

Finding the Truth Amongst the Fakes

Social Newsgathering
& News Verification
in the Arab World



Finding the Truth Amongst the Fakes:

Social Newsgathering and News
Verification in the Arab World

Edited by Sam Dubberley, Montaser Marai and Diana Larrea

Al Jazeera Media Institute

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Social Newsgathering and News Verification in the Arab World

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Foreword

Verifying User-Generated Content in the Arab World

Photos, videos and eyewitness accounts have become one of the main sources of information in newsrooms around the world. You can no longer rely solely on reporters or news agencies. Every minute, more than four hundred hours of video are uploaded to YouTube, and each day, more than nine million images and video clips are posted on Instagram, and perhaps even more on WhatsApp and Facebook.

With this huge amount of content produced by ordinary users across social media platforms, many challenges have emerged on how to verify the authenticity of user-generated content (UGC) and what techniques and mechanisms should be used inside newsrooms to deal with such content, both professionally and permanently.

Despite all the efforts that have been made by various news outlets, mistakes continue to occur. Images and video clips that are aired and published every day on screens and other platforms are soon after proven to be either fabricated or taken out of context. UGC from and about the Arab world is no exception.

Moreover, current events in the Arab World make most of the daily headlines worldwide. Hundreds of photos and videos are captured on a daily basis and uploaded onto digital platforms. This situation has made media forums and institutes adopt a view of the Arab world as a case study, often overlooking the fact that the Arab experience in news verification is continuously growing, developing and strengthening.

In this light, this book aims to draw from the experience of Arab journalists and experts in the Arab World to help journalists enhance their news verification and social newsgathering skills. We hope the publication contributes to the ongoing debate on techniques and ethics that surrounds UGC and the use of digital platforms in the news production process.

Al Jazeera Media Institute

In Newsrooms... Mistakes Will Always Happen

Montaser Marai

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, many questions were raised about Al Jazeera: How does the network access videos of al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden? How does it verify the authenticity of these materials, their timing, or their recording location?

At that time, digital technology was not dominating the world as it is today, and thus, it was not easy to determine the location or timing because al-Qaeda purposely camouflaged and hid any indications of its whereabouts.

There is no doubt that Al Jazeera thoroughly checked the videotapes and followed its strict editorial policy before broadcasting them. However, the controversy that would be raised following the broadcast of these tapes did not concern Al Jazeera, who believed in the viewers' right to knowledge. Al Jazeera's main concern was the possibility of committing a mistake or broadcasting inaccurate material. Although the verification process depended primarily on human effort at that time, Al Jazeera followed a series of steps to validate the video tapes:

Assessing the Source and its Credibility for Al Jazeera

Watching the material carefully, analysing the form and content thoroughly, and verifying that it was free of any room for doubt. Seeking the assistance of experts and technicians to verify that the material was not fabricated or manipulated. Seeking the assistance of Al Jazeera's correspondent in Afghanistan, who

was knowledgeable about the region's political climate. Searching for another source to corroborate the validity of the video or sound recording.

The network paused for a moment before broadcasting the tape to discuss the content with the editorial board. The tape broadcasting was delayed many times to ensure that it complied with the editorial policy and professional ethics and to avoid falling into the trap of beating the competition and securing a scoop at the expense of accuracy.

Broadcasting the tape with some room for doubt, and informing the viewers of this to ensure transparency, Al Jazeera would often state that the tape was "attributed" to al-Qaeda without being final in its ruling on credibility, or the network would include the disclaimer that "the authenticity could not be verified". By this, Al Jazeera remained ethically responsible and realised that the editorial board's decision must be carefully deliberated.

Al Jazeera detailed the context in which it received the tape and opened a discussion on this with the viewers, with the assistance of experts and analysts.

The network presented all points of view, and the American perspective in particular, which published official statements confirming or denying the validity of the videotapes and voice recordings.

Major Transformations

In 1996, Al Jazeera capitalised on the huge worldwide transition from state-controlled terrestrial television to channels that could be received via satellite without censorship.

In 2006, Al Jazeera again quickly transitioned to digital media. It realised early on that the news industry was changing, and news coverage and audience interaction would witness a transformation, where the audience would no longer remain bystanders. During the same year, Al Jazeera established the new media unit to prepare for the future and help the channel in its transition phase to adapt to the rapid change. For the first time, there were technicians and journalists working together in a different dynamic, where technology intersects with media.

The highlight of this was greater interaction with the Arab audiences who follow Al Jazeera through digital platforms as well as on television. Citizen journalism started to expand, and Al Jazeera responded quickly to this idea for the following reasons:

- Al Jazeera from the outset decided to side with marginalised people, and refrain from focusing on the news of leaders and famous people.
- Al Jazeera believed that technological advances allow people to participate in broadcasting news and images and that a normal citizen can hold the role of a journalist, especially in areas where Al Jazeera correspondents are not present, while verifying and authenticating the material the audience sends.

Alternative media and citizen journalism would liberate the media from official control that promotes the agendas of tyrannical regimes and commercial media which prioritises profit at the expense of credibility and public interest.

Through the new media unit, Al Jazeera gave out dozens of cameras to activists in several areas of the Arab World to enable them to capture a glimpse of their reality. And in return, Al Jazeera used these images in its news coverage. However, the time was not yet ripe for testing the success of this experiment.

New Journalists

The idea of the new media and citizen journalists attracted the youth of Al Jazeera. In 2008, a plan was put in motion to produce a documentary on bloggers in Egypt. The blogs acted as alternative platforms for traditional media and conveyed the voice of youth criticising the political and social reality in Egypt. The film followed the story of four different bloggers whose blogs were widely read, a group of activists or new journalists carrying small cameras and running stories from inside the growing movement in Egypt against the regime of long-time Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and his attempt to pass on his position to his son Jamal Mubarak.

Al Jazeera strongly believed in the role of citizen journalists, and with time it acquired new sources of news, but these were not free of new challenges.



Link to access the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKKvc4sxwfw>

Al Jazeera's policy of verifying the validity of the material it received from the activists was based on its confidence in its sources and a vast network of citizen journalists that Al Jazeera recruited and sporadically provided with journalistic training. The challenge of fabricated images was not yet serious, and discovering mistakes in a video or shot received from activists was not easily achieved by Al Jazeera or its viewers.

Nevertheless, with time passing by, social media proliferated and became more important. Improved internet services and the proliferation of smartphones allowed a steady flow of videos and images. The Tunisian revolution sparked in late December 2010, and Al Jazeera played a significant role in covering the street demonstrations, challenging ousted President Zine El Abidine bin Ali. Al Jazeera's office in Tunisia was shut down following official orders at the time. However, thanks to videos sent or uploaded on social media by citizen journalists and activists, Al Jazeera succeeded in breaking the blackout imposed by the Tunisian regime and the world was able to follow the events up until the flight of President Bin Ali on 14 January 2011.

On 25 January 2011, the revolution started in Egypt. Thousands of young people responded to a Facebook call to take part in the demonstrations held on "Police Day" to expose police violations. The video clips received via social media enhanced the coverage of Al Jazeera's team on the ground, and in many instances the activists and amateurs who filmed the videos outdid the professional journalists. The strongest shots that moved the people around the world were those taken by amateurs in various Egyptian cities.

At the time, Al Jazeera provided a large platform for videos and images, and this ensured continued coverage from the streets and challenged the regimes that tried to combat these revolutions and withhold the picture from viewers. Al

Jazeera admitted that its coverage and crews on the ground would not have been successful without the efforts of activists and volunteers.

Former Director of Al Jazeera Network, Wadah Khanfar, who played a prominent role in leading coverage of the Arab Spring revolutions, wrote in British newspaper The Guardian:

“The Egyptian regime decided to close down the Al Jazeera offices and to ban its reporters and crews from working, thinking perhaps, that by banning Al Jazeera the truth about what the country had been going through could be obscured. That was not the first time an office of ours had been closed down in the region. On that same day, we sent out a message to our viewers in Egypt telling them: ‘If the authorities have banned our reporters from working, then every single one of you is an Al Jazeera reporter.’

Hundreds of activists responded immediately by supplying us electronically with a stream of news and video clips via social network sites. We dedicated a team of our editors to the task of receiving and documenting these contributions and then relaying newsworthy items to the newsroom. We succeeded in breaking the siege imposed by the Egyptian security apparatuses, thanks to the faith our viewers had in our mission and to our faith in their capabilities. We set up an entire network of volunteers and activists who supplied us electronically with news. In the meantime, our own crews spread out within Cairo, within Alexandria and within other Egyptian cities doing their job secretly. Al Jazeera technicians succeeded in providing live coverage from Tahrir Square by means of small satellite transmitters, which Egyptian security could not locate”.¹

¹ Khanfar, Wadah (2011, October 7). Journalism and a world in transition: Wadah Khanfar's James Cameron memorial lecture. The Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/NPHhXp>

Al Jazeera sought to validate the images received from activists in Tunisia and Egypt, but it cannot be said, at that time, that it had a clear policy and approach in dealing with these unconventional sources. It was a new experience and the acceleration of events required promptly processing the materials flowing through the internet and social media, which led to mistakes committed in the future.

In March 2011, the revolutions ignited in Syria and Yemen, and Al Jazeera was receiving much material. Al Jazeera broadcast video clips that it said portrayed the torture of prisoners at the hands of Yemeni security forces. It later appeared that this was an old footage of the torture of Iraqi prisoners during the regime of former President Saddam Hussein. Al Jazeera committed an unintentional mistake but it apologised to the viewers and corrected the story. The “Yemeni” channel that promotes ousted President Ali Abdullah Saleh took advantage of the opportunity to attack Al Jazeera and question its professionalism as a result of this mistake.

It was an important lesson that later led to enhancing validating mechanisms for the video clips and images. In spite of all the exerted efforts, the work approach was not as clear as it should have been, and was heavily dependent on individual efforts, perhaps because it was a new experience.

A prominent challenge arose when dealing with the materials coming in from Syria. I remember when I saw the video clip of the first demonstration in Hamidieh Market in central Damascus on 15 March 2011. I was browsing through YouTube that day for any material coming in from Syria after online calls to demonstrate and demand change. I obtained the video and presented it to the editing team in the newsroom, but everyone seemed to question its validity. The photographer insisted that the date was 15 March 2011 and that

the location was Hamidieh Market. The YouTube upload date for the video was the same date of the demonstration, and I was able to verify the whereabouts because I had been to Hamidieh Market on numerous occasions. In spite of this, I sought the assistance of colleagues from Syria to verify the spot and look for any signs that may confirm or deny the video's validity. We were unable to check with Al Jazeera's correspondent at the time, but I succeeded in verifying the facts through communicating with activists. I cannot say we were 100 percent sure, but we felt that the factors verifying validity outweighed all others, and this in fact was evidenced. Al Jazeera published the video that day after much hesitation and opposition from some.



Link to access the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-8y_AbcrR4

I do not deny that we sometimes made mistakes. For example, we post videos from Syria, only to find that they depicted events from another location or date. When possible, we corrected the news immediately in subsequent bulletins. Slowly, a new culture evolved in the newsroom, where video clips, images and news were verified outside a specialised division with a clear policy.

Verification Unit

Al Jazeera's interest in digital media started early, but in 2014, the channel decided to establish a social media unit inside the newsroom. A main duty of this unit was to check content produced by users (user-generated content), as it became an important source of news equal in importance to traditional news from the newsroom (correspondents and news agencies).

On 16 February 2015, Egyptian fighter jets launched an airstrike on the city of Derna east of Libya, which targeted – according to the Egyptian authorities – ISIL² sites, in response to ISIL executing 21 Egyptian Copts in the western Libyan city of Sirte. However, social media soon showed images of the Egyptian jets targeting Derna sites and killing three children, contrary to the official Egyptian version.

Al Jazeera's social media unit initiated an immediate online search in parallel with the news coming in about the Egyptian raids from the news agencies. It tried to track the pictures of the bodies of the three children claimed to have been killed in the raid. Direct contact was established with one of those who uploaded the image on Facebook, and he confirmed that it is 100 percent accurate. However, Al Jazeera had doubts since the admin of the Facebook page lived in France, not Libya.

² Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known as ISIS or Daesh. We refer throughout this text to ISIL.



Link to access the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75Ng0J6DdH0>

It was also found that he is originally a resident of the city of Benghazi and not Dirna, where the raid took place. An independent journalist was also contacted in Dirna via Twitter, who also confirmed the image's validity. A review of his account indicated that he provided valid information. Al Jazeera's correspondent in Tripoli also contacted several sources on the ground in Dirna, and thus, Al Jazeera developed the conviction that the image is valid and it consequently published it on its digital platform and in its bulletin.

Al Jazeera faced a backlash from the Egyptian media which claimed that the image of the three children was fabricated, and that the children died as a result of a gas heater leak in Tripoli. The media accused Al Jazeera of falsifying facts and attempting to misguide viewers. At a certain point, Al Jazeera doubted the validity of the image under the wave of criticism, and decided to remove it from its digital platforms and to refrain from using in its bulletins. It was without a doubt a moment of confusion, and the decision to remove the image was not a

sound one, because rescinding its story did not follow professional principles that proved that in fact the image was fabricated.



Link to access the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHLuLOIK59E>

Here, the traditional media played a decisive role: Al Jazeera's correspondent in Tripoli succeeded through his sources on the ground in securing an exclusive video that confirmed Al Jazeera's story and the validity of the image it published on the killing of children by Egyptian jets in Dirna. Later, Al Jazeera insisted on the validity of the story and the image, and it used the new video to corroborate its story that contradicted with the Egyptian authorities' version. It also broadcast a report outlining the path that the news story took and refuting the Egyptian media's claims.

For its part, Amnesty International confirmed that its investigation into the Egyptian raids against targets in the Libyan city of Dirna on 16 February 2015 indicated that at least two rockets fell on a residential area, killing seven civilians: a mother and her three children, and three other individuals.

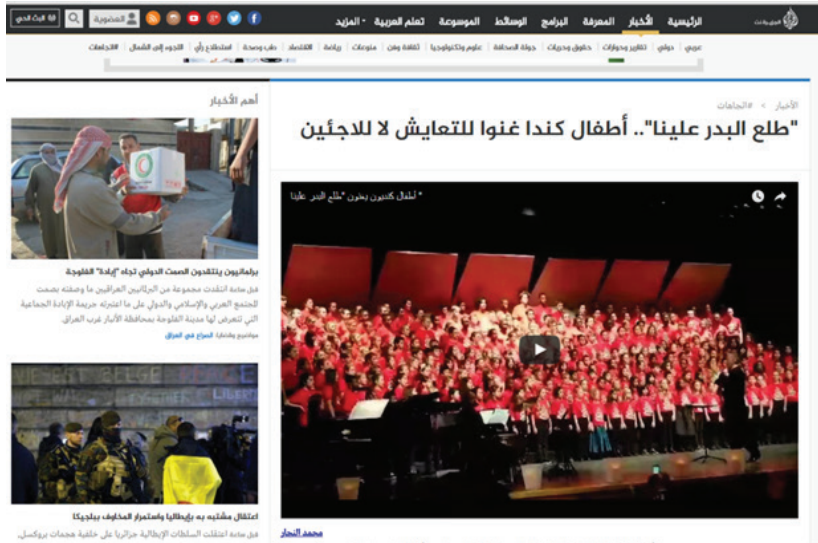


Link to access the news piece: <https://goo.gl/79UJ2l>

Mistakes Always Happen

Al Jazeera's next step to improve its performance in dealing with user-generated content (UGC) was to train the social media unit's team on new verification mechanisms, in addition to training around one hundred journalists from the newsroom on a basic understanding of UGC and its value as well as the challenges imposed by this type of content. In spite of all of this, mistakes happened.

In December 2015, a video was uploaded on social media about Canadian children singing "Tala Al Badr Aleina" in Arabic to welcome Syrian refugees. It later became clear that the video has nothing to do with Syrian refugees, and that it was misinformation spread by some and shared by many. Many television channels – including Al Jazeera – promoted the video without checking the story. Perhaps the global climate of sympathy with Syrian refugees around the world helped in the video's spread, especially in Canada whose new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed the first wave of refugees arriving in the country.



Link to access the video: <https://goo.gl/KLNTlw>

The digital platform, AJ+, made the same mistake as it appears in the video uploaded onto YouTube:



Link to access the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSgoZNkA92Q>

However, it took the initiative in admitting this mistake and corrected the story in another clip:



Link to access the video: <https://goo.gl/dtIRGv>

Conclusion

It seems that mistakes will always occur. It is the nature of journalism at the end of the day, especially with the digital platforms and the flow of hundreds of video clips and images on a daily basis. However, mistakes do not negate the fact that Al Jazeera's experience in authenticating and verifying digital platform content has matured as the channel learned from its mistakes and developed policies to become more methodological.

For the purpose of enhancing sound practices, The Al Jazeera Media Training and Development Centre published a brief manual that helps journalists understand verification mechanisms and how to deal with user-generated content. The guide can be consulted and downloaded from the following link: <https://goo.gl/UJxk8y>

To add more, the role of users or browsers cannot be overlooked in the evolution of this experience, as social media networks have allowed better monitoring of media and interaction with it, as well as highlighting mistakes as they occur.

Social Media Discovery and Verification as a Key Newsroom Skill

Majd Khalifeh

I did not include social media skills on my resume when I applied for work at the newsroom of the Belgian public broadcaster VRT in 2010. However, with every passing day, the importance of being able to use social media tools in professional journalism grows. A budding journalist applying for a job today needs to have these skills that I did not include on my resume over half a decade ago. I have produced many television news reports that have been inspired by social media. Some have drawn a lot of attention, many likes and have been shared widely by other media outlets.

I get really impatient when images and video clips do not arrive on time from the international news agencies. This impatience prompted me to resort to the internet and to explore the social media world and open up a new window of development in my work. The problem was not only images failing to arrive on time, but their limited quantity. Most international news agencies edit the footage (albeit slightly) before distribution. Thus, the need for original images and video sourced through social media has become the sum and substance of a scientific and sound methodological verification process.

A New Leap in the Newsroom

Voices of opposition continue to be heard against using social media sources in news bulletins. Many of these seem to be from veteran journalists who have a long experience in the field of news. These colleagues lived through various

leaps in the media world from the birth of the computer to the introduction of mobile phones. However, the social media leap in news may be the leap or change that is most difficult to be accepted. Although most politicians and government officials here in Belgium, and in Europe in general, post their opinions and verified official stories through their personal accounts on Twitter and Facebook, taking a car and using a camera and microphone to interview a politician remains the only method accepted by many in this older generation. This is in spite of the fact that important political decisions and news making events are frequently announced first on social media platforms. This only correlates with recent studies that show that the majority of today's youth follow news through social media platforms especially Facebook and Twitter (see chapter 7).

A Tweet is Worth a Thousand Stories

Take for example July 13th, 2015, when the most important news of the day in Europe was the European Union reaching an agreement on Greece's debt crisis. Failure to do so would have likely led to Greece's exit from the bloc. The news was uttered not from the lips of Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, rather from his fingers. Mr. Michel tweeted from inside the negotiation room, using his personal Twitter account, just one word: "Agreement". That one word carried a weight that I had not yet seen in my years working as a journalist.



The tweet was retweeted thousands of times in a matter of minutes.

However, the political exploitation of social media has not always been positive. There have been critical political ups and downs such as the moments faced by Theo Francken, the Belgian Minister of Immigration and member of the right-wing, conservative party, just days after his appointment. Members of Parliament dug up his past and demanded his resignation over phrases described as racist, which he had published on his Facebook account years before his appointment. Mr. Francken survived and did not submit his resignation, but he was forced to officially apologise in Belgium's Parliament for comments.

So, the question is: How do you become one of those journalists that can benefit from this world of social media? How can you learn the skills to break news faster than the agencies, to be on top of your beat in your region? One of the most important things is to ensure you have a Twitter account - and master the world of Twitter lists. Doing so will help you filter out the noise of people sharing pictures of your lunch, to actually get through to the important news.

Twitter Lists

My interest in Twitter lists comes from following tweets in the Arab World. I was simply reading too many retweets at peak times. At times of sports events, my "timeline" shifted to be made up mostly by tweets on sports and criticism of football teams and referees.

Therefore, the solution offered by Twitter to its users is through lists. By using lists, you can classify your followers according to their interests. A person who likes football is placed on the "sports" list, and another colleague who is a fan of films can be classified under "cinema". This way, you can tailor your lists according to the interests of those you follow and it makes it easier to move from one list to another according to what you prefer to read. Creating lists or

searching for established lists is very useful in important events and breaking news.

Creating a List

In your Twitter account, go to: <https://twitter.com/yourusername/lists>. On that page, click on “Create New List”. Give your list a name, decide if it should be public or private (tip, private lists cannot be seen by anyone, and the Twitter name added to this list is not notified), and start adding relevant people.

Searching for Lists

Lists created by other people can be easily searched through the Google search engine. For instance, to search for a list on Syria, enter the following search string into Google: site:

twitter.com/*/lists/syria

The advantage here is that you can benefit from work that other, reputable organisations have done in building their own lists. When you’ve found a list that’s of interest to you, just click subscribe, and you can see the list whenever you want. One downside, however, is that you cannot then add other Twitter users to the list yourself.

Monitoring Twitter like the Newswires

Any journalist used to working with the newswires should endeavour to work with Tweetdeck (<https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>). This platform allows you to monitor different Twitter lists at the same time, making your interaction with the platform much more productive. You can also set up and monitor particular

searches and search for Tweets on a map or in different timeframes. Tweetdeck really has become the platform of choice for the social media journalist.

Case Study: ISIL News - How to Monitor Newsfeeds through Tweetdeck

It has become my morning routine while drinking coffee to check and browse social media websites. As part of that routine, on Tweetdeck, I check the lists that I have curated to follow certain topics.

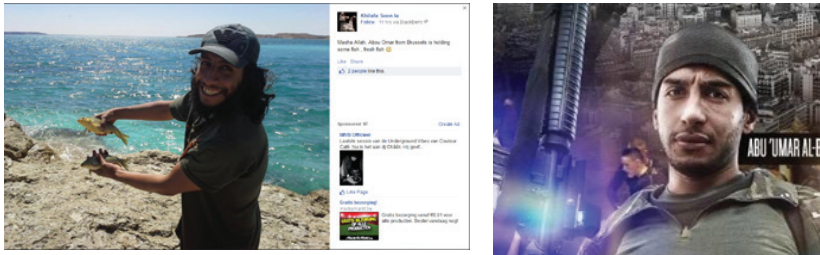
Over the last few years, social media tools have played, and continue to play, a very important role in creating a new area of newsgathering, and that is the individual and personal one. Had it not been for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, we would not have known much about reality in Syria.

As for the Belgian fighters who joined ISIL in Syria and Iraq, their personal accounts had an important role in offering alternative materials about ISIL outside the frame of the professional media propaganda it pushes.

For example, I have created a Twitter search to show all tweets containing the two words “Abu+Belgian” to follow all that appears on Twitter relevant to the Belgian fighters with ISIL in Syria and Iraq. Consequently, I was among the first to follow the accounts of Belgians who migrated to Syria to fight with ISIL, and among the first to follow Abdul Hamid Abaoud on social media. Abaoud was a main coordinator of the Paris attacks that took place in November 2015.

Abaoud and his Belgian and French comrades remained active on Facebook and Twitter early in their life in Syria. The images and videos that they posted on their personal accounts played an important role in influencing some youth and persuading them to migrate to Syria as well. Those photos and video clips did

not revolve around the war and the ongoing fighting in Syria, but about enjoying the “good” life in the so-called “land of the caliphate”.



Social Media Images Posted by Abdul Hamid Abaoud

Among these “happy and unique” moments – if they can be described as such - which were broadcast on the news and discussed by newspapers in Belgium, is a video uploaded by one of the ISIL Belgian fighters on Facebook, in which one of his Belgian comrades is seen playing and laughing with sheep in Syria, speaking in pure Flemish with a Belgian dialect. Another video depicts Belgian young men jumping into a pool near Al Raqqa city, playing and laughing in the water. I was the first journalist to find these videos by tracking the account of the Belgian fighter who published them.

Discovering Geolocated Tweets

It is possible to search for tweets based on geographical location by entering the following code in the Twitter search box: “Geocode:x,y,zkm”. Here, “x” and “y” are the longitude and latitude coordinates of the geographic point in decimal degrees. This is an eight-digit number. These are coordinates that are very easy to find from various mapping websites, such as itouchmap.com or Google maps. As for the “z”, this is the diameter of the circle to be searched in kilometres, with a 1-kilometre minimum. So, a search for tweets 1km around the Al Jazeera Media Training building in Doha, Qatar would look like: “Geocode:25.315098,51.496464,1km”.



Example of a geolocated search for images shot in front of Burj Khalifah in Dubai posted on Twitter.

The “geolocation” feature is important not just to find content breaking news but also for international and sport events. Try for example to follow tweets and images shot in front of Burj Khalifah in Dubai or from inside the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid during a soccer match. You will be taken aback by the number of tweets that do not have the hashtag or trending words used at that time, but are tweeting the event you are interested in. There are many Twitter users who upload images and videos without using an event’s hashtag. Therefore, it is preferable to search by geolocation as well as with the classic hashtag search. At the same time, we must also understand that only around 3 percent of all Tweets are geolocated, so other methods of search are also needed on occasions.



Example of a geolocated search for images shot in front of Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid, Spain

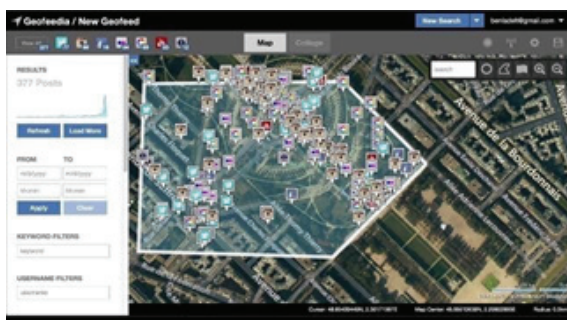
Case Study: Power Blackout in Amsterdam and Eyewitnesses Search

The people of Amsterdam woke up Friday morning, 27 March 2015 to a unique event. Power had been cut to large parts of the city and neighbouring towns. The news agencies that day could not match social media in terms of the quantity of posted materials. While news outlets were broadcasting live images from Schipol airport and some Amsterdam city streets, social media was buzzing with funny and light-hearted images and videos from the people on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

Geofeedia - a tool that allows us to monitor content posted to social media by location - was very useful in following the content stream including images and video, some of which we selected at VRT to broadcast in our bulletin. Geofeedia is a paid service that allows you to follow and monitor social media content flow

based on a geographic location. All you have to do is draw a circle or rectangle around a site on Earth in various sizes, and you will see all the tweets and Instagram and Facebook posts that are available instantaneously. It does not matter if the circle is around a continent, country, street or even a house.

In spite of the immense capacity of this application, the weakness is that the service is restricted to highlighting the geo-tagged posts of account holders. However, it remains an important application to follow news from the event location.



GeoFeedia screenshot

There are also free alternatives to searching for tweets or Instagram posts based on the geolocation for those who do not wish to pay money, as noted above.

Away from Twitter - The Evolution of Social Media Newsgathering

Journalists have historically depended on Twitter as the primary social media newsgathering tool. However, we have to pay close attention to how users' habits are changing and evolving - and this means we also have to understand how to use messaging apps to our advantage. This is covered in detail in Chapter 6, but here are some of my experiences with using WhatsApp - one of

the most popular messaging tools.

WhatsApp and Newsgathering

Since early 2014, after it was acquired by Facebook, WhatsApp's user base began to grow in Belgium and across Europe in general. In spite of the application's popularity in the Gulf and other Arab countries before 2014, it spread in Belgium later. Today, I still have many Belgian colleagues who find my use of WhatsApp in communicating with witnesses or investigating an important story bizarre.

Advantages Offered by WhatsApp to Journalists

- Easy and prompt sharing of images and videos taken by smartphone, which can be included in a television report after verification.
- Communication with witnesses where mobile networks are weak but internet networks are available.
- With internet connectivity, the application allows you to audio record statements.
- The application allows sharing the speaker's geographic location.
- End-to-end encryption - WhatsApp is now encrypted end-to-end - which protects against messages being intercepted. Careful, however, if the phone falls into unfriendly hands, this does not stop messages being read by someone you may not want them to be.

Case Study: WhatsApp and Palmyra's Victory Arc

A few hours after news leaked on the destruction of the Victory Arc by ISIL, I started looking for proof of the Arc's actual destruction. I first resorted to traditional social media methods (YouTube, Facebook and Twitter), but found nothing. I tried through some Facebook accounts to communicate with Palmyra residents, however most had left the city but did not change their place of residence on their personal accounts. After continuous research, I found a person in Palmyra through WhatsApp (see screengrab of the Arch here). The person offered to leak a video of the Arc after its destruction in return for money. My news organisation's management rejected the offer due to the large sum required, which was several hundred dollars in return of a short 15-second video.



Palmyra Arch video as offered to VRT

The next day, a video was shown by news agencies after the initial scoop by the Huffington Post.

Case Study: Direct Communication with Refugee Boats

Credit is given to WhatsApp in many journalistic searches and assignments that I worked on. In 2015, while hundreds of thousands of refugees arrived

and passed through the water passages between Turkey and Greece, I was able – after much work – to persuade a special group of volunteers to add me to their WhatsApp communications group. The volunteer group's mission was to track boats leaving Turkey for Greece and continuously communicate with a refugee until the boat reached safety. In the event of any emergency, the person in charge of the group communicates with the Greek or Turkish coast guard, depending on the boat's location.

I was able to monitor the group and its unique work for weeks and to include the search in the news reports. It is worth noting that WhatsApp can also archive the conversations to maintain information for future use.

The Challenges of Using Social Media in Newsgathering

Social media newsgathering brings with it many challenges - in particular in the area of verification - which is the theme of this book. Let's discuss some of these.

1. Events in Remote Areas

I was working in my newsroom in Brussels when the German Wings plane crashed in the French Alps in the summer of 2015. The crash happened in an isolated area without internet access, except for in villages that were far from the site of the incident. This made it more difficult to track information about the plane or its debris up close. On the other hand, to our advantage, we understood that there was no real content showing the crash due to the isolated geographic location of the event and were then able to dismiss so many of the images that were circulated in the first hour as they were fabricated or depicted past accidents.

2. Big Mistake on Egyptian TV

In October 2015, on the day the Egyptian authorities announced the crash of a Russian plane carrying tourists in Sinai, the images that were received from traditional Egyptian newsgathering sources were very limited. The Egyptian authorities also hindered the work of many of the photographers from international news agencies and restricted their access to the crash site. Accordingly, it took a few hours to access the first shots, which opened the door for fabricated images and clips. However, this only led to a big mistake by an Egyptian television news channel, which broadcast an old online video of an American plane crash in Afghanistan as the first scenes of the Russian plane's crash.

3. WhatsApp Use in Media

Verifying the individual's geographic location: In some sensitive areas, such as conflict zones, the witness may prefer not to disclose his location as a precaution, because his statements may impact their personal safety - or the safety of their families or friends. It is well-known that the registered phone number of the user does not necessarily reflect his whereabouts or country of residence. Many Syrians residing in northern Syria in the areas bordering Turkey use Turkish numbers because the Syrian phone network is either too weak or altogether unavailable.

4. Important Ethical Considerations for Using Social Media

Recently, I have been facing ethical issues in social media, especially with regards to breaking news. A large number of journalists in newsrooms around the world still do not pay attention to ethical issues and the safety of the others involved in the story. To be honest, I personally did not give this any consideration at the expense of getting the story or communicating with the witness as soon as possible. During important events, like a hostage situation,

after a victim tweets “I am fine” or “they are ten”, it does not take long for him to receive requests from international newsrooms to secure an exclusive interview. Unfortunately, many journalists do not take into account the fact that the witness may still be near danger. In hostage situations, the easiest and fastest way for a person to make his fate known is to tweet, but do not reply, like or retweet, before thinking first of what the tweet says. Nothing can guarantee that you are not the reason his phone rings because of your response or retweet while the person is still held by gunmen.

Therefore, think carefully before communicating with the victim or witness, and pay attention to safety. You do not want something bad to happen to someone because you were excited about news.

Recommendations for Journalists

- Try to search for a story in more than one language and dialect. If you are looking for images of the Jenadriyah Festival, try to enter the words using the Saudi dialect in the search engine, if possible. Do not suffice with classical Arabic or English.
- Pay attention to professional ethics and people’s safety. Do not get excited about finding a witness and working quickly in the newsroom. Be careful!
- Use Tweetdeck to monitor tweets and the topics that interest you. Try to create Twitter lists based on your interests.
- Do not forget the phone! Social media does not render it obsolete, and do not forget to search for local numbers and to communicate with sources on the ground. A nurse at hospital reception desk may give you information over

the phone that is much more accurate than a hundred tweets about a certain incident.

- Download the video before verifying it. There is no guarantee that it will not be removed or blocked from the internet minutes after it is uploaded.
- Develop your ability to search various social media outlets simultaneously to compare various sources.

Conclusion

Social media has revolutionised newsgathering. This means that the skills required to discover and verify a piece of social media content now need to be a part of every journalist's skill-set. Learn how to discover and verify content. Also, understand the ethical considerations about using such content. This book provides a good introduction to all of this. Use and learn from it.

Trusting What You See Online - It's Not Just About the Tools

Rose Younes and Eliza Mackintosh

The explosion of social media can be both a blessing and a curse for journalists. It has made anyone with a phone in their pocket a potential witness or source; it has allowed people to tell stories from places where journalists are not present, or where they cannot easily go. Yet it comes with its own problems, problems that can be boiled down to a single question: How can you trust what you see online?

Storyful's everyday work is aimed at solving this problem. Our work in verification of videos and images can turn something compelling, yet not *prima facie* reliable, into something that meets the highest standards of journalistic accuracy.

Whenever a Storyful journalist is confronted with a piece of potentially useful content, she asks herself three questions:

- Is this the original content?
- Can we verify the source?
- Can we verify what the video/image is described as showing?

The first question can be answered by using several methods - several of which are raised through this text. A key is to be quick off the mark: the sooner you are aware of a potentially newsworthy event happening, the sooner you will be searching. The more intelligent those searches, the more likely you are to find a source close to the incident, and before the process of mass copying and re-

uploading gathers momentum and muddies the water. Storyful has built several alert systems that monitor social networks for spikes in activity that could indicate a potentially newsworthy event. A Storyful journalist, monitoring these systems, will get a tip-off in real time, and then begin the search for emerging content. Storyful's in-house technology allows the building of bespoke, multi-platform automated searches, the results of which can be assessed and actioned by journalists as needed.

Identifying whether a specific piece of content emerging from this process is original is done using a variety of techniques.

- Reverse image searches, based on thumbnails from the video, may show an earlier version (see chapter 4).
- A second technique is to take keywords likely to be associated with the video (and in the language most likely to have been used by the original uploader) and searching those across various platforms. Again, this will often point to an original version.
- Searching the URL of the video or its unique identifying code on Twitter will bring you back to the first person to tweet about it - often the owner.

For the second question, the Storyful journalist looks out for giveaways that may cast doubt on the source's legitimacy. A detailed examination of a source's social profiles will usually give a convincing picture of where they were at the time of the incident shown.

- Are there tweets in the run-up to the event that place them at the scene? Does a Facebook page list a location that tallies with the given location of the video?

- Has the source shared previous material from the same location? Have they “liked” or checked into local places?
- Does the uploader habitually “scrape” videos from other sources and re-upload them?
- If there are multiple videos, are they of similar quality?
- Is there any other activity that might indicate a bias or agenda?

The final question is another crucial one, and, in practice, it is a summary of many other smaller questions, the answers to which are used to build an impression of whether, finally, a piece of content is reliable and useful for the purposes of journalism.

Many videos will have a stated location, so, the question arises: Can we show independently that the stated location is correct? Some question to consider are:

- Are there any landmarks or topographical details that allow us to verify the location via Google Maps or Wikimapia?
- Do streetscapes tally with geolocated photos on Panoramio or Google Streetview?
- Do vehicle registration plates, signs or shopfronts indicate the country or state?
- Do accents or dialects heard in a video indicate the location?

Often, establishing a location is a big step on the road to verifying content. Once that aspect has been investigated, Storyful looks at establishing a convincing date for the footage, independent of upload time or statements by the uploader. Questions to consider are:

- Do weather conditions tally with reports on that day?
- Do shadows tally with the time of day that this event reportedly happened?

What is seen in one video needs to be compared with as many contemporaneous sources as possible:

- Does it tally with other videos/images people are uploading from this location?
- Does the video tally with events being reported (through Storyful's curated Twitter lists, newswires and local news reports)?
- What, if anything, does the community we engage with say about this video?
- If the video contains dialogue, do the accents or dialects fit the circumstances it purports to represent?
- What additional information does the Storyful team have on it?

After all this, the Storyful journalist takes a step back. When the questions above are considered and answered to the best of our ability, we make a call. Often, it's literally a call to the uploader, having found a phone number; as frequently, it's a judgment on how reliable the uploader and the piece of content is. And,

even if all the indicators are positive, a Storyful journalist will still rely on gut journalistic instinct. If something doesn't feel quite right, we reconsider. If it's too good to be true, then, in our experience, it all too often is. This can be frustrating, but it's the price we pay for operating on our "Three Cs" model of consultation, courtesy and compensation - for us, it's not a piece of content that can be freely used unless the owner has been identified, contacted and agreed to the use of their content in clearly outlined scenarios and under clearly agreed conditions.

Case Study: Madaya - Storyful's Work in Practice

The first challenge Storyful faced when dealing with content emerging from Madaya, Syria in January 2016, amid reports of starvation in the besieged town, was sifting through dozens of old images that had resurfaced. We debunked several images purporting to show people starving in Madaya, using a mixture of tools, techniques and original reporting. By doing reverse-image searches using open source tools like TinEye and Google (see Chapter 4), we found that many of the images dated back to at least 2013 and were filmed in other besieged areas, then repurposed to draw attention to the worsening humanitarian crisis in Madaya.

Amidst all of this, there was one particularly harrowing video shared by a Facebook page for the Madaya Medical Authority, on January 6, 2016. The video showed a doctor interviewing a skeletal, but smiling, seven-year-old boy. To view the video, go here: <https://goo.gl/o2oWcr>

The Arabic transcript/English translation of the video is as follows:

- What's your name, my boy?

[شو اسمك يا عمو؟]

-Mohammed Essa (or possibly “Eid”). [محمد عيسى]

-How long have you been without food, my boy? [ياعمو أدیش صارلك بلا أكل؟]

-Seven days. [سبع تيام]

-Swear (by God that you are telling the truth). [قول والله العظيم]

-By God. [والله العظيم]

-Are you very hungry, my boy? [جوعان كثير ياعمو؟]

- [Nodding but saying nothing] [يهز رأسه إيجابا بلا كلام]

-What would you say to Mr de Mistura? ³ [شو بتقول للسيد دي ميستورا؟]

- [A slight pause with no answer] [فترة صمت قصيرة بلا جواب]

-That he'd let food in? [أنو يفوتلنا أكل؟]

- [Nodding but saying nothing] [يهز رأسه إيجابا بلا كلام]

-God willing, my child. [يلا انشا الله، ياعمو]

-And now what would you like to do most? [هلاء شو مشتهي أكثر شي تساوي؟]

- [No answer. The boy turns his head] [لا إجابة. الولد يدير رأسه]

³ The United Nations special envoy to Syria.

- What would you like to eat?

[شو مشتهي تاكل هلاء؟]

- [With a big smile] I want sweets.

[بابتسامه عريضة. أنا مشتهي الحلو]

-Yes, my boy. Soon. God willing.

[إيه عمو. يلا. تكرم عينك. الله كريم]

At first glance, the exchange sounded reasonably genuine. The boy's accent was typical Madayan, though the doctor's was not. But the setting could have easily been a hospital room in any besieged village.

For that reason, there was scepticism about the video. One of the earliest Facebook comments read:

شو هالطفل يلي مو أكل والصورة في نساء ورجال بالخلف صحتهم رائعة حاج
كذب حاج نفاق حاجي تخلو الشعب السوري يكره بعضو البعض حاج عيب عليكم
[ما ملينو 5 سنوات الثورة ضحككتو فيها على الناس ولهلقت ماحققتم إلا الخراب

"How come this boy hasn't eaten and [in] the background of the picture [there are] women and men looking so healthy and well-fed [?!] Enough lies [.] Enough hypocrisy [.] Stop making the Syrian people hate one another [.] Shame on you [.] Haven't you had enough? 5 years of the revolution and you've been making a laughing stock of the [Syrian] people, and achieving nothing but destruction."

Setting to work verifying this video, Storyful pored over the Medical Authority of Madaya's extensive archive of videos on Facebook and YouTube, dating back to 2013, looking for clues we could use for corroboration. All of the videos were described as having been filmed in Madaya's field hospital - one of the town's last remaining medical centres.

Due to the limited nature of the footage, taken inside a medical facility, we had to rely on markers like objects and materials pictured in the frame: floor tiles, medical cabinets, and stretchers.

The video shows a distinctive, multi-coloured medical cabinet behind the young boy. A similar storage unit appeared in a video shared on the group's Facebook page in 2013, which shows a patient being treated for a bullet wound (that video has since been removed). But the clip also presented a problem - the white flooring in the video of Mohammed did not match the distinctive green and white tiled flooring in the footage from 2013. The same green and white floor tiles featured throughout most of the videos shared on the Medical Authority of Madaya's YouTube channel, often seen when the camera panned from a gurney to the floor.

Searching for answers, Storyful reached out to the medical authority for further footage to corroborate the location.

As we waited for a reply, Storyful discovered the video of Mohammed on a YouTube channel belonging to Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS). It had been published several hours after the version on Facebook, but showed the same interview with the starving boy. The footage was surfaced by Storyful using reverse-image and persistent-keyword searches for Madaya. Versions of the same clip were beginning to be shared by foreign reporters covering the situation in Madaya, including a Middle East correspondent for ABC News Australia, Sophie McNeill, who confirmed to Storyful that she had been passed the footage directly by a SAMS-affiliated physician at the hospital in Madaya, by the name of Khalid.

Storyful contacted Dr. Ammar Ghanem, a board member at SAMS, who are

a group of Syrian American physicians focused on providing medical relief to the war-torn country.⁴ Dr. Ghanem corroborated Khalid's identity, describing him as a nurse anaesthesiologist. He said that Khalid had been vetted through SAMS's network and his contacts in Zabadani, a town neighbouring Madaya, where Dr. Ghanem used to live. According to Dr. Ghanem, Khalid was from Idlib, but had been living in Madaya for four years, where he worked in the field hospital. He explained that SAMS had set up a WhatsApp number for Khalid to share videos showing the situation in Madaya, to get the word out about the worsening conditions.

Our only other contact in Madaya, the Facebook page Madaya, also said they knew of Khalid and that he was originally from Idlib.

Storyful called Khalid to confirm that he had filmed the video. The man who answered the phone sounded familiar. It was the same voice as in the video with Mohammed, speaking an educated Arabic rather than the distinctive, broad Madayan accent. Khalid said that he filmed the videos and shared them to the hospital's Facebook page.

The situation was terrible, Khalid said. Children and old people were dying of malnutrition and dehydration, and the few medical supplies left could not cope with the crisis.

Khalid was able to explain the discrepancy in the floor tiles, saying that there were two hospitals in Madaya - one for daily cases and the other for operations and intensive care. The operations, he said, were done in the facility with the green and white floors, whereas the starving people and ordinary patients were

⁴ To access the SAMS report on starvation in Madaya, please go to: <https://goo.gl/w0lty2>

in a different hospital, with white-tiled floors.

To confirm that he was at the hospital in Madaya, Khalid said he would send a video of himself in the facility where he had interviewed Mohammed.

The following day, Storyful received a 15-second video on WhatsApp featuring the same room at the Madaya Medical Centre, with the colourful storage container, white-tiled flooring, and nearly empty shelves. Khalid appeared briefly in the footage. Though he was wearing a surgeon's green mask to protect his identity, his voice was clearly identifiable.

Footage shared by Qasioun News Agency on January 7 also showed the same Madaya medical facility, and was used to corroborate the location.

We shared the video of Mohammed on Storyful's Newswire, as well as more footage shared by Khalid from the hospital, distributing it to the world's leading news organisations. Two days after our conversation with Khalid, Storyful received a WhatsApp message from him saying that aid had finally reached Madaya.

Conclusion

Storyful's experience in working on material from Madaya is a reminder that journalists, particularly those used to using social media, should not be too blinded by the power of online search and verification tools. It is still necessary to pick up the phone, and to cross check facts from multiple sources. In an extreme situation, there are many players, and many agendas. It may seem a cold exercise to demand pedantic information from someone in such fraught circumstances, especially during a humanitarian crisis. But, that is the very

situation in which the facts become muddled: When people's desire to believe both the worse (by sharing old videos and images) and the best (by trusting the word of unknown people online who say they are, for instance, local to an event and seeking aid), can combine to create an inaccurate picture. On the other hand, because of independent verification work, material like that discussed here, because reliable, becomes even more powerful.

Why Social Media Storytelling Can Take You Closer to Your Audience

Ethar El Katatney

Telling stories is what we do as journalists, and it's what we've been doing since we first picked up our pens and notebooks. Whether for a newspaper, a blog, a TV station, or for Snapchat, our tools may have changed from a pen and voice recorder to a camera and microphone and now to a smartphone and video editing software, but in essence: we still tell stories.

At AJ+, we target a young, digitally savvy, constantly connected millennial audience. An audience with short attention spans that consumes content through social media platforms and is continually exposed to ever-improving visually compelling content. More animations, less traditional hosted news segments. Faster, clearer, sharper content.

We continually grapple with issues journalists just a decade ago never had to think of: how to tell the news in 15 seconds? How to tell the news with no sound, since people are watching on their phones on their commute to work? How to get your audience to engage with a story about tragedy in Syria when it's competing with a scrolling Facebook feed full of baby pictures and friends' engagement photos? How do we get people to share the video, since shares are exponentially more valuable than likes?

These are just some of the many, many questions we ask ourselves daily. Our toolbox as digital journalists thinking mobile first, tailoring our content for our variety of platforms, and measuring our success using different metrics every other month, is full of new, shiny tools. For the purposes of this chapter, we will

be discussing one of these tools: how AJ+ uses social media to engage our audience and tell better stories.

Why Social Media

82 percent of US adults aged 18-29, our target audience, are on Facebook. People watch over 100 million hours of video on Facebook each day.⁵ It is, without a doubt, our biggest platform to date. But other platforms are gaining steam: 52 percent and 41 percent of teens in the US are on Instagram and Snapchat respectively.⁶ More than 80 million photos ⁷ are shared on Instagram, and 10 billion videos ⁸ are viewed on Snapchat a day. Over 75 percent of global video views on Facebook occur on mobile devices.⁹

Cable is obsolete. Hosts are boring and long-winded. News reports are stagnant and old-school. 38 percent of households with a resident between 18 and 34 years old do not even have cable TV subscription.¹⁰ They stream

⁵ Facebook Business (2016, February 10). Capture Attention with Updated Features for Video Ads. Facebook. Retrieved from:

<https://www.facebook.com/business/news/Features-for-Video-Ads-UK>

⁶ Lenhart, Amanda (2015, April 9). Mobile Access Shifts Social Media Use and Other Online Activities. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/n76zLn>

⁷ Instagram News (2015, September 22). Celebrating a Community of 400 Million. Instagram. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/Hb8a3e>

⁸ Firer, Sarah (2016, April 28). Snapchat User `Stories` Fuel 10 Billion Daily Video Views. Bloomberg. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/sHJmZL>

⁹ Dredge, Stuart (2015, April 23). Facebook 'excited' about ads potential as it reaches 4bn daily video views. The Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/RBYS7K>

¹⁰ Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (2016, July 13). One-Quarter of US Households Live Without Cable, Satellite TV Reception – New GfK Study. GfK. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/EnG0jN>

shows, listen to podcasts, send thousands of instant messages a day. Social media is the environment they are constantly surrounded by; it is where they are. It is fully a part of our lives today, seamlessly integrating into our stream of consciousness. The competition for eyeballs is fiercer than it ever was. News is competing with brands, advertisers, politicians – all willing to shell out to capture a slice of an ever-decreasing attention span.

It is a natural evolution for news to begin to integrate social media into their reporting on news. One of the earliest adopters was *The Stream* – a pioneering show by Al Jazeera that integrated tweets and Skype calls into their daily show. Several years later, however, the reality is that a daily one-hour show that isn't even available online is both too cumbersome and too long for today's audience. The 30-year-old that used to sit through a two-hour documentary can no longer sit through a 30-minute show, let alone the 18-year-old who taps through their friend's Snapchat story because the 10 second maximum for a photo or video feels too long.

News breaks on social media before traditional news every single time. The live-tweeting and live-streaming my colleagues and I utilised during the Egyptian revolution has gotten smarter and savvier. Tools to timestamp, geographically verify, and vet people who tweet are aplenty, from Storyful to Dataminr to SAMDesk. Faster internet connections and convenient live-streaming that send push notifications to your twitter followers through Periscope couldn't be easier. While on the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia in 2015, with a touch of a button I was live-streaming to the entire world the aftermath of the stampede that killed hundreds of people. I recorded interviews with survivors using nothing more than my iPhone, sent the interviews via WhatsApp and Slack to my colleagues, and the story was up before you could blink.

Time is of the essence. Being first to the story is no longer about having the story at the top of the hour, or even the minute. Today, it is about seconds. The news that is picked up, retweeted, re-shared, and exponentially amplified, is the news by the person who got there first.

But AJ+ is not a traditional newsroom. Most of the time, we do not have our own staff on the ground around the world to report for us. We use content curated online, by other eyewitnesses. This gives us thousands of journalists and unhindered access to as many corners of the world as our keyboards can reach, but the same questions of citizen journalism and user-generated content remain as valid today as they did a decade ago: how do we verify the footage, images, audio? How do you know the framing of the footage? The agenda of the shooter? The context and nuance behind? Is it fair to use this footage without permission? What if we reach out and they don't answer us in time? Do we pay later? Do we have a fair use argument? In this chapter, we will highlight some case studies of how we use social media – the home runs, and some flops. We will discuss how social media content sourcing helps us tell better stories, and briefly touch upon how we use social media platforms to drive traffic as well.

New Year's Eve in Dubai

On New Year's Eve 2015/16, a massive fire broke out in Dubai at the iconic Address Hotel. Being on the West Coast of the United States rarely plays to our advantage in terms of our time zone, but in this case, it did. The fire started soon after 10pm Dubai time, which was early afternoon at the AJ+ headquarters in San Francisco. As with many stories, it broke on Twitter. At AJ+, we are subscribed to a service called Dataminr, which uses geotagging to attempt to verify tweets. Before the news broke on traditional media, at least 15 minutes

before I got a push-notification from the BBC saying there was a fire, I had the news. I had tracked down two Twitter accounts of people posting videos from opposite sides of the building from different views, as well as three people who were using Periscope to livestream the event – one from the base of the hotel at a restaurant, one from a high-rise across from the hotel, and another from a high-rise across the city - with a view of the entirety of the hotel. The footage was immediate, visceral, and powerful since it was not recorded by a steadfast journalist but a panicking viewer (“Oh God, it’s burning! How will they get the people out?”).

For this footage, verification was easy: the footage was live-streaming, the Address Hotel is easily identifiable, it had never been on fire before, and the people live-streaming were discussing the date, the fireworks, identifying where they were and what they were seeing. The tweets were posted just minutes ago, and were appearing by the dozens every minute. I had more than enough content to create an AJ+ story.

[**Pro tip:** when searching for eyewitnesses on the scene who are live-tweeting/streaming, use the keywords “I” “I’m” “my.” Deutsche Welle has a list of tips for finding breaking news.¹¹ Searching for keywords and swear words (in the language of the country the incident is happening in) are also good tricks.]

But the footage did not belong to us, and we did not have permission to use it. The majority of the footage uploaders weren’t answering the dozens of media asking for permission to use their footage. One did. Time is of the essence. Tick Tock.

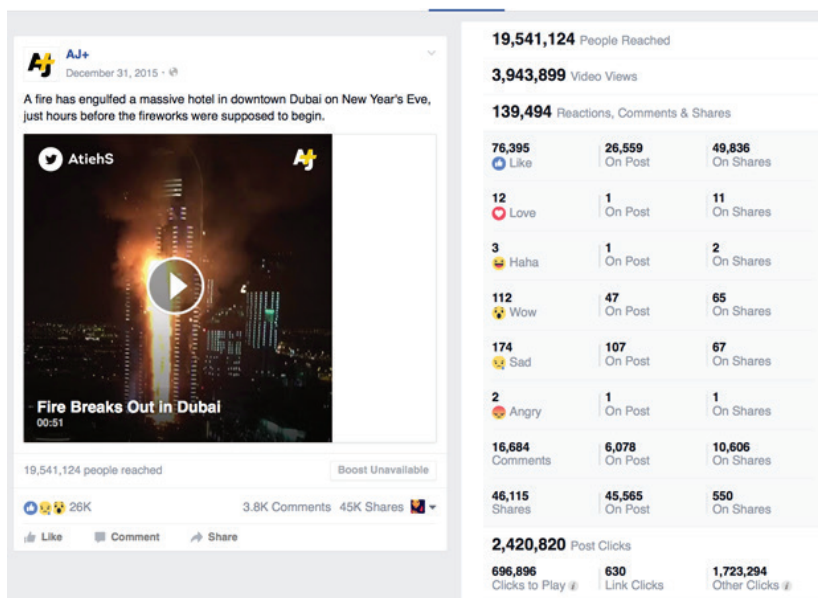
¹¹ Julia Bayer and Ruben Bouwmeester (2016, February 19). How to find breaking news on Twitter. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved from: <http://www.dw.com/en/how-to-find-breaking-news-on-twitter/a-19061495>.

Fair use and fair dealing is a long, complicated topic that varies from country to country. For the sake of convenience, let me summarise by saying that, as a news organisation headquartered in the United States, I felt we had a compelling argument to use the UGC without permission. Our story was transformative for the following reasons: we did get permission for some of the content (one eyewitness even sent me footage via WhatsApp that wasn't published anywhere else); the people posting were recording for the world to see; we did not use any one source and as such were not simply ripping their content; we added tweets (which are typically in the public domain, AJ+'s version of vox pops), and included a statement by the Dubai police posted on social media, and included a short script detailing what was happening.

Today, if you wait for the wires, you will be hours late to the story. On New Year's Eve, I was the only producer working. Within an hour of seeing the first tweet pop on my radar, I had published the story. Text on screen, music, cuts, transitions, texts, subtitles.

There is a sweet spot with a story like this: people hearing there's a fire, a curiosity gap to see the shot of fire and provoke emotional arousal, to know what's going on, to gawk, but not necessarily to tune in to a 20-minute shaky periscope. And for our target audience, who not only are not watching or even own televisions, but will most probably not have channels in the Middle East who would have the news first, this is a prime kind of story. It is a story that is in no way polarising and so not shareable, is timely, is different than traditional news reports, and as such: a success.

The video had over 3 million views within the day. And more importantly: over 40,000 shares. At the time of writing this, it had a reach of 20 million people.



Female Suicide Bomber

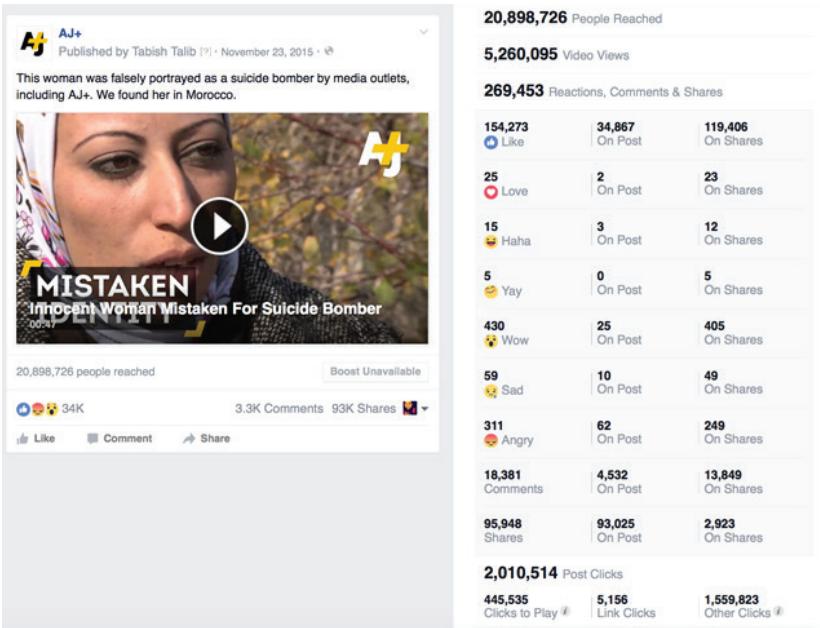
The terrible events in Paris in November 2015 were of worldwide importance. Over several days, we produced a number of stories as developments occurred.

A couple of days after, news of a female suicide bomber who blew herself in a police raid on November 18 as police circled her building broke during our production day.

AP had footage of the attack – and in it, they identified the woman Hasna Ait Boulahcen. There were, however, no photographs of her.

The internet and social media had started circulating images of her. Using these images, we felt fell under fair use since they were adding value to the

story. However, our major problem here was verification – regrettably, we did not take the time to track down where the images came from. Our mistake was assuming that other news outlets who ran with the images had verified them, which was, of course, not the case. We were equally as liable as the first news outlet who bought pictures that were not given freely, and ran with them as fact.



In fact, the photos were of a Moroccan woman, Nabila Bakkatha, who lives in Morocco. We corrected the error by working together with Al Jazeera Arabic, who had tracked her down, and running an interview with her explaining her side of the story. Our follow-up correction story did extremely well – we admitted to our error, had original footage, and had her tell her story of how the internet made her a victim of mistaken identity.

Palestine

Between UGC and highly produced stories by our video journalists, we have a version of reporting that combines old-school journalism with social media to curate and report in bursts of soundbites, images, information and live-reporting. When we deployed a team to report on the ground in Palestine, they filmed for longer highly informative pieces that told a larger story, which were edited in our offices, such as one on the separation wall, for example. But that's not all they did.

One of the things that works best for AJ+ is raw-like videos. People like the snapshots, and not the highly produced pieces. The rawness gives immediacy, closeness to the moment. They tell the human stories. Even though shooting on mobile produces shaky footage that is nowhere near the quality of cameras in audio or video, delivery is almost immediate, and the story is the same. The difference is speed.

In Palestine, our producer and host would upload Instagram photos of children playing football. They would record soundbites from young men who were throwing rocks using their phone. These pieces connected with our audience. They live-streamed, filmed and edited on their phones and tweeted photos and video as news broke.

Unlike agency footage, which is still filmed according to high broadcast standards – wide shots, vox pops with people looking straight into the camera, cut away shots and so on, footage produced for AJ+ is much closer to citizen journalism, with the professionalism, rather than the polish of agency footage. When we produce, we think social media and app-first, and think of the consumption patterns of each distribution platform.

Footage on the ground by citizen journalists is much more powerful, much more first person. The shakiness of it, the words spoken, the rawness, all contributes to creating more powerful footage. The biggest benefit to us being on the ground and not relying solely on UGC is clearly verification. But for our online audience, social media meant producers could live-tweet powerful quotes, snap images, even quickly interview and stream a sound bite. Mobile reporting teams are the future of breaking news. Our coverage in Palestine increased our audience by thousands. And then we replicated it following refugees across borders in Europe – which won us a Webby award.

As AJ+ producer Shadi Rahimi put it:

“Mobile reporting offers the opportunity to engage directly with the social media audience – i.e. our target millennial viewership – unfiltered and in real-time. The reason much of our [...] content went viral had to do with these main factors: 1) Relevance; 2) Timing (immediate delivery on social platforms); 3) Conforming to social norms/standards (the sharing audience members raised their social profile by associating themselves with the content first); 4) Raw emotive video. [...] Social media audience appreciates raw video, despite the quality, because there’s a layer of trust built when there’s no editing”.¹²

The rawness, as we said, is a key part of our success. We search for emotive moments that provoke reaction: positive, happy, negative or angry. People share content that provokes reaction. And our millennial social media audience is a generation of media consumers that trusts the raw over the polished.

¹² Rahimi, Shadi (2015, May 1). How AJ+ reported from Baltimore using only mobile phones. Poynter. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/4iqLOY>

Cover It Live: Periscope, Snapchat, Facebook Live, Instagram

When we began piloting for AJ+ in 2013, many emerging platforms such as Periscope and Facebook Live did not exist, even though live-streaming did. In our early days, we used Stringwire to livestream, which was routed to our YouTube channel but was choppy and unreliable. Periscope was smoother: it changed the media landscape, as have its push notifications to our Twitter followers. As the tools to better engage our audience grow, so do we.

During the height of the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe, we deployed a presenter, producer and shooter to follow refugees. We used a multiplatform approach in an unprecedented way. It was our first foray into Facebook Live, and this experiment did exceptionally well. Considerations of time zones was taken into account when deciding when to go live – research shows engagement is a lot higher when people tune in while we are live rather than watching later. Unlike television, which relies on a presenter detailing the news, our streaming was much closer to citizen journalism – literally walking with refugees, talking to them, showcasing children. We told the human stories and were a forum for live conversation between refugees and viewers – allowing our audience to engage by asking questions of the refugees relayed by the presenters. Just as with Ferguson and Baltimore in the United States, we believe that communicating directly with the social media audience is what works now.

Our stories go beyond the reports we create – the behind the scenes on several platforms has done very well. For example, the producer in Palestine took over our Instagram account, sharing short stories as captions of photos. A presenter in New Hampshire took over our Snapchat channel, live-snapping Bernie Sanders on stage during a campaign event for the Democratic nomination for the presidency of the United States.

As an entity that does not have our own bureaus, we often rely on local video journalists on the ground to cover events of interest to our audience – in the United States this has been from Black Lives Matter Protests on university campuses to the takeover of a federal building in Oregon by armed anti-government protesters. They take over our Periscope feed, and though hearts are the easier way to measure engagement, the metrics we use are in development. The video journalist records short interviews on their phone, and sends it to us via a Slack channel we have created. Although this technically is not UGC, the way we record, share and distribute this content is very familiar to our target audience's way of consuming social media.

Looking Forward

By the time this gets published, and by the time you read it, AJ+ will be experimenting with even more emerging platforms. Facebook Live has become a game changer. Virtual Reality, 360-degree video are tools we have started to experiment with, and we are learning about.

From the birth of AJ+ to today has been a rollercoaster, and one in which AJ+ has learned so much. We're clearly on the right track: on Facebook for example, our engagement scores are through the roof. We average half a million interactions every single day, and a reach of 30-40 million people per day – all organic, nothing paid. We're growing, and we're expanding.

But six months from today, a year, we can't look like we do now. We were lucky to be innovators in this field, but a lot of competitors are now snapping at our heels. If we aren't changing and adapting and experimenting and innovating, we won't grow.

As any organisation at the forefront of digital storytelling experience, we have to constantly stop and remember that the industry is shifting rapidly. Existing on social media platforms, we are at the mercy of their algorithms.

Social media is our bedrock – but we know that there are only so many Tweets people will see before they get bored. GIFs are something we are experimenting with. Should we be including different kind of content? Images? Memes? More infographics? Medium posts? Partnerships? Should content be more tailored for each platform? Should we hire an emoji expert for Snapchat?

We're experimenting with comedy and skits. Targeting a younger audience. Should we crowdsource information from our audience?

Every day, new questions and issues come up. And every day, we have to tackle them head on. But one thing is clear: AJ+ has its finger on the pulse of the internet, the language of our audience. We understand our audience, we are our audience, and we have found our niche. We make people laugh, we make people cry. Our content empowers, engages, and informs.

Verification of User-Generated Video Sourced from Social Media

Mahmoud Ghazayel

In this chapter, we turn our attention to the steps required to verify video sourced from social media website. We look at some of the steps to take in the verification process and why this is important.

As covered in earlier chapters of this book, the use of eyewitness video sourced from social media is crucial for the modern news organisation. However, before using any video sourced from the internet, news organisations and journalists must place emphasis on verifying this content. This applies equally to all content that a journalist wants to use in their reporting - from videos of breaking news to side stories.

We will present some of the free tools that should be used in any video verification. We will discuss how these can be used, and some of the methodologies and workflows that should be used for verification. It's important to note, however, that this is not exhaustive, and the reader should understand that new verification methodologies appear all the time. Therefore, any journalist interested in verification should always be on the lookout for new tools and new methods.

What Kind of Fakes Exist?

First of all, let's think about the different types of false UGC we can fall into the trap of using if we don't fully verify where it comes from.

UGC can be classified as follows:

- Completely authentic - the video is what it says it is, it shows what it says it shows.
- Authentic but occurred at a different time period - the video took place at the location the uploader says it did, but not at the time the uploader said it did.
- Authentic but occurred in a different location - the video is real - but depicts an event that took place at a different geographic location.
- Non-authentic and manipulated by adding false components - the video is fake in some way.
- Intentionally fabricated by using actors or a specific directing method - the video is a complete hoax and was published with the intention of misleading.

One of the most important points for the social media journalist to accept is that it is virtually impossible to fully verify the accuracy of an eyewitness video 100 percent. However, by using the tools discussed here, we can go a long way towards helping us in verifying social media content.

The Questions Every Journalist Should Ask Themselves as They Embark on Verification

Verification of a video requires a process to be completed every time, and requires you to ask yourself several questions.

- Where has the video come from? Did you find it on a social media platform?

Was it emailed to you? Did a colleague share it with you? Did it come from a trusted source? Did it come from someone you don't know?

- Did the source of the video also create the video, or did they simply share it with you? Can you work out the chain of custody?
- What visual clues are there in the video to help you verify it? Are there religious buildings, shopping malls, phone numbers you can search for? What is the weather? Any clue can help in the verification process.
- Why do you think the content was created? Some people wish to mislead, some people have political agendas. Some people are simply passing by an event. What can you find out about the person sharing the video to help you answer this question?

Answering these questions will help you build a case in your mind as to whether or not a piece of content really depicts what you are being told it does. What we will show below is some of the tools you can use to help you answer these questions.

Reverse Image Search

The number one critical skill for the social media verifier is reverse image search. While this is designed for photographs (see the chapter on photograph verification), we can also use it for video by capturing screenshots of the key frames in a video and conducting reverse image search on these frames as if they are photographs.

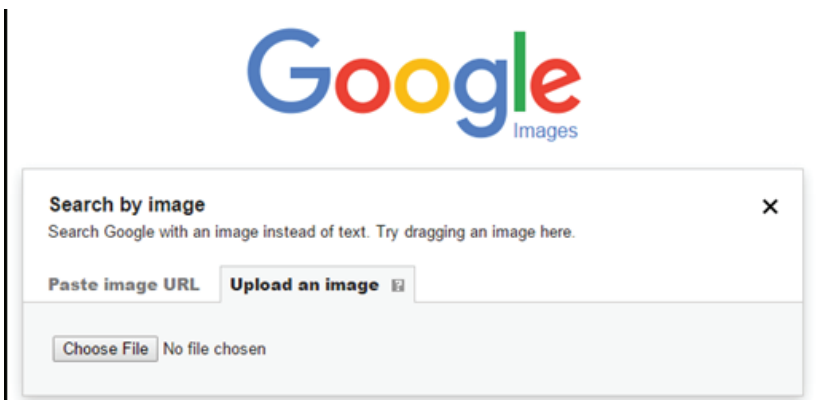
When you have watched the video you wish to verify, choose

screengrabs of the important frames of the video. When this is done, we can proceed with a reverse image search of the key frame. There are two main reverse image search engines. Google Image Search (<http://images.google.com>) & TinEye (www.tineye.com). Here, we will only show the workflow with Google Images as both workflows are very similar. Please note, however, that it is a good idea to use both search engines as they contain different image databases.

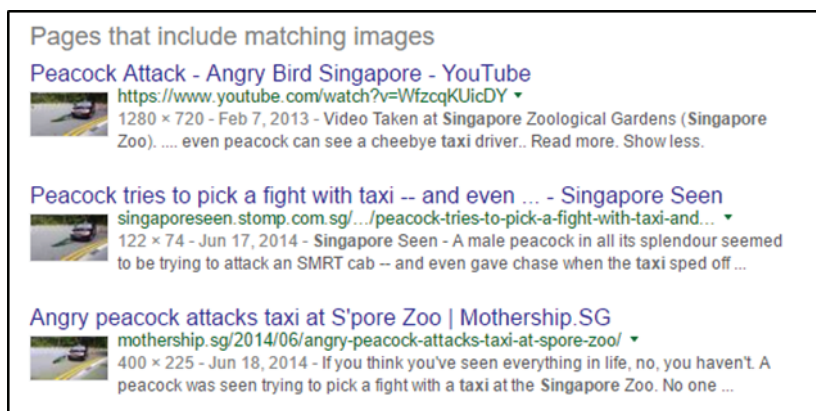
Access Google Image Search through
<http://images.google.com>.



You can upload the screengrab of your video either clicking on the image saved on your computer and dragging it to the search page, or clicking on “Upload an image” then “Choose file” and selecting your screengrab.



After uploading the image, a search of the Google image database is conducted (as can be seen below). The results of this search display any similar shots taken from the same video under verification. This will provide information on the content of video clips, most importantly the date on which the video was uploaded to the internet. Check this date with the date of the event of the video you are trying to verify and if they do not collate, a red flag should be raised over the video.



Reverse image search is the most useful process to use in verification of videos, so ensure you carry it out with any video you wish to verify. It is, however, crucial to understand that reverse image search does not tell you when a picture or video was taken. It can help you ascertain if a video or image has been uploaded to the internet before and, if so, when this upload took place.

If your video is on the social media platform YouTube, you can avoid the screengrab method by using the YouTube data viewer developed by "Amnesty International". It can be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/citizenevidence/>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Youtube DataViewer

© 2015 Amnesty International USA | 5 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10001 | 212.807.8400

This tool is useful for two reasons. First because it provides the investigator with an accurate video upload time of the YouTube video in standard UTC (also known as GMT). Second, the tool automatically selects four key frames from the video to be ready for a Google image search. To do this, just click on “reverse image search”.

Video ID: wtCM3gNm3Y8

Upload Date (YYYY/MM/DD): 2014-12-17

Upload Time (UTC): 15:01:58 (convert to local time)

Thumbnails:



[reverse image search](#)



[reverse image search](#)

The Importance of Knowing How Different Social Media Platforms Display Upload Time

If you have indeed found results that suggest your video was created prior to the event you are told it depicts, ensure you understand how each social network displays upload time. A good example of why this is important is the video shared of the chemical weapons attack on Ghouta, Syria on August 21st 2013. Videos from the attack were uploaded on the morning of August 21st in Syria, leading the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to question the authenticity of video clips as they were listed on YouTube as having been uploaded on August 20th. YouTube's time and date settings default to Pacific Time - i.e. the time at YouTube's headquarters in California - meaning that default setting showed the upload to be on August 20th due to time difference. Putting the upload to UTC would have helped this mistaken claim to have been avoided.

Other Visual Clues

As mentioned above, ensure you check for other visual clues in a video as you watch it. For instance, what is the weather in the video? Does that correspond to what weather reports say the weather was in the location on that day? You can use the computational search engine Wolfram Alpha (www.wolframalpha.com) to check that. Are there mountains, hills, road signs, places of worship, shops, telephone numbers that can be double checked with online maps or via other search methods?

Checking all of these clues is crucial to build your picture of whether a video is depicting the event in question.

Translation

Many videos we wish to use and verify as journalists are not uploaded to social media sites in languages we necessarily understand.

If the video supposedly depicts an event in France, the description of the video would likely be written in French. To help here, while not always fully reliable, the Google Translate is among the translation tools that can help. This is accessed through <http://translate.google.com>, and is also available as a browser add-on in Google Chrome. If added, the journalist can use the add-on by simply right-clicking and choosing the language to translate to.

Whereas in order to search for similar video clips, the user can use “Google translate” feature to find keywords that can be used when searching for videos on YouTube. The user should refrain from translating full sentences; instead, it is better to translate basic words that can be found in the title or description of a video.

Case Study - The Azan in Hamburg, Germany

On the 4th of February 2016 a Facebook group entitled “Syrer in Deutschland (Syrians in Germany)” published a video on its page entitled: “The First Time the Azan is Called in #Hamburg, Germany”.¹³ At the time of writing, the video had received over 450,000 views, had been shared nearly 12,000 times, 11,000 likes and received around 1,500 comments on Facebook.



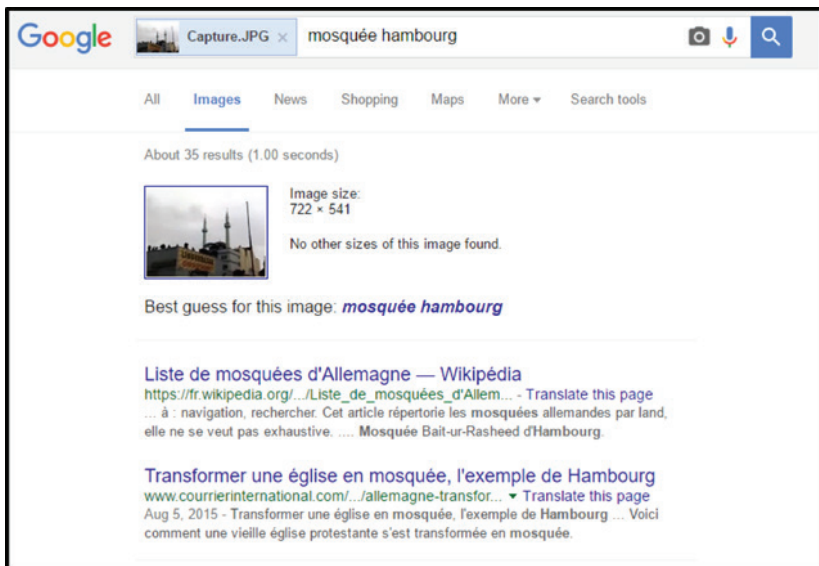
¹³ Syrer in Deutschland (2016, February 4). The First Time the Azan is Called in #Hamburg, Germany. [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/RxGxxH>

At the start of this video, we hear people speaking a non-Arabic language followed by the sound of the Azan. Throughout the whole video we see two minarets. As a journalist, the question we need to answer is: Was it indeed in February 2016 that the Azan was called for the first time in Hamburg, Germany? And, if so, was it from the mosque we see in the video?

Video Verification

To start with, we take a screengrab of a relevant frame from the video using the workflow outlined at the start of the chapter and carry out a reverse image search. As we see in the screenshot below, the results are not clear. But, what helps us is Google's "best guess" - which suggests that the image is of a mosque in Hamburg, Germany.


These results indeed suggest that the mosque in our video is indeed located in Hamburg, Germany.



However, as the image below shows, the remainder of search results in the first page show our video, but give upload dates in 2011 and 2013 with keywords focused on Germany, Hamburg, mosque, Islamisation and Islamophobia.


Pages that include matching images

Muezzin à Hambourg (Allemagne) - YouTube




<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGeHWj2o3dg> ▼
480 × 360 - Oct 5, 2011 - Muezzin à Hambourg (Allemagne). Chaîne de Lachainedinformation. SubscribeSubscribedUnsubscribe 556556. Loading... Loading... Working ...

LiveLeak.com - The Muezzin of Hamburg




www.liveleak.com/view?i=b06_1317926127 ▼
480 × 360 - Added: Oct-6-2011 Occurred On: Oct-6-2011. By: AEI In: Religion Tags: Islam, Europe, Germany, Hamburg, Muezzin, Mosque Location: Hamburg, Hamburg ...

LiveLeak.com - The Islamization of Germany in 2013




www.liveleak.com/view?i=432_1391346584 ▼
120 × 90 - Feb 2, 2014 - In January, the Turkish-run Kuba Camii Mosque in Eschweiler, a city situated along the German-Belgian-Dutch border and about 50 kilometers ...

Popular Videos - Muezzin and Islam PlayList



datab.us/.../Popular%2BVideos%2B-%2BMuezzin%2Band%2BI...
480 × 360 - The professional muezzin is chosen to serve at the mosque for his good character, voice and skills. When calling ... Muezzin à Hambourg (Allemagne). Add to EJ ...

Popular Videos - Muezzin and Music PlayList



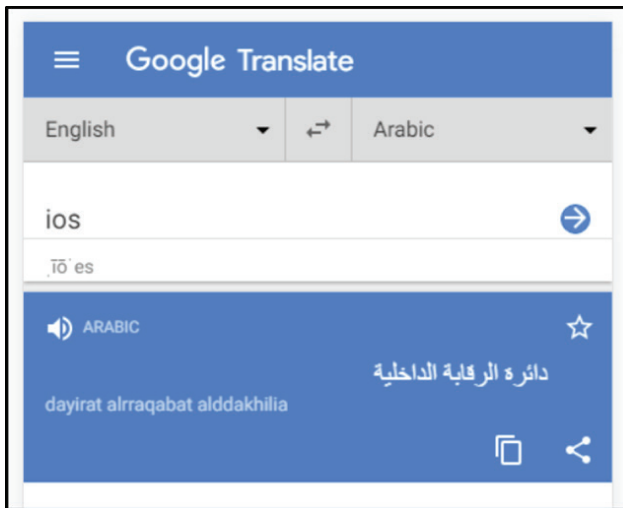
datab.us/.../Popular%2BVideos%2B-%2BMuezzin%2Band%2B...
480 × 360 - Muezzin à Hambourg (Allemagne). Add to EJ Playlist. Muezzin à ... 6am Muezzin, Sultanahmet Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey (Blue Mosque). Add to EJ Playlist.

This search tells us that the video is authentic (i.e. the Azan did play in the mosque in Hamburg) but it occurred at a different time period than the uploader said it did.

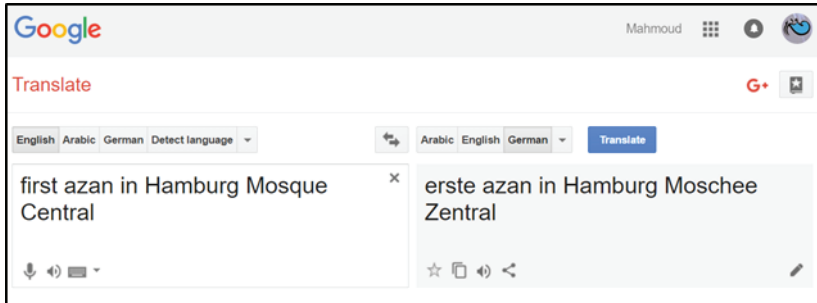
Verification here required us to use Google Translate, however it quickly

raises some of the obstacles a journalist can encounter - namely the quality of translation. Users should always take into consideration that translation is rarely 100 percent accurate, particularly with specific regions or names.

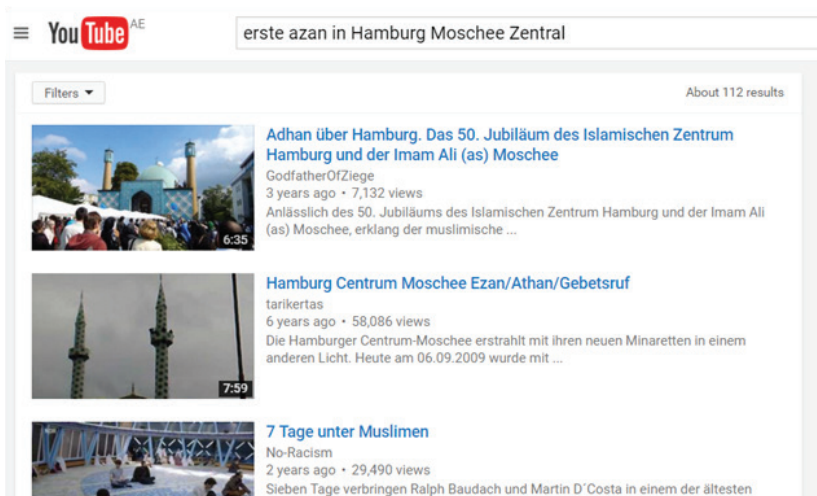
As an example, when entering the word iOS, which means Apple Mobile Operating System, into Google Translate and asking it to translate from English into Arabic, the result shown is “internal monitoring department” or “دائرة الرقابة الداخلية”. The best results usually come from translating to and from English as it is the most prevalent language on the internet.



Referring back to our German example, we can enter Google Translate, select English as the basic language and German as the second language, and then write “first azan in Hamburg Mosque Central”. This gives us the translation “erste azan in Hamburg Moschee Zentral” - which is an accurate translation.



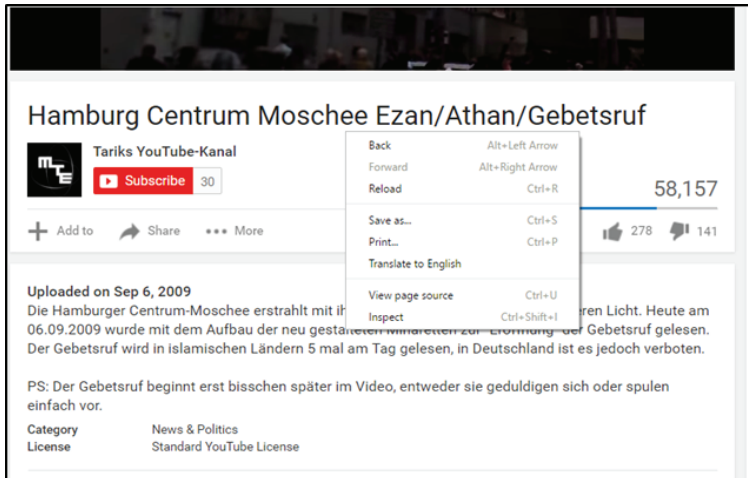
If we then copy the German sentence and paste it in YouTube search tab, the results will display a thumbnail image for a video¹⁴ similar to the one posted on Facebook, - however, with a publishing date in 2010 and with approximately 60,000 views.



When opening and playing the video, the image quality of the video is superior and there is more information under the video. Here, if we copy this information

¹⁴ Tariks YouTube-Kanal (2009, September 6). Hamburg Centrum Moschee Ezan/Athan/Gebetsruf. [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyTUBWTITiw>

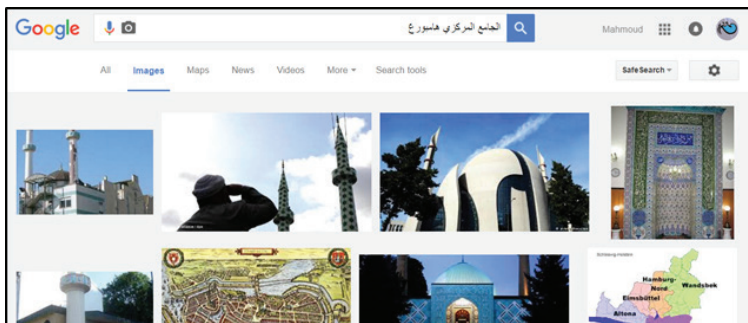
into Google Translate and translate to English, we get an understandable result.



The translation tells us that the capture of this video coincides with the appearance of two newly refurbished minarets on 9 September 2009, when the Azan was called for the first time after the mosque was renovated.

And indeed, when searching for images for the Central Mosque in Hamburg, we can find an image published on the website of the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

Deutsche Welle commented on the image as follows:



“In September 2009, Boran Burchhardt, a German artist, reconstructed the two minarets of the Central Mosque in Hamburg City in an artistic design, converting them into a magnificent masterpiece. The two minarets reach up to 20 metres in height”.¹⁵

By following the method outlined above we could deduce that this video, while not faked, was, in fact, from a different date than that which we were told in the Facebook video.

The Importance of Corroboration

Newsworthy events are, today, generally filmed or captured by more than one eyewitness. This fact is a crucial one in the process of verification. This means that if, as a journalist, you are presented with eyewitness footage of a major news event - planned or unexpected - you should also expect to find further corroborating evidence of this video on the social media networks.

An example of this can be during a motor race. Many videos from different angles depicting the same race can be used to verify the geography of the racing track, the surrounding buildings, the audience, different sounds on the video and so on.

Likewise, if a newsroom receives, for example, an eyewitness video of a young man giving his girlfriend a giant bouquet of flowers on Valentine's Day in the middle of the street in Lebanon, we could rightly expect to see other, corroborating eyewitness images and videos showing the same event from different angles shared on social media networks. We would expect these

¹⁵ Translated from the original text in Arabic. Deutsche Welle (2009, December 8). Mosques and Minarets in Germany. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/NPxhsA>

videos to give us also other visual or audio clues such as car license plates, local dialects, or any other details concerning the place such as the weather and street names.

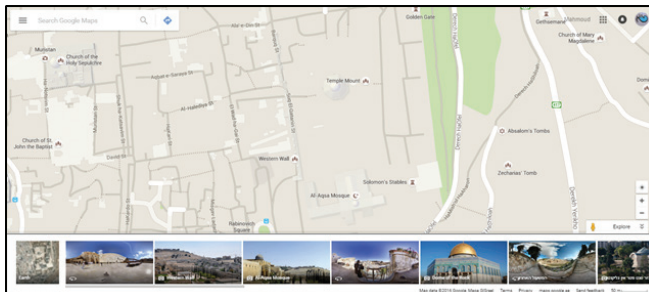
Here we see, therefore, that analysing the visual clues presented in a video and corroboration of the event both assist us in the verification process.

Geolocation

Geolocation is crucial for any verification of eyewitness video. This is the process in which the journalist takes visual clues provided in a video, such as landmarks, terrain, rivers, bridges and so on and matches them to existing maps and satellite to confirm where an eyewitness video was captured. To do this, familiarity with online mapping services, such as Wikimapia, Google Earth or Google Maps is crucial.

Google Maps

Google Maps <http://maps.google.com> is considered among the best free map services available on the internet. Through these maps, the user can identify the key geographies of most areas globally. It also provides a satellite view of the earth. It is an essential website for video verification.



Google Maps has some important functionalities that are useful for verifiers:

- The map scale appears below the shot.
- The map provides the ability to search for the number and the name of the street, neighbourhood, region, city and country.
- The ability to browse the map in all directions.
- The ability to search for latitude and longitude.
- The ability to explore a group of images of landmarks depicted on the map.
- The ability to view a “Map” (as shown above) or as satellite imagery (see image below).



In addition, Google Maps offer an important feature called “Street View”. This allows the user to explore a map’s street-level view. The feature is activated after choosing the yellow person icon at the bottom of the screen, then placing it on the highlighted blue lines on the map.

By using Street View, we can see streets and buildings closely and navigate through a street view with comparative ease.



Street view – Khalifah tower in Dubai- United Arab Emirates

A good way to hone your geolocation skills is through the online game Geoguessr <https://geoguessr.com> which gives you random places on the planet to identify and scores you according to your proximity.

Case Study - ISIL Executions in Egypt

In February 2015, ISIL published a propaganda video allegedly portraying the execution of a group of Egyptians on a Libyan beach.



In the 5-minute video, two scenes give some hints of where this execution supposedly took place.

The first scene is of the beach which consists of rocks to the right of the image, and a small sandy beach leading us to the sea.

The second scene of interest to us shows a single palm tree behind rocks.



If we can focus in on areas where ISIL members are active in north Libya, and we can scan this area on Google Maps for these two landmarks.

Upon viewing some photos taken there, a photo showing a lonely palm tree standing upright in front the spacious beach was found.

And after maximising the photo, a group of large stones appeared in front of the beach.



After linking this image to Google Maps, the results showed that it belonged to al Sabah region located nearly seven kilometres away from the city of Sirte.

Consequently, Google Maps helped determining the location of filming the scenes shown in video clips.

You can read the full details –in Arabic— on how to access this information via the link:

<http://24.ae/article.aspx?ArticleId=138351>

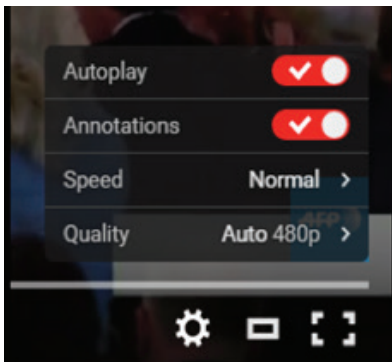
Tips for Viewing Videos

A journalist should use semi-specialised programs to obtain all components appearing in the video clips, particularly rapid scenes. Those programs activate slow-motion playback of videos and allow the user to scrutinise every scene and take screenshots. This can be done as follows:

- A video playback program such as VLC which allows playing video clips one shot at a time.
- Download the Chrome browser add-on — Video Speed Controller – which controls the speed of video clips in most popular websites.



It should be noted that video speed playback can be manipulated on YouTube by clicking on the Gear icon then choosing “speed” option.



Conclusion

There is no silver bullet in video verification, so single tool that will tell you if it is indeed a true video or somehow a misrepresentation. It is also not a fast process. Verification can sometimes take a very long time, so you, as a journalist, must decide how much time you are willing to dedicate to your verification versus the reward gained from using it. One thing is for certain, though, if you do not verify videos you are unsure of, you risk getting stung in their use. Some of the skills outlined above are amongst the crucial skills of the journalist today, and they are expanded on in case studies in other chapters. Also check out the glossary of additional tools at the back of the book - these will help you a lot.

Why the Journalist Needs to Always Consider Image Manipulation

Saleh Rifai

Image manipulation with the intention to mislead has been around as long as photography. But, with more photographs taken today than ever before in the history of humanity and the ability of social media to spread misinformation like ever before, the need for today's journalist to be aware of techniques of photo manipulation, how to spot if a photograph has been manipulated and why is greater than ever. In fact, this knowledge should be part of every single journalist's skill set in order for them to be able to tell news independently and factually. This chapter aims to introduce these skills and explain why they are important.

To do this, we must first consider the reality under which photojournalists in the Arab region work, identify their concept of the image and their understanding of journalism's mission. From my work as a photojournalist for 35 years in Lebanon and the Arab World (25 years as a photographer and then as a photo editor at the Associated Press) and meeting with many foreign photographers of various nationalities, I came to realise that a large number of these photojournalists have acquired a vast photography culture in addition to the technical knowledge that is significantly easy to learn due to the proliferation of specialised institutes and the ease of communication in foreign languages. This is different from photojournalists in the Arab World. Although some of them are knowledgeable about journalistic photography, its history and culture, others require more knowledge in this field, even if they use their equipment well.

As professional journalists, we must first and foremost understand photojournalism as a medium so that we may improve our credibility. As such, here we discuss the challenges that photos published by citizens pose to the journalist but also how professional journalists and governmental agencies have technology at hand to manipulate images we may wish to use.

Press Images

While images have always been manipulated, the manipulation and fabrication of press photographs since the beginning of this century has been on the increase. The Arab region is no exception here, with consecutive incidents of manipulation occurring in relatively short periods of time. This can be attributed to the following reasons:

- Some photojournalists are unaware of the laws and covenants governing media work.
- Some journalists are biased - either by their environment or by their social, political or national loyalty.
- Journalists are unaware of incidents of image manipulation.
- Media institutions and international organisations are not interested in supplying journalists periodically with cases of manipulation or fabrication that have occurred or are occurring, and the action taken against the violators, in order to deter them.

Examples of Photographic Manipulation

Here are some examples selected from the Arab World which are worthy of our study so that journalists do not fall into bad practices that may mislead the public and undermine their credibility and professionalism.

Case Studies: Professional photographers manipulating images

- Reuters – Lebanon 2006

A photographer who worked for the news agency Reuters in Lebanon was in a building overlooking the southern district when it was shelled by Israeli aircraft during the 2006 conflict. The photographer claimed to have taken several photographs to highlight the severity of the Israeli shelling of one of the sites - showing pluming black smoke. He then sent them directly to the Reuters bureau in Beirut.

Following distribution of the image amongst Reuters' subscribers, the Israeli government swiftly protested, saying that the image had been manipulated, noting that the type of munitions used in the shelling did not create such smoke. Reuters later confirmed that the image was in fact digitally manipulated using image manipulation software that had increased the quantity and volume of smoke, making it look thicker throughout the image.

The photographer said that the only alteration he made was removing some dust in the image caused by a dirty lens.



Original image. Photo: Reuters¹⁶



Image after manipulation. Photo: Reuters¹⁷

¹⁶ Image no longer available in Reuters archive. Taken from: BBC News (2006, August 6). Reuters drops Beirut photographer. BBC News. Retrieved from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5254838.stm>

¹⁷ Image no longer available in Reuters archive. Taken from: BBC News (2006, August 6). Reuters drops Beirut photographer. BBC News. Retrieved from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5254838.stm>

Reuters apologised and removed all the images taken by the photographer from its archive, a total of 920 images, and then cancelled its contract with him.

Modern technology allows journalists to distribute their images quickly - but this highlights a serious issue that all news organisations must be aware of.

The photographer was able to send his pictures to his client - enabling him to select the image he wanted. While photographers in the past had to bring the memory card or even the roll of film to the bureau directly where the photo editor would choose the image that told the best story of the incident, simultaneously monitoring the sequence of images and checking if they were manipulated. Today, with modern distribution technologies, more power sits in the hands of the photographer themselves to select and distribute the picture they choose.

- Associated Press – Syria 2014

In early 2014, the Associated Press announced the severance of its relationship with an independent photographer that the agency worked with in the Middle East. This came after the photographer admitted to altering an image from the conflict in Syria he took in September 2013.

The director of photography at the Associated Press said “Deliberately removing elements from our photographs is completely unacceptable.”¹⁸

The photographer’s confession that he amended an image and removed a video camera in the corner of an image showing an opposition fighter prompted AP to consider that the amendment was a violation of their principles and

¹⁸ Associated Press (2014, January 22). AP severs ties with photographer who altered work. AP. Retrieved from: <http://www.ap.org/Content/AP-In-The-News/2014/AP-severs-ties-with-photographer-who-altered-work>

values. Through these values, AP maintains the credibility of its images without digitally amending them or manipulating their content in any form, whether by deletion or addition.

This photographer was among five photographers whose images on the war in Syria contributed to the Associated Press winning the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism in the breaking news category in the spring of 2013.

The photographer thought that the presence of a video camera in the frame would divert the attention of the viewers, and said: “I took the wrong decision when I removed the camera ... I feel ashamed about that”.¹⁹

The fighter appeared to be taking cover in the image and beside him a video camera appeared of one of the photojournalists in a corner of the frame. However, the photographer changed the image by taking another piece of his image’s background and placing it over the video camera in an attempt to remove it, before sending that image to the Associated Press.

¹⁹ Ibid



Original image of the Syrian fighter before amendment - Photo: AP ²⁰



Amended image after the photographer deliberately removed the camera in front of the fighter - Photo: AP ²¹

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

Manipulation of Media by Official Institutions

The issue of image manipulation becomes more serious when official institutions or governments resort to deliberate image forgery. This regardless of the justification, or when media institutions publish images after manipulating them according to official directives or objectives linked to political propaganda. Directed press images have an immense persuasive ability which make them a powerful tool in the hands of political authority, in view of the information and messages that reach the audience. Because of this, some official media institutions have been known to resort to amending or manipulating images - creating what be called politically oriented media.

Case Study: An Egyptian Blogger Discovers Manipulation in a Government Newspaper ²²

The Egyptian blogger Wael Khalil played an important role in uncovering the manipulation by the Egyptian newspaper Al Ahram of an image taken by the Associated Press photographer Pablo Martinez.

On his blog, Khalil published the manipulated image of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak leading the world leaders in the Middle East peace talks. Khalil published beside it the original image showing that President Mubarak was in fact walking behind the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Jordan's King Abdullah II, while the American President Barack Obama was leading the leaders to a press conference at the White House.

²² Sabti, Bassam (2010, September 16). Egyptian blogger discovers doctored photo in state-run newspaper. International Journalists' Network. Retrieved from: <https://ijnet.org/en/blog/egyptian-blogger-discovers-doctored-photo-state-run-newspaper-0>



²³ The photo altered by the Egyptian newspaper was from AP. However, the same photo is available in Reuters image archive, which is the version accessed here.

²⁴ The altered photograph was originally published by Egyptian newspaper Al Ahrām. Taken from: Sabti, Bassam (2010, September 16). Egyptian blogger discovers doctored photo in state-run newspaper. International Journalists' Network. Retrieved from: <https://iinet.org/en/blog/egyptian-blogger-discovers-doctored-photo-state-run-newspaper-0>

Case Study: The Lebanese Government Manipulates a Protocol Image

There is a tradition in the Lebanese Republic to take a family photo upon the formation of a new government. This is a photo that brings together newly appointed ministers with the President of the Republic, the Speaker of the House and the Prime Minister. This was the same on 14 February 2014. When it was time to take the photo, and as some new ministers could not arrive on time, the Speaker of the House, Nabih Berri, had to leave because of prior travel plans.



Lebanese government's photo before (left) after (right) manipulation Photo: Reuters / AlArabiya²⁵

²⁵ The original image was distributed by a Lebanese photography agency. Taken from: Flanagan, Ben (2014, February 17). Photogate: Lebanon slammed over fake image. Al Arabiya. Retrieved from: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/print/2014/02/17/Photogate-Lebanon-govt-slammed-over-fake-image.html>

The group photograph of the new government was taken without House Speaker Berri. To make up for this Berri's image was imposed onto the memorial photo using manipulation software. This was distributed among the local and international press by the photography agency used by the Republican Palace.²⁶ When the manipulation came to light, the image was removed from many news agency archives, for example Associated Press advised its clients not to publish the image. In doing so, AP's vice president and director of photography Santiago Lyon noted that: "Adding elements to a photograph is entirely unacceptable and is in clear violation of AP's standards."²⁷

This image published by the photography agency accredited by the Lebanese government is not considered real and does not reflect any credibility, whatever the protocol standards are. The original photograph should have been published without any amendment along with the reasons for the absence of Speaker Berri.

It is noteworthy that the image was removed from the archives of foreign news agencies, and Reuters, Agence France Press and the Associated Press all sent their subscribers a warning urging them to delete the image of the new Lebanese government which they had received earlier.

Image Infringement

There may be many cases of digital falsification that have not been discovered, either in view of the skill used in manipulating the image, advancement in photo

²⁶ An Nahar (2014, February). They succeeded in forming a government and they failed to take a memorial photo! An Nahar. Retrieved from: <http://www.annahar.com/article/108723>

²⁷ Flanagan, Ben (2014, February 17). Ibid.

editing programs, or lack of serious monitoring of photojournalists' work. This process also requires a sufficient number of monitors in international institutions and bodies that work on protecting press images.

It is noteworthy that photo manipulation has been in existence since the birth of photography, albeit on a small scale, as manipulating images when using film cameras required extensive effort and accuracy to edit negatives or paper images, compared with the digital age. With the start of the digital image age in the early nineties, and the development of digital image processing programs, some photographers were encouraged to infringe upon the original image, which contributed to this undermining of credibility.

The manipulation or alteration of an image has become very easy, and it may be acceptable among individuals working in the field of photography art, but it is not acceptable when a photojournalist makes any amendment or manipulates their image. This is considered unethical and unprofessional.

The Meaning of the Non-Manipulation of an Image

Non-manipulation means the image is presented in its complete form.

- The photographer must not interfere to change the content of the image, along with its positive or negative details, and should refrain from deleting or removing any part of the original photograph.
- The photographer must also refrain from manipulating the photo's credibility - meaning that the photographer must be clear and honest with regard to the caption of the image through its accompanying description: who, what, why, when and how. Any description that evades the truth and reality is also a form

of manipulation.

- The photographer must not publish, send or broadcast any image taken on a prior date as if it were taken on a different date, as this is considered misleading. In this case, the photographer or editor must refer to the real date of the photograph, and the reasons that prevented its publication at the time.

Another issue facing us today is that of journalists intervening in the composition of an image. This is when the photographer moves the elements of their subject to suit them. Someone may move the elements of the subject to the right or left, or make them nearer or further, and in many cases, conduct a re-enactment before the camera. This is a type of malpractice that is appearing more frequently in the photojournalism field.

It is never acceptable to ask the persons in the image to make any effort or any movement, and we must take the picture as it is, with its reality and truth.

In this regard, a professional photographer, created controversy when he spoke to a little girl to direct her to light candles following the Brussels bombings that took place on March 22, 2016, before taking his picture that he published on Instagram. This was discovered because the photographer appeared in the background of an interview on a television channel as he was directing the child.

Some considered that the photographer intervened in the image's course in order to add to the sense of grief, while the photographer defended what he did, saying he did not distribute it among the news agencies, and only published it on his personal Instagram account, but then he deleted it after this controversy. Our goal here is not to make judgments, but this discussion

affirms the importance of not interfering in the reality before the image is taken, that our images and opinions on our social media platforms do not negate our responsibility, and that the credibility of our professional work may be impacted as a result.



Video shot by Fox News and recorded and shared by James Pomerantz on Facebook of the photographer directing the child before taking the picture²⁸



Screengrab of the image taken by the photographer as published on his Instagram account. The photograph is no longer available on the photographer's Instagram page.

²⁸ Recording of Fox News broadcast recorded by James Pomerantz and shared on his Facebook page on March 23 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/jamespomerantz/videos/10102329359726232/>

It should be noted that the photographer later took to Instagram to issue an apology for framing the shot in the way he did, and Pomerantz himself also reacted. He noted on the photographer's Instagram account that: "I posted the video yesterday knowing nothing about [him], why he was staging a photo or what he intended to do with the resulting photographs. I still know next to nothing (not just about this but about most things in life) but I would imagine that if he's not feeling pretty s**** about things at this point, he probably never will. Photojournalist or not, he's first and foremost a human being who it would seem made a mistake and has received some pretty intense public lashings for it. We could use more integrity in the world, not just in photojournalism. The same could be said for empathy and forgiveness." ²⁹

Verifying Images of Eyewitnesses

If there are means to check the validity of the images taken by professional journalists working in news agencies, it is difficult to check and ascertain the validity of photographs published on social media by eyewitnesses to events (what is known as UGC).

As discussed in other chapters, there are some useful technical methods in discovering the information accompanying the image, such as date, location, and other important details. The most important step here is to speak to the photographer directly or to the person who sent or published it. These questions should never be avoided:

- Who are they?
- Where are they?

²⁹ Pomerantz comment was retrieved from:
<http://petapixel.com/2016/03/24/photojournalist-caught-posing-girl-brussels-memorial/>

- When did they get there?
- What can they see (and what does their image show)?
- Why are they there?

It is important to note if the image was taken in a dangerous location, we must ensure that the eyewitness we communicated with is safe and not at risk as a result of the conversation.

In the event of questioning a certain image, it is best to ask the photographer to send more of the photo series they have taken. This helps determine some additional details.

It is also possible to carry out additional checks to verify the validity of the image and its accompanying information. Here are some useful sites in the search process to examine the image content:

- Jeffrey's Exif Viewer: Online tool that reveals Exif information in the images, including date, time and camera settings, and in some instances, GPS coordinates, according to camera type. If the image is taken by phone, this feature must be enforced, or else it is difficult to identify the location.
- Foto Forensics: This site uses an error level analysis (ELA) to determine any parts that were manipulated in the image. ELA looks for variances in quality in the same image and outlines the areas that may be amended.
- Google Reverse Image Search: Users can upload the image or enter a link and find similar or related images in addition to sites and pages that used that image.

- TinEye: Reverse search engine for images which allows internet users to check the source of the image and perhaps its photographer, along with discovering the existence of images, amended copies of them or high resolution copies.
- JPEGsnoop: An application that operates on Windows only and discovers any amendments made to an image. In spite of its name, it can create AVI, DNG, PDF, THM and embedded JPEG files. It also extracts data such as image date, type of camera, lens settings, and more.

Professional Ethical Considerations

Some media institutions and international agencies have set professional ethics laws and statutes that may be references, for example:

Reuters News Agency

It created a guide for the Agency's photographers:

A Brief Guide to Standards, Photoshop and Captions

(<https://goo.gl/8hngUg>)

This is a specialised manual in photojournalism, explaining the rules for working within Reuters and respecting photo ethics, including special standards for writing captions, camera settings, and how journalists use photo editing programs such as Photoshop and others.

Associated Press – AP

Code of Ethics for Photojournalists

(<https://goo.gl/OIUqxu>)

The Associated Press created its own rules and principles to be followed by photographers working for the Agency or those who cooperate with it. Like the other institutions, the Associated Press stresses its credibility and warns photographers of manipulating images under any circumstance.

This is in addition to many newspapers, magazines and photo news agencies that stressed credibility and avoiding common mistakes by employees and workers. Most laws and statutes promulgated by media institutions have a special character for its staff or those who cooperate with it; however, they are very similar in their general goals.

National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)

NPPA Code of Ethics (https://nppa.org/code_of_ethics) was drafted by the NPPA, established in 1946 in the US.

This code of ethics is directed at all those working in the photojournalism field, which all professional journalists or journalists just starting their professional career must read and abide by professionally.

The NPPA is a professional association that works to enhance the highest standards in photojournalism and recognises the need for everyone to be fully knowledgeable of public events and to be recognised as a part of the world we live in.

Photojournalists work as trustees for the public. Our main role is to offer visual reports on important events. Our main objective is trustworthiness.

We as photojournalists have a responsibility to document society and preserve

its history through images. Photographs and video can reveal great facts such as transgressions and negligence, and they give hope and facilitate communication among all people around the world through the language of visual understanding. They can also cause great damage if they are manipulated.

These instructions aim to achieve the highest levels of quality in all forms of photojournalism and enhance public confidence in this profession. They are also meant to be a teaching tool whether for those who practice photography or those who appreciate photojournalism. In fulfilment of this purpose, the NPPA drafted a list of ethical instructions.

Code of Conduct Instructions

Photojournalists and those who manage the production of visual news are responsible for maintaining the following criteria in their daily work:

- The image must be accurate and comprehensive in conveying the subjects
- The photo editors must not manipulate the images
- The photograph must be complete in the registration of subjects and avoid moulding with individuals and groups. Personal and work biases must be avoided.
- Treat all subjects with respect and dignity, give special consideration to the subjects who have been subject to harsh circumstances, such as victims of crimes or disasters, and refrain from interfering in private moments such as grief, unless there is a justified need.

- When photographing subjects, do not purposely contribute to or seek to change events or influence them.
- When editing images, maintain the soundness of content and the general context of photographs, and refrain from processing images by adding or changing sound (for videos) in any way which may mislead the viewers or distort the subject.
- Do not pay to the sources or subjects that you photograph any financial award to share the information or access it. (Sources refers to those who arranged the subject for you, while the subject is the person who is photographed or who stands before the photographer to become the subject of the photograph).
- Gifts, tips or compensation are not accepted from those who seek to influence coverage.
- Do not sabotage the efforts of other journalists.

Image Processing

All the above on photo examples and codes of ethics and conduct must protect the origins and composition of press images. Our images must always remain as they are.

As for what is permissible to improve the image's content, it is specifically outlined in the directives of the statutes of the media organisation for which the photographer works.

Generally, these are simple steps which do not impact or change the image's

content, which are processed using Photoshop or other programs:

- Do not change the image by removing or deleting any element or even any flaws inside the image.
- Do not copy any element of the elements in the image and paste them on the same image.
- Do not add any external parts to the image (copy from another picture).
- The image may be lightened – shaded, but not only a specific part so that it leads to changing the features of the image (dodging – burning).
- The image may be cropped to improve composition or formation.
- If the image is enlarged, or a part of the image is used, it must state “enlargement”.
- The colour balance may be corrected without changing the composition of colour.
- The dust from dust accumulation problems may be removed from the sensor (clone stamp).
- The image may be resized.
- When using Photoshop, a detailed explanation may be written about the image, and a caption may be added so that the photographer avoids responsibility.

Conclusion

The essence of the press image is its credibility. Therefore, we must maintain this by reviewing all material issued by international institutions relevant to press images and follow all guidelines to implement them.

Itidal Salameh writes in her article in the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, “The images that forge the truth have a dangerous impact that is no less than forging documents, because in many instances they speak louder than written text. In every angle, they have more accurate details than those that are seen by the eye and do not require explanation, and this may change the course of history in some countries”.³⁰

³⁰ Salameh, Itidal (2015, January 22). Photos Distort the Truth. Asharq Al-Awsat. Retrieved from: <http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=19&article=802835&issueno=13204#.WAUaV5N97q2>

How New Arab News Networks Bought into Social Media Reporting

Suha Ismail

For arguably one of the first times in history, youth across the Arab World have found their real voice - and this is thanks to social media. It started with individual blogging; however, this has gradually changed and evolved to social media platforms that now enable citizen groups to focus on the live coverage of events. The state and environment of the region prior to the Arab Spring were ill prepared for this. Before 2010, news coverage came from state-controlled media. The youth desired to free themselves of these state-imposed constraints, establish their own domain and meet virtually without limitations on time and place. Post-Arab Spring, the accessibility of information conveyed through the virtual space has helped new news networks in the region grow. Examples here include the Rasd News Network in Egypt, the Sham Network in Syria, the Jordan News Network in Jordan and Quds News in Palestine.

This chapter addresses the experiences of Rasd News Network and Sham Network. Both of them were founded by young Arabs working on social media platforms with the goal of depicting and documenting current events to tell stories from a new perspective - not that of the authorities.

To produce this chapter, interviews were held with both media organisations. The chapter starts with a discussion of Rasd News Network and moves on to Shaam Network. It explores the conditions in which each network was established, why they were established and the goals of each network.

Rassd News Network

Why a new news network in Egypt?

According to Anas Hasan, the young Egyptian founder of the Rassd News Network, the network was founded on 7th September 2010 ahead of the Egyptian Parliament elections which were to be held on 28 November. The prevailing expectations revolved around the intention of the national party and its youth leaders (Jamal Mubarak and Ahmad Ezz) to commit fraud in the elections which would lead to the Islamic opposition and other parties being banned from joining Parliament.

Anas Hasan added that the questions they had in mind was how to cover an event such as the country's parliamentary elections, and document it so that the electoral fraud that had historically taken place in the country behind closed doors was recorded. Hasan stressed the belief and hope that recording forgery and violations could put pressure on the ruling authority to abstain itself from the full elimination of all opposition political forces.

To clarify more, he pointed out that the restraint of freedom of movement in Egypt and the chaotic political scene had led the young founders of Rassd to strive for a new platform that reached out to the youth, the largest demographic group in Egyptian society, which had become heavy users of social media network, especially Facebook.

Social media networks were not subject to the same constraints imposed on physical movement. Social media became a parallel way for the youth, most of whom have accumulated a great discontent against authority and the ruling regime, to represent their experiences.

Furthermore, the failure of the authority to follow up with the social media trends, and its security perception of social media as a bubble encouraged the youth to express their political affiliations and their rejection of the regime, which resulted in creating a suitable environment for mobilisation.

The first established model of Rassd was entitled the “Field Monitoring Unit –Parliaments 2010”. The unit covered and exposed violations and abuses by police officers and the national party during the elections. The unit also distributed more than 40 Gigabytes of video clips to global media outlets. These clips were filmed by activists during the voting and sorting processes and documented the voting fraud committed.

The Idea behind Rassd

The idea behind Rassd was to employ and merge several media concepts, so that media became quantitative and institutional rather than individual. It aimed to create and share public opinion on political issues by using modern methods in the world of social media which were not yet fully understood or politicised at that time by the Egyptian regime.

“Rassd” is an acronym - chosen in Arabic to represent a meaningful indication of the main concept of the network. “R” stands for “Raqib” (monitor), “S” for “Sawwer” (film) and “D” for “Dawwen” (blog). So, it together, the acronym means “monitor – film – blog”. This was chosen to represent the basic concepts of a citizen journalist and the modern news world.

Monitoring and Verification

Hasan highlighted that the network established a communication mechanism

to interact with the audience from day one. The main objective of Rassd was to not rely on reporters in the field. The objective was to rely on the audience and use them as the platform's field correspondents. Hasan explained that, ahead of the elections, the audience could be news generators instead of mere passive recipients of news. It also provided interested parties with guidelines on how to film events, share videos, and employ live broadcasting techniques. Rassd could use several methods for its newsgathering, therefore: email, its teams and collaborators as well as Rassd's Facebook pages which allowed the audience to post any content on its wall.

Moreover, the network's administration formed teams of activists who sought media cooperation and extensive publishing, and assigned them to cover events in a more professional way. This meant that the channel received reliable, high-quality content as well as content provided by the audience. This provided a quality counterweight in certain situations.

Well-developed mechanisms were introduced later to cover the events of the revolution and secured phone numbers were used to receive calls from citizens and report on clashes and demonstrations in Egypt.

Of course, the dilemma of fake, replicated or unverified content was one of the most problematic issues of this new pattern of journalism that Rassd encountered. Therefore, Hassan introduced a new filtering mechanism for content received from the audience.

Two main factors were taken into consideration when verifying reporting that came in via email or Facebook. First, corroboration was crucial. This means that Rassd had to receive reports of the same event from a minimum three persons. This had to be filmed from different angles and told in converging

narratives. Similarly, recurrent news of the same format and form were rejected as there were concerns about them being produced by an organised unit.

The second factor was verification of the “location”. This meant that steps were taken to verify the place and environment of the event. It basically depends on the experience of the person responsible for verification and his knowledge of the place and its landmarks. Consequently, this process is accompanied by a “Time” verification process.

Regarding phone communications, a journalist at Rasd was allocated the role of “hotline officer”. This role had to attain certain standards in handling incoming news calls. Journalists at the network constructed an events map. Verifying location and information was always the greatest challenge.

Verbal and phone incoming news were classified into several levels based on reliability criteria, and were published under the following categories:

- “Confirmed” news were corroborated news in different formats and authenticated through collaborators’ networks.
- “Semi-confirmed” news were recurrent news corroborated by 5 phone-calls from people attending the same event. The news was verified through interviews with the correspondents on site and the environment of the call and confusion felt while telling the information was a validating factor.
- “Unconfirmed” news were any news with fewer than 5 corroborating reports and without the network having the opportunity to verify them through other sources, yet it was presumed to be correct by the news editor. Once it was authenticated, its category changed accordingly.

Crucially, the network also adopted a policy intended to help it avoid the pitfalls of false communication and traps from security apparatus. It rejected all calls that seemingly provided information in an organised manner with consideration of all elements related to place, time and events, since any willingness and readiness to provide complete reports raised doubts about its authenticity. According to the founders of Rassd Network, an amateur field correspondent will reflect their anger, stress, confusion or be unable to narrate a story fully coherently due to their lack of journalistic experience. Therefore, rejecting complete testimonies that did not meet this expectation was a mechanism that played a vital role in overcoming the security forces' desire to mislead and cause confusion.

Sham News Network: The Idea and Establishment

Esam Allaham is the editor in chief of Sham News Network - the network established in Syria after the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Allaham was part of a group of young Syrians who created Sham to expose the abuses, torture and arrests perpetrated by the Syrian regime, and to track any potential Syrian movement at that time, particularly after the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions and the uprisings in Yemen and Libya.

Allaham told us that his network was created with the help of a group of Syrians who were exiled by the Syrian regime and were not allowed to return to their country. The outburst of public opinion supported this, especially after the protests that took place in the southern city of Daraa in 2011 after the 15 children were arrested for painting anti-government graffiti on the walls of a school. The protest that is said to have been the catalyst for the uprisings across Syria.

“The idea for Sham emerged from the simple lack of options for receiving independent news other than social media platforms, as Facebook and Twitter”, said Essam Allaham. “We took into consideration the unrivalled success of the Rasd Network in Egypt. All of this was enhanced by the injustice that has spread deeply among Syrians for 40 years, the desire to reclaim the abducted freedom from Syrians, and for the sake of those who suffer behind the darkness of prisons and for the dead laying underground.”

Sham network started just with a Facebook page and YouTube channel. It then spread its work on Twitter and Google+, finally expanding to establish its own official online website. This website held all of Sham’s work and was supported by reposts of content on its other social media platforms to guarantee wider reach.

Allaham stressed that the most difficult stage for the network was at the beginning of the Syrian conflict. This was due to the widespread fear of the regime nestled in the hearts of Syrians, and fear of filming civil events and demonstrations at that time. However, a large number of young Syrians overcame this fear, carried their phones and cameras and documented events.

Allaham recalls that, at this time, most news channels did not believe what was going on in the streets - the shootings and arrests of demonstrators. News organisations were always demanding photographs and video clips to prove the actions of the authorities. “It was difficult to overcome this barrier and provide enough evidence for international newspapers and broadcasters for them to realise the size of killing and oppression of peaceful demonstrations”, said Allaham. “We still remember this phase in Sham Network, we used to send video clips and photographs to television channels and human rights organisations showing the systematic killing of Syrian demonstrators, but they

refused to publish them because the sources were not official or authenticated. We were fighting with the demonstrators alone, working really hard to deliver their voices and photographs, until we finally succeeded. We earned the trust of channels and organisations. Also, the Syrian people, activists and collaborators connected with us to deliver their voices”.

The most significant event covered by Sham Network were the early demonstrations in 2011 which took place in Daraa - the home city of the majority of the Sham Network founders. Thus, tribal relations and close connections played a vital role in conveying images with trust and without fear/ Success here saw Sham become a wide, trusted network among the Syrians.

Monitoring and Verification

According to Allaham, Sham has a wide network of reporters across Syrian districts. Their mission is to send reports, news, video clips of events and even, when possible, to live-stream. In addition, Sham has ties with coordinators and activists who contribute themselves to Sham. The network resources diversify in most towns and cities, and there is a continuous contact with media offices of armed groups, agencies and organisations operating on Syrian territory. Moreover, Sham is no longer just limited to Syria. The network has offices in Turkey, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, across Europe and the United States of America. This network allows Sham to follow up with Syrian communities abroad and cover political debates and negotiations.

To verify news, Sham has created a list of highly reliable agencies. Crucially, it has also formed Skype chat rooms for every Syrian governorate. These channels contain trustworthy activists. It also developed a specific publishing mechanism. For Sham, if the story has been corroborated by more than one source, the news is considered correct. However, if the story has only been

confirmed by one source, it would be considered as unverified. Critically, anyone who publishes false news more than three times is dismissed from Sham's circle of trust.

During the outbreak of the Syrian revolution, mobiles were the exclusive conveyor of events. At that time, it was difficult to verify certain video clips and accordingly some of them were ignored because of doubts of being fabricated and aiming at attacking the credibility of 'revolutionary media'. Allaham notes that, during a revolution it isn't easy to impose rules on a regular citizen holding a mobile camera in the middle of life-threatening situations and to simply tell him: "We cannot publish this video as its quality is too low" or because it does not comply with all the necessary aspects and components. But later, the regular citizen can become more professional with guidance and patience. In fact, there were many factors that caused the quality of videos to be low, such as the speed of the internet or internet networks being disconnected by the regime. Consequently, most activists were forced to upload their videos in low quality. Today, the Sham Network accepts only high quality videos with full publishing components, as most activists and photographers are now more experienced and now are able to receive internet connections over satellite.

Sham has received many fake videos. It has received videos filmed in Afghanistan, Yemen and Egypt. Here, verification was possible due to the experience of the Network's collaborators and knowledge of local dialects and the region from which the videos were taken. "We once received a video from the Syrian coast purported to be showing a military operation executed by the Free Syrian Army in a wasteland desert. Anyone who is not familiar with Syrian geography may think that the video is true, but there is no desert on the Syrian coast. It is surrounded by green forests and mountains. It is similar with the dialects. Syria has more than 14 different dialects and ethnic groups with their

own languages. When we compare between the onset of the revolution and the advanced stage of its media, we notice a huge contrast. The first stage of the revolution was random and unorganised. The size of videos and repeated photographs of the same area were confusing. Nowadays; on the other hand, handling videos and photographs in Syria has become smooth and organised. We have the skill to verify and spot hoaxes and ensure that the real story is getting out.” “At the end of the day, that’s what we’re trying to do - tell the truth about what is going on in our country. Social media is the only way we can do that.” concluded Allaham.

Conclusion

The Rassd New Network and Sham Network were both born from the fog of revolution. In these situations, the process of obtaining correct information is complicated - and becomes even more so under dangerous security circumstances. With the goal of trying to get the story out, both were pushed to use social media - platforms that allow anyone to become reporters. However, both quickly realised that, if they were to use social media, they had to build processes and workflows to ensure that they were not spreading misinformation. Verification became crucial. It is organisations such as these two discussed here that have developed verification techniques used through the region - and have been able to tell the stories of their countries to the world.

Why a Journalist Cannot Ignore Chat Apps

Trushar Barot

There are more users of instant messaging platforms (or 'chat apps') than there are users of social media. That stark reality - a shift that has occurred in the past 24 months - is why many news organisations are taking these technologies seriously when it comes to publishing content and, increasingly, for UGC and newsgathering.

It's very unlikely that you will never have used one of these apps - whether it's the likes of WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. At their core, they are a more sophisticated way of sending text messages (and increasingly, voice and video calls) to friends and family. While text messages are sent over the traditional mobile phone network, chat apps use the internet connection on your phone either through its data plan or over Wi-Fi. As well as simple text messages, you can also send images, videos, files and other interactive elements such as stickers and emojis. The more advanced chat apps also offer a wealth of other functions, including the ability to buy goods and services, games, brand channels to follow and mobile web browsing.

In this chapter, you'll get an overview of some of the main chat platforms, how they function and what the possibilities of newsgathering and getting UGC material from them are.

WhatsApp

Now with a global monthly active user base of over one billion, it is particularly strong in emerging markets - including India, Brazil, Nigeria, Malaysia and Mexico - but also has a strong presence in other parts of the world too.

One of the reasons it has become so popular is that it's become a free alternative SMS - which can be relatively expensive in emerging markets in particular. In addition to text messages, it can also send voice memos, images and video clips - and internet calls.

Another big factor in its huge global success is the simplicity of the app itself. Once downloaded, it scans the user's address book and immediately lets them communicate with all their contacts who are also on WhatsApp. It doesn't require the creation of a username name through an email address and password - which can be significant barriers to entry where literacy is an issue.

Because of its ease of use and the familiarity that many people have with it globally, it can prove to be an essential tool for communication and newsgathering in breaking news scenarios. Whilst you require a specific mobile handset to link the account to, since WhatsApp launched a web interface (web.whatsapp.com) it has made it much easier to handle incoming content via a desktop or laptop computer.

The 'UGC and social media hub' sits in the heart of the BBC's global newsroom in London. It set up a WhatsApp number over 18 months ago as an additional way for the BBC's audiences to send in comments, pictures, audio and video. Whenever a big story breaks, the team's WhatsApp number is often promoted online and on air and it has proven to be a vital way of getting valuable content

on a number of occasions.

One example was the Nepal Earthquake in April 2015, where, on one particular day, approximately 70 percent of the content being posted on the BBC News website live blog came via UGC sent in to the WhatsApp number. The BBC Hausa language service in Nigeria had similar success when it promoted a WhatsApp number to engage with audiences across the country during elections.

Several of the BBC's news programmes now also have their own dedicated WhatsApp numbers to engage directly with their audiences.

Once content comes in, the verification process remains the same as for any other source of incoming material. As with all other chat apps, WhatsApp strips out Exif data from images, but all material that gets sent in comes with a mobile number attached to it.

This can speed up verification significantly, as you can send a message back instantly to ask follow-up questions or call the number directly. Unlike with more traditional social media platforms, where there can be a long delay from messaging a source back and getting a response, a WhatsApp communication can significantly reduce the time lag.

To confirm a user's location, WhatsApp also allows the user to share their location via the drawing pin tab in a chat message. This can be a useful way of assessing if content from a user is authentic. The mobile phone associated with the user can also be an important clue. If it is the right country code, that can help with your assessment.

How can a user send media, contacts or a location?

- 1) Open a chat with a contact or group
- 2) Tap the paperclip icon (Android or Windows phone) or the arrow icon (iPhone)
- 3) Select the type of media they wish to send

For more information: <https://www.whatsapp.com/faq>

In addition to managing UGC among news teams, WhatsApp is increasingly proving to be a great way for individual journalists and reporters to build and nurture contacts for tips, intelligence, crowd-sourcing requests and, yes - exclusive stories too.

It can be a great extension to having a professional presence on Twitter and Facebook. For example, a beat reporter can create a broadcast list (which takes up to 256 contacts per list) of key contacts, experts and 'influencers' in their field. They can push out links to stories they publish, or ask for help on stories they are covering and get quick responses back in an efficient way.

Putting a selection of people into a WhatsApp group could be an alternative way of crowdsourcing ideas and developing them - with everyone in a group being able to see each other's comments and posts (note that they will also be able to see each other's phone numbers to be sure they will be OK being in a group on that basis).

Facebook Messenger

Facebook Messenger was spun out of the main Facebook platform as a standalone app in 2015. It is now possible to create an account in Messenger

without having a main Facebook account - requiring just your phone number to do so. Facebook users who want to continue messaging inside the platform now have to download the app separately. It's in part because of this - but also the simplified registration mechanism - that has seen it already acquire over 800 million monthly active users. After WhatsApp, it is now the second biggest global chat app. Unlike WhatsApp, its biggest markets are in the developed parts of the world, including the US, UK, Western Europe and Australia.

If you work at a news organisation, it's almost certain that it will have its own Facebook page. This can be of real value when using Facebook Messenger for interactions with your audience - as many of them will already be connected via the Facebook page. When a user clicks on the 'Message' tab on the Facebook page, it will open up a message window inside the Messenger app on their phone. They can then send photos or videos, take and send a new photo or video, record a voice message.

Unlike WhatsApp, content from users won't come associated with a mobile number, only their public Facebook profile information. Additional verification checks can be cross referenced against their Facebook profile: their name, stated location and previous posting history.

The dashboard for managing content sent in by users via Messenger has improved over time. It is now possible to manage individual messages in a more sophisticated filing system:

- Flag individual messages.
- Mark messages as spam.
- Ban users from the page.
- Archive messages.

- Add keywords to manage conversation histories.
- Add notes to keep track of conversations (page admins only).

Snapchat

While a number of news organisations are now on the ‘Discover’ platform inside Snapchat, which offers bespoke digital ‘bulletins’ aimed primarily at its millennial users, it isn’t a two-way communication. Users can watch and share content but they can’t respond back or send in their own content to these brands.

Where news brands have tried to provide Snapchat audiences to engage with them, it has been through the ‘regular’ platform, where they create a normal user account. Snapchat users who follow these accounts, or know the account user ID, can then message them back via text or multimedia content. Snapchat is well known for its ‘self-destructing’ messages, which means it is difficult to store or save content that is sent to you. For text and images, you can screenshot onto your mobile handset. For videos, it is possible to use third-party apps to pull them - though these apps are all likely to break Snapchat’s terms of use.

‘Live Stories’ on Snapchat, which are curated UGC streams at specific locations or around specific events, have proven to be hugely popular among users. Snapchat has allowed news organisations to re-use these with a credit to Snapchat, but this is often on a case-by-case basis. For those news organisations that already have a formal contract with Snapchat via Discover, it is likely to be easier for them to use content from Live Stories with attribution to Snapchat.

Telegram

Telegram is a messaging app that focuses on speed and security. It was founded by brothers Nikolai and Pavel Durov, who were also founders of Russian social network VK.

The company prides itself in having built what it describes as a highly secure app, but with a completely open source code and API (which allows developers freedom to create their own versions of the app or build additional services on top of it).

It has about 60m monthly active users, so much smaller than WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. However, its main user base is heavily concentrated in parts of the world where personal security and government digital monitoring are particular concerns. It's unsurprising, therefore, that Telegram is now the biggest chat app used in Iran.

One big advantage of Telegram compared to other chat apps is that it is truly multiplatform. It is mostly used as a mobile app, but it also has a full version available as a desktop download or web version. This makes it much easier to work across multiple devices.

There are several ways people can find you on Telegram. You can connect to people who are in your phone contacts and have Telegram. You can also select a public username for your Telegram account. Other people will be able to search and find you by that username — and send messages to you even if they don't know your number. This can be an effective way for a news brand to set up a presence inside the platform and promote a simple username, rather than a long phone number.

Telegram also has additional encryption user to user when using the 'secret chats' function (note this doesn't apply to broadcast channels). Telegram describes the function as such:

'Secret chats are meant for people who want more secrecy than the average fella. All messages in secret chats use end-to-end encryption. This means only you and the recipient can read those messages — nobody else can decipher them, including us here at Telegram (more on this [here](#)). Messages cannot be forwarded from secret chats. And when you delete messages on your side of the conversation, the app on the other side of the secret chat will be ordered to delete them as well. You can order your messages, photos, videos and files to self-destruct in a set amount of time after they have been read or opened by the recipient. The message will then disappear from both your and your friend's devices. All secret chats in Telegram are device-specific and are not part of the Telegram cloud. This means you can only access messages in a secret chat from their device of origin. They are safe for as long as your device is safe in your pocket.'

Secret chats can offer a very useful security layer for news organisations or journalists who want to send or receive messages and digital content from sources in some parts of the world, or users who want to ensure anonymity.

WeChat

Launched in 2011 as 'Weixin' inside China, WeChat - owned by Chinese company Tencent - has expanded into other markets a global version. It has 600m monthly active users - the vast majority of them inside China. To set up an official brand account in the platform requires going through an application process, but it is possible for anyone to set up a normal user account.

It's also important to note that WeChat is effectively two different apps - the one inside China (Weixin) and the other outside China. While it is possible to set up a news brand presence in the app outside China, it is much tougher getting a presence in the app inside China (where you have to go through an additional registration process which requires a named individual and an address inside the country). WeChat has to comply with a Chinese law, which makes it difficult for foreign news organisations to get a foothold on the platform inside the country, due to censorship laws.

There are an estimated 100 million WeChat users outside the country, many of whom are Chinese diaspora. These users are able to communicate with friends and family through their normal user WeChat accounts back home - so they can provide a way of reaching out to them for news brands too.

While in recent times WeChat seems to have reduced its expansion plans in the west under its own name (it bought a stake in the Kik chat app, popular among millennials in the US and Canada), it has focused a lot of its marketing power on Africa. It will be a platform to watch on the continent and will be of particular interest for news brands wanting to expand their distribution on the continent. It could also provide a means of soliciting UGC material, as one South African digital radio station has already started to do - Cliff Central.

The station partnered with WeChat in 2014 to launch the world's first full radio and audio channel inside a chat platform.

On the Cliff Central channel inside WeChat, users can stream radio broadcasts live and listen our podcasts on demand. The station updates the channel daily, with new podcasts and pictures and also gives its audience direct access to its presenters and DJs. There is a WeChat channel dashboard plugged in the live

studio so messages can be read and responded to live on air - very similar to how text messages have often been used. With the high cost of text messaging in many emerging markets, this provides a cheaper means for audiences to send in reaction, requests and their own pictures, audio and video. The channel has over 140,000 subscribers, making it a valuable active and engaged digital community.

This is one model that could increasingly be used by other media organisations to develop brand reach and audience interaction in a way that integrates into its existing newsroom or studio workflows. As with other chat apps, WeChat allows users to send in multimedia content as well as texts. It also has an official API that makes it possible for developers to build more bespoke dashboards and services that can be tailored to specific requirements.

FireChat and Anonymous Chat Apps

During the Hong Kong protests of 2014, FireChat grabbed headlines as the go-to mobile app of choice for many of the protestors. The app, created by Open Garden, is different from other chat apps that rely on mobile internet connections.

FireChat uses the Bluetooth connectivity and radio airds on feature phones and smartphones to create a “mesh” network of people in the same area. So even if state authorities shut down mobile networks - as happened in Hong Kong - people can still stay connected and message each other. It’s no wonder tens of thousands of people downloaded the app during the protests.

While traditional mobile networks come under strain the more users are on the network, the opposite happens with FireChat. Its network gets stronger and more resilient as more people join it. FireChat estimates that it would take only

5 percent of a city's population on the app to create a complete network across the city – one that operates completely off-grid, independent of mobile or data networks.

Using FireChat for UGC and newsgathering comes with challenges - anyone who uses the app can create a username of their choice or remain anonymous. No other details, such as email address or mobile number, are associated with that account. The app recently introduced a Twitter-style direct messaging feature, which means it is now possible to have private one-one communication inside the app - previously all messages were public. To communicate with a user one-to-one, they need to be within 200 feet of your location. This distance increases exponentially the bigger the 'mesh' network in the location or region is.

Here's how FireChat describes the user experience inside the app:

'Conversations happen in "chatrooms". You can create a chatroom under the name of your school, organisation, project, NGO, event, conference or any topic. Chatrooms scale very quickly: they can gather as many as tens of thousands of people simultaneously. When your phone is connected to the Internet, the chatrooms become the place for live communication between users everywhere in the world: anyone can share messages and pictures with everyone else in real time. The most special thing about FireChat is that it also works without a data plan and where there is no Internet connection or cellular phone coverage. It even works on a plane or on a cruise ship. When your community physically gets together, it creates its own communication network that's free and doesn't rely on traditional networks.'

It quickly becomes obvious that the app could be a vital newsgathering tool

during natural disasters or major crises, where mobile infrastructure and connectivity can be limited or non-existent. Aid agencies and international relief agencies have already been experimenting with the use of FireChat in such scenarios. This also offers a means of news teams that have been dispatched in the field to stay connected with each other and coordinate their activities during similar scenarios. Even if one within the FireChat mesh network is connected to the internet, it allows everyone within that network to also benefit - meaning messages posted in chat rooms can be viewed and accessed globally.

FireChat recently upgraded its features to allow pictures to also be posted - providing additional value to news organisations who may be seeking UGC material from the scene.

Anonymity and privacy aren't just concerns for people living in countries where government monitoring is a known issue. They are equally significant factors that are attracting millennial users to similar messaging platforms in the West. Yik Yak is one app that has risen quickly in popularity on and around university campuses, as it uses anonymous messaging technology based on location similar to FireChat's.

This in itself can be of value journalistically. BBC News worked with Yik Yak to ask its UK users (the vast majority of whom are millennials) to share their experiences of mental health issues for Mental Health Week in 2015. Because every post is anonymous, users were much more forthcoming in sharing personal stories than if they were on other social or chat platforms. The up-voting feature of the app ensured that the best comments rose to the top as the community voted for them. These comments were then shared across BBC News online and on air, adding greater depth to the coverage of the story and making it more relevant to audiences.

Conclusion

There are a variety of different chat apps that offer a range of functionalities and more are appearing all the time. This chapter, for instance, did not cover other prominent chat platforms like Line or Viber, but they offer very similar features. When using any of these platforms for newsgathering and subsequent verification of content that gets submitted on them, the key thing to be aware of is targeting the right platform for the right story.

Most chat apps have some regional geographic strength, where they have a big proportion of users (e.g. WeChat in China, Telegram in Iran, WhatsApp in India, and Facebook Messenger in the USA). Focusing on the wrong platform for a story can result in a lot of wasted time and energy.

Different platforms also offer varying degrees of verifiable data and information. WhatsApp offers a mobile with any user interaction. Yik Yak is completely anonymous, with no means of directly messaging any user, but can be a great way of getting authentic or 'real' experiences based on location.

Above all, normal journalistic instincts and judgements remain paramount as with all verification processes. As messaging platforms continue to evolve and grow, they will become an increasingly integral interface for breaking news content and audience interaction.

Finding Your Story: Which Platform and Where?

Ahmed Elsheikh

Discovering which social media platform - out of the many out there - to search first for your story is an important decision that every social media journalist must take. Do I take my time on Twitter? Do I delve into the pages of Facebook? Maybe Instagram is where I should look first? These are important questions that the time-pressed reporter should ask. Going down the wrong rabbit hole can cost valuable time, and waste precious energy. Here we look at research that has been done into which social media platforms garner the most interest in each country. Knowing this will help us drill down quickly to the story we are chasing - increasing the chances of finding relevant, verifiable content before competitors. While, of course, new content is available on all platforms depending on the preferences of the uploader, looking at the most popular sites first of should help produce some efficiencies.

In an interview with Adel Mohamed of First Draft News, we highlight some of the issues facing journalists using different platforms across the region. Adel takes us through these problems and shows us what journalists need to think about and we then provide a description of the Arab Social Media Report 2015 to back up Mohamed's concerns and recommendations.

Adel Mohamed is the community manager of First Draft News - a global coalition of news organisations - including the Al Jazeera Media Training and Development Centre - dedicated to verification and combatting misinformation online. Prior to joining First Draft, Adel was the social media manager of the Global Voices where he also a blogged on his country of birth - Egypt.

Why is it important for the journalist in the Middle East to understand different platforms?

With the Arab Spring that started across the region in 2011, everyone in the Middle East started to pay more attention to social media. They saw the great impact it had and how it helped in mobilisation and organising people. Before that it was more the domain of well-known bloggers and few people who used to know each other and use Twitter for tweetups (twitter users gather for a meeting) and to try any new social media website for its possible use for citizen journalism.

I believe understanding different platforms helps to focus the effort and save time when journalists are searching for breaking news or doing a report based on what people say online about a specific topic.

Figures from the report “We Are Social” in 2016 ³¹ back this up. The report shows that around half of the Middle East population (53 percent) are active internet users and around a quarter of the whole population (26 percent) are active social media users. The internet and social media is a vital source of information for any journalist in the region and cannot be ignored. Internet skills are a requisite for every journalist here.

Region	Total Population (million)	Active Internet Users (million)	% Active Internet Users	Active Social Media Users (million)	% Active Social Media Users
Middle East	242	128	%53	63	%26

³¹ We Are Social (2016, January 26). Digital Yearbook. We Are Social. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/2016-digital-yearbook>

Another research study, the Arab Social Media Report (2015)³², shows similar findings: around a quarter of internet users in the Arab World are active in social media. This general number, however, is slightly misleading as the range from country to country is wide. 75 percent of internet users, for instance, in Qatar are active on social media, compared to an apparent 5 percent in Somalia. Notably, also, these figures are not disaggregated by gender, age, rural and urban users, and other variables that would give us more information about user demographics in the region and what kind of stories to expect, and equally important, to tell.

Internet World Stats (IWS) (stat 7, 2016) corroborates these numbers as well, giving 26 percent of users with active social media accounts. This report goes on to note that Arabic is the fourth most used language on the global internet.³³ IWS (stat 5, 2016) also noted that by the end of 2015, internet penetration in the Middle East was at 52.2 percent - above the global average of 46.4 percent.³⁴

Social Media Perception, Usage and Popularity: A Description of the Arab Social Media Report

The Arab Social Media Report (2015) is a comprehensive study that describes perception, usage and impact of social media in 18 countries of the Arab World.³⁵ Below we describe the most relevant conclusions of the study for a journalist.

³² TNS (2015). Arab Social Media Report. Arab Social Media Influencers Summit and DMC. Retrieved from: <http://dmc.ae/img/pdf/white-papers/ArabSocialMediaReport-2015.pdf>

³³ Miniwatts Marketing Group (2016) Internet World Stats-Usage and Populations Statistics. Internet World Stats. Retrieved from: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>

³⁴ Miniwatts Marketing Group (2016) Internet World Stats-Usage and Populations Statistics. Internet World Stats. Retrieved from: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm#links>

³⁵ These countries are: United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco. TNS (2015). Ibid.

Perception

- Social media in Middle East and North Africa is perceived as having “numerous positive aspects that enhance the quality of life of individuals, business profitability and governmental interaction with public”.
- However, “a lack of trust in social media” and its “negative effects on the local cultures and traditions”. Overall, 44 percent of those surveyed claimed to trust social media.

Usage

- 67 percent of users said that they use social media to follow up on the news and current affairs.
- 55 percent of participants said that they use social media keeping to touch with their social networks. 12 percent use it for gaining information, watching videos, listening to music, and sharing photos.
- 8 percent said that they use Social Media as a way to spend their time.
- 52 percent of users are most active during evening hours.
- 25 percent of users spend 16 to 30 minutes per session on a social platform, and 23 percent spend 5 to 15 minutes.

The Most Popular Online Networks

We asked Adel Mohamed for his opinion on the relevance of considering the different available platforms for journalistic purposes.

Could you highlight the advantage for a journalist to look at different platforms? Why would you go to Twitter, why Facebook? Does this change across the region?

As I noted already, the nature of every platform and the nature of every platform's audience go towards making each platform unique. Twitter is well known for breaking news and easier to monitor and search for what people say about specific topics through hashtags or categorising groups of users using Twitter lists (see Chapter 1). We can say Twitter's very design makes it more open to the general public - and to journalists. For breaking news, really, Twitter is the first place you should turn. Facebook is designed to be more closed to friends, to your specific groups. This makes Facebook very hard to search. Even if you can search public posts on the platform, it mostly shows results from specific pages and companies more than the general public. Each country also has different numbers of users across different platforms and being aware of that is crucial.

Facebook is the most popular network across the region, meaning that all journalists should be familiar with it.

Damian Radcliffe, journalist, researcher and digital analyst, explains that Facebook continued to be the most used social media network in the Middle East with 80 million users at the start of 2015. These can be disaggregated by country. There are 27 million users in Egypt, 12 million in Saudi Arabia, and 11 million in Iraq.³⁶ This means that the trend found by the Arab Social Media Report in 2014 still stood on early 2015.

³⁶ Radcliffe, Damian (2016, January). Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2015. LinkedIn. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/mrdamian/social-media-in-the-middle-east-2015-review-by-damian-radcliffe>

Behind Facebook comes the social media messaging platform WhatsApp with 84 percent.

Popularity per Social Network among Current Users/Subscribers in the Arab World

Facebook

- Top social network in the aggregate level, with 87 percent of social media users having an account.
- 89 percent of them access the platform on a daily basis and 87 percent access it through smartphones.
- High preferences were registered in Jordan with 63 percent (the highest), 50 percent in Libya and in Palestine, 47 percent in Syria, 46 percent in Tunisia, 44 percent in Iraq, 42 percent in Egypt, 41 percent in Algeria and 40 percent in Yemen.
- The lowest preference came from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Lebanon, 24 percent each, followed by Bahrain, 26 percent.

Because of the number of subscribers, Facebook would be the platform to first consider for newsgathering, but also for storytelling and audience engagement. One of Facebook's newest features, Facebook Live, could become a new form of newsgathering by connecting to users' livestreams in localities where news break. Although, as a journalist, you should always ask yourself about the ethical considerations –some of which are described in this book- as well as copyright and safety issues.

As for using Facebook Live for storytelling, one of its huge advantage is that it enables you to interact with your audience in real time, by answering their questions and engaging in conversations, as you report news.

WhatsApp

- 84 percent of social media users have a WhatsApp account and 96 percent of them access it on a daily basis.
- The countries that prefer the most this social platform are Lebanon with 58 percent, Sudan with 50 percent, Syria with 49 percent, Egypt and Algeria with 46 percent each.
- Jordan was the country that least prefers it, with 18 percent.

WhatsApp is, with Facebook, one of the predominant platforms in the region. As noted in past chapters, this requires the journalist to understand how this platform works and to understand how to use it to enter into groups (as per the case study in Chapter 1) and how to use it to request your audience to share content (as per the example in Chapter 6).

Twitter

- 32 percent of social media users have a Twitter account, out of which 39 percent of access it on a daily basis.
- Saudi Arabia is the top Arab country in Twitter subscriptions with 53 percent, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with 51 percent, Bahrain with 47 percent, Morocco and Kuwait with 41 percent each and Lebanon with 39 percent.
- The top country for daily Twitter usage is Jordan with 63 percent, followed

by Libya and Palestine with 50 percent each - although Libya is one of the countries with less number of Twitter subscribers, with 12 percent.

While Twitter usage may be lower than WhatsApp and Facebook, its accessibility still makes it the social media platform for today's social media journalist. Remember that it remains the easiest of the social media platforms to search and to find relevant content in breaking news situations. So, despite the platform being low in the standings of popular platforms, it still needs to be in the toolkit of any social media journalist.

Instagram

- 34 percent of social media users have an account, out of which 82 percent access it on a daily basis.
- The UAE is the Arab country with more Instagram users, with 56 percent, followed by Morocco with 52 percent, Bahrain with 51 percent, Lebanon with 49 percent and Kuwait and KSA with 43 percent each.
- Libya and Syria are, among the analysed countries, the ones with the lower rate of subscribers, with 15 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

This platform, which is owned by Facebook, remains a popular one for sharing images and, increasingly, videos. The social media journalist should be aware of how to optimise the use of the tool. It's a good tool for requesting content for less complex news events to be shared with relevant hashtags for newsgathering. Good examples are of national events or sporting events - where the smart social media journalist asks the audience to share content with an appropriate hashtag. The project Guardian Witness by the British newspaper The Guardian is a very good example of this.

YouTube

- 39 percent of social media users have an account in this video platform owned by Google.

- 66 percent of them access YouTube on a daily basis.

- The highest number of users with an account comes from Lebanon, 75 percent, followed by Morocco with 68 percent, Jordan with 66 percent, Qatar with 55 percent and Tunisia with 53 percent.

- The lowest number of subscribers to the video platform is from Egypt with 16 percent, Palestine with 15 percent, and finally Syria with 12 percent.

Putting together lists of relevant YouTubers as well as official YouTube accounts has proven to be a successful way to get the best of this platform as a newsgathering tool. Numbers for regular uploaders are, unfortunately, not available, but that would be a crucial piece of information to map in which countries monitoring YouTube accounts would be relevant for a journalist. It is worth mentioning that the study doesn't include information on Snapchat. Even though its usage is not that widespread yet—not only among Arab countries but also in the world in general—the smart social media journalist wouldn't neglect that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are the second and sixth countries with the larger number of users.³⁷

The Future

This space changes all the time. New platforms emerge, old ones are unsettled. Just look at the fall of Yahoo! and the emergence of Snapchat. The indispensable

³⁷ Mander, Jason (2015, June 17). Top markets for WhatsApp, Snapchat and WeChat. Global Web Index. Retrieved from: <http://www.globalwebindex.net/blog/top-markets-for-whatsapp-snapchat-and-wechat>

platform the social media journalist will rely upon in five years' time may not have been invented yet. This means that the social media journalist of today has to keep her ears to the group, has to know what is happening, and has to experiment all the time to see how to use each new platform as it emerges in popularity.

Here are Adel Mohamed's thoughts on this.

What should a journalist think about in terms of platforms in the future - what is on the horizon?

Journalists should always be aware of the latest features that may empower them doing their tasks or spread the word of what they do. Some say that the next year is for video. We can see this with Facebook giving more priority to video and live video in particular. The thing to watch - in the following years we will see how augmented reality (above the fun of Pokémon Go!) and virtual reality will also play a great role in social networks. Facebook has bought Oculus a couple of years back as it attempts to see how virtual reality can work, Google is experimenting with Google Cardboard. I can really see this taking off - especially when it becomes an integral part of the computer game community.

Conclusion

Having played an important role in the Arab Spring, social media is now an integral part of the daily life of at least half of the Middle Eastern and North African population, there is no excuse for any journalist who wants to be in touch with and engage its audience to ignore its power. What we have attempted to show here is which platforms are the most important in each country to help illustrate where each journalist should look to find content and sources to tell

their stories, but also point out that some platforms, even if they aren't the most popular, such as Twitter, are still essential tools to look for news-worthy UGC. Knowledge of these platforms is not only important for newsgathering, it's also crucial for storytelling. You should know which social media are the most accessed in each country, and think about how to engage with each platform in different ways to tell your story. This is what makes the true social media journalist stand out.

What the Senior Editor Should Know

Tom Trewinnard

So far, this book has covered how a journalist should engage with social media, find their story and verify it. It has spoken about some of the challenges to look out for as a journalist. What we have not yet covered is how to successfully integrate this into your newsroom workflows. Concerns are often around budgets and staff skills. However, as this chapter explains, these challenges are surmountable and not overly costly.

Successfully integrating social newsgathering into your newsroom requires engaging key stakeholders throughout your organisation - among these, senior editors will play a critical and often overlooked role. There is a general lack of comprehensive resources supporting the role played by senior editors. This chapter aims to introduce the key opportunities, challenges and considerations from the editor's perspective, and seeks to answer the question: What should the senior editor responsible for social newsgathering know?

Before unpacking this, let's start with another, more foundational question: Why is the role of the editor so key to any discussion of social newsgathering and eyewitness media? Put simply, the most successful organisations working with UGC and eyewitness media are invariably those where editors have invested time and energy into designing, refining and implementing newsroom processes and policies that are specifically tailored to social newsgathering. In the often tumultuous conditions during a breaking story, newsrooms without well-established processes are not only less likely to find and acquire compelling content, but they are also more likely to make errors with UGC that

can have a lasting impact on a publication's credibility and image.

To design newsgathering processes—for breaking news and otherwise—that make the best use of the opportunities presented by social networks and UGC, editors themselves should have an in-depth understanding of the key tenets of social newsgathering covered in earlier chapters: discovery, verification, and permissions and attribution. Understanding the tools and techniques is not only important in dividing and assigning roles, for example, but also in understanding the wider limitations of those tools and techniques.

This chapter builds on those previous to cover:

- Building a social newsgathering team.
- Investing in social newsgathering.
- Human Resource considerations for editors.

As this is still very much an emergent field, and one in which editors' perspectives are often overlooked, we also encourage editors working to set up social newsgathering teams to externalise and share the valuable lessons they are learning: publish blog posts, speak at conferences, tweet. Our hope is that this chapter is just one starting point for many important forthcoming discussions that are relevant and instructive not only for newsrooms in the Middle East and North Africa, but around the world.

Continuing Professional Development

Providing ongoing professional training for yourself and colleagues is important in any newsroom. For social newsgathering teams, however, given the dependency on a wide range of tools, technologies and platforms, the need is especially urgent: new tools emerge and old tools disappear frequently, platforms often tweak APIs and introduce new features that can help (or hinder)

social newsgathering, new techniques and best practices to accompany new tools are constantly being developed.

The pace of change in the field too, seems to be accelerating: the increased adoption of smartphones and access to fast connectivity is driving increasing volumes of valuable content from an increasing number of places. This dynamic, in turn, drives the pace of innovation in methods and tools for making sense of all that content. Consider this: in the five years since the start of the Arab uprisings, the hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute has increased by a multiple of more than 10: from 35 hours per minute in November 2010 to 400 hours per minute in July 2015.³⁸ Between April 2013 and February 2016, messaging service WhatsApp increased its monthly active user base from 200 million in 2013, to 1 billion in 2016.³⁹ New formats and platforms emerge all the time: think Snapchat, Periscope, 360 video. The principles and priorities of responsible journalistic social newsgathering don't change - but we have to adapt tools and techniques for discovery, verification and attribution to match this new reality, and prepare for new developments in future.

Keeping abreast of the latest tools and research need not be a cost-intensive process. While there is great value in face-to-face training workshops with social newsgathering experts, newsrooms on a tight budget can also stay fairly well up to date by following a handful of accounts on Twitter and dedicating a portion of time each week to reading a couple of blog posts. Attending events - of which there are an increasing amount, including in the MENA region - is also a great way to stay up to date not only on questions of tools and techniques, but

³⁸ Statista. Hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute as of July 2015. Statista. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259477/hours-of-video-uploaded-to-youtube-every-minute/>

³⁹ Statista. Number of monthly active WhatsApp users worldwide from April 2013 to February 2016 (in millions). Statista. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/260819/number-of-monthly-active-whatsapp-users/>

also the wider issues of trauma, ethics, and legal.

Excellent training resources and ongoing social newsgathering-related publishing can be found at:

- First Draft News⁴⁰ (limited content in Arabic).
- Verification Handbook (also available in Arabic).
- Poynter.
- The Checklist (some content available in Arabic).
- REVEAL & InVID Projects.

Protecting the Team: HR Considerations Around Vicarious Trauma

Among the most important developments in the field of social newsgathering over the past five years has been research into the impact on the mental health of journalists of routinely bearing witness to violent and graphic content as part of the social newsgathering and verification process. The term used to describe this unique type of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is vicarious or secondary trauma.

As senior editors, responsible for ensuring a safe and productive working environment for colleagues, understanding the dangers of vicarious trauma is an essential first step in designing practical policies and management structures to mitigate to the greatest extent the impact of trauma on your teammates. Pioneering 2015 survey research into the topic by Eyewitness

⁴⁰ Tom Trewinnard (the author of this chapter) works on the Check project, which is a founding member of First Draft, was a contributing author to the Verification Handbook and curates The Checklist. Check is a project of Meedan, who translated the Verification Handbook into Arabic.

Media Hub⁴¹ found that 90 percent of respondents working as journalists viewed eyewitness media at least once per week. Fifty-two percent of journalist respondents view distressing eyewitness media several times a week. Forty percent of survey respondents said that viewing distressing eyewitness media has had a negative impact on their personal lives, with symptoms ranging from experiencing flashbacks, nightmares, and developing stress-related medical conditions.

This topic is especially important for editors working in the Middle East and North Africa, where the growth of social newsgathering has coincided with the Arab uprisings and their brutal suppression. The volume of graphic content emerging from the region—whether from wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Gaza, or from protest movements in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bahrain, Tunisia and Morocco—is unparalleled anywhere else in the world. As pointed out in a 2015 Columbia Journalism Review article on the subject, vicarious trauma is perhaps most harmful when reporters feel a connection to the media - something unavoidable for many journalists working in social newsgathering in the region.⁴²

Given the significant risks to the mental well-being of our colleagues, how can we as senior editors act to ensure our team is protected to the greatest extent possible? There are numerous excellent resources (listed below) that should be considered essential reading that cover vicarious trauma its impact and mitigation strategies, which broadly fall into three categories:

⁴¹ Dubberley, Griffin, Bal (2015) Making Secondary Trauma a Primary Issue. Eyewitness Media Hub. Retrieved from: <http://eyewitnessmediahub.com/research/vicarious-trauma>

⁴² Spinner, Jackie (2015, December 28). On the 'digital frontline,' social media reporters and editors exposed to vicarious trauma. Columbia Journalism Review. Retrieved from: http://www.cjr.org/first_person/social_media_reporters_and_vicarious_trauma.php

- Acknowledging the problem & creating a supportive environment: The first step in dealing with vicarious trauma is to acknowledge the emotional difficulty of viewing distressing eyewitness content, and creating a supportive environment for reporters. This could mean making sure that team members are themselves aware of the risks of vicarious trauma, creating opportunities to discuss and share experiences of vicarious trauma (such as regular team debriefings). According to Bruce Shapiro, Executive Director of the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma: “The single most important thing we know from every study that has ever been done on effective treatments and programmes, is peer support. Social connection for people exposed to trauma is the single best predictor of resilience. Social isolation is the single best predictor of difficulty”.⁴³

In addition to providing adequate emotional support, other factors that can aid colleagues’ ability to deal with traumatic content include ensuring their physical workspace is as comfortable as possible: provide natural light and make sure reporters take regular breaks throughout the day to leave the desk.

- Designing work plans with trauma in mind: There are several simple steps for organising the day to day tasks of social newsgathering that editors can take to protect their colleagues.

- Limit exposure: Turn down audio volume (which has a particularly distressing impact) on videos; ensure that reporters aren’t viewing content that won’t be used or broadcast; view only as much of a video as is required, and only as many times as absolutely required; and ensure that violent and graphic content is viewed on as small a portion of computer monitors as possible. Be aware that

⁴³ Reid, Alastair (2014, October 13) How are journalists at risk of vicarious trauma from UGC? Journalism.co.uk Retrieved from: <https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/how-are-journalists-at-risk-of-vicarious-trauma-from-ugc-/s2/a562758/>

introducing new platforms into your social newsgathering suite can introduce new risks around traumatic content.

- Avoid surprise: Unexpected exposure to violent or graphic content is more traumatic than viewing content when a reporter is mentally prepared to view content. Ensure that newsroom content management systems provide adequate warnings for traumatic content, and if sharing traumatic content with colleagues be sure to highlight the distressing nature of the content. Build policies and workflows that take maximum care to limit unexpected exposure.

- Share the burden: Designing rotation systems that ensure no one reporter is routinely left working alone on eyewitness media for extended periods and make sure reporters take periods away from social newsgathering to work on less distressing content.

- Providing adequate health care: Ensure that any reporter who needs access to counselling and mental health professionals trained to deal with different forms of PTSD. Review health insurance and other organisational policies to ensure they take into account the risks faced by reporters working with eyewitness media.

Conclusion

The behind-the-scenes work of senior editors in newsrooms can often go unnoticed and under appreciated - but we should be careful not to undervalue the indispensable role they play in setting up and maintaining a newsroom's social newsgathering operation. The broader social newsgathering community, as well as editors themselves, have to do more to create space for the discussion of editorial and management challenges in the field, and support

the creation of more training resources for editors. In this vein, we hope this chapter is regularly superseded and becomes just one among many valuable contributions to the field.

‘Un/Framing Syria’: User-Generated Content and the Ethics of Journalism in the Digital Age

Dr. Dima Saber

UGC presents us with enormous challenges. Many of those challenges are technical. How to verify. How to use the tools. How to constantly think about the challenges on the horizon. These are crucial. No single journalist operating today can work without at the very least being aware of these technical tools - and at least who to ask in their organisation or network about verifying content. However, these tools present another set of new challenges that must also be considered. Ethical challenges. As this book until now has explained, on a daily basis we are using the content - the UGC - of people who are not trained journalists. These people may be activists. They may be propagandists. They may be from non-governmental organisations. Or, more likely, they are people who were simply in a newsworthy place at the wrong time, opened up the camera app on their smartphone and started filming. No more has this been the case than in the conflict in Syria. Syria is a story that is told via UGC. It is, with notable, rare exceptions, not told by independent journalists on the ground. News organisations rely on verified UGC to tell us what is going on. It has been like this in the near 70 months of conflict (and counting). This, of course, has evolved over time. In 2011, we were seeing live-streams of airstrikes in Homs filmed by people standing on the roofs of soon-to-be-destroyed buildings. Today, these have become more formalised - videos from collectives identifying themselves as news organisations. Throughout this transition, one fact has remained constant. We, as news organisations, as journalists, are not working with other trained journalists. We do not employ them. They have no

insurance policies. They have not been on training courses. It behooves us to always keep that in the forefront of our minds when we are dealing with them and their content.

In this chapter, we put this in context - explaining how the discovery of an archive of UGC from the start of the conflict in Syria raises many of the questions outlined above. In addressing how to use this archive, we raise questions of uploader safety, of the protection of identities, of graphic imagery and of propaganda and storytelling. These are ethical questions that each and every journalist engaging with social media and UGC must have in the forefront of their mind alongside the technical questions addressed in this book. If not, there is a serious risk that this important content will escape from the grasp of our story-telling.

Counting the Dead in Syria

March 15, 2016 marked the fifth anniversary of the Syrian uprising. The movement, which started with peaceful protests inspired by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, quickly became the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. It has already killed over 220,000 people, half of whom are believed to be civilians, and has left millions internally displaced, and scattered as refugees around the world (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, January 2016).

Five years after the first peaceful protests in Syria, and to quote Judith Butler in 'Frames of war, when is life grievable?' (2010), the numbers of Syrian dead and displayed are known, but they don't seem to count:

'The reporting of the number of war dead, including civilian losses, can be one of the operations of war waging, a discursive means through which war

is built, and one way in which we are conscripted into the war effort. Numbers, especially the number of war dead, circulate not only as representations of war, but as part of the apparatus of war waging. Numbers are a way to frame the losses of war, but this does not mean we know whether, when, or how numbers count. We may know how to count, or we may well rely on the reliability of certain humanitarian or human rights organisations to count well, but that is not the same as figuring out how and whether a life counts. Although numbers cannot tell us precisely whose lives count, and whose deaths count, we can note how numbers are framed and unframed to find out how norms that differentiate liveable and grievable lives are at work in the context of war'.⁴⁴

In that sense, this chapter should be read as an attempt to keep the Syrian narrative human and alive, through transcending mainstream depictions of (Arab) conflicts where death tolls stop being updated because more people keep dying every day. It is, in that sense, an attempt to make Syrian lives more grievable, hence more liveable.

But beyond the moral responsibility I feel towards the victims of the Syrian war, this chapter is mainly concerned with how the democratisation of image production and dissemination has completely revolutionised the way we think the relation between media and ethics. The spread of new information and communication technologies (new ICTs) has made it possible for anyone with a basic camera, or a simple mobile phone, to document and share widely online images of human rights violations, of bomb attacks and of ongoing bloody wars. This new media 'revolution' has created new spaces within which we witness and document everyday life differently. In these ever-changing new spaces,

⁴⁴ Butler, Judith (2010): *Frames of war. When is life grievable?* London, New York: Verso, xix-xx.

the relations and the frontiers between ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ images and contents now constantly need to be re-negotiated and re-defined.

In an attempt to move beyond the post-2011 ‘over-excitement’ – especially in Western mainstream media narratives – on the role of new media tools in fostering social and political change in the Arab region, this chapter attempts to reposition the debates on the value of user-generated content within its ethical contexts; What happens when ordinary people are granted access to mainstream media systems? What is the value of this ‘amateur’ content – especially when produced in situations of conflict and social turmoil? And how is the changing nature of our media tools reshaping concepts of media ownership and authorship, as well as considerations around concepts such as security, vulnerability and agency in representation?

This chapter is based on archival work I have been involved in since late 2012, with Syrian and Palestinian filmmakers and long-time friends Rami Farah and Liana Saleh, who have been based in Paris since the Syrian revolution took a wrong turn within a few months from its peaceful start. We have been, through the ‘Unframing Syria’ project, mapping and organising thousands of amateur videos smuggled to us through the Syrian-Jordanian border by an activist from Daraa. I start, in the section below, with a statement – rather than an apology – on why I think we, as young Arab researchers, writers, activists and online media enthusiasts, should take back the narratives of conflict in our own countries. I then give an overview of the ‘Un/Framing Syria’ project, which offers in my opinion an adequate, framework to address the main ethical challenges that face journalists, filmmakers, archivists and media activists when attempting to make sense of a disparate and fragmented amateur archive.

Writing on One's 'Own' War

I've always had difficulties assuming my position as a researcher in relation to my objects of study; that is because I work on media depictions of social protests and war with a focus on the Arab region, and I am an Arab researcher. So, I almost always start with an apology for some sort of ineluctable bias inherent to what I'm about to say.⁴⁵

But I'd like to start differently this time; first I'd like to not apologise for writing this chapter on my own – ongoing – war. I'm challenging here the imaginary lines that the 'Academic Institution' has always expected us to keep between our objects of research and ourselves - at least the French Institution of which I'm the 'fine product'. I will therefore start with why I think it's time for us to take back the narrative of our deadly wars.

1) In order to provide a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the emerging contexts and cultural effects of conflict in the MENA region; While most of the world's recent conflicts have taken place in the 'global South' and were, in majority, intra-state wars, an overwhelming majority of the academic body of literature focusing on war and conflict is produced by scholars from Europe, the US and the 'global North'. As a result, cultural perspectives on conflict have been almost entirely absent in the literature on conflict within the Arts and Humanities disciplines.⁴⁶ Arab writers and researchers are today in a unique position to challenge these 'global Northern'/Western depictions of conflict, and to produce alternatives to the West's orientalising system of political

⁴⁵ I often have in mind this quote from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978): 'So authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.'

⁴⁶ McCorriston, S. (2014), *Scoping Study: Research Gaps on 'Conflict'*, The University of Exeter for the Economic and Social Research Council, on behalf of RCUK.

representation, reflected in the famous ‘they cannot represent themselves, they need to be represented’.⁴⁷

2) In order to challenge assumptions of ‘representational limits’ i.e. that the ‘horror’ of some wars, conflicts and massacres lies somewhere beyond the possibilities of representation and significance, an approach predominantly inherited from post-WWII Holocaust Studies and which has been prevalent in the body of literature on conflict in the 20th and the 21st centuries.

3) As a way of recognising that ethics is a permeable concept specific to distinctive cultural settings, and therefore attempt to devise the appropriate interdisciplinary critical frame that would help map key sites of negotiation in what might be thought of as an ethical film practice – from questions about the objectifying power of the gaze and the consent of the participants, to the conservative tendencies of the Syrian narrative itself.

‘Un/Framing Syria’: Towards an Ethical Praxis of Political Filmmaking

A little bit of context first. In September 2012, Yadan Draji, a young activist from Syria, crossed the Jordanian border on foot, carrying a hard drive that contains footage that he and four of his friends shot in Daraa, city where the protests first erupted in March 2011. This first-hand amateur archive documents the first eighteen months of the uprising as it went from a peaceful movement to a militarised and Islamised conflict that became a full-scale war. Comprising of thousands of hours of live recordings of protests, activist gatherings, bomb attacks, funerals and testimonies, this archive formed the backbone of a documentary film that we are currently working on and which looks at the

⁴⁷ Said, E. (1978), *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

interconnectedness between mainstream and alternative media depictions of the Syrian war. The film is scheduled for release in 2018.

Since then, two of the four people who recorded this footage are dead – both killed by snipers in Daraa – one is now a refugee in Turkey, and one is now fighting with some Islamic factions in Syria. This information is absolutely not meant for dramatisation purposes. As I move forward in describing the ethical challenges we have been facing while working on this archive, questions of security, vulnerability and agency in representation can only be asked with those same people in mind; those who shot the Daraa archive and lost their lives doing it, and those who are still alive, but in danger, fighting in a crazy conflict zone.

We first spent several months watching endless hours of an extremely graphic and painful footage. Then we started mapping the archive, organising the videos and collecting metadata that would help us reconstitute the story of what has happened. Very soon in that process, we realised the potential of forming a cross-disciplinary team ⁴⁸ consisting of media and film scholars, the filmmakers, the producer and archiving professionals. Our aim was to try and think collaboratively how technology can help us make sense of such a versatile, fragmented and extremely graphic archive that tells the story of an ongoing war.

Our bet was the following: by bringing together academics, artists and technologists on the same team, we should be better equipped to rethink the value of UGC produced in times of war. In a social-media driven era where digital

⁴⁸ A key member of this team is Dr. Michele Aaron (University of Birmingham) whose contribution has been vital for the progress of this project and of our work on the Dara'a archive more generally. Her ongoing research on the potential of digital film to affect change both in terms of personal, political and institutional practice made her well known for bringing ethical theory to the practicalities, and geopolitics, of film practice.

technologies have completely revolutionised ways citizens are documenting human right violations and making their own narrations of conflicts, the ethics of documentary filmmaking have also radically changed. And we – as a cross-disciplinary team – were all interested in contributing to these ongoing debates on the ethics of political filmmaking in the digital media age. So we started thinking of different ways to turn this massive disorganised archive into an open-access database that would make available to the public around 2000 UGC from Daraa. By doing so, we unavoidably started thinking through all the ethical challenges that face filmmakers, researchers and archivists when attempting to constitute a narrative of an unfolding history; How can one tell the story of an ongoing conflict within a such fraught and misunderstood context? How can one draw a line between what is ‘true’ – and what ‘objective truth’ is – and what needs to be fact-checked and verified? What is a trusted source when the war is that messy, and happening elsewhere anyway? Is there a way to prove it at all? What is too graphic to show to a large audience of an international film, and what should absolutely be included for the sake of the narrative, to bear witness and to respect all those who have lost their lives trying to document this war?

Building on these initial questions, we then set ourselves a list of objectives, and the ‘Un/Framing Syria’ project was born. Through this project, which we expect will last until at least early 2018, we are now trying to:

- 1) Rethink the value of UGC produced in times of war, as a way to better understand the relation between media representation and public understanding and perception of the Syrian war
- 2) Co-create an enduring online resource in the form of an open-access database of a selection of videos from the Daraa archive, thus drawing together the transformative potential of new ICTs and digital storytelling in times of conflict

3) Map the key sites of negotiation within an ethical praxis of political filmmaking and digital storytelling in relation to conflict and new ICTs, thus extending existing discussions of the ethics of representation – on, for example, consent and complicity, security, agency, vulnerability, objectification and obligation – to meet the new needs arising from the representation of conflict in the digital age and in relation to Syria in particular

4) Better understand the potential of political filmmaking and digital storytelling to represent conflict ethically and thereby contribute to informing public debate regarding the Syrian war within academic and non-academic contexts

Our starting point is to think of film as an inherently ethical medium: it depends upon an ethical encounter between the various individuals engaged in its experience. In the making and watching of film, and indeed of any audio-visual narrative, we are asked to position ourselves in relation to the acts and needs, trials and tribulations, and even joy and suffering of others.⁴⁹ We are required to feel in relation to them, to care about what happens to them or at least some of them.

This project works with vulnerable people, some of whom are today scattered as refugees and asylum seekers across the Middle East, some of whom are dead and some still in conflict zones.

⁴⁹ See here Sontag, S. (2003), *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

1

Uploader Safety: If you are contacting an uploader / eyewitness in a dangerous situation - be that during a conflict, attack or natural disaster - think about their safety and wellbeing first. They are not a trained journalist; they are not your employee - take your responsibilities towards them seriously. They are also likely to be being contacted by multiple journalists at the same time. Think about the language you are using when you contact them, ask if they are safe, and only then discuss their content.

The question of ethics is therefore central to our work on the Daraa archive. The first people we have to think about are those who contributed to shooting this archive but are in Syria; their identities and that of other people caught on camera need to be protected and their anonymity preserved through the whole project.

2

Protecting Identities: If you are using footage uploaded to social media to report on an event, think about the people shown in the eyewitness media report. Did they give informed consent to being shown in mainstream media? Could showing their faces identify them and put them in danger some way? You have a responsibility towards the people you show in your news output, think about their safety too.

Second, the archive is very graphic, including scenes from areas that were hit by mortars, destroyed homes where families were buried under the rubble, and houses turned into last-minute DIY morgues. In this way, the archive has pushed us to rethink how the ethics of audio-visual narratives can be brought to bear on the representation of conflict and more specifically on understandings of the role of political filmmaking practice and digital dissemination in shifting attitudes about, here, the Syrian conflict.

Stemming from Sandercock and Attili's 'Digital Ethnography as Planning Practice' (2010)⁵⁰, this archive also pushed us to rethink notions of media ownership, anonymity and legitimacy in the light of the ever-changing nature of our scattered digital archive. Therefore, we find ourselves today face-to-face with questions along the lines of:

'What's in it for those whose story is being told? What do they hope to get out of it? Will the project be designed in such a way as to ensure their needs are likely to be realised? What control will they have over how their interviews are used? How will they be consulted or involved throughout the production and post-production process? Will authorship be shared? Will ownership of the multimedia product be shared, including any potential profits? What's in it for the researchers/producers? Will there be an ongoing relationship after the production is finished? What are the action components of the project? Is the researcher prepared to acknowledge the gift of this story, and what can she or he offer in return?'

⁵⁰ Sandercock, L and G. Attili, (2010) 'Digital Ethnography as Planning Practice' in Planning Theory and Practice 11 (1), 23-45.

Making Sense of Syria's Scattered Narratives

While this chapter introduces a large set of questions for which we do not really have answers yet, the one thing we could attest to is why a project like 'Un/Framing Syria' is very important today – despite all the deaths and massive destruction.

By transforming the fragmented archive of Daraa into an organised open-access platform which we will make available to the public under a CC license, we would first and foremost give a voice to those who have risked and lost – and are still risking and losing - their lives to document human rights abuses during the Syrian war. We would create a durable digital resource that journalists, activists and advocacy groups could both use and add to, thus contributing to national and international understandings of a largely misunderstood and misinterpreted conflict. By transcribing and translating nearly 2000 UGC from Daraa, we would also offer a unique chance to non-Arabic speakers to use this content and contribute to it, thus widening the archive's reach and impact.

Video content coming out of Syria has oftentimes been 'messy', too graphic, unorganised and unverified.

3

Graphic Imagery: Eyewitness media tends to be more immediate than traditional newsgathering. We can show the immediate aftermath of bomb blasts, air strikes or car crashes. But do we need to? What is the impact of showing increasingly graphic imagery on our audience? Research suggests it could be traumatising them, as it could be traumatising journalists as well. Think about the impact of showing graphic footage before you do so, and consider if it is really needed to tell your story. If not, avoid showing the most graphic images.

In that context, the 'Un/Framing Syria' project has the potential to form a valuable and verified source of data for individuals and communities of interest attempting to make sense of the Syrian war. In that sense, our project is mostly concerned with mapping, exploring and testing the potential of what might be thought of as an ethical film praxis, thus contributing new insights to the ethics of historical and political filmmaking practices; from questions about the legitimacy and veracity of the UGC, the informed consent and potential harm to participants, to more general concerns of ownership and authorship of archival footage; How do you shape UGC into usable, durable and effective digital narratives? But also, how can this be done 'ethically'? How do you represent and narrativise historical events of pressing and contemporary concern 'objectively' and 'truthfully' to raise awareness and inform public debate on an ongoing war, without repeating the imbalanced (Eurocentric or 'orientalist') frames of the past?

Moreover, through focusing on the representations of the Syrian war as made

possible by the Internet and associated technologies, we are compelled to rethink the relationship between media representations of war, public perceptions of conflict, and the role of digital technologies in such representational processes. With the rise of new ICTs and in the absence of a clear consensus around what is happening in Syria today, several amateur narratives have emerged, offering multiple – and in many cases conflicting – representations of the Syrian war.

4

Propaganda and Storytelling: It's frequently tempting to take eyewitness media at face value and use it to tell our story - but have you considered who captured and uploaded the content, and whose side of the story they are trying to tell? Increasingly social media content is used by all sides of a conflict to push their side of the story. That's why the journalist's job of verification is so crucial. It's not just to check if a piece of content is what we are told it is on social media, but it's also to check who is telling the story and what is their side.

These 'resistant' narratives, as they navigate their roles as testimony and for advocacy especially, could be seen as bearing a heightened responsibility for the social and historical truths they seek to impart, or counter, and for the corrective stance they might take. They defy the dominant mainstream and political representations of the Syrian conflict, and thereby challenge existing notions of 'the truth', 'objectivity', 'documentation' and 'bearing witness'. Crucially, they also testify to the centrality of new ICTs to emerging understandings and representations of conflict.

In that sense, 'Unframing Syria' is mostly concerned with how the changing nature of digital media and associated technologies is affecting ways that conflicts are represented on screen and perceived by the public. By exploring the value of the UGC produced in times of war, we are touching on a set of questions pertaining to the potential of film and mediated representations of conflict to inform public debate and policy, thus contributing to a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the socio-cultural effects of conflict in general, and the Syrian war more particularly. We hope this would at least make a positive contribution to a better understanding of the relation between digital media representations and public opinion formations in regards to Syria. We are also hoping that in some ways this project would help and restore some of the legitimacy that UGC has lost in the last couple of years, due to the spread of rumour and misinformation across social media platforms.

Conclusion

While the 'Un/Framing Syria' project is still in its early stages, we had to map out a set of general ethical directions to help us make progress with the data mappings and initial organisation of the Daraa archive. We embrace in this context the 'provisional principles' for negotiating ethical norms in human rights social media as laid out by Sam Gregory, programme director at Witness, in his post *The Ethical Engagements of Human Rights Social Media*.

According to Gregory, once an image is uploaded or shared online, this should be considered as a premise to using it, circulating and remixing it, and that unless stated differently, free use is the ethical 'assumption' that should be made in that regard. While respect for human dignity should remain central to any discussion around ethics and digital media, Gregory considers that issues

of consent now need to be re-defined in accordance with the new and diverse possibilities offered by open-licensing and by platforms such as YouTube. At a time where the affordances of new information and communication technologies have highlighted the need to set new frameworks for online aggregation, he defines agency as a 'balancing act between the storyteller and the remixer/re-user, reliant on internalised and externalised contexts'.⁵¹

What all this tells us is that ethics is a permeable concept, that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to approaching questions of representation, of agency, security and consent, as long as, respect for human life and human dignity is given priority over all other considerations. And that is the one predicate that we all – as a team – promised to honour since the beginning of the 'Un/Framing Syria' project; that all Syrian lives matter, and that all Syrian deaths are grievable, no matter how heavy death tolls can get.

⁵¹ Gregory, Sam (2010, November 23). The Ethical Engagements of Human Rights Social Media. Witness. Retrieved from: <https://blog.witness.org/2010/11/the-ethical-engagements-of-human-rights-social-media/>

Protecting Newsgathering through the Sustainable Use of Social Media

Sam Dubberley

All journalists old enough to have worked in a pre-social media world however, will have had that moment. That moment when it clicked in your brain. That moment when you realised the power of social media, the moment of utility. You knew it was good. You knew it was changing the world. You knew it was THE disrupter of our journalistic times. But there was still that moment that it just clicked. For some it was the Arab Spring in Egypt, for others, earlier still, the Iranian Protests of 2009, for others the onset of the Syrian conflict. For me, and probably I was a relative latecomer to the party, for me it was the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul of 2013. The interesting thing about Gezi is that it encapsulates the value of social media, its uses, its opportunities but it also encapsulates the risk and the ethical dangers that we are creating by our harvesting - and I use the word harvesting expressly - of social media content without thought for the uploader. I am convinced that, if we are not careful, the way we are using sourcing and verifying social media today could swallow us all and lead to a situation where the best reporting opportunity of our generation dries up.

So, why was Gezi my clicking point? In 2013, I was a journalist, running a newsroom, sitting in Geneva, Switzerland, in an office in the middle of a nice, green, boring Swiss park. The kind of park that could never and would never become a shopping centre. Our service was to distribute pictures of these protests in the centre of Europe's most populous city. As a journalist, my interest

was piqued. Here was something different. I'd covered every major story since I first set foot in an international newsroom in 2002 as my then prime minister and the US president were starting to rattle their sabres over Iraq. I'd covered the Atocha attacks in Madrid. I'd covered the Beslan school siege in Dagestan. I'd covered the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. All more powerful stories in many ways, but they were very much stories covered by reporters on the ground. There was a live Associated Press camera filming the school siege as it was lifted in Beslan. Reporters were on the ground in Madrid. And NHK - Japan's Public Television - famously had 14 helicopters in the air filming the aftermath of the tsunami in Sendai Province.

Gezi was different. While the Turkish television famously showed a documentary on penguins, the story on the street was being told by mobile phones. Twitter was the main tool, although we saw many other platforms in use and we'd see more come on line and show their utility during further protests in Istanbul - Periscope, for example, is a child of Turkish unrest. It was on Twitter that we saw the calm of Gezi. It was on Twitter that we saw the police violently intervene. It was on Twitter that we saw the use of Water Cannon and Tear Gas on peaceful protesters.

Research by New York University's Social Media and Political Participation Laboratory showed there were 2 million tweets around the Gezi protests - 90 percent of which came from within Turkey itself.⁵² Such was the impact of social media that Turkey's then Prime Minister named it one of the biggest menaces to society. Turkey was, in 2013 and to this day, a divided country. Yet, the mainstream was only showing one side of that divide. It was through social

⁵² Tucker, Joshua (2013, June 1). A Breakout Role for Twitter? Extensive Use of Social Media in the Absence of Traditional Media by Turks in Turkish in Taksim Square. The Money Cage. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/RdHnY8>

media that we saw the other side. Indeed, so active were my contacts on social media that Google Chrome asked me if it should not translate my Facebook timeline from Turkish to English.

This is a trend we see globally now. Social media is allowing us - as journalists - access to the other side of stories that we previously were not given, to the immediacy of stories that we would not otherwise have. Imagine the conflict in Syria in a pre-YouTube age. We would be telling the story through the eyes of Syrian state news organisations by now. Would we truly have understood how the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in New York City came to pass? Would campaigns such as Black Lives Matter have emerged without those videos? Would we know how the favelas were cleared in Rio ahead of the Olympics? The answer is clearly no. So, social media and the content it produces is helping us to understand the world better. It's making us aware of what goes on around us. This is a wonderful opportunity. The service it provides truly is fantastic.

This global phenomenon has disrupted newsgathering and storytelling over the past decade. There are stories we can no longer tell without social media content. But this means that today's journalist must be tuned to it. Today's journalist must have the skills and knowledge to source, verify and use UGC sourced from social media. Discovery, as Majd Khalifeh explained, can put you ahead of your competitors, put you ahead of the news agencies, and allow you to break stories. Verification, as Rose Younes, Eliza Mackintosh and Mahmoud Ghazayel explained, is key to not falling over and telling the wrong story. And doing all that and telling the story in the right way, as Ethar El Katatney explained, is key to engaging today's audience. Throughout these book experts have brought to you some of the challenges that the individual

may face when thinking about using social media for newsgathering for the first time. Alongside techniques of discovery, verification and engagement, true experts have considered issues around how and why photograph manipulation happens. We discussed some of the new news organisations that were able to emerge thanks to these techniques and tell the other side of important, world-shifting events. We have discussed new trends and new platforms that today's journalist has to think about - such as chat apps - and analysed data around the popularity of different social media platforms in different countries across the Arab region. We have thought about the senior editor, and what they should know, and, finally, we have thought about some of the ethical considerations each journalist should hold in their mind when working with social media.

One thing we must hold close to our thoughts, however, is the fact that we are taking and using content that is not ours, that has been produced and shared by someone who is not us, who is not necessarily a journalist at all. Certainly not a journalist in our employ. All of this highlights just how critical it is for us to protect the eyewitness. To make sure that, in telling these stories, in trying to do the right thing, that we don't then put the eyewitness at risk. This risk can be varied. Post Gezi, Turkish users of social media have been prosecuted for their posts, or even for sharing other people's posts. This was one of the reasons the fabulous @140journos was created in Turkey - to collate non-mainstream voices and protect them with the cloak of unity - I Am Spartacus, if you like. Chris LeDay - the man who posted the video of Alton Sterling being shot and killed by Baton Rouge police in the United States in January 2016 - was detained by police just 24 hours after putting the video on social media. As journalists we need to be aware of this, and take our responsibilities here very seriously. My fear is, if we don't understand the cost to the individual of social media newsgathering, this generation disruptor could be closed to us forever.

One of our most stark observations around the use of social media content by journalists is the questionable etiquette surrounding permission requests. The question ‘can we use your photo?’ is rarely accompanied by ‘are you OK?’ or ‘are you safe?’ or, even, ‘did you take this?’. Any reference to crediting or licensing is usually glossed over, if mentioned at all, and often these ‘accidental journalists’ are placed under extreme pressure to respond immediately.

In January 2015 a man called Jordi Mir was sitting working from his apartment on the top floor of a building on the Boulevard Richard Lenoir in Paris. On that morning, Jordi Mir saw, what he thought, was a bank robbery taking place across the street. A police officer had been wounded and was lying prostrate on the floor. As a tech savvy individual who lived and shared much of his life on social media platforms, he took his smartphone out of his pocket and started filming. It was, as much as anything a reflex.

Except this wasn’t a bank robbery - and the two men walking towards the wounded police officer were not colleagues running to help. They were the two brothers who had just murdered eleven people inside the offices of Charlie Hebdo. Five seconds after Jordi Mir started filming, they made Ahmet Mirabet their 12th victim of that day. Mir had filmed it all. The terrorists walking over to Mirabet, pulling the trigger on their automatic weapons, assassinating him and driving off. Alone in his apartment, Mir as a reflex shared the video on Facebook. 15 minutes later, when he’d calmed down, he realised that he should not have shared the video - and removed it - but it was too late. The video of the assassination of Ahmet Mirabet had gone viral. One of Mir’s friends had scraped it and uploaded it to YouTube. Other journalists had found Mir’s original video and taken it for their own use. Screengrabs were taken. Yet, only a handful of journalistic organisations had asked Mir’s permission. Mir’s video appeared

in the lunchtime bulletins of France's two biggest broadcasters, and appeared on the front pages of newspapers across the world the next day.

Traumatised not only by what he saw. He had, let us not forget, just witnessed the cold-blooded assassination of a wounded police officer from his kitchen window. Traumatic enough for anyone. Mir is also traumatised by what he experienced because he shared the video on social media. Traumatised by the media attention. Traumatised by the police attention. Traumatised by having his video viewed around the world and even used as evidence of crackpot conspiracies. Journalists failed in their duty of care to Mir that January day - as they did, to be frank, with most of the uploaders they spoke to. We saw journalists granting permission to other news networks for them to use pictures they had retweeted on Twitter. We saw credit given to uploaders without their agreement - meaning that, if you now search for their names on the internet, you find the picture they captured on the day of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, not their freelance business. We saw news organisations show their audiences the moment Ahmet Mirabet died without forethought or warning. Of course, we are not speaking of every journalist or every news organisation. These are the worst examples - but they should be a warning to all of us in the industry.

David Crunelle experienced the wrath of a media storm during the terrorist attack on Brussels airport in March of this year. Crunelle was inside the airport terminal when the blasts went off and tweeted the words, in French: "Two Explosions at Brussels Airport". This was at 8 am. By 10 am, just two hours later, he had received 10,000 notifications on his smartphone - from jihadists, from concerned friends and, yes, from journalists. It was a totally unmanageable situation - and, more concerning here, was the lack of sympathy from journalists for Crunelle's predicament. Like Jordi Mir, he had just seen an outrageous act of violence.

He had, through reflex, shared it with the world on social media. And social media savvy journalists had tracked him down. Crunelle spent the remainder of the day in negotiations with news organisations. Many contacted him in the most unethical of ways. They tracked him down via his family members. They tracked him down through his professional clients. He eventually sold his video exclusively to a news organisation as much to get away from the storm. He certainly wasn't after money or fame - and the experience brought him neither. When I first started looking at the impact of social media on newsrooms, I would have argued that the transition from what Mir experienced - his content effectively stolen, his rights as the producer of a video violated - to the many requests Crunelle received for permission to use his content - was a good thing. I argued for a request to be made, permission to be granted and content ownership to be credited. Now, having witnessed the transition that I argued for come to pass, I'm not so sure. We still haven't - and this is the important point here - found the solution. Content theft, and use without agreement is not the answer - even if this is protected in many jurisdictions through fair usage laws (laws which defend the public's right to know during important events). But nor is a swarm of journalists descending on a poor, unsuspecting person who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and capture a video or a picture.

Many of the responses I've heard to these stories have not been so sympathetic. It was Mir's fault - what a weird thing to upload to Facebook. If I were David Crunelle, I would have just turned off my telephone. We had a duty to show the videos and we were trying to do the right thing. However, I would argue, these answers are not fair and they certainly share no empathy with what the victim has witnessed. As journalists, to do our job, surely we need empathy? We need these people to tell our stories, we need them to tell our stories - so just pushing

them to turn off their phone notifications, to not upload videos, to not engage with the media surely pushes us back to a world where we rely on traditional gatekeepers to tell us stories.

As journalists, we have to ask ourselves how we can solve this challenge. The consecutive quandary around meeting the suggested standards of verification, respecting the individual's copyright over content they have produced and the ethical standards of not traumatising an eyewitness who has just experienced a truly horrendous and tragic event first hand. As noted in earlier chapters of this book, we argue that one of the crucial steps of verification is to confirm this identity of the content creator. We argue that one of the crucial steps of copyright clearance is to ask for permission to use a piece of content from the content creator. We argue that we must understand what the content creator has gone through and respect them. This is a challenging paradox that requires the combined brainpower of newsrooms around the world. The solutions lie in better metadata solutions. They lie in ethical social media training for each and every journalist, editor and managing editor sitting in newsrooms today.

Journalists have to learn to use social media correctly. This applies to discovery of content, it applies to verification, and it applies to engaging with audiences and understanding new technologies. It means thinking about the ramifications of archiving - or disappearing records of conflict. It means thinking about new human resource challenges and the potential impact of vicarious trauma. It also means thinking about the uploader and our engagement with the uploader. Because, if we don't put the content creator first and foremost in our mind when developing tools and workflows for journalists to tell better stories while using social media, we'll fail. It has to be a human- centred process, or it will go away forever.

References and Resources

Further Training Resources:

- Guide for Journalists to Verifying Digital Content - <http://training.aljazeera.net/en/news/2016/10/161006075718962.html> - gives key advice through real life examples and well-defined steps on how to verify UGC. Published by the Al Jazeera Media Training and Development Centre
- First Draft News (limited content in Arabic) - <https://firstdraftnews.com/> - tips and resources on the latest tools and methods for verification
- Verification Handbook (also available in Arabic) - <http://verificationhandbook.com> - the first guide written for verification and journalism with excellent introductory case studies
- DatNav - a guide for open source human rights investigation - with much relevant to journalists: <https://www.theengineeroom.org/datnav-digital-data-in-human-rights-research/>
- Google News Lab - <https://newslab.withgoogle.com/tools> - tips on how to use Google's tools for verification
- Exposing the Invisible - <https://exposingtheinvisible.org/> - a collection of interviews and recordings on using social media to carry out investigations. Poynter - <http://www.poynter.org> - general resources and posts on journalism including on verification

- The Checklist (some content available in Arabic) - https://tinyletter.com/Checkdesk_Checklist/archive - a newsletter on verification that should be subscribed to
- REVEAL Project - <http://revealproject.eu/> - a project on verifying social media content funded by the European Union
- INVID Project - <http://www.invid-project.eu/> - a project on verifying social media video funded by the European Union
- Using Twitter Lists: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/76460> - tips for getting started with Twitter Lists
- Guide to Chat Apps - <http://towcenter.org/research/guide-to-chat-apps/> - handy guide to using chat apps for journalism
- How to find breaking news on Twitter - <http://www.dw.com/en/how-to-find-breaking-news-on-twitter/a-19061495>.

Verification Tools:

- TinEye - www.tineye.com - Reverse Image Search Engine
- Google Image Search - images.google.com - Reverse Image Search Engine
- Jeffry's Exif Viewer - www.regex.info/exif.cgi - View the Exif data contained within original images
- Google Maps - maps.google.com - online maps of the earth
- Google Earth - google.com/earth - downloadable application that allows you to navigate the globe to help geolocate videos
- Google Translate - translate.google.com - Google's online translation tool
- YouTube Data Viewer - www.amnestyusa.org/citizenevidence - view data in a YouTube video upload
- VLC - <https://www.videolan.org/vlc/> - free video player to watch videos in slow motion

Vicarious trauma:

- Eyewitness Media Hub: Making Secondary Trauma a Primary Issue: A Study of Eyewitness Media and Vicarious Trauma on the Digital Frontline (includes recommendations for reporters, editors and newsroom management)
- Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma: Advice for Dealing with Vicarious Trauma

Ethics:

- Guiding Principles for Handling Eyewitness Media - <https://goo.gl/NbxuDw> - six principles for guiding all journalists working with User-Generated Content
- Ethical guidelines for using eyewitness footage - <https://goo.gl/SR76KG> - ethical considerations for using UGC
- Reuters News Agency. A Brief Guide to Standards, Photoshop and Captions, Reuters News Agency: <https://goo.gl/3QcvU3>
- Associated Press. Code of Ethics for Photojournalists: <https://goo.gl/pd02iO>
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