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Deliverable D4.2: Report on citizen involvement and ethics

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Task 4.2, entitled “Citizens’ Involvement and Ethics”, COSMIC seeks to examine the opportunities, risks (threats), and ethical issues that are brought about by utilization of new media technologies during crises. Additionally, through this task, COSMIC aims to detail the potential consequences, for individuals and the society, of the threats and ethical issues that arise from utilization of new media technologies during crisis.

With respect to the opportunities that new media technologies present in crisis management, this report (chapter 2) argues that such technologies can potentially enhance mobilization of and coordination among various stakeholders during a crisis. The report also argues that realization of this potential hinge on the extent to which new media technologies are consistently and widely adopted during emergencies. Namely, the report recommends,

- Development of industry efforts oriented towards increasing the interoperability of new media solutions for emergency response.
- Increasing the extent to which technological solutions to crisis management trickle down to local response units and the public by prioritizing the development of technology solutions that are compatible with existing consumer-grade devices, such as smart phones or tablets.
- Enhancing stakeholders’ understanding of the mechanisms through which use of new media technologies can enhance community resilience.

Regarding the threats that the use of new media technologies during crises may bring to various stakeholders, this report (chapter 3), focuses on three types of threats. First the report discusses threats to security of citizens that may result from their being recorded in ways that lead to invasion of their privacy and exposure of their identity. Second, the report outlines how citizen journalists may put themselves in harm’s way while trying to capture a noteworthy moment during a crisis. Third, the report argues that sharing sensitive information about tactical choices made by response units may threaten not only effectiveness of emergency response efforts but also the safety of the responders. In this light, COSMIC’s recommendations emphasize two related goals:

- More education and training of stakeholders, including citizens, in order to increase awareness of threats created by sharing information in online networks, and awareness of methods that can be used to protect the privacy and physical safety of individuals, as victims, witnesses, and journalists, involved in a crisis.
- Making sure that stakeholders, and particularly mass and online media outlets, develop universally accepted guidelines that prevent the publication or transmission of content that puts individuals and the public at risk.

The chapter on ethical concerns that arise from utilization of new media technologies for information dissemination during crises (chapter 4) focuses on several related issues. First, using two brief case studies from Istanbul (one from 1955 and one from 2013), we illustrate how the use of mass media and/or social media to exploit public’s sentiments at times of crisis may lead to increased animosity within a society. Second, using a case from Virginia Tech Shootings, we discuss how a rush for providing coverage of an emergency may create ethical problems when journalists (or citizen journalists) exploit their position to quickly reach conclusions about the events. Third, we discuss censorship and surveillance as mechanisms

that may impede the ability of citizens to share and have access to information. Fourth, we further extend the discussions provided in the previous sections of chapter 4 to provide an in-depth focus on two ethical issues concerning citizen journalism: 1) reliability of information and 2) confidentiality of news sources.

The discussion of these ethical issues concerning the use of new media technologies for information dissemination at times of crisis underlines several important measures that need to be taken:

- Promotion of the widespread use of tools that can help individuals counter surveillance and bypass censorship. This can be achieved by standardizing and simplifying such tools for the general public.
- Adoption of detailed verification practices both before disseminating information and while consuming it.
- Dissemination of information verification guidelines to the wider public.
- Enhancing collaboration between citizen journalists and traditional journalism institutions to improve information verification processes for citizen journalists.
- Developing policies that will help recognize citizen journalism as a form of journalism that is entitled to privileges, such as confidentiality of sources, that professional journalists are entitled to.

Concerning the potential consequences of the threats and ethical issues discussed in the report, chapter 5 of the report focuses on three main topics. First, we discuss how misinformation and rumours increase the level of panic in public during times of crisis. This may, in turn, increase political and economic volatility as well as threatening the safety of citizens. Second, we focus on implications of lateral surveillance and vigilante activities and argue that such activities will disproportionately harm certain segments of the population, like racial minorities. Third, we detail the potential implications of utilization of social media, which enhance individuals' ability to engage in selective exposure. Namely, we describe how use of social media may contribute to the increased polarization of factions within a society.

In the light of these discussions regarding the implications of the ethical issues and threats related to use of new media technologies during crises, we recommend the following:

- Information provided by formal sources regarding the progress that is being made about an incident and suggestions about how the public may protect themselves from a potential risk may help mitigate the adverse impact of rumours.
- Particularly at times of political conflicts, increasing the availability of media outlets that can play a mediating role between different factions is a necessary condition for reducing polarization in a given society.

Chapter 1: Introduction

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1 INTRODUCTION

Investigating the various dimensions of communicative opportunities that new media technologies bring to crisis management is crucial for reaching a comprehensive understanding of how these technologies can help improve crisis management and emergency communications. The growing use of new media technologies has brought with it, substantial changes in the processes of production, dissemination and consumption of content. For example, “professional” journalism is no longer the only way in which news and information are produced and disseminated; with citizens engaging in the production and sharing of media content, the characteristics and boundaries of journalism have changed. This process creates opportunities for the production and diffusion of news and information, but is also accompanied by a series of threats to different stakeholders. Additionally, it raises concerns on the ethics of producing content, and the safety of those involved in its production. It is crucial to consider these three issues, opportunities, threats, and ethics, in order to reach a greater understanding of the implications of citizens’ involvement in the process of communication during a crisis.

Accordingly, this report analyses the opportunities and threats posed by the growing use of new media technologies in a crisis, as well as examining the ethical issues paired with this use. This work is based on a study of existing literature on the use of communication technologies in crisis situations, as well as utilising the case studies presented in Deliverable 2.2 (D2.2)¹ and examples of crisis situations not previously discussed in detail. By doing so, COSMIC is able to build evidence-based recommendations as to how ethical issues and threats to safety of individual can be addressed using policy or other mechanisms.

It is important to note that we refer to the use of new media technologies by both citizens and governments, whilst we discuss the impacts thereof mainly in relation to citizens as the recipients of information, as the producers or disseminators of information, or as the objects of information (e.g., when victims of a disaster are covered by news reporters). In doing so, this report contributes to the consortium’s efforts to describe and examine citizens’ involvement in crisis management, especially in emergency communication.

The information presented in this report builds on Deliverable 4.1 (D4.1), in which the various roles that citizens can play in communication processes during emergencies were discussed.² The communication technologies used by the citizens in their different roles are the focus of this report. Many of these technologies were discussed in a previous work package, Work Package 3, which focused on emerging technologies and social media trends with significance for crisis management. In turn, this report will feed into Deliverable 6.1 (D6.1), which consists of guidelines for the use of new media technologies by the public.

1.1 KEY TERMS

Although the terms new media, emergency communication, and crisis management have been

¹ Papadimitriou, Alex, Angelos Yannopoulos, Ioannis Kotsiopoulos, Rachel Finn, Haley Watson, Kush Wadhwa, and Lemi Baruh, Case Studies of Communication Media and Their Use in Crisis Situations, *D2.2 of the COSMIC project*, 30 September 2013.

² Baruh, Lemi, Papadimitriou Alex, Zeynep Günel, Haluk Mert Bal, Yusuf Salman, Salvatore Scifo, and Büşra Çildaş, Report on citizens’ involvement in emergency communication, *D4.1 of the COSMIC project*, 31 January 2014.

explained in previous deliverables, the term ‘ethics’ is first used in detail in this report. In a general sense ethics refers to moral principles that govern a person’s behaviour or the conducting of an activity.³ Within this report, we specifically focus on ‘information ethics’ (or infoethics), which deals with the “relationship between the creation, organization, dissemination, and use of information, and the ethical standards and moral codes governing human conduct in society”.⁴ This branch of ethics focuses on a number of issues including censorship, privacy and information integrity.⁵ Chapter 4 of this report will provide a more detailed discussion of ethics and information ethics.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the threats, opportunities and ethical issues that new media technologies bring for citizens involved in emergencies or crises. To do so, this remainder of this report is split up in five chapters. In addition to discussing opportunities, threats, and ethical concerns regarding the use of new media technologies during emergencies, each of these chapters will also provide recommendations regarding how these threats and ethical issues can be addressed using policy and other mechanisms.

Chapter 2 of this report, “Opportunities”, will identify and discuss the main opportunities the use of new media technologies brings. These opportunities relate to four topics that will be discussed in the chapter’s four sections: swiftness of mobilization, network building and organizational structure, dissemination of information, and public wellbeing. We will illustrate how media technologies can be beneficial for various groups of citizens involved in crisis management.

In chapter 3 of this report, “Threats”, we will discuss how the use of new media technologies in a crisis situation is also accompanied by threats. We will do so by first focusing on the threats to the security of members of the public; the use of new media technologies in a crisis can lead to some people being recorded, which can present a threat to their privacy, which in turn can lead to them being placed in danger. Second, threats to citizen journalists will be discussed: through the action of recording and producing news stories citizens can put themselves in danger. Third, there is the threat to responders; the sharing of certain information via new media technologies can hinder response operations and place individuals in danger.

Chapter 4, “Ethical issues”, will examine how the increased use of new media technologies has blurred traditional boundaries between the production and consumption of information, and how this in turn has led to the challenging of ethical codes related to news making and information dissemination. We will first examine the abuse of power by those involved in the distribution of information. The forms of abuse of power we will focus on include abuses of power related to the exploitation and manipulation of public sentiments and limitations placed, through censorship and surveillance, on the free flow of information. Next, the use of misinformation and the misrepresentation of information impacting citizens will be discussed.

³ Oxford English Dictionary. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ethics>

⁴ Reitz, Joan M., “Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science”, http://www.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_i.aspx

⁵ Hauptman, Robert, “Ethics and Information: An Encyclopedic Overview,” *Business Information Review*, Vol. 25, No. 4, December 1, 2008, pp. 238–252. <http://bir.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0266382108098058> [p. 239].

Furthermore, this chapter will examine the ethics of news production by detailing on the reliability of information and the confidentiality of sources.

Chapter 5, “Consequences”, will focus on the implications arising from the threats and the ethical issues as discussed in the preceding chapters. We will explain how less reliable sources of information have the potential to increase the circulation of false information. Additionally, we will discuss how the ‘careless’ sharing of information may lead to false accusations and blame and consequently lead to increased animosity within a community, whilst the last section of this chapter will emphasise the importance of plurality in the public sphere for the dissemination of information.

This report will conclude in chapter 6, which will present a summary of key findings and recommendations from the previous chapters.

Chapter 2: Opportunities

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2 OPPORTUNITIES

The use of information communication technologies (ICTs) and new media technologies provides several opportunities throughout all stages of crisis management. To gain an understanding of what such opportunities are and how they can be maximised, this chapter discusses four aspects of crisis management that can benefit from the increased use of new media technologies and ICTs: swiftness of mobilization, network building and organisation structure, dissemination of information, and last, public wellbeing.

2.1 SWIFTNESS OF MOBILIZATION

With the help of new media technologies, citizens are able to communicate with increasing speed and range. Manuel Castells describes the contemporary social movements as “viral” because of the way information is diffused within networks and also because, regardless of distance, each movement tends to affect and trigger others.⁶ In other words, by providing the infrastructure that allows real time dissemination of information across vast distances, new media technologies help overcome one of the most essential obstacles impeding mobilization: the lack of infrastructure for networking.⁷ What this implies for social activism in crisis situations, and for emergency response and mobilization is discussed below.

2.1.1 Social Activism

As discussed in D4.1, the mobilization processes of social activism are no longer led by traditional organizations like unions and political parties but by social networks. Rather than recruitment of formal members, the mobilization process is based on maximum connectivity through networks enhanced by new media technologies.⁸ For example, during Occupy Gezi (2013), we witnessed the use of Zello, a new walkie-talkie app, by Turkish protesters as an alternative to other forms of telecommunications while they were in action.⁹ Zello allowed users to create private channels protected by passwords and helped create a more secure communication for activists. Also Zello’s ability to transmit human voice real-time makes the service easier compared to texting. Likewise, in protests in Venezuela (2014) and Ukraine (the Euromaidan protests, started in November 2013) activists widely used Zello, making the app become one of the most downloaded apps in Venezuela and Ukraine. Zello’s CEO Bill Moore said “it became the No. 1 app in Ukraine on Thursday (20 February 2014) for both the iOS and Android operating systems. In one day this week, Zello reported more than 150,000 downloads in Venezuela”.¹⁰

As such, main mobilization channels of social movements increasingly comprise “personal contacts and online social networks rather than co-members and broadcast media”.¹¹ A survey

⁶ Castells, Manuel, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012.

⁷ Della Porta, Donatella, and Lorenzo Mosca, “Global-Net for Global Movements? A Network of Networks for a Movement of Movements”, *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 25, No. 1, May 2005, pp. 165–190.

⁸ Anduiza, Eva, Camilo Cristancho and José M. Sabucedob “Mobilization Through Online Social Networks: The Political Protest of the Indignados in Spain”, *Information, Communication and Society*, June 2013.

⁹ Tucker, Patrick, “This app is Fueling the Uprising in Venezuelah”, *Quartz*, 24 February 2014, <http://qz.com/180474/this-app-is-fueling-the-uprising-in-venezuela/>

¹⁰ “Venezuelan Government Cuts Internet Access, Blocks Websites In War Against Student Protesters”, Fox News, 21 February 2014, <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/news/2014/02/21/venezuelan-government-cuts-internet-access-blocks-websites-in-war-against/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

conducted on 1,037 protesters from the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine revealed that social networks are highly influential in making people join the protests. For example, 92% of the survey participants reported that they did not belong to any political party, civil organization or movement; and only 8% said that their attendance was organized or initiated by such a political group.¹² It is important to note that the survey was carried out on 7 and 8 December, the first days of the protests. Later in the protests, a number of political groups became increasingly influential as the clashes between the police and the protesters intensified. Likewise, in the 15M protests in Spain there was reportedly an “intensive use of digital media” and there was “no clear leadership and no involvement of main political organizations”.¹³

It should be noted that dissemination of content via social media may also act as a catalyser for social movements. For example, in 2011, during the Arab Spring, blogger Asmaa Mahfouz called for action in her Video Blog (Vlog), which was shared by thousands of people and became known, by many, as the “Vlog that Helped Spark the Revolution”.¹⁴ Manuel Castells argues that sousveillance footage exposing the brutality of police officers may be particularly important in triggering immediate mobilization: “The viral nature of these videos and the volume and speed with which news on the events in Egypt became available to the wider public in the country and in the world was key to the process of mobilization against Mubarak”.¹⁵ Similarly, during the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, videos and images showing police beating protesters on November 30, 2013, were circulated in social media and raised anger, which resulted in more people going out into the streets. This is confirmed in the survey referred to in the previous paragraph: 70% of the participants said that the police brutality on 30 November was the main reason for joining the protests.¹⁶

2.1.2 Emergency Response

Evidence on the crucial role that new media technologies may play in swiftness of mobilization is not limited to social activism. New communication technologies may be of key importance in the coordination of disaster relief efforts during or after emergencies, especially as first response is usually carried out by volunteers until more experienced or trained rescue crews arrive to the disaster zone. The Manawatu Floods in 2004, one of the largest emergencies in recent times in New Zealand, illustrate the role volunteers may play in first response: it was primarily the community and the farmers who utilised their pre-existing networks and their own equipment to manage rescue and recovery efforts.¹⁷ While the relief efforts by the community was coordinated offline, for the first time, Red Cross in New Zealand, in partnership with Federated Farmers, utilized the Internet to collect donations, providing “a blueprint for the Red Cross relief fund for the Christchurch earthquakes—an appeal that raised \$125m, most of it online”.¹⁸

¹² Iko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology
<http://dif.org.ua/en/events/gvkrlgkaeths.htm>

¹³ Anduiza, Eva, 2013.

¹⁴ Castells, Manuel, 2012, p.55.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.59.

¹⁶ Iko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology
<http://dif.org.ua/en/events/gvkrlgkaeths.htm>

¹⁷ Smith, Willie, Christian Davies-Colley, Alec Mackay and Greg Bankoff, “Social Impact of the 2004 Manawatu Floods and the ‘Hollowing Out’ of Rural New Zealand”, *Disasters*. Vol. 35, 2011, p. 540-553

¹⁸ Rankin, Janine, “Help came online for the first time”, *Stuff*, 17 February 2014
<http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/9729916/Help-came-online-for-the-first-time>

The role that new media technologies may play in mobilization of emergency response is further illustrated by the earthquake in the city of Van in eastern Turkey. First, reports indicate that two people were rescued from under the ruins of a building as their Twitter post reached the search and rescue organization AKUT.¹⁹ Second, Google's Person Finder, an application that allows citizens to locate each other after an emergency, was utilized during the relief efforts, which was also supported by a blog founded solely with the purpose of finding people, and arranging rescue and recovery plans. Third, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, GSM operators and shipping firms were pressured by the online community to introduce plans that would help organizing rescue and relief action.²⁰

Additionally, mobile devices allow citizens themselves to be involved in rescue or relief action; for example, after Hurricane Katrina, the integration of SMS to crisis management tools and usage of Google Earth helped coordinate action in affected areas.²¹ Hence, with the help of new technologies and coordinating intermediaries, citizens are able to get involved in first response and recovery action more.

Likewise, for response organizations, communication technologies are of increasing importance in getting support for and coordinating emergency response and relief efforts. NGOs increasingly rely on ICTs to communicate within and outside their networks, and utilize resources like GPS, geographical information systems (GIS), satellite connections, and social media to coordinate action, seek support, and involve citizens.²² For example, after the earthquake in Haiti, American Logistic Aid Network (ALAN) helped the evacuation of some victims with the help of a corporate sponsor that provided an airplane. According to their annual report, ALAN facilitated the donation of \$200,000 in goods and services from supply chain communities to non-profit organizations that are involved in relief action around the globe.²³ ALAN, as well as other aid organizations such as Project HOPE, worked closely with foundations like Aidmatrix Foundation that uses the Internet to globally connect donors, recipients and proper transportation methods.²⁴

2.2 NETWORK BUILDING AND ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

In addition to enhancing the ability of volunteer networks and social activists to mobilize more efficiently during crises and emergencies, new media technologies also provide new opportunities for building or strengthening networks and their organizational structures. This section of the chapter will utilize examples from social activist networks and emergency response organizations to illustrate the ways in which new media technologies can help enhance the organizational capabilities and viability of networks.

¹⁹ "Yılın Twitter Hikayelerinden Biri Van Depremi," 2 December 2011, *Milliyet*,

<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yilin-twitter-hikayeleri-nden-biri-van-depremi--internet-1470268/>

²⁰ Özgüven, Kübra, "Turkey: Online Relief Efforts for Van's Earthquake Victims", 24 October 2011, *Global Voices*, <https://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/10/24/turkey-online-relief-efforts-for-vans-earthquake-victims/>

²¹ "Flood Famine and Mobile Phones", 26 July 2007, *The Economist: Technology Quarterly*.

²² Barrigan, Cynthia, and Ben Hemingway, "NGO Use of Information and Communications Technology", November 2011, *Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine*, <http://www.cdham.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Chapter-16.-NGO-Use-of-Information-and-Communications-Technology.pdf>

²³ ALAN Annual Report, 2010

²⁴ Still, Tom, "Technology has made it easier to donate after a disaster - and more efficient", 25 January 2010, *WTN News*, <http://wtnews.com/articles/7015/>

2.2.1 Social Activist Networks

As discussed in D4.1, social activists utilize various new media technologies to build networks. By using various information and communication technologies (e.g., Internet, mobile phones etc.) social activists are able to get in contact at a transnational level and build decentralized and autonomous structures. These technologies provide the means for activists to interact without the boundaries imposed by time and space, giving social activist movements opportunities to expand and transform.²⁵

Social activist networks are flexible, forming and dissolving in short periods of time. In contrast to established organizations having static, leader-oriented hierarchical structures, networks are more task-oriented, dynamic, and horizontally structured. Hence, unlike in more conventional forms of political organizing, individuals and collectives in a network are able to come together and connect in real-time without losing their autonomy. Additionally, the individual activist is no longer bound to a single network, but can participate in different networks concurrently as networks do not require traditional membership.²⁶ In this context, new media technologies facilitate a more flexible, rapid, and participatory mode of network formation. The opportunities presented by the flexibility, mobility, inclusiveness, decentralized horizontal structures and autonomy of contemporary networks are not limited to the increased efficiency in organizing during a crisis; network formations with horizontal structures based on open-participation and direct democracy enable the representation of a more diverse set of values than would have been possible in contemporary “representative” democracies.²⁷

Therefore, in today’s protests held in different parts of the worlds, we are able to observe similar forms of organization for taking collective action. From the initial onset of protests, the first reaction of activists is to communicate and link with each other. Social media enables activists to converse and converge to form diverse and fluid formations. Just as this was the case in various protests discussed in D4.1, such as Occupy Gezi, 15M, and the Arab Spring, it was also the case in the recent protests in Ukraine, which started on 21 November 2013. The Facebook page EuroMaydan, launched on the second day of the protests, reached 76,000 followers in just the first 8 days,²⁸ and three months after its launch it had over 250,000 followers.²⁹ Along with several other Facebook pages like Emaidanua and Euromaidanpr, EuroMaydan was utilized to provide information on the ongoing protests, share news, discuss issues and coordinate protests.³⁰ Each of these Facebook pages is a network created by individual initiatives where people from different backgrounds and ideologies participate for a common cause. The attributes of networks mentioned above like flexibility, autonomy and decentralized structures, make the networks highly inclusive and conducive for organizing protests where latent personal ties can get activated and evolve into a collective action. Arguably, this is one of the reasons why we are able to witness such an exponential growth of some networks like EuroMaydan in relatively short periods of time.

²⁵ Baruh, Lemi et al., 2014.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Juris, Jeffrey S., “The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti-Corporate Globalization Movements”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 597, 2007, pp. 189-208.

²⁸ Bohdanova, Tetyana, “How Internet Tools Turned Ukraine’s #Euromaidan Protests Into a Movement”, *Global Voices*, 9 December 2013, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/12/09/how-internet-tools-turned-euromaidan-protests-into-a-movement/>

²⁹ Facebook Page for EuroMaydan, <https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan>

³⁰ “News and Analysis About Ukraine in English”, *Euromaidan PR*, 5 February 2014, <http://euromaidanpr.wordpress.com/category/infographics-2/>

Communication through new media technologies cannot replace face-to-face communication completely but does create a potential for activists to come together, and improve and sustain networks.³¹ According to Tetyana Bohdanova, this was the case for the recent Ukrainian protests: “One of the major differences between Euromaidan and the 2004 protests has been the use of new media technologies, social networks and other ICT tools for organizing and sustaining the protests”.³² In addition to sustaining networks, new media technologies can also expand social activist networks. For example, the Euromaidan SOS is a group of volunteers who are dedicated to finding people who disappeared, as there were numerous reports of people getting abducted. Additionally they aim to help Euromaidan protesters who are in legal trouble. According to one volunteer of the Euromaidan SOS group, they have more than 200 volunteers working together and 20 new volunteers joining them each day.³³ To some extent, this expansion was aided by their active online presence via Facebook and their official website, euromaidansos.org, which both encourage volunteers to come and actively participate in the physical/corporal domains in addition to online networks.

2.2.2 Emergency Response Organizations

Emergency response organizations include governmental organizations and NGOs involved in crisis management before, during or after crises. Such organizations use their networks and communication infrastructure to aid first response actions and recovery interventions. They can also be involved in drills, simulations and training before emergencies to educate citizens and increase awareness of crisis response approaches, especially when a community or a geographical area is more prone to a specific kind of danger, like hurricanes for coastal areas in the United States and earthquakes in countries like Greece, Italy, or Turkey. Given these different functions of response organizations, the remainder of this section will focus on the ways in which new media technologies contribute to networking and organizational capabilities of response organizations during emergency response and for emergency preparedness.

2.2.2.1 Emergency Response Efforts and Coordination

According to a report by Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM), in the wake of a disaster, emergency response organizations and NGOs will need different types of information such as information regarding the environmental conditions, availability and price of key commodities, extent of damages, and presence of threats such as violence.³⁴ Given these needs, during crises, response organizations may need to utilize a number of tools, such as wikis, shared workspaces, blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds, and social networking sites to not only collect information but also coordinate their actions with other NGOs and citizens.³⁵

However, as the CDHAM report indicates, since it will be difficult for each organization to independently obtain and make sense of all the required information, networking and sharing

³¹ Baruh, Lemi et al., 2014.

³² Bohdanova, Tetyana, 2013

³³ “Ukraine Burning”, Vice, 20 February 2014, <http://www.vice.com/vice-news/ukraine-burning>.

³⁴ Barrigan, Cynthia, and Hemingway, Ben, “NGO Use of Information and Communications Technology”, November 2011, *Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine*, <http://www.cdham.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Chapter-16.-NGO-Use-of-Information-and-Communications-Technology.pdf>

³⁵ “Using Social Media to Enhance NGO Impact”, *NGO Connect*, October 2011

<http://www.ngoconnect.net/documents/592341/749044/NGOTips+-+Using+Social+Media+to+Enhance+NGO+Impact>

information between emergency response organizations is essential for efficient coordination of emergency response activities.³⁶ Accordingly, organizations involved in emergency response will need to exchange information not only within the organization but with various stakeholders such as communities, other response organizations, government authorities (like the police) and donor agencies. The CDHAM report also underlines that most of this communication, between and within organizations, will often need to be carried out sporadically, requiring organizations to have a decentralized organizational framework that allows local decision-making.³⁷

In this respect, wider utilization of online services that can help decision-making and coordination at a local level by linking staff on the field with a wide network of emergency response organizations is crucial. For example, digital services like ReliefWeb (Figure 1), provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, offer up to date data and analyses to response organizations so that they “can make information decisions and plan effective assistance”.³⁸

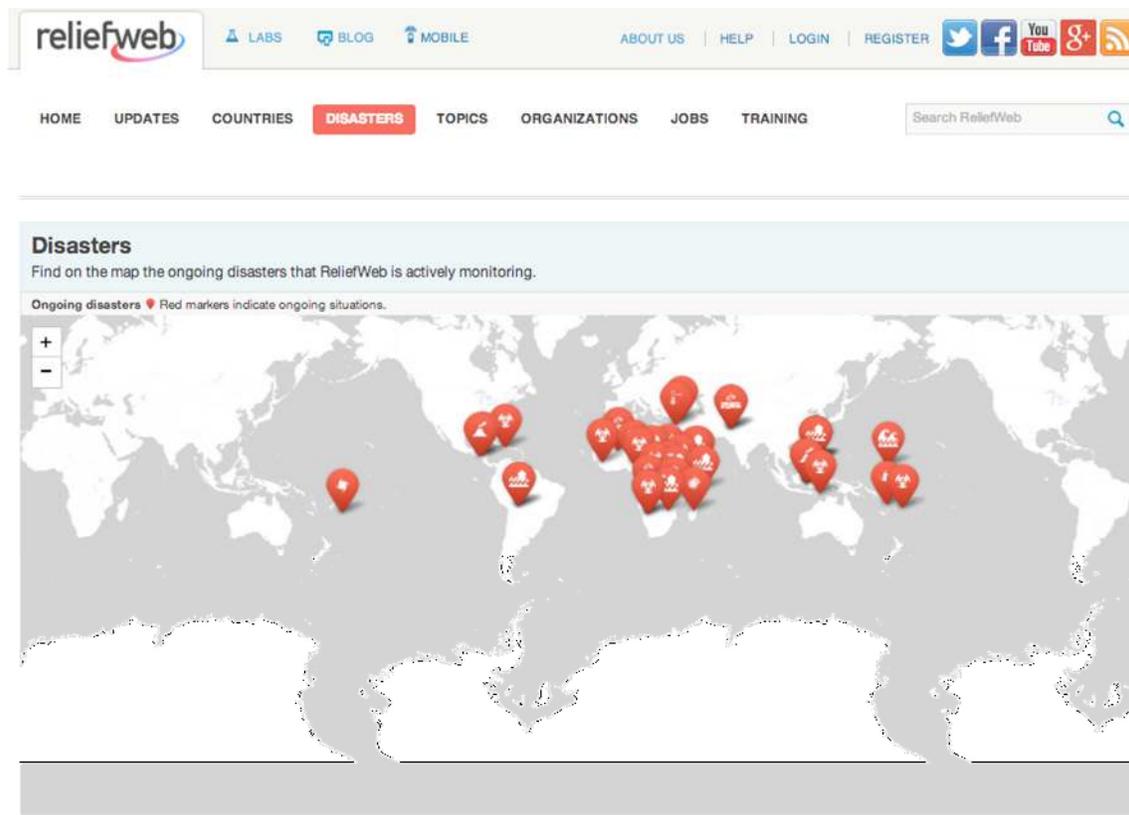


Figure 1: ReliefWeb Disaster Updates

An important obstacle that has been noted by practitioners involved in emergency response efforts during emergencies like Hurricane Katrina or Superstorm Sandy is that despite the increased importance of ad-hoc local networks in emergency response, resources and technologies that may prove useful in coordination of emergency response efforts have not yet trickled down from the “headquarters-level” to the level of the local response units. As

³⁶ Barrigan, Cynthia, and Hemingway, Ben, 2011.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “About”, <http://reliefweb.int/about>

such, the next stage in utilization of new media technologies for emergency response involves “getting tech into the hands of the responders in the field”.³⁹ Given the fast diffusion of new media technologies, such as mobile phones and tablets, as consumer goods, it is safe to assume that in many communities availability of such technologies will increasingly be less of a problem. However, because consumer technologies get quickly updated and there is wide fragmentation in terms of devices that are utilized by the public, it is essential that attention is paid to developing communication methods that can be applicable across different (levels of) technologies, time, and emergency situations.⁴⁰

RECOMMENDATION

An important prerequisite of enhancing the organizational and networking capabilities of response organizations and local responders is to support the deployment of technologies that are available not only at the “headquarter level” but also at a local level, to be used by responders in the field and the public. This can partly be achieved by increasing the interoperability of communication methods and applications (e.g., software) so that consumer devices, which are widely available but also highly fragmented in terms of capabilities, can be used to benefit from the available tools.

2.2.2.2 Emergency Preparation

While the previous part discussed how online sources can help organizational capabilities during emergency response, it should be noted that services like ReliefWeb not only help coordination of response efforts during an emergency but also enable organizations from around the world to form loose networks which share updates with each other, offer training programs and collaborate for research and development. This function of services like ReliefWeb may be of crucial importance in enhancing response organizations’ capabilities in terms of preparing for emergencies.

As it is outlined in D4.1, some crises like extreme temperatures and floods present opportunities to prepare for; however, some others by their nature violate regular patterns of thinking and preparation that has been done beforehand.⁴¹ So, the role of governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations in disaster preparedness relies on drills, simulations, training programmes and information delivery to vulnerable areas and groups of people.

For many response organizations, NGOs and government agencies alike, new media technologies can help reach citizens and increase their preparedness. As we have discussed in detail in D4.1, in addition to mass media campaigns to raise awareness among the public, response organizations and government agencies are increasingly utilizing new media technologies and social media platforms to 1) provide training materials to the public, 2) raise awareness, 3) increase publics’ interest in emergency preparedness, 4) recruit members and 5) invite citizens to pursue other methods (such as attending training courses) for emergency preparedness.⁴²

³⁹ Bharania, Rakesh, “Observations on Hurricane Sandy and Disaster Networks”, *idisaster 2.0*, November 19, 2012, <http://idisaster.wordpress.com/2012/11/19/observations-on-hurricane-sandy-and-disaster-networks/>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Baruh, Lemi et al., 2014.

⁴² Baruh, Lemi et al., 2014.

Additionally, game simulations, 3D maps, mobile applications and smart boards are also among the techniques and technologies that are increasingly being utilized to help crews, volunteers, and citizens to be better trained for emergency response.⁴³ Such simulations, as the meaning of the word “simulation” indicates, create virtual environments within which the participants somehow feel that they are in an actual crisis and visualise how they would respond to such a crisis if it happened in real life. Consequently, simulating may be a very effective way of education: “In most instances, the underlying objective in the design and use of these games is to meet educational objectives and achieve positive transfer of learning. Their role is thus primarily as facilitators of learning using a number of recognized pedagogic techniques such as ‘learning by doing’, ‘reinforcement’ and ‘participation’”.⁴⁴ Accordingly for a simulation game:

It is the sequence of events to which the crisis management must respond. For a flood, it would specify the times and places where specific dikes were breached, services were disrupted, persons were swept away, etc.

The context plus the crisis prior to the start of the game would provide the players with the necessary background information about the situation to enable them to specify the initial conditions for their response activities. Also, of course, the purpose of the game would provide several parameters that are vital to the scenario, such as the setting, potential list of actors, and many of the “rules of the game”.⁴⁵

2.3 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

New media technologies also provide opportunities for the dissemination of information. In this section we will first discuss the ways in which new media technologies can create opportunities for dissemination of information in ways that can bring people together to join in action for a common cause. Second, the section will describe how new media technologies can aid the spread of information in an emergency situation, and hence contribute to influencing individuals’ behaviours and actions.

2.3.1 Political Crises

As discussed in D2.2 and D4.1, during political crises, mass media are often distrusted by citizens. Hence, during political crises, especially in authoritarian regimes, new media technologies provide alternative public spaces for activists where they can “create unmediated and unfiltered flows of information, addressing public opinion and diversifying the message in accordance with their specific target”.⁴⁶ Equally important, the low cost of content production and the ease of access in online networks⁴⁷ gives activists the capability to bypass mainstream media as gatekeepers of information. Especially platforms like blogs or online forums may play an important role in creating the public space where issues and news can be shared and discussed.

⁴³ Baruh, Lemi et al., 2014, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Rolfe, John, Saunders, Danny, and Powell, Tony (Eds.), *Simulation & Gaming Research Yearbook*, 1998, London: Kogan Page Limited, [p. 161].

⁴⁵ Walker, Warren E., Jordan Giddings, and Stuart Armstrong, “Training and Learning for Crisis Management Using a Virtual Simulation/gaming Environment”, *Cognition, Technology & Work*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2011, pp. 163–173, [p.165].

⁴⁶ Della Porta, Donatella, 2005, p.184.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.184.

Manuel Castells argues that in many countries, before protests break out, blogs with political content brought out a public space of discussion and activism, which contributed to getting people to go out in the streets.⁴⁸ Such was the case in Tunisia before the 2011 revolution where blogs played an important role in diffusing information about how Ben Ali, the president of Tunisia at the time, misused his power. Nawaat.org, a collective blog, is one of these platforms that helped create a public space for debate by aggregating articles and information from different sources. Nawaat served as an independent media channel for Tunisians, publishing Ben Ali's regime's abuse of power on issues like inappropriate spending of money, corruption and human rights violations. "The website filled the void left by regime-controlled media and bridged the gap between international media and local activists".⁴⁹ Several weeks before the revolution, the cofounder of Nawaat.org, Sami Ben Gharbia also started Tunileaks, the Tunisian spin-off of WikiLeaks.⁵⁰ Together with WikiLeaks, Tunileaks published leaked diplomatic cables showing the corruption in Ben Ali's government, and "may have offered the final blow to the power of state media".⁵¹ According to a study during Tunisian Revolution the blogs were substantially significant in "surfacing and disseminating news from Tunisia".⁵²

Likewise, during the citizen-led revolutions in Egypt in 2011, which led to the direct challenging of the state, individuals used old and new forms of ICTs to participate in mass self-communication (i.e., the sharing of messages from "many to many" using the Internet and other digital technologies).⁵³ Mass self-communication enabled individuals to network with one another, which assisted them in managing and organising themselves to conduct this digital social movement. According to a diplomatic cable released by WikiLeaks in 2011, approximately 160,000 bloggers were reporting about issues such as police brutality in Egypt in 2009. The same cable also emphasizes the fact that bloggers' discussions on sensitive issues have "influenced society and the media".⁵⁴ Like in Tunisia, during the protests, blogs were significant in both addressing and influencing the public opinion, as well as in disseminating news about the protests. Egyptian blogger Amr Ezzat underlines the role of blogs as a source of information bringing up issues not covered by the state media.⁵⁵ Wael Abbas is one of those bloggers, and published videos of police brutality containing torture and sexual harassment. He said "Everybody knew that this was happening, but then you have a video on the Internet actually showing it".⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Castells, Manuel, 2012.

⁴⁹ "Nawaat Capturing the Core of People's Dream for Democracy in Tunisia", *Tavaana*, retrieved on 5 March 2014, <https://tavaana.org/en/content/nawaat-capturing-core-peoples-dream-democracy-tunisia>

⁵⁰ Index on Censorship Awards 2011, *Index On Censorship TV*, 29 May 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crjw6ICi5M>

⁵¹ Ryan, Yasmine, "Breaking Through Information Monopoly", *Al Jazeera*, 6 October 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/2011104115312389414.html>

⁵² Lotan, Gilad, Mike Ananny, Devin Gaffney, and Danah Boyd, "The Revolutions Were Tweeted: Information Flows During the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions Web Ecology Project Web Ecology Project", *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 5, 2011, pp. 1375–1406.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.6

⁵⁴ "A Selection From the Cache of Diplomatic Dispatches", *The New York Times*, 19 June 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/11/28/world/20101128-cables-viewer.html#report/egypt-09CAIRO544>

⁵⁵ Haddad, Loyal, "Egyptian Bloggers: The Revolution Has Just Begun", *AlAkhbar English*, 26 January 2012, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/3703>

⁵⁶ Ryan, Yasmine, 2011.

The capacity to disseminate information quickly via ICTs has important implications for the ability of social movements to raise global awareness and build support. For example, in many political crises the majority of international users of the Internet contributing to information circulation and public discourse are the diaspora of the country where the crisis is taking place. Especially in authoritarian regimes, diaspora, comprising considerably large number of people who had previously escaped away from the regime or who had been exiled from the country, may play an important role in raising global awareness. Such was the case during the civil unrest in Iran after the 2009 elections, when the Iranian diaspora, estimated to be 2 to 4 million people in 2006,⁵⁷ tried to translate messages posted in Farsi and convey what was taking place in Iran to the global community. Given the restrictions placed by the Iranian government on domestic and foreign press, the role of the diaspora was particularly significant in this case. Namely, with the help of social media platforms like Twitter, members of the diaspora were able to relay information from eye-witness accounts provided by Iranians in Iran to the world. As one Twitter user with apparent links to the opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi put it: “Everybody try to film as much as poss today on mobiles ... these are eyes of world”.⁵⁸ The website called “Tehran Bureau”, launched several weeks before the elections, is an example of how the diaspora strived for explaining events unfolding in Iran.

At the same time, in many authoritarian regimes, as well as in “democratic” ones, the flow of online information is increasingly being subjected to surveillance and other censorship or control mechanisms. Therefore activists are increasingly compelled to use new technologies, applications or tactics to counter surveillance and censorship. In Iran, during the protests after the 2009 elections, the government blocked access to social media services like Facebook and Twitter and to some news websites. Iranians were able to avoid these censorship mechanisms by using tools such as VPN and Tor.⁵⁹ In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak’s regime took a more radical direction to suppress the uprising; in the nights of January 27 and 28 2011, when the protests were at their peak, the government shut Internet off in order to prevent protests from spreading.⁶⁰ “Speak to Tweet” is a service by Google that was initiated to overcome the Internet disruptions in Egypt. The service helped people to tweet without Internet connection. Activists were able to tweet by phoning certain international numbers and leaving voicemail messages. The messages were instantly tweeted with the hashtag #Egypt.⁶¹

2.3.2 Emergency situations

Mass media and direct government information resources might not be sufficient or even reliable at certain times. Usage of ICTs and new media technologies in such cases might improve the quality of information and communication, as well as the reliability of content. Mass media in general play a central role as a source of information for the public. The informative role and check and balance mechanisms of the media are usually associated with the ideas of democracy and informed citizenry. Hence, when mass media do not properly

⁵⁷ Spellman, Kathryn, *Religion and Nation: Iranian Local and Transnational Networks in Britain*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004, quoted in Ghorashi, Halleh and Boersma, Kees, “The Iranian Diaspora and the New Media: From Political Action to Humanitarian Help”, *Development and Change*, Vol.40, Issue 4, pp.667-691, 2009 [p. 674], <http://keesboersma.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/Iranian-networks.pdf>

⁵⁸ Addley, Esther, “The Twitter Crisis: How Site Became Voice of Resistance in Iran”, *The Guardian*, 16 June 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/16/twitter-social-networking-iran-opposition>.

⁵⁹ Bates, Theunis, “Protesters Left in the Dark as Egypt Blocks Internet”, *AOL News*, 28 January 2011, <http://www.aolnews.com/2011/01/28/protesters-left-in-the-dark-as-egypt-blocks-internet-cell-phone/>

⁶⁰ Castells, Manuel, 2012.

⁶¹ “Speak to Tweet”, *Wikipedia*, 8 February 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speak_To_Tweet

perform their duties as a conduit of information, this has important consequences for the public's decision-making capacity. In circumstances when mass media fails to deliver information, either as a result of a direct intervention or self-censorship, social media and ICTs may provide citizens with more tools to obtain information. For example, in 2011, two Turkish air force jets fired at a group of Kurdish civilians smuggling cigarettes across the Iraqi border, after reportedly mistaking them for militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The incident, known as Roboski Strike or Uludere Massacre, resulted in the death of 34 civilians. The incident was not reported on mass media until the following day (with about 12 hours of a delay), and only after the media blackout was broken by coverage on social media.⁶²

Similarly, some experts during the nuclear power plant crisis in Fukushima provided the public with blog entries that explained in layman's terms the real risk the citizens were facing with regard to the radiation leak, after they thought their government was hiding information or that information was insufficient or misleading.⁶³ According to Norimitsu Onishi and Martin Fackler, the Japanese government, endangered the lives of citizens, by withholding radiation data and not issuing proper information about the scope of the events. Citizens did not have suitable guidelines about how to evacuate, and had insufficient information on the real extent of the crisis. Government officials claimed that they had not released information right away, because it was incomplete.⁶⁴ Hence, especially social networking sites and personal blogs of citizen journalists and experts providing information in layman's terms helped citizens receive information in times of mainstream media blackouts and suspicions of government cover-ups during emergencies.

2.4 PUBLIC WELLBEING

The use of new media technologies in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a crisis has important implications for potentially enhancing the wellbeing of those citizens whose security may be threatened. As argued by Shaili Jain, in addition to requiring basic needs as food, shelter, medicines, water and sanitation⁶⁵ in the aftermath of a crisis, at times, there is also the need for individuals to be able to connect with others in their social networks, including members of their family, friends, colleagues etc.⁶⁶ German Neubaum et al. point out that active participation in social media is associated with "feeling better" and "not being alone", whilst emphasising that passive participation in social media, reading about others' experiences of the same crisis, can also have positive psychological consequences.⁶⁷ As a result, although not fool-proof, it is believed that social media has the potential to help facilitate connectedness, that is, it can help individuals to communicate with one another and

⁶² Christie-Miller, Alexander, "Turks turn to Twitter as Erdogan Muzzles Traditional Media", *The Cristian Science Monitor*, 23 July 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0723/Turks-turn-to-Twitter-as-Erdogan-muzzles-traditional-media>

⁶³ Tsang, Monique, "Lessons From Fukushima: Do not Ignore Citizen Media," *World Energy Council*, 11 March 2013, <http://www.worldenergy.org/news-and-media/news/lessons-from-fukushima-do-not-ignore-citizen-media/>

⁶⁴ Onishi, Norimitsu, and Fackler, Martin, "Japan Held Nuclear Data, Leaving Evacuees in Peril," 8 August 2011, *the New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/09/world/asia/09japan.html?_r=1

⁶⁵ The Sphere Project, "The Sphere Handbook", 2011. <http://www.spherehandbook.org/>

⁶⁶ Jain, Shaili, "The Role of Social Media in Disaster Psychiatry (or How I Became a Fan of Facebook)", *Mind the Brain*, 24 January 2013. <http://blogs.plos.org/mindthebrain/2013/01/24/the-role-of-social-media-in-disaster-psychiatry-or-how-i-became-a-fan-of-facebook/>

⁶⁷ Neubaum, German, Leonie Rösner, Astrid M. Rosenthal-von der Pütten, Nicole C. Krämer, "Psychosocial functions of social media usage in a disaster situation: A multi-methodological approach", *Computer in Human Behavior*, Vol. 34, 2014, p. 28-38

re-connect in the aftermath of a crisis and is thus a useful tool in responding to and recovering from a crisis.⁶⁸

Social media is also able to fulfil additional psychological roles in building and promoting community resilience, which is essential for the preparation, response and recovery stages of a crisis. An example of this is Taylor et al.'s study of the use of social media during Cyclone Yasi in Australia and New Zealand in 2010.⁶⁹ Their survey of 1146 respondents using Facebook during the storm revealed that the use of social media contributed to promoting "safety, connectedness, self- and group-efficacy, and help, and in terms of community resilience, directly supporting the adaptive capacities of information and communication and help to bolster social capital, and community competence".⁷⁰ Thus, in line with what was discussed in the previous sections on the role social media may play in enhancing mobilization of the public in emergency response, for Taylor et al. the use of social media is not restricted to fulfilling a psychological function of facilitating connectedness, but also enables individuals to help and support each other in a crisis, thereby enhancing community resilience and the emergence of social capital. It is important to note that this study did reveal that for some users social media was not useful and that these users thus opted out of using it during this time. Similarly, in a study of the role of social media following the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Mark Keim and Eric Noji note that social media may play an additional psychological role in enabling individuals to be of assistance in the aftermath of a crisis, in that they are able to use social media to offer assistance (among other qualities) which enables them a sense of control and can help them cope with a situation.⁷¹ Likewise, Sarah Vieweg et al., in their study of the use of social media following the Virginia Tech Shootings in 2007, observed that social media helped individuals form an altruistic community in an online setting.⁷²

Accordingly, whilst not guaranteed, social media may present citizens with a way of communicating and connecting with others in the aftermath of a crisis, which can potentially help strengthen community resilience. Additional research is required to further understand the psychological opportunities that may stem from the use of social media in a preparing for, responding to and recovering from a crisis.

RECOMMENDATION

The use of new media technologies may provide some psychological benefits to citizens, particularly in providing them with means of connecting with others in a crisis and to find a way of being of help in a crisis. Stakeholders should recognize this benefit and take further efforts to understand the psychological benefits afforded to citizens from the use of new media technologies in crisis situations. Enhanced understanding can then help stakeholders tailor their strategies so as to enhance community resilience in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a crisis.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Taylor, Mel, Garrett Wells, Gwyneth Howell, and Beverley Raphael, "The Role of Social Media as Psychological First Aid as a Support to Community Resilience Building", *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2012, p. 20-26.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

⁷¹ Keim, Mark E, and Eric Noji, "Emergent Use of Social Media: A New Age of Opportunity for Disaster Resilience", *American Journal of Disaster Medicine*, Vol. 6, No. 1, February 2011, pp. 47-54.

⁷² Vieweg, Sarah, Leysia Palen, Sophia B Liu, Amanda L Hughes, and Jeannette Sutton, "Collective Intelligence in Disaster: An Examination of the Phenomenon in the Aftermath of the 2007 Virginia Tech Shootings", *Proceedings of the 5th International ISCRAM Conference*, Washington, DC, USA, 2008.

Chapter 3: Threats

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3 THREATS

The opportunities gained from the use of new media technologies in a crisis are also accompanied by a series of threats that the use of these communication tools may bring to different stakeholders. Accordingly, this chapter will discuss three types of threats: threats to security of citizens, to citizen journalists, and lastly, to responders.

3.1 THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF CITIZENS

As identified in Deliverable 1.1 (D1.1) of the COSMIC project, a key priority within crisis management is ensuring the safeguarding of citizens.⁷³ However, although not necessarily intentional, the use of new media technologies in responding to a crisis can result in several risks that may threaten the security of citizens, including the threat of being recorded and the threat of vigilante activity in particular types of crisis.

3.1.1 The threat of being recorded

In the response stage of a crisis, new media technologies including social media applications and crowdsourcing applications may result in the recording of other people. For instance, in a crisis situation people, as well as items such as number plates and other personally identifiable information can be recorded on camera. Furthermore, the sharing of information including status updates on social networking website may involve the geo-tagging of a person's location which contains personally identifiable information. Thus there is a danger of individuals recording and revealing private information about themselves as well as others via the use of new media in a crisis.

As discussed in D3.2.1 of the COSMIC project, a significant threat to the security of citizens, whom may be recorded in the event of a crisis, is the failure to safeguard a person's privacy, and particularly ensuring the anonymity of personal identifiable information.⁷⁴ Furthermore, as noted by David Yates and Scott Paquette⁷⁵ and Leysia Palen et al.,⁷⁶ even when personal identity information may be masked, there is still the threat that the collection and analysis of weak identifiers, that is "pieces of information that can be used to identify individual users" could lead to a person's true identity being exposed.⁷⁷ For instance, in a political crisis, the sharing of personal information such as an individual's physical location could lead to them being identified, which under certain circumstances could lead to them being placed in danger. This was seen for instance during revolutions in Iran in 2009, where officials

⁷³ Watson, Haley, Kush Wadhwa, Rachel Finn, Ioannis Kotsiopoulos, Angelos Yannopoulos, Jelle Groenendaal, Arjen Schmidt, David de Vries, and Ira Helsloot, Report on Security Crises with High Societal Impact, *D1.1 of the COSMIC project*, 31 July 2013.

⁷⁴ Kotsiopoulos, Ioannis, Angelos Yannopoulos, Haley Watson, Rachel Finn, Kush Wadhwa, and Alex Papadimitriou, Political, Social and Industrial Opportunities Arising from the Use of Emerging Technologies, *D3.21 of the COSMIC project*, 31 October 2013.

⁷⁵ Yates, David, and Scott Paquette, "Emergency Knowledge Management and Social Media Technologies: A Case Study of the 2010 Haitian Earthquake", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2011, pp. 6–13.

⁷⁶ Palen, Leysia, Kenneth M. Anderson, Gloria Mark, James Martin, Douglas Sicker, Martha Palmer, and Dirk Grunwald, "A Vision for Technology-Mediated Support for Public Participation & Assistance in Mass Emergencies & Disasters", *Proceedings of the 2010 ACM-BCS Visions of Computer Science Conference*, Swinton, UK, 2010, pp. 8:1–8:12. <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1811182.1811194>.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

restricted access to the web, and in both Iran and Belarus citizens' social media usage was analysed to identify, locate, and target online dissidents.⁷⁸

As such, as argued by Rive et al. it is essential that those organisations involved in sharing materials such as photos of disaster sites, take the appropriate measures to ensure that the privacy of the public is upheld (e.g., masking faces and vehicle number plates), and where required, ensure that permission is gained from people to ensure their anonymity is protected.⁷⁹ This is further acknowledged by the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) network, who argued in their lessons learned on the use of social media in emergencies that “releasing location information about vulnerable people without their consent is not advised as it can create unnecessary risk, and although users may have good intentions it is the responsibility of responders not to share this on, and also to educate users into using these platforms responsibly”.⁸⁰

As identified in D3.2.1, the safety of personal information is potentially further threatened by the dangers associated with the security of information online, where information shared by others is mined and subsequently in danger of being used for identify theft, as well as other malicious activities, including scams, hacking, etc.^{81, 82} As such, it is important to consider the dangers to citizens that are associated with the sharing of such vast quantities of personal information as well as the increased use of new media technologies for communication during a crisis.

RECOMMENDATION

A range of stakeholders, including members of the public, should be educated on the threats to citizens as a result of the sharing of information during a crisis, on the potential measures that can be taken in order to ensure personal safety online, and on means of mitigating any negative effects of secondary use of information mined from new media in a crisis.

3.1.2 Threat of online vigilantism

In some types of crises, citizens could be in danger of physical or social harm as a result of misinformation (i.e., false information) related to group vigilante behaviour via the use of new media technologies, and particularly social media. As discussed in D2.2 of the COSMIC project, following the 2013 Boston marathon attacks there was extensive evidence of the use of the social networking site Reddit by citizens to gather pictorial evidence (as also requested by the Boston Police) from the scene of the attacks.⁸³ This crowdsourced collection of images from the scene of the attacks was subsequently processed by citizens online to try to identify those responsible for the attacks. Such vigilante behaviour by Reddit users led to the wrongful identification of innocent individuals, including the infamous misidentification of Sunil

⁷⁸ Joseph, Sarah, “Social Media, Political Change, and Human Rights”, *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review*, Vol. 35, 2012, p. 145.

⁷⁹ Rive, G, J Hare, J Thomas, and K Nankivell, “Social Media in an Emergency: A Best Practice Guide”, *Wellington CDEM Group*, 2012.

⁸⁰ Iacucci, Anahi Ayala, and Gregory Barrow, “Social Media in Emergencies”, *CDAC Network*, December 2013. http://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/101_report_on_social_media_in_emergencies_2013-12.pdf. [p. 8]

⁸¹ Yates, David and Scott Paquette, 2011.

⁸² Kotsiopoulos, Ioannis et al., 2013.

⁸³ Papadimitriou, Alex, et al., 2013.

Tripathi, who was eventually discovered as a suicide victim, as well as two young men from the greater Boston area who are now pursuing a lawsuit against the *New York Post*, which printed the photos of two men as the culprits of the attacks, for “libel, negligent infliction of emotional distress, and invasion of privacy”.⁸⁴ In both cases, the *New Statesman* argues that the inter-linkage between social media and crowdsourcing “led to images stripped of their context being passed around as though they were confirmed”.⁸⁵

Elsewhere, as identified by Carlo Rizza et al. and discussed in D3.2.1⁸⁶ vigilante justice was also present following riots associated with the June 2011 ice hockey Stanley Cup final series in Vancouver.⁸⁷ Individuals publicised the riots via social media and shared information and data (upon request) that would assist in identifying suspected rioters. Furthermore, they then engaged in “do it yourself justice” by publicly damning those responsible via social networking sites, which Rizza et al. have labelled a form of “bad ethics”.

Thus, if un-regulated, crowdsourcing behaviour in the face of some types of crisis could potentially lead to the risk of innocent individuals being inappropriately labelled and targeted, which has the potential to cause them physical harm if they are approached by members of the public, as well as emotional distress and social stigma. It is also important to note that as the examples discussed in this section illustrate, the threat caused by online vigilantism to safety of individuals is closely connected to dissemination of misinformation. Hence, as we will discuss in further detail in section 4.2.2 on Misinformation, Misrepresentation, and Scamming and in section 4.2.3 on Ethics of News Production, there is a need for development, and wide dissemination, of information verification guidelines that citizens can use to ensure and encourage the sharing of reliable information in a crisis.

3.2 DANGER TO CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

Harm is not restricted to those that may be recorded in a crisis, but may also face those that are participating in the collection and sharing of news, particularly, those participating in citizen journalism (i.e., the self-publication of news). As discussed in D3.2.1, there is the potential risk that those recording information could be in danger themselves, due to the circumstances they are operating under.⁸⁸ For instance, following the 2007 Glasgow airport attacks, *The Guardian’s* Pamela Welsh, critical of citizen journalists in this incident, raised the issue of whether individuals would place themselves in danger by trying to record evidence. In addition, Welsh observed that while searching for footage to record, citizen journalists often end up ignoring their civic duty of being of assistance to others:

When the burning car careered into Glasgow's terminal one building and the police were attempting to arrest the suspects, these “citizens” did not go and help the authorities. They put

⁸⁴ Sacchetti, Maria, “Mass. Pair Sues New York Post over Marathon Bombing Portrayal”, *BostonGlobe.com*, 6 June 2013. <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/06/05/libel-lawsuit-filed-against-new-york-post-bombing-coverage/enRvNI9PSig0AHDxJHYqFJ/story.html>.

⁸⁵ Hern, Alex, “When Crowdsourcing Goes Wrong: Reddit, Boston and Missing Student Sunil Tripathi”, *NewStatesman*, 19 April 2013. <http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2013/04/when-crowdsourcing-goes-wrong-reddit-boston-and-missing-student-sunil-tripathi>.

⁸⁶ Kotsiopoulos et al., 2013.

⁸⁷ Rizza, Caroline, Angela G. Pereira, and Paula Curvelo, “Do-It-Yourself Justice - Considerations of Social Media Use in a Crisis Situation: The Case of the 2011 Vancouver Riots”, *2012 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining (ASONAM)*, 2012, pp. 720–721.

⁸⁸ Kotsiopoulos, Ioannis et al., 2013.

themselves in grave danger, without regard for their safety or the safety of those around them. Surely, the whole point of being a good citizen is to help others, to actively participate in public service, volunteering and working to make life better for all. Why did the owners of the mobile phones that captured the burning car on film not step in? Why did they not do something to help? At the very least, they should have ushered their fellow citizens and on-lookers to safety, not stood there filming such a traumatic event.⁸⁹

In politically volatile areas such as Syria, when access to the news media is restricted, citizens are putting their lives on the line in order to record and share news with the outside world of unfolding events.⁹⁰

Following the 2005 London attacks, the Chartered Institute of Journalists, critical of the news industry requesting footage of incidents from members of the public, expressed concern of “television companies apparent ‘disregard for the danger they may be subjecting their viewers to in their attempt to obtain picture material’ (cited in *Press Gazette*, 2 August 2005)”.⁹¹ With the growing inclusion of the public in reporting the news, Helen Boaden, editor for the BBC, argues it is essential for the news media not to compromise the safety of citizens: “We must be careful not to encourage citizen journalists to take risks in dangerous situations”.⁹²

The increasing reliance by the news media on material created by citizens has led to the development of guidelines for submitting information and what is deemed acceptable for user generated content to be included in the news media’s presentation of the news. For instance, CNN’s iReport (a portion of their website dedicated to presenting news created and shared by citizen journalists, thereby engaging the public in the creation and discussion of news items) indicates that one particular type of content that is not welcome is content that “advocates dangerous, illegal or predatory acts or poses a reasonable threat to personal or public safety”.⁹³ They also enable users to submit information anonymously thereby protecting the contributor’s privacy.⁹⁴ Similarly, The Guardian’s GuardianWitness also provides guidelines to users regarding their contributions, encouraging them to not only avoid placing themselves in danger, but also to avoid placing others in danger as a result of their activities: “Don’t place yourself or others in danger when making films for GuardianWitness or taking photographs for an assignment”.⁹⁵ Thus, the potential for being in danger from participating in journalism related activities is actively observed by some stakeholders in the news media industry, and in response, some take efforts to publicly encourage others to avoid any potential danger to themselves.

Not restricted to physical harm, in some countries individuals participating in sharing and discussing the news may be at risk of being prosecuted due to national legislation. For instance, as revealed by Stuart Allan, in Malaysia, in September 2008, Raja Petra

⁸⁹ Welsh, Pamela, “Disaster Movies”, *The Guardian*, 2 July 2007.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/jul/02/disastermovies>.

⁹⁰ Holmes, Oliver, “Running Toward Danger, Syria’s Citizens Become Journalists”, *Committee to Protect Journalists*, February 2013. <http://www.cpj.org/2013/02/attacks-on-the-press-on-syrias-citizen-journalists.php>.

⁹¹ Allan, Stuart, *Online News: Journalism and the Internet*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 2007. [p. 189]

⁹² Boaden, Helen, “BBC - The Editors: The Role of Citizen Journalism in Modern Democracy”, *BBC*, 13 August 2008. http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2008/11/the_role_of_citizen_journalism.html.

⁹³ CNN iReport, “Community Guidelines”, *CNN iReport*, 2013. <http://ireport.cnn.com/guidelines.jspa>.

⁹⁴ “How to Post iReports”, *CNN iReport*, 7 November 2011. <http://ireport.cnn.com/blogs/ireport-blog/2011/11/07/how-to-post-ireports>.

⁹⁵ “GuardianWitness Guidelines”, *The Guardian*, 17 January 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/info/2013/jan/17/community-guidelines>.

Karmaruddin, an individual responsible for the “country’s best-known political blog, Malaysia Today, was imprisoned based on allegations of ‘spreading confusion’ and ‘insulting the purity of Islam’”.⁹⁶ Although charges against Karmaruddin were (later – November 2008) dropped, whilst in custody, not only was Karmaruddin faced with prosecution, but he was also harmed via various harassment strategies and torture (e.g., being deprived of sleep). Elsewhere, in Kenya, concerns have been raised among the online community about changes to the country’s media legislation, which broadens the definition of “journalist” and gives courts authority to impose stiff fines. Proponents to the legislation are concerned about the loose definition of “journalist”, and consider the changes to be repressive of media freedoms.⁹⁷

It is necessary to consider how citizen journalists might protect themselves when operating in politically volatile regions. One such technique is by remaining anonymous. For instance, as identified by Heba Zayyan and Cynthia Carter, some citizen journalists blogging about life in the Bethlehem region choose to remain anonymous, using “cyber pseudonyms” to protect themselves from “harassment or harm”.⁹⁸

In some types of crisis, particularly political crises, increased censorship and crack-downs on Internet access and freedom of expression can limit individuals’ sense of understanding of what is going on, and can place citizens sharing information with others in danger. As will be discussed in further detail later in the report, examples of this can be seen in the political crises in Egypt in 2011⁹⁹ and in Turkey in 2013.^{100, 101} Also, the ability of individuals to participate in what we previously, in chapter 2 of this report, described as mass self-communication, have often led to governments fearing the Internet, which ultimately resulted in efforts to suppress the Internet in the form of shutting it down.¹⁰² Despite the government’s efforts, citizens, assisted by the “world’s Internet community”,¹⁰³ took extensive measures to utilise both old and new ICTs to communicate with one another and went so far as to develop a manual for communication, which contributed to the government restoring access. As such, it is important for stakeholders involved in requesting information from citizens in a crisis to be respectful of the wider political situation individuals are part of and should avoid placing them in further danger.

⁹⁶ Allan, Stuart, and Einar Thorsen, “Introduction”, in Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen (eds.), *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*, Peter Lang Publishing, 2009, pp. 1–14. [p. 5]

⁹⁷ Verjee, Neelam, “In Kenya, Bloggers Say New Media Bill Makes Them Vulnerable to Prosecution”, *TechPresident*, 21 January 2014. <https://techpresident.com/news/wegov/24688/kenya-bloggers-media-bill-vulnerable-prosecution>.

⁹⁸ Zayyan, Heba, and Cynthia Carter, “Human Rights and Wrongs: Blogging News of Everyday Life in Palestine”, in Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen (eds.), *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*, Peter Lang Publishing, 2009, pp. 85–94. [p. 89]

⁹⁹ Williams, Christopher, “How Egypt Shut down the Internet”, *Telegraph.co.uk*, 28 January 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8288163/How-Egypt-shut-down-the-internet.html>.

¹⁰⁰ “Turkish Police Arrest Twitter Activists”, *Gulf News*, 6 June 2013. <http://gulfnews.com/news/world/other-world/turkish-police-arrest-twitter-activists-1.1193575>.

¹⁰¹ Pearson, Michael and Gül Tuysuz, “Turkish Authorities Arrest Social Media Users; Calls for Erdogan to Resign Continue”, *CNN*, 6 June 2013. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/05/world/europe/turkey-protests/index.html>.

¹⁰² Castells, Manuel, 2012, p. 61.

¹⁰³ Castells, Manuel, 2012, p. 66.

RECOMMENDATION

Those participating in citizen journalism should be aware of the limits to gaining newsworthy items and should avoid placing themselves in any unnecessary danger. Citizens should also be aware of the legal frameworks for “journalism” in the countries they are operating in so as to avoid the danger of being prosecuted against. As a final point, stakeholders encouraging citizen contributions should be cautious and respectful of a citizen’s situation when requesting information so as to avoid placing them in danger.

3.3 THREAT TO RESPONDERS

An additional risk associated with the use of social media by members of the public surrounds the sharing of confidential police information and the subsequent implications of this type of sharing, particularly on the success and wellbeing of a response operation.¹⁰⁴ Such a threat is aligned to a specific type of crisis including a criminal element: man-made crisis in the form of terrorism. This threat may also be a concern for the day-to-day use of social media within policing operations.

In the aftermath of the 2013 Boston marathon attacks, as revealed in D2.2, during the manhunt for the suspected bomber, members of the public shared the locations of police officers as they moved around their neighbourhoods.¹⁰⁵ They also listened to police radios via scanners and shared information about police activities. In both instances, officers warned residents via Twitter, by tweeting “Do Not Compromise Officer Safety by Broadcasting Tactical Positions of Homes Being Searched”.¹⁰⁶ This was similarly seen following the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the 2013 Kenya Westgate mall attacks; both acts of terror threatening public security. During the Mumbai attacks, it was claimed that some authorities requested for Tweets relating to military and police responses to be stopped as it was feared that the publication of this type of information might be “useful” to the terrorists.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, following the increased use of Twitter during the 2013 Kenya shopping mall attacks, questions were once again raised as to whether those responsible for the attacks could misuse tweets about the attacks to their advantage.

RECOMMENDATION

The use of social media by a range of stakeholders in an emergency could jeopardise the response efforts and place individuals, including response agencies, in danger. As such efforts should be taken to educate those utilising social media to help minimise the widespread sharing of tactical information in particular types of crises.

This chapter has sought to highlight some of the threats associated with the use of new media technologies, and particularly social media, in a crisis, highlighting the importance of using, and encouraging, the use of new media in such a manner that ensures the safety and security of those recording, those be recorded, and those involved in crisis response operations.

¹⁰⁴ Kotsiopoulos, Ioannis, et al., 2013.

¹⁰⁵ Papadimitriou, Alex, et al., 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Sutton, J., E. Spiro, B. Johnson, S. Fitzhugh and C. Butts, “Tweeting Boston: The Influence of Microstructure in Broadcasting Messages through Twitter”, *Online Research Highlight*, 2013. <http://heroicproject.org>.

¹⁰⁷ As It Happened: Mumbai Attacks 27 Nov”, *BBC*, 27 November 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7752003.stm

Chapter 4: Ethical Issues

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4 ETHICAL ISSUES

The widespread adoption of new media technologies by individuals have resulted in substantial changes with regard to how audiences are situated vis-à-vis the processes of production, dissemination and consumption of media content. Namely, it has been argued by academics and media commentators alike that new media technologies have created an active audience, also called as prosumers, engaging in production of information.¹⁰⁸ The blurring of the lines between producers and consumers of information led to several ethical questions, since these so-called prosumers are neither producers with a professional code of ethics or rules nor producers with rights that are afforded to “professional” content producers like journalists. In this chapter, we will start by defining ethics and then discuss key ethical issues related to citizens’ involvement in communications during emergencies.

4.1 DEFINING ETHICS

In order to discuss ethical issues raised about emergency communications and citizen engagement in the context of new media, we will first summarize different perspectives on the definition of “ethics”. Robert Hauptman states “ethical consideration allows a person to decide whether he or she is acting correctly, acceptably, appropriately, justly, positively, or in conformance with societal norms”.¹⁰⁹ This definition helps us to see two important dimensions of ethics: 1) ethics is about whether one acts in a right way or not, and 2) ethics exist within a broader social framework expressed in terms of norms and values of a group, community, or society. With respect to media and information:

The values that inhere in information, its production and dissemination, and the information professions are no different than those that are meaningful in any human endeavour; they include truth, integrity, respect, freedom, access, tolerance, liberty, privacy, justice, beneficence, and protection.¹¹⁰

At this point, we should also note the distinction between descriptive ethics and normative ethics. According to Clifford Christian, for example, “descriptive ethics reports on the moral behaviour of specific persons or groups and studies the way ethical decision-making functions *de facto*” and “normative ethics seeks to establish norms and guidelines, not merely to describe details or deal with abstractions”.¹¹¹ In the case of new media, both types of ethics are relevant since we are interested in how the so-called prosumers are involved in production, dissemination and consumption processes and how such processes can be improved to ensure that public receives useful information to make crucial decisions during crises.

Main schools of normative ethics are utilitarian/consequentialist ethics, deontological ethics and Aristotelian ethics.¹¹² Utilitarians believe that “one should try to obtain the greatest good

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Jack, Martha, “The Social Evolution of Citizen Journalism”, *Canadian Journal of Media Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2010, pp. 95–158 [p. 96]

¹⁰⁹ Hauptman, Robert, “Ethics and Information: An Encyclopedic Overview”, *Business Information Review*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2008, pp. 238–252 [p. 239]

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 239.

¹¹¹ Christians, Clifford G, “Primordial Issues in Communication Ethics”, *The Handbook of Global Communication and Media Ethics*, Vol I, 2011, pp. 1–19 [p. 1]

¹¹² Hooker, John, “Three Kinds of Ethics”, No. October, 1996, pp. 1–21.
<http://ba.tepper.cmu.edu/ethics/three.pdf>.

for the greatest number”, while Kantian ethics or deontology, which literally means “the science of duty”, suggests that “good and evil reside in the individuals’ intentions rather than in the consequences of the act”.¹¹³ John Hooker also argues “Kant tried to summarize his view in a categorical imperative, which instructs one to act only according to a maxim that one can at the same time will to become universal law”.¹¹⁴

In other words, deontology refers to a sense of duty to a universal law as the basis of moral behaviour while utilitarian thinking is interested in concrete consequences of acts rather than idealistic universal laws behind them. The third school of normative ethics listed here, Aristotelian ethics, is based on the question of “how to live the good life”.¹¹⁵ Aristotelian ethics (or virtue ethics) is based on a functionalist approach to human life itself in which human beings are assumed to be “rational” and “capable of trust, love, friendship, honour and courage in a self-conscious way that characterizes no other creature”.¹¹⁶ Hence, in order to live the good life, a human being must live in accordance with these virtues, which are, in other words, the main functions of being a human being. Aristotelian virtue ethics, Kantian deontology and utilitarianism/consequentialism all try to come up with criteria with which right is distinguished from wrong.

Information ethics deals with “all aspects of information production and dissemination within an ethical context” and a central principle in information ethics is information integrity.¹¹⁷ Information integrity basically means the accuracy of information which is being disseminated through media channels, since “acting upon incorrect or false information may result in harm or death”,¹¹⁸ as we will discuss in the following sections on the ethical concerns pertaining to emergencies and political crises. In addition to information integrity, values of journalism, e.g. justice, liberty, privacy, respect, etc., form the basis and the framework of media and information ethics. Based on this framework, challenges posed by the emergence of new media technologies with regard to ethics includes reliability and fact-checking of information produced by citizen journalists, confidentiality of information sources, protection of citizen journalists in coverage of emergencies and political crises, abuse of the public in emergencies/crises, and censorship.

4.2 TYPES OF ETHICAL ISSUES THAT ARISE DURING EMERGENCIES

As explored elsewhere in COSMIC¹¹⁹ the use of new media technologies during emergencies has brought a number of ethical issues to the fore, especially in consideration of the increased role of citizens as individuals involved in situations of crisis as reporters or producers of content shared through new media technologies. The previous chapters of this report have highlighted the opportunities and threats associated with the increased use of new media technologies. In the context of this chapter, the partners will briefly examine the ethical dimensions of the communicative opportunities that new media bring, with regards to first-response, activism and journalism.

¹¹³ Ibid, pp. 2, 7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 8.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 11-2.

¹¹⁷ Hauptman, Robert, “Ethics and Information: An Encyclopedic Overview”, *Business Information Review*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2008, pp. 238–252.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Papadimitriou, Alex et al., 2013; Baruh, Lemi et al., 2014.

First, we will discuss the abuse of power exercised through media and, more specifically the abuse of the public in a vulnerable situation, as well as the use of censorship and surveillance techniques. Then, the ethical issues related to misinformation, misrepresentation and scamming through new media will be examined. In the final section, we will review the ethics of news production and the related concepts of information reliability and confidentiality of news sources.

4.2.1 Abuse of Power

A first major ethical concern related to the use of media in situations of crisis is the eventual abuse of power by any of the players involved. In this section we will focus two major types of such abuses of power. First, we will discuss how access to media, including mass media and, more recently, social media, can be used in ways that exploit public sentiments. Using three examples we will discuss how, such abuses of power during crises can be seen when the suffering of victims are sensationalized for “news making” purposes, and when public sentiments are manipulated in ways that incite fear and/or animosity between different factions of a society. Second, we will focus on surveillance of the public and censorship of information as increasingly common forms of abuses of power with important implications for speech rights and decision-making abilities of the public.

4.2.1.1 Abuse of Public Sentiments in Vulnerable Situations

For the purposes of this report, we will discuss two incidents that have taken place in the Turkish city of Istanbul, where the political agenda has led to the abuse of the public in vulnerable situations at two points in history. We also discuss the case of the Virginia Tech Shootings in the United States in 2008. Whereas the first incident, which took place in Istanbul in 1955, involves the use of conventional forms of mass media such as broadcast and printed media, in the second (Istanbul, 2013) and the third (Virginia, Blacksburg, 2007) cases, information was spread through a mix of media technologies.

The “Istanbul Pogrom”, 6-7 September 1955

The first case is the so-called “Istanbul Pogrom”, a series of events that developed on 6 and 7 September 1955. These government-instigated riots were aimed at moving the public’s attention away from the worsening economic situation in Turkey, and to the issue of settling the status of Cyprus. The Turkish Government at the time, led by Democratic Party’s Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, made the public falsely believe that the Turkish consulate in the Greek city of Thessaloniki had been bombed by Greeks on 5 September 1955; later it would become clear that a Turkish citizen had planted the bomb. However, prior to the latter information being revealed, the false information was spread by the printed media, which was subject to Menderes’ control.¹²⁰ On 6 September the *Istanbul Express* printed 290,000 papers, far more than the usual 20.000 papers, with the headline “Our father Atatürk’s house has been bombed”.¹²¹ With the help of the Cyprus Turkish Association, the papers were distributed all over the city.

¹²⁰ Ergil, Dogu, “The dark side of nationalism: Sept. 6-7 incident”, *Today’s Zaman*, 17 September 2008, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnists/dogu-ergil_153309-the-dark-side-of-nationalism-sept-6-7-incident.html

¹²¹ Korkut, Tolga, “What happened on 6-7 September?”, *Bianet English*, 8 September 2009, <http://bianet.org/english/minorities/116914-what-happened-on-6-7-september>

Considering the huge symbolic value the consulate building has for Turkey, the government knew the papers would likely cause tensions between the Muslim majority of Istanbul's inhabitants and the Greek minority present in the city. Their expectations became reality; the fabricated reports triggered violent attacks on the Greek minority living in Istanbul. Several Greek citizens were killed, women were raped, properties destroyed, and the majority of the Greek population was driven out of the areas they inhabited in Istanbul.¹²² In the long-term, the events contributed to a gradual migration of Turkish citizens of Greek origin back to Greece, considerably diminishing their presence in the country.

Alleged Attack on a Woman Wearing a Hijabi, Istanbul, 1 June 2013

The Gezi Park protests that took place in Istanbul in the summer of 2013 have been discussed elsewhere in COSMIC.¹²³ However, in this context, a particular case study will be examined to provide a more recent example of abuse of the public in a vulnerable situation, widely amplified by the mix of traditional media as print and television, as well as social media networks.

The alleged incident took place close to a pier in the Kabataş area of Istanbul, nearby Gezi Park. The alleged victim, the daughter-in-law of a member of the ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti), claimed that she and her six-month-old baby had been attacked by the protestors because of her headscarf.¹²⁴ In her official complaint, she claimed that she had been “subjected to physical violence by a group of 80 to 100 protesters as she was waiting for her husband”. According to the alleged victim's statement, the group, comprised of “men without shirts, who were wearing black bandanas on their heads”, shouted slogans insulting her headscarf, threatening her with physical violence and proclaiming that they would hang the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.¹²⁵

The claims made by the alleged victim were repeated by the Prime Minister, and was quickly pick-up by mass media and disseminated via social media, primarily, but not solely, via the Twitter accounts of journalists whom Pınar Tremblay names as “hijabi journalists”.¹²⁶ Reporting about the event in her column in Star Newspaper, one journalist, Balçıçek İlter, claimed that she herself witnessed the physical bruises and the trauma that the alleged victim suffered from.¹²⁷ More importantly, highly illustrative of how journalist credentials, combined with social media presence, may be used in ways that can potentially incite animosity, on 12 June 2013, a columnist from Hurriyet (a broadsheet in Turkey), İsmet Berkan tweeted that the alleged events were true (Figure 2). Indeed, in response to inquiries from other Twitter users about whether there is a proof of the incident, Berkan tweeted that there were CCTV footages and that he saw the footages.¹²⁸

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Papadimitriou, Alex et al., 2013

¹²⁴ Gümüş, Kemal “Başörtülü anneye saldırının görüntü kayıtları mercek altında”, *Star Gazete*, 14 June 2013, <http://haber.stargazete.com/politika/basortulu-anneye-saldirinin-goruntu-kayitlari-mercek-altinda/haber-762399>

¹²⁵ “Released footage shows no physical attack on headscarf-wearing woman during Gezi protests”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 14 February 2014, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/released-footage-shows-no-physical-attack-on-headscarf-wearing-woman-during-gezi-protests.aspx?pageID=238&nID=62479&NewsCatID=341>

¹²⁶ Tremblay, Pınar, “Erdogan's Biggest Fear: The ‘Concerned’ Islamists”, *Al Monitor*, 15 August, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/iw/contents/articles/originals/2013/08/erdogan-fear-islamists-tremblay.html>

¹²⁷ “Zehra'nın morluklarını da gördüm, yaşadığı travmaya da tanık oldum”, *T24*, 3 July 2013, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/balcicek-ilter-zehranin-morluklarini-da-gordum-yasadigi-travmaya-da-tanik-oldum/233387>

¹²⁸ Ibid.



Figure 2: Tweets by journalist İsmet Berkan regarding the CCTV footage of the alleged attack on *Woman Wearing a Hijabi*

Currently, the official investigation on the alleged attack is going on. CCTV video footage released on 13 February 2014 and broadcasted by the popular national TV channel, *Kanal D*, suggests that actually none of the surveillance cameras had recorded any evidence of such assault.¹²⁹ Indeed, the only recording available showed the crowd passing by the woman in question with no sign of physical attacks (although, possibility of verbal abuse cannot be discounted through the CCTV cameras).

Turkish journalists such as *Today's Zaman's* Günay Hilal Aygün have questioned the real intentions behind the Kabataş claim, particularly considering emotional charge given to the episode by the Prime Minister Erdoğan at the time of the protests, who used this claim as a political tool when saying that the protesters had assaulted "our headscarved sister".¹³⁰ Aygün states that Erdoğan "was easily able to characterize supporters of the whole protest movement as violent towards religious people. This rhetoric was more than useful for Erdoğan's government because it created a false perception as if there were no religious Gezi protesters".¹³¹

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Aygün, Günay Hilal, "What was the real intention of the Kabataş attack claim?", http://www.today-szaman.com/columnists/gunay-hilal-aygun_339665-what-was-the-real-intention-of-the-kabatas-attack-claim.html

¹³¹ Ibid.

Both of these incidents, which took place in Istanbul, 60 years apart from each other, show how the spread of misinformation via media may play a key role in the exploitation of public sentiments in critical situations.

Virginia Tech Shootings, Blacksburg, Virginia, United States, 16 April 2007

On 16 April 2007, the Virginia Tech massacre took place on the Blacksburg campus of the Virginia Tech University in the United States. A local student, Seung-Hui Cho, killed 32 people in two separate shooting attacks before killing himself.¹³² The scale of the event attracted the attention of local, national and international news media, and received large media coverage. New media technologies played also an important part in the event. As *USA Today*'s Robert Bianco commented:

The country was, however, learning about this story in new ways. At one point in his remarks, the president quoted a blog, reinforcing the effect changing technology had on this unfolding event, from students text-messaging instant updates to newscasters combing social-networking sites for information on the injured and killed.¹³³

Bianco also stated that “this burst of new media also probably provided the signature image of this tragedy: that shaky cell phone footage capturing the sounds of shots, taken by a Virginia Tech graduate student and uploaded to CNN, which referred to him as an “I-Reporter”.¹³⁴ Bianco also further reflected on the role of the students as citizen journalists and the attitude of CNN to encourage the provision of such images:

The student produced a public record of unquestionable value. But that does not make him a reporter, and labelling him as such blurs the line between reporters, who are held out by their networks as reliable and responsible, and witnesses, who may be undependable no matter how well intentioned. Yet it's clear that CNN and all other outlets are redoubling their efforts to solicit such contributions — perhaps without giving enough thought to the veracity of “user-generated content” or to whether that encourages people to take risks they have not been trained or paid to take.¹³⁵

The behaviour of some of the journalists has also been criticised in academic research, by Kim Walsh-Childers et al., who found out that most individuals affected by the incident “had a negative first-hand experience with journalists covering the shootings” and that “the rush to secure early interviews with students who had been wounded in Norris Hall and with family members of individuals who were killed seems to have resulted in some of the worst behaviour”.¹³⁶ Moreover, according to this study, families of victims were highly disturbed by the lack of compassion and sensitivity that journalists exhibited while asking questions to them in their search for the sensational angle to cover grief and suffering.¹³⁷ Finally, the study also observes that the journalists often rushed to assign blames while ignoring the opinions voiced by their people who were affected by the event.¹³⁸

¹³² “US university shooting kills 33”, *BBC News*, 17 April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6560685.stm>

¹³³ Bianco, Robert, “Wall-to-wall coverage reflects monumental scale, sadness”, *USA Today*, 17 April 2007, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2007-04-17-VA-tech-coverage_N.htm

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Walsh-Childers, Kim; Lewis, Norman P. & Neely, Jeffrey (2011) “Listeners, not Leeches: What Virginia Tech Survivors Needed from Journalists”, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2011, pp.191-205 [pp.195-196]

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 196

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 197

Overall, the cases we described in section 4.1.1.1 underline how mass media and social media can be used adversely in ways that abuses public sentiments. The first two cases we focused on underlined how different actors could exploit their access to media to spread misinformation in order to manipulate public's emotions and consequently behaviour. Later in this chapter, in section 4.2.2, we will discuss in further detail misinformation and misrepresentation as key ethical issues for journalism. Also, in Chapter 5, we will discuss how misinformation and misrepresentation of others may lead to the polarization of factions within a society and how online media may exacerbate such polarization. Second, the case on Virginia Tech Shootings illustrate that the rush for more sensational coverage, and the rush to deliver news as quickly as possible, may create situations within which victims who are already suffering are further victimized by journalists (including, but not limited to, citizen journalists).

RECOMMENDATION

Journalists and citizen journalists alike may, even if unwittingly, contribute to the formation of an information environment within which different actors within the society exploit public sentiments. This may particularly be the case during emergencies when tensions are already high as a result of the uncertainty caused by an event. As such, as Walsh-Childers et al. conclude, in crises a much more careful approach within which all parties involved in dissemination of information “exercise restraint to avoid inundating people already reeling from trauma” is needed.¹³⁹

4.2.1.2 Censorship and Surveillance

According to Beyer, the “freedom of information” movement, which is based on the ideas of “government and corporate transparency”, and elimination of censorship in its all forms, has gained momentum in recent years. This can be seen in examples such as WikiLeaks, Anonymous, and the Pirate Party.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, we have recently seen a number of social movements who have protested various legislations (in different countries) that can jeopardize the diversity of information available online. Examples to such social movements include: 1) a global scale website blackout protest carried out by websites against the SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) and PIPA (Protect Intellectual Property Act) bills (U.S.), which included propositions allowing websites to be shut down if they contain links to copyrighted content,¹⁴¹ and 2) street protests against the recently enacted law in Turkey which gives the Presidency of Telecommunication (TIB) the ability to block websites without a court order.¹⁴² As of the completion of this COSMIC report (March 31, 2014), the bans on Twitter and Youtube in Turkey are clear examples of how such legislations can be exploited by authorities in power to stifle free speech.

Yet, during emergencies, and particularly during political crises, censorship can be an important threat to individuals' ability to share and have access to information. Censorship

¹³⁹ Ibid., 203

¹⁴⁰ Beyer, Jessica L., “The Emergence of a Freedom of Information Movement: Anonymous, WikiLeaks, the Pirate Party, and Iceland”, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2014, pp. 141–154. <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/jcc4.12050> [pp. 141-2]

¹⁴¹ “Sopa and PIPA anti-piracy bills controversy explained”, *BBC*, 17 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-16596577>

¹⁴² Uras, Umut, “New Internet law in Turkey sparks outrage”, *AlJazeera*, 25 February 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/02/new-internet-law-turkey-sparks-outrage-201422312144687859.html>

and self-censorship, which can be defined as media institutions or individuals censoring their own work due to fear of being pressured, reprimanded or even punished, are at odds with values of journalism such as truth, integrity, and access to information.

When the Gezi Park protests broke out, Turkish mainstream media failed to cover the events adequately. For example, the fact that *NTV Tarih*, a popular history magazine, was shut down by its own publisher after a controversy regarding the censoring of an edition within which the Gezi Protests were discussed can be seen as one of the many symbols of self-censorship of mainstream media in Turkey.¹⁴³ Consequently, as discussed in D2.2, protestors and the public turned to social media to be informed on the issue.¹⁴⁴

Censorship, and more generally, the government's influential power over media were not limited to the coverage of events. Well-known Turkish journalists lost their jobs over their critical approach on how media and government responded to Gezi Park protests.¹⁴⁵ One of these journalists is Yavuz Baydar, who was fired by the Turkish newspaper *Sabah* as a result of his opinionated article on the freedom of press in Turkey, which was published in *New York Times*. He states that:

Editorial content is strictly controlled by media bosses who have other business interests and are submissive to the government. With, or more often without, any direct government intervention, they impose self-censorship on a daily basis and silence colleagues who defend basic journalistic ethics. With hardly any union presence in these outlets, there is very little job security.¹⁴⁶

Scholars like Ben Bagdikian and Walter Cronkite argue that media conglomerates, which have various business interests that go beyond media, are concerned about their profits and ratings more than the quality and integrity of the information they circulate.¹⁴⁷ This results in, as Alter puts it, “subordination of journalistic values” to “business values”.¹⁴⁸ On the emergence of self-censorship during times of crisis, Cherian George remarks that:

In restrictive media environments, by definition, we cannot assume that whatever is published is a straightforward reflection of professional intentions. Editorial processes are subject to censorship and self-censorship, and content has to be read as the product of a complex interaction between independent professional judgments and various forms of accommodation to the requirements of the powerful, ranging from complete acquiescence to creative methods of resistance that escape official sanction.¹⁴⁹

On the role of social media throughout Gezi Park protests and how government responded to social media, Amnesty International stated that:

¹⁴³ Finkel, Andrew, “How a history magazine fell victim to self-censorship”, *Freedom House*, <http://freedomhouse.org/report/democracy-crisis-corruption-media-and-power-turkey/how-history-magazine-fell-victim-self>

¹⁴⁴ Papadimitriou, Alex, et al., 2013.

¹⁴⁵ “Wave of Dismissals After Gezi Park Protests”, *We Fight Censorship*, <https://www.wefightcensorship.org/censored/wave-dismissals-after-gezi-park-protestshtml.html>

¹⁴⁶ Baydar, Yavuz, “In Turkey, Media Bosses Are Undermining Democracy”, *New York Times*, 19 July 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/opinion/sunday/in-turkey-media-bosses-are-undermining-democracy.html>

¹⁴⁷ Miller, Robert A, “The Frankenstein Syndrome: The Creation of Mega-Media Conglomerates and Ethical Modeling in Journalism”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2002, pp. 105–110 [p. 107]

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁹ George, Cherian, “Diversity around a Democratic Core: The Universal and the Particular in Journalism”, *Journalism*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2013, pp. 490–503 [p. 498]

In the face of self-censorship exercised by large swathes of the mainstream media in Turkey, social media played an important role in providing information regarding developments during the protests and for those wishing to express their support. Government attacked social media companies and its users with the Prime Minister stating “There is a scourge called Twitter”. Government statements suggested that they had received user information from Facebook but not from Twitter forcing Facebook to issue a statement denying cooperation with the Turkish authorities. The Government later made a statement that it would require Twitter to open an office in Turkey and require it to cooperate on “universal crimes” including defamation. Government made further statements regarding [unspecified] plans to introduce a law to regulate social media and require cooperation to combat “defamation”.¹⁵⁰

The Turkish government’s attempt to control and censor social media, specifically Twitter, during the Gezi Protests began with police custodies of 38 Twitter users for “encouraging the commission of a crime” and “encouraging breaking of the law”.¹⁵¹ An even harsher treatment of online content producers took place in a case in Egypt in 2007, where a blogger was sentenced to four years in jail “for insulting Islam and the president”.¹⁵² In many respects the examples from Turkey and Egypt are in line with Tehranian’s account of media: “While the commercial systems dominate the content of news and entertainment, government systems attempt—often unsuccessfully—to control the flow by censorship within their own territorial sovereignties”.¹⁵³

Another example to the role of governments in blocking and manipulating information during crises is the censorship on the information regarding the SARS epidemic in China by government officials. Even though there were SARS-related incidents and infections as early as November 2002, the Chinese government did not acknowledge the urgency of dealing with the virus until April 2003 and blocked attempts to disseminate information on the issue.¹⁵⁴ According to a news article in *CNN*, the Chinese government censored all information related to the SARS outbreak including its spreading among provinces in China. This was problematic in the context of international efforts to stop the spread of the virus worldwide.¹⁵⁵

Leaking of state and military documents constitutes another important dimension of debates regarding censorship and public’s right to know. For example, in a recent case, Utku Kali, a private in the Turkish army is being accused by the government for sharing with RedHack, a Turkish hacker group, secret documents about Reyhanlı (Turkey) bombings in which 53 Turkish citizens were killed.¹⁵⁶ While RedHack, which leaked the documents to the Internet, denied any involvement by private Utku Kali,¹⁵⁷ the legal process against Kali still

¹⁵⁰ In Amnesty International, *Gezi Park Protests: Brutal Denial of the Right to Peaceful Assembly in Turkey*, London, 2013. <http://www.amnesty.org.tr/ai/system/files/GeziParkiEN.pdf> [p. 50]

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁵² Allan, Stuart, Prasun Sonwalkar, and Cynthia Carter, “Bearing Witness: Citizen Journalism and Human Rights Issues”, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2007, pp. 373–389 [p. 384]

¹⁵³ Tehranian, Majid, “Peace Journalism: Negotiating Global Media Ethics”, *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1, 2002, pp. 58–83 [p. 61]

¹⁵⁴ Zhang, Erping, “SARS: Unmasking Censorship in China”, *China Rights Forum*, No. 3, 2003. http://www.hrichina.org/sites/default/files/PDFs/CRF.3.2003/Erping_Zhang.pdf.

¹⁵⁵ “China censors CNN SARS report”, *CNN*, 15 May 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/east/05/14/sars.censor/>

¹⁵⁶ “Private Arrested As ‘Reyhanlı Cables Leak During Shift’”, *Bianet*, 29 May 2013, <http://www.bianet.org/english/crisis/147019-private-arrested-as-reyhanli-cables-leak-during-shift>

¹⁵⁷ “Family denies private’s role in RedHack leaks”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 30 May 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/family-denies-privates-role-in-redhack-leaks.aspx?pageID=238&nid=47858>

continues.¹⁵⁸ This case is important due to the questions it raises regarding whether leaking secret state and military documents falls within the values of journalism or not. For example, WikiLeaks argues that their stance is based on principles of transparency and freedom of speech derived from Article 19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹⁵⁹ while critics believe that exposing state secrets are threatening national security.¹⁶⁰

As the discussion above implies, censorship of information is also related to increased surveillance of information infrastructures by government, as well as and private corporations. Surveillance, literally meaning “to watch from above”, is defined by Mann as “the capture of multimedia content (...) by a higher entity that is not a peer of, or a party to, the activity being recorded”.¹⁶¹

As our discussions regarding Gezi Park protests in Turkey and Euromaidan protests in Ukraine illustrate, new media technologies are tools of both sousveillance (i.e., citizens using digital recording technologies to collect and share information about potential abuses of power) and surveillance. Secret documents revealed by Edward Snowden show the extent of surveillance even in democratic countries.¹⁶² According to the documents, the British surveillance agency, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), with the support of the National Security Agency (NSA), collected webcam images—which include sexually explicit imagery—of millions of Yahoo users who are not suspects of any criminal activity.¹⁶³ The main ethical challenges here concern the potential misuse of the personal and private data of Internet users by the personnel of intelligence agencies, and the violation of privacy of users whose data transactions are supposed to be protected under user agreements. Such measures taken by intelligence agencies are often justified on the basis of national security such as monitoring terrorist activity or drug smuggling,¹⁶⁴ while Snowden’s documents show that surveillance includes collection and storage of data from Internet users who are no suspects of criminal activity.

In chapter 2, we had discussed the opportunities that new media technologies present in terms of dissemination of information during crises. At the same time, as this section underlines, during emergencies and crises, and particularly during political crises, government authorities will often try to limit the flow of information. In this context, censorship and surveillance of individuals play a critical role in limiting the flow of information from and to the public, jeopardizing individuals’ right to know about events that may have a direct impact on their wellbeing.

Indeed, as discussed in Deliverable 2.3 (D2.3) of COSMIC, heightened surveillance of individuals in online environments may create an environment of fear within which

¹⁵⁸ “Mahkeme, Utku Kalı için Gül’ün kararını bekliyor”, *Evrensel*, 03 March 2014, <http://www.evrensel.net/haber/79565/mahkeme-utku-kali-icin-gulun-kararini-bekliyor.html>

¹⁵⁹ “About”, *WikiLeaks*, <http://wikileaks.org/About.html>

¹⁶⁰ “WikiLeaks source Manning gets 35 years, will seek pardon”, *CNN*, 22 August 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/21/us/bradley-manning-sentencing/index.html>

¹⁶¹ Mann, Steve, “Sousveillance: Inverse Surveillance in Multimedia Imaging”, 2004, pp. 620–627. <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1027673> [p. 620]

¹⁶² Greenwald, Glenn, Ewen MacAskill, Laura Poitras, “Edward Snowden: the whistleblower behind the NSA surveillance revelations”, *The Guardian*, 10 June 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance>

¹⁶³ “Optic Nerve: millions of Yahoo webcam images intercepted by GCHQ”, *The Guardian*, 28 February 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/27/gchq-nsa-webcam-images-internet-yahoo>

¹⁶⁴ “NSA-GCHQ Snowden leaks: A glossary of the key terms”, *BBC*, 28 January 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-25085592>

individuals will refrain from discussing potentially controversial ideas. In other words, surveillance can potentially chill speech, thereby threatening the free flow of information, by leading to what we have described as self-censorship at the beginning of this section.¹⁶⁵ It is in this respect that surveillance can be considered as a key component of authoritarian regimes' abuse of their power to control the flow of information.

RECOMMENDATION

Both censorship and surveillance of individuals constitute key threats to the realization of democratic ideals such as freedom of speech and freedom of association. These threats become even more important during emergencies when public may be in need of information that may have a direct impact on their lives. As such, it is imperative to increase the availability and promoting the widespread adoption of tools, such as Virtual Private Network services, anonymizers, private peer to peer networking applications like Zello, that can be used to assist individuals bypass censorship and protect them against undue surveillance.

4.2.2 Misinformation, Misrepresentation, and Scamming

As scholars like Anton Vedder have remarked, from the point of view of information ethics, because “information on the Internet can be used as a basis for decisions, actions, and policies”, the quality of the information on the Internet is increasingly a morally significant issue”.¹⁶⁶ Vedder suggests that both a critical attitude of the public, and its use of mechanisms that help to check reliability and credibility of sources of information, are critical. Therefore, a second major ethical concern related to the use of media in situations of crisis concerns the diffusion of misinformation during emergencies.

Misinformation can be either the result of certain groups or individuals within a society trying to manipulate an event to deceive others, as for example is the case in scamming or the aforementioned abuse of public's sentiments, or be the result of dissemination of inaccurate information about an event without any malicious intent. With the advent of new media, misinformation has become an increasingly relevant ethical concern. This is due to the ease with which information can be spread by a large number of users, for example through the use of social networks.

As the definition provided in the preceding paragraph suggests, often, misinformation will be the result of members of the public sharing false information that they believe to be accurate with others. For example, in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake in Japan and the meltdown of the Fukushima Nuclear power plant, as a result of the commonly shared misinformation that “iodine in table salt might help them [the shoppers] escape the effects of radiation from Japan's crippled nuclear plant” there was a huge “salt rush” first among Chinese residents on the coastline bordering Japan and later throughout China (Figure 3).

Chinese academics such as Peng Peng, a member of the Guangzhou Academy of Social Sciences, also believed that “the fast pace at which the information spread, through online portals and mobile phones, also helped compound public fears”, and that local citizens

¹⁶⁵ Scifo, Salvatore and Baruh, Lemi, Report on the adverse use and reliability of new media, *D2.3 of the COSMIC project*, 30 November 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Vedder, Anton, “Misinformation through the Internet: Epistemology and Ethics”, in Vedder, Anton (ed.), *Ethics and the Internet*. Antwerpen, Groningen, Oxford: Intersentia, 2001, p. 125-132. [p.125]

“would prefer to keep the commodity at home rather than in the hands of society and it reflects a lack of confidence in the supply system of authorities”.¹⁶⁷



Figure 3: After the Fukushima meltdown, shoppers in China rushed to snap up salt.¹⁶⁸

A concept closely related to misinformation is misrepresentation. Vedder defines misrepresentation as the “provision of misleading information, or providing a false account about a person, organization.” As is often the case with misinformation, misrepresentation can be done “intentionally in order to cause damage to who is being misrepresented for social, economic or political purposes” or unintentionally “for instance when an institution or person is identified mistakenly as being responsible for an action or behaviour”.¹⁶⁹

One example of misrepresentation was discussed earlier in this report; during the Gezi Park protests, the protesters were misrepresented by news media and depicted differently (e.g., such as violent masses or crowds, or even as ‘infidels’ that are out of control) from whom they really were. A second example of misrepresentation we can refer to is the unintentional spread of false information about Sunil Tripathi in the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Bombings. In this incident, discussed in D2.3 and in the preceding chapters in this report,¹⁷⁰ social media users’ rush for identifying the perpetrators of the bombings led to the spread of unverified, false information implicating Sunil Tripathi as the bomber.

Indeed, in a study focusing on the use of social media to relay information in the aftermath of the Boston Bombings, Kate Starbird et al., collected 10.6 million tweets and observed that a

¹⁶⁷ “Lack of trust blamed by academics for salt rush”, South China Morning Post, 19 March 2011, <http://www.scmp.com/article/741360/lack-trust-blamed-academics-salt-rush>

¹⁶⁸ Brenhouse, Hillary, “China’s Great Salt Rush: Nuke Fears Cause Supermarket Swarms”, Time, 2011. <http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/03/17/the-great-salt-rush-nuke-fears-have-chinese-swarmed-supermarkets/>.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.8

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.8

substantial number of rumours were circulated.¹⁷¹ Starbird et al.’s analysis focused on three primary rumours: that a girl was killed whilst running in the marathon, that the perpetrators of the attacks were associated with the Navy Seals, Craft Security or Blackwater Agents, and lastly, the digital vigilante activity and the subsequent misidentification of Sunil Tripathi as one of the bombers. Their analysis of the third rumour consisted of the examination of 29,416 tweets, revealing Twitter was used to discuss the rumour that Tripathi was responsible.

Both examples are indicative of serious ethical concerns that arise from intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of others during times of crises. As we will further discuss in the upcoming chapter, such misrepresentation of individuals may have important consequences in terms of polarizing the community and inciting hatred or prejudice against others, including, but not limited to, racial or ethnic minorities.

Whereas spread of misinformation in general, and misrepresentation of others in particular can either be intentional or unintentional, scamming, as a form of misinformation, is most likely intentional. Scamming involves using illicit “means to collect money, and making trustful users believe that such funds are being destined to disaster relief rather than, in reality, being pocketed by electronic thieves”.¹⁷² As discussed in further detail in D2.3, recent events have shown that during emergencies and crises, the Internet can be used by individuals or groups that aim to unfairly (and often illegally) profit from other individuals by luring users into bogus websites and redirect funds to their illegal activities without the users’ knowledge. An example of when this happened is in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when donations up to \$400,000 that were destined to the American Red Cross ended up in illegal hands.¹⁷³ Increasingly frequent occurrence of such scamming activities may have important implications for public’s trust in online systems for mobilization of aid to victims of emergencies and collection of online donations.

Given these ethical concerns regarding the circulation of misinformation via social media, there is a need for increased verification practices to ensure and encourage the sharing of reliable information in a crisis. The development of handbooks, including for instance *The Verification Handbook: A definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage*¹⁷⁴, for the effective verification of information in a crisis are an important step in promoting good practices in using and sharing information gleaned from sources that may not be entirely reliable. As an example, as identified by Claire Wardle, an approach to verifying content created by other members of the public includes asking four central questions:¹⁷⁵

1. Provenance: Is this the original piece of content?
2. Source: Who uploaded the content?
3. Date: When was the content created?
4. Location: Where was the content created?

¹⁷¹ Starbird, K., J. Maddock, M. Orand, P. Achterman, and R.M. Mason, “Rumors, False Flags, and Digital Vigilantes: Misinformation on Twitter after the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing”, *iConference 2014*, Berlin, Germany, 2014. http://faculty.washington.edu/kstarbi/Starbird_iConference2014-final.pdf.

¹⁷² Scifo, Salvatore and Baruh, Lemi, 2013, p.16

¹⁷³ Gerson, Danielle, “Haiti needs help, swindlers on standby”, *NPR.com*, 15 January 2010, http://www.npr.org/blogs/tellmemore/2010/01/haiti_needs_help_swindlers_on.html

¹⁷⁴ Silverman, Craig, ed., *The Verification Handbook: A Definitive Guide to Verifying Digital Content for Emergency Coverage*, European Journalism Centre, 2014. <http://verificationhandbook.com/>.

¹⁷⁵ Wardle, Claire, “Verifying User-Generated Content”, in Craig Silverman (ed.), *The Verification Handbook: A Definitive Guide to Verifying Digital Content for Emergency Coverage*, European Journalism Centre, 2014. <http://verificationhandbook.com/book/chapter3.php>.

This is just one such example of how the verification of content of social media can be approached when accessing social networking sites for crisis related information. Verification of information is a process,¹⁷⁶ as such verification is crucial to ensuring the wellbeing of others who may be reliant on information for their own safety, or as in the case of digital vigilantes, for verifying any accusations that may be distributed following a terrorist related incident.

RECOMMENDATION

Stakeholders, particularly the news media, should ensure they include extensive verification practices in their dissemination of crowdsourced information. In addition, officials' engagement with new media technologies, particularly social media, can help to correct any false rumours that may be circulated in a crisis. Good practices in the verification of information should be shared with digital volunteer communities who seek to contribute to the sharing and discussion of information in a crisis.

4.2.3 Ethics of News Production

A last major ethical concern related to the use of media in situations of crisis is the ethics of news production. The Boston Marathon bombings, discussed in detail hereinabove, illustrate this concern rather well. During the bombings, some contributors of the website *Reddit* speculated that a missing student, Sunil Tripathi, looked like the bombing suspects who were released by FBI publicly. Via Twitter and other social media, this accusation found its way to the mass media, resulting in a witch-hunt. The rumours regarding Sunil Tripathi obstructed the family's efforts to find him. Also, the family itself became a target of negative comments by online commentators.¹⁷⁷ This case illustrates that false accusations can have a variety of consequences for those involved.

As this example suggests, the fact that new media users have become both producers and consumers of knowledge simultaneously, and that this production process does not require any formal education on the part of the user, implies that important ethical issues should be considered, especially with regard to the reliability and confidentiality of information. This section will focus on these two issues related to the ethics of news production. The next part will focus on issues related to information reliability by focusing on the differences between journalism in mainstream media and citizen journalism in new media. It is followed by a discussion of the confidentiality of news sources.

4.2.3.1 Information Reliability

As a concept, information reliability is related to the extent to which users of the information can be confident about its accuracy and trustworthiness. Reliability of information has acquired an even higher significance because of the increasingly wide variety of sources that users may utilize online to get information.

¹⁷⁶ Silverman, Craig, and Rina Tsubaki, "Creating a Verification Process and Checklist(s)", in Craig Silverman (ed.), *The Verification Handbook: A Definitive Guide to Verifying Digital Content for Emergency Coverage*, European Journalism Centre, 2014. <http://verificationhandbook.com/book/chapter9.1.php>.

¹⁷⁷ The Huffington Post, *Reddit Apologizes For Speculating About Boston Marathon Suspects*, 22 April 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/22/reddit-boston-marathon-apology-suspects_n_3133472.html

It is in this respect that academics and critics often voice concerns about the rise of citizen journalism as a mode of reporting about key events. For example, Keen argues that citizen journalism produces only “superficial observations” rather than “considered judgment” and it disparages “expertise, experience, and talent”.¹⁷⁸ According to this mind-set, journalism is and must be a professional activity that requires professional training and a code of conduct and ethics. John Kelly states that:

The issue is one of standards. For the most part, a newspaper or a TV news operation has some level of legitimacy, a result of its history, its perceived professionalism or authority, its standards or ethics, the trust its users place in it. This legitimacy may be unknown with a blog or user-created site and, indeed, there have been cases where individuals have gamed the system, deliberately posting material they know not to be true. In this new world, old notions of trust may not apply.¹⁷⁹

Illustrating this issue of legitimacy are cases in which “individuals have gamed the system”. An example mentioned by Kelly is the case of Kyle MacRae who deliberately posted a photo from 2000 Montana forest fire to CNN’s iReport citizen journalism portal while identifying it as a fire in Scotland and iReport users were able to discredit the photo quickly.¹⁸⁰ The case of Kyle MacRae suggests that there is a different logic of reliability in citizen journalism:

The fluidity of this approach [citizen journalism] puts more emphasis on the publishing of information rather than the filtering. Conversations happen in the community for all to see. In contrast, traditional news organizations are set up to filter information before they publish it. It might be collaborative among the editors and reporters, but the debates are not open to public scrutiny or involvement.¹⁸¹

According to Clay Shirky, the logic of fact-checking and filtering in professional journalism is “filter, then publish”, while citizen journalism relies on a logic of “publish, then filter”.¹⁸² This approach of publishing without filtering and leaving filtering to crowds implies that while rumours and false information can be disseminated via new media technologies, consumers of information are no longer passive recipients of news; rather they are responsible agents of fact-checking. The latter can be observed when looking at the dissemination of information in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. During this period the dissemination of rumours and false images led both citizen and professional journalists to come up with solutions to filter false information through new media.¹⁸³ Likewise, during this period, online resources were created to inform the public about false information circulating about the

¹⁷⁸ As cited in Kelly, John, “Red Kayaks and Hidden Gold: The Rise, Challenges and Value of Citizen Journalism”, 2009.
https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/Red_Kayaks__Hidden_Gold.pdf [p. 29]

¹⁷⁹ Kelly, John, “Red Kayaks and Hidden Gold: The Rise, Challenges and Value of Citizen Journalism”, 2009.
https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/Red_Kayaks__Hidden_Gold.pdf [p. 30]

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁸¹ Bowman, Shayne, and Chris Willis, “We Media: How Audiences Are Shaping the Future of News and Information”, *The Media Center at the American Press Institute*, 2003.
http://www.hypergene.net/wemedia/download/we_media.pdf [p. 9]

¹⁸² As cited in Bowman, Shayne, and Chris Willis, “We Media: How Audiences Are Shaping the Future of News and Information”, *The Media Center at the American Press Institute*, 2003.
http://www.hypergene.net/wemedia/download/we_media.pdf [p. 12]

¹⁸³ “Digital Media Mashup: Hurricane Sandy”, *Emergency Journalism*, 29 October 2012,
<http://emergencyjournalism.net/digital-media-mashup-hurricane-sandy/>

hurricane and its impact. Examples to such online resources include a Tumblr page,¹⁸⁴ a page in *Snopes*,¹⁸⁵ a website dedicated to urban legends and rumours, and a post in *The Atlantic* by the senior editor Alexis C. Madrigal.¹⁸⁶ The latter post shows how mainstream media can have a positive role in filtering user-generated content. In the post, Madrigal crosschecked the information disseminated in social media by either contacting the original source or by utilizing online image verification systems. Then, Madrigal used his post to share with the public the results about whether a specific piece of information or an image was fake, real, or unverified.

While the approach of Madrigal is still within the confines of “publish, then filter” approach since the material is already published throughout social media, it is based on a systematic editorial analysis by a professional journalist which increases the accountability and credibility of the content since the content of the post is subject to a code of conduct. This example suggests that reporting on new media, unless it is incorporated into or cooperative with a professional newsgathering and reporting institution under editorial supervision, will continue to foster debate on the reliability of information regarding user-generated content.

4.2.3.2 Confidentiality of News Sources

Confidentiality of sources is another important ethical concern that is raised by the increased involvement of citizens in news reporting. Commenting on the differences between professional journalism and citizen journalism with respect to the problem of protecting the confidentiality of news sources, Seth Lewis and Nikki Usher state that complete transparency is neither necessary nor conducive to journalist practices; and hence, not desirable in citizen journalism either:

In all of this, we must acknowledge journalists’ source-related limitations, such as off-the-record confidentiality, state secrecy, and the like. However, open-source journalism [citizen journalism] need not mean revealing and documenting every conversation that takes place, or the results of every interview. Rather, open-source journalism invites the reader to better understand the process through which journalists understand the knowledge that they gather, and choose what to report. Radical transparency is neither called for nor necessarily desirable.¹⁸⁷

Just like with respect to issues related to new media technologies and information reliability, confidentiality of news sources is traditionally an issue of standards and professional codes that are missing in citizen journalism. In addition, Mary-Rose Papandrea’s work underlines that citizen journalists may face additional, legal, hurdles when it comes to protecting the confidentiality of news sources. Papandrea investigates the issue of confidentiality from a legal angle through the notion of “reporter’s privilege”,¹⁸⁸ which can be defined as the right not to be compelled to disclose information or identify sources in the court. In her analysis, Papandrea mentions a legal case within which Apple Inc. demanded the names of news

¹⁸⁴ *Is Twitter Wrong?*, <http://istwitterwrong.tumblr.com/>

¹⁸⁵ *Snopes*, <http://www.snopes.com/photos/natural/sandy.asp>

¹⁸⁶ “Sorting the Real Sandy Photos From the Fakes”, *The Atlantic*, 29 October 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/10/sorting-the-real-sandy-photos-from-the-fakes/264243/#.UI9tROyR9fs.twitter>

¹⁸⁷ Lewis, Seth C., and Nikki Usher, “Open Source and Journalism: Toward New Frameworks for Imagining News Innovation”, *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 35, No. 5, 2013, pp. 602–619 [p. 613]

¹⁸⁸ Papandrea, Mary-Rose, “Citizen Journalism and the Reporter’s Privilege”, *Minnesota Law Review*, Vol. 91, 2007, pp. 515–591, [p. 517]

sources from a website that published leaked information about Macintosh computers. According to Apple Inc., the website was required to share the source information because they (the website owners) are not engaged in “legitimate journalism”. At the end of the legal process, editors of the website and their news sources were protected under the California shield law,¹⁸⁹ which “provides legal protections to journalists seeking to maintain the confidentiality of an unnamed source or unpublished information obtained during newsgathering”.¹⁹⁰

On the other hand, in a case involving a blogger, Shelee Hale, who posted negative comments about a software company called Too Much Media, the Supreme Court of New Jersey decided that the New Jersey shield law does not protect bloggers regarding the confidentiality of their news sources.¹⁹¹ According to the court, the blogger was not entitled to the protection of the shield law because she did not have a connection to news media:

The Supreme Court held Hale did not qualify for protection because the law requires persons invoking the shield to have some connection to a publication that is similar to traditional media, whether online or not. Chief Justice Stuart Rabner wrote in his unanimous opinion that the shield law “language does not mean that a newsperson must be employed as a journalist for a traditional newspaper or have a direct tie to an established magazine. But he or she must have some nexus, relationship, or connection to ‘news media’ as that term is defined.” The court found Hale did not have that qualifying relationship.¹⁹²

According to Mary-Rose Papandrea, “to continue to limit the reporter’s privilege to traditional media outlets and professional journalists would unrealistically ignore how the public obtains its information today”.¹⁹³ While the court cases show that confidentiality of news sources is not a straightforward matter, there seems to be a trend towards inclusion of new media technologies and new media reporters into existing legal texts on confidentiality of news sources and protection of journalists.

The ethical issues discussed in this section with respect to news reporting, information reliability and confidentiality of news sources underline important obstacles that citizen journalists may face in reporting about emergencies. First, due to lack of training in professional codes, citizen reporting may often lead to problems fact-checking and information verification. Second, citizen journalists are at best in murky legal grounds when it comes to protecting their sources. The latter may have important implications for the extent to which citizens may engage in investigative forms of journalism that may expose abuses of power, particularly during crises.

RECOMMENDATION

To the extent that mass media can no longer be considered as having a monopoly over dissemination of news, there is a need to 1) develop measures, such as training programs, that will help increase citizen journalists’ awareness of codes of conduct with respect to information verification, 2) enhance connection between citizen journalists and traditional journalism institutions to assist them in information verification, and 3) legally recognize citizen journalists as information providers who are entitled to similar privileges in reporting news.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 517-518.

¹⁹⁰ “Protecting unpublished information and confidential sources”, n.d., <http://www.thefirstamendment.org/shieldlaw.html>

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Papandrea, Mary-Rose, 2007, p. 591

Chapter 5: Consequences

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5 CONSEQUENCES

This chapter will focus, in more detail, on the potential implications of threats and ethical issues discussed in the previous two chapters. The first part will discuss how rumours and misinformation can contribute to the level of panic among the public and may, consequently, exacerbate the impact of a crisis. Second, we will elaborate on the potential impact of lateral surveillance and vigilante activity during emergencies on interracial and interethnic relations. This part will also discuss how misrepresentation of (and misperceptions about) minorities may impede delivery of assistance to victims of disasters. Third, we will discuss the risks that content consumption in online media, which allows for heightened selective exposure, may pose in terms of polarization during political crises.

5.1 RUMOURS, MASS PANIC AND PUBLIC MORALE

An important potential consequence of the spread of misinformation during emergencies is related to how rumours may impede emergency response by creating mass panic and decreasing public morale. In general, rumours can be defined as “an unverified account or explanation of events circulating from person to person and pertaining to an object, even, or issue in public concern”.¹⁹⁴

It should be noted that a number of factors might contribute to the spread of rumours. First, rumours are more likely to spread at times of uncertainty when people try to make sense of what is happening.¹⁹⁵ Second, any event, whether an explosion, a political crisis, or an earthquake, that increases situational anxiety of the public will increase the spreading of rumours.¹⁹⁶ According to Mark Pezzo and Jason Beckstead, this should not be surprising because transmitting a rumour, even if it is only slightly believable, is an adaptive action. That is, even the slight chance that it is true is sufficient to get people to make sure that their close ones are ready for an impending threat.¹⁹⁷ Third, while word of mouth is still the most common way through which rumours disseminate, increasingly SMS messages and social media are emerging as venues through which rumours are transmitted.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, a recent analysis of the use of Sina Microblog (China) indicates that at times of crises, social media amplifies the offline dissemination of rumours.¹⁹⁹

These three characteristics of dissemination of rumours are key factors that contribute to rumours’ potential to affect large segments of the population during times of crises, create mass panic, and increase the pernicious consequences of the crisis in hand. For example, during the SARS outbreak in 2003, misinformation suggesting that vinegar would make people less vulnerable to SARS created a panic buying of rice vinegar, leading to profiteering

¹⁹⁴ Peterson, Warren A., and Noel P. Gist, “Rumor and Public Opinion”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 1951, pp. 159–167. [p.159].

¹⁹⁵ Bordia, P., and N. Difonzo, “Problem Solving in Social Interactions on the Internet: Rumor As Social Cognition”, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 2004, pp. 33-49. Pezzo, Mark V., and Jason W. Beckstead, “A Multilevel Analysis of Rumor Transmission: Effects of Anxiety and Belief in Two Field Experiments”, *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2006.

¹⁹⁶ Walker, C.J., and C.A. Beckerle, “The Effect of State Anxiety on Rumor Transmission”, *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, Vol. 2, 1987, pp. 353–360.

¹⁹⁷ Pezzo, Mark V., and Jason W. Beckstead, 2006.

¹⁹⁸ Tai, Zixue, and Tao Sun, “The Rumouring of SARS during the 2003 Epidemic in China”, *Sociology of Health & Illness*, Vol. 33, 2011, pp. 677–693.

¹⁹⁹ Bai, Minghan, “Exploring the Dynamics of Rumors on Social Media in the Chinese Context,” Uppsala University, 2012.

as well as the formation of black markets. More importantly, the mode of panic also increased the public's susceptibility to additional rumours about, for example, how the US-Iraq war could create a shortage (leading to additional panic buying of rice and salt).²⁰⁰ Unfortunately, mass media coverage which “continuously escalates the sensationalized aspects, bringing the occurrence from the ordinary, to the extraordinary”²⁰¹ often end up contributing to this mode of panic. Likewise, as discussed in the previous chapter, right after the Fukushima Nuclear Plant meltdown in Japan, the misinformed belief that iodine in salt might help fight the effects of radiation led to a salt rush. In addition to the potential impact on pricing of commodities, such rumours increased public health risks because unsupervised consumption of excessive amounts of iodine can lead to many health complications, the most common of which is heart failure.²⁰²

The uncertainty and additional anxiety created by rumours can have a negative impact at a more macro level as well. For example, Allan Kimmel argues that event-oriented financial rumours—defined as those that are related to events in the political and/or economic environments—can create instability on financial sectors.²⁰³ In D2.3, we discussed how such rumours emanating from a fake tweet, posted on the (hacked) Associated Press' official Twitter account, announcing that there were explosions at the White House, resulted in the loss of 140 points in the Dow Jones Index.²⁰⁴ It is important to note that the potential effects of such a loss in the stock exchange may often be long term. That is, effects of rumours on financial markets, according to Kimmel, are anti-regressive in the sense that trading can be “stuck” in an upward or a downward trend depending on the nature of the rumour.²⁰⁵

It should also be noted that in some contexts, the “rumour mill” might create a feedback loop that leads to the further amplification of anxiety and decline in not only in public morale but also in morale of emergency response professionals.²⁰⁶ Such a decline in morale, and an increase in anxiety, may not only impede emergency response, but also further increase the transmission of rumours, thereby creating the feedback loop in question. Here we discuss two consequences this may result in.

First, as indicated in Homeland Security Presidential Directive-7 of the United States, terrorism in its nature is oriented towards not only inflicting physical harm but also damaging public morale and confidence.²⁰⁷ In such circumstances, as we discussed above and elsewhere in COSMIC, intentional dissemination of false information and propaganda will be part of the strategy of organizations aiming to harm the population.²⁰⁸ Additionally, mass media, and

²⁰⁰ Ma, Ringo, “Spread of SARS and War-Related Rumors through New Media in China”, *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 2008.

²⁰¹ Zgoba, Kristen M., “Spin doctors and moral crusaders: the moral panic behind child safety legislation”, *Criminal Justice Studies: A Critical Journal of Crime, Law and Society*, Vol.17, Issue 4, pp.385-404, [p.388], 2004

²⁰² Brenhouse, Hillary, “China's Great Salt Rush: Nuke Fears Cause Supermarket Swarms”, *Time*, 2011.

<http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/03/17/the-great-salt-rush-nuke-fears-have-chinese-swarming-supermarkets/>

²⁰³ Kimmel, Allan J., “Rumors and the Financial Marketplace”, *Journal of Behavioral Finance*, Vol. 5, 2004.

²⁰⁴ Scifo, Salvatore and Baruh, Lemi, 2013

²⁰⁵ Kimmel, Allan J., 2004.

²⁰⁶ Malet, David, and Mark Korbitz, “Public Risk Communications in Disaster Recovery: Results from a Biological Decontamination Experiment”, *Annual Conference of the Australian Political Studies Association*, 2013.

²⁰⁷ Bush, George W., “Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7, ‘Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization, and Protection’”, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 2003.

²⁰⁸ Scifo, Salvatore and Baruh, Lemi, 2013

individuals increasingly sharing information about an incident (e.g., a bombing like the Boston Bombing) via social media may, even if unwittingly, contribute to what has been called as a “theatre of terror” which magnifies the impact of the rumours and misinformation on public well-being and morale.²⁰⁹

Second, emergencies are events that, by their nature, create a feeling of “no end in sight”, which in turn increases susceptibility to rumour anxiety. In other words, anxiety that will be triggered by the emergency situation will make individuals more likely to get anxious when they get exposed to rumours.²¹⁰ Research also indicates that when anxiety level increase, individuals will be more likely to seek socialization and share the rumours as a way of socialization.²¹¹ Namely, the anxiety that misinformation creates may often be a factor that leads to the further dissemination of the misinformation. While this symbiotic relationship between anxiety and dissemination of misinformation and/or rumour may take place via different modes of communication (including word of mouth), it should be noted that the expanded ability of individuals to engage in selective exposure in online media might potential increase this feedback loop.²¹²

Given these potential pernicious consequences of misinformation (and rumours) for public morale, as well as for the functioning of economic and political systems, an important policy goal is to reduce the extent to which such misinformation will circulate during crises. While there is no one size fits all solution for this problem, it is important to note that rumours are more frequently transmitted in cases when there is a general lack of information from more formal channels.²¹³ This argument is emphasised by the example of rumours about SARS and use of vinegar as a remedy, as discussed above, which emerged in a context within which free flow of information from formal sources was constrained.

Hence, increasing the availability of information for the public from formal sources is key to pre-empting the diffusion of rumours. As David Malet and Mark Korbitz explain, this does not necessarily mean that formal channels will act under conditions of certainty and it does not mean that they will have to provide optimistic forecasts,²¹⁴ such forecasts may be counterproductive because of their potential further decrease trust in formal organizations. Rather, formal channels sharing information about progress that is being made with regard to a crisis and specific suggestions about what individuals can do, have been shown to be productive ways of helping maintain the public morale.²¹⁵ For example, during the more recent H7N9 outbreak in China, the Chinese government adopted a strategy that contrasted with how they (mis)managed the information environment during the SARS outbreak in which they constrained the flow of information. The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention disseminated preventive knowledge and local governments provided daily updates about the progress of the pandemic. Consequently, according to Goodwin and Sun, the trust in

²⁰⁹ Shoshani, Anat, and Michelle Slone, “The Drama of Media Coverage of Terrorism: Emotional and Attitudinal Impact on the Audience”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 31, 2008, pp. 627–640.

²¹⁰ Ma, Ringo, “Spread of SARS and War-Related Rumors through New Media in China,” *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 56, 2008. Malet, David, and Mark Korbitz, “Public Risk Communications in Disaster Recovery: Results from a Biological Decontamination Experiment”, *Annual Conference of the Australian Political Studies Association*, 2013.

²¹¹ Pezzo, Mark V., and Jason W. Beckstead, 2006.

²¹² Ma, Ringo, 2008.

²¹³ Pezzo, Mark V., and Jason W. Beckstead, 2006.

²¹⁴ Malet, David, and Mark Korbitz, 2013.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Chinese government, with regards to the H7N9, was much higher among the public than it has been in past cases.²¹⁶

RECOMMENDATION

Emergencies increase situational uncertainty. In the absence of information from more reliable, formal sources, members of the public may end up relying on less reliable sources of information, potentially increasing the pace with which false information gets transmitted. Hence, formal sources of information should seek to increase transparency in ways that will make sure that public has knowledge about how emergency response is progressing and how individuals themselves may take measures to protect themselves.

5.2 VIGILANTE ACTIVITY, PROFILING, AND RACIAL RELATIONS

A second implication of ethical issues surrounding the use of new media technologies in crises concerns how vigilante activity, combined with spread of misinformation or information that misrepresents certain segments of the population, may hurt relationships between members of a community. Both in D2.3 and in this current deliverable, a key case we discussed with respect to the potential challenges that arise from the use of social media during emergencies was the case of Sunil Tripathi, who was misidentified first on social media, and then on mainstream mass media, as the culprit responsible for the Boston Bombing after going missing on 16 March 2013. In many respects, this case is illustrative of how vigilante activities via social media may quickly get out of hand to put undue attention on not only individuals (such as Tripathi) but also their families (whose search for him was impeded) and communities.

It should also be noted that, while this case might seem like an extreme case, in contemporary societies individuals are increasingly invited to constantly engage in monitoring of each other as a way to manage risks (terrorism or crime). As discussed in D2.3, for example, the concept of “lateral surveillance”,²¹⁷ underlines this trend within which individuals are invited to be constantly vigilant in public spaces to watch for any suspicious activity. In the United States, for example, signs warning the citizens to “say something” if they “see something” constantly remind individuals in various public spaces to be not only vigilant but also to infer malicious intent of others from their behaviour (see Figure 4).

In many respects, this invitation to pay undue attention to others’ behaviour is also creating a slippery slope about who is entitled to reaching conclusions about what actions (and by whom) would count as a sufficient evidence of malicious intent. This ethical, and legal, slippery slope is described by Joshua Reeves, who observes that:

the “say something” part is still mired in legal difficulty. Under ordinary circumstances, if your neighbour saw you having an angry cell phone conversation and falsely accused you of terrorism, s/he would be vulnerable to libel action. But American civil law is being quickly amended to accommodate the evolving needs of a homeland security state. The “See Something Say Something Act of 2011”, which will almost certainly pass into law with broad

²¹⁶ Goodwin, Robin, and Shaojing Sun, “Early Responses to H7N9 in Southern Mainland China”, *BMC Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 14, 2014, <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2334/14/8>.

²¹⁷ Andrejevic, Mark, “The Work of Watching One Another: Lateral Surveillance, Risk and Governance”, *Surveillance and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2004, pp. 479-497.

bipartisan support during the 112th US Congress, protects from libel action those who accuse their peers of terrorism.²¹⁸



Figure 4: New Yorkers taking the train are invited to be vigilant about their surrounding

More often than not, in the post-9/11 world, vigilant attention disproportionately targets certain segments of the population who are stereotypically linked to a type of criminal activity. This is especially the case when perceived threat to public safety is elevated in situations such as the Boston Bombings case. Theories like the “terror management theory” argue that such severe reliance on racial and ethnic stereotypes during times of crises is associated with individuals’ tendency to seek assurances in their own cultural group affiliations. Accordingly, this often involves the devaluation of the racial or ethnic other:

One of the major components of these attitudes is the stereotype that describes the human tendency to resort to a simplified image of a given social group in the face of a complex social reality. Stereotypes frequently include negative evaluative overtones due to the underlying motivational need to evaluate one's ingroup positively and to devalue outgroups. Research on ingroup-outgroup categorization has shown that there is a tendency to evaluate outgroup members at the extremes of various psychological characteristics and to implement differential selective processing and retention of information for ingroup as opposed to outgroup members.²¹⁹

What seems particularly disturbing with respect to the dissemination of information that misidentifies a member of a particular racial/ethnic group as being linked to a terrorist activity, is that even a single exposure to such misinformation may trigger stereotypic attributions, and decrease trust and empathy in racial/ethnic others.²²⁰ Hence, when we consider recent examples of how both mass media and users online rushed to the misidentification of culprits in the Oklahoma Bombing, Virginia Tech Shootings and the

²¹⁸ Reeves, Joshua, “If You See Something, Say Something”: Lateral Surveillance and the Uses of Responsibility”, *Surveillance & Society*, Vol. 10, No. 3/4, 2012, pp. 235–248. [pp.235-236]

²¹⁹ Shoshani, Anat, and Michelle Slone, “The Drama of Media Coverage of Terrorism: Emotional and Attitudinal Impact on the Audience”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 31, 2008, pp. 627–640. [p.630]

²²⁰ Ibid.

Boston Marathon Bombing, it is plausible to expect that, even if corrected later, such (mis)information may have long term implications in terms of racial prejudice and animosity.

While the discussion in this section has thus far focused on the consequences of misinformation with respect to racial relations in the aftermath of man-made crises such as terrorism, it is also important to note that recent research indicates that similar mechanisms of racial stereotyping may exist during natural emergencies as well. Two examples illustrating this are briefly discussed here.

First, a study by McCauley, Minsky and Viswanath indicates that during the H1N1 influenza outbreak, pre-existing perceptions about Latinos factored into how Mexicans and other Latinos were stigmatized by Americans as virus carriers:

Many people in our groups were skeptical about traveling to Mexico anytime soon. In most cases they simply shared an understandable impulse to stay away from the epicenter of a threatening disease. But the tone of the discussion shifted, at times, in ways that suggested an aversive response – a subtle form of stereotyping with respect to Latinos, including the propagation of lay theories about differing lifestyles in the US and Mexico.²²¹

Second, evidence suggests that such stereotypical perceptions of racial or ethnic others may also influence the extent to which individuals are willing to help victims of disasters. For example, in a study conducted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, individuals who held stronger negative attitudes about African Americans were more likely to “perceive the victims negatively and to blame the victims for being hit by Hurricane Katrina. Further, individuals’ negative perceptions and victim blaming tendencies were associated with their perceptions that the emergency situation was less severe and that the victims needed less help.”²²² Similarly, negative attitudes towards the victims of the Haiti Earthquake were associated with lower perceptions of severity of the earthquake and lower intentions to help the victims.²²³

RECOMMENDATION

In crises, both journalists and individuals sharing information online may often rush to reach conclusions and assign blame for the events. In such circumstances, a much more careful approach to reporting is needed to avoid implicating individuals in ways that may reinforce existing racial or ethnic stereotypes. When covering the impact of disasters on communities, it is also key to avoid eradicating essentialist racial categories while not “abandoning the concept of race as a... material experience”.²²⁴

5.3 POLARIZATION AND SOCIAL TRUST

According to the Discourse Theory of Jurgen Habermas, the ideal public sphere, which can be defined as a realm of social life within which individuals can engage with each other to form public opinion, must be diversified and autonomous from the influence of money (economic

²²¹ McCauley, Michael, Sara Minsky, and Kasisomayajula Viswanath, “The H1N1 Pandemic: Media Frames, Stigmatization and Coping”, *BMC Public Health*, Vol. 13, 2013, pp. 1116-1132. [p.1125]

²²² McManus, Jessica L., and Donald a. Saucier, “Helping Natural Disaster Victims Depends on Characteristics and Perceptions of Victims. A Response to ‘Who Helps Natural Disaster Victims?’”, *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, Vol. 12, 2012, pp. 272–275. [p.273]

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Flores, Lisa A, and Dreama G Moon, “Rethinking Race, Revealing Dilemmas: Imagining a New Racial Subject in Race Traitor”, *Western Journal of Communication*, Vol. 66, 2002, pp. 181–207 [p.185].

system) and administrative power (public administration) if it is to function as a socially integrating unit of democracy.²²⁵ Moreover, as Joshua Cohen explains, deliberation in the public sphere should ideally be all-inclusive to ensure plurality.²²⁶ Earlier discussions on health of democratic systems, such as, for example the Federalist Paper 10, published by James Madison in 1787, argue that the existence of multiplicity is a key prerequisite for being able to provide checks and balances on each other.²²⁷

Plurality in the public sphere does not only ensure a balancing of interests that would enable the functioning of democratic deliberation but it would also improve the participants' access to different point of views. As Stuart Mill explains, unless the individual has the ability to refute the opinions of others, indeed unless he/she knows what these arguments actually are, he/she would have no grounds for preferring either one.²²⁸ Ideally, then, public spheres, as long as they are inclusive and pluralistic, make it possible for participants to have access to a variety of people and ideas.²²⁹

According to some academics, online networks may expand the prospects of democratic deliberation. Jerry Kang, for example, underlines the possibility that the Internet can enhance contact between racial groups that would not otherwise interact with each other.²³⁰ Likewise, Putnam argues that unlike in offline environments, individuals in online environments have a greater possibility of overcoming factors such as differences in age, income, race or gender.²³¹

Recently, it has been argued by different scholars that by increasing individuals' ability to engage in selective exposure, defined as the tendency to seek information and attitudes that are congruent with one's attitudes, online media may have important implications for the extent to which individuals are exposed to variety of ideas.²³² In other words, online media may potentially pose a risk for pluralistic democracies by creating "echo chambers" which are formed "when individuals seek to find information and sources that support their viewpoints and filter out countervailing information".²³³

An important consequence of the formation of online echo chambers is what has been named as group polarization. John Turner (1991) argues that there may be different mechanisms at play that may lead to group polarization. For example, the Persuasive Arguments Theory underlines the role that information, or more precisely, persuasive arguments may accumulate to induce group polarization. Accordingly, different members of the same group will share the same opinions on the basis of different reasons. However, intra-group deliberation works so as to expand the initial pool of persuasive arguments that individual members of the group held. Such an expansion in the set of persuasive arguments that individual members hold reinforces the members' opinions, thereby pushing their beliefs to the extreme. Hence, in an

²²⁵ Habermas, Jürgen, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, MIT Press, Boston, 1998.

²²⁶ Cited by Habermas, Jürgen, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, MIT Press, Boston, 1998.

²²⁷ Madison, James, *The Size and Variety of the Union as a Check on Faction: The Federalist No.10*, 1787.

²²⁸ Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty*, The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd, London, 1859.

²²⁹ Sunstein, Cass R., *Republic.com 2.0*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2007.

²³⁰ Kang, Jerry, "Cyber-Race", *Harvard Law Preview*, Vol. 113, 2000, pp.1130-1208.

²³¹ Putnam, Robert D., *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000.

²³² Sunstein, Cass R., 2007.

²³³ Newman, Nic, William H. Dutton, and Grant Blank, "Social Media in the Changing Ecology of News: The Fourth and Fifth Estates in Britain", *International Journal of Internet Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2012, pp. 6–22 [p. 7]

environment of discussion where the same view is based upon different (and probably compatible) reasons, the opinions of the individuals (and the group) will exhibit marked polarization to the extreme.²³⁴

During conflicts such as political crises, polarization may even be stronger because storytellers (online or offline) tend to intensify and exaggerate the opposing views.²³⁵ For example, commentators on the on-going political crisis in Thailand argue that content in social media played a key role in the escalation of animosity between factions:

Networks of political groups in Thailand are the main actors who use information out of its original context. A tactical approach is used to inoculate political values in their fellows as well as attack their political opponents... Most Internet users use this kind of informal information to express their political values and emotions and release political tensions rather than as purely academic information. Together with the fast flow of information, consumption and usage in the information society could backfire and more deeply polarize the current conflict.²³⁶

Likewise, a recent study on polarization in Egypt has found that “a large fraction of strongly polarized domains consist of blogs, in line with other work that shows the importance of this media form for political discourse in Egypt”.²³⁷ This study also found that increased polarization often coincided with periods of violence.²³⁸

RECOMMENDATION

As Gilda Parella argues “language of conflict does not correct itself. It needs active interference to facilitate communication between the conflicting parties. Without such active interference we can expect conflicts and polarization to grow larger”.²³⁹ As such, particularly at times of political crises, the existence of information sources which can play a mediating role between different factions.

²³⁴ Turner, John C., *Social Influence*, Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, Pacific Grove, 1991.

²³⁵ Parrella, Gilda C., “Consensus-Building Journalism: An Immodest Proposal”, *Nieman Reports*, 2011.

²³⁶ Sutjaritthanarak, Mattawan, “Social Media War in the Time of Thailand’s Democracy Crisis”, *Prachatai English*, 2013. <http://prachatai.com/english/node/3794>.

²³⁷ Weber, Ingmar, Venkata R. Kiran Garimella, and Alaa Batayneh, “Secular vs. Islamist Polarization in Egypt on Twitter”, *IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining*, ACM Press, New York, 2013, pp. 290–297.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Parrella, Gilda C., 2011.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6 CONCLUSION

The increasingly widespread use of new media technologies have brought with it important changes with respect to the role that citizens may play in creation, dissemination, and consumption of information. Individuals, once considered to be passive consumers of information, can, nowadays, be much more involved in production and dissemination of information. These changes create new opportunities but also pose new challenges for citizens' involvement in crisis communications. As such the aim of this report was to summarize opportunities presented by and threats and ethical concerns posed by the emergence of new media technologies, and citizens' engagement in emergency communications.

The report is divided into four main sections focusing on:

- Opportunities brought about by new media technologies to citizens' involvement in emergency communications (Chapter 2),
- Threats posed to individuals—as witnesses, victims, reporters, and first responders—and communities by improper utilization of new media technologies during emergencies (Chapter 3),
- Ethical issues raised by the use of new media technologies for dissemination of information (Chapter 4),
- Potential consequences of the threats and ethical issues concerning the use of new media technologies during emergencies and crises (Chapter 5).

In chapter 2, we discuss how new media technologies can help real-time mobilization of social movements as well as emergency response groups.

With respect to actions of social movements during political crises, examples from recent events such as the crises in Turkey, Venezuela, and Ukraine, as well as the Arab Spring, suggest that mass self-communication allows individuals to network with one another and organize themselves via personal contacts and social networks. This, in turn, allows them to organize more securely (privately, anonymously), and without having to rely on leaders or mainstream political organizations such as political parties.

Likewise, our analyses of relief efforts in the aftermath of disasters point to several important benefits that new media technologies can offer. First, new media technologies can help coordination of volunteers who arrive at a disaster-inflicted area before official response teams arrive. Second, there have been a number of instances during which social media platforms, such as Twitter, have helped identify the whereabouts of victims affected by a disaster. Third, particularly in the last decade, new media technologies have proved to be highly affective venues through which collection of donations and their delivery to victims are coordinated at a global scale.

In addition to enhancing the ability of volunteer networks and social activists to mobilize more efficiently during crises and emergencies, new media technologies also provide new opportunities for building or strengthening networks. For example, our analyses of current social movements indicate that with the help of online networks, social movement can create much more open (i.e., participatory) decisions making systems and horizontal governance structures. Likewise, digital services, such as the ReliefWeb service, can help link local and

international emergency response organizations and can help enhance the production and sharing of know-how on emergency response preparation.

As discussed in chapter 2, an important obstacle against the proper utilization of new media technologies for the coordination of emergency response activities is that many of the applications are either too specialized (i.e., used in a specific type of emergency at a specific location) or are not accessible for local units and/or volunteers engaging in emergency response. It should also be noted that many of the consumer-grade communication devices (such as smart phones) that are now widely used by the public might prove highly useful in terms of helping trickle-down information solutions used in emergency response. With these considerations in mind, COSMIC makes the following recommendation:

- *A crucial policy goal for improved utilization of new media technologies during emergencies is supporting research and development activities that are oriented towards 1) improving the interoperability of different new media solutions for emergency response; 2) rather than developing stand-alone devices running these solutions, increasing the adoption of these solutions in the field by making them available in devices with different capabilities.*

In line with discussions from D4.1, our analysis also underlines the potential benefits of utilizing new technologies, such as simulation games, in reaching out to the public and training citizens as well as first responders for emergency preparation. Relatedly, chapter 2 also discusses the ways in which new media technologies can enhance disseminate information to the wider public. For example, in recent political crises, such as during the Green Revolution in Iran, Iranian diaspora located in Europe and United States played a key role in building global awareness of what was happening in Iran. Likewise, in the aftermath of the Fukushima Nuclear Plant meltdown, at a time when information from government sources was severely limited and was not considered to be credible by the public, local experts used social media to disseminate valuable, and easy to understand, information for the public.

Finally, chapter 2 also provides examples to how communication via new media technologies in the aftermath of emergencies can not only help individuals' psychological wellbeing but also help build community resilience, thereby contributing to the recovery stages of an emergency. In this light, COSMIC makes the following recommendation:

- *Stakeholders in emergency response and recovery should seek to further their understanding of the potential psychological benefits of use of new media technologies in crisis situations. This can help improve communications with the public and develop better strategies for building communication and intervention programs that can enhance community resilience.*

Chapter 3 focused on how, the use of new media technologies in responding to emergencies may pose a threat to the safety of citizens.

The first issue that chapter 3 discussed was the intentional or unintentional invasions of privacy that may ensue from the utilization of digital recording devices and disseminating the recorded content via social media or crowdsourcing applications. For example, while recording the scene of a crisis, users may record and share personally identifiable information such as license plates, putting individuals' privacy at risk. Even in cases when personally identifiable information is not recorded, use of weak identifiers may expose the identity of an

individual. Particularly during political crises, exposition of identities of individuals may threaten their physical safety as well as putting them at the risk of being the target of undue pressure and even imprisonment in authoritarian regimes. Given these risks, COSMIC recommends that:

- *Stakeholders involved in recording and sharing materials such as photos, videos, sound recordings from sites of emergencies and crises should make sure that they strip, to their best ability, any information that can lead to the identification of individuals. In this respect, more education and training of stakeholders, including citizens, is needed to increase awareness of methods that can be used to protect the identity of individuals involved in a crisis.*

The recommendation provided above is also relevant to another risk that chapter 3 discusses in some detail: online vigilante activity. Namely, in recent crises, such as in the aftermath of the Boston Bombings and the riots that followed the 2011 ice hockey Stanley Cup finals in Vancouver, Internet users have utilized social media to take law enforcement into their own hands to identify and share information online about individuals they believed were perpetrators. In such instances, Internet users may often contribute to the dissemination of false information suggesting that an individual is a perpetrator. In addition to the emotional harm (as a result of the public embarrassment) that this may inflict on the individuals who are mis-identified as perpetrators of a wrongdoing, such incidents may escalate to an extent that the public also assumes the role of a prosecutor, labelling and even physically harming an innocent individual.

Risks associated with the recording of crises are not limited to those who are recorded without sufficient protection of their privacy. Additionally, as discussed in chapter 3, reporters, including citizen journalists, may often place themselves in harm's way while trying to catch that "newsworthy" moment. While citizens certainly should be expected to do their best to protect themselves while engaging in reporting activities, part of the problem—and hence the solution—lies in a media system that indiscriminately seeks footage without considering the risks that individuals recording the footage face. A number of media outlets, such as the GuardianWitness program, have already introduced measures that incentivize individuals to avoid placing themselves in danger while recording events. In line with such measures, COSMIC recommends:

- *Education and training programs that increases citizens' awareness of the limits of gaining newsworthy items. In addition, news institutions that engage in transmission of citizen generated content should develop rules of conduct that will reduce the chances that content generated in ways that put citizen journalists in danger are disseminated.*

Finally, chapter 3 summarizes the ways in which citizen involvement in recording and dissemination of information about events may place respondents and security officers at risk by revealing sensitive information that can be misused for malicious purposes. For example, chapter 3 discusses how, during the 2013 Kenya shopping mall hostage crisis, tweets by the public may have revealed information that attackers could use in their own advantage. Accordingly COSMIC calls for:

- *Outreach and education programs that can help citizens become aware of and minimize risks associated with the widespread dissemination of tactical*

information regarding responder activities in particular types of crises such as terrorism.

In parallel to the discussions provided regarding the threats to safety that may arise from use of new media technologies to disseminate information, chapter 4 discusses ethical concerns concerning production and dissemination of information via online networks during crises.

Utilizing the definition of ‘information ethics’ as a branch of ethics that deals with issues related to creation, organization, dissemination and use of information, chapter 4 starts by discussing how access to information dissemination resources may be abused by different stakeholders to exploit the sentiments of the public to manipulate them. This section utilizes three brief case studies: 1) Istanbul Pogrom (1955) during which, as a result of a rumour spread about the bombing of the Turkish consulate in Salonika, rioters targeted Greek minorities in Istanbul; 2) Rumours about an attack on a woman wearing headscarves in Istanbul (2013); 3) Virginia Tech Shootings (2007).

Through the first two case studies, we argue that the use of mass media and/or social media to exploit public’s sentiments at times of crisis may lead to increased animosity within a society. The third case on Virginia Tech Shootings, on the other hand, underlines how a rush for providing a sensational coverage of an emergency may create ethical problems when journalists (or citizen journalists) 1) quickly assign blame to individuals or groups even though there is little evidence supporting the claim, and 2) exploit the vulnerability of the victims to get noteworthy sound bites from them without respecting their opinions, their privacy or their emotions.

As a second form of abuse of power with respect to dissemination of information during emergencies, chapter 4 focused on surveillance of the public and censorship of information. The chapter described how during crises, censorship and self-censorship may pose important threats to the ability of citizens to share and have access to information. It is important to note that such examples to attempts at censoring information may be seen both during political crises, such as Gezi Protests in Turkey, and during natural disasters, such as during the SARS epidemic in China. Relatedly, chapter 4 also identifies surveillance as a related misuse of power that may impede on the public’s right to have access to information. Namely, the chapter argues that without sufficient protection of privacy of individuals, expansion of state surveillance may chill speech. In the light of these discussions regarding the potential ethical problems associated with censorship of information and surveillance of the public, COSMIC’s recommendation is as follows:

- *During crises, when surveillance and restrictions placed on speech are more acute, protection of individual liberties, and particularly the right to associate, speak and have access to information, will require widespread adoption of tools, such as VPN services, anonymizers, that can help individuals counter surveillance and bypass censorship attempts. Such widespread adoption of counter surveillance and counter-censorship tools can be achieved by a concerted effort by civil rights organizations that can promote their use and application developers that can make such tools more accessible (i.e. easier to use) for the wider public.*

In addition to focusing on the ethical implications of abuse of power during crises, chapter 4 also summarized key ethical issues pertaining to information accuracy and reliability. In the section on misinformation, we discussed in detail the types of misinformation that may spread

during crises. We particularly focused on spreading of rumors and spreading of misinformation that may, either intentionally or unintentionally, lead to the misrepresentation of individuals and/or communities. This section on misinformation also discussed the implications of scamming activities on public's trust in online systems that collect donations for victims. In the light of these concerns about the diffusion of misinformation in online environments, COSMIC recommends that:

- *Stakeholders involved in dissemination and use of information in online networks should adopt detailed verification practices both before disseminating information and while consuming it.*
- *Guidelines about information verification methods and approaches, such as information verification handbooks, should be widely disseminated by stakeholders to the public.*

The last section of chapter 4 focused on ethics related to news reporting. Namely, we discussed issues related to two dimensions of ethics of news production: reliability of information and confidentiality of sources.

Our discussion of reliability of information in news reporting starts by underlining the fact that unlike professional journalists, most citizen journalists lack professional training and knowledge about codes of conduct in news reporting. Relatedly, citizen journalism also differs from professional journalism in the way in which it approaches fact checking. Namely, whereas professional journalism is characterized by a “filter, then publish” approach, citizen journalists often adopt a “publish, and then filter” approach within which information is first disseminated and then checked, by crowdsourcing, for accuracy.

Recently, there have been examples to how filtering of citizen journalist content by editors experienced in news reporting can help identify and filter out false information. For instance, chapter 4 summarizes how Alexis C. Madrigal, senior editor in *The Atlantic*, crosschecked information disseminated online about Hurricane Sandy and shared with the public whether a piece of information was real, fake, or unverified. Such examples suggest that enhancing collaboration between established journalistic institutions and citizen journalists may, at least partly, help increase the reliability of information that circulates online.

With respect to confidentiality of news sources, chapter 4 argues that citizen journalists are at a disadvantage because they are often not afforded the “reporter’s privilege”, which protects journalists from being compelled to reveal their sources. It can further be argued that when combined with the extensive surveillance practices that may chill free speech, the lack of “reporter’s privilege” may have important implications for the ability of citizen journalists to conduct investigative reporting.

In the light of these considerations regarding information reliability in news reporting and citizen journalists’ rights regarding confidentiality of sources, COSMIC recommends:

- *Develop measures, such as training programs, to help increase citizen journalists’ awareness of codes of conduct with respect to information verification.*
- *Enhance collaboration between citizen journalists and traditional journalism institutions to improve information verification.*

- *Develop policies to recognize citizen journalists as information providers who are entitled to privileges afforded to “professional” journalists associated with news institutions.*

Chapter 5 provides a detailed overview of the potential implications of the threats and ethical issues discussed in the previous two chapters. The first section of this chapter discusses how misinformation and rumours increase the level of panic in public during times of crisis. Such an increase in the level of panic may have an impact on the proper functioning of markets for goods as well as on political and financial stability in a country. Moreover, as chapter 5 outlines, rumours can amplify the negative effects of a disaster by creating a feedback loop within which, the panic that rumours create make the public more susceptible to dissemination of additional rumours.

One important measure that can help counter the rumour mill during a crisis is the regular provision of information from formal sources. COSMIC recommends that:

- *The information provided by formal sources should provide updates about the progress that is being made (without overestimating the extent of the progress) and should contain suggestions that the public can implement to reduce the risk they are exposed to.*

The second section of chapter 5 focuses on the potential impact of lateral surveillance and vigilante activity, combined with spreading of misinformation during emergencies, on interracial and interethnic relations. This section argues that more often than not, lateral surveillance relies on racial or ethnic stereotypes in identifying potential suspects, which implies that certain segments of the population, like racial minorities, will be disproportionately targeted.

Recent research also indicates that even short amounts of exposure to content that misrepresents other racial groups may decrease trust in racial/ethnic others. What this implies is that when information that misidentifies an individual from an ethnic minority as a culprit of an event (like a bombing) spreads online, even if the false information is then corrected, the potential impact of the misinformation on racial stereotypes will not be easy to eradicate. Consequently, as in our previous recommendations regarding ethical issues raised by misinformation, we recommend that:

- *While reporting about a crisis, journalists and citizens need to adopt a very careful approach to news reporting to avoid implicating individuals in ways that may reinforce existing racial or ethnic stereotypes.*

In the final section of chapter 5, we discuss in detail the potential implications of utilization of social media, which enhance individuals' ability to engage in selective exposure, during political crises may increase the risks that factions within a given community will increasingly be polarized. During conflicts such as political crises, polarization may even be stronger because of the tendency of storytellers to intensify the reporting of conflict. As such, we recommend that:

- *Particularly at times of political conflicts, the existence of media outlets that can play a mediating role between different factions is a necessary condition for reducing polarization in a given society.*