted* and *A Very British Job Agency* about the work of job agencies in Bognor in a post-Brexit world, were shown at 10.00 and 11.00 pm respectively.

Indefinite Films

Indefinite Films was established in August 2009 by filmmaker Bruce Goodison and producer Kate Cook to make scripted programmes. These include the award-winning *Leave to Remain* (2014) about an Afghan refugee in the UK and *Murder in the Car Park* (2020), a three-part series for Channel 4 based on a true incident, an element that characterises its productions. Goodison and Cook, who have worked together for over twenty years, are, according to Goodison, ‘naturally drawn to tackling challenging subject matter where our central characters face choices that are authentic, but handled in a way that's really eye-

catching and different ... We want to take creative risks with new voices to find the most engaging way to tell true stories.^{xxviii} Indefinite Films is one of only six Bristol-based companies that specialise in scripted content, by far the smallest production genre.^{xxix}

Indefinite Films received support from the Emerging Indie Fund in December 2020, having previously won funding from the BBC's Small Indie fund.^{xxx} Cook commented: 'we're excited to have their backing to take Indefinite Films to the next level with a view to producing more narrative content out of Bristol. There is a strong creative talent pool in the city that is growing all the time, so we'll be looking to collaborate with that regional talent, as well as looking further afield and overseas. We look forward to taking our slate forward with the support of Channel 4's drama department.'^{xxxi} Part of Indefinite Films' attractiveness to Channel 4 was the company's ability to, as Cook put it, 'bridge the world of documentary and drama' that could potentially deliver the 'state of the nation' stories that are infrequently proposed to the broadcaster. Channel 4's **Head of Drama Caroline Hollick commented:** 'We were really impressed by Indefinite's bold approach to finding ambitious ideas for drama. This feels like a good time to support the company as they focus on developing some really original ideas that have heaps of potential for Channel 4. They've also been very proactive in creating a network for talent in the South West, something that is in line with Channel 4's ambition to see more from the nations and regions in our content. We look forward to working with them on their drama developments and also in finding talent.'^{xxxii} Indefinite Films also has a demonstrable commitment to supporting local talent and voices from under-represented sections of UK society: Cook is a founding partner in Bristol Screen producers, an alliance or collective of experienced producers in the region dedicated to nurturing emerging filmmakers, sharing and raising the profile of local filmmakers and acting as an open door for potential stories.^{xxxiii} It helps run the BFI's New Producers Lab for entry-level creatives. Cook commented that there were 'all these pockets of creative talent doing things but not knowing about each other'. Indefinite Films wishes to continue to be 'infrastructurally lean' and is thus hesitant about opening an office in Bristol whilst remaining fully committed to the region.

Cook regards the Emerging Indie Fund as very limited financially but a 'great relationship builder', especially with the drama commissioner that was one of the major innovations in Channel 4's Bristol hub, as discussed in [Blog#2](#). Indefinite Films has benefitted from 'a direct relationship and talk about ideas' in which Channel 4 will say quite quickly if an idea interests them or if Indefinite Films should pitch it elsewhere with advice about where to go, encouraging the company not to be wholly dependent on the broadcaster. However, despite its energy and assets and the potential of having a drama commissioner in the city, Indefinite Films continues to struggle because Bristol is still very much a 'TV city'. Bristol-based drama productions have, since the departure of *Casualty* in 2011, always suffered from the competition from a better-funded and more welcoming production environment in Cardiff. Designated a Centre of Excellence for drama, the BBC and the Welsh Government invested £20 million in building the Roath Lock Studios and continue to support productions filmed there through providing additional resources. For the BBC, Bristol is a Centre of Excellence for Factual, principally the Natural History Unit, and thus drama is not part of its portfolio for the city. The expansion of the Bottle Yard Studios – three new stages were opened on 4 November at an adjacent site in Whitchurch – is to cope with the increased number of high-end television productions that are attracted to using Bristol rather than to open up spaces for indigenous drama productions that will be, for the foreseeable future, much smaller scale. Thus increasing scripted production in Bristol will take time to grow and offer opportunities for career progression. However, there are hopeful signs: the New Writers Scheme discussed

below and the news of a possible Screen Agency funded by the West of England Combined Authority that would administer a drama fund.

Proper Job Films

Launched in 2020, Proper Job Films is a partnership between filmmaker Harvey Lilley and military historian Patrick Bishop intended to ‘create innovative, thought provoking and entertaining content in specialist factual, documentary and drama’.^{xxxiv} In interview, Lilley considered its core priority to be ‘quality programmes that take you under the skin of something’. Its first commission was *The Real Peaky Blinders* (2022) a two-part series for the BBC followed by *The Falklands War: The Untold Story*, a feature-length documentary that offered a revisionist account of the conflict, with senior military figures prepared to discuss issues they could not admit to in 1982 that was screened in March this year. The programme attracted a significant audience of around 2 million and plaudits from numerous reviewers: ‘this thorough, rigorous documentary is an exhaustive and engaging account of what happened, by many who were there’.^{xxxv}

Lilley describes the company as being run on a ‘guerrilla basis’, working from home and hiring space and freelancers when needed. The importance of the Emerging Indie fund for Proper Job Films was a limited amount of development funding – including research for the Falklands film – that is always the most difficult finance to secure, but perhaps more importantly the direct and supportive relationship with Sacha Mirzoeff as a factual commissioner. Being in receipt of the funding also acts as an advertisement for the company in its search for commissions and thus help to grow the business.

New Writers Scheme

The New Writers scheme was introduced by Channel 4 on 16 May 2022 working alongside its partners, the BFI, Bristol City of Film, the Bottle Yard Studios and UWE.^{xxxvi} Although part of the broadcaster’s national 4Skills programme, this initiative comes from its Bristol Hub and covers eight counties in the West and South-West, from Cornwall to Hampshire. The scheme is targeted at emerging screenwriters from this region, offering the twelve successful applicants training days, masterclasses (in-person and online) and mentoring designed to build their knowledge of the industry, writing skills and networks to develop and write drama scripts. These must reflect ‘the lived experience of people in the region, with a particular focus on diverse perspectives’. The scheme was launched on 8 September 2022.

The scheme is too recent to be evaluated – which UWE is undertaking – but it is clearly an affirmation that the Bristol Hub is committed to strengthening drama within the region, which aligns with its championing of Indefinite Films and the WECA funding that is in the pipeline. One of the significant aspect of the scheme is that it not only requires the writers to be based in the region but that their dramas also reflect the experiences and perspectives of people living in the region. Location and representation do not always go hand in hand. In *Producing British Television Drama: Local Production in a Global Era* (2019), Ruth McElroy and Catriona Noonan observe that although the BBC filmed both *Dr Who* and *Sherlock* (2010-17) in Roath Lock Studios, neither represents Wales nor speaks to the experiences and identities of those who inhabit that nation. One producer referred to Cardiff as just a convenient production ‘warehouse’.

The Glasgow Hub

Although a full-scale comparison between the two Creative Hubs in Bristol and Glasgow is beyond the scope of this project, I visited the Glasgow hub in July in order to get some sense of the similarities and differences, interviewing Stuart Cosgrove who headed Glasgow bid to host Channel 4 and Jo Street who has become its Head of Hub.

In preparing its bid, Glasgow had received assurances from Edinburgh that it would not submit a rival bid and from Belfast that it support Glasgow's bid if its own was unsuccessful. Both Belfast and Edinburgh preferred the proximity of a Creative Hub – or headquarters, Glasgow's bid was for either – in Scotland rather than the north of England. Edinburgh is 75 minutes away by rail or car and Belfast a short flight (23 minutes in the air). Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, had assured Channel 4 that the broadcaster would be supported by an independent Scotland, in effect future-proofing Glasgow's application.

Stuart Cosgrove led a group representing Glasgow's creative companies, local authorities and regional development bodies and the city's bid emphasised both direct and indirect economic impacts. The bid was orchestrated carefully to present the 'granular detail' Cosgrove thought Channel 4 was looking for as opposed to the corporate rhetoric he considered was the basic flaw in the bids from Birmingham and Manchester. Glasgow's bid has a number of striking similarities to Bristol's, centrally Glasgow's creative credentials, and 'what we'll do for you': a strategic partnership with complementary benefits for both entities.^{xxxvii} As with Bristol, Glasgow's application emphasised its contrarian nature, 'a city that likes to challenge authority and refuses to take itself too seriously ... a city alive with attitude, teeming with young people and ignited with an audacious belief in its own creativity' (p. 5). There was a focus on youth throughout and the creative potential of its 130,000 student population, reflecting Channel 4's core 16-25 demographic. The bid also made great play of Glasgow's ethnic diversity, its established Indian and Pakistani communities together with 'post-asylum' communities – Iraqis, Sri Lankan Tamils, Somalians and Syrians. Above all, Glasgow showcased itself as 'one of the UK's biggest and most diverse production communities ... unique in the range and depth of its independent production' (p. 8). These indies were connected through a number of existing mini-hubs, including those in the old bonded warehouses on the canal and in Film City, characterised as dynamic, thriving networks of which Channel 4 could be part. The bid argued that Glasgow's creative community was supported by a developed infrastructure: the Glasgow Film Office, Invest Glasgow, the City Innovation District, and was a creative gateway connected to Edinburgh and Dundee's interactive games development, alongside the opportunities that would come with the imminent opening of BBC Scotland. The Clyde Gateway regeneration programme and the Barrowland and Collegelands regeneration projects were offered as opportunities for Channel 4 to make an important difference to the physical fabric of the city as well as its cultural ecology: 'relocation here would have a significant social and economic impact' (p. 37).

However, David Lee et. al. comment, although the bid offered these sites as possible locations for Channel 4's offices alongside 'perhaps the most obvious site, the Pacific Quay hub, where there is an existing cluster of media production including the BBC, STV, MG ALBA, and Film City Glasgow', none of them was chosen.^{xxxviii} Instead, Channel 4 opted for locating in the old Garment Factory in the Merchant City, an attractive, cool and aspiration area of Glasgow close to the city centre and the central bus and train stations, a choice that closely mirrored that of Finzel's Reach in Bristol. Channel 4 occupies a single floor of what is a unique, iconic building that has been carefully restored to retain period features as well as a light and modern office accommodation, 'which reflects Channel 4's values of innovation, inclusion and creativity'.^{xxxix} Rather than take on the burden of helping to regenerate a run-

down area, Channel 4 decided on a central location that would afford its staff an attractive and accessible workspace. As in Bristol, the award of a prestigious Creative Hub has been seen as a major economic and cultural asset that the City Council can use as an example of its innovative and future-facing strategy that can harness the dynamism of the creative economy, becoming what Cosgrove termed a ‘victory for the city’s self-image’.

Channel 4’s choice as Head of Hub was Jo Street who had spent twenty-five years working for the BBC, based in Glasgow since 2008 and therefore, like Mirzoeff, was well known to and knowledgeable about the regional creative community, understanding the breadth of regional talent. Her main job is as a commissioner, running the largest department, daytime and features, whose principal purpose is to making popular shows that will endure: ‘returnable, repeatable that’s our big mantra’, with volume commission, usually 20 episodes at a time. Accommodating 16 staff, the Glasgow hub is slightly larger than in Bristol and was able to open slightly earlier, in November 2019. Every level of employment is represented in the Garment Factory office thus announcing that career progression is possible in Channel 4 without needing to go to London.

Street considers that she has a figurehead role as Head of Hub, representing Channel 4 to the wider regional community as well as championing Glasgow and Scotland’s creative community nationally and internationally: ‘to be visible, bang the drum and be a loud voice about Scotland, and what we’re doing and how prolific we are’, showcasing regional-based indies to the rest of the organisation. She is convinced that even in the era of Zoom or Teams meetings, a physical base outside London is extremely important: ‘its about having boots on the ground in places, that’s what matters. It matters to creatives to be able to pop in here and have a meeting and not have to schlep to London. It matters that people who are commissioning programmes are living in places other than London.’ Her Glasgow location affords Street credibility and status within the region, able to collaborate with Screen Scotland and co-operate with other agencies to promote the city-region. Although commissions are based on the quality of the idea rather than production location, Street was able to keep Scottish Indies afloat during the pandemic: ‘they would have got lost had everything come out of London’. Street is connected to the rest of Channel 4 through the nations and regions commissioning group that meets monthly, alternately chaired by her and Mirzoeff, and an out of London leadership group chaired by Sinead Rocks, Head of Nations and Regions. Street considers that the Hub is on course to achieve, over time, its central objectives: to raise the profile of Glasgow and Scotland’s creative talent, to implement national and locally-inflected training schemes, working towards a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Her presence demonstrates Channel 4’s genuine commitment the nations and regions, enjoying a significant degree of budget autonomy and devolved spend.

This blog has been concerned principally with providing information rather than argumentation. However, what I have tried to research through this project and emphasised throughout these blogs is that the mere fact of moving production out of London does not in itself constitute a commitment to regional creativity and cultural diversity. Relocation is therefore not a solution but part of a wider process. As I see it, the most encouraging aspect of Channel 4’s hubs are that they seem determined to become genuinely embedded, part of their respective region’s cultural and economic fabric.

In the final blog I will report back on my visit to Channel 4’s new headquarters in Leeds and on an event at the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol on 3 December, ‘Channel 4 at 40: The TV Revolution and Bristol, which brings together programmes and speakers from the earliest

days of Channel 4 (launched on 2 November 1982) and those who are currently in receipt of commissions, including Blak Wave and Proper Job Films, profiled above.

FOURTH BLOG: The Leeds Headquarters; Sinead Rocks, Head of Nations and Regions; Channel 4 at 40: The TV Revolution; Conclusion

This fourth and final blog will describe aspects of Channel 4's establishment of its new headquarters in Leeds, following a visit on 14-16 November 2022; a separate interview with Nations and Regions Controller, Sinead Rocks; and 'Channel 4 at 40: The TV Revolution and Bristol', an 'anniversary' event held at the Arnolfini Gallery on 3 December, co-organised by myself and Professor Rod Stoneman. There were a number of such events around UK cities – including Belfast and Cardiff – and centrepiece celebrations in Central London during November. In the conclusion, I reflect more generally on the process of relocation and on Channel 4's future as a public service broadcaster.

The Leeds Headquarters

As befits a headquarters, Channel 4's operation in Leeds is much larger than those in the Bristol or Glasgow hubs. It currently houses over 200 staff – expected to rise to nearly 300 – that includes the nations and regions staff and the 150 who compose 4Studios, the broadcaster's in-house digital content team that has grown rapidly since relocation. 20 of the 120 news staffers are located in Leeds, alongside the team responsible for *Steph's Packed Lunch* – a daily lifestyle and chat programme presented by Steph McGovern – which broadcast out of a different studio close-by in Leeds city centre. Senior staff located in Leeds include Sinead Rocks as Head of the Nations and Regions team and her deputy Kevin Blacoe, Head of Partnerships; Caroline Hollick, Head of Drama, and Pete Andrews, Head of Sport. As in Bristol and Glasgow, Channel 4 chose to occupy an iconic building, The Majestic, a Grade II listed former cinema – one of the 'picture palaces' that were constructed in the 1920s – before it was closed in 1969 to become a bingo hall then nightclub. Badly damaged by fire in 2014, The Majestic took three years to convert once the decision to have Leeds as the new headquarters had been taken. Channel 4 initially used offices in Westgate before moving in to The Majestic on 6 September 2021. It is an imposing building, a stone's throw from the main railway station, though there is no external indication of Channel 4's occupancy of the top three floors, 27,000 square feet, of this seven storey building. However, during the renovation a huge banner was hung round the building – 'Didn't think Channel 4 knew there was life outside the M25' – registering the broadcaster's consciousness of its perception as a metropolitan organisation.

The office space is open plan, collaborative and spacious, the general décor neo-modernist, mirroring those of Bristol and Glasgow. Overall there is a sense of a prosperous organisation, the majority of whose staff are young, informally dressed and used to working flexibly. This is partly because the majority are 4Studio staff – the biggest department outside London – consists of young creatives (20-24 year olds) employed to work on digital content, either original or repackaging existing programmes, targeted at 16-34 year-olds who do not have an affinity with Channel 4's terrestrial presence. The work goes on E4, More4 and various online platforms – Snap Chat, Twitter, Tik Tok etc., with Facebook the biggest market and YouTube a priority (Channel 4.0) because of its monetising potential. 4Studios is a key element in the broadcaster's acceleration strategy to create, adapt and distribute content across social media channels and to become the UK's most viewed social branded partner with upwards of 11 billion views of Channel 4 content across digital media. Its growth also

serves to create numerous opportunities for emerging performing talent. A deliberate decision was taken to recruit locally, working with local colleges and universities; approximately 85 per cent of its staff are from the north of England. 4Studios adheres to C4's core remit by commissioning 90 per cent of its work from mainly local indies and freelancers. In addition to locality, the recruitment emphasis was on diversity (under-represented groups) and on offering genuine possibilities for career progression. Channel 4 runs a local apprenticeship scheme – eight or nine places a year – as part of the Content Creatives Programme. There are some additional more specialist, niche roles where the hiring is national, including London.

Some of my discussions were with staff from the partnership organisations which were involved in Leeds's bid to host the city that was led by Leeds City Council, the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Screen Yorkshire. The region's deliberately informal *Gogglebox*-style 'Be the Spark' campaign, like those of Bristol and Glasgow, emphasised youth, diversity and the dynamism of a range of digitally-savvy local indies. It argued that having Channel 4's headquarters would generate an additional 1,200 jobs and £1 billion additional income for the region over the next decade. In addition, the bid emphasised that Leeds had very broad geographical reach; Sally Joynson, then Chief Executive of Screen Yorkshire, focused on what she argued had been the heavy 'consolidation' of media location on the western side of the UK – Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow – and therefore that locating Channel 4's in the North East would help redress, or 'rebalance' to use Ofcom's preferred term, the UK's media ecology. It would help soothe the age-old Manchester-Leeds rivalry a decade after the establishment of MediaCityUK in 2012. Crucial to the bid was presence of Bradford, whose diverse and rapidly growing community has 120 nationalities speaking 200 languages. Mahon commented that Bradford was 'of particular interest to us because of ethnic diversity and social mobility and because of the youth of the city'.^{x1}

Channel 4 also enjoyed support after it 'landed', including rates relief on renting the Majestic, help from the locality with staff relocation and providing introductions to key figures in the region – fast track relationships or 'speed dating' – designed to connect the broadcaster into existing networks. However, expectations were high: the anticipation that Channel 4 would play a very active role in partnerships with stakeholders. The consensus during my visit was that Channel 4 had been an excellent partner, interviewees citing 4Studios regional recruitment, and its support for Bradford's 2025 City of Culture. There is a specific Screen Strategy for Bradford, which half funds a Screen Hub with Channel 4. Interviewees argued that the decision to invest in new television studios on Whitehall Road only got over the line because of Channel 4's presence. As elsewhere in the organisation, relocation was slowed up first by the pandemic and then the threat of privatisation, which made partners reluctant to convene future-facing strategic meetings for 12-18 months. Nevertheless, the arrival of Channel 4 has enabled Leeds to attract further major businesses, including media ones such as Sky. PACT has moved its nations and regions office to Leeds, which now has a branch of the National Film School.

The opening of Channel 4's headquarters in Leeds was judged to be a very significant moment for the city, placing it firmly on the UK's media map. As in Bristol and Glasgow, Channel 4's presence was seen as a 'great big deal' for Leeds and Bradford's cultural and business communities, a statement of worth, esteem, status and confidence in the future.

Interview with Sinead Rocks, Head of Nations and Regions, Channel 4^{xii}

Sinead Rocks was appointed to the post of Head of Nations and Regions at Channel 4 in 2019 and is now based at its Leeds headquarters. Her role is to ensure that the broadcaster delivers on the '4 All the UK' strategy and to encourage commissioners to work with a wide variety of indies across the UK. A further core activity is to diagnose the barriers impeding the growth of the production sector outside London and to attempt to redress these through training and skills initiatives and to open up the industry to those who had never considered a media career might be possible. In the majority of cases these take the form of partnerships and placements with experienced staff in existing companies. Channel 4's national 4Skills training programme also involves regular meetings with other providers – the BBC, ITV, Sky, Amazon, Netflix etc. – 'because we actually need the same thing, a healthy sector right across the UK'. Over the last five years there has been evidence of an evolving culture of co-operation, including co-productions, rather than head-to-head competition, which act as the catalyst for sustained growth with a wide geographical reach.

Cumulatively these developments will lessen the industry's dependence on London and facilitate a wider range of voices being heard and represented in the UK's broadcasting landscape. Rocks emphasised that the budgets are held by the senior genre commissioners as they need to 'balance the slate for the genre', rather than in particular localities. She is convinced that relocation was necessary to help Channel 4 become 'much more reflective of the UK as a whole in all its different facets and flavours ... We need to know that we are representing the unheard voices and provide the level of challenge that Channel 4 was set up to deliver. And we will do that more effectively if we are not all based on one building.' Relocation has enabled commissioners build 'really close relationships with independent production companies in ways that wouldn't have been possible had those commissioners been based in London', facilitating an 'ongoing dialogue and conversation'.

Rocks considers that the move out of London has meant 'attracting people to join our organisation who really are fired up about changing how things are done within broadcasting' and sends out a resounding message that building a media career does not necessitate spending a period in London. Despite the pandemic-enforced proliferation of Zoom or Teams meetings, she welcomes the possibilities of returning to face-to-face encounters that are less time pressured and thus better able to create the conditions in which a genuine and potentially transformative exchange can take place: 'the depth and richness of relationship building that actually turns a piece of coal into a sparkling diamond', thus the difference between 'being functional and adding value'. She emphasised that a responsive regions and nations' strategy is one that recognises and helps to nurture particular cultural specificities not a one size fits all – 'different part of the UK need different things' – which is reflected in the different ways in which the various 'hub days' are organised up and down the country.

Channel 4 at 40: the TV Revolution in Bristol – Arnolfini Gallery, 3 December

The schedule for this event was as follows:

- 11.00-11.30** Professor Andrew Spicer: Welcome & Introduction: Channel 4 and the TV Revolution
- 11.30-12.00** Professor Rod Stoneman: Bristol and Channel 4 – The First Phase: Early Bristol film activity; Co-operatives and Independent Workshops (*Bristol Bands Newsreel*)
- 12.00-12.30** Channel 4, Bristol and factual television –

David Parker: *Cut Throat Business* & Colin Thomas: *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*

12.30-13.00 Channel 4 and Animation
David Sproxton: Aardman Animations' early commissions

13.00-13.30 Channel 4 and Drama
Martin Kiszko: *Zastrozzi* (1986) – Channel 4 Films

13.30-14.30 **Lunch**

14.30-14.45 Channel 4 in 2000s (i): Andrew Spicer: *Skins* (2007-13)

14.45-15.15 Channel 4 in 2000s (ii): Jeremy Routledge, *Calling the Shots: Random Acts* (2013-17)

15.15-15.45 Sacha Mirzoeff (Head of Hub): The Work of Channel 4's Creative Hub in Bristol

15.45-16.15 **Break**

16.15-16.45 Tamsin Summers/Sophia Thompson: Drummer TV (*The Plinth + A Very British Job Agency* (extracts)

16.45-17.15 Michael Jenkins and Mena Fombo: Blak Wave (with extracts: *Shadow of Slavery* and *Chance to Shine*)

17.15-17.45 Plenary discussion

17.45-19.00 **Break**

19.00-20.30 Harvey Lilley (Proper Job Film) – *The Falklands War: The Untold Story* (2022) + Q&A

In the opening overview, I discussed Channel 4's origins, its founding remit and in what ways its establishment and subsequent history might constitute a 'TV Revolution'. I emphasised how it was constituted as unique entity, a publicly owned but commercially-funded not-for-profit company, with no shareholders and with no direct dependence on the government, as the BBC does, through a licence fee. Channel 4 had *licence to be different*. Its statutory remit *required* Channel 4 to:

- Appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by ITV
- Encourage innovation and experiment in the *form and content* of programmes that would lend it a 'distinctive character'
- Ensure that a 'substantial proportion' of its programmes were made by independent production companies – i.e., not the ITV companies.
- Have a central and extended scheduled slot for news

This was the birth of the 'TV Revolution', a broadcaster constituted to be radical, subversive, challenging, reaching out to an increasingly diverse, multicultural UK society. Its core demographic was and remains 16–35-year-olds who might wish to see something different on their television screens. And, as a *publisher-broadcaster*, Channel 4 would not produce its own programmes but commission them from other companies, which encouraged numerous small, independent companies to make television programmes with fresh, diverse and

innovative content; in its first year of operation, these new indies took 61 per cent of the initial commissions, four times what had been anticipated.

In view of the presentations to come, I focused on Channel 4 News – slap-bang in a mid-evening position and a full hour in length, which afforded the opportunity for greater range and depth of journalistic coverage, especially foreign events. Its investigative approach resembled that of a broadsheet such as the *Guardian*. The News come to stand for core Channel 4 values: hard-hitting journalism, irreverent and anti-Establishment. I then briefly discussed the early anarchic supplement, *The Friday Alternative*, made by David Graham, who'd set up a small company, Diverse Productions, recruiting a varied cross-section of personnel to make radical news programmes. Channel 4 News continues in its original position and stays true to its founding remit, flanked by occasional programmes for *Unreported World* that sustains the legacy of radical and fearless journalism and the determination to seek out stories from across the globe.

If a different approach to reporting the news constitutes an important aspect of Channel 4's TV Revolution, I argued that other aspects include the extraordinary growth of the independent production sector, which changed from cottage industry to big business and is now worth around £3.5 billion. It has become the norm for television programme production globally. Jeremy Isaacs, Channel 4's first CEO, was adamant that it should support the UK's indigenous feature film industry, an unprecedented move by a UK broadcaster. Channel 4's first fiction commissioner, David Rose, encouraged innovative productions, soliciting films, often by debuting writers or directors, such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Comrades* (1986) and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988). Although there have been ups and downs, by common consent, Film4 injected fresh life into what was a moribund British film industry, helping to create a rejuvenated national cinema, producing or co-producing some of the UK's most celebrated films since the 1980s, including *The Crying Game* (1992), *Trainspotting* (1995) and *12 Years a Slave* (2013), another 'revolution'.

I then discussed two central themes of these blogs – relocation and privatisation – before sketching Channel 4's Future Four strategy, the 'pivot to digital', of which 4Studios, discussed above, is a core component.

In the second session, Professor Rod Stoneman explained the ways in which a nest of emerging small independent filmmakers and micro-companies provided a fertile creative, cultural and highly politicised environment in which talent could develop and which helped to create and shape Channel 4. Notable was the Independent Filmmakers Association, an alliance between varied forms of filmmaking, various traditions of political documentary, agit prop, innovative narrative forms, avant garde aesthetics and micro-budget fiction filmmaking. All of these activities were a reaction to the existing constrictions of 'fortress television'. The first ever festival of independent British cinema took place in the Arnolfini in February 1975, organised by David G. Hopkins, which provided a forum for and encouraged the cross-fertilisation of these different forms of independent film practice. Rod discussed the Independent Film Workshops in Britain, which stretched over seventeen different centres across the UK in 1979 and the IFA's dialogue with Michael Meacher, then a Junior Minister at the Department of Trade. When Labour was defeated in 1979, that dialogue was transferred to the debates and lobbying that eventually led to the formation of Channel 4 and informed its particular remit, outlined above. The creative talent that was fomenting in these groups – that were activist collectives – forged an independent sector from which Channel 4 could draw in its early commissions and also led to the 1982 Workshop Declaration, an

agreement between Channel 4 and the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) that supported a number of existing not-for-profit groups up and down the country through to the early 1990s.^{xliii} Rod showed an extract from the *Bristol Bands Newsreel* (1980) by Mike Gifford and Mike Leggett, a community collaboration between filmmakers and some of the bands and venues active in Bristol at that time. Rod became one of the founding commissioners in Channel 4's Independent Film and Video Department led by Alan Fountain, which connected immediately with the 'radical pluralism' that the spectrum of IFA practices represented. He showed a short extract from one of its commissions (co-funded by the BFI Production Board), Richard Kwietniowski's *Flames of Passion* (1989), which transformed the famous film *Brief Encounter* (1945) into a witty contemporary gay melodrama.

The next section featured two of these community-based co-operatives that emerged from this early period and which attracted Channel 4 funding. David Parker produced *Cut Throat Business* (1986) for his co-operative Forum Television, a documentary about the closure of a chicken processing factory at Bridgewater in Somerset in 1985, as seen from the viewpoint of those who worked there and who took part in abortive industrial action to save the plant. It brought the voices of hitherto unrepresented groups to the national television screens. Colin Thomas showed a brief extract from his monumental thirteen-part series *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* (1985). Rather than provide the conventional synthesis or 'balance' between different viewpoints, the series shows an irreconcilable clash between its co-presenters, the patrician Wynford Vaughan-Thomas and the man-of-the-people Gwyn Alf Williams, the latter rejecting Thomas's mystical continuity from pre-historic times to the present by emphasising a Marxian sense of breaks and ruptures as the essence of Welsh history. Both Parker and Thomas emphasised the trust that was shown by Channel 4, the lack of interference and editorial control, which gave them an empowering autonomy to make the programme they thought appropriate to the subject.

David Sproxton revealed the crucial role Channel 4 played in enabling Aardman Animations to develop into what is now a global company, commissioning a series of 'Down and Out' animations that would multiply the company's 1978 pilot episodes about the demi-monde for transmission soon after the Channel's launch. These programmes – 'On Probation', 'Sales Pitch', 'Palmy Days', 'Early Bird' and 'Late Edition' – transmitted almost a year later, were scheduled at 9 pm across week-day evenings, unheard of positioning for animation that had been confined hitherto to children's programming. Sproxton opined: 'Those commissions allowed us to practise our craft, to build our skills, to develop a pool of people who contributed massively to these films; model-makers, set-designers, camera-crew, editors, etc etc, a great many are still working with us today or have carved out successful careers of their own. It also gave [Aardman] exposure on a respected broadcasting channel and supported us during the making of these films. All this built the studio's credibility and stature.' The programmes had an immediate impact, establishing Aardman's distinctive 'clay-animation' style and attracting interest from advertisers, which provided the cash flow that enabled the company to expand, including the famous 'Lip-Sync' series. Sproxton quoted his co-founder Peter Lord's observation that Channel 4's commissioning practices help grow 'a diverse and dynamic animation culture which in style, voice and content was aggressively, unmistakably British' – an animation revolution. He ended with a short compilation tape of snippets from many of the programmes Channel 4 commissioned from Aardman.

Channel 4's contribution to radical drama was represented by Martin Kiszko's discussion of *Zastrozzi*, a four-part mini-series broadcast in 1986. This production was based on Percy

Bysse Shelley's 1810 Gothic horror story, an overheated story of revenge, betrayal and thwarted or misplaced love. The action, partially transposed to the present day, is highly stylised, operatic and poetic, an extraordinary fusion of the compositional beauty of the filming – written and directed by David G. Hopkins – and Kiszko's sensuous and evocative music. The whole production exemplified – in the most uninhibited way – the possibilities Channel 4's 'TV Revolution' created, encouraging radical experimentation in the *form* as well as the content of programming.

After lunch I introduced *Skins*, the Channel 4 series that many people most strongly associate with Bristol. *Skins* was a highly successful – seven series (2007-10 and 2013) – and controversial comedy drama that followed the lives of a group of teenagers in Bristol through the two years of their sixth form. Each episode focus on a particular character and the struggle s/he faces, which included dysfunctional families, various forms of mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, sexuality, identity, substance abuse, bullying and death. Parents are depicted as annoying, usually foul-mouthed, goons who have no idea about the experiences their offspring are going through. *Skins*, now also a 'cult classic', was a critical success, credited with the depth of its understanding of youth problems that were not usually addressed on British television and very different from the slick American fantasy-lifestyle teen series such as *Dawson's Creek* and *Gossip Girl*. Several of the *Skins* cast, including Dev Patel who plays Anwar, went on to have successful acting careers.

Skins was commissioned by Danny Cohen, head of E4, then a tiny, experimental digital channel, who gave writer Bryan Elsley and his son Jamie Brittain, aided by several 'teenage consultants', a free hand. Cohen liked the idea of a teenage show written from their perspective, not an adult one. Produced by the London-based Company Pictures, but with a largely Bristolian crew, *Skins* was shot almost entirely in Bristol, including the John Cabot Academy as the fictitious Roundview College, and scenes around College Green, the docks and other, for locals, instantly recognisable locations. I then showed the opening of the first episode of Series 1.

A contrasting series, *Random Acts* (2013-17) was profiled by Jeremy Routledge, co-founder of the Bristol-based company Calling the Shots. The series supported the talent of communities and emerging storytellers from Bristol and the South West, helping filmmakers use modest funding from the Arts Council, the BFI and Channel 4 to produce innovative and often experimental short films. Screening on Channel 4 provided a national showcase for these productions.

The next set of presentations represented voices already profiled in these blogs: Blak Wave, Drummer TV, Sacha Mirzoeff as head of Channel 4's Bristol hub and Harvey Lilley, co-founder of Proper Job Films (see Blog#3), who introduced the concluding evening presentation: a full screening of *The Falklands War: The Untold Story*, first broadcast on 27 March 2022, another fortieth anniversary but of a rather different event. This compelling and probing 68-minute documentary features a range of interviews from senior commanders and also other combatants who now feel able to discuss the 'other' Falklands War, unreported in the media and the jingoistic tabloids, which showed how close Britain came to losing the conflict and explores the physical and mental trauma that the veterans experienced, which they movingly reveal to the camera.

Together these currently active companies showed how the reach and influence of Channel 4 remains potent, retaining a commitment to the unusual, the innovative and the provocative.

Overall, the day demonstrated that despite the transformative changes in the media landscape over these forty years, Channel 4 remains a distinctive and significant aspect of Bristol and the UK's media ecology, which relocation has helped enhance.

Conclusion

If we look across the piece, there are distinct limitations to Channel 4's relocation strategy, which eschewed a radical realignment of the UK's broadcasting locations in favour of targeting established 'hot spots' with developed infrastructural networks in 'first tier' cities. Only the development of its Leeds headquarters could be said to have made a limited impact in addressing the 'geographical imbalances' in the UK's broadcasting that Ofcom discerned. Within its chosen cities, Channel 4 has played safe, siting its offices in areas already on the up rather than attempting to spearhead more extensive urban regeneration.

However, throughout the four blogs, I have shown that relocation has had been a positive and progressive change both for Channel 4 itself, which has shifted from working with companies to working in partnership with its host cities to realise the vision set out by Mahon in '4All the UK'. Each city has benefitted significantly from the broadcaster's arrival, especially Leeds as its new headquarters, and Channel 4's presence has enhanced each city's 'brand' creating spill-over investment, infrastructural improvements and additional business arrivals.

These positive impacts have been slowed by two unrelated factors. The first was the pandemic – almost as soon as the new offices were open, they were closed to comply with lockdown. The second was the Conservative government's determination to privatise Channel 4 in the face of overwhelming opposition from the industry, academia and most informed opinion. Thankfully, at time of writing, December 2022, newspapers have been reporting that privatisation has been 'quietly shelved'.

Thus if relocation does not constitute a 'TV Revolution' comparable to Channel 4's birth in 1982, it appears to be a progressive force for democratic change that contributes both economic and cultural value. Commissioners are forging closer relationships with local indies and training schemes are becoming more responsive to local needs. £5 million has been invested in 4Skills and there are plans to double that investment alongside an increased focus on the nations and regions, including greater penetration into local schools and colleges. The regional centres are gradually becoming more attractive to senior staff who no longer feel they need to be in London. Increasingly a media career that takes place entirely in the nations and regions seems possible, even desirable.

However, it is a change that will take time – and consistent political support – to realise completely. Especially as locating production in a particular place does not also mean that that locality will find itself represented on the screen. In many ways that is a more significant challenge. Although there is a perception in some quarters that Channel 4 is not moving fast enough, perhaps in the longer term Channel 4 will become a fully devolved, regionally embedded broadcaster, shedding its London premises, one that, like the old ITV franchise holders, promotes a diverse range of voices from across the UK, affording them genuine autonomy that can develop and promote the locality and its culture, traditions and specificity and make its voice heard. If that is so, Channel 4 can become an even more important element in a responsive, accountable media ecology no longer so dominated by London.

Perhaps the last word should be given to David Plowright, one of Granada Television's most perceptive and far-sighted executives: 'The greatest asset ITV brought to national broadcasting was the distancing from London of a major part of the creative input into television. The change was not only desirable in itself but part of a revolutionary policy designed to give the regions hope for the future. Regional independent television brought an entirely new scrutiny to bear on British society'.

I write in the expectation that Channel 4 will continue to give the UK's nations and regions 'hope for the future'.

Combined Endnotes

ⁱ For discussion see John Mair, Fiona Chesterton and Neil Fowler (eds), *What Price Channel 4 Now?* London: Abramis, 2021.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/may/08/channel-4-privatisation-david-abraham>, accessed 04 October 2021.

ⁱⁱⁱ https://levellingup.campaign.gov.uk/?utm_source=Google&utm_medium=Search&utm_campaign=Levelling%20Up, accessed 24 February 2022. A White Paper has been published: this is the link to the Executive Summary: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052046/Executive_Summary.pdf

^{iv} <https://innovationsoftheworld.com/sacha-mirzoeff/>, nd, npn, accessed, 13 September 2021.

^v *For People Like Us and People Like You*, Channel 4, Autumn 2020.

^{vi} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/up-next-the-governments-vision-for-the-broadcasting-sector/up-next-the-governments-vision-for-the-broadcasting-sector>

^{vii} See, inter alia, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/nov/05/rishi-sunak-expected-to-shelve-privatisation-of-channel-4>.

^{viii} For further discussion of the issues around privatisation, I should like to recommend an excellent and wide-ranging blog, 'Channel 4: Privatising Public Space', by Professor John Ellis, himself a former television producer whose company, Large Door won numerous Channel 4 commissions: <https://cstonline.net/channel4-privatising-public-space-by-john-ellis/>.

^{ix} <https://www.channel4.com/corporate/about-4/indie-growth-fund>; my emphasis.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} <https://www.channel4.com/corporate/about-4/future4>. There is a downloadable summary available on this web page.

^{xii} https://assets-corporate.channel4.com/flysystem/s3/2021-10/October%202021%20-%20Indie%20Growth%20Fund%20-%20Booklet_FINAL.pdf

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Most of this profile and all quotations, unless indicated, are taken from my interview with Mirsky on 11 April 2022.

^{xv} <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-indie-growth-fund-invests-five-mile-films>, my emphasis.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} <https://www.fivemilefilms.co.uk/the-dog-house>.

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-indie-growth-fund-invests-david-olusoga-and-mike-smiths-independent-uplands>

^{xx} Ibid.

^{xxi} <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/tony-robinson-present-uplands-tvs-new-history-format-museum-us#:~:text=Channel%20has%20commissioned%20Uplands,new%20history%20format%20for%20More4>.

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- ^{xxii} <http://www.uplands-tv.com/index.html>
- ^{xxiii} <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/twenty-nations-regions-based-indies-set-benefit-channel-4s-emerging-indie-fund>.
- ^{xxiv} <https://www.channel4.com/commissioning/indie-accelerator-2022>.
- ^{xxv} There is a longer profile in Andrew Spicer, Steve Presence and Agata Frymus, *Go West! 2: Bristol's Film and Television Industries* (Bristol: UWE 2022).
- ^{xxvi} <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/take-your-knee-off-my-neck/on-demand/71544-002>
- ^{xxvii} For a longer profile see *Go West! 2*.
- ^{xxviii} <http://bristolcityoffilm.co.uk/four-bristol-companies-backed-by-c4s-emerging-indies-fund/>.
- ^{xxix} See *Go West! 2*. Watford and Essex is the sixth company, moving to Bristol after *Go West! 2* had gone to press.
- ^{xxx} <https://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/small-indie-fund>.
- ^{xxxi} *Close-Up Film*, 12 December 2020.
- ^{xxxii} <http://bristolcityoffilm.co.uk/four-bristol-companies-backed-by-c4s-emerging-indies-fund/>.
- ^{xxxiii} <https://www.bristolscreenproducers.co.uk/>.
- ^{xxxiv} <https://properjobfilms.co.uk/>.
- ^{xxxv} Rebecca Nicolson, *Guardian*, 27 March, 2022; <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/mar/27/falklands-war-the-untold-story-review-this-gripping-documentary-tells-how-britain-nearly-lost>.
- ^{xxxvi} <https://careers.channel4.com/4Skills/TVDramaNewWritersScheme>
- ^{xxxvii} <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=46552&p=0>.
- ^{xxxviii} David Lee, Katherine Champion & Lisa Kelly (2022), 'Relocation, relocation, relocation: examining the narratives surrounding the Channel 4 move to regional production hubs', *Cultural Trends*, 31: 3, pp. 222-239, at p. 227.
- ^{xxxix} <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-advanced-negotiations-glasgows-garment-factory-new-creative-hub>.
- ^{xl} Quoted in Helen Pidd, 'Channel 4 opens new HQ in Leeds as it fights against privatisation', *Guardian*, 5 September 2021.
- ^{xli} Zoom interview by author on 15 August 2022.
- ^{xlii} See Peter Thomas, 'The British workshop movement and Amber Film', *Studies in European Cinema*, 8: 3, 2012, pp. 195-209.