ARAB NEW MEDIA FOR PEACE AND DIALOGUE

MATERIALS / 4

Arab New Media
for Peace and Dialogue

ARAB NEW MEDIA FOR PEACE AND DIALOGUE

Best Practice Guide and

Pedagogical Toolkit

Centre UNESCO de Catalunya

Barcelona, 2010

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PREFACE

This publication is the result of the Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue project carried out by the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia - Unescocat, in cooperation with the UNESCO Office in Baghdad, and with the support of the UNESCO Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace Division.

The aim of the project was to strengthen the role of communication and information by fostering mutual understanding, peace and reconciliation, particularly in conflict and post conflict areas and give support to joint and cross border media cooperation.

The project brought together 30 new media professionals from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Syria who attended the "Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop" in Amman (8-10 February 2010).

They exchanged new media experiences, comparing country-specific contexts, and updated their skills in new media techniques. Emphasis was placed on the important work of media and new media professionals in the region as agents for change and development. For some, it was the first time they had come face to face with colleagues in other countries to hear about how they face difficulties and how they can play an active role in addressing peace and dialogue in their countries through the use of new media tools.

The resource material contained in this publication has been created by the new media professionals and experts who participated in the workshop. However, it is relevant to all those interested in new media and citizen journalism in this context and others. It is made up of two separate documents:

The **Best Practice Guide** gives a general overview of new media in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Syria. It analyses new media experiences acquired in conflict and post conflict areas, presenting best practice examples and recommendations developed by the workshop participants on how to use new media as a tool to facilitate peace and dialogue in the region.

The **Pedagogical Toolkit** contains a series of articles by experts on new media. It formed the basis of the training sessions at the "Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop" and provides useful, practical insight into the field of new media within the region and in other contexts.

The UNESCO Center of Catalonia has been implementing this programme, as it is a further step to contributing to strengthening bonds within UNESCO's Euro-Arab dialogue framework, to reinforce our action in the Mediterranean and to promote and disseminate the UNESCO Audiovisual Platform.
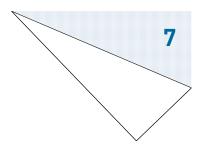
UNESCO Centre of Catalonia

ARAB NEW MEDIA
FOR PEACE AND DIALOGUE

Part 1:

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This 'Best Practice Guide' would not have been possible without the support and trust of a long list of individuals and professional institutions that should be mentioned.

First, we would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the UNESCO Freedom of Expression Division and its Director, Mogens Schmidt, as well as all the media experts and professionals who participated in this project which was created in 2009 and culminated in the Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop held in Amman, Jordan (8-10 February 2010).

We would like to thank the participants; Shereen Raffoul, Rebecca Saade, Nada Akl from Lebanon, Youlia Rihanni, Sana Abu Ghalieh, Ibrahim ElHayek, Ramez Habash, Hamzeh Weshah from Jordan, Rana Khmous, Hassan Said, Bilal Gaith, Emad Hawattat from the Palestinian Territories, Zuhair Al Jezairy, Hamzoz Hayder, Qais Qazaz, Ali Mawlawi, Mohammad Hayder, Ahmed Khalid from Iraq, and Dalia Haidar, Rasha Faek, Mohammad Kayali and Khaled Elkhetayar from Syria. Thank you for attending the Workshop, for your help in developing this 'Best Practice Guide', for your commitment to enhancing media development in the region as a tool for peace and dialogue. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and views, and for raising your voices which have constituted the soul of this project.

We are also particularly grateful to the list of institutions and their teams who have supported this project: the UNESCO Office in Baghdad and the UNESCO Office in Amman, particularly Amalia Toledo-Hernández, as well as those who have participated: USAID in the West Bank and Gaza through the presence of its Conflict Mitigation Officer, Joubran Joubran.

We express our sincere appreciation to the panel of experts and their respective institutions who strongly helped develop the concept project and prepare the 'Pedagogical Toolkit' for the training sessions: Dr. Mahjoob Zweiri, Head of the Iranian Studies Unit, at the Center for Strategic Studies in the University of Jordan, Dr. Magda Abu Fadl, director of the Journalism Training Programme at the American University of Beirut, AUB, Professor Paul Mattar, director of IESAV, Institute of Drama and Audiovisual Studies at University Saint Joseph in Beirut, Dr. Naila Hamdy, Chair of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo, Ann Nelson, former director of the Committee to Protect Journalists and professor at the Columbia School of International and Public Affairs in New York, Dr. Nora Paul, Chair of New Media Studies at the University of Minnesotta, Dr. Ibrahim Saleh, from the Center for Film & Media Studies, University of Cape Town, and Dr. Sahar Talaat, lecturer in the European Master's programme at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Thank you to Ramsey Tesdell and Naseem Tarawnah, from 7iber.com who conducted the training sessions in Amman.

A special thanks should go to Al Ahliyya University in Amman and its Dean, Dr. Mustafa Yaseen, who engaged personally in this project with great generosity.

Finally, our deepest gratitude goes to George Papagiannis, UNESCO Representative in Baghdad. As well as a friend and colleague, he is a person to learn from. His guidance, support, trust, knowledge and encouragement have been vital to the project.

Thank you very much to all of you.

UNESCO Centre of Catalonia

INTRODUCTION

For decades, conflict and confrontation have raged in the Middle East as international and domestic interests have competed for economic and geo-strategic advantage. Within this tumult, and through its varying degrees of intensity, reliable civil society groups and an increasingly vocal media sector have emerged, only to be augmented by the user driven tools identified within the information communication technologies and better known as new media.

Within this changing and dynamic environment, the Department of Audiovisuals at the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, with the support of UNESCO's Division of Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace, has formulated and implemented the project 'Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue'. The initiative, coordinated together with the UNESCO Office in Baghdad, aims to reinforce the role of Arab new media for peace, and give Arab media a relevant role in addressing the regional conflicts that remain unsolved by the international community.

Although there is a certain relationship between conflict and news, and media professionals and audiences gravitate to violence and confrontation, it has been demonstrated that media can play a relevant role in an ongoing peace process and in the promotion of stability. Media can be an active agent by helping disseminate messages of peace, legitimating leaders and groups working for peace and transforming negative perceptions about the "enemy".

Media can also promote hate, violence and social fragmentation. To counter this, how we define peace within the context of sustainable societies needs consideration. Peace as a calm environment may not be of interest for the news media, but peace related to economic development, employment and the welfare of a country could be a more rational approach[1]. The ideal of peace, a broad concept, based on the welfare of societies, could therefore be used as a vehicle for achieving progress toward conflict resolution.

This process implies a change of mentality and the involvement of different types of agent, not only from the media field, but from the NGO community, academia and professional associations. The goal is to mobilise various players towards a common goal through the creation of a regional platform for new media professionals, with goals such as strengthening the role of communication and information for mutual understanding, peace and reconciliation, and fostering joint and cross border media cooperation[2], the project 'Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue' had as its first test at the New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop which took place in Amman, Jordan on 8-10 February 2010.

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1   As developed in research works such as *Media and the Path to Peace*, by Gadi Wolfsfeld

2   Themes registered as Main Lines of Action of the UNESCO Communication and Information Sector

The second step of the project is this 'Best Practice Guide', which serves two different goals. First, it aims to analyse the status of media and new media in the Sham region - Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the Palestinian Territories and Iraq - and elaborate a series of recommendations to improve the current situation. Secondly, it presents case studies which could be taken as good practice within the region as well as in other contexts.

This publication attempts to analyse the media and new media landscape in the countries that compose the Levant Arab subregion. It also aims to recognise relevant work carried out by the institutions mentioned. However, its main goal is to emphasise the important work of media and new media professionals in the region who are the real agents for change and development. Their role in addressing peace as the only way to achieve progress and stability in the region should not be doubted, and it should be taken into account by the governments of these countries. The clearest representation of these professionals is the list of contributors participating in the development of this Guide; highly valuable agents who are already working to achieve progress.

The research presented in this publication has been conducted by those who attended the Workshop in Amman; nearly 30 professionals from the media, civil society and academia, among others. All of them are considered new media practitioners since they use new media in their daily activities: blogging, online journalism, audiovisual production through mobile devices, and awareness campaigns by email, etc.

The Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop has offered these local professionals an *agora* or marketplace within which to discuss their main concerns. For most it was the first time they had come face to face with their colleagues in other countries and hear about how they face difficulties and how they can activate their role to achieve peace and progress in their countries. The relevance of their work in reaching peaceful coexistence and a better future for the region justifies all efforts to make this project a successful experience.

Rut Gomez Sobrino
UNESCO Centre of Catalonia

AUTHORS

(in the order content appears)

Rut Gomez Sobrino is a journalist with experience in radio and printed media as well as in communications for the private sector. In recent years she has developed her career as a media development professional through the implementation of communication and information projects in Latin America, Asia and particularly the Southern Mediterranean region, where she lived between 2001 and 2007. She has been formerly linked to the Anna Lindh Foundation and the UNESCO Communications Development Division where she managed the UNESCO Audiovisual E-Platform. She has a BA in Journalism, an MA in International Relations and Euromediterranean Studies and a DEA in Economics.

Nada Akl is an online journalist and blogger. She studied Communication Arts at the Lebanese American University (LAU) and is currently pursuing her Master's degree at the Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Lebanon.

Sherine Raffoul graduated in the audiovisual field at Beirut Saint Joseph University and has developed her career in the production field as an assistant producer, as well as in advertising, documentaries, television and filmmaking. She is also specialised in photography, the field in which she currently teaches.

Youlia Rihani is a television journalist who has worked as a news reporter on the Russian satellite TV channel "Russia Today" in Arabic language. She has travelled across Russia and abroad covering stories on subjects ranging from culture and art to environmental and political issues. Youlia is a freelancer in various media outlets in Jordan. She holds a MA in International Cooperation from the Complutense University of Madrid, and carried out research into "The Relationship between Human Rights, Freedom of Information and TV Media in the Middle East".

Sanna Abughalieh holds a BA in Journalism and Mass Communication/Radio and a TV major from Yarmouk University in Jordan. She has worked as a librarian at the Children's Museum of Jordan where she found a real need to stir children's attention towards the importance of reading. Her interest in documentary filmmaking led her to take intensive courses in Documentary Filmmaking at the Royal Film Commission, USC and RSICA.

Hamzeh Weshah has more than ten years' experience in the audiovisual field, and currently works at the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation. He obtained his Bachelor of Business Administration from the Applied Science University and he also has a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Al-Balq'a Applied University.

Ramsey Tesdell is co-founder of 7iber.com, where he works with communities in the Middle East. His particular interest is in using new media as an outlet for expression, a space for critical conversations, and to organise collective actions. For him, new media is a powerful medium to bring people together physically and virtually in order to positively contribute to society. He has a BS in rhetoric and communication from Iowa State University, and an MS in technical communication from the University of Washington in Seattle.

Bilal M. Ghaith holds an MA in International Relations and a BA in Journalism and Political Science from Birzeit University. He is the editor and manager of the international and Arab news section at the Palestinian news agency – WAFA, Israeli News Website. Ghaith had worked as an educational reporter for Alkhaleej Newspaper in the U.A.E. He also worked as a correspondent for several newspapers and new websites including: the "Palestine Times", "Al-Haqaeq Newspaper", AMIN (Arab Media Internet Network) and the Arabs48 Official Website.

Emad Al-Hwaitat is a presidential scholarship alumni who graduated with an MSc in Engineering with a minor focus on project management from the George Washington University in Washington D.C, USA. He is a professional programme and project manager who has led and supervised more than fifty projects in local and international organisations. He is currently managing a grant programme focusing on engaging Palestinian citizens in the Palestinian Authority (PA) decision making process and establishing communication and dialogue between the PA and Palestinian citizens. He also supervises three media projects in civil society organisations, with the aim to build the media capacity of some PA institutions and establish dialogue with citizens.

Hassan Hamarsha has an MA in Mass Communications from the University of Leicester, England and a BA in Journalism from Birzeit University, Palestine. He is currently the Coordinator of the Palestinian NGO Portal at the NGO Development Centre. Previously, he worked with the Development Studies Programme at Birzeit University as an editor of a monthly supplement on development, and as a website administrator.

Rana Khmous is an online journalist and has worked as a media coordinator for social associations. She has also been a member of the editorial committee of the Human Rights Studies Centre. She has participated in documentary film festivals and received training in internet journalism, Human Rights, children's rights, photography and documentary filming. She has a Bachelor of Journalism from An-Najah National University, Palestine.

Thaer Tabet holds a Bachelor in Journalism and Media from An-Najah National University in 2007. He has worked as a reporter in Al-Quds newspaper, and for electronic media sites such as Al-Jazeera Talk Youth in Qatar. Since 2008, he has worked as a media coordinator at the DARNA centre for youth initiatives and citizens in the governorate / Nablus, which is one of the community centres that gave him the opportunity to create relationships with organisations and media personalities and activists from around the world.

Hamzoz Hayder is an Iraqi blogger, social activist and member of Al Amal Association. He usually works as a trainer of trainers to support women and youth in the use of technology in Iraq. He is linked in particular to the programme 'Women in Technology'. His blogs can be found at: www.hamzoz.wordpress.com and www.iraqistreets.com

Ali Al-Mawlawi is a research fellow at the Iraqi Institute for Economic Reform, an independent Iraqi think tank based in Baghdad. Having spent most of his life in the UK, Ali returned to Iraq in 2008 and is currently working on issues related to transparency and democracy promotion.

Qais Qazaz is specialised in website editing, updating and Web 2.0 publishing such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, blip.tv, Wikipedia, Wordpress. He is also a head trainer on new media. He contributes to the 'Ghadan' newspaper in Iraq and on various blogs such as http://thefreepen.wordpress.com

George Papagiannis is the officer in charge of the UNESCO Iraq Office in Baghdad, providing representation for the organisation across all of its areas of activity in Iraq. Prior to moving to Baghdad, he was with the organisation's Division of Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace in Paris, where he led the development of the Power of Peace Network, a UNESCO initiative bringing the power of the 2.0 world of the internet to bear on the promotion of a culture of peace. Before joining UNESCO, he was vice president for policy and government affairs for Internews, a US-based non-governmental organisation working in media development and access to information around the world. With Internews, Mr. Papagiannis developed expertise in media development in conflict and post-conflict countries, creating and implementing numerous media related programmes in a variety of places including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chad, where he led the development of a three-station community radio network providing the communications infrastructure for the humanitarian response to the Darfur refugee crisis along Chad's frontier with Sudan. Prior to joining Internews, Mr. Papagiannis had a distinguished and award-winning career spanning 20 years in Journalism.

THE ARAB MEDIA AND NEW MEDIA LANDSCAPES
General and specific challenges

Rut Gomez Sobrino

It is not a coincidence that the ArabNet 2010 Conference was held earlier this year (25-26 March 2010) in Lebanon. Featuring nearly 50 speakers and around 20 media partners, the conference showed that new media has, indeed, arrived in the Arab World. Global conglomerates such as Google, Facebook, Yahoo and Nokia, along with regional counterparts like Aramex and Al Jazeera led the debates. Social media, content, online advertising, mobile communications, e-commerce, and start-up financing, were among the main topics[3].

Some of the earliest broadcasts to the region date back to the 1930s when the BBC launched its Arab language radio programme, a programme that has maintained a loyal following to this day. But despite the quality of offshore programmes, they were not from here, and local broadcasting in the Arab world for most of the 20th Century was provided by the state and rarely reflected anything more than the official viewpoint on matters the officials dubbed as worthy for public interest.

In 1996 this all changed. Al Jazeera began broadcasting on satellite television and the Arab media has never been the same since. Al Jazeera originated from the region, but unlike the state broadcasters, it tapped into the Arab consciousness, often amplifying the voices of the disenfranchised. The news programmes were very professional and the content was, at times, critical of regimes in the region that had tarnished their images for decades through media that was government controlled. Al Jazeera took advantage of the global telecommunications revolution that started in the 1980s, particularly in the field of satellite television[4]. It also tapped into a nearly insatiable thirst for information in the Arab world that had largely gone unsatisfied by state or tightly controlled local media.

For good or for bad, the rise in satellite television in the region that is for the region has been transformative. The Arab diaspora, especially those living in the West, have become better informed about issues at home. In a certain sense, Arab media has been more successful than Pan-Arabism in the 1970s in unify-

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3 http://www.iloubnan.info/technology/actualite/id/44022/titre/ArabNet-2010-Conference:-The-Arab-World-s-

4 There are 300 satellite stations in the Middle East and a choice of around 400 channels. (Data from 2007 in: http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/newswar/war_arabmedia.html)

ing Arab societies reinforcing their identity. One of the relevant consequences of this phenomenon is the creation of a certain *conscience publique* on transnational issues such as the occupation of the Palestinian territories, the civil war and Israeli invasion in Lebanon, and the Iraq war.

If satellite television set a new stage for expression in the Arab world, then the Internet has stolen the show. No matter how innovative, satellite TV is programmed along traditional models. The Web has turned the passive viewer into a full participant in the discussions that matter to the individual. Its growth in the region has been exponential and it is changing the way freedom of expression is employed, even when the enabling environment may not be so free[5].

This explosion in both spheres has expanded the discussion taking place on a virtual Arab street. While there is plenty to be concerned about in terms of hate speech, there is also a lot more discussion of taboo subjects, such as Human Rights. Satellite and the Internet know no boundaries and, as such, provide a space that is hard to narrow or control. Campaigns developed by bloggers Mohamed Khaled and Wael Abbas on Egyptian police brutality, and also the journalist Noha Atef reporting on these cases on the website *Torture In Egypt* are examples of this change[6]. Another would be the programme presented on Egyptian TV by Doctor Heba Kotb, professor of Forensic Medicine at Cairo University, who opened up the floor to discuss sex issues on the air, something impossible to imagine just a few years ago[7].

The three 'hot spots'

The Maghreb, the Mashrek, and the Gulf and the Sham[8] region are the major sub areas comprising the 22 countries registered under the Arab League of Nations. This refers to an incredibly diverse area, sometimes with a common colonial past, but with differing stories that unfolded in the 20th Century and, in some cases, resulted in periods of conflict.

In the particular case of the Sham or the so-called Middle East, three conflicts have been a feature of

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5 More about Internet penetration in the Arab region: http://burdacenter.bgu.ac.il/publications/finalReports2001-2002/Rinnawi.pdf

6 See report posted on the website of the Committee to Protect Journalists: http://cpj.org/2010/02/human-rights-coverage-spreads.php

7 To know more: http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/11/11/egypt.divorce/index.html

8 The Bilad Al Sham region refers to the Levant or Mediterranean part of the Arab region: Syria, parts of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The term comes from the Arabic word for Shamal -"land of the left hand"- and Yemen –"land of the right hand"-.

the region in the last decades: the civil war in Lebanon and the Israeli invasion, the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and the Iraq war. As in any conflict, these have all resulted in displacement of people, deep psychological damage and serious implications for civil society.

Table 1: Three parallel cases

	Lebanon	Iraq	Palestinian Territories
Year of independence	1943	1932	1939: End of British occupation 1948: Declaration of the State of Israel
Conflicts in modern history	- Civil war 1975-1990 - Syrian troops withdrawn in 2005 - Military offensive by Israel in 2006 against Hezbollah	- War with Iran - 1990 invasion of the US troops - Overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and civil conflict	- War of 1948 - 1967 6-Day War - 1973 Yom Kippur War - 1987 First Intifada - 2000 Second Intifada - 2006 victory of Hamas in elections and beginning of the clash with the Palestinian Authority (PA)
Population details	Around 4 million Literacy rate: 85% Nearly 30% of the population under 15 years old	Nearly 24 million Literacy rate:74.1% Around 40% of the population under 15 years old	Around 4 million Literacy rate: 92.4% Nearly 50% of the population under 15 years old

Source: Own elaboration

Media in the region have also suffered from this instability, having as major consequences a more dangerous environment for media professionals, news blackouts at the worst possible times and targeted attacks on media workers during extended periods of lawlessness, during and after conflict[9]. Phenomena such

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9 News related to the conflicts and the violent use of language. Reporters without Borders Press Freedom Index: http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1001-2009.html and http://www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/classement_en.pdf , http://www.pressreference.com According to debates and presentations conducted at the Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop, Amman, February 2010. Data regarding Israel not West Bank, and Gaza.

as the *Electronic Intifada,* an example that we will analyse later and sectarianism exercised by some media are examples of this.

The media can play a critical role in conflict prevention, toward building a culture of peace and dialogue that can lead to tolerance and mutual understanding. This assumption could help Arab media better position itself as a partner of peace in the region.

Although there are common characteristics shared by countries in the region, the media landscape in the Arab region in general, and in the Sham area in particular, is as diverse as its countries.

Table 2. Media landscape in the Sham region

	Lebanon	Iraq	OPTs	Syria	Jordan
Freedom of Expression	61 out of 175	145 out of 175	161 out of 175	165 out of 175	112 out of 175
Media scene	• Daily Newspapers: 13 • Television Stations: 15 • Television Sets: 1,180,000 • Television Sets per 1,000: 325.3 • Cable Subscribers: 25,370 • Cable Subscribers per 1,000: 5.9 • Radio Stations: 46 • Radio Receivers: 2,850,000 • Radio Receivers per 1,000: 785.6 • Individuals with Computers: 175,000 Computers per 1,000: 48.2 • Individuals with Internet Access: 300,000 • Internet Access per 1,000: 82.7	• Radio Television Stations: 13 • Television Sets: 1,750,000 • Television Sets per 1,000: 75.0 • Radio Stations: 74 • Number of Radio Receivers: 4,850,000 • Receivers per 1,000: 207.9	• Television Stations: 17 • Television Sets: 1,690,000 • Television Sets per 1,000: 284.6 • Cable Subscribers: 1,147,000 • Cable Subscribers per 1,000: 185.0 • Satellite Subscribers: 1,160,000	• Television Stations: 44 • Television Sets: 1,500,000 • Television Sets per 1,000: 89.7 • Satellite Subscribers: 435,000 • Satellite Subscribers per 1,000: 26.0 • Radio Stations: 17 • Radio Receivers: 4,150,000 • Radio Receivers per 1,000: 248.1 • Individuals with Computers: 250,000 • Computers per 1,000: 14.9 • Individuals with Internet Access: 30,000 • Internet Access per 1,000: 1.8	• Television Stations: 20 • Television Sets: 500,000 • Television Sets per 1,000: 97.0 • Cable Subscribers: 980 • Cable Subscribers per 1,000: 0.2 • Satellite Subscribers: 109,000 • Satellite Subscribers per 1,000: 21.2 • Radio Stations: 12 • Radio Receivers: 1,660,000 • Radio Receivers per 1,000: 322.1 • Individuals with Computers: 150,000 • Computers per 1,000: 29.1 • Individuals with Internet Access: 127,317 • Internet Access per 1,000: 24.7

Source: Own elaboration

Challenges to freedom of expression, particularly in the coverage of domestic affairs, barriers to Internet access, polarisation of the media along sectarian, religious or political lines, are often daily hindrances and need to be addressed.

Another significant threat to media professionals is their lack of safety. This applies to all media, including those working in new media who are not yet recognised for their roles by the various associations that represent journalists. For example, in many of the countries in the region, membership of a syndicate is required, but this membership depends on employment with a reputable or established media house. Of course, this does not take into account citizen media.

Although syndicates and associations may ignore their existence, governments keep a wary eye on the various online postings. The result has been that a number of bloggers in the region have found themselves in jail. But threats to freedom of expression are not limited to official organs. Journalists, citizen or otherwise, face serious challenges from parallel powers; entities with vested interests that operate outside the law, enforcing their will through violence. Add to this the danger of reporting in conflict zones, and the situation for media professionals in nearly untenable. As UNESCO states, "137 journalists and media staff have been killed since the beginning of the Iraq war, which is the deadliest conflict for media professionals since the Second World War"[10]. Some of these deaths were the result of war reporting, others were targeted.

Interestingly, although not immune to these threats, the new media professionals have the capability that those in traditional media lack. When they sound an alarm, it is, by default, a global alert. This is the power of the Internet.

Division of media[11] according to the fragmentation of political parties, the decrease in the use of the Arabic language in the media favouring the rise of English and French outlets, are issues which should be further discussed in specific contexts such as Iraq or Lebanon.

In order to address the common challenges, regional strategies should be developed and local media professionals should be intimately involved in this process. Professionals not only from the communication field but also from other domains such as academia and development should be engaged.

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10 Visit a complete list of assassinated journalists by country at:
    http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=16998&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

11 This phenomenon has been described as 'Lebanisation'

Table 3. Media and new media challenges in the region

	Lebanon	Iraq	OPTs	Syria	Jordan
Particular challenges	Influence of political parties in media. Lack of independence Differences between the capital city and the rest of the country leading to misperception about media development in the country Decrease in the use of the Arabic language	Safety of journalists Certain "lebanisation" of media Poor access to internet	Lack of infrastructure Fragmentation of Palestinian media due to the lack of social cohesion Diaspora of media professionals	Poor Internet access due to government regulations and policies by multinationals Censorship, particularly on domestic affairs	Low quality of media outlets
Common regional challenges	Internet access improved Safety and protection of the journalists guaranteed Media independency strengthened Regional platforms of media and new media professionals created				

Source: Own elaboration

Internet in the Arab region and the new media tools

Although only 17% of the Arab population as a whole use the Internet[12], trends show a promising future with a 50% increase in users in the coming years, rising to 82 million by 2013[13]. There are even studies that affirm that the Middle East has the second fastest Internet traffic growth in the world with a growth rate of 97% a year since 2005, below that of South Asia, with a yearly rate of 103%[14].

The growing use of the Internet was initially shaped by the demographic structure of the region, intimately linked to youthful protagonists of the region who have perceived the net as a window to the world. The proliferation of internet cafes as well as mobile phones and text messaging has become a basic element of social interactions[15].

Although many would argue that the Internet is just a youth entertainment vehicle where time is wasted, many of these youngsters are affiliated with online communities and are willing to have a proactive role in their countries.

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12 According to Madar Research, currently there are around 56 million Arab users, only 17% of the 337 million population

13 Arab Media Outlook report

14 http://www.telegeography.com/cu/article.php?article_id=24888

15 Deborah L. Wheeler, Internet and Mobilisation in the Arab World: A view from Internet cafes in Jordan and Egypt

It is not surprising that a platform that is user driven will be in a constant evolutionary state as countless users give the Internet a new *raison d'être* every second of every day. Web 2.0 is one of these evolutions, a practical application of the web which allows for more interactivity, promoting feedback and participation from the audience, information sharing, and user content creation. Blogs, forums, social networking and video-sharing such as YouTube are some recurrent examples, but are not the only ones. NGOs, political activists, professional associations, academic researchers, and a long list of different types of stakeholder that can be considered catalysts for change in their respective contexts, can also make use of these new opportunities.

Journalism has also evolved dramatically thanks to 'online reporting' where everyone can be a reporter. This new model is quite different from conventional journalism, as it has the possibility of refreshing news faster, giving a more accurate picture by using more sources and resources, and enriching the news writing by breaking with tradition. Audiovisual production is another field which has benefited tremendously from new media tools, and film festivals currently make room for entries made using mobile devices or digital animation.

Arab e-government is another application for information communication technologies (ICTs). Arab countries[16] are already managing many of their operations online and e-Government and e-procurement models are spreading across the region through the development of electronic platforms. These changes are also encouraging the private sector to engage in e-commerce strategies, something that will obviously lead to improved cost efficiency as well as business performance.

Table 4. ICT use index, 2008

Country	ICT use index 2008
UAE	2.39
Bahrain	2.18
Qatar	2.12
Saudi Arabia	2.09
Kuwait	1.81
Libya	1.55
Oman	1.48
Jordan	1.4
Tunisia	1.22
Algeria	1.06
Morocco	1.02
Egypt	0.96
Lebanon	0.91
Syria	0.82
Iraq	0.8
Palestine	0.76
Yemen	0.41
Sudan	0.4
TOTAL	**1.01**

Source: MADAR Research

16 There are several examples of successful experiences such as Lebanon and Jordan which implemented harmonisation strategies of their custom data systems

Table 5. Internet usage in the participants country to the summit of Arab New Media Workshop, Amman, February 2010

	Population	Internet users	Penetration	Broadband internet connections (Sept.07)
Lebanon	4,017,095	945,000 (Sept.09)	23.5 %	170,000
Syria	21,762,978	3,565,000 (June 09)	16.4%	5,600
Jordan	6,269,285	1,500,000 (June 09)	23.9%	48,600
Occupied Palestinian Territories	2,461,267	355,000 (Mar.08)	14.4%	25,800
Iraq	28,945,569	300,000 (Sept.08)	1%	Not available

Source: Internet World Statistics[17]

It is clear that the range of possibilities posed by new media for change and development in the region are immense, not only in the field of communication and media, but also in parallel domains such as education.

The regional scene is clearly vibrant and the ICT industry is growing. With a market value of $8.9 billion by 2005, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates accounted for around 60% of demand in 2001[18]. In 2001, Noor, the first free internet service provider was launched in Egypt, showing that ICTs could be one of the regional catalysts for economic growth.

However, apart from the creation of an ICT related industry, new media has a social and political dimension. Although disparities related to the access and usage of information and communication technologies, the so-called digital divide, and the low internet penetration rate in the Arab world should not be ignored, it is true that new media has brought the hidden discourses of Arab societies to the public sphere.

The configuration of an 'Arab blogosphere'[19], one of the most well known phenomena of new media in the region, has facilitated the discussion of matters such as corruption, censorship, homosexuality, among other taboos, leading to a certain activism, social movements and collective actions as previously mentioned. According to the Arab Network for Human Rights Information[20] there are

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17 http://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm

18 According to ESCWA, 18% of Arab banks offered online transaction facilities in 2000

19 'Blogosphere' is a term referring to a platform of interconnected blogs resulting in the creation of an online community

20 http://www.hrinfo.net/en/

approximately 40,000 Arabic blogs; most of them were launched in 2006, creating a vast platform for the discussion of issues facing the community.

Table 6. Internet users in the Arab region compared to International usage

	Population (2009)	Population % world	Internet users	Penetration %
Arab region	202,687,005	3	57,425,046	28.3
Rest of the World	6,565,118,203	97	1,676,568,695	25.5
WORLD TOTAL	6,767,805,208	100	1,733,993,741	25.6

Source: Internet World Statistics [21]

Table 7. Arab Internet usage per country

Arab region	Population (2009)	Internet Usage, Latest Data	Penetration %
Bahrain	728,709	402,900	55.3 %
Iran	66,429,284	32,200,000	48.5 %
Iraq	28,945,569	300,000	1.0 %
Israel	7,233,701	5,263,146	72.8 %
Jordan	6,269,285	1,500,500	23.9 %
Kuwait	2,692,526	1.000,000	37.1 %
Lebanon	4,017,095	945,000	23.5 %
Oman	3,418,085	465,000	13.6 %
West Bank	2,461,267	355,500	14.4 %
Qatar	833,285	436,000	52.3 %
Saudi Arabia	28,686,633	7,700,000	26.8 %
Syria	21,762,978	3,565,000	16.4 %
United Arab Emirates	4,798,491	2,922,000	60.9 %
Yemen	22,858,238	370,000	1.6 %
Gaza Strip	1,551,859	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	202,687,005	57,425,046	28.3 %

Source: Internet World Statistics [22]

As some authors have mentioned, there are distinctive phases in the evolution of new media: an experimentation phase, determined by the first contact with ICTs and new media; an activist phase, characterised by the social power of blogging as well as other phenomena; and the diversification phase, when new media

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21 http://www.internetworldstats.com

22 http://www.internetworldstats.com

and new technologies spread into general use[23]. To all intents and purposes, the Arab region is between phase two and three.

A research study that focused on a sample of more than 35,000 Arabic-language blogs has resulted in the creation of a three-dimensional visual representation of the Arab blogosphere[24]. Some key findings from this research were the trend of bloggers to discuss domestic politics, the concern about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the creation of international online communities of Arab nationals, something particularly important in contexts suffering from continuous diasporas such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Iraq.

We can summarise that new media has brought to the Arab region:

▪ Plurality and diversity through the development of new content that is independent from the state and cultural differences

▪ A sense of Arab community exercised in the reinforcement of the Arab identity and the rise of a common voice

▪ Immediacy to follow and understand current developments in the region, traditionally reported only by foreign media or a tightly controlled state media

The 'Arab blogosphere' has also fought prejudices about the Arab region by showing, for instance, the lack of support for terrorism and its criticism among bloggers, something that the media in the West has largely ignored, focusing attention instead on terrorist websites.

However, despite the dynamic environment and the possibilities this poses for change and development, there are challenges that should be addressed. Some are the basic infrastructure and mediocre bandwidth and connectivity in the Arab region.

Moreover, the development of Arabic content is central to the development of new media in the Arab world in order to respond to local linguistic needs as well as to enhance coordination across different stakeholders, such as the civil society, private sector and public authorities.

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23 "Core to Commonplace: The evolution of Egypt's blogosphere", by Courtney Radsch, found in http://www.arabmediasociety.com/UserFiles/AMS6%20Courtney%20Radsch.pdf

24 pg. 12 of the Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere report at http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Mapping_the_Arabic_Blogosphere_0.pdf. Illustration courtesy of the Berkman Center.

CHAPTER 1. LEBANON AND ITS BEIRUT "ISLAND"

General overview

Rut Gomez Sobrino

Civil conflict devastated Lebanon between 1975 and 1990 as a result of the religious, ethnic and political encounters. The division and high level of diversity have had an influence not only on social fragmentation but also on the media landscape. As a consequence, media affiliation to political parties and the different communities has been common.

There have also been some media trends instigating violence among the country's religious sects and varied communities. Indeed, during the confrontation arising in 2006, the National Media Council president, Abdel-Hadi Mahfouz, even blamed the media for stoking sectarianism and getting involved in political insults.

Although the audiovisual law forbids sectarianism, the division of media has become evident for instance in the television field; Al Manar TV[25] linked to Hizbullah, the NBN[26] and New TV[27] related to the opposition, Mustaqbal TV[28] and LBC[29] closer to the government. In parallel, divisions and tensions were more evident in talk shows. Conflict has definitely reduced the distance between media and politics.

We should also not forget the difficult situation faced by media professionals in the country as a result of this instability. In 2005, after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, two of the most prominent journalists from the journal An-Nahar were killed in two bomb attacks perpetrated in the months of June and December respectively. The assassinations, in 2005, of Samir Kassir, not only a prominent journalist but also a democracy advocate, and Gibran Tueni, an editor involved in politics, astonished the world and were widely disseminated. The international media community realised again how fragile the safety of journalists can be in certain contexts.

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25 http://www.almanar.com.lb

26 http://www.nbn.com.lb/

27 http://www.aljadeed.tv

28 http://www.futuretvnetwork.com/

29 http://www.lbcgroup.tv/

Table 8. Media and new media landscape in Lebanon[30]

Printed press	Al-Amal Al-Anwar Al-Asefah Al-Balad Al-Bayrak Al-Diyar Al-Liwaa Al-Mustaqbal Al-Nahar Al-Safir El-Shark Lisan al-Hal	Morning daily in Arabic
	L'Orient-Le Jour	Morning daily in French
	The Daily Star	Morning daily in English
	Al-Aman Magazine Al-Intiqad Al-Moharrer Al-Arabi Attamaddon El-Kalima Al-Kifah Al-Arabi Al-Massira Al-Ousboua Al-Arabi	Weekly in Arabic
	Monday Morning	Weekly in English
	La Revue de Liban L'Hebdo Magazine	Weekly in French
Audiovisual	Tele Liban Future TV	Arabic, English, French
	Al-Manar Television NBN TV	Arabic
	LBC International	Arabic and English
	Al-Nour Radio Radio Delta Radio Liban Libre Radio Strike Sawt El-Mousika	Arabic
	Radio Orient Voix du Liban	Arabic, English and French
	Radio Voice of Van	Arabic, Armenian, English
Internet	Aashtar Lebanon Wire Beirut Nights Radio Radio One Radiorama Online	

Source: Own elaboration

30 www.menassat.com

Nevertheless, despite the conflict, freedom of speech and a certain level of sophistication and dynamism are characteristics of the Lebanese media scene in comparison with neighbouring countries. This has been in parallel to the relatively critical society and the vitality of public debate.

There is, however, a certain risk of reaching incorrect conclusions if we analyse the Lebanon case focusing only in Beirut, a modern city closer to the European context than to the rest of the region. Most of the Lebanese media and new media professionals state the tremendous gap between Beirut and other cities in Lebanon as happens in many countries, and the differences in media and new media development levels.

For instance, most magazines and periodicals in Lebanon –such as *An Nahar, As-Safir,* and *Al-Akhbar*, the English-language *Daily Star*, and the French-language *L'Orient-Le Jour-* are published in the capital city of Beirut, while Internet access is still limited in rural areas, far from the capital city.

The post-war rebuilding of telecommunications infrastructure has made possible the arrival of new technologies, but connection is still slow and expensive. Actions implemented by NGOs framework have focused on enhancing the use of the Internet.

The diversity of Lebanon and its history has also had an influence on linguistic diversity. In this regard, diasporas have affected the languages used in media and the rise of media outlets in different languages, such as French and English. As a result, Lebanese media professionals comment on the reduced use of the Arabic language in media, particularly in blogs, printed media and television. We can suspect that the media has not contributed to reinforcing the Lebanese Arab identity[31].

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31 See "The 'Lebanisation' of the Iraqi Media: An overview of Iraq's television landscape," P. Cochrane, Transnational Broadcasting Studies, Volume 2, Number 1
For more about the Lebanese Media Law, please visit : http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/lebanon-amending-the-press-law-oflebanon.pdf

The Lebanese media legal framework

There are two main media institutions in Lebanon: the Lebanese Journalists' Union and the Institute for Professional Journalists. Traditionally, media organisations have been quite active in Lebanon, compared to other countries in the region. As in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, a number of organisations supporting freedom of the press and promoting training have appeared on the scene.

Names worth mentioning include the Social Media Exchange[1] and the Maharat Foundation[2]. In 2009, this organisation proposed, together with Article 19, an amendment of the current media legislation in order to guarantee freedom of the press[3].

The Lebanese media is regulated by the 1962 Press Law which is applicable to the media as well as publishing and printing houses, libraries and distribution firms. In 2009, the Maharat Foundation, a civil society group promoting free press in Lebanon, together with Article 19, requested an update of this law.

The demand was based in the willingness to reduce the powers of the Minister of Information to intervene in the press and included a proposal to create a National Council of Press and Publications in order to reinforce journalists' ethics and raise journalistic standards.

Another law, introduced in 1994, created the possibility that journalists could be found guilty of defamation and inciting strife.

1   Visit its website at: http://www.smex.org/

2   For more information, http://www.lebanon-article-19-calls-for-comprehensive-reform-of-print-media-legislation.pdf

3   More about freedom of the press in Lebanon at http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/lebanon-amending-the-press-law-oflebanon.pdf

Web journalism in Lebanon: a much needed breath of fresh air

Nada Akl

Traditional media outlets in Lebanon are closely connected in one way or another to political parties, in particular audiovisual media, since this sector developed during the Civil War, with radio stations and TV channels serving as parties' communication tools for political purposes. As a result, although it is true that Lebanon is the home of some prominent independent journalism, there was never really a tradition of independent media, aimed at informing and empowering the public, rather than selling political agendas.

The Internet has the potential to change all of this. As a low cost media that (if not blocked) knows no geographical boundaries, it offers the perfect opportunity for independent voices that wish to get past superficial political discourse and tackle crucial social issues that touch everyone's lives, or centre the political debate back to core issues instead of simply fuelling political tensions.

A number of Lebanese online news portals and political forums did appear and are very popular but it turns out that they are also funded by political parties, mirroring the traditional media landscape. In parallel, a handful of dedicated bloggers and citizen journalists also gained in popularity, enriching the debate in their own way. However, professional and independent online journalism made a very late entrance. Part of the problem is the difficulty of finding a sustainable business model, especially considering that advertising budgets worldwide (a prime source of income for the media industry) are shrinking, and also because online advertising is still at its early stages in the Middle East.

It is only very recently that some independent media offering information online started making their mark on the scene. One of them is www.iloubnan.info, a Lebanese, online, news portal in English and French, addressing the Lebanese Diaspora, a large worldwide market. As an editor for this portal, I was able to experience firsthand the difficulty of bringing an independent voice to the media scene. I quickly realised that many people were simply not convinced by the notion of independent media.

Today, the result speaks for itself, but when the portal was new on the scene, communication professionals constantly asked about the website's affiliation and funding, wondering how we managed to be independent. It is true that at the moment, everywhere in the world, media professionals are looking for new business models to make online information viable. This is a transition phase for journalists. In my opinion, one thing is sure: advertising alone is no longer enough, and despite this, we have to find new ways to make profit in order to remain independent. In the case of www.iloubnan.info, part of the revenue is generated by online advertising (just like television and newspapers), but the company also offers a variety of services such as copywriting and web design.

The rules are changing; everything is being reconsidered and it is a very exciting time for the profession. Working online means acquiring new skill-sets that make so many more things possible. For example, for each story, the journalist now gets to choose the most appropriate media language (video, audio, text, slideshow, etc.).

Another important change brought about by the Web is that the journalist can now make their own mark online, independently of which media they work for. A good article will make its way onto Facebook, Twitter, blogs and be read by millions, even if it does not come from a major publication.

What is most important in my opinion is that online, the journalist can establish a real dialogue with his/her readers, whether through comments, blogs, social networks, etc. This connection is crucial nowadays, because it can create a real community around a certain issue (Human Rights, feminism, etc.). The web is a new ecosystem where readers give their input and where citizen journalists and bloggers also have their say. Some regard citizen journalists as competitors but they have proven that they are actually partners in the news making process. In this world of fast-paced communications, they often contribute with additional facts or raw video footage. However, a professional's job is still to verify the facts, give them meaning and perspective, and turn them into information for the public.

These actors of the net can also act as watchdogs for the press (indeed, the press also needs watchdogs). Through their blogs, comments and tweets, they are the smart-mob that will collectively blow the whistle when events are not reported with objectivity, when there is no transparency or a lack of accuracy. They are the ones who make sure journalists are doing their jobs the right way.

In simple terms, the Internet, its unlimited reach, its multimedia possibilities, and its collaborative aspect, make the news better. We need this in Lebanon and in the Middle East in general.

Unfortunately, online journalism and the Internet itself are greatly underdeveloped in the country. With low Internet penetration[32], online access is still not widespread while poor bandwidth limits everyone's use of the Web (large files such as videos for example, can be impossible to upload and download). In addition, there is still very little awareness about the possibilities of the Web, for journalism purposes but also in other fields such as activism and education.

These are obstacles to the development of new media in Lebanon. It is also the reason why the country has still not completely seized the opportunity represented by the new media landscape, where online journalism is a much needed breath of fresh air, allowing the socio-political debate to develop in a productive way.

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32 According to the International Telecommunication Union in 2009. In Lebanon, Internet user penetration stood at 23%, close to the world average, and above the Arab Region's average of 15%.

New Media Best Practice Examples in Lebanon

Some case studies worth mentioning in the new media landscape in Lebanon are:

- **I-LOUBNAN,** www.iloubnan.info, an interactive multimedia portal offering information about politics, business, arts and culture, social issues, health, environment, science and technology, sports and tourism among others.

    It is the only portal of its kind and a pioneer in its field, and it addresses the concerns of the Lebanese community in Lebanon and around the world, as well as those of people interested in knowing more about Lebanon.

- **MENASSAT**, www.menassat.com, is probably the most referenced resource for media and new media professionals in the region and one of the most

successful experiences. Menassat.com is a portal that includes news, trends and events concerning the media landscape in the twenty-two countries making up the MENA region.

The website aims to provide a platform to Arab journalism and establish a connection among all media experiences throughout the region. It also offers updates about social, political, economical and cultural developments in the Arab world and its relation with the media field.

Menassat aims to be a platform where Arab media professionals can offer and exchange views and information free of censorship and political or sectarian agendas. Its philosophy is based on the promotion of freedom of expression and it is published by the Arab Images Foundation in English and Arabic.

- **Social Media Exchange,** www.smex.org; created in May 2008, the Social Media Exchange offers training and consulting to civil society and non-profit organisations in Lebanon who seek to use media to advance their missions.

With the aim of working regionally in the future, the mission of this NGO is to use the Internet for positive social change and sustainable development and help professionals working in the field to integrate new media into their programmes and projects as a means of self-empowerment and self-advocacy. Social Media Exchange has three main lines of action:

1. Encouraging media literacy and raising awareness about digital and social media, especially among youth and trainers, through concepts, case studies, and the translation of key materials into Arabic

2. Helping organisations develop sustainable, collaborative strategies for incorporating digital and social media into their programs

3. Increasing access to the Internet

Recommendations

In order for the current situation to positively change and advance, several measures should be implemented on different levels, not just for online journalism, but to promote the web as a democratic space for free independent speech and citizen participation:

- Introduce web-journalism in all university curricula to familiarise young journalists with this new tool

- Make Internet access available and affordable all over the territory, and improve bandwidth. (In countries such as Finland, broadband Internet (at least 1Mbps) is now a legal right)

- Encourage entrepreneurship through start-up incubators and by offering an adequate business environment and infrastructure. This is important to encourage local web-production and increase Arabic language content[1]. There are enough highly qualified professionals with entrepreneurial potential

- Through workshops, trainings and other courses for students and actors of civil society, promote the Internet as a platform for socio-political debate.

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1   According to Joanne Kubba, Google manager of communications and public affairs for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), less than 1% of global online content is available in Arabic although Arabs make up 5% of the world's population.

New media in the Lebanese audiovisual field

Shereen Raffoul

The relationship between new media and the entertainment industry in Lebanon is much contrasted. Piracy is everywhere and copyrights are not respected by anyone. Despite the Law for Intellectual and Artistic Property which was approved in 1999, negligence remains. This explains why Lebanon cannot be a member of the World Trade Organisation[33].

In this framework, new media can have a positive impact for emerging artists and alternative scenes by encouraging different kinds of expression with no restriction and censorship.

New media is about innovative techniques which are more affordable; new ways of learning and teaching, and new ways of producing and distributing. However, it is also about piracy and therefore less profitability; about low Internet connection and geographical spread.

With regard to the field of filmmaking, the documentary industry and television production, it is true that television is still the number one means of communication in the Arab world. Reality television shows and other game shows are cost-effective. In the case of Lebanon, there are a huge number of programmes produced outside and inside Lebanon for the Arab world by production companies such as Imagic and Periba.

This means that there is a consistent audiovisual culture that is not ready to disappear with the rise of new media.

Since the television industry has already created a strong connection between the Middle Eastern countries, the audience is strong and consistent. However, the reality is that Internet is not yet at the same level. Most of the population is still convinced that television is where everything is happening: politics, entertainment, culture. As a result, maybe television will lead the way for the Internet to increase.

The problem here is the lack of independence since Lebanese television channels are normally dominated by political forces. This has traditionally been something assumed by the general public and in a more in-depth analysis we could also affirm that the audience is certainly confronted with different points of views so they have varied choices.

Television has been the preferred media for the older public while young generations feel very much attracted to the new media tools. Lebanese media are therefore

33 For more information, read the article: http://www.iloubnan.info/economie/reportage/id/427/article/1220

trying to adapt to the new market and there are, at present, initiatives such as the programme started by Future TV in the mornings dedicated to discussing current issues related to the Internet. Another example is Shankaboot, the first Arabic web drama which is making a lot of noise among the young generations[34].

Since the Lebanese government does not provide funds for audiovisual and artistic activities, sponsors are usually foreign foundation brands and potential donors. Big productions still need to use old procedures and techniques to raise funds and produce a feature film, but it is true that the Internet facilitates research like everywhere else. Independent films and documentaries require the use of new media since it obviously reduces production costs and the new media equipment is more affordable to create independent projects.

Concerning the new tools, there are many that should be mentioned, for instance, the canon 5D mark II in the market that provides the opportunity to produce at a high quality and at a lower price.

Distribution and New Media

Distribution in Lebanon is not easy because of piracy. New media can constitute an alternative to improve this situation by facilitating the distribution online. For instance, new groups have been created progressively on Facebook to spread the word about certain documentaries.

A good example of this is the work of Hady Zaccack[35], a producer and director, who tries to preserve the quality of his work. Through social media and the Internet, many people and institutions such as worldwide festivals and distributors have access to his work and, although he is not selling a great deal through the Internet, more people are now watching his productions at film festivals.

As in other countries, documentary distributors in Lebanon are non-existent. In the fiction industry the landscape does not differ too much, but there are, at least, a few.

The strong music industry

Regarding the music industry, the Arab region as a whole and Lebanon in particular has been traditionally regarded as a vibrant and dynamic context. However, as described in some publications, the music industry in the Arab world has not been affected by the apparition of the new media. This can be explained by the fact that piracy has never been blocked in our countries and therefore, the industry has simply adapted itself to it.

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34 For more information: http://www.shankaboot.com

35 For more information: http://www.hadyzaccack.com

As a result, artists are used to travelling significantly throughout the Arab region, drawing on their profits and their concerts, and are aware of the fact that they have the chance to be exposed to a big market.

The relationship between the music market and the audiovisual field has been a reality for the past decades. One of the most evident examples is the rise of television formula and the video clip market, represented by conglomerates such as ROTANA and Melody. ROTANA normally shows their own artists, produced and promoted by the company, and Melody focus on the Arab music market as a whole. Both are of a commercial nature, and they report very standard singers who attract general audiences.

Many video clip directors, such as Joe Bou Eid, defend the impact of the Internet on the production of video clips that are later uploaded on Youtube. This gives the director, the audience and the artists the possibility to reach a larger target, ready to add comments and interact. The feedback will lead them to have a better idea of what the consumer really expects. Of course, artist production encourages votes and fan pages on the web.

The following question is: where could we find alternative scenes and more selective content? My response is on the Internet of course.

In fact, a small alternative scene in Lebanon emerged 15 years ago, although not everybody is aware of it and even noticed it. In this context, advertising and distribution are mainly conducted through the Internet. For musicians, new media facilitates ways to produce music and distribute it like a one man show.

There is debate about how to improve the Internet connection and new media tools so that an alternative team of artists, both in the music and the audiovisual industry, can interact and be exposed to the general public. In Lebanon, this issue is important since Internet access is not good enough outside the capital Beirut. We could say that the Internet culture is not yet on our mind.

As a consequence, emerging artists are still finding new ways of promoting themselves, such as multiplying concerts and publicity through social media networks. Some examples of these alternative networks can be found at: www.lebaneseunderground.com and www.incognito.com.lb/store/category/lebanon. Particular attention should be paid to the story of the group Masrou3 Leila, a young Arab pop experience, unfortunately suffering from very limited exposure.

A new generation of photographers

The development of media and new media in the past decade has made the creation of a new generation of photographers possible. For these professionals, blogs and other websites constitute a useful tool to promote their work.

As in many countries, photojournalism is decreasing its influence and photographers are in need of new ideas to sustain their work. As new media and particularly digital technologies are altering traditional procedures, we see the introduction of new techniques.

At present, the application of new media to photography has constituted a real revolution. It has now become a tool which helps you visit places you have never seen, where you can hide behind your camera, taking pictures with a whole new approach, more in detail, discovering issues that affect those around you.

CHAPTER 2. JORDAN, A SHY AND TRANQUIL TRANSITION

General overview

Rut Gomez Sobrino

Despite being surrounded by the conflict in Iraq and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the traditionally pro-Western foreign policy and good relations with the United States and the United Kingdom has provided consistent stability to Jordan and this is reflected in its media. Professionalism as a result of consistent higher education institutions in Journalism like Yarmouk University and the University of Petra, and media businesses have made certain progress in recent years. However, compared to other major media empires, Jordan has not been characterised by being a 'communications hub' in the region but rather a small communication and information market.

Jordan Radio and Television, JRTV[36], is the primary media in the country, part of the new Jordan Media City, JMC, a project launched in 2001 as the first private media city in the region. Private ownership needs to be reinforced in Jordan media since there is a certain lack of capacity to compete with the strong media sector and major conglomerates from the neighbouring Gulf region. As the Media Sustainability Index states, "media technology is advanced, but media management is dictated by political and family ties"[37].

This assumption is particularly applicable to the case of Jordan, where the use of technology has grown consistently as has Internet and mobile penetration. According to a media survey in Jordan conducted in 2009[38], 30% of Internet users are connected daily, around 20% of radio listeners follow their radio programmes on the Internet and 6% of the total radio audience use the Internet to listen to the radio[39]. This data concerns only Amman, but taking into consideration that nearly half the Jordanian population, around 3 million, is located in the capital city, the figures are quite relevant. As stated in a research report by Freedom House[40], in 2007 there were 4.7 million subscriptions to a mobile phone, a figure that represents around 85% of the population.

Support by public authorities to media development has also been quite relevant. The country's 10-year blue print for reform published by King Abdullah II

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36 http://www.jrtv.jo/

37 http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_MENA/index.asp

38 Harris Interactive study conducted for USAID

39 http://www.irex.org/images/news/2009/mdd-JMS_2009%20_ALL-Sections-Mar1.pdf

40 Freedom House report on Media in Jordan

in 2005 included measures such as the increase of press freedom and political pluralism[41]. Indeed, the Royal family has publicly supported, on many occasions, the media's role in the development of the country. Interventions by King Abdullah II rejecting the imprisonment of journalists and public discourses by Queen Rania favouring new media as a tool of progress are quite common.

Interview by Queen Rania where she defends the importance of the Internet in promoting dialogue and eliminating prejudices and stereotypes

Nevertheless, Jordanian media content has so far been more focussed on entertainment programmes rather than on news and information. Jordanian audiences trust regional media more than local publications and media outlets. This can be explained by the reduced coverage of domestic issues. New media has produced a shift to this traditional orientation, introducing a model closer to current issues in the region. The Ammannet website is a clear example of this.

Blogging, another new media trend, was also clearly visible after the attacks on Gaza in December 2008 and the online campaigns organised by a group of bloggers and journalists to collect food and clothes[42]. The unexpected online social mobilisation created in only 48 hours showed that a new era had begun in terms of ICT applied to media.

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41 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/828763.stm

42 Ramsey Tesdell, Reach Out and Touch Somebody: The Ecology of New Media and New Social Movements in Jordan , found at http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=729

Table 9. Media and the new media landscape in Jordan[43]

Printed press	Al-Dustour Al-Arab al-Yawm Al-Diyar Al-Ghad Al-Ray' Al-Anbat	Daily Arabic
	The Jordan Times	English Daily
	The Star	English weekly
	Ahali Al-Awtan Al-Hadath Al-Hilal Al-Majd Al-Wihda Al-Sabeel	Arabic weekly
	Shihan	Arabic bi-monthly
	Al-Maghtas Magazine Jordan Business	English monthly
Audiovisual	Jordan Radio & Television Corporation	Arabic, English and French
	ATV (Jordan United TV Broadcasting Company)	Arabic and English
	Mazaj 95.3 FM (Arab Media Network)	Arabic
	Radio Jordan (Jordan Radio & Television Corporation)	Arabic, English and French
	Rotana Radio (Rotana Holding Company) Sawt al-Ghad (Jordan International Radio Broadcasting)	Arabic
	Radio Fann (Al-Kawn radio &TV Broadcasting)	Arabic and English
	Ahlen FM (Al-Deka for Broadcasting)	English, French, Italian and Turkish
	Beat FM (Seagulls Media Services) Mood FM (Seagulls Media Services) Play 99.6 FM (Modern Media Ltd.)	English
Internet based / new media	Radio AmmanNet www.almalaf.net www.maktoob.com www.menafn.com www.menareport.com	

Source: own elaboration

43 Source: www.menassat.com

Media regulations in Jordan

As in other countries, Jordan's Constitution guarantees freedom of opinion and speech, although there are some restrictions such as criticism of the King, the Royal Family and the State's reputation and dignity[1].

The Martial Law of 1967 permits censorship of the press. There were some attempts to eliminate state control in 2005, so censorship has diminished although self-censorship has increased as a result of fear towards public authorities[2].

It is not common practice in Jordan to revoke media licenses and ban websites. It is normally the judiciary power, not the government, the only institution that can shut down media outlets.

There is a major institution which syndicates media professionals; the Jordan Press Association, which registers around 700 journalists. A new trend in media and new media development is reflected in the creation of NGOs working with new media which offer training in the field. This follows the structure of Lebanese organisations such as the Social Media Exchange.

1   According to Library of the Congress: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Jordan.pdf

2   Jordan Sustainability Index published by IREX

Jordan new media, the key for social development

Youlia Rihanni, Sana Abu Ghalieh, Ramez Habash, Hamzeh Weshah

Nowadays a young Arab in Jordan or any other part in the world can become a part of the news and not simply as a consumer. Unlike traditional journalism (such as television channels controlled by governments) new media tools are becoming increasingly accessible and popular.

New media allows people to be the change they want to see in the world. Social networks such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter can build bridges of understanding through lateral learning. Blogs started as text, but have now developed into photo blogs, audio blogs and even video blogs. They are providing an authentic, fresh point of view which until now has been missing in the Arab media landscape.

According to OpenNet Initiative studies in 2007, Jordanians appear to enjoy essentially unfiltered access to Internet content. However, the Press and Publications Law's broad provisions have been extended to online publications and may lead some writers to engage in self-censorship. Although Jordan's government continues to develop initiatives to expand access to the Internet, laws restricting freedom of speech preserve an intimidating atmosphere that discourages free discourse on political and social issues.

Some efforts, steps and best practice taken to use new media in Jordan as a tool to promote Human Rights, dialogue, and social issues are the following:

1. The initiative that Queen Rania launched on YouTube in 2008, to generate dialogue concerning myths and misconceptions of the Muslim faith, and show people "the real Arab world… unedited, unscripted and unfiltered."
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFf897bUW2Y&feature=PlayList&p=E4A6856F19CF80DC&index=1

   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyCB-ULChV4&feature=PlayList&p=E4A6856F19CF80DC&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=16_

   In the following video, an Arab boy and a Portuguese girl perform a song together as a message to bring people from different backgrounds together:

   http://www.youtube.com/user/QueenRania#p/f/28/dbJ9fh9hnRY

2. watwet.com: Jordanians used this network to aid victims of the war on Gaza, which led to successful campaigning to support innocent Palestinians by donating food and clothes.

3. All Jordanian blogs can be found at http://jordanplanet.net

4. <u>Jordan Watch</u> - Batir Wardam writes about a Jordanian striving for a modern, democratic and stable Jordan

5. <u>Jordan, Enjoying My Space</u> - Omar Fahd writes about modern life and aspects and politics within Jordan

6. <u>The Black Iris of Jordan</u> - Covering politics, society and other Jordanian and Arab-related issues

7. <u>Nakhweh.com</u>: Nakhweh is a first-of-its-kind website in the Arab World which presents the opportunity to give back to the community. It exposes itself by breaking down the barriers between the volunteers and business leaders with varying online services that support social entrepreneurship in the Arab countries. Representing the voice of volunteers, Nakhweh is dedicated to fostering and developing free-willed work within the community. It aims to meet the ambitions of the volunteers from improving their self-esteem to meeting real community needs whilst still having fun. Nakhweh assists volunteers in finding the appropriate opportunities that meet their needs and interests, expanding the capacity of civil society, and encouraging a culture of individual empowerment and participation.

8. <u>Facebook</u> helped recruit over 3,000 volunteers in the initiative "Ketabak Ketabi" and it is now becoming a regional initiative for Palestinians in refugee camps in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Ketabak Ketabi aims to foster the establishment of new libraries for less privileged children utilising donated books from the online and offline communities.

9. <u>ARIJ.net</u> Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism is an independent, nonprofit, Amman-based, regional media network that seeks to support independent quality professional journalism, through funding in-depth journalism projects, and offering media coaching, creating a culture of "investigative journalism" throughout the region. UNESCO and ARIJ officially launched the first Arab manual for investigative journalists, to fill the gap in literature for the profession. The *Manual for Investigative Journalists* is an important guide to basic methods and techniques in investigative reporting that focuses on the hypothesis-based inquiry approach.

10. <u>7iber.com</u> is an independent media outlet that is youth-orientated and Jordanian-based. It looks to provide an online platform that allows young Jordanians to become more actively engaged in the process of change. 7iber is seeking to better inform its audience of untapped Jordanian issues as well as providing local perspectives on news, politics, arts and culture. It offers a model for free speech in Jordan, while attempting to provide

professional, ethical and fearless journalism. The content is a mixture of articles and multimedia based primarily on submissions from citizens as well as the 7iber team.

11. AmmanNet.net (the voice of the community), Broadcasting since 2000 as the Arab world's first Internet radio, launched by the Arab journalist Daoud Kuttab with a group of independent media practitioners in Amman, with funding from UNESCO, the Greater Amman Municipality and the Open Society Institute. AmmanNet produces audio reports, news bulletins and a variety of programmes. It supports independent media, and provides a free space for intercultural dialogue as well as social and political debates. AmmanNet has also become a leading training centre with journalists from Jordan and other Arab countries.

Website of Ammannet

12. Aramram.com is a starting point to develop the first Arab online television broadcasting from Amman. It works as a platform for all young people inside and outside Jordan to express their opinion and points of view concerning different serious social issues.

The subjects and problems tackled by "aramram" in the videos and interviews, aim to raise awareness about our modern life and its various components based on images of cultural heritage and civilisation. The site aims to provide an interactive space in which topics from society and history are used to open up dialogue between all groups. Some examples are:

http://www.aramram.com/episode/77

Honor crimes

http://www.aramram.com/episode/345

Violence against women

http://www.aramram.com/episode/391

13. <u>Hamzet Wasel</u> is a diverse and inclusive community of Amman citizens engaged in social activism and authentic relationship building across the city. Hamzet Wasel works with individuals and communities to design and participate in activities and programmes that tackle the city's complex challenges and explore its unique opportunities. Hamzet Wasel acts as a platform for activism and inclusion and is a catalyst for reviving, maintaining and enriching the social and cultural fabric of Amman through advocacy, documentation and community development.

14. <u>Ta3leeleh</u> is a grassroot community-based forum that brings people together from around the Kingdom, region and globe to stand before the microphone and share their ideas and interests in front of a supportive audience in a safe and comfortable environment. Ideas and interests include: research papers, philosophy, personal experiences, inventions, topics of interests, speeches, debates, the arts, etc.

15. <u>Zikra</u>, an initiative launched by Rabee' Zureikat in March 2007, is dedicated to promoting the Exchange concept amongst Jordanians. The initiative aims to bring people and communities closer together so they may learn and accept one another. In doing so, the initiative will bridge the socio-economic gap by bringing people from different communities across the Kingdom together through various activities.

16. <u>jordanopensource.org</u> is a community-based movement created to promote Open Source and Free Culture in Jordan and the Arab World.

17. <u>The Royal Film Commission</u> http://www.film.jo/?q=node/152, aims to encourage Jordanians and people from the Middle East to tell their stories (using the film industry), thus contributing to cross-cultural understanding and enhancing freedom of expression. The RFC promotes film culture throughout Jordan, thus contributing to educating and fostering a critical mind, and it positions Jordan as a location for international audio visual productions, offering great locations, creative resources, as well as technical assistance, etc.

New media and the way towards peace

Nowadays, thanks to technology, people can not only learn more and expand their knowledge on certain issues, but they can also actively participate in contributing information. The population of the Arab World is becoming younger and younger and this new generation of Arabs is being exposed to many new trends and communications tools. It is important to understand how to direct these tools in a positive way, and find out what is needed to be able to use this media in the best way possible.

In my opinion, through various journalistic trends, such as preventive journalism, investigative journalism, peace journalism, and citizen journalism, both society and journalists can foster positive dialogue in conflict situations and try to uncover serious social problems, offering optimal solutions that can prevent crisis as much as possible.

The media can diminish xenophobia, aggression and hatred if it stops running after dramatic, spectacular and sensational news stories that reflect images of people killing each other, without any attempt to show the other side (because there are always other sides of the story; such as groups of people trying to promote peace). New media can address peace and dialogue in the following ways:

- Frame news stories in a way that encourages conflict analysis and aims to resolve problems without using violence

- Promote peace initiatives, respect humanity and be objective and unbiased.

- Give accurate, balanced and reliable information

- Represent diverse points of view, and think of what to report and how to report it.

- Carry a message of peace and understanding, possible solutions and a positive vision

- Provide explanations of events and give a voice to those who work to build and not destroy

- Collaborate with NGOs that aim to foster peace through the social work they carry out. This can help society to understand how to work together for a better future.

However, media interventions require intensive advance research and sensitivity to local conditions. Experience has shown that media projects must strive for longevity leading to sustainability, to have a lasting effect. Every conflict and peace building situation is different and thus requires specific examination.

Freedom of speech is generally acknowledged as a cornerstone of a democracy and as crucial to the progressive development of the flow of ideas throughout the global community. The simultaneous push of the Internet to directly link people across the globe and allow them to express themselves using websites, blogs, and other examples of user-generated new media and the pull of governments to control their respective populations has greatly altered the possible impacts of censorship on a broader audience which may extend far beyond the sovereign territory of a given regime.

Recommendations

Free media can be useless if society and the journalists do not learn how to employ it in order to serve the community. Furthermore, the interested use of media can create clashes within society.

To avoid this, there are a several recommendations:

- It is important to clearly separate the exercise of political power and work of journalists in order to increase media independence

- Governments should commit to eliminating exaggerated interference in journalistic work and remove all obstacles to exercise new social media

- Governments should provide open access to government information in relation to Human Rights to let media professionals report on these cases

- On Human Rights issues, the media should give special attention to the context and terminology. Journalists should be careful about all stories and should develop certain ethics in reporting this news. Investigative journalism should offer more explanation and analysis of the problem

- Journalists should avoid biased language, and they should give a voice to victims and affected communities

- It is important to raise awareness among journalists and communities about international Human Rights instruments, through a series of activities such as seminars, training courses on Human Rights standards, including national perspectives, promoting cooperation between journalists and Human Rights organisations nationally, regionally and internationally

- Promote professional cooperation among journalists, communities and correspondents working for different media in different regions to better understand local conditions and develop a greater knowledge of information sources

- Strengthen the ability of journalists and new media users to work professionally and safely, and reinforce ethical principles in the presentation of reports on Human Rights

- Journalists, the media and Human Rights organisations play different roles in the defence and promotion of fundamental rights. Human Rights NGOs could provide budgetary support to journalists who wish to conduct research in the areas of Human Rights and social development and organise practical sessions and meetings between Human Rights activists and journalists.

Ecologies and Revolutions: How new media might change Jordan

Ramsey Tesdell

On 27 December 2008, Israel launched a series of attacks on the Gaza Strip. The very next day, 7iberdot.com met to discuss how we could respond to the attacks. We had been working with a number of new media tools and experimenting with ways to engage the growing number of digitised people and were looking for an activity to experiment on. Unfortunately, it came in the form of death and destruction.

Website of 7iber.com

We decided on a food and clothing drive, spreading the word for 48 hours, and collecting the donations for only two hours. Despite being intimately familiar with the technologies we deployed, we knew little of the impact they could have and the power it might afford.

To attempt to understand media ecology, I trace how the Gaza campaign went 'viral' and examine how the different media, various subjects, and a single emotional motive all interacted. We, as volunteers were not only witnesses, we helped create the opportunity to support Gazans. To better understand, I will disentangle each network from the others, analyse and then re-entangle them to observe how the networks operate collectively.

> "The first law of ecology is that everything is related to everything else."
> Barry Commoner

The first step to understanding this process is to disentangle the ecology, while understanding that everything is related. This can be difficult, but offers an intimate look into each of the tools available. However, after we take it apart, we will put it all back together again.

This campaign was devised during a meeting the night after the first attacks. The original idea was that of a 48-hour drive to collect donations to send to Gaza. We would spread the information on 7iber's website and each member's personal blog, and also utilise Facebook events to invite people to participate. A logo was created, a specific post was written detailing the action, and a call to repost the information was sent out to bloggers. An event on Facebook was created with the same information.

Within a few minutes of posting, a few comments were received, and several trackbacks recorded. A trackback is a link to the original post from another blog or website and are increasingly used as an indication of the popularity of the post. As the information spread throughout the blogs, more and more bloggers reposted the action.

Disentangling the Ecology

Subjects

These subjects came together, using specific tools in very specific ways, and were able to collectively orchestrate a large-scale event. 7iber used their website to announce the donation drive, and continued to update the site to reflect volunteer times and accomplishments. The Action Committee engaged their networks to organise volunteers, and the volunteers offered hours upon hours of volunteer time.

Tools

The number of tools accessible to Jordanians grew dramatically in the past few years. This has led to the utilisation of many tools for organising, while many of these avenues did not exist in the past. Current laws deny groups the possibility to assembly without permission from the government, but as new media tools become more available, obstacles such as these regulations diminish.

The tools used were a combination of digital new media tools that led to information being disseminated through the mass media, including the radio. Each tool offered unique advantages and disadvantages, such as enabling communication with specific socioeconomic populations and in specific geographic locations.

For example, blogs in English and on Facebook were used to spread information, but these reached a specific group, a mostly elite and English-speaking portion of the population. The tools used during the Gaza campaign include 7iber, the blogs and blogosphere, SMS and watwet, Facebook, and viral emails which

eventually led to the information being broadcast on several radio stations, an added important element in new media ecology.

7iber

The 7iber website served as the basis for the Gaza campaign by providing updated information and new opportunities, while also serving as a location to document the activities through text, pictures, and videos. 7iber utilised the blogging aspects of Wordpress by publishing a post with the information about the campaign. New information was added to the same post, by updating the post through a consistent and visually distinctive header.

Offering a single place for people to visit and have the opportunity to read information and ask questions was vital to the success of the project. The space also provided a key place for multimedia from the campaign to be posted that allowed the campaign to be documented at the same time as disseminating important information.

Facebook

Facebook has seen an explosive growth of usage in Jordan over the past two years. As such, it has become a necessary component in the new media ecology of Jordan. For the Gaza campaign, Facebook allowed us to do many things that 7iber's website was not able to. First, it allowed us to reach a large and different audience and engage them directly through invitations, messages, and tagging people in pictures and videos. The event page also offered another forum of users to ask questions and engage in discussion. Volunteers posted pictures and videos from their experiences and tagged their friends, which helped spread the message and attract more volunteers.

Facebook was specifically used to create events and invite people to attend the event. The event page consisted of information, contact information, and a link to 7iber's website for more information. As more people joined the event, they invited their friends and the snowball continued to grow. Within 24 hours, the event had over 800 confirmed participants. Another key tool was the ability to send messages to members of the 7iber Facebook group.

Blogosphere

The Jordanian blogosphere is relatively small compared to other countries such as Egypt and Morocco. While this has disadvantages, the advantage of a small group is that information spreads quickly and thoroughly and also that the blogosphere is more unified and supportive. Cooperation between bloggers in Jordan is common, especially during times such as the Gaza campaign. During the campaign, many bloggers picked up the story and reposted it on their own blogs.

The importance of this was two-fold; first it offered the information to a wider audience than just 7iber.com's website, and second it allowed the blogger to become involved in the campaign. By posting on their own blogs, bloggers had got a sense of participation and a self-interest in the success of the campaign.

Bloggers also helped document by volunteering, taking pictures and posting their stories on their own blogs. Again, 7iber provided a central place where incoming links were listed as a sort of aggregator, and helped ensure that posts about the campaign were collected in a single place and that anyone could follow everything written about the campaign.

While much has been written about the role of blogs in democratic and liberation movements, it is important to remember that blogs are just one tool in an ecology of new media and are dominated by primarily one audience. For a successful democratic movement to take shape, more technologies need to be utilised.

SMS

As blogs and 7iber were spreading information through their respective networks, an unexpected source of publicity and information dissemination rose out of mobile phone networks. Early in the campaign, 7iber utilised a new tool for Jordan called watwet, a Twitter-like service for the Arab world. Watwet allows users to sign up for channels that accept contributions from more than one person. We were able to authorise several contributors and keep subscribers informed with up-to the minute information.

A watwet badge was also placed on the 7iber website in order to update the site with a single SMS.

SMS was also utilised to keep large numbers of people, who were not following on the websites, informed of opportunities to volunteer. As mobile phone penetration in Jordan exceeds that of the Internet and any other media tool, mobile networking is a key component in the ecology. Our emails and messages on Facebook were converted into SMS messages by individuals and forwarded en masse.

It is nearly impossible to track this usage except with anecdotal evidence. It is even more difficult to control the accuracy of information, as our original messages were shorten, edited, and personalised as they were spread. Despite these limitations, SMS and watwet offer exciting new opportunities to organise collective actions through the mobile networks in Jordan.

Email

Email is one of the earliest forms of digital communication through the Internet. Despite its legendary status, its influence and uses maintain respect simply

by the sheer number of emails being sent, the number of people relying on email, and the instantaneous nature.

In this campaign, email was relegated to a relatively minor role. Despite this, many of the Facebook messages or posts from 7iber, were copied and pasted into emails and sent out to lists. Management of the accuracy and consistency of campaign information was a challenge, although at the same time, we welcomed its widespread dissemination.

Radio

As the campaign was whizzing around the Internet, an unexpected turn of events occurred. Several radio stations around Amman publish and monitor blogs. In this case, a radio DJ heard about the campaign and decided to read the call for volunteers on air. He continued to follow up with the coordinators and read updates on air as they were published on the website.

This coordination and communication between the formal media sector, specifically radio, and 7iber was a welcome surprise to the campaign organisers and in the case of Jordan, unprecedented. In this way, the new media ecology was able to partner with and co-opt a portion of the conventional media to further the aims of the Gaza campaign.

Objective/Motive: organise people for donations and volunteers

The Gaza attacks had a tremendous emotional impact on many people in Jordan. Over 50% of the Jordanian population is of Palestinian descent, and Jordan serves as a temporary home for many displaced persons, and an avenue of travel for Palestinians, either as a destination or simply a layover to elsewhere.

This emotional, political, and economic connection was realised in sudden and spirited demonstrations throughout the country. Calls for economic boycotts, annulling the peace treaty with Israel, and even burning the Israeli flag in the Jordanian Parliament, were all ways to express the anger over the bombing of Gaza.

In many ways, the Gaza campaign became a 'movement' through viral marketing. The decentralised nature of the information allowed it to always be available, and resilient to attempts to cut it off. Despite the charity aspect of this event, it did take place in a country where organising collective actions can be a dangerous act of resistance; simply organising a gathering of a few people is illegal without permission from the government .

The purpose of this case study was to determine how new media technologies are impacting group efforts to organise and carry out collective actions. From this case

study, there are four key factors to consider: decentralisation, mobility, "the medium is the message," and different tools corresponding to different socioeconomic classes.

It is crucial to build the networks of information on various mediums, and utilise more than one network in case one is shut down. Decentralising content and information is key to the sustainability of the project, but at the same time information consistency needs to be controlled by providing central locations for the information to exist. A blog, a Facebook event, and another source could be utilised as a way to quickly update and provide a source for the information.

It is difficult to overstress the importance of decentralisation in an environment such as Jordan where information is tightly controlled. While the examples above pose no threat to the government, such tools could in fact be used to organise a political movement that would threaten the ruling elite.

By engaging the ecology, organisers offer more avenues to connect with larger numbers of people, and also reduce the risk of losing an important communication tool due to an error or intentional failure of the system. Adapting the message to each specific medium is important, so that important information is not mistakenly left out or incorrect information added.

Different tools offer different audiences, and offer a larger possibility that the collective action will "go viral" and spread like a virus throughout each medium or channel. Most people use a mobile phone and SMS, fewer use email, even fewer use Facebook, and the fewest read blogs. As you go through ecology, you see the higher classes and English-speaking strata owning the blogosphere and Facebook, while all classes enjoy SMS and emails.

Depending on your audience, careful consideration is required into which tools will be used to complete the ecology. Also important to decentralisation is the growing importance of mobile communication. Tools such as watwet allow Jordanians to spread information across multiple networks quickly and cheaply, wherever mobile phones have a signal. These tools can be utilised in a number of political and non-political situations such as poll monitoring, recording events at a protest, or simply updating family members about a newborn baby.

The four factors listed above are aspects that are critically important to the success of collectively organised events, while certain aspects grow in concern as the political nature of the collective action increases. These factors, and how the new media ecology is utilised will be aspects of a successful campaign using digital small media to organise large collective actions.

All the time, people are interacting, cooperating, discussing, scheming, and organising online, this involvement translates into a more connected society

that shares more information and can lead to a more engaged society as more information enters the public domain and more spaces are created for the critical examination of events. It is anyone's guess as to what will happen when even larger numbers of individuals come together, with space and freedom to critically examine their world, and tools to coordinate their actions. What we can say is that these tools have opened up a new potential for *something* to happen.

CHAPTER 3. NEW MEDIA IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, A DOOR TO THE WORLD
General overview

Rut Gomez Sobrino

The Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) is the clearest case in the Arab region to show how political developments and long conflict can affect the civil society as well as the media scene of a community. Various generations of Palestinian society have been affected by the conflict originated by the occupation and its serious implications. Psychological damage, displacement of people, lack of coverage of basic needs and a lack of security are some of the burdens carried by the Palestinians for several decades.

As a result, the Palestinian Territories may appear to have the most difficult scenario to promote messages of peace and dialogue through media and new media. However, it is precisely in these difficult environments where media and new media can reinforce a better coexistence and where media professionals can act as catalysts for peace and dialogue. In fact, there are many best practice examples implemented in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the fields of media and new media that can be useful to other contexts. This will be analysed further.

The Occupied Territories have been a recurrent issue for international media that reports every day on this particular area of the region. As a consequence, Palestinians have become used to continuous exposure and being one of the windows of international news reporting. On the other hand, they normally live isolated, with restricted access to windows to the world.

This contradiction has resulted in a particular media landscape and even a specific media language that some have criticised as victimising. The paradigm mentioned has also influenced the structure of Palestinian civil society that is tremendously active. The dynamism of the Palestinian NGO framework, often being used as an example at the most reputed schools of international affairs, can probably be attributed to the lack of political leadership in the Territories until 1995[44].

Youth movements originating from this dynamism have been intimately related to the evolution of media and recently of new media. The result is that many activists and social workers have become reporters during the periods of conflict affecting the OPTs in recent years.

At this point, it is clear that citizen journalism acquires a new dimension in the Occupied Territories. The most evident example to illustrate this assumption is the

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44 The Palestinian National Authority was created in 1995 through the Oslo Accords

response of social media networks and bloggers during the Israel attacks in Gaza in 2008. Israel's decision to impose a media blackout on Gaza, forbidding foreign correspondents to enter the territory was followed by a massive cyber campaign against the attacks, providing footage and primary reporting from Gaza.

The Gaza Today blog[45], authored by Sameh Akram Habeeb, working at Ramattah News Agency in Gaza, was one of the sources of information which included photo archives uploaded onto a Flickr account.

Gaza Today blog

Israel's assault on Gaza gave social media a greater legitimacy, not only as a tool to disseminate information and updates on actual events, but also as an instrument to raise funds and support for the Palestinian people. The rapid response of social networks in the region to the disastrous situation in the Occupied Territories was of an unprecedented level[46].

The involvement of Arab society in the conflict has become a reality thanks to the increasing use of ICTs and the willingness of the citizens in the region to be more active. The result has been the reinforcement of the traditional Arab public consciousness regarding the Palestinian cause.

However, Palestinian new media has also had a strong representation in other countries, showing how the diaspora is an intrinsic element of Palestinian society. One of the most well known examples of this is the Electronic Intifada[47], a not-for-profit, independent publication launched in 2001 to inform about the question of Palestine as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the economic, political, legal, and human dimensions of Palestinian territories.

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45 Available at: http://gazatoday.blogspot.com/

46 See more at: Social media in the Gaza conflict By Will Ward

47 http://electronicintifada.net/

Media landscape in Palestine[48]

Printed media	Al-Ayyam Al-Hayat Al-Jadida Al Quds	Arabic daily
	Al Manar Al Karmel Kul Al Arab Al Massar Sawt Al-Nesa Akhbar Al-Naqab Fasl Al-Maqal Sawt Al-Haqq wal-Hurriya Al Sennara	Arabic weekly
	Filistin Al-Muslima	Arabic monthly
	Al Sabar Al Bayader	Arabic bi-montly
	The Jerusalem Times	English weekly
	Kana'an	Arabic quarterly
Press agencies	Ramattan	Arabic, English
	WAFA	Arabic, English and French
	Jerusalem Media&Communication Center	Arabic, English
	Ma'an News Agency International Middle East Media Center	Arabic, English and Hebrew
Audiovisual media	Palestinian TV and Radio Corporation Al Amal TV Al Nour TV Al Quds Educational TV Al Salam TV Amwaj TV Bethlehem TV Farah TV Qalqilia TV Nablus TV Al Balad FM Al Hurriya FM Holy Quran Radio Nagham Radio Radio Aiyal Radio Angham	Arabic
	Amwaj Radio	Arabic, English, French
	Al Najah FM	Arabic, English
	Hebron Radio Voice of Palestine	Arabic, English, French, Hebrew
	Nablus FM Radio Bethlehem 2000 Radio Isis Radio Kolennas Radio Tariq Al-Mahabbeh	Arabic and English
Internet based/ online media	www.palestinedaily.com www.palestine-pmc.com/arabic/arabic.asp www.amin.org www.alburaq.net www.jerusalem-times.net www.forpalnews.net	www.fpnp.net www.yafa-news.com www.electronicintifada.net www.fromoccupiedpalestine.org www.palestine-net.com www.palguide.com

Source: Own elaboration

48 www.menassat.com

Palestinian media law framework

Media regulations are registered in the Palestinian Basic Law that was amended in 2003 and guarantees freedom of expression. This has been mentioned in several articles, such as Articles 10, 19 and 27. The latter even provides protection for the different types of media outlets[1].

Nevertheless, taking into account the current political division within the Occupied Palestinian Territories authorities, the work of media professionals is normally under threat.

The Palestinian media organisations landscape is quite active. The main ones are the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, the Palestinian Press Center for International Journalists[2] and the Media Center for Arab Palestinians in Israel. There are also some monitoring services provided by the Palestine Media Watch and the Palestine Monitor[3].

1   The Legal Framework for Media in Palestine and Under International Law, by Toby Mendel and Dr. Ali Khashan

2   Visit: www.ipc.gov.ps

3   Palestine Media Watch www.pmwatch.org and Palestine Monitor www.palestinemonitor.org

The need to reinforce Palestinian new media content

Bilal Ghaith, Emad El-Hawitat, Hasan Hamarsha Rana Khmous and Thaer Thabet

According to the Internet World Statistics, the use of Internet in the Occupied Palestinian Territories reaches 14.2% of the Palestinian households. There are also around 3,500 Palestinian websites registered under the Palestinian country code (.ps).

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics[49] showed that 28.5% of the Palestinian households have an Internet connection.

In terms of new media tools, we should consider the following data:

1. Facebook/Twitter and social networks: by the end of 2008 there were 43,000 people on the Palestinian network on Facebook and around 540 groups with the word "Palestine". In Yahoo groups, there are 2 famous groups, the first is the Palestinian Electronic Forum with more than 10,000 users, and the Palestinian Non-governmental Forum with around 6,000 users.

2. Blogging: although Palestinian bloggers have started to emerge, blogging in the OPTs is still underutilised and dominated by international voices.

3. New media and Human Rights: New media has the possibility to advance the Human Rights agenda in Palestine, but this is unlikely to happen on its own. Human Rights organisations operating in the Palestinian territories should be focusing on ICT training and diversifying existing media skills. While training should include international aid workers, media centres, and journalists, training should not overlook the Palestinian people, whose voices, in particular, also need to be heard."(Heske and Bates, 2009)

Communications, Dialogue and Peace

Citizen dialogue is the relation between government officials and citizens which is considered one of the main pillars of peace. The Government needs to convey to citizens its accomplishments, strategies, future plans, service provision procedures, etc. On their side, citizens need to tell the government about their needs, requirements, concerns and other aspects. In order to reach a peaceful relationship between government and citizens, there is a need to establish dialogue. This cannot be established without having a catalyst and this catalyst is the civil society and community-based organisations.

This type of organisation is playing a vital role in establishing communication channels between government and citizens. They are deeply rooted in the community and therefore know community needs and expectation very well and can better reflect these needs to the government. They have the capacity to run and

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49 http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/

manage public and town hall meetings where citizens and government officials come face to face and discuss all issues.

Establishing this type of dialogue will provide the government with the opportunity to respond positively to citizens' requirements and adapt new policies that respond to citizens' needs. Also, this dialogue holds the government accountable to citizens and this leads to democracy, transparency and accountability.

With regard to the public sector communication capacity, media in all forms drastically affects public opinion and should consequently be used with care to achieve the objective for which it exists. Government institutions in Palestine started establishing media departments and training media officers a long time ago but thet are not actively communicating with the public for many reasons. One of them is the absence of communication strategies at the government level and the absence of interaction between media departments and the technical departments within the same institution.

There is a need to activate communication between government institutions and citizens using civil society organisations in order to have active dialogue between these institutions and citizens so that, in the end, it leads to transparency, accountability and peace through the development of new government policies that are responsive to citizen needs.

In particular, it is necessary to:

1. Build the capacity of government institution media departments through developing communication strategies, training media staff and building technical capacities.

2. Train spokespeople and media officers in government institutions about media in all forms including new and old media

A Palestinian example of best practice: MASADER

This best practice example was presented at the 'Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop' held in Jordan in February 2010.

This initiative was launched officially in July 2005 as the first unprecedented NGO portal in Palestine and the Arab world. It is specialised in serving and empowering the NGO sector in terms of assisting them to overcome geographic limits and provide them with the chance to communicate among each other, and with other directly or indirectly related parties, on the other hand.

Through this web portal, each NGO will be able to publish its accomplishments, such as projects, studies, research, proposals and administrative and financial reports. Moreover, it provides donors, both individuals and institutions, with the required data for making decisions regarding funding, as well as

Masader

providing an informative account for governmental, private, educational and media institutions which enable them to operate with a higher level of accuracy and professionalism.

This vision establishes a significant source of information and a platform for productive dialogue for the Palestinian NGO sector. To date, there are 635 NGOs registered with the portal.

The portal includes several sections: Member NGOs Directory, Donors Directory, News, Events, Projects, Appeals, E-library, Multimedia Gallery, Funding Opportunity, and Forums.

The Palestinian NGO Portal is one project in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where there are more than 1,500 NGOs. This project should be presented in other participant countries, especially in Iraq where there more than 6,000 NGOs.

Recommendations

Having analysed the new media and media landscape in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, we propose the following list of recommendations:

1. Creating long-term programmes: new media is in use in Palestine, but needs to be directed towards specific objectives by designing and implementing new projects

2. Improving capacity building: educating media departments in government institutions about new media where communication between them and citizens can be stimulated.

3. Increasing social awareness: educating civil society organisations about the use of new media, where they can use it in conveying information to the citizens, in outreach activities and in debate about domestic issues and those related to the Israeli occupation.

4. Training qualified press cadres on new media about spreading a culture of understanding and reconciliation in their society that also work towards training future journalists for the same purpose.

5. Working towards creating a professional and independent media body that stays in constant communication with organisations working in the field to provide support in laying the foundation for peace, stability, and spreading the culture of accepting others, by using social networks.

6. Upgrading journalism syllabus at colleges and universities to include specialised courses about new media and Human Rights and their role in building a democratic society.

New Media: A new zone for peace and war

Bilal Ghaith

'Media is Half the Battle'. This slogan was used by James K. Glassman in one of his articles published in Wall Street Journal during September 2007[50]. He stresses the fact that media power and effect is equal to that of a real war.

For this reason, the media is a one of the struggle zones where the Palestinians used to defend the Israeli claims that they are not capable of having an independent state or achieving peace. Through these claims, Israel deliberately tries to legitimise its occupation of the Palestinian land.

The Palestinian journalists were also faced by an additional challenge which is to find the suitable place for managing this battle. They used all the available media outlets to deliver the truth to the world.

The new media, or alternative media as some prefer to call it, is one of the major outlets that are capable of reaching the international community, particularly after the wide spread of Internet websites, forums, blogs, and mailing groups. In fact, the Internet has contributed efficiently to the Palestinian cause. Not only in Palestine, but also all around the globe, the Internet has proved to be a successful method to get the public attention on many issues and force governments to revise and amend certain decisions. Also, Palestinian journalists were forced to face the Israeli blackout on the protests against Israeli actions, especially the construction of the apartheid separation wall. During these protests, hundreds of international and Israeli activists were participating and some of them were injured or forced to leave the Palestinian Territories.

New media was widely used to document the Israeli violations against the Palestinians, especially the video documentation. For instance, in the Palestinian village of Naelen, the video of the Israeli soldier shooting a Palestinian after being arrested was shown to the World and exposed some of the Israeli violations against the Palestinian civilians.

I will try to shed light on new media in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Jerusalem, and focus on Palestinian success in taking advantage of new media in order to maintain the achievement of freedom and independence and establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The Wikipedia definition for the term 'New Media' states that it is "a term meant to encompass the emergence of digital, computerised, or networked information and communication technologies in the later part of the 20th century. Most technologies described as "new media" are digital, often having characteristics of

50 For more information please check: http://www.aei.org/article/26809

being influential, networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial. Some examples may be the Internet, websites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMS, and DVDs. New media is not television programmes, feature films, magazines, books, or paper-based publications."

It is necessary to mention some of the constraints I faced while preparing this paper, mainly due to the lack of information about this topic, and the lack of updated official statistics on new media in the Palestinian Territories. I tried to obtain information through interviewing other journalists, and navigating web-sites and blogs looking for related information.

According to Mr. Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed, Chairman of Al Arabiya Satellite television channel, the advantages of new media are that: "it is now possible to all to have access to the media. In the past it was available only for the elite group. Now it is available even to the less educated and low income groups."

Another advantage, according to Al-Rashed, is that circulating news and photos regarding political issues forced some governments to take some decisions and to cancel others, as a result of the public protest. For example, in Egypt, the photos of assault and sexual harassment against an Egyptian civilian "Imad Al-Kabeer" led to the an open investigation into police corruption in Egypt.

The same thing happened in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco , Iraq and finally in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, when a video was published on YouTube of an Israeli soldier abusing Palestinian civilians at one of the checkpoints near Jerusalem it forced the Israeli government to send this solider to trial.

Internally, supporters of Hamas and Fatah have used new media to influence public opinions. There have been extensive campaigns by Hamas supporters accusing Fatah of financial corruption, while Fatah supporters were accusing Hamas of being controlled by Iran and not working for Palestinian interests.

Al-Rashed states that "new media is represented in high speed and interactivity and the low price of the medium which make it available to all."

Furthermore, one of the positive features of new media is that it is widespread. More than 90% of Palestinians own a mobile phone, and they use them to exchange information. According to research conducted by the Zawya Center for Research[51], the number of mobile phone users in the Middle East exceeds 75 million users who receive the service via 38 communication companies. From an economic perspective, the mobile phone sector is the second highest income generation sector in the Gulf region after oil.

Statistics from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reveal that 12.7% of the Palestinian people own a personal computer; 13.5% in the West Bank, and 6.7% in the Gaza Strip.

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51 http://www.zawya.com

The Internet has played a major role in showing Palestinian suffering to the World. Palestinian and Arabic websites publish information about the latest news in the Palestinian Territories in several languages, and most of these websites allocate sections to the Palestinian issue and track the house demolitions, Israeli violations of basic Human Rights, and protests against the separation walls.

These websites also highlighted Palestinian suffering as a result of the Israeli siege imposed on the Palestinian towns, villages, and refugee camps. Also, these websites documented the sequences of the Israeli siege on the Palestinian people. For example, as a direct result of the Gaza siege, more than 400 people died.

During the Israeli military operation "Cast lead" in the Gaza Strip (2009), the new media proved its capability to transmit the details of the military attacks day by day.

The war on the ground coincided with another war in cyber space. Many websites dedicated sections for collecting donations and funds for the people of Gaza. Other websites focused on showing the Palestinians as terrorists and trying to legitimise the Israeli attack.

This "e-war" includes hacking and closing some websites by the supporters of each side. This "e-war" is also visible on Facebook which includes many groups that focus on the war in Gaza. The clashes started on the website after an Israeli group called "Jewish Defence Force" hacked some pro Palestinian groups and removed the content of these groups and put instead content supporting the Israeli policies.

The pro-Palestinian activist, Andrew Silvera, whose Facebook page was hacked into recently, said "I received an invitation to be the administrator for a group that calls for immediate seize of fire in Gaza. After clicking on the link inside the invitation, my account vanished."

Regarding blogs, Asfour says: "blogs will have a negative impact on the level of language used, and this will also affect the quality of the news, as these blogs are not following the structure of the news story. They only care about instant publishing of news and people managing these blogs are not journalists. I think these blogs sometimes could be considered as bad publishing."

The challenge according to Asfour is how to best use the power of new media to make a political change in the Arab world; to reduce poverty, illiteracy, and strengthen the values of democracy.

Finally, I think new media was effectively used by the Palestinians to support their rights. It gives them all the power to be reporters, Human Rights defenders, and ambassadors for Palestine in Cyberspace. But, the Palestinian community is still at the bottom of the list on the World Internet Statistics. Around 14% of the population in Palestine has access to the Internet. This is in contrast to Israel where more than 70% of its population has access to the Internet.

CHAPTER 4. SYRIA, BETWEEN RESTRICTION AND MOBILISATION

General overview

Rut Gomez Sobrino

When comparing the Syrian media scene with neighbouring countries, what first stands out is the low number of outlets and media companies in the country. There are only a few printed publications and local audiences normally rely on regional television due to the reduced number of Syrian channels. Furthermore, the Internet still has very low penetration, due to its limited access and high cost.

Despite this, there is room for optimism since there has been a certain opening up with the arrival of Bashar Al Asad to the Presidency. The Press Law of 2001 authorised privately-owned newspapers and after forty years of state-owned press, more than 100 new titles appeared on the newspaper market. Together with the new presidency, a refreshing generation of young professionals is trying to revitalise the media scene[52].

It is those who did not grow up in the old times of the monolithic regime, who have been exposed to an international context, who are making up a reduced elite of intellectuals with enough willingness and capacity to mobilise civil society organisations and reinforce their role in democratic processes. This may eventually have a positive effect on media outlets and media independence.

The strong tradition of state-owned media[53] explains that private media is quite new in Syria, as it was only allowed with the aforementioned presidential decree of 2001. Between 2001 and 2010, 220 publications have been licensed although 70 have been closed afterwards. The main problem is that once printed, journals are vetted by the Arab Establishment for Distribution of Printed Products belonging to the Ministry of Information.

Al-Thawra, Teshreen, Al-Watan are the privately owned daily journals, together with the foreign Baladna and the Syria Times, published in English. Media independence is still an issue to be addressed in Syria, and political parties are normally related to newspapers and other mass media. Some of the main political party newspapers are Al-Baath, Al-Wahdawi, An-Nour and Sawt ash-Shaab.

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52 Half the population is under the age of twenty-one

53 Syrian private media was nationalised by the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1958, during the union signed between Syria and Egypt

Ahead of traditionally state-owned media, private initiative exceptions are Cham FM[54], which often addresses social issues inviting social workers and stakeholders from civil society, and Syria Today[55], tackling sensitive issues such as the judicial reform as well as culture, politics and current affairs.

Forward Magazine[56] is another interesting initiative founded by media and technology entrepreneur Abdulsalam Haykal. Dating from January 2007, and edited in English language, it is a highly professional outlet tackling economics, politics, culture among others. Also a Haykal project is Al-Iqtisadi[57], a monthly magazine, the first private business magazine to be licensed in Syria. The magazine started in December 2004, and now goes by the motto "*The magazine of every Syrian*".

In the television field, the ORTAS, General Organisation of Radio and Television Syria[58], founded in 1946, is the main broadcaster for radio and television. Other television channels are not of Syrian origin. Private radio stations dealing with politics are still prohibited in Syria and the majority are music radio formula or only tackle cultural matters.

In general terms, and after a certain boom with the arrival of Bashar Al Asad in 2000, the Syrian context does not seem to be flourishing for the media and new media field at present. Financial capacity, together with the political willingness to favour freedom of the press, appears to be the only way towards media independence.

Pessimistic international media organisations usually consider Syria to be one of the most censored countries in the world, together with others such as North Korea, Libya, Equatorial Guinea and Cuba. Freedom House, Reporters without Borders and other international media organisations often criticise the situation of Syrian media and the pressures on Syrian media professionals mainly due to the lack of freedom among other difficulties that professionals face.

For the Committee to Protect Journalists[59], Syrian media are under heavy state control and most media outlets are strongly supportive of the regime and lack criticism to domestic politics. Cases of banned websites and arrests have been widely reported thanks to new media, particularly new media established abroad.

For instance, some satellite channels licensed by the Syrian authorities have been banned and forced to continue their emissions from other Arab countries. This is the case of Al-Sham, currently based in Egypt.

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54 http://www.shamfm.fm

55 http://www.syria-today.com/

56 http://www.fw-magazine.com

57 http://www.aliqtisadi.com/

58 http://www.rtv.gov.sy/

59 Special report by Freedom House, 2006

However, self-censorship can be worse than the pressure exercised by the public authorities and this has increased in recent years[60]. This phenomenon, normally driven by fear, consists in establishing limits that can be much stricter than those imposed by public authorities. Media professionals are aware of this.

In a survey published on the website of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression[61] about public opinion on the blocking of internet sites, 74% of voters consider it obscures the other opinion and 19% think it stops the flow of information. None of the voters think that it is a matter of protection of national security.

This institution opened in 2004 under the direction of Mazen Darwish, a journalist and well-known supporter of press freedom as an independent civil society institution with the aim of raising awareness on freedom of the press. Darwish was under a military court trial in April 2008 accused of "libelling and insulting the State Administrative bodies"[62].

Other well-known and reported cases were the poet Firas Sa`ad, writer of the website www.ahewar.org, sentenced to four years in prison for "weakening national sentiment"[63], blogger Tarek Biasi, moderator of the online youth forum www.akhawia.net, sentenced to three years for "insulting security services" and "weakening national sentiment" and political analyst Habib Saleh sentenced to three years in prison for "spreading false information" and "weakening national sentiment", for writing articles criticising the government and defending the opposition figure Riad al-Turk.

The use of ICTs in Syria

The Syrian telecommunications sphere is the most regulated in the Middle East although it is among the least developed. Syrian Telecom (STE) part of the Ministry of Telecommunications and Technology, owns all telecommunications infrastructure. The private ISPs compete with STE in the provision of the internet. Other providers are Syriatel, MTN and SCS-net, the Syrian Computer Society. GPRS and 3G connectivity is available but it is very costly for Syrian citizens, reaching USD 50 per month.

Internet arrived in the country as part of the modernising reforms of President Bashar Al Assad. While the global growth rate of internet was 250%, in Syria this figure reached a surprising 4900%[64].

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60 For more information, read the interview of the founder and former director of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, Mazen Darwish at: http://www.arabpressnetwork.org/articlesv2.php?id=1574&lang=

61 http://www.scm-sy.net

62 To know more about the campaign to free Mazen Darwish, visit http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/alerts/3443-syria-joint-action-support-mazen-darwish

63 In his articles, he called for better relations between Lebanon and Syria and criticised the Syrian army's role in the July 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. For more information, visit: http://www.hrw.org/en/node/79303

64 http://opennet.net/research/profiles/syria

Nevertheless, internet use is still low and expensive. Most of the 16%[65] of internet users go online in internet cafes or through dial-up connections via landlines at their homes.

Despite the difficulties, there is a relatively high level of information literacy and as a consequence, most radios, television channels and newspapers have their own website.

Regarding social media, there are timid movements, particularly from the youth. Networks such as Facebook and Twitter reach all countries, so the attraction towards these websites is advancing everyday. However, these new media tools are being highly restricted[66] and authorities are not very much in favour of promoting them. Prohibitions, both from Syrian authorities and major US companies like Google and Sun, plus censorship, have originated another movement: the development of IT strategies to overcome this. Internet cafes and forums have become the meeting point for those able to conquer freedom of expression.

Some of the most famous blogs and sites are:

- Al-Safahat (www,safahat.blogspot.com): featuring political and cultural articles about Syria

- Syria Comment (www.syriacomment.com): featuring thoughts on Syrian politics, history and religion

- All4syria (http://allforsyria.info): one of the most widely-read electronic media news and opinion sources in Syria, with around 17,000 daily subscribers.

- News From Syria, (http://newsfromsyria.com): This website, the Syria News Wire is written from Damascus and London. It was the fourth Syrian blog to appear on the Internet, back in 2004. It has been nominated by the Lonely Planet and gets around 15,000 hits every month.

Some examples of not banned websites are the Syria Planet and Al-Mudawwen[67], the main blog providers.

The relationship between NGOs and new media

Activism has traditionally provoked a negative reaction throughout the Arab world. Perceived as a leftist concept, closer to revolution than to evolution, this traditional rejection has been a certain brake to the development of NGOs and social movements. However, the discontent of Arab societies towards their

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65 Data from Internet World Statistics

66 Facebook has been accused of conducting Israeli penetration of Syrian youth, visit the article at: http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSOWE37285020071123

67 www.syplanet.com and www.almudawen.net

governments and the willingness to advance towards a better life has provoked an explosion of NGOs of different types in the Arab world since the 1980s.

In Syria, the NGO framework has experienced a certain boom in recent years and the list of civil organisations has multiplied[68] as well as the trust of the citizenship towards civil society action. I, myself, was working in Syria during 2007 under the Anna Lindh Foundation[69]. I was based at the Syrian Computer Society established at the Teshreen Garden in Damascus where I trained and assessed Syrian NGOs. Through my experience, I can certify that there is an evident willingness for social mobilisation and involvement as well as for innovation and creativity.

The increase of Syrian television sketch comedies and highly creative drama series tackling certain sensitive social issues traditionally considered taboo, is proof of the change in mentality and the willingness to open public debates[70].

The restrictions suffered by both civil society organisations and media have created a certain sense of solidarity among them. This explains press coverage of some cases of detention of social activists and the attitude of several NGOs criticising lack of freedom of the press in the country.

In the Syrian context, characterised by different types of hard restriction, the interaction between NGOs, social activists and new media has a profound significance. The rise of registered NGOs, together with the increasing use of the Internet, has led to some blogging campaigns, which certainly had a deep effect on the knowledge of Syria outside its borders.

Many of these campaigns have addressed social issues and Human Rights matters such as the detention of bloggers and journalists, such as the aforementioned Tariq Biassi and Karim Arbaji among others[71]. Not only the Internet, but also mobile phones, have been a great source of support to these campaigns.

According to the Syrian Human Rights Committee, 2009 was a dark year for Human Rights as the authorities arrested political and Human Rights activists,

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68 According to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, there were 540 NGOs in 2001 and currently there are 1,500 registered names

69 The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue Between Cultures was created in 2005 as an organisation shared by the 43 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean, to bring people together to improve mutual respect between cultures, and to support civil society working for a common future of the Region. The Foundation has a region-wide network of over 3,000 civil society organisations. For more information, visit the website: http://www.euromedalex.org/

70 Syria under the Spotlight:Television satire that is revolutionary in form, reformist in content, by Marlin Dick

71 Some examples: http://freetariq.org , a petition to free blogger Tariq Biassi. The website is currently banned but has been posted at http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/free-syrian-blogger-tariq-biassi.html
Arbaji was sentenced to three years in prison charged of ¨spreading false information that can weaken national sentiment¨ for moderating the online youth forum, www.akhawia.net, that criticizes the government
To know more about Karim Arbaji detention and other bloggers, please visit: http://advocacy.globalvoiceson-line.org/2009/09/19/syria-blogger-kareem-arbaji-sentenced-to-three-years-in-prison/ and http://ya-ashrafe-nnas.blogspot.com/

censored websites and detained bloggers[72]. To date, twelve leaders of the Damascus Declaration, a coalition of opposition groups, were still under the 30-month prison sentence imposed in 2008 after attending a political meeting.

Again, there is room for hope. Between 23-24 January 2010, Damascus hosted the First International Development Conference held in Syria to explore the "Emerging Role of Civil Society in Development". The complementary role of NGOs, together with the private and public sector in the development of the country was underlined by the First Lady, Mrs. Asma Al Assad who participated in the opening ceremony.

Syrian media landscape[73]

Printed media	Al-Baath Al-Thawra Teshreen Al-Fedaa Al Furat Al Jamahir Al Ouruba Al-Wehda	Arabic daily
	Syria Times	English daily
	Al Nour	Arabic weekly
	Syria Today	English Monthly
	Abyad wa Aswad Al-Iqtisadiyya	Arabic weekly
	Forward Magazine	English monthly
Press agency	Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA)	Arabic, English, French
Audiovisual media	General Organisation of Radio and Television Syria	Arabic, English, and French
Internet/online media	Al-Sham http://www.syriamc.com http://www.syria-news.com/ http://www.syria-report.com/index.asp http://www.lasyrie.fr/Default1.aspx http://www.surion.org/ http://www.rezgar.com/ http://www.broadleft.org/sy.htm	

Source: own elaboration

72 For more information: http://www.shrc.org/data/aspx/d12/4062.aspx

73 www.menassat.com

Syria Media Law Framework

There are two main media organisations in Syria; the Syrian Arab News Agency, SANA[1] and the Union of Syrian Journalists. The latter imposes discriminatory status on media professionals who do not follow the official lines, excluding them from membership. This is one of the most evident cases of self-censorship and it creates a monopoly of certain professionals in the exercise of journalism.

The Emergency Law has been in place since December 1962. This mandates the censorship of letters, publications, broadcasts, and other forms of communication. A new Press Law was pushed in 2001 for continuous control over printed media as well as new media. The list of delicate topics was extensive and included stories that touch the so-called "national security" or "national unity."

Also the Penal Code includes press restrictions such as Articles 286 and 287 against spreading news abroad. Decree No. 6 of 1965 still criminalises "publishing news aimed at shaking the people's confidence in the revolution." Other laws criminalise "opposition to the revolution, its goals, or socialism."

1   www.sana.sy

Recommendations

There are three main needs for progress given the current situation of media and new media in Syria:

- **To obtain the commitment of public authorities to support freedom of expression, freedom of the press** and the guarantee to increase the safety of journalists and media professionals, with a particular focus on the new media channels. A consistent media system is the basis of a democratic and advanced country. Therefore, the work of social and development workers, media professionals and political activists, among others, should be respected as a relevant catalyst for economic, social and political progress. It is evident that the Syrian civil society is prepared to rule its own destiny. This is something the state should be aware of.

- **To improve higher education offered in journalism schools and implement vocational training programmes**. At present, only the University of Damascus offers a degree in journalism and the topics and subjects have not been updated in recent years. The harmonisation of the curriculum with internationally recognised journalism schools is necessary as well as the provision of resources to update the subjects taught to international standards and to offer appropriate technical and practical training to media students.

- **To increase the professionalism of media and new media professionals** in order to improve journalistic content. This needs to be carried out in a variety of topics not only in those related to domestic politics.

CHAPTER 5. IRAQ, RECOVERING FROM THE BLACK DECADE

General overview

Rut Gomez Sobrino

The Iraqi population of nearly 30 million is highly diverse with 75% Arabs, 20% Kurds and 5% of other groups[74]. Once supported by Western nations, the country has been affected by conflicts of different types since the 1980s when the war with Iran resulted in an 8-year military encounter that left around 1,000,000 total casualties on both sides. In recent years, there have been a cascade of dramatic events in Iraq that have provoked unprecedented media coverage.

Since 2003, the country has been occupied by a multinational coalition of forces and has witnessed the withdrawal of Saddam Hussein and his sentence to death. In 2004 the United States set up a Provisional Government which approved a new constitution in 2005[75].

The relationship between conflict and media in Iraq deserves a profound analysis. On one side, the massive international coverage of the First Gulf War provoked deep criticism that accused international press of pro-invasion bias and of distorting the world's public opinion. Works such as the documentary 'Lines of Sand' (1992) by the peace activist Ed Griffin-Nolan evaluated the Gulf War and the manipulation of public opinion by the US government and the media.

Further research conducted by the Institute of Communication Studies at the University of Leeds[76] even concluded that "the news media have failed, quite dramatically, in their role as information providers (in the Iraq Gulf War). Despite months of coverage, most people do not know basic facts about the political situation in the Middle East, or about the recent history of US policy towards Iraq. Television, as the "information" source most people depend upon, is particularly responsible. While support for the war was extraordinarily strong, it was at least partly built upon a body of knowledge that is either incorrect or incomplete."

Discussion about the international media coverage of Iraq continued years later with the 2003 occupation of the country. Research conducted at the University of Maryland shows how the media affected the world's views on the

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74 For more information: www.menassat.com

75 More about the country profile in: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/791014.stm

76 "The Gulf War: A Study of the Media, Public Opinion and Public Knowledge", found at http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&folder=30&paper=738

war[77]. The research analyses the relationship between media and politics by focusing on coverage of the Iraq War by two newspapers; the North-American "New York Times" and the Japanese "Asahi". The author reveals that editorials of the "New York Times" treated the oppressive Saddam Hussein regime and terrorists as the "evildoers" while the "Asahi" portrayed the U.S. as the big evil doer.

According to the author, anti-military sentiments and cultural factors, such as religion, appear to have influenced how the war in Iraq has been portrayed. His dissertation statistically shows that the media's impact shaped not only the political agenda but also public opinion. For instance, Japanese sentiments about the United States show a decline in positive feelings towards the United States. Also, there was a moderate negative relationship between the "New York Times" unfavourable coverage of the U.S. government's policies of Iraq and presidential approval ratings.

This focus on the attitude of certain international media professionals as well as on the hard security conditions in Iraq has provoked a certain lack of awareness of the situation of Iraqi professionals, the first ones to suffer during these years of conflict. They have experienced not only the typical risks of a country in conflict but also abuses that some foreign correspondents exercised against them. These mainly consisted of the use of local professionals as 'ghost writers' while international correspondents stayed safe at the international organisation compounds.

The mistreatment and exploitation that many Iraqi media professionals experienced by the international media conglomerates sent to Iraq, as discussed at the 'Arab New Media Workshop' held in Jordan in February 2010, could be defined as a new colonialism with a journalistic approach. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has been a recurrent issue in developing countries and should be widely denounced since it attempts basic principles of good journalism.

Both Iraqi and international media professionals have suffered high pressure, restrictions, kidnapping and assassination. Indeed, Iraq has been the bloodiest single conflict after World War II. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 163 journalists and 51 media workers have been killed in Iraq since 1994[78]. However, assassinations of media professionals have decreased in the last 4 years, going from 32 killings in 2006 to 9 cases in 2009.

Despite this hopeful data, diaspora has been a constant phenomenon[79], during and after Saddam times, at first because of oppression and later due to the high insecurity affecting the country[80].

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77 Maeshima in http://www.lib.umd.edu/drum/bitstream/1903/7267/1/umi-umd-4667.pdf

78 http://cpj.org/killed/mideast/iraq/ shows that the majority of victims were local professionals

79 Syria and Jordan have hosted the majority of Iraqi people leaving their country

80 According to Reporters Without Borders, 206 journalists and media assistants were killed since the start of fighting in Iraq in March 2003

Organisations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists[81] as well as multilateral organisations such as UNESCO have tried to advocate for Iraqi media and mew media professionals[82], reporting and denouncing cases of pressure and assassinations.

The media boom in Iraq

Despite hard conditions in Iraq, media has boomed in the country following the withdrawal of Saddam Hussein with hundreds of publications, satellite television channels and newly created radio stations[83]. The Iraqi Communication and Media Commission was established by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004 with the aim of regulating the media in Iraq and guaranteeing freedom of expression. Moreover, the international coalition has supported the establishment of a new era in the media field. Some examples are the initiative of the news agency Aswat Al Iraq[84], a Reuters and UNDP project.

Furthermore, the Coalition Provisional Authority settled the Iraqi Public Broadcasting Service and the Iraqi Media Network[85] as a result of a U.S. funded news and entertainment network consisting of the union of Al Iraqiya TV, Al Sabah newspaper and a network of radios. Another initiative is the Broadcasting Board of Governors that includes the Voice of America, Radio Sawa and Al Hurra.

As in other contexts of conflict, freedom of expression has been a recurrent issue in recent years in Iraq. Although the Iraqi Constitution includes freedom of the press, just recently the Iraqi government planned to introduce restrictions on broadcast news media. It was denounced by the Committee to Protect Journalists as "an attempt to silence critical coverage".

The relevance of media and new media in Iraq has been realised by international organisations working in the country that have focused on media development as a strategy to stop ethnic and sectarian violence and to create a public venue for citizens, particularly youth. In fact, the high diversity of the Iraqi population has influenced the media and new media landscape as has happened in the case of Lebanon. The term 'Lebanonisation' when describing the Iraqi media has recently been used[86].

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81 http://www.cpj.org/reports/2008/07/journalists-killed-in-iraq.php

82 Visit the web portal 'UNESCO Remembers Assasinated Journalists' at the following link: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=16998&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=-481.html
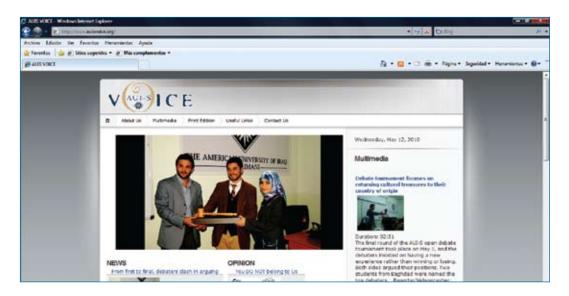
83 Al-Zaman, Al-Sabah, Al-Mada and Al-Manarah are among the main newspapers, Al-Iraqiya and Al-Hurra some of the TV channels

84 http://en.aswataliraq.info/

85 http://www.imnsr.com/defaulten.aspx

86 http://www.tbsjournal.com/Cochrane.html

One of the most interesting experiences in this context has been the online newspaper of the American University of Iraq, based in Sulaimani[87]. This outlet, called AUIS-VOICE is the first editorially independent student newspaper in the country's history and even includes a Facebook page. In January 2010 the newspaper appeared in print on campus[88].

Website of AUIS-VOICE www.auisvoice.org

To help youth working on peace building themes is a challenge, given the current problems that young generations face in Iraq; including poverty, unemployment and violence. In 2009, the 'Peace Media for Iraqi Youth'[89] aimed to create a multimedia programme that provides young Iraqis, aged between 14 to 18, with tools that can help them emerge as catalysts for peace within their communities.

New media is still very young in Iraq, particularly due to the lack of infrastructure and poor internet access. However, there are examples of good practice as we will see later, and other initiatives developed abroad, such as the Electronic Iraq[90], the sister website of the already mentioned Electronic Intifada.

87 http://www.auisvoice.org/

88 Reimold, Dan, "College Media in Iraq offers Independent Voice for Students", Mediashift, 10 May 2010, found at http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2010/05/college-media-in-iraq-offers-independent-voice-for-students130.html

89 For more information, visit the project website: http://www.usip.org/files/resources/iraq_youth_media.pdf

90 http://electroniciraq.net/

Discontent at coverage of the realities of Iraq as well as the long-term conflict has created a quite active generation of bloggers who started to report not only on violence but also social, economic and cultural issues. The pioneer Salam Pax[91] should be mentioned. His blog "Where is Raed?" maintained the attention of the media after the 2003 occupation; some of his most visited blogs are: Iraqi Streets[92], Baghdad Treasure[93] and Healing Iraq[94].

The Iraqi Streets blog

91 http://salampax.wordpress.com/

92 http://www.iraqistreets.com

93 http://baghdadtreasure.blogspot.com/

94 http://healingiraq.blogspot.com/

Iraqi media landscape[95]

Printed media	Al-Adala Al Hoda Al-Ahali Al-Mada Al-Ittihad Kul al-Iraq Al-Sabah Al-Zaman Al-Mashriq Al Dustur Sawt al-Iraq Al-Rafidayn Al-Taakhi Al-Iraq al-Yawm Al-Mowaten Al-Sabah al-Jadeed Al-Siyada Baghdad Tareek al-Shaab Al-Basaer	Arabic daily
	Al-Itijah Al-Akhar Al-Sot Al-Akhar Al-Thakafa Al-Jadeda	Arabic weekly
	Al-Manarah	Arabic bi-weekly
	Al-Amal	Arabic bi-monthly
Audiovisual media	Al-Iraqiya	Arabic
	Kurdistan Satellite Channel	English
	KurdSat Al-Hurra TV Al-Diyar	Kurdish
	Al-Fayhaa Al-Sumeria Al-Forat TV Al-Baghdadia TV Al-Qiethara Satellite Channel Al-Rashid TV Turkmeneli TV Iraqi Media Network Al-Rashid Radio Dar al-Salam Radio Djila Radio Nawa Radio Radio Basra Voice of Iraq Radio Free Iraq Radio Sawa	Arabic
Internet based / online media	www.niqash.org/ www.journal-iraq.com (Journal for Journalism and Journalists) www.almanarpress.com/manaraloufindex.htm www.sotaliraq.com/links-directory. php (extensive link directory) www.iprospect.org.uk/analysis.php www.almawsem.net/diwan.htm	www.iraqworld.net www.iraqgate.net www.rafedain.com www.nahrain.com/ www.baghdadbulletin.com www.electroniciraq.net www.komalnews.net

Source: Own elaboration

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95 www.menassat.com

The Media Legal Framework in Iraq

The 2005 Constitution includes freedom of press and expression and an independent National Communications and Media Commission[1]. The Institution, the first of its kind in the Middle East, is an independent authority according to the Constitution. Its goal is to regulate and develop the media and telecommunications sectors in Iraq.

Parallel to this, the Media Law Working Group has been formed by members of the Parliament, media professionals and Human Rights experts with the aim of working to support pluralistic and independent media. This, together with the creation of associations and organisations in the field of journalism and media, draws an optimistic picture. Some of these organisations are the Iraqi Journalists' Union, the Kurdistan Journalists' Union and the Iraqi Association to Defend Journalists' Rights.

1   http://www.icmc.iq/english/aboutcmc.html

The media revolution in Iraq in the post-Saddam era

Ali Al-Mawlawi, Hayder Fadhel and Qais Qazzaz

The development of new media in Iraq is unique in many respects. Unlike other countries in the Middle East where information technology has gradually evolved over the past three decades, Iraq's media revolution began abruptly following the fall of the former regime in April 2003. While neighbouring countries experienced the Internet boom and the rapid advancement of media technology in the 1990s, Iraqis remained isolated and unaware of the changing dynamics in the media field.

The table below illustrates the media boom that was witnessed in Iraq after 2003.

	2003	2010
Internet subscribers	4500	1.5m
Mobile phone subscribers	0	19.5m
Commercial newspapers	0	~300
Commercial radio stations	0	~115
Commercial TV stations	0	~55

Source: Iraq Index, Brookings Institution

Prior to 2003, access to information was controlled entirely by the state, while independent media organisations were non-existent. Television censorship was particularly harsh and severe penalties were enforced on those found to possess satellite dishes, including imprisonment, heavy fines and even capital punishment on some occasions. Internet availability was very limited and basic access to sites such as Yahoo Mail was forbidden.

New media can be described as the innovative use of electronic tools and digital technologies for the purpose of mass communication. Given that the introduction of advanced technologies to Iraq is very recent, the concept of new media and its implications are relatively misunderstood among Iraqis compared with its regional neighbours.

However, with the convergence of advanced communications technology and new media tools, the dynamics of the way people work and exchange information is inevitably changing. This is particularly the case in the field of journalism. Iraqi media outlets are beginning to develop innovative ways to cover stories and reach out to their audience. Given that foreign media agencies are cutting back on staff in Iraq, the role of Iraqi journalists to accurately cover events is all the more important.

As coverage on Iraq shifts from security-related matters to politics, economic development, and social issues, the relevance of on-the-ground reporting as well as the ability to reach out to an international audience is particularly significant. The Iraqi blogosphere is rapidly expanding as young and enthusiastic writers have realised the potential of blogs to quickly and easily express their views to a wide audience[96].

Internet access

As highlighted in the table above, a fundamental change in recent years has been access by the general public to the Internet.

Iraq's internet infrastructure is developing at a fast pace. Old technology such as dial-up is being bypassed as users demand faster connection speeds. Currently, Y-Max technology is the cheapest preference for home users, but connection speeds are limited to 10kb/sec. Businesses and government institutions favour satellite-based technology such as V-Sat and e-Vidue, which currently offer up to 1mb/sec. Whilst a limited fibre optic infrastructure does exist in Iraq, it is currently not accessible to the general public although there are plans to make this so in the near future. Mobile GPRS has also been recently introduced, with network providers offering mobile internet to subscribers.

As competition between internet providers increases, the cost of internet subscription is likely to fall and connection speeds are expected to improve. However, the current speeds are not sufficient for the effective use of some new media tools such as YouTube and Google Maps.

Best Practice in Iraqi New Media

Development data and statistics

Iraq's economic and social development is of particular interest to academics, civil society activists and journalists. The ability to monitor and assess progress requires access to key statistical indicators such as inflation, GDP, mortality rates, oil production, and investment data. Iraq's primary agency for collating and disseminating such information is the Central Organisation for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT).

Key development indicators and strategic reports are posted on COSIT's website[97] and made available to the general public. In addition to the website, a comprehensive online database[98] has been developed in coordination with UNDP which combines data from a number of sources.

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96 For example, see www.iraqistreets.com and www.thefreepen.wordpress.com

97 www.cosit.gov.iq

98 www.iraqinfo-online.org

Access to economic data has been utilised by Iraqi NGOs such as the Iraqi Institute for Economic Reform[99], which converts data into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets so that researchers can manipulate and analyse data more easily.

Culture

Often described as the Cradle of Civilisation, efforts to preserve and promote Iraq's rich and illustrious history have been enhanced by the use of new media tools. The Iraqi Museum holds an extensive collection of artefacts, dating back to ancient Mesopotamia, through to the Abbasid and Ottoman dynasties and Iraq's modern history. The Museum was notoriously looted in 2003 but it was refurbished and reopened to the general public in 2008. However, access to its rich collection remains limited given that the Museum is located in Baghdad.

Therefore, in collaboration with the Italian embassy, an online virtual museum[100] was developed, featuring a guided tour of the Iraqi Museum's collections and detailed information about Iraq's cultural heritage.

Similarly, Google announced plans in November 2009 to digitalise the Iraqi Museum's collection and post up to 14,000 images online for free. The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Christopher R. Hill, described the digitisation project as "part of an effort spearheaded by the State Department to bring technology to Iraq."[101]

Democracy promotion and elections

The transparency of state agencies and institutions is a key feature of good governance and accountability in established democracies. The ability to hold government officials to account is another feature of functioning democracies. A culture of public accountability is being nurtured in Iraq, so that ministers and members of parliament are beginning to appreciate the importance of connecting with the people they claim to represent.

Al-Iraqia TV channel hosts a weekly programme whereby ministers are invited along with their senior staff to respond to questions and criticisms from the general public. Viewers are encouraged to call in during the live show and guests are expected to provide frank and coherent answers to the audience.

Iraq's 2010 parliamentary elections featured an explosion in the use of new media, both by political parties during election campaigning, and by the Iraqi High Electoral Commission (IHEC)[102].

99   www.iier.org

100 www.virtualmuseumiraq.cnr.it

101 "Google Plans to Digitise Artifacts at Iraq's National Museum"
     http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/google_plans_digitize_iraqs_national_museum.php

102 www.ihec.iq

All the main competing political parties utilised SMS technology to promote their candidates. Short and succinct text messages were sent via mobile network providers including Asiacell and Zain. A surge in the use of social networking sites was also noticeable. Prior to the elections, only a handful of Iraqi politicians had official Facebook accounts.

During the three-week election campaign, several candidates and political coalitions opened accounts, as well as associated fan groups. Facebook users were able to communicate directly with candidates and receive answers to their questions. The site also facilitated the development of networks of supporters for particular groups and discussions between competing supporters were widespread.

The use of Twitter in Iraq is also a new phenomenon. Prior to 2010, only three Iraqi politicians were actively posting tweets on a regular basis.[103] This number increased during the elections, with political coalitions also utilising the site to reach out to non-Iraqi audiences as well as Iraqi expatriate communities. Twitter has enabled politicians to inform others about their daily activities and to publicise upcoming television interviews.

The worldwide web was the focus of several election campaign adverts. Popular Iraqi news websites provided space for candidates to promote themselves, and all the main political groups launched campaign websites.

A well-known Iraqi news website, Mawsu'at Al-Nahrain[104], was highly sought after by candidates.

A noticeable feature of some campaign websites was an emphasis on reaching out to non-Arab audiences. The State of Law Alliance's website was accompanied

103 Barham Salih (current prime minister of Kurdistan Regional Government), Haider Al-Abadi MP, Mahmoud Othman MP.

104 www.nahrain.com

by an English language site[105], which included a translation of the Alliances election manifesto. Video conferencing technology was used for the first time to hold live sessions featuring State of Law candidates, with Iraqi expatriates around the world being able to watch and ask questions directly.

State of Law Alliance's English campaign website
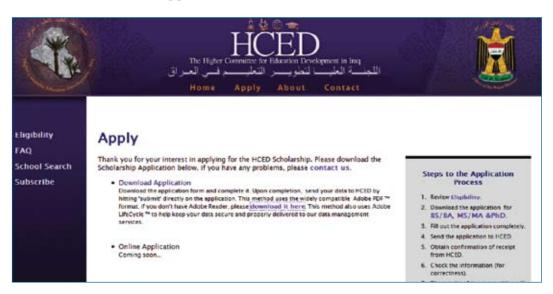

Sample of an Iraqi National Movement press release

The Iraqi National Movement[106] utilised its extensive mailing list to email regular press releases and announcements of forthcoming press interviews (also translated into English). This enabled voters to gain a clear understanding of the Movement's position on a variety of controversial topics.

The Iraqi High Electoral Commission, tasked with facilitating the elections, was not exempt from the use of new media tools. The partial election results were released on a day to day basis on the IHEC's website. A detailed breakdown of the results on the provincial level was available to download in PDF format. Election observers could also apply for authorisation via the website and press releases were available in both Arabic and English.

105   www.qanoon337.org/en/

106   www.aliraqiah.com

e-Government

The monumental task of establishing an e-government system is still in its early stage. The Iraqi government is, however, utilising new media technology to reach out to its citizens. In November 2009, the government launched its own YouTube channel, featuring speeches and activities by high-level officials. In the opening address, Prime Minister Al-Maliki said the channel was "one of the methods" that the government would use to "connect with people globally".[107]

In January 2009, the Prime Minister's Education Initiative was launched, providing 10,000 university scholarships per year for five years to Iraqi students to study at accredited universities in the United States and the United Kingdom. A pilot project was implemented, sending 500 students in 2009. In a first of its kind in Iraq, the application process was completely paperless[108]. This meant that students could submit applications from the comfort of their own homes.

The Higher Commitee for Education Developement in Iraq

Communication

Civil society organisations are harnessing the power of the Internet to enhance day to day communication. Video conferencing programmes such as Skype are used on a daily basis to hold joint meetings between staff and trustees located in Iraq and abroad. Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) technology is used as a cheap alternative to mobile phones to make long-distance calls to international partners.

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107 BBC News, "Iraq government launches its own channel on YouTube".
     http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8378160.stm

108 www.hcediraq.org

Difficulties and Recommendations

Difficulties facing new media professionals can be labelled under four categories: technical, legislative, political and social.

Although access to the Internet is readily available, connection speeds for household users are often insufficient to handle demanding websites featuring videos and Flash technology. Poor upload and download speeds can also be a barrier for those working under heavy time constraints.

Poor electricity supply is also a significant problem that further complicates the work of many Iraqis who have no access to a secondary power generator. Work is often delayed or put on hold until the electricity supply returns.

Language barriers pose a problem for many journalists and bloggers who seek to connect with networks outside of the Arab world. English language skills remain relatively weak amongst Iraqis compared to their Arab counterparts. Whilst training centres have opened nationwide (also providing TOEFL and IELTS courses), public campaigning is required to encourage young people to attend. This could be made easier if evening courses were more readily available and if courses were free of charge.

Educating young people to use computer software and internet-based media tools is key to creating a strong platform of media professionals. Training schemes have already been introduced by a number of Iraqi NGOs nationwide. In Baghdad for example, Al-Amal Association[1] provides daily computer training sessions for young people, with an emphasis on female participation. Courses on utilising Twitter and blogging sites have also been introduced. Whilst the use of Facebook has become a popular leisurely pastime for many young Iraqis, there is limited understanding of the site's potential in the work arena.

From a legislative point of view, Iraq is in need of a 'Freedom of Information' bill, in order to grant journalists and civil society activists greater access to official documents and statistics. Such a bill would ultimately result in improved government transparency and enhanced accountability mechanisms. In addition, a draft bill on the protection of journalists has been submitted to the Council of Representative, but has yet to be approved.

Legal cover for journalists is essential to ensure that the protection of their profession is upheld as a key priority for the State. Whilst violent reprisals against journalists are uncommon in Iraq today (4 journalists were killed in 2009 compared to 32 in 2007), many journalists still complain of intimidation by political parties.

In order to maintain professionalism within the Iraqi media, journalists have a responsibility to be objective, balanced and truthful. The Iraqi media community is often heavily politicised, with rumours and unsubstantiated accusations often used as the basis for headline news. This trend can only be reversed by journalists themselves. It is imperative that they take a firm stance against irresponsible journalism, by highlighting discrepancies in reports and 'naming and shaming' those who abuse the media for political or private interests.

Finally, it is important for Iraqi new media professionals to be able to share ideas and resources via an extensive local and national network. Establishing a forum whereby likeminded specialists can communicate, organise and advocate as one team will improve the quality of their work. There should be periodic meetings both online and face to face. A central branch based in Baghdad can coordinate activities and ensure that good practice is duplicated at a provincial level. In addition, there should be a sustained effort to reach out to new media professionals in the Middle East and around the world in order to share experiences and establish long-term dialogue with people of different cultural and religious backgrounds.

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1   www.iraqi-alamal.org

CONCLUSIONS

Rut Gomez Sobrino

We have seen in the five chapters of this 'Best Practice Guide' that each country in the Arab Levant region has different media and new media contexts, with different types of concern.

Nevertheless, there are common points in the issues to be addressed that are summarised in the following table:

Media and new media challenges in the region

	Lebanon	Iraq	OPTs	Syria	Jordan
Particular challenges	• Influence of political parties in media. Lack of independence • Differences between the capital city and the rest of the country leading to misperception about media development in the country • Decrease in the use of Arab language	• Safety of the journalists • Certain "lebanisation" of media • Poor access to internet	• Lack of infrastructure • Fragmentation of Palestinian media due to the lack of social cohesion • Diaspora of media professionals	• Poor Internet access due to government regulations and multi-nationals policies • Censorship, particularly on domestic affairs	• Low quality of media outlets
Common regional challenges	• Improved internet access • Guaranteed safety and protection of the journalists • Strengthened media independency • Regional platforms of media and new media professionals created				

These common challenges justify the need to design and implement cross-sectoral and transnational measures in the region.

The recommendations proposed in each chapter are summarised below:

Country	Recommendations proposed
LEBANON	1. Introduce web-journalism on all university curricula 2. Make internet access available and affordable all over the territory, and improve bandwidth 3. Encourage entrepreneurship through start-up incubators and by offering an adequate business environment and infrastructure 4. Encourage local web-production and increase Arabic language content 5. Through workshops, training and other courses for students and actors of civil society, promote the Internet as a platform for socio-political debate

JORDAN	
	1. Clearly separate the exercise of political power from journalism to increase media independence
	2. Governments should commit to eliminating exaggerated interference in journalistic work and remove all obstacles to exercise new social media. They also should provide open access to Human Rights issues to let media report on these cases
	3. On Human Rights issues, the media should give special attention to the context and terminology
	4. Journalists should be careful about all stories and should develop certain ethics in reporting this news.
	5. Reinforce investigative journalism
	6. Journalists should avoid biased language, and they should give a voice to victims and affected communities
	7. Raise awareness among journalists and communities about international Human Rights instruments (activities such as seminars, training courses on Human Rights standards, including national perspectives)
	8. Promoting professional cooperation among journalists, communities and correspondents working for different media in different regions
	9. Strengthen the ability of journalists and new media users to work professionally and safely. Reinforce journalism ethics
OPT	
	1. Create long-term programmes in new media
	2. Improve capacity building: educating media departments in government institutions about new media
	3. Increase social awareness: educating civil society organisations about the use of new media to convey information to citizens
	4. Training qualified press cadres on new media concerned with spreading a culture of understanding and reconciliation in society
	5. Create a professional and independent media body in constant communication with organisations working in the field to provide support in laying the foundation for peace, stability, and spreading the culture of accepting others
	6. Upgrade journalism syllabus at colleges and universities to include specialised courses about new media and Human Rights
SYRIA	
	1. Obtain commitment from public authorities to support freedom of expression, freedom of the press and guarantee to increase safety of journalists and media professionals, with a particular focus on new media channels
	2. Improve the higher education offered in journalism schools and implement vocational training programmes
	3. Increase professionalism of media and new media professionals in order to improve journalistic content. This would be conducted on a variety of topics not only on those related to domestic politics.
IRAQ	
	1. Improve internet access including electricity supply
	2. Reduce language barriers
	3. Improve capacity building in new media particularly for youth
	4. Commitment from the authorities to guarantee freedom of expression and information
	5. Increase media independence
	6. Enhance professional cooperation between media and new media

There are recommendations which affect specific contexts, such as the electricity supply in Iraq, but many are applicable to all five countries involved in this project. These can be summarised as:

- Improve internet access
- Guarantee freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the proper exercise of journalism
- Improve capacity building through continuous education programmes and training
- Strengthen professional cooperation among media and new media professionals as well as civil society advocates
- Promote ethics in the media and new media community

These common recommendations require the implementation of transregional actions that should be developed in the future in order to improve the current conditions of the media and new media fields. They involve direct commitment from the media and the new media community, but they are also a call to public authorities in these countries. Without their commitment and support to freedom of expression, freedom of the press laws and to internet access, current obstacles and problems will continue in the future.

New media and media professionals as advocates of peace building

It is clear that only through strong media and new media structures that are consistent, can citizens can be engaged in advancing towards socio-economic development. The participants in the project 'Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue' are aware of this and constitute good examples. The tools 2.0 and 3.0, explained at the beginning of this Publication, guarantee citizen participation and the expansion of the civil society role in the development of a country and the creation of public debate. Taking into account that peace building is one of the major priorities in the Arab region, this participation acquires a very relevant dimension.

With the media and new media developments that have occurred in the last decade in the region, it is evident that this participation has played an effective role as a progressive voice with an anti-war vision. This Guide provides many examples of the high capacity of Arab new media and media professionals to induce development and a culture of peace.

These examples are not only happening in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Iraq but in the Arab region as a whole, showing that social change has already started thanks to new media. The Kefaya movement in Egypt, political protests in Bahrain, anti-corruption campaigns in Libya and the 2006 Kuwaiti elections are other examples that should be mentioned.

State repression has hardly subdued social demonstrations, but the change is already happening in society, particularly among the young generations. The introduction of new media in the Arab region shows that although there are issues to improve, blogging has already initiated social mobilisation. Public authorities in the region have to adapt to a new era in the region in which the civil society will play a more relevant role than in the past.

EPILOGUE

George Papagiannis

It has almost become a cliché to talk about the "new media." Bursting into the public consciousness in the 1990s, the Internet, as most users know it, is well into its second decade. So, what is so new about new media? Well, a lot.

The World Wide Web was global in principle, but not in practice as we began to take notice of this technology. Access to the Internet was not everywhere at once, emerging first in the United States and Europe and the other OECD countries, and then expanding as telecommunications' infrastructures, disposable incomes, enabling legal frameworks and availability of equipment converged. And if that wasn't enough, the ongoing evolutionary process of the Web, and ICTs in general, is nothing short of stupendous.

Web 2.0 ushered in social networking. Facebook, only six years old, needs no introductions and being "friended" is now part of the vernacular from pre-teens to septuagenarians, even in countries where English is not spoken. The blogosphere is a new media power base, empowering the everyman to sway public opinion and challenge the established media giants, who are rooted in a very linear delivery of news and information, although increasingly involving what could be defined as citizen journalism.

As access to the Internet is more commonplace, the Web expands, drawing out new voices, new perspectives, new forms of cultural expression and new languages. Language and culture and shared experiences are uniting people across borders in ways that was only possible just a few years ago by physically moving oneself from one place to another. This was a luxury for most people, a function of available time, money, interest, and a visa. Now, for very little money—by comparison to a plane ride—people connect, even when their governments would prefer they did not.

All of these factors have converged in the Arab world as they have done elsewhere, with one exception. Only recently, the first non-Latin URLs have been issued. Three of the first four are in Arabic, having been awarded to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. It is an effort that UNESCO has championed, signing an agreement with ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, last December, to promote linguistic diversity on the Net. Chinese, Tamil and Thai will soon follow.

Just like elsewhere, the driving force behind innovation and expression is young people. Never before have the energised voices of youth been given such a platform for this scope and power to organise and promote their ideas and desire for change.

None of this ensures that the ideas offered or the change sought promotes freedom of expression or a culture of peace. There is plenty of opinion expressed on

web pages that promotes violence, hate and monolithic views to the exclusion of all others, just as there are websites extolling the virtues of peace and tolerance, freedom of opinion. The Internet, home to extreme views, as well as more centrist thinking, allows for firmly held beliefs to be batted around in a virtual town square potentially open to millions of contributors.

What is so wrong about that? What is the problem with allowing ordinary citizens the opportunity to speak out and be heard on the issues? In order to make informed contributions to a discussion, access to information is essential. Information is power. Hold onto the information and one holds the power. Allow information to flow, and the power is disseminated over the population. It is the keystone that supports any attempt at representative government where those that govern are accountable to the governed.

The purpose of the 'Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue Workshop' held in Jordan last February 2010, was to introduce the principles of freedom of expression and to expose the participants—bloggers and new media activists—to the concept of a culture of peace within the context of what they do day to day. All of the participants have been exposed to the direct or indirect consequences of armed conflict, the failure of diplomacy to deal with pressing issues between countries or factions. The realisation from the workshops was that these individuals, despite the harshness of some of their experiences, were predisposed to openness, transparency and the peaceful resolution of differences.

Some had met before, some knew of each other, and they were all eager to share and build on what the Internet was offering them. The average age was mid twenties, but their observations and their ideas, based on their experiences, revealed a collective wisdom well beyond their years.

Their presentations and discussions pointed to a number of challenges that were addressed in their sessions, but will need further attention. This is an evolutionary process. The participants are, by default, agents of change. They exist and are engaged in moving information that may otherwise remain out of sight.

Generally speaking, the constitutions in their countries protect freedom of expression, but this does not always translate into a fully open environment for the robust debate of issues, even in the blogosphere. In some cases, there is government pressure; in others media ownership plays a role as owner's agendas are advanced to suit their interests; parallel powers within a country, especially those with militias or paramilitary forces that are competing with the government for authority are another factor undermining freedom of expression.

All of this leads to varying degrees of censorship that are at play in the region, ranging from self-censorship to outright harassment or worse of individuals exercising their rights to freedom of expression. It is no longer possible or accurate to

identify these people as journalists alone. It is journalism-plus. In some instances they see themselves as watchdogs of the traditional media. In fact, they are not journalists in the traditional sense, but they are engaged in the sharing of information and are influencing broader public opinion in the way that the established media used to, and as such can find themselves the focus of unwanted attention.

In their own words they are providing a road map into the future. They take most of the responsibility for dealing with their local challenges, but they cannot do it alone. They test the limits of what they can discuss openly, on their blogs and forums, and calibrate their actions based on their understanding of the space that exists for differing viewpoints. When the temperature rises they act accordingly, and sometimes raise the alarm by bringing attention to their concerns to the global audience that is only a mouse click away.

Credibility and editorial independence are as a much a concern to them as they would be at an independent newspaper or broadcaster. Training opportunities, some of which need to occur in neutral locations are in demand. These include not only basic skills in evidence based analysis, but also in the all important area of developing sustainable business models for new media enterprises.

Sustainable business models are good for editorial independence. Not unlike the traditional media, limited income streams can even stifle free speech on the Net. The speech is free as long as it is in line with those that bankroll the business. Unlike the traditional media, new media can tap the economic power of their diaspora communities who are hungry to connect with the homeland. In some cases they are also sympathetic to the cause of new media and the role it can play in providing alternatives to media that is government controlled or heavily influenced by the government.

Journalism syndicates, the associations that typically apply a level of control on journalists, are dinosaurs in the face of new media. Who is a journalist today? In the broadest definition, potentially anyone with a mobile phone, a Twitter or a Facebook account, or a blog and who is willing to share what they know with others who are interested in what they are saying. Is the taxi driver who drives by an accident and snaps a picture with his camera phone and sends the image to his fellow taxi drivers not fitting some definition of a journalist?

But what to make of all the noise? For all the access that currently exists, even in places where there are tight controls on information, establishing the bona fides of dependable information streams is a job by itself. One area that was not explored in our discussions was plain old media literacy. In a region where most sources of news and information were counted on one or maybe two hands, in less than a generation access to the World Wide Web has expanded the opportunities enormously. With new media come new rules or maybe an old axiom still applies, *caveat emptor*, buyer beware.

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**ARAB NEW MEDIA
FOR PEACE AND DIALOGUE**

Part 2:

PEDAGOGICAL TOOLKIT

CONTENTS

AUTHORS

(in the order content appears)

Rut Gomez Sobrino, Head of the Department of Audiovisuals at the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, journalist and media development professional. She has developed her field experience in the Arab region where she worked in communications and development issues. She has been formerly linked to the Anna Lindh Foundation and the UNESCO Communications Development Division where she managed the UNESCO Audiovisual E-Platform.

Ramsey Tesdell, founder of 7iber.com, has a Master's degree in Technical Communication from the University of Washington in Seattle. His thesis title: "The Ecology of New Media and New Social Movements in Jordan" has been the basis of his work as a trainer in new media in the Middle East.

Naseem Tarawnah runs one of Jordan's most prominent blogs, the black-iris.com, which has recently won a Brass Crescent award as the best Middle East blog. He has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Economics and a Bachelor of Honours in Public Policy from York University in Canada. He is currently the Deputy Editor Editor-in-chief and a senior writer for Jordan Business Magazine. Naseem is the winner of the 2005 Brilliancy Award from the Andalusia Prize for Literature and is regularly invited to speak about the new media scene in Jordan by international educational centres including Harvard University, the University of London at SOAS and the United Nations University in Amman.

Magda Abu-Fadil, with years of experience as a foreign correspondent with international news organisations such as **Agence France-Presse** and **United Press International**, is director of the Journalism Training Programme at the American University of Beirut (AUB). She also wrote for dailies **Asharq Al-Awsat**, **Al Riyadh** and **Defense News** and was Washington bureau chief of **Events** magazine. Abu-Fadil served as director of the Institute for Professional Journalists at the Lebanese American University before moving to AUB. Abu-Fadil blogs for the Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/magda-abufadil).

Nora Paul is director of the Institute for New Media Studies at the University of Minnesota. Nora was editor for information services at the Miami Herald from 1979-1991. She is co-author of *Behind the Message: Information Strategies for Communicators,* and *Computer Assisted Research*. She has travelled worldwide presenting seminars and lectures on research methods and innovation in online news. Her work at the Institute focuses on evolving digital storytelling forms, eyetracking research, and news game development.

Mahjoob Zweiri, expert in Middle East politics and Iran, was a Fellow of the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University in the UK, and served as Teaching Fellow in Middle East Politics at the Institute for Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies, as well as director of the Centre for Iranian Studies, Durham University. He is currently Assistant Professor in Middle East Politics and Iran and head of the Iranian Studies Unit, at the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan.

Naila Hamdy, Chair of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo. She received her BA from the University of San Francisco, her MA from the American University in Cairo and her PhD from Cairo University. Hamdy joined AUC in 1997 to teach courses on the graduate programme of the Adham Center for Television Journalism. Her research interests focus on various aspects of the journalism profession in Egypt, the impact of communication technologies and media development in the Arab region.

Anne Nelson, former executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, is an author, professor, and expert on international media development. She teaches the course "New Media and Development Communications" at the Columbia School of International and Public Affairs in New York, and consults on media policy for a number of US foundations and institutions. She is a graduate of Yale University and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Sahar Talat, lecturer on the European Master's programme (MIM: Master of Inter-Mediterranean) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona in the Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences. She teaches Arab media development in the Southern Mediterranean and aspects such as the integration of new technologies, media laws, Human Rights, new media structures and their effects on the profession and the medium, and women media professionalism.

Paul Mattar is the director of IESAV, institute of drama and audiovisual studies at Saint-Joseph University, Beirut. He is also the director of the Monnot Theatre in Beirut. Since 1981, he has specialised in children and educational productions in Lebanon and the Arab World where he produced many plays and CD records. His work has also been linked to United Nations activities as he has directed and produced video films for UNICEF, the UNDP, UNFPA and ESCWA.

Ibrahim Saleh, full-time faculty member at the Center for Film & Media Studies, University of Cape Town, a Fulbright scholar, and a senior media expert in the "Media Sustainability Index (MSI)" in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He has a PhD in political communication and is the co-founder and managing director of the 'Arab European-Media Observatory,' a pioneer research initiative aiming to provide policy analysis of the "Mediterranean Region".

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary concept of 'new media' comprises innovative means of mass communication that use electronic tools such as the Internet, CD-ROM and digital technologies. Online journalism, digital filmmaking and blogs are some types of new media.

The phenomenon of this application of technologies to communication is a real revolution in the dissemination of information and knowledge. It also involves new possibilities and hopes for the problems of humanity such as climate change, poverty, illnesses and of course, peace and mutual understanding.

In the Arab region, the arrival of new media has been advanced by the revolution of satellite TV in the 1980s bringing a contemporary notion of communication and a new relationship between citizenship and media.

Regarding the Arab region, new media have brought:

- **Plurality** in terms of the dissemination of new content that is independent of states, borders and cultural differences

- **Connection** by enhancing mutual exchange between countries in the Arab region

- **Immediacy** to follow and understand current developments not only in the region but also in other parts of the world

- **Inclusion** of certain groups that have traditionally been marginalised, such as women and young people, as target audiences to be taken seriously.

Moreover, new media has brought to the Arab world a common social sensitiveness and consciousness, a unified identity and a voice to work together on certain issues of general interest. If we take into consideration the rise of consistent civil society groups which appeared in most Arab countries in the post colonial period and which have increased in the last decade, we can assume that new media has become the tool for these civil society groups to express themselves.

Peaceful coexistence with fluid relations among its neighbours is the desire of all peoples in the world. In the Arab region, a land that is traditionally diverse and threatened by different types of conflict, this hope acquires a greater dimension. With the rise of new media, new hopes for peace and dialogue appear in the mind of civil society.

The project "Arab New Media for Peace and Dialogue" builds upon these thoughts and ideas. Listening to the needs of those civil society groups and new media professionals in the Arab countries and considering their willingness to be active in addressing peace and dialogue in their region, and their capacity to be the engine for change, we decided to develop a meeting to exchange experiences and update their skills on new media techniques.

However, the development objective would have to tackle a greater aspect: the need to enhance cooperation among professionals using new media techniques. The result is the aim to create a "Network of Media Professionals on Peace, Dialogue and Conflict Prevention", which will attempt to be an active partner in facilitating dialogue for informed decision-making in the region, and as a relevant interlocutor with governments, NGOs, international players and cross-border institutions such as the Arab League and the European Union.

The network will have its first resource material in this pedagogical toolkit which has been created thanks to the generosity of a panel of experts of recognised prestige in Arab new media. The second action of the network is the "Best Practice Guide" to address peace and dialogue in the region through new media. This second publication, created by the participants in the project, from five Middle Eastern Arab countries; Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Syria, describes the media and new media landscapes in these countries. It suggests a series of recommendations to improve the current situation and presents examples of best practice which can be useful for other contexts.

With these actions, our intention is to provide new media professionals in the region with the initial tools and resources to develop common strategies for peace and dialogue, which will contribute to prosperity and stability.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to the contributors who developed this pedagogical toolkit and to the experts who provided their advice, as well as to the UNESCO Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace Division and to the UNESCO Baghdad Office, particularly to Salah Khaled and George Papagiannis, who offered their most valuable help to make this project possible.

Rut Gomez Sobrino
UNESCO Centre of Catalonia

UNDERSTANDING THE ECOLOGY OF NEW MEDIA

Ramsey Tesdell

According to Thomas H. Davenport in *Information Ecology*, a human-centred approach puts "how people create, distribute, understand, and use information at its centre." People who adopt an ecological approach believe that information cannot be stored on computers easily, that it can take on various meanings. In other words, it acknowledges that humans shape and manage technology. This notion, of analysing the human in the centre and not the technology, frees us from the powerful technological determinism of globalisation rhetoric. For example, some regard technology in Jordan as a saviour and even the government has encouraged the growth of IT in all areas such as e-government and training new ICT specialists. Despite this growth, Jordan adopted the rhetoric of globalisation and did not focus on how the technology could be used, but instead on the technology itself. Now, we see a market over-saturated with IT specialists, while e-government initiatives and websites do not meet their goals.

I have identified several important attributes in understanding the environment in which they function: 1) acknowledging multiple perspectives and embracing complexity 2) valuing interrelationships, and 3) recognising a dynamic environment. Generally, these points demonstrate the importance of understanding that technology is shaped and managed by people and not an invisible force that controls technology. This enables the analysis to focus on how the technologies are being used when incorporated with each other, rather than the technology itself.

As the satellite television revolution took the Arab world by storm, another quieter revolution was happening online. Due to technological innovation and the decreased cost of technology, blogs and social networking were becoming mainstays in the daily routines of an increasing number of Arab citizens. Online communities were forming and groups of people, meeting online, were coming together around the world. Satellite television stations offered none of these advantages, yet took advantage of this technological accessibility by creating websites for discussion and pushing much of their content online. Viral videos and emails have become an important aspect of a citizen's daily news source.

A large number of television shows, both political and entertainment, began including audience participation by offering the audience the ability to cast a vote by sending an SMS. One popular show, Super Star, was a show based on the British show Pop Idol, where participants from around the Arab world performed songs for an audience. A mixture of judges' opinions and votes from the wider audience pushed contestants off the show until a winner was selected. Super Star was extremely popular during its first season, but in its second season, the rival

show, Star Academy, competed strongly.[1] The key aspect in both of these shows was participation by the audience.

Brian Katulis, in a 2004 report on Women's Rights in Egypt, describes the attractiveness of blogs and participatory media for women and other historically oppressed groups. He writes, "[the most] attractive features of the new media options are that they are interactive and participatory…participation is crucial…" He goes on to describe how radio stations and television shows rely heavily on audience participation to voice their viewpoints, but also to vote for their favourite singers.[2] One popular radio show in Jordan is one where listeners are encouraged to call in and describe a problem in their community. The radio station coordinates with the person responsible for the solution to the problem, and connects the two. The age of participation had begun.[3]

Much has been published recently about the Egyptian and North African blogosphere, due mostly to the fact that political rights and social movements have been able to take advantage of the new space for discussion, and these movements attract significant media coverage. Articles discussing the evolution of the Egyptian blogosphere[4], satellite television[5], Egypt's Facebook movement[6], etc., have been published.

Other Internet movements, including online civic action, have been largely ignored. In a new book entitled *CauseWired*, author Tom Watson offers examples of using social media for social causes in order to garner support and collect money. This paper, however, looks to highlight the contributions of the Jordanian blogosphere and the movement they have created using new media as an emancipatory medium.

A recent report published by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society attempted to map the Arabic blogosphere. They identify several categories into which blogs fall, in order to classify and study the sphere as a whole[7].

Users interested in creating their own blog will find that it is relatively simple. The following advice is about blogging in the Palestinian Territories. It provides useful information about creating a blog and using it effectively.

1 Kraidy, Marwan M., 2007. Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and the Changing Arab Information Order. *International Journal of Communication* (1), 139-156.

2 www.freedomhouse.org: Special Report. Retrieved November 24, 2008, from http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=138&report=21.

3 Tapscott, D., & Williams, A. D. (2006). *Wikinomics: How mass collaboration changes everything.* New York: Portfolio.

4 Arab Media & Society. Retrieved January 8, 2009, from http://www.arabmediasociety.com/countries/index.php?c_article=177.

5 Abu-Lughod, L. (2005). Dramas of nationhood: The politics of television in Egypt. The Lewis Henry Morgan lectures, 2001. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.

6 Arab Media & Society. Retrieved January 8, 2009, from http://www.arabmediasociety.com/countries/index.php?c_article=179.

7 The study can be found online at: http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2009/Mapping_the_Arabic_Blogosphere

Opening a blog:

1. Blogspot

To start a blog with blogspot, go to this address and following the directions online: https://www.blogger.com/start

2. Maktoob

To start a blog with Maktoob, the World's largest community of Arab bloggers, go to this link and follow the directions: http://www.maktoobblog.com/

A) Blogging content

Blogs are flexible, which make them very powerful but also very dangerous. Powerful in the sense that you can post pictures, videos, and text in any combination and about any subject you like. They are dangerous in the sense that if a blogger does not have a "beat" or a specific general topic, the readers will become lost and stop reading.

Participation is also key so it is important to encourage your readers to comment, respond, and challenge what you are saying. This will provide the readers with an opportunity to interact with you and will keep them coming back.

Before you decide what you want your blog to be about, decide what you want your blog for. If it is meant as a personal diary, a place where you keep your private thoughts and feelings, then you may want it to be anonymous or lock the site so that you can choose who views it. If you want to talk about agriculture in the Gaza Strip, you probably want to have it open so as many people who want to can join the conversation.

Before you start your blog, take a minute to think about what you want your blog for, and who your audience will be.

B) The Spirit of the Net

One of the beautiful things about starting a blog is the flexibility it provides. You can write about anything, as often or as seldom as you like, put videos, pictures or just text, or any combination of the above.

While this flexibility is liberating, it can also pose problems. Readers enjoy viewing blogs and websites with a common thread or topic. While it is easy to talk about everything in the world, it is best not to, and keep your blog relatively focused. Otherwise your readers will get lost and stop visiting your blog.

When you start the blog, you should think about whom you want reading your blog, and why they would read what you produce. Your audience determines your message. If you are aiming to update family about what is going on in your life, then you will be talking about what's going on in your life. However, for most people, finding out when you brushed your teeth, where you bought your groceries, or which family member you visited will not be the most exciting reading material.

To engage your audience, you need to write and take pictures of interesting and exciting events, and attempt to relate these events to their lives.

For example, Laila alHaddad in Gaza talks about raising her son, Yousef, on her blog called Raising Yousef. While she discusses raising her son, she talks about the political, economic, and social situation in Gaza through stories about him. Her blog has become very famous and she has been interviewed by many international news agencies.

Types of blog:

There are various kinds of blogs. Some focus on posting only pictures, which is called a photoblog. Another type, vlog is a video blog where videos are posted instead of pictures or text. Another type of blog is a collective blog, where more than one person is able to post to the blog and publish comments. A good example of a collective blog is Kabobfest where a group of Arab-Americans blog about everything regarding the Middle East. Check out the blog here: http://www.kabobfest.com/

The following are aspects to bear in mind when starting your blog and building your reputation on the blogosphere.

1. Ideas to write about

One idea about what to write is to pick a specific topic, such as culture, food, politics, economics, or anything specific enough so that people with an interest in that topic should be interested in your blog. If your goal is to document your own life, that is fine too, but do not expect too many readers to follow what you are doing.

For example, you can write about important issues happening around your part of Palestine. You can collect all the cultural events happening in Nablus, or analyse the latest political news coming out of Gaza City.

2. Photo, audio, video

One of the wonderful aspects of blog flexibility is that it does not cost any money to publish videos, pictures, and audio. Simply uploading and embedding multimedia in your blog can be done through a variety of websites such www.ikbis.com and www.youtube.com. Both services offer picture and video hosting and the ability to embed the content into your own blog.

One idea is to make a short photostory. To do this, take several pictures that tell a story of something. For example, take pictures of all the steps it takes to make a kite. After you have taken all the pictures, upload them to www.ikbis.com and post them on your blog. Under each picture, write a short description of each picture. This is one way to tell a story without having to write lots of text. Pictures make the post more exciting.

Another simple idea is to make a short video. You can use you mobile phone or a number of other small video cameras to shoot a short film. An easy idea that does not require any editing is to ask people a very simple question and have them answer in one world or in three words. An example includes:

http://ikbis.com/7iber/shot/184698

3. Technology

Technology is a key aspect in being an effective user of social media. Staying up-to-date with the latest trends and tools is a good way to keep your site new and attractive to visitors. But remember not to get too obsessed with technology. If your blog uses the latest, coolest technology, but does not have engaging and unique content, few visitors will visit your site. Focus on content, and you will not have to find readers; they will find you.

Below, we discuss some of the tools to which you have access that are vital to your success as a blogger.

a. Mobile phones: you can use your mobile to remotely update your blog, but also as a tool to take pictures and videos to post later on your blog.

b. Twitter and Facebook: use Twitter and Facebook to spread your blog around to interested people. Posting on your Facebook profile and having friends re-tweet (when someone sends your tweet out to all their friends) greatly increases your visibility.

c. Laptop/computers: these are your main access points to the internet and the easiest and best way to access your blog.

d. Maps: GoogleMaps http://maps.google.com and OpenStreetMap http://www.openstreetmap.org are two good sources for maps. Offering

a map to show the geographic position of where the news or event you are talking about is taking place is useful for readers to understand the spatial distribution of the items you talk about.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Naseem Tarawnah

Social media is just that, social. The concept was designed to engage, interact, communicate, and cooperate with one another. Take Facebook for example; every feature is built to share pictures and videos, share thoughts, write comments on other people's pictures and videos, and chat with one another, all on Facebook.

This section discusses how you can use social media to build your online presence and garner attention, if you choose to do so.

Reading and Engaging

Besides writing about topics that interest people, it is key that the spirit of social media is understood and taken advantage of. If you are writing about cultural events in Nablus, you need to be reading content by everyone who writes about events in Nablus. If there is another blog, you need to be reading it and commenting on their articles. This allows people to see the name of your blog and begin to recognise it. Also, by commenting on someone else's blog, it creates an automatic link back to your blog.

This is the *social* aspect of Social Media; interacting with other bloggers, commenting on their articles, and engaging them in discussion. This is key for your blog to become well known around the Palestinian blogosphere.

Microblogging

Twitter[8] and Watwet[9] are two microblogging services that allow you to write very short messages, 140 characters or less, and spread the message widely. Simply register an account with either service, and begin meeting people and announcing that you have an account by sending messages to users with the '@' sign in front of each username.

For example, Maan News Agency's Twitter account is MaanNewsAgency, so to send a message that will show up on their account, you send a message with '@MaanNewsAgency' in the body. You can use this technique to make other users aware of your account. It is a common technique, when you are first getting started, to send many messages with different user names in them so that they become aware of your presence. You can have more than one name in a message at a time.

8 http://www.twitter.com

9 http://www.watwet.com

When you send a message, you have to be aware that you can only send 140 characters, which limits your message. To use Twitter effectively, write a short message and include a link to your blog or an interesting article. If others find your tweet sufficiently interesting, they will re-tweet, or send your tweet through their networks.

Social Networking

Social networking has become as famous as it is prevalent in digital life. Terms like Facebook, MySpace, Youtube, HI5 and others did not exist just a few years ago but are now terms heard in many circles of discussion.

Social networks are websites where you create an account and build a profile that includes information about yourself. You can include information as personal or as general as you like. Social networks are a good way to build your online presence and stay in touch with friends. There are many tools that allow you to connect and engage others on the social network.

For example, on Facebook, you can create groups, create events, invite people to the groups and events, and message them all through your profile. People can add comments to your wall, tag pictures with you in them, and also suggest other friends for you. Tagging means adding your name or someone else's name to a picture, video or a written note. When you update your status, it shows up on your friends' profiles. You can use this to draw attention to a new post on your blog or something important that has happened in your life.

Blogging Aggregators

Blogging is a great way to meet more bloggers and engage in discussion with them. It also helps build a community around the bloggers and allows the community of bloggers to take on discussions as a group and not as individuals.

One of the largest and most influential aggregators is called Global Voices. Global Voices has been working to build communities of bloggers around the world and help make their voices louder. Their phrase, "The world is talking, are you listening?" works well with their goals of aggregating important blog posts from around the world and highlighting important issues.

What happens when a community helps produce their own specific narrative and help in the production of news about them and their country? With citizen media, any community member can help produce news regarding their environment. As Palestinians working in media under Israeli occupation, we find the process of critically examining our environment, offering Palestinian narratives, and describing our own stories, a liberating process. We hope that citizen media can provide the opportunity for more Palestinians under occupation to express their narratives.

As citizen media grows increasingly popular around the world, the Arab world offers an extraordinary opportunity for the concept of citizen media. Citizen media is essentially defined as a private citizen or a person without formal journalistic training, who reports news from the community. In addition to citizen media, it is also known as community media and participatory media.[10] In this article, we will refer to the concept as citizen media.

We hope that this type of publication and the training sessions to be held around Palestine, help citizen media play an important role in reasserting the Palestinian narrative and offer tools and skills to recount many of the stories that the mass media deems unworthy. In this way, we hope to help empower Palestinians to tell their own stories, their own hopes and dreams, their own struggles and challenges, rather than having the mass media report our stories.

While citizen media as a concept and fashion is relatively new to Palestine, we find many examples of citizen media. Journalism is a highly regarded profession in Palestine, and the concept of Palestinians telling our own stories is not new to us. Since the beginning of Palestinians as a people, we have been battling occupying forces for our own liberation and our own ability to articulate our own narratives. Digital media has offered a unique opportunity to all Palestinians to articulate their narratives to a larger audience, possibly even a global audience, with minimal training and at nearly no cost.

However, with digital media becoming more easily accessible and affordable, concerned citizens have shown great interest in taking advantage of these new tools to organise and strengthen their collective voices. In Palestine and around the world, digital media has become one of the most important and effective means of communication due to the interactivity, accessibility, affordability, and connectivity.

In Palestine, the proliferation of digital media has had a profound impact on the public sphere, the way information is created and shared, and dramatically shaped the relationship between citizens, mass media, and the government. These changes are especially important in contexts where the means of self-expression are hampered by occupation. Blogs, Facebook, short message services (SMS), and citizen media have changed the way people communicate and the impacts are now being felt.

For many years, traditional media - pamphlets, newspapers and television - were the only formal source for the general public to learn about the world around them. Informal networks existed to share information and rumours, and many common social institutions (churches, mosques, community centres) help facilitate information sharing. Mass media constructed reality as the government or its agencies saw fit, which was often at odds with the way the people perceived their environment. In Palestine, the proliferation of media outlets has helped improve the amount and the

10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen_media

professionalism of journalism; however, some argue that the sheer amount of media outlets leads to media saturation and drives down the quality.

Digital media provides a wide variety of mediums that offer those who receive news the opportunity to comment and contribute to it in ways never previously possible. This wild growth of digital media is evident in the large numbers of Jordanians flocking to Facebook and using it for political movements, the number of blogs being created, and the number of SMS messages being sent.

The recent developments in media and technology and the continuing occupation of Palestine have inspired community activists and organisers to develop platforms, tools, and the capabilities to empower communities in telling their own stories. We hope that this pedagogical material is a useful starting point for Palestinians under occupation to articulate their own narrative.

Our aim is to create a thriving community of citizen media activists in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, through tools and training, to critically examine their environment and to articulate their unique and important narratives.

Regarding the term "citizen journalism", in English it offers a useful name to embrace as a concept for community-based media; however, in Arabic the name emphasises media made by a citizen of a nation-state. This is particularly difficult in Palestine as the questions of citizenship and state independence are critical issues we deal with daily. More appropriately, we have translated citizen media as "community journalism" or "journalism of the people." We find these two terms more appropriate for the flavour of citizen journalism that we are advocating here.

REGULAR TRAINING, THE KEY TO MULTIMEDIA PROFICIENCY

Magda Abu-Fadil

"New media for peace and dialogue" is a misnomer. No sooner is something declared "new" than it becomes dated.

Such is the case with the April 2010 release of the iPad, a device many journalists, bloggers, and communicators of various stripes find an interesting toy, but not quite a tool for multimedia dissemination of information.

While the iPad, with its high resolution touch screen, ability to read electronic books, browse the Internet, run fancy applications and display videos draws much attention, it has yet to convince owners of smart phones and laptops with cameras to purchase another device that duplicates many of the same functions.

Like its earlier incarnation, the iPhone, the iPad's novelty will wear out and give way to yet another craze, fad, or must-have electronic device.

Some would have us believe cutting-edge devices are redefining journalism. Perhaps. But in a telling article entitled "Memo to Media – iPad Won't Save News Industry," Jose Antonio Vargas argues that it's not just about the gadget, but about the content.

"Or, more specifically, how the content adapts and evolves in our blogging, tweeting, Facebooking, YouTubing times." [11]

He quotes veteran journalist and author Jeff Jarvis as saying the Internet provides the means for communities to share what they know at no cost and that it's up to journalists to ask how they add value to such knowledge.

For this writer, a dyed-in-the-wool journalist and former foreign correspondent who trains and teaches journalists, NGO members and corporate officials, to name a few, the key to success is the ability to absorb new information, techniques, tools and skills on a regular basis and use them in an efficient way.

In short, in a constantly changing environment, one must keep reinventing oneself, learn to multitask, and maintain one's balance while doing so.

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11 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jose-antonio-vargas/ipad-wont-save-news-indus_b_524322.html

Digital Skills

In the case of social media, blogging, advocacy work, peace and dialogue, and journalism in general, it starts with familiarising oneself with digital equipment, learning to write efficiently, shooting and editing still pictures and video, recording and editing audio clips, mastering the ability to search for and find information of all types in various formats and media, and applying basic rules of accuracy, fairness, balance, fact-checking, common sense, interviewing techniques, and, ethical standards.

Fortunately, the plethora of digital equipment available today allows even amateurs to collect data, create content, edit materials, and publish across various platforms. But it's imperative they hone their skills on a regular basis to make a difference, have an edge and be heard through all the cacophony of media and players.

For someone seeking clarity of sound and pictures, ease of use, and facility of transmission, it is best to check out the speed of one's Internet connections, upload and download capabilities, and whether websites are blocked or information obscured in one's country. That makes a big difference.

Fast Internet access has been slow coming to Lebanon, for example. Internet service providers have had to contend with top-heavy government bureaucracy and feuding politicians hampering the process, with each party seeking to wring the highest profits from customers.

Although prices have dropped, users view this as a promotional gimmick to entice customers to the ADSL service where demand outstrips supply. Lebanon, it should be noted, has one of the highest Internet costs in the world.

As for digital equipment, the more unobtrusive, the better. One need not be sneaky in recording events, interviewing people or advocating peaceful coexistence, but "in-your-face" journalism is equally inadvisable and can, at times, become dangerous, if not lethal.

While I use a number of devices (Macbook Pro laptops and Olympus digital cameras and recorders), I find the Nokia Nseries "communications centers" handy, light to carry, sturdy, reliable and provide high quality output.

The N97, for example, has a good touch screen, large storage capacity (upgradable to 48 GB), a 5 megapixel Carl Zeiss lens, a QWERTY keyboard for writing, and the possibility to edit pictures and video content when a computer is not available.

Ease to browse the Internet, send and receive messages, access to maps for navigation, and a good audio recorder are

among the N97's other desirable features. It's also a mobile phone and provides a myriad of applications.

The Nokia N86 8MP is the most advanced mobile imaging device in the Nseries range, featuring a wide-angle Carl Zeiss Tessar lens with variable aperture that is powerful enough to capture super sharp photos even in challenging low light or ultra bright conditions.

This may seem of peripheral importance, but the more professional the packaging and presentation of solid content, the more credible the message.

It is imperative to keep abreast of technological advances, to upgrade one's hardware and software on a regular basis, to back up one's files and to make multiple copies of everything – as tiring as it may be – to ensure one is on the ball.

Academics, teachers and trainers who do not evolve, who remain ensconced in their ivory towers, pontificate, and do not adapt to change, can be obstacles to progress. Worse yet, are those in practical fields like journalism and the media who do not practice the profession but impart theory.

So Hugh McGuire's irreverent blogpost recommending that academics should blog, hit the nail on the head.

He suggested that blogging would improve academics' writing; that some of their ideas were dumb; that the point of academia was to expand knowledge; that blogging expands readership; that blogging protects and promotes ideas; that blogging is reputation; that linking is better than footnotes; that academic journals and blogs can (and should) coexist; and, he asks rhetorically, what have journals done for academics lately? (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hugh-mcguire/why-academics-should-blog_b_138549.html)

Citizen/Online Journalism and Social Media Training to the Rescue

To help journalists and activists acquire the needed skills for a 21st Century globalised multimedia landscape, the Journalism Training Programme (JTP) at the American University of Beirut developed a series of training workshops and a journalism certificate for professionals.

Trainer Jessica Dheere demonstrates tweeting by sending news on the Internet via mobile phone during a citizen journalism workshop

Since citizen journalism has increasingly become the rage in the Arab World, it is imperative to stay ahead of the curve.

The Journalism Training Programme (JTP) has been offering mini courses in Web 2.0, audio and video editing, converged content and online media ethics that have drawn Arab would-be and regular bloggers seeking to sharpen their skills in cyber publishing.

Lebanese broadcast journalist and blogger Ibrahim Arab is a case in point and on his blog http://www.ibrahimarab.blogspot.com has argued that journalism in Arab countries should reflect more what citizens think and want rather than what politicians promote, adding that universities were still not up to par in teaching online journalism.

While Lebanon enjoys a modicum of press freedom, other Arab countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria and Jordan, to name a few, have clamped down on bloggers, notably those resorting to cyber publishing as a means of dissent against their governments.

Since mainstream media often pick up on stories that first appear in blogs and social media, they shed more light on them through in-depth coverage they (traditional outlets) would not have otherwise considered.

With so many non-professionals contributing to the conversation, it's important to share the standards of journalism ethics, so that professionals and non-professionals alike can develop credibility for their reporting.

The JTP multimedia training conducted in Lebanon, Yemen and Morocco, for example, has involved writing, photo, audio and video editing and production, linking to other sites, online ethics, podcasting, RSS feeds, tweeting, Facebooking, YouTubing, packaging stories for multimedia and different platforms, circumventing restrictions, and, presentations of the final products.

Of particular interest was a workshop in Rabat in February 2010 involving North African bloggers who were trained in constructive and effective writing, notably about conflicts, and whose social media skills were upgraded, despite censorship problems and various technical constraints in the Maghreb region.

North African bloggers thrive at Rabat course

The workshop, sponsored by Washington-based NGO Search for Common Ground (www.sfcg.org) included sessions on the needs and challenges facing bloggers including censorship, blogging and social media as forms of self-expression and activism, the impact of blogs in covering conflicts, the evolution of blogging, and, online media ethics.

In countries where press freedom is limited (or non-existent), traditional journalists and all manner of bloggers are risking life and limb to disseminate their respective messages.

Reporters Sans Frontiers (Reporters Without Borders) published an Arabic directory of countries averse to freedom on the Internet:

http://arabia.reporters-sans-frontieres.org/article.php3?id_article=31693

In 2009 it published a newer version of its Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents available in PDF format:

http://www.rsf.org/spip.php?page=article&id_article=33844

An older version in Arabic is no longer online on the RSF site and needs updating but can be found for download at:

http://www.adfusa.org/content/document/detail/866

Another Arabic-language publication produced by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in 2003 and entitled Reconciliation after Violent Conflict, A Handbook, is available at

http://www.adfusa.org/content/document/detail/874

Journalists, bloggers and activists should revert to tips provided by the U.K.-based Media Diversity Institute on peace journalism and the media's role in preventing and moderating conflict. They can be found at www.media-diversity.org.

The U.S.-based Society of Professional Journalists has also published guidelines for countering racial, ethnic and religious profiling that can be viewed at http://spj.org.

The following is a compilation of resources to help journalists, bloggers, activists and others interested in the subject.

Media Literacy

The Dynamics of Mass Communication – 10th Edition, Dominick, McGraw-Hill, 2009

http://www.medialit.org/default.html

http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=2797

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy /what_is_media_literacy.cfm

Understanding how the news media operate:

http://washpost.com/nielessonplans.nsf/0/0D23C3B24F20563285256C600077C9E2/$File/1-Octb.pdf (pdf)

http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9906E0D6163EF931A1575BC0A9629C8B63

http://washpost.com/nielessonplans.nsf/0/670B861A5CB54A6185256C98005ACEA9/$File/2-PhotographyFinal3.pdf (pdf)

Mutlimedia Laws and Ethics

Media Ethics – Issues and Cases – 6th Edition, Patterson-Wilkins, McGraw-Hill, 2008

http://www.article19.org/pdfs/languages/arabic.html

Information Ethics: The Right to Information, Responsibility for Managing and Using It (Arabic PDF),

http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=&lin=1&futf8=1&mode=e&ll=1&gp=1&look=default&sc1=1&sc2=1&ref=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/index.shtml&nl=1&req=2&by=2&au=Morcos,%20Paul

Multimedia Reporting

Handbook for Independent Journalism (Arabic PDF)

http://usinfo.state.gov/

BBC Workbook (Arabic PDF)

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/in_depth/2007/workshop_intro/default.stm

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/about_us/cojo/default.stm

http://ijnet.org/ar/ijnet/list/training_materials

http://tech-video.net/

http://www.j-learning.org/plan_it/category/Newspaper%20in%20a%20Box/

Investigative journalism manuals in downloadable PDF format (Arabic

http://www.article19.org/pdfs/languages/arabic.html 19 Oct 2007)

and English)

http://www.article19.org/search-results/index.html?freetext=investigative+journalism 26/10/2007)

Digital Media

Online tools + techniques for journalists with Eric Ulken, Canwest Global visiting professor, University of British Columbia Graduate School of Journalism

http://ulken.com/ubc/workshop

http://www.elated.com/articles/understanding-image-formats/

www.luc.edu/its/pdfs/Ttips-2007-10-26_Image_Formats.pdf

http://poynterextra.org/cp/index.html

http://www.cambridgeincolour.com/tutorials.htm

http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/tutorials/

Digiactive Twitter (Arabic PDF)

http://www.digiactive.org/

A Guide to Facebook Pages (Arabic PDF)

www.smex.org

Video-making guides (Arabic)

http://video.alarabiya.net/

Teaching Online Journalism

http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/

Other Resources

http://www.ifj.org/

http://www.journalists.org/

http://www.ire.org/

http://www.publicintegrity.org/icij/

http://www.arij.net/

http://www.spj.org/

http://www.snd.org/

http://www.cyberjournalist.net/tips_and_tools/

http://www.newslab.org/category/resources/

http://www.icfj.org

http://www.article19.org/

http://www.iwpr.net

http://www.rsf.org/

http://www.wpfc.org/

http://www.poynter.org/

http://www.ijnet.org/Director.aspx?P=Ethics

http://ijnet.org/ar/Director.aspx

http://www.arabpressnetwork.org/homev2.php?lang=ar

HOW JOURNALISTS CAN USE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Nora Paul

Out of all the information tools that new communications technologies offer journalists, it is the social networking and communications sites such as Facebook and Twitter that have the most compelling application for the purposes of promoting peace.
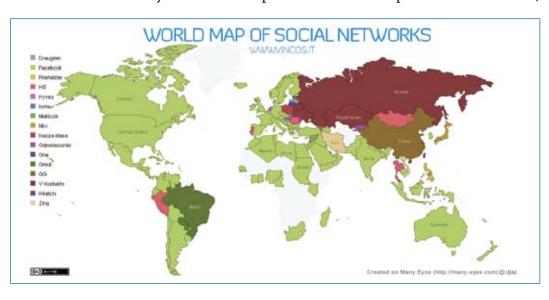
These resources offer journalists new ways to conduct three key components of their work:

- Keep up to speed on a topic or event they are following

- Locate sources that have a story to tell or perspective to present

- Connect with the people who want and need the information the journalist has to report

The following is a short overview of social networking sites and how they can be used by journalists, particularly in the cause for peace.

Understanding social networking sites

Social networking is a key attribute of what is referred to as Web 2.0. Where Web 1.0 was characterised by the traditional publication model of producer to consumer,

Web 2.0 changes the dynamic so that the producer and consumer roles are merged and interchangeable.

Another important change from Web 1.0 to 2.0 is from publication to conversation. Social networking facilitates ongoing conversation and updating between the people that have chosen to be in a networked relationship with each other.

A basic definition of social networking sites comes from Wikipedia: "Sites which focus on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others."

Different countries have one or more social networking sites which are predominantly used.

Some sites, such as Facebook and Orkut work on the idea that you create a profile of yourself and then people you want to have in your network are invited to become a friend. The question "What are you doing?" is central to the updating of these social network profiles. Of interest to journalists is not just what the individuals who create the site are doing, but, in some cases, who their friends are and what it is that they are doing. The sites allow you to post photos and videos, sign up for "causes", or chat with friends.

Other sites, like Twitter, are more like a "microblog" in that they facilitate the easy updating (in 140 characters or less) of your postings. People can follow your postings or you can search for postings on a particular topic and then follow other postings that people assign with that topic "tag".

Becoming part of these social networking sites is important to journalists who need to make connections, find out what people are talking about, and to network with organisations and individuals who can inform their reporting.
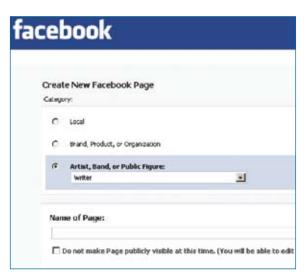
Joining social networks

Social network sites are free and easy to join – but you do need to think about how you want to structure your membership. Many journalists create two accounts on Facebook, one which they use to network with their family and friends in their "outside work" life, and another they use to make work related postings and to solicit information from a network of people who are interested in following their work.

Create a "fan" page

At the log-in page, click on the "Create a Page" link.

You can select "Writer" as one of the choices for a fan page:

Fan pages are generally better for building long-term relationships with your fans, readers or customers.

Finding sources

Increasingly, people who are mentioned in the news have a social networking page somewhere. This is particularly true for those under 30 years of age. Routinely

checking for a profile page on Facebook can sometimes give interesting background information or provide links to friends of the person in the news.

The trick, though, is that many people know how to protect their profiles from casual use. You have to send a request to become their "friend" which they must accept before all the information in their profile is available.

For example, a news story in the 04/02/10 Cyprus Mail contained a paragraph about this particular event:

"We want a solution right now, now, now!" a 23-year-old student emphatically told the Cyprus Mail during a break in the chanting, as she and almost 1,000 Turkish Cypriot peace demonstrators waited for Ban Ki-moon to pass by on his way to visit Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat at his Nicosia 'palace'.
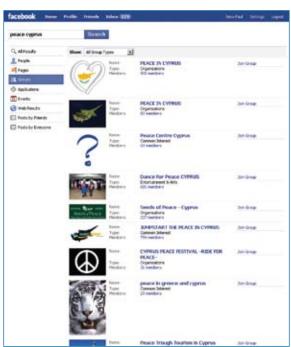
A search on Facebook for the student named in the article finds a young woman with Cypriot connections. Could this be the same person?

You could send her a message or send a friend request. But as you can see, many young adults now have a social networking page which can be a great way to contact news sources.

Sometimes you are not looking for a specific person, but rather any person that might be interested or knowledgeable about something. The search function of Facebook (and other social networking sites) is useful. For example (to follow up on the previous example), if you are interested in the peace movement in Cyprus, search for "peace Cyprus" on Facebook and you will get 229 "hits":

Clicking on "Peace in Cyprus" lets you see the people who have joined this Facebook group and you can send them a message to see if they would be interested in talking to you. In fact, just looking at the list of organisations can give the creative journalist lots of ideas of story angles that might be interesting to cover. This is the other great value of these social networking sites; the rich exposure to ideas and groups that get spawned in these spaces can give journalists great story leads.

If you find an organisation you can see their news and events postings. You might want to be cautious

about "joining" a group, however, depending on how this might reflect on you or your impartiality as a journalist.

Following news events or specific topics on Twitter

Through microblogging sites such as Twitter, the world is your news alert service. People who post "tweets" on Twitter provide short updates on what is going on that is of interest to them. A journalist can use these updates by going to Twitter and searching for a key term which lets them see what people are saying about a topic. You can also receive links to items of interest that are suggested by someone else. If we take the previous example and search for "Cyprus peace" on Twitter, we see the following:

Links to articles from different media outlets

Updates from the "American Turkish Council". If you sign up to "follow" them, you will see all their postings as they make them.

The uses of social networking sites for journalists are just beginning to be tapped, and, hopefully, this brief explanation of some of the ways these resources can help journalists is helpful. These sites are by no means a replacement for the tried and true methods used by journalists to gather information. They are, though, a potentially valuable supplement and can provide access to people, ideas, trends, and events from around the world.

NEW MEDIA IN THE CURRENT ARAB POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Mahjoob Zweiri

Speaking about new media in the current Arab Political framework involves speaking about the interaction between politics and the media business in the Arab world. However, it is more important to try to identify whether the new media have been driven by the political atmosphere in the Arab states, or actually the opposite. It is well known that the term "new media" describes satellite television, new mobile phone uses (SMS), FM radios, and the Internet and its different uses such as blogging, tweeting, etc.

It is important to remind ourselves that the media in general is an industry, and any debate about the social role of the media is in fact based on imagination. Media in the Arab States and other governments in the Third World is a tool to strengthen a state's control of its own society. This was the case until today, and what has changed is that there are other players who are now competing with governments. All decisions related to the news, entertainment and media programmes in the past and at present are made by those who see things through government "sunglasses".

This type of approach reflects an important fact which is the belief in how influential the media is. This is enough to make governments fight against who is questioning the role of their own media. As governments have different political attitudes towards the political matters in the region such as the Arab Israeli conflict, the occupation of Iraq, the question of political reform etc., media has become more necessary to achieve two goals; to reflect the official opinion of governments, and to act as a platform for those who defend the views of the these governments.

Such a situation has started to change gradually. The first step was the emergence of satellite television as a private business. For example, when the MBC group started to broadcast, it became clear that the media was becoming an industrial attempt to provide politics and entertainment. Since the beginning, the idea of advertisement has confirmed that media is becoming real business and the economic aspects have a strong presence. In order to enter this business, it is necessary to know the rules of the game. Again, such a development reminds us that there is someone who is deciding what to broadcast and what not to, and this is exactly what the government media used to do.

However, we should bear in mind that the authority of wealth has appeared to have real influence in the media sector in the Arab world. All that is happening and the winds of privatisation and foreign investment arriving in the Arab States and

the entire Middle East, have affected the media sector and reconfirmed that the media is a business which needs investors, and investors need more freedom and greater infrastructure. At the same time, the idea of Media Cities appeared to be the response whether in Jordan, Egypt or Dubai.

Investment in the satellite television sector has continued to dominate the Arab public and private sphere; however, they became old fashioned investments compared to the new sphere that the Internet has started to offer. The new sphere had begun to be opened with zero control from the governments, and more importantly with no cost or very minimal cost. One main obstacle was that knowledge of new technology was very limited, and this may explain the lack of control from the governments of the new technology. It may be worth remembering that the Internet users in the Arab world have increased rapidly from a few million to more than 55 million which represents 17% of the entire population, estimated at 335 million.

Using the internet in the Arab world has changed the general mood of the majority of users. They have become more aware about many issues, the access to information - regardless of the importance of this information - becomes easier and unlimited. So far the use of the Internet is more focussed on email, blogging, and for business. It is important to remember that when a society moves increasingly towards the Internet, it is considered an indication of modernity. Information technology has proved to be one of the main measures of the level of progress that any society might make.

The increasing number of internet users and the rising level of awareness within Arab societies about the broad and extensive use of this technology have raised more concerns within the political circle in Arab states. The response from these states is two-fold; firstly, by penetrating widely the internet and building their communication means with the users, and, secondly, by thinking of ways to control the information which comes to their countries through the Internet. In the Arab world today, there are leaders who are bloggers as well. This platform was originally only used by political oppositions rather than government members.

The use of the Internet in Arab states has been oriented to support their own political views on matters in the region. The reason behind this is the change in public opinion from watching or listening to the government media to using new media tools. Consequently, the leaders also have to change and use the new tools to communicate with their own people. We could say that the old media is still useful and important to governments and this could be discussed elsewhere, but the reality in recent years has proved that there is a real move towards focusing on the quality of people you are communicating with rather than on the number. I do believe that the "old media" controlled by the state in the Arab World is trying to focus on the audience in terms of numbers.

The new media role in the political context of the Arab world seems to be a response to the existing situation in which people live. However, it is important to bear in mind that it is becoming influential due to the unstable political atmosphere as well. In addition, the new media cannot ignore the public's assessment of its performance. This is affecting, one way or another, how the new media has been used and can be used.

ETHICS FOR THE ARAB JOURNALIST AND MASS COMMUNICATOR IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Naila Hamdy

Situations that Arab journalists and mass communicators are confronting in this digital era are in many ways reflecting some of the same ethical challenges that their counterparts are facing in the West. Other challenges are specific to the region, but in both cases this is a time when high standards are most needed as Arabs race along the digital road.

Moreover, there is a journalism revival in our part of the world. Political and economic changes, coupled with a strong drive from the evolution of new media technologies have had a strong impact. In the last decade alone, we have witnessed the launch of hundreds of satellite stations, private media ownership where it did not exist, numerous independent newspapers, and countless alternate voices.

Arab journalists and media practitioners are working in a better environment, as press freedoms have increased significantly in this new era. Ironically, the same technologies that have been a catalyst to change have also brought challenges in unforeseen ways. In order to survive, the same journalists find that they need to embrace new media, be interactive, improve their content and be highly innovative while continuing to uphold all fundamental principles of integrity and ethics.

Before we address the question of ethics in this digital age, it is important to establish what media and journalism ethics are and whether this is a profession that has an ethical existence. Objectivity, truth and impartiality are at the heart of the journalism profession. It is a profession entrusted to serve society. Furthermore, there is an assumption that the media play an important role in society and that journalism in particular is the unofficial fourth estate, since media has a main function of surveying, reporting and analysing events that affect members of society. Although this is the underlying philosophy of all journalism and media, and more so in western democracies, at times it has also been embedded in the thoughts, constitutions and laws of Arab countries. However, at other times these principles have not always been upheld.

Much of the media in the region has functioned under authoritarian rule; with state ownership, censorship and self censorship being barriers to performing ethical journalism. Nonetheless, as the media has begun to proliferate, there has been a reawakening of this function. News, current affairs, debates, commentaries, opinion columns, phone-in talk shows and other opinion forming communications have intensified via print, television, radio, and the Internet with all its applications. The role and function of journalists and media professionals are ideals that are taken seriously and thus many ethical codes and practices have been developed.

In fact, one survey of the global world found that ethical codes and debates concerning ethics are abundant worldwide.

The Society of Professional Journalists[12] has developed, for example, a code that revolves around four core values:

- Seeking the Truth and Reporting It
- Minimising Harm
- Acting Independently
- Being Accountable

These are the same type of basic values upon which most codes of ethics are written. The Federation of Arab Journalists for instance has an Arab Code of Ethics that reflects many of the same values, but may add some Arab specific functions such as "a commitment to the objectives of the public and the right of the Arab nation to unity, freedom and progress." However, principles of seeking the truth and reporting, minimising harm, acting independently and accountability do not differ fundamentally[13].

In recent years too, several initiatives have also taken place where Arab journalists were noted to be attempting to regulate journalistic practice, particularly in the area of ethics, and adapt to this new era.

Yet, agreeing that media and journalistic practices have codes of ethics does not mean that journalists have not and do not compromise these principles. Voluntary codes of conduct are often violated but that does not mean that there is no place for moral integrity in the profession.

In addition to this argument we must note that in this era, new technologies are indeed bringing us new situations to deal with. Social media, blogs, YouTube, Second Life; a myriad of tools are here to be used by media at a time when thoughts on how to approach these tools ethically are still forming. Are the principle guidelines different?

The answer to this question should be "no". It has hard to find anyone who can disagree. If journalists and media professionals recognise that ethical codes are not associated to technology and that they should apply across platforms, they may then be able to continue their quest for an ethical existence comfortably.

Let us take the same codes from the Society of Professional Journalists and see if they are applicable to the challenges that face journalists today. For example, if a journalist keeps a blog on an increasingly common activity sometimes requested by the organisation for which they work, then what principles would apply?

The answer to that would be that no doubt the principles are the same. If a journalist is blogging their story, rather than broadcasting, should it not be honest and fair? The information needs to be balanced. Nothing should be deliberately distorted, sources should be identified when possible, plagiarism is not acceptable, and content that is "newsy" such as headlines and picture captions should not be highlighted out of context. Should journalists use their blogs to give voices to the voiceless and give more opportunity to diverse opinions? Again it would be hard to argue that this would change online. Certainly a journalist should be accountable for what they publish regardless of where that is.

They would still be expected to identify advocacy and advertising for what they are and certainly they should treat subjects, colleagues and humans with dignity. Finally, acting independently is a value that may actually be easier to practise online than offline. At least, this has been the case so far. With the current open internet structure, journalists have been freer than they have been in traditional media.

Perhaps the best way to look at this is that journalists and media professionals can differ in the way they display or create their content in the digital era but the principles are certainly the same. Thus a journalist who works for *Al Ahram* Newspaper but chooses to publish his/her blog should not have two different attitudes or sets of morals. The form of story writing may be different, he/she may voice more opinion or use different techniques to tell the story but the basic morals should be the same.

In fact, many journalists and journalism associations believe that accountability and ethics online should not be limited to professional journalists. There is a strong belief that citizen journalists should also follow a code of ethics. The Huffington Post[14], for instance, publishes standards for citizen journalists echoing the same standards used by traditional journalists for years.

This movement is not restricted to the US. As citizen journalism increases in the Arab world, a similar debate is taking place here. Moreover, awards are granted for good citizen journalism worldwide, proving that it is an expression of communication that is held to high standards. Arab citizens are blogging fiercely. They are also winning awards for the quality of their entries[15].

In the Arab region, journalists and other mass communicators may actually be raising the bar by embracing social media and other forms of digital content. For instance one of Egypt's newly published independent newspapers *Al Youm al Sabaa* carries a more powerful online version than its print counterpart. Other

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14 *Huffington Post Citizen Journalism Publishing standards available online at http://www.huffingtonpost. com/2009/04/07/citizen-journalism-publis_n_184075.html*

15 *Awards for Citizen Journalism can be viewed at http://arabisk-award.com/index.php*

journalists such as those who write for *Al Masri Al Youm* online are attracting and publishing diverse opinions in unprecedented numbers. On 3 February 2010, for example, an article by the Egyptian Justice Ministries deliberately obstructing citizens from issuing proxies for two potential presidential candidates received instant feedback from readers on this controversial topic[16]. In this sense, journalism is becoming more ethical as journalists are performing their job better and fulfilling the functions required by them and listed in various codes of ethics. Hence these journalists are serving the public in a virtuous manner by facilitating the democratic process.

But where would social media fall in this discussion? Is tweeting immune to critical revision? Can a journalist tweet ethically versus unethically? As more and more Arabs join the tweeting trends, this question too becomes equally as important.

Is tweeting for Gaza activism, journalism or neither?[17] Should journalists behave differently when they tweet to when they write for a newspaper? Should journalists and media professionals be held accountable for their tweets whilst all are other citizens are not? Is it acceptable to use "ghost" tweeters or employees who tweet for you? The questions at issue are neither simple nor easily resolvable. Social media despite their phenomenal popularity and growth are still at their infancy and so are the ethics that guide their use.

This is not to claim that there have been no attempts at addressing the issue of ethics and social media. Of course, there are several approaches and fundamental disagreements. Indeed, many experts feel that it is the audience or public that decide what is ethical and what is not. This is due to the nature of social media and its ability to provide a direct/instant feedback loop. But on the other hand, many others believe, as argued earlier, that the profession of journalism is an ethical one. Therefore journalists have individual ethical codes that they abide by and would use when making a decision on whether to tweet a message or not.

16 An example of a news story with its feedback in Al Masry Al Youm newspaper http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=238957

17 An example of a twitter trending topic http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/12/27/global-tweeting-for-gaza/

NEW MEDIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE COMPLEX ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE ARAB WORLD

Anne Nelson

Over the course of world history, some of the biggest transformations have resulted from the collision of seemingly unrelated phenomena. For an extremely long time, Arab societies have evolved according to specific social structures: a strong oral tradition, an emphasis on clanship and traditional authority, and a frequent distrust of outside influences.

Now, Arab regimes and value systems are being challenged on many fronts by many parties, ranging from advocates of Western liberalisation to proponents of conservative Islamic values. Only a few decades ago, such challenges could be contained through strict censorship of the printed and broadcast media, and control over the educational system. But those forms of control are themselves being challenged by the technological and social capacities of new social media.

In recent years, Egypt's burgeoning movement of students and young professionals rallied around workers' strikes, organising their activities through Facebook applications[18]. In Gaza, young Palestinians have recorded videos of alleged Israeli abuses and posted them on the Internet[19]. Activists in Arab countries closely watched Iran's "Twitter Revolution" in 2009, in which demonstrators led their street protests on mobile phone platforms. Governments have been watching these events with intense interest. In the affected countries, police and security agencies have raced to counter these activities with new forms of online investigation, to identify the activists, gain access to their plans, and gather evidence against them. On the other hand, many Western governments are encouraged by the potential for greater freedom of expression through new media, and are funding initiatives to expand online skills and access[20].

To grasp the impact of social media in the Arab world, it is first necessary to understand its relation to past forms of communication. The Internet and its offshoots have sprung upon the world with astonishing swiftness. Only a generation

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18 See "Arab Media: the Web 2.0 Revolution," http://www.carnegie.org/reporter/17/arabmedia/index_low.html

19 See "Human Rights Documentation in Palestine," http://www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/nelson/newmediadev08/New%20Media%20and%20Documenting%20Human%20Rights%20Abuse%20in%20the%20occupied%20Palestinian%20territories.html

20 See "The New Empowerment Communications Technologies," http://mepi.state.gov/opportunities/129624.htm. See also Mary Myers report on non-U.S. funders, http://cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/CIMA-Non-US_Funding_of_Media_Development.pdf

ago, computers were evaluated in terms of what they upgraded: a faster adding machine, an improved filing cabinet, a speedier postal service. As miraculous as these developments were, they represented a linear extension of existing human activity – we were doing roughly the same things, only on a larger scale and faster.

Marshall McLuhan's "Four Laws of Media" were useful for identifying that old technologies became obsolete[21]. Soon after 2000, Web 2.0 emerged. Suddenly we were no longer regarding the Internet as a question of moving traditional knowledge creation from the page to the screen. New applications such as Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were changing the architecture of knowledge itself, and altering fundamental forms of human interaction.

The traditional process of publishing led from author ("expert") to publisher ("gatekeeper") to reader ("audience"). Under the new rules of social media, there were no distinctions between those three categories; author, publisher and reader were the same, with equal authority. Social media was based on the practice of "crowd-sourcing," in which every participant could supplement or alter the product.

A Wikipedia article, for example, has no "author"; it is the product of an amorphous collective authorship that is constantly revising content. YouTube allows anyone to post videos, and also allows anyone to comment or "review" the posted material[22]. Enthusiasts of Web 2.0, such as Harvard's Yochai Benkler, argue that crowd-sourcing will replace traditional forms of authorship. Sceptics, such as British author Andrew Keene, fear that the random and unconfirmed information generated by Web 2.0's "cult of the amateur" may replace more mature forms of information and creation, without replicating its mastery of craft, its checks for accuracy, and its balance for fairness.

In the current chaotic world of Web 2.0, there is ample evidence for both sides. An enthusiast can point to Wikipedia articles that outstrip every other published treatment for detail and current relevance. A sceptic can point to YouTube comments that are no more than ignorant, hate-filled rants that would never be aired in a legitimate publication.

In grasping the positive power of social media, Arab societies face many of the same challenges as Western countries – only more so. Throughout the world, young people are quicker to master new technology than their elders. This can bring fresh energy to communications, but it can also involve a lack of maturity and judgment.

In the Arab world, the youth are a particularly volatile population. Currently there is a regional demographic bulge with a disproportionate percentage of

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21 For an introduction to McLuhan's laws, see http://www.horton.ednet.ns.ca/staff/scottbennett/media/

22 For a guide to Web 2.0, see http://www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/nelson/newmediadev/Web%202.0%20and%20 Social%20Networking.html

people under 30. There is also a large new population of educated young people, who lack access to jobs that match their qualifications. They are understandably impatient with old political systems, yet they have few formal outlets for political expression. Over the past few years, the global economic crisis has heightened political pressure, while Internet access and cell phone technology has been growing exponentially.

Communications infrastructure in most Arab countries still has a long way to go. High-speed internet access allowing active participation is largely limited to urban elites. There is a great need for improved automatic translation programming that could open up vast new stores of knowledge to the Arabic-speaking audience.

However, we should not underestimate the need for human resources. How should educators approach this field? First of all, they need to create their own knowledge base of online skills and social theory, so they can understand (and practise) using the social media that are changing their students' lives. Every form of education must be a combination of information and values. Teachers must be able to guide students in the process of judging content online for both utility and accuracy. This is especially critical in the field of Human Rights documentation. It has always been easy to mislabel a photograph or invent a story for political purposes. At the same time, many governments have been able to distort or cover up evidence of Human Rights violations through censorship and violence against journalists.

There is a greater need than ever for trusted Human Rights organisations that can research, verify and protest against abuse. Many Western organisations, such as Human Rights Watch and the Committee to Protect Journalists, work closely with local organisations. This work has been extended into social media through efforts such as the Witness Hub, which posts videos of Human Rights abuses from contributors around the world[23].

It is often difficult to verify the information, and as the field of online Human Rights documentation matures, activists will need to devote increasing attention to safeguarding the quality of the information that is posted (which is not so different from the traditional role of the "editor"). Generations of Human Rights activists have learned, often the hard way, that publicising false information can lead to terrible setbacks for their cause, and even discredit accurate information in the future.

Many Internet-savvy youth in Arab countries have picked up their technical skills informally, from each other and from Internet cafes. As they join the

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23 See "Witness Hub" http://hub.witness.org/en/AboutHub and "Human Rights and New Media," http://www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/nelson/newmediadev08/What%20Human%20Rights%20Organisations%20Can%20Achieve%20From%20New%20Media.html

growing ranks of the blogging community and citizen journalists, they become a *de facto* press corps. However, it is often easier to acquire online skills than it is to get access to good training in reporting and fact-checking. The skill sets of professional journalism and Human Rights documentation go hand-in-hand, and journalism education is a new and underdeveloped discipline in the Arab region. This makes it all the more important to introduce the principles of media literacy into secondary education and less formal settings. In the past, many educators dismissed Wikipedia as an academic source, but now they have to take a more nuanced approach. They should lead their students through exercises in critical thinking, asking questions such as: What makes a good Wikipedia article? How do you identify an online source of information you can trust? What steps should be followed in writing an online post to assure that it is accurate?[24]

It is easy to point to floods of information on the Internet generated by extremists, governments, and everyday users with no regard for these standards. However, sooner or later, the participants in online communities must address them seriously if the Internet is going to be a true instrument for progress.

24 For a good introduction to the principles of media literacy, see http://cima.ned.org/events/media-literacy-helping-to-educate-the-public-in-a-rapidly-changing-world.html

EXAMINING THE NEW JOURNALISM PURPOSES AND ITS INTEGRATION IN THE PROCESS OF THE CYBERSPACE

Sahar Talaat

While examining current media mapping, some crucial factors can be detected to determine the evolution of a new "Journalism Mosaic ". Certainly, the combination of the widespread deployment of broadband services on the Internet has penetrated new information options. In addition, the adoption of Internet protocols and packet technologies by network providers has created a new promising and challenging platform for the growth of innovative journalism and multimedia services applications.

Some may think that the extremely high demand for implementing digital communications media would replace the old media or eliminate its existence (Van Dijk, 2006). Several academics like Scolari, have been asking about the highly concentrated talk on "new media" as if "old media" has been put to one side. Some tend to forget that, for instance, television in 1950 was a new medium. In 1920 radio appeared and the cinema started at the beginning of the 20th century (Scolari, 2009).

Of course, no one can doubt that "newness" of new media did not exist before. However, we should consider that these changes do not mean abolishing all history. This media history is full of similar moments of newness (Lister et al., 2003, 3). All media were once new media (Gitelman, 2006; Gitelman and Pingree, 2003; Zeilinski, 2006). Therefore, studying this evolution allows us to understand the significance of being new.

This communication perspective is rapidly evolving and changing in response to market forces and self-regulation as well as the development and availability of new technologies (Internet Governance Forum, Sharm El Sheik, 2009). It is leading to a communicative dynamism that will affect journalism aspects, forms, characteristics, strategies and influences, etc.

This transitional stage or the so called "new media" is largely driving the researchers to question whether this relative concept (weblogs, community media, online journals) will be considered "old media" in twenty or thirty years. Obviously, there are increasing interests to define the new forms of communication in the digital age. It is a time to determine the nomination of this "new thing". Should it be called: "interactive media or digital communication or hypermedia or networked or collaborative communication"? (Scolari, 2009, 946)

To clarify, this is not an easy task; meanwhile, research is opening up new horizons to discuss these new forms of communication. Each researcher may examine or adopt one or more characteristics to describe these forms such as, digitalisation, interactivity, virtuality, dispersion, hypertextuality (Lister et al., 2003), numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, transcoding (Manovish, 2001), networking, convergence, interactivity, hypertextuality and digitalisation (Van Dijk,2006; Scolari 2008), etc. This semantic confusion is considered to be a new research field and a necessary part of the media process.

Consequently, we could determine that "digital communication" should be understood as the technological process in which text would be introduced in fragmented, handled, linked and distributed forms that facilitate the use of other characteristics such as networking, multimedia and interactive communication.

The interconnected and open nature of the Internet has proved clearly that it is its greatest strength. It has encouraged individuals, private and public media institutions, and companies to invest and innovate so that consumers/users use the Internet more to conduct and share their lives online. This correlation is considered a step forward in redesigning the media process. These new forms of digital communication have further increased the complexity of this area and redefined old conversations about mass media.

To comprehend the current development of the media process and the situation of journalism around the globe, it is necessary to reflect on all aspects of media and journalism forms including the press, radio, television, online media and digital media communication.

Nowadays, the press is facing an important crisis. Newspapers and magazines in paper format continue to lose market share at alarming rates and their digital counterparts are still struggling to find a real revenue model. Newsrooms are shrinking and disappearing altogether in the developed world. There are many voices that are calling for this prestigious journalism industry to be saved.

Nichols and Mc Chesney (2010) stated that a free society requires a free press. They placed the reasons for the press crisis in the developed world, especially in the USA. They described how a free press which does not have the financial resources to remunerate the people who gather, analyse and distribute information in a very accessible form, would look like a seed without water or sunlight. Journalism represents a social need for the population and an important source of information as a "public good", but market forces are incapable of generating it in sufficient quality and quantity. Advertisers are decreasing their appeal to journalism. They are looking for more attractive news products and this may influence journalism standards badly.

The rise of Internet media corporations means they are trying to maximise their profits by turning newsrooms into "profit centres" by lowering the quality

and trivialising journalism. Nichols and Mc Chesney concluded that the Internet has merely accelerated a long-term process by making news free online and steering advertisers elsewhere.

The question now is how to create a vibrant, independent and competitive press without ceding government control over content if some governments subsidise the press corporations during the recession. One suggestion to improve the situation is, for instance, to increase spending dramatically on public and community broadcasting, so that the money would go primarily to journalism, especially at the local level because local journalists are the most affected. To summarise this situation, journalism needs an institutional structure that acts with its status as a public good.

Current journalism is enhanced by new global technological capabilities that encourage us to rethink borderless information and entertainment systems. We also have to redefine the meaning of national press and broadcast systems and be more concerned about setting up cultural protection against the invasion of the local by the global.

Still the world's media products are largely produced for domestic markets and not for global consumption. Somewhere, during the shifting conversation concerning the identification of what is local or national and what is global or glocal, the development concept of communication may have lost its purpose. The discourse on globalisation has currently left poor nations on the periphery, creating a new paradigm concerning cultural protection for the local versus global. Some scholars are concerned about reconsidering the meaning of national media and its influence on diminishing the local culture by the global one (Ogan et al., 2009, 655, 656).

To clarify, Berger (2009) introduced a comparative chart between the differences of old and new media news forms in respect of their production, character of content, distribution reach, consumption and mediation.

On one hand, he explained that the old media production is determined by its concentration in First World countries, especially in the USA. The character of the old media content is focusing on the domestic, central, local or national themes. Its distribution reach has been confined to specific spatial zones. The consumption of the old media is characterised by international imbalanced flow. The mediation measurements are ruled by gatekeeping media, including the news agencies (Berger, 2009, 363).

On the other hand, new media production could still be seen to be concentrated in First World countries. New media has the same trend with domestic, centric, local and national content. The distribution reach of new media is focusing on the ubiquitous within the online universe. Berger questions why new media consumption has less flow imbalance and less mediation for much of the news.

"Hyperlocalism" or "Ultra-localism" could be considered a recent media trend to focus on the immediate entourage events and the local neighbourhood. For instance, despite the involvement of the UK and the USA in wars far from their territories in recent years, much of the media culture focus has still been concentrating on the local news. However, a portion of Internet users from the First World were consulting foreign websites seeking different information and perspective where the news framing differs from their local sites.

On the other hand, Third World countries become more competitive with their own websites and targeting their own journalism news, culture and consumers/users. Accordingly, this openness is enhancing new opportunities for creative configurations of content, production, distribution, consumption and audiences. Yet, in many developing countries limited online content is still found and there is often weak access to cyberspace; for these countries extra-national news represents a fair part of their information diet (Berger, 2009, 363).

Community radio represents, therefore, an alternative media for deprived social groups. Radio journalism would experience new challenges in emerging civil society, enabling more journalistic approaches to decline the digital divide and implement more mainstream media tools. (Lewis & Jones, 2006, 16)

Radio will attempt to enable some participatory advantages that focus on:

- Enhancing a more studied cost; efficient value on technological and journalistic levels to improve the radio communication information standards.

- Radio editing style is essential in conveying the local spoken language, penetrating sustainable development and extending knowledge while maintaining cultural traditions. Therefore, creating new educational and social programmes leads to more interest in reaching the immense illiterate population in the rural areas that have limited access to ICT. Reconsidering the content of the message would develop more awareness in the marginalised population, especially while tackling delicate topics such as women's rights, religious topics, ethnic problems, poverty, health care, social participation, etc.

- Providing and developing more local news on radio stations, especially on community radios, could encourage higher participation from the audience. Improving the journalistic skills and standards of the media staff would encourage and expand broadcasting styles that emphasise selected important topics such as the influence of public opinion, prejudicial clichés, improving self-image, discussing ethnic, gender, religious matters, providing cultural and social attitudes, developing communicative habits, etc. (Lewis & Jones, 2006, 16).

- Local community involvement in ownership and production, for example, would help address stagnation in dealing with national and local programming and editorial lines on the radio.

Communications have therefore completed a transformation because the printing press and the several genres of broadcasting have been converted into a one-to-many medium. With the convergence of the telecommunication services, digital communication aspects are offering diversified options to create a different journalism perspective. The media is currently providing information possibilities that fulfil the one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many types of communication. Consequently, these options stimulate various nervous systems in journalism.

Visions on journalism

The concept of universal access is rechecking the layers of the media from its underlying infrastructure to its outputs and services at the top. In-depth views concerning types of information, journalism, media structure, illustrations and interests should be coordinated to create a concentrated and merged media environment based on freedom, competition, innovation and regulation.

Using multiple tools of multidirectional journalism does not mean crossing ethical lines. There is an urgent need to maintain the core principles that include fairness, accuracy and thoroughness. Therefore, alternating periods of incremental innovations are linked to a technological media variation process such as:

- Horizontal / vertical media approach: merging a dynamic style that processes social change, providing communication tools and content, reengaging the users by avoiding their passivity, reconstructing media interests and enabling a flexible media strategy.

- Long-term / short-term agendas: the cybernetic universe is driving the communication decision-makers to conceive long term media planning to mobilise, develop and build capacities to continue, maintain and improve their mediums. Meanwhile, short-term planning is essential in evaluating the growth of the media and helping introduce new journalistic approaches, programmes and models. Regarding the community, viewers and users, short-term planning could help engagement in society by promoting cultural environments and political participation.

- Collective / individual: the expansion of journalistic themes would help reach a global audience and improve the individual connection with different experiences, societies and cultural traditions.

- Specific / Massive: journalism is reviewing its extension and its scale regarding content and the production process. Journalism will utilise more fragmented tools and techniques to identify, define, persuade and fulfil several media types and needs that are social, educational, political, economic, cultural, gender, intellectual, scientific, etc.

- Ownership / access: the actual media ownership still remains categorised as government–owned and operated utilities, autonomous public sector corporations and privatised corporations. There is a rising process to provide equal opportunities to the community; it is the community media where people are experiencing awareness and consciousness. It is not yet defined, but community media is the best example of merging social interest and needs with market services. The openness to information access is establishing media industrial consolidation to facilitate access for consumers and marginalised users, etc.

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NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW MEDIA AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY OF AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION

Paul Mattar

I have been lucky to be given the chance to witness the fantastic transformations that have occurred in media and communication systems over 50 years of my life, and appreciate their effect and the essential role they have played in our lives and on our behaviour.

I grew up in a home where there was no television. I was already a teenager when the magic of television was introduced to my country. In the mid sixties when I started to deal with art creation and production (theatre, music composition, documentary films, commercials, institutional films, television series, etc.), I observed the changes in the creation and audiovisual production process on two different levels:

a) Technological advancement

The technological advancement considerably improved the tools of production, affecting not only the sustainability of the media industry, but also the behaviour and way of thinking of the producers, who were more motivated to take risks in innovation, thanks to new facilities provided by new technologies. As a young professional creator in the early seventies, I used to think: "We have a bunch of ideas, but we lack the means to express them. Cinema is so expensive, unaffordable (there was no video at that time). For music production we need instrumentalists and recording studios. That's a lot of money…"

The appearance of video recording, then the computer and finally digitisation brought a radical solution to these insufficiencies. Today I can afford to shoot and produce my own films with my personal equipment, and on my computer, I have the chance to reproduce a full symphonic orchestra by myself. What satisfaction for an artist!

b) Evolution in the behaviour of the viewer/consumer

1) Quantitative revolution. More choices for the viewer:

Audience behaviour as media consumers has also changed and improved over the years. New trends in communication with the public created the new profile of a "consumer-decision maker" and the media became more interactive with a more participative audience.

In the first decades of radio and television broadcasting, viewers have acted as passive partners in the media dissemination chain. They used to hear and watch what they were offered, without any chance to express their feelings, thoughts,

preferences and dissatisfaction, or interfere in the media to modify or adapt the content of the broadcast programme. They were stuck to their seats, most probably at home, with only few limited means to express themselves, whether by shutting down a contested media or by exchanging thoughts and feelings with a fellow watcher, most probably a parent or a friend, sharing the same status of voiceless receiver. Programmes were prescheduled and broadcast to an anonymous mass of consumers.

Conceptualisation, creativity, production and dissemination through media were reserved for a happy few who were transformed into "decision-makers" playing a cultural, social, political and ideological leading role. These happy few also used to be the holders of the financial and economic power.

Then, the "quantitative" revolution occurred. Television stations proliferated and multiplied. The user was given the chance to choose between different programmes on the same television set, each one with its own specificities. In the eighties, in Lebanon, we jumped from the limited choice given to us in the sixties, between one public television station and a private one, to forty or fifty of them. A few years later, the satellite Pan Arab stations started and were added to the multiple choices offered to the viewer. Meanwhile, cable television was introduced to our homes putting us in communication with the rest of the world (Arab and non Arab). Today, each one of us has, on average, over 100 television channels. This is really a gigantic quantitative improvement since the time two channels were offered when I was a teenager in the sixties.

This proliferation of Pan Arab and international cable television offered a plethora of choices for the Arab viewer and contributed to globalisation where each person feels they are a citizen of their own country first, but also the citizen of this larger global village that is the whole world. Since the nineties, this broad-minded behaviour led to a radical transformation in cultural and social habits and has had an especially huge impact in developing countries which suddenly found fantastic opportunities for communicating with the whole world.

Until the nineties, the most remarkable change in media on the consumer level was the widening of active choices both in terms of quantity, content and subjects (choosing between local or foreign programmes, different genres and types, documentaries, historical programmes, talk-shows, feature films, comedies, dramas etc.) all available on the television set.

2) Qualitative revolution. The "customer decision-maker":

Moreover, with the passage from the television to the desk computer, a "qualitative" revolution appeared.

The emergence of digitalised applications based on sophisticated technologies, especially the proliferation of the Internet facilities, also opened

a way for the viewer to be more participative and interactive in media. No longer stuck to their seat, the user can decide the time, place, length and subject they want to watch. They may enter forums to exchange thoughts and feelings and participate in the modelling of the media. A new generation of services and users appeared with programmes, such as YouTube and Facebook, where the users are their own providers and distributors, as well as providing ratings.

This technological revolution created a new type of "customer decision-maker". They took over the power and, nowadays, the happy few of yesterday are a multitude. This phenomenon is probably the most important qualitative change that has occurred both at cultural and social levels.

These new habits, which began in the nineties, culminated at the beginning of the 21st century. The use of the computer, reserved for privileged literates some 15 years ago, spread among the population. Even in remote areas, a computer connected online has become an indispensable tool for living and communicating. As we all need to be involved in the digital world, education has to play an essential role in this.

Although this "customer decision-maker" appears to be a contemporary creation directly related to the introduction of the computer, it is quite interesting to note that some 68 years ago, in 1932, the German writer, Bertold Brecht predicted, or rather, requested this participative, sharing attitude between media and their audience. His words, then, referred to the radio, the available media at that time:

> "…Radio is one-sided when it should be two. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organise its listeners as suppliers. Any attempt by the radio to give a truly public character to public occasions is a step in the right direction."

A critical look at the above statement makes us wonder: "What came first, technology changes or behaviour changes? What dragged the other one into

the raft of changes?" I am not concerned about answering this question. I can only testify that both were experienced together and they both depend on one another. On one hand, we have new concepts and new technical facilities, on the other hand, there is a new sociology of media consumption and they feed one another. Technological innovations encouraged the consumer to be more demanding and the increasing requirements of the viewers called for new technical innovation.

Drastic reduction in production costs

As mentioned above, the technological innovations introduced new facilities, making audiovisual production much more affordable than before. The savings on production costs occurred on many different levels:

a) Savings on the financial cost of equipments and facilities acquisition

I remember in 1972 when I needed to record my first music record. I knocked at Studio Baalbeck's door. It was the most famous studio at that time in Beirut, where Feyrouz and the Rahbanis used to record their songs. The rental cost of the studio was 60 LBP (20 USD) per hour for a recording session on a 4 tracks recorder which was a lot at that time. Working also as a composer for commercials, I spent much of my budget on studio rental until the day came, in the eighties, where the concept of the "Home Sound Studio" entered our lives.

For 15,000 USD I could acquire an 8 track recorder on a ½ inch tape. I set up a recording booth in my home and I started working from there. In the nineties, I swapped my eight tracks Tascam recorder for a Macintosh equipped with an Audiomedia sound card and recording and editing software. The whole set cost around 6,000 USD. The new equipment provided me with 999 tracks of digital tapeless (on hard dive) recording. Today, you only need a computer that is moderately powerful, connected to a professional audio interface (roughly a 3,000 USD budget) to be able to record professional sound at high definition (24 bits and 96 or 192 MHz) in your "Home Studio".

The same decrease in cost and increase in specifications occurred with filming equipment. From the cinema camera that cost nearly 50,000 USD, to the professional Betacam SP for around 20,000 USD in the late eighties, to the DVCam and mini DV (prosumer cam) for approximately 6,000 USD, to the AVCHD handy cam or SLR cams at 1,000 to 2,500 USD that became consumer products, but still provide quality at least as good as (if not better than) the older DV format.

b) Savings on the effort exerted by the producer and easiness of use of the new equipments

Beside the financial aspect in the equipment and facilities development, the friendly easiness of use played an essential role in motivating and increasing the audiovisual productions.

I cannot forget these huge cameras as big as filing cabinets that I used to see in Télé Liban (the public Lebanese television) when I acted in drama series in the sixties and seventies and that used to record on videotapes of 2-inch width.

Each one-hour programme would have filled as much space on the shelves as three volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. This was for the studio shooting. As for the outdoor shooting, I remember the cameramen reporters holding a big camera on their shoulders and being followed by a fellow assistant who had to hold the "U-Matic recorder", linked to the camera by a ½ inch diameter cable. Both the cameraman and his assistant had to move in perfect synchronisation. If one of them speeded up his movement, they were both in danger of falling down.

The all in one (optical part and recording device) camera then appeared making video shooting much lighter and easier. We were happy then, with the Betacam SP tapes, as big as an Agatha Christie pocket edition, however, much smaller than the U-Matic ones. They still only lasted 30 minutes and after shooting a documentary in Yemen in 1991, I remember that I had to dispatch 60 tapes of rushes, from Sanaa to Paris, where I had to achieve the postproduction of the film, in a metallic trunk as accompanied baggage.

I will never forget how they got lost in Cairo Airport during a transfer, putting my whole film project on threat, and how much effort was required to get them back. With the introduction of the digitally recorded films on DV, I did not have to worry about my rushes. The mini DVCam of 40 minutes were smaller in size than a "post it pad". I could handle 50 of them in my hand luggage with no problem. Today, most new HD camcorders are tapeless and you can record (depending on the model and compression ratio) hours of video on compact flash drives smaller than a matchbox.

This progressive reduction of size has been accompanied by a similar easiness to use, making the process of producing an audiovisual programme much easier than a few years ago.

c) Reduction in production time

There is no doubt that the development of new technologies also allowed producers to gain time.

The non-linear and non-destructive editing computerised systems (for sound and video recordings) cut down time wasted in production. In the analogue era,

simple modification to the film in the editing stage required all, or part, of the work being redone using the copy of the tape and leading to a loss in product quality.

With the non-linear editing system, the correction of a segment is carried out in one or two clicks. Spending hours in analogue editing sessions can be reduced to minutes today using Avid or Final Cut.

d) Savings on the quality of the production

We can also see a considerable improvement in the quality of production. I remember the days when I had to deliver copies of my work on VHS tapes and the loss in quality that occurred after each copying generation. Nowadays, when you duplicate a digitalised product, there is no loss of quality.

Moreover, in my home studio, I look at my old DVCam camera that I used in the late nineties to earn a living as a documentary director and compare it to the tiny AVCHD camcorder that I use today.

The superiority of the images produced by the smallest and newest device is obvious. The same thing is true of the sound recording: sessions in 16 bits and 48KHz are relegated to the past. Today we live in the high definition era.

The impact of new technologies on the economy. Increase in the opportunities for work and the rise of new media:

With savings on so many levels, it was natural to observe an extensive impact of new technologies on audiovisual production and the implementation of new media.

- A reduction in the cost of production

- A change in consumers' attitude empowering their participative attitude

These two facts combined, lead to a sort of revolution in the economy of the media.

On one hand, you no longer need to be wealthy or depend on a powerful financial group to produce a "mediatised" program or even to create a media production structure of your own according to your own needs or your community's needs.

On the other hand, since traditional viewers have more power today, when taking part in modelling the media, some viewers are understandably tempted to cross from "viewer" to "producer" or "creator", especially when the means to reach this previously unaffordable status are no longer so costly.

We have to face and accept it. A new species of creators is rising today with new conditions of existence and renewed functions. They are closely related to the

evolution and progress that occurred in the history of the media over the last five decades.

These new creators have caused a radical transformation in the economy of media:

a) Accessibility of the profession

The democratisation of the acquisition of equipment (accessible to all at a reasonable cost) has made it possible for any young creator or producer to make audiovisual products at a professional broadcasting quality level. This is especially true of documentaries and low cost television programmes and similar. With initiative (the most essential qualification) and a few thousand dollars (fewer every year) any motivated person can be a creator / producer.

b) More opportunities and better employment

This also stimulates innovation and creativity in young producers. New genres of films and audiovisual production have emerged: institutional films, web streaming programmes and even mobile phone captured movies (there are festivals and media specialised in this type of production). All these innovations in audiovisual production practice widen the horizon of opportunities open to young producers and increase employment offers. As the director of an audiovisual and drama institute in Lebanon, I can certify that the ratio of unemployment among our graduates is close to nil. The opportunities our graduates have on the audiovisual market are growing every year. If a young producer cannot find a job that fits his specific requirements (or dreams) 100%, he or she still has the chance to find their way with different opportunities offered which showcase their know-how.

c) Implementation of new media

This situation was a fantastic incentive for young producers to approach their more participative and demanding public, with many new possibilities in shaping their programmes, new ideas and innovation in the conceptualisation of the media and its role in society.

Next to the gigantic traditional mass media (public television or powerful stations), addressing an "anonymous mass audience", many small units have appeared, establishing a new type of small sized media responding to the needs and demands of a specific community or target audience, and responding to the needs of a specific concern shared by a group of people.

This is what we call "community-based diffusion". You can create a chain of diffusion (whether it is cable television or some other more traditional means)

for your school, your neighbourhood, your company, etc. You can create forums on the Internet, web televisions, using sophisticated audiovisual technologies and a sharing and exchanging approach with your target audience. Through my professional life, I had the chance to experience some of these "community-based" media:

- In Morocco I directed a film that was shown on public bus television on the line connecting Rabat to Casablanca. The bus was playing the role of "community-based media" using audiovisual material

- In Tunisia, I watched mobile van clinics equipped with video facilities. They used to visit the remote areas of the country to provide medical assistance to the population. While the beneficiaries were waiting for their turn to see the doctor in the van, an educational film on health care was screened on the back window. The mobile van clinics were therefore transformed into small audiovisual media

- At the Saint Joseph University in Beirut we are preparing to launch an inter-campus cable television for our student population

- In some Palestinian camps of Lebanon, a group of young artists have a project to launch a cable television transmitting selected programs for the population of the camps

A democratic use (in both processes of creation-production and consumption) of the mediatised product favours dialogue and conflict resolution:

The enhancement of new media and the creation of new opportunities are shaping, little by little, the society of tomorrow, that will hopefully be open minded, tolerant, fair, based on dialogue and exchange.

In the midst of this everlasting trend of evolutions and transformations in the medias milieu, I can underline three aspects related to the orientations of what would be our life in the near future and which set up what I call a "democratic development":

a. The great amount of newcomers and new media as described above will definitely continue to multiply voices, different opinions, different cultural, social visions and centres of interest, off the beaten track and the official stonewalling. Diversity and the enrichment of the community of "media makers" will open the way to a large dialogue platform made up of encounters, confrontation, discussion and exchange, etc.

b. The multiplication of new programmes based on inter-individuals or communication groups (MSN, Facebook, etc.) favouring chatting and dialogue

between people of different nationalities, cultures, religions, ages, classes, etc. will give us all a chance to get to know others, share thoughts, dreams and projects

c. This gigantic network of communications spread over populations from different continents will also weaken censorship and the exclusivity of the major media that used to control and manoeuvre the mass audience. With technology advancement and progress in the communication among human beings, an air of liberty surrounds us

Let us not oppose it; on the contrary, let us take advantage of it, letting the air fill our sails and lead our boat towards dialogue and peace.

But let us also be aware of its threats. Freedom is indispensable to progress. This does not mean that we may disseminate through communication any insanity or unethical, aggressive, provocative or insulting comments.

We have the chance to have an open platform for dialogue with our media. Let us use it with wisdom and respect. Let us raise our voice, but let us also hear other voices. Let us have a real and open dialogue giving us the chance to venture off the beaten track and away from clichés, which are often the cause of misunderstandings among people and can be the source of conflicts.

After all, what is peace other than accepting the freedom of the other?

My conclusion is: have a voice and listen. Now is the right time.

INTERNET & GOVERNANCE IN EGYPT: A STORY OF SAVAGE GRACE

Ibrahim Saleh

"The job of a citizen in a democracy is to participate....... to do job well, (there is a) need (to ask for) the help of journalists who are superbly trained, intellectually rigorous, steeped in knowledge about the subjects they report on, steadfast about their ethical standards and courageous in their pursuit of truth."

Vartan Gregorian, President of Carnegie
Corporation of New York

The classical tragedy that surrounds media in Egypt is related to the lack of proper boundaries between journalism practice, and education through the prism of civil society. Indeed, there is a dysfunctional relationship between the public and the state, which created a situation of dissonance and continuous fighting against each other, on one hand, and a vulnerable structure of civil society, all working together to make it a story of savage grace.

It is thus rational to note that good governance, and a vigorous civil society are the only path to creating democracy that is missing. For successful democracies, the media usually carries out the four dimensions of governance: *authority* of institutions and actors, *transparency* of the decision-making process, *accountability* of the government, and the *capacity and effectiveness* of institutions in exercising their authority.

In Egypt, this is not the case due to the lack of free media monitoring government performance and publicising abuse, as well as the lack of will in the basic socio-political and economic climate, especially considering that governments since 1952 have depended on coercion as the means to repress those who are vulnerable and scared of change.

There is a general phenomenon of 'governance crisis' that has resulted from the long years of adopting the 'statist' approach and the weak indigenous business class, and the professed commitment to social equality. Indeed, the patriotism and the acute external threats have substituted the supposedly self-discipline of a rationalist elite for the extreme discipline of a strong vigilant civil society. For example, journalism is strictly manipulated by state intervention, censorship, legal and regulatory issues.

This dim picture has projected a very thin citizenship that is good for no one because the uninformed public fell for pseudo-slogans and were swayed by lofty rhetoric with little regard for policy differences and voting records.

There is a recurrent perplexity among the Egyptian public in which society just never knows when it will run afoul of some unknown rules, expectations, and even suffering, more than when they do. Such rhetoric resonates with how the fabric of media, politics and public are often subject to bewildering mood shifts and unpredictable behaviours to displace their endless internal problems, and the worries about the 'other' in addition to the tripled-edged syndromes of illness, poverty and illiteracy. However, this thinking citizenship has drawn political life to an unprecedented degree as activists stirred waves of rage (Bellin, 1994), while complacent elites reeled from social unrest, amplified by sluggish economic growth and draining fiscal endowments (Henry and Springborg, 2001).

The 'street', a term usually used as a synonym for public opinion, in Egypt seldom empowers the expression of public views and collective sentiments of Egyptians fed up with their lives, as a result of the continuous brute force expressed in riots and mob violence. Such a political environment represents a complex entity wherein sentiments and outlooks are formed, spread and expressed in a unique fashion. Of course, the authorities keep trying to exert a pervasive power over public spaces through police patrols and similar authorities.

It has become well-recognised now that long-prevailing media hegemony has failed to appeal to the Egyptian public due to the influence of a powerful political and economic elite, who persistently imposed heavy amounts of censorship and opinionated reporting to justify their corrupt practices. The weak representation of the public voice has resulted from both self-censorship, which is the outcome of long years of oppression and the uncertainty of likely repercussions from the side of the government.

In the meantime, there is disconnection between media literacy, and governance that could instead have offered a valid local model, by linking the public agenda with all its aspirations, and disparities of grassroots in the troubled societies with the state, which could have improved the current poor local governance in Egypt.

In Egypt, as other autocracies prior to democratisation, media and politics have become hype-making tools that dope the public. As a result, both have failed to meet popular economic and political demands, as well as social equality, blocked any possible chances of carving public spaces that could develop a sound bureaucratic form, and stipulate policy alternatives (Entelis, 1999).

Making this connection between governance and sound media is crucial. As Rosenau explains, it offers a system of rule without, necessarily, authoritative institutions, which function because of the acceptance by a majority or, at least, by the most powerful by those affected (Rosenau,1992).

Among the many challenges facing political mediation in Egypt is the sad reality that almost only the elite have access to international news, thinking about civil liberties, while the deprived Egyptian society at large can only think about trying to get their basic needs to finish the day with some food; almost 40% of the Egyptians are on or below the poverty line. There is a dilemma of inequality within the same society that I consider to be due to international colonisation.

There are many challenges, and even impediments blocking socioeconomic development, emancipating cultural change and democratisation that constitute a coherent syndrome of social progress. Hence, the complexity of the situation and the many unwritten aspects must be addressed appropriately. The main objective of this article is to broaden human choices in Egypt, increase individual resources, raise emancipating values and strengthen people's subjective orientation towards choice, as well as guaranteeing institutionalised freedom of rights.

Researching this topic can be misleading, however, while dealing with the operational variables involved. For example, looking at the notion of "literacy" is not only related to reading and writing, though "media literacy" will seem even more ambiguous. In this context, language use is a problem in itself, because there is a popular overlap of the notions of "media literacy" and "media education."

Kirsten Drotner stated that increasing mass media only means that more people became literate but not literary because the focus is on the consequences of access without discernment (the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure; the skill in discerning) (Drotner 1992). Therefore, literacy in general, and media literacy specifically is a cause and effect of what is happening in Egypt.

It is, therefore, understandable that there is a collective sense of being "fed up" with everything, and a growing sense of alienation, especially when the 'Patron State' punishes and fights any serious attempt of liberating the media. This situation gave way to displacement of the discontented public into unregulated informal underground sectors, and illegal activities such as different kinds of extremism including religious and social extremism and human trafficking.

The absence of a well-oriented state and the presence of effective media will always mean there is a weak civil society, and generally a vulnerable societal fabric that is either demolished completely, or at least suffers from exacerbating inequality. In this context, there is an obvious clash between empowering civil society and sound media structure on one hand, and the socio-political and economic context throughout the contemporary history of Egypt on the other (Saleh, 2008).

'False Starts' could be one of the reasons for what we are currently witnessing because the political culture in the region including Egypt was imposed by colonial and semi-colonial rule towards the end of the 19th century, and have transplanted

institutional models from the metropolis of the host cities with the political traditions, cultural linguistic diversity and a lack of organic connections (Enterline & Greig, 2008).

Civil rights in Egypt are jeopardised by a number of laws that have a bearing on their application such as the Riotous Assembly Law 15 (1914), the Meetings and Demonstrations Law 14 (1923), the Emergency Law (1958) and the Police Organisation Law 109 (1971). Hence, Egyptian journalists are still used to being on the front line, fighting for basic Human Rights, while confronted with oppressive laws and regulations, and would most certainly never think of having a future, unless they automatically entered into an alliance with the 'Patron State' (Saleh, 2009a).

In May 1999, the Egyptian Parliament passed Law No. 153 of 1993 encroaching upon NGOs' freedom to organise and act. The new law banned private groups from working to influence government policy or union activity. It gave the Ministry of Social Affairs power to disband boards of directors (Arab Republic of Egypt: Constitution). NGOs must seek permission from the government before accepting foreign donations. Following a wave of protest by both Egyptian and international NGOs, the law was found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court on procedural grounds, and it was suspended. However, the country's older law on NGOs (Law 32 of 1964), which is seen as equally repressive, remains in force (Saleh, 2009a).

Almost all the time, speaking the truth is regarded as very dangerous by the 'Patron State' as politicians contradict their acclaimed care for authenticity. Much of the media and communications in the region suffer setbacks in many aspects that vary from finance, resources, and technology, but most importantly the absence of real functionality of media that make the process a tamed journalism or even just protocol news.

Such a contrasting role of the media has only promoted state victories, especially in their current overwhelming control through media monopoly (Wilcox, 1982, 200-232), and practising all their tactics of work hostility environment through licensing, subsidies. The Egyptian media has generally followed the 'patrimonial mechanisms' which is a kind of governance that relies on a *côterie* of regional and organisational notables (Sandbook & Barker, 1985).

Most institutions are predominately characterised by factional manoeuvring, client focused relations, and the exclusion of the middle class, which means an existing chain of personal loyalties and coercion. As mentioned in the latest report of "Human Development: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries," the average institutional change for the Arab countries is -0.02, and there is no evidence of any overall improvements in governance. Hence, the period 1996-2007 marks deterioration in institutional reform in Egypt, especially in the government's effectiveness, political stability and control of corruption.

This might explain how the weak civil society in Egypt has always hindered, or even obstructed any democratic consolidation that urges the creation of a healthy environment for change to inspire or revisit the social contract between the government and the public, and the constitutional enhancement of human rights, and democratisation (Saleh, 2008). Moreover, the erosion of the middle class has intensified the situation. In this way, it is very difficult to attain these basic goals, and the current autocracy is always fighting and punishing any serious attempt to liberate media and politics.

The elite in Egypt, whether we refer to the traditional military or new business, often obstructs state-directed reformism with the pretext of defending liberty, and the efficiency of market forces. Besides, the absence of a well-oriented state, the bourgeoisie, and the civil society have been demolished completely, and in the best scenarios suffer from exacerbating inequality. In such a context, policies are often made on the hoof, yet civil society is still blamed for their acceptance of marginalisation instead of offering society through its key players a "guesstimate" about what they know. It is therefore crucial to give way to a leading group of public intellectuals, who have experience and knowledge, yet command the authority to challenge the current corrupted environment (Uwazurike, 1990, 55-77).

In Egypt, almost all the media players follow the 'patrimonial mechanisms' of governance that are predominately characterised by factional manoeuvring, client focused relations, and the exclusion of the middle class, which means a chain of personal loyalties, and coercion. In this context, 'prebendalism' is very common and makes journalists and media professionals, as well as politicians compete for public office to use them for personal benefit. Obtaining and maintaining clients requires "prebendal" offices to ensure the distribution of power and share interest among their circles. In this regard, unsecured rulers increase the capacity to reward followers and punish actual and potential opponents.

It is only possible to experience the emergence of popular democratic movement in Egypt if it is growing within the marginal grassroots to sustain a people-oriented progress. Nevertheless, the current cosmetic progress as a top-down imposed movement is beleaguered by domestic discontent and external pressure, and buffered by economic crisis, deep fissures, meaning short evidence. Accordingly, as Korten & Clark said, the development of a human, or people centred paradigm could certainly emphasise the progress role of civil society (Korten 1990; Clark 1991).

There is a growing phenomenon of either not reading carefully the statistics, or trying to project a positive context about the country, motivated by pride, lack of knowledge, or even a clash of interests, to presume that every young person in the region wanders the streets with their laptop. However, the paradox here lies in these delusions that are reflected in government statements about plans, distance

education without considering the millions of students who simply cannot afford to be internet literate.

A starting point is to clearly define the operational variables, by differentiating between fact and fiction. However, a main question is raised by Sahar Talaat that relates to the unresolved profound query between access and framing of many issues; for example, the real number of computers connected to the Internet and the social preference of the public in using and consuming Internet or any other mass media, as well as their assessment of their levels of satisfaction (Sahar Talaat, 2009).

In a qualitative study conducted with media professionals at their workplace and with media university students at their public or private universities or at their homes from study, by the British Council in Cairo (Saleh, 2009b), more than 90% of the sample of journalists and media professionals blame the state for the current fixation and for the lack of civil liberties, and 74% of the respondents strongly blame the government, while 16% relate the problem to the absence of social enterprise structures in society (Saleh, 2009b).

The problem may sometimes be the issue of resources, but it is often due to the lack of vision, and serious steps to attain it. Hence, the cornerstone here is the urgency to have a progressive developmental plan boosting a sound civil service that is able to design and implement programmes without political interference.

Fighting the widely spread corruption and nepotism, enhancing the freedom of expression, citizen journalism, and democratisation, as well as empowering street politics of the grassroots (the third sector or the marginal groups that are completely disregarded by the state) rather than prioritising the interests of the elite and the military are the foundations for a civil society.

The *Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics* census has also revealed that the number of computers is approximately 1,376,343, while the number of these computers with internet access is approximately 428,451, which is equivalent to only 32.1% of the total family-owned households in Egypt (Abd El-Wahab, 2009).

Having said this, the home-internet users may represent less than a quarter of this number, although there are obvious conflicting figures between *Egypt's Central Agency for Mobilisation and Statistics* and the *Ministry of Communications*. The fact remains in the analysis of these figures, that because the majority of the Egyptians are deprived the right to student education, this might be a real threat to a government adrift in cyberspace (Abd El-Wahab, 2009).

In this context, the Egyptian public express four main criticisms. The first is that the Egyptian media only endorses freedom of expression and the press half-heartedly, while ignoring other basic human needs. The second is that the media takes a superficial approach to freedom and democracy, which results in the marginalisation of the interests of the majority to preserve the ruling minority's interests. The

third problem is the media overemphasis on major regional issues such as the invasion of Iraq, Islamophobia, and the "resentment and tyranny" motivated by hatred towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict, while ignoring the vital local and national issues that affect the lives of the public directly and indirectly. The fourth problem deals with the simplistic official analysis of the multifaceted complexities that produce a perception of fear of the 'other', and the excessive use of force against opposition.

Distrust and doubt are a typical response to any mainstream discourse as a result of the lack of transparency and accountability, and negligence of public aspirations. Hence, the different mass media, especially with the possible effects of new media, could have a more effective role for civil society organisations, helping them recover missing freedom.

However, it is trivial to think that media could be a communication tool without empowering it with the capacity to stipulate good governance through governments' effective assistance. The Egyptian public is very frustrated with the results of poor governance. Economic growth and poverty reduction remain major challenges, but beyond remuneration, there are problems with management structure, human resources, staffing and career paths. The recruitment, capacity building and incentives of employees all need attention.

In conclusion, there is obviously a robust environment developing in Egypt that is full of vigorous competition of ideas that are attempting to cater to the needs of the public. However, this context does not provide for a multiplicity of views, nor space to observe government performance, as well as checking the level of corruption and abusive behaviour of different parts of society.

We suggest that media is used as a localised participatory democracy with maximum self-sufficiency. In the meantime, the media should aim to focus on the what is participatory, and the deliberative side of public spheres (Anderson & Geoff, 2007).

Media literacy could possibly be a powerful channel to attain what Ghandi described as "Charka", or the spinning wheel, by advocating policies, laws and actions, however this is only possible within the existence of a competitive environment in which alternative viewpoints are freely available and new organisations of scale are also present.

The first focus should be directed towards the level of citizens' participation in public life within political parties and outside them too, where journalism solves problems, while the second focus should be on engaging the public in timely issues to foster rational public discussions. In this context, breaking down the artificial academic barriers separating various fields is a mandatory action to deal with the "contentious politics," social movements, revolutions, ethnic conflict, by going beyond the structurally oriented work (Saleh, 2008).

To that end, there is an urgent need for supporting the process that promotes change and aids education and critical thinking as well as the other projects that

explicitly help people learn to coordinate and organise opposition to vested interests. Empowering civil liberties can gradually help reduce or end government control of the public media and of information flow.

The emergence of a strong and sound civil society is therefore a pre-condition for realising political parties, having a free, competitive environment, and enforcing the rules of law. However, civil society needs a dense network of autonomous associations, and building social consensus on democratic values. A priority is to deal with the endless domestic problems ranging from fractions in some countries such as Lebanon, or religious agitations as in Egypt, and ethnic and tribal issues as in Morocco and Iraq. The threat is that such fissures may be misconceived inside and across societies.

Strengthening civil society through collective self-empowerment can address such pressing needs and problems on their own, and mobilise demoralised government bureaucracies. Among the many profound challenges facing good governance in Egypt is the threat to power structures because regional governments want to maintain their manipulation and dominance, and never allow any expansion of civil liberties to ensure they are being followed. The reason is obviously that well informed people are automatically empowered, and become agents of change in societies (W. Maathain quoted in Topariz, 1990, 31).

This process of reform must be supported by experts with skills and vision to provide a new niche in the public sphere that can aggregate views about standards and the creation of an enlightened citizenry that reflects social mixes within individual societies.Without doubt, such political reform toward classical liberal values is a step towards engaging adequate media literacy and good governance.

Despite our present socio-political and economic difficulties, we live in a hopeful time, in which young generations seek out political news when they know that their elders and their peers care about politics. With the blossoming of this youthful interest, now is the perfect time for those who see a need to strengthen the connection between journalism and citizenship to act.

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