‘Even if it is not your fault, it is your responsibility’: Livestreaming as means of civic engagement

A case study of citizen journalism in Egypt and Syria
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Abstract

A well-functioning media is a given part of any society, and can be a valuable tool in the democratising process of a country. The media is traditionally given the role of providing citizens with information about political events in society, and as a result enabling them to make informed decisions.

Before the 1990s most of the Middle Eastern and North African media was controlled by governments and because of that they often failed in their responsibility as information providers. As new media such as the internet and satellite television were introduced to the region, the media paradigm shifted and a new arena for public debate arose and has continued to grow ever since.

During the 2010-2011 uprisings in the region social media platforms were used by citizens to spread news about demonstrations and political moves, not only within countries, but also globally. Livestreaming applications in particular were used successfully, and videos filmed by citizen journalists were broadcast on international media channels.

This thesis focuses on the use of livestreaming by citizen journalists in Egypt and Syria to accomplish a social change, and on citizen journalism as an act of civic engagement. To provide an analytic frame, this thesis uses the work of Dahlgren (2009) and his six modes of civic engagement, to better and understand the role of citizen journalists in changing society.

Through a number of qualitative interviews with citizen journalists, traditional journalists and Bambuser, this thesis concludes that citizen journalism did play and still plays an important role when it comes to civic engagement in Egypt and Syria although weather or not it might be able to take the role of traditional media in society remains to be seen. The interviews with citizen journalists were conducted in Cairo, Egypt and funded through a Minor Field Study grant.

Keywords: Egypt, livestreaming, media convergence, public sphere, social change, Syria
Abbreviations

AP – Associated Press
CPJ – Committee to Protect Journalists
ICT – Information Communication Technology
IFJ – International Federation of Journalists
IFES – International Foundation for Electoral Systems
ITU – International Telecommunication Union
MFS – Minor Field Study
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SCAF – Supreme Council of Armed Forces
Sida – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
RWB – Reporters Without Borders
VPN – Virtual private network
Chapter 1: Introduction

In the Middle East and North Africa, several states have traditionally had a firm grip on media within the country. As a result, the media has been unable to fulfil its responsibility to inform citizens in order for them to educate themselves on the political situation in their country. In reaction to the protests of citizens, the states in the region have resorted to banning international journalists and news organisations from the country, as well as tightening governmental control of domestic media. (Sakr, 2007, p. 6). During the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa since 2010, new media such as citizen journalism has claimed its place on the global arena.

By media, this thesis is referring to traditional media such as television, print and radio, and new media can be defined as participatory online platforms where media is produced. A citizen journalist is essentially a citizen who participates in the field of journalism, most likely without any formal training or pay (Goode, 2009). The motive behind citizen journalism varies – from political to a desire to entertain, but it is in large extent done voluntarily. This thesis focuses on the work of citizen journalists with a political agenda who, through their reporting, participate in the public sphere with the end goal of achieving a political change in their society. This type of citizen participation is often referred to as civic engagement, when the citizens of a state or society work together to accomplish a set agenda (Dahlgren, 2009). The form of citizen journalism focused on in this thesis is livestreaming: to accomplish this the reporter needs an application for broadcasting live, as well as internet access, and the most commonly used tool is a mobile phone. The videos are accessible on-demand after having been livestreamed.

With the use of new media such as livestreaming, citizen journalists are able to not only influence their fellow citizens, but also have a great impact on the global audience. Through videos and images shot by citizens participating in demonstrations, the international community is able to follow events despite the fact that traditional media is unable to do so, and media organisations have in turn started integrating citizen-produced material in their own reporting. This confluence of new media, communication and content has in recent years been referred to as ‘media convergence’ (Jenkins, 2001).

This thesis aims to investigate how citizen journalists use new media such as the livestreaming applications Bambuser and Ustream, and to answer the research question: How does new media, and livestreaming in particular, encourage civic engagement and promote social change?
Within this question, special attention will be given to the relationship between citizen media and traditional media in regards to the public sphere and the role of the media as information keeper and provider, as well as being the responsible institution for the informing of citizens. The thesis seeks to determine if the convergence of citizen and traditional media can be seen as playing an important role in promoting an active citizenry and, as a result, achieving social change.

To answer this research question, a number of qualitative, in-depth interviews have been carried out with Egyptian and Syrian citizen journalists and Bambuser, as well as traditional journalists. The majority of the research was conducted during June and July 2012 in Cairo, Egypt, and some complementary interviews have been conducted during September and October 2012 (See Appendix 1 for a list of interviewees). It proved rather difficult to make contact with citizen journalists, due to both the political climate in Egypt and the abundance of researchers in the country. In the end, interviews were carried out with five reporters from two citizen journalist networks. In some cases, follow-up interviews have been done via email or chat.

Out of respect for the interviewees, some of them being activists who are under scrutiny from the state, several citizen journalists have been left anonymous for this thesis. The people that can be seen as public figures, e.g. journalists and official representatives of companies, will be mentioned by name. Although the networks interviewed for this thesis refer to themselves as both citizen journalists and activists, the term 'citizen journalist' will hereafter be used in this thesis. That being said, being a citizen journalist does not automatically make one an activist – and vice versa.

The field research in Egypt was funded by Sida, through a Minor Field Study (MSF) grant, awarded to students conducting research for their bachelor or master thesis. The idea behind the MSF scholarship is for students to be able to conduct research in a developing country during a period of no less than two months. Egypt and Syria were chosen partly as the use of livestreaming during the recent uprisings in the countries was an especially successful way of getting news out, both domestically and internationally. Being a journalist myself, I have a particular interest in media development, the use of new media tools as a means of spreading information. With an academic background in studying Arabic and Middle Eastern studies, combined with an interest in the region expressed through membership with, and as of June 2012, the Secretary General of the Middle East and North Africa Committee of European Youth Press, Egypt and Syria came to mind.

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1 Second round of the 2012 presidential election held on 17-18 June.
This thesis focuses on events happening after the uprisings in late 2010 referred to as the Arab Spring. It is however, as will be briefly mentioned, important to note that these types of civic movements and uprisings are not a new development in the investigated countries, simply as the citizen journalists interviewed started their reporting during this period, it has been chosen as the main focus.

1.1 Thesis Outline

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 will present a contextualisation of the situation in Middle Eastern and North African media in general. The chapter ends with an introduction to media convergence and contextualises this within Egypt and Syria.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework that this thesis is built on, the importance of a well functioning public sphere that offers and enables a citizen platform for discussion and debate, as well as the importance of a network society for social change. As an analytic frame, this thesis uses the work of Dahlgren (2009) on civic engagement. Dahlgren presents six modes of civic engagement that make for active citizens, and these are used to identify the role of citizen journalism in the transitional Egyptian and Syrian societies.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological approach taken in this thesis – textual analysis and qualitative in-depth interviews as well as a presentation of the reasons for the choice of these methods.

Chapter 5 consists of an analysis of the gathered material, and gives an answer to the research question.

Chapter 6 concludes this thesis, summarises the points made in chapter 5 and offers a short discussion on the importance of engaged and active citizens and how this can converge with traditional media to create a well-functioning public sphere.
Chapter 2: Contextualisation

2.1 The State of the Media in the Middle East and North Africa

Before the 1990s, governments controlled the majority of media in the Middle East and North Africa. Research shows that the Arab ruling elite has been shaping the content of media in the region after their own priorities and, as a result, the media content is not aimed at the audiences, but rather the political and financial elite in these societies. (Sakr, 2007, p. 6). This lack of a free and independent media, as well as the absence of free speech, make it close to impossible for citizens and traditional journalists to use and access media for the purpose of self-informing. The lack of a plurality within the media field is yet another hindrance for the information flow in society, as there is no media outlet to criticise and respond to news provided by state-media. (Howard, 2010, p. 118-119). That being said, with the introduction of new media such as the internet, as well as satellite television such as Qatar-based al Jazeera and Saudi-owned al Arabiya in the region, the media landscape has become more pluralistic in its structure. These broadcasters provide news about the region, from an Arab view with Arab interests and concerns as the main focus and, in doing so, help create an Arab identity2. (Lynch, 2012). However, they do not offer the possibility for the audience to create content themselves. (Howard, 2010, p. 40).

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon, but it is, however, constantly changing and often seen as something that connects the world and brings the population together (Servaes et al. 2009). It facilitates a free flow of information, transnationally as well as within states and, in the words of McNair: ‘information, like knowledge is power’ (2006). As noted by Sakr, however, it is important to be careful of praising the emergence of new media and the role it is playing in the democratisation process in the region (2007, p. 4). Although globalisation offers increased possibilities to access information, it does not mean that all parts of the global audience have this access. As pointed out by Servaes and Lie (2008) ‘all too frequently [...] it [globalisation] refers primarily to the extent of coverage, with the popularity of satellite television and computer networks serving as evidence of the globalisation of communications.’ (p. 61).

With new media, the society has been opened up for citizens to participate more actively in politics, and it is indeed a contributing factor in the democratisation of the Middle East and North Africa.

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2 Lynch does, however, also mention that the ownership of al Jazeera and al Arabiya has proven to be a liability. ‘Those stations increasingly shaped their coverage to fit the interest of their owners, with badly distorting effects’, taking the uprisings in Bahrain as an example, where half the population were in the streets in protest, but which was ignored by the aforementioned broadcasters. (2012).
particularly in the sense that citizens are now, more than ever, able to communicate and discuss across both international borders and social classes (Seib, 2007, p. 1).

State-ownership of media has been shown to be driving the emergence of alternative media organisations, either created by traditional media or citizens, especially online (Howard, 2010, p. 126), and this new media discourse has allowed citizens to be critical of the state and share and discuss their opinions among their peers (Khamis et al. 2011). Furthermore, and as noted by Seib (2007), a ‘key factor in the expansion of media reach and power is the relevance of borders’, and the new global structure of the media will assist the democratisation process in the Middle East (p. 2). New media has means that traditional journalists can now ‘bring international news to national audiences, to give national stories a global reach, and to publish content that could not appear locally.’ (Howard, 2010, p. 108).

Since 2005, a year of several elections in the Middle East and North Africa, citizen journalism and the use of the internet for political discussion has been emerging and it continuously increasing. During this period, the first arrests of citizen journalists were made in several countries. (Hofheinz in Sakr, 2007, p. 57). Research shows that the use of the internet in the region for spreading and obtaining news by citizens is particularly common in times of social and political crisis, and citizens go online to get verification on news and events taking place in their societies. (Howard, 2010, p. 108).

Lynch, despite concluding that new media cannot single-handedly affect democratic transformation (as it cannot replace citizens and the work of individuals and political organisations), makes two points regarding the positive aspects of new media: It contributes firstly in ‘building a foundation for a pluralistic political culture by demonstrating the legitimacy of disagreement’, and secondly changes the long-lasting status quo in Arab media. Lynch argues that al Jazeera and other Arab satellite television media facilitated a transformation in the political arena in the region. (Sakr, 2007, p. 5) (Lynch, 2005).

The transnational character of media can influence movements in other countries as well as in its own. For instance, satellite television stations such as al Jazeera and al Arabiya intensively covered the uprisings in Egypt in 2011, and informed Egyptian citizens who may not normally be interested in politics about events and demonstrations that were on-going in the country. From a global perspective,

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3 Presidential elections in Egypt and Palestine, parliamentary elections in Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt, to name a few. (IFES 2013).
international coverage appears to be more reliable for the audience than the Egyptian state-run media would be. As noted by Lynch, however, the ‘transforming information environment alone did not cause these revolutions – there are far deeper legacies of authoritarian rule, economic mismanagement, and social frustration at their roots’, and he goes on to state that the creation of a new public sphere facilitated the uprisings. (2012).

2.2 Media Convergence

It is no longer professional journalists and traditional media such as television and print who have a monopoly on news production. With today’s fast-moving development of information communication technologies, almost everyone has the potential to produce and publish news in the public sphere. Especially in countries where state media is corrupt, or where free speech is threatened, citizen-produced journalism has become an important source of information. (Sasseen, 2012).

In the West, the development of new media is often focused on the idea of it as a tool for either freedom or oppression (Howard, 2010, p. 13-14). Over the last couple of years, citizen media has been given an increasing role in media and communication research and theory, in large part due to the internet that can be seen as an ‘organising model for a new form of political protest that is international and decentralised’. (Cammaerts, 2008, p. 226, 243). Organisations working for social change are now online, mobilising and spreading their message via different platforms before taking action in the streets. In the case of some countries in the Middle East and North Africa, social movements would not be able to exist without the ability to access and mobilise through the internet, as members of the opposition are often either in exile or suppressed by the state. (Howard, 2010, p. 38). It is however important to note, as Papacharissi (2009) does, that the internet should be seen as a tool for social change as it cannot achieve this on its own (p. 2).

Another key development in the technological sphere is the mobile phone. It is an affordable alternative to computers that facilitates access to the internet and can be used for sharing photos, streaming videos and texting. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a total of 159 countries have launched 3G services, with coverage reaching 45 percent of the world’s population in 2011, and mobile-broadband is often the only way for people in developing countries to get internet access. (ITU, 2013). The mobile phone is the first communication technology that has more users in the developing world than in the developed (although looking at statistics,
individual usage of mobile phone is still higher in developed countries\(^4\). (Hopper, 2007, p. 68) (ITU, 2012\(^5\)). Mobile phone usage in the Middle East and North Africa has increased dramatically over the last decade, the fastest growing region of all developing countries (Khamis et al., 2011). Statistics from ITU shows that in 2011, there were 101 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 citizens in Egypt, and the same statistic for Syria was 63 per 100, compared to 2001 where the numbers were 4 per 100 and 1.2 per 100 citizens respectively (ITU, 2013). According to Howard, the mobile phone can be seen as ‘something of an antidote to media concentration’ (2010, p. 130).

New media and technologies do in fact change how people access news, and many demographics favour the internet rather than traditional media when searching for and obtaining it (Hopper, 2007, p. 71). The majority of traditional media is now also available online, national newspapers have their own websites, radio is accessed through podcasts and television is available via satellite, streamed on the media organisations’ websites or via on-demand. There is a growing interaction between the audience and media producers via online discussion forums and the possibility to comment on articles and segments. (Hopper, 2007, p. 65-71).

Jenkins (2006) refers to this mixing of traditional and new media as ‘convergence’, by which he is referring to ‘the flow of content across multiple media platforms’. He continues to argue that in a ‘world of media convergence’ no story will go untold. In this interpretation of today’s media, the audience is playing an important role in the creative process, as they continuously seek and contribute to the making of media. (p. 3-4).

Despite this praise of new technologies, one should emphasise that they are nothing without the individuals who are using them. As noted by Papcharissi (2009) ‘it is not the nature of the technologies themselves, but rather, the discourse that surrounds them, that guides how these technologies are appropriated by a society’, meaning that without users, new technologies would not matter. (p. 2).

\(^4\) Statistics from ITU (2012). Due to inability to gather own statistics on the use of ICTs in the region, this thesis uses statistics and surveys carried from ITU, but acknowledges the fact that these statistics may lack validity on several levels, such as the fact that this statistics only provides information about how many SIM-cards that are registered, not how many individuals actually have a subscription. [http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/)

\(^5\) With 5.9 billion mobile-cellular subscriptions, global penetration reaches 87 percent, and 79 percent in the developing world. Mobile-broadband subscriptions have grown 45 percent annually over the last four years and today there are twice as many mobile-broadband as fixed broadband subscriptions. (ITU, 2012)
2.2.1 Livestreaming
As noted above, the mobile phone has gained popularity over the last decade and in making video technology that is easy to use and small enough to fit in mobile phones and hand-held cameras, journalists and activists are given the opportunity to use video in a more strategic manner (Sasseen, 2012). Castells goes as far as to claim that ‘we have all become potential citizen journalists who, if equipped with a mobile phone, can record and instantly upload to global networks any wrong-doing by anyone, anywhere’ (2009, p. 413).

In 2007, Bambuser, a mobile livestreaming application for smart phones and computers which gives its user the ability to share video footage live and linking the application to different social media and blog platforms, was launched (Bambuser, 2012). UStream also launched in 2007 with a mission to ‘bring people together around shared interests for amazing live, interactive experiences that build and maintain relationships’ (Ustream, 2012). Bambuser offers their premium feature to citizen journalists and networks under the campaign name “Free Speech, Free Premium”6. Through this feature users can choose to link their videos to Associated Press, giving them the possibility of being picked up by traditional media. UStream has on-going cooperation with several livestreaming networks, one of which has been interviewed for this thesis.

With the breakthrough of blogging and the increasing usage of new and online media for spreading news and information, and through the increasing use of mobile phones to livestream video and reporting in real-time, the media landscape is transforming. Media, private users, organisations and companies use livestreaming applications, and it has become especially popular with social movements and other non-governmental organisations working with human rights, free speech and democracy building. The mixing of journalism and activism, especially during the Arab Spring, has been very successful in that citizens have taken it upon themselves to gather and spread information about the abuse of regimes and, through video, online publishing, or traditional media, share this information with the international community. (RWB, 2012).

This convergence of traditional and new, citizen-produced media, livestreaming and uploaded video in particular, has been proven crucial in order for traditional media to cover the unrest that has erupted across many countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Through videos filmed by citizen journalists, the international community has been able to see protestors in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria fighting their oppressive regimes.

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6 Announcement made on www.blog.bambuser.com on May 29, 2012
These videos have made it possible for traditional media to cover political events that regimes would earlier have barred media from covering. According to Seib (2007) the development communication technologies have been pressuring Middle Eastern states for over a decade and, while governments have tried to control development by taking measures such as enforcing censorship, employing state-friendly editors for media, it has not stopped the satellite broadcasters from growing and expanding. The same goes for citizen journalism. Despite this, the expansion of the media landscape has led to the emergence of several new media organisations.

The internet, with its many-to-many functions, offers a space where citizens can meet, discuss and together create a collective of opinions. Although internet access is often under government control, users are often able to find ways to get around it, as in the case of Syria. Many Middle Eastern and North African states have themselves gone online in order to scare and keep track of the public, a development which has been especially evident in countries like Syria, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, according to research done by CPJ. As noted by Hofheinz (in Sakr, 2007), however, state censorship does not hinder citizens who have the technological skills to circumvent blocked access to the internet (p. 59).

During the uprisings in 2010 and 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa, many protesters turned to video applications such as Bambuser and UStream in order to share information surrounding the revolts, to bypass state-run media and get the news to the public, but also to shed light on events that were over-seen by traditional media. In Egypt, the regime blocked Bambuser, which lead to them setting up an assigned page, where all the streams coming from Egypt were gathered. In Syria, the livestreaming broadcasts were, and still are, practically the sole source of information, as traditional media is either banned or unable to cover the events due to safety concerns for the journalists and media organisations themselves.

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7 A blog post named New Egypt page: Taking citizen journalism one step further published on February 2nd 2011 announced the creation of the Egypt-page ‘ [D]edicated solely to protests across the globe’. This page later developed into the Middle East and North Africa page. (Bambuser 2012). http://blog.bambuser.com/2011/02/new-protest-channel-taking-citizen.html
The uprisings have called for a more pluralistic media landscape and, in Egypt for instance, a number of new television broadcasters, print newspapers and magazines have emerged. Bloggers and citizen journalists have been given a valid place on the media scene, something that would not have been possible a decade ago. (CPJ, 2012). In the process, freedom of speech and a more open and less censored media has emerged, and this newly liberated media dares to criticise the regimes.

Shortly after the demonstrations and uprisings, ways of censoring the internet appeared in order to keep the unrest and protests from spreading across countries and borders. According to Reporters Without Borders, some of the regimes adopted various filters to use online for spotting compromising information and keep a strong hold on their power, and most affected by this were social media and livestreaming sites. (2012). For traditional journalists, this meant that it was no longer enough to protect themselves in the analogue world, but they also had to keep their digital selves safe from reprisals from the regimes.

2.2.2 Media Convergence in Egypt
On January 25th 2011, Egyptians started moving into the streets across Egypt in protest against the regime. This was not a new demonstration of public discontent; Egypt has a long history of public protests and political opposition, but not on the same scale as those of 2011. The protests were characterised by the use of new media by activists and citizen journalists to spread and obtain information, with this providing a platform for open and free debate, mobilisation and action, something that had been missing prior to the uprising. New media thus became a contributing factor in the possibility to mobilise large numbers of people, protestors used social media to spread the message, texting to coordinate and livestreaming and filming to document the events. (Khamis et al., 2011). This capability of new media - that of being suitable for the mobilisation of people locally and globally, facilitated the uprisings in Egypt. However, as noted above, it is important to stress that new media is merely a tool that aided the opposition, and did not create any change on its own.

During the 18 days of revolts at the beginning of 2011, the Mubarak regime attempted to systematically stop journalists from reporting and news from being broadcast and published. Apart from assaulting journalists and raiding media organisations, the servants of the regime blocked internet access, shut down mobile services, blocked satellite transmissions, revoked accreditation for foreign journalists and confiscated their equipment. (CPJ, 2012). Similar efforts were made by the state during the Egyptian
2005 presidential election, when access to websites of the opposition was blocked (Hofheinz in Sakr, 2007, p. 61). The state authorities kept journalists from getting too close to the crowds in order to avoid having media coverage of the clashes broadcast internationally. A recent report\(^8\) from Reporters Without Borders highlighted the fact that the Egyptian government was jamming mobile phone signals in places close to gatherings of people. (2011).

The international community started to put pressure on the regime and interest from global media was high, largely due to the fact that Twitter as well as Bambuser was blocked. In the days following January 25\(^{th}\), access to several social media sites, including Facebook, was partially or completely blocked and internet speed was reduced\(^9\), especially for those trying to access media sites. On the evening of January 27\(^{th}\), at the height of the demonstrations, the state decided to simply shut down internet and mobile phone access. (RWB, 2011). Internet access was restored six days later, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, estimated that the cost of the internet cut for Egypt amounted to 90 million US dollars. (OECD, 2011). The act not only had financial repercussions, cutting internet access also meant that more people went onto the streets to get information and to join the protests (FRIDE, 2011).

2.2.3 Media Convergence in Syria

As in many countries across the Middle East and North Africa, in March 2011 many Syrians were out on the streets demanding democratic change, and the regime led by president al Assad responded with force. Many had thought that when al Assad took over as president in 2000 Syria would liberalise the internet, but in fact the opposite happened. The internet was opened to the public, albeit under strict supervision of the state, and political opposition groups and information websites were and still are blocked (Hofheinz in Sakr, 2007, p. 56). The opposition relied on self-produced and international media to spread information, using livestreaming, uploading videos of protests and demonstrations to YouTube. (Lynch, 2012).

The regime responded aggressively and immediately initiated a media blackout in March, banning international media, while local journalists were detained while trying to report on local demonstrations. (CPJ, 2012). Using the same strategy as Egypt, the Syrian regime assaulted both professional and citizen journalists, banned the remaining foreign journalists from the country and raided media organisations. The regime

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\(^8\) Upheaval in the Arab World. Media as Key Witnesses and Political Pawns, 2011

regularly cut internet access and mobile phone service in places of demonstrations in order to prevent people from publishing any news about them. Media organisations and NGOs resorted to satellite phones and shared these phones with the demonstrators. (RWB, 2011).

The authorities managed to drive most foreign press out of the country, either by arresting or expelling them. In August 2011, the government announced that it had passed a new law that would supposedly improve media freedom in Syria, but a number of journalists are still being detained, unable to communicate with their editors and media organisations. In addition, foreign journalists are continually expelled from the country (CPJ, 2012), and state media is used for propaganda regarding ‘foreign threats’ (Lynch, 2012).

Citizen journalists and activists took action when the media was shut out. They were, and still are, the providers of information and news about the protests against al Assad, and by using applications such as Bambuser or Ustream, they film and upload videos online, live for the world to see. In areas where internet access is restricted, the users turn to VPN-clients and satellites to broadcast. (ANA New Media Association, 2012) (RWB, 2012).

Where the Egyptian regime failed, its Syrian counterpart is succeeding: Through a well-developed cyber-army the regime manages to keep track of citizen journalists online, and many have been detained by the military. The cyber-army primarily targets social media and has claimed that that its existence is based on the need to complement the official media and in doing so provide a balanced media sphere. (RWB, 2011, 2012). In June 2011, the regime temporarily shut down most of the country's internet access and although it was, according to Reporters Without Borders, restored quite quickly, the internet service now slows down regularly, particularly on Fridays when the main demonstrations take place. In late November of 2012, the Syrian government shut off the internet for five days. (Renesys, 2012).

The aim of the shutdowns could be an attempt to keep information such as videos and photos from being uploaded and spread online. Access to Bambuser has been blocked intermittently in the country since February 2011, but with the use of different VPN clients and satellites, videos are still being uploaded and used by international media, particularly through the user “homslive” via Associated Press. (Bambuser, 2012) (RWB, 2012).

10 VPN – Virtual private network extends a private network and the resources contained in the network across public networks like the internet.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

As the main analytical tool for this thesis, the analytical frame for civic cultures provided by Dahlgren in *Media and Political Engagement. Citizens, Communication, and Democracy* (2009) will be used. But before introducing this framework, a broader theoretical foundation will be presented to provide a better understanding of the relationship between state, citizens and the media.

It should be noted that the terminology presented here is derived from Western scholars, and is for the most part applied to Western contexts. This thesis, however, applies these theories to an Egyptian and Syrian context, in the sense that a well-functioning society is a democratic one noting that neither Egypt or Syria are to been seen as democratic to current date (although, it must be conceded here that there is no way of telling if a democracy is the ultimate way for a society to be structured). With regards to Egypt, democracy does appear to be a distinct possibility for the future, and listening to the voices of the Syrian opposition, many appear to be requesting democracy.

3.1 Role of the Media in Societies

The relationship between the media, society and democracy produces many theories. The liberal, and commonly recognised, perspective focuses on information which is complemented by the media, serving as a watchdog. The citizen is seen as a participating individual, and as such they have an ethical obligation to make informed decisions and choices in society. (Cammaerts et al., 2007, p. 1-2). According to this perspective, the media’s role in society is to make politics understandable and visible to the citizens, and this is done through sharing information, providing analysis, acting as a platform for debate and stimulating discussion. Within a liberal model of the public sphere, the media has a critical role in informing citizens and directing public opinion, and thus the media is a requirement in the making and shaping of a democratic culture, although, as Dahlgren notes (2009), it is not a guarantee. (p. 2-3).

A more critical perspective focuses on media as empowering citizens to enable them to see where their interests are, and that this in turn fosters solidarity and collective interests. In his critical approach, Curran (in Cammaerts et al.) includes some of the liberal aspects of the media, such as their responsibility to scrutinise the decision-makers in society, and for media to represent the weak and disadvantaged groups. In addition to this, he focuses on the importance of citizen empowerment. (2007, p. xii-xiii).
3.2 The Public Sphere

The concept of the public sphere was developed by German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas in the early 1960s, and was originally a concept for analysing the political developments in Western countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Today it is also used to discuss the public life and society in other regions of the world. (Sakr, 2007, p. 16). By the public sphere, Habermas referred to a space in society that is independent of government and partisan economic stakeholders. The public sphere is a place where people live their social life and also where public opinion is formed (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 3), and is ‘dedicated to rational debate and which is both accessible to entry and open to inspection by the citizenry’ (Webster, 2006, p. 163).

The ultimate purpose and goal, then, is public consensus and decision making, although this might not always be achieved. (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 3).

The original purpose of the media was that of an un-biased part of society, a watchdog of institutions and governments, but its function is changing as it becomes more dependent on capitalist interests. This means that it is moving from being an information provider to a former public opinion. The media is run by corporations which are dependent on the market and therefore also put their energy towards getting maximum advertising revenue and as a result the product (news) becomes damaged. (Webster, 2006, p. 166-167).

‘those who pay the piper generally call the tune, publicly funded organisations can easily be regarded as tools of government.’

Webster, 2006

Over the last two decades, there has been a continuous trend towards the centralisation of media to a few mega-corporations, and there has been a privatisation of media, from state to individual control. (Deane, 2005, p. 177). Critical media theorists such as Curran, see media as evolving towards profit, rather than public knowledge. (1991).

According to Habermas, information is the core of the public sphere, as reliable and adequate information will enable a good discussion and platform for debate. Yet Habermas was sceptical towards the excesses of media outlets in society and was of the opinion that a greater supply of media did not automatically mean better quality. (Webster, 2006, p. 168, 175). Habermas stated that the commercialisation of mass media has turned the public sphere into ‘a space where the rhetoric and objectives of public relations and advertising are prioritised’ (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 5).
3.3 Network Societies and Social Change

Castells (2009) defines ‘social change’ as the interaction between cultural change and political change, where social change is ‘a change of values and beliefs processed in the human mind on a scale large enough to affect society as a whole’, and political change is the ‘institutional of the new values diffusing throughout the culture of a society’. Social change does not come about automatically, but requires the will of social actors, referred to by Castells as ‘social movements’ that in turn exist in the form of various networks. (p. 300). A network is defined as a constellation of individuals that share a set of values and interests, and who have set common goals for their mobilisation, and is partly a result of globalisation. Social change then, is the change that social movements are seeking to achieve (Castells, 2009, p. 19, 301) through the act of civic engagement.

Society is becoming more and more based on these kinds of networks, on not just local, but national and global levels. People are using the internet and online media to connect and establish contact with others around the world who share interests and common goals. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 29). As Castells (in Webster, 2006) argues, the internet makes international cooperation between organisations, activists and other groups working within societies easier, and it provides them with an opportunity to respond and react on an international level to local events; through this, network societies are being created. (p. 101). Although the state is still the main arena of power in society, it is increasingly being challenged by globalisation and the weakening of state boundaries. In countries with strong oppositional networks which mobilise fast, the efforts of the network can lead to the toppling of governments (Couldry, 2012, p. 115), as in the case of Egypt in 2011.

Media in various forms has long been used as a means of communication, especially by social movements who rely on the attention of traditional media, through which they reach their communities and people in power. By using different media outlets, social movements increase their chances of achieving social change (Castells, 2009, p. 302). People make up their minds according to images and information they receive from different communication networks and the media is a large factor when it comes to changing public opinion. Media is essential to the process of raising awareness, and all forms have a common goal – to attract an audience by creating and telling stories that raise concern among citizens (Castells, 2009, p. 317-318).
In the Middle East and North Africa, the internet has proven to be vital in the development of social movements, especially when it comes to mobilising people and communication across networks and state boundaries (Howard, 2010, p. 132).

3.4 Civic Cultures and Citizen Journalism as Civic Engagement

Although Dahlgren recognises that there are a fair number of events that influence citizens in participating in society, his main focus for his analytic frame is the role of the media. (2009, p. 102). Dahlgren defines civic culture as ‘a framework intended to help analyse the conditions that are necessary for – that promote or hinder – civic engagement’. (2009, p. 103). These cultures can be learnt, inherited, or absorbed from other citizens, and are in fact a prerequisite for the citizens to be active in society. Furthermore, the media, traditional as well as new, plays an important role in shaping culture, and is a must for a well-functioning society. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 106). Dahlgren's six modes of civic cultures consists of: knowledge, values, trust, spaces, practices and identities, and are presented below from the angle of citizen journalists.

Civic engagement is based on the notion that citizen sees themselves as participants in the public sphere, that their voices are being heard, and that they are contributing to political discussion. Citizens also need some form of motivation to continue their cause. For citizen journalists, this motivation is producing and sharing information in the public sphere, often with the intention of accomplishing some societal change. In the creation of citizen-produced media, the citizens are creating cultures, which are in turn affecting others in the public sphere.

Knowledge

In order for citizens to be able to participate in democracy they need to have knowledge. The citizens must have access to information, reports, analyses, debates and discussions about what is happening in their society. Traditionally speaking, it is the media that has the main responsibility for informing citizens, although this responsibility is problematic, seeing as civic knowledge may come from many different angles and in various forms and that this speaks for a ‘democratic plurality in regards to knowledge (and genres of journalism)’. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 108-110). For citizen journalists, the knowledge which the possess is the context – they are a part of the society which they are trying to change, which also gives them a certain amount of knowledge.
Values

For a democracy to function, its citizens must share and follow a set of values based on democratic principles. Universal values such as liberty, equality, justice, openness, responsibility and accountability are the foundations of democracy, and there is a need for a consensus amongst citizens to live by these values for a democratic society to work. As Dahlgren suggests, however, these values are not only a rational choice for the individuals in the society, but there must be a will for these values to be in place; it must involve ‘an element of passion’. If the citizens are excited and enthusiastic about the democratic values, they will also act in their favour. (2009, p. 111-112). For Castells, it is shared values and beliefs that bind people together and creates networks, and this is in turn the driving force behind social change (2009, p. 300). When speaking of citizen journalists, they have, as will be discussed in the analytical chapter of this thesis, a set of values that are crucial in their work. These values are in fact not far from the values that are used by traditional media\textsuperscript{11}.

Trust

Trust is a prerequisite for democracy to be in place – between the political elite and the citizens, the citizens and the media, the media and political elite, and vice versa. For Dahlgren (2009), the trust that is of interest is that between the citizens themselves. (p. 112). Too much trust might lead to an abuse of power, whereas too little might cause friction in other ways. For citizen journalists to be able to work, there must be trust in place, between themselves as well as between the citizen journalists and the participants in the public sphere. The citizen journalists interviewed for this thesis are all members of networks and, of course, a sense of trust is of utmost importance, especially when reporting about issues that are regime-critical.

Spaces

A platform for citizens to engage in discussion and debate, and to interact with each other, is another must for democracy to exist. The citizens must also be able to communicate with the political elite, in order to influence decision-making. The public sphere is thus a prerequisite for a public space to exist. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 115). Public

\textsuperscript{11}International Federation of Journalists' Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists is acclaimed as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events. Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the IFJ. Amended by the 1986 World Congress. The declaration can be found in full in Appendix 4. (IFJ, 2013).
space, as defined by Castells, is space ‘of societal, meaningful interaction where ideas and values are formed, conveyed, supported, and resisted; space that ultimately becomes a training ground for action and reaction’ (2009, p. 301).

Media has shaped and developed the private and public spaces, and with the development of new information technologies, such as the internet, there has been an expansion of the public spaces not only within societies, but also globally. The openness of the internet has made it easier for people to engage and interact with others and, through this, enhance the possibilities for civic engagement. The internet does not, however, ‘replace face-to-face encounters’ (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 116), and today, citizen journalists often use the internet and online space for their work. As seen in Egypt and Syria, the new media online has played an important role when mobilising people and informing citizens, as well as the global public.

Practices
Continuous and established practices are a given part of any democratic society, in all areas, can be expressed in the form of actions such as elections, education, and literacy. To participate in these actions will enable individuals or groups to grow and empower themselves and their role in society (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 117) and through this strengthening the sense of belonging and the structure of the network.

Over time, democratic practices become traditions, and society must make sure that these traditions do not leave out new practices and in the process hinder the development of democracy. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 118). Tying in with values and trust, citizen journalists tend to have a set of practices which they follow when they are reporting. The citizen journalists interviewed for this thesis all have regular training sessions and offer a sort of mentoring system for new reporters.

Identities
By identities, Dahlgren is referring to people’s views of themselves and their role and place in society, and he sees this as the foundation of civic cultures. Identities are seen in plural – a citizen has many identities, each corresponding to their place in different societal settings. They are also changeable, and develop through experience. According to Eriksen (in Servaes et al.), identities are constructed locally, and ‘people still live in place’ (2009, p. 63). That being said, this do not hinder the emergence of global identities.
In addition to the identity that citizenship offers, Dahlgren explores two other notions of civic identities; (1) acting as an empowered political agent and (2) membership of a political community. The first of these refers to individuals who actively seek to inform themselves and in this become empowered participants of society. The second notion refers to the strengths of belonging to a group, and that together it is easier to make a political impact. The political collectiveness is no longer bound to geography, but can be acted out on a global scale, and research show that the internet is the primary way for individuals to develop and establish their political identities and express their opinion. (2009, p. 120-121) (Howard, 2010, p. 136). For Castells, the idea of the ‘collective identity’ is a result of the network society and central part of any social movement (in Webster, 2006, p. 109). For citizen journalists, they, as mentioned by Dahlgren, have different identities depending on what context they are acting in – as citizens, as reporters, as producers.
Chapter 4: Methodology

Due to the purpose of this research, it became clear early on that it would be conducted in a strictly qualitative manner, and for that reason it was decided to use qualitative interviews as the main approach. There are some who question the validity of the in-depth interview as a research method, as opposed to quantitative processes; one reason for this is the difficulty in measuring the gathered material and getting precise information. For this reason the decision to perform a textual analysis of a number of livestreams prior to the interviews was made, as a complement to the outcome and in order to get a sense of the material that the activists and citizen journalists are producing, due to the fact that this research is mainly based on livestreaming and its place in the public sphere. In addition to this, an extensive literature review was continuously conducted to provide a theoretical depth to the thesis, and the findings of this literature review are mainly presented in the contextualisation in chapter 2 and the theoretical framework in chapter 3.

As the main approach consists of qualitative interviews, it was important to interview a range of information providers in the public sphere. Although the focus of this research is on citizen journalists, interviews with traditional journalists as well as representatives from livestreaming application Bambuser were conducted. An attempt to interview representatives from Ustream was made, but was unsuccessful. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and in a neutral location, normally in a café. To be able to keep the interviews free and interactive, as well as also to have proof of the research having been conducted, the interviews were recorded. Notes were also taken, mostly to keep track of the questions and to take down points to return to later in the interviews. The interviews were conducted in English and, in the case of the founder of Bambuser, in Swedish, as I am not entirely fluent in Arabic and the interviewees were fluent in English.

4.1 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other people see and experience the world. McKee defines a text as ‘something that we make meaning from’, essentially to produce an interpretation of something. (2003). As preparation for the interviews, the decision to perform textual analysis of livestreams was made, and the analysis was conducted from what McKee refers to as a post-structuralist approach: ‘cultures do indeed make sense of the world differently: and it is impossible to say that one is right and others wrong’. In short – different cultures experience and have different realities. (2003, p. 9).
In today’s media landscape traditional media have the monopoly on the definition of news and media, and there also appears to be a consensus that citizen journalism is not part of that discourse. In this analysis the traditional media news coverage was set as the norm, and when viewing the livestreams, attempts were made to identify the difference between traditional media and media produced by citizen journalists. The livestreamed videos were not being judged, and the aim was not to see how accurate they are. The post-structuralist approach does not pass any judgement on a text’s accuracy, truthfulness or claim to identify a single reality, but rather aids in understanding how it differs from the norm. (McKee, 2003, p. 15-17).

Before commencing the textual analysis, a frame of reference was needed. The decision was made to use the International Federation of Journalists’ ”Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists” (See Appendix 4) as a guideline for the role of the media and journalists in the public sphere. Using textual analysis, an attempt to identify the characteristics that separate traditional media from material produced by citizen journalist was made, and this analysis together with the literature review provided a good foundation in preparing for the interviews and showed the area of focus of each respective citizen journalist network in their reporting.

4.2 Qualitative in-depth interviews

Before engaging in qualitative interviews, there were a number of things to consider. Davis (in Pickering, 2008) lists the following three points: (1) identifying interviewees, (2) making and maintaining contact with interviewees and (3) dealing with the on-going collection and analysis of the interview material. In addition to these points, Burgess (2006) points out the importance of: (4) the construction of questions and the need to consider the ethical aspects of conducting interviews regarding: (5) open or closed research and (6) truth-telling and lying. The latter two are discussed under “Ethical Aspects”. (p. 150-164).

Identifying interviewees

As this research is mainly focused on citizen journalists, the initial focus was to get in touch with citizen journalist organisations during a field study in Cairo, Egypt, from June until August 2012. The interviews with traditional journalists were conducted prior to the field study and the interview with Bambuser upon returning to Sweden. There was an intention to conduct interviews with Associated Press and Ustream, but due to the time restriction and declines for interviews, the decision was made not to pursue them.
The gathered material resulted in five interviews with citizen journalists, four with traditional journalists and one with Bambuser.

Making and Maintaining Contact with Interviewees

It proved to be quite difficult to find and get access to citizen journalists and networks, mainly due to the fact that Cairo in particular has become a popular target for European and North American researchers, and these organisations are tired of being researched. The fact that many of the activists are also anonymous and known publicly only by their online aliases added to the difficulty in finding suitable interviewees.

Despite this, contact was made with one Egyptian livestreaming network – Ana Mubasher, and one Syrian network – ANA New Media Association (ANA). Both of these networks use livestreaming in order to get news out when there is either a lack of interest from traditional media, or they are unable to report. Ana Mubasher (‘I am Live’ in Egyptian Arabic), was founded on January 25th 2012, and has since become Egypt’s biggest livestreaming organisation. They are supported by UStream, which has given them the Egyptian channel Ustream.com/Egypt, and offered what they term a “super channel”. ANA is a Syrian livestreaming network based in Cairo, also supported by Ustream. The founder is the internationally known activist Rami Jarrah, who previously operated under the alias Alexander Page.

As mentioned above, the gathered material was not transcribed until returning to Sweden in early August, mainly due to time restrictions in the field. There were some concerns about becoming too distant from the research and interviews by waiting, but this approach turned out to be beneficial for the continued work on the thesis. Contact is also being maintained with the interviewees, and the possibility to ask follow-up questions and get clarification still exists.

Interviews with journalists Paul Lewis and Pepe Escobar were done prior to the field research, those with Måns Adler from Bambuser as well as the freelance journalist referred to as ‘F’ were carried out on returning from Egypt in August 2012.

Dealing with On-going Collection and Analysis of the Interview Material

As mentioned above, due to the difficulty of finding interviewees and the time restrictions in the field, the decision to carry on with the interviews and leave the processing of the interviews until returning to Sweden was made.

Each interview was allotted a time limit of one hour – mainly because of the amount of data that would later have to be processed. A certain amount of caution with regard to
interviews getting ‘too friendly’ and a certain distance from the interviewees was maintained, although the interviews were nonetheless kept conversational.

It became evident during the first interview that the interviewee was not media-trained, so special attention in regards to what parts of the material was to be included in the thesis has been paid so as to not compromise the interviewees, some of whom are activists and, in some cases, under scrutiny from the state.

Construction of Questions

Being a journalist, the same way of structuring the interviews as when interviewing for an article or feature was used. A set of open-ended questions which would enable follow-up questions and be appropriate regardless of answers given by the interviewees was designed. As Burgess argues, if the questions were too structured and thought out, it would mean that the questions asked were constructed in such a way as to attain the answer the interviewer was already looking for. (2006, p. 83). By keeping the questions open, more truthful answers from the interviewees were obtained as there was no ‘right’ answer for them to give.

Ethical Aspects

The interviewees were all given a brief background on the intention of the thesis, about what is being investigated, and if they would mind having their name published. As the interviews were very intimate and conducted one-on-one, there was a need to be clear with the interviewees about when the interview was ‘on the record’. Before the start, a short summary of the project and research question was given, so that they would know what to expect from the interview. As the questions were kept open-ended, an attempt to avoid putting the interviewees in a subordinate position was made, something which, as Burgess states, could severely damage the outcome of the research, since the interviewee might give answers the researcher wants rather than honest ones. (2006, p. 83). As the interviews were conversational rather than following a strict questionnaire, it allowed for more flexibility during the interviews. The fact that the interviews were unstructured was challenging, as it created extra pressure to control the interview and keep it on topic, rather than drifting off in the wrong direction. It was at times difficult not be drawn into a discussion and be an interviewer rather than a participant in the process. It proved useful to have journalistic training and experience in conducting interviews.
Early on in the planning process, the decision to keep the research open was made. As with any research, great thought was given to the intention of the research, whom it was being conducted for, and who would benefit from it. The aim for this project is for the organisations that were interviewed to be able to use the research and hopefully gain something from it, whether it be during training, in the field or just for the networks to use as reference material. As most of these individuals are working on livestreaming in their free time and have full-time jobs, respect was given not to take too much of the interviewees’ time. In Egypt especially, there has been a constant flow of academics coming in from the West to analyse and observe these networks for personal gain. Because of this, the findings will be shared with the interviewees, if interest is shown. The interviewees were also given the possibility of viewing the material before publishing.

As in all human interaction, there is always the question of whether or not someone is telling the truth or misrepresenting themselves or their work. For this research, the assumption that the interviewees were sincere in their answers was made – as the research is not interested in passing any judgement regarding their work or methods, there is no reason as to why they would be insincere or untruthful.

4.3 Validity of Research

When deciding on the topic for this thesis, the intention was to conduct at least 10 interviews with citizen journalists and 10 interviews with traditional journalists, as well as representatives from Bambuser and Ustream, and Associated Press. In the end, only five interviews were conducted with citizen journalists, four with traditional journalists and one with representatives from livestreaming company Bambuser. It is difficult to know if the selection of interviewees for this thesis will actually be representative, although, due to the small number of interviewees, each interview could be conducted more thoroughly, and a deeper connection to each interviewee was made. This was particularly helpful in returning from Egypt, when it came to follow-up interviews.

Depending on the role and profession of the interviewees, the questions they were asked varied. In this manner, the interviewees were asked questions relevant to their field of work, and in this way satisfactory material has been gathered to perform a successful analysis, allowing the aim of this thesis to be met.
Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1 The Role of Citizen Journalists in Shaping a New Public Sphere

‘Engagement refers to subjective states, that is, mobilized, focused on attention on the same object’ (Dahlgren, 2009).

As stated in the theoretical chapter, this research draws on the notion that, although Egypt and Syria are not democracies per se, there are public spheres within these societies that are evolving and, as such, these countries can be considered as valid subjects for an analysis. In Egypt, a country transitioning towards democracy, the citizens succeeded in the toppling of president Mubarak, and in Syria, the citizens, albeit in many different actions and in many directions, are rebelling against the regime led by al Assad. The citizen journalists interviewed for this thesis were all in agreement that the cause which they considered their activities to be in aid of was a more democratic society. Two of the interviewees even referred to themselves as democracy activists.

However, as Dahlgren (2009) points out, the media is considered to be a prerequisite for a democracy in that it provides information to citizens (p. 2-3), it must be mentioned that when the media is seen as or becomes the bearer of political communication, the message might become distorted. If information, as in the case of Egypt and Syria, is coming from the political elite of society to the audience, media is failing its purpose. The media, for the most part, is a component of a one-to-many information flow, in that the media traditionally exists to keep the citizens informed, but without any real possibilities for citizens to respond and react to the provider of the information. The media paradigm is shifting, however, both in the Middle East and North Africa and elsewhere, either due to the continued concentration of media organisations or organisational ownership, citizens are becoming less and less informed. Thus, by the populace engaging themselves in citizen journalism, there is a way for them to take initiative and civic action in the public sphere.

5.1.1 Knowledge

In order to participate in political life and to be able to make informed decisions for themselves and their fellow citizens, citizen need access to knowledge, commonly through the media. In the case of Egypt and Syria, however, the media has failed to provide its citizenry with information leading to knowledge, due to either media being banned from the countries or simply being puppets of ruling regimes. Based on interviews conducted with citizen journalists for this thesis, it has become clear that they see a lack of knowledge and access to information in society, and that they, as citizen journalists, took it upon themselves to provide this.
What speaks in favour of citizen journalists is the fact that they have the ability to fully contextualise political events as they are, for the most part, reporting from their own country, environment and surroundings. They have an understanding of the issues at large, one that is difficult for institutions from the outside to obtain. Since citizen journalists have this context, and in many cases a better understanding of a situation than international media, it can be argued that they are a more reliable source.

In countries such as Egypt, where the state media is essentially a puppet of the regime, and Syria, where the same situation exists and is exacerbated by a still extant ban on international news organisations, citizen media serves as a window to the events in these societies. As long as these citizen journalists are open and honest in their reporting, especially in terms of livestreaming, it should not matter if the information is ‘biased’ or from a certain perspective.

According to most media theories, the responsibility to inform the public lies with the media. New media technologies have given citizens better control of what kind of information they obtain, as well as when and how they get it. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 44). When traditional media fails to inform its citizenry, the citizens can take matters into their own hands and start filming, blogging, broadcasting and, in doing, so become the informants of society, providing the public with knowledge about on-going events and politics. The citizen journalists interviewed for this thesis all said that they started to livestream because of the absence of traditional media in their respective countries, and they felt that the information that state-run media provided was biased and propagandistic. As a network, the interviewees focused on the idea of themselves as knowledge providers:

‘You will make mistakes, but also learn from them, and learn from other livestreamers. It is all about doing simulations, participating in knowledge transferring events, being interactive.’ (Ana Mubasher, 2012).

This shows the importance of knowledge, and that these networks do see a responsibility towards their fellow citizens.

5.1.2 Values

The second of Dahlgren’s modes of civic engagement, values, is one of the most relevant out of the six when it comes to the relationship between citizen journalism and traditional media. Critics of citizen journalism (such as White, 2011) say that as citizen journalists are not trained in journalistic practices, they cannot provide accurate information and they are not credible as sources. Yet, during the recent events in the
Middle East and North Africa, citizen journalism has been extensively used in traditional media, and Associated Press even entered into an agreement with Bambuser in April 2012 to get access to users' livestreams\(^\text{12}\). They do not, however, acknowledge citizen journalists as news providers per se, but regards them as ‘eye witnesses’:

'We’re not in Homs right now, there’s a way of getting the Homs story out. It’s one facet, of the Syria story, and you have to be careful as a news organisation to understand that, you’re piecing together a jigsaw puzzle here, and we have to present it for what it is, which is just one aspect of the story, not the entire story.’ (Associated Press on Beet.tv, 2012).

From Syria, where AP is not able to be present, they are using their collaboration with Bambuser for newsgathering:

'The Bambuser users in Homs provided us with the first live feed of the bombardments going on in a Syrian city, so we have seen how it can already be used, that particular video was one of the most highly used news videos around the world on the day that we broadcasted it. In fact, in several times it has been on our top 10 of usage worldwide.’ (Associated Press on Beet.tv, 2012).

Through this, AP is essentially using citizen journalists in the same way they would a traditional journalist. In an interview with Beet.tv, a spokesperson for AP took the interviewer through the steps through which AP confirms the authenticity and reliability of a citizen journalist’s story, something that in fact does not differ much from how traditional journalists are assessed.

The Syrian citizen journalism network interviewed for this thesis, ANA, was founded as they wanted to exist as a media organisation, only based on citizen-produced materials. Their original name was "Activists News Association", but they soon realised that if they referred to themselves as activists, they would lose credibility as a news provider as, in the eyes of many, the term carries with it negative connotations. Through a network of 350 citizen journalists across Syria, their main goal is to enter into the traditional media sphere.

'We want not only to contribute to other media outlets, but also compete with them, being a more sophisticated source on getting real information, more detailed reports, more information.’ (ANA New Media Association, 2012).

This proves that this network does in fact acknowledge something lacking in their society and in the media production, and that they themselves can, through citizen journalism contribute to a change in society, Egyptian network Ana Mubasher founded their organisation as a result of the many human right abuses during the uprisings in 2011:

'We started this on January 25th, because we saw so many brutalities, especially against protesters, and we wanted to do something about it.' (Ana Mubasher, 2012).

Ana Mubasher felt that the media was failing the citizens by not reporting about the situation, and engaged themselves in media. What is interesting about the interviewed networks is that they both appear to have good conceptions about what type of material they want to produce. Even though they are not professional journalists, both networks have a code that they follow in their livestreaming, and it is indeed strikingly similar to the Code of Conduct\(^\text{13}\) that most professional journalists follow. ANA New Media Association, for instance, strive to be as objective as humanly possible, but also said that they realise that it is an issue and that 'Neutralism is impossible, and we know that it is impossible' (2012). Because Ana Mubasher realised that they lacked experience and knowledge, they sought contact with the founder of ANA New Media Association:

'None of us had any experience. 'B' is an engineer, I am working in project management, so it was all new to us. We came in contact with Alexander Page, who is one of the most prominent activists who does livestreaming. He later set us in contact with Ustream, and helped us set up our own super-channel for Egypt.'

'At first we made many mistakes, but we learnt from them, and from observing others. We shadowed Alexander Page when he was livestreaming in Cairo.' (Ana Mubasher, 2012).

This shows an understanding of knowledge and a sober view on the importance of information providing, and the responsibility towards fellow citizens. In the current media paradigm, traditional media is often seen as an impartial information provider, something which is very rarely the case – a result of continued media concentration and state- and elite ownership of media organisations. (Deane, 2005, p. 177). This brings us to the practices used by these networks, which will be further discussed in section 5.1.5.

\(^\text{13}\) See Appendix 4 for the Declaration on the Code of Conduct for Journalists.
New media in itself is self-regulatory due to its interactive character, in that people can comment on and correct untruthfulness or biased news about events if someone is claiming something which is incorrect\textsuperscript{14}. Livestreaming can, of course, still be manipulated, but essentially it is more raw and un-touched than most edited material coming from traditional media in news segments and broadcasts.

Egyptian network Ana Mubasher has two aspects which they always consider while livestreaming. The first is never to show any faces, for their own safety and that of others’. A member of the network gave the example of how he was livestreaming from an event in Abbasiya, Cairo, in late 2011, and had over 25,000 people following his stream. During the event there were representatives from practically all political and religious groups in Egypt, and since the interviewee made some negative comments regarding SCAF while streaming, he would have placed himself in danger, had he shown his face.

An important aspect of citizen journalism is how the networks and/or individuals are funded. The members of ANA New Media Association and Ana Mubasher are all paying out of their own pocket, although both are looking for different funding possibilities. One could argue that because these networks are driven by money coming from individuals who are a part of the networks, their material in that sense will be influenced by the journalists’ own opinions. However, neither of the two networks interviewed for this thesis have claimed to be independent of their opinions, and are in fact open when asked about this. This is not, however, to infer that either group lacks integrity: Neither network will allow funding from political or other interest groups, and in one interview, it transpired that one of the networks has in fact been approached by high profile politicians wanting to fund their work. It should be noted that by paying for their own activities, these livestreamers show that they are motivated not by a paycheck, but non-financial motives. In fact, the interviewees were all hesitant about the possibility of making money from their work.

’I do this because I believe in the cause, not for financial gains. There is a risk that citizen journalism will be destroyed if people can make money from livestreaming, that some people might do it because of that, instead of having a cause behind it.’ (Ana Mubasher, 2012).

\textsuperscript{14}As an example, Lewis mentioned an event during the London Riots in 2009 where someone tweeted that the London Zoo had been broken into and all the animals were on the loose, and this news spread like wildfire on Twitter. Someone at the Zoo quickly tweeted an image showing that the animals were still in their cages, and the whole scare was over in less than an hour.
Self-funding does not necessarily mean that the reporting will be biased, no more so than that of the news being broadcast by al Arabiya, for instance, owned by a Saudi prince, and many times accused of not broadcasting independently, as in the case of the protest movements in Bahrain during 2011 (Lynch, 2012). As long as there is an open discussion and transparency in the matter, this means of funding can be sustainable.

The textual analysis of videos revealed that the livestreaming citizen journalist shared many of the characteristics of traditional journalists’ methods of reporting. The code of conduct for journalists, years of following news on television and being a professional journalist myself served as a reference in the analysis.

Despite many similarities in the reporting, such as the protection of sources and the use of fair methods to obtain news, there are also differences. In the videos analysed, the citizen journalist was continuously commenting on the events happening. Professional reporters working in areas of conflict are often asked by the studio to describe what they see, and yet the commentary provided by the citizen journalists can, at times, be politically charged: In the material analysed from Ana Mubasher, the reporter would often comment negatively about SCAF and the state of Egypt. This practice would have been frowned upon by the traditional media, at least in the past. On discussing this matter with Escobar, journalist and co-owner of Asia Times, he stated that the media is being run differently today than it was during ‘the glory-days of objective reporting’. According to Escobar, the professional reporters of today need to appeal to people’s emotions:

‘You launch an emotion grenade and everyone is hit at the same time, and that is why language is so dangerous. It all comes back to manipulation of words and images. For the average media consumer this is a nightmare. How are you able to tell facts from fiction, and what is really happening?’ (2012).

That being said, neither of the networks interviewed ever claimed to be objective, neutral or without political affiliations and, on the contrary, they were both very open about their political stances during the interviews. The findings from conducting the analyses of the livestreams is that the main and defining difference from traditional journalism is that citizen journalist are participants rather than observers in society and the political arena, and that they are using livestreaming as a means of changing society, rather than having the main purpose of sharing information.

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15 As an example, during the 2004 American presidential election, public service Swedish Radio’s then Washington correspondent, Uddén, made a statement regarding the candidates best suited for the role of president. She was later suspended as her statement was deemed to constitute a breach towards the rules of reporting with Swedish Radio.
On the matter of objectivity within traditional journalism, Escobar did not believe that there is such a thing, and said that ‘every single thing that you write is more or less biased according to your history, your ideology, the language you use, the choices you make, everything’, and added that ‘what every journalist should do, is to stick to the facts’. As mentioned above, he has identified a change in the language used by traditional journalists in current media as it is becoming more opinionated in order to appeal to the emotions of its audience, thus meaning that less of the news produced is fair and balanced. (2012).

Escobar sees a problem when traditional media starts to manipulate citizen media, but does see it as a valid form of information. During the interview, he suggested that if the content is run through an editor, this, or at least the image from the responsible media, can still be balanced. (2012).

Lewis, special projects editor for the Guardian, shares Escobar's opinion in that citizen journalists have become an important part of the media but added that trained editors should process the content. However, he also questions the over-belief in trained and professional journalism. (2011). Being a professional journalist does not guarantee that the end product or the means of getting to that product will be fair and justified. The News of the World’s scandals culminating in 2011 can be seen as an example of when professional journalism breaks the code of conduct, although it must be granted that; the journalistic content in the publication was not news reports, but populist and based mainly on gossip.

5.1.3 Trust
Trust is an essential component in the media and with the responsibility of providing information to the public comes a certain level of trust from the former to the latter. ‘The camera never lies’ is a well-used phrase that might have been true half a century ago; images, and video are often seen as simple recordings of an event. They are seen as a moment in history, captured for those who missed it, and are an important document which details things that might otherwise be lost, and are considered as an extension of the eye (Hall, 1997, p. 81-82). Hall (ibid) takes the notion of the social and human aspects of image-making, and says that documentary images are always influenced by the photographer and so the result is a mixture of emotion and information. (p. 83).

News of the World was a weekly British tabloid owned by News International that was cancelled in 2011 as a result of a series of incidents.
In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag argues that images have an obvious advantage in that they have two sides, one objective and one subjective, differing from Hall’s argument, however, Sontag does not believe that they are opposites, but working together in symbiosis. (2003, p. 23). She describes it as a ‘record of the real [the camera] and witness of the real [the photographer]’. This aside, video is a more powerful media than print, as it both shows and tells the story about an event to the audience.

In conducting interviews for this thesis, a consensus among the citizen journalist networks became clear in terms of trustworthiness in respect of the audience. A member of ANA New Media Association emphasised the issue of trust throughout the interview. He talked about himself starting out as an anonymous activist picking up a mobile phone and recording, to being a reliable source for most major media outlets, even while retaining his anonymity:

> 'When I was contacted by journalists, they would say; were 50 people killed, and I would say no that’s exaggerated, and I would realise a very good vibe, and we would build a relationship with these journalists and they would then say, if I told them that this person is credible, they would say okay, if you tell me he’s credible, he’s credible. Because I was always being honest. I think that if we abide by that, then we’re just working as any other news outlet, we’re in danger, but we understand that danger, and we’re willing to be there.’ (ANA New Media Association, 2012).

As for who is allowed to become part of their networks, neither has any restrictions on joining. ANA New Media Association created their Ustream super channel by incorporating any livestream that was tagged with Syria or similar tags, and Ana Mubasher used a similar process for livestreaming in Egypt. However, both networks did raise concerns regarding the videos connected to their networks and said that they would ‘disconnect’ any videos and users that proved unreliable. If this has ever been done has not, however, been confirmed.

An interesting note is that these networks do not seem to have any formal leaders, but everything is managed with equal status in terms of leadership level. This could be a reason as to why they have been so successful as, if there is no identifiable leader, the sense of trust within the network could grow and become stronger. This is a sign that these networks are in fact based on the authentic will of individual citizens’ efforts to accomplish change.
5.1.4 Spaces

In many countries where traditional media is repressed, citizen-produced videos have become a crucial medium through which the outside world is able to learn about events and violations of civil rights in conflict, as well as acting as a valuable source of information for citizens. This has been especially evident in the Middle East and North Africa over the last two years (Sasseeen, 2012).

During the uprisings, citizen journalists used the internet to spread their videos within their networks and eventually to an international audience. Through this process, news about political events and unrest reached farther than it would without access to new media. What would previously have taken multiple days – via traditional media, telephone or word of mouth – was instantaneously broadcast live for the whole world to see. Talk about politics has expanded from local to global proportions, engaging participants and encouraging them to discuss and share their opinions online. This is networking in the sense that likeminded activists can find each other. (Seib, 2007, p. 7).

Livestreaming platforms have provided a space for citizens to come together to spread and share information, to their countrymen as well as to the outside world. Particularly in countries where governments have tried to suppress political opposition, new media such as blogging and livestreaming can prove to be valuable in pressuring the state for change. (Seib, 2007, p. 7). Livestreaming does in part offer protection from oppressive regimes for, if there is an audience, it is harder for the regime to capture and abuse oppositional individuals or groups. When the governments respond by shutting down access to these technologies, the citizens react and stay on their mission, either without them or by finding ways to circumvent the regimes. They also have the capacity to report from areas that are covered by traditional media. ANA New Media Association is establishing in itself Sudan, Morocco, and Bahrain to begin with, mainly because they already have a network in these countries.

One should not forget about citizens’ actions on the ground, offline. It was not livestreaming in itself that toppled the Mubarak regime in Egypt, but people through their actions. ANA New Media Association and Ana Mubasher both keep training offline and they meet face-to-face. Human interaction is important when it comes to civic engagement, and the interviews gave many examples of this. One
interviewee spoke about an event in November 2011 where he was broadcasting live from Tahrir Square in Cairo:

'I got as much as 100 000 live views, and it was more powerful than it being on al Jazeera or CNN, and there was no international, no media at the square at the time, when there was a sniper on the Mogamma, and he was shooting and about six people were killed, and we were filming all of it, and speaking to audience, and people were writing stuff and we answered them and saying this this. Someone asked us to film this and this and we would run there, and we got a 100 000 views, just because we were interacting with the people, and I think that it was much more powerful [...] Tahrir was filled, because they saw what was happening, and then it became a rumour that people were getting killed, and they came down and then it became an international thing on the 20th of November. So I think we contributed to that.' (ANA New Media Association, 2012).

This shows that although the initial report from the event was made online, it did in part lead to citizens taking action and joining the people already in the square. ANA New Media Association believes that they are doing the same work as any news organisation, but that the difference is that the citizen journalists are working in countries such as Syria, where traditional journalists and media organisations are not willing to endanger themselves, as citizen journalists are (2012).

While new media technologies do provide a space for people to meet and interact online, they do not automatically provide a public sphere. Just because someone has greater access to information, does not mean that they will make political use of it, and access to political information does not mean that individuals will use it in the public sphere. As the online world still largely only exists in the Western part of the world17, it would, as Papacharissi also points out, make more sense to speak about regional or national public spheres, rather than a globalised one. (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 9).

Online media makes it easier for people to interact over geographical borders, and also allows for a certain amount of anonymity (although it must be remembered that, thanks to those who possess IT skills that are merely above-average, no-one is truly anonymous when online). This sense of security through obscurity gives people the courage to enter the public sphere and participate in the political discussion and voice their opinions. (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 10).

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17 The digital divide could be discussed, but as this thesis does not focus on issues of technology per se, this discussion has been left out mainly due to the word restriction.
Papacharissi (2009) claims that what normally separates blogs from articles or broadcasts is that they are subjective in form and tendencies and based on personal evaluation. While the notion of subjectivity is true, it is not much different from the current structure of news for, although media in its purest form would be objective and impartial, today’s media climate and reporting is far from it. With the increasing concentration of media corporations in the West, in combination with advert-driven companies owning close to all media, news content has become market driven and in the process, subjective in the sense that the media reports on issues that are of interest for consumers, rather than fair and balanced reporting18.

With the increasing breadth of the internet, people have more opportunities to meet likeminded individuals across the world, and by using new media such as livestreaming, the citizens themselves can challenge the messages delivered by traditional media. They can also share and exchange information amongst, as well as create it themselves. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 124).

5.1.5 Practices
As with values (section 5.1.2), there are certain practices that traditional journalists follow in their professional lives, including protection of sources and keeping their reporting fair and balanced. In addition, professional journalists are, for the most part, trained through journalism schools or apprenticeships. The lack of professional training of citizen journalists is often a source of criticism.

The internet is changing the way in which news is being produced, and the line that separates journalism from non-journalism is becoming more and more blurry. Sasseen suggests that ‘journalism organisations should work with journalism schools, human rights organisations, and other groups that foster and distribute citizen journalism to ensure the benefits of crowd-sourced video while minimising the risks to those who shoot or appear in such footage.’(2012).

This raises some issues, for if citizen journalists are to be professionally trained, who will train them? And if they are trained, should they not be paid as professional journalists? And would they then still be citizen journalists, or would they have to transfer to traditional media?

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18 For example, 90 percent of international news in the world comes from four Western news agencies. In the representation of foreign reporting in United Press International, news covering Africa is two percent and the same number for the USA is 67 percent. (Webster, 2006, p. 133).
As Mubarak’s government tried to isolate the country from media getting out and in by shutting down mobile phones and internet access, as well as by limiting the access for foreign journalists, Egyptian citizens took it on themselves to report. (Sasseen, 2012). This does not mean however, that these citizens were untrained and just happened to be there. Most of the broadcasters have had training, and are responsible in their reporting.

Ana Mubasher and ANA New Media Association both hold training sessions for the people in their networks, although Ana Mubasher does describe their methodology as more of a trial and error approach where the members learn from their mistakes or by observing other citizen journalists or professional journalists:

“What is interesting with citizen journalism is how everyone just takes on the role they want. You can learn how to livestream in two hours, it is very simple, like I said, you will make mistakes, but also learn from them, and learn from other livestreamers. [...] Because from the stories you hear you learn how to deal with the things that might happen to you when you are in the field.’ (Ana Mubasher, 2012).

Both Ana Mubasher and ANA New Media Association pointed out that there is a need to have training and information regarding how to protect and keep themselves safe. There is always a risk of endangering oneself or someone who is caught on camera, and, because of that, the networks do have a number of security measures that they teach new members. As mentioned above by an interviewee from Ana Mubasher, none of the founders had any training in either citizen or traditional journalism, but actively sought out other activists who had the experience that they themselves were lacking. They described their work as a trial and error approach; learning from each other and taking advice.

‘There’s two things that we need to think about, one is that we do not show faces, not someone else’s or your own. We are known within journalistic and activist communities, and putting a camera in someone’s face is just not acceptable, so when we livestream, we do not show faces. Second, we never use people’s names when we talk, we always use their online alias.’ (Ana Mubasher, 2012).

Both networks provide training in internet security, as well as how to avoid government tracking online, connect to the internet using VPN-clients, and access the internet using satellites and similar. They offer guidance on how to film in order to verify a position, such as filming landmarks rather than moving objects.
An interesting difference from traditional media is that while broadcasting, these networks focus on numbers to show what is going on – demonstrators, security forces etc. They focus on the attackers rather than the victims of abuses, something that both networks claim to be a weakness of traditional media; that for most of the time, they are focusing on the victims of assaults.

5.1.6 Identities
Dahlgren (2009) writes that the media has the power to appeal to and mobilise a number of identities that, in turn, can engage citizens of a society. A single individual can have several identities depending on the context he or she is in: student, employee, mother etc. The citizen journalists interviewed for this thesis all talked about the value of networks and finding like-minded outside their own network, especially when it came to reaching outside their country. They spoke of relationships with activists in other countries that inspired them in their reporting, as they were facing the same struggles. However, it is worth noting that even though the internet does in fact open borders, it does not mean that individuals or groups from different background and cultures will automatically understand each other and join forces: in the case of the interviewees, however, it was true.

To disregard citizen journalism as amateurish, irrelevant and a non-competitor to traditional media is to underestimate the power that citizen journalism can have. The term citizen journalist can give them a sense of familiarity with the audience, rather than just a rather anonymous journalist on a piece of paper or on a screen. To appeal to people’s sense of the collective – commonality can be a powerful tool.

5.1.7 Final Notes on Civic Engagement
The points made above show that citizen journalism can in fact act as a catalyst for an active citizenry. In Egypt, it contributed by bringing people onto the streets in order to stand up to the repressive system, and they became active in the public sphere and the media-making process, rather than a passive, spectatory audience. As Jenkins (2006) states in the introduction to Convergence Culture, one of the benefits of media convergence is that it transforms the citizens from passive receivers, to playing an active part in society (p. 3).

Along these lines, Dahlgren (2009) says that ‘sometimes the media can facilitate not just engagement, but even participation, as when the internet is used by citizens for political purposes’, and this is especially true for citizen produced media. As the citizen journalists were able to film the event and interact with the audience in real time, the interviewee believes this to be much more powerful than if traditional media was to broadcast a news-segment. Livestreaming is more emotive, and appeals directly and in a more visceral fashion.
to the viewer than that of a distant and emotionally detached television news anchor. During the interviews, one interviewee said that he believed the biggest difference livestreaming made was within Egypt, rather than internationally, as it brought news to citizens in a way that traditional media was unable to. However, as pointed out by Castells, the only way to know if ‘collective action were actually subjects of social change in the aftermath of the action’ (p. 300), what is the case of Syria remains to be seen.

5.2 Media Convergence – the Use of Citizen Journalism in Traditional Media

When discussing media and democracy, it is often in connection with the notion of the public sphere. Media must make sure that citizens have access to information (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 34), and it plays an important role in educating the public, providing knowledge and making sure that citizens have access to proper and independent information with the goal of an informed citizenry and a sustainable public life. In the past media, as a concept, was independent, especially within the public service sector and, as mentioned in previous sections, this is changing and news is often profit-driven. (Deane, 2005, p. 179).

There has traditionally been a dichotomy between media producers and their audience. According to Couldry (2010), this could explain why the code of conduct for journalists is designed from a ‘producer perspective’ (p. 59) as there is a responsibility for journalists to inform and share knowledge with the masses but no expectation that this audience maybe have an impact back on the journalists, in terms of demands for just and balanced reporting.

Media is undoubtedly a large part of people’s everyday life, through newspapers, television and the internet, and with the possibility of obtaining news faster, Couldry goes on to argue that there might be a need to change the relationship between media and the audience. (2010, p. 59).

‘Since media unquestionably do help shape actions and worldviews on a global scale, we cannot exclude the global from our reflections: a media ethics must in scale and scope be a global media ethics, or it is nothing at all.’ (Couldry, 2010).

With the emergence of new media and the increasing ability of the public to access information faster and in larger quantities, there is a need for a new journalistic paradigm, one which considers the aspects that new media brings to the profession. Today, citizens are not merely receiving information from the media, but are in fact a part of the production process. Sontag (2004, cited in Couldry, 2010) points out that with the internet, computers, mobile phones and digital cameras, everyone is essentially contributing to the media and should consider the ethical responsibilities that this entails. (p. 67).
In most democracies, there are healthy public spheres where citizens can interact and discuss politics and current affairs. The citizens are allowed to seek and obtain information, as well as make decisions based on this information. Egypt and Syria does, however, have a different starting point as there is not a tradition of free press in these countries; in Syria, the media is still being used for state propaganda, and although the media in Egypt is in the process of transition, there are still laws and regulations which limit their ability to function freely. Although these countries are not currently democracies, they still have a public sphere, an arena where citizens can interact and, in this space, the citizen journalists interviewed for this thesis took it upon themselves to inform their fellow citizens.

In states suffering under political repression where the traditional media is not able to inform citizens, the internet can and does serve as a means for people to communicate, as citizens take it upon themselves to spread information. Research shows that the use of new media for expressing political opinions and obtaining news is particularly popular in the Middle East and North Africa. A recent report from Pew Research Center shows that 63 percent of Egyptians use social networks online to share and express political opinions, and that 74 percent use it to express opinions on community issues. As a comparison, the same statistic for Britain are 30 percent and 36 percent, respectively. (Pew, 2012).

The report also shows that, out of the people who own a smartphone, 79 percent of Egyptians use it to access different social networking sites, and 65 percent use their smartphone to access political news. In Britain, the same numbers are 68 percent 45 percent respectively. (Pew, 2012).

Bambuser acknowledges seeing an increase in the number of users in the Middle East and North Africa after the uprisings in Tunisia in late December 2010. Although they are not actively working with citizen journalist networks directly, they are participating in

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19 For more information on this, Reporters Without Borders’ report Upheaval in the Arab World. Media as Key Witnesses and Political Pawns from November 2011 is recommended.
20 Social Networking Popular Across Globe. Arab Publics Most Likely to Express Political Views Online, Pew Research Center, Global Attitude Project December 2012. Results for the survey are based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Survey results are based on national samples. Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by governorates (excluding Frontier governorates for security reasons – about 2% of the population) proportional to population size and urban/rural population. Face-to-face adults 18 plus.
lectures and panel debates. Bambuser founder Adler pointed out during the interview that it is not Bambuser driving these uprisings.

‘The development in the Middle East is that of their [the citizen journalists’] own. They have used our application to livestream, and it has given the rest of the world an opportunity to see what is going on.’ (Adler, 2012).

Digital technologies such as Twitter and Bambuser are breaking the rules of the public sphere, where traditional media and trained journalists had a monopoly on the provision of the citizens with information. These new technologies challenge the existing structure of a media landscape in which an elite of trained individuals is responsible for informing the citizens, and thus allowing all citizens to become a part of the information provision. However, as Papacharissi (2009) notes, this should not be confused with traditional journalism, or even a public sphere of its own.

However, this point is in regards to the old definition of what constitutes journalism, and citizen journalists should not be any less valued than professional journalists, as it is simply another form of information sharing. In societies that are under-going political transition, such as Egypt, access to information through alternative online media, rather than that which is state-controlled, becomes important for both the citizens of the country and the larger world audience.

5.2.1 Media Convergence In Egypt And Syria

In Syria, state control of the media is, as mentioned in Chapter 2, tighter than in Egypt and international media has in large parts been barred from the country, as journalists are continuously being detained and media organisations raided. Citizen journalists are also banned, but are re-entering at their own risk or continuing to report while endangering themselves (ANA New Media Association, 2012).

The Syrian government was able to learn from the mistake made by Mubarak’s regime in cutting the internet in 2011, and so rather than cutting the access completely, they instead slowed it in order to hinder the transfer of information to other parts of the country or the international community.

‘In the areas that became very hostile, like Homs, and the assaults were intense, they [the government] would cut the Internet, because it was obvious that they did not care about what anyone thought, they just wanted to attack everyone.’ (ANA New Media Association, 2012).
The use of citizen journalism can bring many benefits to the field: The ability to cover events when traditional media for various reasons cannot is one, the understanding of certain contexts another. There are, however, a number of points to be made regarding the issues that may emerge when traditional media integrate citizen journalism in their news production.

Sasseen (2012) points to a number of issues of citizen journalist-produced videos and focuses mainly on the journalistic quality and a lack of broader context and balance. Although these points are fair and should be noted, Sasseen does miss the mark somewhat: In the report, she states that ‘the use of such videos, generally shot by ordinary citizens and local activists with little training or background in journalism, also raises significant issues for both media organisations and media consumers’, with one of these ‘simply be[ing] the quality of the journalism created’. She questions the difficulty inherent in verifying the truthfulness of videos as well as the sources. Furthermore, she attacks the citizen journalists’ lack of knowledge, stating that ‘they are actors in a revolt, not journalists attempting to portray the full dimensions of a conflict as broadly and objectively as possible.’

Although these aspects are important to consider, it is also clear that Sasseen has a quite antiquated and romanticised view of journalism. First of all, per the common definition as presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis, it is the role of the media to verify and investigate information given to them, and in turn use this material to provide citizens with news. The fact that the information flow increases and the quality of the material accessible and provided by citizens is generally higher today than even a decade ago does not mean that the journalistic role and responsibility disappears, however.

Secondly, on the matter of objectivity, fairness and balance – despite this being a part of the code of conduct for journalism, it is barely observed by most media corporations today, as evinced by events such as the News of the World scandal or the reporting on the shootings in Utøya21, Norway in 2011. Professional journalists working in these areas of the media, under the supervision of their editors, were carrying out criminal activities in the name of journalism and the public’s ‘right to the truth’. The media has become sensation- and consumer-driven, and a concentration of media corporations is emerging on the global arena, with ownership of media brands becoming increasingly the domain of a small number. (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 36). From the interviews, it is clear that the citizen journalists participating in this research emphasise and recognise the importance of knowledge, and continuously work to improve their practices.

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21 Most major media reported the shooter to be a terrorist, and many associated him with Islam before it was confirmed that he was ethnically Norwegian and a citizen.
As for having an agenda in reporting – that is also the case with the majority of today’s media organisations; namely profit for, without it, there will be no media. Public service is declining and being replaced with major media corporations, concentrated under the ownership of a few. None of the citizen journalists interviewed for this thesis claimed to be professional journalists – some said they did strive to compete – but not one claimed that they were replacing traditional media.

In an interview with beet.tv in 2012, AP’s vice president and director of International Video News, Macintyre, was asked questions on the then newly-established collaboration with Bambuser. Macintyre’s answers gave the impression that the reasons were first and foremost consumer driven:

‘What has been clear is that more and more people in the digital world and broadcast world want real-time news’ (Macintyre on Beet.tv, 2012).

Macintyre referred to the citizen journalists as ‘video eyewitnesses’ and pointed out the fact that all material gathered would be authenticated and verified according to AP’s standards (Beet.tv, 2012). This statement gave the impression that the AP regards these citizen journalists as little more than sources, rather than reporters.

For Bambuser, this collaboration with AP means that they can offer free Premium accounts to citizen journalists around the world. AP is paying for the use of Bambuser videos, and the revenue is paying for the free accounts for citizen journalists. Adler sees this as a ‘Robin Hood’-approach, where AP is paying for the service to be free for the users.

‘Bambuser’s mission is to democratise the technologies used for livestreaming. [...] Citizen journalism is something that we work actively with, and we really wish to support this type of work’ (Adler, 2012).
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Citizen journalists in Egypt and Syria successfully use livestreaming applications to promote social change in their societies, taking it upon themselves to inform their fellow citizens at a time when the information flow is hindered by state control and censorship. Although new media cannot overthrow regimes or create democracy on its own, the media convergence in the Middle East and North Africa can certainly facilitate democratic transitions in the sense that it encourages civic engagement and, as has been established in this thesis, an active citizenry is a prerequisite in order for social and political change to be achieved. As governments across the Middle East and North Africa appear to have learnt their lessons it is no longer enough to intimidate the press or raid media organisations to prevent information and news from reaching an audience. By interfering with mobile reception and internet speeds, governments can hinder the ability to work, although citizen journalists and activist will continue their work to find a way to get the news out regardless.

As far as new media goes, livestreaming does set itself apart from other forms. For instance, researchers (as Lynch, 2005) praised the emergence of satellite television broadcasters such as al Jazeera and al Arabiya which, during the 1990s and early 2000s, was considered a vital contributing factor for the emergence of a public sphere in the Middle East and North Africa. It was said to help promote an Arab identity, and to offer news from an 'Arab perspective', rather than that of the Western media organisations, which in turn would benefit the growth of a healthy public sphere and, in the long run, facilitate a transition to democracy. This, however, turned out to be a premature assessment, as the ownership model of aforementioned broadcasters has had a possible negative influence on the public sphere, in the sense that they have at times neglected to report on events, as in the case of the 2011 Bahraini protests. Livestreaming, on the other hand, is (for the most part) an act of the citizens themselves, where they take action as a result of the state failing them. Granted, this approach is still in its infancy, and what the long-term influence on the Middle Eastern and North African public sphere is impossible to predict. What can be said, however, is that, in comparison to other approaches, it has been proven a valuable asset, both locally and globally.

During the interviews conducted for this research, it became clear that the driving force behind these citizen journalist networks was change. They aspire to an open society where their fellow citizens can access the information they want – regardless of state-ownership or censorship. As mentioned by one of the interviewees, they believe that their work is much more powerful and has more influence on the Egyptian citizens than that of traditional
media – both in terms of providing news, but also in the sense that they are documenting events from the inside. When the state is tampering with internet access and blocking media, citizen journalists are still there, filming and broadcasting, reaching both a local and international audience. During the protests in Egypt, the citizen journalists were in Tahrir Square before international media. Livestreaming also proved important in regards to mobilising people – when citizens saw what was happening live, they joined the demonstrations.

On a global scale, livestreaming has been acknowledged as an important contributor when it comes to broadcasting news in high-conflict areas such as Syria. Due to the fact that the state has banned most international media from the entering the country, the work of citizen journalists has become crucial for many major media organisations. It has, to some extent, grown to be considered a valid and credible source of information, although it is not yet considered to be equal to that of traditional journalism. In Egypt, it proved to be a valued means by which the public could access news at a time where state-media was failing its audience. Although the applications did indeed turn out to be a useful tool in Egypt and Syria, in essence, it is the engagement and will of the people that made the uprisings possible. New technology cannot change societies on their own, but when the populace use them to mobilise, spread and share information, social change can indeed be accomplished. Online media such as livestreaming can serve as a much-needed boost to the public sphere, and fill the shoes formerly worn by traditional media.

It is impossible to say what the future holds for Egypt and Syria: if Egypt will in fact transition into a democracy either under the rule of president Morsi or by a new political rule, or if al Assad will ever give up power in Syria and, if so, who will take over. What is certain is that oppressed citizens will never stop fighting for their voices to be heard and, in today's world, technologies such as livestreaming, provide them with a tool which they can use to speak and have their view of events broadcast outside of the country. By taking on the role of investigating the state, will they perhaps aid the emergence of democracy and the increased transparency of state business?

There might be an opportunity for citizen journalism to function as a new watchdog, as traditional media is no longer serving its original purpose of providing its citizens with information which helps in the formation of their opinion. In an age where public service is fading and the journalistic paradigm is shifting from an era of objectivity, citizen journalism may yet take its place.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – List of interviewees


[www.ustream.tv/egypt](http://www.ustream.tv/egypt)


**Anonymous 3, member of ANA New Media Association.** Referred to in transcript as ‘C’, Syrian male, working with ANA, Activist News Association on a new project. Broadcasts on [www.utstream.tv/syria](http://www.utstream.tv/syria)

**Anonymous 4, member of ANA New Media Association.** Referred to in transcript as ‘D’, Syrian male, working with ANA, Activist News Association on a new project from Cairo. Broadcasts on [www.utstream.tv/syria](http://www.utstream.tv/syria)

**Anonymous 5, journalist.** Referred to in transcript as ‘E’. Egyptian journalist that has launched a citizen journalist initiative with the intention of getting news to the public, not only from Cairo, but all of Egypt.

**Anonymous 6, journalist.** Referred to in transcript as ‘F’. Austrian journalist that has done extensive work on citizen journalism, and work and travelled extensively in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Måns Adler, founder of Bambuser.** Chaos-Pilot. Founded Bambuser in 2006, and it was released in 2007.

**Paul Lewis, special projects editor at the Guardian**

**Pepe Escobar, journalist and co-owner of Asia Times,** regular contributor to Al Jazeera

Appendix 2 – Transcripts

Transcript (part of) from interview with Rami Jarrah/Alexander Page

*The interview was conducted in English.*

Rebecca Bengtsson: Why did you start out?

Rami Jarrah: In terms of live-streaming, when the uprisings began in Syria, we did have a serious problem with the absence of traditional media, and most of the Western media had been kicked out of the country, so obviously, what became very popular was citizens taking up what we call citizen journalism, where they would themselves film or report on what’s going on, and we tried to sort of create channels with Western journalists, mainly Western journalists, and of course Arab media, and creating those bridges on basically showing the world what is happening.

Live-streaming I think was one of the biggest contributions, because it was high in credibility – it meant that it was happening right now, the video footage, the government was using a lot of propaganda in state media saying that these videos were fabricated, I think when it was being live-streamed, now to say that it was fabricated, you have to also say that Ustream and all these other companies, and tools are also part of this conspiracy. And the Syrian Government wasn't able to do that.

So these live-streams were proof that this is happening right now. And I think they contributed a lot to Syria, and that’s why we have thousands of Syrian channels, that live-stream everyday.

What we did, was that we put together a sort of different channels from around the country, so what became Ustream.tv/Syria. And what that did was any time there was a livestream within Syria that involved a livestream that we had added, you could see it on that super channel. I think that they contributed a lot, because we handed it out to all the different media outlets around the world, they found it very useful because they could just stay on this one page, and anything that was happening, people could see it.

There was another good aspect of livestreaming, and it was that as long as the livestream was working and the battery was on and it was okay, the protester wouldn’t be attacked, because the government knew that the protester, and that the video was being seen live.

RB: Shut Internet down?
RJ: In Syria, that was always a bit complicated situation. In Egypt, we saw what happened when they cut the internet, and I think that Syria learnt from that and the Syrian regime tried to avoid a mass movement, where people were going around saying – okay, what is going on, we don't know, we have to leave to find out.

The Internet in Damascus, Leport (?), in all of Syria in the beginning wasn't cut, like in Egypt. When the areas that became very hostile, like Homs, and the assaults were intense, they would cut the Internet, because it was obvious that they didn't care about what anyone thought, they just wanted to attack everyone.

And I think that the shelling sort of substituted as the reason for them not to go out. Whereas in areas where there isn't shelling, where there wasn't a siege, the Internet wasn't cut. It was sometimes slowed down to an extent where livestreaming was impossible.

RB: In Ustream you can't record offline?

RJ: No. You can record offline and the upload, but then it just becomes like YouTube, and it wasn't very popular, but we had a way, that even if the internet was too slow we would use a VPN, which for some reason, and even though IT specialists told me that it shouldn't speed up the connection, Ustream and Bambuser would actually work, they worked very swiftly. Without the VPN, the 3G connections they wouldn't work, so you did need a VPN connection.

RB: Also using Bambuser?

RJ: The good thing about Bambuser is you can, even if you lose your connection, it works, whereas Ustream needs a certain connection. Ustream was more popular, and then Bambuser became popular. I think now, UStream is coming back.

RB: And they're offering it to you for free?

RJ: UStream, yes.

RB: No strings attached?

RJ: What sort of strings?

RB: That you would have to bring in traffic, did they tell you that if your not broadcasting you'd lose the super channel etc.
RJ: No, actually I was in contact with a lady called Ruby Togas (?), I can connect you to her, and she's in Ustream. She actually helped me put together the Syrian super channel, she was being very helpful, and I don't think that there were any strings attached. She was just helping us because she knew that it would inevitably help them. And this was at a time when Bambuser was more powerful in Syria and being used more widely, and I think that UStream knew that they needed it, and in Syria, livestreaming was and is very popular so they got in contact with Syrian activists, and I was one of them, and we created this super channel. I didn't see any real obvious string attached.

RB: Other than that they are a profitable organisation?

RJ: Yes

RB: How are you funded?

RJ: Where do we get funding?

RB: Yes

RJ: Sweden, from SIda, they are supporting now an initiate of 7 radio stations across the Arab world, one of which is for Syria, and because it's to volatile in Syria it's impossible for security reasons to build a radio station now, because it wouldn't be independent. We've decided to do it here in Cairo, and I can show you where it'll be when we're done here. We're supposed to buy the equipment tomorrow or the next day, because the money just arrived, they've support, it's a 3 year contract, there's a Jordanian intermediator that is CMN Jordan, so we're dealing with the Jordanian NGO, not directly with Sida, it's supposed to be a community based radio, so that's what they've, those were the conditions. We're going to have talk shows, programmes that sort of reflect all aspects of society. We can't just reflect the opposition, we made it clear to them that we have to be realistic, we can't really help the supporters, but can sort of, introduce programmes that they'd be interested listening to, and that wouldn't be an insult or attack on them, or abuse to their thoughts. So we're going to try and we're claiming neutralism, and we're going to try to, there be limits, we're going to try as much we can to really be neutral, and that involves training our journalists.

RB: How would they be trained where would the trainers come from?

RJ: Okay, Sida is not involved in the training, SIda's will technically train three journalists, a radio manager, an IT manager, and sound manager, and give salaries to them for three years. But very, very shit salaries, but they're going to help us get support
from other NGOs to sort of raise those standards. For instance, the journalists make 250 usd, and if you lived in Egypt that would be possible, if you’re an Egyptian, but not if you’re a Syrian that has come out and you’re here, and you have new living expenses. For that reason for example, he (another guy at the office) sleeps here; we have given him a room here where he can sleep. Because he not going to be able to cover his expenses. He’s going to be the IT manager. So Sida is supporting this, and I think that this has given us some sort stability, for the whole project. We have this newsroom, that has nothing to do with that project, and we have gotten funding from Hivos, a Dutch NGO which is very active now in the Arab spring, supporting all sorts of initiatives and organisations, and they’ve agreed to a first phase fund of 10 000 euro, which would really only cover us for three months, and only cover a few employees. It doesn’t cover me, and another co-founder that is coming in from London, doesn’t cover Basil(?), it only covers the journalists that are going to work in this newsroom. And those 8 journalists. So, we’ve just established contact with the Thompson foundation, they want to offer us a four phase fund for ‘they say many years to come’, they believe in the project.

I think that the Thompson foundation may be replacing for everything that we do.

RB: Where are they based?

RJ: London, I think it’s in London, not sure. I was contacted by someone from London.

So, this is where we’ve gotten funding. We haven’t received anything just yet, all of this was done by myself, and Deiaa Dughmoch, who also co-founded it with me, we paid for this ourselves, and I mean the funding process is long so we’ve been sort of, we just moved to this office, and we realise that we can’t do it without funding. We wanted to be independent, but it’s impossible. But we have strict rules about not getting any funding from any political directive groups. We have been offered by lots of politicians and even [Off the record], we refused it. We think that Scandinavia is the only ‘safe’.

RB: Sida is still political.

RJ: Yes, it’s run by the ministry, but Sweden as a country, I don’t worry about Sweden having an agenda, other than not seeing refugees, jumping to Sweden, taking refuge there, I think one think that Sweden think about, and that is part of their foreign policy towards the Arab Spring, and I agree.

I think that if you’re to say what problems they look at in the world and in the Arab Spring, and what problems can come out of the AS, they feel that they have a duty to
support these types of initiatives that create democracy in these countries, to bring
stability to the Arab world. I think that that’s how they think, I’m not sure. I don’t see an
agenda, so it’s fine to work with them. This is actually the contract here

RB: They do it in Arabic?

RJ: It’s in Arabic since it’s via the Jordanian NGO, so this is the equipment we have to
buy, and the salaries.

RB: Are you in any way involved with the Swedish Radio, or are Sida just giving you
money, and they will employ people to train the journalist.

RJ: Yes, and they’ve given us a schedule, this is it. This is a list of all the things that we
need to do, this will be clear There is a system that we have to follow but they are not
involved in contact (?) in anyway. And that’s the sort of the conditions that we have, that
they will not be any direction on what we want to broadcasts for our reports, they’re not
involved in anyway. And so far I’ve seen it’s fine in the contracts, support sounds.

RB: The funding that your getting, is it isolated for just the radio project?

RJ: Sida is just the radio

RB: And the other funders...

RJ: Even the rent, they cover just for the one room, so they’re not involved in the rest.
But I do think that they offer some stablility, because these three journalists in the radio
can be used here in the newsroom at the same time. And this newsroom will be their
source of information from Syria, or Bahrain, or Sudan, where we work. We would love
to work in Egypt, but we think that would lead to the authorities coming through the
doors.
Transcript (part of) from interview with Ana Mubasher ‘A’ and ‘B’

The interview was conducted in English.

Rebecca Bengtsson: Where did it all start?

A: Everything really started during the occupy cabinet incident last year, when we first saw Alexander Page in action, livestreaming from the sit-in, we were just hanging out while he was streaming, and commenting on what he saw. The whole thing work sort of like a mentorship, we followed him around. Then on December 20th he and I were in Tahrir and I just started recording, I actually documented a murder that night, there was shooting. I learnt how to do it. I commented in English, I took the video to court, and they asked me why I commented in English.

We are not the first to livestream in Egypt, but our concept of actually livestreaming for hours, and contiguous events we were the first.

RB: What would someone have to do to join your network?

A: Dedicating time and effort. What is interesting with citizen journalism is how everyone just takes on the role they want. You can learn how to livestream in two hours, it is very simple, like I said, you will make mistakes, but also learn from them, and learn from other livestreamers. It is all about doing simulations, participating in knowledge transferring events, being interactive, and about storytelling. Because from the stories you hear you learn how to deal with the things that might happen to you when you are in the field. I have been though situations, one day they were shooting rubber bullet at us, and you need to wear dark clothes not to be recognised, or have light reflected on you, the faintest light would be reflected if you are wearing something in a light colour. That I learnt from a journalist friend of mine. If you are seen with a camera, they take you out. Of course if someone turns out not to be credible, we would remove their feed, but that has never happened.

RB: In ethical aspects, how is in the streets, how are you dealing with putting yourself, and others at risk by filming and livestreaming?

B: There’s two things that we need to think about, one is that we do not show faces, not someone else’s or your own. We are known within journalistic and activist communities, and putting a camera in someone’s face is just not acceptable, so when we livestream, we do not show faces.
A: Yes. Like during the incident at Abbasiya, I was livestreaming and I had over 25 000 viewers following me. During these protests there were Salafis, revolutionaries, Feloons, pro SCAF, everyone, and all of these groups were sharing my stream on their pages. The started fighting in the commentary section on my UStream, and it got to the point were my application just froze and I could not use it. If I had shown my face then, they would have know that I was there, and since I was commenting, I was saying things that is anti-SCAF, and of course I would not wnt to expose myself, I could have gotten badly hurt, or even worse – gotten killed. So that’s the first thing we need to think about. We never use people’s names when we talk, we always use their online alias’, as much as we can remember to, I mean, of course sometimes we forget. We always carry two phones – one that is untraceable and that we use for the livestreaming, and then one for emergencies. I mean, we take risks. We risk our lives in what we do; I got stabbed once while I was livestreaming. There are undercover cops, people recognise me, as I’m always holding my phone up and recording, so it's not easy. There’s a need to believe in the cause.

RB: What is the most important thing for you when you are livestreaming, in terms of what you want the viewers to see?

A: We focus on numbers. We need to show what is going on. And we always try to catch the attacker, not the victims. I believe that is where traditional media is messing up the most, they always focus on the victims. We try to catch the shooter, or the security forces when they launch teargas, or rubber bullet. Unfortunately the quality of mobile cameras is not the best, and we are trying to find a camera that we could use for livestreaming, but then again, it is all about the money. We are all just ordinary workers too, we have day jobs that we need to keep.

RB: How do you finance Ana Mubasher today?

A: Through our own pockets. And it is very stressful. During the Abbasiya incident I mentioned before, I never slept. I was there during the night, then I went straight to work, I still needed the money.

B: We are looking into funding, but then again, that takes time, and also, who would we accept money from, would there be strings attached.
Transcript from interview with Bambuser founder Måns Adler

*The interview was conducted in Swedish then translated into English by the author.*

Rebecca Bengtsson: How would you describe Bambuser. What is the purpose?

Måns Adler: Bambuser’s mission is and was to democratise the technologies used for livestreaming. In 2006, when we began to build on the idea and in 2007 when we launched it there were very few who were able livestream video. That was the mission that we set for ourselves essentially.

RB: What would you say that the primary use of Bambuser is?

MA: We have been against the idea of attempting to define the application’s specific area of use but if you look at it, it is probably lectures and citizen journalism that are the two subgroups within the community that really have taken off dramatically. One could imagine that sporting or similar could take off, but it has not yet.

RB: Have you seen any increase in the use of livestreaming as citizen journalism since 2010-2011?

MA: Yes, absolutely. We had an event in June 2010, which was very important when a guy named Rami Jarroh, a human rights lawyer in Cairo, was filming a demonstration where the police detained 200 protesters and took their mobile phones and erased much of their material, but Rami had used our application to send, so he could use the film in retrospect in a legal case against the police in which they denied using all forms of violence. It was quite successful, and there followed a time of training before various human rights actions. It was sometime around then that the decision was made to use Bambuser for safety reasons. As Wael Abbas said: The best thing about using Bambuser is that the damage is already done. They can abuse me but the video is already out, it does not matter. In the past they could destroy the video, but since it is now livestreamed, there is proof that it really happened.

RB: Were you ever involved in some form of training?

MA: No, not really - we give speeches in different places, with lectures, panels, etc. But most of the development that has taken place with livestreaming in the Middle East is completely that of their (the citizen journalists) own. Jonas and I went to Egypt, to provide training, but there were so many things going on leading up to the election, so nothing ever came of it.
RB: Are there any manuals on how to use the service? Have you extended your citizen journalism service?

MA: Yes, it is something that we are actively working on. It is to really support that kind of work.

RB: I am thinking that there may well be a risk with this too, to encourage individuals to use a service they may not have full control or knowledge of, individuals who are under scrutiny of regimes and so on. If they do not know how to hide themselves, it then creates a certain risk for them. Do your feel any kind of responsibility, or are you simply just providing the service?

MA: The only thing we provide is a service that makes it possible for the world to see when it happens and it is usually 10 times more valuable than trying to protect themselves from what is happening. If we look at traditional video, when I see it, it's already too late. The magic of livestreaming is that this is happening right now, and I can actually go out and react to what is happening. If it is happening physically nearby, I can run out and participate. I think that is very central and changes much of this problematic. Then there is the other side of it too; in Syria, many livestreamers are protecting themselves using sunglasses or keeping their Palestinian scarf around their face to conceal their own identity, but I think also that when looked at it in other contexts, where they are completely public with themselves, and are completely open about where and when they are, they are far more difficult for states to make a move against, because it is causes a huge outcry if the citizen journalists are to disappear. If you have a large group of followers and one is public with his case it makes it difficult for the state to act, it is the same with Pussy Riots; the outcry is because people know who they are, and so they are incredibly difficult to remove. Had it just been a more or less unknown person, they would have been a lot easier to get rid of.

RB: If we look at geo-tagging, is that something that can be turned off as well?

MA: You can certainly choose to remove. But what we have seen is that it might not always help. If you are streaming from a rooftop in Syria, for example, you might film a mosque or another building that enables triangulation, so removing the geo-tagging would do no good.

RB: This was one thing that many of the interviewees spoke a lot about; they thought it could be problematic, but that they often chose to hide behind different clients etc.
MA: Yes there are a lot of ways to conceal your identity online, but the problem is that
the internet providers have access to much information, since they have various VPN
clients that allow one to tunnel through various platforms, there are a lot of different
services to use. In Syria the internet providers immediately shut down their mobile
networks, so the citizen journalists started streaming the data via satellite. There are
different levels to livestreaming, and many of the users know how to make more of it
than I ever thought of.

RB: What is Bambuser’s view on citizen journalism’s place in the media, what do you
think livestreaming has done in the media landscape today?

MA: It has made a lot of difference, among other things CNN and AP have used videos
from our community. How the media will look in the future will be interesting to see.

RB: What form does your cooperation with AP take?

MA: We have a commercial cooperation where currently they are the only ones that the
user can choose to share their news with. Particularly videos from Syria have been
picked up by the AP.

RB: Do they pay Bambuser for this collaboration?

MA: Of course they pay. And this enables us to support and provide organisations with
free premium accounts.

RB: There is no form of compensation for the livestreamers?

MA: No, as long as we do not even make money off it, it is difficult, we need to start to
break even before we can think about it. I see this as a Robin Hood model. It is free for
the user, and the AP pay for it. There is no real business model, it is a pretty good trade-
model for the streamers. Citizen journalists are actually getting their message out to as
many people as possible, and if the organisation that can spread the message is ready to
pay for it, it is a good deal.

RB: So the cooperation is funding the free accounts?

MA: Yes, it is.

RB: How do you define a citizen journalist? Are there any rules, or you are one if you say
you are?
MA: Right now, our rule is simply that those who consider themselves a citizen journalist get an account, it is not up to us to define who is and is not, it is difficult to claim that I am more citizen journalist than you are, it is mostly about what topic you choose to communicate about and how familiar you are, that is where the big problem is that the traditional journalists think that they are better than the rest of the world, and it is a major failure on their part, and the reason that they are largely collapsed today.

RB: What do you think the most important thing about citizen journalism is, it is to cover things that traditional media does not, or is there another purpose?

MA: The main benefit of citizen journalism is that there will never be a traditional journalist who is first on the scene.

RB: The Free Premium package, what does that mean for users?

MA: All it really means is that they do not have advertising on their on-demand videos. In the livestream there is never any advertising, but with premium on-demand videos are also ad-free.

RB: Does Bambuser require something as compensation from the users?

MA: No, nothing.

RB: Ustream require a certain number of live broadcasts, and they even wanted to get them to change the slogan on their live broadcasts.

MA: Ustream, they pay to broadcast, they have a different strategy, and they are very well-funded, they've got $ 105 million in venture capital. It is the users that make our service successful, we are damn grateful of and open with that fact. That is how it is.

RB: As regards the ethics surrounding it, traditional journalists are very quick to point out that citizen journalists are not journalists but activists. But they are on location when nobody else is there, and they do not get paid.

MA: In the future we may be able to get the deals where we can get paid. The problem with AP is that they have a flat rate fee to its customers. You pay a flat fee every month and you get access to all AP's material, then it does not matter if a video is shown zero or 1 billion times - then it becomes difficult for us to make an estimate towards our users. If you can get a deal where AP pays X thousand a month to get access to all the live material, but when they then use the on-demand they would pay per view. Then we can check which users have had their videos showed a certain number of times, and so they
should be paid this much money. You have to reach a level, there is a risk that when you
do not make money at all, you have built a good community like Bambuser has done,
and then you have to close the store because there is no cash. There must be a
sustainable business model, but without an insane income.

RB: The people I interviewed were afraid that if they mixed money in it the desire to
actually achieve change would disappear, and perhaps many who just want cash would
get into livestreaming.

MA: I think that may happen, and it is sad. I think one option would be that they worked
for themselves, which is to say that the check we deliver should not feed them, but they
would get sponsors etc.

MA: The widening of citizen journalism actions will be huge; they are all there when it is
happening, whatever it is. There is the great possibility, through thoughtful analysis of
what has happened, what the traditional journalists stand for, right now we are in a kind
of monitoring period where we call them citizen journalists because the traditional
journalists cannot really let go of the fact that is has to be something unique to be first
on site, they have a trust issue that is completely and totally outrageous. Just because
they did not hold the camera themselves, it did not happen. It is truly scary at times, this
way of thinking.
Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

Citizen Journalist Networks

The following questions were more or less used in the interviews; they may have been changed or taken out if not relevant for the interview.

1. Why did you start as a citizen journalist?
2. Why is it important for you?
3. Would you call yourself an activist?
4. What applications are you using?
5. How are you funded?
6. What is your background?
7. What role do you think citizen journalism play in regards to the media?
8. Do you have any type of security training?
9. How do you look at your responsibility towards the audience – ethical etc?
10. Who can join the network?

Traditional journalists

The following questions were more or less used in the interviews; they may have been changed or taken out if not relevant for the interview. These interviews were more of discussions and open than interviews with citizen journalists, and there for a fewer number of questions where prepared beforehand.

1. What are your thoughts on citizen journalism?
2. What role can they play in the media production process?
3. Do you think there can be any ethical implications?
Appendix 4 – IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.

2. In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right of fair comment and criticism.

3. The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.

4. The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.

5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.

6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.

7. The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.

8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following:

   • plagiarism;
   • malicious misrepresentation;
   • calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations;
   • acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

9. Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognise in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by governments or others.’

(Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the IFJ. Amended by the 1986 World Congress.)
Appendix 5 – Statistics On Mobile Phone and Internet Usage in Egypt and Syria

Source: Arab Human Development Index, 2013

Source: Arab Human Development Index, 2013
Almost
6 billion mobile-cellular subscriptions

With 5.9 billion mobile-cellular subscriptions, global penetration reaches 87% and 79% in the developing world.

Mobile-broadband subscriptions have grown 45% annually over the last four years and today there are twice as many mobile-broadband as fixed-broadband subscriptions.

Source: International Telecommunication Union, 2012
Countries that offer 2G/3G services commercially, mid-2011*

Source: International Telecommunication Union, 2012