

## **Streets to Screens: Mediating Conflict Through Digital Networks**

9.30-10.15 Registration and coffee

10.15-10.30 Welcome and Introduction  
Holly Steel, Natalie Fenton and Brian Loader

10.30-12.00 **Panel One: News Media and Public Discourse**

**Chair:** Natalie Fenton

**Remediation, intermediation, transmediation. The trajectories of citizen voice in convergent journalism** – Lilie Chouliaraki, *LSE*

**Amateur Footage: A global study of User Generated Content in TV news output** - Claire Wardle, *UNHCR*

**Strategic Visions, Lived Realities: Representations of military practice in digital media** - Sarah Maltby, *University of Sussex*, and Helen Thornham, *University of Leeds*

**Infographics in #GazaUnderAttack: Data, Information and Propaganda on Twitter** - Eugenia Siapera, *Dublin City University*

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00 -14.30 **Panel Two: Social Media and Activism**

**Chair:** Brian Loader

**Resistance-by-recording: YouTube and the struggles for (in)visibility in the Syrian civil war** - Kari Andén-Papadopolous, *Stockholm University*

**Spontaneous networks of crisis communication** - Einar Thorsen, *Bournemouth University*

**Status for Status: Activism “signaling”** – Tamar Ashuri, *Tel-Aviv University*

14.30-15.00 Break

15.00-16.00	<p><b>Roundtable: Working with UGC</b></p> <p><b>Discussant:</b> Becky Gardiner</p> <p>Liam Stack, <i>The New York Times</i></p> <p>Malachy Browne, <i>Storyful</i></p> <p>Others TBA</p>
16.00-16.30	Break
16.30-18.00	<p><b>Panel Four: Witnessing</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b> Holly Steel</p> <p><b>Revisioning photojournalism: Citizen witnessing and the politics of visual truth</b> - Stuart Allan, <i>Cardiff University</i></p> <p><b>The Auto-Mediated Eyewitness</b> -Mette Mortensen, <i>University of Copenhagen</i></p> <p><b>Violent Witness: The mediatization of atrocity</b> - Andrew Hoskins, <i>University of Glasgow</i>, and Ben O'Loughlin, <i>Royal Holloway</i></p> <p><b>Ubiquitous Witnesses: Who Creates Human Rights Evidence and Human Rights Live(d) Experience?</b> - Sam Gregory, <i>WITNESS</i></p>
18.00-19.00	Wine Reception

## Panel One: New Media and Public Discourse

### **Remediation, intermediation, transmediation: The trajectories of citizen voice in convergent journalism**

Lilie Chouliaraki, *London School of Economics*

In this presentation, I draw on disaster (Haiti earthquake, 2010) and protest (Egypt uprising, 2011) reporting, in order to explore convergent journalism as a form of journalism that may mobilise practices of transnational solidarity. Even though the inclusion of citizen voice in convergent journalism has been welcome as a democratisation of journalism, catalysing processes of recognition that may cosmopolitanise the West, I advocate a more cautious, empirically-grounded approach that attends to variations in the convergent use of citizen voice. The potential for transnational solidarity is not inherent in convergent journalism, I argue, but depends on the insertion of citizen voice in a broader structure of Western journalism - a structure organised around processes of re-mediation, intermediation and trans-mediation. It is only under certain conditions, I conclude, that this structure may be able to challenge existing hierarchies of place and human life and recognise the voice of distant others as a voice worth listening and responding to.

### **Amateur Footage: A global study of User Generated Content in TV news output**

Claire Wardle, *UNHCR*

The research, published in May of this year, provided the first comprehensive report into the use of user-generated content (UGC) by broadcast news channels. This research was designed to answer two key research questions: 1) When and how is UGC used by broadcast news organizations, on-air as well as online? 2) Does the integration of UGC into output cause any particular issues for news organisations and how do they handle them? This research was carried out in two phases. The first, a content analysis, involved watching 1,164 hours of 24 hour TV news output from 8 global channels, and analysing 2,254 web pages from those same news organisations. The second phase involved semi-structured interviews with 64 news managers, editors and journalists from 38 news organizations based in 24 countries around the world. The research found that newsrooms are increasingly relying on footage filmed by eyewitnesses to news events, but this content is causing 6 key issues for newsrooms: 1) Workflow (most newsrooms are relying on news agencies as they are not able to resource the discovery of UGC); 2) Copyright (many newsrooms remain unsure about the legal issues related to using UGC); 3) Verification (there are significant knowledge gaps around verification skills in most newsrooms); 4) Crediting (only 16% of UGC had an onscreen credit); 5) Labeling (72% of UGC was not described as content created by people unrelated to the newsroom); 6) Ethical responsibilities (newsrooms are not considering their responsibilities to uploaders in terms of health and safety, or their own staff in terms of vicarious trauma).

## **Strategic Visions, Lived Realities: Representations of military practice in digital media**

Sarah Maltby, *University of Sussex*, and Helen Thornham, *University of Leeds*

This paper focuses on the potential divergence between the lived experiences of military personnel as represented, performed, constructed and articulated through digital media and the wider political and strategic vision as articulated by the Strategic Communications Unit. Using qualitative data collected from the MoD and the British Military this paper seeks to identify any tensions between the strategic and the operational, the role of social media technologies in their generation, dissemination and articulation, and the implications they have for defence practice at a tactical and diplomatic level. Social media are at the forefront of Strategic Communication initiatives because they are perceived to offer distinct opportunities to engage and influence others (see Maltby & Thornham, 2012; Maltby, 2010). But the unpredictability and contiguity of emerging media data has the potential to reconfigure, in an on-going fashion, political and public perceptions (and knowledge) about the military and operational activities. It is to this uncertainty that this paper speaks.

## **Infographics in #GazaUnderAttack: Data, Information and Propaganda on Twitter**

Eugenia Siapera, *Dublin City University*, and Ioanna Iliadi, *Open University of Cyprus*

In his original formulation of the political contest model, Wolfsfeld (1997) argues that the role of the media in political conflict is not given, but must be understood in terms of the relations between antagonists and other contextual factors. In essence, Wolfsfeld's model assumes three main actors, the two (main) antagonists and the media, relegating all other factors to intervening variables and then measuring the outcomes in terms of the dominance of certain media frames. Since 1997 however, the media ecosystem has changed dramatically. The rise of social media made apparent the active role of citizens themselves, some present in the conflict zone, some watching from afar, but who produce contents on the conflict. Secondly, social media introduced new forms and genres of communication, beyond conventional news reports. Thirdly, the operation of social media as profit-making corporations drives their agenda to a significant extent and circumscribes user practices. These introduce complications that affect and complicate this schema. The proposed paper will flesh out these theoretical arguments through focusing on the 50-day war in Gaza in the summer of 2014, as this unfolded on Twitter. Methodologically, the paper relies on the infographics tweeted by the official IDF and Al Qassam – the military wing of Hamas – Twitter accounts and the responses to these. The focus on infographics is significant, because this genre epitomises the logic and culture of social media, combining visuals, data and information in a condensed form.

Analytically, the paper seeks to understand this new genre and its role in this particular conflict by looking at what is communicated and how, and by mapping the range of responses. Conceptually, it seeks to understand Twitter and infographics not only as an arena or platform for conflict, nor as part of a PR offensive, but

significantly as a weapon in their own right (c.f. Karatzogianni, 2006); if that is indeed the case, then Twitter accounts and their contents become themselves active participants in the conflict. So, who won the battle of infographics? The findings suggest that the IDF accounts promote information clearly and in an engaging manner. Twitter, presumably responding to reports, suspended Al Qassam's accounts, thereby destroying or at least seriously undermining Al Qassam and Hamas' ability to communicate directly through social media. In general, Al Qassam's infographics appear crude and ineffective. Taken together these suggest that IDF won this battle. However, the media tactics of Palestinian supporters, which include trolling, talking back, and inverting visual information, defy an easy and straightforward assessment. Additionally, the findings suggest that while the IDF and to an extent Al Qassam operate with a centralized and controlled model of communication, Palestinian supporters operate more as loose networks with multiple hubs, and produce, visualize and disseminate information in unpredictable ways. To return to theoretical questions, Wolfsfeld (1997) argued that the ability of antagonists to initiate events, control information and mobilize elite support determine the extent to which they can use the (mass) media effectively. However, social media such as Twitter, and new genres of communication such as infographics introduce new and unpredictable elements, and shift emphasis from elite to popular support and from control of information to reappropriation of information: guerrilla rather than conventional tactics.

## Panel Two: Social Media and Activism

### **Resistance-by-recording: YouTube and the struggles for (in)visibility in the Syrian civil war**

Kari Andén-Papadopolous, *Stockholm University*

This paper considers the dynamics between networks of on-the-ground video activists in the context of the ongoing Arab rebellions and the media institutions or platforms that enable the circulation of their work. Focusing on YouTube as the dominant platform for sharing activist videos today, it highlights how this specific sociopolitical and industrial context enables the emergence of new networks of media activism during a period in which people in the Arab world see it as integral to their rebellious action, even as part of their rebellious duty, to record their defiance as well as their own repression and upload it for the world to see. Drawing on an online ethnography of Youtube with the Syrian civil war in focus, the paper argues that Syrian activist groups and their followers both recognize the decisively corporatist and restrictive protocols of Youtube while seeking to redefine it as a space for embodying a new political subjectivity.

### **Spontaneous networks of crisis communication**

Einar Thorsen, *Bournemouth University*

Citizens – be they victims, bystanders, or emergency professionals - are today actively participating in crisis news reporting, through publishing eyewitness

accounts, commentary, crowdsourcing and fact checking information. Established professional values are being recast in this rapidly evolving relationship between journalists, elite sources and citizens. Examples abound where ordinary citizens have acted in journalistic ways – for example to document unfolding natural disasters, wars and conflicts, mapping human rights abuses, or challenged misuse of corporate or political power. Eyewitnesses are increasingly using their mobile phones to capture and instantly disseminating news. Activists are using the internet to mobilise protests, and drawing attention to their causes by communicating directly with other citizens. The rapid rise of websites facilitating photo and video sharing as well as social networking, coupled with widespread mobile internet, has simplified access to publishing tools for ordinary citizens across the world. In so doing, it has precipitated a disruptive shift in how, and by whom, global information flow is controlled.

This paper will examine the spontaneous interconnection of ordinary citizens in local and global communication networks during crisis events. It will examine how citizen participation in news-work during transnational crisis is engendered, harnessed and remediated through a range of different, and arguably interconnected, media. Such networks of strangers, I will argue, play an important part in shaping our shared understanding of crisis as they unfold. Yet, this fugacious mesh brings both epistemological and practical challenges. By drawing on a range of recent crisis events, the paper will explore conceptually the impact of temporal interconnectivity on both its participants and the nature of global information flow. It will conclude by inviting greater self-reflexivity about how rapidly normalising conventions are being consolidated into journalistic forms and practices.

### **Status for Status: Activism “signaling”**

Tamar Ashuri, *Tel-Aviv University*

This article tackles a fundamental problem in communication: How can one party in an interaction convince the other party that he/she is providing credible information regarding his/her unobservable attributes? This problem becomes ever more critical in an online, body-free environment that reduces the number of observable attributes required for engaging interactions. In this article, I offer a useful analytical perspective, known as signaling theory, for explaining and anticipating online behavior when two parties (individuals or organizations) have access to different information regarding one another. To demonstrate the explanatory value of this theory for online communication, I observe interactions in the context of social activism. Focusing on enactment of social activist organizations with Facebook, I illustrate how online signaling patterns signal a particular hidden attribute of quality, provide benefits to both sender and receiver and demonstrate how online attribute signals remain credible.

## Panel Three: Witnessing

### **Revisioning photojournalism: Citizen witnessing and the politics of visual truths**

Stuart Allan, *Cardiff University*

Calls for the reinvention of photojournalism have been resounding evermore widely over recent years, the traditional definitional boundaries demarcating the amateur from the professional news photographer having become blurred - dangerously so, in the view of some commentators. In striving to investigate the ways in which ordinary people find themselves compelled to engage in first-person photo-reportage, this presentation will illuminate a number of issues warranting close and careful elucidation. To describe those involved as 'citizen journalists' may be advantageous in certain circumstances, in part by acknowledging the visible evidence their activities engender, but such a label brings with it certain heuristic difficulties as well.

My primary aim in this presentation is to discern a conceptual basis for formulating an alternative perspective. More specifically, I will offer an evaluative appraisal of diverse efforts to think through the journalistic mediation of witnessing with a view to assessing, in turn, certain implications for research into ordinary citizens' participatory cultures of newsmaking. The discussion focuses on two crisis events recurrently characterised as 'terror attacks' in the press: the bombing of the Boston marathon in April 2013, and the killing of a British soldier on a street in Woolwich, southeast London the following month. Drawing on a visual analysis of the impromptu photo-reportage of these attacks, I shall elaborate the concept of 'citizen witnessing' as one possible way to reinvigorate photojournalism's social contract to document conflicting truths. In meeting this challenge of innovation, I argue, photojournalism will benefit by securing new opportunities to revision its digital publics in a manner at once more transparent and accountable, while at the same time encouraging an openly inclusive news culture committed to fostering dialogic relationships of civic engagement and connectivity.

### **The Auto-Mediated Eyewitness**

Mette Mortensen, *University of Copenhagen*

In 2001, John Durham Peters (722) argues in his seminal essay "Witnessing" that most eyewitnesses are not aware of their role as such until after the closing of an event, when they are called upon to account for their first-hand information. This no longer holds true per se. With the proliferation of digital media, witnessing has become an individual choice, a recurring option, a mass phenomenon. Eyewitnesses do not just make appearances in the media as sources of information, but are capable of creating and distributing media content themselves. As a standardized and ritualized response to evolving crisis and conflict, individuals on the spot film events as they unfold. The videos and photographs are instantly distributable through a web of relations ranging from media platforms, organizations, institutions,

and actors in the global, digital media landscape. Drawing on the rich literature on the witness and witnesses (e.g. Felman and Laub 1992, Ellis 2000, Peters 2001, Frosh and Pinchevski 2009), this paper investigates the way in which eyewitnesses have become self-mediated by incorporating digital media technologies into their practice and adapting to the logics of the current media system. Specifically, the paper pays attention to how the roles and functions performed by the auto-mediated eyewitness in today's extended circuit of information from areas of conflict might be theorized.

### **Violent Witness: The mediatization of atrocity**

Andrew Hoskins, *University of Glasgow*, and Ben O'Loughlin, *Royal Holloway*

Despite the apparent digital free-for-all in the recording and dissemination of acts of atrocity, mainstream news media still appears caught up in the paradox of showing and hiding. Television news in particular is torn between giving publicity to violent acts while simultaneously pushing such acts away as 'shocking' and 'brutal'. Meanwhile, perpetrators of violence rely increasingly on mainstream media for the oxygen of publicity.

Through comparative analysis of media and conflict in the 1990s in the Balkans, jihadis in Iraq in the 2000s, and 'those more hardline than Al-Qaeda' in Syria in the 2010s, we demonstrate continuity in the manner in which perpetrators record their atrocities for mass witnessing while mainstream media offer coverage while expressing outrage and that same content which they remediate. What new media condemn, they also facilitate and normalize.

In this paper, we ask how shifts in the media ecology of the day shape this paradox anew, and what prospects there might be for mainstream media to represent violence differently.

### **Ubiquitous Witnesses: Who Creates Human Rights Evidence and Human Rights Live(d) Experience?**

Sam Gregory, *WITNESS*

Technology and digital media have transformed how human rights content is created, shared and utilized. Visual media technologies form a key component of this pivotal moment, both by mobilizing people and informing the world about crises. In protests around the world – from Cairo to Damascus to Rangoon – and in thousands of other, smaller struggles against injustice, videos shot by activists and citizens have been a powerful mode of communicating on human rights and are increasingly central to advocacy. Video currently comprises more than half of Internet traffic and at least 100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute. Even if a miniscule percentage of that content is human rights-related, cumulatively it amounts to a tremendous amount of imagery telling stories of abuse. This increasing amount of video is being captured and shared by ever-expanding numbers of people, increasingly in real-time, both online and offline. Moreover, the diversity of users is expanding, with video-for-change no longer



limited to human rights defenders. Nowadays, the lines dividing the activist, journalist and citizen witness are blurred.

With video-enabled mobile phones now in the hands of billions, and with more and better platforms to amplify media, activists have identified new opportunities to reveal evidence and stories, challenge propaganda and galvanize publics. However emerging challenges include how to translate old ethical conundrums into new contexts, how to determine authenticity with increasing volumes of content, how to turn visual evidence into real change, how to scale up training and capacities to vastly larger and more diverse creator and sharer populations, and how to highlight less visible struggles. Layered on top of these dilemmas are questions on how to address the 'public square' role of Facebook and YouTube, as these new technologies and platforms do not have a human rights framework or protect human rights defenders, leading to new and emerging challenges – around safety and security, privacy and anonymity, and freedom of expression

Drawing on the experiences of WITNESS ([www.witness.org](http://www.witness.org)) and others, this paper will explore the practical challenges and opportunities of the current moment and will also focus particularly on two poles of the current paradigm of citizen witnessing where existing expectations and professional norms are being disrupted. It will particularly consider the question of what is 'evidence' as the volume of videos depicting potential war crimes from a context like Syria reaches half a million, and how this relates to existing and historical paradigms of human rights and justice documentation. It will also consider how the concept of the live news broadcast and the role of the 'distant witness' is being up-ended and up-dated through the practice of livestreaming from situations such as Rio's streets, Ferguson, Gezi Park and the city centre of Kiev, and within this context the possibilities of live and immersive witnessing for human rights, and the conceptual, ethical and practical possibilities of image and experience-based activism at the intersection of trends in live and immersive video, 'co-presence' technologies for shared experience at a distance, task-routing technologies and distributed movement technologies.