

for(e)dialogue

Department of Media and Communication

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Editorial

Connecting (Forced) Migration and Media Studies

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This Special Issue on (Forced) Migration and Media is the result of two workshops organised at the University of Leicester: a workshop on (Forced) Migration and Media-research that took place on the 13th of June 2016 and a Community Impact event that was organised on the 18th of July, 2016. These workshops were a response to the topical interest for refugees' access to digital technology and the dehumanizing language used in, especially but not limited to British, media regarding migrants and/or refugees (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2015). (Forced) was purposefully bracketed as the label 'refugee' has its own difficulties. The differentiation between economic and forced migrants for instance negates that reasons behind migration are often multi-causal and multi-layered. It reinforces thinking in dichotomies that homogenizes and tends to negate in-between complexities, as is often appropriated as a governing tool to victimize, exclude and curtail the rights of human beings (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017; Lindley, 2010; Zetter, 2007). In this editorial, we reflect upon the main outcomes of the workshop we and other PhD-colleagues organised on the 13th of June, 2016, and connect them to the articles within this Special Issue.

In 2015, in what was soon framed in mainstream media as the "European refugee crisis", much focus went out to the realisation that migrants travelling in(to) Europe owned smartphones. At that time, critical research connecting different academic fields – forced migration studies and media and communication studies – was to a large extent lacking. This Special Issue aims to contribute to the increasing body of literature in this area, which Leurs and Smets (2018) defined as 'digital migration studies'. Three of the four contributions in this Special Issue (Assaf, this issue; Parker, Aaheim Naper and Goodman, this issue and Voigts and Watne, this issue) are largely based upon papers discussed during the 13th of June workshop. We consider how these contributions speak to the three main outcomes of the workshop. The first outcome is the necessity of moving beyond techno-orientalism, a conceptual understanding that enables us to partly explain the shifting media-discourse upon an

increased arrival of people seeking refuge on Europe's shores. The second outcome points to the importance of context and history in understanding media-use by forced migrants. The last outcome relates to the importance of migrants' voices and the role that academics play in response to addressing social injustices. Dr. Idil Osman's contribution in this Special Issue speaks to this, as she reflects upon the Community Impact workshop she organised in July 2016.

Moving beyond (techno/cyber) orientalism

A number of contributions during the (Forced) Migration and Media workshop paid closer attention to the shifting media discourses around refugees and/or migrants and gave further insight in how the categories refugees and migrants are made. How the 'crisis' was represented in journalistic media, first as a migration and then as a refugee crisis, deeply relates to local ideological and political developments. It also relates to particular emotive images that can leave behind impressions (Vis and Goriunova, 2015). In our workshop, Anja Aaheim Naper considered how migration control is portrayed in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, whereas Sam Parker compared representations of asylum seekers in the UK and Australian print media. Dr. Simon Goodman focused in particular on (re)categorisations of refugees throughout the Refugee/Migrant crisis in the UK. Their presentations have resulted in a collaboration, published in this Special Issue. The three scholars have compared the shifting discourse in the UK, Australia and Norway before and after the image of a Syrian drowning boy went viral. Their contribution enables us to consider how geographical differences matter.

In their pivotal report, published shortly before our workshop Gillespie et al. (2016) also reflect upon the shifting media discourse around refugees and smartphones, as it moved from a surprised reaction that refugees are not necessarily poor, fear that a smartphone could be used as a 'terrorist essential' (p. 9) and unrealistic hopes for techno-fixes to systemic problems regarding geopolitics and borders. Negating the (prior) access and availability of technologies in the lives of forced migrants – those on their journeys to and in Europe as well as those beyond Europe – results in a thinking in simplified dichotomies between 'us' and 'others' and the west vs the rest. Building upon a stereotypical portrayal of the poor, the figure of the

unconnected refugee is used to mark out people as 'deserving' versus supposedly 'undeserving' migrant.

The surprised reaction of mainstream media on migrants using smartphones for travelling in(to) Europe was a sign of techno-orientalism. It misrecognized that only a few years earlier the so-called social media revolutions were celebrated in the Middle-East, and that many people were now navigating their journeys with the same devices that had used to tweet (Leurs, 2016). In her keynote lecture, Dr. Miriyam Aouragh from the University of Westminster also reflected upon what she in previous work has she referred to as cyber-orientalism (Aouragh, 2012). The growing interest in digital technologies, journeys and refugees, reminded her of the surge of media interest during the Arab Spring. The Arab uprisings were framed through the lens of the use of technology, giving the impression that media-use would somehow make non-western subjects more worthy. Whereas there is not necessarily anything wrong in reporting and/or conducting research on refugees' media-use, the problem is that its focus – especially on the 'new' – tends to overtake the discourse of politics and justice. Dr. Aouragh therefore argued for a critical analysis about the politics of representations and digital infrastructures.

Dr Aouragh also pointed out in her keynote that "the heterogeneity of forced migration does not allow for terminological reductionism". What labels – forced migrant, asylum seeker, refugee, economic migrant, transit migrants – are used, matters as these labels have material, legal and social implications. "Categories have consequences" (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017, p. 59) as they entitle protection and rights to some, and are used to restrict the rights of other. But Aouragh also warned against discursive policing. Instead, a re-orientation of media analysis to media and communication infrastructures which are deeply embedded in capitalism and imperialism is needed. In the end a large part of humanity are "refugees of capitalism". Too much focus on a differentiation between migrant and refugees also further contributes to a discussion of who has rights, instead of holding state actors – especially those who have ratified the 1951 refugee convention - responsible for recognizing (and violating) these rights (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016).

In her presentation, Dr. Savandie Abeyratna further problematized the differentiation and different valuation of different migrants, as she considered how young Muslim men are posed as bigger threat in European media than other migrants are, again showing the importance of critiquing a stereotypical hierarchisation of rights. Joining us from Greece via Skype, Dr. Giorgos Tyrikos - an activist and researcher from the Greek island Lesbos – also reflected upon changes within the rhetoric in mainstream Greek media. As far as Lesbos was concerned, he disentangled three phases of the crisis. The first six months in 2015 the local teams who were overwhelmed as they tried to respond to the increased number of people arriving in Lesbos. The rhetoric in mainstream media, according to Tyrikos, was overwhelmingly right wing and xenophobic. In the second part of 2015, international NGOs and volunteers surged the island who shared their own stories of what they faced. The involvement and story-telling by volunteers on social and later also on press media, Tyrikos argued, was incredibly important in the shift in the media discourse, as instead the focus went out to connections and solidarity. The third phase started with the signing of the EU-Turkey agreement: boats have stopped arriving, but the refugees in Lesbos are in limbo and insecure of what and where their future will be. The media discourse has shifted back to one of demonization, blaming forced migrants for instance for a decline in tourism without considering how the broader political and economic factors have contributed to their arrival. Tyrikos however remained hopeful as he stressed the importance of volunteers and activists' narratives for pushing against this recurrence of a demonizing discourse, but also warned for a simplified sanctified image of refugees. Instead, he emphasized the importance of solidarity and the necessity for all people having a right to humane conditions.

Situating the forced, yet connected migrants beyond journeys

The earlier mentioned report by Gillespie et al. (2016) was also meaningful as it combined a more top-down discourse analytical approach with bottom-up conducted research. This enabled the researchers, contributing to this project, to distinguish three main possibilities or affordances of mobile and/or smartphones: communicative, locatability and multimediality affordances. The first relates to the ability to communicate with friends and family and to connect with people who have already moved onwards, while the second one is used for wayfaring and to familiarize oneself with new places. The multimediality affordance is the

ability to capture and share images, making smartphones into living, expanding photo albums that can also be used to witness of the violence experienced. These different potentials often overlap: communication over Skype also holds a multi-media component, and communication is often also essential for locatability purposes.

In regard to refugees' journeys technologies tend to have a "paradoxical presence": technologies can be a resource, but can also increase threat (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 2). This also became evident in several presentations provided during the workshop. Urs Charpa considered what role ICTs play in decision-making processes of refugees planning their journeys, whereas Denise Gomes de Moura paid attention in her presentation to the use of tools for migration management by governments. Technologies are for instance used on a large scale to monitor and control the movement of forced migrants (Jeandesboz, 2016). The proliferation of digital systems to control Europe's geographical borders takes place within and beyond geographical borders (Anderson, 2014). However, digital technologies can help migrants to circumvent the movements of state and non-state actors. Social media can, for instance, provide crucial opportunities and information in regards to how to cross territorial borders safely, enables connections to people who can help to organize migratory routes, to find loopholes through the often opaque procedures and to re-unite with friends and family or to connect to acquaintances who can provide necessary insider knowledge (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Witteborn, 2015). Access to an overload of ever-changing information can, however, also be overwhelming, as it is sometimes difficult to distinguish right from false information (Frouws, Phillips, Hassan, & Twigt, 2016; Gillespie et al., 2016).

A few other critical remarks need to be made regarding the attention for mediated journeys. First, research on access and use of technologies during journeys rarely touch upon gendered and generational differences and tends to focus on young travelling men (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 19). Like physical mobility, digital connectivity is far from evenly distributed and much also depends on technologies available and digital literacy prior to flight. Differences in degree, control and initiation of communication and movements are deeply racialized, gendered and classed (Massey, 1991). This also became evident in the presentation of Matt Voigts of the University of Nottingham. Voigts presented a survey conducted among 169 Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Malta, results of which were published later in 2016

(Gauci, Cassar et al, 2016). For this Special Issue, Voigts has co-written a piece with Audrey Watne, a research scientist at the New York University Center for Global Affairs who reflects upon her work in Iraqi Kurdistan. Voigts and Watne (this issue) consider the power dynamics behind obtaining information for refugees, and how this results in challenges for communication between and obtaining information by refugees, aid workers and researchers.

A focus on refugees' journeys also tends to obscure that for many forced and other migrants, mobility is in fact often characterized by long-standing periods of immobility and waiting. Journeys often take years and are most often far from linear or straightforward (Collyer, 2007; Khosravi, 2007; Schapendonk & Van Moppes, 2007; Schapendonk, 2012). The (im)mobility of many migrants is in fact a stretched-out process, zigzag-shaped and slowed down by often exclusionary, bureaucratic border regimes beyond as well as within western countries (Anderson, 2014; Khosravi, 2007; 2014). Increasingly in the global North many migrants are living for undetermined times in on-going conditions of uncertainty and waiting (Doná, 2015, p. 70). An increased body of literature suggests that digital technologies might, beyond obtaining information for and planning onward journeys, also play important social and subjective functions in the lives of migrants, who are living in prolonged uncertainty and who balance attachments between different places.

In 2006, forced migration scholar Cindy Horst (2006) already argued that electronic technologies will greatly affect the social relations of refugee diasporas. Two central features associated with globalization – human mobility on one hand and the emergence of ICTs on the other – come together into the ideal-type figure of the 'connected migrant' (Diminescu, 2008). Yet until 2015, academic research considering the digital connectivity in the lives of forced migrants was limited. Migration was never a permanent break to one's native environment - as prior to the emergence of Internet migrants found other ways to stay in touch (Madianou & Miller, 2011; Wilding, 2006). However, the presence of technologies – enabling for instance transnational connections, the sharing of information and imaginations of lives elsewhere – can alter how forced and other migrants experience and navigate their often uncertain lives.

Research has, for instance, pointed out that technologies are crucial to mitigate and circumvent localized insecurities around the - often informal - working life of migrants, to cope with loneliness and contribute to a shared experience of suffering (Collyer, 2007; Harney, 2013). The combination of money transfer technologies and communication devices can also make it easier to transfer remittances (Lindley, 2007), whereas the circulation of global advertisements might reinforce particular expectations of kin abroad (Gordano Peile, 2014). The influence of digital technologies on the lives of forced migrants goes far beyond financial or material support. The ability to connect to people, places and times people are physically closed off from, can enable dispersed populations to stay politically engaged, to obtain a sense and stability of self, to maintain and/or even establish a sense of community. The digital co-presence of dispersed loved ones can play an important motivational role in enduring hardships in transit and for staying hopeful towards better futures elsewhere (Leurs, 2014, 2016; Twigt, 2018). Meanwhile virtual practices provide asylum-seekers in Germany crucial ways of presenting themselves as the person they want to be or become, rather than the one that is being restricted by a lack of opportunities: as such it is the process of unbecoming a victimized refugee (Witteborn, 2015).

Giorgos Tyrikos, reflecting upon his experiences in Lesvos, also mentioned that smartphone and iPads are for many journeying migrants he has met the most essential thing in their lives. This does not suggest digitality is “the miraculous transformatory manna from heaven” (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, & Tsianos, 2015, p. 3). Technology might create additional spaces for agency and creativity, but these spaces should always be considered in relation to the prolonged legal and social insecurity many forced migrants worldwide navigate their journeys in that might necessitate particular practices over others as becomes evident in the next section. It is important to be cautious of celebratory of mobility and connectivity and to negate the societal and material constraints in which technological possibilities are embedded. This also becomes clear in the work of Assaf (this issue) and Voigts and Watne (this issue).

Migrants' representations and the role(s) Migration and Media scholars play

After his presentation, Giorgos Tyrikos was asked whether the people arriving on Lesbos also making use of their smartphones to report on their own journeys: "What about migrants' own voices?" Tyrikos explained that those migrants arriving on Lesbos need their time and energy to plan and coordinate their onward journeys, but they have told him that one day, when they will stop running, they will build their own monuments and mourn their death. In her contribution to this Special Issue, Maria Assaf reflects upon the difficulties and opportunities Syrian refugee journalists residing in Istanbul, Turkey experience for voicing their experiences. Deeply engaged in reporting on developments within Syria, they feel hindered in their opportunities to voice and discuss matters regarding their stay in Turkey.

Tyrikos emphasized the importance of solidarity: of volunteers and activists sharing migrants' stories. This begs the following question: what role can academics and academic knowledge play in this regard? How can we – as academics – for instance reposition refugees not as objects of study but as agents of change? And how are we, as scholars conducting work on migration, ourselves part of the "migration industry" (Anderson, 2017). Moreover, the limited attention to how historical and recent western involvements have contributed to the migration of people is striking. In her keynote lecture Dr. Idil Osman showed the importance of context, history and connectivity. In response to the (continuation of the) Somalian conflict, which started in 1991, (forced) migrant routes have been established and diasporic communities have reshaped experiences of people living in conflict. But transnational connections have also enabled to engender a dialogical diasporic identity among people who are Somali by origin, to be critically engaged in regard to what happens in Somalia, their western home countries and beyond. In the last and forth contribution of this Special Issue, Osman reflects upon the Community Impact workshop she organised on the 18th of July 2016. This workshop was directly aimed at sharing and connecting to experiences of migrant communities, with the aim of considering how academic knowledge can be useful for speaking back to dehumanizing discourses against Islam and migration and for enabling migrants to voice their own concerns. A similar appeal for knowledge sharing for the benefit of conflict-affected migrants can be found in the contribution by Voigts and Watne (this issue).

We sincerely hope that this Special Issue not only contributes to an advancement of academic knowledge regarding the connection between forced migration and media studies, but that it also proves meaningful for people working with, people who consider themselves as, are descendants of, or are otherwise close to people who have been forced to migrate. We are very happy that this Special Issue has finally taken shape and want to express our gratitude for the work and patience of all the people who have contributed to this Special Issue: Maria Assaf, Audrey Watne, Matthew Voigts, Dr. Simon Goodman, Anja Aaheim Naper and Samuel Parker and Dr. Idil Osman. A special thank you goes out to keynote speaker Dr. Miriyam Aouragh, to Dr. Idil Osman, for her keynote speech and the organisation of the community impact event, to Giorgios Tyrikos for sharing his academic and practical knowledge with us, to everyone else who has contributed and to Zakaria Sajir, Foteini Panagiotopoulou and Nerina Boursinou for helping us organising the workshop (Forced) Migration and Media, to Andreas Anastiasou for his time and dedication and to all our other reviewers. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Maria Rovisco and Dr. Jessica Noske-Turner for sharing their knowledge regarding publishing generously.

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How a photograph of a drowned refugee child turned a migrant crisis into a refugee crisis: A comparative discourse analysis

Samuel Parker, Anja Aaheim Naper and Simon Goodman

Abstract: *The 'refugee crisis' refers to the on-going movement of people crossing into Europe, in which over 3,692 migrants and refugees died in 2015. A key point in this 'crisis' was the publishing of photographs of one of the young children who died. Despite the death toll, representations and the resulting treatment of refugees in Europe remained ambivalent. This paper compares the representation of the 'crisis' across three countries (The UK, Norway and Australia) before and after the publishing of the photographs from one major broadcaster in each country using discourse analysis. It is shown that the photographs led to a more sympathetic portrayal of refugees resulting in the 'crisis' shifting from a 'migrant' to a 'refugee crisis'. This analysis demonstrates the importance of the ways in which refugees are presented as well as the benefits of a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis.*

Keywords: migrant crisis, refugees, asylum seekers, crisis, discourse analysis, migrants

Introduction

The 'refugee crisis' refers to the on-going movement of people crossing into, and between, European countries. In many ways, the 'crisis' is nothing new; Pugh (2001) wrote about refugees drowning attempting to cross the Mediterranean back in 2001, however the issue came to prominence in 2015 after media reports of boats sinking attempting the crossing, killing those on board. Indeed, Gatrell (2016) suggests that references to 'crises' fail to take account of the long history of refugee movements and assume that such events are a temporary blip before things return to normal. Hence, in this article we use the term 'crisis' to problematize the media's use of this word. The first time the term 'crisis' was used by the BBC was in April 2015 (Goodman, Sirreyeh and McMahon, 2017). The 'crisis' referred to two main routes of crossing the Mediterranean, one from Turkey to Greece and one from North Africa to Italy (for more on the routes and flows of people, see Crawley et al., 2016). During 2015, as far as known 3,692 refugees died attempting the crossing (IOM, 2015). It has been shown that the type of 'crisis' that is referred to has changed, referring to different locations

and to either refugees or migrants (Goodman et al., 2017) where 'refugee' tends to offer a more sympathetic response than 'immigrant' (e.g. Kirkwood et al., 2015). One key suggestion of Goodman et al. (2017) was that the reporting of the drowning of the three year old boy Alan Kurdi, whose body was photographed washed up on a beach in Turkey, appeared to have an influence on the reporting of the 'crisis', something that this research attempts to investigate further. Specifically, the research questions we sought to answer were as follows. Firstly, did the publishing of the photographs of Alan Kurdi lead to a change in media representations of the 'crisis'? Secondly, were there international differences in these representations? To answer the second question, we chose to focus our analysis on media representations of the 'crisis' in two European countries (The UK and Norway) and one country outside Europe (Australia), which itself has a recent history of migrants and refugees attempting to enter the country by boat.

In the UK, anti-immigration sentiment has been rife, culminating in the 'Brexit' decision to leave the UK at least in part to prevent immigration from the EU, with the 'refugee crisis' being used as a further justification for the decision. Asylum rules in the UK are tough (Bloch, 2013) and asylum figures have remained unaffected by the 'refugee crisis'. Nevertheless, the media and politicians have been shown to be hostile to asylum seeking refugees (e.g. Goodman, 2008). Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) conducted an analysis of a 140 million word corpus of UK newspaper articles about refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants, published between 1996 and 2005. They found that these terms were frequently confused and conflated and that a number of negative category representations were used in such reports in addition to a number of nonsensical terms such as illegal refugees. More recently, in a comparative study, Berry et al. (2016) found that the right-wing press in the UK was unique in its hostility towards refugees and migrants, whilst the Swedish media was the most positive. Indeed, the Swedish media was found to predominantly use the more sympathetic category of 'refugee', whilst in the UK media 'migrant' was typically used.

In Norway immigration started to rise more recently compared to many other European countries (Brochmann and Kjelstadli, 2014). However, in recent years the number of immigrants arriving (per inhabitant) has been amongst the highest in Europe. During 2015, the number of asylum seekers rose to 30,000, compared to 11,000 in 2014 (Øvrebye et al., 2016). The general media coverage of migration, and in particular of asylum seekers, has been

dominated by a negative approach, constructing immigrants as threats to 'our' society (Horsti, 2008). However, one of the latest studies on media representations of immigration conducted in Norway, finds an increasing use of a human interest frame in Norwegian articles on immigration, meaning that the focus on one particular person dominates the article, and often this particular person is portrayed in a sympathetic way (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). For example, a case about a young woman, Maria Amelie, gained massive media attention, and focused on Amelie being a victim of the authorities' inhumane immigration policies.

Debates in Australia around asylum have dominated the public and political sphere for many years, particularly following the 2001 Tampa affair, in which the Australian Government refused to allow a Norwegian ship carrying rescued asylum seekers to enter Australian waters. The subsequent introduction of the 'Pacific Solution' by the Australian Government was in response to both the Tampa affair and the growing concern amongst politicians and the general public about the number of 'boat people' making the crossing from Indonesia. As such, asylum seekers attempting to arrive by boat were transferred to offshore processing centres on Pacific islands such as Nauru and Papua New Guinea where their asylum applications were processed. Off-shore processing was re-introduced by the Labour government in 2012 as a tough response to boat arrivals was espoused. Nguyen and McCallum (2016) indicate that there has been an alignment between Australian news reporting of asylum seekers and government discourse. They conclude that these news reports function to justify the government's hard-line policies as fair and reasonable. A body of research shows that the Australian print media have constructed 'boat people' as illegals, criminals and queue jumpers (Gale, 2004) or as deviants (Pickering, 2001) and that these constructions are predicated on notions of border protection and national identity (Gale, 2004). Other discursive analyses of printed media reports have found a high incidence of water metaphors (floods, tides, swamped etc.) used in Australian media reports about refugees and asylum seekers (Parker, 2015; Nguyen and McCallum, 2016), which add to the construction of asylum seekers as deviants and problems who are a drain on Australian society.

In the section which follows we outline our method of data collection and analysis and then proceed to present a discourse analysis of six articles from the national broadcasters in

the UK, Norway and Australia; three from prior to the publication of the photo of Alan Kurdi and three which followed its publication. We argue that in the week following the publication of the photographs refugees were constructed more sympathetically resulting in the 'crisis' shifting from a 'migrant' to a 'refugee crisis'.

1. Method

The death of Alan Kurdi was reported internationally on September 3rd 2015 following his tragic drowning the previous day. Following the suggestion of Goodman et al. (2017) that the reporting of the drowning of Alan Kurdi, who was photographed washed up on a beach in Turkey, appeared to have had an influence on the reporting of the 'crisis', we chose dates that would allow for further investigation of this.

For this study we selected one article that was published in each of the countries from the week before and one from the week following the publication of the photo of Alan Kurdi. This resulted in a sample of six articles for analysis. Each of the articles were selected from the national broadcasters' website in that country: BBC (UK), NRK (Norway) and ABC (Australia). These sources were chosen because each has a good reputation, national coverage and aim to present a range of views with impartiality, thus allowing for international comparison. The articles were chosen following a keyword search of all the articles on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants published on the broadcaster's website within the given time span, based on the criterion that each article prior to and after the publishing should deal with similar situations.

The six selected articles were coded for sections referring to the 'crisis', and extracts selected for examination using discourse analysis (McKinlay and McVittie, 2009). As this was a discursive analysis our focus is on what is accomplished in each of the articles analysed, rather than seeing them as a route to understanding what the author may or may not have been thinking (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

2. Analysis

In this analysis we begin by demonstrating how the construction of the 'crisis' differed between media reports in each of the three countries before and after the publication of the photo of Alan Kurdi's drowning. This is followed by a more general, and comparative

discussion regarding the use of language in constructing the 'crisis' following the publication of the photo.

2.1 The UK

This analysis addresses one article from the BBC a week before and after the publishing of the photographs of Alan Kurdi. This first example published a week before, also focuses on the tragic death of refugees crossing the Mediterranean.

1. **Migrant crisis: Scores of bodies found on Libya boat¹**
2. [Europe Migrant Crisis]
3. **About 50 people have been found dead in the hold of a boat carrying**
4. **migrants intercepted off the coast of Libya, the Italian coastguard says.**
5. Thousands of migrants have died and many thousands more have been rescued
6. after setting sail from Libya recently.
7. Wednesday's rescue operation was one of 10 such missions currently taking
8. place in the waters off Libya, the Italian coastguard said
9. Ahead of the summit, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz told the BBC
10. that current EU asylum regulations were not working.
11. Earlier in the week, Macedonian police had to use stun grenades after thousands
12. of migrants broke through police lines at the Greek border.

This first thing to note in this example is that this is explicitly referred to as a 'Migrant crisis' (1), which categorises those who died as migrants, rather than as refugees. This article makes no reference to 'refugees' at any point, with the term 'migrant' used throughout. 'Migrant' has been shown to be a negative term when compared with refugee, particularly as this ignores the specific needs of refugees who have been forced to flee their homes because of a fear for their safety (see Goodman and Speer, 2007). The article itself is categorised as 'Europe Migrant Crisis'. This term works to present the 'crisis' as one for Europe rather than for the people attempting to reach Europe (see Goodman, et al., 2017), many of whom are reported to have suffocated in this article.

The migrants in this article generally lack agency to act themselves, so that they are 'intercepted' (4) and either died (5) or are 'rescued' (5), whereas it is the Europeans (here

Italians) who have agency. However, where migrants are shown to have agency they are shown to have 'broke through police lines' (12) which is problematic, as it associates them with criminal behaviour. This kind of portrayal helps to justify the use of violence ('had to use stun grenades' (11) towards those who are categorised in this article as 'migrants'.

In sum, although people are reported to be dying in their attempts to reach Europe, they are also positioned as problems and as such in need of keeping out; as 'illegal' migrants and not refugees. The following article was published a week after the photographs of Alan Kurdi were published and presents a more sympathetic approach.

1. **Migrant crisis: EU's Juncker announces refugee quota plan²**
2. **European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has announced plans**
3. **that he says will offer a "swift, determined and comprehensive" response to**
4. **Europe's migrant crisis.**
5. Under the proposals, 120,000 additional asylum seekers will be distributed
6. among EU nations, with binding quotas.
7. He said tackling the crisis was "a matter of humanity and human dignity. It is true
8. that Europe cannot house all the misery in the world. But we have to put it into
9. perspective.
10. "This still represents just 0.11% of the EU population. In Lebanon refugees
11. represent 25% of the population."
12. ***A note on terminology:*** *The BBC uses the term migrant to refer to all people on*
13. *the move who have yet to complete the legal process of claiming asylum. This*
14. *group includes people fleeing war-torn countries such as Syria, who are likely to*
15. *be granted refugee status, as well as people who are seeking jobs and better*
16. *lives, who governments are likely to rule are economic migrants.*

This article is prefixed with the heading 'migrant crisis' (1), and like the previous extract is categorised as being part of the 'Europe Migrant Crisis' series, so this is very much framed around migration. Also, as with the previous example, the 'migrant crisis' is referred to as 'Europe's' (4). However, unlike the previous example there are also references to refugees throughout the article, including in the title (1), in addition to use of the category 'migrant'. Another major difference compared to the previous article is the reference to 'humanity' (7)

which positions this story as being about people in need of support, rather than simply exclusion and works to counter dehumanising representations. The President of the EU Commission, whose statement this article is based around presents a broadly sympathetic portrayal of refugees, suggesting that Europe should be offering support to refugees and constructs Europe as a trustworthy caring entity, responsible for making rational just decisions.

Of particular relevance is the footnote to the article (found on most, but not all 'Europe Migrant Crisis' articles of the day) which explicitly topicalises terminology (12-16). Here the BBC justifies and rationalises its use of terms, claiming that 'migrant' (12) is a catch all term that may include refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants. This note functions as a disclaimer, and suggests that the writer of this policy is managing a possible dilemma (Billig et al., 1988) where using the label of either migrant or refugee may be interpreted as taking a specific stance, particularly regarding the status of the refugees. 'People on the move' (12-13) is value free regarding people's refugee status, and the reference to 'legal process' helps to defer the responsibility defining status from the BBC to individual countries' laws. While the note does not refer to any of the migrants as 'refugees' the term is nevertheless used to refer to a 'likely' status; equally economic migrant (16) is presented as a possible category for the migrants, but in both cases the note remains ambiguous and leaves the final decision to 'governments' (16) who make the rulings. This note was not found on articles predating the photographs of Alan Kurdi being published. While this note explicitly does not call the people referred to in this article refugees, it does make the category available in a way that was not done previously, meaning that the possibility that these people are refugees is now implied.

While this article is still headed under the banner of 'Europe Migrant Crisis', the overall tone of this article is very different from the previous one. Whereas the article predating the death of Alan Kurdi presented refugees as problematic people to be excluded, the article after his death presents them as requiring humanitarian support. Alan Kurdi is not referenced in this article (only a link to another article about him remains), but it is possible that the impact of the publicising of his death can be seen in the references to refugees and humanitarianism that were absent in the previous article.

2.2 Norway

This analysis addresses two articles from NRK, a week before and after the publishing of the photographs of Alan Kurdi. The article from the 26 August is on refugees crossing borders in Europe and is categorized as being about “refugees in Europe”, partly implying this to be a European issue.

1. ***Crawling in to Hungary under the barbed wire fence***³
2. *[Refugees in Europe]*
3. *This morning, many Syrian refugees crawled under the barbed wire fence that is*
4. *put up between Hungary and Serbia.*
5. *Look at the refugees crawling under the barbed wire fence here.*
6. *Hungarian authorities have put up a barbed wire fence, but the fence shows*
7. *great deficiencies. The refugees were helping each other holding the lowermost*
8. *part of the fence, while others were crawling under it.*
9. *During August, the stream of refugees from Serbia to Hungary has increased. On*
10. *Monday, the number of border crossings was the highest ever. 2093 persons*
11. *crossed the border. In 2015, Hungary has registered over 100 000 migrants.*
12. *This border is the outermost border of the Schengen area, and when they have*
13. *entered Hungary, they can travel freely to any of Schengen’s 26 countries.*
14. *“If we do not take consequential steps, we will become a lifeboat sinking*
15. *underneath the weight of those struggling to hold on to it” says Janos Lazor.*
16. *“The decision to protect the borders of Hungary will be made next week”*
17. *spokesperson of the government, Zoltan Kovacs says.*

In the article, the situation is through metaphors, depicted to be one of invasion and conflict, protecting an inside from an invading outside. Water metaphors (9) imply that an uncontrollable force is approaching the borders, which calls for a concrete answer such as a need for protection (16). By drawing on this repertoire, the refugees’ need for protection is also undermined in favor of the border’s need for protection.

Through using the metaphor of a sinking lifeboat (14-15), normally associated with the disastrous deaths of refugees in the Mediterranean, the Hungarian politician equates the situation of the Hungarian people and Europe with the situation of the fleeing refugees.

Consequently, it is implied that the current situation for the people of Hungary is just as desperate as the situation for the refugees fleeing. This contributes to the justification of the fence, as well as implying the 'crisis' to be a European one, rather than one outside Europe.

The agents in the articles are both the Hungarian government working to secure the border, and the refugees themselves, finding ways to bypass it, despite Hungary's effort to protect it (6-8). Although the refugees' act is not entirely a negative one, as for example "helping" implies humanity, it is also suggesting illegality and helps justify the need for securing the border. Hence, the agency of the refugees is partly portrayed as being negative.

In the article, the term 'migrant' is only used once (11), and the term 'refugee' is used nine times. The terms are not connected or used in the same sentence, which makes the distinction between them unclear, but there is a fact box attached where the difference between 'migrants' and 'refugees' is underlined. Thus, there seem to have been a rather conscious use of the terms migrant and refugee in this article. As the term refugee connotes people in need of protection, it creates ambiguity in relation to how to respond to the "stream of refugees", and who actually is in need of protection: the refugees or the border. The term 'person' (10) is used once, when addressing the number of people crossing the border between Serbia and Hungary. This functions to promote the refugees as equals; everybody is a "person", whilst not everybody can be labelled a migrant or a refugee.

The next article is also on border crossings, but these border crossings unfold closer to Norway.

1. ***3000 refugees arriving in Denmark during three days – full stop in the ferry and train traffic⁴***
2. *According to the Danish Police, there were around 3000 foreigners arriving in*
3. *Denmark between Sunday and Wednesday. The situation is*
4. *changing hour by hour. "We have a difficult task managing all the people who*
5. *are entering. We are talking about humans, families and children who*
6. *have travelled a long way trying to escape areas of war and conflict. We must*
7. *handle this situation through dialogue and understanding" says Svend Larsen in the Danish Police.*
8. *Several ferries and trains with refugees and migrants arrived yesterday.*

9. *While the refugees are sitting in the train waiting, a stream of Danes are coming*
10. *to help. They bring cloths, food and beverages.*
11. *The refugees are entering Rødbyhavn, Lolland, and the border*
12. *town of Padborg, Jylland. Here, the refugees are asked to register in Denmark,*
13. *as asylum seekers. Most of them say no. They want to go to Sweden. – We*
14. *hope to convince them that the most reasonable thing to do is to register,*
15. *says Carsen Andersen.*
16. *Sweden is not interested in receiving those refugees wanting to go to Sweden*
17. *but already in Denmark. That was made clear after a meeting between Swedish*
18. *and Danish authorities.*

The second article, published on the 9 September, deals with the same situation, a high number of refugees (1-2) crossing a border, this time between Denmark and Sweden. The situation is presented as chaotic (4); however, this article focuses on management and finding ways to distribute the refugees between the two countries (12-18). Thus, a management and humanitarian theme, which in itself is a more positive approach, has challenged the conflict theme above.

The people quoted in this article are all police officers emphasizing that the refugees are vulnerable humans (5-7). As the police are often associated with criminality and control, this police statement about human compassion serves to strengthen the humanitarian discourse. However, the police officers also victimize the refugees, implying that they are not reasonable (14). Thus, 'othering' processes are at work as well, even though this approach is a more positive one than the former.

The terms used for the people on the move are asylum seekers, migrants, humans, foreigners and children, but first and foremost they are labelled as refugees. The term migrant is also used, but in this article, the term migrant is only used to distinguish from the refugee (8). This clear distinction, as well as describing them as humans trying to escape war, works to present them as more deserving than what was the case in the first article. This quote also implies that the real 'crisis', the war, is not happening in Europe, but rather outside.

The humanitarian angle is also detectable when describing the "stream of Danes" (9-10) as a concrete Danish response to the notion of the "stream of refugees" entering. But rather

than promoting an understanding of the refugees' situation, this works to provide an idea of the benign Dane, helping people in need and managing the refugee situation.

To sum up, the use of terms only differs slightly in the two articles, but overall there seem to have been a rather conscious use of the terms migrant and refugee in both articles. However, there was a higher focus on management and humanitarianism rather than conflict in the article after Alan Kurdi's death, as well as an increased focus on concrete solutions.

2.3 Australia

This analysis addresses one article from the ABC a week before and after the publishing of the photographs of Alan Kurdi. This first example, taken from a week before, focuses on the number of refugees crossing the Mediterranean in 2015 and is predominantly informed by quotes from a UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson.

1. ***Up to 3,000 refugees, migrants expected every day in Macedonia, UNHCR says***⁵
2. ***Up to 3,000 migrants are expected to cross into Macedonia every day in the***
3. ***coming months, most of them refugees fleeing war, particularly from Syria, the***
4. ***United Nations has said.***
5. *"They are coming in large groups of 300 to 400 people and then travelling*
6. *onwards by train or bus to Serbia" UNHCR spokeswoman Melissa Fleming told*
7. *a news briefing.*
8. *"We are anticipating that this influx and this route is going to continue at the*
9. *rate of up to 3,000 people per day," she said.*
10. *Ongoing violence in Iraq and Syria and "worsening conditions" for Syrian*
11. *refugees in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon are driving people to seek asylum*
12. *in Europe, Ms Fleming said.*

In this article a variety of terms are used to categorise those crossing the Mediterranean. The term 'migrant' is used on four occasions and, on each occasion, is used in the same sentence as the category 'refugee' (1), making it unclear whether the 'crisis' is being constructed as a 'refugee crisis' or a 'migrant crisis'. By contrast the term 'asylum seeker' is also used four times in the article but not in the same sentence as the terms 'refugee' or 'migrant', suggesting that they were being used interchangeably. Such a discursive strategy

creates ambiguity between the categories of ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ and therefore leads to a dilemma in what the appropriate response to the ‘crisis’ should be. The term ‘people’ (a value free term, as discussed above) is also used seven times in this article, almost exclusively when quantification is used (5). This quantification rhetoric functions to construct the ‘crisis’ as an exclusively ‘EU crisis’ with no mention of Australia’s response, shown in the large numbers of people entering EU countries each day (1, 2, 5, 9). When used with water metaphors (see Van der Valk, 2003), such as “influx” (8) this quantification rhetoric implies that the ‘crisis’ is a temporary problem, for the EU, but not for Australia.

Here, refugees do have agency as they are fleeing (3) or travelling (5) to Europe, and whilst a number of water metaphors (8) and disaster metaphors (10) were found throughout the article, echoing previous findings of their use in Australian media reporting on refugees and asylum seekers (Nguyen and McCallum, 2016), this is done through a humanitarian, rather than, a conflict discourse. However, this may be because much of the article is based on quotes from UNHCR. As such, use of these metaphors helps to construct the ‘crisis’ as an EU problem, as it is the EU who must respond to this “influx” (8). By drawing on a humanitarian repertoire it positions refugees as deserving, which has often been found to be absent in Australian media reporting on asylum seekers and refugees attempting to enter *Australia* by boat (Pickering, 2001; Gale, 2004).

The article analysed from the 7th of September 2015 showed some similarities with the article of the week before Alan Kurdi’s drowning. Its main difference is in its framing of the ‘crisis’.

1. ***Syrian refugee crisis: We’re failing to do our part***⁶
2. ***While the Opposition has called for a one-off life to Australia’s refugee intake,***
3. ***the Prime Minister hasn’t budged. No matter which way you cut it, Australia***
4. ***isn’t stepping up to the plate, writes Monica Attard.***
5. *We are a long way from the source of the crisis. We have and continue to do*
6. *something, albeit not enough, to resettle refugees who are forced to flee their*
7. *homes. But we are a long way from acting swiftly to help relieve the raw,*
8. *palpable suffering of the Syrian asylum seekers as Germany and Austria have*
9. *done, not to mention doing what a good global citizen does to help out the*

10. European nations bearing the burden of proximity.

11. What a pity – for the asylum seekers and for us.

Here, in contrast to the previous article, the 'crisis' is framed as a 'Syrian refugee crisis' (1) with only the terms 'refugee' (five occurrences) and 'asylum seeker' (ten occurrences) being used. The term 'migrant' is not used at all in this article. By focusing on humanitarian discourses (6-10) and framing the article as a 'Syrian refugee crisis', refugees and asylum seekers are positioned as those who have fled their homes and therefore as those who are deserving of support. However, by framing the 'crisis' as a 'Syrian refugee crisis' this article also fails to recognise that many of the refugees are not Syrians but are from other countries in the Middle East and Africa. Such a framing therefore positions those who are not Syrian refugees as less deserving of sympathy and support and leads to their status being open to question. Similarly, framing the 'crisis' as solely a 'Syrian refugee crisis' suggests that it is a temporary phenomenon, which will end once a resolution to the Syrian civil war is found. It fails to take account of wider global trends in forced migration.

Further rhetorical work is achieved in this article through the use of the pronoun "we". Through its multiple uses a dilemma (Billig et al., 1988) is apparent because "we" positions Australia (and Australians) as failing to play its (their) part (7) whilst also acknowledging distance from the source of the 'crisis' (5). Thus, in line with the previous article, the 'crisis' is positioned as an EU problem, however, here it is one which Australia should be assisting in solving. Indeed, the humanitarian repertoire used in this article further serves to criticise the Australian government's history of responding to refugees and asylum seekers who attempt to enter Australia by boat

In sum, this article has an increased humanitarian focus than the first article, and whilst both, to an extent, do construct asylum seekers and refugees as deserving, the biggest difference lies in the use of terms and the framing of the 'crisis'. In both articles, perhaps because of Australia's geographic location, the 'crisis' is positioned as an EU problem, so that it is Europe which needs help rather than those attempting to enter Europe, and there is no discussion of the role which Australia could play in resolving the 'crisis'. It is also interesting that the term 'migrant' was not used at all in this article following the publication of the photograph of Alan Kurdi and that it is framed as a 'Syrian refugee crisis', rather than just a

‘refugee crisis’. Such a framing of the ‘crisis’ is exclusionary and positions Syrian refugees as deserving whilst, other conflict-affected migrants and refugees, are excluded.

Discussion

The aim of this research was to analyse whether the reporting of the drowning of Alan Kurdi, who was photographed washed up on a beach in Turkey, had an influence on the reporting of the ‘crisis’ in three different countries.

Taking a comparative discourse analysis approach has demonstrated that in each of the three countries a variety of terms were used to categorise those crossing the Mediterranean to Europe: ‘migrant’, ‘refugee’, ‘asylum seeker’, ‘person’ and ‘foreigner’. The category ‘migrant’ has been shown to be more negative than that of ‘refugee’ (Goodman and Speer, 2007) and, before the publication of Alan Kurdi’s photograph, was the only term used in the UK article. In the Australian article, however, the terms ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ appeared to be used interchangeably and appeared in the same sentence whenever either was used. In the Norwegian article, the more positive term ‘refugee’ was used almost exclusively, which functioned to create ambiguity between humanitarian and security discourses. Despite this, in each of the articles the ‘crisis’ was constructed as being ‘Europe’s crisis’, rather than a ‘crisis’ for those who are trying to reach Europe. This construction is problematic because it overlooks the specific needs that refugees may have as a result of fleeing their home countries and creates a discourse in which security and border protection takes precedence over the welfare of refugees.

Following the publication of the photograph of Alan Kurdi there were some noticeable changes in the use of terms. The second Australian article did not use the term ‘migrant’ at all, instead opting for the more positive terms ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum seeker’. In the UK and Norwegian articles the term ‘refugee’ was more frequently used, and whilst the term ‘migrant’ was still used, there were attempts made to draw a distinction between the two categories in order to present ‘refugees’ as more deserving. Of particular interest here is the BBC’s addition of an explanation on terminology, which functioned as a disclaimer and suggested a possible dilemma (Billig et al., 1988) around the use of the term representing a specific stance. This analysis has therefore demonstrated the ways in which a category is used is never neutral, as different terms present those described in different ways. In this case the

analysis has demonstrated that the publishing of the pictures of Alan Kurdi led to a change in the category use from the more negative 'migrant' to the more positive and 'deserving' 'refugee' in all three countries' media.

Taking a discursive approach further highlighted that in the articles before the photos of Alan Kurdi were published, refugees were portrayed as generally lacking agency, and where they were given agency this was shown in negative terms which threatened borders and state security. An exception to this was in the Australian article where, despite the confusion over terms, the agency of refugees was constructed under a humanitarian repertoire. However, Australia's geographic distance from the 'crisis' may be a reason for this as previous research has shown that refugees and asylum seekers attempting to enter Australia have typically been constructed using security and deviance discourses (Pickering, 2001; Parker, 2015).

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¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34066466> 26 August 2015 (accessed 8 November 2017)

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34193568> 9 September 2015 (accessed 8 November 2017)

³ <https://www.nrk.no/urix/krabber-under-piggtradgjerdet-og-inn-i-ungarn-1.12518642> 26 August 2015. (Accessed from Atekst Retriever, 5 August, 2016)

⁴ <https://www.nrk.no/urix/3000-flyktninger-til-danmark-pa-3-dager-1.12543573> 9 September, 2015. (Accessed from Atekst Retriever, 5 August 2016)

⁵ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-26/up-to-3000-refugees-migrants-expected-a-day-in-macedonia/6724988> 26th August 2015 (accessed 8 November 2017)

⁶ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-07/attard-we're-not-'stepping-up-to-the-plate'-on-syria/6755154> 7th September 2015 (accessed 8 November 2017)

Seeking ‘common information’ among refugees, program workers, and academic researchers

Matt Voigts and Audrey Watne

Abstract: *This paper discusses three factors that contribute to a lack of ‘common information’ among refugees, academic researchers, and humanitarian program workers. The first is power differentials between refugees and many individuals who work with them. Refugees produce information agentively (especially through personal communications), but are also subjugated as targets of research, beneficiaries of humanitarian projects, and contingent recipients of legal protection. The second factor is transitoriness. Refugees often experience prolonged uncertainties about where and how they will live. Researchers and program workers, however, often spend short times ‘in the field’. They often negotiate their jobs’ learning curves in relative independence, with limited opportunities to share key basic aspects of their work with others or collaborate to explore more complex ones. The third factor is a lack of common ground around what information is valuable to share, rooted in the abovementioned factors and differences among academic disciplines. To strengthen collaborations, we propose increasing direct involvement by refugees in academic and program development; longer-term engagements and relationship development; and collaborations among all involved in the further development of theoretical frameworks.*

Keywords: refugees, information, information communication technologies, ICTs, gatekeeping, program work, interdisciplinary collaboration, interdisciplinarity, humanitarian aid

Introduction

This paper discusses how information is used by refugees, academics and program workers in conflict and post-conflict zones. We define information broadly as knowledge which is written, spoken or otherwise conveyed amongst people. Its presence is ubiquitous in the ‘information age’, but in relation to seeking asylum it is notable how often knowledge must be shared among people with radically different social positions. With so much written documentation produced in relation to asylum, why is it often difficult to share what we know with each other – and what can be done to better understand and support refugees and asylum seekers? The short answer is that the differing goals and positions of members of each group contribute to a lack of common ground around what information they value. This paper explores these differences, how they contribute to informational priorities, and how closer collaboration might facilitate more mutually beneficial knowledge sharing and the creation of ‘common information’ usable by all.

Information is submitted to substantiate asylum claims. Gathering information is a crucial part of program workers' and academic researchers' jobs as they produce research and implement programs ostensibly in service of people seeking asylum. For researchers, information 'gaps' shape research questions and frame how publications are shaped. Identifying what is 'known' about a topic allows researchers to formulate what is 'unknown'. Information is the substance of journal articles, needs assessments, program evaluations, and border control databases. It is a foundation upon which policy, research analysis, and humanitarian engagement are based and while it is transferable, attempts to share information often leads to tensions. While refugees' and humanitarians' divergent goals has been discussed (e.g. Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010; Yarrow, 2008), less attention has been paid to the implications these different positionings have for how and why information is obtained and interpreted.

We identify three underlying and intersecting reasons for tensions around information. The first is power differentials between refugees and those who work with them. Refugees share the fact that they left their homes because of insecurity. They otherwise do not necessarily share the same education, class, gender, race, cultural background, religion or nationality. While they may travel far from home, they often lack the privilege to do so safely held by Western aid workers and researchers. The second reason relates to different experiences of time. Many academics and program workers stay in the 'field' for periods of weeks or months, where they expend effort negotiating steep learning curves in relative independence with fewer resources to share what they have learned with others who are in similar positions, or build on it to address more complex problems. This contrasts with the protracted waiting experienced by most refugees around the world (Brun, 2016; UNHCR, 2006), whether they live in camps or urban areas (Malkki, 1995a). The third reason is the breadth of disciplinary traditions in which studies of refugees are situated and a lack of shared theory among them. Bakewell (2007) described refugee research as "notoriously under theorised" (p.13), a view shared in two other journal editorial introductions (Landau, 2007; Voutira and Doná, 2007). The field lacks established theoretical mainlines to make more abstract comparisons amongst different refugees' experiences and situations.

With awareness of the challenges, we argue for the importance of establishing collaborative approaches to better produce written material that can be understood and used

by all involved. Our suggestions include an increase in direct involvement by refugees in research and program-planning and implementation; in projects that promote long-term, sustained engagement and relationship development; and in the development of interdisciplinary-comprehensible theory.

1. Refugees, information, and power

This section discusses information that comes into play in and around refugees' lives, and the power systems in which it is embedded and of which it is constitutive. Beginning with an examination of challenges associated with the label 'refugee' itself, it discusses how refugees, program workers and researchers are subjects and agents within institutional and informal power structures. This includes current research on refugees' use of personal communication devices.

1.1. Information and institutional power

Information is intimately connected with the goals to which it is put to use. It inherits biases and emphases of those who produced it, both in its content and how it is organized (e.g. Bowker and Star, 2000; Barocas and Selbst, 2016). Official records are often used for pursuing the goals of the nation-states that create them (Graeber, 2015). Much of the information created around refugees is used to exercise power over them, for instance in order to assess the credibility of the evidence presented in asylum claims (Madziva and Loundnes, 2018; Jubany, 2011; Thomas, 2006). This also becomes evident in the widespread practice of biometric identification in Europe (Ajana, 2013).

Contentions around the terminology of the refugee bear out how intertwined challenges of power are with information (here, a fundamental piece of 'information' being the definition itself). In the United Nations' definition (1967), a refugee is someone who:

"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted... is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Individuals who wish to be protected as refugees by signatories of the Convention must conform to this definition - or, more specifically, must provide evidential information that they conform to it. The definition refers to the individual's subjective experience of "fear", but governmental assessors determine if that fear is "well-founded". Jubany (2011) and Souter (2011) describe how UK immigration officers come to subjective decisions on whether the information presented meets the criteria. In France, refugees' experiences may be 'authenticated' as traumatic by psychoanalysis (Fassin and Rechtman, 2008). In practice, whatever mortal or visceral fears the asylum seeker experiences, their credibility is established on terms set by countries offering protection.

The inadequacy of the definition to cover the present group of migrating people reflects the assumptions built into it. As Zetter describes, refugee movement motivations often include a mixture of seeking safety and better economic opportunities (2007, p.183). As Malkki (1995b) discusses, the UN definition was modelled on post-World War II Europe and the then pervasive ideas regarding nation-states and military conflicts. Presently, the global majority of displaced persons are from and residing in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where countries are configured by European powers whose colonial legacy lives on within them. Bauman (2007, p. 32) suggests these "latecomers to modernity" - those in countries that the West tends to describe as 'developing' - "are obliged to seek *local* solutions to *globally* caused problems - with at best a meagre, but more often than not non-existent chances of success." The movement of people seeking safety in another locality is one way individuals attempt a solution.

Hayden (2006) discusses how the terms of 'need' required by the earlier mentioned definition create a division in which conspicuously exercising agency is considered evidence that protection is not needed. In the official narrative, "[refugees] are not permitted to care about pull factors and are defined purely in terms of overwhelming reasons to leave." (p.474). To the institutional structure, the refugee is defined by necessity and a lack of choice: the refugee must flee, whereas economic migrants – conceived as rational actors – move of choice. At the same time, even asylum seekers fleeing relatively 'clear cut' instances of threat (for example, the Syrian conflict that began in 2011) may face scrutiny, doubt, and long waits for their claims to be processed. Given these pressures and expectations, the act of framing

one's experiences to meet the 'image' or legal definition of the refugee to acquire benefits (such as the legal right to presence in a country) may be read as an act of agency, even as asylum applicants remain at an overall power deficit.

Demonstrating that one is in need of international protection may seem straightforward, but in practice becoming a 'refugee' involves fulfilling a set of criteria (legal, and sometimes popular) to which the applicant must conform, may ambiguously meet, and is often not permitted to act too agentively as this would negate the vulnerability necessary to fulfil expectations tight to the label.

1.2 Refugees' communications with journalists and program workers

An emphasis on suffering is further aggravated by the interests of researchers and journalists alike, who tend to be interested in dramatic aspects of migration and gravitate toward refugees who most fit (or are willing to play toward) stereotypes (Andersson 2014, p.53-55). This perpetuates a sensationalized image of refugee life. Refugees themselves may not see direct or indirect benefits from the work of researchers and program workers who ostensibly arrive to 'help'. Many grow frustrated by interviewers (including journalists and academics) who "take our stories", a wording that appears in both Foster and Minwalla (2018, p.59) and Andersson (2014, p.48). Foster and Minwalla's (2018) research found that Yezidi women who survived ISIS captivity felt pressure to talk to journalists undermining their personal and emotional security as well as that of their relatives. At the same time, they believed it was their duty to share their experiences, even though their expectations for international humanitarian and military responses to their stories were greatly unmet, and they had no recourse to hold anyone accountable for unmet promises and expectations.

1.3 Information, power, and program workers

Information is often a pragmatic part of program workers' jobs. It is produced while creating, implementing and justifying programs. Input can come from direct research, program evaluations and reports. Program workers are agents of information creation. Yet they are also subject to information, facing expectations to communicate their actions in terms acceptable to superiors and funders that are not necessarily otherwise relevant to their work or the refugees who it is supposed to benefit.

Program workers seek to help refugees, yet they are constrained by the following factors. Often early career professionals (even those holding advanced degrees) learn the bulk of their roles and the context in which they operate on the job (Autessere, 2014). During this learning process, they design programs navigating between clients' needs as they are perceived from the operational level; the funding priorities of donors; and headquarters-level strategic priorities. Governmental agencies and NGOs adopt policies which promote their values and principles (such as democracy, human rights, and gender equality) (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 51-52). These may be in conflict, as when personal desires to help may be at odds with different governments' desires to increase local economic development and discourage economic migration. Gulrajani (2017) explores the motivations of bilateral aid investment as a "dialectic relationship between humanitarian and strategic interests" in which national aims are often a stronger driving force than humanitarian interest in the well-being of non-citizens (p.376). Additionally, program workers navigate rapidly changing funding priorities and donor "fads" as governmental and international NGOs continuously shift their interests, making sustained engagement on priorities difficult (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 59). The workers themselves balance between these formal, overarching aims of international aid; unspoken goals and moral values they personally hold onto; and the goals of their home countries' governments to which they might feel they have to abide. As Hilhorst and Schiemann describe in their study of Médecins Sans Frontières Holland, program workers shape organizational principles through daily practice as they negotiate how to apply their principles within their lived daily reality and operational constraints (2002).

In recent years, many NGOs have expected increased accountability for resources used and the impact (both positive and negative) their activities has on the operational contexts. Two key moments in this were the establishment of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action in 1997 and the 1999 publication of Anderson's *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War*. NGO accountability processes often falls under the heading of 'Monitoring and Evaluation' (M&E) and involve exercises for measuring programmatic effectiveness and impact. Depending on program design, M&E systems compile raw program data through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, which is used to generate donor reports or internal assessments that feed back into future program design (see "Ends Goals" of the American Evaluation Association, 2014).

Chapman et al. (2016) describe M&E as often being an ad hoc process, generated by key individuals or organizations both in the field and in headquarters, based on feedback from beneficiaries and program workers judgment and experience (p.43). Producing these reports are one way in which program workers navigate the agendas of the organizations for which they are working and the funders that make their work financially possible. The information priorities and collection methods applied in delivery and evaluation of these projects however tend to be donor-driven, and bear limited resemblance to realities that workers see on the ground. They may be focused on single dimensions that appear somewhat arbitrary, for example, measures of the number of food bags delivered - without providing attention to how this fits into the overall dietary quality of life of beneficiaries or collecting data on seemingly simple and important factors such as gender or other demographic details (Chapman et al, 2016, p. 43). As asylum applicants may seek to 'fit' the definition of refugee under ambiguous circumstances, program workers may seek to mould outputs for external consumption that are drawn from complex situations.

Meanwhile, more ground-relevant insights gained through M&E may not be utilized outside of the evaluative process. Information generated through M&E often rests on hard drives or email archives not made available to researchers or program workers engaged in similar work. While NGOs have a responsibility to protect individual data, sharing data regarding overall economic impact, conflict assessments or program impact could prevent duplicative efforts. Decisions regarding information are influenced by power relations. For example, as a program worker and researcher, Watne experienced conflicts regarding information sharing. After completing one research project, the funding NGO specifically withheld detailed findings that could have been used for improving refugees' wellbeing in order not to jeopardize its own relationship with the host government.

Similarly, informational outputs of the process are rarely accessible to the programs' intended beneficiaries. Anderson et al (2012) found that those on the receiving end of aid programs reported that "aid providers often do not communicate clearly about decision-making processes, project plans, the selection of beneficiaries/ participants, and actual results achieved—and that this leads people to speculate about what is being hidden and why" (p. 26). Aid tends to be perceived as a one-way flow of resources from those who have privilege to those in need of help. Beneficiaries often have no mechanism to feed back into program

design, to contribute to and challenge the interventions that are used. Cea and Rimington (2017) discuss the challenges that prevent what they call “for impact” organizations from involving “end users” or beneficiaries in their program design (p.103). There are entrenched formal power structures in decision-making and program design in which donors, executive directors, and program staff are unwilling to challenge their assumptions. Cea and Rimington further attest from their interviews that “this environment encourages for-impact practitioners to infantilize, dehumanize, ignore, and even fear its end-users” (p.106).

Overall, the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of donors, foreign project designers, and program implementers reinforces a dynamic in which foreign knowledge and information priorities supersedes the interests of locals and beneficiaries and may not reflect on-the-ground realities.

1.4 Refugees’ personal communications

Recent research and media coverage has gravitated toward the figure of the ‘tech savvy refugee’ – smartphone in hand as he or she navigates long, dangerous journeys while staying in touch with distant family (Economist 2017, O’Malley 2015, Gillespie et al 2016). Indeed, Information Communications Technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet, social media and the mobile phone create many communication opportunities for refugees within (and outside) institutional structures of immigration. With the rise of digital communications, researchers have examined how refugees in camp and urban settings communicate with globally-dispersed friends and family (Gillespie et al 2016, Cassar et al 2016, Witteborn 2014, Witteborn 2015, Harney 2013 and Leung 2011). These technologies, however, provide both opportunities and potential dangers to refugees, as they may be employed to more closely observe them and regulate their movement (Gillespie et al, 2016). Wilding and Gifford write that ICTs foreground “issues of power: on one hand, the power held by governments and other bodies to employ ICTs as instruments of surveillance and control over forced migrants and, on the other hand, the potential of ICTs to empower forced migrants in their quest for agency and control over their current and future circumstances” (2013, p.495-496). Gillespie et al (2016) summarize similarly:

Smartphones are an essential tool and also a threat for refugees. They are essential in that they allow them to navigate their journeys, use translation tools, access vital services (legal, medical, food and shelter, support networks) and to keep in touch with friends and family, especially those refugees who have already made the journey. But smartphones are also a threat because the digital traces that they leave behind make refugees vulnerable to surveillance by state and non-state actors, and intimidation by extremist groups. (p.5-6)

Gillespie et (2016) further highlight how European governments could assist in providing information to help refugees travel safely, but which they decline to do out of political priorities and challenges - a critique which could be extended to many other governments and institutions. There have been reports of plans by Frontex and Eurosur to monitor asylum seekers as they travel (Taylor and Graham-Harrison 2016) but as for now – as far as the authors are aware - how or if this has been implemented has not been discussed in academic literature or news media. In detention, however, personal communications devices are often confiscated as part of larger systems of control as Leung (2011) described in Australia and Lemaire (2014) and Debono (2013) in Malta.

The veracity of information to which refugees have access is equally a matter of concern. Jack (2015) and Turner (2004) found word-of-mouth communication and rumors to be common in, respectively, a Burmese refugee camp in Thailand and a Burundian refugee camp in Tanzania. Matters discussed relate to both the immediate and the international. “Often they would know more about recent world politics than I did, only listening to the BBC world service when I had time,” wrote Turner (p. 236) of his research community. Jack wrote of camp communication that “[c]amp residents tended to have poor knowledge of how to navigate the resettlement process, ... [residents used] a cyclical pattern of word-of-mouth communication among camp residents...” (p.252). Though communication is abundant, reliable information is lacking. Twigt noted that urban Iraqi refugees in Jordan used social media to fact check news viewed on television news sources (2016, p. 36). The BBC described how the unreliability of information sources erodes trust in institutions like the UNHCR or governments (2016), and how face-to-face communication with other refugees was often more trusted than information distributed through official sources (p.23-27).

This section discussed refugees and program workers are both agents and subjects of information, as they seek, generate and are subject to it. Overall, much of the information produced ‘about’ them is not necessarily ‘for’ them, and is often used to constrain their movements. The UNHCR definition of ‘the refugee’ seeks to define who is worthy of international protection, and evidence of meeting the definition is presented through evidentiary information. Information Communications Technology enables refugees to communicate across distances and seek information. At the same time, practical, reliable information from official sources remains difficult to find, and ICTs and biometric identification may be used to monitor and restrict refugees’ movements. Program workers employ information to plan programs, yet are subject to justifying their work through M&E terms that may not correspond to the practicalities of their work supporting refugees. The following section describes how transitoriness comes into effect during programmatic and academic work with refugees.

2. Transitory experiences in the field

As described above, refugees seek information for their own use and become sources of information as subjects of research, nation-states, and program beneficiaries. This section discusses a second communication challenge outlined that is deeply related to the power differentials discussed in the previous section. A notable contrast exists between the transitoriness of academics and program workers who come and go into ‘the field’, and refugees’ often prolonged experiences of legal, social and personal limbos.

The challenges researchers (including academics and journalists) face for communication may seem small in light of those they study. ‘Western’ researchers occupy a privileged position of international mobility that become even more tangible and evident in non-Western countries and camp settings. Refugees’ movements are controlled, while researchers’ lives are marked by mobilities, choice and the ability to drop in and out of the field (Korff et al 2015). They have the financial means, institutional organizational support, and necessary legal documents required to engage with refugees’ situations at relative will and then return ‘home’. This power differential is highlighted in quote from Foster and Minwalla (2018)’s Yezidi participants about journalistic attention: “they come from everywhere, and they take our stories and they don't do anything for us” (p. 59).

In addition to reflecting privilege, however, the transitoriness of refugee research and program work creates challenges for the work itself, including allowing professionals to develop skills over long careers. As mentioned in the above section, many program workers learn ‘on the job’, and foreign organizations may allocate comparatively large financial resources to bring in high value workers for relatively short periods of time only. Many journalists, volunteers, and researchers may not have experience with refugees before they arrive at the field site. They may change careers as funding opportunities come and go. Sometimes, the ‘field’ itself disappears or radically changes. An example is the island of Lesbos, which became a major site of arrival in Europe through the summer of 2015, resulting in the construction of an infrastructure to support them (see Hernandez 2016 as well as the editorial of this special issue) that was reduced in scope as arrival numbers decreased.

Transitoriness for program workers is often a necessity that is driven by short term contracts, challenging field conditions, greater advancement opportunities available in headquarters locations, and the challenge of maintaining social relationships or raising children in conflict affected areas. These and other challenges tends to encourage experienced program workers to leave after brief work experiences and their replacement by younger, less experienced staff (Autesserre, 2014). Korff et al (2015), for example, found only a 40% retention rate (returning for a second assignment) in a study of 1,955 *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) Holland field staff.

A high turnover results in at least two informational challenges. One, they make for missed opportunities to explore situations in-depth. Two, they exacerbate a steep learning curve on site, as previously established knowledge must be re-learned as new staff enter old positions. Logistical information is lost, and frequent turnovers stifle relationship and trust development among foreign workers, their local counterparts and the refugees themselves.

3. Disciplinary differences

The previous two sections outlined differences in regard to goals and informational priorities among refugees, the agencies that govern their movements and the program workers that seek to support through program implementation. This section focuses on academic researchers, whose diversity and breadth of approaches further contributes to the labyrinthine nature of communication.

3.1 Information sharing among academics

Limited communication among researchers is exacerbated by the field of Refugee Studies and Forced Migration Studies' well-documented lack of theoretical unity (Bakewell 2007, Landau 2007, Voutira and Doná 2007). Large-scale studies on refugees' technology use do not necessarily attempt a theoretical grounding. For example, Gillespie et al.'s 2016 paper on refugees' communication technology use while traveling (discussed above) does not situate its information within larger theoretical debates.

Different researchers working to address refugee-related issues from different perspectives is in many ways positive. Another effect, however, is that researchers from diverse groups have different requirements, assumptions, understandings, and expectations for what is known and unknown, what constitutes a novel research topic. PhD students may be supervised by academics without method or subject area knowledge of refugees. Oft-cited texts in one disciplinary approach – such as Malkki's *Purity and Exile* (1995a) which among many anthropologists would be considered a classic study on forced displacement – may not be as widely known to researchers from other backgrounds. Chatty and Marfleet (2015) trace the concept and origins of the various strands of 'Refugee and Policy Studies':

In spite of this broad interest, or perhaps because of it, key conceptual issues have seldom been addressed, with the result that there is a lack of clarity on matters of fundamental importance. Greater awareness of general theory and greater analytical rigour is required urgently on issues that bear upon forced migration. (p.1)

That such "fundamental" topics continue to be unaddressed speaks to the challenge of doing so. As earlier discussed, the terminology of 'refugee' itself is both emblematic and reflective of the challenges of multidisciplinary research. This also becomes evident of number of different strands of migration research. Researchers tend to situate their research under different headings with their own particular histories, technical and theoretical focuses, including 'forced migration', 'refugee studies', and 'undocumented migration' (DeGenova 2002). Many strains of research and terminology bear the imprints of power relations - as Hayden writes, "it has remained impossible to define refugees in such a way that legal, ethical, and social scientific meanings of the term could align," (2006, p.472). As described in Section I, criteria used to assess refugees' legal 'worthiness' may not reflect on-the-ground realities.

In turn, policy-oriented work may not reflect sociologically or anthropologically useful categorizations, or - as Bakewell (2008) argues - may be the best way to uncovering policy-useful information. While the social and political implications of these labels and the work they support is important to consider, the key emphasis here is a more basic one: a practical challenge exists for knowledge sharing among different actors who may or may not share similar political mind sets.

3.2 Information sharing beyond academia

Academics seeking information about or from refugees are likely to approach program workers to access research populations. As early-career program workers are developing their own contextual knowledge and experience, they may find themselves serving the role of gatekeepers, mediating between refugees and academics and journalists who seek to research them. At the time of this writing, during two years working in program implementation, evaluation, and research in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq, Watne has fielded over a dozen requests from academic researchers and journalists seeking on-the-ground knowledge and refugees to contact. Requesters ranged in knowledge about the context and about forced displacement and they came from a wide variety of disciplines. As a gatekeeper, Watne struggled with the desire to support research on refugees and concerns for the effect of research on research populations with which she worked.

Watne felt a need to maintain her own relationships and credibility, which could be compromised by introducing unprepared or insensitive researchers to colleagues and friends. She also felt a responsibility to protect vulnerable and traumatized populations and limits to her time available. To informally vet potential collaborators, she assessed the context of the introduction (including how well she knew the person who had referred that particular person to her); how well-organized the request was; the stage of research (whether exploratory, design, or implementation); the institutional support the requester was receiving (whether it had been approved by a University Internal Review Board, a news publication, or was being done by a freelancer); the requester's approach to sensitive research topics with vulnerable populations (such as experiences of trauma and violence); and, finally, the knowledge of the local context of Kurdistan, Iraq, the requester was demonstrating. Gatekeeping was, for Watne, an ad hoc process in which credibility was difficult to measure and based informally

on these criteria, as well as general availability and the interest of local contacts to meet researchers.

Discussing ethical standards can help demonstrate knowledgability on topics of importance to program workers. Program workers and researchers may have differing priorities, ethical frameworks, and vocabulary. International NGOs utilize ethical frameworks such as Do No Harm (Anderson, 1999) and the Core Humanitarian Standard (Sphere Project, 2011). Academics may follow university-bound ethical guidelines such as those laid out by the Association of Social Anthropologists (2011). These frameworks, however, often share many core values which includes a commitment to minimizing harm. Humanitarian practitioners and researchers most often share the same ultimate goals of helping refugees, though the articulation and implementation of this aim varies.

Program workers and researchers face different pressures and deadlines, even if they may be relatable. In a conflict context, programmatic deadlines are driven by donor funding cycles interact with conflict developments on the ground that are impossible to predict. Academic calendars, as with programmatic work demands, may also be independent of the on-the-ground situation. For example, during the writing of this paper, deadlines in the journal schedule coincided with major on-the-ground context changes including the Kurdish offensive to retake Mosul from ISIS in spring of 2016 and shifting borders after the Kurdistan Independence Referendum in fall of 2017, causing delays and communication difficulties as programmatic and security concerns took precedence over research and writing. Other seemingly mundane challenges in collaboration include coordination calls across time zones, late night and early morning meetings, and connectivity issues due to unpredictable electricity or internet service in Iraq. Researchers should recognize that while program workers may in principle agree to provide support, they may lack the time to provide in depth contextual knowledge, context orientation or the number of contact introductions on which academics may rely on them. When contact is made and information exchanged, ethical researchers and program workers may strive to react to uncertain on-the-ground situations to the best of their ability.

Tensions between academics and researchers may involve conflicting priorities over knowledge aims. For a program worker, it may be difficult to see value in academic questions

that serve to advance a discipline, but do not provide concrete benefits to research subjects. Workers in the role of gatekeeper have concerns that the vulnerable populations with which they work may be re-traumatized by insensitive or unprepared interviewers. Bloch notes that immigration status is a key factor to vulnerability and that people without documents might fear that participation in research will have negative outcomes such as deportations and detention (2007, p.233-234). Varying assumptions about what constitutes preparedness may also lead to tensions. Basic questions may be seen to indicate the researcher lacks background knowledge, while technical questions may be deemed irrelevant. Program workers may witness refugees' interview fatigue - as described above - and feel they must prioritize their own survey implementation over what appear to be more esoteric information gathering exercises. The potential benefits of academic research on humanitarian work and refugees, is that it potentially has more time and space available to reflect upon the long-term outcomes of short-term programming (Brun, 2016), but it is key that the results of these research practices are communicated back to the people in the field, refugees and practitioners alike.

Early career program workers may serve as gatekeepers and possible partners to support academics to reach target research populations among refugees. Program workers and academics face challenges when sharing information including different expressions of ethical responsibilities, different levels of engagement with refugees (i.e. longer term project engagement versus interviews or survey enumeration), and different timelines. Depending on the context of program work and research, program workers may also face challenges due to operating in and near conflict areas or limited services. These challenges may be overcome through increased communication, active listening, and openness about reality of constraints and different views or priorities. Academics bring valuable theoretical background and can help situate insight and data from program work into larger theoretical and policy discussions. Program workers and academics working together can amplify the voices and experiences of refugees and roots research in lived experiences. These benefits of collaboration far outweigh the challenges.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In light of the three above challenges discussed - power differentials, the transitory nature of the field, and disciplinary differences - this paper recommends the following approaches to

increase and improve collaboration to find information that can be of common use for refugees, academics, and program workers:

- 1) First, to address power imbalances, refugees should be directly involved in information generation within the context of research design and program implementation. Such collaboration could include involving refugee, displaced, and host community academics as equal co-authors and not (just) as research participants and creating more spaces for their contributions in international academic spheres. This should help to facilitate both more useful informational focuses, and greater accountability to beneficiary communities at different stages of program design, implementation, and output production.
- 2) Second, to address the transitory nature, academics and program workers should aim for longer term engagement. A more integrative involvement of refugee academics and program workers in publishing and programmatic processes can provide continuity and grounding in lived realities even as researchers and program workers exit the field. Establishing equitable, long-term relationships with refugees will help foreign researchers to come to a more thorough understanding of local contexts. This ideally would be facilitated by supportive funding structures. In the absence of such guarantees, however, this can take the form of sustained partnerships at an institutional or individual level.
- 3) Third, to address issues of understanding that come with disciplinary diversity and different information priorities, researchers and program workers should seek concrete ways to collaborate constructively with each other. Academics of different disciplines and program workers should seek to articulate foundational knowledge, methods, and ethical frameworks in comprehensible ways and work together to produce mutually understandable, useful and rigorous published work that can be widely shared. Outputs should also be made available in forms understandable to the refugee communities involved as research participants and program beneficiaries.

These proposals still carry the challenges of the above-identified issues of power differentials, disciplinary differences, and transitory engagements. However, with awareness and greater

collaboration, we believe that more unified and useful projects - supported by and with resulting informational outputs - can be created that are of greater benefit to the displaced people who are supposed to benefit from them.

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Assessing the freedom of expression of Syrian refugee media outlets

Maria Assaf

Abstract: *Syrian post-uprising media outlets arose during the peaceful phase of the Syrian uprising in early 2011 (Salazar-Ferro, CPJ, 2014). Fewer than 30 of these outlets, funded by Western countries, survived and gradually moved to Turkey, escaping censorship and deteriorating security in Syria. In Turkey, they still face challenges such as security threats and an uncertain legal status. This article focuses on the challenges that threaten refugee reporters' freedom of expression. Its aim is also to bring an understanding of the techniques refugee journalists use to mitigate these challenges, which can inform other reporters in similar conditions. This research was carried out utilising a case-studies framework and speaking to seven editors in chief of post-uprising media outlets in Istanbul. It concludes that Syrian post-uprising media face severe restrictions to their freedom of expression, but survive through a mixture of collaboration, creativity and resourcefulness.*

Keywords: refugees, freedom of expression, journalism, conflict, Syria, Turkey.

Introduction

By 2014, more than 70 Syrian journalists had fled censorship and a lack of safety in Syria (Salazar-Ferro, 2014) and many had moved to Turkey. This research explores the freedom of expression of refugee media outlets by drawing upon interviews with seven Syrian post-uprising reporters based in Istanbul, Turkey, and three Syrian refugee media professionals. Carver and Verdirame (2001) studied refugee freedom of expression from a human rights perspective. Andersson (2013) outlined that political interests often drive governments' decisions to deliberately limit refugees' freedom of expression. The research is born out of adherence to Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICPR) which states that people in countries signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) have the right to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds..." and to have opinions "without interference" (UDHR, 1948). The limiting of individuals' right to speak out and of press freedom is a direct threat to this right.

In 2016, Turkey was home to over 2.7 million Syrian refugees. Despite being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the country imposed a geographical restriction only granting refugee status to Europeans. Syrians are only permitted to reside in Turkey for a limited period of time as "guests". These limitations restrict Syrians' access to legal employment,

healthcare, education and housing. Most Syrian refugees in Turkey are waiting to be resettled to a third country, but constant changes in refugee law designed to prevent Syrians from reaching Europe, such as the “EU-Turkey deal”, continue to make their legal situation even more precarious (Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel, 2016). Carver and Verdirame (2001), in their study on Kenya and Uganda, wrote that refugee press fulfils vital functions in their community such as voicing concerns and helping assess the potential to return home. However, Syrian refugee reporters in Turkey face killings, funding challenges, press freedom restrictions, as well as an uncertain legal status. Most of the publications studied in this article have a precarious legal status and authorities could shut them down any time. Thirty journalists were killed in Turkey in 2015, several of whom were post-uprising Syrian journalists reporting on politics, human rights and corruption (CPJ, 2017).

With 65.6 million forcibly displaced people in the world in 2015 (UNHCR, 2017a), refugees’ freedom of expression is of particular importance. Examining the challenges to the freedom of expression of Syrian refugee reporting provides insight into refugee freedom of expression as a whole. This article draws upon theories of the ideal role of a journalist in a society and on considerations how journalism has changed over time (Carpentier, 2005; Dahlgren, 2010 and Deuze, 2005). This article considers, beyond the threats to refugees’ freedom of expression, the resilience mechanisms that refugee reporters deploy. This may inform other refugee journalists working in similar conditions, as well as donors who fund refugee reporting (IREX, 2016), of the specific barriers to refugee freedom of expression including their often uncertain legal status and the physical dangers refugee journalists can face.

1. Literature review: Refugee journalists’ freedom of expression- functions and challenges

The limited research conducted on information precarity of refugees and refugee reporting points at the myriad of difficulties refugees face when trying to accurately cover the political situation in their countries of origin and discuss the problems their community are facing in their host country. The making of journalism has been a historical challenge for refugees. Leff (2015), for instance, points to the difficulties Jewish refugee reporters fleeing Nazi Germany faced when they tried to exercise their profession in the United States. They encountered that journalism schools rebuffed requests to re-educate them with an often anti-semitic rationale.

While earlier it was mentioned that Article 19 of the ICPR foregrounds the right of refugees to speak out, international legislation can also be misused to stop refugees from undertaking journalistic activities that denounce or speak out about unpopular issues (Andersson, 2013). The Organization of African Unity (OAU)'s 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, for instance, specifically forbids refugees from engaging in "subversive activities" or "attacking" a member state of the OAU "through the press, or by radio" (OAU, 1969). In their research on refugee rights in Kenya and Uganda, Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) showed how refugees engaging in journalism can be threatened with forced return, regardless of whether these countries are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Major texts on journalistic scholarship such as the Handbook for Journalistic Studies do not recognise refugee press as a genre of its own (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009), whereas studies have outlined the clear role of refugee press in society (Carver and Verdirame, 2001). Wall, Otis Campbell and Janbek (2017) found that Syrian refugees in Jordan sought information about the wellbeing of relatives left-behind, their crops and the conditions of the towns and cities where there had been attacks. The refugees in this study expressed, however, a lack of access to information regarding the material help available to them in the refugee camp. Refugee reporting can also be an important homemaking tool for those who may never be able to return home (Bonini, 2011).

In his article about Congolese refugees in a Rwandan camp, Kivikuru (2013) wrote that a lack of refugee voices in the international media has reinforced a soft colonial discourse. In a similar fashion Wall, Otis Campbell and Janbek (2017) found that international media portrayed the lives of refugees as having less value than those in the 'developed world'. The Syrian refugees in their study reported that journalists often took photos of them without their permission and printed distorted stories. At the same time, Palestinian reporters play an essential role in the production of international news about their society, but are often prevented from telling their own stories in the international media (Bishara, 2006). Despite having the skills to do the job, their contribution is usually as translators, producers and fixers. Often, to keep their jobs at international news organisations, they avoid disclosing their views on the situation. These reporters also face security threats and Israeli-imposed mobility

constraints. These challenges leave the stories of Palestinians' experiences in the hands of those with only particular political interests.

Journalistic objectivity has been used as a reason to prevent those affected by conflict to tell their own stories. However, literature about multiculturalism and multimedia reporting challenges this limiting view (Deuze, 2006) as these forms of reporting require collaboration across communities and often include a call for journalists to take a more active role in addressing issues such as inequality. Similarly, alternative and citizen journalism are born out of discontent with mainstream Western media portrayals. Often produced by people without formal journalistic qualifications and by the use of mobile devices and social media, these forms of reporting provide more background information and context in news reports. They give greater coverage to non-elite people and often see themselves as authors of social change (Atton, 2009, p. 265). Refugee journalism exists in a challenging media panorama, but it has the potential to help their community take greater ownership of the international conversation about their lives.

Refugee reporting shares similar characteristics with alternative and citizen journalism. Asthana (2017) looked at the use of inexpensive communication technologies by Palestinian youth to aid their struggle against Israeli occupation by performing activities such as a social media campaign to get innocent Palestinians released from prison. This form of reporting was political in nature and it enabled group formation among Palestinians. These productions strayed away from the view of refugee children as helpless victims, a view much in line with the neoliberal discourse of humanitarian narratives on children's rights. Asthana (2017) argues that such views perpetuate circles of violence and domination. Her research points at the potential of refugee journalism as a form of resistance against those narratives.

Syrian refugees in Jordan's largest refugee camp similarly took to social media to counteract false stories written about them, according to the study mentioned earlier, by Wall, Otis Campbell and Janbek (2017). They also found that Syrian refugees experienced a lack of access to communications technologies and faced surveillance by the Syrian regime. Since 2000, the Syrian regime has been blocking and censoring the internet. As the civil uprising escalated in 2011, the government also began to prevent foreign journalists from entering Syria. Citizen journalism boomed during this information blackout and activists

learned to work around government controls (Salama, 2012). For those telling these stories, they take the risk in the hope that the international community will hear their stories and respond.

A major challenge of refugee reporting is that it requires philanthropy to survive. Funding usually comes with conditions attached, as Scott, Bunce and Wright (2017) have shown in regard to the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). This online news agency was first founded by the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to report on development issues. Journalists were told to avoid being critical of UN member states or of the humanitarian industry. Eventually, IRIN moved towards private sector funding, which also imposed agendas concerning particular business interests. Having several donors helped IRIN mitigate the power of conditional funding.

This section aimed to highlight the role of refugee press as an attempt by its communities to claim their right to freedom of expression and achieve social and political change. It provided a brief illustration of the challenges refugees face when trying to engage in journalism and an overview of the vital role information plays in the lives of those fleeing conflict. The doors of journalism are now opening to alternative voices such as those from refugees. Refugee freedom of expression can be better understood by viewing journalism as a form of freedom of speech and the potential for any individual to be a journalist. Telling stories about their community and expressing grievances is a human right that is systematically denied to refugees in many fronts.

2. Theoretical framework: the ideal role of refugee press

This section examines the ideal role of a journalist from a variety of perspectives, making an attempt to formulate an ideal role of refugee press. Comparing the ideal with the reality of refugee press will highlight the limitations that exist for achieving refugee press freedom. Journalism's role varies according to place, economic system and dominant political ideas. According to Carpentier (2005) the liberal and social responsibility models are the most dominant. In the liberal model, the media are seen as economically-independent, profit-driven enterprises. In the social responsibility model, the media remains a private entity, but it carries public responsibility. In a study attempting to describe universal journalistic values Deuze (2005) found that being objective was important for many journalists. He defined

objectivity as being neutral, fair and credible. He also came to the conclusion that many journalists valued autonomy and immediacy: journalists should be independent and able to gather the news quickly. Ethics, or having a sense of validity and legitimacy, was also highly valued for the reporters interviewed (p. 447).

One of the most significant journalistic values Deuze (2005) found is that of journalists as a fourth state or government's watchdog. In this context, the ideas of press freedom and autonomy become ever more important: of not being stopped from reporting on certain topics or expressing opinions. However, the concept of press freedom has not been without its critics. For example, Berg critiqued Western journalism as a powerful entity that has often sided with capitalistic power (2012). Lichtenberg (1987) also points out that journalism has traditionally been run by profit-driven, large corporations, which seeking the largest possible audience, may avoid coverage that is too demanding, controversial or disturbing. Traditionally, journalism professionals have claimed the right of freedom of speech on behalf of the public, something Hartley (2007) views as exclusive and undemocratic. The scholar cites Ian Hargreaves phrase that in a democracy everyone should be a journalist. Hartley (2007) stated that journalism is a human right, basing his opinion on Article 19 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Hartley, 2007).

New or human interest journalism challenges the idea of objectivity (Carpentier, 2005) as defined earlier by Deuze (2005). Dahlgren (2010) wrote that journalists should make their production processes and knowledge gaps visible to the public. He devised criteria to define idealistic journalistic values and wrote that journalism should be accurate, adhere to facts and face consequences for malpractice, such as lies and disinformation. Although, most research on journalism has been done in the US, the profession has acquired an increasingly global character (Hartley, 2007; see also Dahlgren, 2010). Many journalism scholars like Dahlgren (2010) think it should represent a pluralism of voices.

While media ownership can influence coverage, ethically-done journalism is believed to play a positive role toward promoting democracy. Davis (2010) wrote that journalism embodies the "first draft of a community's history" and creates identity, social capital and a sense of belonging, which she found made people more engaged with politics (Davis, 2010, p. 1). At present, journalism is transitioning from an era of big capital and professionalisation

to an internet era where anyone can be a publisher of their own ideas. Refugee journalism is thus caught between trying to achieve large profits, which tends to be seen as legitimate and professional, and telling stories using available means such as mobile phones and social media.

3. Methodology

Empirical data for this research was gathered through semi-structured interviews. A preliminary interview was carried out with the editor of a refugee newspaper in a Kenyan refugee camp to inform the questionnaire for the interviews in Istanbul. Walliman (2016) mentions that there must be a common ground between the researcher and the people studied. As the researcher is herself a journalist, this commonality produced empathy and allowed the refugee journalists to explain the challenges they faced with greater depth. The researcher first focused on asking respondents about what subjects they were not able to cover as well as what logistical issues they faced. More direct questions were discussed later, such as security challenges experienced whilst doing their job and how they overcome these. The director of one international non-governmental organisation (INGO) shared background information and the criteria the INGO used for funding news outlets.

The researcher focused on news outlets run by Syrians in Turkey financed by Western NGOs. The respondents knew each other and most of them were part of the Syrian Network of Print Journalists (SNP), a collaborative network of Syrian media (OMRAN, 2016). Most are critical of the Syrian government. These respondents do not represent the entire panorama of the media in Syria, as there are, for instance, also state-run news outlets in Syria (SANA, 2017). Walliman (2016) points out that even with the largest amount of resources and time, no sample will be an exact representation of an entire population. Some of the information collected is confidential. This data was used for background research, but was not reproduced in the final paper to ensure the safety of participants. In total 13 people were interviewed for this article. They are not named to protect their safety. Respondents 1 to 7 are editors of post-uprising Syrian media in Istanbul, Turkey on which the article is based. Respondent 8 is a Middle-East research consultant. Respondents 9 and 10 are a director at the Association de Soutien aux Médias Libres (ASML) and a former program manager who administered funding for post-uprising Syrian media at Democracy Council. Respondents 11 to 13 are the editor of Kenyan refugee newspaper *Kakuma News Reflector*, a Syria-based reporter working for one

of the Syrian editors interviewed and a school director at the Syrian Nour Association, an NGO based in Istanbul helping Syrian refugees. These last three interviewees provided background knowledge for this article.

The researcher drew upon newspaper clips and academic research to find information about the background of Syrian media, freedom of expression in Turkey and the origins of the Syrian civil conflict. Two reports on the development of Syria's post-uprising media were also gathered. A qualitative data analysis of the interviews was conducted using qualitative data analysis software. This resulted in the formation of themes regarding the challenges refugee reporters' experience, the ways to mitigate them and the role that these media outlets have in their community. Themes for challenges included logistical, funding, and security threats, among others. Translated summaries of three copies of the newspapers from the outlets analysed were used to corroborate some respondents' answers.

4. Research outcomes: Challenges on Syrian refugee news outlets' freedom of expression

The research found that limitations on the freedom of expression of Syrian refugee news outlets were all-encompassing, consisting not merely of self-censorship, but also of the outlets' inability to be economically viable, difficulties managing personnel in Syrian war zones and legal challenges as unrecognised refugees in Turkey. This section explains these challenges in-depth, along with the ways in which these media outlets have tried to mitigate them.

4.1 Decreasing and conditional funding and NGO distrust

Most respondents mentioned that funding was the biggest challenge to their press freedom. Most of them obtained funding from Western INGOs including the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), the French Operator in Media Cooperation (CFI) and the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD). Core donors such as the European Union usually finance media INGOs who in turn provide funding and training to Syrian media outlets. Respondents mentioned that donors often impose editorial conditions on them. Some Syrian media outlets have closed down as a result of this. Respondent 10 said that the French government once requested to vet the news before publishing. An INGO director also said

that there were “red lines” reporters could not cross: “No one could talk about sectarian violence or the dismantlement of Syria or the end of the Syrian nation” (Respondent 9).

Respondent 4 mentioned that funders were not allowed to interfere editorially with their outlet and Respondent 10 explained that many Syrian news organisations refuse funding that comes with editorial conditions. However, the existence of “red lines”, as Respondent 9 points out, seems to imply a culture of self-censorship. This could impact the ability to report on for instance sectarian violence and was seen as a clear challenge to their ability to speak of certain topics. Some reporters mentioned that funding tended to go to Western-friendly outlets: “They believe in democracy, we believe in democracy. From this side they see that we deserve to be supported” (Respondent 6). Having the power to administer funding, INGOs can effectively influence coverage. Nonetheless, some examples in the coverage of the news outlets studied in this article critiqued Western interventions in the Middle East (Rushdi, 2016).

An average budget of one of the outlets in this study ranges from \$5,000-\$30,000 US per month on staff salaries, printing, distributing and equipment. One of the main issues discussed by respondents was that funding is usually provided for six months up to a year. Requirements to get funded include how large their audience is, as well as publications’ quality and professionalism. Respondents mentioned that the pressure to secure funding often caused them to use specific communications channels that were not the most effective for them to reach their audience. There is “a great push for electronic”, said Respondent 5. The respondent felt this compromised the role of refugee journalists in Syrian society since many people lack electricity and internet.

Many of the respondents do not think INGOs are investing in the true needs of refugee news outlets. They mentioned that INGOs often request attendance to journalistic trainings that they find to be redundant, considering many are already trained journalists. They also mentioned that the INGOs do not understand their society. Refugee news outlets are driven to take the aid to maintain good relationships with donors, and to make their outlets economically viable. Several of the reporters interviewed sought alternative funding from international colleagues such as *Al Arabiya*, *Politikan* and *Liberation*, who help them fundraise. One Syrian reporter called this “clear” money, because it did not have conditions

attached: *"It's clear money, it's clear relationships. They understand us and we understand them"* (Respondent 7).

Some outlets have tried with partial success to use advertising or charging for content. However, charging Syrians living in a war zone for information seems unethical to many respondents. Other outlets have tried to get donations from friends or Syrian businessmen, but these have come attached with requests for editorial control. Refugee news outlets are fighting for media independence, but the difficulty of making a profit from their work leaves them vulnerable to the editorial requests of their funders. *"I think before we were fighting for independent media from the regime. Now we are fighting for independent media from everyone"* (Respondent 7).

4.2 Refugee reporting and legality

The legal status of reporters

Many of the reporters interviewed had to flee their homes and homelands due to war. Turkey was considered to be the best available option in the region in terms of living conditions and their ability to run media outlets. However, their uncertain legal status presents great challenges to them. Many respondents showed an official ID-card explaining that in Turkey, they are classified as "guests", not as refugees. *"I rent a home here and the owner he can get me out anytime at any moment, like any Syrian here in Turkey"* (Respondent 7).

Their uncertain legal position limits their ability to work freely and make a living. Their ability to express grievances relating to their situation is also compromised as a result of this.

The legal status of news outlets

In 2014, Turkish authorities began to request that several of these news outlets obtain government licenses to operate. Most of the media outlets studied in this article were not licensed. Respondents said it is almost impossible for non-Turkish businesses to get a license. If they would get one, Turkish authorities would be likely to censor and impose specific conditions on them:

“We might be required to have Turkish workers, be Turkish-including. Part of the publication has to be Turkish. It would become under the government control” (Respondent 3).

Some papers obtained a license to print and distribute, but not to operate as a news organisation. Respondent 5 explained that Turkish authorities once entered the office of an SNP paper and fined them for lacking a license. One editor managed to obtain an *“awareness media”* license. With this, the editor managed to avoid being known as a *journalistic* outlet, because this word could attract censorship. In Turkey, their publications are distributed illegally and distributors are often targeted. Respondents also mentioned that their publications are prohibited in refugee camps, where they resorted to smuggling them in. These difficulties in reaching their audiences limit their potential.

4.3 Freedom of the press in Turkey

Many respondents thought that it was easier to do journalism in Turkey than in Lebanon, a country that also hosts a large number of Syrian displaced people (UNHCR, 2017b). They mentioned that they stay out of the Turkish authorities’ radar by writing in Arabic and by focusing on Syrian issues only. *“We are cautious we don’t address the Turkish issues. Those are restrictions we are putting ourselves on ourselves. Because Turkey is the only place we are left with to work”* (Respondent 6). Even with these precautions publications and broadcasts are constantly monitored by the Turkish government.

The outlets are often interrogated about their coverage, particularly if it deals with Kurdish issues. Not reporting on issues of sectarian violence is a way they have found to avoid facing security threats in Turkey. These testimonies show that even after moving to Turkey in search of greater press independence, Syrian refugee media outlets have limited freedom of expression. In 2015, Turkey was called the “world’s largest prison for journalists” by Reporters Without Borders (Tunc, 2013, p. 154). Journalists in Turkey are often accused without proof of having ties to Kurdish separatists and promoting terrorist propaganda¹.

5.4 Security

According to most respondents, their personnel in Syria experience the greatest security concerns. Their correspondents in Syria are constantly at risk of being arrested or killed. Their

electronic devices are often tapped. After publishing a cover with the sentence “Je Suis Charlie Hebdo”, Respondent 7 faced threats from Islamic armed groups in Syria. The respondent said this was commonplace. According to respondents, most of the outlets studied in this article are banned in regime strongholds. With all of these challenges, most are uncertain about the future:

“Actually it’s one of the questions that we have asked ourselves. How can we send our message in an environment that refuses to talk about the truth sometimes? It’s just like walking in a road full of mines. It’s so dangerous” (Respondent 4).

In Syria, they receive threats from the regime, but also from Islamic militias. Reporters in this study said they had been targeted through the internet, which is one of their main ways to communicate with their correspondents in Syria:

“They sent us a message [saying] that we saw fear in your journalists and we scared your journalists. The war is not about the AK-47 or the F16. Our war is in real land and in electronic land. They sent us a threat in our website” (Respondent 4).

These reporters said they try to stay safe using Virtual Private Networks (VPN) and Tor browsers that allow them to bypass network surveillance and censorship. Their audiences in Syria also find innovative ways to access their content, such as solar power and engines that generate electricity to listen to radio. One radio station said it had built frequency towers in Syria.

According to several respondents, INGOs do not offer personal security measures for journalists in Syria, apart from teaching them internet security measures that they are already familiar with. Reporters try to stay safe by using nicknames, keeping their offices’ locations secret and avoiding covering certain armed groups. One respondent said that agreements with certain armies and connections with friends and family were essential for operating in Syria. Resorting to self-censorship to avoid being attacked or arrested limits these outlets’ freedom of expression.

5.5 Seeking solutions

One of the most effective coping mechanisms the outlets in this study have developed has

been to form alliances such as the Syrian Network of Print Journalists (SNP) (OMRAN, 2016). Most of the reporters interviewed belonged to this specific network. SNP members print and distribute using the same offices and networks. Gathering news is often done by transmitting information from Syria to Turkey over the telephone or through social media. Obtaining detailed information and fact-checking is often done by asking family members in Syria. Papers often use unnamed sources for security reasons.

Respondents mentioned that their network allows them to share training and expertise. Their long-term aim is to become mainstream media in Syria. To ensure they have high reporting standards across the network, they formed the Ethical Charter of Syrian Media Alliance (2015). They think the “ethics pact”, as they refer to it, can help to ensure a place in the media landscape in post-conflict Syria where they hope to return to. While this ethics pact can serve to improve their legitimacy, it remains uncertain if it can guarantee these refugee journalists an environment of freedom of expression, or ensure their physical safety. Nonetheless, having an established ethical framework is promising for the future media of post-conflict Syria.

Conclusions

This article examined refugee freedom of expression by focusing closely on the challenges of seven Syrian post-uprising reporters in Turkey (Respondents 1 to 7). It drew upon theories about the role of freedom of expression in the lives of refugees, as well as research on the ideal role of journalism. It also studied the coping mechanisms of these reporters and whether they were able to fulfil the ideal role of refugee press. For a lot of these journalists, opposing the Syrian regime through the media is one of their ways to fight back. It was clear that reporters saw themselves as participants in the political situation in Syria and their role as that of promoting social, political and cultural change in Syria.

However, their ability to effect social change or to be government watchdogs in Syria is limited by challenges such as being banned, harassed or even killed by the regime in Syria (CPJ, 2015). Some of their coping mechanisms to stay safe in Syria include avoiding mentioning particular militias that play a role in the Syrian conflict. This limits their freedom of expression and their ability to fulfil their perceived role of bringing change to Syria. Added to these security challenges are the challenges that living as unrecognised refugees in Turkey

bring about. Respondents experienced limits to their rights to live, work and run media organisations in Turkey. Carver and Verdirame (2001) mentioned that in an ideal state, refugee press would enable their community to express grievances about their situation as refugees. Considering that a focus on Syria appears to be a precondition to being able to operate in Turkey, the press freedom of Syrian refugee journalists in Turkey is far from the ideal.

Reporters considered funding the biggest challenge to their freedom of expression and spoke about having to focus on internet audiences in order to receive funding. Considering the precarious access to electricity and the internet, it can be stated that refugees, as well as those who have stayed in Syria, cannot fully access vital information on their rights and the situation in Syria. The ability of the outlets in this study to produce fair journalism including a pluralism of voices is also limited, because of funders' red lines on coverage, as well as the push for specific communications channels. Refugee reporters are not alone in this, because as was seen in the theoretical framework, mainstream, big-capital Western media organisations face similar challenges.

The lack of effective safety measures by INGOs to protect the personal safety of reporters is concerning, considering the large number of Syrian journalist casualties in Turkey over the last two years (CPJ Alerts, 2016). Despite all these obstacles, Syrian reporters in Turkey have found resourceful ways to operate, such as creating collaborative networks among themselves and with international press. Their ethics pact could provide them with legitimacy, and examples were found in which these reporters were able to critique Western interventions in Syria. Their resilience could also be observed as they obtained permits to operate in Turkey. Although Syrian refugee press in Turkey experience systematic challenges on many fronts, these methods could be of use to other refugee journalists in the world who are trying to create positive change.

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Biography

Maria Assaf is a Colombian-Canadian freelance reporter born in Bucaramanga, Colombia. Her journalistic career includes reporting for Latin American, Filipino and West Indian diaspora media as well as for mainstream newspapers in Canada such as the National Post's world section. She has a bachelor degree in journalism from Ryerson University and an MA in Development and Emergency Practice from Oxford Brookes University, where she researched Syrian refugee media freedom of expression in Istanbul, Turkey. In 2015, she travelled through Colombia's conflict areas as a research assistant and interpreter as part of a conflict transformation project on symbolic violence toward vulnerable communities in Valle del Cauca and Tolima. She currently works in strategic and change communications at Oxford Brookes University.

¹After the coup attempt in July, 2016, the Turkish government began a large-scale crackdown on journalists, dissidents and human rights activists whom it alleges are perpetrators of the coup. This research was conducted a month before these events took place (Shaheen, 2017).

PR, Media and Refugee Community Activism: Reflections on Media, Migration and Engaging with Local Communities Workshop

Dr Idil Osman

Introduction

As part of the 'Forced Migration and Media' Series, day 2 was held on 18th of July 2016 and focused on engaging the local communities in Leicester. The purpose of the day was to share with the local community existing departmental knowledge and expertise relating to media and migration. The workshop brought together community leaders and organisations that dealt with migration and refugee matters. Majority of them represented Somali community organisations more broadly working with refugees and migrants. The workshop took a practical approach by combining mini lectures with training sessions, in order to enable community leaders and organisations to use lobbying techniques and media platforms to support and advance their work. As one of the organisers leading this particular day of the series, this article is a personal account of it.

The workshop brought together department staff well-versed in PR, lobbying and online activism. It drew a diverse group of people and participants were excited that the department was engaging them in a manner that they saw as participation in local community development. From their reflections, I gathered they had not earlier engaged with academics before, so I was elated that this not only did not discourage them from attending, but in fact was an encouraging new experience that made them participate keenly.

Lobbying to influence decisions and decision-makers

The workshop began with a lecture by Dr Scott Davidson who explained the process of lobbying as communication aimed at a decision-maker with the hope of influencing their decisions. The lecture highlighted the importance of having specialist knowledge, awareness of the environment one is operating in and delivering strategic advice with regards to the lobbyists. It also focused on the process of supply and demand of information, also known as the information subsidy. This process requires researching and obtaining information on current situation in terms of how certain policies are affecting relevant communities. This is one area

where lobbyists play a role. Furthermore, the lecture illuminated how communities are also experts on the policies that affect them, and can therefore fill this gap by contributing to policymaking as well. For this to be effective, information needs to be delivered in a format that fits the logic of government and politics.

Once an issue is defined and evidence is gathered, community activists need to find useful allies within the relevant government departments and they need to find out who to lobby. They then need to use a range of tactics to influence decisions and policies. The lecture was followed by a practical session which allowed participants to brainstorm how to operationalise some of those tactics on their own campaigns. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that many of the attendees were already engaged in various kinds of lobbying and related some of their experiences of engaging the media, local and national politicians. They were also already participating in stakeholder events organised by government departments. This experience was quite useful as it helped them to apply their own experiences to the different information and tactics discussed in the lecture.

Online activism

The second half of the day concentrated on using online platforms for campaigning purposes. It began with two lectures, with the first one delivered by Dr Athina Karatzogianni. Its focus went out to digital activism, defined as political participation, activities and protests organized in digital networks beyond representational politics. Examples of causes discussed in the first lecture ranged from demanding global justice, countering capitalist crises and austerity to secession, demanding regime change and organising oppositional movements. The lecture related the problem of ideology and consensus in the global public sphere in defining whether digital activist events are legitimate and gave insights on when digital activism can work positively and when it can become counter-productive or even destructive.

I delivered the second lecture, which drew from practical examples of when digital activism changed conditions on the ground. Its focus was on the Somali diaspora to make it relevant to the attendees. It discussed how the internet sometimes empowered ordinary citizens to become amateur reporters. Along with the rise of new and social media, the internet has propagated alternative media as a significant alternative to mainstream media. The potential of alternative media, particularly the internet and social media were probably best

demonstrated in the first half of 2011 when revolutionary uprisings swept North Africa and the Middle East, which quickly came to be known as the Arab Spring. These uprisings saw the exit of two heads of states, Mubarak in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia, and a political shake-up across the Arab inhabited lands. The Arab Spring was used in the lecture as a case study to indicate the different ways media can be put to use, and the roles it can play in mobilising for political and social change.

The lecture related the research that I did on the Somali diaspora, which showed that they have utilised the improvements in communication technology. The internet in particular presented an opportunity for them to communicate, regroup, share views, help their groups at home and organise activities. But as these products of transnational media dissolve distance and suspend time, they create new and unpredictable forms of connection, identification and cultural affinity. The internet is also an opportunity to promote political identity and their particular points of view through a new medium. Somali websites that have sprung up in various parts of the world depict a deeply divided society, one that is at the same time both integrated and fragmented. The research also highlighted how Somali-European youth are part of a marginalised groups within the Somali diaspora with regards to media engagement. This is predominantly due to the dominance of men in the Somali media and the society being patriarchal. Nevertheless, there is also an exclusion that seems to be the outcome of their western upbringing, which means the majority of them struggle to speak and understand the Somali language. They seem to have responded to this exclusion by creating multilingual platforms online and on social media where they congregate to find a sense of belonging with others who share the same hybridised identity; being European (British, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian etc.) by culture and settlement, Muslim by faith and Somali by heritage. They often use these platforms to garner support or collectively engage with social and political issues occurring in Somalia, Muslim majority countries and their respective European countries.

The lecture finished with a practical session where attendees designed an online activism cause campaigning against a conflict related issue. They could choose to focus on a violent conflicts and issues that arise from that conflict or on non-violent conflicts such as matters related to social or political injustice, inequality and racism and discrimination.

Concluding remarks

The final session allowed attendees to learn how to identify the objective of their campaign, what the most suitable platforms are to address this, the steps need for acting online, to take online to, assessing possible risks and obstacles and finally, how to circumvent them and garnering support for the cause. The attendees expressed how useful the approach of the workshop was and related that the skills they learned would potentially help them to advance the causes of their organisations and the communities they serve. In turn, I have also learned from this workshop and by engaging with practitioners. I witnessed how simple fine-tuning of existing ideas and experience can lift activists that are already doing some remarkable work in their communities to aim for higher grounds. I hope that this workshop signals more engagement from departments like ours to build good relations, transfer knowledge in meaningful ways and help empower local communities in an age where funding is being cut and relevant institutions are being closed down.

Biography

Dr. Idil Osman has worked for over 12 years as a national and international journalist for the BBC, the Guardian and the Voice of America, spending the majority of her career covering stories from the Horn of Africa. Through her work, she has developed a vast network of media contacts including those based in the region and the diaspora. She has authored publications that focus on media, migration, development and conflicts in the Horn of Africa and diaspora communities in Europe. She completed her PhD in Journalism and is an expert on diasporic media and development communications. She currently works as a Senior teaching fellow Department of Development Studies, SOAS University of London and is a former teaching fellow at the School of Media, Communication and Sociology, University of Leicester. You can reach her on io7@soas.co.uk.

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