Media and Communication
Open Access Journal | ISSN: 2183-2439
Volume 4, Issue 1 (2016)

Thematic Issue

Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media

Editor

Vladimir Bratic

COGITATIO

Media and Communication, 2016, Volume 4, Issue 1
Special Issue: Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media

Published by Cogitatio Press
Rua Fialho de Almeida 14, 2º Esq.,
1070-129 Lisbon
Portugal

Available online at: www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication

Table of Contents

Editorial
Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media
Vladimir Bratic 1-3

Article
Elicitive Conflict Transformation and New Media: In Search for a Common Ground
Wolfgang Suetzl 4-14

Article
"Likes" for Peace: Can Facebook Promote Dialogue in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict?
Yifat Mor, Yiftach Ron and Ifat Maoz 15-26

Article
Fields and Facebook: Ta'ayush's Grassroots Activism and Archiving the Peace that Will Have Come in Israel/Palestine
Jon Simons 27-38

Article
Internet Censorship Circumvention Tools: Escaping the Control of the Syrian Regime
Walid Al-Saqaf 39-50

Article
EU Armed Forces' Use of Social Media in Areas of Deployment
Maria Hellman, Eva-Karin Olsson and Charlotte Wagnsson 51-62

Article
Building Peace through Journalism in the Social/Alternate Media
Rukhsana Aslam 63-79

Article
Awareness towards Peace Journalism among Foreign Correspondents in Africa
Ylva Rodny-Gumede 80-93

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 1-3
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.559

Editorial

Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media

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Submitted: 23 December 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
This editorial provides the historical context for the current state of peacebuilding media and introduces the articles featured in the issue.

Keywords
conflict; Internet; mass media; new media; peacebuilding; social media; traditional media, war

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

Media did not become an integral part of the formal peacebuilding until the end of the Cold War when specialized, non-governmental and intergovernmental agencies formalized the practice of peacebuilding and media technologies improved to allow non-professionals to make and distribute their own media. Therefore, the practice of using media for peacebuilding emerged in the last decade of the 20th century when peace organizations formally began utilizing media to advance their goals in places of violent conflict.

Academic studies were slow to address this practice. There were only a handful of studies at the turn of the century explicitly studying peace and media, most of them were written by practitioners (Hieber, 2001; Howard, Rolt, van de Veen, & Verhoeven, 2003; Lehmann, 1999). Peace and media were not studied under the same umbrella until the very end of the 20th century because peace studies traditionally resided in political science while media studies originated in sociology. It took a few interdisciplinary efforts to recognize the distinctive practice (Price & Thompson, 2002; Wolfsfeld, 2004). At that time, a number of different media applications in peacebuilding emerged as distinctive areas of study. The role of journalism and journalists in conflict was the most prominent area of research studied mainly by political science and journalism scholars (Kempf, 2008). Less academic and more practice-driven attempts were made to recognize that other media formats (i.e. entertainment and marketing) could also make an impact on peace (Radio Netherlands, 2004; Search for Common Ground [SFCG], 2002). Similarly, legal media scholars brought up the argument that media laws and regulatory environment are crucial ingredients of a prosperous and peaceful society (Price & Krug, 2002).

Over the last five years the discourse in the field has shifted away from the traditional media and formal peacebuilding practice. The ever-improving technologies introduced new media channels (mobile phones, the Internet) and new media practices (new media and social media). Academic research and policy moved towards examining new ways technology can enhance democratization and social activism. Some initial results confirmed the ability of new media to inform, involve, and mobilize citizens and enhanced the ability of peacebuilding agents to achieve their goals and improve security in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (Livingston, 2011; Stauffacher, Weekes, Gasser, Maclay & Best, 2011). But conflict areas continue to be dominated by the influence of old, traditional media and technology which continue to be used by people for both good and bad purposes. Propaganda and attacks on journalists and free speech have not been eliminated because of the new technology and social networks.

This issue is an attempt to recognize the new questions that both practice and academia need to consider

in the future. This issue aims to explore the innovative use of new media technologies both theoretically, as is the case in the first article of issue, as well as application of social media in violent conflict in the next four articles of the issue. At the same time, new questions have emerged in reaction to the recognized practices in peace journalism which is the subject of the last two articles of the issue.

To begin, Wolfang Sützl's "Elicitive Conflict Transformation and New Media: In Search for a Common Ground" examines the role that social media can play in communicative processes in light of Conflict Transformation Theory. The author emphasizes the absence of media theory in conflict resolution theories and draws on the common ground of both realms to conclude that social media can play an effective role in peace-building.

The next four articles describe the application of social media in practice. Yifat Mor, Yiftach Ron and Ifat Maoz's article "'Likes' for Peace: Can Facebook Promote Dialogue in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict?" analyzes the discourse of one Facebook group among Palestinians and Israeli-Jews. Authors find out that moderate voices and peace-oriented posts by Palestinians were more likely to elicit acceptance and sympathy from Israeli-Jews.

In "Fields and Facebook: *Ta'ayush*'s Grassroots Activism and Archiving the Peace that Will Have Come in Israel/Palestine" Jon Simons argues that the work of the activist group T*a'ayush* might be considered a failure based on the traditional metrics in the scholarship of social movement and peacebuilding theory. Yet, the value of the group's online activism, he argues, is in documenting and archiving the work of activists in confronting the Occupation.

Walid Al-Saqaf explains how new media technologies can be used to circumvent state censorship of an authoritarian state in "Internet Censorship Circumvention Tools: Escaping the Control of the Syrian Regime". The author provides empirical evidence that new media can effectively bypass censorship and enable access to blocked websites, demonstrating the potential of such tools to promote freedom of expression.

"EU Armed Forces' Use of Social Media in Areas of Deployment" by Maria Hellman, Eva-Karin Olsson and Charlotte Wagnsson examines the perceptions of social media by the military forces of European states. The authors conclude that social media is seen simultaneously as a combination of opportunities to advance their communication and marketing as well as potential areas of risk.

The last two articles of the issue are the new readings on peace journalism; in "Building Peace through Journalism in the Social/Alternate Media" Rukhsana Aslam describes the changes in reporting of conflict in the time of social media networks. The author considers existing paradigms of journalism in conflict and proposes a more fluid journalism model; one based on work of synergy among journalists, academics and peace workers, emphasizing more direct engagement in conflict resolution.

In "Awareness towards Peace Journalism among Foreign Correspondents in Africa" Ylva Rodny-Gumede interviews journalists from multiple global news organizations based in Johannesburg, South Africa, and examines their awareness and attitudes toward peace journalism practice. The author finds a lack of confidence in the model yet a strong preference and established practice of many of its tenets.

Therefore, at this juncture in research it is necessary to ground the new results about new technologies in what was previously confirmed about traditional media. In the case of this particular issue, authors examine the impact of new media and technology in light of what we already know to be good practices. At this time when new media and social networks draw most of the attention of researchers and policy makers, we must understand the historical context of the practice, remain comparative in the study of regional applications and mindful of the previous lessons from not so distant cousins—old, traditional media and formal peacebuilding practice.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 4-14
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.358

Article

Elicitive Conflict Transformation and New Media: In Search for a Common Ground

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Submitted: 4 May 2015 | Accepted: 3 November 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
Advocates of elicitive conflict transformation (ECT) maintain that the parties to a conflict are the most important resource in efforts to render that conflict less violent. According to them, the transformation of the conflict is immanent to the conflict itself. The claim of ECT theorists is that classical conflict resolution has mostly aimed at overcoming a conflict by means of neutral mediation, while conflict transformation is not primarily concerned with terminating a conflict and considers the conflict worker as part of the conflict system. Although ECT is a communication-based model of conflict management and relies on human media, its media-theoretical aspects are not made explicit, raising the question of what role technological media play in the communicative processes that make up ECT techniques. Through an examination of the claimed differences between conflict resolution and conflict transformation, and focusing on the common roots of new media and the elicitive model in systems and cybernetic theory, this paper asks whether any peacebuilding potential of new media could be found in a specific anti-propagandistic quality of distributed technological media. It concludes by looking at any such potential in social media.

Keywords
conflict resolution; elicitive conflict transformation; new media theory; peace media; peacebuilding

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

1. Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to contribute towards an understanding of new media in peacebuilding by positing them in the context of recent developments in conflict theory. Specifically, I will examine a shift from the concept of conflict resolution to one of conflict transformation, and its implications in terms of how we understand media and any function they can have within peacebuilding. To this end, I will examine any media-theoretical aspects of elicitive conflict transformation and seek to arrive at conclusions regarding the role of new media in peacebuilding.

I feel justified in doing so because both conflict resolution and transformation imply a mediating agency, some "in-between" space that separates and connects the conflict parties, and where conflict resolution professionals or peace workers operate. The way this in-between space is conceptualized is significant in theorizing and practicing the resolution or transformation of conflicts. I am not going to discuss theories that deny the possibility of a third party to a conflict, as for example those advocated by the Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger, although their 'Heraclitan' thinking has a continuing currency (Sützl, 2008). According to those theories, a conflict ends with the victory of one party over the other. However, in as much as they contain a critique of liberalism, they will be relevant at the end of this paper, where my discussion of the peacebuilding potential of social media relies on its distinction between liberalism and peace that has informed recent research on peace and war. This distinction acknowledges the potential for violence inherent in the present global liberal governance (Dillon & Reid, 2000), the emergence of a distinct form of liberal war (Dillon & Reid, 2009; Evans, 2011) as well as post-liberal peace (Richmond, 2011).

For the purposes of this essay, I will base my reaso-

ning on the assumed existence of such a third space between conflict parties. This space is the space of communication, where commonality can become manifest. As such, it is both the space of mediation and the space of media. The Greek word μέσον (meson), from which the English word 'medium' is derived, does not only refer to the middle; it also stands for the common ground and the common good, thus comprising both the political and the technical aspects of the communication that takes place in order to resolve or transform a conflict.

The second reason why I feel justified in taking this approach, which is that there is an apparent lack of research that looks at conflict resolution or conflict transformation from a media-theoretical angle, with the underlying assumption frequently being the communication occurring in resolving or transforming conflicts is face-to-face, as in the classic setting of the negotiating table. Mediation is understood in terms of a person being 'in the middle,' rather than in terms of a human or technological medium, requiring no specific media-theoretical approach (Curle, 2015) and limiting itself to communication theory (Burton, 2015). Yet the negotiating table is only part of a much larger communication environment in which many different types of media may be present, including technological ones. A theory of conflict resolution or transformation will therefore need to include a media theory. While a small amount of research has been conducted into the role of media in conflict resolution (e.g. Gilboa, 2010, Saleem & Hanan, 2014), such research has not advanced to the point where a media-theoretical enquiry is engaged.

2. The Lack of Media Theory in Conflict Resolution Theories

I suggest three possible explanations of this lack of media theory. Perhaps most obvious among them is that what Friedrich Kittler calls the 'technological media' have a long history of complicity with war: many key media technologies were developed and used for military communications, from the optical telegraphs of antiquity to the missile-guidance systems of the present, from computer technology to internet and satellite communication. It would be hard to deny that the war and the military at least hat a very significant impact on the evolution of the technological media. As is known, Friedrich Kittler went as far as to argue that all technological media have their origin in military purposes and have served war, propaganda and surveillance ever since they existed. Indeed, it would be hard to not see the continuity of war in media history, from the optical telegraphs of antiquity to current concepts of information war or cyberwar (e.g. Eurich, 1995; Snow, 2003; Stocker & Schöpf, 1998; Virlio, 1989). More recently, the rise of security as a guiding principle of international politics after 9/11 has added to these suspicions, with critics interpreting security as a technologically driven pursuit of peace that reads pluralism and creativity as potential risks to be politically neutralized (Cox & Sützl, 2009; Sützl, 2008, 2009).

Such interpretations of the relationship between technological media and peace rest on the assumption that these media do in fact have an impact on what can be communicated, and consequently on the success of conflict transformation. Accordingly, they are not neutral, and that this lack of neutrality makes them unsuitable for mediation in a conflict, or for a peace-oriented political process. Another way of interpreting the apparent absence of a theory of technological media in conflict resolution and conflict transformation theories would be to assume that technological media are neutral, and therefore not in need of theoretical attention. From this perspective, instead of being detrimental to building peace, they would simply be irrelevant. Whether communication occurs face-to-face or through using technological media would have no effect on what is communicated, and consequently on the outcome of the conflict transformation process. This would be a continuation of a long-standing tradition in western philosophy and originating in Platonic thought, according to which knowledge is not affected by the media through which it is communicated, archived, or processed. Kittler becomes a media theorist because Foucault's discourse analysis does not entirely shake off this tradition: lacking a media theory, "his analyses end up immediately before that point in time at which other media penetrated the library's stacks" (Kittler, quoted in Winthrop-Young, 2011, p. 59).

A third explanation might be that there are no adequate theoretical sources that would allow it to form a positive understanding of the relationship between media, peace, and war. Although peace journalism has established itself as a practice and theory following the recognition of the complicated role of journalists in war (e.g. Keeble, Tulloch, & Zollmann, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005), it has not yet developed its own media theory. In part, this is certainly due to the difficulty of conceptualizing peace, as opposed to violence and war. Peace was long defined in negative terms, as the absence of war, with the advantage of universality, but impossible to represent in positive forms, and therefore of limited use in peacebuilding efforts. Peace researchers in the 1980s were therefore driven by an ambition, originating in the work of Johan Galtung and others, to develop theories of positive peace that would in fact be helpful in making peace a positive social reality (Galtung, 1964). Yet positive attributes turned out to be much more problematic to generalize than negative ones, as they are inseparable from cultural values which, if universalized, might generate their own cultural violence (Galtung, 1990). The response to this dilemma consisted in a pluralization of peace theories, either in the form of considering peace as cultural-

ly contingent and speaking of 'peaces' instead of one peace (Dietrich, 2011, 2012), or in a turn towards conflict resolution, with the meaning of positive peace being contingent upon the conflict constellation and parties.

The following enquiry into peace media, and the status of technological media in ECT is an attempt to contribute to the theoretical resources that will allow an understanding of the relationship between media and peace.

3. Bratić's Peace Media Theory

Is it possible to view technological media as capable of promoting peace? In a study of media in post-conflict peacebuilding settings, Bratić (2008) starts with the affirmation that "cases of the positive use of mass communication channels in the reconciliation of post-conflict societies" are "virtually unknown"(p. 487) and he proposes the term "peace media" for media created by non-conflict parties for the purpose of actively supporting a post-conflict peacebuilding effort by transforming the cultural violence (as defined by Galtung, 1990) that inevitably exists in every violent situation. Indeed, "the media are often a venue where cultural violence is created," (Bratić, 2008, p. 492) as they generate a symbolic environment and are capable of cultivating thoughts and attitudes in their audience that can lead to changes in behavior. While the mass media are never the sole source of social change, the "effects of the media are neither minimal nor negligible." Therefore, according to Bratić, "if the symbolic environment is impacted by the messages of peace-oriented media, such media environment can be conducive to the cultural transformation of violence" (Bratić, 2008, p. 493).

Because the meaning of peace media here is limited to mass media such as radio, television and newspapers, a particular difficulty presents itself: how can a mass medium that intends to accomplish certain outcomes—even if these are peaceful outcomes—avoid being a propaganda medium? And is there such a thing as a pro-peace propaganda, or are peace and propaganda incompatible? What would the peace thus promoted look like? These questions are akin to the problems studied by the propaganda theorists of the 1920s. George Creel (1972), Walter Lippman (1922) and Harold Lasswell (1927) are among a generation of writers who, influenced by the experience of World War I (WWI), took up the study of mass media effects, trying to understand what kind of processes make propaganda effective. Although propaganda theory, as well as its surviving elements in public relations theory (Bernays, 1923, 1952), has attracted much criticism for reducing mass media audiences to a "bewildered herd" in need of control (Chomsky, 2002, p. 6, citing Lippmann's famous phrase), there was widespread conviction that propaganda could also be of a benevolent, pro-democratic kind. This belief was particularly convincing when pro-democratic and anti-German propaganda seemed the same, as in the work of the US Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel. Bratić takes up Creel's idea of "employing all media of appeal" in pursuit of a cause and argues for peace media to be understood as part of a "peace relations agenda," of a "joint and integrated set of measures involving more than a single media channel or technique" (Bratić, 2008, p. 501). As is known, the US propaganda theorist found one of their main critics in John Dewey, who refused to "accept the need of a technocracy that would use scientific methods to protect people from themselves" and instead insisted that public education would be the most effective means of defending democracy against totalitarianism (Baran & Davis, 2012, p. 86). According to Dewey, "democracy was less about information than conversation," (Alterman, cited in Baran & Davis, 2012, p. 87) and such an education cannot proceed by creating a class of experts in control of information. Drewey may have seen in George Creel's propaganda strategy to bring Germany to surrender in WWI—known as the Fourteen Points of Wilson—a powerful indication of a collusion that may exists between propaganda and totalitarianism (Bateson, 1972, pp. 477-495).

Are there ways in which technological media can support peacebuilding outside of a model of benign propaganda? In order to answer this question, I will look at conceptual differences between conflict resolution and conflict transformation and their relationship to peacebuilding in the next section.

4. Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

As a distinct conflict management technique, conflict transformation appeared in the 1990s (Lederach, 1995). Lederach describes conflict transformation as "to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships" (Lederach, cited in Dietrich, 2013, p. 7).

The utility of the concept has been a matter of controversy. Critics have argued that conflict transformation merely refers to the "deepest level of the conflict resolution tradition" (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011, p. 9), or that conflict transformation emerged as a response to a growing misuse of the term conflict resolution, being wrongly applied to many processes involving open violence (Mitchell, 2003). According to such criticism, conflict transformation would be synonymous to conflict resolution well done.

Mitchell (2003) makes a systematic attempt at

identifying any substantive differences between the two concepts. He refers to Galtung's statement that "conflicts are generally not solved" because there is a conflict energy that does not disappear with the assumed resolution of the conflict, but rather "attaches itself to one or more conflicts, possibly also the old one" (Galtung, cited in Mitchell, 2003).

Although understanding the difference between conflict transformation and conflict resolution mainly as variations of emphasis, Mitchell does attribute to conflict transformation a focus on long-term healing:

> "Resolution has a tendency to concentrate upon the immediate and the shorter term, its advocates arguing that dealing with the issues and the deeper interests producing a current situation of intractable conflict is enough of a problem in itself. Transformation has deliberately included 'the aftermath' in its focus, purposefully building in approaches and processes that deal with conflict 'residues'—traumas, fears, hurts and hatreds—which, even if one major conflict has been resolved, will remain to poison futures and ensure that later conflicts will be prosecuted in a spirit of intransigence, if not revenge" (Mitchell, 2003).

Conflict transformation, then, would see its work continue in post-conflict scenarios and include techniques and activities that are typically part of peacebuilding.

Dietrich (2013) proposes a more clear-cut distinction between conflict transformation and conflict resolution. He understands conflict resolution as a "modernist concepts of international relations" and as having been "deconstructed by postmodern philosophy" (p. 7). Accordingly, conflict resolution is about removing or ending a conflict, following the dramaturgy of a crime novel. The story ends with the resolved conflict. As in the crime story, "any re-traumatization of victims, of the victim's family, or of erroneous suspects at the hand of investigators and court officials is subordinate to the just and correct resolution. Life after the resolution is of no interest" (Dietrich, 2013, p. 8). Unlike conflict resolution, which rests on the idea of overcoming and ending a conflict, conflict transformation, as understood by Dietrich, is a process described by the German word *verwinden*, originating in Heidegger's problematizing of metaphysics that gave rise to a reorientation of continental philosophy in post-structuralism and postmodernism. *Verwindung* is usually translated as "twisting" in English (Sützl, 2007) and can be likened to recovering from the disease, which is different from the disappearance of the disease. The "twisting" of a conflict initiates a process of maturing, of discovering and of developing new choices, a process that "changes human relationships and personal consciousness" and is entirely different from any formulaic problem solving. This approach to conflict is transformative of social systems and of individuals. Dietrich's understanding of conflict transformation is based on energy locked in the epicenter of the conflict, released in conflict work and used for transformation.

Conflict transformation thus goes beyond a movement on the surface of a conflict that Lederach calls an "episode" in which "physical violence is suppressed, the extremes of structural violence mitigated, and a new narrative form, a compromise, the famous win-win solution, is found" (Dietrich, 2013, p. 8). As a result, the energy of the conflict is not transformed, it is merely shifted elsewhere. Using a musicological term, Dietrich calls this a "conflict transposition." The score (or conflict) remains the same, but being rendered in a different pitch, the mood changes: "A melody is perceived differently and gives rise to different feelings when rendered in A major as opposed to F major. It is precisely this, and nothing more, that is done in conflict transposition" (p. 8). Conflict transformation, by contrast, claims to alter the dissonant melody itself, "utilizing its urgent energy creatively in order to form a new harmony based on what exists" (p. 9).

As to the use of media, the attention given to psychological and symbolic aspects in conflict transformation suggest limitations of peace media understood as mass media, and opens up the question of a type of medium.

5. Neutrality and Permeability

This becomes even clearer when we consider how those who advocate for conflict transformation as an entirely different enterprise understand the space of mediation, in the sense of the meson as discussed above. While the resolutional school has typically viewed the intermediary as a conflict broker, who, while required to have an appropriate understanding of the "culture and social structures in which the adversaries are embedded," (Mitchell, 2003) is not part of the same structure. The intermediary is an intermediary by virtue of his/her neutrality and separation from the conflict itself.

By contrast, conflict transformation theorists tend to acknowledge that mediators bring their own baggage to a conflict and are therefore never neutral. Dietrich (2013) asserts that "what many think to be objectivity and neutrality is nothing other than the assessment of a particular situation by a third party which, by virtue of the assessment, becomes an interested party and cannot be a neutral element" (p. 11). Neutrality, in his view, is a principle firmly rooted in a western and modernist world view that has left peace politics in a dilemma between idealist and realist assumptions (Dietrich, 2012). Dietrich does argue for "impartiality," as a "subjective attempt to avoid unilateral, thoughtless, and explicit expressions of partiality," (Dietrich, 2013, p. 12) but otherwise, precisely because of the impossibility of neutrality, the emphasis is

on the mediator needing to be neither neutral nor distanced, but "permeable" (Dietrich, 2013, p. 210). This means that the mediator shares with the conflict parties what he/she brings to the conflict (values, emotions, desires, intentions, own traumas, etc.) in order to be able to facilitate a transformation process that will, inevitably, also be the transformation process of the mediator. The mediator forms part of the conflict scenario as a complete person, and is no longer seen as an expert with an advance in knowledge vis-à-vis the conflict parties.

From a media-theoretical point of view, this implies a shift in the view of the in-between space, of the medium of communication in conflict transformation. It marks a shift from a prescriptive to an elicitive approach to conflict that mirrors the transition from old to new media. Below I will examine some of the differences claimed to exist between conflict resolution and elicitive conflict transformation in order to arrive at conclusions regarding the latter's view of the space between conflict parties. This will help develop our understanding of the media that can exist in that space.

6. Prescriptive and Elicitive Conflict Transformation

The concept of elicitive conflict transformation originates in Lederach's 1995 book *Preparing for Peace* (Lederach, 1995). Here, Lederach responds to a concern about understanding and honoring the cultural dimension of conflict, and develop trainings for conflict transformation that no longer pretend to offer a how-to-do-package created by conflict experts. Instead of transferring outside knowledge—knowledge developed in a different setting, expert knowledge disconnected from the cultural vernacular—the transformation of a conflict needs to put to use the resources, including the cultural forms, available within the conflict setting itself. In a nutshell, Lederach makes a case for a conflict transformation training that no longer proceeds in a prescriptive manner, transferring "conflict resolution technology from one setting to another," and which instead "builds from the cultural resources in a given setting" (Lederach, 1995, p. 7). Whereas in the prescriptive model the "trainer's knowledge is the key resource to be emulated by the participants," (p. 51) the conflict can be resolved precisely because culture is left out, the elicitive model uses culture as a resource in transforming the conflict (see Table 1).

Going beyond training requirements, Dietrich (2013) develops a theoretical grounding for the elicitive approach that follows from a far-reaching critique of concepts of peace in history and culture (Dietrich, 2012). He juxtaposes two historically large families of peace that have existed in the world. Energetic peace assumes human existence to be "embedded in the All-Oneness of being" (Dietrich, 2012, p. 273) where consequently peace is a harmonious interplay of cosmic, natural and societal energies. The other family of interpretations is what he calls "moral peace" (peace as identical with justice), where a split between the eternal divine peace and the temporal peace of mundane existence emerges and peace is understood as a vectorial projection into a future. "Modern" and "postmodern" interpretations of peace have drawn on these foundations each in their own way. Modern images of peace are "based on a mechanistic understanding of the world that evicts God and supposes reason in his place," while postmodern ones doubt the existence of an ultimate Truth and declare God to be dead. In postmodernism, the rationality of the modern spirit unites with relationality. "Truth, security and justice are recognized as constructs and peace thus becomes multiform and in need of definition within each context" (Dietrich, 2012, p. 274). Eventually, he proposes a novel and pluralistic concept: the "trans-rational peaces" (Dietrich, 2011, pp. 3-23, 2012, pp. 210-260), introducing a plural to a noun that dictionaries list only in the singular—itself a consequence of moral and modern interpretation of peace. Significantly, the trans-rational concept of peace "[enlarges] the ethical and aesthetic moment of existence beyond the limits of the modern persona and into transpersonality and thereby gains the energetic without abandoning the rational" (p. 274).

Table 1. Types of conflict transformation (Source: Lederach, 1995, p. 65).

Prescriptive	Elicitive
Training as transfer	Training as discovery and creation
Training as content oriented: Master approach and technique	Training as process oriented: participate in model creation
Empowerment as learning new ways and strategies for facing conflict	Empowerment as validating and building from context
Trainer as expert, model, and facilitator	Trainer as catalyst and facilitator
Culture as technique	Culture as foundation and seedbed

In order to understand the media-theoretical quality of Dietrich's approach, it will be helpful to look at an important theoretical source for Dietrich's elicitive theory: the humanistic psychology movement. Emerging from the differences that a new generation of psychologists had with Sigmund Freud in the middle of the 20th century, this movement distanced itself from the psychoanalytic focus on illness and sought instead to use psychological knowledge to release the potentials for growth in human beings and their communities. Writers such as Abraham Maslow, gestalt therapists Laura and Fritz Perls and Paul Goodman, psychodrama founder Jacob Levy Moreno, family therapist Virginia

Satir, client-centered therapist Carl Rogers, communication scholar Gregory Bateson and transpersonal psychologist Stanislaf Groff were all concerned with the relationships that exist between the inner conflicts and potentials of a person, and the conflicts and potentials in society and politics—the ways in which the intrapersonal is affected by, and in turn affects, the interpersonal. The tools and methods of elicitive conflict resolution as suggested by Dietrich encompass all dimensions and layers of human existence, from the persona to the sexual, socio-emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

This "twisting" of the linear structures and of central categories, the fluidity of boundaries and the understanding of the self as communication is at the basis of ECT. How is this distinction relevant to conceptualizing elicitive peace media? I will try to answer this question in the following section.

7. Prescriptive and Elicitive Peace Media

Propaganda as a modality of mass communication is prescriptive by definition: it cannot but project certain social realities or values as desirable, promote certain attitudes and behaviors, or seek to influence the beliefs of an audience. Although associated with 1930s totalitarian ideologies, mass communication theorists such as Lasswell and Lippmann argued that a democratic polity needs its own kind of propaganda that will protect democracy against the danger of totalitarianism. Integrated with other social institutions, such propaganda-based of peace media have been shown to support building peace efforts following a violent conflict (Bratić, 2005, 2008). Indeed, Lasswell thought of his propaganda theory of mass communication as a remedy against conflict. Influenced by Freudian thinking, he considered the inevitable political conflict arising in pluralist societies as "inherently pathological," and it was the responsibility of social researchers to find ways to "obviate conflict." Public discourse was to be replaced by democratic propaganda (Baran & Davis, 2012, p. 83).

While these propaganda theories were evolving in the 1920s and 1930s and were fuelled by the appearance of Nazi propaganda in Europe, Bertolt Brecht developed his own critique of propaganda in his radio theory: he wanted the listeners of this mass medium to be able to engage in a conversation with one another, rather than just listening to programs they had no influence upon. Radio, he famously argued, should be transformed from a "distribution apparatus" to a "communication apparatus" if it is to have consequences (Brecht, 2000, pp. 41-46). The audience was not only to be instructed but should itself instruct (p. 43). Before the Nazis destroyed media freedom and set up their own unparalleled propaganda machinery after 1933, socialist organizations did in fact offer radio workshops for workers with the goal of turning radio into a participative, progressive medium (Brunner-Szabo, 1989). Brecht's contribution to a more comprehensive theory of radio may have been stifled by his own skepticism vis-à-vis the technological media in general and his reliance on stage drama. It was only Hans-Magnus Enzensberger who returned to Brecht's demand in his 1970 Constituents of a Theory of Media, polemically demanding that the left finally enter the new media age and, in doing so, embrace a more unpredictable, disorderly model of emancipation (Enzensberger, 1970). His remedy against manipulation and propaganda was that everyone gets access to communication media. Writing well before the popularization of computers, his extensive list of new media includes "time-sharing computers, data banks, composing and learning machines, video-phones, laser techniques," in a striking anticipation of a similar conversation that set in once computers and the internet became available to larger audiences in the 1990s. New media activism (Lievrouw, 2011), hacktivism (Samuel, 2004), electronic civil disobedience (Critical Art Ensemble, 1996), the tactical media movement (Garcia & Lovink, 1997; Kluitenberg, 2011) and Indymedia are some examples from this period that stood for new ways of putting new media towards an emancipatory use, generally motivated by a desire for a more just and open information society and by lending everyone a voice.

Drawing on artistic as well technological resources, these media activist movements sought to level the difference between author, audience and producer. Formed in the Web 1.0 age, many of them did not survive the spread of Web 2.0 technologies, although the hacking swarm Anonymous and Wikileaks would represent examples of a continuation of this movement in the present.

While some of this media activism did not go beyond being subversive, disturbing dominant discourses and interfering with media dispositives—and in as much as this was the case contributed to a larger critique of violence—there are also examples of using the computers and the internet to promote peace ideas and activism (Gray, 2005).

In former Yugoslavia, the ZaMir network was an early example of a civil-society peace-oriented computer network. Supported by anti-war groups in the various Yugoslav republics, it proofed capable of bypassing government-imposed curbs on communication during demise of the Yugoslav state at the beginning of the 1990s, and of continuing a conversation about peaceful alternatives amidst the nationalist and militaristic propaganda. In the US, PeaceNet was a member organization of the Association for Progressive Communication (APC), a computer network founded in 1990 providing online communication resources to peace activist and organizations, and pioneering the use of the internet for social movements (Noronha & Higgs, 2010).

The need both Brecht and Enzensberger expressed for media serving communication rather than distribu-

tion is echoed in these uses of the new media, marking a shift away from mass communication in the classical sense. The normative thinking exemplified by Brecht and Enzensberger, on the other hand, would seek to promote the public discourse by breaking the one-to-many structure of mass communication and envisioning a many-to-many model of communication by the masses instead. Rather than looking for ways to obviate conflict, conflict is seen as inevitable and even desirable in order to advance to a more egalitarian society.

Does the idea of distributed communication media that underlies these ideals of emancipatory media use contain clues as to the role of technological media in elicitive conflict transformation? The idea of emancipation connected to conflict transformation may be rather different from the European socialist thought inscribed into these normative theories. In its revolutionary form, emancipatory politics has resorted to violent conflict, and on the other hand, processes of elicitive conflict transformation may differ from western notions of emancipation. Even Enzensberger is not entirely free from a propagandistic sensibility when he speaks of "democratic manipulation," reminding readers that "there is no unmanipulated writing, filming, or broadcasting," the question being not "whether the media are manipulated, but who manipulates them." Enzensberger envisions manipulation as a distributed activity that makes everyone a manipulator, leading to a "self-regulating learning process which is made possible by the electronic media" (Enzensberger, 1970, p. 20).

8. Cybernetics, Mediality, and Medium

What Brecht's and Enzensberger normative theory proposes is, at closer inspection, a cybernetic idea: the idea of self-regulation that replaces central control. Gregory Bateson, a psychologist and a founding figure of cybernetics, is cited by Dietrich as one of the precursors ECT (Dietrich, 2013, pp. 28-29). Bateson's is a systemic view thae is primarily transformative; that is, it detaches itself from the ideal of a revolutionary subject that still underlies Brecht's and Enzensberger's thinking, and whose celebration in leftist social theory may have reached its culmination in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre. To Bateson, the self is a result of communication, and communication is therefore not something that an individual with a pre-existing sense of self does in an instrumental fashion: rather, it is "only through communication that one's reality and sense of self [could] be maintained." (p. 28) Therefore, all communication within and without the person must be connected through feedback cycles. On this basis, conflict is inevitable, and was in fact considered as an essential part of life by Bateson, and any "obviation" of conflict is neither possible nor desirable. To Bateson, conflict was an integrative part of being human, an existential fact that concerns the entirety of human existence, i.e. body, mind and the relations to others. Dietrich offers a figure to illustrate Bateson's relevance to ECT (see Figure 1).

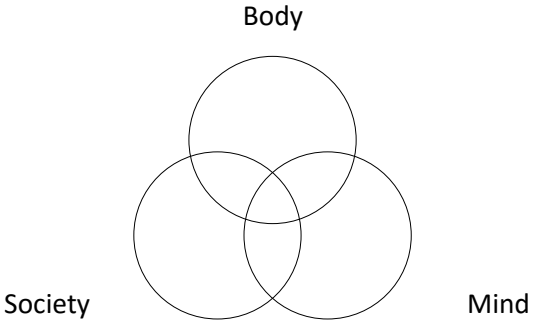

Figure 1. The systemic approach to peace after Bateson (Source: Dietrich, 2013, p. 28).

Conflict as an existential fact is also key in the thinking of Martin Buber, who Dietrich cites as another precursor of ECT. According to Buber, we are driven to choose between two conflicting basic attitudes: orienting (seeking security) and realizing (seeking change). As both of these attitudes aim for something desirable but are mutually exclusive, a permanent conflict between the two is inevitable. (Dietrich, 2013, p. 26). This existential conflict is present in any other form of conflict experienced by humans, and as a consequence, a conflict cannot be neutralized, but can only be transformed by seeking a balance between orienting and realizing.

We can ask the question of technological media in ECT, then in this way: does the systemic interconnectedness of layers of existence, of inner and outer experience, of people, communities, include or exclude technology? To answer this question, it will be useful to look at the common ground between humanistic psychology and cybernetics. Both disciplines emerged in the same historical context and pursued similar epistemic goals, influenced by systems theory. Therefore, system-theoretical concepts such as feedback cycle, boundary, interface, or environment are used in humanistic psychology as well as in cybernetics. Scholars such as Gregory Bateson, Norbert Wiener, Heinz von Foerster and Gregory Bateson were all concerned with how human and technological systems interact and evolve. Reviewing the historical evolution of cybernetics, Katherine Hayles reminds us that Gordon Pask, a founding figure of cybernetics who was also a humanistic psychologist, understood cybernetics as concerned "with information flows in *all media,* including biological, mechanical, and even cosmological systems" (Hayles, 2010, p. 146). Cybernetics opens a door towards understanding the mediatic dimension of human existence, the way in which humans function as media.

The human body as a medium can be traced back

to the origins of culture (or it is the origin of culture): dance, theater, ritual performances and the like are long-standing ways of what Nietzsche in the Birth of the Tragedy referred to as the "original dramatic phenomenon: to see oneself transformed before one's eyes and now to act as if one really had entered another body, another character" (Nietzsche, 2000, p. 50). 20th century psychology, philosophy and anthropology made an increasingly strong case against the possibility of static, or even stable, experience of the self, as well as the undivided, closed-in understanding of the subject that has marked the modern era. Being human means being a human medium, always entering or exiting different states, being fluid rather than static. Without this media-nature of human beings, it is impossible to imagine mediating a conflict.

It is therefore only consequential that the methods of ECT proposed by Dietrich all draw on this medial dimension of being human: he groups them into breath-, voice-,and movement-oriented approaches, implicitly describing forms of human mediality. Techniques include "transformative theater work," "political constellations," the Japanese traditions of Butō and Aikido, breathing techniques, Ruth Cohn's theme-centered interaction and Marshall Rosenberg's non-violent communication. All of these techniques rely of humans to be fluid selves, to cross boundaries, to be their own media, and in being their own media, being able to mediate—a verb whose meaning then would be: transforming a conflict by virtue of being a medium, of "seeing oneself transformed."

Cybernetics has prepared an understanding of such a mediated and mediating sense of communicated and communicative self as crossing the boundary to the technological, viewing both human bodies and technological media as part of an information-processing system. From a cybernetic point of view, therefore, in as much as humans are considered as being inherently medial, they are always potentially technological media because the boundary between the two is constantly shifting as messages are communicated.

What this also means is that the medium as a category entirely separate from the human is at odds with the premises of ECT as theorized by Dietrich. As little as ECT can rely on a static self or an essential human nature, it can assume an insuperable division between biological and technological systems. In the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of the cyborg (for 'cybernetic organism') was key in a debate that sought to give a positive social meaning to this process of shaping the integration of the biological and the technological from a peace-oriented perspective, breaking the military's dominance in this field of research. Using a term coined by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline (Clynes & Kline, 1960), Chris Hables Gray (2002) and Dona Haraway (2000) reminded us of the simple fact that everyone who has been vaccinated is a cyborg, because his or her body no longer functions according to biological principles alone. But vaccines are often the result of a profit-driven, boxed system of patented expert knowledge, dominated by a patriarchal culture and government secrecy. By breaking these boxes, cyborgization was understood as a possible part of a peace-oriented, progressive cultural movement that embraced technology rather than avoiding it. Cyborgization was theorized by these authors as a cybernetic transformation that would transform society by working across what we could call, borrowing a word from gestalt therapy, the biology-technology contact boundary.

9. Elicitive Conflict Transformation and the Social Web

While ECT advocates work with forms of human mediality but seem to largely exclude non-human media, the very discipline that provides some of the main theoretical inputs for ECT, cybernetics, has developed a systemic way of thinking about communication that permeates the boundary between biological and technological processors of information. To not consider technological media as part of the communication processes on which ECT relies contradicts the very intentions of ECT. From a media-theoretical point of view, ECT inserts itself into evolution from centralized to de-centralized, from mass media to distributed networks, from one-to-many to many-to-many communication that allows it to elicit knowledge by pooling resources offered by users. However, this in itself does not necessarily make those media more conducive to building peace, nor does the possibility of propagandistic manipulation disappear, as Enzensberger hoped, when everyone becomes a manipulator.

Thus, when we look at current Web 2.0 media, we might at first look at a realization of the demands made by three generations of media activists, from Brecht in the 1920s to the alternative, social movement and activist media of the present: every receiver is also a sender, access to communication is easy, distributed and flexible networks replace powerful mass media. Indeed, we already seem to inhabit a media world where people "do no evil" (Google), and are engaged in constant process of turning strangers into "friends" (Facebook). Social media seem to at least define themselves as peace media of sorts.

But while the propagandists seem to have disappeared, and manipulation now is in everyone's hand, propaganda itself has not. When something is "trending" on Twitter, we might be looking at a social-media revenant of what the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in 1939 described as the "bandwagon:" "Everyone, at least all of *us*—is doing it" (Institute for Propaganda Analysis, 1979, p. 24). Ranking search displays by popularity—the most important component of Google's page rank algorithm—mirrors the "plain folks" technique identified by the Institute: an idea is good because it is

"of the people, the plain folks" (p. 24), and it would probably take little effort to identify social web equivalents of all the other propaganda techniques. The difference is that due to the distributed structure and the accessibility of the social web, these propagandistic elements appear to be the outcome of a 'democratic' process. Moreover, when looking at the peacebuilding potential of the social web, it must be remembered that social media have not just been hailed as the engines of positive social change, but simultaneously criticized as master tools of profit generation in an age of info-liberalism (Banning, 2016), applying a business model that supplies advertisers with user attention and user information.

How can social media can play this double role of being effective tools for social movements, and thus peacebuilding, while at the same time generating subjectivities that fall in line with the demands of the neoliberal model of info-capitalism? As far as the social web is concerned, peacebuilding and info-capitalism want the same thing: the growth in user numbers of Facebook, for example, increases the utility of the network for the individual user, providing social movements with an efficient communication channel and a means of mobilizing support. "Peace" and corporate profits then are become indistinguishable. Everyone is involved in "making the world a better place," or in "making a difference," to quote two popular items of a neoliberal vocabulary that makes peace redundant.

The neoliberal agenda, driving the political out of politics becomes indistinguishable from the peace that follows the win-win resolution of conflicts. What separates peace activists from shoppers, or peacebuilding NGOs from investment banks, can no longer be meaningfully expressed in environments where everyone is a friend. In fact, there is no need to express differences of a political nature at all, as Laswell's idea of obviating conflict, intended to avoid the violence of political extremism in the 1930s, seems to have come to a surprising and successful conclusion.

Contemporary social media represent a symbolic environment of relentless positivity. Byung-Chul Han (2010, 2013) has argued that the "digital swarm" and its sphere of boundless positivity and tireless promotional discourses creates its own violence: making it impossible to work with distinctions of negativity that are necessary to make a conversation politically meaningful, drying out the very intellectual and symbolic resources that are needed to effectively criticize violence in the first place. As a consequence, the media dominating the social web are creating a communication environment without an outside, what could be called "total communication." And in total communication, for lack of negative, limiting criteria, conflict can never be perceived as a political conflict because it can never be communicated in terms that allow the construction of a distinctly political meaning.

But just like ECT seeks to leave behind the idea that there should be a society or politics without conflict, any new medium that is to be a peace medium rather than an extension of liberalism into info-liberalism or neoliberalism, would need to make a symbolic repertoire available that allows negativity and is capable of communicating it.

I would characterize the social web therefore not as the peace medium of ECT but as an assemblage of neoliberal media that have succeeded in obviating conflict by generating an insistent positivity within which a potential political conflict exists only as a symbolic or economic exchange transaction that can only take place because it will immediately result in a reconciliation. In an anti-liberal, authoritarian setting, this distinction between a medium that helps build peace, and a neoliberal medium that is, after all, still liberal, might not be immediately apparent or even significant, and this is one way of understanding the undue importance assigned to social media in popular uprisings of recent years.

But as Byung-Chul Han (2011, 2013) has also pointed out, this sphere of boundless positivity and relentless promotion creates its own violence: making it impossible to work with distinctions of negativity that are necessary to make a conversation politically meaningful, drying out the very intellectual and symbolic resources that are needed to effectively criticize violence in the first place. As a consequence, the dominant social media have no way of limiting themselves, they create what could be called total communication. The transformation of conflict, in ECT inseparable from embracing conflict as an existential fact, is not possible there, while the win-win structure of these media is remains a solution that never knew a conflict.

10. Conclusion

Against the above reasoning, the purpose of new peace media in elicitive conflict transformation seems paradoxical: they must be able to communicate a kind of negativity that makes it possible to speak of losses in order to help find ways to reduce violence in a way that is meaningful and can be expressed in political terms.

This is where we must return to Schmitt (2007) (whose theory of irreconcilable opposition makes him an unlikely reference for either conflict resolution or conflict transformation). However, his critique of liberalism as a de-politicizing power seems is proving difficult to dismiss. Chantal Mouffe (2013) critically engages in with Schmitt's position in her own critique of the dominant model of liberal democracy, and when looking for the meaning technological media could have in ECT, this may be helpful starting point. According to Mouffe, "liberalism is unable to adequately envisage the pluralistic nature of the social world, with the conflicts that pluralism entails" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 3). But moving these conflicts from a struggle between ene-

mies to a struggle between adversaries is at the heart of her agonistic model of radical democracy. From this perspective, media that offer themselves as a resource for a politically meaningful yet non-violent discourse might therefore be potential new peace media. In keeping with the fundamental ideas of ECT, such media will look different in each specific conflict.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Samantha Ventrella for proofreading this manuscript.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 15-26
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.298

Article

"Likes" for Peace: Can Facebook Promote Dialogue in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict?

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Submitted: 19 April 2015 | Accepted: 5 October 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
This study examines the ways in which social media is used to promote intergroup dialogue and reconciliation in the context of the protracted, ethnopolitical conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. We focus on content analysis of posts and comments on a Facebook page named "Tweeting Arabs" which was established and is administered by Palestinian citizens of Israel. This page states that its' main goal is to publicize opinions, thoughts and beliefs of Palestinians, enabling the moderate voice to be heard and encouraging dialogue between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. The analysis is based on a data set containing posts and comments collected from "Tweeting Arabs" since the page was founded in November 8th 2014 and until December 4th 2014. This data set contains 85 posts which gained a total of 9657 "likes", and 461 "shares", as well as 3565 comments and replies to these posts. Our findings reveal that while posts that presented the narrative of Palestinian suffering were mostly followed by negative comments from Israeli-Jews, posts that brought up the Palestinian moderate and peace seeking voice elicited higher Jewish–Israeli acceptance and sympathy. The research adds to our understanding of Facebook as a dialogue provoking platform that enables users from different ethnopolitical groups in divided and conflicted societies to perform peacebuilding actions.

Keywords
contact theory; intergroup dialogue; narrative model; peacebuilding; reconciliation; social media

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

1. Introduction

Facebook serves as a main arena for public debate for Israelis, who are found to spend more time than any other nation on Facebook (McHugh, 2011; Mor, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Maoz, 2015). During the second week of April 2015, 61,493 new Facebook friendships were formed between Israelis and Palestinians.[1] And so, while remaining in a protracted ethnopolitical and intractable conflict which is perceived as irresolvable, Israeli-Jews and Palestinians interact on Facebook daily.

Intractable conflicts, such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, are a major force shaping the ethos and viewpoints of the societies involved (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2013; Bar-Tal, Rosen, & Nets-Zehngut, 2009; Kriesberg, 1998; Salomon, 2004). Intergroup dialogues are extensively used as mechanisms for reducing prejudice and improving relations between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. However, only limited research attention has been dedicated to online dialogues as venues for Israeli–Palestinian peacebuilding and reconciliation (see Ellis & Maoz, 2007; Hasler & Amichai-Hamburger, 2013; Walther, Hoter, Ganayem, & Shonfeld, 2014). Our study examines Facebook as a platform for promoting intergroup dialogues aimed at cooperation and reconciliation in the context of this protracted, ethnopolitical conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. It is based on a qualitative content analysis of posts and

[1] Peace.facebook.com

comments on a Facebook page named "Tweeting Arabs" which was founded and is administered by several Palestinian citizens of Israel. This page states that its main goal is to publicize opinions, thoughts and beliefs of Palestinians, enabling the moderate voice, seeking peace and justice, to be heard, and encouraging dialogue between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. In light of the frequent use of Facebook in Israel and the sizable amount of interactions that are conducted between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians through this platform, this study examines mechanisms through which the "Tweeting Arabs" Facebook page attempts to promote the expression of reconciliatory voices, draws the Jewish–Israeli public into dialogue and attempts to build intergroup solidarity and civil understanding between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians.

2. Theoretical Background

Maoz (2004) defines two main characteristics of the sociopolitical context of the conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians, which are particularly relevant to reconciliation-aimed dialogue and peacebuilding efforts between the two sides: 1. Relationships of conflict and aggression alongside coexistence and cooperation. 2. Inequality in which Israeli Jews have greater access to resources and influence over the culture, religion and language of the State. Thus, like other intergroup contact interventions conducted in settings of ethnopolitical conflicts, intergroup dialogue between Israeli Jews and Palestinians constitute a paradoxical project that aims to bring about open communication, equality and cooperation between two groups embedded in a deep-rooted reality of protracted conflict and asymmetry (Halabi, Sonnenschein, & Friedman, 2004; Maoz, 2000a, 2000b, 2004, 2009, 2011; Ron & Maoz, 2013a, 2013b; Suleiman, 2004a).

2.1. Intergroup Dialogue between Israeli Jews and Palestinians

Intergroup contact is commonly used as a device for grassroots level peacebuilding. Of all the interventions that have been designed for the reduction of intergroup bias and hostility, intergroup contact has seen the widest application and has been the one most commonly studied (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2011). The starting point for most theoretical reviews of intergroup contact is the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954), which assumes that intergroup contact is likely to reduce stereotypes under the following four conditions: 1. Equal status for the groups participating in the contact framework. 2. Contact based on common goals and on the existence of intergroup cooperation in order to achieve them. 3. Opportunities for personal acquaintance through close and long-term contact. 4. Social and institutional support for the intergroup contact. Other researchers have defined additional conditions for successful intergroup contact, such as a common language, voluntary participation, contact that is pleasant and beneficial, appropriate economic conditions, a not overly negative attitude toward the outgroup, etc. (Abu-Nimer, 1999; Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005, 2007; Pettigrew, 1998; Ron, Maoz, & Bekerman, 2010; Stephan & Stephan, 2001).

Most of the empirical studies that have examined the effect of intergroup contact on reducing prejudices have noted the success of contact that takes place under conditions specified by the original Contact Hypothesis, even in cases where not all of the conditions are fully met (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Maoz, 2000a, 2000b; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2011). At the same time, there has also been criticism of the limitations of the Contact Hypothesis regarding, among other things, the ability to sustain the contact effect also in situations of escalation of the intergroup conflict; and the ability of the contact model to deal effectively with interethnic tensions and asymmetric power relationships (Bekerman, 2002, 2009; Dixon et al., 2005, 2007; Maoz, 2000a, 2000b, 2011; Ron et al., 2010; Saguy & Dovidio, 2013; Suleiman, 2004a, 2004b).

In view of the limitations of the Contact Hypothesis, alternative approaches to intergroup contact have developed. Maoz (2011) differentiates between four contact models: the Coexistence Model focuses on interpersonal contact aimed at promoting understanding and tolerance and at reducing prejudice, with emphasis on what is similar and shared (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 2001). The Joint Projects Model is based on the assumption that a shared task which is directed toward achieving a common goal that is relevant to both sides will bring the sides closer together and create a shared superordinate identity (Campbell, 1965; Nadler, 2004; Sherif, 1966; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). The Confrontational Model emphasizes the conflict and the asymmetric power relations between the sides, focusing on group and national identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). Finally, the Narrative Model is based on story telling (Bar-On, 2006, 2009; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004), and on approaches that focus on promoting recognition and legitimization of the collective narrative of the other (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004; Bar-On, 2006, 2009; Bar-On & Adwan, 2006; Salomon, 2004).

2.2. The Narrative Model of Intergroup Dialogue

The Narrative Model is particularly relevant to this article's attempt to reveal mechanisms through which a social media platform promotes the expression of reconciliatory voices of Palestinians and exposes Israeli-Jews to these voices. The narrative approach to intergroup contact has begun to develop in the 1990's and

early 2000's against the background of increased attention to the centrality of narratives as an organizing feature of social and cultural life (Bruner, 2008; Hammack, 2009; Hammack & Pilecki, 2012) and to the importance of cognitive and affective intergroup processes such as the reduction of intergroup threat and empathizing with the suffering of the other (Stephan, 2008, 2014). The model is identified with the theoretical approach of intergroup reconciliation proposed by Salomon (2004), and to a greater extent—with the theory and practice offered by the late Israeli psychologist, Dan Bar-On (2006, 2008, 2009; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004).

Salomon (2004) claims that the collective narratives of groups in conflict and their implied delegitimization of the out-group's narrative should be the main target for change when promoting intergroup reconciliation. To this end he proposed an educational process focusing on the exposure, recognition and legitimization of the narrative of the other (Salomon, 2004). Bar-On's theoretical approach to encounter and dialogue between conflicting narratives relies on the assumption that in order to reach reconciliation, ethnic or national groups in protracted conflict must work through their unresolved anger and pain through story-telling. Encountering the experience and suffering of the other through story-telling is seen as enabling conflicting groups to create compassion and intergroup trust by re-humanizing and constructing a more complex image of each other (Bar-On, 2006, 2008, 2009; Maoz & Bar-On, 2002; Ron & Maoz, 2013a). It is argued that the exposure to multiple stories about the lives of others in the conflict has the potential to increase one's understanding of the complexities of one's own group on the one hand, and of the other group's personal and collective trajectories in the conflict on the other (Bar-On 2006, 2009; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004).

The narrative approach acknowledges the central role played by collective and personal narratives in maintaining protracted ethnopolitical conflicts, and hence, the need to cope with the deep-rooted narratives of conflict, and to expose each side to the narrative of the other through processes of intergroup dialogue. In a study that explores the effects of continuous long-term exposure to the contesting narrative of the outgroup in the context of the protracted conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, Ron and Maoz (2013a) point to the ways in which intergroup dialogue encounters enable the Jewish participants to better understand the narrative, the sufferings and emotions of their Palestinian counterparts, and to undergo a process of moral inclusion of the Palestinian other. This leads many of the Jewish participants to later take an active role in alternative frameworks of action, such as academic research, education for peace, and activism in civil society organizations.

The findings of Ron and Maoz point to the potential of intergroup dialogue to help cope with the negative role played by narratives in protracted ethnopolitical conflicts and to promote peacebuilding and intergroup reconciliation (2013a). Amichai-Hamburger and Mckenna (2006) point to the benefits of the Internet as a protected environment for users and as a medium for intergroup communication and contact. The purpose of the present study is to examine the ways in which social media may be used to promote reconciliation-aimed dialogue in general, and the narrative model of intergroup dialogue in particular, in the context of the protracted, ethnopolitical conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians.

2.3. Computer Mediated Dialogues in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

Due to the intractable conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians, and the severity of the violence and security issues it involves, face-to-face (FTF) contact between representatives of the two groups may be hard to arrange. Thus, computer mediated communication (CMC) may become a highly relevant alternative for conducting dialogue between the groups (Ellis & Maoz, 2007).

Both CMC and FTF communication have their advantages and disadvantages, yet CMC has lately become a highly important platform, paving the way for new social and communicative horizons. Online discussions can play an important role in constructing a public sphere in which the transformation and remaking of attitudes and practices can occur (de-Vries, Simri, & Maoz, 2015; Ellis & Maoz, 2007; Hasler & Amichai-Hamburger, 2013; Maoz & Ellis, 2006; Mor et. al., 2015; Walther et al., 2014). Facebook discussions are described in several studies as "Eco Chambers": as interactions that are conducted in homogenous clusters in which users interact with other like-minded users (see for example John & Dvir, 2015). Ellis and Maoz (2007) researched argument patterns in online group discussions between Jewish–Israeli and Palestinian youth. Their findings indicate that unlike in FTF intergroup discussions, Israeli–Jewish and Palestinian participants did not develop structured and complex arguments through CMC but rather exchanged unelaborated expressions of disagreement over points of view or over the right to have various points-of-view and tended to regress to a cycle of dead-end arguments.

Hasler and Amichai-Hamburger (2013) suggested in their review on online intergroup contact that further research should explore the extent to which there is a relationship between the discussed topics and the generation of a positive and cooperative intergroup interaction. Previous empirical research reveals that online interactions focusing on the topics of Jewish and Islamic religious practices or collaborative learning, generated a positive sphere for dialogue (Mollov, 2006). However, online interactions focusing on issues related to

the asymmetrical, ongoing political and social conflict did not decrease the hostility between the groups (Hasler & Amichai-Hamburger, 2013; Hoter, Shonfeld, & Ganayim, 2009; Walther et al., 2014). Our study continues this previous research and further explores the extent to which the topic of a discussion conducted through a Facebook page is associated with the nature of the intergroup dialogue that develops between Israeli Jews and Palestinians.

Facebook presents itself as a platform through which unexpected friendships occur. A unique Facebook feature called 'World of friends' displays the number of new Facebook friendships formed each week between Israelis and Palestinians.[2] According to these reports, during the second week of April 2015, 61,493 new Facebook friendships have formed between Israelis and Palestinians.[3]

Given this documented sizable volume of intergroup Facebook friendships it is important to further understand the factors that affect the extent to which these interactions, conducted in the context of an intractable protracted conflict, can be constructive and cooperative. Our study focuses on a Facebook page aimed at encouraging intergroup dialogue, and explores the ways in which this Facebook platform is used to promote reconciliation and peacebuilding between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians.

3. Method

3.1. Research Corpus

The analysis focuses on a Facebook page founded and administrated by Palestinian citizens of Israel in November 2014, under the name "Tweeting Arabs". The page's declared mission is to expose Israeli-Jews to Palestinian narratives and perspectives by publishing personal stories, peace-seeking expressions, mass-media criticism and more. Consequently, the page aims to attract as many Israeli–Jewish followers as possible in order to communicate the Palestinian narrative and enable an open dialogue. The posts published by the page admins are solely in Hebrew, and so are most of the discussions following these posts, in which both Israeli-Jews and Palestinians take part. The page is followed by approximately 7000 Facebook users[4].

The decision to focus on this particular Facebook page was based on an initial mapping of Facebook pages which host dialogue between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. Except for "Tweeting Arabs", all the Facebook pages we explored had 4,000 followers or less. Since the page "Tweeting Arabs" was significantly more popular than the other pages mapped, we chose to focus our study on this page.

We examined posts that were published between November 8th 2014 and December 4th of the same year, following the 2014 Israel–Gaza conflict (July–August 2014), and prior to the 2015 elections in Israel. Both events increased the tension between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians placing intergroup violence and prejudice in the center of the public debate in Israel, particularly on Facebook. The analysis is based on 85 posts that gained a total of 9657 "likes" and 461 "shares". The 3565 comments and replies that followed these posts are analyzed as well.

3.2. Method of Analysis

Our analysis is inspired by the Grounded Theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which emphasizes the construction of theories and concepts based on data that was gathered in the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In line with this paradigm (Berg, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) we conducted a horizontal reading of the Facebook page posts in order to identify relevant main themes. The units of analysis were the posts, including attached pictures, articles and texts. Several more readings led us to narrow down the number of themes identified in the first stage by merging similar categories and focusing on the ones that have been found common, interesting and relevant to our work. Finally, posts—together with the comments and replies that followed them—were categorized according to the themes. The two major themes derived from the analysis are presented in the following Findings section.

4. Findings

The section below presents two major themes that emerge from our analysis of the posts and related comments and responses that appeared on the "Tweeting Arabs" Facebook page.

4.1. Posts Presenting the Palestinian Narrative in the Conflict and Jewish–Israeli Responses

According to Ron and Maoz (2013a), exposure to the Palestinian narrative in the conflict may undermine Israeli-Jews' own narrative or even unsettle their identity and moral self-conception—resulting in expressions of sympathy, guilt and regret towards Palestinians. However, in our study we find that posts expressing the Palestinian perspective on the conflict provoked mostly negative comments from Israeli-Jews, including blaming the Palestinians for hypocrisy. A post published by the page admins on December 3, 2014, shows a picture

[2] Peace.facebook.com

[3] Peace.facebook.com

[4] Retrieved on April 2015 from https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D7%A2%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%9E%D7%A6%D7%99%D7%99%D7%A6%D7%99%D7%9D/984026594946799?sk=likes

of the IDF demolishing a Palestinian building in the West Bank, explaining that the demolition was done in order to expand an Israeli checkpoint. This post gained 50 "likes" and was followed by negative comments from Israeli-Jews such as the following:

> "Thank God. Any illegal building should be destroyed, especially when it concerns Israeli citizens' security. No one cries over the demolition of houses in Jewish settlements."

Moreover, several Israeli-Jews stated that buildings are being demolished in Egypt too; suggesting that showing only the damage done by the IDF is hypocritical:

> "Do you understand now why the Jews see the Palestinians and the world as hypocrites??? When you only focus on the Jews, it is called hypocrisy and anti-Semitism."

Another Israeli–Jew wrote in response to the same post:

> "There are other Arabs too. A very small minority that is loyal to the state. But to find them is like looking for a needle in a haystack."

These comments were followed by additional comments by one Israeli-Jew commenter containing links to Israeli–Jewish press coverage of violent incidents and terror attack attempts in which Palestinians have recently been involved.

Apparently, the exposure to the Palestinian point of view on the conflict and to the suffering of the Palestinians provoked antagonism among Israeli–Jewish commenters, and led them to suggest an alternative perspective on the described Israeli action (demolishing houses of Palestinians) that puts the blame on Palestinians. A more varied array of Jewish–Israeli responses was elicited by another post published by the Palestinian admins of "Tweeting Arabs" on November 26, 2014. This post brought a picture of children in Gaza walking in the rain to school and gained 227 "likes". The picture portrays young children walking through flooded roads due to the lack of infrastructure. The accompanying text says:

> "The way from the non-existing home to what used to be a school, winter in Gaza"

The comments to this post vary; some Israeli-Jews sympathized with the message, yet blamed the situation on Hamas and on those who voted for them:

> "Sad picture. Sad life. No hope, no dreams. Let's hope the parents and adults of these sweet children will go out to the streets in order to change the future for the next generation in Gaza."

Another comment by an Israeli–Jew stated:

> "Billions were raised for rebuilding Gaza, where did the money go?"

This comment was followed by a discussion in which Palestinians claimed that the money never made its way to Gaza. One of these commenters wrote:

> "It's not only sad my dear, it is shocking and horrifying and inconceivable. I have a family there and they've sent me a picture that is disappointing, troubling. No matter that she's Palestinian, no matter what you'll say, this picture runs shivers through your body. A woman, maybe 56 years old, drinking water from the road and it's not only sad, unfortunately, it's disheartening."

In some of the replies to this comment, Israeli-Jews showed sympathy:

> "I don't understand the comments here. Nobody mentioned Hamas or Israel, these kids are the victims of a war!!! Put politics aside and be human for a moment"

However, most Israeli–Jew commenters stated again that although the people of Gaza deserve better, they should turn against Hamas which is to blame for their situation. These commenters made one Palestinian commenter very upset:

> "Most of the comments here are inhuman!!! Thus I'm not surprised it makes normal people turn radical….Instead of reconciling you do the opposite and turn people away from you….These children aren't to blame for anything except being born there!!! And if it was the other way around and these were comments made by Palestinians you would curse them, calling them barbarians and animals….But you can see who is being a barbarian and inhuman….And everyone who commented here with cruelty is no different than Hamas."

The above quotes reveal that Israeli-Jews find it hard to accept the narrative of Palestinian pain and suffering and tend to respond negatively to Palestinian posts that express these themes. While a picture of a building being demolished by the IDF aroused mostly negative comments from Israeli-Jews, a picture of suffering Palestinian children did bring about some sympathetic Israeli–Jewish reactions. Nevertheless in both cases, some Israeli–Jew commenters perceived the expression of Palestinian suffering as an allocation of blame on Israel, resulting in defensive reactions. Apparently, unlike in previous research on dialogue groups conducted offline, when the dialogue takes place online, in

an open platform such as Facebook, the narrative of the Palestinian suffering may bring about sympathy from the Israeli–Jewish participants but may also cause antagonism and result in a clash of narratives and arguments between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians.

4.2. Responses Calling for Peace and Reconciliation: Palestinian Posts and Jewish–Israeli Responses

Another major theme that emerged from our analysis of posts and comments concerns a Palestinian attempt to display a contradicting message to the one commonly presented in the Israeli press: a message that brings the Palestinian voice supporting peace and condemning terror.

The protracted, ethnopolitical conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians is characterized by inequality in which Israeli-Jews have greater access to resources (Maoz, 2004). Within this context of asymmetric power relations, Wolfsfeld, Avraham and Aburaiya (2000) discuss the biased representation of Palestinian activism, protests and demands from the Israeli government in Israeli-Hebrew press. According to Wolfsfeld and his colleagues, the Israeli mass media tends to exaggerate threats of violence posed by protests, thus, instead of constituting a resource for minority groups and allowing social mobility, the press serves as an agent preventing such change (2000). Internet use may transform these dynamics and allow other voices to be heard (Castells, 2013; Loader & Mercea, 2011). The internet makes it easier to access large amounts of information from various sources (Hasler & Amichai-Hamburger, 2013). Specifically, Facebook proudly states that it connects people from all over the world even in unexpected places, announcing on new friendships that are created weekly through this platform between Israelis and Palestinians.[5] During the time of our study, there were several incidents in which Palestinians attacked or attempted to attack Israelis. These incidents were strongly condemned by the Palestinian page admins, as shown in a post they published on December 3, 2014, and that gained 110 "likes". The post relates to an incident of a Palestinian attacker who stabbed two Jewish citizens in a supermarket:

> "As long as we won't learn how to condemn all sorts of violence, including the attempt to attack the innocents in order to kill….As long as we won't be able to teach ourselves what is a legitimate struggle and what is a low and damned act of sabotage….Until then we will carry on suffering for losing our way and losing our moral compass."

Jewish Israeli responses to this post were often very positive. One response stated that incidents in which Jewish settlers stabbed Palestinians should be similarly condemned, and another stated that the Israeli response to the Palestinian stabbing was too violent and only contributed to the circle of bloodshed. On the other hand, one Israeli–Jewish user claimed that most of the "likes" on the post came from profiles of Israeli-Jews and thus the support for the Palestinian condemnation of the violent incident does not represent the majority of Palestinian citizens of Israel. Yet, the majority of Israeli-Jews' responses to this condemnation were positive, suggesting that generally, the message of Palestinians condemning terror was appealing to Israeli-Jews. For example:

> "What a Facebook page, pleasant to the eyes and to the heart….Keep it up! There is no other Facebook page like yours—full of peace and truth. I wish everyone would think the same—then our world would look much brighter."

In another post that was published by the page admins on November 27, and that gained 368 "likes", a photo of an IDF soldier dressing the wound of a Palestinian child was followed by the text:

> "The truth isn't always popular…sometimes the truth hides between the lines."

The responses to this post varied between positive and negative comments from both sides. The positive comments reflected appreciation for the soldier and his humanitarian act. For example, one Palestinian wrote:

> "Every person is partially good and partially bad. His being a soldier does not imply that he doesn't have a kind heart. He is just doing his job, nevertheless he is a very compassionate person. I really liked it"

Other comments—such as the one here below that was posted by an Israeli–Jew—blamed the press for the mutual hatred and emphasized that the people can live together in peace:

> "I don't feel any hatred towards Palestinians. A person is first of all a person and is to be judged according to his deeds. Leave the internet, the television, the poisoned news and come and make new Jewish friends. Maybe together we'll create a better future"

However, Some Israeli–Jewish and Palestinian users claimed that if it wasn't for the IDF activity in the territories, the child would never have gotten hurt in the first place. One Israeli–Jewish commenter wrote:

[5] Peace.facebook.com

> "It's only human…he shot a rubber bullet to the kid's head and now he's dressing his wound because the army of peace, 'Betzelem' (an Israeli peace organization, documenting the IDF activity in Gaza and the territories, Y.M.), is taking pictures nearby"

Yet, other Israeli-Jews commented that this child will grow up to be a terrorist and the soldier should not have saved him:

> "He'll grow up and become a terrorist"

It appears, thus, that the intergroup dialogue generated by the posts published on "Tweeting Arabs" enables the expression of different and diverse voices and opinions that include sympathy to the other side, criticism of one's own side as well as blaming the other side.

Another post that was published by the page admins on December 4, and gained 131 "likes" also elicited an array of responses that in this case did not include mutual blaming, but did include blaming the leadership on both sides. This post showed a banner with the words "The majority chose PEACE", coupled with this text:

> "To violence and racism I refuse, we should reconcile and come together, let's talk about peace and coexistence, words connect hearts….Far from contempt, only reasonable thoughts….It isn't hard to do….Eventually we'll find an answer….You have bought us with terror, but how much longer will we wait? Whoever dug a hole in the ground, will fall into it himself, me—I'm pure, I've praised the peace that will come. They said I'm drunk, it only strengthens my hope ☺"

The above post was followed by positive comments from both Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. Some asserted that while ending the conflict may not be an easy thing to do, it is possible, like this comment from an Israeli–Jewish user:

> "For a better life in the Middle East, we must have peace. And for those who claim that it's impossible—peace is made between enemies, not between friends."

Others blamed the leadership on both sides for not wanting peace, like this Palestinian user:

> "There will be no peace as long as the leaders from both sides make their profit out of war….Peace can come between the peasants maybe, those who live side by side….But the war will go on."

Interestingly, we find that the posts brought within our first theme, and that dealt with Palestinian suffering, led to discussions in which Israeli-Jews and Palestinians predominantly blamed one another for the situation. However, the posts brought within this second theme—that dealt with the Palestinian call for peace, elicited exchanges that were predominantly positive and a dialogue characterized by partnership and hope.

5. Discussion

Although intergroup contact and the role it plays in the reduction of prejudice and intergroup hostility is commonly studied (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2011; Stephan, 2008, 2014), relatively little research attention has been devoted to the ways in which social media can be used to promote dialogue and reconciliation between conflicting national or ethnic groups (Amichai-Hamburger & Mckenna, 2006; Ellis & Maoz, 2007; Hasler & Amichai-Hamburger, 2013). The current study examines intergroup dialogue conducted online in the context of the protracted, ethnopolitical conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians.

Our analysis of major themes, messages and responses that appeared in the Facebook page "Tweeting Arabs" revealed that while posts that presented the narrative of Palestinian suffering were mostly followed by negative comments from Israeli-Jews, posts that brought up the Palestinian moderate and peace seeking voice elicited higher Israeli–Jewish acceptance and sympathy.

More specifically, we found that the exposure to the Palestinian pain and suffering led to a predominantly negative intergroup exchange, characterized by mostly defensive Jewish–Israeli comments, suggesting that the fault for the suffering is of the Palestinians themselves and specifically of Hamas, for whom the Palestinian people voted in the governmental elections. On the other hand, the exposure to a moderate and peace seeking Palestinian voice facilitated a positive dialogue between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians, expressing hope, sympathy and acceptance. Here below we discuss these findings in light of relevant previous literature dealing with face-to-face and online intergroup contact and dialogue, while mostly focusing on the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

5.1. The Narrative Approach to Intergroup Dialogue and the Exposure to the Palestinian Perspective through a Facebook Page Dialogue

The narrative approach to intergroup dialogue in settings of protracted ethnopolitical conflict is based on the assumption that the exposure to multiple stories about the lives, the experiences and the suffering of the other in a conflict can enable conflicting groups to create intergroup trust and compassion by re-

humanizing and constructing a more complex image of each other (Bar-On, 2006, 2008, 2009; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Maoz & Bar-On, 2002). In a research program that explored the effects of exposure to the contesting narrative of the outgroup in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Ron and Maoz (2013a, 2013b; Ron et al., 2010) found that continuous involvement in intergroup face-to-face (off-line) dialogue-encounters enabled Jewish participants to better understand the narrative, the sufferings and emotions of their Palestinian counterparts, and to undergo a process of moral inclusion of the Palestinian other (Ron & Maoz, 2013a). These processes led to ideological changes (Ron et al., 2010) and to more complex attitudes toward the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Ron & Maoz, 2013b).

The picture that emerges from our findings regarding the Jewish−Palestinian dialogue conducted *online* through the platform of a Facebook page, is more ambiguous. In line with previous findings regarding face-to-face dialogues (Ron & Maoz, 2013b), the exposure of Jewish Israeli Facebook-users to moderate, conciliatory or self-critical posts written by Palestinians evoked positive and sympathetic responses. However, Facebook posts dealing with Palestinian pain and suffering elicited sympathy in some cases but mostly led to defensive and negative Jewish–Israeli responses and to discussions in which both groups blamed one another for the situation.

These findings seemingly contradict previous studies demonstrating the strength of the Narrative Model face-to-face dialogues in eliciting intergroup understanding and sympathy (Bar-On, 2006, 2008; Ron & Maoz, 2013a, 2013b). It should be noted, however, that the changes reported in the studies conducted by Ron and Maoz, for example, are attributed to the continuous and repeated involvement in dialogue-encounters over an extended period of time (Ron & Maoz, 2013a, 2013b; Ron et al., 2010). It seems that such long-term process of exposure to the dialogue interaction and to the narrative of the Palestinian other, does not take place in the case examined in our present study.

5.2. Dialogue as Process

Qualitative studies addressing processes and interactions as they occur in face-to-face intergroup dialogue encounters, point to a complex and gradual process that takes place in these encounters. Maoz, Bar-On and their colleagues reveal the difficulties and challenges that are encountered in some of the sensitive dialogue processes between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians, and characterize these processes as ranging from "good enough" successful dialogues, to explosive, destructive ones, in which the difficulties are not successfully dealt with through the continuous intergroup dialogue (Maoz, Bar-On, Bekerman, & Jaber-Massarwa, 2004; Maoz, Bar-On & Yikya, 2007). Steinberg and Bar-On (2002) describe the gradual process of dialogue and relationship building that occurs in face-to-face encounters between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. This process typically begins with "Ethnocentric talk" in which the participants use argumentation, do not share their feelings, and in which the discussion tends to be based on simplistic perceptions of self and other; and gradually moves to "Dialogic moments", characterized by sharing feelings with others, listening and reacting in a non-judgmental way and trying to understand the other's point of view. The predominantly negative and defensive Israeli–Jewish response to expressions of Palestinian suffering in the conflict can be attributed to the lack of long-term process of dialogue and relationship building in the studied case of a dialogue conducted through the online platform of a Facebook page.

5.3. Facebook Page as a Platform for Dialogues in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

Facebook differs from other platforms for online dialogue in several ways. Unlike other online platforms, Facebook is a public arena with public-sphere characteristics in which the participants are not anonymous. Examining Facebook in Israel is highly important since Israelis are the heaviest internet users in the world and spend more time on Facebook than any other nation, thus rendering Facebook as a main arena for public debate (Karniel & Lavie-Dinur, 2012; McHugh, 2011; Mor et. al., 2015).

Our study explored Israeli-Jews' reactions to two different topics that were discussed in the Facebook page posts presenting the Palestinian narrative and perspectives in the conflict: Palestinians' descriptions of their suffering in the conflict and Palestinians' call for peace and reconciliation. In line with the findings of Mollov (2006) and Hoter et al. (2009), our findings indicate that while exposure to Palestinian' descriptions of their suffering generally generated negative reactions from Israeli-Jews, exposure to Palestinians' call for peace generated predominantly positive reactions from the Israeli–Jewish commenters and enabled a dialogue characterized by partnership and hope. Thus our study indicates that when analyzing dead-end online intergroup dialogues such as the one documented by Ellis and Maoz (2007), it is important to take into account the nature of the topic discussed, together with the features of the online platform.

These finding are highly significant. In line with previous studies regarding both face-to-face dialogue as well as online dialogue between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians (Hasler & Amichai-Hamburger, 2013; Maoz, 2000a, 2000b, 2011), our study points to the major role the topic of discussion may play in enabling cooperative dialogues between groups in protracted ethnopolitical conflicts.

Our findings suggest that Facebook can indeed serve as a platform that enables intergroup dialogue in the context of the intractable conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Facebook is an open arena for discussions, on which participants from different ethnopolitical groups in a conflicted society can share ideas, opinions and reactions (Mor et. al., 2015) and engage in peacebuilding activities. With approximately 7000 followers, that include both Israeli-Jews and Palestinians that hold diverse opinions and take part in the discussions voluntarily, "Tweeting Arabs", as well as similar Facebook pages and groups, can support and facilitate reconciliation aimed dialogue between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians.

5.4. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the importance of our findings to the understanding of Facebook as a dialogue facilitating platform that enables users from different ethnopolitical groups in divided and conflicted societies to perform peacebuilding actions, this study also has certain limitations. First, the research is based on data that were collected from one specific Facebook page and during a limited period of one month. Further research should examine data from several relevant Facebook pages and over an extended period of time in order to enable broader generalizations regarding the dynamics of peacebuilding through Facebook. Furthermore, although Facebook does make it easier for Israeli-Jews and Palestinians to communicate, it is important to also keep in mind those who are excluded from such dialogue due to language difficulties and lack of access to technology. Therefore, our findings cannot be automatically generalized to the entire Israeli Jewish and Palestinian population. It is thus important to also continue exploring alternative and potentially more inclusive platforms for intergroup contact aimed at peacebuilding.

6. Conclusion

It seems that at least in their current form online dialogues that take place on Facebook pages such as "Tweeting Arabs" lack the continuity that enables the dynamic development and building of intergroup relationship that characterizes some of the face-to-face dialogue encounters conducted offline (Ellis & Maoz, 2007). Given the potentially non-continuous nature of intergroup communication through posts and comments published on the platform of a Facebook page, it may be worthwhile to consider adjusting the model of dialogue implemented online to the features and limitations of these types of interactions. The findings of our study indicate that *the Coexistence Model of dialogue* which focuses on promoting understanding and tolerance and emphasizes intergroup commonalities (Maoz, 2011), might be more effective as a model for an online peacebuilding dialogues than other, more complex approaches to intergroup dialogue such as *the Confrontational* or *the Narrative approach* (Maoz, 2011). These findings, thus, enable us to engage in careful optimism regarding the potential for a constructive, peacebuilding intergroup dialogue through social media platforms in settings of protracted ethnopolitical conflicts.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the late Professor Gavriel Salomon, who dedicated much of his life work to the study and promotion of peace education. This article is inspired by his work and dedicated to his memory.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 27-38
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.390

Article

Fields and Facebook: *Ta'ayush*'s Grassroots Activism and Archiving the Peace that Will Have Come in Israel/Palestine

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Submitted: 7 July 2015 | Accepted: 23 November 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
Israeli peace activism has increasingly taken place on new media, as in the case of the grassroots anti-Occupation group, *Ta'ayush*. What is the significance of *Ta'ayush*'s work on the ground and online for peace? This article considers the former in the light of social movement scholarship on peacebuilding, and the latter in light of new media scholarship on social movements. Each of those approaches suggest that *Ta'ayush* has very limited success in achieving its strategic goals or generating outrage about the Occupation in the virtual/public sphere. Yet, *Ta'ayush's* apparent "failure" according to standard criteria of success misses the significance of *Ta'ayush'*s work. Its combination of grassroots activism and online documentation of its work in confronting the Occupation in partnership with Palestinians has assembled an impressive archive. Through the lens of Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, *Ta'ayush* can be seen to enact a "future perfect" peace that will have come.

Keywords
archive; Israel; media activism; new media; Palestine; peace activism; social media; *Ta'ayush*; Umm el-Arayes; Walter Benjamin

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

1. Introduction: A Small Incident in the South Hebron Hills

On the YouTube channel of guybo111 there is a 47 second video (guybo111, 2013a). The clip shows a melee of Israeli soldiers, activists and locals. Above the noise an activist can be heard shouting in Hebrew to one soldier, "You're kicking a girl!" to another who is grabbing a boy "Leave the boy alone!", and to another who approaches him as he films "leave the camera alone and calm down." As of June 28th 2015, the video had attracted 2961 views, 4 likes, 4 dislikes, and 4 shares. A separate video (guybo111, 2013b) lasting 42 seconds, shows in slow motion a woman activist being attacked by a settler who grabs her camera and smashes it, amid much shouting. This video was posted on November 23rd 2013 to the Facebook page of Guy Butavia, who is an activist in *Ta'ayush*, a grassroots group of "Israelis & Palestinians striving together to end the Israeli occupation and to achieve full civil equality through daily non-violent direct-action" (*Ta'ayush*, 2015a). The four line Hebrew text on the post protests that settlers grabbed and smashed an activist's camera while Israeli soldiers looked on, and then arrested her and another activist, along with 5 Palestinians. The English text reads: "*Ta'ayush* activist been attacked and her camera smashed by settlers 23 11 2013", and contains the hyperlink to the video. The video posting has 19 likes and 24 shares.

Both videos of this routinely violent incident, one of many that characterize and sustain the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank, can also be found in a report of the day's activities on *Ta'ayush*'s website (*Ta'ayush*, 2013a). The text (which is translated from Hebrew into English) explains that preceding the recorded incident Palestinian children of families on whose land the doubly illegal (in international as well as Israeli law) outpost of Mitzpe Yair had been attacked by the settlers. The children had approached hothouses built by settlers and scheduled for demolition by order of the Is-

raeli High Court. The report continues in indignant tone to add that the soldiers present did not intervene for about twenty minutes, during which some of the Palestinians were injured and the activist's camera broken. Then the soldiers began enforcing a "closed military area" order, roughly arresting two Israeli activists and 15 of the Palestinians (including children), most of who were blindfolded and bound, and some of whom were beaten while under arrest. 10 minors were released on the spot, 2 activists and 5 Palestinians (the landowner and 4 children) were taken to the Israeli police station, from which the activists, who agreed to a restriction order, were released after 2 hours and the Palestinians after 2 days, on payment of bail.

What is the significance of this new media activity for peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine? I will consider several interrelated issues. What is the relationship between the grassroots solidarity activism of *Ta'ayush* and their presence on the Internet and social media? How should we understand the online practices of documentation of activism, public exposure of violence by soldiers and settlers, and expressions of outrage about the Occupation? Social movement scholarship, particularly the branch of it that intersects with new (or social) media studies, offers some instructive answers to those questions, which are outlined in what follows. Yet those answers miss the full significance of *Ta'ayush*'s online presence, especially its website, which, through the lens of Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, appears as an archive of both the Occupation and of its activities in the "future perfect", prefiguring a time in which the work of the activists will have become recuperated by the practice of peace as partnership. "A future of equality, justice and peace begins today, between us, through concrete, daily actions of solidarity to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories" (*Ta'ayush*, 2015a).

2. *Ta'ayush* and Anti-Occupation Activism

Ta'ayush is one of several new activist groups that formed following the October 2000 events that mark the involvement of Palestinian Israelis in the second intifada. The peace camp has changed post-2000: it is more internationalized than previously; more prone to identify with Palestinians and to act in close cooperation with them; more likely to be characterized by nonviolent direct action; and ironically it is operating in an atmosphere in which the very term 'peace' has been discredited, such that activists often see themselves struggling *against* occupation or for human rights, justice, or such like, and not *for* peace (Fleischman, 2012; Hallward, 2011; Lamarche, 2009). As my interviewee from *Ta'ayush* said, "we've lost the discourse of peace".[1] An additional way in which activism has changed since 2000 is that the groups have a significant presence on the Internet, through websites and more recently on social media. Hence, the site or public sphere in which peace activism occurs has changed to include not only the "public screen" (DeLuca & Peebles, 2002) but also the "public/virtual sphere" (Goldberg, 2010).

In place of an overt ideology the group has a "doctrine of a working modality", according to which '*Ta'ayush*' expressly means not coexistence but "partnership" or "living in common" (coexistence is a discredited term in this sector of the peace camp, especially for the Palestinians) (Zackem & Halevi, 2004). *Ta'ayush* have no declared position on a preferred political settlement although, according to one document, in early 2002 *Ta'ayush* activists were committed to a return to the 1967 borders and a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue (Hermann, 2009, p. 193). Rather, the group is open to whoever wishes to participate in its activities. For several years it could count on a few hundred activists each week from around the country, but now is reduced to a single branch in Jerusalem with a couple of dozen regulars. As it is not an NGO, it depends on volunteers and has few resources, being funded by its members to cover some of the costs of the weekly activities, as well as supporters in Israel and beyond. Significantly, this small group currently includes no Palestinian Israeli activists, in contrast to the early years when their presence made *Ta'ayush* quite distinct in its social make-up compared to most other Israel peace or anti-Occupation activists.

Ta'ayush became known for its convoys of water, food and other supplies into the West Bank at a time when it was quite cut off because of the second *intifada* (Badawi, 2005; Hallward, 2011). Another notable campaign assisted the return of the villagers of Yanoun after they temporarily abandoned it under intense harassment by the settlers of Itamar in October 2002. By 2004–2005 the group's attention was focused on the separation wall, which involved many demonstrations and the pursuit of claims in the courts (Hallward, 2011; Shulman, 2007; Zackem & Halevi, 2004). *Ta'ayush* developed a repertoire of concrete solidarity activities to support Palestinian farmers who faced restrictions on access to their land or harassment by the military or settlers: olive and other crop harvesting, accompanying shepherds, ploughing fields, clearing out buried wells and cave homes, making paths and roads, and so on. It is this sort of activity that continues today in the group's focus on supporting the villagers of the South Hebron Hills area. Early every Saturday morning a handful of Israeli and international activists leave Jerusalem to join with Palestinians in confronting regular, routine violence—denial of access to land, dispersal of flocks, destruction of buildings and arrests, beatings, and so on. They enjoy occasional successes—a ploughed field, a lamb being born, a settler attack de-

[1] Ta'ayush activist interview, Jerusalem, 11/12/2012.

terred, the release of an arrested activist or Palestinian—all of which add up to significant outcomes in *Ta'ayush*'s area of activity. Even if it does not quite constitute "living in common", the activity on the ground still brings Israelis and Palestinians together in the partnership that is the best encapsulation of *Ta'ayush*'s image of peace, which is performed through the direct action and forged in a common language of activism (Badawi, 2005: Hallward, 2011; Sporen, 2001). Their "vision of peace is in what they do" (Hallward, 2011, p. 193), and their concept of peace is in their activity.[2]

However, *Ta'ayush*'s intended equal partnership has not been performed so convincingly within *Ta'ayush* (out of the public eye), according to previous research. Certainly, activists did speak publicly of democratic, egalitarian, consensual decision-making, the avoidance of patronizing attitudes, and the formation of a collective identity (Badawi, 2005; Sporen, 2001; Zackem & Halevi, 2004). Yet, the group had no magic formula for dealing with the common problem of trying to practice equality in the face of structural social inequality (Hallward, 2011). It was like trying to live "an egalitarian heterosexual relationship" (Hermann, 2009, p. 195). The group did not develop practices to address the related patterns of unequal power relations between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, and Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, whose membership fell (Hallward, 2011; Sivan, 2010). There was an exodus from *Ta'ayush* in October 2006 to establish a new group, *Tarabut/Hitchabrut*, with a more "domestic" agenda that tries to coordinate socioeconomic struggles within Israel with anti-Occupation activism (Sadovsky, 2007). Other activists became more focused on sustained activity against the separation wall.[3] As Atalia Omer (2013) observes, in the absence of a discourse of just peace that integrates the subaltern voices of the victims of Euro-Zionism (Israeli Palestinians and Mizrahim), into new, Middle Eastern versions of Judaism and Israeli Jewish identity, the Israeli peace movement suffers from conceptual blindness.

The group has in effect narrowed its purpose to blocking one aspect of the Occupation by enabling the villagers of the South Hebron Hills to remain in place and farm their land, though their overall goal is to end the occupation.[4] *Ta'ayush* is part of a networked campaign of Palestinian, Israeli and international activism with local goals, such as to prevent the expulsion of Palestinians from what the Israeli Occupation authorities define as Firing Zone 918 (Schaeffer Omer-Man, 2013). Other groups with which *Ta'ayush* networks include *MachsomWatch*, *Rabbis for Human Rights* (especially for legal representation), *Breaking the Silence*, *Combatants for Peace*, and *Settlement Watch* (for information about the illegal settlements that harass Palestinians and seize land). In addition, members of *Ta'ayush* are often active in one or more other groups, such as *Free Jerusalem Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity* and *Anarchists Against The Wall*. The small group now functions with little internal discussion, as there is agreement about the sort of activity in which it engages. Coordination of weekly activities—decisions about which sites need how many activists to accompany and work with Palestinians—are made on the day by experienced members. The ongoing issues that do invite discussion—often via email to which I do not have access—are about whether *Ta'ayush*'s work has become too humanitarian rather than political, too close to "normalization" which brings Palestinians and Israelis together in co-existence rather than in co-resistance to all forms of oppression of Palestinians (Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, 2011). Prior periods of intense discussion, such as about whether the separation wall be opposed altogether or whether it should be resisted only insofar as it diverged from the Green Line (the pre-1967 war ceasefire line), had been fractious.

Partnership with Palestinians consists in coordination at three levels: the heads of local council or mayors who mostly confirm that joint activity is not normalization, local popular committees, and individual farmers who contact *Ta'ayush* directly to ask for support. On the ground, during joint solidarity activities, the local Palestinians decide how far to take resistance each day (such as opposing a "closed military zone" order by being arrested) but as in all issues partnership also involves the Israeli activists expressing their opinions. At the same time, *Ta'ayush* is committed to non-violent direct action so they only work with Palestinians who accept that, even if they do so for pragmatic rather than principled reasons. Also typical of such radical direct-action oriented groups, within this network *Ta'ayush* find themselves in the usual dilemma that they recognize as such, namely legitimizing the Occupation by using its judicial affordances to constrain it (waving sheaves of rulings and regulations in the faces of commanders on the ground), while in principle rejecting the injustices of the occupation as a legal system (Lamarche, 2009).[5]

Historically and currently, *Ta'ayush* meets some of the generally recognized criteria of a peacebuilding organization as understood in the confluence of social and peace studies. It engages in the transformation and construction of relationships and partnership processes, awareness raising about the Occupation and human rights abuses, and constructive, non-violent confrontation with the Occupation authorities and settlers (Hallward, 2011). It practices active, sustained partnership, and challenges "socio-political power ar-

[2] Activist interview.

[3] Activist interview.

[4] Activist interview.

[5] Activist interview.

rangements between Israeli troops and unarmed protestors" (Hallward, 2011, p. 98) and between the Israeli "civilian" (settler) population and Palestinian citizens. *Ta'ayush*'s partnership with West Bank Palestinians is a challenge to the national solidarity of Jewish Israelis propounded and practiced by the Zionist mainstream, especially when they confront the Israeli military. Such confrontation and antagonism to the mainstream is inevitable when the mainstream flows against anything recognizable as "transformative peace", or "just peace", as is the case in Israel. To *not* confront would not be "peaceful" but mean settling for the current status quo of "no peace, no war" under which Occupation thrives.

Equally significant in Hallward's analysis of contemporary peace activism are *Ta'ayush*'s moves towards reconstitution of boundary identities constructed through narratives of conflict, by engaging in "contentious performances" that challenge those boundaries (Hallward, 2011, p. 21). Literally, the group mixes Jewish Israelis with West Bank Palestinians on the ground, but at the same time they treat the Green Line as a boundary between nationally-defined areas, thereby maintaining distinct identities. It is also important for the *Ta'ayush* activists to be acknowledged as Israelis, even when their Palestinian partners might prefer to identify them as internationals.[6] There is only so far that *Ta'ayush* goes toward transforming the structural violence that undergirds the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and the Occupation in particular. They cross the boundaries of conflictual identities only to some extent. They consider themselves to be an "Arab-Jewish" partnership which, as Omer (2013) points out, means that they implicitly rule out the category of Arab Jews, and thus do not challenge the Orientalist, ethnocentric character of "Euro-Zionism" in which Mizrahi Jews as well as Palestinian Arabs are subjected to Ashkenazi dominance. The Occupation endures, and the peace of Israeli-Palestinian partnership seems elusive. Hallward concludes by observing "the inadequacy of such efforts when conducted on a small scale absent an overall strategy for undermining the regime's 'pillars of support'" (Hallward, 2011, p. 104). Yet one must ask: what is the ethical position of the social movement scholar who judges activism to be "inadequate"? Inadequate in relation to what? Such a judgment assumes an instrumentalist notion of activism that serves a purpose in a "progressive" theory of history. Walter Benjamin proposes a different theory of history through which the significance of activism is not revealed by relating the present to the future, but to the promise encountered in the past. I will turn to Benjamin following the next section of the essay.

3. *Ta'ayush* as Media Activism

If *Ta'ayush*'s grassroots activism is not enough, does its online presence (which is not covered by Hallward) give us a brighter picture of its peacebuilding efforts? Scholarship on social movements and new, social media suggests that online activism might well contribute significantly to its peacebuilding activities of constructing relationships and processes of partnership, raising awareness of Occupation and human rights abuses, and constructive, non-violent confrontation with the Occupation authorities and settlers. Gamson and Wolsfeld (1993) argued that social movements "need news media for three major purposes: mobilization, validation and scope enlargement" (p. 116), each of which has changed and become more complex with the advent of new media (Tufecki, 2013). Using Facebook and YouTube as low-cost means to mobilize members is significant for large movements, but less so for small groups such as *Ta'ayush*, whose activity is also exposed to audiences hostile to its work. New media afford activists wider reach to recruit new members and disseminate their work, especially when such dissemination goes viral. Yet, enlargement of scope is constrained by the degree of external validation, or legitimacy. New media give activists the chance to bypass traditional news media that act as the gatekeepers of hegemonic, legitimate public action. Yet this does not mean that publics who have access to new media consider counter-hegemonic activism to be valid, a point which is all too pertinent for anti-occupation work in the eyes of Jewish-Israeli publics. In the light of some scholarship about social movements and new media, I will consider the possibility that online presence boosts the grassroots activism of *Ta'ayush* in relation to three interrelated issues: (1) online activism as a complement to the practice of partnership on the ground; (2) social media as widely shared public expression of moral outrage about the Occupation; (3) online presence as providing access for marginalized voices to document the Occupation.

Paolo Gerbaudo (2012) considers social media primarily as a "means…to *choreograph* collective action [through]…symbolic construction of public space which facilitates and guides physical *assembling*" (p. 5), which entails the interaction of "mediated communication and physical gatherings" (p. 2). Especially promising is the "personal character of social media and their everyday use as a means of maintaining diffuse spheres of friendship" to construct a "sense of togetherness" (p. 14). Manuel Castells (2012) credits Internet networks with the creation of "togetherness" (p. 225) and facilitating "a form of shared practice" (p. 227), but only insofar as "the social movement is constructed as a hybrid space between the Internet social networks and the occupied urban space" (p. 11). According to Zizi Papacharissi (2015), online storytelling generates affective attachments that do not actually create communities among those not participating directly, but do produce "feelings of community" (p. 9), however fleeting,

[6] Activist interview.

which may "support connective but not necessarily collective action" (p. 128). New media also facilitate the sustenance of shared identity and community within groups as they can frame their activities according to their own anti-hegemonic political discourse (unlike in mass media). Yet, such internal focus can come at the cost of "homophilious sorting", meaning that only those within the activist community's frame of mind participate in a form of online partnership (Tufecki, 2013). To sum up, social media could be a space in which *Ta'ayush* practice Palestinian-Israeli partnership as a complement to their grassroots activism (which is concentrated on one day per week). It might also be a space in which *Ta'ayush* share their sense of partnership with a broader public, thereby increasing awareness and possibly recruiting more activists. Or not.

Gerbaudo (2012) argues that social media can serve as "emotional conduits" which bring together "individual sentiments of indignation, anger, pride, and a sense of shared victimhood and transform them into political passions" (p. 14). Manuel Castells (2012) also holds that social movements (whether online or not) "require an emotional mobilization triggered by outrage against blatant injustice" (p. 220) and that Internet networks facilitate the contagious, "viral character of the diffusion of messages" (p. 224). "Multimodal, digital networks are an "effective communication channel" in which people can identify with the anger of others and "transform their anger into action" (p. 15). Papacharissi (2015) focuses on the affective character of social media: "affective publics" are "networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment" (p. 125). Affective intensity and civic engagement can take the form of liking a post on Facebook, and "structures of feeling" develop around the circulation of YouTube videos (p. 116). Through new media's particular forms of storytelling people can feel their way into politics as they share and immerse themselves in hybrid streams of facts and opinion. Networked publics involve "a generalized expression of indignation, discontent, or disagreement with…regimes" (p. 119). Although Jewish Israelis and Palestinians are by no means victims of the Occupation in the same way, *Ta'ayush*'s activists share moral anger and outrage about the Occupation as they engage in committed and arduous political action in their solidarity with Palestinian farmers and villagers. Such indignation could be communicated to a connected, affective public who like and share the group's postings on social media. Yet, such indignation may remain the currency of a small counter-public who frame the Israeli occupation in terms of injustice rather than according to the hegemonic framing of security.

Given that *Ta'ayush* faces an uphill struggle for validation in the Israeli public sphere, do social media afford an enlargement of scope? Gerbaudo (2012) mentions that new media are significant for social movements as a means of representing the group, eliciting external attention, and as citizen journalism. Papacharissi (2015) points to the online media's ability to give voice to marginalized voices, thereby pluralizing the public sphere. Castells (2012) emphasizes the autonomy of communication through social networks that have immense reach and speed, although Gerbaudo's (2012) observation that social media have replaced the self-managed Internet of the anti-globalization movement should remind us that there is a pay-off between operating in corporate, algorithmically structured social media geared towards the monetization of attention, and their capacity to reach people globally and instantly (Goldberg, 2010). Through activity in the online public sphere, *Ta'ayush* also practices citizen journalism that documents not only its own activities but, as in the example with which this essay opens, the actions of the Occupation regime it wishes to bring to an end. Yet it is not the most obvious new media outlet to turn to for such reporting, in contrast to the human rights group *B'Tselem*. The documenting of violence by *Ta'ayush*, whether routine or exceptional, is an expression of outrage. Public exposure of violence is a form of activism in itself, one that contributes to the archiving not only of Occupation, but also of the peace, the partnership, that will have come.

What characterizes *Ta'ayush*'s online presence? On *Ta'ayush*'s Facebook page (created on October 31st 2009, and as of July 1st 2015, showing 4,280 "likes"), there are posts (roughly one per day) about the group's activities and campaigns. There are also many reports and announcements of activities from similar anti-occupation grassroots groups and news items that are reposted, all of which may be in Hebrew or English, or a mixture. The Facebook page is linked to a Twitter account, set up on August 8th 2009, which had 2,422 followers and 2,844 Tweets by July 1st 2015, which link back to the posts on Facebook, rather than being "real time" updates as activities occur. Videos of activities are mostly hosted on activist Guy Butavia's YouTube channel, guybo111, which (as of July 1st 2015) had 1,058 subscribers, hosts 812 videos, (many of which are of *Ta'ayush* activities) and has attracted 1,463,345 views in total since November 28th, 2007. That relatively large figure indicates the significance of persistent media activity, rather than focusing on the occasional viral success.

There are not Facebook posts for each weekly activity, and hence not an accumulative chronicle of the group's work on this platform. Often when there is a report (as on April 26th 2013) there is an album of photos without captions, in this case 17 of them, and it is hard to figure out what happened without a good deal of local knowledge. The post shows 9 likes, one share, and no comments, with the shares coming from a mixture of locals (with Hebrew and Arabic names) and internationals. Those numbers are not untypical, sug-

gesting that *Ta'ayush* is part of a small homophilous network.

The report for the activity on June 15th 2013 is a 2:28 minute video titled (in English) "Settler from Otniel attacking shepherds flocks and activists 15.6.2013" in a post which reads (in Hebrew): "Today, on the land of Umm el Ammad adjoining Otniel. A settler armed with a pistol trespasses on private Palestinian land, attacks a shepherd and activists and threatens to expel the flock. All this happens in open view of the soldiers who don't stop him and in the end shake his hand." The post has 10 likes and 3 shares, while the video had 1,131 views as of June 28th 2015. The video shows a good example of *Ta'ayush*'s work: the activists try to put themselves between the settler (who does not speak to them) and the flock, demand that he stop, and call on the soldiers to get him off the land. The video documents the settler's aggression, his cursing and pushing of the Palestinian shepherd who challenges him verbally, and the soldiers' indulgence of his actions before gently escorting him away. Although there is a title at the end in English asking for donations, the dialogue in the clip is in Hebrew and Arabic. In general, *Ta'ayush*'s Facebook posts about activities offer little by the way of contextualization and are frequently sparse with words, allowing the pictures to do the talking.

Ta'ayush (2015b) also maintains a website (updated in 2009) with Hebrew and English, but not Arabic versions. The home page includes an activity spotlight and links to sign up for alerts, get involved with the grassroots activity, donate, and follow *Ta'ayush* on Facebook and Twitter. There is significant variation of content in the Hebrew and English pages, which seems to depend on who wrote it rather than any significant difference in emphasis or focus. The pages are accessed through the usual banners at the top of each page, about pressing issues, activity spotlights, activities, issue and facts. The banner at the top of each page includes the logo (*Ta'ayush* written in Hebrew, English and Arabic, as well as the phrase "Arab–Jewish partnership") and a short description of the group: "Israelis and Palestinians striving together to end the Israeli occupation and to achieve full civil equality through daily non-violent direct-action" with "since 2000" appended in the Hebrew version. Each of the pages linked to the home page generally feature blog-style reports on activities, with longer pieces from other media, groups or individuals in the "background material" section. Through the activities page one can access an archive of activities organized by year, according to type of activity (agricultural, aid and solidarity, information, protests), and by location, each of which is further subdivided. I will return to this archive below.

To return to the three categories of online presence outlined above, *Ta'ayush*'s activity in the hybrid space of the electronic public sphere is perhaps more of a supplement than a complement to its grassroots work. The Facebook page does share some partnership with a very limited circle of followers by reporting on ways in which those in the know, such as regular activists who could not participate one week or previous local or international activists, get a sense of what went on and are affirmed in their commitment to the group. Anyone who is somewhat familiar with *Ta'ayush* is likely to understand from the photo album of the April 26th 2013 activity that soldiers blocked the local Palestinians from grazing on their land, that the *Ta'ayush* activists documented it (and probably argued with the soldiers), and that on this occasion the settler who is seen in one photo remained at a distance. Just another Saturday in the South Hebron Hills, just the routine, militarily-enforced denial of agricultural livelihood and access to land. But the Facebook page does not coordinate activity between activists or with Palestinians, which is done by activists visiting locals and by (smart)phone. It does situate the group in a network of other groups whose posts are shared on *Ta'ayush*'s page, but does not facilitate connective action with a broader public or serve for recruitment of new members. The group initially developed on the basis of personal contacts, between some Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis, and more recently when an effort was made to increase the number of activists, it was on the basis of personal networks.[7] *Ta'ayush*'s website would also be a pathway to learning more about *Ta'ayush* and anti-Occupation activism, but as such it does not build connective community.

One could conceive of an online, ongoing conversation between the activists and their Palestinian partners that complemented partnership on the ground with a shared practice of togetherness online. But it would have to overcome the language barrier (between Hebrew and Arabic) and something of a digital and social divide between the mostly urban and middle-class Israelis and the mostly rural Palestinians, and would require resources that the group simply does not have. It would need to remain a conversation about activities and the ongoing situation of Occupation rather than becoming a dialogue for dialogue's sake, a model of "coexistence" which has been discredited for failing to acknowledge power asymmetries between Israelis and Palestinians that must be addressed by political transformation (Kampf, 2012). Moreover, emphasis on online activity runs counter to *Ta'ayush'*s ethos of working with their hands and each other on the ground, in a network where the raison d'être of each group is its distinct type of activity.[8]

Ta'ayush's online presence certainly expresses outrage about the Occupation and its many injustices. For the most part, the photographs and videos posted by *Ta'ayush* highlight the oppressive character of the Oc-

[7] Activist interview.

[8] Activist interview.

cupation, such as harassment of people and animals by settlers, obstruction of daily life, destruction of property, and arrest. The video for the event on June 15th 2013, along with the limited commentary, clearly does so (especially for those who know that Otniel is an illegal settlement and understand the general dynamic of settler-military collusion against Palestinian residents in Area C). As suggested above, so too does the album of photographs, but for a much more limited online community. The YouTube videos and Facebook posts, along with the website blog report of the incident described at the start of this essay, definitely involve the intense affect that is expressed as anger about the routine violence.

At the same time, the sharing of indignation is not generated by the online activity but expresses preexisting political passion. Moreover, the communication of anger about the Occupation by *Ta'ayush* and the other groups with which it networks is not a sentiment that is widely shared by the Jewish Israeli public (Hermann, 2009). For the most part the routine violence and abuse that prompts indignation is of little interest to the mainstream news media, and hence social media serve as an alternative to rather than competitor with them. *Ta'ayush*'s voice is marginalized in the Israeli public sphere, so social media is a vital outlet for them, as was demonstrated forcibly by an affair in January 2016.

A well-regarded documentary program on Israel's Channel 2 aired a report, based on footage provided by a right-wing group which had planted a couple of its members in *Ta'ayush*. The item, which sensationalized *Ta'ayush* as if it were some sort of dangerous, secretive organization, included a potentially damning segment in which a key *Ta'ayush* activist, Ezra Nawi, appeared to boast about having reported Palestinians who had sold land to settlers to the Palestinian Authority's security service, who would rough up and kill the sellers (Ha'aretz, 2016). A media furor followed the broadcast, and Nawi, a Palestinian activist Nasser Nawajah, and later Butavia, were detained in prison by the Israeli police on various charges, including conspiracy to murder. Subsequently they were released without charge by the court which was unimpressed by the police's inability to find any evidence in support of the charges (Hasson, 2016). Some newspaper and alternative online reports that followed the story as it fizzled out went some way towards dispelling the smear of Nawi, Ta'ayush and human rights activists in general (Sheizaf, 2016). Access to social media enabled *Ta'ayush*, which found itself in the public eye briefly, to tell its own story about the dire situation for Palestinians and its work in the South Hebron Hills. A series of well-produced videos made by volunteers on its Facebook page (Ta'ayush, 2016) had over 25,000 views by February 1 2016.[9] *Ta'ayush* practiced citizen journalism and made public its voice that was not only marginalized but also vilified.

Yet, *Ta'ayush*'s indignant voice does not snowball into a growing movement. Their sentiments are not contagious and their feeling does not go viral. Currently, *Ta'ayush* considers the Jewish Israeli public to be a less important address than either Palestinian or international publics.[10] In the past the group had a media coordinator (Sporen, 2001), and they still maintain relationships with a few dedicated, politically sympathetic Israeli print journalists who periodically push editorial constraints to disseminate both information and shared anger, as well as frustration. The group's documentation of Occupation as it encounters it in its work and through its online presence is significant, but not in the usual terms that new media scholars have used to analyse online activism.

4. An Archive of Occupation

The "about" page of *Ta'ayush*'s (2015b) webpage states: "The activities and the activists of *Ta'ayush* were always concentrated on field work. Documentation (written or photographic) was and will continue to be secondary to this….The total amount of activity presented on the site is only a fraction of what has been happening in the field over the years." Given that, it is remarkable how much documentation there is on the website which complements social media activism by providing much more explanation and contextualization. I propose that activist media production of images can also serve as an archive—not only in the present for the researcher (myself) of the past (recent or otherwise), but also as an archive of the "future perfect." Constructing an assemblage of the fragments of activist visual and verbal documentation, online observers can construct a document of activism that prefigures a time in which the work of the activists will have become "successful." In the several years that audiovisual recording has become part and parcel of its repertoire of practice, *Ta'ayush* has amassed a vast, if fragmentary, archive of evidence of the routine violence of Occupation. The collection of information is a function of when and where activities occur, and which activist was present and was prepared to write a report in Hebrew or English. The structuring of the web archive follows both the localism of activity, in small and often remote places, and the specificity and small scale of types of action. The archive in its totality includes YouTube videos and Facebook postings, so it is spread across several platforms. Web 1.0 complements Web 2.0 in this dispersal of the video and documentary archive.

As I went to Umm el-Arayes (where the videos discussed above were filmed), in December 2012 as a participant observer of *Ta'ayush*, I focus on that location in this essay. It is a small Palestinian agricultural community located in the troubled South Hebron Hills area,

[9] Email from activist, February 1st 2016.

[10] Activist interview.

where the continued existence of some 30 Palestinian villages is threatened by the Israeli occupation. On the English version of the website there are 24 items about Umm el-Arayes from November 17th 2012 until May 19th, 2015. There is a mixture of 6 video postings with paragraph-long explanations, blogs or other written counts, 10 accompanied by photographs, and three without, including an article from *Le Monde* about *Ta'ayush*. On Umm al-Arayes, the Hebrew version has 14 items from 26th January 2013 until January 27th 2015, of which 6 are videos with explanations, 6 are texts with photographs, and 1 is text only (the article from *Le Monde*). An additional video clip in the Hebrew version is a 5-minute report from Israeli Social TV (2013) about events at Umm el-Arayes. As noted above, the website provides more information than the records of activities on the Facebook page and the YouTube videos, as in the case of the incident on November 23rd, 2013. Without the website and its narrative framing, it is hard to fathom what is going, especially for those who understand neither Hebrew nor Arabic, which suggests that the purpose and effect of *Ta'ayush*'s online presence is affirmation of the group and of the network of anti-Occupation activism within which it works, rather than the networking of a large, affective public.

The pattern of settler violence and military and police coercion in relation to local Palestinians and activists runs through *Ta'ayush*'s archive, the coverage of Umm el-Arayes not showing the worst of it. In a longer clip (lasting 8:34 minutes), the heated exchanges between soldiers and Said Awad, the leading local Palestinian campaigner for his family's land rights, the structural violence underlying the whole situation is articulated (*Ta'ayush*, 2013b). The video starts with members of the Awad family making yet another attempt to reach their land that has been seized by the settlers of Mitzpe Yair. They are blocked by Israeli soldiers wielding a "closed military area" order (which in this case is invalid, as the camera shows it hasn't been completed properly). There is some pushing and shouting, but it's not really the physical and verbal violence that is significant here, nor even the detention of the two activists that is mentioned in the paragraph of text, which in this case does provide useful, concise context for the local situation. Rather, what stands out is Said Awad's determined dispute with the soldier whom he faces almost eyeball to eyeball. Said tells the soldier that he cannot claim to be a "man of the law" as he's defending an illegal settlement. "Your weapon is your law," he says.

The story is not always one of confrontation, though the context is. In one clip hosted on another activist YouTube channel, publicamir, we see the usual cat and mouse game between soldiers trying to enforce a "closed military area" and in this case a Palestinian boy who evades them and manages to reach a settler boy about his age who, after some hesitation, accepts his outstretched hand to shake it. There is no happy ending, regrettably. The settler boy throws a couple of rocks as the Palestinian boy heads back across the field to his family, an act of violence that a nearby soldier appears not to notice (*Ta'ayush*, 2013c).

The most popular of the 6 clips is the most harrowing. On a tense day at Umm el-Arayes on January 19th 2013, in enforcing the routine closure order, the military and police arrested 15 local Palestinians and activists, among them a mother and her 18-month-old baby (*Ta'ayush*, 2013d). The 1:36 minute clip shows, among much shouting and shrieking, a man being forced to the floor as he's arrested, and military policy surrounding the woman. They gesture and call for her to be quiet and calm down as they seize her and lead her away, with her baby in her arms, while another activist holds a crying boy. The text on the web page adds some information about the release of the detainees, and on this occasion the video on guybo111 is accompanied by some explanatory text that names the mother as Reema and the baby as Quamar. This clip, credited to Nissim Mossek (who also has his own YouTube channel with material about *Ta'ayush*), has had 95,021 views. While in this case the video wasn't posted to the Facebook page, there was a small album of 6 photos documenting Reema's arrest as well as two postings in Hebrew about the event, and subsequently a link to a report in the quality Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz* (2013). On this occasion, *Ta'ayush*'s social media activism broke through to the mainstream press, although not because of a deliberate effort to break media routines.

Although the *Ta'ayush* activists have neither the time nor resources to develop the archive beyond the well-organized web site, it can be a rich source for storytelling about activism and Occupation. Israel's Social TV is an NGO that focuses on social justice and human rights issues and activism, broadcasting biweekly on a local channel and through the internet, including its YouTube channel. In October 2013 the station compiled a report, mentioned above, on Umm el-Arayes that used a significant amount of *Ta'ayush* footage, including of Reema's arrest in January. For the Palestinians of Umm el-Arayes and the activists, the violence and coercion witnessed in this footage has become routine. While this alternative news video report provides some narrative framing, there is a bigger picture that cannot be told even with the combination of video clips and voice-overs. A more ambitious editing and framing project, such as the documentary film *Wild West Hebron* (Mossek, 2013) locates local struggles in the larger context of occupation and settlement, by weaving together footage taken over nine years into a complex narrative. In this case, it is not new media alone that is capable of telling the story (Papacharissi 2015, p. 4), but a hybrid of new and alternative media.

Ta'ayush's new media also blend with old media.

Among the 24 items on *Ta'ayush*'s English website about Umm el-Arayes are 11 blogs by David Shulman, a veteran activist. These blogs offer a poetic, phenomenological account of many events. His accounts of earlier *Ta'ayush* (and other) activities have been collected into a memoir that has been published in Hebrew, English and French (Shulman, 2007). His report of harvesting wheat at Jibna, May 2002, blends Biblical associations to the *Book of Ruth*, description of the landscape, self-awareness of a city-dwelling professor learning how to use a sickle, the discomfort of a tractor ride, the looming danger that Israeli courts will order the local Palestinians from their land, a visit to a cave dwelling filtered through his experience of India, and then a feeling of "fury" at the "malice [that] drives this campaign to uproot the few thousand cave dwellers with their babies and lambs" (p. 23). Here, in old media, in the relationship between an author, his experience and reflection on it, and his readers, is the storytelling with the affective intensity of the expression of outrage that reaches and touches a broader public. Indeed, Shulman's poetic, phenomenological voice offers the tenor in which the significance of *Ta'ayush*'s activity can be heard far more clearly than it can through the filters of social movement and new media scholarship. And so in the final section of this essay I switch away from the tones of social scientific discourse to a style that is open to the peace that will have come.

5. An Archive of the Peace That Will Have Come

What does it matter if *Ta'ayush* has documented the Occupation if it has achieved only small successes that relieve only some of its worst symptoms for some of the occupied? What does it matter that in its social media presence it expresses outrage, documents abuse, reinforces its activists' commitment, if the public it shares with remains so limited? Why does *Ta'ayush*'s vision of peace as the practice of partnership matter if they realize that they have "lost the discourse of peace almost entirely", if it feels almost impossible to effect change through internal pressure on the Israeli government, if along with the successes there are failures even in the small things, such as saving one village from being cut off by the separation wall?[11] It matters in part because the small successes have significant local impact. As the activist I interviewed wrote in response to the first draft of this paper:

> "I base my feeling of success rather than failure on the fact that whereas in all area C there is a well-documented process of forcing Palestinians to abandon their land and leave to areas B and A, in South Mt. Hebron the process is reversed. There had been a massive expulsion of the Palestinian population in this area around 1999 and 2000, but since then, in part, perhaps because of the sort of things we do there, about 50% of those who left, have returned to their original dwellings and fields, and this process continues before our eyes from week to week".[12]

Moreover, by the time of writing, Said Awad, a landowner from Umm el-Arayes mentioned above, had regained access to two thirds of his land, reflecting the effectiveness of persistent, grass-roots local activity based on Israeli-Palestinian, and international, partnership.

Yet the Occupation remains, with few signs that any more Jewish Israelis are becoming outraged about it than there were before *Ta'ayush* became active as part of a broader network of anti-Occupation groups. The coercion of occupation wins nearly every round of the unevenly matched contest. The settlement of Mitzpe Yair still stands, protected by the Israeli army, and the story of Umm el-Arayes is untold in the mainstream media, unheard and unseen in the media space occupied by corporations and governments. Yet even in light of such "strategic" failure, it is too soon to conclude that *Ta'ayush* has failed, because to do so ignores how week in, week out, it practices peace on the ground, and because the routine criteria of failure and success, which are reflected in much academic scholarship, are insensitive to the uncertain practice of peacebuilding in the face of overwhelming oppression. According to a different, messianic conception of time as expressed by Walter Benjamin, the success or effectiveness of *Ta'ayush*'s activism cannot yet be assessed.

Benjamin is probably best known to readers of this journal from his "artwork" essay in which he discusses the decline of the aura of artworks and development of new media and modes of perception (Benjamin, 2002). He remains ambivalent about the loss of aura under capitalist conditions of media production, hoping that something of aura's use value could be recuperated under not yet existent, revolutionary conditions, which can only be glimpsed in "figures of collective dreams" that appear in certain art such as Dada that creates "a demand whose hour of full satisfaction has not yet come" (p. 18). Benjamin's philosophy of history is of non-linear time, and similarly the political activity of *Ta'ayush* satisfies a demand for peace that has not yet come.

History (and hence a history of peace activism) does not unfold in a linear fashion, in which "there is causal connection between various moments in history", and in which *Ta'ayush*'s activism (along with that of others) leads to peace, but rather their activism becomes "historical posthumously" (Benjamin, 1968, p. 263). What matters is invisible to a perspective of success that works in terms of cause and effect and a temporal framework of "before" and "after", according to which

[11] Activist interview

[12] Email correspondence with *Ta'ayush* activist, July 13th 2015.

the action of *Ta'ayush* and others should produce a progressive end. The historical time in which *Ta'ayush* operates is not a series of consequential events according to which activism succeeds, but is "encountered…as a monad" (p. 263), that is, a point in historical time which is not "a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop" (p. 262). This point, which is filled with the "presence of now" is also "the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening" that interrupts the Occupation as "state of emergency" which is "not the exception but the rule" (Benjamin, 1968, pp. 261-263). As Arik Ascherman (2009) of *Rabbis for Human Rights* is wont to say: "we never know what little act we will take that seems meaningless, pointless, irrelevant, useless at the time—but whether that will be the act that tips the scales one way or the other." Similarly, (but in the different context of queer theory) Judith Halberstam (2011, p. 120) writes: "all our failures combined might just be enough, if we practice them well, to bring down the winner". In activism, "every second of time…[can be] the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter" (Benjamin, 1968, p. 264). *Ta'ayush*'s strategic failure matters in ways that are not apparent from the perspective of instrumentalist, strategic action.

Within this conception of history and political action, *Ta'ayush*'s social media presence should also not be understood as strategic communication that delivers a message. The main significance of the activity on Facebook, YouTube, their website and elsewhere is of self-documentation that adds up to a vital archive, even if not neatly wrapped up in a documentary genre. Their archive takes its place in what Azoulay (Azoulay & Flanders, 2012, p. 18) refers to as a "public archive" to which neither the state nor private ownership can deny access to "common documents". In these documents viewers can not only see "the strong imposing their will upon the weak" but also "reconstruct violence as a bond of sorts," which in the case of *Ta'ayush* is a bond of partnership in the face of violence.

The archive is an odd assemblage—it doesn't add up into a whole in an obvious way, but consists of individually fragmentary or incoherent parts, as in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, which he conceived of as history in the form of "literary montage" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 460). Rather like rags for Benjamin, *Ta'ayush* give us a montage—a photo album without captions, a video clip without context, a website without much traffic, an alternative news report with little traction. Yet it is none the less an archive of facts and feelings (Cvetkovich, 2003), not one that tells the whole story, but one in which an image of civil partnership is revealed for those who are open to it. Clearly, for now most of the Jewish Israeli public is not open to assembling *Ta'ayush*'s archive into something akin to the dialectical image, the "lightning flashes", that Benjamin hoped would form a "constellation of awakening" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 456, p. 458). The history documented in *Ta'ayush's* archive is one that few demand to read in the present, but will want to read in a time of peace that will have come.

The video and photographic documentation of *Ta'ayush*'s multiple acts of civil partnership also matters in that it stakes a claim in a mediated public space that the forces of occupation, and the forces that stand behind them, seek to occupy completely, but cannot (Azoulay, n.d.). The occupation forces aim towards dispossession, dispersal and eviction. In contrast, *Ta'ayush*'s archive shows a sharing of space, a dwelling in moments of partnership that will always be there, and so will always be here. On the fields of Umm el-Arayes, the activists of *Ta'ayush* and Palestinians who refuse to be enemies fashion a new body politic, speak a new civil language, and create each week an "open civil area" (as opposed to a "closed military zone").

Until events interrupt the progressive course of history, we will see only fragments of an archive, but one day it will have become apparent that it is an archive of the "future perfect." There will be a time in which the work of the activists will have become recuperated for the past and in the present. Then we will see that the archive is showing us the practice of peace all along—peace as partnership, as civil togetherness, as embodied reclamation of the land in which such relationships can flourish. *Ta'ayush*'s activism and its archive of dispossession, occupation and repression prefigure the civil partnership whose existence will have become established as it is documented in the present.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Lady Davis Trust for a fellowship that funded my field work in the autumn of 2012, during a sabbatical granted by Indiana University, Bloomington. I would also like to thank the Jewish Studies Program at Indiana University for supplemental funding for my research, and Norma Musi for her research assistance. This article is based on presentations at the Association of Israel Studies conference in June 2013 and the Bloomington Jewish Studies Program in October 2013, and I thank those present for their instructive comments on each occasion. I am also grateful to the activists of *Ta'ayush* who welcomed me to their activity and to the people of Umm el-Arayes who allowed me on to their land.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 39-50
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.357

Article

Internet Censorship Circumvention Tools: Escaping the Control of the Syrian Regime

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Submitted: 3 June 2015 | Accepted: 3 November 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
Studies have shown that authoritarian regimes tend to censor the media to limit potential threats to the status quo. While such censorship practices were traditionally aimed at broadcast and print media, the emergence of the Internet and social media in particular, prompted some authoritarian regimes, such as the Assad regime in Syria, to try and exert a similar level of censorship on the Internet as well. During the Arab Spring, the Syrian regime blocked hundreds of websites that provided social networking, news, and other services. Taking Syria as a case study, this paper examines whether Internet censorship succeeded in preventing Internet users from reaching censored online content during 2010–2012. By analyzing the use of Alkasir, a censorship circumvention tool created by the author, the paper provides empirical evidence demonstrating that users were in fact able to bypass censorship and access blocked websites. The findings demonstrate that censorship circumvention tools constituted a threat to the information control systems of authoritarian regimes, highlighting the potential of such tools to promote online freedom of expression in countries where Internet censorship is prevalent.

Keywords
Alkasir; Arab Spring; conflict; democracy; freedom of expression; Internet censorship circumvention; Syria

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

1. Introduction

When coining the term *media studies 2.0*, media scholar William Merrin argued that the rapid growth of the Internet for media content creation and distribution by Internet users had led to a paradigm shift, which created an urgent need for the discipline to upgrade its ability to deal with digital media in order to remain relevant (Merrin, 2009, p. 9). While several social science scholars have studied censorship practices of broadcast, print and other traditional media by authoritarian Arab regimes (e.g., Al-Obaidi, 2007; Flew, 1998; Hardt, 2000; Hinnebusch, 2006; Lee, 2007; Mellor, Rinnawi, & Dajani, 2011; Rugh, 2004), only a few scholars attempted to study how censorship practices were carried out against digital media (e.g., Al-Saqaf, 2014; Deibert, 2013; Gohdes, 2014; Howard, 2010). This paper builds upon the latter group of studies but with a specific focus on Internet censorship and circumvention in Syria around the period that immediately preceded and followed the Arab Spring[1].

Syria was found to be a suitable case study given that it has a well-documented and long-standing history of traditional media censorship (Freedom House, 2010) that was followed by a wave of Internet censorship practices in 2010 and beyond (Al-Saqaf, 2014). This study empirically analyzes patterns of Internet censorship in the form of website filtering in Syria in the two year period stretching from October 2010 to October 2012 and goes one step further to assess whether such censorship was able to restrict access to those censored websites.

The subject of this paper is relevant to social scientists in general and media scholars in particular given

[1] The Arab Spring refers to the anti-government uprising that started in Tunisia in December 2010 and later expanded to other Arab countries including Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and Libya.

the well-documented use of social media by regular citizens to become producers of media content instead of mere consumers (Gauntlett, 2007; Huang, 2011; Howard, Agarwal & Hussain, 2011; Shirky, 2011; Stepanova, 2011). By 2014, over 2.8 billion people representing about 39% of the world's population had access to the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2014). As Internet connectivity continues to become more commonly available on mobile phones, the number of global Internet users was expected to have reached over 3.4 billion by the end of 2015, bringing roughly 45% of the world's population online (Cisco, 2011). According to a prediction by Google CEO Eric Schmidt, the whole world will be connected to the Internet by 2020 (Gross, 2013). Furthermore, a growing number of countries have adopted laws considering Internet access a human right (Ayish, 2010). In 2014, Brazil for example, adopted Marco Civil—also called the "Constitution for the Internet,"—which aims to use the Internet in ways that strengthen freedom of expression, individual privacy, and respect for human rights (Kerr, 2014).

The research question this paper aims to address is: How successful were censorship practices on the Internet in Syria during 2010–2012 and what does that mean for the future of information control by the Syrian regime? To answer this question, a hypothesis is presented arguing that the structure of the Internet as a decentralized network makes it possible to circumvent censorship easily. And with the expected rise in Internet use, this threatens the systems of information control that the Syrian and other authoritarian regimes have been using for generations.

The methodology this paper uses relies on analyzing data generated from Alkasir[2], a software solution downloadable for free from the internet that the author created in 2009, which aims to help map and circumvent website censorship around the world (Al-Saqaf, 2014, p. 317). The data collected was then analyzed to measure the level of success that users in Syria had in bypassing Internet censorship and accessing websites blocked by the regime. In light of its theoretical framework and findings, the study then concludes with a forward-looking assessment as to what this means for the field of media studies in regard to the information control measures taken by authoritarian states.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Controlling Information as a Trait of Authoritarianism

Censorship is a practice dating back to ancient Greece when Socrates was executed for a message deemed to threaten the moral fabric of society (Stone, 1989). Over time, censorship evolved to be the examination of books, periodicals, broadcast media, film, plays, and other media for the purpose of altering or suppressing parts found to be objectionable or offensive based on cultural, religious, political and other factors (Senat, 2011).

Authoritarian regimes have for generations adopted various forms of censorship to depoliticize the population and prevent the questioning of their legitimacy (Linz, 1964, p. 304). Such regimes hope to be viewed as worthy to rule and are even willing to be seen as a "necessary evil" needed to address societal problems (Casper, 1995, p. 43). When authoritarian regimes do call for public participation in politics through election campaigns, rallies, or referenda, they tend to control the message to the public by suppressing anti-regime rhetoric and dissuading political opponents from forming strong coalitions (Casper, 1995, p. 45). This implies that oppressive practices ranging from political persecution to media control and censorship are therefore frequent traits associated with authoritarianism and are meant to prevent the opposition from reaching a critical mass and consequently, threatening the status quo. By definition, authoritarian regimes enforce strict obedience by the media to their political authority (Ostini & Ostini, 2002). They do so by exercising restrictions on the types of content published or broadcast to ensure that the traditional media's role is confined to maintaining the existing power structures.

With the advent of the Internet however, the role of traditional media started to weaken due to the ability of regular Internet users to become content producers by utilizing decentralized and distributed networks such as social media (Shirky, 2011). This feature of the Internet was quite visible during the Arab Spring when activists used social media to mobilize anti-government campaigns and organize mass rallies that helped trigger the downfall of two Arab dictators, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt (Huang, 2011; Stepanova, 2011). This transformation has also given social media a strong complementary role to traditional media as demonstrated by Al Jazeera's use of social media content to supplement its own reporting during the Arab Spring (Duffy, 2011).

2.2. The Rise of Internet Censorship

As the Internet became more popular and widely used to mobilize protest and dissent, authoritarian regimes evolved their media control practices to include Internet censorship, which can be understood as the practice of "suppressing, limiting, or deleting objectionable or any other kind of speech" (Deibert, 2013, p. 139). Internet censorship constitutes any act or system that suppresses, limits access to, or deletes any other kind of information published or communicated on the Internet (Al-Saqaf, 2014, p. 91).

Well before the Arab Spring, some Muslim coun-

[2] The word 'Alkasir' is a transliteration from Arabic, which means 'the breaker' or 'the circumventor'.

tries had already started practicing Internet censorship by prosecuting bloggers and cyber activists and by blocking websites (Howard, 2010, p. 175). In the case of Syria, by censoring social media websites such as Facebook and Blogger, the regime had inadvertently further encouraged the use of such platforms for political dissent (Howard, 2010, p. 164). Following the Arab Spring, motives behind Internet censorship by authoritarian regimes in the Arab world appeared to stem from their desire to prevent dissenting voices from reaching the public and hence, stifling political opposition and protecting the status quo (Al-Saqaf, 2014). Those motives are aligned with those that made authoritarian regimes censor dissenting voices in traditional broadcast and print media.

Technically speaking, implementing Internet censorship often involves the use of filtering software to block access to websites in a particular network or environment (Hersberger, 2004, p. 265). Such filtering can target an individual's private computer, or can occur on a wider intranet level where the responsible network administrator or Internet service provider (ISP) sets up a digital firewall to prevent access to certain websites that include particular keywords or meet some other matching criteria. If a user tries to access any of those blocked websites, he/she would normally get an 'Access Denied' page or some other notice (Hersberger, 2004*, p. 266*). Internet censorship of a website can happen on a national level when all ISPs in the country in question block the same website. While independent filtering mechanisms for some countries are based on the terms of usage and rules that each ISP needs to enforce, e.g., blocking pornography, gambling, etc., studies have found that national Internet censorship is often devised to suppress the dissemination of dissident messages (Al-Saqaf, 2014; Bennett, Grothoff, Horozov, & Lindgren, 2003, p. 1).

The lion's share of research regarding Internet censorship has so far focused on China, where the regime maintains what is arguably the world's most sophisticated and comprehensive national Internet censorship system. Often referred to as "The Great Firewall of China", the Chinese Internet censorship system relies on a diverse set of censorship strategies ranging from website filtering (Deibert, Palfrey, Rohozinski, & Zittrain, 2008) to internal blog content monitoring and blocking (MacKinnon, 2008) and often includes legal measures that lead to the prosecution of bloggers using existing laws (Liang & Lu, 2010, pp. 116-117).

In the Arab world, website filtering is but one of several forms of censorship, which include prosecution, threats, physical intimidation, and surveillance (Zarwan, 2005). Murdoch and Anderson (2008, p. 65) detailed nine mechanisms of Internet censorship ranging from technical website filtering to domain deregistration and attacks on websites. Cyber laws can be considered a form of Internet censorship if they curtail freedom of access or use of the Internet as demonstrated by Iraq, whose proposed cyber laws were seen as a means of targeting journalists, whistleblowers, and activists (Sutton, 2012). Similarly, the UAE's decrees on cyber crime led to restrictions on the ability of citizens to criticize the state on the Internet and promoted self-censorship (Gradstein, 2012).

2.3. The Internet and Liberation Technology

The debate regarding the positive and negative uses of the Internet as a technology was invoked by Thierer (2010), who contrasted the views of "Internet optimists" with those of "Internet pessimists". Internet optimists include researchers such as Negroponte (1996), Surowiecki (2005), and Shirky (2011), who argue that the Internet contributes positively to freedom of expression, innovation, participation, anonymous communication, and empowerment. Internet pessimists such as Postman (1993), Keen (2007), and Morozov (2011) however, view the Internet as a technology that could be misused and abused. Some Internet pessimists argue that the Internet could debase culture, lead to the lack of accountability or serve as a tool used by governments to target activists or journalists. These contrasting views reflect what I see as the *neutral* and *conduit* nature of the Internet, which itself cannot be good or bad, but rather, it can be used for good causes as well as bad ones.

On the one hand, the Internet has the potential to support economic development and this aspect could be a strong incentive for its embrace by authoritarian states (Shirky, 2011, p. 37). But on the other hand, it can also be used to stifle human rights not only in authoritarian states, but also in advanced democracies as demonstrated by the mass surveillance practices carried out covertly by the National Security Agency (NSA) of the United States as revealed in 2013 by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, who leaked around 200,000 classified documents detailing the a clandestine mass surveillance program with the government code name PRISM (Anton, 2013). This is particularly troublesome given that PRISM used private communications on Google, Facebook, and other major platforms in its surveillance practices.

Authoritarian regimes did also use the Internet against activists as highlighted by Morozov (2011), who argued that cyber activists could be targeted using various mechanisms, for example by having a social media network decide to reveal their identity to authoritarian states, or causing them to be exiled due to affiliation with US-sponsored training. This would be in addition to the exposure of Internet users to surveillance, trolling, censorship, and even prosecution for downloading some types of censorship circumvention software (Morozov, 2011).

In relation to the use of the Internet by authoritari-

an regimes against activists, a study by Gohdes (2014) found that the Syrian regime remained in control of access to some social media through censorship—including network disruptions—and surveillance. In her study, the author illustrates the use of surveillance as a means to monitor the flow of information between activists on the ground in order to track names, locations and other information for 'targeted violence' (Gohdes, 2014, p. 3). This illustrates the dangers of using social media in times of conflict, which highlights the dark side of the Internet. However, it was noticeable that Gohdes did not refer in her study to censorship circumvention tools, which could have partially contributed to addressing the censorship problem.

The two sides reflect an ongoing and thorny debate that will probably continue for a long time. A more constructive approach to this debate however, could be the one taken by Diamond (2012), who coined the term "liberation technology" to mean "any form of information and communication technology (ICT) that can expand political, social, and economic freedom" (Diamond, 2012, p. 4). While Diamond argued that liberation technology has the potential to be used for the good of society, he did not rule out the possibility that it could also be abused. Advocates of liberation technology do acknowledge that like any other neutral tool, the Internet could have empowering and disempowering effects depending on context and other factors. In this paper, the focus is on the positive aspects of liberation technology while acknowledging that there are also some negative aspects.

2.4. Censorship Circumvention Tools as a Liberation Technology

In this paper, Internet censorship circumvention tools are considered to be a liberation technology because they expand political and social rights of citizens by allowing them to access websites containing dissident content that authoritarian regimes wish to hide from the public. Those tools work because they exploit one of the most fundamental characteristics of the Internet, i.e., decentralization. After all, when the Internet was born in 1969 at the US Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET), it was built as a communication network that could survive a major attack. Because it is not centrally controlled, its solid and resilient distributed architecture allows it to operate even if large parts of the underlying networks are destroyed (Brand, 2001).

Censorship circumvention tools rely on proxies, which are analogous to intermediary agents that serve as a bridge between two communicating parties. When a recipient and a sender of information are prevented from direct communication, they can use a middleman who is not forbidden from individually interacting with either of them. In case the middleman loses access to either party due to censorship or other reasons, an alternative middleman can be used to maintain the communication. The middleman is a metaphor for a proxy server that is able to reach both the Internet user and the blocked website. For example, for a person in Beijing to access http://facebook.com, which—as of the time this article was written—is blocked in China, a circumvention tool could be used to reroute the traffic to that website via a proxy server based in the United States, for example, and send the data in an encrypted form back to the user. One common feature of circumvention tools is that they all rely on proxy servers to overcome censorship (Palfrey, Roberts, & Zuckerman, 2011, p. 5).

Theoretically, any server that is able to reach the user and target a website simultaneously could serve as a proxy. This entails that a regime with a strong enough determination to block access to a particular website would have to block access to all potential proxy servers, which is virtually impossible without blocking significant parts of the whole Internet. Such a scenario, however, is highly unlikely because the global expansion of the Internet made it indispensable for communication, business, government, transportation, and various other vital public and private uses (Hoffman, Novak, & Venkatesh, 2004; Stepanova, 2011, p. 2; Varnelis, 2012).

That being said, at least one authoritarian regime had reportedly shut down national access to the Internet as demonstrated by the case of Egypt in January 2011 (Cowie, 2011). Initially, the regime reportedly ordered ISPs to block access to Facebook and Twitter (Schonfeld, 2011). But as the availability of censorship circumvention tools and methods rendered website filtering ineffective, the regime took the radical step of shutting down access to the Internet as a whole from January 27 to February 2 (Cowie, 2011). Yet that step appears to have backfired as it led to even more protesters, some of whom wanted to be informed about developments directly given that they were no longer able to access information online (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011, pp. 15-16). It was quite evident that the decision to completely block citizens' access to the Internet did not prevent the planned protest on Friday January 28. When Egypt was brought back online on February 2, the protests had already reached unprecedented sizes, eventually leading to the resignation of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak on February 11 (McGreal & Shenker, 2011).

The Egyptian example presents a clear dilemma for authoritarian states trying to censor the Internet. On the one hand, they cannot prevent users from using censorship circumvention tools to access blocked websites. Yet on the other, they can't afford to shut down the Internet altogether because doing so would negatively affect the economy and cripple government agencies (Howard et al., 2011, p. 217).

3. The Syrian Context

3.1. Traits of an Authoritarian Baathist Regime

When Bashar Assad inherited power from his deceased father Hafez Assad in 2000, he also took charge of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, which had ruled the country with an iron fist since 1963 (Pipes, 1989). Just after the Arab Spring started however, the media reported grave human rights violations and widespread and systematic abuses across the country (Black, 2012). As is the case with authoritarian regimes, Assad's legitimacy to rule was not based on a democratic process and was often questioned by various opposition entities and dissidents, most of which had to operate in exile due to the Syrian regime's tendency to assassinate opposition figures (Zahler, 2009, p. 66).

The Syrian constitution does refer in a few clauses to citizens' right to individual freedom (Heller, 1974). However, restrictions on freedom of expression through different means including acts of censorship remained the norm and intensified since 2001, when the Press Law was enacted, giving authorities the right to deny and revoke publishing licenses of newspapers as well as enforce blatant press censorship (Freedom House, 2010). Assaults on journalists and banning of newspapers coming from certain countries or containing certain types of content were carried out on the grounds of protecting Syrian national security. The Press Law imposed a hefty fine of up to a million Syrian pounds, which was valued around USD 20,000 in 2010, and granted the judiciary the power to give jail terms that range from one to three years (Freedom House, 2010). Based on that law, any form of speech, whether written, spoken, or electronic, could be considered punishable if deemed a threat to national sovereignty or security or if it is thought to offend public morality. Among the most strictly censored messages are those that advocate autonomy or self-rule for Kurds, who are prohibited from importing Kurdish-language publications (Ziadeh, 2009).

Dissidents in Syria are usually unable to challenge the regime through traditional media because publishing houses and media outlets are either owned or influenced by the state and are mobilized in active support for the regime (Rugh, 2004, p. 56). Security agencies work with total impunity and operate under the direct oversight of the presidential office and are known for committing acts of torture to extract information and admissions from suspects or their relatives (Freedom House, 2010).

The systematic repressive practices by the Syrian regime over the years have weakened the internal opposition and resulted in a thriving exiled dissident movement, which is composed of several competing factions including moderate Sunnis, Kurds, Islamists, liberals, and others (Lund, 2012). The regime's grip on the media and the economy was further enhanced through notably strong ties with Iran and Russia, which are two powers with a strong stake in the region (Landis & Pace, 2007).

3.2. Internet Access and Censorship in Syria

The Internet was cautiously introduced to Syria in 1997 when a very limited number of state institutions were connected and operated in a highly restrictive and security-driven setting (Goldstein, 1999, pp. 55-56). When Bashar Assad became president in 2000, he expanded Internet access, which grew from 30,000 users in 2000 to over five million in 2012, representing a penetration ratio of 22.5% (Internet World Stats, 2013). The rapid growth of the Internet was used by the regime to expand its information propaganda to the masses and attack dissidents in a virtual cyberwar (Watson, 2011). Despite this growth, Syria's online environment remained highly controlled and regulated by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Technology through the Syrian Telecommunications Establishment (ONI, 2009). Investments by the regime in the telecommunication infrastructure were coupled with a monopoly of the ISP sector led by SyriaTel, a wireless 3G GSM and Internet operator owned by the first cousin of President Assad, Rami Makhlouf (US Department of Treasury, 2008). Nepotism and favoritism were practiced widely in the country, signaling a state of corruption and inefficiency (Schmidt, 2006).

As Internet usage grew in Syria, so did restrictions on online freedoms as manifested by the pervasive Internet filtering practiced by the state, which blocked numerous dissident websites as well as major social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube (ONI, 2009). The international media freedom monitoring watchdog Reporters without Borders (RSF) named Syria in 2010 as one of the "enemies of the Internet" due to its repressive practices restricting freedom of expression on the Internet (RSF, 2010). Since the uprisings started in the beginning of 2011, at least ten citizen journalists and online activists were reportedly killed by the end of the year, after which the number spiked fivefold to 49 deaths in 2012 (RSF, 2013). The Syrian regime started in 2011 to ban traditional journalists from going into the country for reporting. This resulted in a high number of casualties among citizen journalists, who became a major source of news (Arnold, 2012). Furthermore, the lack of sufficient experience in safe communication, encryption techniques and other digital protections made online journalists vulnerable to being identified, tracked, and targeted (Galperin, 2012).

3.3. From a Potential Revolution to an All-Out Civil War

Inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, Syrians in the city of Dara'a took to the streets in big numbers in March 2011 demanding more rights and to protest the arrest of schoolboys for writing political graffiti call-

ing for an end to the Assad regime (Macleod, 2011). The protests were faced with a violent security crackdown, which resulted in more and bigger protests to a degree that prompted the regime to cut taxes and raise state salaries. Soon after, Assad attempted to deal with public anger by ending the state of emergency that was in place since 1963 and issued a decree to dissolve the long-feared state security court and to regulate the right to peaceful protest (Oweis, 2011). Despite these measures, violence intensified and opposition groups turned from peaceful protests to armed rebellion, supported by defections of military and government personnel and followed by mounting international pressure (Myers, 2011). When the opposition Free Syrian Army was formed in July 2011, it helped transform the popular peaceful uprisings to a militant opposition that led to an all-out civil war (Karam & Kennedy, 2011).

By 2013, the UN reported a death toll exceeding 60,000 with over half a million internally displaced (Hubbard & Jordans, 2013). Additionally, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees fled across the borders to Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, resulting in over one million refugees (Sweis, 2013). The types and magnitude of the crimes committed by the Assad regime since 2011 made it a candidate for an international tribunal for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, which discouraged the regime from handing over power to a transitional government (Walt, 2012).

4. Discussion

4.1. Methodology

This study uses data collected through Alkasir website censorship mapping and circumvention tool to quantify website censorship in Syria during October 2010–October 2012. I originally created the software in 2009 as a means to circumvent censorship of my own news aggregator website yemenportal.net, which was blocked in 2008 by the Yemeni authorities citing concerns that it may have posed "national security" risks because it allowed dissident content to be viewed on it (Al-Saqaf, 2014, p. 326). Alkasir started out as a Microsoft Windows application that enabled Internet users to report blocked websites and access them freely afterwards using a secure and encrypted tunnel to a proxy server located in the United States. By October 2012 however, Alkasir had been installed over 72,000 times and was downloaded in more than a hundred countries around the world.

The sample used for this paper is confined to the data generated by users inside Syria. Alkasir's proxy is a US-based server, which fetches data from blocked websites requested by the users and sends those websites' content to the users in an encrypted format that the ISP cannot read. This renders the censor role of the ISP useless because all it sees is garbled encrypted traffic exchanged with a destination that is not meant to be censored, i.e., Alkasir's proxy server[3].

The software was used to identify blocked websites in Syria by allowing users to report them first before being able to access them through a special proxy server. Every user running Alkasir had a graphical user interface with clearly marked buttons that were used to report one or more websites. There were over twenty thousand instances of Alkasir being voluntarily installed and used by users using different ISPs inside Syria during October 2010−October 2012. This allowed the detection of national website censorship to a highly reliable degree. The technical data was stored securely in a MySQL database on a US-based server that also hosted Alkasir's official website (https://alkasir.com). Raw MySQL database content was later manually converted to datasets and imported to a computer running IBM SPSS[4].

For the study to identify which websites were filtered nationally, it was necessary to have multiple reports coming from users in different parts of the country using different ISPs. Otherwise, a website filtered by a single ISP may be mistakenly interpreted as being censored nationally. A public library or cyber cafe, for example, could block facebook.com due to the terms of service. If a student attempts to access facebook.com they can still report the website and access it through Alkasir, which adds the ISP to a database containing information about censored websites in Syria. If someone else using another ISP in another part of the country also reports the website blocked, that ISP is added to the database as well. The more ISPs found to block a particular website, the more likely that it is blocked nationally. This study considers that websites reported to be blocked by a threshold of more than 15 ISPs to be blocked nation-wide.

One of the limitations of Alkasir is its inability to know precisely when a website was unblocked. This is because it relies on the users' active updates by reporting websites regularly. It is rarely the case that users report a particular website regularly to keep its status up-to-date. This meant that in order for a website to be removed from the list of nationally censored websites, manual intervention was needed to directly remove the website from the database containing the list of blocked websites in a specific country. This procedure was not used in the case of Syria given the high probability that a website that was blocked before would be blocked again in the future.

Alkasir has an internal web browser, which allows it to collect metadata on the frequency of access to various blocked websites. Every attempt to access a blocked website via the browser increments the total

[3] A more thorough description of how Alkasir works can be found in an earlier study (Al-Saqaf, 2014)

[4] IBM SPSS is software that many social science researchers use for statistical analysis.

number of page views of the website. The study was able to identify the total number of views of blocked content without having to identify who accessed them because no personal information that could be used to identify users was saved on the server due to privacy considerations. The quantitative data collected over the period of the study includes data about the reported websites, the countries and ISPs that blocked them, the number of times Alkasir was accessed, and the number of page views of each website. The data was then analyzed using SPSS to identify patterns that answered the study's research questions.

4.2. Findings

When studying patterns of Alkasir usage in Syria, it was found that the number of successful connections to the proxy server increased from 13,826 in October 2010 to 958,548 in October 2012, which is a seventy-fold rise. In order to understand whether this increase was triggered by any developments on the ground in Syria, a deeper analysis was carried out. The analysis revealed a noticeable sharp rise at the peak of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings in January 2011 in terms of the number of censored websites reported as shown in Figure 1. After a relative period of calm, a renewed wave of reports was witnessed in July 2011, which is when a heavy wave of defections from the Syrian army took place, later leading to the creation of the Free Syrian Army (AFP, 2011). After another period of limited website censorship reporting activity, a spike emerged in mid-2012. The highest number of websites reported censored was in July 2012 when 677 unique Websites were reported 3,207 times in total. By October 2012, the number of page views of blocked websites in Syria through the internal browser reached over 4.4 million while the number of installations reached 22,415.

By more closely examining the month of July 2012, one can see that there were two spikes on July 15 and 26 as shown in Figure 2. The first spike on Sunday July 15 coincided with the Free Syrian Army's announcement to launch the operations Damascus Volcano and Syrian Earthquake aimed at liberating the capital Damascus (Karouny, 2012). The other spike occurred on Thursday July 26 when strong signs of an imminent battle in Aleppo emerged a day after the Free Syrian Army took control of some of its districts (Weaver & Whitaker, 2012).

The empirical data shows that as a censorship circumvention tool, Alkasir was indeed used effectively to bypass government-imposed censorship at a very delicate and important period in the history of Syria. This indicates that the Syrian regime strived to control the flow of information online using filtering software. However, the decentralized and open design of the Internet allowed users to overcome the challenge of censorship to remain informed.

When looking into the specific censored online content that was accessed using Alkasir, the results revealed that online resources such as social media and media sharing websites received the highest attention. As the pie chart in Figure 3 shows, social media constituted around 92% of all visits to blocked websites during the period represented in this paper. Within the social media group, the dominant website was Facebook with around 98% of the visits followed by other less known social media websites. The Syrian regime's censoring of Facebook could be attributable to its perceived threat as a means to mobilize rallies and protests through social media, leading to the overthrow of the Tunisian and Egyptian presidents.

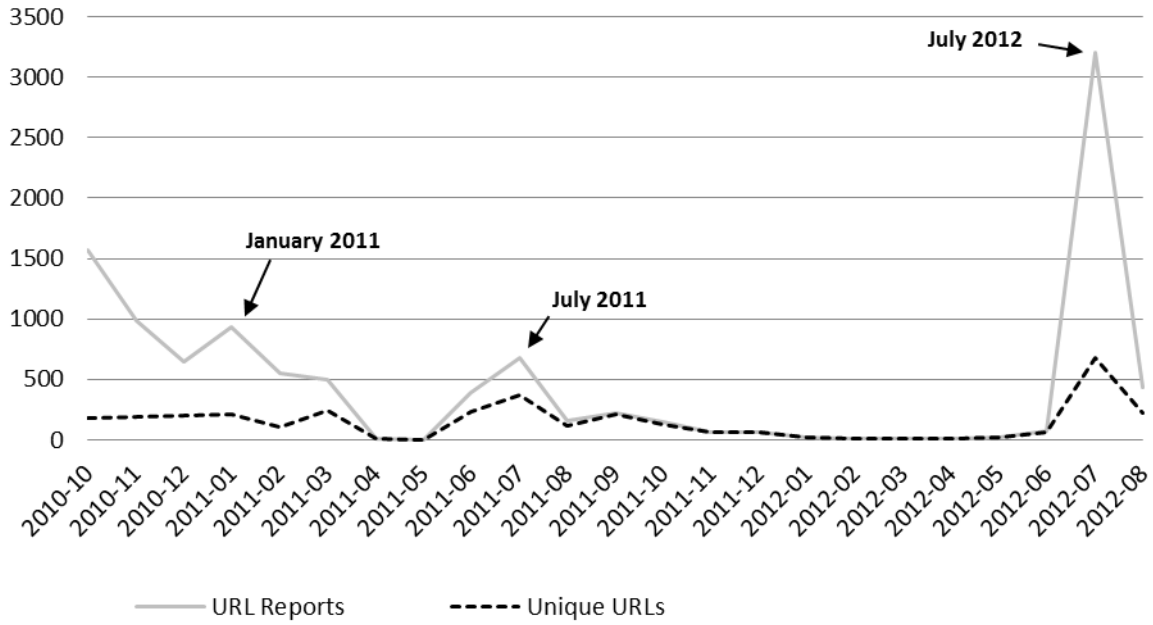

Figure 1. Level of user activity in reporting censorship through Alkasir in Syria.

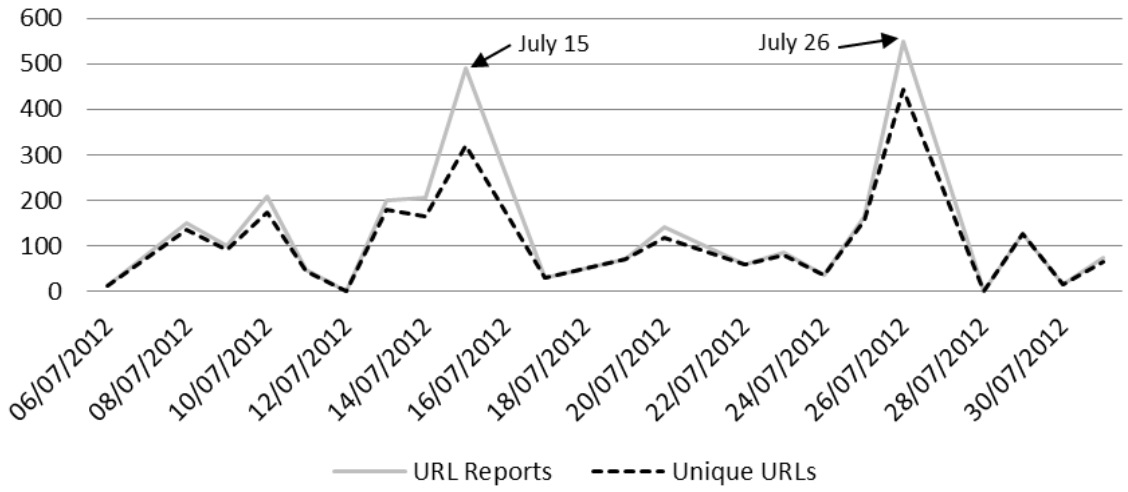

Figure 2. Level of user activity in reporting censorship through Alkasir in Syria during July 2012.

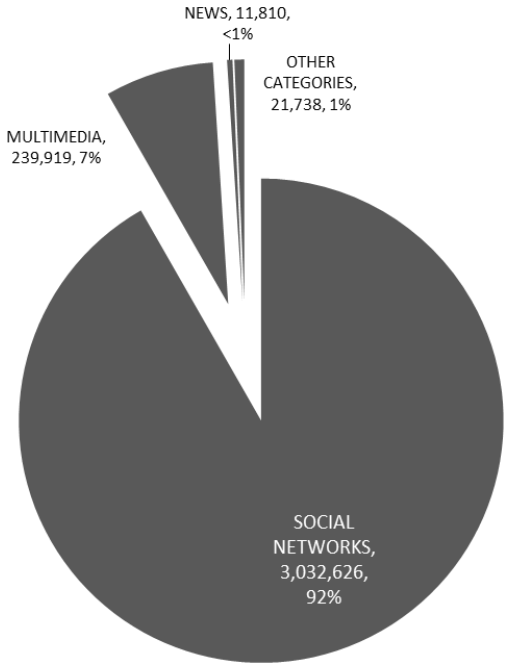

Figure 3. Visits of censored websites using Alkasir in Syria.

Table 1. The top ten censored websites.

Website	Category
1. facebook.com	Social Networking
2. youtube.com	Multimedia Sharing
3. tagged.com	Social Networking
4. mig33.com	Social Networking
5. all4syria.info	Dissident
6. aawsat.com	News and Opinion
7. netlog.com	Social Networking
8. store.ovi.com	Commercial
9. skype.com	VOIP
10. adobe.com	Commercial

The second group of blocked websites included those that allow the sharing of multimedia content, such as YouTube, which was also used to expose footage portraying the destruction of homes and properties by Assad forces. YouTube videos were also shared on Facebook showing images of injured and killed civilians by the shelling of villages and cities where opposition forces were based. It is therefore evident that bypassing censorship of such platforms by utilizing Alkasir helped broaden the perspective of Internet users and allowed them to access information from sources that are not controlled by the regime.

Table 1 shows the top list of blocked websites in terms of number of visits using Alkasir in Syria during the period covered by this paper. The top website, Facebook, was by far the most dominant with over 92% of all visits. Four of the ten websites were categorized as social media, which demonstrates the high value Alkasir users gave to the ability to interact and share information online. Alkasir did have the potential to allow users to access hundreds of other blocked websites as well but they received a much smaller number of visits.

While these findings point to a strong interest by users in accessing social media websites, it is important to note that one cannot conclude with certainty that the users of Alkasir used it merely to access and share anti-government content or used the software purely for mobilizing protests or dissident activities. However, it is possible to conclude that the attempt by the Syrian regime to prevent the public from accessing Facebook after the downfall of the presidents of Egypt and Tunisia illustrates a perceived threat by the social networking website to its authority. The study's findings point to the determination of users in Syria to access Facebook in large numbers despite the ban, allowing Alkasir to emerge as a liberation technology with the potential to limit information control by the government and al-

low users to engage in political mobilization through the web.

Additionally, the fact that censorship increased with developments on the ground and that among the top blocked websites was all4syria.info, a news website that included stories that promoted the Free Syrian Army, lends support to the hypothesis that Alkasir was also used to disseminate and access dissident material. In a time of conflict, such a contribution is arguably positive because it supports the free flow of information by limiting the regime's ability to manipulate online content.

While no particular qualitative research was carried out in this study, it is worthy noting that the use of Alkasir to prevent information blackouts during the Syrian conflict was in some way life saving as well. This was found by interviewing one of the Syrian activists who used Alkasir for an extended period of time. In a personal communication by email in 2013, he gave a couple of examples demonstrating how the use of Alkasir may have helped save lives. The activist, who requested to remain anonymous for his safety, said that he used Alkasir to publish footage and videos on Facebook and YouTube from areas affected by the fighting. He indicated that he was also able to use Alkasir to communicate a warning message through Skype, a voice chatting platform blocked in Syria at the time. The warning he sent had arrived just in time to the intended recipients, who were also using Alkasir, giving them the chance to evacuate an area before it was raided by the regime's security.

The activist gave a second example of a case when he used Alkasir to access blocked online resources, which he then used to communicate to international humanitarian missions to provide urgently needed humanitarian aid. The anonymous Syrian activist said: "When inspection operations began seeking leaders and organizers of the revolution, the software allowed us to send warnings on Skype or Facebook that security vehicles were approaching a particular neighborhood or street." (Syrian Activist, personal communication, 24 July, 2013)

These two examples illustrate that in certain situations during a conflict, having a tool to break free from censorship could be a matter of life or death. By empowering even a single individual in times of war, Alkasir demonstrates that technology can be used for the good of society.

It is important to note that while Alkasir was mainly used to access censored social media, the above examples illustrate that in order to assess the impact of a particular technology, one should not only take the number of visitors of blocked websites into account but should consider the significance of the type of content being circulated via those blocked websites. It might well be that a few users were able to access a censored website to upload timely and critical reports to the web. But the content they uploaded may have a substantial impact nationally and even globally. War news and footage published on Facebook using Alkasir for example, could then reach remote parts of the world and be shared and be picked even by transnational broadcast media. Such an impact is very difficult to assess, but should not to be ignored.

5. Conclusion

For a long time, media studies remained well behind the times by failing to adequately study how the Internet is used for political mobilization and dissent. The Arab Spring was a point in history when media scholars tried to catch up by studying the use of social media to promote freedom for people living under the rule of authoritarian regimes. However, many of those scholars fell in love with positive aspects of social media studies and very few made an effort to highlight the reaction of authoritarian regimes in the form of Internet censorship and the use of censorship circumvention tools as a form of liberation technology in response to the growth of censorship on the web.

This study is among the few that stand out in this area with a special focus on Syria. The study tried to understand how the Syrian regime censored the Internet during the initial period of the Arab Spring. By highlighting how Internet users in Syria fought back using censorship circumvention tools and eventually defeated website blocking, the study opens new doors to further explore this new and relatively unexplored area of research.

Being the seemingly indestructible, decentralized and global network that it is, the Internet will continue to garner more interest in the media studies field particularly as repressive practices by authoritarian regimes are expected to continue and evolve over time. The strong and unwavering resistance to repression as demonstrated by the Syrians that used censorship circumvention technology is a sign that the subject of Internet censorship will continue to be important and attract more research.

It is necessary however to critically reflect on the role of Internet censorship circumvention tools given that their ability to unblock websites is insufficient to address Internet censorship, which includes many other forms of practices that range from prosecuting bloggers to practicing mass surveillance on activists. While this study helps shed light on the important role those tools have, it merely scratches the surface when it comes to addressing the many forms of Internet censorship.

Furthermore, by serving as an intermediate agent between a user and a blocked website, any circumvention tool becomes vulnerable in its own right. With increased sophistication in online monitoring and tracking techniques, authoritarian regime are improving their capacity to identify the methods and operators of

those circumvention tools and take some steps to render them ineffective. Financial incentives to companies to stop hosting proxy servers could also be a move that some larger governments may take. While not invincible, censorship circumvention tools should be supported and encouraged to improve and spread to limit the ability of authoritarian regimes to target them.

It is unlikely that the Syrian regime will give up the fight against censorship circumvention tools. In fact, it is likely that it will try other ways to limit the ability of citizens to challenge its authority. Surveillance strategies as demonstrated by Gohdes (2014) could perhaps be a preference over censorship in the long run if those circumvention tools continue to be successful. Such a scenario could be devastating to activists if they are not diligent and careful when publishing personal information on social media.

The door is open to carry out more research in this exciting and growing field. What is needed more than ever is to engage media scholars with questions about liberation technology because the conversation surrounding freedom of expression and censorship on the Internet will likely continue unabated.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Professor Stig-Arne Nohrstedt for his support and supervision of the doctoral dissertation that permitted the collection of the data that was used to produce this study. This article was carried out with funding from Örebro University's Department of Media Studies.

Conflict of Interests

The author is the creator and administrator of Alkasir, on which he relied to extract the data needed for the study. However, Alkasir is free and is used mainly for educational purposes and activism. It is not a commercial product.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 51-62
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.336

Article

EU Armed Forces' Use of Social Media in Areas of Deployment

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Submitted: 28 May 2015 | Accepted: 3 November 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
The advent of social media can be seen both as a risk and an opportunity by armed forces. Previous research has primarily examined whether or not the use of social media endangers or strengthens armed forces' strategic narrative. We examine armed forces' perceptions of risks and opportunities on a broad basis, with a particular focus on areas of deployment. The article is based on a survey of perceptions of social media amongst the armed forces of EU member states, thus adding to previous research through its comparative perspective. Whereas previous research has mainly focused on larger powers, such as the US and the UK, this article includes the views of the armed forces of 26 EU states, including several smaller nations. In analyzing the results we asked whether or not risk and opportunity perceptions were related to national ICT maturity and the existence of a social media strategy. The analysis shows that perceptions of opportunities outweigh perceptions of risks, with marketing and two-way communication as the two most prominent opportunities offered by the use of social media. Also, armed forces in countries with a moderate to high ICT maturity emphasize social media as a good way for marketing purposes.

Keywords
armed forces; EU; international deployments; social media

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

1. Introduction

This study surveys and analyzes diverging views amongst EU armed forces on the risks and opportunities of social media use in areas of deployment. Social media pose significant challenges and call for the management of issues such as transparency of information and communication with local populations. The use of social media also raises concerns about the security of deployed troops. Social media have been in use in armed forces since the Kosovo crisis in 1999 (Nissen, 2015, p. 8). The increasing use and importance of social media, alongside intensifying debate about the reliance on communication for successful multinational military interventions, give us cause to explore the views of EU armed forces on the use of social media. These forces participate together on multinational operations, and their views on the management of the information flows of social media pose increasing problems for coordination and collaboration, and for facilitating and improving their efficiency.

Social media can be used for multiple purposes. On the one hand, social media use might mirror traditional ways of thinking about communication as one-way communication originating from Shannon and Weaver's transmission model for telecommunication systems (Shannon, 1948). On the other hand, the use of social media could correspond with more recent views on two-way communication, influenced by digital technology (e.g. Dunleavy, Margett, Bastows, & Tinkler, 2006). A study of the Swedish Armed Forces indicates that market logic is the key driving force for communication via social media; the Armed Forces are seen as an agency in various markets competing with other actors for personnel, influence, funding and political attention (Deverell, Olsson, Wagnsson, Johnsson, & Hellman, 2015). The use of social media, primarily for

marketing purposes, corresponds with a general trend within public organizations towards more market driven communication (e.g. Byrkjeflot & Angell, 2007).

If armed forces place great value on the marketing potential of social media, they can choose to 'let go' of control. However, armed forces may seek to retain control of information to ensure its accuracy, and in order to prevent the spread of sensitive information that may jeopardize personal and operational security. Social media can indeed be a disruptive force for national narratives and government messages in the security sphere (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2009; Kahn & Keller, 2004). Therefore, armed forces may instead opt to strengthen control and/or censor opposing narratives on social media platforms (Cammaerts, 2008; Morozov, 2011). Research indicates that social media have become more regulated and less free as armed forces have grown increasingly aware of the risks involved (Bennett, 2013, p. 49; Bjerg Jensen, 2011, p. 196; Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2009; Lawson, 2014; Maltby, Thornham, & Bennett, 2015).

However, scholars have paid little attention to how armed forces beyond the US and the UK have dealt with the 'social media challenge' (see for example Bjerg Jensen, 2011; Maltby et al., 2015; and Jones & Baines, 2013, on the UK; and Rid & Hecker, 2009, on the US, Great Britain and Israel). Previous research has mainly focused on whether or not armed forces have been harmed by or have managed to exploit social media, whether they have tried to control social media and to what degree they have allowed personnel to communicate freely via social media.

Social media provide armed forces with new opportunities to get their message out in areas of deployment. For instance, they might see great opportunities for marketing their operations via social media without having to involve news media. What is clear is that armed forces see an increasing need to communicate with a multitude of audiences through social media. Thus, military organizations disseminate official messages in a transformed media environment, engaging in social media through channels such as YouTube, blogs, Twitter and Facebook (Bennett, 2013, p. 49). In their study Caldwell, Murphy and Menning (2009), for example, examine the use of social media by the Israeli Army and Hezbollah during the 2006 Second Lebanon War. They argue that Hezbollah, as a result of skillful social media use, was successful, whilst Israel was perceived as having failed. '…Hezbollah information efforts focused directly on gaining trust and sympathy for its cause at all levels. Israel provided no countervailing view, allowing Hezbollah to drive perceptions that could become universally accepted as truth' (Caldwell et al., 2009, p. 6).

Building upon previous research, this article fills a gap in the literature by taking a broader perspective and examining European armed forces' perceptions of social media use in areas of deployment. Moreover, we examine whether or not armed forces' perceptions of social media are connected to national ICT maturity and the existence of a social media strategy (see below). What this study particularly adds to previous research is its comparative perspective; it stands out from other studies by including views amongst the armed forces of almost all EU states, including all the smaller member states.

2. Previous Research

Participation in international missions in complex political, military and social environments, along with technological developments, have required armed forces across the Western world to develop new expertise in a range of areas, including communications (Forster, 2006, p. 6). The involvement of international organizations (NATO, UN) in a number of complex emergencies in recent years—e.g. Afghanistan, Libya and Mali—has required the ability to communicate across military and civilian boundaries, as well as with the populations in the countries in question. Participation in international missions also requires communication with a nation's own citizens in order to muster popular support for perilous military interventions. Despite all this, there is limited research examining armed forces from a communication perspective. The research that does exist has concentrated mainly on aspects related to strategic communication, such as governments' transmission of strategic narratives (Bjerg Jensen, 2014; Jankowski, 2013; Ringsmose & Börgesen, 2011). The academic debate has focused on social media both as a threat, and as an opportunity for armed forces to get their message across. For example, in a study of the use of social media by the Swedish Armed Forces, Deverell et al. (2015) argue for the advantages of social media use falling into three broad areas: one-way, two-way and market oriented communication.

Academics who understand social media primarily as an opportunity tend to emphasize the inherent potential of social media for disseminating the national strategic narrative in situations where armed forces have devoted substantial resources to developing their own media outlets (Bennett, 2013, p. 49; Karatzogianni, 2008, p. 2). This is so because success in the application of force depends ultimately on how the war, its purpose and its conduct are perceived at home and within the theatre of operations. The use of social media platforms by armed forces can impact positively on both recruitment and the legitimization of the tasks of armed forces. Wall (2006, p. 122) suggests that bloggers active during Gulf War II did not present alternative perspectives of the war, but offered more personal versions of prevailing public debate about the war. Personalized accounts by military personnel, encouraged to blog directly 'from the field', can be utilized to strengthen a national strategic narrative (Hellman & Wagnsson, 2015).

On the other hand, armed forces face several risks by using social media. Firstly, they risk losing control of their own narrative from a strategic management perspective (e.g. Jones & Baines, 2013). From this perspective one threat arises from the use of social media by military personnel. Having investigated homemade videos uploaded to YouTube by coalition soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, Andén-Papadopoulos (2009, p. 17) suggests 'The soldiers' firsthand accounts of the war have introduced new and sometimes highly controversial perspectives into the documentation of warfare that military and media elites are struggling to contain'. In addition to harming the national strategic narrative, military personnel using social media in operational theatres can place their comrades or mission aims at risk. Academics in the field have, for example, stressed how increasing globalization, fueled by new information technology, has blurred the boundaries between combatants and non-combatants and between home and abroad (Betz, 2008). In such an environment it is important to understand that messages intended for domestic audiences may easily spread to the area of deployment and, similarly, locally targeted messages may be transmitted around the globe (Paul, 2012).

Besides the problems associated with communication by individual military personnel, another problem in trying to control the strategic narrative is the coordination of messages. For example, during the Afghanistan mission it was not until 2006 that the realization dawned 'that the communication strategy had to be aimed at all the relevant target groups—and that these were implicated with each other' (Dimitriu, 2012, p. 206). The problems associated with targeting several audiences at once were also illustrated during NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011, when British messages were primarily designed to legitimize the operation in the eyes of the domestic audience. As a result, there was a lack of consistent messages suitable for the needs of local civilians. Instead, messages formulated in NATO countries participating in the intervention unintentionally reached local audiences and became more of a hindrance than a help in building legitimacy for the operation (Bjerg Jensen, 2014, pp. 182-183).

There are also cultural and technical obstacles facing the use of social media by armed forces in areas of deployment. Despite the ambition to reach all the vital stakeholders with their communication, from global opinion to the local level on the ground, ISAF generally had a poor understanding of the Afghan population, due to difficulties in understanding local language, culture and history (COMISAF Initial Assessment, 2009). Beyond the problems associated with the cultural gap, there are also technical obstacles to communicating with the local population through social media due to low levels of Internet penetration (International Telecommunication Union, 2015). Due to low levels of Internet use, key leader engagement and radio became the most important sources of information. All the problems discussed above risk either distorting the strategic narrative, or impeding it from reaching its target group.

In the next sections we describe two explanatory factors, which we suggest may impact on armed forces' perceptions of social media: the existence of social media strategies and ICT maturity in a national setting.

2.1. The Existence of Social Media Strategies

Our first explanatory factor relates to the presence or otherwise of a social media strategy. As previously discussed, one important aspect of the military use of social media is the notion of control, which is often manifested in regulations and policies. Previous research indicates that the US armed forces' attitude to the use of social media has changed since the beginning of the century. Having been relatively liberal, views have become more restrictive following incidents that could have had a negative impact on US public opinion (Lawson, 2014). Until 2010, social media rules and regulations were rather unclear and based on the need to ask superiors' permission before publishing information that could potentially endanger operations (Resteigne, 2010, p. 523). The trend in trying to increase control may be reinforced by the internal organizational logic likely to come into play when communication departments are given more resources. There is a general trend within public agencies towards professionalization and expansion of communication functions (Byrkjeflot & Angell, 2007; Deverell et al., 2015; Wæraas, 2010). To sum up, public agencies, including armed forces, might consequently be inclined and/or expected to issue official policies and regulatory documents intended to increase control, and restrict the free use of social media. On the other hand, they may try to formulate social media policy so as to encourage and facilitate the use of social media for marketing the armed forces, thus loosening control, as previously argued. We investigate how the adoption of a social media strategy relates to negative/positive attitudes to the use of social media.

2.2. ICT Maturity in National Settings

Our second explanatory factor is the ICT maturity in armed forces' respective home countries. To our knowledge there is no previous research connecting an armed forces domestic level of ICT to perceptions of social media as a threat or opportunity in international missions. However, previous research demonstrates how the level of ICT maturity in various societies impacts on the use of social media. For example, based on a literature review of social media use in e-government, Magro (2012) concludes that the digital divide is a major barrier to e-participation. A study by Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2010) shows that the level of ICT use in governmental agencies depends, not pri-

marily on their own preferences regarding new information technology, but rather on citizens' preferences, and technical abilities, when interacting with governmental agencies. At the same time, and to their surprise, Bonsón, Torres, Royo and Flores (2012) found in their study of social media use amongst EU local governments that the national level of Internet access, and use by citizens, were not significant predictors of the level of the use of Web 2.0 and social media in local government.

Again, there are arguments for both positions. We can expect armed forces from countries with a social media savvy population (e.g. Sweden, Finland or Denmark) to have a more positive outlook on social media use in deployment areas. At the same time, despite the use of social media in humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping operations ranging from Kosovo to Afghanistan and Darfur, the chiefs of staff should still pay attention to the risks involved.

3. Method

The questionnaire that forms the basis of the empirical analysis was designed to capture views on social media use with a focus on risks and opportunities. All the armed forces of EU member states responded to the questionnaire, with the exception of Greece and Cyprus. Luxembourg was included in the study, but claimed not to use social media and responded to no more than a few questions in the questionnaire, which is probably due to the small size of the armed forces of this country.

We focused on views about social media at the highest, strategic, level of organization. When contacting the armed forces of individual countries, we asked them for contact with the Head of the Information Department, or another authoritative person who could express their official view of the use of social media within the Armed Forces. Half of the respondents are representatives of armed forces' information departments, one third are representatives of the Ministry of Defense and the remaining 18 per cent hold other positions, with tasks related to their armed forces' information and communication.

Policies issued at the strategic level are not always followed at lower levels of the organization or by individual services (army, navy, air force). Rid and Hecker (2009, p. 94) identify an "institutional gap" in Great Britain between the public affairs' leadership at the Ministry of Defense and the military command. They argue that the public affairs civilian leaders attempted to increase control in ways that were not conducive to practices at subordinate military levels. The authors (2009, p. 223) recommend that military public affairs in ministries of defense should primarily be run by senior officers and not by civil servants, since these have better access to senior commanders. Our results, therefore, are an indication of the armed forces' overall objectives in using social media and do not necessarily fully reflect practices in the field.

These significant limitations mean that the findings presented and discussed here must not be overstated. More research is needed to provide a more thorough and solid picture of armed forces' views of—and use of—social media in peacekeeping operations at different levels of the organization. However, because this study includes responses from the armed forces of almost all EU states, it provides a useful starting point for future research.

Firstly, we asked a few general questions; namely, what types of social media the armed forces use, and their view as to whether or not social media mainly posed risks or presented opportunities, when used in an area of deployment. We also asked if they had issued a social media strategy. Indeed, armed forces, that have not adopted a social media strategy, may have other policies that regulate the use of communication by the agency and/or its personnel. A few indicated that this is the case. The Netherlands for example stated: 'We provide guidelines for using Social Media. Info opsec is forbidden to share. We hand out tips & tricks for the use of social media.' However, this is not the same as having an elaborate general official view on social media use, which is valid as strategic guidelines for the entire organization.

In order to capture different types of opportunities/risks that we argue social media could offer/pose to armed forces, we formulated three risk and three opportunity statements. The statements of risk/threat read as follows: Personnel stationed in an area of deployment (for example Afghanistan) using social media platforms (for example blogs): a) Make the Armed Forces lose control and risk distorting information, making it less correct; b) Place soldiers at risk by revealing sensitive information; c) Harm mission purpose by revealing sensitive information.

The statements of opportunity are: Personnel stationed in an area of deployment (for example Afghanistan) using social media platforms (for example blogs): a) Are a good way to market the armed forces and its mission in the area of deployment; b) Facilitate one-way communication with the civilian population and is a good way to disseminate correct information about the armed forces; c) Facilitate two-way communication with the civilian population, increasing transparency of the operation.

The respondents were asked to grade each statement from "do not agree at all" (1) to "wholly agree" (5). When presenting the answers we merged the two answers indicating agreement, as well as the two answers indicating disagreement, which resulted in three categories of answers (disagree/neither disagree or agree/agree). The distribution of responses was then set against the two explanatory factors: ICT maturity in a national setting and the existence of social media policies in cross-tables. The explanatory factors were

cross-tabulated against each risk and opportunity factor to explore relationships between them. In the presentation of the results we focus on those instances where a particular risk or opportunity was found to be related to an explanatory factor.

The ICT maturity factor was derived from the statistics of the International Telecommunication Union (2015) using the latest figures (from 2013) listing the share of population using the Internet. The armed forces were divided into three groups: firstly, armed forces from high ICT maturity countries with Internet use above 85% of the population: the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Luxembourg and the UK. Secondly, armed forces from moderate ICT maturity countries with Internet use between 70 and 84% of the population: the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Latvia, Slovenia, Estonia, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Slovakia, Hungary and Spain. And finally, armed forces from low ICT maturity countries with Internet use below 69%: Lithuania, Italy, Croatia, Malta, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Portugal.

4. Views on Social Media Use: Risk versus Opportunity

4.1. General Views on Social Media Use

In this section we account for the general results of the survey that clarify views on the use of social media, as well as perceptions of risks and opportunities in relation to social media use.

The findings from our survey show that all the armed forces, with the exception of Luxembourg, claim to use social media; first and foremost Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Some also name Instagram, Google+ and LinkedIn, but only a few say that they use blogs.

Only 11 of the armed forces claim to have an official social media strategy (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Spain, the Czech Republic and the UK). It is a recent phenomenon since, with the exception of Ireland (2008) and the UK (2009), these armed forces only issued a social media strategy in the last couple of years. Among those armed forces without a social media strategy, eight claim that they are planning to issue one (Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and Sweden).

When asked about the opportunities and risks of social media use in areas of deployment, almost all of the European armed forces recognize that social media offer opportunities.

As can be seen in Figure 1, half of the armed forces acknowledge that there are problems and risks involved with social media use, but none perceives the risks as outweighing the opportunities when these are discussed in general terms.

Next we examine perceptions of specific risks and opportunities. Figure 2 shows the armed forces' perception of specific risks mentioned in the survey.

Figure 2 shows that, among the three potential risks, the one referring to "social media use placing soldiers at risk by revealing sensitive information" collects the greatest number of agreements. Fewer perceive a risk that the armed forces might lose control and information might become distorted. Social media has opened the field of communication to new actors, each with the potential and capability of giving different accounts of an event, posting different images of an institution, or purposefully publishing false information worldwide. Yet several armed forces, such as Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy, say that they see no such risks with social media use in an area of deployment. Rather, the most commonly perceived risks are those related to the security of soldiers, and then, the risk of harming mission purpose.

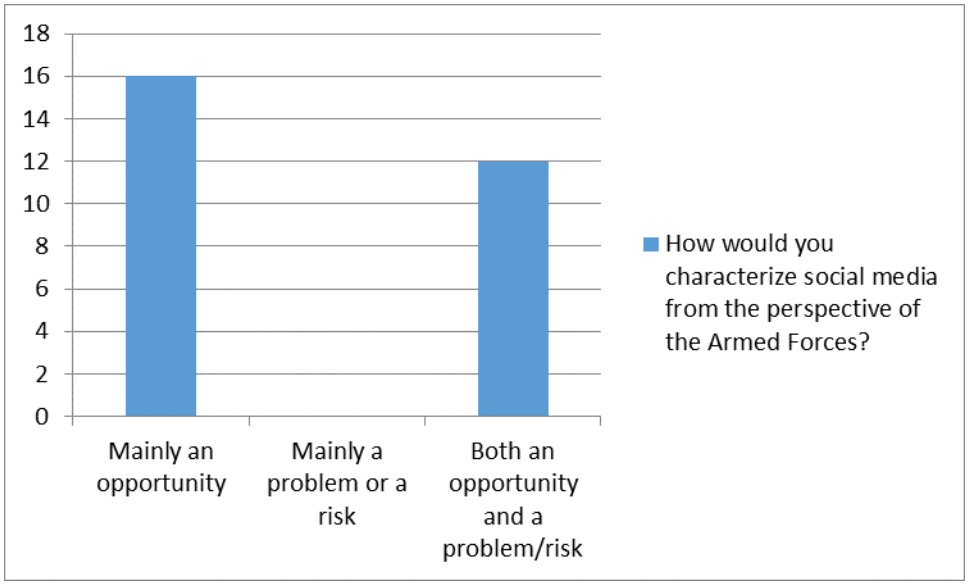

Figure 1. Views on social media as mainly a risk or as an opportunity.

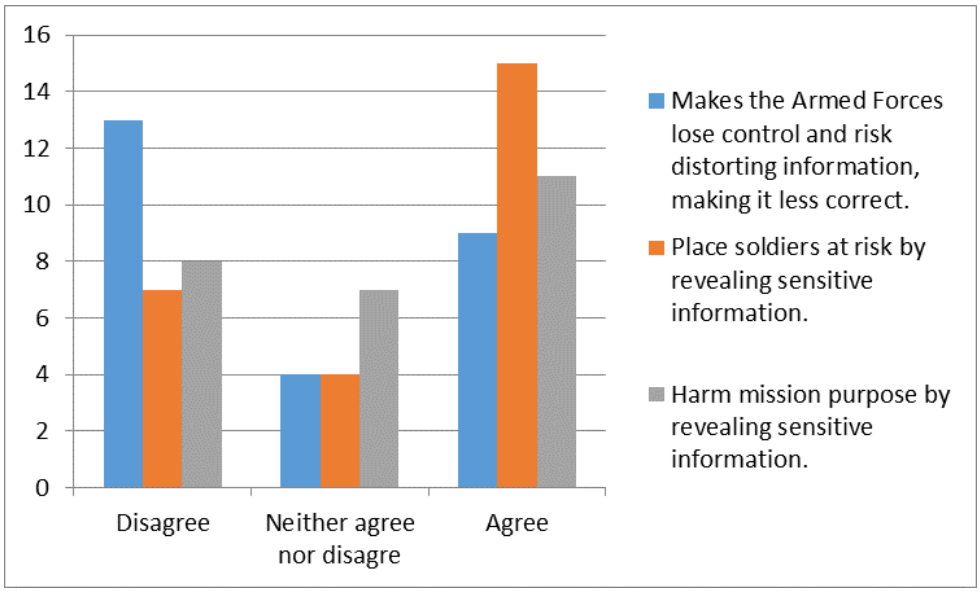

Figure 2. Risks with using social media.

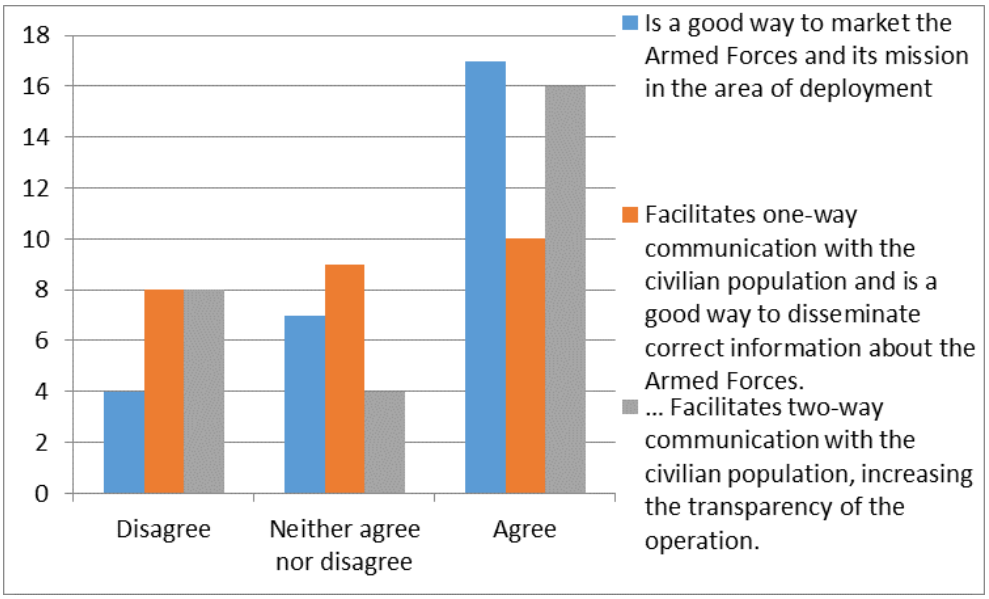

Figure 3. Opportunities with using social media.

In Figure 3 we examine how armed forces perceive the opportunities provided by social media use.

Figure 3 shows that most armed forces see social media use as beneficial for marketing purposes and for two-way communication with the civilian population. Fewer armed forces are convinced that social media facilitates one-way communication with the civilian population and is a good way to disseminate correct information. This may indicate that few armed forces are convinced that social media can replace traditional media for informing and one-way communication with local populations in areas of deployments.

We now move on to explore if the existence of a social media strategy and the national level of ICT maturity influence armed forces' perceptions of social media as a threat or an opportunity.

4.2. How ICT Maturity Relates to Perceptions of Opportunity and Risk in Social Media Use in European Armed Forces

We start by examining risks and opportunities on an aggregated level in relation to national ICT levels (see Table 1).

As can be seen from the table, there are only minor differences between the three groups of armed forces, yet armed forces in countries with high ICT maturity perceive risks as less severe as compared to their counterparts within countries with low ICT maturity. Next we analyzed perceptions of opportunities on an aggregated level, as shown in Table 2.

Again, we can see that there are no major differences between the groups when it comes to opportunities on

Table 1. Risks related to experiences of international deployments.

	Extensive experience of troop deployment		Moderate experience of troop deployment		Minor experience of troop deployment	
	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces
Risk assessment	85	10,6	75	7,5	64	8,0

Table 2. Opportunities related to experiences of international deployments.

	Extensive experience of troop deployment		Moderate experience of troop deployment		Minor experience of troop deployment	
	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces
Opportunity assessment	74	9,3	114	11,4	69	8,6

Table 3. Experience of international deployment related to the proposition "Social media use in an area of deployment place soldiers at risk by revealing sensitive information".

	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Row total
Extensive experience of troop deployment	1	-	7	8
Moderate experience of troop deployment	3	2	5	10
Minor experience of troop deployment	3	2	3	8
Column total	7	4	15	26

an aggregated level. Yet, when looking at the three potential opportunities separately (see Table 3), the analysis shows that all but one of the armed forces in countries with high ICT maturity emphasize social media use as a good way to market the armed forces and its mission—and none of the armed forces in this group disagrees. Most armed forces in countries with moderate ICT maturity also view marketing as an opportunity, although a few disagree.

Based on the Table 3, we conclude that armed forces from countries with moderate and high ICT maturity are more optimistic when it comes to using social media for marketing purposes. Thus, it seems that moderate or high ICT maturity is required in armed forces' home countries for them to view social media as suitable for projecting a favorable image of missions and troops.

In the next section we examine how social media strategies impact on the perception of social media as a threat or opportunity.

4.3. How the Existence of an Official Social Media Strategy Relates to Perceptions of Social Media Use in European Armed Forces

Here we analyze how a social media strategy relates to perceptions of risks and opportunities. It was found that armed forces from countries with the lowest level of ICT maturity (such as Croatia and Bulgaria) also lack a social media strategy. Yet, of those armed forces from countries with high ICT maturity, only the UK and Denmark have issued an official social media strategy. Again, we start by showing the aggregated results based on all three risk factors.

As can be seen from Table 4, we discerned no clear results at the aggregated level when it comes to risk perceptions. Moving onto the independent analysis of each of the three risks, we also did not notice any clear patterns, yet some small differences among armed forces are worth considering (see Table 5).

As the table shows, all but two of the armed forces with a social media strategy acknowledge that soldiers might be placed at risk through social media use. In the group of armed forces lacking a social media strategy views on this risk-factor are more evenly distributed with some (Sweden, Slovenia, Latvia and the Netherlands) not considering this a risk, while others (Denmark, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Portugal and Slovakia) acknowledge this to be a risk. In Table 6 we move on to analyzing the opportunities at the aggregated level.

As seen from the table, there are no clear results when examining opportunities at the aggregated level.

As can be seen from Table 7, among the opportunities, the most interesting one is marketing. For armed forces lacking a social media strategy, on third agrees that social media are a good way to market armed forces and their mission in an area of deployment, whereas only one out of five armed forces with a social media strategy agrees to this. It seems that armed forces that have not adopted a social media strategy are somewhat more prone to conceive of marketing opportunities. These are however small differences that should not be exaggerated.

Table 4. Risks related to ICT maturity.

	High ICT maturity		Moderate ICT maturity		Low ICT maturity	
	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces
Risk assessment	44	7,3	108	9,0	84	10,5

Table 5. Opportunities related to ICT maturity**.**

	High ICT maturity		Moderate ICT maturity		Low ICT maturity	
	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces
Opportunity assessment	65	9,2	126	10,5	69	8,6

Table 6. Social media use as a good way to market the armed forces and its mission in the area of deployment related to ICT maturity.

	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Row total
High ICT maturity	-	1	5	6
Moderate ICT maturity	2	3	7	12
Low ICT maturity	2	3	3	8
Column total	4	7	15	26

Table 7. Risks related to the existence of a social media strategy.

	Having issued a social media strategy		Not having issued a social media strategy	
	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces	Total for all armed forces	Average per individual armed forces
Risk assessment	109	10,0	118	7,9

5. Conclusions

The results of the analysis of EU armed forces' perceptions of risks and opportunities from social media use in areas of deployment show that armed forces embrace social media as an opportunity more than they emphasize the risks. The most commonly perceived opportunities are marketing and two-way communication. Fewer appreciate the opportunity of using social media for one-way communication. The focus on marketing and PR corresponds with the point made in the introduction (e.g. Byrkjeflot & Angell, 2007) about a general tendency within public organizations to increasingly focus on marketing. Armed forces appear to follow this trend.

While none of the armed forces view social media *primarily* as a problem or risk, half of the armed forces acknowledge that the use of social media does involve risks. When asked to assess specific risks, the probability that social media use places soldiers at risk, by revealing sensitive information, is most common. Somewhat surprisingly, the risk of social media use distorting information, making it less correct, is acknowledged by fewer armed forces. As argued in the section on previous research, academics have dealt with armed forces' preoccupation with control of the strategic narrative (e.g. Bjerg Jensen, 2011), yet our results indicate that the risk of distorting information is not seen as the major problem with social media use in areas of deployment. This indicates that armed forces more often focus on the dangers of social media in relation to the safety of military personnel (e.g. Maltby et al., 2015, p. 17), rather than on the risk that they interfere with or distort their strategic narrative.

Furthermore, we explored whether or not views on opportunities and risks were related to the existence of a social media strategy and ICT maturity. In terms of ICT maturity, we found that all armed forces but one, from countries where ICT maturity is moderate or high, consider marketing an opportunity provided by social media use. Among armed forces from countries with the lowest ICT maturity views are divided. This contradicts previous research stating that the use of social media by governmental agencies does not correspond to the national level of ICT maturity (Bonsón et al., 2012). At least, it seems that ICT maturity does matter when it comes to armed forces' views on social media use. Also, we found that armed forces that have not adopted a social media

strategy are somewhat more positive towards using social media for marketing purposes.

Finally, as recognized above, we only investigated armed forces' viewpoints at the strategic level and, as argued above, more research is needed to provide a more complete picture of armed forces' views of social media in peacekeeping operations. Moreover, recognizing that ICT maturity and a social media strategy have relatively little impact, we must investigate other factors that might explain national differences in perceptions of the risks and opportunities of social media use. Should we search for explanations in the national strategic cultures of armed forces? What role do previous negative experiences of placing personnel at risk play in deciding what measures are taken to regulate the use of social media? In contrast, how do positive experiences of social media as a marketing tool spur development towards less regulation and more positive views on social media? Further research with more refined questionnaires and/or interviews is needed to deepen our understanding of the attitudes of armed forces towards the use of social media.

Acknowledgments

The authors are greatly indebted to MA Rickard Blomstrand for his great work in assembling the empirical data.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

Please note that a few more questions were included in the questionnaire, but since they did not form part of the analysis of this article they are not listed below.

Questionnaire on the Armed Forces' social media strategy

Introduction

The questionnaire forms part of the research project "Social media strategies of Armed Forces" conducted by five post-graduate scholars of war studies and political science at the Swedish National Defense University. The aim is to analyze how Armed Forces from states forming part of NATO and/or the EU looks upon the use of social media in connection with military missions abroad as well as everyday work at home. Since there is limited data on how the armed forces make use of social media we would like to generate deeper knowledge in this field.

In order to gather this data we would very much appreciate the cooperation of a person responsible for the social media strategy of Armed Forces (Head of Information Department or its equivalent) to answer the survey. The answers are anonymous.

What is your current position?

Representative of Information Department of the Armed Forces

Representative of Ministry of Defense

Other position, yet with tasks related to the Armed Forces' information and communication

Use of social media by the Armed Forces

Do the Armed Forces officially make use of the following social media:

	Yes	No	Do not know
Facebook			
You Tube			
Twitter			
Blogging			
Instagram			
Other (please specify)			

How active are the Armed Forces on social media?

Make use of social media daily

Make use of social media weekly

Make use of social media monthly

Do not know

How would you characterize social media from the perspective of the Armed Forces:

Mainly an opportunity

Mainly a problem or a risk

Both an opportunity and a problem/risk

Has the Armed Forces officially issued a social media strategy?

Yes

No

If yes, please name the year of issue.

If the Armed Forces are about to issue such a strategy, please name the year of its planned release

To what degree do you agree with the following statements about use of social media in an area of deployment (for example Afghanistan)

Not agree—Wholly agree on a 1-5 scale. 3=Neither agree nor disagree

Personnel stationed in an area of deployment (for example Afghanistan) using social media platforms (for example blogs):

Makes the Armed Forces lose control and risk distorting information, making it less correct

Place soldiers at risk by revealing sensitive information

Harm mission purpose by revealing sensitive information

Is a good way to market the Armed Forces and its mission in the area of deployment

Facilitates one-way communication with the civilian population and is a good way to disseminate correct information about the Armed Forces

Facilitate two-way communication with the civilian population, increasing the transparency of the operation

Among the following options, what is the greatest advantage with using social media by the Armed Forces and its personnel stationed in an area of deployment? Please rank from 1 to 3.

Use of social media of the Armed Forces and its personnel in an era of deployment…

Is a good way to market the Armed Forces and its mission in the area of deployment

Facilitates one-way communication with the civilian population and is a good way to disseminate correct information about the Armed Forces

Facilitate two-way communication with the civilian population, increasing the transparency of the operation

Please mention other negative aspects of social media (if you see any other risks with the Armed forces or its military personnel using social media platforms)

Please mention other positive aspects of social media (if you see any advantages with the Armed Forces or its military personnel using social media platforms)

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 63-79
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.371

Article

Building Peace through Journalism in the Social/Alternate Media

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Submitted: 10 June 2015 | Accepted: 27 October 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
Social media networks are rapidly rewriting the traditional principles and protocols of war and conflict reporting. This paper endorses the argument that with the help of new media technologies, journalists can enhance the peacebuilding efforts in societies and communities. Their writings in the alternate media can provide 'compelling form of engagement' between the audiences and the people affected in the areas of violent conflict. But, the paper further argues, this requires a broadening of the orthodox model of journalistic objectivity that has so far been in place. It examines the possibilities of new models in the light of the existing journalism paradigms as argued by scholars including Galtung and Ruge (1965), Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), Shinar (2007), Hackett (2011) and Shaw (2011). It concludes on the need to have a model that is 'a more natural fit' for the 21st century by giving journalists the 'flexibility' to enable people to make their own judgments as to where the truth lies; and to open up the possibilities for dialogue and engagement in conflict resolution.

Keywords
alternate media; challenger paradigm; conflict resolution; new journalism models; peacebuilding; peace journalism; social media

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

1. Introduction

New media, social media and alternate media are the terms used intermittently to explain the technological changes that have revolutionised the information gathering, news making and its distribution across the boundaries. Because of their increased overlapping of the content and functions, these platforms are fast becoming an alternate platform for distributing news and information (Hackett, 2011; Keeble, 2010; Matheson & Allan 2010; Newman, 2011; van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

Not only is the online daily coverage of news made available by almost all major media organisations, newspapers and televisions channels, they also have Twitter feeds and Facebook pages (Newman, 2011). Smaller independent media organisations use it as a major source to publish news, and journalists have their blogs, twitters and Facebook accounts to express their opinion and views. The rise of 'citizen journalism and mass-self communication' is now seen as a direct alternative to 'journalism's traditional role or mission, its public responsibilities' (Allan, 2007). According to AOL News editor in chief, Lewis D'Vorkin, (as cited by Allan, 2007): 'the world is turning to the fastest growing news team—citizen journalists—to get a human perspective through the eyes of those who lived or experienced the news as it unfolds'.

Alia goes to the extent of calling blogging 'the new journalism, able to cross geographic, cultural and political borders and help build community, transcending the limits imposed by attitudes, policies, and governments of the regions and countries where they reside' (Alia, 2010, p. 136). Moreover, 'Twitter users are beginning to find their way into the start-system of mass media alongside media celebrities' whereby journalists are treating tweets from celebrities or politicians as 'quotes' (Lesage & Hackett, 2013, p. 7). The result is that these platforms 'are increasingly accepted as legit-

imate standards to measure and mark people and ideas; these rankings are then amplified through mass media and in turn reinforced by users through social buttons such as following and liking' (p. 7).

Social media is also a major source for the whistleblowers, e.g. the WikiLeaks, which in many instances has attracted the media's attention world over. Privately uploaded videos on media outlets such as YouTube have many-a-times attracted mainstream media's attention. According to Matheson and Allan (2010), the citizen dispatches relayed in these spaces 'reveal their potential to narrow the distance that otherwise allows distant publics to ignore their plight' (p. 188). Even the indigenous media in countries such as Canada, Japan, USA, Australia and Greenland, has found audiences across the globe (Alia, 2010). This signifies the *cross-over roles* of the mainstream, social and new media especially in cases where the stories have been overlooked or avoided by the mainstream media. Hence, the terms 'social media', 'new media' and 'alternate media' are broadly referred to in the paper as social media platforms and networks, and are treated as a *given social reality or environment* in which the journalists have to operate in order to write and disseminate news on conflict, without going into their ideologies, complexities, politics or dynamics.

This article focusses more on looking at the possibilities available for the journalists to play a more positive role in conflict situations and help build peace in societies in the new age media. It argues for the need to have a 'broader model of journalism' to achieve that goal and discusses its implications for those who practice the profession in the light of existing alternate models. It concludes that any journalism model that can provide 'a natural fit for the 21st century' must have the *flexibility* and *creativity* to make full use of the technological advancements that characterise the age of new media. At the same time, there needs to be a cohesive and 'synergised media strategy' between the journalists and other media professionals, researchers, academics, peace workers and communities if they are to make a positive social change.

2. Peace and Conflict Reporting in Social Media Networks

Social media networks are 'rapidly rewriting the principles and protocols of war and conflict reporting', argue Matheson and Allan (2010, p. 187) in their study of four conflicts in the year 2008. The study consisted of the social media responses to Mumbai terrorist attacks in India; street protests in Greece; the final government's push against the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the Israeli assault on Gaza. They conclude that 'collaborative approaches to news gathering offer compelling forms of engagement and immediacy'. Although it is acknowledged that such information is 'also prone to inaccuracy, with key "facts" lacking verification or corroboration' (p. 187) as in the cases of Mumbai and Greece, tweeting had echoes of 'rumour and prejudice'. Yet, the authors also point out that in situations like Sri Lanka and Gaza, 'social networks fill silences created by censorship and suppression' (p. 187). In their opinion, the fact that social networks are being used to 'make connections across diasporas, to mobilise support and to build complex global spaces outside those established by news organisations and states[,] open up new distinctive forms of communication which journalism cannot afford to ignore' (p. 187).

Newman (2011) in his report *Mainstream Media and the Distribution of News in the Age of Social Discovery* gave three case studies to demonstrate how social media platforms are changing the production, distribution and discovery of news. One of them is the news of the death of Osama Bin Laden when the American forces raided his house in Abbottabad in Pakistan in May 2011. The first tweet was posted by Shoaib Akhtar, a Pakistani IT consultant on a holiday in the mountainous city of Abbottabad and feeling annoyed at the sound of the hovering helicopter in the area at 1am Pakistan local time. By the time Akhtar realised what was going on, he had become 'the guy who liveblogged the Osama raid without knowing it' (Newman, 2011, p. 30):

> By that time he'd gathered almost 100,000 followers for his Twitterstream and not just a network hub of information about events in Abbottabad but a story in his own right. He spent much of the few days talking to the world's press and posting pictures of them setting up their satellite positions near his home. (Newman, 2011, p. 30)

In Britain, records Newman, the social monitoring tool Trendsmap showed that 'BBC stories were consistently the most shared on Twitter throughout the day, and BBC log files showed almost 400,000 referrals from Facebook and Twitter to the top stories about the event' (p. 32). Back in the United States the story also emerged first through Twitter and went viral, records Newman. New York based company Social Flow mapped how the story spread by analysing 15 million tweets. Within one minute, it reported, the first tweet was resent eighty times and from there it went viral (p. 31). Many people tweeted that they had first got the news on Twitter or Facebook, then checked it on News App on their mobile and then switched to the TV.

Jeff Jarvis, American journalism professor, summed up the change in the news distribution of Osama's death in these words:

> The old definition of shared national experience was watching TV at the same time. This shared experience is happening with TV in the background. The In-

> ternet is our connection machine and Twitter is the new Times Square. (Cited in Newman, 2011, p. 32)

According to the special report of *The Economist* (2011), the social and new media are taking the audience back to the conversational culture of coffeehouse. For Newman (2011) the change means 'more than that':

> The new electronic coffeehouses are not replacing the mass media; rather, they live in a symbiotic relationship, feeding and amplifying each other....The news itself may emerge first via Twitter, but it is the mass media that pick it up and package it for a mass audience. (Newman, 2011, p. 56)

It is thus 'the interplay between mainstream media and social media' that makes most news organisations recognise that there is no turning back from this new 'social ecosystem', argues Newman (p. 56). As new networks such as Google+ and social aggregators like Flipboard, WhatsApp, news.me and Zite are emerging, he maintains, the news will continue to become more personalized and customized for the audiences; 'and yet none of this replaces the role of a traditional news organisation'. 'The need for quality content to be produced, packaged and distributed remains crucial for the new ecosystem to function and flourish', even though the news publishers already realise that 'there is no alternative but to engage—hard and fast' (p. 56).

3. Broadening the Journalism Model

The 'new distinctive forms of communication' that Matheson and Allan (2010, p. 187) have pointed out in their study hints towards the change in the traditional journalism model to include the platforms and medium offered by the social, new and alternate media. And what Newman refers to as the *symbiosis* between the various media platforms is clearly the phenomenon that is already taking place - the 'broadening of journalism model' in the age of new media.

Verbitsky, an academic on conflict resolution at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), used the term in an interview (January 2014) with the author during her doctoral research when she was asked to comment on the nature of relationship between conflict resolution and journalism. According to Verbitsky it is an attempt to free journalism from the demands of 'the orthodox model of objectivity' which can be 'very rigid and modest in the way it approaches war' (Aslam, 2014, pp. 149-151). To start with, Verbitsky draws the line between conflict resolution as a practice and as a means to help journalists play a positive role in reporting conflicts. In her opinion, journalists need not to become 'conflict resolution practitioners' in order to help people resolve conflicts or build peace. Rather, one needs to be careful 'in trying to delineate the parameters of what journalists could do,' she says. But there are other ways 'of being a journalist, of being faithful to what journalism is about, without having to take that model (of conflict resolution) on board,' she says. Journalists should be able to work within 'the new models to deliver information and possibilities about how conflicts can be resolved.' (p. 149)

This requires 'a broadening of the concept of journalism to embrace other forms and models which are much more cognizant' than the 'orthodox model' of objectivity that dominates the mainstream media. 'For me the old model is fine for the period in which it came into being, but for the 21st century it is too simplistic, too commercial,' she says (p. 150).

Verbitsky's call to broaden journalism's model is a means to enable the journalists to ask critical questions, expose truth, find spaces and open dialogues. It is reinforced by her emphasis on what they can learn from the field of conflict resolution: conflict analysis, conflict transformation, dialogue building, and facilitation in order to bring the parties on a platform to communicate. 'In the 21st century we have seen so many changes in so many situations, so many transmutations, that I think journalism needs to transmute to keep pace with what is happening and to reflect the reality of situations,' (p. 151). For that purpose, journalists must learn 'how to deconstruct a conflict', she points out. How to do it? She suggests going back to journalism practices:

> The journalistic way of asking 5Ws [who, what, when, where, why] are a good point to start with….But then you need to add on more information about the needs and interests of the conflicting parties, as well as those of the other stake holders in the world such as the super powers, nuclear powers and the regional players. There is also the element of the historical context and exploring what avenues can be opened for a dialogue. (p. 151)

However, the difficulty for the journalists in doing so, Verbitsky concedes, is in 'trying to persuade the editors and media owners they can do it without threatening the integrity of the news that they are producing'. But the argument can be made, she points out, that the journalists' integrity lies in their ability to ask questions:

> …because if they don't, how do you get a critical analysis of what is going on….So for journalists to have integrity, I think, they have to ask questions of everybody. And it's not just who is the most powerful one, it's just everybody who is connected with that conflict in order to try and get to a space where people can make their own judgments as to where the truth lies; and to open up the possibilities for a dialogue and the space for engagement in conflict resolution. (p. 150)

One of the reasons why people get cynical about the news, Verbitsky reflects, is that 'when the orthodox model is employed, it's all gloom and doom on conflicts and no prospect of anything other than conflict continuing on indefinitely' (p. 150). But the journalists can also see conflicts in terms of 'human relationships' and help people in connecting with each other. Giving the examples of Rwanda and Nazi Germany, Verbitsky finds that's where Track II diplomacy is 'very valuable':

> For people at the level of community leadership to meet their counterparts in Track II diplomacy, to exchange stories and narratives, to hear about how the conflict impact each other, to recognise each other's humanity and to see the possible spaces, even if they are small spaces, where some kind of conflict resolution can be engendered, can be important. (p. 150)

4. The 'Objectivity Regime'

Verbitsky is not the only one to find 'the objectivity model' lacking in terms of informing the public on peace and conflict issues. Starting with Galtung (1996), Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) and Hackett & Zhao (1998), many academics have 'repeatedly demonstrated the shortcomings of existing journalism when measured against the stated ideal of objectivity', (Hackett, 2011, p. 39). According to Hackett, *objectivity* is a 'paradigm or regime, a metaphor that calls attention to the interlinkage of practices, norms, epistemology and structures in journalism' (p. 37). These practices include the notions of 'accuracy', 'fairness', 'balance', 'separating "fact" from "opinion", 'the privileging of personalities over structures, political strategies over policy analysis, and discrete and timely events over long-term processes, conditions or contexts' (p. 39). To the extent that employment of such practices requires specialised skills, 'objective reporting enhances journalists' claim to professional status' (p. 38):

> When measured against sensationalism or wilful propaganda, these objectivity practices have much to recommend them….Yet they also have predictable consequences that are highly problematic for informing public opinion, or incentivising remedial action, in relation to global crises of conflict, ecology and poverty. (Hackett, 2011, p. 39)

Objectivity is considered as the fundamental tenet of contemporary reporting that refers to the factual basis of reporting. It is 'the value of fairness' and 'the ethic of restraining your own biases' says American journalist Rosen (cited in Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 203). But Bell's (1998) experience of covering the Bosnian ethnic cleansing in 1994–95 as a BBC correspondent led him to criticise the BBC's guidelines for reporters to be objective and dispassionate. He argues:

> I am no longer sure what 'objective' means: I see nothing object-like in the relationship between the reporter and the event, but rather a human and dynamic interaction between them. As for 'dispassionate', it is not only impossible but inappropriate to be thus neutralised—I would say even neutered—at the scene of an atrocity or massacre, or most man-made calamities. (Bell, 1998, p. 18)

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) are particularly critical of the journalists' defence of objectivity. For them, journalists are involved whether they like it or not. Nor can they be wholly objective—they only see a fraction of the action especially in battle, they do not know the whole picture. For the same reason they question how the reporter can claim to be reporting the truth—a small slice of truth, perhaps, not the whole picture. And a partial reporting of the truth often distorts the overall picture.

For them, it is about making 'choices' in terms of 'what to report, and how to report' in conflict (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). These choices 'create opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict'.

Objectivity then is not the issue: 'Selection is the issue, the criteria applied and the codes and the context in which the event is placed and interpreted' (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 52). Rosen (cited in Howard, 2003) says:

> We make an error if we assume that the price of an interest in conflict resolution is giving up commitment to truth and professional objectivity. It is in fact quite the opposite: conflict sensitivity is a journalist's pass into a deeper understanding of what it means to seek the truth in journalism. (Rosen as cited in Howard, 2003)

The 'beneficiaries' of the objectivity regime, according to Hackett, are many: including the 'commercial daily press', 'news agencies', journalism's institutional status, 'politicians', and 'the interested groups that had the resources and willingness to play the game' (Hackett, 2011, p. 38; also see Hackett & Zhao, 1998, chapter 3). But the downside is that 'objectivity regime helps to manage the symbiotic relationship between news media and the state' (p. 38) thus making the media a propaganda tool in the hands of the state (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). The framing and agenda setting by the media, in terms of what makes the news, can determine the public opinion and also reflect journalists' personal perceptions and prejudices when they *interpret* the conflict for the audience (Aslam, 2010). The media-state symbiosis is also affected by the competition that exists among the news media to capture the audience and ratings (Hackett, 2007; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

5. What the 'New Model for Journalism' Means?

One can evidently find considerable scholarly support on the need for a 'broader model for journalism' to improve the standards of contemporary journalism in conflict reporting and peace building. But what exactly does it means in terms of practical journalism and professional trends and values? Following is the discussion on what it implies for the journalists involved in conflict and peace reporting.

5.1. 'Peace' as the 11th News Value

Conflict is a news value because it sells—Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Harcup and O'Neil (2001) tell us in their studies. While Galtung and Ruge listed the elements that make up the foreign news; Harcup and O'Neil (2001) in their follow-up study identified ten dominant elements as to what constitutes the news: power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news events, magnitude or scope, relevance, follow-up and the newspaper own agenda.

The first implication for journalists is to make 'peace' a news value. Many scholars have argued in favour of attributing journalism with the 'value explicit approach' of peace but with the journalistic commitment to state the facts and a clear recount of how these facts are met (Galtung, 1996; Lynch, 2013; Shaw, Lynch, & Hackett, 2011). This would lend it the legitimacy to be included within the paradigm of professional journalism. Peace is an important attribute as it brings in 'the values of transparency and responsibility', says Lynch (cited in Aslam, 2014). 'The opposite of value *explicit* is not value neutral but value *concealed*':

> And if you are value explicit and you are in favour of 'peace' and you are in a privileged position…then there is an onus to follow through from theory to practice; there is an onus to involve one's self in debates generally and make a contribution to them. Not only to reflect opinion but also to lead opinion. (Interview, May 2013, cited in Aslam, 2014, p. 156)

The new paradigm of news values allows peace story or event to become the 'news' when a war becomes 'a routine, terrible but repetitive, monotonous, plainly boring….In that case the peace event…is a farewell to boredom' (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 18). 'Both violence and peace are texts. Whether they are (newsworthy) events depends on the context.' Lynch further overarches this paradigm to apply to the overall framing of news when he talks about the value of good journalism being in its ability to 'throw up' the stories that are 'unusual to the norm' and that make the 'good bits of journalism' (Aslam, 2014, p. 160).

However, related to making 'peace' a news value is the tricky matter of defining the term 'peace' itself—an issue that leads people to confuse it with 'activism' and 'advocacy' (Kempf, 2007). Peace has always been associated with war and conflict. Barash (2000) argues that peace is never fully achieved, but can only be approached. Kempf (2003) gives various meanings of peace ranging from it being the 'absence of war' to being a 'state of harmony'. Galtung (1996) argues that peace has a 'fatal connection' with war—he terms the mere 'absence of war' or ceasefire as 'negative peace'. On the other hand, 'positive peace' is the condition in which other 'non-violent' ways are available to the society to deal with conflict. 'In positive peace, aspects of structural and cultural violence are exposed, and challenged, and this requires openness and inclusiveness in public spheres, to allow monitory democracy' (Lynch, 2013, p. 50). If conflict is defined in terms of 'human relationships'; peace is defined 'not as the absence of conflict, but as the absence of violence' (p. 50). Metaphorically, peace can be seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition; it is a dynamic and social process of constructing peace—a phenomenon that Lederach (2003) calls 'conflict transformation'.

Related to peace, are the concepts of *peacebuilding* and *peacekeeping*. Peacekeeping is defined as 'the maintenance of peace, especially the prevention of further fighting between hostile forces in an area' (Collins, 2003). It may require the presence of internal and external forces to monitor and execute the truce between the opposing sides—a role that has been increasingly assigned to the UN Peacekeeping forces (Mogekwu, 2011). Peacebuilding, on the other hand, is a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships (Lederach, 1997). The term involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords.

Galtung (1998) explains peacebuilding as the process of creating self-supporting structures that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives in war-like situations. Such mechanisms should be built into the structures of society and be present there as a reservoir for the system itself to draw upon, just as a healthy body has the ability to generate its own antibodies and does not need ad hoc administration of medicine (Galtung, 1998; Lynch & Galtung, 2010).

Hamelink (2011, p. 11) contends that conflict are natural part of living with others and that ultimately 'history takes its bloody route' because as long as people have different values and beliefs they will always 'see things differently'. Lynch (2013) argues that this would 'invalidate peace, if peace were indeed an end state requiring everyone to agree on everything' (Lynch, 2013, p. 50). Peace is worth pursuing because 'peace allows for people to live with conflict' and in its non-violent response to conflicts, peace finds 'alternatives to "bloody routes"' (p. 50).

Non-violence then, according to Lynch (2013), is an essential aspect of peace, a thread that he traces in the history of anti-war and peace movements against the threat of nuclear warfare, which led American President Johnson (and later his successor Richard Nixon) to turn down Pentagon's proposal to launch nuclear strikes against Vietnam in 1966. The biggest ever demonstration in New York's Central Park by the Nuclear Freeze Movement 'effectively' toned down President Reagan's rhetoric on waging nuclear attacks against the Soviet Union and he declared it 'unwinnable' (Lynch, 2013, p. 47). Some other examples of successful non-violent movements include Gandhi's non-violent civil disobedience movement during the Indian freedom struggle (1936–1947); the US Civil rights Movements led by Martin Luther King Jr; and 'the mass movements that brought down the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe in 1989' (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 59). A non-violent approach is then essential to the journalism that makes peace a news value.

In the respect where peace is associated with a country's interests and goals, the term *peace* can be 'notoriously polysemic, to the point where it can sometimes seem to mean all things to all people' (Lynch, 2013, p. 46). Chami (2010), member of Beirut-based NGO, the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, records his experience in media training that involved journalists from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Palestine—countries where the US-sponsored Middle East peace process has given peace a bad name (Zogby, 2003). The term 'peace' in Arabic could be translated as *salam*, he says, but this 'has been sensitised to give the connotation of peace with Israel which tends to be problematic to many Arabs who would shy away from, if not attack the discipline altogether without really delving into its depth' (Chami, 2010, p. 18). Instead the participants were willing to accept the translation as *silim* which 'portrays more a kind of civil peace—something more internal' (p. 18).

Chami's experience also provides 'an alternative understanding of peace' in its attempt 'to discern and live by peaceful values, at every level: from our own interiority' (Lynch, 2013, p. 47). It is an 'insurgent form' that is 'nurtured and developed in peace movements' and is contrary to the prevalent Western 'teleological' view of peace which is 'victory oriented' (p. 47).

Mandelzis (2007) argues that in relation to the news media, 'the notion of "peace" has still not been adequately conceptualised' (p. 99). In her study of peace discourse in the Israeli news media, she found that 'studies on media peace discourse *per se* are extremely rare, and peace itself is not strongly emphasised in the media or elsewhere' (p. 98). She also notes the observations made by Groff and Smoker (2002) who said that although the term 'peace' has been 'increasingly popular' among the leadership of UNESCO; there is no 'clear consensus' on how to interpret it. Mandelzis further argues that 'perhaps it is the lack of perspectives on 'peace', among other things, that also explains the scarcity of literature on the relationships among the mass media, communication and the culture of 'peace' (2007, p. 98).

Bratic and Schirch (2008), too, have argued that while there has been an 'optimistic shift' in the media's role in conflict, 'the theoretical argument for the media's impact on peace is under-developed, the practical projects are vastly scattered and a systematic analysis of the practice is missing'. Moreover, the debate reiterates the media's social responsibility model and 'its universal and philosophical nature tends to divert and dilute the discussion'.

Hawkins' (2011) maintains that it is because 'peace is a process, not an event' (p. 262) and because the 'needs of the media corporations' in going about the business of constructing news 'do not fit well' with the needs of peace related journalism (p. 263). He quotes Wolfsfeld, Alimi and Kailani (2008):

> A successful peace process requires patience and the news media demand immediacy. Peace is most likely to develop within a calm environment and the media have an obsessive interest in threats and violence. Peace building is a complex process and the news media deal with simple events. (Wolfsfeld et al., 2008, cited in Hawkins, 2011, p. 263)

But this is not to assume that the peace events cannot be 'exciting' (Mandelzis, 2007) or without the promise of 'drama' (Hawkins, 2011). Events like 'the historic Oslo handshake on the White House lawn in September 1993', 'the ceremony marking the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan (27 October 1994)', and 'Elton John's concert in Belfast (May 1998) celebrating the peace agreement in Northern Ireland' can be 'fascinating ceremonies' (Mandelzis, 2007, p. 109). Whereas 'the tension of the bitter foes coming to sit at the same table, the outbreaks of residual violence that threaten to ruin the process, the threat of walkouts, the anticipation of a successful outcome' can provide the media with 'both action and drama' (Hawkins, 2011, p. 264).

5.2. 'Connecting with People' and Knowing 'How to Do It'

Mohammad Wajih, a peace worker who works with people in peace and conflict situations in Pakistan, says that journalists can build peace in societies in the digital age by doing two things: 'connecting with people' and 'choosing the right medium'. Wajih was also interviewed by the author during her visit to Pakistan in April 2012 for her doctoral research (Aslam, 2014, pp. 144-147). As the former programme director for Search for Commonground in Islamabad, the US-based NGO that funds projects in peace building and Track II di-

plomacy, he has extensive experience in helping the communities bridge the conflicting issues at social level (www.sfcg.org). Currently he is the Director Programmes, Intermedia, Pakistan, a non-profit organisation that works on bridging the communication gap between people through media.

For Wajih, it is important for the journalists to connect with the people who are affected by the conflict rather than tag along the official sources. Focusing on the similarities between the different sides is even better, especially if it is an old conflict. He supports his argument by giving an example from his experience in dealing with the Nepal-Sri Lanka and Pakistan-India conflicts.

'One of the main areas of common grounds between nations is sports, so we built on football during the Nepal-Sri Lanka conflict and cricket for Pakistan-India conflict. This way we tried to create a positive channel for the youthful energies,' Wajih explains. They produced a 26-episode radio drama called 'The Team' in 2011 for the audience in Pakistan, Kashmir and India. It was a series of stories about a group of cricket players who came from different regions with different social, cultural or political backgrounds in a team but each story also highlighted the common issues and situations that faced them as human beings while they interacted with each other. In the end, the players were able to reconcile their differences and develop positive relationships among themselves (p. 144).

'The project was a great success', Wajih recalls. One of the reasons, why it was so readily accepted by the audience was probably the fact that the project did not use professional actors. 'We went on a *talent hunt* from within the communities to find young men and women for playacting and they connected with the audience immediately as *real people* facing *real issues* that were similar to their own' (p. 145).

Wajih's belief in the media's ability to leave a positive impact when it is 'connected' with people and communities is supplemented by another equally strong belief: the importance of choosing 'the right kind of media' to relay such messages. 'When you are working with the communities, it is important to engage with them in the language they understand and the medium that is part of their daily lives' (p. 145).

Therefore local and regional language-based community radio or TV channel can become an effective means of promoting messages among the rural communities helping them change attitudes, accept peace building initiatives and ultimately helping to resolve conflicts, he says. In the bigger cities with a more literate audience, it would be the newspapers, magazines and national TV channels and at the international level, the social media can be effective. But when civil infrastructure is in shambles during active armed conflict, stories have come out of small communities through the social, new and alternate media.

Journalists, in Wajih's opinion, therefore can play an important in role in reducing violence and building peace if they know 'how' to do it.

> If journalists are not trained professionally; if they do not know how to engage the conflicting parties in a dialogue without losing the control of the conversation (e.g., in a talk show); and if they do not know how to connect with people, they will only enhance the conflict without even knowing it. (p. 146)

However, Wajih cautions against another problem and that is when all kinds of journalists get involved in reporting and analysing a conflict. 'This brings forth a plethora of assumptions, presumptions and biases which makes conflict resolution even more complicated because then people do not know what and who to believe,' he says.

> At the basic level, all journalists need to know how to analyse conflicts and how to communicate with people. But they also need to identify their own role as to 'how' they do it? Newspaper commentators and analysts, TV anchors, talk-show hosts, programme mediators, even entertainers, all have roles in the media that is very different from the role of the journalists who work and report in the conflict zones. The important thing is to know the best and most effective way to give the message of peace within their areas of expertise (p. 146)

Equally important is for the journalists to be 'honest and forthright in what they say and why they say it', continues Wajih, 'it is a matter of personal ethics and integrity.' It is commonly thought that the big names in journalism always say the right thing; not necessarily so. 'In my experience big-time old-hand journalists are equally—if not more than their younger colleagues—susceptible to taking positions on an issue out of ignorance or arrogance,' he argues. 'Also, because they are famous they are specifically targeted by the parties who have stakes in the conflict and can fall prey to coercion or corruption.'

Wajih recalled when in 1984 India carried out nuclear missile tests and there was international diplomatic pressure on Pakistan not to retaliate in a similar manner, the Pakistani media was urging the government to do otherwise. When Pakistan carried out its own nuclear tests, many countries enforced sanctions against Pakistan. 'How was that a peaceful suggestion (made by the Pakistan media) for the country? Or even helpful for the people who for the many next years had to face severe economic and social problems,' he asks.

5.3. Blurred Lines

The massive shift in the new age media platforms has not only impacted the nature of the audiences, it has

also affected the scope of journalism as a profession. Lynch points out in an interview with the author in May 2013, that 'the lines are blurred' not only between the mainstream media and social media but also between the journalism careers (Aslam, 2014, pp. 153-157). 'Journalistic careers are in many cases a lot less linear', he says. For instance Lebanese journalist Vanessa Basil, who attended Lynch's workshop on peace journalism in Lebanon and went to practice it in all kinds of media. In his opinion, she is a very good example of how she has made use of social media, intended outcome, donor media, commercial media, Arab media, western media, and international media and creating opportunities for herself through it. Basil is active in social media. 'She is doing "gigs" in all kinds of media and she has built her own identity through using social media' (p. 156).

As the lines between the mainstream traditional media and social media are getting blurred, other scholars and journalists have also welcomed the 'freedom' and 'flexibility' that it can offer to journalists who engage in peace building (Hawkins, 2011; Mogekwu, 2011). They can make use of this 'cross-over role' and join forces with social media and other civic movements like communication rights 'if their efforts are calibrated with due sensitivity to context' (Hackett, 2011, p. 47). But in order to do so, they must develop, between them strategic approaches capable of motivating exponents in both fields. This flexibility also offers journalists the creativity to shape meaningful messages in a format that is not confined to news media but appeals to the masses in other media forms such as photojournalism, documentaries and entertainment.

Suchenwirth and Keeble (2011), also the proponents of using social media for peacebuilding, enlist the peacebuilding initiatives across the world where social media has played a positive role in gathering and disseminating the information. They assert that the community media is 'the most promising milieu for peace journalism' as it actively promotes human rights and social change (2011, p. 12).

Alia (2010) voices similar thoughts in her study *Crossing Borders: The Global Influence of Indigenous Media*, where she says that during the 1990 confrontation between the townspeople at Oka, Quebec, and the people of the Kanehsatake Mohawk First Nation, 'radio played a crucial role in providing public information, conflict prevention and conflict resolution' (p. 128).

5.4. Broader 'Claim of Humanity'

Journalists are often referred to as the fourth estate and the guardians of public trust. Indeed Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963) have argued that journalists have a social responsibility to criticise those in power on behalf of the peoples and societies, more or less serving as their watchdogs (Curran, 2011; Siebert et al., 1963).

The Article 3 of the 1978 UNESCO Declaration states that 'the mass media have an important contribution to make to the strengthening of peace and international understanding and in countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war' (UNESCO, 1978, p. 1). The social responsibility of journalism, in Nordenstreng's opinion, calls for initiatives 'to systematically monitor what the media tell about the world with a view to improving media performance and contributing to media ethics' (2001, p. 1).

Moral responsibility to society, it thus follows, is an important obligation of journalists. Shaw (2011) has argued in favour of linking journalism with a more 'proactive (preventive)' role of media in conflict rather than a 'reactive (prescriptive)' role:

> If journalism is to play any agency role in conflict, it should focus on deconstructing the underlying structural causes of political violence such as poverty, famine, exclusion of minorities, youth marginalization, human trafficking…rather than focusing merely on the attitudes and behaviours of the elite that benefit from direct and uncensored violence. (Shaw, 2011, p. 108)

Such an approach that entails a more 'avowedly proactive' role for peace journalism must aim for greater public interest (Lynch, Hackett, & Shaw, 2011, p. 12). A relevant question at this point would be: since the peace journalism's philosophy is rooted in the social responsibility theory (Kempf, 2007, p. 3; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 4) what are the implications of this approach on the journalists' obligations to the society in a global age, where conflicts transcend geographical boundaries and encompass a global audience?

In his epilogue to *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*, Ward (2005) argues that it broadens the 'claim of humanity' on journalism:

> If contemporary journalism is to seek to represent the truth, there must be a re-conception of the journalism's social contract and its public….The new social contract requires that we add what I would call the 'claim of humanity' to the principles of journalism. The claim states that journalists' primary allegiance is to truthful, independent informing of a global public humanity. When considering one's journalistic duty, a reader's place of birth, residence, race or cultural group is morally irrelevant. (Ward, 2005, p. 328)

Ward's claim of humanity hints at the shift in the way journalists' role in society can be looked at in the age of new media. Modern journalism in 21st century, in Bacon's words, needs to be 'both local and global'. In fact the 'failure of the mainstream media to achieve this is one aspect of the crisis in journalism' today (Bacon,

2011, p. 53). She calls on the universities to embrace this aspect again by accepting the investigative journalism as research methodology in academics and collaborating with other universities to give space to the students' investigative journalism.

6. New Journalism Models

Castells (2007) has argued that the increased usage of the alternate media through the internet in the twenty-first century demonstrates a 'historic shift of the public sphere from the institutional realm to [a] new communication space'—one in which 'insurgent politics and social movements can intervene more decisively' (p. 238). In fact, he asserts that 'the media have become the social space where power is decided' (p. 238). Such media centric stance warrants 'further scrutiny of the power relations at work within media domains' (Lynch et al., 2011, p. 8). Hence there have been efforts by the journalists and academics including Bell (1998), Galtung, (1965, 1969, 1996, 2010), Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), Shaw (2011), Lynch (2010, 2013), Tehranian (2002, 2007), Shinar (2007), Keeble, Tulloch and Zollmann (2010), and Hackett (2007, 2011) to find alternate ways to help journalists engage in the 'journalism of attachment', one that 'cares as well as knows' (Bell, 1998, p. 16); that is 'responsible' and 'accountable' (Howard, 2003) in reporting conflicts. Such journalism would not contribute to escalating conflict situations but would find 'non-violent' responses to them (Galtung, 1996); such journalism would also be 'ethical' and professionally ascribe to the standards of 'good' journalism (Lynch, 2013).

A host of new concepts have come forth starting from 'the journalism of attachment' (Bell, 1998) to include the notions of 'citizen journalism' (Allan, 2007), 'reliable journalism' (Howard, 2003), 'development journalism' (Dixit, 2010), 'critically deliberative journalism' (Robie, 2013), 'conflict sensitive journalism' (Howard, 2003) and 'peace journalism' (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). All of them are essentially drawn from the notions which stress the social responsibility of the media and advocate a proactive role for the media in resolving conflicts and aim towards peace. There were other titles too, as mentioned by Shinar (2007, p. 205) that include 'victim journalism' (Hume, 1997); 'justice journalism' (Messman, 2001) and 'engaging' journalism (Lynch, 2003).

Yet it is peace journalism that has been the focus of the debate and whose theoretical and conceptual framework has been significantly developed in the past two decades. It is partly because the term 'peace' is provocative in both ways, eliciting a negative and positive response from people (McGoldrick, 2007). And partly because many scholars do not see peace journalism deviating from good journalism practices. For instance, Robie (2010) argues that much of peace journalism is the combination of an individual's approach to a conflict situation and plain good contextual journalism. Ross (2007, p. 74) maintains that 'peace journalism does not involve any radical departure from contemporary journalism practice'.

Peace journalism is therefore discussed here as one of the alternate and broader models for journalism in the new age that can help maximise the role of journalists in peace building and conflict reduction. The other three are the *alternate journalism* and *communication rights movement* as proposed by Hackett (2011) and *human rights journalism* by Shaw (2011). They are then discussed in the light of each other along with their implications for journalism as a profession.

6.1. Peace Journalism

Galtung and Ruge (1965) in their examination of the structure of what makes the foreign news have presented the *peace journalism* model as an alternative to the prevalent model of *war journalism* that is based on the 'objectivity regime'. Peace journalism has its orientation towards *peace process* as opposed to violent events; *truth* as opposed to propaganda; *people* as opposed to the elite and *solution* as opposed to victory. It is seen as an 'insurgent form' of the traditional norms and practices of the media coverage of conflict (Lynch, 2013). Peace journalism is defined as 'a set of tools, both conceptual and practical intended to equip journalists to offer a better public service' (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). It is a form of journalism that tells stories 'in a way that encourages conflict analysis and a non-violent response in society' (Mogekwu, 2011, p. 247). It not only helps to reduce conflict, it acts as a means for peacebuilding (Hawkins, 2011).

Peace journalism, it follows, is seen by its advocates as a 'deliberate creative strategy conceived as a specific response' (Lynch, 2013, p. 36) to Galtung and Ruge's (1965) study of the 12 factors 'which make an event a worthy candidate to become news' (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. ix). Its 'value-explicit approach' (Lynch et al., 2011, p. 9) with the journalistic commitment to remit the facts and a clear recount of how these facts are met, lends it the legitimacy to be included within the paradigm of professional journalism (Lynch, 2013).

Peace or conflict reporting then becomes an opportunity for 'not only reporting the truth but the whole truth' (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 2). Truth, which can be gleaned through the journalistic 'supply of cues and clues, to alert readers and audiences' to the propaganda trappings of the conflicting sides (Lynch, 2013, p. 38). It also gives a choice to the editors and reporters of what to report and how to report which in turn creates opportunities for the audiences to find non-violent responses in society (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). 'Peace journalism is a serious, inquisitive, professional reporting making conflict more transparent' (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 17).

If the above arguments are taken into account, then peace journalism can legitimately present itself as a more complete and accurate form of journalism than the standardised and stunted practices of objectivity, observes Hackett (2011, pp. 47-61), in his examination of peace journalism as an alternate paradigm for journalists. Within the ideological framework presented by its advocates, it claims a 'toehold in the established media field' by embracing the 'the best ideals of journalistic profession—including comprehensiveness, context, accuracy, and the representation of the full range of relevant opinions…while providing practical alternatives' (p. 41). Yet it also challenges the *epistemology* of the objectivity regime as well as the dominant *news values*. For instance, journalists in conflict situations are caught up in the feedback loop with the political players who with their spinning of facts, half-lies, secrecy, propaganda and embedded journalism tactics can make journalists unwittingly play a part in escalating conflict. 'Objective journalism can thus be "irresponsible" in that it shuns Max Weber's ethic of responsibility in public affairs'—a notion that goes against the journalists' own moral responsibility to society (p. 42). 'PJ thus challenges the very epistemological basis for a stance of detachment, calling instead for journalists to be self-reflexive vis-à-vis the institutional biases of their routine practices' (p. 42).

At the same time, peace journalism challenges the *dominant news values* that implicitly provide a criteria and 'routinely guide journalists in selecting and constructing news narrative' (Hackett, 2011, p. 43). Harcup & O'Neil (2001) in their follow-up study identified ten dominant elements as to what constitutes news: power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news events, magnitude or scope, relevance, follow-up and the newspaper own agenda.

Hackett's final argument in favour of peace journalism is that it implies 'not just the right to speak freely, but also a right of access by all significant voices to the means of public communication' (p. 44). Keeble (2010, p. 64) too has favoured this argument: that there is 'the need to acknowledge the right of all (and not just the members of the professionalized, privileged and largely white, male elite) to communicate in the main or alternative public spheres'. He strongly advocates that peace journalism be taken away from the mainstream media and made a 'political practice' across the internet-based media. His reasons are based on Falk's argument that 'if peace journalism is to become more than an argument at the outer margins of political debate; it has to become a *political* project on the agenda of global reform' (Falk, 2008, as cited in Keeble, 2010, p. 64).

6.2. Alternate Media, Communication Rights Movement & Human Rights Journalism

Hackett (2011) further examines peace journalism against what he calls two other 'challenger paradigms'—alternate media and communication rights—that challenge aspects of media structures and practices. Alternate media is the term used as opposed to the structure and message of the news disseminated by the mainstream media and is also described through adjectives such as alternative, alterative, radical, autonomous, independent, tactical, citizens', participatory and community media (Kidd & Rodriguez, 2010, p. 1; also see Hackett, 2011, p. 46).

An ideal type of alternative journalism, as defined by Hackett (2011), is 'participatory' in production of news; challenging 'established media power'; rejecting 'conventional elite-oriented and conservative news values'; taking a more 'bottom-up ways of scanning and reporting the world'; and demonstrating 'a positive orientation to social change, social movements and/or marginalised communities' (p. 47). Drawing his arguments from Atton (2009), Atton and Hamilton (2008), Brooten (2008), and Hackett and Zhao (1998), Hackett argues that 'alternative journalism is complementary to PJ in several ways' (p. 47). It represents 'dissatisfaction not only with the mainstream practices and coverage, but also with the epistemology of news' (Atton & Hamilton, 2008, p. 1, cited in Hackett, 2011, p. 47). Conversely, it seeks to represent 'the under and mis-representation of subordinate groups' and 'marginalised communities'; it also favours 'social change and social movements' by embracing the concept of 'learning by doing'—i.e. people's participation and experience (Hackett, 2011, p. 47). Hence, it constructs 'a reality that opposes the conventions and representations of mainstream media' (Atton, 2008; Brooten 2008, cited in Hackett, 2011, p. 47). Moreover, alternative journalism also shares with peace journalism 'a commitment to move beyond the reporting of daily events, to analyse contexts and to critically explore the structures of power' (p. 48).

To be sure, there are some tensions between the two kinds of journalism (Hackett, 2011, p. 50-51) such as the 'presence and desirability of professional' in peace journalism as opposed to 'people telling their own stories' in the alternative media; or the alternative media advocating 'for one side of a conflict' may oppose to peace journalism precept of 'productive dialogue between the different parties in a conflict'. But, Hackett's emphasis is more on the 'profound complementarities' between the two (p. 51) that can be profitable to both sides.

> Both paradigms reject the epistemology of the regime of objectivity, insisting that journalists acknowledge they are embedded in social processes and communities, and act ethically on that basis. Both seek to challenge elite war propaganda, and to broaden the range of voices accessed to the public arena, especially those of peacebuilders and the victims of violence in conflict situations. (Hackett, 2011, p. 51)

The second challenger paradigm is based on the civic society advocacy movements such as the media justice, media reform and international civic society movement for communication rights (CRIS) working together on the common principles of 'freedom', 'equality', 'diversity and pluralism', 'participation', 'responsibility', 'human rights', 'communication rights' and 'knowledge as common good' to form 'a coherent paradigm of democratic communication' (p. 58).

'The overarching paradigm, arguably, is the institutional organisation so as to enable all segments of society to participate in constructing public cultural truth,' argues Hackett (p. 59). This paradigm brings about the 'democratision' *of* media '*through* the media' and pegs on the ethics of 'listening to and taking into account, the needs of the other, as a nucleus for both democratic communication and social justice' (p. 59).

In the light of this description, Hackett argues that 'alternate journalism is complementary to PJ [peace journalism] in several ways' (p. 46). According to him then, 'peace journalism and media reform/communication rights could similarly envisage strategic alignment and common principles' to develop 'new strategies' through the alternate media. He argues:

> Structural reforms applicable to all three challenger paradigms include public and community media that offset the biases of corporate media towards commercial and political propaganda; subsidies for media production and access in the global south; genuinely internationalist media; affordable and equitable access to networked digital media; and governance regimes that reinforce popular communication rights. In the final analysis, all three challenger paradigms point beyond the objectivity regime, towards an ethos of dialogue and an epistemology of self-reflexivity, and to fundamental change in media and social structures. (Hackett, 2011, p. 63)

Another model that broadens the traditional journalism model is given by Shaw (2011) who extends the dimensions of peace journalism to include human rights by arguing that the two strands complement each other in fighting the plight of mainstream journalism. Human Rights journalism 'has the potential to complement peace journalism's contribution to global, long-term, proactive, and sustainable justpeace-building' (Shaw, 2011, p. 108). The model is drawn on Schirch's justpeace framework (2002) and Galtung's positive peace framework (1996). Galtung's model of positive peace framework suggests that the roots of violence and conflict are rooted in the structural and cultural foundations of society. Any peacebuilding effort without consideration of rights of the people would render peace as *sterile* and *negative* (1996). Schirch has argued that the concept of justpeace is a hybrid of human rights and peace as it builds on 'a restorative vision of justice, aimed at meeting basic human needs of both victims and offenders while holding the latter accountable for their crimes' (Schirch, 2002, p. 212, cited in Shaw, 2011, p. 101). 'The field of human rights fits into a long term plan for building justpeace', argues Schirch, 'by contributing analytical tools, value frameworks, and by playing a variety of roles in peacebuilding practice.' Hence there are no contradictions between human rights and peacebuilding goals within the justpeace framework (Shaw, 2011, p. 101).

Shaw further builds his arguments on the works of Ife (2007), Larssen (2009), the war ethics of Frank (2007), Walzer's just war theory (1992), and philosophical deliberations of Kant (1963/1784; see Shaw, 2011, pp. 101-103).

Shaw argues that both peace journalism and justpeace 'have elements of critical conflict analysis and creativity' that favours dialogue and resolution. While the traditional media approach to conflict reporting is win-lose for the two parties, peace journalism's approach is 'win-win logic of finding solutions' for both sides. Here he draws from Ury (2001, p. 38, cited in Shaw, 2011, p. 105) who conceptualises justpeace as having a 'third side' that is 'a kind of social immune system that prevents the spread of the virus of violence.' This 'third side' is made up of people from the community who use the power of peers, to provide perspective of common ground, support the process of dialogue and aim for the good of the community (Ury, 2001). The point where justpeace goes further in the solution-oriented approach is where its own targeted end product is a '*triple win*, a solution that meets the needs of the two parties in the conflict and the community as the "third side"' (Shaw, 2011, p. 107, emphasis added).

Evidently, the Human Rights journalism model is built on the argument that if journalism is to play any agency role in society it should focus 'on deconstructing the underlying structural causes of political violence' that manifest in physical violence. In other words, 'it calls for a robust, proactive (preventive), rather than dramatic, reactive (prescriptive) role for media in conflict' (p. 108).

Verbitsky supports the peace journalism model because it can provide the kind of space and flexibility needed to start dialogue between the conflicting parties by virtue of it being able to 'connect with people' and employ 'journalistic creativity'. 'The difference is that the journalists initiate or facilitate mediation and negotiation processes within the media sphere for the good of the people and society at large and not *on behalf* of any particular side', she says (Aslam, 2014, p. 153). Peace journalism can thus provide a more natural fit for the 21st century by giving journalists the flexibility 'to try and get to a space where people can make their own judgments as to where the truth lies; and to open up the possibilities for a dialogue and the space for engagement in conflict resolution.' Verbitsky's line

of argument also supports Newman's call for allowing journalism to form a meaningful relationship with the existing symbiosis of the mainstream with the new and social media networks (discussed above).

6.3. The Model of the Inverted Trident

If one is to make an argument in favour of peace journalism as an acceptable 'broader model for journalism' for peace building in the age of new media, then two final arguments in this discussion must be made. First, if the boundaries of values and ethics of journalism are to be stretched: *what is the end objective?* That is to say that if the traditional journalism model allows one to report 'objectively' and 'factually', what does peace journalism aim at: diffusion of conflict, resolution of conflict, peacebuilding or conflict prevention? Should peace journalism be employed after the conflict? Or should it exist beforehand, so as not to allow the conflict to happen? Literature shows the opinions are wide and varied especially given the fact how subjective the meaning of 'peace' could be in different cultures and societies as discussed above.

Lynch (2013) believes that 'peace journalism is *good* journalism' because its main purpose is 'to give peace a chance' (Aslam, 2014, p. 156). Mogekwu (2011) says peace journalism is better than *good* journalism: it is *determined journalism*. He also says that peace journalism should be able to *prevent* the conflicts in society through monitoring and detecting the early signs of discord in society. Hawkins (2011) argues that peace journalism should aim towards *peacebuilding* thus expanding the peace journalism movement to include not only the coverage of conflicts but also peace processes.

Hackett (2007) argues that the 'trust-bonus' that people lend to the media should be capitalised by peace journalists. Shaw (2011, p. 116) extends the dimensions of peace journalism by including human rights in it and suggesting that human rights journalism be made 'a complimentary strand of peace journalism'; McGoldrick (2011) links the new scientific discovery of human capacity for 'empathy' with peace journalists arguing how they can produce a more realistic and authentic representation of human relationships in conflicts. Tivona (2011) has brought the gender aspect to the debate and makes a call to expand the scope of peace journalism to incorporate coverage of largely invisible peace building efforts of women in conflicts.

The broad spectrum of the way peace journalism is being approached and debated in terms of what it is and what it should achieve in conflict situations can cause confusion for layman's understanding. And indeed it happened many a time when this study was presented before the students, journalists and academics at different forums and in different institutions. The audience's main concern was always: what exactly peace journalism is supposed to do and how is it practised? In the author's view, all critical approaches are important in the conceptualisation of peace journalism as a field of study. What is needed is a model that consolidates all these approaches. This can be achieved with what she has called *the model of the inverted trident.*

The word 'trident' comes from the French word *trident*, which in turn comes from the Latin word *tridens* or *tridentis*: *tri* 'three' and *dentes* 'teeth'. It is also related to Sanskrit *tri* ('three') and *danta* 'tooth'), although several Indian languages prefer another similar word, *trishula* (three-thorn), derived from Sanskrit, meaning 'triple spears' (Roland, 1994). In Greek mythology, trident is a three-pronged spear of the sea-god Poseidon and is the symbol of his mighty power. It is also associated with the gods Neptune and Shiva in the Roman and Hindu mythologies respectively. Commonly it is associated with being a weapon in combat and war. When inverted, it is used as a tool to catch fish and prepare ground in agriculture (Roland, 1994).

The visual presentation of the inverted trident of peace journalism is given in Figure 1.

The term is chosen because the values deemed useful for peace journalism, in the light of the above argument, come from the three strands of the media, conflict resolution practice and peace research. Some of these are the values of public trust bonus, creativity, scientific enquiry and analysis, effective communication, facilitation and initiation of dialogue by employing negotiation and mediation skills, respect for human rights, empathy and compassion for each other which can lead to the diffusion of conflict, its transformation and peacebuilding. Peace journalism can thus be defined as a form of journalism that takes its impetus from the values offered by the three strands of media, conflict resolution and peace research. Empowered by the shared values between journalists, researchers and peace workers and built on the foundations of methodical analysis, skills and strategy, the three strands converge together with the primary objective of de-escalating an armed conflict. Together in a cohesive and synergised strategy, they then develop into peacebuilding and prevention of further conflict utilising the tools of researchers' enquiry and analysis to deconstruct conflict; journalistic skills and creativity to inform and educate; and strategic employment of on-ground peace initiatives that embody the values of compassion, empathy, human rights and social justice. This is the *inverted trident of peace journalism,* a metaphor that sees the weapon of war turn into a tool for peace. It implies that peace journalism is not a random or one-off journalistic investigation or intervention into conflict situations, but a process that can help journalists to connect with people in a manner that is both professional and socially responsible. It is an opportunity for them to enhance their role as information providers into something more constructive and meaningful.

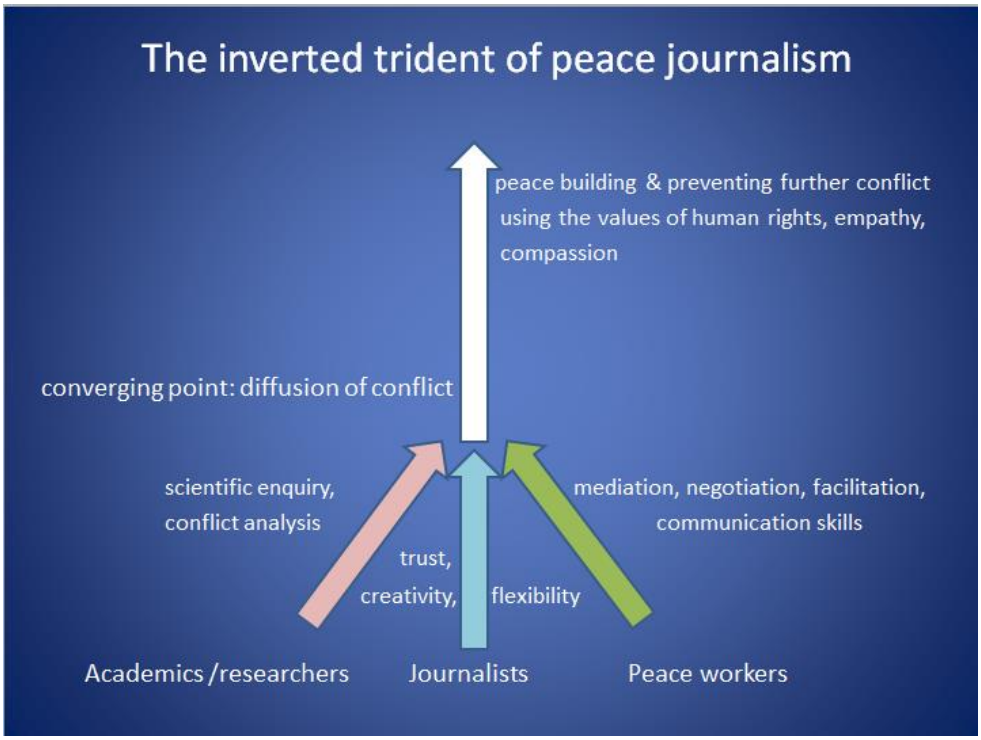

Figure 1. The inverted trident of peace journalism model that shows the values shared between journalists, researchers and peace workers. Meeting together to reduce the conflict they then unify and develop to build peace and prevent further conflict (Source: Aslam, 2014, p. 183).

This model also has the capacity to absorb the various critical approaches of peace journalism, and to consolidate them into an image that can help in the conceptual understanding of peace journalism.

6.4. The 4P Model for Peace Journalism

The author's second argument in this context is that the new paradigm for peace journalism would arguably also affect the political economy of peace journalism. According to Knightley (2000) the political economy of the mainstream media thrives on the interplay of 3Ps—power, politics and profit. Rai (2010) argues that the political economy of peace journalism must go beyond these to include 'the kind of committed political base that was once enjoyed by *Peace News* in its early years' (2010, p. 209). [*Peace News* was North London's small-time publication established in the 1930s on the principles of 'non-violence' and 'just peace']. Rai asserts that for peace journalists working outside the mainstream media, such support is 'crucial for economic survival and political effectiveness' (p. 209). Peace donors could be another source to lend that kind of support to peace journalism since more and more journalism is funded through extra-commercial means (Lynch, Interview May 2013, cited in Aslam, 2014, p. 157). Lynch found it 'useful' in finding the funds for his projects when they were pegged on peace. He also said that a similar argument could be made to convince the donors to sponsor 'actual slots' (paid jobs) in the media.

If the organisations working on peace can be convinced to fund peace journalism projects or sponsor job slots—in alternate media as well as in the mainstream media—then it could be argued that peace donors can become the fourth 'P' in the existing 3P model stretching the three axes of the triangle into a quadrilateral. Not a square, a parallelogram, a diamond or a rhombus but a quadrilateral, the angles of which could be drawn according to the aims, objectives and vision of that particular media that would allow it the flexibility in compromising the existing 3P-axes (power-politics; power-profit or profit-politics). In the author's opinion, this flexibility is crucial for any media platform—mainstream, social or alternate—where peace journalism is being practised. Especially since peace journalism is still evolving and much needs to be determined regarding its effectiveness; more so if it is to become a natural fit for the 21st century. Although the scope of this paper does not allow a complete discussion on this model, the author nevertheless notes the need for revisiting the old model.

7. Conclusion

To conclude the discussion, in order for the new paradigm for journalism to play a positive role in peace-building calls for change in many aspects: change in the definition of who practices such kind of journalism (Keeble); change in journalism practices that are more cognizant with the principles of conflict resolution and

transformation (Verbitsky); change in the journalists' ethics towards a wider global audience (Ward); change in finding common allies and developing synergized strategies in a more diverse media (Hackett); change in the news value system that determines what makes the news (Lynch & Galtung); and change in possible revenue sources to sustain peace journalism and journalists (Lynch).

All these aspects are so diverse and complex that there can be no single paradigm for journalism for all times. Rather they require frequent reflection and debate. As the human society changes with time and technology, it will bring forth new contexts, new framing, new values for the news and thus room for more shifts in the existing paradigms. As van Dijck and Poell (2013) have argued 'social media networks can neither take credit nor blame for single-handedly transforming social processes or for turning around events' (p. 11). They may be seen 'as new unruly forces in a global transformation' yet they must be faced not only by the mass media but also by other institutions. The future growth of journalism-social/alternate media symbiosis will take its own course. Just as human society has been in flux from the beginning, so has journalism been dynamic, whimsical and at times idiosyncratic—and therein lies the beauty of its own symbiosis with the human society. It is therefore even more important that peace journalism retains its 'creativity' factor which will allow it to be flexible enough to survive and thrive in the future.

Moreover, while the social or alternate media can provide effective platforms for peace journalism, a *synergised media strategy* must exist between the journalists, academics, peace workers and researchers to utilise the mainstream media space by employing the journalistic creativity that peace journalism offers. As has been pointed out in the discussion, the lines between the various media and journalism are getting more and more blurred, and all media platforms should be explored including the news media, the entertainment media and advertising. This needs the joining of hands by the journalists, non-news media professionals, academics, peace workers and researchers to work within their own domains and come up with creative ways to give voice to the voiceless and effectively disseminate the messages supporting peace and non-violence.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Jane Verbitsky of Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand; Mohammad Wajih, Director Programmes, Intermedia, Pakistan; Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch, Director of Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, Australia, for being so open in sharing their views and experiences with me. Gratitude is expressed to Pacific Media Centre and its Director, Professor David Robie, for his continuous support.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)
2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, Pages 80-93
Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i1.365

Article

Awareness towards Peace Journalism among Foreign Correspondents in Africa

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Submitted: 6 June 2015 | Accepted: 27 October 2015 | Published: 18 February 2016

Abstract
Much has been said about the news media's role in instigating war, conflict and violence. Less attention has been paid to the news media's role in mitigating conflict. Criticism has been directed towards the ways in which journalists and war correspondents cover conflict with an emphasis on violence, suffering, polarization of the views of main stakeholders, and over-simplification of the underlying causes of conflict. The growing literature and scholarship around Peace Journalism stands as a response to this. In the context of the African continent, further critique has been levelled against frames and narratives of war, conflict and violence grounded in Western epistemologies and dominant discourses of African conflicts and stakeholders. Based on data collected from interviews with a selected group of journalists working on—and covering—the African continent, the article assesses awareness towards alternative narratives and news frames, as well as attitudes towards alternative practices and models for journalism. Particular attention is paid to ideas and responses regarding Peace Journalism as an alternative model for reporting.

Keywords
Africa; foreign reporting; Peace Journalism; war journalism

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media", edited by Vladimir Bratic (Hollins University, USA).

1. Introduction

While the news media's role in instigating war, conflict and violence has been documented, less attention has been paid to the news media's role in mitigating conflict (see Bratic & Schirch, 2007, p. 7). Criticism has been directed towards the ways in which journalists and war correspondents cover conflicts with an emphasis on violence, suffering, polarization of the views of main stakeholders, and over-simplification of the underlying causes of conflict. In the context of the African continent, further critique has been levelled against frames and narratives of war, conflict and violence grounded in Western epistemologies and dominant discourses of African conflicts and stakeholders. The growing literature and scholarship around peace journalism stands as a response to this (see Allan, 2011; Brock-Utne, 2011; Dente Ross, 2007; Galtung, 2000; Hyde Clarke, 2011; Lynch, 2008; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Rodny-Gumede, 2012, 2015; Theranian, 2002).

The research is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with a select group of foreign correspondents covering conflicts on the African continent and assesses awareness towards: 1) the critique levelled against foreign reporting and the reporting of Africa and conflicts on the African continent; 2) alternative narratives and news frames, as well as alternative practices and models for journalism—in particular, Peace Journalism (PJ).

2. Critique Levelled Against Foreign Coverage and Coverage of War and Violence

Studies have established that there is an overwhelming emphasis on war and conflict in the news media. Less attention is paid to peace and peaceful solutions to violence (Bratic & Schirch, 2007; Carruthers, 2011; Gal-

tung & Ruge, 1965; Hyde-Clarke, 2011, 2012; Lynch, 2008; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Rodny-Gumede, 2012, 2015). Much has been said of the news media's explicit role in instigating war, hatred and violence. Carruthers (2011, p. 5) argues that the news media thrives on a logic that seeks out conflict and emphasizes "bad news". War and conflict sell newspapers and journalists go for stories that will make the headlines (Carruthers, 2011). Criticism has therefore been directed towards the ways in which journalists and war correspondents cover conflicts with an emphasis on violence, suffering, sensationalization of coverage, polarization of the views of main stakeholders, and oversimplification of the underlying causes of conflict, with the result that reality is distorted and ethics and professional standards forsaken.

Galtung (1986) argues that coverage of war and conflict conforms to what he labels "war journalism". War journalism has a value bias towards violence and violent groups that leads audiences to overvalue violent responses to conflict and ignore non-violent alternatives (Galtung, 1986)—a militarist bias, "a reflexive predisposition to favour military force over non-violent methods of conflict resolution" (Roach, quoted in Carruthers, 2011, p. 26). This is the result of news reporting conventions and frames that only focus on physical effects of conflict, while ignoring psychological impacts (Galtung, 1986). War journalism is also biased towards reporting only the differences between parties, rather than similarities, previous agreements, and progress on common issues and it also values elite interests over other stakeholder interests (Galtung, 1986). War journalism focuses on the here and now, ignoring causes and outcomes and assumes that the needs of one side can only be met by the other side's compromise or defeat (Galtung, 1986).

War journalism and the role of war correspondents is steeped in a somewhat romantic lore, but is actually beset by problems of allegiance, responsibility, truth and balance (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). These are problems that also arise in the daily grind of journalism, but they do not lack resolvability and editorial control that a war or conflict situation presents (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). War correspondents tend to be parachuted into conflicts with little prior knowledge of the conflict or the stakeholders and without the backup of an editorial team and the time to reflect upon issues of the practices and ethics of journalism (Carruthers, 2011; Lynch & Galtung, 2010). The role of the journalist is to get the job done, cover the conflict, and to make sense of events to audiences often far removed from the issues on the ground, both geographically and perceptually. In a war or conflict zone, access to sources and information is often scarce and journalists tend to band together to feed off each others' "networks"; pack journalism and ideas of embedded journalism are therefore never far behind (Duncan, 2012, 2013). As such, the reporting of war and conflict becomes a litmus test for journalism practices and, more broadly, ethics (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). As a response to these practices, scholars have advanced the idea of PJ as an alternative model for reporting conflict.

3. Peace Journalism

As previously stated, much attention has been paid to the role of the news media in instigating, maintaining, and exacerbating violence through their news coverage. Less attention has been paid to the media's role in preventing, mediating and ameliorating conflict. In essence, the news media gives peace less of a chance than war and conflict (Carruthers, 2011; Lynch & Galtung, 2010).

The term "Peace Journalism" (PJ) was first coined by media scholar Johan Galtung in the 1970s (see Cottle, 2006) and stands as a response to hegemonic discourse within media and communication studies that have for a long time framed coverage of conflict as binaries of us and them, war and peace, good and bad (Seaga Shaw, Lynch, & Hackett, 2011). Instead, PJ puts the emphasis on conflict resolution, the underlying causes of conflict, alternative news sources, and a use of language that does not over-emphasise conflict frames.

As opposed to war journalism as set out by Galtung (1986), PJ is a form of journalism that frames stories in a way that encourages analysis of conflicts, their root causes and emphasizes non-violent responses to conflict during periods of war and also during periods of peace and absence of open conflict (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). On a practical level, PJ occurs when journalists select which stories to report and how to report them in ways that "create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). PJ aims to ventilate peace initiatives from whatever quarter and to explain the underlying causes of conflict and avoid polarisation of the parties involved (Dente Ross, 2007, p. 80). As such, PJ tries to transcend reified practices in order to alter journalistic practices—and the subsequent mediated public discourse—to a more inclusive range of people, ideas and visions (Dente Ross, 2007, p. 80). Thus, PJ addresses issues around journalistic practices in relation to story selection, presentation and sources, with the aim of facilitating non-violent responses to conflict.

Lynch and Galtung (2010, p. 13) argue that where war journalism is reactive and makes conflict and war opaque and secret, putting the focus on the visible effects of violence, PJ rather focuses on the invisible effects of war and violence, makes conflict transparent, and is proactive and truth-orientated rather than propaganda-orientated. Also, where war journalism embraces an "us versus them" mentality and focuses on violence and a final victor/victory, PJ involves a conflict-orientated analysis of the underlying causes of the

conflict and seeks solutions (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 13). As such, PJ tries to give a voice to all parties, including the voiceless; it is people-orientated rather than elite-orientated (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 52). In this way, PJ works against existing journalistic practices of relying exclusively on official sources and offers a way for journalism to provide a more nuanced style of reporting. While both war journalism and PJ are descriptive of reality, PJ tries to take in more reality (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 52).

Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) show how television news inserts taken from mainstream news bulletins can be reworked according to a PJ model and can analyze audience responses to news items coded as "war journalism" and "peace journalism", respectively. From the PJ model, Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) establish a set of evaluative criteria and re-frame news items from two South African television news programmes and four newspapers according to a PJ model of news framing. The news items were then shown to focus groups that either saw the original news items or the reworked news items conforming to a PJ framing of news journalism. Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) find that PJ proved to be ideational in the sense that the focus group that viewed the PJ-adapted news items were more likely to perceive structural and/or systemic explanations for problems and more likely to see opportunities for therapeutic and/or cooperative remedies to be applied through exertions of political agency from different levels.

However, it is important to note that, however noble the aim of PJ may be, many injunctions have been made against the model. One of the main points of critique have centred on the lack of resources for implementing PJ and the practices it advocates, particularly at a time when media houses are facing financial constraints and the downscaling of staff. Kempf (2003, 2007) also points out that PJ is unlikely to succeed unless there is a serious drive to train journalists and alter institutional norms and that reporters need to be given proper time for research and the resources to do so (Hackett, 2007; Hanitzsch, 2004; Lyon, 2007; McMahon & Chow-White, 2011;). With fewer resources dedicated to research and training in newsrooms around the world, PJ is more likely to be a challenger ethos rather than practice (Rodny-Gumede, 2015). Other injunctions made against the model have focused on PJ as being too broad in its conceptualisations and scope, being too normative, philosophical and "utopian" (Hackett (2007, 2011) and drawing on an underlying epistemology of naïve realism based on assumptions of causal and linear media effects (Hanitzsch, 2004, p. 483). In itself, "peace" creates the impression that PJ's only focus is on peace and conflict resolution, as it reports only the "good news", providing little else than "sunshine journalism".

Labels aside, is there merit in rethinking some of the practices with regard to how conflicts are reported in light of the critique levelled against the news media and foreign coverage in particular? What do journalists covering war and conflict on the African continent say about these issues and is there an awareness of, and openness towards, alternative models and practices?

4. Methodology

The research is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 17 journalists from the following foreign news organisations and media outlets (based in Johannesburg) during 2013 and 2014: Al Jazeera, BBC (2 interviewees), AFP, AP (2 interviewees), Reuters, CNN, CBS, DPA (German Press Association), CCTV, Swedish Public Broadcaster (SVT), German Television (Deutshe Welle), *LA Times*, *The Guardian* U.K., *The Financial Times*, *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden).

The choice of interviewing only foreign correspondents is based on two major considerations. Firstly, South African news media employs very few correspondents for their Africa coverage; in effect, most South African-run foreign bureaus have been closed down and the South African news media instead relies mainly on stringers and partnerships with international news agencies. Secondly, the critique levelled against the coverage of the African continent and how foreign correspondents and news agencies carry out their mandate—as set out in the literature on foreign coverage and war reporting—is specifically directed towards the foreign bureaus.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were preferred over other data collection methods in order to gather as in-depth and as rich a set of data possible and to fully explore the way in which foreign correspondents carry out the work they are doing, how they think about the work they are doing, whether the critique levelled against the coverage of Africa is justified and whether there are attempts to address this and evaluate coverage and practices. Semi-structured interviews also lend themselves to small-scale qualitative and exploratory studies such as this (cf. DuPlooy, 2009; Drever, 2000). Qualitative interview data also shows the complex interplay between structure and agency in the media as articulated by journalists themselves.

Semi-structured interviews also generate open responses which allow the interviewee to articulate his or her views at length; this limits the possibility of responses being prompted or limited by the options of responses on offer and lends themselves to the *post hoc* development of categories for analysis that might be more appropriate than any preordained scheme of categorisation (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Mordich, 1999, p. 63). This is an important feature of this research, where the interviews have generated subthemes, which have subsequently been explored and incorporated into the data analysis.

However, the interview as a scientific method is not

unproblematic. In approaching the interview material, one needs to be extra sensitive towards issues of the subjectivity of the interviewee as well as accuracy in recalling events that happened in the past (Deacon et al., 1999, pp. 300-303). Furthermore, interviews without actual observation of conduct and procedure can only tell us what the people in the news media think they do or wish they could do. Hence, any researcher needs to be wary of the fact that discrepancies can exist between what editors and journalists say they do or should do, and what they actually do (Williams, 2003, p. 108). As such, "all answers need to be appraised carefully and occasionally taken with a pinch of salt" (Deacon et al., 1999, p. 62).

Journalists also often feel that social scientists who study the news media speak a language that they mistrust and misunderstand. Social scientists speak of "constructing the news", of "making news", and of the "social construction of reality" (Schudson, 2000, p. 176)—concepts that connote that there is something amiss in the way that the media reports. Media scholars, especially those who occupy themselves with the study and teaching of journalism, often attest to the difficulties in bridging the gap between academy and praxis (cf. Tomaselli & Caldwell, 2002; Zelizer, 2004a, 2004b). In the case of this study, all interviewees were told from the start that the focus of the study was specifically on the critique levelled against foreign coverage and the ways in which foreign correspondents both carry out their practice and how they frame stories.

The sample was drawn from the database of registered correspondents of the Foreign Correspondent Association of Southern Africa. Twenty-five correspondents were initially approached and finally interviews were conducted with 17 foreign correspondents over a three-week period from 23 February to 12 March 2015 in Johannesburg, South Africa. One interview was however conducted via email with a correspondent based in Nairobi. On average, the face-to-face interviews were an hour long. In order to reduce any misunderstandings, and for the purpose of recording responses as accurately as possible, all interviewees were asked to give their consent for the interview to be tape-recorded and these interviews were later transcribed. In instances where interviewees did not agree to such recording, the interview was recorded as accurately as possible by hand.

A set of 12 pre-defined questions was posed to all interviewees. In many instances, these generated follow-up questions that were recorded and later organized and analysed under seven broad themes: Knowledge and understanding of the continent; Coverage and story selection; Constraints and impediments for improving coverage; Framing; Acknowledgment of the critique levelled against coverage of the African continent; Role conceptualizations; Awareness and openness to alternative practice.

5. Interview Findings

5.1. Knowledge and Understanding of the Continent

To contextualize and put the responses from the interviewees in context, all interviewees were asked questions relating to their own knowledge, experience and interest in the region/continent. This provides some interesting data as to "who" the foreign correspondents are, their backgrounds and the knowledge base and experience acquired and required for their jobs.

All interviewees have three years or more experience in domestic coverage and most have two years or more experience from other countries/regions—except two interviewees with no foreign coverage experience before being posted to South Africa as Africa correspondents. At the time they were interviewed, all interviewees had had one or more years' experience in covering South Africa, Southern Africa and/or the African continent. It is important to note that foreign correspondents are more often than not stationed at one major duty station—in this case, South Africa, where the main news bureau is based and from which correspondents are sent on particular stories or longer assignments to countries around the continent.

When asked why South Africa was chosen over other duty stations, career planning seems to be a major factor, despite the fact that South Africa seemingly falls rather low on the list of duty stations which are seen as high profile and good for career advancement. Nine out of 17 interviewees say that their current position will be good for career advancement, but 10 out of 17 interviewees say that other duty stations might have been better for career advancement and quote duty stations such as Washington, Brussels and "China" as more high-profile duty stations. Of the 17 interviewees, 13 chose to be stationed in South Africa. Seemingly, there are other factors, apart from career advancement, that play a role in the choice of duty station. In this regard, the interviewees who chose to be stationed in South Africa state that they did so for very particular reasons, mainly emanating from previous experiences of South Africa, southern Africa and the continent, an interest in "Africa" and/or a particular knowledge base—often from studies undertaken which were related to African studies or development studies. However, two of the interviewees specifically stated that they had no real interest in "Africa" but were stationed here nonetheless. Nine out of 17 interviewees have a tertiary degree or educational background, which indicates formal knowledge of the continent and/or Southern Africa and South Africa in particular.

5.2. Coverage and Story Selection

In terms of a broader articulation of the focus of coverage, as well as their own understanding and commit-

ment to covering the African continent, all interviewees recognize that the African continent receives proportionally little coverage. Many also mentioned that despite being stationed in South Africa, and despite South Africa—Johannesburg in particular—being the financial hub of Africa, the South African story is no longer the "biggest" story. There is also a move away from coverage of South Africa to the broader global South. For example, there is an increased emphasis on South Africa in BRICS, but it would seem that this story has received less attention than, for example, coverage on China in Africa. As this journalist says:

> "The BRICS story is not necessarily a big story. South Africa is also the odd partner in the mix. This said, financial coverage with regards to South African investments and economic links to the rest of the continent cannot be ignored. There is also a growing focus on China and Chinese investments in Africa." (Reuters' respondent)

This is also confirmed through the questions asked around coverage with regard to coverage focusing on the continent. This journalist argues:

> "There is a larger focus on elections, this also true for domestic coverage, particularly with the American one coming up. More attention is also being paid to terrorism on the continent and its global repercussions." (CBS respondent)

Another colleague adds to this:

> "Terrorism is high on the agenda. So is the environment, however often framed from a natural resource perspective, oil and 'fracking' for example. Of course, we also have the Ebola story." (BBC respondent 1)

Furthermore, most of the journalists interviewed also confirm that many preconceived ideas exist about the African continent, with 16 out of 17 interviewees stating that that the most prominent of all preconceived ideas is the idea that Africa, bar South Africa in certain circumstances, is a "country". As these two journalists say:

> "It is sad but the African continent is often seen as one country, as such individual nations are lumped together as if they were a homogenous whole. Of course, some of this is changing and the BBC is also has very good world focus and an Africa business focus that might change some of these perceptions." (BBC respondent 2)

> "Our audiences would distinguish between South Africa and the rest of the continent; however, as a whole Africa is seen as one country, at best maybe some will make the distinction between an axis of South, North, West and East. We often have to add a regional tag to any country specific coverage to put people in the picture." (CNN respondent)

This also links to the critique levelled against coverage of the continent and how the interviewees articulate and acknowledge this critique and the changes they would like to see, including perceived impediments towards changing coverage.

5.3. Acknowledgment of the Critique Levelled Against Coverage of the African Continent

Many of the interviewees acknowledge the critique levelled against the coverage of Africa for perceivably over emphasizing conflict, poverty, maladministration and, in later years, terrorism. This journalist says:

> "There is a clear focus on the negative, very few stories have and can actually have a positive angle. Of course the more you get to know the continent and different countries including regional cultures and commonalities, your reporting will inevitably be more nuanced." (AFP respondent)

Similarly another colleague argues that:

> "As much as we can critique coverage for being one sided or steeped in stereotypes of the Continent as well as its 'people', I do not think that this is necessarily the fault of individual journalists. I think that view is about 10 years out of date. The BBC, CNN, the Guardian and others now do quite a lot of stories that counter the old stereotypes of war, famine, disease, dictators etc. That said, of course some of the stereotypes persist in some outlets. I think that mainly comes from editors sitting in faraway places, some of whom have never been to Africa, which makes it frustrating for correspondents on the ground who have a much more nuanced view." (*Guardian* respondent)

Yet another colleague expands on this by saying:

> "There are real issues that need attention and I think we need to make sure that we do our job properly and that we do not add to or reify many of the preconceived ideas that already exist. I am absolutely committed to this Continent and what I do, and even though you sometimes despair over comments made or stories that you feel could have been covered in a different manner, I do not think that any of my colleagues are bad journalists or that they harbour any particular racists or pre-conceived ideas that would influence coverage." (Al Jazeera respondent)

There is an acknowledgement of the critique levelled against the coverage of the continent, but most interviewees also say that there are real constraints put on foreign reporting that sometimes hamper a more nuanced coverage.

5.4. Constraints and Impediments for Improving Coverage

With regard to impediments and constraints towards improving coverage, time constraints and lack of resources are brought up by most interviewees. Of the 17 interviewees, 12 state that stories have to be filed very quickly; 14 interviewees cite lack of resources and 11 argue that in particular there is a lack of resources to cover longer historical processes or narratives. As this journalist says:

> "The bigger news organizations are of course better resourced and rely on permanent staff rather than stringers and freelancers. They tend to have a better network of people in different regions as well to tap in to. As much as time is often scares on breaking stories and resources not always there, it is the ad hoc stories that could provide for a different take on issues that would need better financing. Big resources were dedicated to major events like the World Cup, death of Nelson Mandela, Oscar Pistorius trial or Ebola outbreak. I suspect most of the money goes on logistics: flying to west Africa to cover Ebola, and paying a driver and fixer there every day, is an expensive business. A lot of organisations threw a lot of people at the Mandela story. This can mean that smaller stories sometimes have to be covered from afar: a country like Angola is very costly to get to and rarely features prominently. So there's an imbalance." (*Guardian* respondent)

However, the journalists employed by larger news organisations also cite lack of resources as an impediment to improve coverage. This BBC correspondent for example says:

> "Lack of resources may be a bigger factor and/or impediment for smaller news outlets but does concern us as well. Budget cuts are real and impacts on staffing and what we can achieve." (BBC respondent 2)

Many of the interviewees also cite the lack of infrastructure in some locations, and while 14 out of 17 interviewees cite lack of access to infrastructure as an impediment, all interviewees acknowledge the fact that modern technology has addressed this to a certain degree. This is highlighted by this journalist:

> "Resources or the lack thereof, is not only about money. We have had staff cuts, and bureaus closed. There is also infrastructure to be considered, new cheaper communication technologies have definitely changed the way we work but do not always take away the lack of very basic infrastructure, power shortages can be a real frustration on some assignments." (DPA respondent)

Another impediment often quoted is the lack of resources for research and also that fixers are absolutely crucial to gaining access to information and sites. These journalists say:

> "I have to make sure that I budget for the time spent on research, it is implied in the job that we do, but still it needs to be factored in. The time spent otherwise on just chasing interviews will generate little. There is no excuse for sloppy research but resources also have to be dedicated." (BBC respondent 1)

> "We sit with a situation where less resources are dedicated to foreign reporting, as such there is a certain amount of creativity needed to get the real, fuller story out there. I will not be able to get the stories that I want without someone who can get me connected, set up interviews etc. Fixers are not sources but often an invaluable resource to get to sources." (DPA respondent)

However, another journalist emphasizes contacts over research and says:

> "There is no way one can get around the importance of contacts or fixers. As much as we can rely on research, we cannot get by without contacts on the ground. Much research done has to be verified." (*Financial Times* respondent)

Furthermore, many of the interviewees acknowledge that the "pooling" together of foreign journalists—thought of as "pack journalism"—is hard to avoid. As pre-planned events feature high on the agenda, foreign correspondent often know where they will be and what stories they will cover, and they also share information with each other. There is no direct competition for stories around pre-planned events, apart from being larger news organizations or smaller ones. As these two journalists say:

> "I am in no direct competition with anyone else, bar other Swedish media present on the Continent, such as the Swedish radio and *Dagens Nyheter*, and it is unlikely that my stories will be picked up by any of my international colleagues." (SVT respondent)

> "There is no real competition for stories or scoops.

> More than anything I think we work alongside each other and recognizing that we are colleagues often covering the same stories." (AFP respondent)

There is also a sense that it is prudent to share resources when resources are scarce; in remote locations journalists are often forced to do so. This journalist argues:

> "For many stories out of South Africa the foreign corps tends to stay at the same hotels, go to the same locations, attend the same press briefings etc. This is a common practice. Often you have to set up very quickly and for smaller news organizations it might be necessary to share certain resources. I think we are all averse to sharing sources and fixers though. I might ask a colleague for some tips or help on certain stories but at the end of the day you want to have your unique inside on a story." (*Financial Times* respondent)

Overall, there is a sense that stories need to be geared towards and tailored to a domestic audience and the knowledge base of domestic audiences. Of course, many of the correspondents interviewed file stories for both domestic and world news bulletins and programmes. This raises questions around role orientations and how foreign correspondents look upon their own roles and how they articulate ideas around the public interest and the perceived impact of their stories. This will be elaborated on later in this article.

Another impediment cited is the perceived lack of interest in African stories, with 15 out of 17 interviewees stating that stories about Africa or emanating from the continent are not made a priority as there is little interest from the audience. This also seems a particular issue for smaller news markets. And while larger news organisations, such as the BBC, have direct historical links to the continent, smaller news outlets and nations and more remote news markets have to justify their stories on other grounds and work to create an interest among domestic audiences. This Swedish journalist says:

> "Sweden is a small country. I am often happy to get any coverage at all and have to work hard to sell stories to my editors at home unless there is an immediate interest in a story, such as an election, or conflict." (SVT respondent)

It is also clear from the interviews that journalists have to work harder to submit their stories, unless there is an immediate conflict/war situation or pre-planned event, such as an election, major summit or official government/state ceremony. The idea of selling other stories and the difficulties faced in doing so is confirmed by all the interviewees. This journalist says:

> "It is not always so that bad news is emphasized over other stories; however, an immediate crisis will have to be covered if deemed significant enough or relevant to a domestic audience or a global audience. Other stories are covered but will not be given the same priority. It is the bigger impact stories that get covered." (Deutshe Welle respondent)

As such, there is also an acknowledgement of the fact that to stand a chance to be published, stories of or from the continent need to conform to thematic issues such as conflict, elections/leadership change, natural resources (often in relation to domestic economic interests), natural conflicts, and domestic political interest. As this journalist says:

> "The stories right now are terrorism but also El Niño, both stories with a direct link and relevance to American domestic coverage and politics." (CBS respondent)

5.5. Framing

The idea of news frames and the fact that stories have to conform to certain frames or pre-set news evaluation/worthiness criteria is confirmed by all interviewees. This is exemplified through the following responses:

> "There is always a domestic angle to consider unless the story is pitched for the world news. Domestic stories are often hinged on a clear relevance angle, world news of course less so and this is where we see the conflict, terrorism or natural disaster stories." (BBC respondent 1)

Likewise another journalist states:

> "We do have to conform to certain frames or angles. War and conflict might feature prominently and will always make headlines, however there is an increasing focus on economic news, often dependent on a clear domestic angle though." (*LA Times* respondent)

Correspondingly, arts and culture, the environment and sport coverage is not viable unless connected to the thematic issues set out previously; for example, conflict, elections/leadership change, natural resources, natural disasters, and domestic political interest. This journalist says:

> "Of course sport is a beat on its own, art and culture less so. There is space for this as well but only if there is a real angle to the story that talks to something already known to our readers. Artists struggling amidst war, artists highlighting aspects of political conflict, etc." (AFP respondent)

All interviewees also confirm that pre-planned events get more and "better" coverage unless there is an imminent crisis or disaster with clear domestic angles or long-term global implications, as with terrorism and stories related to terrorism.

Furthermore, 12 out of 17 interviewees say that human-interest stories are often disregarded, unless directly related to broader thematic issues, as in the case of art stories or coverage of sports men and women. However, it is interesting to note that human interest stories about terrorism are actually sought in order to set out, explain, and profile who the terrorists are and to give a "human" face to the threat. In particular, the foreign news media seems to focus on issues of new recruits to terrorist organisations on the continent. This journalist says:

> "We have done a few stories on terrorists themselves and there is definite interest in new recruits and people who have been radicalized, particularly if these are people from communities known to the audience. I guess these are human-interest stories to a certain extent." (AP respondent 2)

Another journalist expands on this:

> "The terrorist story is frightfully compelling. It is the girl or boy next-door analogy that is so frightening; people that our audiences have refused to see and relate to: The new immigrant wave into Europe, but also the unexpected housewife, the radicalized suburban working classes etc." (BBC respondent 2)

Many interviewees acknowledge the presence of thematic frames as an impediment to alternative coverage and also say that conflict is covered to a higher extent than other topics. However, it is not necessarily overemphasised; for example, coverage is proportionate to issues observed "on the ground". As this journalist says:

> "We cannot disregard the problems on the ground; the fact is that the African continent remains the poorest. If we did not recognize this something would be wrong. Coverage would be very skew if we ignored the plight caused by wars on the continent. This also stands as a counter argument to the fact that Africa gets little or no coverage." (CNN respondent)

Further, there is an acknowledgment of the fact that there is little space or grounds for coverage of interludes of peace or absence of war, or as phrased by Pearce (2005) "outbreaks of peace"; 13 of the 17 interviewees state that "peace", peace negotiations and absence of open conflict is not newsworthy. As this journalist says:

> "South Sudan is a brilliant example of a story that comes and goes and then wears off the radar again. It is difficult to establish where one conflict ends and another one takes over. Sure we could cover interludes of peace or transitional arrangements but there is little space and interest for this." (*Guardian* respondent)

Another journalist adds:

> "It might seem crude, but much reporting is reactive, as such coverage is centred on breaking stories unless there is an ongoing conflict. Peace has to be contrasted and juxtaposed to something. The South African transition was a peaceful one, however, even with regards to this story there was an element of something out of the ordinary, a civil war that did not happen." (Reuters' respondent)

Interesting to note, however, is as the Swedish Public Broadcaster's correspondent says:

> "Sweden by virtue of being a smaller country with a well defined and quite homogenous audience, actually has more space for more nuanced stories and analysis. There is also a real focus on positive news from the Continent in terms of development in various areas." (SVT respondent)

5.6. Role Conceptualizations

While most of the interviewees firmly see themselves as journalists in the liberal tradition of journalism as a watchdog, 11 of the 17 interviewees acknowledge that there is less emphasis on the watchdog role, because there is no one to hold directly accountable, compared to domestic coverage. For example, this journalist argues:

> "There is not much scope for investigative work. Most stories tend to rely on reporting of facts, scenarios and sometimes an historical expose. As much as you want to hold governments and corrupt leaders including international organizations and institutions accountable, there is little room for arguing a direct link to holding elected leaders accountable. Of course the watchdog role is important but different from domestic coverage." (DPA respondent)

However, all interviewees are clear on their role with regard to reporting in the public interest—this is somewhat contradictory to the idea of not emphasizing the watchdog role where no one is to be held directly accountable. This journalist says:

> "Of course foreign reporting is in the public interest as much as domestic coverage. Let's face it; despite

> increased online and social media activity, foreign news is often seen as more reliable and factual. I guess we act as intermediaries." (Deutsche Welle respondent)

However, this view is also somewhat negated by this journalist, who argues:

> "I sometimes wonder if my role is not rendered obsolete by the fact that people can now access information online, direct accounts of events by sources on the ground. This said, I also know that editors back home and audiences I suppose like an intermediary, someone who speaks the same language and shares the same conventions for reporting." (*Dagens Nyheter* respondent)

From the interviews, it appears that most of the interviewees feel that they contribute to a knowledge base for domestic audiences that would not have been there unless domestic coverage was also complimented by foreign coverage; 13 out of 17 interviewees specifically state that they have a direct mandate to educate and to bring issues otherwise not covered to the attention of domestic audiences. Two journalists argue:

> "With resources scarce and less commitment to foreign coverage, the work that is being done is even more important. There are issues that risk sliding off the agenda unless there is a concerted effort on our behalf to keep them there." (*Guardian* respondent)

> "During the world cup in South Africa in 2010, I had many comments and questions from people. Everything from questions such as, what is the Capital of Ghana, does it snow in South Africa, to highly complex questions around the African economy and the environment. Of course there was an increased focus on Africa and South Africa then but it goes to show that audience interest is piqued when stories are covered more prominently, it generates interest." (BBC respondent 1)

Of the 17 interviewees, 12 also state that they are seen and sought after as experts; as such, they are often asked to contribute commentary and analysis to other media outlets and domestic current affairs programming. Many are also asked to contribute analysis to organizations and institutions outside the news media.

What then of alternative models and practices that could contribute to a different coverage?

5.7. Awareness and Openness to Alternative Practices

All interviewees explicitly acknowledge that they would like to cover stories other than "the run of the mill war, conflict and human suffering" (BBC respondent 2) and that when they do, this coverage should be given more prominence. This journalist says:

> "Of course I would like to do a broad range of stories, and I would like to contribute to a better understanding of the region or continent as a whole. Yes, we need different stories to counter certain stereotypical narratives." (Reuters' respondent)

Similarly, another journalist says:

> "My sense is that you have to continue to pitch the 'alternative' stories, often you can pin a smaller story to a bigger one. I try to make sure that when I travel I always have a few stories lined up. I realize though that these can be inane, there is always one or two stories on the once flourishing city, hotel etc.; however, I try to do the stories that will add to the overall coverage and that hopefully will give people a better understanding of a particular country and the politics of any one situation." (Al Jazeera respondent)

In this regard, all interviewees acknowledge that interest and new agendas have to be fostered. This journalist says:

> "The more coverage the better, and the more we focus on the real issues, the more interest it will generate. With regard to viewer fatigue, I am not so sure this is correct, the real issue probably has more to do with how things are covered." (BBC respondent 1)

And while most interviewees acknowledge the need for change and broader coverage, the idea of PJ as an alternative practice is little known. Of the 17 interviewees, 10 are aware of the notion of PJ as an alternative journalistic model, and four have a clear idea of the main tenets of PJ, as it has been articulated in the scholarly literature as well as in more popular discussions around the concept. Eight out of the 17 interviewees also express real skepticism towards the notion and see it as little else than "an idealistic academic exercise of little relevance for facilitating any real change" (AP respondent 2). This is also exemplified by the following responses:

> "I am not sure what you mean by Peace Journalism. I recognize the need for alternative stories and for broadening the scope of stories, but I am not sure you can always set up models for how things should be done. There are often ethical questions that come up but these are often not universal and have to be attended to within the context of a particular story. Most of us already adhere to fairly strict

> regulations as to what we can and should do within the realm of our profession and the stories we cover." (AFP respondent)

> "I am not entirely sure what Peace Journalism portends to be. Many of my colleagues are fairly seasoned journalists and many of us train and mentor younger colleagues and the knowledge required in the field is often very different from what you might be able to set up as the norm. I would rather say that we need to tap in to this knowledge base when we train new journalist and younger colleagues rather than spending time setting up theoretical models for how things ought to be done." (Reuters' respondent)

However, 14 out of the 17 interviewees also acknowledge some of the ideas of PJ as interesting and valid. In particular, ideas around sources and the inclusion of a broader range of views in media coverage are emphasised by the interviewees. These two journalists say:

> "I think it is an interesting model and we need to take the criticism on board and change coverage for the better. I am not saying that all coverage is bad but there is always room for improvement. Maybe because I am an old hand at this, I can see the resistance to change. I think younger colleagues however a probably more open and more critical." (BBC respondent 2)

> "I can see the need for changing some of our practices and there seems to be a strong argument in Peace Journalism for a broader more inclusive way of engaging sources. We know women are underrepresented in news coverage and less used as sources for stories." (*LA Times* respondent)

This also links to the acknowledgement that comes through in the interviews with regard to how stories often emphasize conflict through pitting differing views against one another, emphasizing a conflict frame, rather than common ground. These journalists say:

> "It is true that much coverage is either one sided or steeped in a way that might trump up competing views. However, conflicts are not based on agreement but disagreement. It is difficult to see how some stories could be covered differently. This is not to say that there isn't room for a wider spectrum of views and that we sometimes could do a better job at seeking out alternative views." (AFP respondent)

> "We could do a better job seeking out new views points and sources, or even make a point out of ascertaining where there is consensus. I have done several stories on the ANC and the EFF and how found many commonalities in the ways in which they articulate certain political issues, this has been missed all together in the coverage here; instead they are just seen as constantly being at each others' throats." (AP respondent 2)

As much as the interviewees acknowledge that biases towards one party or one single view should be avoided, all say that official sources are often more accessible. However, this does not seem to spring from an idea of embedded journalism or a fascination with the army or military; instead, 16 out of 17 interviewees state that there is a real need to try to capture the views of the warring or opposing factions, in order to give an accurate account of a situation. This journalist says:

> "It is true that we often have to rely on official sources. However, we also engage 'militia men' and other parties involved. These are people who can give one perspective that is as valid as any other even if perceivably wrong. If we didn't we would not do a proper job" (AP respondent 1)

In addition, all interviewees say that they always ensure that they capture the view of people directly affected by a conflict even though not directly involved—this may include civilians, peace negotiators and representatives from international organizations and institutions. This journalist says:

> "You have to make sure that you reflect the views of all stakeholders, opposition parties, aid organisations, the international community etc. as well as the views of ordinary people who are directly affected and who often bear the grunt of conflict and war." (CNN respondent)

Of the 17 interviewees, 14 argue that it is difficult not to take sides, particularly in a war zone. This journalist says:

> "I interviewed some of the mothers and families of the abducted girls in Nigeria and it was interesting to note that many of the women did not lash out against the abductors; instead their concern was solely focused on getting their daughters back. Meanwhile, I could not help but feeling absolutely full of hatred." (Reuters respondent)

Similarly, a colleague argues:

> "It's difficult not to take sides but sometimes necessary. I generally think we should take the side of civilians and victims, not one armed faction or another. I prefer journalism that allows the victims to

> do the talking rather than shows too much attitude." (Guardian respondent)

Furthermore, 14 out of the 17 interviewees agree that while there might be a need for the visual aspects of stories to be down-played and narratives strengthened in some instances, more often than not they do complement each other.

> "Of course much of the audience view of the continent is based on visuals of wars, poverty and famine. These images stay and without proper contextualization and narration coverage will be superficial. However, visuals also do provide context and both print and television are reliant on good photographers and cameramen. We cannot only rely on footage though and need to make sure we employ reporters who knows their stuff and who can set a story out in such a way that footage does not mislead." (BBC respondent 2)

This also links to the seeming consensus that emerges from the interviews; giving the idea that contextualization is more important than solely reporting facts. This is exemplified in this response:

> "Foreign reporting gets less space than domestic news coverage and in broadcast bulletins even less so. And as short as an insert might be, context is everything. You need to become a master at getting as much information in as possible. If you don't you end up simplifying and cementing stereotypes."(CNN respondent)

While there may be a lack of knowledge around the notion of PJ in particular, there is an overall openness towards alternatives and new ideas and practices. Many of the comments and responses from the interviewees also relate to ideas of PJ, although not always articulated as such by the journalists themselves. Most recognize the need for giving peace—and narratives about peace and peaceful resolutions—a greater place in foreign coverage. However, time and lack of resources are often cited as major impediments for seeking out alternative stories and implementing new ways of reporting.

6. Concluding Remarks

This article assesses awareness towards the critique levelled against coverage of the African continent, as well as alternative narratives and news frames, practices and models for journalism among a select group of foreign correspondents covering the African continent. Particular attention is given to ideas and responses to PJ as an alternative model for reporting.

The interviews show that there is a clear sense that much of the critique levelled against the reporting of the African continent is valid and recognized as such by the interviewees. The interviews confirm—from studies that have established—that there is an overwhelming emphasis on war and conflict in the news media. However, while studies have focused on the idea that the news media thrives on a logic that seeks out conflict and emphasizes "bad news", many of the interviewees instead articulate ideas that—rather than over-emphasise conflict—the role of journalism is to report what is seen and experienced. There is little ground for reporting peace or absence of war, as the reality often looks very different. Whether these perceptions hold up or not, on the one hand they perceivably refute the idea that the news media only seeks out "bad" news, and on the other hand they confirm the idea that the media does give conflict more attention than peace and absence of war.

There is also a real sense from the interviewees that the focus on conflict rather than peace has little to do with a lack of knowledge of the conflicts and countries that they cover, and that they are aware of staying clear of stereotyped and sensationalist coverage. However, the interviewees all agree that more could be done to broaden the scope of stories and to make sure that a multitude of voices and sources are included in coverage, in order to avoid an overt polarisation of the views of main stakeholders. However, and in addition to this, all interviewees say that they try to make sure that they also capture the views of people on the ground, civilians, peace negotiators and representatives from international organizations and institutions. Many also refute that there is what Galtung (1986) labels a "militarist bias" favouring official sources, and instead argue that ideas of relying on official sources or quoting army sources or "militia men" springs from a need to reflect underlying causes of conflict and ideas of parties that perceivably are driving forces behind a conflict. This of course contradicts the critique levelled against foreign coverage for neglecting to report on underlying causes of conflicts and for simplifying these.

Many of the interviewees also say that they feel "trapped between the need to contextualize events and at the same time recognizing that space and time is limited" (AFP respondent), independent of reporting for print, radio or television. The interviewees are all acutely aware of their roles as intermediaries and interpreters of events to audiences often far removed from the issues on the ground, both geographically and perceptually, often with little or no knowledge of the continent, let alone the events taking place.

Reporting also seems to be emphasized over investigative journalism, while the watchdog role is less pronounced and pre-planned events are given priority over ad-hoc stories pitched by the individual journalists. There is also less competition, and as such scoops are less relevant to beat a competing news outlet. This

said, all interviewees acknowledged the need for research and pointed out that with regard to how they see their own role, serving in the public interest is no less important in foreign reporting than in domestic coverage whether working for a global or national media organization.

With regard to news frames and reporting conventions that emphasize conflict over conflict resolution and polarization of views over common ground, most interviewees argue that while it is not their role to acts as "peace-makers" and that there is little room for covering absence of war or conflict, more could be done to reflect alternative views that might reflect that consensus or common ground exists, even between two warring or opposing factions. However, many also point out that this is made difficult, as sources are often hard to reach, particularly in situations where there is little time to prepare and do the research needed to find alternative sources—as with "breaking stories". This is also where foreign correspondents often become heavily reliant on so-called "fixers"; for example, people on the ground with particular knowledge or contact networks as confirmed by Murrell (2015). Fixers then become the main gatekeepers of sources of information.

Overall, many of the interviewees acknowledge some of the problems with regard to foreign reporting—and the reporting of the African continent in particular. Lack of resources is quoted as a major impediment towards changing reporting. Time constraints seem to be the major obstacle, as is the lack of human resources and funds for research to cover all parts of the continent and all stories in equal measure. It is interesting to note that while smaller national news outlets emphasize a lack of resources and a perceived disadvantage compared to larger news organizations—which are perceivably better staffed and better funded—many of the larger media organizations will report more or less the same constraints in terms of funding and other resources, such as staffing and infrastructure.

It is interesting to note that while lack of resources is quoted as an impediment to better and fuller coverage, there seems to be no lack of knowledge of the broader issues on the ground and or problems and opportunities on the continent. This is seemingly confirmed by the fact that the majority of the interviewees have some prior knowledge of and interest in the African continent and/or specific regions or countries. Many also show a genuine interest in the job and a commitment to giving their audiences nuanced and well-informed coverage of the continent. Many also reject the idea of "pack journalism" and instead argue that often the idea of "pooling together" is prudent in order to share resources and information.

Most importantly, the interviewees all acknowledge much of the critique levelled against the coverage of the African continent and foreign reporting and coverage more generally. However, with some reservations, and while many acknowledge the need for change in some areas, the idea of adopting new models for reporting seems less of a priority than strengthening particular areas where a re-thinking of practices might be needed. PJ, as a model for reporting, is seemingly given little credence. Many would also agree with some of the injunctions made against PJ for being too idealistic and removed from some of the realities of journalism and the stories and story angles deemed to be in the public interest.

However, many of the interviewees also quote many of the tenets of PJ as desirable and already in place, even though they are not always articulated as such. There is a sense that actual practices, as well as some of the desired changes to the same, are less contradictory than they are made out to be in scholarly arguments that juxtapose practices in terms of "war journalism" vis-à-vis "peace journalism". As such, the discourse around, and the critique levelled against foreign reporting might have more to do with a disjuncture between theory and practice—the academy and industry—and the two would do well to engage with each other. This is where PJ as a model might open up a space for this engagement. PJ is not only a theoretical model to be tested against examples of coverage, but addresses practices and offers advice on how reporting can be done.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the anonymous referees for *Media and Communication* for their thorough and very insightful comments and feedback.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)

Media and Communication is an international open access journal dedicated to a wide variety of basic and applied research in communication and its related fields. It aims at providing a research forum on the social and cultural relevance of media and communication processes.

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