

The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Moral Dilemmas of Journalism in Kenya's Politics of
Belonging

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Abstract

This thesis explores the strategies pursued by Kenyan journalists as they contend with “the politics of belonging” in their work, arguing that the choices journalists make in the micro-processes of news production can be understood and guided from a moral perspective. The study addresses lingering questions about how journalists experience and respond to social divisions that can be created in the dynamic interaction between ethnic identity, personal networks and competitive party politics that characterizes a politics of belonging. Theoretically, it builds on an interpretation of Roger Silverstone’s normative theory of morality in the *mediapolis* and on the concepts of autonomy and agency developed within the sociology of journalism. A participatory and action-oriented methodology is employed to examine journalism practice: 10 journalists were engaged through a series of participatory workshops and interviews, and participant observation was undertaken through collaborations with these journalists on a variety of news experiments. Additional formal and informal interviews were conducted with other stakeholders who have an interest in news production.

The thematic analysis of the resulting corpus of field notes and interview transcripts suggests that the Kenyan journalists who participated in the research experience the politics of belonging as a complex set of social pressures in their professional relationships, which create a series of challenges, trade-offs and dilemmas that they strategically negotiate in their daily practices and in the discourse of their news reports. The empirical analysis argues that the theoretical framing of journalism practice — as envisaged by Francis Nyamnjoh and other scholars seeking to formulate African alternatives to Western traditions of journalism — can be strengthened by integrating the concepts of journalistic autonomy and moral agency as developed in this thesis. The dissertation also offers insights into how such theoretical framings can be developed and implemented in the context of journalistic practice.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context

A prominent TV journalist in Kenya, when preparing a special report to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Kenyan independence, anxiously anticipated the reaction he would receive from family members and former schoolmates when it aired. He had felt obliged to include in the report how the first president, Jomo Kenyatta, and his family members had used the influence of the presidency to acquire vast tracts of land in the country. This was, as he saw it, an historical fact that could not be left out of the nation's history. But many of his family and friends, who belong to the same Kikuyu ethnic group as Kenyatta, would, he said, be expected to see it differently. He knew this because of the reactions he had received to his past reports. His father had once scolded him for being so critical of his own people in his work. On another occasion, with a national election approaching, an old friend from school, now a politician, called the journalist to ask for a favour, adding a reminder at the end of the conversation that they both harked from Mount Kenya. The journalist laughed when he recalled how the reference to Mount Kenya – an important symbol of Kikuyu culture – was intended to evoke his sense of ethnic loyalty. For this journalist, the choice seemed clear. He would do his job according to his professional convictions and would stoically endure pressure from family and friends, regarding it as an occupational hazard.

As clear as the choice may have seemed for the journalist in this instance, that he faces this predicament in the first place has been an issue of concern to scholars of African journalism – and is the concern in this study. This thesis explores how journalists in Kenya contend with issues of ethnic identity in their work, suggesting that the issues are both personal and professional, both private and political. Dilemmas are confronted in their everyday practice that are often more subtle and more difficult than those described above by the journalist. In this study I investigate these dilemmas, finding that they are ultimately moral – and that they are best understood as normative questions about how to construct

social boundaries in news reports that are appropriate for sustaining a democratic politics in a diverse, multinational state (Kymlicka, 1995) such as Kenya.

In Kenya such boundaries have at times become deep social fractures that foster violence. Following the contested 2007 elections, more than 1,000 Kenyans were killed by neighbours and fellow villagers in hate crimes driven by simmering historical grievances and notions of autochthony; and instigated by elites (Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission, 2013; Waki, McFadyen, Kambale, Kegoro, & Manjanja, 2008). In some cases, the violence was fuelled by local language radio stations that allowed hate speech to be aired during call-in shows (Ismail & Deane, 2008a; Somerville, 2011). For their part, national media outlets were criticized for failing to cover the violence, casting the country into an information blackout that was said to exacerbate rumour and fear (Reporters without Borders, International Media Support, & Article 19, 2008).

Francis Nyamnjoh argues that such failings in African media are pre-ordained by conflict between the norms of Western journalism and the realities of identity-based politics, which he describes as a *politics of belonging*. This politics of belonging refers to a dynamic relationship between notions of ethnic identity and autochthony, networks of kinship and reciprocity and competitive politics. In many African countries that share a legacy of colonial rule, the politics of belonging have often been linked to what is described as neo-patrimonialism (Kelsall, 2012), a structure of political clientelism that exploits sentiments of ethnic chauvinism, often with balkanizing results. Nyamnjoh argues that journalists working in this environment, like the one described above, are faced with a false dichotomy between the principles of universal citizenship and liberal democracy and the “alternative ideas of personhood and agency in the cultural communities of which they are a part” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 3). This, he suggests, leads to a polarizing choice: to serve their cultural community or to eschew it “in the name of modernity and civilisation” (Nyamnjoh, 2015).

Under liberal democracy where the individual is perceived and treated as an autonomous agent, and where primary solidarities and cultural identities are discouraged in favour of a national citizenship and culture, the media are expected to be disinterested, objective, balanced and fair in gathering, processing and disseminating news and information. The assumption is that since all individuals have equal rights as citizens,

there can be no justification for bias among journalists. But under popular notions of democracy where emphasis is on interdependence and competing cultural solidarities are a reality, journalists and the media are under constant internal and external pressure to promote the interests of the various groups competing for recognition and representation. The tensions and pressures are even greater in situations where states and governments purport to pursue liberal democracy in principle, while in reality they continue to be high-handed and repressive to their populations. (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 38–39)

Nyamnjoh's observations present a compelling critique to the dominant templates for media development that emerged out of the political and economic transitions of the former states of the Soviet Union since the early 1990s. In this region, Northern donors and multilateral institutions, keen to speed up the transition to market capitalism and democratization, urged the privatization of the media as a counterbalance to state-driven propaganda (Jakubowicz, 2005; Putzel & Zwan, 2006). In Africa, this approach is embodied in the work of the United Nations (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2007), World Bank (Norris, 2009), and non-governmental organizations such as Internews (Nelson & Susman-Peña, 2011), which tend to emphasize market-based solutions to media freedom and watchdog journalism. Moreover, these prescriptions are often prevalent in the institutions that train journalists in Africa (Banda, 2009; Hochheimer, 2001; Skjerdal, 2011b).

In this thesis I seek both to challenge and to deepen Nyamnjoh's account. Based on my study of journalism practice, I suggest that Nyamnjoh neglects how journalists understand and respond to the politics of belonging, particularly through the micro-processes encountered in their daily working lives. This neglect of journalistic agency and the role of practice arguably is a weakness insofar as it limits Nyamnjoh's vision for an alternative to Western watchdog journalism.

Nyamnjoh, with other scholars, calls for approaches to journalism in Africa that would allow for a greater acknowledgement of the interdependence of individuals within communities and conviviality among communities, but he and others offer little guidance for how African newsmakers can realistically arrive at such an alternative. Normative journalism frameworks in the African context such as *ubuntuism* (Blankenberg, 1999; Christians, 2015), peace journalism (Galtung, 2003; Hackett, 2006) or development journalism (Banda, 2006), seem to

downplay the challenges of ethnic politics or to offer a naïve communitarian view that is arguably at odds with the challenges of contemporary politics.

This thesis seeks to avoid these shortcomings both theoretically and methodologically. Theoretically, it seeks to build a conceptual framework that is actor-oriented, particularly by remaining sensitive to the multifaceted dimensions of how a politics of belonging might influence a journalist. This theoretical framework is also intended to be both explanatory and normative: to shed light on why journalists make the decisions they do, whilst still contemplating the potential for change. The methodological design of the thesis, derived from the action research tradition, seeks to complement these aspects of the conceptual framework by fostering a praxis amongst the participating journalists that encourages them to critically reflect on their current choices. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to better understand how journalists experience and respond to the politics of belonging in their work and to develop a normative approach that might better serve them, and those who train and support them, in this challenge.

1.2 The moral strategies of Kenyan journalists

By morality, I refer to intersubjectivity, a concept that has been defined in a number of ways, but that can be simply described as “the variety of possible relations between people’s perspectives” (Cornish & Gillespie, 2010). The study of intersubjectivity takes on a distinctly moral aspect when it is concerned with conceptualizing these relations in an idealized, or normative, form – as exemplified by the work of such scholars as Paolo Freire (Freire & Bergman Ramos, 1979), Jurgen Habermas (Habermas, 1990) and Roger Silverstone (Silverstone, 2007).

Silverstone’s conceptualization of *mediation* furnishes an overarching concept for meaning-making, whilst the moral obligations of his mediapolis – truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance – provide the normative dimension that is incorporated into the conceptual framework for this research. Silverstone approaches the topic of morality with a particular concern for our intersubjectivity with the *other* – “to the judgement and elucidation of thought and action that is oriented towards the other, that defines our relationship to her or him in sameness

and in otherness, and through which relationship our own claims to be a moral, human, being are defined” (Silverstone, 2007: 7).

Silverstone sets a high moral standard, implying both epistemological and ontological commitments. I suggest that this approach is vital for a reflective praxis that asks journalists not only to consider how they should best portray others, but to reflect also on how their own identity is at play and at stake in the decisions they make. My interpretation of Silverstone’s work is also well suited to the task because it supports a framework that is actor-oriented, holistic and attuned to the dialectic nature of agency at the intersection of the private and public realms. This latter aspect will be shown to be especially important in the light of how journalists contend with how ideas about political legitimacy are contested at the intersection of the public and the private within a politics of belonging.

That said, Silverstone’s work does not easily account for the complex and multiple positions that journalists occupy in news production, and his framework does not lend itself to providing a clear vision of a process through which the mediation of ethnic conflict or historical grievances (to name two issues encountered by Kenyan journalists) might become more moral; he does not provide a basis for indicating how change can occur in practice. I examine the sociology of journalism and various scholarly approaches to morality in news as a means of complementing the insights arising from Silverstone’s focus on mediation. In Chapter 3, I suggest that the notion of journalistic autonomy can be usefully applied to understanding the dialectic that situates journalists in the push and pull of their organizations, their genre, their societies and communication technologies. Approaches to morality in the news are drawn upon to illustrate how journalists may demonstrate a moral reflexivity with regard to the discourses, practices and technologies of journalism.

The core concepts – **journalistic autonomy** and **moral agency** – serve as focusing devices for the empirical research. Journalistic autonomy is conceptualized as the reflexivity that journalists exercise in regard to the *forms* of the news genre. These forms are understood as the linguistic, aural and visual techniques through which the news may “naturalize” an account (Richardson & Corner, 1986), and they

are examined with regard to their close links to the procedures, routines and practices of news production. The latter, moral agency, is developed and used to shed light on how journalists aim to shape the *content* of news: the discursive or connotative meanings of the news texts they produce. Moral agency is initially conceptualized as the ability of journalists to bring truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance (Silverstone, 2007) into the texts that they and their institutions produce. Journalists are expected to seek to exercise moral agency through unique **strategies** motivated by specific **moral intent** that can be revealed and interpreted within the micro-level processes of journalistic practice. The overarching research question that follows from this conceptual framework is “*What constitutes moral agency for journalists working within a politics of belonging?*”

Action research is the methodological approach that is used in this study; specifically, the research design sought to create a *praxis* that would enable journalists participating in my study in Kenya to reflect upon and strengthen their strategies for moral agency, whilst also creating an opportunity for these strategies to be observed. By virtue of its dialogic and participatory nature, my praxis-based approach to action research enables my empirical research to focus on agency, intersubjectivity and praxis as a bridge between normative theories of morality and journalistic practice.

This research was facilitated by a project called the Networked News Lab, which assembled a group of 10 successful journalists who had demonstrated an extraordinary moral commitment in their work. Over the course of a year, I repeatedly assembled these journalists for collective discussions, met with them individually and worked with them on stories and projects with the intention of finding new and better ways of doing journalism. This engagement produced a corpus of data – notes from participatory workshops, interviews and field notes from participant observation, as well as a collection of reports and stories published or broadcast by these journalists. The corpus of data is examined through a thematic analysis that focuses especially on illuminating practices that align with the core concepts, but which also enables reflection with a view to developing insight to advance theoretical debates and to suggest new normative approaches to practice.

The Kenyan journalists who participated in the research are shown to experience the politics of belonging as a complex set of social pressures exerted in their professional relationships with colleagues, sources and the public. They are shown to deploy strategies to evade or subvert these pressures. The study reveals that they face a complicated set of discursive calculations in producing their texts, forcing them to confront trade-offs and dilemmas in their efforts to counter divisive political narratives in news reports.

In the light of the empirical analysis, the thesis revisits notions of journalistic autonomy and moral agency in the concluding chapter, suggesting that moral agency is not only detected in the texts of journalist stories, but also operates as a force for greater intersubjectivity in the relationships that sustain the news production process. Moral agency is understood not as a property possessed by an individual, but as a social process, one that may be strengthened through reflexivity, or autonomy, whereby journalists reflect on their moral intent and strategies.

The findings of the study challenge Nyamnjoh's understanding of how a politics of belonging is experienced by journalists – pointing to how it is manifest in the numerous, small vexing challenges and dilemmas of professional practice, and is not experienced as the monumental predicament that Nyamnjoh seems to portray. Journalists are not so much “torn” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 28) by the politics of belonging as they are *tangled* by it, I will argue. My analysis supports a questioning of notions of objectivity and detachment that are central to Western traditions of journalism, but also points to how Nyamnjoh and others writing in a similar tradition undervalue the extent to which journalism norms are interpreted and adapted to suit the particular purposes of journalists. The findings of this thesis suggest that the norms and values of Western journalism do not necessarily need to be discarded, but instead better adapted to local and national context.

The results of the study provide both support for and critiques of Silverstone's framing of the mediapolis and reflections on the ways in which African theorizations of media's role in the politics of belonging can be strengthened. The mediapolis is found to provide a rich normative framework through which to

foster a reflective praxis among Kenyan journalists. The analysis suggests, however, that in addition to the obligations within a social context of media production as envisaged by Silverstone, understanding is needed of a more complex array of mediated relationships than Silverstone is generally considered to acknowledge. The importance of *trust* as a key ingredient in managing the mediation process at the complex intersection of news production and the politics of belonging that Kenyan journalists in this study occupy is highlighted.

These findings contribute insights into how alternative forms of journalism can be fostered to better contend with post-colonial realities and to support social progress where it has been hampered by social divisions.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters, including this introduction. In Chapter 2, the context and significance of the thesis are elaborated through a discussion of how scholars have addressed issues of media, ethnicity and politics in Africa – providing an assessment of the contributions and weaknesses in this body of work. This chapter also explains why Kenyan journalism is selected as the focus for the empirical research.

Chapter 3 provides a critical appraisal of Silverstone’s framework for examining mediation and the mediapolis and draws upon relevant literatures in the sociology of journalism tradition and perspectives on morality in the news, leading to the proposal of a conceptual framework that emphasizes the importance of journalistic autonomy and moral agency.

The methodology for this thesis is detailed in Chapter 4. A praxis-based action research methodology is set out that includes a research design that focuses on how the participating journalists contend with social divisions in the choices they make in their professional practice. This chapter introduces the Networked News Lab and its management as a site for the action research and discusses the methods for data collection and for data analysis. The methods of data collection consisted principally of participatory workshops, interviews, participant observation, and the collection of news texts – all of which was subjected to a thematic analysis with the aid of Nvivo software. This chapter also considers the limitations of the study.

The subsequent two chapters, 5 and 6, present the analysis of the empirical data from two perspectives and provide a further elaboration of the concepts of journalistic autonomy and moral agency, respectively, based on the empirical analysis. Chapter 5 draws from the participatory workshops, interview and participant observation data to examine whether and how journalists express a *moral intent* as they exercise their journalistic autonomy. Chapter 6 deepens this analysis, drawing upon participatory reflections by the journalists on their own news texts to investigate how discursive strategies for moral agency come to be represented in their news reports.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by providing an overall analytical synthesis in response to the research questions and a consideration of the implications for the theoretical refinement of the conceptual framework, avenues for future research and suggestions for a practical application of praxis in the field of journalism. A concise summary of the analysis and findings from this study can be found in the first half of that chapter.

2 Kenyan Media and the Politics of Belonging

2.1 Chapter overview

The aim of this chapter is to establish the context and significance of the research. The context for the study can be described succinctly as the production of news within Kenya's "politics of belonging", a phrase that denotes a dynamic relationship of forces: notions of ethnic identity and autochthony; networks of kinship and reciprocity; and competitive politics, amongst others. The research is intended to contribute to empirical knowledge on how journalists interact with the politics of belonging through their work, and to contribute theoretical insights into the process by which social divisions are mediated through the news production process.

The chapter first reviews how scholars have addressed issues of ethnicity and tribalism in African politics, highlighting the conceptual advancements in this area and the lingering ambivalence about the role of ethnicity in contemporary politics. The chapter then examines the insights of Francis Nyamnjoh into how this ambivalence is reflected in the conduct of African news organizations, presenting journalists with a dilemma of how to cope with competing loyalties and duties in their work. Whilst Nyamnjoh captures the challenge well, his account falters, however, insofar as he gives little attention to the agency that journalists are potentially able to exert when confronted by this dilemma. He does not consider how journalists themselves might understand the predicament and whether they have any discretion to respond strategically or purposefully to it – a gap this thesis aims to address.

The limited research relevant to the politics of belonging in Kenyan media points to a number of unanswered questions in this regard. A brief review of this literature suggests that there is greater variability between African countries than Nyamnjoh concedes in his account, and even considerable variability within Kenya's own media. Furthermore, there are clues that suggest journalists may not confront the politics of belonging in the manifest fashion that Nyamnjoh depicts,

but instead through a number of everyday experiences in their personal and professional lives, pointing to a need to understand their choices in these micro-level scenarios. In addition to the need to understand these choices empirically, there is also a need for a normative framework that can guide journalists to make better choices. Unfortunately, the efforts to conceptualize journalism in an African context have largely been inadequate for this task, often because of an excessively naïve normativity, or because they neglect to account for the challenges presented by a politics of belonging.

This discussion is intended to foreground the need for a theoretical framework that can conceptualize the professional strategies and everyday choices made by journalists working in a politics of belonging that is both explanatory and normative. Furthermore, the discussion is intended to highlight the multiple facets of the challenge for journalists: how their choices are at once personal, professional, political, discursive, and technological. These complex aspects of the problem – I will argue in the following chapter – suggest a conceptual framework derived from Silverstone’s (2007) *mediapolis* that offers a holistic and actor-oriented perspective, and that also provides normative tools that help journalists to exercise better judgement when confronted with these choices.

2.2 Ethnicity and tribalism in Africa

Research on the role of ethnicity in African media has largely been developed in parallel to a wider body of academic work on the role of ethnicity in African politics. As such, it is impossible to discuss the former without a brief mention of the latter.

Carola Lentz’s excellent survey on “‘Tribalism’ and Ethnicity in Africa” (1995) identifies three major traditions of research that have left a lasting legacy on this topic and makes a case for how these traditions have collectively delineated some of the most important conceptual dichotomies in the field of African political studies. This section summarizes these traditions and the conceptual dichotomies they have engendered, with particular reference to Kenya, before turning to how these issues are reflected in competing views on *media* and ethnicity in Africa.

The earliest studies related to the topic of ethnicity in Africa were conducted by British social anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s within the context of labour

migration and urbanization. Those studies, Lentz (1995) concludes, tended to treat ethnic identity in rural areas as linked to kinship and primordial ties and, in the city, as more fluid and socially constructed. This distinction between ethnicity in rural and urban areas would not survive in future studies, but the underlying dichotomy between primordialist and constructionist views of ethnicity has been enduring. Lentz (1995) concludes that the reason for persistence of this dichotomy lies partly in the nature of how ethnic identities are constructed: their effectiveness at producing naturalized and immutable identities lies precisely in their ability to evoke primordialist arguments linked to ties of kinship and home. Following the independence of African colonies, research in the 1960s and 1970s began to look at the role of ethnicity in nation-state formation. It was in this period that scholars began to use the term “tribalism” as a notion of “politicized ethnicity” with connotations of racism, a sentiment captured in a 1962 article in the journal *Africa Today*.

If some of Kenya's current difficulties have their genesis in racism, it is hardly reasonable to expect that racism's first cousin, tribalism, will help to create a prosperous, peaceful, and progressive Kenya in the future. It would be an ironic conclusion to 60 years of struggle for freedom and independence if victory now should see the long battle for equality of black and white ended, only to be replaced by a new and more bloody conflict between black and black. (Manners, 1962: 10-11)

Studies in this period, however, also cast the formation of political groups based on ethnic identity, or tribalism, as “dynamic and rational” and largely akin to the rise of nationalism as imagined communities created vis-à-vis invented traditions (Bates, 1974). This is not to say that tribalism and nationalism are perfectly analogous; even researchers working from this perspective acknowledge a distinction between “the Weberian legal, rational, and bureaucratic frameworks that up-hold identity, legitimacy, and authority in the nation-state, as opposed to the social customs, social practices, and non-bureaucratic structures that define and uphold citizenship in ethnic groups” (Ndegwa, 1997: 601).

A third group of studies identified by Lentz as crucial to the understanding of ethnicity and tribalism in Africa has focused on how colonialism and colonial systems have been instrumental in politicizing sentiments of ethnic belonging. A key proponent of this view, Lonsdale has distinguished between the “moral

ethnicity” that characterizes “the common human instinct to create out of the daily habits of social intercourse and material labour a system of moral meaning and ethical reputation within a more or less imagined community”, and “political tribalism”, as the use of ethnic identity in the competition for resources with other groups (1994: 132). “Political tribalism”, in Lonsdale’s view, emerged as a result of indirect colonial rule, which overlaid new political geographies onto fluid and overlapping networks of people in a deliberate strategy of ruling by division (Lonsdale, 1994; Orvis, 2001). Some, however, have also argued that the role of colonial power has been overstated, pointing to how social constructions were rarely without local historical precedents (Spear, 2003). In any case, this last area of historical research has been critical for historically recasting the issue of ethnic identity into contemporary explorations of citizenship in African states transitioning to liberal democracy, as exemplified by Mahmood Mamdani’s seminal book *Citizen and Subject* (Mamdani, 1996).

These accounts resonate in many ways in Kenya, where colonial methods of control and domination fomented conflict between linguistic groups (sometimes very loosely related) construed by the colonizers as constituting a “tribe” (Hornsby, 2012). In Kenya, the present-day Luo-speaking community was once comprised of 53 intermingling clans (Atieno-Odhiambo, 2002). The relatively recent provenance of the Kalenjin (Lynch, 2011) and Kamba (Osborne, 2014) as ethnic communities has also been well documented. As elsewhere, the British colonizers divided the Kenyan territory administratively into districts, locations and sub-locations, only allowing political parties to form at the district level, and then pitting them against each other on the African Legislative Council, which encouraged the formation of political groupings around new ethnic identities. Furthermore, the colonial system of “chiefs” and “senior chiefs” – leadership positions that had not existed previously – laid the foundation for what is often described as neo-patrimonialism (Kelsall, 2012). As famously depicted in Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s *A Grain of Wheat* (Wa Thiong’o, 1974), these chiefs too frequently took advantage of their connections to the central colonial authority to acquire land and money, entrenching a system of control through the distribution of benefits from power.

The role of ethnicity in Kenya was deepened subsequent to independence under the rule of Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi (Hornsby, 2012; Ndegwa, 1997), and is still visible in Kenyan politics. Political parties are institutionally and ideologically weak, and coalitional political movements shift fluidly as political leaders representing different ethnic groups form or break alliances with other leaders (Branch & Cheeseman, 2008; Cheeseman, 2008). Such shifts, for instance, had Raila Odinga and William Ruto, standard bearers of the Luo and Kalenjin communities, on the same side of the political divide in 2007, and then on opposite sides in 2013. When such political divides coincide with long-standing tensions between ethnic communities, as they did between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu in 2007, social divisions can be deeply aggravated (Wanyama, 2010). As such, political divisions and ethnic divisions are often difficult to disentangle in a given moment of time.

In the 2013 election, an exit poll analysis found that a voter's ethnicity was the best predictor of voting behaviour in Kenya, though this has been slightly diminished as a predictor of voting patterns in comparison to the previous election (Ferree, Gibson, & Long, 2014). The fundamental question of how best to accommodate ethnic identity in contemporary politics continues to occupy scholars, including in Kenya (Ndegwa, 1997; Omolo, 2002).

Lentz's conclusion is that four decades of research on ethnicity and tribalism in Africa have expanded understanding of many facets of this issue without resolving the underlying conceptual divisions.

Historically construed, ethnic identities remain open to change, and are multifaceted and ambiguous. Ethnicity can become an idiom of personal and collective identity in situations of alienation and insecurity, such as migration; it can provide the basis for a moral community, in which struggles occur over elite status and the right of less well-off tribesmates to redistribution and a minimum of reciprocity; it can also become a resource for client networks and political mobilization, which members use to compete for education, jobs, and state benefits more generally. Its efficacy rests on the transfer of the emotional power of kinship and "home" to larger communities. Behind the essentialist "facade", though, there is always room for multiple meanings and negotiation. (Lentz, 1995: 323–24)

Popular debate in Kenya, as elsewhere on the continent, also reflects a deep ambivalence on where to place ethnicity and tribe in politics: the extent to which

ethnic identity is real or invented, whether liberal politics should adapt to tribalism, or tribalism should be made to succumb to liberal politics. An on-line video presentation about the “tyranny of numbers”, for example, elicited a vigorous debate online and in the mainstream press in the run-up to the 2013 elections. According to Mutahi Ngunyi, a well-known political commentator, winning an election in Kenya is an exercise in assembling the coalition of ethnic leaders that represents the largest population (Ngunyi, 2013). The Uhuru Kenyatta-William Ruto ticket, he alleged, would win by virtue of that arithmetic. Those objecting to Mutahi often disagreed with his assessment, but just as often detractors voiced opposition to the sentiment they inferred from Mutahi’s analysis (whether it was intended or not) that the tyranny of numbers is an acceptable state of affairs (Maina, 2013). Indeed, ending “tribal” politics is an aim of many activist groups, artists, social commentators and civil society organizations in Kenya. And the country’s 2010 Constitutional reform established new county governments – which while not explicitly designed to be an ethnic federalism – nonetheless devolves state power to regions that are similar to the ethnically defined colonial districts (Nguru, 2012).

The competing views on ethnicity and tribalism in political theory and practice, and in the public imagination, thus present a great challenge to scholars interested in exploring how ethnicity is mediated in Africa. This thesis builds on Nyamnjoh’s effort to respond to this challenge through his conceptualization of the politics of belonging. Whilst other scholars have pursued the topic of media and the politics of belonging in Africa since Nyamnjoh’s seminal book (2005), these efforts have remained focused largely on questions of citizenship, national identity and development (see, for example, Bornman, 2013; Haupt, 2013; Malila, Oelofsen, Garman, & Wasserman, 2013; Mboti, 2013; Milton, Wasserman, & Garman, 2013; Nyambuga & Onuong’a, 2012). As such, this thesis chooses to return to Nyamnjoh’s work as a point of departure for an exploration of a relatively neglected line of enquiry into the politics of belonging and journalistic practices.

Following Nyamnjoh, my approach is to acknowledge that the ambivalence felt towards the role of ethnic identity in African politics need not be resolved *per se*,

but it can be seen as a result of dynamic forces and accounted for theoretically. In the case of this thesis, I aim to use a moral lens to understand how journalists cope with the ambivalence. Also like Nyamnjoh, I will avoid using the term “tribalism”¹ – or even terms such as “moral ethnicity” or “political tribalism” – in recognition that such terms seek to delineate *a priori* what is or is not an acceptable form of loyalty and belonging. This study has sought instead to understand how the participants in the study make these judgements.

2.3 Media and the politics of belonging

In the late 1990s, a group of researchers in Cameroon found that in spite of urbanization, involvement with “village” and “home” was on the rise. Migrants to the city were sometimes leaving spouses and children in the village, investing in agriculture or other rural enterprises, and building homes for retirement in the countryside, and these strategies were negotiated with family members in the village, often in terms of their obligations to kin and community (Geschiere & Gugler, 1998). These trends were bolstering the emphasis on autochthony in people’s lives, and this was seen by Geschiere and Gugler, amongst others (Eyoh, 1998; Nyamnjoh & Rowlands, 1998) to be creating a new “politics of belonging” in which “the village and the region assume new importance as a crucial source of power at the national level” (Geschiere & Gugler, 1998: 309). This became a powerful account for scholars trying to understand the role of ethnicity in politics. While acknowledging the historical role of colonialism in shaping these identities, their observations also helped to weave together the relationship between patterns of urbanization, political competition and nation-state formation in Africa.

Nyamnjoh (2005) claims that the dynamics observed in Cameroon are represented in many other countries in Africa in the way that this politics of belonging has conflicted with the institutions of liberal democracy, including the press. He argues that the politics of belonging are implicated in the failure of the liberal democratic model and its associated norms of journalism, premised as they are on an individualism. By his account, journalists, who adhere to an ideal of

¹ As exceptions, I have used the term “tribalism” or “tribal” when referring to its usage in comments made by participants in the study, or when alluding to it as a topic in the scholarly literature.

objectivity and detachment, have to ignore “dominant ideas of personhood and agency (and by extension society, culture and democracy) shared by communities across the continent” (Nyamnjoh, 2015: 37). This eventually pressures media houses towards a polarized and ethnicized politics whereby the ability of journalists:

to give all sides of a story, to avoid biased language, comment and opinion in news stories and reports, to dwell on the issues and avoid ad hominem remarks, has been crippled by the tendency to break Cameroonians down into the “righteous” and the “wicked” depending on whether they are in opposition or in government, or simply depending on their ethnic group and region of origin. (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 186)

For Nyamnjoh, the dysfunction he observes in Cameroonian journalism is not a result of anything inherent in the politics of belonging, but in the way that liberal democratic models of journalism have prevented media institutions from acknowledging the interdependence of individuals within communities and conviviality between communities.

The challenge for the media is to capture the spirit of tolerance and coexistence beneath every display of difference and marginalisation, beckoning for recognition as the way forward for an increasingly interconnected world of individuals and groups longing for recognition and representation. (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 252)

In his acknowledgement that displays of “difference” can be claims for “recognition and representation”, Nyamnjoh refuses to endorse the pessimistic view that sees ethnic identity in African politics as merely a false ideology in the service of elites, or a political pathology inherited from colonialism. And though Nyamnjoh evokes the conviviality associated with the fluid and contingent forms of ethnic identity associated with pre-colonial systems, he also rejects “a romantic reconstruction of the precolonial and a frozen view of harmony in rural Africa” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 91). Nyamnjoh (2006) extended a similar view towards issues of globalization and xenophobia, arguing for a notion of flexible citizenship that would also acknowledge the blurriness of national identities. Given this stance, it is perhaps unsurprising that he takes issue with Mamdani’s strict dichotomy, arguing that:

For democracy to succeed in this context, it must recognise the fact that most Africans are primarily patriotic to their home village, to which

state and country in the modern sense are only secondary. It is in acknowledging and providing for the reality of individuals who straddle different forms of identity and belonging, and who are willing or forced to be both “citizens” and “subjects”, that democracy stands its greatest chance in Africa. (Nyamnjoh, 1999: 26)

In this false choice, not only citizens, but journalists are torn between “serving their communities and serving the ‘imagined’ rights-bearing, autonomous individual ‘citizen’ of the liberal democratic model” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 28). This, he argues, leads journalists and their institutions into an exclusionary and fractious politics of belonging: “A democracy that stresses independence, in a situation where both the world-view and the material realities emphasise interdependence, is bound to result only in dependence” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 28).

This, however, is where Nyamnjoh’s argument is weak insofar as he does not acknowledge that not all journalists make the same choice or even – for that matter – acknowledge how they might understand the choice. This weakness can be attributed partly to the attention Nyamnjoh gives to macro-level issues in his critique of Western liberal democracy, but also perhaps to the methodological approach he takes to his analysis. Nyamnjoh (2005, 2010) relies heavily on newspaper texts and other secondary sources that may have neglected the micro-level issues of journalistic practice. This thesis aims to address this gap by taking an actor-oriented approach to understanding how journalists navigate the dilemmas presented by a politics of belonging in Kenya and, as will be argued in the next chapter, by bringing a moral perspective to bear on the issue.

2.4 Kenyan journalism and the politics of belonging

The importance of taking an actor-oriented approach to the topic of journalism and the politics of belonging is evident when one considers Kenyan media in comparison to Nyamnjoh’s account of Cameroon. Two issues arise prominently from this comparison. The first, as discussed below, is that there is far greater variability in African media than Nyamnjoh acknowledges when he claims that Cameroon can be used to represent the continent, and not only between countries, but within them. The second issue that emerges is that the monumental dilemma Nyamnjoh describes – the journalist’s choice between loyalty to community or country – appears to be articulated through a series of much

smaller dilemmas. This points to the need to explore the politics of belonging in media on a much more granular scale than Nyamnjoh has done.

2.4.1 How Kenyan media are unlike Cameroonian media

Nyamnjoh (2005: 235) describes a polarized press in which media houses either vilified the opposition, or the government. This portrayal does seem to resonate in Kenya. There is a view commonly encountered in Kenya that because of the political leanings of a media house's ownership (Nyanjom, 2012), because of the dominant ethnicity in a newsroom, because of advertising pressure or corruption (Wasserman & Maweu, 2014b), or because of some confluence of these factors, news outlets favour certain politicians and the ethnic communities they represent.

That said, Kenyan media outlets have been far more circumspect about being viewed as partisan, or as propagating ethnic politics, than their counterparts in Cameroon. A content analysis (Onyebadi & Oyedeji, 2012) of the country's two most widely read newspapers, the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, which are viewed to have favoured opposite sides of that electoral competition, found that the papers equally featured content promoting peace and reconciliation before and after the election. Several observers considered the national coverage leading up to the disputed elections of 2007 to have been responsibly conducted (Cheeseman, 2008; Semetko, 2010). Indeed, the response by Kenyan media to the politics of belonging could be characterized as overly cautious following concerns raised about how major news outlets may have been remiss in their journalistic duties by failing to report the violence (Reporters without Borders et al., 2008). That said, the pressure exerted by the elections on journalists left national newsrooms bitterly divided (Makokha, 2010; Wasserman & Maweu, 2014a), and cast suspicions on senior editors and managers for surreptitiously aligning themselves with different sides of the political divide (Ismail & Deane, 2008b). Since the 2007 elections, almost all newsrooms have made efforts to improve balance and editorial transparency, in some cases commissioning their own internal studies to verify that opposing sides of the political divide, and the ethnic leaders who represent such parties, receive equitable coverage (Benequista, 2015b; Oriare, Okello-Orlale, & Ugangu, 2010).

Still, there have been notable exceptions to this cautiousness. The hosts of call-in shows on local vernacular radio stations, by failing to moderate responsibly, inadvertently gave a forum to hate speech that helped to fuel the violence that followed the disputed 2007 elections (Ismail & Deane, 2008a; Somerville, 2011). One journalist was placed on trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for allegations that he deliberately used his radio platform to provoke attacks.² And the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation, under President Gideon Moi, has been seen as complicit in President Moi's now famous "doublespeak" strategy of using accusations of tribalism to subjugate and discriminate against groups for the benefit of his fellow Kalenjin (Opondo, 1996).

Leaving such blatant examples aside, the politics of belonging continues to manifest in Kenyan media in other more subtle ways. There is, for example, an observable bias towards ethnic leaders – the so-called "big men" – in Kenya media, which is to say that papers favour coverage of the squabbles and intrigue between these figures over issues and public policy (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Kenya, 2009). In the Media Council of Kenya's monitoring of the vernacular radio coverage of the ICC trials, there is this telling statistic: ICC-related radio items were "perpetrator-centred" in 94.8% of cases, and only "victim-centred" in 2.2% of the sampled stories (Media Council of Kenya, 2011). Kenyan media also consistently under-represent female candidates, female journalists, and female sources (African Woman and Child Feature Service, 2009; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Kenya, 2009).

Furthermore, accounts from Kenya also suggest that ethnic identity is not portrayed in the same way for all groups; not all ethnic identities are equal in a politics of belonging. This is particularly true for ethnic Somalis in Kenya, who have experienced "precarious access to citizenship" in Kenya (Lochery, 2012). For groups who occupy a similarly marginalized status, there may be little recourse for them to seek "balance" in response to negative coverage. During an outbreak of political violence along the coast in 1997 related to historic grievances over land, the media consistently portrayed the more marginalized party in the

² Joshua arap Sang, from the Kalenjin radio station KASS FM faced charges at the ICC along with President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy President, William Ruto. All three cases were eventually dismissed.

conflict, the Mijikenda, in such a way as to position their cultural traditions in opposition to the political progress of the country (Ciekawy, 2009). Unfortunately, little research of this kind exists in Kenya, but there is clearly a rich vein to explore by differentiating how the politics of belonging is mediated for different groups, including with attention to cross-cutting divisions such as gender (Macharia, 2010), religion (Mwakimako, 2013) and class (Ekdale, 2014).

2.4.2 The politics of belonging in journalistic practice

There is evidence too that journalists are acutely aware of the influence of a politics of belonging in their newsrooms, and that they face this pressure in everyday ways in their professional relationships and journalistic practices. Wasserman and Maweu (2014a) conducted interviews with 20 journalists at the *Daily Nation* in regard to how issues of ethnicity affected their coverage. The study concluded that ethnicity was “a key political filter that impacts on their ethical decision-making and complicates their adherence to ethical notions of ‘independence’, ‘freedom’ and ‘objectivity’, especially during general elections” (2014a: 171). The respondents highlighted how reporters are assigned based on their ethnicity, and how the *Daily Nation* newsroom was riven by ethnic–political divisions in the run-up to the 2007 elections, and how political compromise is negotiated through “balance”.

I will give you an example ... when I was the Bureau Chief in Kisumu all the journalists in my team were from the same community (Luo community) and so Raila visits Kisumu and they have all these nice things to say about Raila ... and Kibaki visits Kisumu and they cannot see anything good to say about him ... so I had a meeting and told them that we cannot go on like that ... we have to have balanced reporting ... so what I did was to tell them that we reach a gentlemanly agreement that when Raila visits they have the freedom to say all those nice things about him, but when Kibaki visits I will personally cover him and see if I can find anything positive to say about him ... so you see tribalism is very rife in the newsroom and this impacts on our professionalism.
(Wasserman & Maweu, 2014a: 172)

So while Kenyan media houses may not be active participants in the politics of belonging in the same overt fashion as their Cameroonian counterparts, there is evidence to suggest that the politics of belonging is reflected in more subtle ways, and is intimately connected to how journalists use “balance” and other notions of professionalism to reach compromise between political factions in the

newsroom. This raises a fascinating aspect of the relationship between media production and the politics of belonging that is, arguably, neglected by Nyamnjoh.

To the extent that empirical studies of journalism and news production have touched upon the unique challenges of journalism in other African contexts, this has largely been done from the perspective of journalistic values and identities. Studies of this nature conducted in Uganda (Mwesige, 2004), Tanzania (Ramaprasad, 2001a), Nigeria (Ebo, 1994) Namibia and South Africa (Vltmer & Wasserman, 2014) have often highlighted the way that journalists in those countries express a sense of responsibility to national development and social progress in terms that are influenced by each country's unique political culture and historical experience. With the exception of the study by Wasserman and Maweu (2014a) cited above, these studies have largely skirted issues of ethnic identity, but lend support to the value of studies such as this in trying to understand the diversity of journalistic practices in Africa.

Finally, there is evidence in Kenya that suggests the politics of belonging is finding new expressions in the platforms enabled by digital forms of communication³, with uncertain consequences for the role of journalists. Whereas mainstream media maintained a veneer of balance and independence, and actively promoted a "peace agenda" in the run-up to the 2013 elections, social media platforms such as Facebook, blogs and Twitter in recent years have become host to more acrimonious forms of identity-based politics.

The Umati Project⁴ monitored blogs, forums, online newspapers, Facebook and Twitter from October 2012 to May 2013 and found 5,683 unique hate speech statements (iHub Research, 2013), of which a quarter were categorized as "dangerous speech", a sub-category of hate speech proposed by Susan Benesch to denote the kinds of statements most likely to provoke violence (2012). The majority of those hate speech statements (88%, according to a sub-sample)

³ By digital forms of communication, I refer to a host of innovations in the last 15 years for gathering information, storing it, processing it, distributing it, and displaying it (Pavlik, 2005). These include everything from satellite communications, mobile phones, computers, and digital networks such as the World Wide Web.

⁴ www.ihub.co.ke/umati

demonstrated discrimination against another ethnic group (iHub Research, 2013). The concern about online vitriol in the run-up to the 2013 elections prompted the country's best known cartoonist to publish the following cartoon in March 19, 2013 in the *Daily Nation*. This speaks to a changing communication ecosystem that also needs to be considered when understanding the choices that journalists make in a politics of belonging.

Figure 1.1 Satirical cartoon depicting Kenyan social media



On the more positive side, Kenyan news organizations have made tentative steps to adopt social media as a tool for openness and accountability and for inclusion of less powerful voices, yet these steps have often been depicted as representing more of an effort to “catch up” than a genuine vision for the future of digitized media in Kenya (Mudhai, 2011). Elsewhere on the continent, too, researchers are noting the adoption of new communication technologies by journalists with a view towards making coverage more accountable or inclusive (Mare, 2014; Mpfu, 2013), but these aspirations are often attenuated by issues around access,

inequality, power and the quality of information in new media⁵. After the almost utopian bliss that followed the expansion of digital communication networks in Africa such as mobile phone networks and the internet, scholars are increasingly calling for “a more critical rethink of the social and political impact of new technologies on the African polity” (Banda, Mudhai, and Tettey, 2009).

Nyamnjoh (2011: 30) has himself looked to the possibilities offered by new communication technologies “to give birth to a conventional-cum-citizen journalism that is of greater relevance to Africa and its predicaments”, but he is often vague about what this journalism would look like. Aside from his recourse to the role of regulation and professional associations, and his overtures to the importance of alternative and community-based media, Nyamnjoh offers few resources to understand or inform how a journalist might best navigate the dilemma presented by a politics of belonging.

In summary, various aspects of how Kenya’s politics of belonging is mediated suggest far more room for the agency of journalists than Nyamnjoh acknowledges. This is understandable given Nyamnjoh’s objective to critique both the politics of belonging and the liberal democratic models imposed on African countries by illustrating the perverse relationship between the two. But the result is that Nyamnjoh’s vision for an alternative to Western liberal models of journalism is neglected. The next section examines other normative models put forward for African journalism, and the extent to which they adequately respond to the challenge media makers face when they are working in a politics of belonging.

2.5 Normative models for African journalism

Alternatives proposed to Western-style journalism by scholars of African journalism usually evoke a mix of five major traditions: (i) the critical approach, (ii) alternative media, (iii) public service broadcasting, (iv) development

⁵ I will use the term new media throughout this thesis to refer to systems of communication enabled by digital technologies emerging in the last 20-25 years that have a low cost of entry and that give the audience more control over how and when content is consumed, as well as the ability to produce their own content (Breen, 2007).

journalism and (v) approaches inspired by the philosophy of Ubuntuism and Afriethics, including participatory journalism.

The *critical approach* to media in Africa is informed by some of the seminal critiques of commercial news media in Europe and the US (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972; Bourdieu & Ferguson, 1999; Herman & Chomsky, 1994), as well as by the MacBride Report, which controversially concluded that *dependence* on Western media sources was drowning out Southern voices (Independent Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, 1980).

On the African continent, the *critical* view has been given a distinctly post-colonial tone (Banda, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2011) and also adapted to the unique political economies (Tettey, 2006; Tomaselli, 2002). Still, this critical approach in Africa has generally been more pragmatic than its European and US counterparts. These scholars are frequently willing to accept a commercial media, and may even prefer it to state or public broadcasting, but they call for strategies to improve the weaknesses of the liberal democratic model, especially those that arise from the wholesale export of a Western model of journalism. They call for better accountability of the private press (Tettey, 2006), which they acknowledge may only arise with sufficient external pressure by civil society and media activists. Like Nyamnjoh's own prescriptions, such models tend to focus on the political economy of media markets, neglecting the day-to-day practices of journalism and news narratives.

The proponents of *alternative media* also subscribe to the radical critiques that emanated from the Frankfurt School and cultural theory, though they are distinguished by a more pessimistic view on the possibility of improving mainstream media. Influenced heavily by experiences in Latin America, they emphasize disengagement from mass media and instead often recommend the establishment counter-hegemonic spaces outside of the mainstream, variously called community media, citizens' media and independent media (Downing, 2001; Rodriguez & Rodríguez, 2001). In Africa, there has been renewed interest in the power of community and alternative media amidst optimism that digital communication technologies can give these outlets greater power to mobilize citizens and to challenge national narratives (Akinfemisoye, 2013; Manyozo,

2009; Peters, 2010). But whilst this approach may be promising, it largely elides the challenges of how the politics of belonging can be reconciled with national politics, giving little guidance for those interested in national-level journalism.

A *public broadcasting* model, following a European tradition, emphasizes the transfer of public funds to media outlets, most often through state subsidies. Many proponents of this model argue that this protects media from vested interests, and allows for countrywide coverage that caters to all tastes and addresses a broad range of issues – not only those deemed commercially viable. The watchdog role is still present, but the public broadcasting model further emphasizes what Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm described as the social responsibility of the media (1956). Resonating with deliberative and pluralist models of democracy, public broadcasters are often expected to act as mediators of public debate and purveyors of diverse perspectives. Still, the public broadcast model in its ideal Western form requires that media outlets remain free from government intervention, which some have argued is difficult to achieve in developing countries with weak institutions (Abbott, 2016). For this reason, some scholars have proposed a hybrid system – with public broadcasting and privately owned media – in which no one actor can monopolize the media (Hackett & Zhao, 2005). Those who defend the preservation of public service broadcasting have also argued that it is uniquely well suited for responding to the challenges of development and nation building (Fourie, 2003) and to the needs of diverse cultural communities in Africa (Eko, 2000).

There is also a relatively small group of scholars and practitioners who point to *development journalism* (Banda, 2006; Skjerdal, 2011a) as providing useful alternative models on the continent. Though the idea of development journalism originated in Asia, it shares characteristics with the public journalism movement in the US (Skjerdal, 2011a). Development journalism is most often applied in contexts where there is a state broadcaster, though it has been suggested as a possible strategy for public broadcasters as well (Banda, 2006). The defining characteristic of much of the literature in the development journalism field is that it abandons the liberal democratic emphasis on the media's watchdog role, and instead focuses on the responsibility of the media to promote socioeconomic development. But in practice, the work of development journalism scholarship

has left doubt as to whether it can treat the audience as active and rights-bearing citizens (Banda, 2006), and little if anything has been written from this perspective about how the media can reconcile demands for group rights with the needs for national development. In other words, most contributions to development journalism do not fundamentally resolve the challenge of a politics of belonging, they merely establish a new kind of dilemma.

A fifth and final influence on alternative notions of news media in Africa comes from *ubuntuism*, a philosophy of dialogic communitarianism, and the related field of Afriethics. *Ubuntuism* – as a general philosophy – has been widely debated, generating nuanced positions that defy easy generalization (see, for example, Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 2002; Shutte, 2001), but of concern to this thesis is the much smaller sub-set of this literature that has committed itself to applying *ubuntuism* to the practice of journalism. *Ubuntu*-influenced perspectives on African journalism usually carry a strong moral critique, often expressed in terms of the media's social obligation – derived in part from an “African” ontology (Kasoma, 1996) that resonates, some argue, with a Levinasian obligation to the “other” (Christians, 2004) and with Freirian, participatory approaches to communication (Blankenberg, 1999).

Advocates of *ubuntu* journalism want reporters to shift their sense of obligation and duty away from prescribed norms of independence and objectivity and towards the societies whose communication they facilitate. This implies what Christian calls “authentic disclosure” – a more transparent form of reporting that subordinates the Western emphasis on “truth-seeking” in journalism to the dialogic quality of the process itself (Christians, 2015). When described in practical detail, *ubuntu* journalism appears very similar to civic journalism, in which journalists are expected to spend less time covering the declarations of prominent figures and more time embedded in communities, reflecting their lived realities and concerns (Blankenberg, 1999; Fourie, 2007).

Where the *ubuntu*-inspired normative approach to journalism often falls short (indeed, as civic journalism does too) is in its ability to provide guidance in anything less than an idealized scenario, as Nyamnjoh himself points out (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 91). It does not offer an account of *how* journalism changes or

improves. This is closely linked to another weakness that *ubuntu* journalism shares with other normative theories (e.g., civic journalism, attachment journalism, development journalism), which is that they struggle to theorise why, in a given context, journalism might function in a certain way in the first place.

Coming as it does from (false) assumptions of homogeneity emanating from its communitarian origins (Christians, 2004), *ubuntuism* can tend towards a romantic and essentialist vision of Africa that offers an unconvincing account of what moral media should look like in such diverse societies (Tomaselli, 2003; Voltmer & Wasserman, 2014). By most accounts, it is unclear when the journalist can, or should, act independently as a moral agent – standing apart from the majoritarian views. The notion, put forward in Kasoma's *ubuntu*-affiliated Afriethics, that moral journalists should discipline others within the cohort to uphold a standard seems naïve, unworkable and even dangerous in any real-world context. Fourie (2008) similarly concludes that *ubuntu*-inspired approaches to journalism raise issues of journalistic autonomy and pose a threat to freedom of expression.

As such, whilst the major perspectives that inform alternative approaches to journalism in Africa have been important sources of critique and reflection, none provides an adequate normative framework for how journalists working at a national level *should* respond to the pressures created by a politics of belonging. Most either neglect or elide the issue of ethnicity in politics altogether, choose to address the topic from a macro perspective that neglects practice and narrative, or assume far too naïve a view. In addressing this gap, this thesis aims to explore an actor-oriented and practice-focused approach to the dilemmas of journalists working in a politics of belonging.

That said, a caveat is required. Not all countries in Africa would benefit from a normative lens that is focused on the politics of belonging, and given the legacy of prescriptive approaches to journalism in Africa, there is reason to be circumspect of any prescription for African journalism as a whole. That is not the intention here. As Nyamnjoh himself points out, a journalistic dogma has been given to African newsmakers:

to implement and hardly ever to think or rethink, where what is expected of them is respect for canons, not to question how or why canons are forged, or the extent to which canons are inclusive of the creative diversity

of the universe that is purportedly of interest to the journalism of the one-best-way. (Nyamnjoh, 2015: 37–38)

For Nyamnjoh, the ability to question journalistic norms and ethics is fundamental to that autonomy, an issue I will address both theoretically and methodologically.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has briefly highlighted some of major issues concerning the study of ethnicity in Africa, and discussed how these issues – through a politics of belonging – are seen to permeate newsrooms in some countries on the continent. I argued that whilst the challenge for journalists working in a politics of belonging is well characterized, the solution is less clear. Nyamnjoh’s own account offers little guidance from the standpoint of a practitioner, and other normative frameworks proposed as alternatives to Western liberal journalism in Africa do not sufficiently acknowledge or realistically respond to the dilemmas created by a politics of belonging. I will argue in the following chapter that elements of Silverstone’s mediapolis offer a robust conceptual foundation for redressing these weaknesses, especially in conjunction with insights drawn from the sociology of journalism field.

The intention is to formulate a conceptual framework that can account for the diverse and heterogeneous ways that journalists experience and respond to a politics of belonging. I will argue that Silverstone’s analytical approach to the process of mediation and his normative framework together offer a way of developing a normative, actor-oriented theory that can inform reflection on many of the issues neglected by the perspectives described above.

As Obonyo (2011) and Mabweazara (2014) have said, the origin of the theory is not so important as applying it in such a way that does not lose sight of the contingency of the African experience. To leave room for the unique aspects of the Kenyan experience, especially given the additional challenge of ascertaining that experience from my own perspective as a foreigner, I have chosen an action research methodology that will be described in Chapter 4.

3 Journalistic Autonomy and Moral Agency

3.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter described the challenges faced by Kenyan journalists, who are confronted by conflicting pressures and contradictory loyalties in a clash between Western liberal democratic models and a politics of belonging. It was argued that current theory fails to adequately account for how journalists respond to these pressures in their daily work, and offers incomplete guidance for their professional practice in such environments.

This chapter develops a conceptual framework for addressing that gap and the central research question of the thesis: what constitutes moral agency for journalists working within a politics of belonging? In this section, I will propose that the so-called “moral turn” in media studies, and particularly notions related to Roger Silverstone’s (2007) mediapolis, offer useful conceptual tools for understanding and confronting issues of ethnic identity in contemporary Kenyan journalism. The first challenge, however, is that neither Silverstone, nor other scholars who have followed the moral turn, have fully reconciled a moral perspective with an understanding of news production. Second, notwithstanding the insights offered by Silverstone’s normative framework, these were not matched by a convincing account of how it can be achieved – of how the media changes to become more (or less) moral.

The challenges to Kenyan journalism are not just a matter of finding new narratives that unsettle the partisanship and discrimination that are subtly propagated by the news (though they are partly that), but about finding strategies that resist the partisanship and ethnic tensions that are embedded in the everyday practice of journalism in Kenya (Wasserman & Maweu, 2014a).

As Silverstone’s work alone is inadequate for the task, this chapter will explore the literature emanating from sociological and ethnographic studies of journalism in order to develop an understanding of the autonomy that journalists have within news production. The chapter will then examine how other approaches to

morality in journalism have addressed the issue of change, looking in particular for the insights these studies can provide for an actor-oriented framework.

3.2 Mediation and morality

Roger Silverstone's (2007) work provides the foundation for the conceptual framework for this study. As such, it is vital to explain what he meant by mediation, the everyday, the mediapolis and morality – and the implications these concepts have for this research.

3.2.1 Mediation as a process of meaning-making across boundaries

Silverstone describes mediation as

the movement of meanings from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another. It involves the constant transformation of meanings, both large scale and small, significant and insignificant, as media texts and texts about media circulate in writing, in speech and audio-visual forms, and as we, individually and collectively, directly and indirectly, contribute to their production. (Silverstone, 1999: 13)

Mediation is Silverstone's approach to understanding how media fits into the everyday social processes of meaning-making, and this thesis makes the argument that the politics of belonging can be seen to be "mediated" by Kenyan journalists in this sense – which is to say that the journalists must not be seen only as producers of media, but also as consumers, and as playing a crucial but necessarily limited role in the wider social process of mediation. To follow in this tradition also requires that the study not only examine the text that journalists produce, but also a range of professional and personal encounters. An aspect of ethnic loyalties may carry certain connotations in the context of a visit to "the village", and yet another on the pages of a national daily. As Nyamnjoh points out, journalists are both agents and avenues, and perhaps even both "citizens and subjects", in the processes that connect and shape the meaning of ethnic identity across personal, social and political realms in Kenya.

As such, this thesis follows Silverstone in a tradition of scholars in media and communication who have used the term "mediation" to denote a social and technological process through which meaning and identities are constructed, and through which power is both at play and at stake. The theorization of that process

has been cast varyingly as a core element in social reproduction (Martin-Barbero, 1993), as a defining part of our modernity (Thompson, 1995), and as a feature of our everyday lives (Silverstone, 1994).

Mediation has at times been used more or less synonymously with mediatization “to point to media’s general effects on social organization” (Couldry, 2012, Chapter 6, Section 2, Paragraph 1). Some scholars even prefer mediatization to mediation on the grounds that it is closer linguistically to cognate terms used for the same idea in other languages such as French and Spanish. But I prefer to reserve it for what Friedrich Krotz describes as a meta-process, comparable to globalization, through which media (and the process of *mediation*) becomes central to more and more spheres of life (Krotz, 2007, 2009). Seen another way, mediatization relates to the “culturalization” of an ever wider range of economic activities, blurring the boundaries that previously would have marked the cultural industries (Deuze, 2007).

Mediation, by contrast, has generally been used in an effort to link media studies with social theory – often for the sake of both. John Thompson lamented in his seminal 1995 book, *The Media and Modernity*, that communications theory had become too mired in the mechanics of communication, losing its sense of purpose. Equally though, he pointed out that communications theory can play a crucial role in reminding scholars that “myth” – woven into the media narratives we consume and into the rituals by which we consume it – continues to play an important part in our society (Thompson, 1995).

As Sonia Livingstone has said, the term “communication” might itself stand in for “mediation” except that the latter,

as an alternative, usefully highlights the artefacts and practices used to communicate, it more readily invites analysis of the social and organizational arrangements through which mediation is instituted ... and it urges a critical focus on the expression of what is unexpressed or suppressed in those interrelations. (Livingstone, 2009: 10)

One of Silverstone’s (1994) theoretical contributions pertains to his ideas on how mediation is woven into our daily lives, drawing together previously disparate work on the audience – including on reception, effects, habits of use, etc.. He conceptualizes mediation as a dialectic, fraught with tensions, between

“institutionalized media of communication” and everyday experience (Silverstone, 2002: 762). In doing so, Silverstone draws our attention to how mediation blurs the boundary between public and private, raising troubling implications for our transition into the hyper-real of the intensely mediated age, but without neglecting the agency of the audience in this process.

This focus on the boundaries between public and private is fundamental to the suitability of Silverstone’s insights for understanding the politics of belonging, which is itself characterized by a troubled relationship between “private” and “public” identities. The politics of belonging has been called the “dirty work of boundary maintenance” (Crowley, 1999: 30), though this interpretation is stronger in the work of European and Canadian scholars who have used a politics of belonging as a framework for understanding nativism and xenophobia (Dieckhoff, 2004; Taylor, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 2011). In the African context, the politics of belonging is far more ambivalent, reflecting uncertainty over whether to reject or embrace the role of ethnicity in politics. Not only are journalists “torn”, to use Nyamnjoh’s description, between the public and private loyalties they feel, but the nature of political legitimacy and political claims in the politics of belonging is itself a matter contested at the intersection of “private” and “public” realms.

This places journalists at the centre of multiple intersections, and Silverstone’s dialectic, which seems to have been formulated largely on the foundation of his earlier work with audiences, does not fully account for the complexity this creates. In some ways, journalists in Kenya have the same relationship between the mediated world and the everyday as any member of the public. Journalists too must find a way to make sense between the mediated portrayals of ethnic identity, and their everyday experiences of the same. Except, as Nyamnjoh points out, how journalists make sense of these tensions – between public and private, community belonging and liberal citizenship – also colours the decisions they make in the newsroom. As such, the dialectic that Silverstone describes between the media and the everyday can be read also as the tension between a journalist’s private life and public work. And there is yet another dimension, raised in the previous chapter, and elaborated upon later in the sociological literature on journalistic autonomy; there is a dialectic between the micro-level choices made by journalists

in practice, and the demands of the genre, routines and organizations in which they work. The public and private realms or group belonging and citizenship, the everyday and the media – these are simultaneously parallel and cross-cutting to the micro and macro levels of journalistic production.

Silverstone's work is suggestive of an approach or direction for understanding these overlapping dimensions. Silverstone argues that this dialectical process of mediation between the public and private realms is conducted by individuals, institutions and by technology itself – all of which are embedded in forms of economic, political and symbolic power that are part of the wider social and cultural environment. In this way, he emphasizes mediation's ubiquitous and diffuse role without seeming to overstate its importance. Mediation does not function in isolation, or by virtue of any simple linear relation of cause and effect (for example, of ownership over content, or content over the perceptions of the audience). Rather, mediation is interstitial: while it is certainly subject to power, it is also a sphere where power is contested, at all stages, and it can, itself, wield power.

Mediation, as a result, requires us to understand how processes of communication change the social and cultural environments that support them as well as the relationships that participants, both individual and institutional, have to that environment and to each other. At the same time, it requires a consideration of the social as in turn a mediator: institutions and technologies as well as meanings that are delivered by them are mediated in the social processes of reception and consumption. (Silverstone, 2005: 189)

The holistic, interdisciplinary nature of a “mediational” approach to morality renders it as a helpful approach for what Beckett and Mansell (2008: 14) describe as “critical interdisciplinary” research (2008: 14). Attempting to look holistically, privileging breadth over depth – as Silverstone does – is compatible with the task of this thesis which is to formulate a normative, actor-oriented conceptual framework that can guide reflection at multiple levels of engagement with the process of mediation: at an institutional level, in the context of practice, from a technological standpoint, within the text itself and even at an individual level. The challenge is to understand the diverse and heterogeneous ways in which journalists participate in mediating a politics of belonging.

This holistic approach appears to be lacking in the various reformist movements within journalism that have also aimed for a normative standard: civic journalism (Blumler & Cushion, 2013), journalism of attachment (Bell, 1998), and even, in that respect, *ubuntu* and Afriethics (Christians, 2015; Fourie, 2008; Mfumbusa, 2008), to name a few. Unlike these, Silverstone's ideas offer a path to an *explanatory* and *normative* conceptual framework; offering the ability to make a claim on both what is and what ought to be (Hesmondhalgh & Toynbee, 2008). Whilst the notion of mediation sheds light on the process by which a politics of belonging *is* shaped through the media, Silverstone's notion of the *mediapolis* offers potential to reflect on how journalists *should* conduct their work within this process.

The next section turns to the normative aspects, with a discussion of Silverstone's proposal of three major moral obligations for participants in the mediation process, and their implications for a politics of belonging. It then returns to the challenge of building a conceptual framework that can untangle the criss-crossing and overlapping threads that connect the journalists in so many ways to the politics of belonging. Central to this effort are concepts for understanding journalistic autonomy and a related notion of moral agency.

3.2.2 The mediapolis as a normative framework

The relationship between media and morality (or the nature of moral mediation) is conceptualized by the mediapolis – Silverstone's answer to Jurgen Habermas' public sphere. Habermas' normative vision – whilst alluring to many scholars of media in Africa (Husband, 2000; Mpofu, 2011; Omwoha, 2010) – has been criticized elsewhere for its bias towards the philosophical perspectives of the European Enlightenment (Mouffe, 1999). Unlike the public sphere, the mediapolis is a place where rationality is not a condition for achieving the full possibilities of communication.

There is no rationality in an image, and no singular reason in a narrative. Both rhetoric and performance subvert the simple order of logic. The political, civic space of mediated representation, globally, nationally, locally, depends on both the capacity to encode and to decipher more complex sets of communications than mere reason enables. (Silverstone, 2007: 34)

Silverstone owes much to Hannah Arendt for this notion of the mediapolis, deriving it in part from the notion of the *polis* of Greek antiquity on which so much of Arendt's philosophy is based. Like the *polis*, the mediapolis is presented as a normative ideal for many forms of human communication, including "the performative", "the narrative", "the personal" and "the rhetorical" (Silverstone, 2007: 43).

So for Arendt in the polis, and for me in the mediapolis, the issue is not just the rationality of human communication, but a recognition that communication is grounded in a feeling for the world, and in the condition of being in the world among others.

As the "among others" intimates in the passage above, Silverstone's mediapolis is a meeting place, a space of intersubjectivity. It is where we are given the opportunity to recognize difference and, as such, it is a moral space. Silverstone gives the mediapolis its distinctive normative framework through three obligations that he develops at length – truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance – all of which help to construct an ideal for intersubjectivity that I suggest can be applied to the challenges of mediating the politics of belonging in Kenya. This section presents a reflection on each of these obligations, with consideration of how each might be regarded within the context of journalism in a politics of belonging.

The moral obligations of the mediapolis

Before discussing the mediapolis, an important caveat is necessary. Though Silverstone outlines the mediapolis from the standpoint of normative obligations, it would be unfair to describe his arguments as promoting a deontology or universal ethics, as both Couldry (2012) and Dayan (2007) have suggested, and that is not the intention here.

Silverstone arguably avoids turning the mediapolis into prescriptive deontology, in part, by recognizing the contingent nature of morality – both within the notion of proper distance (explained below) and in his emphasis on the dialectic nature of mediation itself. Morality, in Silverstone's reckoning, as well as for the purposes of this thesis, is depicted as a matter of first principles – a line of argument for justification – and hence distinct from ethics, which relates to norms of practice or, in this case, the rules that govern the decisions made by journalists.

Furthermore, as the subsequent chapter on methodology (Chapter 4) will elaborate, the intention is not to generate hard-and-fast rules, but to produce a conceptual framework that can help to facilitate critical reflection. With that in mind, I comment on each of the obligations in turn.

The first of the obligations, *truthfulness*, is not an obligation to tell the truth *per se*, but an obligation to be accurate and sincere – or at least not to lie or mislead (an obligation to one’s own truthfulness). Silverstone also comments on the obligation to challenge the claims of others, making reference to “the marketplace of ideas” (Williams, 2002). Nick Couldry, however, is perhaps more clear, and certainly more specific, about how Williams’ philosophy can inform media practice, deriving two “virtues” from Williams that are closely connected to Silverstone’s truthfulness, and perhaps better suited for journalism. The first, accuracy, Couldry (2012: Chapter 8, Section 5, Paragraph 4) describes as “doing what is necessary to achieve truthfulness in specific statements”. Accuracy, in his formulation, requires an “investigative investment”, an effort and allocation of resources oriented towards truth (even if accepting that truth cannot be absolutely defined). If accuracy can be assessed for any given statement, his second virtue, sincerity, requires a much broader evaluation.

The disposition of sincerity refers to all the background checking and reflecting necessary to ensure that whatever one says is not just accurate in itself but fits more widely with the whole range of other things that one believes about the world. This is a more complex test since it is a commitment to truthfulness within one’s wider practice. (Couldry, 2012: Chapter 8, Section 5, Paragraph 4)

In addition to encompassing the obligations of accuracy and sincerity, Silverstone’s notion of truthfulness has an additional aspect. Truthfulness, as derived from the philosophy of Arendt, is a description of a social relationship, of a mode of appearing to another and, as such, is ostensibly contingent upon different social and cultural configurations.

This social aspect of the obligation to be truthful potentially sheds light on two aspects of the practice of journalism that have received attention with the advent of new digital technologies. The first relates to the openness and authority of journalistic accounts. The “openness” of journalism is currently at stake, some allege, as journalists, via social media, now have the ability to allow viewers a

much closer look at the process of reporting – at the decisions made and reporting procedures used to produce a particular story (Beckett, 2008). There has also been a suggestion that new forms of journalism alter the authority of the journalist, making her less of an expert, whose voice reporting from the scene of an event counts most of all, to a verifier, who helps the audience to evaluate which of the other voices can be trusted (Beckett, 2008).

Truthfulness as a mode of appearing also resonates with issues raised by scholars working in the *ubuntu* tradition, who have put forward the notion of “authentic disclosure”, which Christians has interpreted to mean that “reporting must be grounded historically and biographically, so that complex cultures are represented adequately” (Christians, 2004: 247). Pursuing truthfulness in this respect provides an avenue for precisely the kind of critique of objectivity that Nyamnjoh has proposed (see Chapter 2, section 2.3). Factuality and accuracy may be important, but they can be determined largely without any consideration for intersubjectivity. Truthfulness, by contrast, asks journalists to consider how a reader (and potentially a reader from an ethnic group represented in the story) might view the truthfulness of a particular narrative, which is likely to depend on whether the journalist and the reader have similar criteria for what constitutes authentic disclosure.

A concept derived from Kant and Derrida, *hospitality*, refers to the “right not just to the freedom of speech but as an obligation to listen and to hear” (Silverstone, 2007: 136). Though Silverstone’s idea of hospitality is largely derived from Ulrich Beck’s cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2002), the notion nonetheless resonates with Tanja Dreher’s (2009) observations on a growing emphasis on “listening across difference” in media studies. Dreher argues that fighting racism in the media has previously focused on giving minority communities the right to speak, but she cites the work of Husband (1996), Downing and Husband (2005) and Bickford (1996) as signalling a growing emphasis also on the right to be understood and its corollary obligation to listen. Viewed in this way, hospitality can be construed as an essential component of what Nyamnjoh and other scholars have termed *conviviality*, the ability to leave peacefully with difference (Page, Evans, & Mercer, 2010).

In the news media, however, hospitality is always constrained, relying on an invitation that often comes with conditions, but Silverstone challenges the media to extend hospitality further and further, possibly even to include the “uninvited”. Still, he defends some limits. Those who would deny hospitality to others do not themselves deserve it. And he asks whether there is any point in hosting those who cannot be heard.

The limits and challenges of hospitality highlighted by Silverstone pose a critique to the kind of “naïve pluralism” described by Kari Karppinen (2008), who calls for a more nuanced consideration of pluralism – one that would not be out of line with Nyamnjoh’s own concern that democratic principles from a Western liberal tradition have not been sufficiently interrogated. In that sense, Karppinen asks questions that resonate strongly with the challenges of a plural media that have already been highlighted in Kenya and in other “fragile” or “crisis” states (Putzel & Zwan, 2006).

Is there not a point at which healthy diversity turns into unhealthy dissonance? Does pluralism mean that anything goes? And what exactly are the criteria for stopping the potentially endless multiplication of valid ideas? (Karppinen, 2008: 30)

These concepts lead to a consideration of inclusion in Kenyan journalism, of who gets to speak, and on behalf of whom. In a country context where most people are unable to participate in online discussions⁶, and where language and cultural norms of communication are so diverse, the notion of hospitality raises other relevant concerns about the terms on which voices are hosted. But more than simple inclusion, hospitality requires a consideration of the terms of inclusion, and whether these terms allow for “listening across difference”, which in the Kenyan context might apply to the major ethnic–political factions, though also to cross-cutting differences such as gender, class or religion. Finally, the notion of

⁶ According to the Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018 of the Communications Commission of Kenya, as of September 2013, Kenya had 31.3 million mobile phone subscribers and 19.1 million internet users, representing 70% and 43%, respectively, of the country’s 44.4 million residents.

hospitality requires a consideration of its limits with a view towards approaching, and even challenging them.

Silverstone says that *proper distance* implies an epistemological commitment, vis-à-vis Arendt, and an ontological commitment, derived from Levinas' philosophy on our relationships to the other. From Arendt, Silverstone evokes the possibility created by the mediapolis for *imagination* and *judgement*. Imagination is the ability to compare one's standpoint with the possible standpoints of others; it is an act of empathy (Arendt, 1982). The "proper" in proper distance, linked to this epistemological empathy, implies a necessary balance: the representations of others in the mediapolis must demonstrate a certain respect for the other's "otherness", yet also acknowledge our shared humanity. Difference does not exist to be overcome; if difference is eliminated, mediation can present "too close" a representation, falsely reassuring us with the homogeneity of the world.

Proper distance refers to the importance of understanding the more or less precise degree of proximity required in our mediated relationships if we are to create and sustain a sense of the other sufficient not just for reciprocity but for a duty of care, obligation and responsibility, as well as understanding. (Silverstone, 2007: 47)

It is from the standpoint informed by proper distance that judgement is made possible. Judgement, in Arendt's elaborate formulations, is a profoundly complex notion and difficult to define. Still, for Silverstone's conception of the mediapolis, one critically important feature of judgement is that it implies an action and a responsibility on the part of an individual. It is also important to note that for Arendt, judgement is an expression of human freedom, rather than a claim to validity – a perspective that resonates with the effort in this thesis to provide an actor-oriented conceptual framework that is not prescriptive, but that provides a basis for reflective practice as a foundation for moral mediation (Arendt, 1982). The proper distance for imagination and judgement inevitably also involves a certain amount of estrangement: "achieving distance from ourselves, seeing ourselves as others" (Orgad, 2011: 401).

Silverstone draws on Levinas to give an explicitly moral dimension to his notion of proper distance. If Arendt's philosophies suggest a duty to see the world from a plurality of perspectives, Levinas (2003) more profoundly challenges us to

experience the estrangement of alterity. Silverstone's use of Levinas distinguishes his moral perspective from the precepts of cultural pluralism, which fall short of Levinas' ontological challenge.

According to Silverstone (2007: 7), morality is:

the judgement and elucidation of thought and action that is oriented towards the other, that defines our relationship to him or her in sameness or otherness, and through which our own claims to be moral, human, beings are defined.

Couldry suggests that Silverstone may go too far with this moral standard, suggesting instead the virtue "to care", which he gleans from Alex Honneth's (1995, 1997) notion of recognition, Paul Ricoeur's (2007) hermeneutic philosophy and Onora O'Neill's (1996) concept of social virtue, amongst other influences. Couldry is explicit that the virtue of care does not imply as broad a responsibility as Silverstone's concept does (for producers as well as for the audience) through the obligations of hospitality and proper distance. Couldry (Couldry, 2012: Chapter 8, Section 6, Paragraph 4) is especially critical of the implications of "hospitality" as a metaphor for the obligations of a moral producer and audience.

But is the old metaphor of hospitality sufficient for the continual obligation of mutual engagement Silverstone had in mind? Indeed, is the metaphor of media as a "home" helpful at all, given its territorial implications? What if, instead of a bounded community of which "we" and our journalists are part, the concerns raised by media "hospitality" derive from a general challenge we face – any two of us concerned with what media we need – that stems from media's inherent mobility and the unpredictable human encounters media make possible?

Couldry's alternative to hospitality seems more in line with a "public sphere" approach (Habermas, 1984a, 1984b) – as if communication is the place we go to connect with others. Care, he says, implies concern for "what we say and show on the media" and how that might affect both the space of communication and how it might potentially harm specific individuals.

But it is precisely *because* Silverstone's normative perspective crosses the line between public and private that his framework provides a rich tapestry on which to explore and critique the politics of belonging in Kenya. Hospitality and proper distance ensure that identity politics are not ignored, which is crucial for unsettling some of the dogma of Western-style journalism in Africa and for

exploring forms of journalism that might be better suited to the challenge of fostering greater conviviality and intersubjectivity amongst ethnic communities. This is not to say that all aspects of Western journalism are ill suited to Africa, but merely that a framework that puts intersubjectivity in a privileged position might provide a productive critique of Western-style journalism in contexts such as Kenya. Exploring post-electoral violence through the inherent tensions between the virtues of sincerity and care would, for example, differ very little from the considerations raised by a conversation framed by the ethics of “seeking the truth” and “doing no harm” found in almost any standard Western conception of journalistic ethics.

Silverstone's use of Levinas has been confronted with other critiques as well. The effect of proper distance, according to Dayan (2007: 120), is to falsely juxtapose the individual “other” against a “monumental, generalized OTHER” (emphasis his).

Silverstone stages a big Levinasian face to face, a theatre of alterity, a climactic encounter that feels like the final shootout in a western movie. Of course this is an admirable shootout, a sublime encounter of I and Thou. It is not the sublimity of the encounter I object to. I object to its dualistic character.

Dayan's critique is pertinent in Kenya, where the “triangles” and the “multiplicity of others” that he says are lacking in Silverstone's work are visible in the complex politics of belonging writ through tribe, language, religion, class and political party. But the “I” at the centre of Silverstone's theory holds a place for an actor-oriented perspective that is a crucial feature of a framework for considering journalistic practice in a politics of belonging.

The obligation implied by a proper distance not only implicates the text, but implies a personal commitment on behalf of the journalist as well. It recognizes that the challenge of mediating a politics of belonging is not only in the responsibility of media institutions, but the responsibility of all individuals who participate in the process of mediation, and that the responsibility is also commensurate with power. Given their privileged position in the process of news making, journalists can be seen to have an even greater responsibility than consumers. Imagination, judgement, estrangement and a duty to care are not only features of a moral text; they are features of a moral journalist. Given how a

politics of belonging articulates boundaries not just through institutions, but specifically through the competing loyalties felt by individuals in those institutions, this aspect of the mediapolis seems to provide a vital contribution to a normative approach to journalism in a politics of belonging.

This section has argued that Silverstone's focus on the everyday as an arena for substantive engagement with the media and his use of an obligation-based vision of morality support a suitable framework for critically understanding agency; he neither deprives the audience of power, nor does he fall into the trap of the Panglossian view of popular culture. Silverstone offers the possibility for an actor-oriented perspective by embedding the process of meaning-making in the subjectivities of the individual, as well as in the structures and institutions of media production.

But Silverstone's framework is not ideally suited for understanding journalistic production. The dialectic in Silverstone's framework is largely between the everyday experience of the audience and the world of mediated meaning. I have argued that this dialectic is applicable to journalists, but must also be considered in the broader context of news production. The world of news production, however, is shaped by its own dialectic, between the macro-level political structures and institutions that shape the media, and the micro-level practices of journalists. This next section looks at how studies in the sociology of journalism tradition have addressed this dialectic through the notion of journalistic autonomy.

3.3 The sociology of journalistic autonomy

The study of news has consistently asked an important question: how much control, or autonomy, do individual journalists have over their work? In the various iterations of responses to this question, much has been revealed about how power operates in journalism. One might even be tempted to say that the question was resolved for a time by those who may be characterized as cultural-structuralists such as Curran, Cottle and Bourdieu (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Cottle, 2003a; Curran, 1989) until the restructuring of the news industry, and the transformation of journalistic practices that accompanied the emergence of digital communication technologies.

Of course, changes in the news landscape are not driven only by the technology. The shift toward multimodal mass media is entwined with a larger pattern of globalization that has seen authority and power dispersed from local to global, and across state and non-state actors (Held & McGrew, 2002). As a result of these concomitant processes, news media are in some senses more contested than ever, even as globalization promotes greater commercial consolidation of media organizations and increased homogenization of news style (Chakravartty & Roy, 2013; Cottle, 2003b).

As radically different as the new global communications landscape may seem, the potential to restructure power through the use of novel technologies is also attenuated by particular socioeconomic, political and cultural histories. As Natalie Fenton warns in the introduction to *New Media, Old News: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age*:

We should remember that the history of communications technology shows us that if innovative content and forms of production appear in the early stages of a new technology and offer potential for radical change this is more often than not cancelled out or appropriated by the most powerful institutions operating within dominant technological and socio-political paradigms. "Newness" of form and content is quickly smothered by predominance, size and wealth. But history does not always repeat itself. (Fenton, 2010: 13)

There is, in other words, good reason to revisit the issue of journalistic autonomy, and to interrogate the optimism invested in new media as a democratizing force in news. And this is being done to a greater and lesser degree in various facets of news production (Boczkowski, 2004; Deuze, 2007; Pavlik, 2001), though relatively few scholars are pursuing this issue with a consideration for moral implications of the kind described above (Ashuri, 2012; Tait, 2011; Wiesslitz & Ashuri, 2011; Wright, 2012, 2013).

In keeping with the aim of working with normative, actor-oriented theory that can inform practice, this section engages with the literature on journalistic autonomy that has privileged the actor's perspective. The sociology of news literature has explored the issue of journalistic autonomy both directly and indirectly by asking what determines the messages conveyed in news texts, weighing up the relative influence of media owners, market forces, organizational

demands, journalistic routines, journalistic values and identities, elite sources, cultural tropes, and structuring power of technological media, among many other factors. Indeed, the list of factors that have been seen as either enabling or constraining what might be construed as journalistic autonomy is too long to present.

Broadly, however, the approaches to understanding the agency of journalists coalesce into three categories that will be examined in turn in this section as a precursor to presenting a conceptual framework for this thesis with the constructs of autonomy and moral agency at its core. Those categories are:

1. Journalism as organizational routine and structure
2. Journalism as a site of cultural conflict
3. Journalism as technologically enabled practice

The scholarship in this area sheds light on the interconnected aspects of journalistic autonomy – providing an avenue for connecting Silverstone’s mediapolis concept to an actor-oriented, mid-level framework for understanding and guiding the moral agency of journalists in Kenya.

3.3.1 Journalism as organizational routine and practice

Beginning towards the end of the 1960s, and carrying on through the 1980s, a number of sociologists carried out “newsroom studies” to understand the conditions under which news is produced. Amongst other prominent topics, these studies often looked at how much independence, or discretion, journalists maintained over their own work. The conclusions they reached vary, of course, but a great many of them concluded that journalists operate under an illusion of independence, or at least under very limited autonomy. Stonbely (2013), producing an intellectual history on some of these studies, traces the common influence throughout many of these studies of organizational theory, a critique of professionalism common in sociology, and an epistemological leaning towards social constructionism. She attributes their sceptical disposition towards journalistic claims of independence to prejudices within these dominant frameworks, but also to the general intellectual climate of the times, particularly the prevailing pessimism about governing institutions and the rising liberal calls for greater pluralism.

That said, the enduring value of these studies is that they have unsettled a number of sweeping generalizations about news media, including claims of elite domination in the media (Cottle, 2007). They have done so by elucidating the relationship between micro and macro accounts of power in the newsroom, and for that reason are an especially good source of concepts relevant to the task of conceptualizing journalistic autonomy.

The earliest newsroom studies challenged the place of objectivity in journalistic independence, a defining feature of the field that dates back to when journalism first professionalized in the 20th century. Though much has been made of the importance of this professional ideology in establishing its social authority (Anderson, 2008; Luhmann, 1990), Schudson reminds us that how journalists view themselves and their work has implications also for journalistic autonomy.

Rules of objectivity enabled editors to keep lowly reporters in check, although they had less control over foreign correspondents. The ideology of objectivity was a kind of industrial discipline. At the same time, objectivity seemed a natural and progressive ideology for an aspiring occupational group at a moment when science was God, efficiency was cherished, and increasingly prominent elites judged partisanship a vestige of the tribal nineteenth century. (Schudson, 2011: 75)

That fact that such objectivity represented anything other than this progressive agenda – liberating journalists from atavistic squabbles – remained largely unquestioned until sociologists began to pry into the practice of journalism. In her seminal book, Gaye Tuchman (1972) demonstrated how elite New York journalists unwittingly serve the *status quo* through the very practices that underpin their notions of objectivity and independence. Objectivity, she said, was a set of symbolic procedures that shielded journalists from criticism; it helped to turn journalism into what Niklas Luhmann would describe as a “self-organizing” social system (Luhmann, 1990). Gans also found that through delegation, rank-and-file journalists evoked their professional identity to insist upon autonomy in the production of stories, though he questioned their influence over story selection (Gans, 1980).

The professional ideology of journalists also has implications for who wins and who loses in the competition over how media events are portrayed. Hallin, analysing the coverage of the Vietnam War, concluded that the trappings of

objectivity favour the government's version of the story, though he acknowledged that journalists do have a certain leeway over stories once they become part of the sphere of "legitimate controversy", which comprises the topics where a plurality of opinions are possible (Hallin, 1986). Elsewhere, objectivity has been accused of complicity with economic liberalism (Hackett & Zhao, 1994) and of legitimizing the Gulf War (Baudrillard, 1995).

The notion of journalistic objectivity would again become a topic of interest to scholars investigating how journalistic norms and practices are shifting in an era of digital communication – an issue that will be discussed further below. Journalism's professional norms are not merely embedded in the values or beliefs it imbues, however, but are codified through routine and practice – a theme that the researchers in the first generation of newsroom studies highlighted above all.

Researchers also observed the professional pursuit of deep-seated news values and the operation of a journalistic culture and milieu sustaining of colleague relationships, journalistic professionalism and news policies. But it was the bureaucratic necessity of "routine" that became the explanatory key for many of these theorists. (Cottle, 2003a: 14–15)

And the standardized ways of doing journalism, necessitated as they are by the urgency of the work, can also contribute to the homogenization of news, as through the routine nature of cooperation with sources and the daily sharing of information with other reporters (Bennett, 2001).

"Routines" are patterned practices that work to organize how we perceive and function within the social world. Thus, here we look to those ongoing, structured, deeply naturalized rules, norms, procedures that are embedded in media work (e.g. Reese and Buckalew 1995). We recognize that individuals do not have complete freedom to act on their beliefs and attitudes, but must operate within a multitude of limits imposed by technology, time, space, and norms. We naturally are often led to view these routines in a negative light, as constraints on individual agency, but they can just as appropriately be viewed as inevitable features of any human activity. (Reese, 2001: 180)

Epstein (2000), in his ethnography of networked television news, for example, showed how the requirements of news to entertain, rather than inform, exerts a strong influence over news images. Driven by the needs of the industry, his television newsroom secured the desired kind of editorial judgement through selective hiring and promotion practices.

Those who were able to adapt to the networks' values were retained and promoted. Those who were not able to accept those values were weeded out and dismissed or shunted aside. From this perspective it was the organization, not individuals, that determined the pictures of society represented on television as national news. (Epstein, 2000: xxii)

The enthusiasm for understanding journalistic homogeneity, however, has waned in recent years with the recognition that values, routines and practices, and professional ideologies actually vary considerably from country to country, owing to particular historical developments (Schudson, 2011), to particularities in the journalistic “field” (De Barros Filho & Praça, 2006) and owing also to the unique way that global discourse on journalism becomes domesticated and “glocalized” in post-colonial contexts such as Kenya (Vltmer & Wasserman, 2014; Wasserman, 2006). Still, it is because of the potential for different values and routines to configure power in the production of media texts in distinct ways that these issues need to be understood in a comparative perspective.

Comparative research on news media has begun to develop seriously only in the past decade or so and may be the most important new domain of academic research on news. (Schudson, 2011: xix)

In summary, sociological studies in this tradition have provided an important link between micro and macro accounts of power. The discussion highlights three factors in particular that are important for establishing those links: professional ideology (particularly objectivity), the routines and practices of journalism, and personal background. Research on this topic suggests that these factors do not function purely as a method of control, yet neither can they be seen as a font of journalistic independence. Rather, these are the terrain on which journalistic autonomy is negotiated.

3.3.2 Journalism as a site of discursive conflict

Owing much to Erving Goffman's influence on Tuchman and other early newsroom researchers, there has always been a constructivist, or culturalist, current within the sociology of journalism tradition.

A culturalist approach to understanding news production was strengthened further by the turn towards the discourse of the news “text” inspired in large part by the rise of audience or reception studies. As Stuart Hall (2007: 201) writes, a discourse is “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about –

i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic”. These “statements” (e.g., utterances, writings, images, etc.) that comprise a discourse can be understood as both reflecting and shaping our emotional and moral responses to distant others.

Dahlgren describes the turn to reception studies as a shift from a “Hegelian critique of domination to a Kantian concern with the epistemological dimensions and possibilities of TV news programmes and their audiences” (Dahlgren, 1988: 288). Hall’s essay on encoding–decoding provided another crucial contribution to this theoretical direction (Hall, 2007), while Morley’s study on how different audiences interpret the same broadcast is was an early seminal piece in the tradition (Morley, 1980). For a time, with popular culture ascending as a topic of interest, media research turned away from the hard politics of news and from the process of journalistic production.

That was, at least, until scholars returned to the notion of framing as a bridging concept allowing a broader conceptualization of institutional interests and affiliations, and of how these are linked to news stories vis-à-vis economic power, discursive power and through biases inherent in certain journalistic procedures (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Entman, 2007; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Drawing on cognitive research, some scholars have also tried to account for how the personal backgrounds of journalists might interact with the wider discursive contest over news frames (Stocking & Gross, 1989; Van Gorp, 2007). From this perspective, it is evident that journalists are in the complex position of being both coders *and* decoders, as producers and receivers of frames.

Reception studies, framing studies and the culturalist–cognitive tradition of journalism studies helped to bring to light two dimensions of power that might enable or constrain journalistic autonomy. One has to do with the “form” of media content; reception studies helped to disentangle the linguistic, aural and visual techniques through which the news can “naturalize” an account (Richardson & Corner, 1986). These forms, of course, are significantly determined by the bureaucratic requirements of the industry and by the need of the profession to establish its authority (more on this below). Some have even

pointed to the format of the news trade as the single greatest constraining factor on journalists (Ignatieff, 1985).

Hard news reporting is governed by a range of mechanistic, narrative conventions that are intended to generate a denotative transparency to inhibit potential readings ... As such, news is a peculiarly "closed" form of actuality coverage whose polysemic potential is circumscribed. (Fenton, 2007: 20)

The other area where journalists might be seen to exert agency has to do with the discursive content of particular news stories – as opposed to the standardizing formats of the news. This aspect has been best addressed as “news frames”, the symbolic packages that help people to organize their experience (Goffman, 1974), though the form and format of news are certainly implicated in the process of producing these frames.

Jenny Kitzinger’s study of the Cleveland sex abuse scandal demonstrated how these frames, codified through the structures of news as “templates”, can take on a power of their own (Kitzinger, 2000).

Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. (Gitlin, 1980: 7)

While frames are often implicated in what might be termed ideological work (Carragee & Roefs, 2004), they have also been explored as dynamic sites of contestation where the institutional and personal collide in the “politics of representation”. This perspective is well suited to the politics of belonging – widening our notion of interests beyond class to the multiple identity-based subjectivities evoked by individuals who participate in the process of mediation (Dahlgren, 1988).

And there is empirical evidence to support the idea that journalists are often aware of how common tropes circumscribe their work, or of the ideological implications of frames. This is reflected in studies into the role of journalistic cynicism (Cappella & Hall Jamieson, 1997; Mcdevitt, 2003), and it has been brought to life by ethnographies documenting many ways that journalists criticize their own copy, though often without a sense that they can change it (Pedelty, 1995). Finally, the various critiques of journalism that have emerged from within journalism (civic and community journalism, for example) are a further reflection

of the degree to which journalistic tropes are contested – and thus a source of potential autonomy.

In short, the culturalist thesis assumes that authority within media organizations is devolved to relatively autonomous journalists. Their reporting is structured by cultural and ideological influences – whether inscribed in news routines, relayed through sources, mediated through market influences, or simply absorbed from the dominant climate of opinion – rather than by hierarchical supervision and control. (Curran, 1989: 120)

In the 1990s, as interest in newsroom studies waned, several scholars sought to reconcile the findings of the early organizational and structuralist studies of the newsroom with the more culturalist approach of the previous decade. One might even be tempted to say that the questions around journalistic autonomy were resolved for a time by structural-culturalists such as Cottle, Curran, Benson and Bourdieu (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu & Ferguson, 1999; Cottle, 2003a; Curran, 1989). In various ways, these scholars reached the conclusion that cultural influences tend to reinforce the organizational and structural constraints encountered by journalists, but that shifts in power were possible over time, and that well positioned journalists could be instrumental in bringing about such changes given their unique position in the politics of narrative.

The culturalist approach to understanding news production has shed light on another important aspect of journalistic autonomy that relates to news discourse, in both form and content. These studies suggest that journalists exercise a form of autonomy when they are critical of the ways that news forms can naturalize an account, and conscious of how power is manifest in the content of news. Unlike the notion of autonomy that emerges from the sociological studies' focus on news routine and practice, journalistic autonomy in a culturalist tradition is not merely negotiated vertically between a journalist and his or her organization, but also horizontally with sources and society.

3.3.3 Journalism as technologically enabled practice

As new digital technologies began to fundamentally change the way that news was produced, distributed and consumed at the turn of the millennium, the debate about journalistic autonomy was revived from new perspectives that have added yet another dimension to considerations of journalistic autonomy.

McLuhan may have pioneered the epistemic nature of technology more than 30 years earlier (McLuhan, 1964), but Cottle and Ashton, writing in 1999, were still lamenting how little attention media sociologists had given to technology in news production (Cottle & Ashton, 1999). This changed quickly. Technology is now implicated in changes in every aspect of news work. Convergence – the coming together of audio, video, telecommunications and data onto a common platform through digitization – affects four aspects of the media industry, according to Deuze: (i) the content of communication, (ii) the relationship between media producers and consumers, (iii) the structure of firms, and (iv) how communication professionals do their work (Deuze, 2007). And these changes have given sociologists more than sufficient reason to return to the newsroom to investigate how technology is implicated in reconfiguring the practices of the profession (Dickinson, Matthews, & Saltzis, 2000).

The earliest of the newsroom studies concerned with the digitizing of news generally ignored the concerns of the previous newsroom sociologies, positing the technology itself as the prime driver of change (McNair, 1998; Pavlik, 2000, 2001). But in one of the first newsroom studies of the digital era to take up sociology's concern with autonomy, a less optimistic view is apparent. Simon Cottle studied how convergence was affecting the practice of journalism at the British Broadcasting Corporation. In the study, he witnessed individual journalists taking responsibility for a greater range of activities within the production process – sometimes acting as producer, reporter and editor all in one. This “multi-skilling” was heralded within the institution for its potential to give journalists greater control over their work and to promote creativity, but the increased demands on their time and the loss of expertise in any given area of the production process meant that technological change became an additional conditioning factor (Cottle & Ashton, 1999).

More recent studies of technology in the newsroom, however, have found a balance between the early optimism and pessimism by being more sensitive to the contingent nature of technology, documenting how organizational structures and occupational practices shape how technology is adopted (Boczkowski, 2004; Deuze, 2007; Domingo, 2014; Ursell, 2001).

The new technologies make possible changes in news production and news outputs, but there is no reason to expect that the impact of the new technologies will be uniform across all news providers. Rather we might expect to find that there are differing impacts, contingent upon different technological applications, which in turn are contingent upon the goals and judgements of executive personnel and any political regulators. (Ursell, 2001: 178).

Digitization has given a new complexion to the study of day-to-day journalism, shifting the focus from “routines” to “practices”, which reflects a move away from organizational functionalism towards “discursive and administrative enactments”, which can be seen as both “productive and facilitative, as well as repressive or imposed” (Cottle, 2003a: 19).

As part of this shift, the most recent studies in the current wave of newsroom sociology studies have emphasized journalistic autonomy far more than their counterparts in the 1970s and 1980s, but whether this reflects actual changes in the nature of newsrooms or simply contemporary theoretical standpoints is unclear.

Both Nikki Usher and David Ryfe, drawing upon Giddens’ structuration theory, see technological change as opening opportunities to unsettle the way that organizational cultures, journalistic practices, and professional ideologies reinforce one another with homogenizing effects on the news. In other words, both see technology as opening up opportunities for greater reflexivity, but they disagree on the factors that influence whether journalists can take advantage of the opportunity to exercise their agency. Ryfe sees the potential as greatest when journalists can collectively reimagine their profession, which requires a strong sense of community, suggesting little scope for any single actor to make a significant difference. Usher, on the other hand, sees any act of reflexivity that purposively changes existing practices, or creates new forms of practice, as constituting a kind of agency, or autonomy.

I found that the structures that are most constraining to news production are organizational identity and time, whereas the agents are most able to change structure when they can introduce new routines into newswork via new technology. (Usher, 2012: 808)

Deuze, with inspiration from Zygmunt Baumann, refers to the current state of affairs as “liquid journalism”, contrasting it with the more predictable linear

forms of production that preceded it. Deuze acknowledges that the multi-skilling of the journalist for the liquid newsroom can be a problem, but that this overlooks the early adopters and the enthusiasts who embrace technology when “they perceive it to enhance their status, prestige, and the way they did their work before” (Deuze, 2007: 157).

Part of what will happen will reproduce existing power relationships and inequalities, for sure. Yet we are also witnessing an unparalleled degree of human agency and user control in our lived experience of mediated reality. A journalism that will successfully embrace and engage this ecology will have to become fluid itself – a liquid journalism. (Deuze, 2008: 860)

Deuze goes on to argue for journalism to be conceptualized as an “ensemble of attitudes and behaviours”, emphasizing the journalist as an “individual meaning-maker in the context of the media ecosystem” (Deuze, 2009: 119) – which strongly resonates with the approach being proposed here. Where journalism goes depends much on journalists themselves.

That said, it is unclear how much the newsrooms of the North resemble the newsrooms in Kenya and elsewhere in the South (see Mawindi Mabweazara, 2014 for a good summary of these issues). Unlike their Northern counterparts, readership is on the rise, bolstered by growing literacy, and with it a fast-growing advertising market that targets an expanding middle class (Deane, 2003). Though social media is thriving in Kenya, media houses are not immanently threatened with replacement by a “new online order” of bloggers and citizen journalists. Still, there is evidence that they are feeling some pressure from online competition (Mare, 2013; Mudhai, 2011), and some newsrooms in Africa, even without pressure, are embracing new technologies with a conscientious aim of being more participatory and inclusive (Mare, 2014). Furthermore, new digital technologies must be expected to be reshaping news in different ways in the South than in the North. The greatest potential for citizen participation in media might not be through online communication, but vis-à-vis mobile phone short message service (SMS) and the cheap and easy-to-use software packages such as FrontLine SMS and FreedomFone that allow even local radio stations to send and receive SMS messages in bulk (Lopes et al., 2015).

In a Southern context, journalism research must also reckon with issues of media freedom in terms of threats to the functions of a watchdog press that can include harassment, intimidation, censorship and undue government restraints beyond the remit of libel and obscenity laws (Bourgault, 1993; Mano, 2005; Ochilo, 1993; Odugbemi & Norris, 2010; Tettey, 2006). New technology, rightly or wrongly, has often been implicated in the question of how to protect journalistic freedom in this regard (Becker & Vlad, 2011; Karikari, 2004). Kenya is no exception. The crowd-sourcing platform, *Ushahidi*, was developed in Kenya in response to the failure of the press to document violence that followed the contested 2007 elections (Goldstein & Rotich, 2008), and there has been a strong perception amongst digital activists that new media platforms can document what journalists in Kenya's large commercial media houses supposedly will not or cannot (Benequista, 2015a).

As different as Kenya may be from the contexts where the majority of third-wave newsroom sociologies are being conducted, the latest studies underscore the relevance of technology to journalistic autonomy in two dimensions. The first is that the nature of how institutions adopt technology has implications for journalistic autonomy; like journalistic practices, and discourse, technology is another terrain on which autonomy is negotiated. But new digital communication technologies, and the rubric that surrounds them, are also unsettling orthodoxy in journalism, which creates new opportunities for reflexivity, and hence autonomy. Still, with the abundance of "autonomy" now witnessed in the changing field of journalism, there remains a question of whether this autonomy is being marshalled for betterment of the profession and society. A conceptual framework that connects journalistic autonomy with a normative notion of moral agency is better able to respond to that question by avoiding the pitfall of viewing all forms of change as agency, and all forms of autonomy as desirable.

3.4 Locating sources of morality in the news

The previous section considered the sociological literature to address a gap in Silverstone's work. Through the notion of the mediapolis, Silverstone weaves a powerful account of morality into the rich, sociological fabric of mediation. This provides the foundation for a conceptual framework that is both explanatory and

normative, and that can account for the multi-faceted ways that journalists are involved in mediating a politics of belonging. But how Silverstone's theoretical ideas can be applied to journalistic practice was unclear.

The notion of journalistic autonomy, developed in the sociological literature on journalism, is helpful for understanding the ways that journalists contribute to mediation through news production. They can be seen to exercise a form of autonomy, and hence power, in their professional ideology, in the manner in which they carry out routines and practices, in the form and content of news discourse, and in their use of technology. In each of these cases, their autonomy rests partly on their ability to exercise reflexivity – to comprehend how power is negotiated on these terrains.

Related to this issue, there is another component of Silverstone's framework that needs to be addressed for the purposes of this thesis. Silverstone does not provide a clear account of how media changes or of how this process of change might be facilitated by moral and ethical frameworks such as his own. This section examines this feature of Silverstone's framework, before discussing other attempts to locate morality in journalism.

Silverstone has been criticized for insufficiently theorizing on how individuals come to formulate or adopt an identity as moral, caring beings (Corpus Ong, 2009). This critique is helpful to the extent that Silverstone gives more insight into what he calls "collusion" and "complicity" (Silverstone, 2002) than into a capacity to challenge, to contest and ultimately to democratize mediated relationships. The notions of complicity and collusion, however, are richly textured concepts that, together with the notions of imagination, judgement and alterity discussed above, leave substantial clues for how to understand journalistic autonomy and moral agency. One useful distinction between "complicity" and "collusion" relates to the different aspects of form and content.

Complicity depends on our willing acceptance of the media's capacity to translate the properly challenging other both into the comforting frames of the familiar and into excommunicated banishment. Collusive denial depends on our capacity, and our desire, both to ignore and to forget the reality of the other's otherness. Complicity is implicated in our relationship to the forms and processes of mediation, collusion to its content. (Silverstone, 2002: 29)

Silverstone is not explicit about what he means by these terms, but scholars concerned with journalism have elsewhere given us useful ways of distinguishing the two. One dominant way of conceptualizing the “form” of media content is as the linguistic, aural and visual techniques through which the news can “naturalize” an account (Richardson & Corner, 1986). These forms, of course, are significantly influenced by the bureaucratic requirements of the industry and by the need of the profession to establish its authority (more on this below). In that sense, the “complicity” that Silverstone describes can be approached as a bricolage of journalistic practices and formats that structure the production of news, while “collusion” relates to the connotative meanings embedded in the texts. Given how interrelated these categories are, however, it is best to consider them as heuristic devices for analysis.

Silverstone argues that all participants – producers and consumers alike – are capable of complicity and collusion, though some have more power, and hence greater responsibility, than others.

I also intend to argue that insofar as the persisting representational characteristics of contemporary media, above all in our media's representation of the other, remain unchallenged – as for the most part they are – then those who receive and accept them are neither mere prisoners of a dominant ideology nor innocents in a world of false consciousness; rather they are willing participants, that is, complicit or even actively engaged, that is, collusive, in a mediated culture that fails to deliver its promises of communication and connection, with enduring, powerful and largely negative consequences for our status as human beings. (Silverstone, 2002: 762)

At the end of *Media and Morality*, Silverstone calls for a new approach to regulation. Acknowledging the limits of current, national and regional-level regulatory frameworks, he proposes a global framework, somewhat akin to the Kyoto Accord, to promote a media environment in which there is respect for the distant other. But perhaps more importantly, he stresses the need for a new approach to media literacy, one that acknowledges the growing importance of participation in media as a civic activity. He also emphasizes that media literacy for professionals is not just a matter of skills, but also “a matter of informed and reflexive understanding of the nature of mediation as a practice of the mediapolis

as a social, cultural and political environment, in which their activities have significant moral consequences” (Silverstone, 2007: 183).

Silverstone does not give much detail for how either of these ideas might be practically implemented. It is not the concern of this thesis to elaborate a global regulatory framework, but the conceptual framework and the action research methodology of this thesis do aim to contribute insight into how a reflexive understanding of mediation might be instilled amongst professional journalists.

The following section will discuss how the concepts of morality in the mediapolis compare with other efforts to conceptualize morality in journalism, seeking further clues as to where morality can be located, and exercised, in the production of news.⁷

3.4.1 Morality in news narratives

Morality has often been located primarily in the “content” of stories, though the approach to understanding the morality in news narratives is markedly different, depending on the perspective.

Ettema and Glasser (1998) have made one of the most valued contributions to this issue from the field of journalism studies. In their view, journalists perform an important function by helping to determine which social ills are deemed unacceptable. The authors hold investigative journalists in special esteem, arguing that their work often goes beyond the day-to-day news judgement (a determination of what is important), to serving a function of moral judgement (a determination of what is right and wrong).

Their stories call attention to the breakdown of social systems and the disorder within public institutions that cause injury and injustice; in turn, their stories implicitly demand the response of public officials – and the public itself – to that breakdown and disorder. Thus the work of these reporters calls us, as a society, to decide what is, and what is not, an outrage to our sense of moral order and to consider our expectations

⁷ In the following sections, I have chosen to leave aside almost all of the debates on journalistic “ethics” because they (a) attempt a codification of practice that is different from the objectives of this framework and because (b) they do not seek to provide an explanatory framework.

for our officials, our institutions, and ultimately ourselves. (Ettema & Glasser, 1998: 3)

As shorthand for social values of right and wrong, Ettema and Glasser's conception of morality is, of course, distinct from the notion of morality put forward by Silverstone and described above, but their account is still relevant to one important aspect of what I will describe as the moral agency of journalists – and that relates to their deliberate use of *narrative* to communicate values. This is important in journalism's own account of itself.

Coddington draws on Ettema and Glasser's work in arguing that mainstream journalists increasingly defend their social contribution (primarily against the perceived threat of networked forms of information gathering) not by their ability to parse official documents, conduct interviews and provide eyewitness observation (all of which can be provided by networked forms of information gathering) but by their ability to provide “context, judgment and narrative power. In doing so, journalists cast themselves fundamentally as sense-makers rather than information-gatherers during an era in which information gathering has been widely networked” (Coddington, 2014: 678).

The ability of journalists to act as moral sense-makers or as agents of discursive power, however, is not entirely unconstrained. Tester approaches morality in the sense found in Ettema and Glasser's work, claiming that “it is through the media that individuals become aware of their obligations and duties as people who uphold the right and condemn the wrong” (Tester, 1994: 83).

But he also poses a challenge to the sanguine view of journalists as moral agents by describing how their “ethical subjectivities” are embedded in the practices and structures of news production. He says that their ability to demonstrate compassion is wound up in the contradictions inherent in journalism: pitting their own personal histories against the journalistic obligation to report “facts objectively without empathizing with the human victims” and the “logic of the market which tends towards a journalistic practice that is sensationalist” (Tester, 1994: 27). In his later work, he poses a critique to the thesis of compassion fatigue, arguing that the phenomenon owes less to the callousness of the audience than to the inherent weaknesses of the genre (Tester, 2001).

Ignatieff, an early proponent of a moral perspective on media, focuses more on the demands of the news genre and of mediated communication itself to betray even the best intentions of journalists, making viewers “voyeurs of the suffering of others, tourists amidst the landscapes of anguish” (Ignatieff, 1985: 59).

When the rules of a genre are in such contradiction to the needs and intentions of those trying to make best use of it, there is a case for scrapping the genre altogether. (Ignatieff, 1985: 76)

Looking at morality from the perspective of the demands of the news genre and the demands of mediated communication thus provides an important reminder not to fall into a naïve celebration of the moral subjectivities of journalists, which are also subject to forms of power embedded in news production.

Another approach to this moral conundrum has emanated from cultural studies and is epitomized by the work of Luc Boltanski and Lilie Chouliaraki – both of whom are concerned primarily with the implications of news as moral discourse (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006, 2012). They ask if news can create a genuine connection between the viewer and the represented. At the heart of inquiries into media and morality is the paradox of the media’s ability to both create and to obliterate distance. Or, as Chouliaraki poses the question, “Does media discourse deliver the promise of a reflective and active public or seduce and disempower spectators?” (Chouliaraki, 2006: 4).

Drawing on Boltanski’s theories on distant suffering and on critical discourse analysis, Chouliaraki offers a detailed answer to the paradox. She finds that the ability of media to create possibilities for genuine sympathy depends on how suffering is portrayed. In particular, it depends on specific aspects of textual multi-modality, on how the text represents proximity to and distance from the sufferer and on how the agency of the sufferer is presented. Through this approach, Chouliaraki and Boltanski deepen the understanding of what makes discourse moral, though without an account of journalists’ “ethical subjectivities”, or the process of production.

Considered together, and in light of what can be gleaned from a culturalist understanding of journalistic autonomy, these approaches to morality in news narratives are suggestive of how to understand the moral agency of journalists. They indicate that the moral subjectivities of journalists are important, and that

these subjectivities have roots in personal background and in journalists' ability to exercise reflexivity about the forms and content of journalistic discourse. Accounts from Tester, Ignatieff, Chouliaraki and Boltanski, however, are a reminder that these ethical subjectivities cannot be taken for granted without examining the moral content of news discourse to gain a greater understanding of *how* a journalist's moral ambitions are ultimately reflected in the text. The pursuit of these ethical subjectivities in the context of news discourse, with all of contending forms of power implicated in its construction, is captured well by the notion of *discursive strategies* put forward by Anabela Carvalho (2008). Carvalho defines these as forms of discursive intervention intended to achieve a certain effect or goal (2008: 169). She further argues that the discursive strategies of journalists have largely been neglected as a topic of study. I would argue that participatory action research provides a useful way of interrogating these strategies. And indeed, the participating journalists in study were involved in the act of examining the discourse of their own news stories as a method of facilitating their reflexivity towards such strategies (as elaborated further in Chapter 4).

3.4.2 Morality in news practices

Another approach that seeks to locate morality in news production has focused on the practices of journalists. Nick Couldry (Couldry, 2004, 2012) argues for this kind of a practice-based approach to media ethics,⁸ with independence from either textual or political economy models. As he observes, this places his framework on common territory with Silverstone's approach to mediation.

The shift to a more widely focused research question was anticipated also by the emergence of the term "mediation" (cf. Silverstone, forthcoming) to refer to the broad expanse of social processes focused around media, even if the first prominent use of that term (Martin-Barbero 1993) was concerned, still, with extending our understanding of media consumption to encompass a broader range of cultural participation. (Couldry, 2004: 119)

In spite of the similarities in their general approach and outlook, Couldry's three virtues – accuracy, sincerity and care – are distinct in many ways from

⁸ Couldry here uses "ethics" in an Aristotelian sense, which is closer in meaning to the "first principles" definition of morality proposed above than to ethics as codified norms of practice.

Silverstone's own triad of obligations (Couldry, 2012). Couldry specifies that these virtues may have some overlap with a "general ethics of communication", but he can be understood as proposing that these virtues should apply in instances where there is an "institutional concentration of communicative resources", which would apply specifically to the case of news producers (Couldry, 2012: Loc 5811). In that sense, Couldry is directing his framework to the very cohort that Silverstone seems to neglect.

Couldry also distinguishes himself from Silverstone by alleging that Silverstone puts forth a deontology – a set of prescribed rules – in *Media and Morality*; Couldry advocates instead an Aristotelian approach that relies on the *phronesis* (judgement or "practical wisdom") of the practitioner. As discussed above, this may be an inaccurate critique of Silverstone. My intention in this thesis is to develop a framework, drawing from Silverstone, that can help to promote the kind of reflective practice that Couldry supports.

Wright, who is also seeking ways to inform the actual practice of journalism with insights from moral theory, describes the reflective approach to moral journalistic practice as "unworkable" in two separate critiques of Couldry and of Silverstone (Wright, 2012, 2013), citing limitations on editorial judgement that include commercial pressures, the collective nature of editorial work and time constraints. She describes her perspective as being that of a "critical realist", offering in essence a critique of Silverstone's and Couldry's critical theories of media and morality by assessing their workability in the real-world context of newsrooms. In doing so, she argues that there is no substitute for a rule-based approach to journalistic ethics, which she says is exemplified by the usefulness of the BBC Editorial Guidelines (Wright, 2013: 370).

Wright, while perhaps charting a more "*realistic*" path to change, surrenders much of the power of critical theory by treating the limits of journalistic autonomy as barriers to avoid rather than to challenge – precisely the taken-for-grantedness that Nyamnjoh and other scholars have criticized in an African context.

Indeed, the approach in this thesis is a departure from Wright's efforts. As the methodology chapter (Chapter 4) will elaborate, I apply Silverstone's approach within the context of action research that builds on the moral ambitions of the

participating journalists. Each of the journalists in the Networked News Lab, which was introduced briefly in Chapter 1, said she or he wanted to change the way that journalism is done. This thesis aims to demonstrate that such a reflective framework is helpful for both understanding and informing their unique strategies. This is not to argue against the importance or usefulness of codified guidelines of ethics within institutions. A rule-based approach to journalistic ethics and a reflective approach to morality are, in fact, not mutually exclusive. This thesis chooses nevertheless to focus on the latter.

This raises another important point of contention in debates on morality and the media: between those, such as Couldry and Silverstone, who suggest that morality and ethics in journalism can be derived (and somehow imposed) from external philosophical resources, and those, like Barbie Zelizer, who defend an “immanent” approach in which normative frameworks are gleaned from the history of journalism practice itself (Zelizer, 2011).

These other efforts to locate and understand morality in journalistic practices are useful for clarifying the approach in this thesis. In a similar strategy to that proposed by Couldry (2012), I use a normative framework and an action research approach to facilitate reflective practice amongst the participating journalists. As described above, this reflection can help journalists to consider how their intentions are reflected in the text, but it must also consider the forms and practices of journalism. I would suggest that Wright’s contention that a rule-based approach to journalistic ethics is not more “realistic”, particularly given the need in the Kenyan context to question the orthodoxy of Western journalism. Finally, by proposing to approach this reflective practice through action research, I seek a compromise between the externally driven and immanent approaches to formulating a normative framework for journalism.

3.4.3 Morality in moral witnessing

A final approach to media and morality that is worth mentioning has looked at journalists and bloggers as moral witnesses. Chouliaraki provides a concise summary of how new media technologies in particular have stimulated an interest in this area.

Whereas all classes of news remain recognizable as 'accounts and explanations of events presented by news organizations' (Tuchman 1973: 112), the generic shift from television to post-television journalism, enabled by the intense technologization of our culture, also marks a narrative shift from professional to ordinary testimony and, therefore, from hybrid narratives, mixing professional and non-professional testimony, to hypertextual ones, driven by input from 'ordinary' witnesses. (Chouliaraki, 2012)

In one of the earliest studies in this tradition, Barbie Zelizer (2000: 10), compares photography of the holocaust to coverage of more contemporary atrocities, arguing that to “bear witness” is how the media encourages the public to “assume responsibility for the events of our times”. Tait (2011: 1233) develops this idea further, drawing in part from Boltanski to define “bearing witness” as “the act of appealing to an audience to share responsibility for the suffering of others”. She writes:

Central to this appeal is the attempt to elicit affect; to move the body to participation. Bearing witness also describes this participation; hearing the appeal, being affected by it, and translating that affectedness into emotions that moralize public action. It is this space of socializing affect as emotions that bind publics to a cause that requires interrogation as a site where empathy for the sufferer may be displaced by hatred for the perpetrator, reproducing the mechanisms of violence rather than facilitating processes of reconciliation. (Tait, 2011: 1233)

Like a practice-based approach, this tradition also seeks to cross some of the theoretical divides in media studies; specifically, it begins to reconcile a Boltanskian view of morality with journalistic production. Unfortunately, with little work yet in this tradition, it mostly elides the vexing questions raised by authors such as Tester about the institutional contexts of news production.

That said, other authors have looked at how new forms of digitally enabled journalism specifically have enabled bloggers to “bear witness” in a way that their mainstream media counterparts cannot (Ashuri, 2012; Wiesslitz & Ashuri, 2011). Wiesslitz and Ashuri say that their approach follows Couldry and Giddens, claiming to move past the structure–agency dichotomy and beyond the political economy–cultural studies divide to focus instead on “media-oriented practice”, which she claims is changing in a digital news environment.

Though the authors are more suggestive than explicit as to why it is happening in a digital media environment, they argue that online news sources outside

mainstream news outlets are giving rise to a “moral” journalist who is different from both the “objective” and “advocate” journalist.

Unlike the “objective” journalist who (supposedly) remains outside of events and reports only evidence that “speaks for itself”, and unlike the “advocate” journalist who aims to bring about change by reporting on events in which she takes part, the “moral” journalist witnesses the suffering of others with the aim of changing the witnessed reality. In other words, the “moral” journalist functions as an eyewitness to evil, and her report gives public visibility to the experience of suffering caused by this evil. (Wiesslitz & Ashuri, 2011: 1039)

Ashuri (writing without Wiesslitz) concludes that her quintessential moral witness, Machsom Watch, might succeed in drawing public attention to instances of abuse of Palestinians at Israeli checkpoints, but that their work simultaneously legitimizes the “conventional practices of mainstream news organizations and [naturalizes] their representations of evil and suffering” (Ashuri, 2012: 54). Ultimately, it is not clear what difference the moral witness can make to the contemporary news environment. Ultimately, the inchoate literature on journalists as “moral witness” does not live up to its stated ambition to deliver a framework that can bridge the worlds of text and production in a way that provides a compelling normative vision.

That said, the approach, more so than others, has been able to take advantage of the reflective moment created by technological change. It aims, in a sense, to capitalize on the uncertain moment to “move from the ivory tower to the control tower” (Nyre, 2009). In this thesis I share that ambition, and the sensibilities of this approach to how journalists can be seen to be deliberately using technology for moral purposes.

3.5 Conceptual framework and research questions

3.5.1 Conceptualizing journalistic autonomy and moral agency in the mediapolis

Journalistic autonomy, broadly, has been discussed as the discretion or creative control that a journalist enjoys in a given institutional and cultural setting, but the nature of that discretion has been conceived in very different ways. I aim to put forward a distinct notion of autonomy that is related to the ability of journalists

to exercise a moral form of agency – one that exercises their power in the process of mediating a politics of belonging.

I propose a conceptual framework with journalistic autonomy and moral agency as the major constructs. These notions are defined in part by the same distinction Silverstone makes between complicity and collusion as constituting acts of mediated form and content, which I have argued is similar as well to the distinction between the form and content of news elaborated in a culturalist approach to journalism. Though the two are, in practice, often inseparable, the distinction helps to conceptually highlight both the practices and formats that structure news, as well as the connotative meaning of news texts.

With this in mind, I define **journalistic autonomy** as the reflexivity of journalists with regard to the *forms* of journalism. As the discussion above shows, journalistic autonomy is both enabled and constrained by the news genre and professional ideology, routines and practices, news discourse and the technology of journalism. It is not, as the early conceptualizations would have us believe, a simple dichotomy with institutional control of journalistic production; it is, rather, a dialectic – which is itself cross-cutting to the dialectic described by Silverstone between the mediated world and the everyday. This creates a unique challenge of understanding the complex, diverse and intersecting ways in which journalists participate in the process of mediation from their privileged positions.

Journalistic autonomy may often be latent. Whether it is exercised or not, whether journalists are complicit or not, it is there. It is most visible, however, when journalists act: when they consciously and deliberately work to change the forms of their genre, when they are not complicit. This action can be institutional; it might comprise their efforts internally to shield the editorial team from the influence of the sales team. It might be discernible when journalists experiment with new forms of digital storytelling that innovate standard formats of news. And it might be textual, or discursive, as when a newspaper journalist seeks to frame a story in a novel way. All of these efforts to change the news indicate a degree of autonomy: a certain reflexivity and a desire for change. But not all acts of autonomy are expressions of moral agency.

Unlike moral autonomy, moral agency is exerted in news narratives; it is primarily discursive. Moral agency in this thesis will relate to the ability of journalists to bring truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into the texts that they and their institutions produce. This, of course, is intimately related to the nature of their autonomy, but it depends also on the quality of their own reflections. Journalistic autonomy and moral agency, seen in this way, are distinct but interwoven.

Where journalistic autonomy is exercised in form, moral agency is the ability of journalists to express their sense of responsibility for the other through the content that they produce. Silverstone offers a normative framework for judging whether this has been achieved, but using Silverstone's obligations like a set of standards seems at odds with the challenge that he puts forward to pass judgement on ourselves, and to consider how the manner in which we view others through the media affects who we are.

As the following chapter will argue, this dilemma can be addressed through a methodology of action research that seeks to facilitate a *praxis* – cycles of reflective action – that encourage journalists to sharpen their judgement and their execution of their moral agency, which relies on their skills as much as their good intentions.

This framework suggests that when journalists seek to exercise moral agency, they do so through unique **strategies** motivated by specific **moral intent** that can be understood within the micro-level processes that have been brought to light by the sociology of journalism. These processes are themselves intertwined, and any categorization is inevitably a heuristic exercise. But in an effort to devise categories that respond to the theorization of mediation, I propose to investigate how the moral intent and strategies of a small group of journalists in Kenya are articulated through their personal backgrounds; notions of professionalism; journalistic routines and practices; the technologies of journalism; and political and journalistic discourse.

This thesis, and the methodology of action research that supports it, attempts to facilitate a dialogue of sorts between how the journalists have constructed their strategies for moral action in their profession and a theoretically informed

normative framework: creating an opportunity – one hopes – for the betterment of both.

The aim is to work with an actor-oriented conceptual framework that can inform and guide reflective practice. Silverstone's model is well suited for the task because of the ontological and dialectical nature of his approach. Though in his own recommendations for media policy, he may have failed to appreciate it, his mediapolis strongly suggests a path of reflective practice. By turning his notions of complicity and collusion around, and by extending his arguments to the rich scholarship on journalistic production, we see the need for a moral *praxis* to guide the work of journalists within a politics of belonging.

3.5.2 Research questions

This conceptual framework provides the basis for the overall research question and three sub-questions. These will be operationalized in the following chapter.

RQ: What constitutes moral agency for journalists working within a politics of belonging?

Sub-RQ1: In what ways do journalists express a moral intent in the exercise of their autonomy?

Sub-RQ2: In what ways do Kenyan journalists strategically pursue moral agency in news content?

Sub-RQ3: What are the implications of the pursuit of moral agency for the connection between journalists, their professional practice and the politics of belonging?

3.6 Paths not taken

The discussion in this chapter has already touched upon a number of alternative approaches to this topic, pointing to some of their weaknesses, but borrowing concepts and ideas that can strengthen the key concepts that are used in this thesis.

Ubuntu, development journalism, Afriethics – the normative frameworks most widely posited as alternatives to Western liberal journalism in Africa – either do not respond adequately to the challenges of a politics of belonging, or take too naïve a view on the conviviality of contemporary African politics and society.

Other approaches to morality in journalism have been reviewed, along with their strengths and weaknesses. I have sought a synthesis, or compromise, between some of these competing views with an aim of building a framework that is applicable in practice. My conceptual framework emphasises another practice-based approach to morality in journalism, but endeavours to do so without losing sight of news discourse. I also aim to navigate a route between externally driven and immanent approaches through the use of theoretically informed action research, an approach that will be described in the next chapter.

I have chosen not to follow other potential paths that are not covered in the discussion above. The theories of Giddens, Bourdieu, Foucault, Latour, and Baumann – to mention a few – have all been used to understand power in media production (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Chadwick, 2011; Chouliaraki, 2010b; Deuze, 2009; Usher, 2012). Research informed by these theoretical perspectives did not provide as good a fit as the mediapolis concept. Whilst each of these approaches have certain virtues that might have recommended them for inclusion in my study, the moral perspective seems particularly well suited to broaden the understanding of how Kenyan journalists experience and respond to the place of ethnic identity in the news.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the conceptual framework for the thesis. Silverstone's conceptualization of mediation furnishes an overarching perspective on meaning-making, whilst the moral obligations he makes central to the mediapolis provide the normative dimension. Arguably, his perspectives remains at a distance from the realities of journalistic practice. Mediation, whilst suggestive of a dialectical and holistic approach, in Silverstone's work was not developed to account for the complex position journalists occupy in news production, a position that is even more complex given the added tensions between the public and private realms in a politics of belonging. Furthermore, Silverstone gives us greater insight into "collusion" and "complicity" (Silverstone, 2002) than into autonomy and agency; it is unclear how participants in the mediapolis, including journalists, acquire greater moral commitment in the process of mediation.

To address these two weaknesses, I have drawn on the notion of journalistic autonomy, developed in decades of sociological research on journalism, and on more recent approaches to understanding morality in the news. The notion of journalistic autonomy reveals a cross-cutting dialectic that situates journalists in the push and pull of their organizations, their genre, their societies and communication technologies. Meanwhile, approaches to morality in news have illustrated how journalists also demonstrate a moral reflexivity with regard to the discourses, practices and technologies of journalism. These insights are brought together in the key conceptual constructs for this thesis: journalistic autonomy and moral agency.

Journalistic autonomy is understood as the reflexivity of journalists with regard to how the *forms* of journalism mediate intersubjectivity, whereas **moral agency** refers to the ability of journalists to bring truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into the texts that they and their institutions produce. The conceptual framework further proposes that when journalists seek to exercise moral agency, they do so through unique **strategies** motivated by specific **moral intent** that can be understood within the micro-level processes of journalistic practice. To explore these concepts and their relevance to journalistic practice in Kenya, the overarching research question is, *“What constitutes moral agency for journalists working within a politics of belonging?”*

The next chapter will present the methodological approach taken to observe the strategies and intent of Kenyan journalists to exert moral agency, choosing action research to facilitate a praxis in which this journalistic autonomy and moral agency can not only be observed, but potentially strengthened.

4 Methodology: Action Research and Praxis

4.1 Aims and overview of the research process

Action research fundamentally challenges the notion of the researcher as a passive observer of the world. This methodological approach is premised on the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed, and that knowledge production is a political act. Action research presupposes that it is possible, and perhaps even necessary in some instances, to understand the social world through an active effort to change it.

In the spirit of action research, the methodological approach of this thesis was aimed in part at bolstering the moral agency of participating journalists. That moral agency, the previous chapter suggested, is premised strongly on journalists having an awareness, or reflexivity, of how the forms and content of news construct intersubjectivity. Some argue that ethical or moral lessons derived from theory and philosophy can be passed on to journalists as tools for this reflexive work (Couldry, 2012), whilst others argue that journalism must find ways internally for the profession to strengthen its own sense of ethical and moral commitment (Wright, 2012; Zelizer, 2011).

In this thesis I propose another path. The research design was intended to create a reflective space, what Einsiedel would describe as a praxis (Einsiedel, 1999), in which leading journalists in Kenya could explore, experiment with and assess different strategies and approaches to journalism in Kenya. This praxis – which was facilitated by a project called “The Networked News Lab” – was intended to strengthen the ability of participating journalists to reflect on their work, individually and collectively, whilst simultaneously trying to observe this reflective work for the purposes of answering the research questions for this study.

In Chapter 2, it was argued that the aim is to make a contribution to empirical knowledge on how journalists interact with the politics of belonging. In Chapter 3, a case was made for how the research can make a contribution to the understanding of how intersubjectivity is mediated through the news production

process. This chapter explains how an action research approach has been used to achieve these purposes.

Engaging journalists in this manner, not as passive research objects, but as active participants in the process of enquiry, is not only a feasible way for promoting change, but also useful for building an actor-oriented understanding of moral agency in news production. The chapter first outlines a rationale for the study's overall design, explaining action research and reflective praxis, and describing both the strengths and weaknesses of the approach for the task. The chapter will then describe how the research questions were operationalized in this research design, and how the Networked News Lab was managed as a site for action research appropriate to answer the questions posed by the thesis.

The second half of the chapter describes the data collection methods and analytical processes in detail. For the study I conducted participatory workshops, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, participant observation; collected news articles;⁹ and I examined the resulting data through thematic analysis. Each of my methodological choices will be discussed according to their rationale, implementation and limitations with reference to the conceptual framework.

4.2 Action research, reflective practice and the mediapolis

4.2.1 The basic principles of action research

Action research is a flexible methodological approach, as illustrated by the diverse theories and methods associated with it in the recently published *Encyclopaedia of Action Research* (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Under the enduring legacy of John Dewey and the influence of American pragmatism, action researchers are known to use theories and methods opportunistically to suit the purpose of promoting democratic social change (Greenwood, 2015; Gustavsen, 2008). Dick and Greenwood (2015) also refer to the pragmatic need for theoretical and methodological eclecticism.

Action researchers must understand themselves as responsible for basic familiarity with a wide variety of social theories and methods because we have to be able to bring them to bear on particular [action research]

⁹ Appendix III features a list of the interviews, workshops and field note entries, which will be referenced by date throughout the thesis.

projects when a particular approach may give the needed change process an anchor, or at least traction, in moving toward solutions. (Dick & Greenwood, 2015: 195)

This is not to say that action research is limitlessly flexible. Given its assumptions about the political nature of knowledge production, action research can make an uneasy companion to other qualitative and quantitative methods. And though it is essentially pragmatic, there have been repeated efforts to combat what is seen as the co-optation and corruption of action research's ideals by establishing basic principles that distinguish it from other forms of enquiry (Grundy, 1982; Hall, 1992; McNiff, 2013; McTaggart, 1991a).

One core principle of action research is that it should take as its subject matter a social practice, and that it must regard the practice as a strategic action, which is to say that it is susceptible to improvement (Brydon-Miller, et al., 2003; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; McNiff, 2013; McTaggart, 1991b). In the 1938 book *Experience and Education*, which has been influential in this aspect of action research, John Dewey (1963) argued against the usefulness of abstract philosophical traditions divorced from people's lived experience. By approaching journalism as a practice, and engaging journalists in a process that seeks to improve that practice, this thesis follows in this tradition. Dewey further argued that the usefulness of research findings in the real world is the final determinant of the value of research – an issue that figures prominently in the claims to validity that are discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

The second and third principles derive from the work of psychologist Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1999), who explored group dynamics in the workplace and found that the process of research itself could be a catalyst for change (institutional change, in the case of his research). Emanating from Lewin's insights, action researchers have frequently insisted that a research project proceed through cycles of action and reflection, though scholars working within the methodology do so with varying degrees of sophistication. Some insist on an interlinking spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting that has each of these activities systematically and self-critically implemented (Copeland & Hill, 2010; Grundy, 1982; McNiff, 2013). In the case of this thesis, it was impossible to facilitate successive cycles of action and reflection in as systematic a fashion as some of the

literature advises. Action researchers insist on the importance of the spirals of action and reflection to stimulate double-loop learning, which refers to the capacity of participants not only to reflect on and alter their action strategies, but also to reconsider the driving factors and assumptions behind those strategies (Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1985; Reason, 1994). Though some double-loop learning was possible in spite of the inability to facilitate successive action research cycles, the findings of this thesis will have to be considered in the light of this possible shortcoming of the research design in this respect.

The third and final principle commonly attributed to action research is that it seeks to engage the researched as participants in all stages of the process of enquiry, rather than as objects of study, ideally widening participation in a project to gradually include others affected by the practice. For Tandon (1988), who has practised action research in the traditions most closely associated with international development, genuine participation in action research is enhanced by giving participants the power to challenge the research methodology itself. He points to three determinants of full participation: setting the agenda for the inquiry; participating in data collection and analysis; and control over the outcome of the whole process. This effort to democratize the research process is especially vital when working in contexts, such as the case in this project, where local worldviews can be subjugated to the elite or Western worldview of the researcher or facilitator.

Though it did not occur in the systematic fashion that was initially anticipated, the participants in my study will be shown to have shifted the agenda, data collection and outcome of the project, in some cases, quite deliberately, but also indirectly by obliging the researcher to understand and cater to their interests and desires in order to secure their continued participation. This negotiation – between a researcher tethered to a conceptual framework and participants firmly ensconced in a social milieu – is central to the spirit of action research, and one of the reasons why the methodological approach is appropriate for exploring the issue of moral mediation – a concept itself at the nexus of the ideational and the social. Patricia Maguire has similarly reflected on the productive parallels in her work between theorizing action research, theorizing feminist social movements

and theorizing international development assistance, underscoring the potential for this kind of cross-fertilization:

the juxtaposition of everyday activism in the women's movement with theorizing action research led me to feminist critiques of traditional social science research as well as feminist critiques of international development assistance. It didn't take long to superimpose feminist critiques on participatory action research. (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003: 16)

Furthermore, as McTaggart and others have pointed out, action research cannot adhere dogmatically to principles because it is so contingent on context. Indeed, as the next section will explain, this project did not have a blueprint to follow; my ambition to engage journalists in Kenya as co-researchers was perhaps bound to face difficulties. But those difficulties, upon reflection, also helped to shape the research and, as such, can be considered a crucial part of the action research process.

4.2.2 Action research in media studies

Though the implementation is often highly contingent, the deliberate manner in which action research is intended to proceed through cycles of action and reflection and the efforts made to involve participants in the design and implementation of the research are what distinguishes it from what might be dubbed “engaged scholarship” (Van de Ven, 2007), “activist research” (Hale, 2001, 2006) or “normative media research” (Nyre, 2009).

In the field of media and communications, there has been little research that has attempted to adhere to the three basic principles of action research described above, and less still that does so with advancing theoretical insight, though the philosophy underlying the methodology has been a strong influence in much of the scholarship in the field in the last 60 years. This is perhaps most notable in the long tradition of theorizing media justice from the perspective of a social movement insider (Napoli, 2007). Everett Parker's support for the Civil Rights Movement through his research into television portrayals of minorities (Napoli & Aslama, 2011a) and Gitlin's (1980) insider account of the anti-war movement's efforts to influence news frames are amongst the earliest instances of this.

There has also long been an action-oriented perspective on research related to alternative and community media (Napoli & Aslama, 2011a). This, of course, has been an especially prominent trend in Latin America, where liberation theology, the work of Freire and the MacBride report have all been influential (Gumicio Dagon, 2001; Rodriguez & Rodríguez, 2001). Closely connected to this is the broader field of participatory communication, which has widely employed the notions of *praxis* and *conscientization* in its approach to communication as a force for development (Cadiz, 2005; Gumicio Dagon & Tufte, 2006; Morris, 2005).

More recently, action research – as a method *per se* – has enjoyed a surge in popularity amongst media scholars concerned with the possibilities created by the new communication technologies (see, for example, Hearn, Tacchi, Foth, & Lennie, 2009; Napoli & Aslama, 2011b; Nyre, 2010), though even these deliberate attempts by media and communication scholars to engage with action research are largely instrumental – better fitting the models of what Grundy (1982) terms technical and practical action research.¹⁰

However, as others have pointed out, there has seldom been a concerted effort within these traditions to co-create knowledge that is both academic and practical, that serves academia as well as the community (Hoynes, 2005; Muturi & Mwangi, 2009). Fewer still have sought to engage participants in a praxis that encourages reflection on their own discursive strategies. One exception to this has been the work the Media Research and Action Project, which for over a decade trained activists to conduct research on media frames, including the frames they were promoting as part of their campaigns (Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001). Researchers affiliated with the Media Research and Action Project have also sought to engage directly with journalists to shape the coverage of issues such as domestic violence (Ryan, 2006) and housing (Carragee, 2005). Journalists, however, were treated more as targets in these interventions, rather than as co-researchers in a process of action research.

This study thus follows in a rich tradition of action-oriented research and activist-oriented enquiry in media and communications, but still confronts a novel challenge, to which this chapter now turns, in ensuring that a research design

¹⁰ See below for a summary of this distinction.

based on action research remains consistent with the central questions of the thesis.

4.2.3 Opportunities and challenges for action research in the mediapolis

As distinct as action research may be from other methodological approaches, its practitioners are divided by some fundamental epistemological questions about what constitutes praxis and the nature of intersubjectivity that arises through dialogue and collective reflection. These issues have significant methodological implications for how this thesis addresses the question of journalistic autonomy and moral agency.

Broadly speaking, action research has a *constructionist* orientation that is in line with the epistemological implications of Silverstone's mediapolis and consistent with the sociological tradition within journalism studies (see Chapter 3). Crotty describes constructionism as:

the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (Crotty, 1998: 42)

Constructionism, Crotty argues, is distinguished from a *constructivist* epistemology by placing a greater emphasis on the collective and social construction of meaning, as opposed to the meaning-making activity of the individual mind. This is perhaps most accurate within the variants of action research labelled "critical", "emancipatory" or "participatory" (among others), in which there is a view that action and reflection must be of a collective nature (Heron & Reason, 1997; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This is partly related to the influence within these variants of Paolo Freire and Jurgen Habermas, who share a dialogical outlook on epistemological matters (Morrow & Torres, 2002). Freire stressed a route to social transformation through consciousness-raising and cycles of reflection and action that he called *praxis* (Freire & Bergman Ramos, 1979), while Habermas developed a theory of liberatory communicative action premised on ideal criteria for dialogue (Habermas, 1984a). Both of these authors have been cited on the importance of facilitating a collective and dialogic reflection through the action research process.

The process of participatory action research is one of mutual inquiry aimed at reaching intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding of a situation, unforced consensus about what to do, and a sense that what people achieve together will be legitimate not only for themselves but also for every reasonable person (a universal claim). Participatory action research aims to create circumstances in which people can search together collaboratively for more comprehensive, true, authentic, and morally right and appropriate ways of understanding and acting in the world. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005: 578).

For Freire, true dialogue requires an obliteration of the subject–object dichotomy (or the sender–receiver dichotomy); knowledge in this process arises from intersubjectivity (Huesca, 2008). Freire’s subject–object dialectic – captured succinctly in his declaration that human beings are “not only *in* the world but *with* the world” (Freire & Bergman Ramos, 1979: 3) – has been well discussed elsewhere (Crotty, 1998; Fals Borda, 2001; Morrow & Torres, 2002). From a methodological standpoint, however, what is important to note is that the subject–object dialectic is reflected in his notion of *praxis*, which though first proposed by Freire as a pedagogical device, has since been adapted in participatory and action research. When applied to research, *praxis* implies a “focus on social practices and the ways that research and reflection leading to theoretical insight might inform the process of social change” (Einsiedel, 1999: 361). Whether discussing human understanding of a physical or social reality (or even a mediated reality), Freire’s philosophy presumes a certain phenomenological “intentionality” between the human subject and the object perceived, an outlook that can be regarded as being consistent with Silverstone’s dialectical view of mediation (see previous chapter). This is to say that although the authors had a very different “object” in mind, their conceptions of our relationship with that object are similar. And both view the possibilities for meaningful action that arise in this relationship from intersubjectivity, which would seem to recommend action research for an exploration of the mediapolis.

The claims about action research’s ability to foster “intersubjective agreement”, however, have been the subject of some controversy, hinging on the question of how action research contends with power within the research process. Mohan (2006), taking aim primarily at forms of action research conducted within the field of international development, argues that the position put forward by Tandon and

others falsely claims to obliterate hierarchical forms of power in the research process and underestimates the potential influence of Western subjectivity. Mohan argues that a more sincere approach would be to foster intersubjectivity by making the role of Western subjectivity more transparent and, hence, contestable. Others trying to reformulate action research from a post-modern perspective have similarly called for greater attention to discourse in the research process, suggesting the need for more reflexive or auto-ethnographic practices by researchers engaged in action research (Jennings & Graham, 1996).

Some action researchers have pushed back against such critiques. Heron and Reason argue that experiential knowledge is embodied in such a way that shields it from discursive power (Heron & Reason, 1997). Indeed, in the case of this project, the journalists draw their own lessons from the encounter. However, as a researcher, I cannot claim to have an unfiltered view of their experiential knowledge, and so this critique remains valid when there is a deliberate effort, as there is in this research project, to build theoretical insight from action research. Gaventa and Cornwall acknowledge that early approaches to action research understood power in an overly dichotomized manner which overlooked the way that more diffuse forms of power operate through discourse, including in the action research process itself (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). The authors see this as an opportunity, rather than just a threat, to the methodological approach, opening up to questions of “how” rather than only “who” and “why”.

If power is shaped by discourse, then questions of how discourses are formed, and how they shape the fields of action, become critical for changing and affecting power relations. From the perspective of participatory research, this is a crucial insight as the process of participatory research can in itself become a space in which dominant discourses are challenged and reframed, shifting the horizons of the possible. (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001: 176)

Putting a Foucauldian spin on action research, as Gaventa and Cornwall propose, also compels practitioners of action research to confront the residual notions of false consciousness that have burdened action research with expectations to “conscientize” or “emancipate” participants from a false ideology. Approaching the beliefs of research participants in such a dichotomized manner – as either captive to or liberated from ideology – would also be at odds with how I have

conceptualized the notion of journalistic autonomy and moral agency (see Chapter 3).

Also implicated in this debate is the question of theory-building in action research. Some traditions within action research reject theory-building altogether, but for those action researchers who have sought a link between academic theory and practice, Habermas' three forms of knowledge-constitutive interests (technical, practical, and emancipatory) have been crucial. This was especially so for what has been described as the third wave of action research, emanating mostly from Australian scholars (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1982; McTaggart, 1991a; Kemmis, 2008) concerned with what they viewed as an overly instrumental application of the methodological approach.

In this tradition, Grundy describes *technical* action research as that which is led by an expert with a pre-existing idea or solution or mind, questioning whether such an approach should even be called action research. Practical action research, rather than involving others to test an idea, "seeks to improve practice through the practical skill of participants" (Grundy, 1982: 27). Critical or emancipatory action research, by contrast, seeks to facilitate the kind of double-loop learning that encourages participants to look beyond their own practices and to consider the forms of power that shape their practices and action strategies. From this perspective, action research provides an intriguing possibility for a dialogue between the high theory and micro-practices that are implicated in the conceptual framework set out in Chapter 3.

Grundy insisted then that participants might be incapable of carrying out reflection on their practices "beyond the dictates of compulsions of tradition, precedent, habit, coercion" without the aid of social theory (1982: 28). Leaving aside the kind of theory Grundy felt was necessary for this reflection, it has since become more commonly accepted within action research that the application, formulation, and critique of theory can be part of the double-loop learning.

But action research goes beyond the notion that theory can inform practice, to a recognition that theory can and should be generated through practice, and, as the earlier discussion of values would suggest, that theory is really only useful insofar as it is put in the service of a practice focused on achieving positive social change. (Brydon-Miller, et al., 2003: 15)

Turning to Silverstone's notion of proper distance is useful here (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2). There are, indeed, important parallels between the challenges of *representation* confronted by the researcher and journalists participating in this action research project. Proper distance, applied to the methodological issues raised here, suggests that action research need not insist on truth, or on the elimination of insider and outsider perspectives, but can use the contradictions and conflicts inherent in action research constructively. To be specific, it is arguably a matter of finding balance in the facilitation of reflection to ensure that the normative framework is challenging without being domineering, to ensure that participants have scope to critique the conceptual framework without giving in to radical subjectivism. Overreliance on familiar journalistic language such as "verification", "attribution", and "transparency" may tie the dialogue too closely to existing professional values; language too unfamiliar to the participants, however, might alienate them. Push too much and the co-researchers are being manipulated; push too little and the discussion may remain superficial, leaving accepted wisdom uncontested. The challenge continues, though in a different form, through the process of analysis and in the writing of the thesis. In this study, by implementing a methodological and iterative process of thematic coding and engaging in self-reflexivity, the researcher has attempted a certain distance.

And for what action research lacks in rigour, it can be said to compensate with more extensive forms of validation than are found in some other methods of research – a topic that will conclude this chapter. First, this chapter describes how the research questions were operationalized, and how the methodological challenges foregrounded here were confronted in practice.

4.2.4 Operationalizing the research questions

Chapter 2 set out the overall research question for this thesis, which is:

RQ: What constitutes moral agency for journalists working within a politics of belonging?

As irrevocably tied to the conceptual framework as it is, this question is not easily operationalized, or translated, into an empirical question. Instead, the sub-questions have been operationalized into empirical questions and themes, and mapped onto the methods used to answer each question, respectively, in Tables

4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 below. It is worth commenting briefly on what it means to answer this question through action research.

By asking what “constitutes” moral agency within a politics of belonging, the question suggests a search for an *equivalent*; in other words, it asks how this concept, derived from theory, can be re-interpreted within a politics of belonging. But the word “constitute” also connotes an assembly of something larger from component pieces; it implies the need to build. The question, and its application through action research, aims for a two-way dialogue of sorts. It seeks to use the conceptual framework to elucidate the workings of a politics of belonging, while opening up the conceptual framework to critique. And as the discussion above suggests, the approach to answering this question also aims to create new possibilities for action.

Table 4.1 Operationalization of sub-research question 1

Sub-RQ1: <i>In what ways do journalists express a moral intent in the exercise of their autonomy?</i>		
Operationalized: How do elite journalists in Kenya express their hopes and ambitions for coverage of social divisions such as tribalism and partisanship, and how are these hopes and ambitions reflected in: their personal backgrounds; their sense of professionalism; the routines and practices of journalism; the technologies that they use in their work; and political and journalistic discourse.		
Conceptual themes	Empirical topics	Methods of data collection and analysis
Moral intent Reflexivity Journalistic autonomy Forms of journalism	Opinions of journalists of what constitutes good/bad coverage of tribalism and partisanship in Kenya. Professional decisions, career strategies and the justifications for these.	<i>Data source:</i> Participant observation, participatory workshops and interviews. <i>Analysis:</i> Values, versus and process coding; and

	<p>Editorial procedures and routines of news work.</p> <p>News narratives in Kenya.</p> <p>Professional ethics of Kenyan journalists.</p> <p>Technologies of news production.</p> <p>The beliefs and attitudes that journalists would like to dispel amongst audiences.</p>	<p>thematic analysis (described below).</p>
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Table 4.2 Operationalization of sub-research question 2

<p>Sub-RQ2: <i>In what ways do Kenyan journalists strategically pursue moral agency in news content?</i></p>		
<p>Operationalized: What discursive strategies do journalists employ to achieve their moral ambitions in the news they produce? What do they believe they have achieved in the text they have produced? How might the normative framework challenge their views of their own work?</p>		
Conceptual themes	Empirical topics	Methods of data collection and analysis
<p>Moral agency</p> <p>News content and discourse</p> <p>Truthfulness (accuracy, sincerity, authentic disclosure)</p>	<p>Openness, factuality, investigative investment, consistency, historical and biographic context in news.</p>	<p><i>Data source:</i> Participant observation, participatory workshops, interviews, and news articles.</p>

Hospitality (listening across difference) Proper distance (empathy, estrangement, imagination)	Inclusion and exclusion (gatekeeping), sources in news. Representation, emotion, and multiplicity of perspectives in news narratives.	<i>Analysis:</i> Thematic analysis (described below).
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Table 4.3 Operationalization of sub-research question 3

Sub-RQ3: <i>What are the implications of the pursuit of moral agency for the connection between journalists, their professional practice and the politics of belonging?</i>		
Operationalized: How do journalists experience a politics of belonging in their work, and what scope do they have to deliberately respond to a politics of belonging in their professional practice?		
Conceptual themes	Empirical topics	Methods of data collection and analysis
Mediation Politics of belonging Reflexivity Praxis	Journalistic strategies for responding to a politics of belonging. What journalists learn from reflective praxis.	<i>Data source:</i> Participant observation, participatory workshops, interviews, and news articles. <i>Analysis:</i> Values, versus and process coding; and thematic analysis.

4.3 The Networked News Lab

In order to facilitate cycles of action and reflection, a project was undertaken under the name of the Networked News Lab with funding secured from the Dar

es Salaam-based organization Twaweza and the UK Economic and Social Research Council's Knowledge Exchange Scheme.

The Networked News Lab involved a core group of 10 journalists, who were treated as co-researchers in the process. Editors, scholars, developers, civil society representatives, activists and other thought-leaders were also engaged during the project in various ways, which are described in this sections. The Networked News Lab supported several efforts to do innovative reporting by participants and hosted a series of five participatory workshops, among the many other one-on-one conversations I had with participants. The Networked News Lab also conducted some dissemination activities in compliance with its funding.

The funding was used to cover a portion of the researcher's time, a stipend for an assistant to the project and the design of a website (www.networkednews.org). The funding was also intended for the purchase of technical support, physical materials and any other resources that the journalists might need in order to experiment with digital tools not already adequately available at their institutions.

The aims of the project were as follows:

This project proposes to create a forum where technological innovations and conceptual insights can be explored, experimented with and assessed by leading journalists. A small group of four or five accomplished journalists will be convened in each country,¹¹ representing a range of mediums and media houses. The project will benefit from a partnership with Twaweza, a ten-year initiative with a strong focus on information and transparency.

The Networked Journalism Lab will then test what can be done in the new communication landscape: accessing new sources of information, connecting with people who could not be reached before, using crowd-sourcing, social media, innovative survey techniques and citizen journalism, etc. (and still going out to speak with people in person).
(Manyozo & Benequista, 2011: 3)

Attempting to follow the principle of action research that calls for a gradual widening of participation, the project endeavoured to connect the journalists with existing resources, which seemed a feasible approach in Nairobi given the number

¹¹ This study, and the associated work of the Networked News Lab, was initially intended to be done in Kenya and Ethiopia, but risks to participants in Ethiopia were later deemed to be too high, and so the project was carried out only in Kenya.

of innovative applications of information and communication technology to which the city is host. Bringing practitioners of mainstream and new media¹² into a dialogue, and potentially into collaboration, was expected to yield insights into whether digitally mediated communication projects in Kenya offer something that mainstream media cannot offer.

According to the original plan, the journalists were to have a presentation from a potential collaborator or advisor at each meeting. Map Kibera, a group using crowd-sourcing software to map a Nairobi slum and to stimulate citizen journalism, and Frontline SMS, a company that produces software, now commonly used by journalists for managing mass communication via SMS, were two such organizations approached for this role.

In a discussion facilitated by the researcher, the journalists were to share their ideas about how a given technology or project might be of use for the reporting process. Collaborations were to be encouraged, and if the conversation sparked an original idea, the project would have had the resources (within limits) to support the implementation of that idea. None of the journalists were to be paid, but if they required the support of a web developer, or needed access to a digital camera, or any other resources that were not available at their institution or by in-kind contribution from a collaborator, then the Networked News Lab would provide this support. In this manner, following each workshop, the journalists were expected to work independently of one another in their respective media houses to experiment on a feature story using a different digital tool after each meeting.

At a subsequent meeting, the journalists were expected to review each other's stories and share their experience of using a particular technology. The role of the researcher was to facilitate a discussion that moves the conversation beyond the practicalities of each story, in the fashion described by Grundy and others (see section 4.2.1). In this iterative process of action and reflection, it was hoped that

¹² I will use the term mainstream media throughout the thesis to refer to the news content (print and broadcast) produced by large media houses in Kenya. Though these companies increasingly rely on new systems of digital communication (new media) for the production and dissemination of their content and allow for some forms of co-production, "mainstream" is a designation meant to highlight the relative control of these institutions and their professional staff of journalists over their content.

the journalists might be encouraged to re-imagine their profession in the changing communication landscape.

The reality of the project, however, was very different from its initial conception. Of the approximately £10,000 contemplated in the initial budget to support the innovative applications of new media by participants, less than £2,000 of this was actually spent. And none of the efforts to facilitate collaboration with Nairobi's many digital innovators succeeded. This section will describe how the project diverged from its initial plans, and how the researcher attempted to maintain the principles of action research even as the original plan proved unviable.

4.3.1 Selection of country case and participants

Much of the rationale for selecting Kenya for the site of the study is implicit in Chapter 2, which points to how Kenya provides an appropriate setting in which to address the gap in our understanding about how journalistic practices influence the mediation of a politics of belonging.

Kenya is in many ways characteristic of the politics of belonging that Nyamnjoh and others describe in Cameroon. Colonial methods of control in Kenya can be seen to have constituted contemporary notions of "tribe", and to have laid the foundation for a neo-patrimonial system of competition and distribution of resources that characterizes a politics of belonging (Atieno-Odhiambo, 2002; Hornsby, 2012; Kelsall, 2002). The post-election violence of 2007/2008 has also made it clear that the marriage of ethnic identity and politics in Kenya suffers from the pathologies and dysfunction that Nyamnjoh observes in Cameroon, where interdependence and conviviality have been overshadowed by dependence and divisions.

Yet Kenya is also unlike Cameroon in many ways. Kenyan media houses have been far more circumspect than their Cameroonian counterparts about allowing themselves to be seen as partisan. One research study conducted with journalists from the *Daily Nation* points to how journalists are keenly aware of their own ethnic identity and that of colleagues in the newsroom, and that journalistic principles of "objectivity" and "balance" are evoked to negotiate the portrayal of competing political figures as a strategy for minimizing conflict in the newsroom (Wasserman & Maweu, 2014a). Mobile phone technology and social media in

Kenya – though important issues of access to these technologies remain – are also playing a role in how a politics of belonging is mediated, and journalists in Kenya are beginning to grapple with the implications of this (Lopes et al., 2015; Mudhai, 2011). In short, the media houses in Kenya have not responded to a politics of belonging in the same manner as they have in Cameroon, and there is reason to suspect that journalistic practices may account, at least in part, for these differences. To be clear, this project is not comparative, but these parallels and contrasts offer insight into why Kenya is an appropriate setting in which to observe how journalistic practices shape the mediation of ethnicized politics.

Participants were selected through a two-step process to gain a purposive sample of journalists who would be *most likely* to exert moral agency in their work. As a first step, six individuals distinguished for their contributions to news media in Kenya were approached to ask for their recommendations for young but accomplished journalists who had demonstrated exceptional talent, commitment and integrity in their work.¹³ They were also encouraged to offer names that would improve the diversity of potential participants in terms of the media house where they worked, the news medium, their ethnic background and gender. Those sources offered about 15 recommendations in total.

By limiting participation to national journalists who were recognized for their accomplishments by senior figures in their field, the project already established one criterion for the sample selection. But even within these parameters, it was important to maximize the diversity of the group for two reasons. First, this research project was intended to be inductive: to explore a range of sociological variables in relation to the idea of moral agency in journalism: the routines and practices of journalists, notions of professionalism and the technologies of news production, amongst others. I was also keen to examine how the unique background and circumstances of each participant influenced their effort to exercise moral agency.

The diversity of the group was also essential from the standpoint of establishing an effective praxis in this instance. Journalists were picked from each of the country's four major media houses; were drawn from television, radio and print;

¹³ The individuals who helped to identify participants are listed in Appendix I.

and were selected to maximize gender and ethnic diversity. Of the 10 participants in the Networked News Lab, four were female, six male, and their ethnic backgrounds were Somali, Kikuyu (2), Kalenjin, Luhya (2), Luo (2), and Kamba (2).

Initially it was expected that the mutual dedication amongst the group to “quality” journalism (however they define that), coupled with competent facilitation, would enable the group to listen and speak across differences in ways that are difficult in the institutional setting of the newsroom (Dreher, 2009). Indeed, it became increasingly clear during the research that the project provided a unique opportunity to foster and model the kinds of intersubjectivity (i.e., the forms of mutual understanding) that are characterized by the normative framework for this thesis. By the end of the fieldwork, several of the participants had remarked on being able to express sentiments within the group that they would not express publicly or with work colleagues, owing to the mutual trust that had developed. In retrospect, the participants ideally should have also been vetted to reflect diversity in their political persuasions as well. That said, the group was not entirely homogenous in this respect. Furthermore, because the participants in the study (respected journalists) were guarded about their political persuasions, it would have been difficult to assess this at the outset.

In the second step of the selection process, I spoke to as many of those candidates as possible and reviewed their recent work. One of the initial participants later dropped out of the project when she was offered a job with an international news service, though another female participant was found to replace her. Though some of the participants were more active than others, 10 journalists in total contributed their views on their how they approach the challenges of producing news in Kenya amidst the challenges of ethnic–political polarization.

Whether these journalists had already demonstrated interest in technological innovation in journalism was a secondary concern, and their agreement to participate in the project was taken (mistakenly, in retrospect) as an indicator of genuine interest in possibilities offered by new digital media. With a few exceptions, however, many of the participating journalists later revealed that they were not as enthusiastic about the use of technology as they had initially

indicated. Table 4.4 gives a short description of the 10 main participants of the Networked News Lab. I have used pseudonyms for all but two of the participants.¹⁴ As specific publications by Abdi and Bertha are discussed in Chapter 6, it would have been impossible to anonymize them in this thesis. Their signed waivers of confidentiality are included in Appendix II.

Table 4.4 Names and description of the individuals who participated in the Networked News Lab

Name	Medium	Description
Abdi*	Print/Online	Freelance writer for print and online publications.
Nancy	Television	Investigative reporter at a national television broadcaster.
Bertha*	Print	Freelancer writer for print publications.
Holly	Print	Editor and writer at a national newspaper.
Thomas	Print/Online	Editor and writer at a national newspaper.
David	Radio	Talk-show host and reporter at a major radio broadcaster.
Anthony	Television	Talk-show host and presenter at a major television broadcaster.
Mary	Radio	Entertainment reporter and presenter at a national radio broadcaster.
Daniel	Print	Political reporter and feature writer at a national newspaper.
Joseph	Online	Writer for an international blog.

* Abdi and Bertha agreed to have their real names used in this thesis.

¹⁴ I have used common Anglophone names, instead of traditional Kenyan names, for the pseudonyms to avoid any suggestions of the participants' ethnic identity.

4.3.2 Chronology of events

The data for this thesis were collected as far back as January 2011 and as recently as February 2015, though the bulk of the data were collected in late 2012 and 2013, the year that the Networked News Lab was most active.¹⁵

In 2011, I began to carry out interviews to identify potential participants, but also to gauge the interest of various organizations working in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development to contribute to the project as collaborators. This reflected the initial emphasis of the Networked News Lab on experimentation with technologies of digital communication, and on the role of journalism in “development”. In total, I conducted nine interviews that year. In 2011, I applied for funding for the Networked News Lab. Formulating the proposal required the participation of a partner. The notes from one key meeting with the potential partner that year also yielded field notes from my participant observation of the discussion.

In the second half of 2012, I made additional efforts to identify and recruit participants, to reach out to potential collaborators and to make plans for the operation of the Networked News Lab. In preparation, I secured a location for meetings, began work on a website, and started to assemble knowledge resources. Those knowledge resources were case studies and practical guides related to the use of new media technologies by journalists, and short profiles of the many organizations working with new communication technologies in Kenya. In December 2012, I hosted a gathering of the participants to introduce them and to mark the beginning of the Networked News Lab’s activities. I hosted the first participatory workshop for participants in December. In that workshop, I asked each of the journalists to describe their backgrounds, to speak about the values to which they aspire in their journalism, and then to comment on an exemplary piece of their work, which I had asked them in advance to bring. These questions generated a great deal of conversation, and were intended to provide the foundation for building intersubjectivity within the group. In January, I held an

¹⁵ Appendix III features a list of the interviews, workshops and field note entries, which will be referenced by date throughout the thesis.

identical workshop for two participants who were unable to attend the December workshop.

It had already been made clear to participants then that the Networked News Lab would support innovative use of digital technology by the journalists; I had mentioned the use of social media, phone-based surveys, crowd-sourcing platforms, digital storytelling and other techniques that have become a part of what Charlie Beckett calls networked journalism (Beckett, 2008). And as early as January 2013, I began to work individually with the participants to discuss their ideas and make arrangements for them to receive support. The objective was to use financial resources as a last resort, trying first to find collaborators who would work with the journalists in a *pro-bono* manner. In this way, the project intended not only to encourage the use of technology by the journalists, but also to encourage collaboration, a key component of the networked journalism model (Beckett & Mansell, 2008). As mentioned previously, few of these initiatives succeeded, but the various efforts made to support them nonetheless provided a useful opportunity to converse with the journalists about their work and to collect data through participant observation.

A third workshop was held at the end of January, this time bringing together participants in the Networked News Lab with two leading bloggers (one also a prominent figure working in the field of ICT for development, or ICT4D) and a prominent civil society activist. In that workshop, the participants were asked to talk in detail about their use of social media, and participants brainstormed ideas for how to bring new communication technologies into their work. The bloggers and civil society representative were then brought in and asked to speak about how they saw their role being affected by the previous elections, and how they now saw themselves vis-à-vis mainstream media. The workshop ended with a planning session for the personal projects of each participant, with others providing input and feedback.

Over the next few months, I continued to meet individually with the participants. In some cases, we would meet for lunch, coffee or drinks. I had developed a strong rapport with many of the participants and such meetings were often both professional and personal engagements. I used these opportunities to learn more

about the participants and their work. On many occasions, we would have discussed the journalist's progress on a news story, ideas for future stories, or made arrangements for some form of support from the Networked News Lab. Some of these have been logged as unstructured interviews, or as participant observation, depending on which purpose was predominant in the interaction.

As many of individual projects failed to materialize, it was then that I began to adjust the course of the Networked News Lab away from technology and gradually towards identity and politics. Reflecting on the experience, there were four main reasons for the failure of several journalistic projects to materialize. The first is happenstance. As the national election in March 2013 approached, journalists in the network were either completely engrossed in the coverage or sidelined by the event (for those who do not cover politics). A second factor, already mentioned above, is related to how the journalists were selected for participation in the project. Whether they were interested in technological innovation in journalism was not an important criterion in the selection process, and many of those selected later revealed that they were not as enthusiastic about the use of technology as they had initially indicated (with a few exceptions). The failure may also relate to how the project was managed. The project took a bottom-up approach. This seemed sensible from a research standpoint, but diverges from the approach most often taken by organizations seeking to promote innovative journalism, such as Internews Kenya or the World Bank-supported Code4Kenya project. These projects, by contrast, made arrangements with senior editors or managers, who (in the case of Internews trainings) assign journalists to participate or who make commitments on behalf of the institution (in the case of Code4Kenya). In the Networked News Lab, there was no institutional support or incentive for the journalists to experiment with new communication technologies. The fourth and final factor that explains the project's failure to promote the use of new communication technology relates to the vexed relationship between journalists in Kenya and the country's ICT4D community. As I have written elsewhere (Benequista, 2015a), fundamental differences between journalists and ICT4D practitioners made them unlikely collaborators.

The elections, however, also created a new opportunity. As the participants in the research began to express strong views about the news coverage of the event, I

suggested that we look at the controversy around the coverage through participatory research. The participants helped me to formulate questions and to identify key journalists and editors involved in electoral coverage at the major media houses. I later conducted approximately 20 interviews and then convened a fourth workshop with the members of the Networked News Lab to discuss the results. It was during these interviews and in the subsequent workshop that the major themes explored in this thesis became apparent.

We made the decision then to drop the technological requirement for journalistic projects; the Networked News Lab would still support such projects, but would also support any project that challenged the *status quo* of journalism. In that time, I began to work with Bertha on a feature about the state of internally displaced people in Kenya, and Abdi and I began to have conversations about the coverage of Somalia and Somali Kenyans. In both of these instances, the journalists were encouraged to reflect on the narrative techniques – the discursive strategies (Carvalho, 2008) – they employ in their own work, and in comparison with the narrative techniques they see in other stories on similar topics. These were two of the most successful efforts in the life of the Networked News Lab. The shift in approach at that time also set the stage for the final two workshops held by the Networked News Lab. One invited Somali-speaking journalists to reflect upon the coverage of Kenya's incursion into Somalia, and the other invited journalists and activists to discuss the coverage of two recent protest campaigns. In both of those final workshops, participants were again encouraged to reflect on the discursive function and connotative meanings of specific news texts – a technique described in greater detail below.

In 2015, the Networked News Lab received further funding from the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Kenyan office. As one of the final contributions to the dataset, I have included a 2015 meeting at which the members of the Networked News Lab were convened to discuss a new round of activities and to consider a role for the network in the future.

4.3.3 The role of the researcher and normative theory in facilitating the process

The facilitation of the research process was meant to function as what Kemmis and McTaggart call an “*animateur* of change” (2005: 570). Though the approach to facilitation shifted considerably over the course of the project, particularly with regard to the role of technology, the research design always contemplated the use of Silverstone’s normative framework as a crucial tool for facilitating reflective practice. This, however, was done largely in an *ad hoc* manner. In the early stages of the project, including at the first workshop, I was interested in capturing the journalists’ own moral values, hoping to reflect on them later in light of Silverstone’s concepts. During the early discussions on the use of technology, I probed the journalists to consider how their use of social media builds openness and trustworthiness, or how it affects inclusion, issues that were foregrounded by Silverstone’s obligations of truthfulness and hospitality. In retrospect, the usefulness of proper distance as a conceptual tool was not clear until much later in the research, as themes of ethnic identity began to surface. In any case, Silverstone’s insights were initially an influence only as an inspiration for my facilitation; I consciously endeavoured to remain attuned during these various interactions for opportunities to steer the reflection in ways that would be relevant for truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance. My capacity to do this improved with practice, and I also discovered techniques, including through the participatory reflection on news discourse that I conducted in later workshops, to better integrate normative considerations into the reflections, relying less on *ad hoc* interjections, which are of limited value. This was particularly true in the early stages of the research, when my efforts to stimulate conversation on such normative dimensions were often overshadowed by my need to keep the journalists engaged and interested in the project. The ability of the facilitation to achieve both these objectives also gradually improved with time, especially following major shift in the approach of the Networked News Lab that occurred around the time of the elections. This is a testament to both the strength and weakness of action research – an issue I will return in the methodological reflections in Chapter 7.

4.4 Data collection methods

The research employed various methods¹⁶ of data collection: participatory workshops, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation and the collection of news articles. The dataset covers a span of nearly four years and contains comments from 94 distinct individuals, about half of whom work as journalists and editors in Kenya. The remaining individuals in the dataset are civil society representatives and activists, international development practitioners, researchers, programmers, bloggers and other new media practitioners. A much smaller set of individuals participated in the workshops. Initially, those workshops included only the 10 members of the Networked News Lab, but subsequent workshops widened participation. The largest workshop, which discussed coverage of protest movements, drew about 20 participants. The field notes also include observations and jottings made during the activities carried out to establish and coordinate the Networked News Lab. It should also be noted that Nairobi was my primary residence during this period, and so the field notes include some small and scattered observations made whilst reading newspapers, watching television or observing social media, and notes from panel discussions and other public events at which journalists and other relevant figures made comments of interest to this research topic. I also worked as a consultant in Nairobi during the course of the research, and these additional activities often brought me into contact with activists, researchers, international development workers, and others. A few of the observations in the dataset came from those encounters as well.

4.4.1 Participant observation

In an action research project of this kind, it is difficult to demarcate what might constitute data from the outset. Seeking the necessary permissions to do the research in Kenya; negotiating the funding of the project; finding willing participants; the many, short interactions and also longer, informal conversations with participants that are inevitable while organizing and maintaining a project;

¹⁶ Action research could be described as the overarching *research methodology* for the project, whilst the tools used to collect and analyse data will be referred to as *research methods*.

the day-to-day observations made on Kenyan media; the advice received from Kenyan friends and colleagues – all of these presented potential data-collecting opportunities.

In this regard, data were collected through participant observation. Participant observation, in the context of action research, typically refers to the observations made by the practitioner – a teacher, a journalist, a social worker – in their professional work setting (Herr & Anderson, 2015; McKernan, 1996). There is also a tradition of participant observation in the sociology of journalism, whereby the researcher assumes a daily job in a newsroom to observe news production from the inside (Cottle, 2007). Though the participant observation in this project does not conform to either of these traditions, it is a useful marker for signposting aspects of data collection that bear a resemblance to ethnography, which Geertz describes as the art and science of understanding culture (Geertz, 1975). Ethnographers tend to discuss their methodological tools as sensitizing heuristics – aids in what is essentially an interpretative process.

These participant observations were generally made in the course of coordinating the Networked News Lab and working directly with the member journalists on their projects. I conducted participant observation, for example, whilst working with one journalist and a programmer as we discussed an approach to integrating SMS into his talk show, whilst helping another member of the Networked News Lab to plan a training course for journalists and editors, and whilst collaborating with representatives of a media development organization to plan a panel discussion on the coverage of the elections, to name just a few examples. I also accompanied one journalist on a trip to a rural town to host a live community forum on radio, shadowing them during the preparations and joining the audience (with the assistance of an interpreter) during the show. Other observations were made in the simple course of living in Nairobi, and whilst following the news and social media in Kenya. The approach to journalistic “balance” that media houses can take on polarizing issues – the shuttling from one day to the next between single-source stories from different sides of the political divide – first became apparent to me whilst reading the coverage in early 2011 of allegations of corruption in the *Kazi kwa Vijana* (jobs for the youth) programme – a government-run public works project intended to give

employment to young people. I was first alerted to the importance of the Christian faith of one of the participants by following her on Twitter and Facebook. I once overheard comments by a senior editor at a public panel discussion with regard to the impossibility of “truth” in Kenyan journalism; I later found that repeating this statement to journalists was a useful prompt to generate discussion on newsroom politics. Many of these small observations have been invaluable to the research process in ways that are often difficult to document. Still, I endeavoured to include such small, everyday observations in the dataset so that they could be subject to thematic coding, along with all the other sources of data.

The authority of ethnographic interpretation is, of course, not unquestionable, and the more so in this project given the active role of the researcher described above. Issues of power and post-colonial subjectivities are at play in the very methodology. Reflexivity refers to the efforts of a researcher to document and account for her or his positionality. As mentioned above, there is an echo of Silverstone’s concept of “proper distance” in the methodological challenges of this project, raising an intriguing opportunity to reflect on what proper distance, hospitality and truthfulness imply for the action research process – itself a form of mediation. I will return to this theme again in the methodological reflections included in Chapter 7.

In practice, the approach required that I maintain “jottings” of any observation or interaction that seemed relevant to the project, as any ethnographer would. I routinely turned these into longer “field notes”, at times taking a reflexive approach – a first-person narrative – that kept my thoughts, feelings, and positionality within the gaze of the field notes. These field notes captured useful data from my informal activities, my activities managing the project, and my day-to-day interactions with journalists and others who contributed to the project. That said, my efforts to maintain field notes were not always consistent, owing in part to the long duration of the research and the way that fieldwork was interspersed with other day-to-day activities.

I also endeavoured to be transparent with the participants about my motivation. From the beginning, I told the participants that the Networked News Lab would give me an opportunity to observe, to learn and to produce a thesis that would earn me a PhD, but that I hoped that it would also be a benefit to them, providing

an opportunity to learn, a chance to influence journalism in Kenya and offering resources that would benefit their work and careers.

One of the interesting observations I made in the course of the study is that the journalists – even those who later confessed to having little interest in social media and digital communication technology – seemed to make requests that would strategically suit both my interests and theirs. Daniel, for instance, requested my assistance early in the study to investigate the use of social media by political parties. His interest in social media did not prove enduring, but his commitment to doing original, investigative work on political parties was borne out repeatedly. Examples such as this have led me to the conclusion that the opportunity afforded by this study to follow the careers of these journalists over such a long period of time has been beneficial for discerning the difference between their long-standing motivations, and more opportunistic expressions of interest invited by the availability of resources from Networked News Lab.

During the course of the study and beyond, several of the participating journalists have also called on me for support that went beyond the remit of my role as coordinator of the Networked News Lab: for reference letters or help finding a job. I too have called on them for small favours, including advice, introductions to other journalists or background information. I have also continued to socialize with several of the participating journalists, often discussing our personal lives, our work, journalism and Kenyan politics. All of these small interactions have left me with the impression that my relationship with the participants can be characterized as one of reciprocity, shared interests and genuine camaraderie.

4.4.2 Workshops and interviews

The five workshops hosted during the course of the Networked News Lab serve as one of the most important sources of data for this thesis. In terms of their composition and management, as well as in regard to the nature of the data they produced, these meetings share some attributes with focus groups, but are distinct in a few ways that are worth commenting upon.

Like focus groups, the participants in the meetings represent a purposive, rather than representative, sample (Rabiee, 2004); in this case, as a group of accomplished and dedicated journalists, they were uniquely positioned to speak

to the research questions. But the ideal composition of the workshops for this thesis also differs from what might be recommended by a more orthodox approach to focus groups. A focus group is constrained by the need to ensure participants feel comfortable quickly. This often necessitates a selection of participants that prevents confrontation or bullying, favouring a certain amount of homogeneity in the group. One might host separate focus groups with men and women to explore issues of gender in the newsroom, for example. But as mentioned above, the logic of this project was to convene as diverse a group of journalists as possible amongst respected, national journalists. Action research, often conducted over longer periods of time, allows for efforts such as this one to build *new* relationships and intersubjectivity rather than – as is the case with focus groups – relying on *existing* forms of intersubjectivity that must be taken as a given.

Though focus groups have certainly been used to facilitate a praxis in ways that are similar to action research (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005), focus groups are generally not conducted with the same participatory principles found in action research. The researcher in focus groups may make an effort to keep the research topic in “focus”, whereas action research makes sometimes considerable efforts to allow the participants to shift the focus, including by making the research question itself transparent and contestable. And unlike focus groups, these workshops were often concerned with planning future actions – with brainstorming stories or formulating strategies for how to influence the practice of journalism in Kenya – and were seen by the participants as a formative stage of a network that would potentially endure.

In preparation for the workshops, I prepared facilitation guides. These guides describe my plan for each workshop and contain the themes that I had hoped to explore and how I intend to encourage reflection by participants. The workshops were digitally recorded (over 18 hours of recordings) and subsequently transcribed.

As mentioned above, each workshop focused on a different theme. In the first two workshops, the journalists were asked to describe how they came to be journalists, the major frustrations they face in their profession, and the principles that motivate them in their work. They were also asked to bring in an example of

what they considered some of their best work, and recounted the background behind that story. The second workshop hosted discussion on social media, with the participation of two bloggers and a civil society representative. That wide-ranging discussion gravitated towards issues of truth, accuracy, verification and the responsibility to prevent violence – with comments made on the strengths and weaknesses of both mainstream media and new media during fast-moving and high stakes events such as elections. A third workshop reviewed the coverage of the 2013 elections; specifically, the members of the Networked News Lab were presented with a series of quotes from interviews I had conducted with senior reporters and editors on the topic, and asked to contribute to an analysis of those interviews.

The fourth and fifth workshops experimented with techniques to encourage participants to reflect on their discursive strategies (Carvalho, 2008). One challenge encountered is that very few methodological examples exist of participatory methods being used with the purpose of examining discursive practices. Work of this nature has been done with mediators and teachers (Grujicic-Alatraste, 2015), with young people (Lamerichs, Koelen, & Te Molder, 2009) and with activists (Ryan, 2006), but none that I could find with journalists. Wright's collaboration with BBC Radio journalists on implementing proper distance (Wright, 2012) comes the closest in this regard, and is instructive of the difficulties of bringing Silverstone's theories into news content, but was not approached from the methodological perspective of praxis. Given the lack of a relevant precedent, the implementation of this method in the final workshops was largely improvised.

In the fourth workshop, I brought together a small group of Somali-speaking journalists to review some of the most seminal news reports of Kenya's incursion into Somalia. First, they were asked for their general impressions of the coverage. Then, specifically discussing each story, the participants were asked to identify the actors who were included and excluded from the story, how each was portrayed, how the story might have turned out with different actors or perspectives included, and the effect they thought each story might have on the audience, amongst other prompts. Finally, in each case, the journalists were

asked to reflect on *why* each story looked the way it did, and if they – personally – could have done anything differently to change the coverage.

The fifth and final workshop brought together a much larger group, including journalists and activists who had been involved in covering or leading two protest campaigns: one in 2011 aimed at the rising price of food and another in 2013 against a proposal by MPs to raise their salaries. This workshop followed a similar procedure to the previous one, asking participants to comment on positives and negatives of the coverage generally, before guiding them through a closer look at a selection of key news items. In the larger, mixed group, this exercise kindled a vibrant and wide-ranging discussion that was more difficult to “focus” than in the smaller group. But both of the final workshops provided a wealth of fascinating comments and observations by participants.

I also engaged several of the journalists individually in the analysis of news discourse, though particularly Abdi and Bertha. These conversations were not facilitated in the same formal and structured manner as the workshops, but like much of the facilitation, drew upon Silverstone’s framework in an *ad hoc* manner. This aspect of the project, whilst promising, could have been strengthened considerably, and the methodological reflections in Chapter 7 include thoughts on how this might be done.

My more formal interactions with the participating journalists between workshops also captured important data, as did my conversations with the developers, new media activists, bloggers, data specialists and others. These constitute a series of 93 **semi-structured and unstructured interviews** that are different from the jottings that emerged from briefer or less formal interactions.

These interviews served to gather data, but also to further encourage reflection by the participants, often in discussing the possibilities for one of their projects linked to the Networked News Lab. In these encounters, I used what has been described as “active interviewing”, which, according to Holstein and Gubrium, seeks to use the interviewer’s influence productively.

Rather than searching for the best or most authentic answer, the aim is to systematically activate applicable ways of knowing – the possible answers – that respondents can reveal, as diverse and contradictory as they might be. The active interviewer sets the general parameters for

responses, constraining as well as provoking answers that are germane to the researcher's interest. (Holstein & Jaber, 1995: 39)

In order to maintain a collegial and candid tone, these conversations were not recorded, but handwritten notes were often taken during the interviews and typed up in a more extended form within a day, while memory of the conversation was still recent.

4.4.3 News stories

The articles produced by the journalists during their collaboration with the Networked News Lab constitute another source of data. In each case where a participating journalist made reference to a specific article, an effort was made to obtain a copy of the article, though this was not always possible. In some cases, the journalists also wrote blogs for the Networked News Lab's website, and those too were included in the dataset. In total, 20 news stories¹⁷ and seven blogs were included in the dataset. This is in addition to six news stories specifically discussed at the last two workshops, the titles of which are included in Appendix IV.

Finally, in at least three cases, the participating journalists made references to specific articles produced or written by other journalists. In a few of these cases, as mentioned above, this was part of a more or less systematic effort to encourage a more discursive or textual reflection, whereby the participating journalists were encouraged to review a body of news stories to consider how their approach and their style are different (or the same). As such, these three articles have been included in the data set (and reproduced in full in Appendices 5 and 6) and are the subject in Chapter 6 of a thematic analysis that also includes the comments and observations on them that were made by their authors.

4.4.4 Excluded data

Data were excluded in two cuts. I first made an initial, though conservative, cut of materials that were obviously not relevant to the research questions. And then, through successive cycles of coding described below, more of the data were labelled *not applicable*; this often included small talk and other bits of casual

¹⁷ These include three radio broadcasts, four television reports, and 13 print or online articles.

conversation that are common in a research project of this nature. These data were eventually expunged from analysis altogether.

It is also important to note that much of the data collected did not figure prominently in the analysis presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The analysis draws most extensively from the comments made by the core group of 10 journalists and their work, but that is not to say that the rest of the data were excluded as such. The interviews with dozens of other individuals have been crucial for corroborating the accounts of the 10 journalists, and for situating their perspectives. Comments made by individuals from outside the Networked News Lab also provided a foundation for many of the discussions in workshops and interviews. The best example of this was the deliberate effort at the fourth workshop to involve the members of the Networked News Lab in an analysis of what 20 journalists and editors had said about the coverage of the elections. Interviews with activists and researchers also informed the facilitation of the final two workshops. This approach to the use of other sources of data has been fundamental to the face and construct validity described below.

4.5 Data analysis methods

The jottings and other participant observations, workshop transcripts and interview notes were all compiled and entered into qualitative data analysis software NVivo, where heuristic coding and thematic analysis were conducted in the following manner.

As a basic procedure, the data were coded for basic attributes, identifying participant characteristics, for example, and the method of data collection (interview, workshop transcript), among other variables that would facilitate ease of search and analysis later throughout the process. Because the data were collected through active interviewing and dialogic workshops, the researcher's utterances were also coded – which was also helpful later for strengthening reflexivity in the data analysis.

Excluding the texts from news articles, two forms of coding were then conducted to explore the conceptual themes linked to the first sub-research question. To address the conceptual theme of moral intent, both values coding and versus

coding were applied to the data.¹⁸ According to Saldaña, *values coding* involves “the application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her world-view”, (Saldaña, 2013: 110), while *versus coding* is used to “identify in dichotomous or binary terms the individuals, groups, social systems, organizations, phenomena, process, concepts, etc., in direct conflict with each other” (Saldaña, 2013: 110). The coding sought to identify the values esteemed by the journalists as constituting good journalism, the ideals to which they aspired in the work, and to also identify how these values might be seen to contrast with or to subvert the beliefs and attitudes perpetuated by news coverage that fails to live up to these ideals. The first sub-question also relates to the strategies that journalists pursue, recommending a distinct coding of “processes” – the actions, decisions, routines, and other activities that can be identified within the data, particularly in relation to how the journalists are pursuing their moral ideals. Whilst guided by the conceptual framing, the codes applied during in this cycle were derived as much as possible from the content of the data, and from the words used by participants themselves. Continuing with the analysis of the field notes, workshop and interview notes and blogs (and excluding the news stories), a second cycle of five descriptive codes was then applied. These codes emanated from how the conceptual framework suggested that *forms* of journalism might be depicted: editorial procedures and routines; news narratives; professional ethics; technologies of news production; and media organizations. In this manner, I endeavoured to draw concepts from the conceptual framework into the analysis, whilst also remaining open to other avenues of analytical possibility.

With the coding completed, containing an eclectic mix of both inductive and deductive elements, I conducted an initial thematic analysis, refined the coding system and updated the code book. During the thematic analysis, I began to organize the data into *categories*. Whereas codes are a descriptor of datum (capturing a single, salient attribute) categories are intended to organize the data more conceptually – an intermediary step between the data and the theoretical

¹⁸ See Chapter 5, Section 5.1 for further details on the analytical approach used for exploring moral intent.

themes and concepts of the thesis. It is worth noting that the terms *codes*, *categories*, *themes*, and *constructs* thus designate increasing levels of abstraction, and will be used consistently throughout this thesis with that intent.

After the initial thematic analysis of the field notes, workshops, interview data and blogs, I turned to the analysis of the news stories. For most of these stories, coding was not necessary; they have been lightly drawn upon in the analysis presented in Chapter 5 largely as illustrations of how a journalist's moral intent and strategy can be seen in his or her work, and often by their own account. Three of the articles, however, were used for the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 6. I had already discussed the text of these stories in-depth with the authors, and had also gained insights into their intention during our collective and individual reflections. I decided to build upon this analysis by independently examining their texts. I first coded the stories with the categories that emerged from the analysis of qualitative data, then added a second round of codes derived from Silverstone's mediapolis (see Table 4.2 for a summary of how those were operationalized). For instance, passages were coded that were relevant to accuracy, sincerity, and authentic disclosure as a heuristic device for exploring how the text constructed a sense of truthfulness. This analysis was not intended to stand alone as a conventional discourse analysis of news (Carpentier & Cleen, 2007; Gill, 1996), but as a further exploration of how discourse analysis might fit into a wider process of facilitating reflective praxis. Carvalho (2008) calls for a greater exploration of what she calls the "discursive strategies" of social actors. By conducting a discourse analysis independently of the journalists, my intention was to highlight the ways that these journalists might be further challenged by a praxis informed by Silverstone's normative framework in a way that not only reveals such "discursive strategies", but allows social actors such as journalists to sharpen and strengthen them.

4.6 Understanding validity in this thesis

Following Guba and Lincoln's typology of the different paradigms of qualitative research, the methodological approach taken for this thesis is dialogic in its use of action research and dialectical by virtue of the praxis that it seeks to create between theory and experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is also openly value-

laden, which places a unique burden on the validity of the data and its interpretation. According to Lather, the validity of a project of this kind must build four features into study design: triangulation, construct validity, face validity and catalytic validity (Lather, 1986).

Triangulation in value-laden research refers to the importance of relying upon multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes in such a way that the researcher can make an honest effort at disconfirming findings. Construct validity comes from the ability of a research project to challenge theory with experience. This relies on reflexive subjectivity – a disposition and research design that will allow the *a priori* conceptual framework, such as the one in Chapter 3, to be changed during the course of the research by “the logic of the data”. Face validity derives from the effort of the researcher to verify his or her own analysis with at least a sub-sample of respondents. Catalytic validity is indicated by the impact of the research process on respondents’ self-understanding and self-determination. This, of course, is not self-evident, nor is it a given in participatory action research. I briefly discuss the challenges for achieving each of these in this research project, and how the research design has attempted to meet those challenges.

4.6.1 Triangulation

Triangulation of data might be considered weak in this instance, considering that the research relied primarily on a small group of 10 journalists as sources. This has implications for the generalizability of the results in this thesis. An overview of how generalizability was approached follows the discussion of validity in section 4.6.4 below, but it is important to note that the findings of this study are not intended to represent all Kenyan journalists, or even, for that matter, Kenyan journalism as a field. The study does endeavour, however, to make valid suggestions about the suitability of the theoretical framework for fostering praxis beyond this small group of journalists.

As such, triangulation is an important component of the methodology. In the course of the project, I had the opportunity to collect thoughts on this topic from many other observers of the media in Kenya. As described above, there were also opportunities during the project to triangulate between four different data collection methods – participant observation, interviews, participatory workshops

and news texts – and to gather diverse kinds of data in different settings, which provided a guard against possible “consensus collusion.” This is a phenomenon where “co-researchers may band together as a group in defence of their anxieties, so that areas of their experience which challenge their worldview are ignored or not properly explored” (Reason, 1994: 333). In the case of this study, the risk of consensus collusion takes many forms; participants, for instance, could have reasserted their commitment to internalized codes of journalistic integrity likely taught to them in university and elsewhere – balance, objectivity, independence – rather than becoming *more* open to questioning these principles in light of their personal experience. This consensus collusion also presents a challenge to the construct validity of the action research that is discussed below.

As the empirical chapters will illustrate, triangulated data collection methods (and the size of the data set) have permitted a nuanced and in-depth analysis that helps to provide a check against the heightened risk of a narrative becoming self-reinforcing through the action research process.

Triangulation of theories is also important for validity, Lather argues. This is especially the case with grand narrative frameworks that lean towards tautological conclusions. The risk in this study would be that the normative values of the conceptual framework begin to shape the responses of participants; Lather’s approach to validity suggests that to avoid a self-reinforcing trap, the conceptual framework itself must have scope for reinterpretation. The conclusions that emerge from this research will be considered in regard to my conceptual framework and in particular to Silverstone’s understanding of media morality, to ideas emanating from the sociology of journalism, to the concept of a politics of belonging (see Chapter 2), and to the metaphors and frameworks that the co-researchers themselves propose. Triangulation with this latter source of “theory” relates also to the construct and face validity of the research.

4.6.2 Construct and face validity

The construct validity of this research derives largely from the dialectic between the *a priori* theory and the journalists’ own views, which have themselves been influenced, though not necessarily determined (Vltmer and Wasserman, 2014), by global journalistic norms and values. This dialectic, however, is rife with

power, an issue that has been discussed in Chapter 3. As Huberman points out, theory has an insidious way of determining what we see, and perhaps more so in a project that is deliberately constructed to push participants to reconsider long-held beliefs about the media (Huberman & Miles, 1991). The data collection and the analysis thus had to contend with the complex interplay between the norms of Western journalism, the values of the participating journalists derived from their unique experience, and the normative aspects of the theoretical framework. Construct validity and face validity in this project are thus intertwined in ways that arguably cannot be untangled.

Whilst the dialectic is always imperfect, the project aspired to balance power as much as possible through certain aspects of the research design and by encouraging a certain reflexive disposition on my part as the writer, and on the part of the co-researchers.

The reflexivity aided by the field notes, as mentioned above, promoted the transparency of this process and strengthens the dialectic by mirroring the process that the co-researchers are being asked to undertake. The iterative revision of the thematic codes and their application to the data (inductive and deductive), offered another important device to allow “the logic of the data” (and the actual language of the participants) to speak back to the conceptual framework. The objective of the coding was not only to apply existing codes, but to identify themes and issues that defy the codes. In further iterations, the analysis sought also to formulate new codes informed by theoretical concepts, or the language of the journalists themselves, or both. There was a two-way translation from the theory to the operational language of the action research – and back – as far as possible.

The reflective workshops were another important method for creating construct validity. It is important, for example, to note that participants redefined the problem that the research set out to resolve, shifting the focus away from the application of novel technologies and, instead, towards ways of resolving the challenges of identity politics. To this end, the participatory process began with an open-ended exploration amongst the co-researchers of what they perceived to be the major failings of Kenyan media, and the conceptual framework in Chapter 3 was created partly in response to this process.

Face validity reinforces construct validity inasmuch as co-researchers have a chance to vet the analysis. Though it would have been ideal to hold a final feedback workshop with co-researchers, this was not possible because several of the participants left the country to pursue studies or work in 2015–2016. Still, throughout the research process, I discussed ideas and shared preliminary thoughts with the participating journalists and sought their feedback.

4.6.3 Catalytic validity

The actions and the words of the co-researchers throughout the project and perhaps even beyond helped to establish some catalytic validity for the research. By the journalists' own account, they found participation in the process to be useful, though it is difficult to attribute any of the specific changes they may have made to their journalistic practices and career strategies to the project itself.

Perhaps a better form of catalytic validity – as interpreted within the conceptual framework for this project – is whether the intentions and strategies that they articulated within the reflective workshops and interviews are reflected in the texts they produced. Though this approach also has its limitations. Without a reception component to this study, it is impossible to indicate the extent to which these strategies can influence audiences. That is a limitation in so far as it limits the capability of the analysis (and of the participants in the study) to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of these strategies in shaping public perception.

Finally, it would be a mistake, and a narrow reading of action research, to interpret a lack of “change” as a failure, or as invalidating the research. On the contrary, moments of resistance to change are also moments of learning and critique – opportunities to respect the choices that Kenyans have already made about their morals, their practice and their media. These moments too have been considered to ascertain whether the choices are owing to an impediment the journalist cannot, or will not, overcome, or whether a choice not to change suggests a criticism of Silverstone's perspective. In that sense, even a lack of change, so long as it is consistent with the findings, provides a certain kind of catalytic validity.

4.6.4 Generalizability and interpretation in the study

As described above in section 4.6.1, the small, purposive sample used in this study does not make possible generalizations about Kenyan journalists, or African journalists, and such generalizations are rarely, if ever, the purpose of action research.

...action researchers do not treat projects as mere data sources for objective post hoc generalization. We believe that reliable knowledge is only generated and tested situationally and that gaining such knowledge requires the active intellectual and social engagement of the stakeholders in the situation whose interpretations and understandings are as central to the process as are the action researchers'. (Greenwood, 2015: 205)

In other words, action research does not aim to generalize in the sense of producing statements of universal truth; action researchers tend to reject this approach to knowledge. Rather, action research often seeks to produce knowledge that can be usefully applied and reinterpreted in idiosyncratic circumstances, with the potential for revealing indications of behaviour or attitudes that might be considered in other contexts.

In the tradition of critical action research (Grundy, 1982), however, the absence of the positivist form of generalization does not preclude theory building. It is in this sense that the research question for this study (see section 4.2.4) is intended to guide research that elicits interpretations of the concept of “moral agency” within the context experienced by the participants, and to reconceptualize that theoretical construct in a way that highlights its strengths and weaknesses as a framework for fostering praxis – so that others might apply the insights, and in turn reinterpret the construct, in their respective contexts.

This interpretivist approach to theory requires attention to the validity of that interpretation, which depends on the legitimacy of the praxis itself, and the subtleties involved in facilitating it, as much as it does on the methods of data collection and analysis. The following section considers the particular challenges of positionality and the ethical considerations within the action research facilitation process.

4.7 Positionality and ethical considerations in facilitating praxis-based research

Methodological reflections on the role of the researcher's identity in qualitative research may focus on an insider/outsider dichotomy, but examining the researcher's positionality in terms of a greater variety of factors – ethnic identity, gender, class, culture and other factors – has provided for a more nuanced consideration of how researcher identity may affect research findings (Merriam et al., 2001).

It is likely that participants would have responded in some way to my identity as a white foreigner, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as ethnic identity. As discussed in Chapter 2, the very meaning of ethnicity in Kenya is deeply embedded in a colonial experience. Participants may have assumed that I, as a foreigner, would view forms of tribal identity negatively, and may have catered to that expectation in their responses.

That said, being a foreigner may have been an advantage in other ways. Research participants may have been *more* willing to discuss sensitive topics with me than with a Kenyan researcher, whose own ethnic identity and known associations could have given the participants reason to be circumspect. And being a white foreigner from a well-regarded university may have also given me other forms of privileged access to participants that could be viewed as beneficial to the study. While I can only speculate as to whether participants in the study would have been more likely to respond to interview requests from a foreign researcher, or whether the expectations of resources from the Networked News Lab may have provided an incentive, I can attest to the fact that I had no trouble obtaining meetings with many busy, high-profile individuals in Kenya's news industry.

Furthermore, the long duration of the research and my efforts to express openness to all views on ethnicity and the genuine comradery built with research participants during this period, are likely to have compensated to some degree for the downsides associated with conducting research in Kenya as a white foreigner. And indeed, my data suggests the participants became more open and frank over the course of the study.

As Section 4.3 explains, the research project had resources intended to benefit participants, and I acted as the manager of these resources. This too might have influenced the participants' behavior throughout the study. To mitigate this risk, I initially sought to democratize the decisions about how the funding was spent, allowing the participants an influence over how resources were allocated. It was difficult to distribute the resources; most of the participants did not benefit from the money and all of them, at one point or another, dedicated time and energy to activities that provided no opportunity to benefit in this way.

Many other aspects of my identity also are likely to have influenced my relationship with individual participants and my facilitation of the project. Though I enquired about the gender issues, these were illusive for much of the study, with participants – both male and female – initially downplaying the importance of gender in their newsrooms.

I used my own experience as a journalist during the facilitation process. While my techniques were often helpful in promoting a more conversational tone during the study, there were some unintended consequences that became clear to me later in the study. As a journalist, I preferred to write feature stories with a political angle. My own journalistic preferences made it difficult for me to relate to some of the participants who eschewed political coverage at first, though in the course of the research, this became evident to me and I took steps to address this shortcoming.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by seeking to be a catalyst for action in this study, the power relations intrinsic to the action research methodological approach have ethical implications as well.

Specifically, by encouraging the participants to explore their own moral judgements, the project also asked them to assume responsibility for their actions. There are limits to the independence of this judgement. They, of course, made decisions in the presence of other co-researchers. They implemented and instantiated their judgements along with editors and colleagues. These were professionals who, in their accomplishments, were demonstrating their common sense.

Nonetheless, actions motivated by critical intent cannot always be excused as “just doing my job”; participants in this kind of research can take actions for which they are personally accountable. This carries risks for the participants and the researcher. The project initially contemplated opening a second branch of the Networked News Lab in Ethiopia, but following a decision by the government there to use treason and anti-terrorism laws to harass and imprison journalists, it was decided that the risks were too high. In Kenya, by contrast, none of the participating journalists reported any harassment or intimidation during the course of the project.

Another ethical consideration arose during this project related to confidentiality. I initially promised the participating journalists that their comments would remain anonymous in the thesis. But this guarantee proved to be impossible to maintain for two of the participants, whose published articles are examined in this thesis. Consequently, I asked these participants after the data collection had begun whether their comments could be attributed to them. This should have been foreseeable, but fortunately did not occasion any complaints from the participants, who agreed to allow their comments to be made public.

4.8 Chapter summary

The research for this thesis has been guided by the methodological approach of action research. In this tradition, the research sought to create a praxis that would enable journalists in Kenya to reflect upon and strengthen their strategies for moral agency, whilst also creating an opportunity for these strategies to be observed.

By its dialogic and participatory nature, this praxis-based approach to action research is well suited to the focus of the research on agency and intersubjectivity, and offers an alternative route for bridging normative theories of morality and practice. But this approach is not without its challenges. Indeed, the initial plan to facilitate cycles of action and reflection around the use of new communication technologies proved untenable, and my ability to marshal Silverstone’s obligations for reflective practice remained constrained for a time to ad hoc interventions in the facilitation of discussion.

That said, it was possible to preserve a certain adherence to the fundamental principles of action research and praxis that did prove useful. The necessity to involve participants as co-researchers also provided an important impetus for me, the researcher, to listen and to adapt. And even as the Networked News Lab failed to produce innovative forms of journalism, the conversations and workshops did succeed in building mutual understanding amongst all participants, including for the researcher. However messy, the process provided abundant opportunities to listen, observe and to record data that speak to the questions of the thesis. The data collected must be viewed as a result of a process rife with tensions and contradictions but, like other forms of value-laden and action-oriented research, it has unique sources of validity as well and, in the end, both in spite and because of the challenges, the approach did generate useful insights into how journalists mediate a politics of belonging for all who participated. The next two chapters present the results of the empirical analysis and considers this in the light of the conceptual issues. Chapter 5 explores the moral intent of journalistic autonomy in Kenya, and Chapter 6 examines the strategies for moral agency: two sides of the same coin that together speak to the larger question of how journalists experience and respond to the politics of belonging.

5 Moral Intent and Journalistic Autonomy in Kenya

5.1 Chapter overview

The task for this chapter is to demonstrate how the values expressed by journalists in Kenya represent *moral intent* and *journalistic autonomy*. In Chapter 3, journalistic autonomy was defined as the reflexivity exercised by journalists with regard to the forms of journalism, and the forms of journalism were defined as the linguistic, aural and visual techniques through which the news can “naturalize” an account (Richardson & Corner, 1986). It was argued that these techniques are intimately linked with the procedures, routines and practices of news production. Moral intent, then, refers to the aspects of journalistic autonomy that concern intersubjectivity, revealed in the moments when journalists express their desire to reshape the social boundaries constructed by the news. This chapter will analyze the empirical material in light of this concept and, reflecting on the results of this analysis, further develop the argument of this thesis and its conceptual framework.

The methodological process for understanding moral intent was considered in the previous chapter. In practice, the data collected from workshops, semi-structured and unstructured interviews and participant observation¹⁹ were analyzed using Nvivo software. The analysis applied values, versus and process codes (Saldaña, 2013) to the data with the intention of exploring both normative and production-related themes. Exploring the “empirical topics” corresponding to sub-research question 1 (see Table 4.1), the values and process codes sought to identify the opinions of participating journalists on what constitutes quality or poor coverage of ethnic communities and politics; the justifications for their career choices; and the beliefs and attitudes they sought to contest in their professional practice. The process codes sought to identify the actions, decisions, routines and other activities that could be identified within the process of news production. The

¹⁹ See Appendix III for a guide to interviews, workshops and field notes, which will be referenced by date throughout the thesis.

codes were developed and applied iteratively – such that they evolved over several weeks of reading and re-reading, coding and re-coding, the data. This approach identified prominent values amongst journalists such as “being principled”, “in-depth reporting”, “being free from politics”, and “providing the people’s perspective”, amongst others. It also highlighted the importance of activities and processes such as “writing features”, “dealing with newsroom divisions”, “working with untrustworthy sources”, and “managing public reputation”.²⁰

An effort was then made to merge these values and process codes. The values and process codes exhibited numerous correlations; some were self-evident, whilst others were revealed through matrix queries.²¹ Through successive attempts at theming, four categories emerged that seemed to make sense of the relationship between the different codes, and that also spoke to the research questions and the conceptual framework.

As such, the chapter examines the moral intent of Kenyan journalists in four ways. It begins by considering how they communicate moral intent in the stories they tell about their personal background, particularly when asked what motivated them to become journalists. It then examines the moral intent expressed in the statements and actions they make in regard to others: towards their colleagues in the newsroom, with sources and with the public. These four thematic areas are consistent with those signposted by the conceptual framework, particularly in the way that these thematic areas help to focus the analysis on the issue of intersubjectivity. Though the chapter explores moral intent vis-à-vis these sets of social relationships, I sought to ensure that the analysis would remain cognizant of how routines and practices, the technologies of journalism, journalistic discourse and notions of professionalism are important terrain for exercising autonomy. But with a focus on intersubjectivity, this chapter puts a spotlight on the moral aspects of this autonomy.

²⁰ The quotes refer to the Nvivo database codes, which were at times drawn *in-vivo* from interviews, but more often were best-fit phrases devised by the researcher.

²¹ Through matrices, Nvivo software generates tables that quantify the instances where different codes have been applied to the same text.

What emerges from this analysis is that the moral intent of journalists can be directed at their professional relationships or at their content, or both. They not only are shown to express a desire to change the moral content of their stories, but also express a desire to change the moral nature of their relations – with colleagues, sources and the general public – and they make strategic choices at different moments about which of these to influence. Though it is difficult to make any categorical statements about these strategic choices, there does appear to be an important trade-off to consider as journalists decide to focus their moral intents on content or on relationships. When journalists focus their moral intent on the content of their work, they often do so by evading or eschewing identity politics in their dealings with colleagues, sources and the general public. At other times, however, they are shown to confront, or challenge, these identity politics more directly. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that journalists face moral dilemmas that seem to have no easy solution. The sections below will further elaborate on these evasions, confrontations and dilemmas – all of which have implications for the research questions of this thesis that will be explored in subsequent chapters.

The findings here are illustrated primarily with examples from the experiences of the 10 journalists who were members of the Networked News Lab, a small set of journalists selected because they had demonstrated extraordinary moral commitment to their work. The intention with this small, selective sample was to maximize the possibility of seeing moral agency in their work, and to explore the nature of this moral agency holistically and in as much depth as possible. Comments collected in interviews with journalists and editors who did not participate as members of the Networked News Lab are cited sporadically in this chapter. In keeping with the commitment of action research to privilege the voices of participants, and in the interest of analytical transparency, this section quotes extensively from the journalists' own comments.

5.2 Personal roots of obligation

When asked why they became journalists, the members of the Networked News Lab often harked back to childhood stories. Whether apocryphal or not, these stories communicate values that can be linked with the moral intent of their

professional work, particularly by highlighting the journalists' sense of purpose and what they view as their unique ability to represent others.

I was born in Nairobi, grew up in Nairobi, went to school in Kenya until like class three, then my mother in '97 decided to move us to Mogadishu. So she's never been to Mogadishu and she's never had any connection and she's like, you know what? Let's just move. And that was like the height of the war. So we went to school every morning and you could actually see that some people in the classroom never had breakfast. I could see that some people in the classroom were barely affording books. We could see that our neighbours were barely even sustaining their own lifestyles, and here you are having the luxury of travelling back to Nairobi for the holidays and all this. I think it's about the people. I came to have this connection with the neighbours and the people and the stories. And it was literally a wild, wild west. It was. Nobody would ever think of Mogadishu in 1997, so I started – I think it was an encouragement from my mom – to try and keep a diary. Try and write what you see in school this morning, what you see. Try and write it down, try and put it in a book. We were very good in Swahili and English, but the schools were being taught in Somali and Arabic. So we actually started learning Arabic, we started learning Somali at the time, and my mom would, like, actually tell us, try to learn in English tonight, tomorrow write it in Arabic. What's your experience, how are you developing, maybe at the end of the month telling us, what is the narrative, what story are you getting this month? . . . That's why I like writing. It's not just about writing. It's about systematic kind of writing, like what are you getting out of the story? (Abdi, workshop, 08/01/13)

Abdi's story is a particularly apt illustration of how moral intent is expressed in personal background. As a young man, he found himself living in two countries and across cultures, and he used his writing as a tool to practise his empathy for others and to keep himself grounded in the bewildering transitions between these worlds. That commitment appears to be present still in his work as a journalist. Abdi's predilection for long-form stories (Latif, 2010), photo essays that challenge stereotypical views of Somali Kenyans and Somalia (Latif, 2013) and for first-person reportage (Latif, 2012) all reflect the personal nature of his journalism. And his moral intent is reflected too in his own critique of Kenyan journalism, partially captured in this unedited²² excerpt from a blog posting in which he gave his views on how Kenyan journalism could address the growing xenophobia and

²² A version of this blog edited by the researcher is available at http://networkednews.org/project_resources/long-journey-understanding-kenya-somalia/

nativism in the wake of Kenya's military invasion of Somalia and the subsequent attacks by Al-Shabaab in Kenya.

As Somalia opens itself to the world, it faces a polarized world that barely understands it. Some people define the country by the image of glassy-eyed children dying of hunger; others associate it with the photos of pregnant mothers carrying jerry cans of water. And in this age of terrorism, many more have come to couple it with the gruesome acts of Al-Shabaab and the deadly attacks they have carried out, from the Presidential Palace in Mogadishu, to the Westgate Mall in Nairobi and just last month, at the Garissa University College.

This negative association is more evident in Kenya, especially after the country's Defence Forces invaded Somalia in October 2011, with the aim of deterring and defeating Al-Shabaab. The paradox here is that Kenya and Somalia share a lengthy border of almost 700 kilometres. Kenya is also host to hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees who reside in Dadaab Camp, arguably the world's biggest. And since 2011, legions of Kenyan labour workers, engineers, humanitarian workers and teachers are effectively helping rebuild Somalia.

Yet, the conversation in the public sphere, abetted by lacklustre journalistic practices, has been one of outright ignorance or unworldly naiveté. As a journalist experiencing this over the last few years, I have come to view this as part of an ingrained system of thought and practice, of how people across the two borders view each other. In the end, Kenya and Somalia come off as two countries divided by war, and united by rickety planes, a long border and a visceral fear of the unknown.

That's why on Thursday, April 16, I gave a talk at PAWA254, a collaborative space for creatives and journalists, about "The Role of Journalism in Exploring the Somali Story." The basic objective of the talk was to try and answer the question: can good journalism help Kenyans understand Somalia better?

My talk focused on not only humanizing the Somali experience, but also looking at how media narratives have been appropriated to give readers and audiences the right picture of a country that has been at war for two decades. The presentation was also based on the premise that journalism wields an important role, and if it isn't done well, then it has the negative power of spreading wrong accounts or reinforcing misconstrued experiences. (Abdi, email, 21/04/13)

Abdi's tale of his upbringing, and the way he evokes this personal history in his writing, is redolent of a moral intersubjectivity, particularly in his efforts to reflect on different standpoints, including his own. Indeed, there are hints of truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance in the values that Abdi expresses in these passages. He can be seen to question whether the Kenyan journalists have

made the investigative investment and provided the “authentic disclosure” (Christians, 2004) needed to tell a truthful story of Somalia, and to offer Somalia and Somalis the hospitality they deserve as a neighbour. Furthermore, the importance that Abdi attributes to his own liminality between cultures and countries evokes the moral power of estrangement that is fundamental to proper distance (Orgad, 2011). Abdi’s story may seem particularly befitting of a moral fable, yet there are hints of moral obligations too in the stories told by other journalists in the Networked News Lab who do not share Abdi’s cross-boundary childhood. Two other journalists shared origin stories related to the importance of how radio and newspaper stories allowed them and their families to feel part of the movement for multiparty democracy in Kenya.

What inspired me to join journalism? I think from a very early age I was reading newspapers. I was brought up in [redacted town name] and that’s when there was a lot of struggle for the liberation of the country, the second liberation, and we used to keep in touch. We used to follow what was happening in the political scene. I got very curious out of that after seeing what was happening in the country, the reporting that was happening in [Daily] Nation. And I was very keen to participate in that process of informing people what is happening in the political scene. What we need to do as a country, what is lacking in the political scene, and I got really inspired by the things I was reading in the newspapers at that point in time. So I had a very strong urge to participate in that process of collecting news and, you know, disseminating them. (Daniel, workshop, 10/12/12)

Like Daniel, David too evoked memories of the broadcasts that brought him and his family the voices of the opposition, allowing them to feel part of the pro-democracy movement (participant observation, 13/04/13). The potential moral aspects of these stories, however, are more apparent when considering how the childhood experiences of Daniel and Anthony impressed upon them what might be described as an obligation to truthfulness and hospitality in political reporting. Daniel once described it as “activist journalism” (unstructured interview, 27/06/12), which requires him at times to play an active role in the coverage, an effort akin to that made by the journalists who brought Daniel and Anthony a more truthful story about agitation for multiparty democracy.

I think sometimes I don’t feel like I am doing a lot because we are just disseminating what is happening in other words. We are like a mirror, not really a mirror, but we mirror the society. In other words, we are just

taking what we see and relaying it to people with very little value addition. I think that one frustrates me a lot especially in what we are doing. I am a political journalist myself so unless I do features, that is when I feel like I am impacting the society in a way. But if I am just writing about political processes – for example now I am going to Kasarani to report a Wiper Democratic Movement delegate conference. I know the behind the scenes and I know that whatever is going to happen there is really, sorry to say, but it is crappy. They have decided, they are calling the delegate conference now they are going to endorse it and you see sometimes that doesn't come out clearly in my report, but sometimes I try to bring it out, but sometimes it doesn't come out very clear. And as a result you feel frustrated when you see newspapers reporting that the delegates have endorsed this and that, when it's really not the delegates. That one is quite frustrating. (Daniel, workshop, 10/12/12)

David's own recollections of how radio broadcasts gave him and his family a sense of solidarity with other citizens is reflected too in his current approach to radio journalism. David favours *Swahili*, the lingua franca of Kenya, and town hall-style talk shows that bring together an audience for his shows that he describes as “cosmopolitan” (semi-structured interview, 27/03/13). When asked to share his best work, he cited a feature he had done on the Wagalla massacre,²³ saying that he was amongst the first to report on the story after President Moi's departure created an environment of greater media freedom, and that he had tried “to give the perspective of the people who were there” (unstructured interview, 11/07/12). In this respect, David has often relied on the particular strengths of radio for building *hospitality* amongst Kenyans, an approach that seems to hark back to his own personal sense of belonging.

A third example worth highlighting here is from Anthony, whose experience being represented by the national news when he was the resident of an informal settlement has underscored his own commitment to do news that is more hospitable to the lives and experiences of the poor.

I was brought up by my grandmother and all we had was me and her and an iron sheet and a mud-thatched house. I actually first saw electricity when I was 18. That was the first time I saw electricity. In our neighbourhood we had this Nation photographer who only used to come when there was floods [laughter], when bad things happen. So you

²³ Hundreds of citizens were killed and many other atrocities committed in Wagalla, Wajir by Kenyan security forces in February 1984 in what has since been dubbed the Wagalla Massacre (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, 2013).

know, pictures and then you would see the next day, you know, two people drowned in a river, you know, houses swept away and all these things. A small caption somewhere in the whole newspaper. And that was a cycle that I got used to. As I grew up, I knew when it rained and it rained really badly, I would see him. You know he would come and take pictures and the next day you would have a small space. You know, houses swept away and that's it. And I used to wonder, I mean, that's how I live. That's my story every day. It's big, if those two people that were killed were probably two people that I knew, houses that are swept away are of families that I knew, yeah. So, it's my story every day; I live it. It's painful; I see it. And I think as I grew, it frustrated me as to why these people were not telling my story the way I would tell it and I grew up with that. You know, so I wanted to find out, why is my story a small story as opposed to when it happens to someone else? When its politics, it's story number one, when our house is, you know, swept away, it's not a story. So when I finished high school it was clear to me that obviously I like writing, I would love to speak, I would love to do all these things but I need to come to a place where I can put all that together, and television was the option for me because in my mind, I knew there were 30 million stories to be told. I don't see why a story in Korogocho or in Sinai is a small story because there are people who are in Kasarani and they are going to endorse a president. I don't see that. It doesn't make sense to me. I tried to think that if you give people a platform to tell their own story, and as a journalist they trust us enough to give you the details of their lives. So to tell their own story of how tough life is of how things are not working out, how health care is just a mess, how being poor is a punishment in this country. You know, people struggle. They tell you these things not because they like it but because they have a hope and feeling that if I tell you, you would tell the world and I would get some sort of, you know, help, if anything. Because this is their lives. They live this, you know. For us, you get in there, tell a wonderful story and exit. If it's a good story, it's a splash story, we love it, and we move on to the next story. But this is their lives. So for me, my struggle has been to stay with that story and say this person lives this life and they trust me enough to tell me the details of their life, they let me in their life and I would like to, in the very least, tell their story the way they would tell it if they had the opportunity. And that has been my struggle because . . . I've been there so I understand, and I think it's a long journey that will not end now. (Anthony, workshop, 10/12/12)

In this passage, Anthony explicitly traces his professional approach and commitment to the frustrations he felt as an object of news portrayals. Like Daniel and others, Anthony expresses the value of bringing the people's perspective into news, but the passage also highlights another theme that emerged in the data: a lack of the people's perspective versus the dominance of political perspectives. Civic and public journalism levelled a similar critique at news in other contexts

(Blumler & Cushion, 2013; Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009) but the concern of Kenyan journalists with the dominance of politicians in the news has a unique complexion in a politics of belonging, whereby they are seen by journalists to *falsely* represent the interests of their communities and, including by way of sowing divisions, to serve their own interests. As such, there can be seen to be unique issues of intersubjectivity at stake when journalists such as Daniel and Anthony seek to provide greater truthfulness or hospitality for a “community”, be they Somali Kenyans who experienced the Wagalla massacre or slum residents.

When Anthony was asked to suggest an example of his best work, he offered an investigative report on a 2011 fuel pipeline fire that killed or injured more than 200 residents in the informal settlement of Sinai in south-eastern Nairobi. The report revisited the event a year later, endeavouring to tell the story in greater detail, particularly from the perspective of those who had survived the disaster and who continued to rebuild their lives following serious injury, loss of loved ones and loss of property. As such, Anthony’s Sinai story represents, by his telling, an effort to encourage the audience to listen across difference, to feel empathy for the victims, and to give a more authentic biographic account of their lives beyond the sensational headlines that first accompanied the tragedy.

Interestingly, the female journalists tended to evoke origin stories of a slightly different nature from their male counterparts, emphasizing their early artistic interests and aptitudes – writing (Bertha, workshop, 10/12/12), poetry (Nancy, workshop, 10/12/12), and theatre (Mary, workshop, 08/01/13) – over the political. This is not to say that issues of politics and ethnicity were not cited by these journalists; they were, and repeatedly, just not when they were asked to describe their entry into the profession of journalism. It should be noted that male participants (Anthony and Abdi) also cited their aptitudes for speaking and writing as influencing the choice to enter the profession. By evoking their creative passions and aptitudes in their origin stories, these journalists recall the importance of narrative and discourse as a source of morality in news (Chouliaraki, 2008; Ettema & Glasser, 1998). And indeed, these very journalists also emphasize the use of features, in-depth reports and personal interviews as important aspects of their ability to tell untold stories (Bertha, unstructured

interview, 09/01/13), promote empathy (Mary, workshop, 08/01/13) and prompt public action (Nancy, workshop, 08/01/13).

These examples all suggest that the personal backgrounds that journalists evoke to explain their professional values and commitments can be read as moral parables and, furthermore, that these parables call attention to how moral commitments are rooted in how a journalist has experienced the mediation of a politics of belonging. In articulating their moral views, Abdi, Anthony and others often recalled anecdotes about what it felt like to be misunderstood or misrepresented, or some like Bertha, Daniel and Mary, were motivated by their ability to bring their special talent to bear meaningfully on the process. All of them acknowledge the responsibility that comes with the power and influence of being members of the national press corps, as Daniel implies in this excerpt from field notes:²⁴

We talked about coming from “the village”. I told him about my working class background and asked him what it meant to come from the village. He [Daniel] mentioned an old song about “hearing your own voice on the radio”. When he came to Nairobi, the slick, fast-talking journalists were intimidating. Still are. People like Caroline Mutoka, who speak English well. He still has his tribal accent. But he tells young people back in the village that they can be as good as these people, better even. (field notes, 01/08/13)

This section has demonstrated that professional origin stories – interpreted in light of a journalist’s body of work – reveal meaningful moral commitments that link personal identity, the experience of media representations and a sense of professional duty. The question these stories leave unanswered, however, is what gives some individuals the *imagination*, to use Arendt’s language, that allows such an interest in being heard across difference to transform into a more general commitment to listen across difference (Dreher, 2009) as well. This issue, and the role of *praxis*, will be further addressed in Chapter 7.

²⁴ Field notes recorded from jottings made after the interaction or in hand-written notes during the interview often include a combination of direct quotes and paraphrasing, as is the case with this excerpt.

5.3 Relationships in the newsroom

Chapter 2 discussed how a politics of belonging manifests within Kenyan newsrooms in mistrust, apprehension and at times in open divisions and conflict amongst colleagues. As gradually became clear over the course of the fieldwork, these relationships are themselves an important space for moral intent, which is captured in the values journalists express and decisions they make in regard to newsroom relationships. This section first discusses how the journalists experience the politics of belonging in their newsroom relationships. It then explains some of the strategic choices they make in this environment, with attention to the trade-offs and dilemmas with which they must contend.

Thomas was one of the first members of the Networked News Lab to comment openly on the subject of newsroom divisions in an informal interview in March 2013 in which we discussed the comments that had been made by editors and journalists in interviews conducted on electoral coverage. “You have hit the nail on the head”, he said, in response to the suggestion that newsroom suspicions were influencing coverage of the elections. “How do you maintain professional standards even if your place of work is divided?” Thomas went on to say that he often feels concerned that colleagues will assume that his ethnicity will make him a supporter of Raila Odinga, the leader of the opposition. He recalled a small but recent disagreement he had with a journalist over a headline. The President Uhuru Kenyatta had recently issued an apology for referring to the Supreme Court Justices disparagingly as “some six people”. Thomas wanted the headline to read “Uhuru Apologies for ‘Six Person’ Remark”, but the journalist did not want to repeat the slight in the headline, arguing that “Six Person” could be replaced with “Supreme Court” or another phrase. Thomas recalled wondering whether the political (and ethnic) sympathies of the reporter were at play in the disagreement, but also whether the reporter may have been acting under the assumption that Thomas held a certain political bias because of his ethnicity.

Holly also spoke about the challenges of ethnic identity in the newsroom in an informal, unstructured interview setting. Her parents had raised her in English and Swahili, opting not to teach her Kikuyu to intentionally mask her ethnic identity at a moment in the country’s history, under President Gideon Moi, when

Kikuyus felt discriminated against. She said she first realized the strength of tribal identity when violence broke out after the 2007 elections and people assumed that she was a Kibaki supporter, though she had voted for Odinga. Holly talked at length about the complexity of family, personal life, politics and identity in Kenya, and when asked how she responds to tribalism, or suspicion of tribalism, in the newsroom, she said this:

If you shout, if you over-compensate, people wonder what's wrong with you. But it's not my burden to carry . . . you have to adopt a different persona; it's like being on stage. You have to adopt your journalistic persona like you're taking up another character . . . You have to be someone else. You can't be yourself. Yourself is too complicated. People are in denial. They imagine they can be who they are and a journalist, but it's not true. (semi-structured interview, 11/04/13)

Consistent with Holly's description, other journalists in and out of the Networked News Lab describe the presence of tribalism in the newsroom as emotionally taxing, hurtful, and difficult to manage. It is a deep and fundamental challenge in all national newsrooms, which is rarely discussed outside of small groups of colleagues. Several members of the Networked News Lab did eventually address the topic together as part of a conversation about electoral coverage. There was some debate in the group about whether journalists should ever declare their political persuasions openly, but even those in favour of journalists transparently proclaiming their party affiliation expressed doubt that it could be done in an environment where to do so meant facing accusations of tribalism. Holly again made a compelling statement on the issue, which resonated with the rest of the group.

I think for me it is something that we should be able to talk about but in our context we all know that political opinions are linked to tribal opinions, which makes it look primitive and ugly. And that is why we don't want to come out and say that this is what I believe, this is what I support. It makes you look like a barbarian because you know that you are mindlessly following someone and you are not a reasonable person. I would like to see the day when, you know, like in the US, someone can come up and say, I am a Republican. I am a Democrat. It is part of your identity. You carry it with pride. You have reason for doing it. You don't shy away from it. You are not ashamed of doing it. (Holly, workshop, 23/04/13)

“Primitive”, “ugly”, “barbarian”, – the words Holly uses to describe the shame of being labelled a tribalist – are reminiscent of the language used by colonial powers to cast African societies as backwards, and of the early writings on “tribalism” as the African equivalent to racism (Manners, 1962). In that regard, the passage also evokes Frantz Fanon’s arguments for how such colonial discourses have become self-imposed (Fanon & Philcox, 2004). Leaving aside for a moment these important but vast post-colonial issues, what these comments point to in the context of this study is another impossible dilemma for journalists. They are, on the one hand, stifled by suspicions amongst peers, but unable also to proclaim their loyalties freely without being shamed. This state of affairs does not seem to conform to what Nyamnjoh describes (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 28) as feeling “torn” between loyalties to nation and community, so much as it does to a sense of feeling trapped.

This feeling of captivity to the politics of belonging is reflected elsewhere in the data. After that workshop, Thomas agreed to write a blog post to bring together some of the thoughts that arose during the conversation, and to promote a wider debate about the issues on social media. The blog posting elaborated on how repressive the current state of affairs can feel.

While the public has its catharsis, debating the politics of the day and championing their candidates, a Kenyan journalist can feel – ironically – silenced. Being a journalist in Kenya is like living in a country where you’re not free to express your views. And the editorial process reinforces this feeling. (Thomas, blog, 09/05/13)

The discussion that follows will explore how journalistic autonomy in the Kenyan context is fundamentally interconnected with this state of affairs, and how the strategic choices that the journalists make in their professional practice can be seen to represent a moral intent in their effort to reshape intersubjectivity in the relationships in the newsroom, with sources and with the public.

5.3.1 Strategic choices and moral intent in the newsroom

Journalists often find small, everyday ways to cope with this feeling of being stifled or silence, and these often imply an evasion or avoidance of identity politics in the newsroom. Like Thomas and Holly, they might do their best to suppress their suspicions, and to resist the urge to let the suspicions of others shape their

behaviour and judgement. Some, like Bertha and Anthony, go as far as to adopt a second name that cannot be easily identified with an ethnic group. But it is also possible to see how journalistic autonomy in Kenya, even those expressions of autonomy commonly found in different settings, is part of a strategy related to the challenge of navigating ethnic divisions in the newsroom. Several sociological studies on journalism remark on the desire of journalists elsewhere to maintain independence from editors and from the constraints of daily news and the news cycle (Gans, 1980; Tunstall, 1971), but that desire in Kenya can be viewed, in light of this discussion, to have a moral dimension.

For many of these journalists, particularly those in print, writing features is the main approach to gaining that independence. For Bertha and Abdi, a career as a freelance journalist has allowed them to focus almost exclusively on long-form stories, though it should be pointed out that both Bertha and Abdi rely on income from short-term work as communication advisors that allows them to endure the precariousness of freelance work. Not all the journalists who participated in the Networked News Lab have the same capacity to pursue such a strategy, and find other ways to free themselves from the stifling work of daily news coverage. Daniel, for example, changed newspapers to accept a position as a full-time feature writer, in spite of the fact that he had been content working for an editor who shared his commitment to constitutionalism and reform. For television and radio reporters as well, becoming a specialist in features can be a route to independence, as Nancy accomplished. But for many other broadcast journalists, independence comes with the ability to host a show. David and Anthony both acquired a modicum of independence in this manner at their respective media houses, and especially in Kenya, where TV and radio hosts often act as their own producers.

This is not to say that feature writers and the hosts are without influence. All of these journalists complained at one point or another of some kind of managerial or editorial intrusion into their work, especially as the approaching 2013 elections elevated political tensions in the country. Anthony reported that the guests he had invited onto his talk show had been censored by managers, citing a case in which a guest at his show was banned from the television station for questioning the legitimacy of the electoral process (unstructured interview, 22/03/13). Daniel

received pressure from editors when he was following the alleged case of corruption in the procurement of equipment by the country's Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (semi-structured interview, 26/03/13). He interpreted the pressure as a well-intentioned attempt by editors at his newspaper to ensure that a high-stakes story was well substantiated, though there had been a discussion in the news industry more widely about whether news outlets suppressed the story owing to political pressures (editor, semi-structured interview, 20/05/13; editors, public meeting, 13/03/16). David had been told in the run-up to the elections not to mention "anything ugly", such as incidence of violence, that might jeopardize turn-out on election day (semi-structured interview, 13/03/13).

Bertha had a story rejected by *The Nation* after the editor consulted with the newspaper's legal team and determined that it might offend members of the judiciary. The story – entitled "Absurdity of the Case of Robbery with Violence" – was critical of a part of Kenya's penal code that carries the death penalty for any robbery that is conducted with "violence", a term that judges have interpreted liberally in some cases to dole out death sentences for crimes that might otherwise receive milder sentences (unstructured interview, 09/01/13). For the article, Bertha spoke to a woman who had been sentenced to death on this provision of the penal code.

Whilst the journalists certainly expressed a desire for greater professional independence from editors and managers, it was often the freedom from daily coverage and the "news cycle" that served as the strongest motivation. This is reflected in the comments in the previous section by Daniel and Anthony, but was also expressed clearly by Bertha and Nancy in the first workshop.

I've grown to really love doing features. Even though I do miss reporting, general news reporting. For more or less the same reasons as Bertha. Because with features you have a lot of room to sort of set the agenda, a lot of room to be creative. You are not hopping from one press conference to another. And these press conferences have really been a source of frustration for me, because I feel that, what value am I adding? I mean, these people have already sat down with their PR consultants and they have decided that this is the message we are going to pass to people. Sometimes they are not genuine, I mean, it's calculated to achieve a certain goal and so there I am. I claim to be a professional but I feel that they are just using me to achieve their goals and that's really frustrating.

And so that's why I have tended towards features more. I find that more fulfilling, you know? You go down the communities, you talk to people about things that affect them and you bring out the story and they have such impact. They also impact policy. So when you see something changing as a result of a story you did you really feel satisfied like, this is something I'd love to live for. (Nancy, workshop, 10/12/12)

For this group of journalists, the desire to be free from daily news coverage, to have independence from standard political coverage and to avoid the oppressive identity politics of the newsroom appear to be interwoven, and these aspirations can be considered for their moral intent. Bertha and Abdi choose to be freelance feature writers so that they can tell in-depth stories that foster understanding and empathy; Daniel and Anthony have staked out programmes that allow them to bring a people's perspective to the news. This is not to say that this confluence of factors produces a single seamless strategy; there are often tensions and contradictions in a journalist's efforts at autonomy, as Mary's case illustrates well.

By her own account, Mary's decision to become an entertainment journalist was motivated primarily by her "hate" of politics and its insincerity (Mary, workshop, 08/01/13). But throughout the course of the research, Mary repeatedly raised the question of how to engage in politics "with a small p" from her position as a leading entertainment journalist. Mary says that she feels particularly motivated to engage in social issues because of her long-standing involvement with the Mavuno Church, a Christian-denominated church with a strong emphasis on social justice in its gospel (unstructured interview, 15/02/15). Once, she tried to engage the music artists she interviewed on the topic of by-laws affecting live performances in Nairobi, and she flirted with the idea of getting involved with an online campaign called "I run this city" aimed at getting youth from across political divides more involved in city governance (unstructured interview, 09/02/13). More recently, Mary began work privately on a short documentary about hip-hop cultures in Nairobi with political overtones. All of these small projects indicate how Mary has struggled to find safe ways to engage in issues of politics and identity from her position as an entertainment journalist.

Where Mary and others may often seek ways to escape to a "safe" or cloistered space away from newsroom identity politics, some expressions of moral intent reflect a desire to even challenge the attitudes and behaviours of other colleagues

in the newsroom, such as when Anthony says of his intent to demonstrate to his colleagues that “the story doesn’t end just because people have stopped reading” (workshop, 10/12/12).

Anthony hosted one of the first talk shows in Kenya to incorporate social media. Inspired by Al Jazeera’s *The Stream*, Anthony wanted to go beyond the call-in format that was typical then. He began to take questions and comments hash-tagged on Twitter, and solicited input from his thousands of followers on Facebook. One particular interview on that show, conducted with the director of state-owned electricity provider Kenya Power (KPLC), provided an opportunity for Anthony to challenge newsroom suspicions. KPLC is deeply unpopular in Kenya owing to the poor quality of its service, and so the comments that came in to the show from Twitter and the call-ins were invariably critical. Following the interview, the director filed a complaint with the television station and threatened to pull advertising owing to what he perceived to be unfair treatment by Anthony. In a newsroom environment with deep suspicions amongst colleagues, and the presence of supervisors who may be beholden to political interests, Anthony could have easily been admonished, and forced to issue an apology. But he was able to deflect any potential criticism by providing a copy to management and to KPLC of all the comments he had received, arguing that he was merely the messenger of public complaints. The station’s management and his colleagues all stood behind him, and KPLC eventually relented in its threats. Anthony reflected on the experience in a one-on-one interview (unstructured interview, 13/02/12) and later summarized those reflections in a blog for the Networked News Lab.

In Kenya, if a journalist asks tough questions, he is not viewed as an objective representative of public opinion, as a defender of public interest, but as someone with a political agenda or personal vendetta. Social media has helped me to deflect these kinds of attacks. After the interview with the KPLC director, we sent him all the tweets directed at him – hundreds of them – with legitimate grievances. (Anthony, blog, 01/03/13)

In other examples, Nancy (unstructured interview, 17/04/12) and Abdi (workshop, 08/01/13) both described how they are using analytics to demonstrate to editors that non-partisan, issue-based stories can attract readers. And Joseph has made efforts to persuade editors and journalists to cover the

International Criminal Court (ICC) proceedings in ways that challenge the partisan narrative (there is more on this case below in Section 5.4). But the clearest expression of moral intent with regard to newsroom relations is when journalists speak out publicly on the issue. Their willingness to do so is often attenuated by fears of reprisal.

I wouldn't [write about tribalism in the newsroom] because as far as I know that I have been in that kind of a bias situation, then I'd just be jumping from the side of the table into the fire, hot water, so I personally wouldn't be comfortable because I would like to keep my opinions to myself, except for with people like you guys. (Mary, workshop, 23/04/13)

But both Thomas (in the blog post cited above) and Abdi have spoken out in the course of the research. In Abdi's case, he chose to point out the failings in the news coverage of Kenya's invasion into Somalia, implying that those shortcomings emanate from the marginalization of ethnic Somalis in the newsroom – a case that will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter.

All of the examples above suggest that within the exercise of autonomy by Kenyan journalists, there is an awareness of and a concern for the intersubjectivity between colleagues in the newsroom. Addressing these moral concerns may not be the only or even the primary objective of their autonomy, but there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the politics of belonging, and its manifestation in newsroom relations, is amongst the issues that this select group of committed journalists consider as they navigate their professional choices in these organizations. Journalists, the discussion suggests, can try to cloister themselves off against identity politics in the newsroom, find indirect ways to challenge or subvert those identity politics, or they can even confront them directly by speaking out. The implications of these different strategies for moral agency – for the ability of journalists to influence the moral content of news – is an important emergent theme from this discussion that will have to be considered in subsequent sections.

5.4 Relationships with sources

Cynicism and mistrust of sources are hallmarks of journalism (Cappella & Hall Jamieson, 1997; Mcdevitt, 2003), but the wariness felt by Kenyan journalists

towards sources has its own complexion in the country's unique politics of belonging, which is highlighted from a moral perspective. As with their relationships in the newsroom, journalists also make strategic choices in their dealings with sources that reveal a moral intent, and that navigate similar trade-offs and challenges.

Journalists interviewed for this thesis repeatedly lambasted government officials for intentionally misleading the public on a series of issues and events, including security responses to terrorist attacks, the events of the ICC trials, the invasion by Kenya of Somalia, the allocation of resources for people displaced by post-electoral violence and others. Even more than untruthful, politicians were seen by journalists in and out of the Networked News Lab to be responsible for “inciting” violence (editor, public meeting, 21/03/13), “peddling” the perception that Kenyans are tribal (Joseph, email, 26/07/12), and spreading hate speech (editor, semi-structured interview, 16/05/13). The frustration and anger directed at Kenyan politicians is captured well in this passage by political cartoonist, writer and blogger Patrick Gathara:

Like they have done over the past 50 years, our ruling elite is rather determined to hype ethnic differences as a cover for its thieving ways. It is creating tribal animosity and fear to circumvent real and meaningful discussion over the causes of our penury, over the real reasons for our insecurity and why it is that the exercise of constitutionally guaranteed rights by even a section of Kenyans generates such terror. (Gathara, 2014)

One caveat is important here. I entered the Networked News Lab with a view of Kenyan politicians not dissimilar to the one expressed by Gathara. Over time, I recognized that members of the Networked News Lab were unwilling to indict politicians quite so categorically, or to deny that politicians can ever act in the interest of the public. Still, politicians need not be vilified to acknowledge that they can pose a moral threat by seeking to intentionally mislead or to stoke ethnic divisions when it serves their own self-interest, and journalists in Kenya are acutely aware of these risks.

Civil society groups and activists too have been increasingly viewed as partisan by journalists, who will often question their underlying motives. There is evidence to suggest that some civil society organizations are indeed compromised, and that

there has been a creeping politicization of civil society in the past two decades, particularly as civil society leaders entered government under the Kibaki administration, which led to stronger party–civil society linkages than had existed previously (Okello, 2010). According to several accounts, with the added pressures of the 2007 elections, political–ethnic divisions further crept into civil society organizations, not unlike the manner in which this occurred in newsrooms. One prominent civil society representative, speaking ahead of the 2013 elections, discussed the politicization of the sector that occurred amidst the political tensions of the 2007 elections.

Organizations that had worked very closely hand in hand all of a sudden had some sort of friction, whether it's because senior members of a particular organization or CEOs or whatever coming from different ethnic groups and starting to align themselves with the party from their region or the politician from their region. So even amongst civil society, one of the things you found was that it became very difficult to know who to trust. People who you had been working with for years all of a sudden, you would be suspicious when they would ask you a certain question, so it certainly did affect the way that people related to one another. And in some cases, some people were just not able to work together, and they said, let's just put whatever we're doing on hold, and we'll come back to it. So those kinds of polarizations were there also for us in civil society and strangely enough, whether people are willing to admit it or not, I think they are starting to surface again. The country is extremely polarized at the moment and sadly I'm just not sure that we have learned the lessons from 2007 that we should have. (Civil society representative, workshop, 22/01/13)

Whilst journalists may have cause to be suspicious of civil society representatives, the distrust goes both ways. In the course of the research, two civil society representatives gave detailed allegations of being solicited for a bribe in order to have their cause or event covered. Activists interviewed for the thesis (unstructured interview, 10/01/13; unstructured interview, 13/02/13; unstructured interview, 23/07/13) and those who participated in a workshop with journalists (workshop, 05/08/13) repeatedly complained that news coverage had suggested that their campaigns might serve an ulterior political agenda or implied that they were being paid to protest in the interests of certain “big men”.

Many civil society organizations are also reluctant to speak publicly with journalists on sensitive or politicized issues. The network of civil society organizations that contributed to the electoral monitoring platform Uchaguzi –

including the Constitution and Reform Education Consortium and Ushahidi – chose not to speak with journalists for fear of exacerbating a tense situation that week (participant observation, 21/02/13). Similarly, the Election Observation Group made no public statements until well after the elections. One individual, who did criticize the electoral process in a blog posting during the week that votes were being tallied, later recounted a number of phone calls from acquaintances asking for his/her “motivation”, which he/she interpreted to mean he/she should be more circumspect about speaking publicly (ICT4D practitioner, unstructured interview, 15/05/13). Religious leaders and Kenyan human rights groups were also reluctant to speak publicly during Kenya’s incursion into Somalia for fear of reprisals or fear of drawing anti-Somali sentiment, according to Somali-speaking journalists who are routinely in touch with these sources (workshop, 03/08/13).

Complicating the matter for many journalists is the tendency for ethnicity to be a determining factor in the sources they acquire. There is the practice in several media houses of assigning journalists to cover political parties based on their ethnicity; this was noted by Wasserman and Maweu (Wasserman & Maweu, 2014a) and also described in several interviews for this thesis (editor, semi-structured interview, 17/04/13; editor, semi-structured interview, 18/04/13; editor, semi-structured interview, 26/05/13). Furthermore, journalists noted that old classmates and friends often become the most reliable sources, and that too can end up creating a bias in a journalist’s networks towards a particular ethnic–political grouping (editor, unstructured interview, 04/04/13; editor, semi-structured interview, 26/05/13). Whether they have intentionally cultivated such sources or not, a journalist or editor will frequently be judged by their peers and other sources on the basis of who their “political friends” are (David, semi-structured interview, 13/03/27).

All of this presents a serious challenge to the ability of Kenyan journalists to exercise a traditional watchdog role over government and power-holders. Members of the opposition and civil society representatives are often key sources of criticism, but when such sources are untrustworthy, or unwilling, journalists face difficult decisions. Several journalists commented on the need to be critical yet responsible in this context, and how finding the right balance between the two can be difficult. Indeed, in the wake of Kenya’s 2013 elections, there was a

vigorous debate on the pages of the press, on blogs and at a series of panel discussions over whether the mainstream media erred on the side of caution by not reporting sufficiently on the alleged irregularities on the electoral process (Benequista, 2015b).

5.4.1 Strategic choices and moral intent with sources

Amidst these challenges, journalists deploy a few distinct stratagems that seek to reshape their relations with sources, or to guard their content from what they might consider to be the morally damaging influence of political discourse. Journalistic approaches to verification, of course, would be the natural approach to filtering out inaccurate statements, but journalists in and out of the Networked News Lab repeatedly discovered that parsing the truth from conflicting statements can be difficult. Macharia Gaitho, a senior editor at the *Daily Nation*, echoed this sentiment at a public discussion.

The thing with political disputes is that there is no one truth. There are always two or more sets of truth. Jubilee²⁵ has its version of truth. CORD has its version of the truth. And it is not our role to play advocate for either of those political contenders. (Macharia Gaitho, public meeting, 21/03/13)

Senior editors described efforts to perform a watchdog role behind the scenes during the course of the elections. Amidst the failure of the electronic tallying system and rumours of hacking, three senior editors described how they wielded the threat of critical coverage to secure assurances from electoral officials that they were working to preserve the integrity of the vote (editor, semi-structured interview, 04/04/13; editor, semi-structured interview, 17/04/13; editor, semi-structured interview, 19/04/13). By their own accounts, this approach was intended to secure a democratic outcome without giving a space to politicians who might unscrupulously exploit the situation to foment social divisions.

At some level we were aware of what happened in 2007. We're not crusaders for peace, but we have to keep that in mind. We can criticize, but we can't discredit the process. There has to be no doubt, even if

²⁵ Jubilee and CORD (Coalition for Reforms and Democracy) were the names of the two major political coalitions competing in the 2013 elections.

criticising the failures, that [the IEBC]²⁶ is the only institution legally sanctioned to carry out elections . . . We can question, but don't want to go to a "don't know" situation. (editor, semi-structured interview, 17/04/13)

None of the journalists in the Networked News Lab recounted any effort to confront political sources directly, in the manner that senior editors did with the electoral commission, but instead endeavoured to cultivate a wider array of sources – in effect seeking to broaden hospitality in such a way as to diminish the discursive power of politicians. Daniel built a network of civil society activists that he could trust, Anthony and David endeavoured to connect with members of the public, Bertha and Joseph reached out to technocrats and academic experts, often with the expressed intention of countering divisive and partisan narratives.

In several instances, journalists used their gatekeeping powers, saying that they had decided not to use comments by government officials or politicians that they felt were baseless or inflammatory. Senior editors and journalists at one television station decided against broadcasting comments made at a press conference by candidate for deputy president, Kalonzo Musyoka, in which he questioned the integrity of the electoral process, deeming the comments overly polemical. One reporter commented on a decision to filter the allegations of election rigging made by some ministers of parliament.

I didn't write about MPs who came to make noise because they wanted to throw the country into chaos. (journalist, semi-structured interview, 15/04/13)

But the most common stratagem used by journalists in the Networked News Lab is to evade the dominant and divisive agenda put forward by politicians with a focus on “issues” or the “voice” of the people. This will be illustrated in greater depth in Chapter 6, which examines the moral agency of journalists covering the government’s efforts to resettle the people displaced by electoral violence and the Kenyan invasion of Somalia. But it can be illustrated briefly here with Joseph’s approach to covering the proceedings of the ICC.

²⁶ The Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission is Kenya’s national electoral authority.

It is worth first noting that Joseph repeatedly remarked on how his position as a professional blogger in the employment of an international NGO liberated him from many of the constraints of his earlier newsroom work, and that he felt his in-depth and long-term coverage of the trial would have been impossible elsewhere. The case is one example of new digital communication technologies creating new spaces for journalistic autonomy in Kenya. In one semi-structured interview, Joseph reflected at length on how his coverage differs from mainstream coverage. Comparing his stories with their equivalents in the pages of the *Nation*, *Standard* and *Star*, Joseph came to the conclusion that the Kenyan press is more likely to portray the proceedings of the trial as a conflict or clash between the prosecution and the defence. According to Joseph, his approach differed by focusing on what was at stake legally – on the strategies of argumentation and the thresholds for proving innocence and guilt. His coverage also included one aspect that was almost entirely absent in the mainstream coverage of the trial.

One side of the story that's usually ignored by the national media are the lawyers who represent the victims. Because the ICC is unique as a judicial process, where in addition to the normal adversarial prosecution-vs-defence set-up, they have an additional thing where victims who are affected by the crimes under investigation are represented in court. Now, the input of the victims' lawyer is not as much as the defence or prosecution because the victims lawyer is not expected to present evidence and defend that evidence, but to give a voice to victims in addition to what the prosecution has presented. Presumably, the witnesses to the prosecution are victims, some of them, but they may not be victims who tell the entire story . . . And very often the victim's lawyers are asked to present views on one thing or the other, and those views never find their way into the national media. (unstructured interview, 01/08/13)

According to Joseph, the mainstream approach to covering the trial, inadvertently or not, fit with the efforts of the president and deputy president to discredit the trial as politics, and distracted from the concern the audience might feel to see justice for victims. His legal approach, however technical at times, was his effort to counter that narrative largely by excluding political sources entirely from the coverage.

In spite of the reservations held by journalists about international development organizations, a few of the journalists would collaborate with these groups in order to focus on issue-based coverage that challenged balkanizing narratives.

Nancy often collaborated with international groups such as the World Health Organization to produce stories on health issues. Such collaborations often involve a field visit, something that would unlikely be funded directly by the media house, but that was often conducted in a way to optimize public relations benefits for the organization. One of her tactics in such collaboration was to agree to visit whatever project the development organization wanted to showcase, but to insist that she be given time and resources for independent investigation at the site. David's media house received support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to cover the costs of operating his "town hall" style show, which broadcasts live conversations (in Swahili) between residents and local government officials from across the country. The show, which has taken David to more than 70 different towns across the country, was a unique opportunity to give citizens a public platform, and for listeners to gain a more direct insight into the lives and concerns of other communities. That the UNDP insisted the programmes feature some commentary by a constitutional or governance expert (intended to raise awareness of Kenya's recent devolution) was an agreeable compromise for David to be able to do grassroots journalism that privileged the voice of the people over political voices.

The moral intent in these stratagems is not as apparent as in the reflections journalists make about their backgrounds, newsrooms or (as described next) about the public. But their efforts to take the power over story narrative away from politicians and other official sources and to privilege issues and the voices of the people seems to be a key component of the moral intent they express elsewhere. The fundamental motivating principle for these stratagems is to take voice away from those who would divide the country for their interests.

Are we becoming conveyors of politicians? Are we driving the agenda? Are we checking these people? . . . We don't give space to the wananchi [people] to comment. We must move from the politicians and let the people speak. I've seen that happening well in electronic and new media, but we are failing in print to give the wananchi that forum. We're still following the politician. As media houses, we must stand up. (editor, public meeting, 30/04/13)

Keeping the coverage focused on issues, and bringing in local sources, can at times achieve coverage that is both critical (serving as watchdog and public

interest role) and responsible (not promoting ethnicized political polarization), but there are instances where this is not the case. Journalists mentioned many examples where the route to balance between being critical and responsible was not so easy, particularly around the elections. This included how to report cases of hate speech without giving forum to those same utterances (editor, semi-structured interview, 16/05/13; journalist, semi-structured interview, 04/04/13), reporting ethnic-based violence without exacerbating it (workshop, 22/01/13) and being critical of the electoral process without giving ammunition to those who might wish to destabilize the country for their personal ambitions (editor, semi-structured interview, 17/04/13).

How to write critically of the social pathologies associated with a politics of belonging without feeding those pathologies is a profound challenge for Kenyan journalists. This thesis does not address this dilemma, but the analysis does suggest that raising the question, as journalists do, is itself an expression of moral intent.

5.5 Relationships with the public

The journalists' aspirations for how they intend to shape public discourse, and their opinions on how the public shapes their work and stories constitute another important area for understanding moral intent. The relationship with the public, however, has its own complexity owing to the fact that it is predominantly mediated – by social media and the news text – and because the moral intent directed at news content is also concerned with changing the views of the public.

Social media figured prominently in the discussions about the journalists' relationship with the public, and these new means of communication were widely viewed with ambivalence – as both a positive and negative influence on their work. Social media was described by the journalists as something “random” that you “can't control” (Anthony, workshop, 10/12/12), as keeping journalists “on their toes” and “having no ethics” (Bertha, workshop, 10/12/12), and “venomous” (Mary, unstructured interview, 09/02/13).

Several journalists, including Daniel and Nancy, remarked on how social media was forcing them to be better journalists. Daniel cited the competition from social

media as a compelling reason for journalists to deliver more accurate and in-depth news (workshop, 10/12/12). Nancy recounted an example of how she once posted a draft version of a report on men who have sex with men on YouTube. She says that she received almost instant feedback on the way the story had conflated the sex worker community with the gay community, and that she tried to respond to that criticism in the final edit (unstructured interview, 17/04/12). Bertha, Anthony and David all cited examples of how citizens had given them leads through social media that resulted in interesting stories (workshop, 22/01/13). Short-message service has been an especially powerful tool for David, who runs a short segment each week that brings to light an injustice from a different part of the country. David gathers the stories during his travels for his town hall-style talk show, but just as often by text message. Whilst co-hosting a morning show that has as many as 11 million listeners during its five-hour duration, he solicits stories of injustice. Out of the more than 2,000 SMS texts the show receives in the morning, about 10 are usually deemed to be worthy of follow-up, giving them a quantity of leads that would have previously been impossible to gather from callers (unstructured interview, 22/05/13).

Whilst the public engagement enabled by new forms of communication is valued by the journalists, social media are also viewed warily as opening the gates to partisan and discriminatory views. Journalists can often feel victimized by the public. One editor, speaking anonymously, spoke about how leading political bloggers can sway decision-making in the newsroom.

These guys will try to bring pressure. They'll say things like, "What will the [redacted newspaper name] headline be tomorrow?" and that sometimes makes you unsure about your decisions. (editor, semi-structured interview, 20/05/13)

While Anthony was hosting a conversation on LiveWire one evening on the topic of the role of the opposition, people began to criticize the ethnic composition of his panel. One commentator referred to the panel as "GEMA", the acronym for the Gikuyu,²⁷ Embu and Meru Association; another referred to them as "Mount Kenya", a common reference in Kenya to the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru ethnic

²⁷ Gīkūyū is sometimes rendered in English as "Gikuyu", but this thesis uses the more common rendering, "Kikuyu".

groups that reside near Mount Kenya (observation, field notes, 11/04/13). And the criticisms from people on social media often target the journalists themselves. Joseph was accused in a widely shared Facebook posting of being part of an anti-government conspiracy (Joseph, interview, 01/08/13). One prominent female journalist has been impelled to block many supporters on Facebook and Twitter because of comments that focus on her appearance (journalist, semi-structured interview, 12/04/13). The comments section was another area for public participation that concerned the journalists.

“That space is full of spoilers”. She said she had one experience in which an article had some discussion. “One guy posted something angry and political – and it ruined it”. (field notes, 09/02/13)

In this environment, Anthony describes his work as “managing Kenyans”.

“Sometimes, Kenyans need to be managed”. He cited the example of the Kikuyu songs, signalling the extremism of views coming through. “We knew before that there were extreme views, but didn’t know how to handle it. Social media gives an avenue for people to vent, but also a form for responding”. (unstructured interview, 13/07/13)

Social media, in this respect, can be seen to be both enabling and constraining for the moral intent of the participating journalists, and can be viewed, in that respect, as part of the dialectic of journalistic autonomy.

5.5.1 Strategic choices and moral intent on social media

When talking directly about managing Kenyans on social media, the journalists acknowledged that this was a challenge. Social media policies at media houses are weak or non-existent, and the moderation of the comments section on the websites of major media houses is typically limited to rejecting some of the most outrageous comments, or shutting down the comments entirely for articles that begin to draw too many polarizing comments (web editor, 25/05/11). The journalists often highlighted their role as a “verifier”, referring to the use of their journalistic credibility to quash rumour and false accusations, but also acknowledged the limitations of their power. Discussing the events around a contested primary election, for instance, Anthony describes how social media in his view drove public perceptions around one contested primary election, and how his reporting failed to sway the narrative.

And when all that noise is happening on social media, pretty much everyone has got it. So it doesn't matter what happened on traditional media, already on the ground, there is a different feel. When you go to the ground, you find this has already been announced on other forums. So we don't even have a leg to stand on to say we don't know who the returning officer is, or that we can't get the authorities to confirm or deny. That effect is that if you tell a lie so many times, it becomes the truth. So all of a sudden, this someone is actually a winner and there has been no voting on the ground. People start burning tires about these things. (workshop, 22/01/13)

Abdi faces a form of pressure on social media that other journalists did not mention: the pressure to portray the Somali community in a positive light.

I wrote a lot of articles after that trying to capture many of the negative elements that are happening in Eastleigh²⁸ that a lot of Somalis don't like to talk about. And because I have my facts right, I have the contacts and I was just calling up people and I am like, face the reality, it's true, you are doing this, right? And they would say it on record. And I would write those stories and people would write back and say now you have become a sell-out. You are a real Kenyan and you have never been to Mogadishu and Somalia. (Abdi, workshop, 08/01/13)

Abdi continued to say that he responded to such critics by sending them a more positive article he had written on Eastleigh to demonstrate that he does not only focus on the negative. Moreover, Abdi has offered to meet some of his critics in person, taking the opportunity to explain how he gets his facts, and why he likes to write both the positive and negative sides of a story. He believes he has persuaded these critics to see his work differently, and to accept the need for more “balanced” coverage.

5.5.2 Strategic choices and moral intent in the news text

While the journalists seemed to feel their ability to exert moral pressure directly vis-à-vis social media may be limited, they do express a sense of moral intent in their aspirations for how their work might influence public perceptions. The comments of this nature prominently focused on their ability, through news narratives, to foster empathy, promote issue-based politics and foster public action.

²⁸ A primarily Somali neighbourhood in Nairobi.

Bertha was working on a story about suicide that was expressly motivated by the desire to challenge the stigma associated with the practice. When discussing the options for how to photograph a story about suicide amongst youth, Bertha was keen to have photographs taken of their empty rooms, saying that young readers around the country would “find the similarity” (unstructured interview, 30/01/13). Daniel, who had been covering the trial proceedings for the ICC, expressed a desire to track down the victims to restore the emotional resonance of the story (unstructured interview, 01/08/13). Mary, speaking earnestly, described one story idea she had been working on as intending to show “how different tribes look at each other and how the human element can top that” (workshop, 08/01/13). Finally, Abdi also described a story idea that intended to bolster public empathy for pirates operating out of Somalia.

“No one talks to pirates, about what’s going on in their mind, about what they think of Kenya. They talk to the prison commissioners”. He said he’ll talk to them directly, and he believes because of his identity he can get them to open up more than to other journalists. They are portrayed as hopeless, unemployed youth who have no options and so they do it for fun. What’s the other narrative, I ask. Some are educated. And there’s a conflict between what they learned in madrasa and what they see. “They are trying to build a better future for themselves and their families. It’s not that they believe in the power of the gun, but they’re using it as a tool to build a better future”. (unstructured interview, 03/10/13)

In addition to promoting empathy, the journalists repeatedly evoked “the issues” as an antidote for tribal politics. Discussing the coverage of the 2013 elections, Holly and Joseph expressed the view that the news media are complicit in a kind of self-fulfilling prophesy through which the unquestioning acceptance of tribe-based voting patterns is self-reinforcing.

I think in the areas that were considered strongholds, there wasn’t really an effort to analyze why the people voted the way they did, which side they leaned on. It was taken for granted that, like of course Nyanza will vote CORD, Central will vote Jubilee, but for other regions which were sort of swing areas, like the coast or some parts of the Rift Valley, the ones which didn’t have a strong presidential candidate of their own. In those areas there was an effort to analyze which side they would lean on. For example in the coast because of land issues. And the way CORD went hard on Jubilee on land reforms. Can they be trusted to implement the constitution on land and so on? In those areas there was an effort to

try and talk about the issues, but in the stronghold areas I didn't see anything. (Holly, workshop, 23/04/13)

In a follow-up to a discussion at that same workshop, Joseph sent an email in which he summarized the views of Wachira Maina, a constitutional lawyer and journalist who had done some investigation into tribal voting patterns. Joseph's comment reinforces Holly's view.

[Wachira Maina's] conclusion that different groups vote for their tactical advantage bears scrutiny and speaks to politics being about interests that go beyond a simple this is my tribesman/woman and therefore I support them. Politicians peddle that line more than any other because it makes political organizing and mobilizing easier for them. And I'm not just talking about campaigns; even just lobbying for support on an issue in parliament or wherever. But it is not just politicians. I think political journalism has for a long long time taken the easy path, Fulani [slang for "some person"] is from such an ethnic group, ergo, they will have the support of that ethnic group. It's certainly more complicated than that. (Joseph, email, 24/04/13)

Another aspect of moral intent is reflected in the desire, prominently cited by journalists in the Networked News Lab, for their work to prompt public action, often with regard to the care and responsibility for others. Mary expressed this interest in her support for the "I run this city" campaign, aimed at getting youth to participate in cross-partisan community development initiatives (unstructured interview, 09/02/13). Anthony lauded the inspiring aspects of Westgate coverage²⁹ that highlighted and promoted the efforts of citizens to provide food and medical attention and emotional support to victims, families of victims and the security personnel (unstructured interview, 03/10/13). Journalists and activists also discussed their shared commitment to marshalling public support in the campaigns to bring down food inflation and to block MPs from raising their salaries (workshop, 05/08/13). These cases are underpinned by a moral commitment on behalf of journalists to promote social solidarity and a responsibility to care, particularly as a counterweight to narratives that would instead promote divisions and apathy.

²⁹ Three gunmen carried out a mass shooting at the Westgate shopping mall on 21 September 2013.

Seen from this perspective, Bertha's deliberate efforts to assemble a portfolio of stories on "social issues", David's approach to local political issues in his town hall-style show, and Nancy's health journalism, amongst other examples, can be understood as partially reflecting a commitment to unsettling a politics of belonging that undervalues people's everyday concerns and needs in news coverage. It also reflects a desire amongst these journalists to promote solidarity and a responsibility to care amongst citizens in a conscious effort to resist what they view as the ethnic and partisan divisions that are exacerbated by the mediation of political discourse in Kenya.

5.6 Chapter summary

The foregoing discussion serves to demonstrate that journalistic autonomy in Kenya can be deeply imbued with moral concerns. Moral intent is best understood as diffuse: at times explicit, and at times latent, but often present. Moral objectives seem to figure amongst several other considerations – including those as mundane and necessary as maintaining employment – and as such can only be acted upon obliquely, strategically, like a chess player who cannot anticipate the future position of the pieces, but knows to control the centre of the board. These decisions are often linked to notions of professionalism and the news genre, journalistic routines and practices, and the technologies of journalism, but these processes do not appear as the object of moral intent. The analysis suggests that the moral intent of journalists is most evident when journalists talk about their ambitions to influence newsroom relationships, news content, or both.

Finding independence in the newsroom, cultivating a wide variety of sources, building credibility and a strong following amongst the public: these expressions of autonomy are by no means exclusively moral, yet the accounts given by the journalists in this study suggest that moral concerns figure substantially in the calculations behind these manoeuvres. And just as forms of journalistic autonomy are dialectically connected to the forms of journalism, so too is moral intent. A journalist's use of technology is not an enabling or constraining factor for moral intent; it is a space of moral intent, at least as it is understood by the journalists' accounts. The dialectical nature of journalistic autonomy (and moral

intent) creates tensions, contradictions and trade-offs, and even impossible dilemmas.

The trade-offs highlighted by the analysis are often between the ability to influence the relations that journalists have – in the newsroom, with sources, and with the public – or to influence the content of the stories. There are instances where both can be achieved, or even where changes in one set of relations, i.e. with the public, can be a source of power for changing a different set, i.e. in the newsroom. This creates a complex dynamic for moral forms of autonomy, but can also leave journalists in seemingly insurmountable dilemmas.

There seems to the journalists in this study to be no easy answer for how to respond to ethnic violence as a journalist, for how to respond to ethnic tensions in the newsroom, or how to respond to vitriol from the public. And it is precisely the existence of these kinds of dilemmas that recommends a *praxis* that provides guidance without being prescriptive, and that recognizes that such dilemmas ultimately require a kind of contextual *judgement* that is an expression of human agency, and not a claim to truth. Indeed, there is considerable evidence in the short period of this study that the participating journalists began to speak more frankly about this issue, gained clarity and focus as they began to articulate their own tacit expressions of moral intent and also – as we will see in the next chapter – helped them to sharpen their strategies and to critically reflect on their notions of success.

This last issue is particularly important for avoiding an approach to understanding morality in the media that naïvely celebrates the reflexivity and ethical subjectivities of journalists. Indeed, throughout the examples cited in this chapter there is a tendency to evade identity politics, treating the politics of belonging as an inevitable source of moral corruption. In a reading of Nyamnjoh's theories, one might conclude that Kenyan journalists have merely made the opposite choice to their Cameroonian counterparts, rejecting community loyalties outright, but my elaboration of Silverstone's normative framework provides a way of providing a more nuanced interrogation of these choices. By drawing from participatory discourse analysis and a closer examination of how these strategic choices are reflected in text, the next chapter portrays these strategies for moral

agency as far more of a compromise than Nyamnjoh's perspective would suggest, but one that is perhaps still capable of improvement.

6 Strategies for Moral Agency in Kenyan News

6.1 Chapter overview

In the previous chapter, it was shown that some Kenyan journalists are not “complicit” (Silverstone, 2002) in sustaining forms of journalism that propagate divisive, identity-based politics. Indeed, they were shown to make strategic choices in their careers and in their newsrooms that are guided at least in part by a moral intent to challenge expressions of ethnic chauvinism in their news stories and in their relationships with colleagues, sources and the general public.

This chapter goes beyond the expressed autonomy of journalists to examine how their strategies and moral intent are reflected in the content they produce. This examination of news content is intended to shed light on what it means to exercise moral agency as a Kenyan journalist. In Chapter 3, moral agency was defined as the ability of journalists to bring truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into the texts that they and their institutions produce. Considering journalistic content is important for several reasons. First, the sociology of journalism has highlighted cases where journalists demonstrate critical reflexivity in their understanding of the news genre – even moral reflexivity (Wiesslitz & Ashuri, 2011) – but many of these studies also raise questions about whether autonomy is ultimately expressed in the news text (Pedelty, 1995; Wright, 2012). This resonates with Silverstone’s notions of collusion – whereby even those who are not complicit, who question the forms of journalism, may still fail to assume a responsibility or a duty to care (Silverstone, 2002, 2007).

Whether that sense of responsibility is taken up by the audience is a question this thesis cannot answer. But examining news content does provide an opportunity to challenge, and to deepen, the observations made in Chapter 5 about the moral intent of journalists. This chapter presents a thematic analysis of a corpus of data comprised of the comments made by journalists during participatory reflections, my own observations as a participant in the Networked News Lab and a small

selection of news texts. This analysis is used to further develop the concept of moral agency.

The chapter focuses on the comments and work of two journalists in particular: Bertha and Abdi. By encouraging Bertha and Abdi to explore the connotative meaning in news texts, and asking them to reflect on how their reports and articles were different, the participatory process allowed them to articulate and perhaps even sharpen their discursive strategies (Carvalho, 2008), whilst also making these discursive strategies observable. This approach was strengthened in the participant observation I was able to carry out whilst working together with Bertha and Abdi on strategies for changing the coverage of politicized topics. With Bertha, this took the form of our collaboration on an actual feature, and with Abdi this related to our joint efforts to co-host a workshop with other journalists and the planning for future activities³⁰ that emerged from that. As mentioned in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis, I endeavoured to draw upon my conceptual framework and my modified interpretation of Silverstone's normative framework during these interactions, particularly whilst examining news discourse with Bertha, Abdi and others, but the integration of his obligations into the reflections was never fully realized.

This chapter seeks to address that shortcoming by conducting a thematic analysis of how the journalists construct truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance in their stories. This is not intended to be an evaluation, but an exploration of how Silverstone's obligations might enable journalists in Kenya and elsewhere to reflect upon and strengthen their strategies for moral agency. Whilst Silverstone's obligations are complex ideas that are difficult to apply directly to empirical cases, some effort was made in Chapter 3 to interpret these concepts for the context of producing news through the theoretical lens of a politics of belonging, and then in Chapter 4 to operationalize those concepts for empirical observation.

It was argued in Chapter 3 that Silverstone's notion of truthfulness encompasses accuracy, sincerity (Couldry, 2004) and authentic disclosure (Christians, 2004), which may be reflected empirically in how journalists present facts and their

³⁰ Abdi and I carried out preparations for a further training workshop that would have targeted non-Somali-speaking editors, but that never came to fruition.

attribution, how they manage conflicting accounts from competing sources, and the choices they make with regard to presenting history and context. Hospitality, a moral obligation in Silverstone's mediapolis equivalent to opening one's home to the stranger, was discussed in the light of Dreher's (2009) "listening across difference" and Karppinen's (2009) challenge to naïve pluralism (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2). In each article discussed in this chapter, hospitality will be discussed with regard to the voices that are included and excluded, whether those voices represent a possible "other" in the context of Kenyan politics, and what limits the journalists might face in terms of who and what can be included in a story.

To consider "proper distance", the third obligation examined in Chapter 3, the story should be interrogated for whether it fosters empathy, but still allows for a recognition of otherness. Proper distance, however, is not just a balance between a too close or too distant portrayal of the other; it also depends on how the text constructs a perspective for the audience. The analysis in this chapter will consider particularly whether the texts foster something akin to Arendt's imagination: whether the audience is given the resources needed to see an issue from multiple perspectives (Arendt, 1998). And (connected to this), it will examine the potential for the audience to experience estrangement from their own perspective (Orgad, 2011). Finally, as a way of addressing the aspects of a duty to care that are essential to proper distance, it can be asked how all of these moral components of a story might ultimately challenge the politics of belonging in Kenya – even if there is no definitive answer to this question.

This chapter will also take up the issues highlighted in the analysis of the moral intent of journalistic autonomy in Chapter 5, particularly with respect to how moral intent is expressed in regard to news content and to the three sets of social relationships maintained by journalists in the process of news production: with colleagues, sources and the public. The discussion highlighted how journalists make strategic decisions that are linked to notions of professionalism and the news genre, journalistic routines and practices, and the technologies of journalism, and also how these are best understood as the terrain on which journalists carry out their ambitions to influence these social relationships, news content, or both. Furthermore, the analysis highlighted important tensions,

contradictions, trade-offs, and seemingly impossible dilemmas that journalists face in the dynamic relationship created by these factors.

The stratagems and manoeuvres exercised by journalists use for moral autonomy can at times seem intended to avoid identity politics – placing them out of reach of the pressures from colleagues, sources and the public – so that they can produce news that eludes or subverts divisive and partisan narratives. Alternatively, these strategies can be more confrontational, particularly with regard to changing the attitudes in the newsroom, where journalists have more power and discretion to speak out (though even here, it is limited). The empirical evidence in this chapter sheds further light on this issue.

Owing to the unpredictability of action research, and to the evolution of the researcher's focus during the fieldwork, this chapter relies on two case studies. That is to say, in only two cases did the researcher capture a depth of reflections sufficient to understand how a journalist addresses truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance in a given text, and to be able to relate that not only to the journalist's wider strategy for moral autonomy but also to how the politics of belonging influences the text. By sheer coincidence, one of the cases illustrates a strategy of avoidance, whilst the other takes a more confrontational approach with other newsmakers. There is also a slight methodological difference, described in Chapter 4 and alluded to above. While journalists at the centre of each case – Bertha and Abdi – both participated in the group workshops, the reflections on the texts presented here were conducted differently. Bertha and I held several one-on-one reflections about the particular story presented in this chapter. In contrast, Abdi and I explored the moral implications of his story in a small workshop with journalists from outside the Networked News Lab. Some observations on the implications of these differences are included in the methodological reflections Chapter 7.

6.2 Morality and the coverage of Kenya's internally displaced

In March 2013, I sat down with Bertha to discuss, amongst other topics, the recent coverage of the elections (unstructured interview, 26/03/13). It was then that Bertha talked about her own struggles with ethnic identity in the profession, and how the pressures of tribe make it difficult for the media to put forward an

independent view of the country. “By virtue of media not taking the middle road, it leaves the country more divided”, she said, later adding, “People say media is a mirror of society, but no. The media puts up the mirror”. I asked Bertha then if she had an idea for a story that could offer a more independent, “middle road” version of events. Her initial response was to find an “untold” story, one that had not been covered in the news: something akin to her previous stories on teen suicide and the draconian sentencing of the crime of “robbery with violence”. I suggested that the “untold” story might avoid confronting ethnic and partisan portrayals of events; I urged her instead to consider a story that *had* been covered, and had been politicized, to provide a comparison of how to do things differently. After discussing a few ideas, Bertha settled on the topic of the families displaced after the contested 2007 elections. Bertha agreed to write a story on this topic. The Networked News Lab would provide access to any necessary photography or recording equipment and financial support for travel, and I agreed to discuss the story with her as it developed, and to assist where possible.

The brutal attacks on fellow neighbours in December 2007 and January 2008 had not only left over 1,000 people dead, it also forced more than 660,000 people to flee their homes (Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission, 2013). Though some of those displaced had taken up residence in the homes of relatives, at the time Bertha began reporting the story, at least 7,000 families³¹ were residing in makeshift camps, still awaiting government promises to resettle them nearly five years later. The failure to resettle those families had become a political issue, with opposing sides exchanging blame and recriminations, especially over allegations of corruption in the allocation of resources intended to benefit the displaced families.

I met with Bertha the next month to discuss the story further. She had been interviewing officials at the Special Projects Ministry and Ministry of Land, the two ministries embroiled in the controversy and, until the recent elections, led by different political factions, but had not found anyone yet whom she trusted at

³¹ Figure obtained from the April 2012 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Resettlement of the Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya.

either of those agencies. A spokesperson for the internally displaced people (IDPs) also seemed to be giving her a partisan view, rather than representing the interests of the IDPs, she said. Meanwhile, she used her contacts to secure interviews with an official at the Ministry of Finance who used to work with the Human Rights Commission and who was expected to be reliable, and with someone at the UN Development Programme who was also expected to give an impartial view.

I assisted Bertha in her investigation by looking through available budgetary documents to answer some of the questions she had about how much money had been allocated and to which ministries. Even with technical assistance from a national non-governmental organization (NGO) that routinely conducts budgetary analysis as part of its advocacy work, I found that allocations on this topic were insufficiently transparent to accurately determine where the resources had been allocated.

Bertha and I had collected clippings from the *Daily Nation*, the country's largest paper, and we used those to formulate an analysis of how the mainstream press had covered the issue so far. What we found was that when the resettlement of IDPs was at the apex of its politicization – from late 2009 to early 2010 – news media achieved impartiality by shuttling between the different sides of the political conflict. The story became about who is to blame for malfeasance and delays in the programme (Okwembah, 2009) – but our reading also suggested that this approach only served to obscure the real nature of the problem; the reader was bombarded with contradicting accounts that no one could possibly untangle.

For example, in late 2009, an audit report by the president's office accused the Ministry of Special Programmes (then aligned with Prime Minister Raila Odinga) of squandering 200 million Kenyan shillings intended to assist IDPs (Presidential Press Service, 2009). The minister responded by accusing the report authors of partisanship, and levels her own accusations, saying officials at the presidency had tried to profit from a plan to purchase land for IDPs (Ogosia, 2009). Treasury had the money, not her ministry, she said. Treasury later responded in November, saying money for IDPs had been distributed between the Ministry of Lands (also run by an ally of Prime Minister Raila Odinga), the Ministry of Special Programmes and the Ministry of State for Provincial Administration and Internal

Security. None of these disputes could be resolved by available budgetary documents, and Bertha had already found that sources at the respective ministries were also unable to convincingly settle the debates.

By June 2010, charges were brought against 22 district commissioners and more than 50 district officers for embezzling up to 500 million Kenyan shillings of funds. Media accounts are contradictory as to whether the Ministry of State for Provincial Administration and Internal Security or the Ministry of Special Programmes had the responsibility of supervising the distribution of funds that were allegedly embezzled (Some, 2012). To our knowledge, media never reported whether any officials were ever found guilty.

Just to demonstrate that this treatment of the story was not unique to the 2009–2010 period, we examined another politicized moment in 2011. In this instance, there were contradictory accounts as to whether landowners were delaying the resettlement by refusing to accept the price offered by the government, and a volley of allegations from both sides of the political divide of “playing politics” with the issue.

Reading the coverage of the IDP resettlement programme from even just from one paper (we focused on the *Daily Nation*), we determined that a reader would be unable to reconcile the contrasting accounts of the corruption and delays. Rather, the reader would be compelled to make a choice – to believe one account or another. This choice, it seems, can only be made based on how the reader assesses the credibility of the source. In this way, impartiality, or balance, is achieved through the “right to reply”, but this technique seems likely to perpetuate partisanship amongst the audience. Furthermore, there is an assumption underlying much of the coverage that this issue is merely two-sided.

This approach to “balance” was familiar to Bertha and the other reporters in the Networked News Lab, and was frequently mentioned as a technique for preventing conflict between colleagues in the newsroom, and for assuaging political pressure (Anthony, semi-structured interview, 27/03/13; Holly, semi-structured interview, 11/04/13; Bertha, workshop, 23/04/13).

While many of the human interest features on IDPs had successfully sidestepped partisanship at this time, they often did so by sacrificing their watchdog role. A

Daily Nation story from 24 August 2012 is illustrative of this point (Nation Team, 2012). There is no mention of how the system has failed the young boy profiled in the story. Given the real challenge of establishing accurate details on the story, this approach is perhaps understandable. And taking into account how newsroom tensions further encourage this approach to balance, it makes a “he said, she said” strategy almost inevitable.

But as a freelancer, and with an awareness of the way media plays the political gambit, Bertha decided she could aspire to something better: to write a story from the perspective of an IDP, while illustrating the failings of the system, and to do so in a way that would not allow her story to be cast dismissively as propaganda for one side or another.

Bertha’s full story, included in Appendix V, was eventually published in South Africa’s *Mail & Guardian* (Kang’ong’oi, 2013), partly because the work she had invested in the story would not have been commensurate with local rates, and because the paper had a better reputation internationally, which would serve her well when circulating her portfolio to future employers.³²

Bertha’s story illustrates examples of moral intent described above. Approaching the story as a freelancer, she was able to avoid the newsroom infighting that might have made it difficult for her to shape her story. By affiliating herself with the Networked News Lab, she was able to secure resources that made it possible to do a story that might otherwise have been impossible. When confronted by conflicting sources, and no clear way of discerning the accuracy of one account versus another, Bertha’s instinct was to seek the people’s perspective, or the human interest angle. And with the human interest angle, she sought foremost to foster empathy for the victims in a story that had, in Bertha’s opinion, become too much about political theatre (a phrase she uses in the story) and too little about the people (the displaced had been turned into “statistics”, she said).

³² In the first workshop, Bertha said she would prefer to write for Kenyan newspapers because of the stronger influence her stories would have nationally, but confessed that she could not afford to pay her bills if she published only exclusively in national newspapers, which can pay as little as 1,000 Kenyan shillings per story (US\$10).

To understand how these aspects of Bertha's autonomy become part of a strategy for moral agency, it is important also to see how these relate to the content she produces: with the connotative meanings of the news story "Kenya's displaced left in limbo". As such, the following sections examine how Bertha's story enacts Silverstone's obligations to truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance in the context of how the politics of belonging have shaped the narrative around the issue.

6.2.1 Truthfulness

In the case of the coverage of IDPs, journalists and reporters can be seen to be complicit with news sources in presenting stories that were neither accurate nor sincere. These stories, explored above, lacked accuracy because reporters would not or could not make the investigative investment sufficient for ascertaining the veracity of claims made by different political factions. And by allowing clearly contradictory accounts (though this might serve the function of maintaining peaceful newsroom relations), journalists and editors failed also to fulfil the obligation of sincerity. Bertha made an investigative effort, with my support, to verify the claims about where resources had been allocated, but Kenyan budgetary documents were not transparent enough to do so. Still, the way that Bertha acknowledged this lack of transparency can be seen as an effort to remain sincere and transparent in spite of the inability to provide accurate figures on resource allocation.

Different arms of government point the blame at one another, and such is the lack of transparency, even the auditor general cannot confidently say where much of the money has ended up. In the end, only about 24% of the people displaced in the 2007–2008 post-election violence have been settled, according to official 2011 records.

...

It's hard to tell exactly why, after five years and billions of shillings allocated and disbursed to IDPs, the last of the IDPs has not been resettled. It's even harder to tell where the buck should stop. Money has been misappropriated, that's a fact, though only a few small-time administrators have faced investigation, and it is not clear what has come of the charges raised.

A report, done in April last year by a parliamentary committee, was not able to account fully for all the money. The one thing that was clear was that there was gross misappropriation of funds in the whole IDP

resettlement scheme, from the very beginning of the exercise in 2008.
(Appendix V, Lines 64–67; Lines 76–82)

The discursive manoeuvre also reflects Bertha's refusal to be a tool of politicians; it conforms to her broader strategy of avoiding the influence of identity politics in her work. As such, it can be read as a marker of her independence, and hence trustworthiness, intended for a Kenyan audience suspected by journalists of scanning news copy for signs of the political and ethnic allegiances of the author. Bertha is evoking the impartiality of a journalist who refuses to take sides in a political divide. This adds a wrinkle to Silverstone's notion of truthfulness, which does not consider trust or trustworthiness *per se* as an aspect of that obligation; rather, he regards trust separately as a problem primarily of proper distance and responsibility between the everyday and the media, arguing that the audience risks being either too trusting, or too distrustful; and that there is a further risk of alienation from the duty to care when trust is based on a view of the mediated world as a game (Silverstone, 2007: 123–127).

The other aspect of truthfulness that is particularly relevant in Kenya is authentic disclosure, as discussed in Chapter 3. Most of the articles written by the *Daily Nation*, by failing to contextualize political statements or to give historic accounts, could be seen to neglect authentic disclosure. By contrast, Bertha provides a detailed biographic account of the young woman in her story: the death of her father, her pregnancy, the expulsion from the school, the family's wait for a land title in Subukia. This too can be read in the broader context of a common strategy amongst Kenyan journalists to draw upon the people's perspective as an antidote or counterweight to political narratives. So whilst Bertha's biographic account can be seen to construct trust and truthfulness between the young woman and the audience, it is also a gambit for bolstering Bertha's truthfulness to the public, particularly in conjunction with her refusal to take sides in the debate over misallocated resources.

The story, however, could provide additional truthfulness in at least two ways that point to a certain trade-off in Bertha's approach. First, no authorities are made to respond for the failings she observes. She does not talk about the specific challenges of finding reliable sources at the ministries, or what made her believe the head of the IDPs is partisan. Admittedly, these are difficult to do in a style of

Western journalism that demands more than just her impression to make an account admissible to a story. Still, Bertha's choice to exclude this element from the story (which will be discussed further in regard to hospitality) can also be viewed in relation to a general strategy of eschewing identity politics. Bertha may be concerned that the presence of these sources would compromise the accuracy or sincerity of her story, or even the audience's view of her trustworthiness, and she may be correct on both accounts, but Silverstone's framework suggests that the truthfulness of her content is compromised by this omission. This trade-off is important to note because it points again to the role of trustworthiness, but also to how intersubjectivity and moral obligations can be understood in multiple dimensions, which creates the possibility for more tensions and contradictions than perhaps Silverstone acknowledges (Silverstone, 2007).

Bertha also chooses not to discuss the personal history (and political history) behind the displacement of the young woman beyond a mention of the "armed youth" that pushed her and her family off their land, avoiding the history of land ownership and dispossession that is so central to ethnic animosities in Kenya, and avoiding any description of the violence, which is itself a topic that divides opinion along ethnic-political lines. How this decision fits within Bertha's discursive strategy and its implications for moral agency, are discussed further from the perspective of hospitality and proper distance.

6.2.2 Hospitality

Whilst there have been some stories profiling the lives of those displaced by the violence, they have often been relegated to human interest, and left out of the day-to-day reporting focused on the accusations and counter-accusations. And in this sense, their voices have indeed been marginalized, if not silenced, as Bertha claims. By focusing the article on this young woman's story, and weaving her story into the wider political events, Bertha makes an overture to hospitality by including a voice from amongst the IDPs, a group she feels have been uninvited from the political discourse by a news media that privileges politicians over people.

Perhaps unbeknown to Gathoni and to the thousands of displaced families at the time, former President Mwai Kibaki, after forming a coalition government, had set up a special committee to look into the

issue of internally displaced people (IDPs), and to resettle them in 2008. Billions of shillings were set aside and, if all had gone as planned, Gathoni and family would already be resettled, either back to their farm in Keringet, or in an alternative location.

But all that political theatre seems quite distant from the reality here in Nakuru. (Appendix V, Lines 35–40)

This passage can be seen as a reminder to the reader of the human lives that are at stake; Bertha also makes a later reference to how the audience itself has forgotten the victims, with public attention captured instead by the coverage of the trials at the International Criminal Court. This can be seen as a direct challenge to the Kenyan reader to consider how they might be complicit in denying the hospitality they deserve.

But while eyes turn to the televised proceedings, it seems as though the nation's attention is drawn further from the more than 7000 families still stuck in deplorable camps. (Appendix V, Lines 21–22)

But as emphasized in Chapter 3, Silverstone's hospitality implies more than just an invite; it implies a responsibility to listen or to hear strangers, akin to what Dreher (2009) calls listening across difference. By the higher standard set by this consideration, Bertha constructs a somewhat limited form of hospitality, asking the reader to view Gathoni largely to understand the experience of one of Kenya's internally displaced. This experience includes deprivation, an abandonment of aspirations, and reliance on false benefactors and despair; it is an experience of powerlessness. This could be construed as a challenge to the perception amongst some Kenyans that IDPs of Kikuyu heritage, such as Gathoni, are receiving preferential treatment because of their shared ethnic identity with the president.

To remain true to an actor-oriented perspective, it is also important to ask whether Bertha allows herself to listen across difference, and her hospitality may be even more limited in that regard. Whilst Bertha has, to my knowledge, never herself experienced the deprivation and powerlessness of an IDP, the young woman in the story is in other ways quite a familiar figure to her. Bertha has focused on human interest features her entire professional life and is adept at handling these interviews and at transforming the stories into news. And indeed, Bertha raised no concerns or dilemmas with regard to how to include the young woman in her story. To use Silverstone's metaphor of the home, the hospitality implied in the

story does not entail Bertha inviting a stranger into her own home, but would be more akin to Bertha bringing a friend, or acquaintance, into someone else's home. She is brokering a relationship between the young woman and the public, which has become inured to her existence, or to the implications on her life of Nairobi politics.

There are some "strangers", however, to whom Bertha might have been more hospitable in her home. The representative of the IDPs, whom Bertha felt to be too partisan, was left out of the story precisely because of her concern that his comments might introduce the kind of partisan framing she hoped to avoid. The same was true for the ministry officials with whom she spoke. Another group mentioned only briefly in the story, but without a voice, is the "armed youth" who drove the young woman and her family from their land. Seeking commentary from this latter group would have been a potentially dangerous task, and unlikely to yield much cooperation, but the normative framework set out in Chapter 3 nevertheless requires such questions to be asked. These decisions to deny hospitality can be seen as a strategy of avoiding a difficult dilemma: how to write about the historical grievances between Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities in the area without reifying those tensions, or providing a historical account that can be seen to validate one side or another of the conflict. Whatever the reasoning, these omissions point to how such dilemmas mark an obstacle, if not a limit, to implementing Silverstone's normative vision in a politics of belonging.

6.2.3 Proper distance

In recounting her experience reporting the story, Bertha conveyed her empathy for the protagonist of the article, and she seems intent to construct that empathy for her readers. Bertha documents Gathoni's many misfortunes since being displaced (losing her father, being kicked out of school, being left to single parent, struggling to buy food) and her emotional state. Her "stare", the reference to "breaking down" as she speaks about her father, her attempted suicide, and the forlorn expression on her face in the accompanying photo (below): all are intended to elicit a strong emotional response from the audience to care about this woman and her fate. Bertha also emphasizes the view that this young woman, who has suffered so much, continues to be victimized: forgotten by the audience, neglected by politicians engaged in "theatre" and let down by "everyone" else

who has visited. This combination of victim and perpetrator is a classic recipe for soft-heartedness and outrage (Boltanski, 1999).

Even when Martha Gathoni (19) looks straight at us, she seems to stare through us. It has been way too long for her, this hoping and waiting, with promise after promise from government officials, priests, nongovernmental organization workers, and other Good Samaritans.

They arrive at the camp with smiles and assurances, and then disappear, never to be seen again.

“Everybody has been trying to take advantage of us”, reflects Gathoni. “People show up, take down our names and listen to our stories, promise to help – and then we never see them again”. (Appendix V, Lines 10–15)

Figure 6.1 Image from “Kenya’s Displaced Left in Limbo”



But is Bertha’s representation “too close”? Gathoni’s “shanty”, her poverty, her distance from the political theatre of Nairobi: these descriptors might create a sense of distance, but are perhaps best construed as attributes of her victimhood more than her “otherness”. Class, as a barrier to mutual understanding in Kenya, was mentioned several times during the course of the research – and often as a difference that is underappreciated – but never by Bertha. And there is something

else about the young woman in the story that seems more genuinely vexing to Bertha: Gathoni's continued loyalty to the president. The "red and white campaign flag" is mentioned prominently in the first paragraph, and Bertha later reminds the reader that the same president failed to settle IDPs in the first hundred days, and that he and the deputy president recently visited an IDP camp in Naivasha, promising more money "in calculated timing, just a few days ago and before the trial of Ruto began at The Hague". The implication for those who are familiar with Kenyan politics is that this individual remains loyal in spite of the government betrayal and self-interest. This is amongst the great frustrations shared by Bertha and the other journalists in the Networked News Lab, and Bertha's portrayal of Gathoni can be construed as provocation to a Kenyan reader – deliberate or not – to see the foolishness of their tribalism in Gathoni's loyalties, and perhaps to feel a certain estrangement.

Proper distance, however, is not just understood as the correct balance of empathy and recognition of otherness; particularly in the context of Kenya's politics of belonging, it demands that a situation be seen from more than one perspective. In this regard, Bertha's story constructs a bleak and lonely landscape – perceived almost exclusively from Gathoni's perspective. And this isn't the first time. Her story "Lives needlessly lost in a war with no real cause" – a story she selected as representative of some of her best work – paints a similarly dismal picture of the general indifference to inter-communal violence in Turkana.

Gathoni's isolation relates in part to the choice, described in regard to hospitality, to exclude the voices of sources who might bring a partisan slant to the story. But neither does Bertha find any benefactors: anyone in Nairobi or elsewhere on whom to pin hopes. The resulting impression is arguably a kind of cynicism that echoes Gathoni's own hopelessness. That said, Bertha's choice to focus on Gathoni makes sense, particularly from the perspective of how journalists in Kenya express their moral intent. As described in the previous chapter, the privileging of the people's perspective is a common gambit amongst journalists to deflect any suspicion that criticism implicit in an article is a reflection of the reporter's political agenda. And the appearance even of a benefactor outside the

realm of national politics – an international organization – is perceived to be a potential source of mistrust.

Does Bertha's story represent moral agency in the mediation of the politics of belonging? The analysis suggests that Bertha pursues a coherent and meaningful strategy or moral agency that is characterized by various steps meant to avoid or evade the influence of ethnic politics on her autonomy and in her work. Such strategic manoeuvres can be seen to allow her to create a counter-narrative to coverage that has encouraged Kenyans to consider the interests of their communities, and their political leaders, over the interests of their fellow citizens. She reminds her readers of the human consequences at stake in politics, to provoke their discontent with inaction and possibly also to remind them of their own collusion. Seen another way, Bertha seeks to foster a proper distance in the audience by challenging them to see the consequences of their complicity and collusion on an individual citizen.

But the analysis also suggests that Bertha's tactic of "avoidance" may have costs as well, including the sacrifice of her own proper distance. She creates a narrative world that is so hostile to what might be considered "tribal" perspectives, that she is not forced to account for the existence, or even for the rationality or legitimacy, of these forms of loyalties. This is the kind of stark choice between citizen and subject that Nyamnjoh invokes to characterize the dilemma of Cameroonian journalists: one that he suggests has no compromise in Western traditions of journalism and politics. This analysis suggests that my interpretation of Silverstone's normative framework also points to the need to push further to the centre of these polarizing forces. Could the story have addressed the issue of tribalism more directly and still remain "moral"? Could Bertha benefit from a reflection on her own hospitality? There may not be a clear answer to such questions, but it does seem that an actor-oriented interpretation of the mediapolis can provide a useful framework for facilitating a praxis to enable practitioners such as Bertha to answer such questions.

That said, the analysis also suggests that my interpretation of Silverstone's normative framework does not sufficiently account for the trade-offs, contradictions and dilemmas that journalists face when trying to exert moral

agency. His normative framework does provide opportunities to address the multiple and interconnected levels of intersubjectivity between the journalist, her sources and her relationship to the audience. Bertha's own truthfulness to the audience depends, in part, on sacrificing truthfulness in the story; her denial of hospitality is key to the audience accepting her, and to accepting the other; and she fosters proper distance of the audience at the expense of her own. Bertha's ability to exert moral agency is premised on trust, yet securing that trust may entail moral compromises. Furthermore, Bertha's moral agency can hardly be viewed by virtue of her text alone: her discursive strategy of avoidance may fail to adhere to Silverstone's standards, but it has to be understood also in the context of her broader efforts to avoid identity politics within her professional relationships, which are themselves a site of moral action. The next section examines another approach within this complex environment.

6.3 Morality and the coverage of *Linda Nchi*

In May 2013, Abdi sent me a copy of a commentary he had written about the coverage of *Linda Nchi* (Swahili for "Protect the Country"), an incursion by the Kenyan military into Somalia that began in October 2011 to press an offensive against Al-Shabaab. The Kenyan military eventually occupied the port town of Kismayo in cooperation with the Somali National Army, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and the Ras Kamboni militia. Abdi was disappointed in the coverage, and had tried to get his critique – entitled "Reporting from the Cannon's Mouth" – published in the opinion section of the *Daily Nation*. An editor there who is sympathetic to Abdi's views, said he agreed the coverage had been poor, but felt it would be impossible to get the piece past the other editors. Abdi recounted the editor's response:

And he's like, to be honest, I don't think anyone would ever publish this. He didn't even encourage me to share it with other people or even within the newsroom itself because it would look like all these people putting this effort together weren't doing enough. Like saying you're sending reporters to Somalia and they're doing nothing. (Abdi Latif, workshop, 03/08/13)

He tried again at Al Jazeera, but an editor there also told him that the piece "touches too many nerves". I thought the piece, which was never published,

provided a good entry into a critical reflection on how Somalis are portrayed in the Kenyan media, and proposed to Abdi that we deepen his analysis. I suggested that we could bring together a group of Somali-speaking journalists to discuss the coverage of *Linda Nchi* in general, and to look closely at a few select pieces. Abdi was enthusiastic about the idea, and quickly put together a list of participants. I designed a facilitation plan and solicited his feedback on it. In the end, Abdi and I conducted one interview via Skype with a foreign-based reporter (Journalist 1), and then held a small workshop attended in person by three Nairobi-based journalists and via Skype by another foreign-based journalist. The workshop participants will be referred to as Journalists 2–5 in this chapter.

The participants at the workshop were explicit that the slanted and inaccurate reporting of the invasion of *Linda Nchi* was the result of a lack of inclusivity in the newsroom.

If you look at the Kenyan media platform, what you will see is very few Kenyan Somalis. (Journalist 3, workshop, 03/08/13)

They commented on how the journalists embedded with troops did not speak Somali, or have Somali translators, how many of the factual errors in reporting owed to the ignorance of news staff about Somalia. One participant offered the view that the factual errors in the reporting were indicative of a larger problem.

Kenyans are incredibly inward looking and there's almost a lack of interest in what's going on around them. Almost like the way people talk about Americans navel gazing. So why bother to understand Ethiopian policy dynamics and the implications for the region, or what's happening in Somalia. So the factual errors speak to that bigger disinterest and ignorance about what's going on around you. OK, there's a war going on somewhere in Eritrea. There are refugees, Ethiopians are fighting, Somalis are fighting. So the average Kenyan just shrugs their shoulders and moves on, so to speak. So my sense was the factual errors were indicative of that broader missing discourse. (Journalist 2, workshop, 03/08/13)

They said that they felt that the ethnic composition of newsrooms and discrimination allowed Somalis to be portrayed in discriminatory or stereotypical ways that would not be tolerated for other ethnic groups that are better represented in Kenyan newsrooms.

You take some of these stories. If you change the words to Kikuyu or Luo, there would be an outrage in this country. The things that pass for reporting on Somalis is atrocious. (Journalist 2, workshop, 03/08/13)

To be fair, each one of the reporters mentioned open-minded editors, who have sought their advice, encouraged them to submit stories or been open to hearing criticism of the coverage. But, ultimately, military and government sources dominated the narrative. They attributed this to various reasons. First, they acknowledged that many alternative sources – including human rights groups, business leaders, religious leaders and government officials in Somalia – were either reluctant to appear in the Kenyan press, or did not have the contacts to insert themselves into the story.

Journalist 2: I think that's why civil society activists didn't come out, because they are part of the community and they are brought up being Kenyan and this has something to do with it. Not just the journalists, not just the government, but every Kenyan and the civil society, the academia: all of these people who were supposed to come out and question, asking what is happening.

Journalist 3: It is difficult for them to do that. The president is saying those involved in the incursion are the country's new heroes so if you have someone opposing the war, it looks like you are supporting the terrorists. It's this binary, either this or that, discourse which lends itself to people not speaking up. If you say this or that is happening to people, you look like an Al-Shabaab sympathizer or a terrorist. (workshop, 03/08/13)

Second, they made clear that they felt that Kenyan journalists too were seized by a sense of nationalism that compelled them towards a version of the story that turned the incursion into something heroic. This made the press blind to the broader story behind it – the political intrigue, the financial interests – and negligent in their duty to question the logic and national benefits of the military action. One participant bluntly described the sentiment: “Jingoistic, chest-thumping, kick some ass. It's been terrible”. One of the journalists, who reported from the port town of Kismayo (the final destination of the Kenyan military) describes how different the situation looked to him as he spoke to local residents and other sources about the significance of the incursion.

With all these cross-border invasions from neighbouring countries, what you don't get to hear is the locals who live in those places. How often

have you seen a feature piece that doesn't involve military guys that involves the locals and someone independent? For example, the military will drop you off in Kismayo, or stay in the army base. So when you have an independent journalist talking to the locals, getting actually the feel of how these locals feel. I was in Kismayo and the whole situation was seen first as an invasion and now it is seen as protecting the interests of a certain clan. So it moved from pushing Al-Shabaab away to pushing the agenda of a certain tribe. And that's how Kenyans are seen in Mogadishu. They are seen as being with the people who live in Kenya. So the local flavour of what Somalis think . . . if you talk to a certain clan, they will give you one perspective. You talk to another clan and you get, no, no, they are liberators. We want them. So even if you as a journalist go in, you need to know these local dimensions. You could be in a certain place in Kismayo, talk to the locals, and get a certain view. They'll tell you, we don't want them. Let them go back. Then you go to another part of Kismayo and they will tell you these are the liberators. We are free, thanks to the Kenyans, and we want the Kenyans to stay forever. That's the local dimension. (Journalist 1, semi-structured interview by Skype, 02/08/13)

Participants discussed several dangerous consequences for public opinion. Kenya has had a long history of remaining out of military conflict in the region, a tradition that they were disappointed to see so easily discarded. They were concerned that the military incursion into Somalia was not genuinely aimed at attacking Al-Shabaab but more of a power grab by the Kenyan state and by Kenyan military elites, allowing them to establish a sphere of influence along the border and profit from control of the Kisumu port. This was unlikely to be beneficial to Kenyans or Somalis. Finally, the participants were concerned that the news coverage would exacerbate discrimination against Somalis and ethnically Somali Kenyans, particularly the news coverage focused on the “fifth-column” threat allegedly stemming from Somali refugees living in Kenya. A Citizen TV report “Dadaab: The Threat Within” and the *Daily Nation*’s “Inside Al-Shabaab Network in Kenya” are emblematic of this (Barasa, 2011; Kosgei, 2012). Dadaab, located in eastern Kenya, is the largest refugee complex in the world with more than 348,000 residents.³³ Both of those articles point to Dadaab and to mosques in Kenya allegedly run by extremists as sites of radicalization, a

³³ Figure taken from the UN High Commission for Refugees’ January 2016 report, accessed from <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DadaabCampPopulation31Dec2015.pdf>.

narrative that participants felt would breed greater nativism and discrimination. Their concerns were often rooted in personal experience with bias. “We have all had interesting experiences as a result of being othered”, said Journalist 2 (workshop, 03/08/13).

Thus, the participants catalogued a number of interrelated concerns about the impact of the coverage. They were concerned that a sense of nationalism would preclude critical coverage of the war, and hence allow for human rights abuses to go unchecked and for political and military leaders to put self-interest above the best interests of Kenya and Somalia. Second, they expressed consternation that the coverage of the conflict might exacerbate the exclusion and discrimination felt by Somalis in Kenya.

In that sense, this topic presents a very different aspect of the politics of belonging than the coverage of IDPs. As mentioned in Chapter 2, ethnic Somalis in Kenya experience “precarious access to citizenship”, marked by poor access to services, and the securitization of their relationship to the state (Lochery, 2012). At stake in the coverage of the war, and the treatment of ethnic Somalis, is not “tribalism”, as in the case of IDPs, but something more akin to nativism and xenophobia, issues that have been somewhat neglected in Nyamnjoh’s conceptualization of a politics of belonging in Cameroon, though they are well captured in the literature on this topic emanating from Europe (Amin, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2011), Canada (Zaman, 2010) and even in his own work from southern Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2006).

The rest of the chapter will analyse two examples of Abdi’s work (included in Appendix VI) to discuss his strategy for moral agency in this context. Unlike Bertha’s article, Abdi’s pieces are both critiques of Kenyan journalism, aimed at changing the practices that determine the coverage. In order to offer a critique of this strategy, to highlight the potential costs and trade-offs of this approach, the section will also look by comparison at an opinion piece by Abdinasir Amin entitled “The Pain of Being a Kenyan Somali”, which was published in the *Daily Nation* and its sister papers in the East Africa region (also in Appendix VI). This article was highlighted by participants, and by Abdi, as an exceptionally brave and important statement at the time. And as the analysis of the themes

corresponding to key concepts in my conceptual framework will show, it serves as an excellent counterpoint to reflect on Abdi's strategic decisions. Indeed, it is unfortunate that no equivalent comparison was found to deepen the analysis of Bertha's case above.

6.3.1 Truthfulness

Abdi's first piece, "From the Cannon's Mouth", strongly emphasizes the truthfulness – specifically the accuracy – of the coverage of *Linda Nchi*. The article offers a litany of inaccuracies and mistakes committed by the Kenyan press: falsely attributing the source and date of an image, confusing the Somali and English names for a single town as two different towns, mistranslating a Somali word, placing a city in the wrong region on a map.

And like the participants in the workshop, Abdi's observations on the inaccuracies are linked, by his own account, to larger issues: the reliance on military sources and the "lack of knowledge" of those assigned to cover Somalia. In two cases, Abdi traces the inaccuracies back to the Twitter account of Military Spokesperson Major Emmanuel Chirchir. And he writes of the senior reporters assigned to the story:

Even senior reporters who were embedded, with whom I later spoke, displayed a shocking lack of knowledge about Somalia, its history and its people. They simply could not hold an intellectual conversation on the country.

This parochialism was also showcased in the daily snippets published by the Nation's two reporters, who were in the frontline in Somalia for 20 days. The two were incapable of offering their readers anything beyond their immediate surroundings, and flaunted their lack of knowledge as though it were humorous, as in this snippet:

"Apparently, Ras Kamboni, Ras Aliyoos and the other 'Ras' in Somalia, have nothing to do with Rastafarians. Instead they mean protruding gulf" (Appendix VI, Lines 52–60)

As Abdi draws the piece to a close, he admonishes journalists for not mastering "the basics of accuracy and verification". Very little in Abdi's pieces evoke a concern with sincerity, *per se*, but he does make something of a call for authentic disclosure in both pieces as he reminds the reader of the importance of history and context.

The embedded journalists' coverage from the frontline cities of Ras Kamboni and Afmadow was disappointing, to say the least. It was a far cry from the high expectations of the public. The dispatches were intellectually vapid, while explanatory journalism, which is crucial in a time of war, was lacking. Kenyan journalists failed to depict the bigger narrative, or to examine the political and socio-economic endgame of the military incursion. (Appendix VI, Lines 47–51)

The discussion also opened up an avenue to deliberate on the historical, political and economic reasons behind the collapse of Somalia's central government. A Somali journalist present also pointed out the overflowing weaknesses in Somali journalism, and how the lack of serious Somali journalism might be an impediment to creating a two-way conversation that can foster harmony and understanding between Kenya and Somalia. (Appendix VI, Lines 203–207)

“The Pain of Being a Kenyan Somali” takes an entirely different approach. It is not aimed at journalists, but at the public at large, and it is deeply and profoundly personal. The piece also addresses truthfulness much less in its aspects of accuracy and sincerity, and much more through authentic disclosure. Abdinasir's narrative weaves together personal anecdotes and historical events, which eventually reveals how Abdinasir experiences small, everyday forms of “othering” through a historical prism, including how the 1984 Wagalla Massacre touched him directly.

At the height of that infamous security operation, I was in primary school in Tarbaj village, 48 kilometres North of Wajir town, Wajir County.

First, I see images of grown men in Tarbaj in broad daylight, stripped of all dignity, of all their clothing, in front of women and children, being whipped and herded like animals to the centre of the town.

The naked men beg for mercy as the nyahunyos [whips] cut into their flesh in the blistering sun. By dusk, the askaris [guards] would congregate at the nearby dam, the only source of water, to cook and clean, having successfully rounded up many men from the nearby towns and “dropped them off” in Wagalla – a euphemism for teaching them a lesson.

The askaris gave us ugali [corn meal], fruit jam, and army-issue biscuits. After all, we were students, and the old man said education was the key to Kenya's future. (Appendix VI, Lines 308–331)

Abdinasir's personal history represents a challenge to the failure of Kenyan media to account for the country's own dark history in its coverage, or to contextualize

the conflict in broader concerns about preserving peace and ethnic harmony. The candid account of his personal history is, in that sense, not just an expression of his own truthfulness to the reader, but a statement about what *should* constitute authentic disclosure and truthfulness in the public discussion of *Linda Nchi*, and can be understood as part of a strategy to exert moral agency in the mediation of the conflict.

6.3.2 Hospitality

The workshop participants, including Abdi, were unequivocal about the barriers preventing many kinds of voices from being included in the coverage of *Linda Nchi*: the lack of diversity in the newsroom; the predominance of nationalism; the eagerness of the government to control the narrative; and the reluctance of alternative sources to speak out amidst concerns of backlash.

Abdi's two pieces largely skirt these issues, relying on the implications, noted above, that inaccuracies resulted from assigning senior journalists with no experience of covering Somalia, and from the blind reliance on government sources. Abdi, however, does return to the issue of hospitality in his second piece, though his comments on the matter here seem directed more at journalists who already have a connection and a commitment to Somalia, encouraging them to "listen to their own voice beyond the deafening salvo of shots", (Appendix VI, Line 173) to "better understand the people whom they are covering on a day-to-day basis" (Appendix VI, Line 181) and to rely on new media tools, as he has, to fill the void of Somali voices.

Indeed, Abdi remarked that his talk had drawn a number of Somali speakers, and it would be natural for Abdi to consider this audience as he penned the second piece. In doing so, Abdi may also have been mindful of the pressure he has received from the Somali-speaking public to reflect a more positive narrative in his work. Indeed, Abdi places an emphasis in the second piece on how the mainstream media excludes the "positive changes taking place across Somalia" in favour of a more negative emphasis on war and violence.

As a Kenyan growing up in Somalia in the late 90s and early 2000s, I remember watching television and recoiling at how the stories were almost always defined by the imagery on the ground. The negative stories always outweighed the positive ones, and there was an almost

100 percent consensus amongst media outlets on how to portray Somalia and Somalis. This type of journalism still exists today – and one can see an overwhelming number of reports focusing on attacks and explosions, regardless of the positive changes taking place across Somalia.
(Appendix VI, Lines 164–170)

As such, the two pieces construct a notion of hospitality, and the audience's responsibility for it, in quite different ways. The first, by shaming those who have failed their obligation to accuracy, represents a clear demand for mainstream media to include journalists with knowledge of Somalia. In the second piece, Abdi instead offers those already committed to hospitality some guidance for how they can tell stories and capture voices that would otherwise be excluded by mainstream media.

Abdi's first piece could also be construed as a denial of hospitality, or as a statement on the limits of hospitality, if one interprets his comments to mean that only truthful statements – statements made with a commitment to accuracy – should be tolerated. In the second piece, hospitality is presented perhaps as something to be managed for the sake of “the journey to understanding” between Kenya and Somalia. This is a perspective that might be seen as morally dubious from a strict interpretation of Silverstone's obligations, and yet appears to reflect a genuine concern of many journalists in this study who describe the preservation of peace as an important value (journalist, semi-structured interviews 04/04/13; journalist, semi-structured interviews 05/04/13; editor, semi-structured interviews 17/04/13).

Abdinasir's article, by contrast, constructs a hospitality that seems to encourage the reader to listen across difference, to understand how it *feels* to face discrimination as a Somali-Kenyan and how the latest “security” operation is seen not as a patriotic struggle against an evil enemy, but as a potential harbinger of more pain and suffering. This approach is strengthened by the piece's efforts to connect historical experience with contemporary, everyday anecdotes – and thus holds a connection to its approach to truthfulness described above. For instance, the piece compares the word “security” to “shouting fire”, and recounts an amusing story of public figure, Billow Kerrow (presently a Senator) catching himself after realizing that the crowd was startled by his suggestion that they should cooperate with “security”. But soon after the article punctuates these

anecdotes with far more serious and harrowing descriptions of the abuses perpetrated in the name of security in Kenya.

6.3.3 Proper distance

There are no people directly represented in Abdi's two pieces, but the relationship of Kenyan journalists (and their audiences) with Somalis and Somalia is certainly at stake, as is Abdi's relationship with the public, as the previous chapter suggests. And the notion of proper distance sheds some light on how Abdi seeks to exert moral agency in both of these relationships.

Without populating these pieces with people, Abdi forgoes much of his ability to foster empathy, though he is pushing in both pieces for the reader to make an act of imagination by considering Somalia from a different perspective. This is most evident in "No Longer at Ease" when he pivots from news items that have portrayed Kenya as a victim of "Somali" terrorism (evoking fear), to the neglected aspects of Kenyan cooperation with Somalia (evoking pride) (Appendix VI, Lines 130–147). And in "From the Cannon's Mouth", Abdi is also challenging journalists to reconsider the stereotype of the people and nation they have created (Appendix VI, Lines 81–86).

But the success of Abdi's strategy rests largely not on the effectivity of the message, I would suggest, but on the messenger – on his ability to position himself in such a way that his own background and ethnicity constitute a proper distance. He does this through a careful deployment of his Somali heritage and values associated with journalistic professionalism. He also seeks to evoke a sense of historical responsibility by comparing the work of Kenyan journalists in Somalia to that of American correspondents in Europe in the prelude to WWII, referring to the final lines of Alfred Hitchcock's "Foreign Correspondent", which describes reporters as a "little army of historians who are writing history from beside the cannon's mouth" (Appendix VI, Lines 110–111).

Professionalism, history: these are rhetorical devices Abdi is using to unsettle the unquestioning nationalism that can be seen to have infected the coverage of the war. And his positionality too is an important device; Abdi's Somali heritage, and his experience covering Somalia, serve as a reminder to Kenyan journalists to be aware of their own positionality on the story. But this manoeuvre depends on

those same readers not dismissing Abdi's views as tribalism. That balance is at stake in the following two passages, as Abdi levels the critique squarely on nationalism, but then pivots to an indictment of Al-Shabaab that anticipates and seeks to pre-empt any suspicions the reader might feel about Abdi's loyalties.

And then there was the tone of the coverage, which veered at times towards chest-thumping jingoism. The Standard newspaper's headline on November 4, 2011, for example, read: "Spirits High as Navy Kills 18 Shabaab". "Was it not sufficient to report the killing of the insurgents? We risk dehumanizing ourselves when we celebrate the death of an enemy.

Of course, journalists, like any citizens, are stakeholders in the country's national security. The Kenyan military's incursion into Somalia affects us all, and is as much about protecting our borders and sovereignty as it is about eliminating a regional and international threat. There should be no doubt that Al-Shabaab's threat needs to be dealt with, and promptly. (Appendix VI, Lines 90–97)

Abdinasir takes this issue head on in a way that Abdi perhaps feels he cannot, and with a personal approach that has implications for proper distance. With its "jocular" tone, references to banter, materialism and the familiar experience of oral examination, the opening paragraphs quickly seek to establish Abdinasir as "Kenyan". And as the article describes the abuses perpetuated by Kenyans in ways both horrific and mundane, and as it communicates how it feels to be the victim of such events, the reader is obliged to reconcile the tensions inherent in Abdinasir's experience. The elements of proper distance that appear to have been achieved by Abdinasir are encapsulated well by the following excerpt.

There are worries that, as has happened before, gold and other valuables for sale in Garissa Lodge and other malls in Eastleigh will be confiscated, never to be returned.

Some women have started wearing the niqab, the all-covering face-cloth. One such woman remarks: "I don't want people staring at me like I am a criminal, at least now they can't see me. I feel safer this way". (Appendix VI, Lines 346–350)

In this passage, Abdinasir takes a symbol of "otherness" in the eyes of Christians, the niqab, and imbues it with new meaning, with the implication that the women wearing the niqab are hiding, in effect, from the accusing eyes of the reader. In this deft device, the reader might glimpse themselves as a threatening "other",

achieving in a single, short anecdote the combination of empathy, recognition of otherness and estrangement that perfectly characterizes proper distance.

6.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the relevance of the interpretation of Silverstone's normative framework for making sense of the strategies journalists employ for moral agency that was set out in my conceptual framework – the ways in which they try to reshape and counter political narratives that use ethnic identity to foster divisions in Kenyan society. The chapter applied this framework to an eclectic dataset, drawn from participatory discourse analysis, participant observation and news texts. It built on the preceding analysis of the moral aspects of journalistic autonomy by using Silverstone's framework of moral obligations to examine how two journalists implement their moral intent in the content they produce. The implications of this analysis for theory and practice will be discussed in the chapter to follow (Chapter 7), but a few empirical observations are worth making by way of conclusion here.

The first is that the decisions the journalists make in order to secure moral autonomy were found to be reflected in their texts. Bertha, who has tried largely to remove herself from the influence of identity politics in the newsroom, pursues a similar strategy in the text examined here. Abdi, whose personal background has made him a crusader for greater understanding between Kenya and Somalia, takes on misrepresentations of Somalis and Somalia directly. In one sense, their autonomy is presented as crucial to their moral agency in the text, but these choices also have implications – perhaps even limits – for their moral agency as well.

The analysis suggests that “obligations” have to be considered on multiple levels, as operating not only between the audience and the “other”, but between the audience and the journalist, and the journalist and the “other”, involving precisely the kinds of “triangles” or even the “multiplicity of others” that Dayan (2007) suggests was absent in Silverstone's initial conception of the mediapolis.

It was found that the concepts of truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance are helpful for understanding and for posing challenges to the strategic choices

journalists make, though the usefulness of these concepts is strengthened in the context of journalism by considering other, related notions such as accuracy and sincerity (Couldry, 2012); authentic disclosure (Christians, 2004); listening across difference (Dreher, 2009); and estrangement (Orgad, 2011), amongst others (see Chapter 7, Section 3.2.2 for earlier discussion). However, with respect to obligations as discussed in my conceptual framework, the analysis suggests that these are not always compatible with the ways that journalists construct trust in the triangle between them, their audience and the other.

Both journalists were careful to protect the trustworthiness of their content – Bertha as a messenger of the people’s perspective and Abdi as a dedicated professional – to avoid being seen as partisan, and thereby losing their power to influence the moral perspective of the reader. Trust, in this respect, rests on the power of the news genre to “naturalize” their account, and can be understood as a necessary and important part of their discursive strategy for moral agency, even as it compromises their ability to bring greater truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into the text. This tension is considered in Chapter 7 with regard to the implications it holds for a further consideration of my interpretation of Silverstone’s notion of the mediapolis.

And as a final observation, the analysis above suggests that moral agency might also need to be considered in more spheres than just the text. It would be tempting, for example, to conclude that Abdi’s piece is a call for moral mediation, whilst the pieces by Abdinasir and Bertha are *acts* of moral mediation, but this interpretation would be at odds with an approach that insists upon the need to understand journalists’ strategies for moral agency holistically, and within the wider context of their journalistic autonomy. The next chapter turns to the task of conceptualizing journalistic autonomy and moral agency with these challenges in mind.

7 Conclusion

This study has endeavoured to bring new understanding to how journalists contend with a politics of belonging in their work, arguing that the choices journalists make in the micro-processes of news production can be understood and guided from a moral perspective.

This chapter provides a synthesis of the study's findings and a discussion of the theoretical and methodological insights that emerged from it. In the first section, I will describe how the analysis has responded to the research questions of the thesis. Subsequently, I will consider the broader implications of the findings for theory and for future research. A third section shares reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the methodological approach. A brief conclusion to this thesis then follows.

7.1 Findings

This thesis has posed the question, “What constitutes moral agency for journalists working within a politics of belonging?” The overall research question was elaborated and operationalized by three sub-research questions intended to simplify the analytical challenge. Those three questions were:

Sub-RQ1: In what ways do journalists express a moral intent in the exercise of their autonomy?

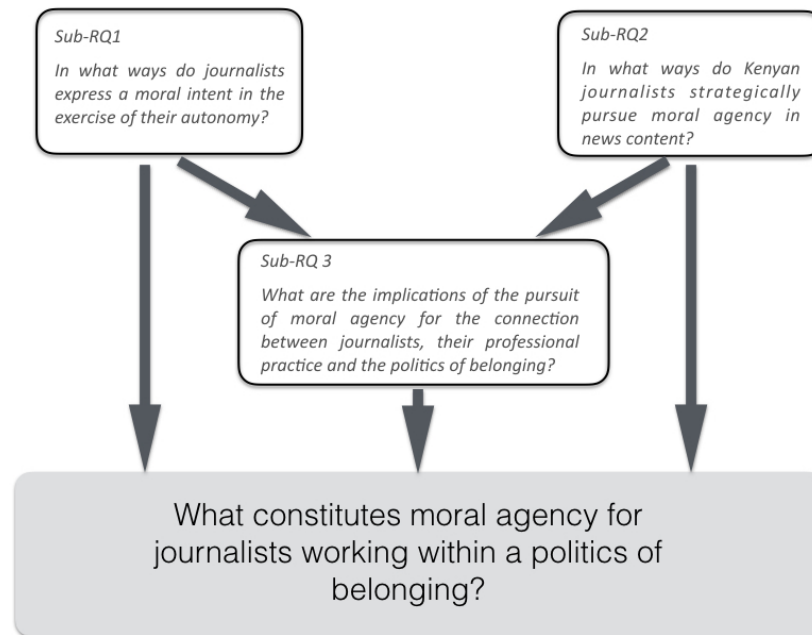
Sub-RQ2: In what ways do Kenyan journalists strategically pursue moral agency in news content?

Sub-RQ3: What are the implications of the pursuit of moral agency for the connection between journalists, their professional practice and the politics of belonging?

This chapter highlights the insights arising from the empirical analysis and conceptual argument in the preceding chapters; it does so by first answering the three sub-research questions before responding directly to the overarching research question that has guided this study. Figure 7.1

below illustrates how the sub-research questions and overall research question are interrelated.

Figure 7.1 Relationships amongst the sub-research questions and overall research question



7.1.1 Sub-RQ1: *In what ways do journalists express a moral intent in the exercise of their autonomy?*

The analysis and discussion in Chapter 5 corresponds closely to the first sub-research question and focuses on the concepts of journalistic autonomy and moral intent, which was originally developed in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3, Section 3.5. The chapter argued that journalists express moral intent in multiple ways. The personal values that underpin their moral intent are suggested in the stories they tell about their personal background, which highlights the importance of these experiences in shaping their own intersubjectivities. Perhaps more importantly, journalists were shown to express moral intent in the statements and choices they make with regard to their colleagues in the newsroom, with sources and with the public. The analysis highlighted

how journalistic autonomy is imbued with moral concerns in Kenya's politics of belonging. As such, moral intent appears to be dialectically connected to the news genre and its associated norms, practices and technologies. "Balance", "objectivity", "accuracy" – the manner in which these are interpreted and enacted was convincingly shown to have moral implications in Kenyan journalism. The strategic choices journalists make about what sources they develop were motivated by the values they wish to impart to the public. Features and talk-shows can be seen as avenues to escape the demands of daily coverage, where politicians and their divisive narratives dominate. Social media can be either a tool or an obstacle in a journalist's efforts to promote greater mutual understanding and compassion.

This dialectic creates tensions, contradictions, trade-offs and dilemmas for Kenyan journalists. The journalists in my study navigated these complex dynamics with strategies that sought to avoid or evade identity politics in some respects, and to counter or confront them in others. An important finding, however, is that the moral intent of these journalists was not driven towards a singular outcome related to news content, but also towards their professional relationships. The journalists expressed a desire to alter their relationships with colleagues, with sources and with the public in ways that are arguably moral. I suggest that this broadens our understanding of their strategies. Many of the journalists in the study did indeed find ways to evade identity politics in their dealings with colleagues in the newsroom, finding autonomy as a feature writer or show host so that they could confront the demoralizing aspects of identity politics in their content. But the journalists also deployed strategies that cut across these different relationships, for instance using their social media followers to buttress their credibility and confront suspicions of partisanship in the newsroom. That said, the chapter also highlighted the limits to these strategies when confronted by dilemmas with no easy answer, such as how to cover ethnic-based violence, or how to cover hate speech. It is unlikely that the solution to such dilemmas will come from an individual agent, however, pointing to the need for a broader strategy that not only targets

journalists as individual mediators, but that seeks to transform their relationships – an issue that will be addressed further in the following sections.

7.1.2 Sub-RQ2: *In what ways do Kenyan journalists strategically pursue moral agency in news content?*

In Chapter 6 the analysis was deepened by including a consideration of the discursive strategies (Carvalho, 2008) that journalists employ for moral agency, applying my interpretation of Silverstone's framework of moral obligations to the data collected from participatory reflections and from participant observation, and to the texts produced by journalists. This yielded insights into moral agency as discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.1) and provided an answer to sub-research question 2.

The analysis drew attention to how journalistic autonomy and moral agency can be understood as being closely interwoven by the moral intents and strategies that cut across the realms of practice and content. The strategic choices made by the journalists in pursuit of autonomy had repercussions for their moral agency, often both creating and limiting its possibility. The choices of where to avoid the politics of belonging, and where to confront, were often intertwined, in much the same way that Chapter 5 highlighted a series of trade-offs. Furthermore, the analysis suggested that the relationships at stake in the news content, at least from these journalists' perspectives, were not just with the audience and the "other" represented in the text. Rather, there was a "triangle" (Dayan, 2007) between the journalist, the audience and the other that created complex considerations for the journalists. This was shown to bring considerations of truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into conflict with one another and into conflict with the imperative to maintain the journalist's trustworthiness. The analysis also points to how moral agency does not come to light simply through an examination of the journalists' texts alone; the moral agency of these journalists permeated, like power in news production, through both the forms and content of news, and was

manifest in multiple social relations in the production process, as well as in the text.

The application of the conceptual framework for this thesis as a normative framework for studying the strategies employed by journalists for moral agency also highlights the ways that journalists can be pushed further in their efforts. Throughout Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 there are instances of journalists who resist being drawn into, and who refuse to propagate, a worldview in which ethnic loyalties and competitive politics demand citizens and journalists lend their support behind one or another partisan faction. But it is possible to view the moral intent and strategies of these journalists as reactionary rather than visionary; they only evade or confront. Silverstone's understanding of obligations, in contrast, is one which seems to direct the journalist toward a strategy that might be best described as assimilative, or even transformative: one that acknowledges how Kenyans feel a sense of loyalty and belonging in their communities, though rejects this view as totalizing. This resonates too with Nyamnjoh's call for an approach to journalism that does not present a dichotomous and polarizing choice between citizen and subject, as discussed in Chapter 2. In the case of the stories that are examined in the analysis in Chapter 6, the analysis yielded some specific observations on how truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance can guide discursive strategies in news towards a more assimilative approach. That said, it needs to be acknowledged that any such prescription is much easier said than done in an environment where a journalist is not merely mediating the politics of belonging, but mediating from *within* a politics of belonging – the implications of which are highlighted in the answer to the third sub-research question.

7.1.3 Sub-RQ3: *What are the implications of the pursuit of moral agency for the connection between journalists, their professional practice and the politics of belonging?*

In the conceptual framework presented in Section 3.5.1, it was acknowledged that there are challenges in understanding the complex,

diverse and intersecting ways that journalists participate in the process of mediation. It was proposed that by considering journalistic autonomy (with relation to the forms of the news genre and its associated norms and practices) and moral agency (with relation to news discourse) it would be feasible to capture this diversity and complexity. The analysis, however, suggests that the conceptual framework misconstrued one important aspect of how journalists are connected to the politics of belonging in their work. Insufficient attention was given to the social aspect; an insight that comes to light as a result of the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6. My analysis shows that morality in news media is not principally established by a journalist's relationship to the forms and content of journalism; it is also influenced by a journalist's relationships to other people. Indeed, the forms and content of journalism are highly contingent on these social relationships as indicated by my empirical analysis. The journalistic norms of "balance" and "objectivity" in particular were shown to be subject to different interpretations, with implications for how intersubjectivity, and hence morality, is constructed in the news (see Chapter 6, Sections 6.2 and 6.3). This supports the idea that global discourse on journalism is frequently domesticated (Voltmer & Wasserman, 2014), but is not to say, however, that the reinterpretation of journalistic norms and adaption of journalistic procedures in unique contexts is infinitely pliable. On the contrary, in this study the dilemmas that journalists faced both in their professional relationships and in their content were perhaps a testament to the fact that there are limits.

The strategies implemented by Bertha and Abdi for moral agency were restrained by their need to establish their trustworthiness as journalists. For Bertha, who protected her credibility as a defender of the people, and for Abdi, who premised his critique of Kenyan media on dedication to journalistic principles, the need to guard themselves against suspicions was shown to compromise their ability to bring greater truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into their work.

By examining these small micro-practices of journalism through a moral lens, it becomes apparent that the politics of belonging does not – at least

in this study – represent an external dilemma; rather, it was a force in the production process and it was a force (at least from the journalist’s perspective) in the mediation process. The journalists were not mediating the politics of belonging, as initially assumed, but instead they are better understood as mediating from *within* a politics of belonging. As such, the exercise of moral agency needs to be viewed well beyond the confines of the text, and as a force for greater intersubjectivity throughout the many relationships that are brought together in the news production process.

7.1.4 What constitutes moral agency for journalists working within a politics of belonging?

In Chapter 4, I elaborated on the intention implicit in the overarching research question to interrogate how the concept of *moral agency* might be reinterpreted in the context of a politics of belonging, and I also explored what builds moral agency – with the aim of understanding its constituent parts.

In its initial conceptualization, moral agency was defined as the ability of journalists to bring truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance to their texts, and it was suggested that this ability was supported by journalistic autonomy, or the ability of journalists to exercise reflexivity in their execution of the norms and practices of the news genre (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1). The observations above, however, suggest the need to revisit the concept in three ways.

The first is that moral agency may not be limited to the content that journalists produce, but can be seen as the ability to bring truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance to any of the social relationships involved in news production, not just those mediated by the news text. Seen from this perspective, to achieve greater intersubjectivity between colleagues in the newsroom, or with members of the public via social media, for instance, would both be acts of moral agency. Indeed, Silverstone’s understanding of obligations can be applied to these relationships as well as to the news texts that arise from them. Truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance could be seen as ideal characteristics of the interactions

between colleagues in the newsroom, between journalists and their sources and between journalists and the public. That said, the discussion in Chapter 5 also highlighted how each relationship has its unique challenges. The journalists had few tools for changing their relationships with elite power-holders, though they were able to work to build greater mutual understanding and trust with civil society representatives, government agents and others. The relationship with the public, mediated as it is, presents its own complications. Though this thesis has elucidated many of these issues, such aspects could usefully be studied in their own right, as remarked upon below in the recommendations for further research.

The second reason to reconsider the conceptualization of moral agency is that moral agency in this study did not appear to be a property that is held exclusively by an individual journalist. A journalist may wish to build greater intersubjectivity in his or her relationships, but this had to be done whilst also contending with mistrust, suspicions and divisions that permeated those relationships, or alternatively by building on the resources for trust and understanding that already existed in those relationships. This was perhaps best illustrated by the process that occurred within the Networked News Lab (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3). When asked at the end of the first workshop to comment on what had struck them about the discussion, Bertha commented:

I don't know if it's just in this room, or if this room is representative of what's happening out there, is that most of us are activists. We are really passionate. The desire to change. It's not just the reporting. That's just an end to a means. You want to see change. (Bertha, workshop, 10/12/12)

In this and several other instances, the participating journalists commented about their ability to speak openly with the rest of the group, and about the rare space this afforded them for reflection. Intersubjectivity seemed to create the conditions for its own growth. Moral agency, in that sense, may not be exercised solely by an individual; it may, based on the evidence in this study, be better seen as a social condition.

A third and final finding that contributes to a recasting of the notion of moral agency is related to reflexivity. Moral agency, in some instances, may require that journalists not only exercise reflexivity in regard to the news genre and its routines, but that they have the capacity also to question and reflect on their own moral intent and on the strategies with which they pursue it. The strategies that the journalists in this study employed for moral agency may make sense within the constraints of their relationships, but that is not to say that they cannot be improved. Indeed, there is some evidence in this study to suggest that the participating journalists could benefit from a deeper reflection in two ways. The first is that journalists in the Networked News Lab largely treated identity politics as something to avoid or to confront, perhaps influenced by a notion of “tribalism” that discredits all loyalty to ethnic groups as a source of manipulation by self-serving elites. In this research project it was not possible to strongly encourage the journalists to consider whether there might be a compromise, or assimilative position, that would acknowledge a legitimate sense of loyalty and belonging to ethnic community. Second, and related to this, is the potential usefulness of challenging journalists to consider whether the norms of journalism themselves, premised on Western notions of individualism, were preventing them from seeing another approach.

These observations give rise to a reassessment of journalistic autonomy and moral agency in a way that is responsive to the overarching research question. First, I suggest that it is helpful to continue to define journalistic autonomy as the reflexivity of journalists in relation to the news genre and its associated norms and practices, and to preserve the idea that considerations for intersubjectivity in this reflexivity can be understood as indicative of moral intent. The analysis also indicates that the journalists made strategic choices, if not coherent strategies, in pursuit of their moral intent. Thus, the study provides a basis for suggesting that when journalists are able to articulate how their moral intent and strategic choices are connected to the news genre and its associated norms and practices, they can be seen to be exercising a more holistic form of reflexivity that could

be described as **moral autonomy**. Indeed, this would correspond to the kind of double-loop learning (Argyris et al., 1985) that praxis-based approaches to action research have sought to promote in other fields. Furthermore, the notion of moral autonomy echoes Nyamnjoh's call for greater reflexivity on journalistic norms as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3. It seems reasonable to suggest, based on the evidence in this thesis, that moral autonomy can be regarded as a property that an individual can possess, or at least a faculty that an individual can exercise, though it remains intimately connected with moral agency, which perhaps is best described as a social condition.

Following this line of argument, moral agency can be seen as relating to the potential that surrounds the journalist, embedded in their social relationships, to bring greater truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into the process of mediation, and this potential, in turn, depends on the truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance of those very relationships. As such, a newsroom that is managed to maximize truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance amongst managers, editors and journalists might be a source of moral agency, though not infinitely, as news production has been shown to involve many other sets of relationships that may not enjoy the same intersubjectivity as may be present in an ideal newsroom. The journalists in any such a newsroom would still have to contend with the distrust between them, their sources, and the public. Statements made by politicians that invoke ethnic divisions may be received with equanimity by the journalists in an ideal newsroom, but this study suggests that journalists might still fear that reporting such comments will trigger violence amongst the public, for instance.

Imagine a journalist tied to a dozen ropes, and at the other end of those ropes are all the other groups and individuals who are involved in the process of producing and consuming news. If the journalist pulls, dozens of people might move; this depicts the potential power of the journalist in the process of mediation. But those people at the other end of those ropes are pulling too, often in different directions. The more they pull in opposing directions, the more difficult it is to move, providing a metaphor

for the trade-offs and dilemmas that journalists face in a politics of belonging, and specifically as evidenced by the sample of journalists in this study. This seems to be the paradox of moral agency. It is most difficult to exercise at the site of its greatest potential.

Understanding moral agency for journalists has one more constituting feature that is implicated in this complex tug of war, which relates it back to moral autonomy and to the strategies employed by journalists at the centre. As discussed in Chapter 6, the cords that journalists pull are limited by trust, and that trust is woven from the power of journalism to naturalize an account, often by removing the journalist from the view of the audience. In a politics of belonging, this may imply a compromise, perhaps even some complicity, in news reports that forgo some truthfulness, hospitality or proper distance to some extent. Yet as shown in this study, journalists risk losing their influence altogether if by exposing their subjectivities, that trust is lost. This trust, and its close relationship with journalistic forms and practices, is what appears to connect the dialectic of journalistic autonomy with the dialectic of mediation. Moral agency and journalistic autonomy are, in this conceptual and metaphorical sense, best understood as being interstitially connected, and mutually constituting.

7.2 Implications for theory

The insights presented in the previous section are likely to have broader ramifications for the way media and the politics of belonging, and mediation and the mediapolis are understood. Furthermore, the findings of this thesis point to issues that could be explored through further research. Each of these will be explored in the following sub-sections.

7.2.1 Implications for understanding media and the politics of belonging

This thesis sheds light on how journalists experience and respond to a politics of belonging in their work. The analysis suggests that Nyamnjoh's analysis is accurate when he observes that the ideals of objectivity and

detachment in Western liberal approaches to democracy are at odds with “dominant ideas of personhood and agency (and by extension society, culture and democracy)” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 37). However, it would seem that he assumes too much about how journalists experience and respond to this tension, at least on the basis of the evidence presented in this study.

To begin with, the journalists who participated in this study make a different choice than the one made by their Cameroonian counterparts (at least according to Nyamnjoh’s account). The journalists in the Networked News Lab repeatedly expressed their disdain for ethnic-based politics and pursued strategies that seemed to be intended to counter such a perspective in their work. The sample for this study was both small and purposeful, but further research may confirm this. In any case, this study suggests that Nyamnjoh’s characterization of the decision made by Cameroonian journalists is perhaps an over-generalization in this respect.

Furthermore, this study points to the value of trying to understand journalists’ choices at a more granular level. The journalists in this study did not seem to experience this tension as a personal choice between loyalty to a democratic ideal of individualism and loyalty to community, not, at least, in as manifest a fashion as Nyamnjoh has depicted. That is not to say that this tension did not exist; but it was subtly implicated in the many small, day-to-day professional *choices* that these journalists made. Nyamnjoh’s analysis can be criticized for depicting the norms and values of Western journalism too monolithically in this respect, neglecting the way that these norms are interpreted and adapted, and the way that they are used by journalists to navigate the complex terrain of morality and trust in a politics of belonging.

That said, this study does lend a different kind of support to the idea that notions of objectivity and detachment need to be questioned; they should be questioned not because they are inherently ill suited for African journalism, but because the moral autonomy of journalists in Africa may depend on their ability to critically reflect on how these norms can both serve and undermine their objectives.

7.2.2 Implications for the mediapolis

The conceptual framework for this study drew primarily on two aspects of Silverstone's work: his conceptualization of mediation, and the three moral obligations that he presented as constituting the normative concept of the mediapolis (Silverstone, 2007). The conceptual framework also drew inspiration from Silverstone's notions of complicity and collusion (Silverstone, 2002). Yet it was in regard to this latter set of concepts that the conceptual framework proved the least robust.

In Chapter 4, I argued that the underlying distinction between complicity and collusion, derived from the subtle difference between the form and content of news, would be useful for understanding the different but interrelated concepts of journalistic autonomy and moral agency. In the discussion above, I have suggested that this distinction needed to be adjusted in the light of the results of my empirical analysis (see especially Chapters 5 and 6, Sections 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 6.2 and 6.3). Contrary to my original notion, indications of moral agency can be detected in several dimensions that are not limited to the news content (which is to say in the connotative meanings of the text). It spills beyond the forms of journalism, beyond the news genre, its norms and associated practices. Moral agency, I argue, is also embodied in the social relationships at the heart of news production, and truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance might apply helpfully as a normative framework for understanding how intersubjectivity is constructed in those dimensions.

Still, my initial emphasis on the journalistic norms, practices and discourse was also informed by my inclusion of other approaches to morality that introduced ideas about the sources of morality in news media (Section 3.4). These scholars similarly neglect to consider the nature of intersubjectivity that journalists build with colleagues, with sources and the public and the implications of this for morality in the news text. This original oversight might have been avoided, however, by taking greater direction from the notion of mediation that Silverstone himself puts forward. As a reminder, Silverstone (1999: 13) defines mediation as

the movement of meanings from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another. It involves the constant transformation of meanings, both large scale and small, significant and insignificant, as media texts and texts about media circulate in writing, in speech and audio-visual forms, and as we, individually and collectively, directly and indirectly, contribute to their production.

The journalist's relationship with colleagues, with sources, and with the public all can be seen, at least in this study, to "directly and indirectly" contribute to the production of the news text, and as such they are sites of moral agency. In that sense, my reconceptualization of moral agency in this chapter helps to restore some of its harmony with the notion of mediation by recasting moral agency as an aspect of social relations in the process of news production. This insight is especially important because it broadens our view of morality in journalism, depicting the newsroom, and its subsidiary relationships, as a moral microcosm.

My analysis also suggests a departure from Silverstone's normative concepts in another important way. In Chapter 6, it was argued that the "triangle" (Dayan, 2007) between the journalist, the audience and the other creates complex considerations for the journalist that may force considerations of truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance into conflict, and put them at odds with perceptions of trust. This latter issue – trust – was bracketed in Silverstone's work on the mediapolis when he conceptualized it primarily as an issue of proper distance and responsibility between the everyday and the media. He argued that the audience risks being either too trusting, or too distrustful; and that there is a further risk of alienation from the duty to care when trust is based on a view of the mediated world as a game (Silverstone, 2007: 123–127). This view of trust may indeed speak well to the moral challenge of the audience, but it also neglects the role of trust from the perspective of a journalist endeavouring to foster greater intersubjectivity between the audience and the other. Indeed, this observation is consistent with a broader challenge that is encountered in trying to adapt Silverstone's perspective to a context of production and this related to his derivation of insights informed largely by audience studies.

Indeed, in view of the mediatization of so many aspects of society (Krotz, 2009), the insights from the analysis of the sample of media professionals in this study are suggestive that Silverstone's view of the individual in the mediation process may be too narrowly cast insofar as it privileges the perspective of the audience. With the culturalization of an ever wider range of economic activities (Deuze, 2007) and a growing number of untrained citizens producing content that could be construed as news (Rosen, 2006), perhaps there is room to explore the "moral agency" of participants in the process of mediation beyond their status as domestic consumers. By better understanding other moral microcosms influencing the process of mediation, we might also strengthen the social-normative value of the mediapolis in the shift towards mass self-communication (Allan, 2007) and self-mediation (Chouliaraki, 2010b).

7.3 Reflections on strengths and weaknesses

For this study, I have chosen to take an actor-oriented and dialogic approach to the topic of news media and the politics of belonging through action research, focusing the research on journalistic practices, and within the space of practice, particularly emphasizing the strategies that journalists in Kenya use in pursuit of moral agency. This choice was made in order to address a gap in our empirical understanding of how journalists understand and respond to a politics of belonging, and to contribute to the scholarly and practical debates about how to develop and support alternatives to Western journalistic practices in Africa. The approach taken in this study has indeed provided useful insights into these issues. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the limitations implied by the theoretical and methodological choices of this study, which can be highlighted by a brief consideration of the kinds of analysis and interpretation that other approaches might have brought to the topic, including discourse analysis, comparative case study analysis and newsroom ethnography – three of the most obvious alternatives. The strengths and limitations of this thesis will be discussed by examining the distinct issues that each of these alternative approaches would have elucidated.

The subsequent sections examine the validity and generalizability of the thesis' findings and to lessons for more applied uses of praxis, as conceptualized and practised in this study.

7.3.1 Discourse analysis

In Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1, I described some of the approaches that have been taken to understanding morality in news narratives, and particularly in the discourse of news. This study has retained an interest in this topic by exploring what others have called the ethical subjectivities (Tester, 1994) and discursive strategies (Carvalho, 2008) of journalists – issues that were examined in this study in terms of the moral intent and strategies of journalists pursuing moral agency. This study did not, however, employ techniques such as discourse analysis (Gill, 1996; Van Dijk, 1985) or critical discourse analysis, in the tradition of scholars such as Fairclough (Fairclough, 1992) and Chouliaraki (Chouliaraki, 2006, 2012b). Conducting such an analysis in a theoretical tradition that privileges discursive forms of control and domination – as exemplified by Stuart Hall (S. Hall, 2007a, 2007b), Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) among other scholars either associated with or influenced by the Glasgow University Media Group – might have given considerably more attention to the relationship between news reports and elite, political sources, as well as elucidating the *ideological* function of a politics of belonging. A critical discourse analysis, by contrast, might have given greater emphasis to the role of news forms and the news genre in mediating a politics of belonging, or to how the aesthetics of social media and more participatory forms of journalism might influence the mediation of a politics of belonging (Chouliaraki, 2012; Tait, 2011). These are but two of many distinct approaches to the study of discourse (Howarth, 2000), but this thesis has favoured an emphasis on strategies and practices to the deeply penetrating yet narrow lens that would have been provided by discourse or critical discourse analysis. Furthermore, these approaches would have also furnished a fundamentally different view of moral agency, which I contend would not have been as compatible with the aim of this research to formulate an actor-oriented perspective of how journalists contend with a politics of belonging.

7.3.2 Comparative study

This study was initially intended to be comparative, with the ambition of conducting the Networked News Lab in both Kenya and Ethiopia. Owing to ethical considerations related to the safety of the researcher and participants (Chapter 4, Section 4.7), such a comparison was not possible. Had it been possible, a comparative study on this topic would have confronted considerable challenges in maintaining methodological consistency whilst also preserving a respect for cultural specificity (Livingstone, 2003), especially in countries as culturally distinct as Kenya and Ethiopia. A comparative study of that nature would have likely required methodological strategies to compensate for the vagaries of action research, possibly incorporating the use of comparative case study analysis, surveys and questionnaires or content analysis, methods frequently employed in comparative research on journalism (Albæk, van Dalen, Jebril, & H. de Vreese, 2014; Esser, 2008; Pan & Chan, 2003; Ramaprasad, 2001b; Weaver & Wu, 1998).

A comparative study of this nature – employing action research with a mix of more comparable methods – might have shifted attention to the role of journalism culture (Hanitzsch, 2007), news cultures (Deuze, 2007; Esser, 2008) or journalistic paradigms (Golding & Elliott, 1979). Such notions have been useful elsewhere for making the conceptual link between journalistic practices and political systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Pan & Chan, 2003; Ramaprasad, 2001b), which would have been useful for interrogating Nyamnjoh's (2005) claims about the relationship between media, liberal democracy and a politics of democracy in Africa at a more structural level.

Still, these studies have also been criticized for generating national stereotypes at the expense of understanding subnational heterogeneity (Livingstone, 2003) and transculturality (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), and for making assumptions based on Western liberal models of journalism and politics that fail to account for the diversity “beyond the West” (Chakravartty & Roy, 2013; Wasserman, 2011). Whilst a combination of comparative methods with action research would have provided an interesting opportunity to correct for the blindness of previous comparative studies to the diversity and fluidity of news cultures, reconciling action research with comparative methods might have been an impossible task.

Plus, even if this were if successful, it would have still run the risk of neglecting (or over-universalizing) the ethical subjectivities of the journalists in the study – with potential consequences for the ability of this study to formulate an actor-oriented perspective and to interrogate the normative aspects of the conceptual framework.

7.3.3 Newsroom ethnography

Whilst this study employed participant observation, a method that is strongly associated with ethnography, it does not constitute *per se* an ethnography of Kenyan newsrooms or of news work. I did not observe the journalists directly at work in the newsroom and did not join them at press conferences or interviews. Studies of journalists that have employed such ethnographic styles of observation (see, for example, Epstein, 2000; Pedelty, 1995; Ryfe, 2009; Tuchman, 1980; Tunstall, 1971; Usher, 2012) were cited extensively in Chapter 3, Section 3.3, particularly with reference to how they have helped to elaborate notions of autonomy in the practice of journalism. These studies, perhaps even more so than other sociological forms of research on journalism, have effectively highlighted “the daily routines, bureaucratic nature, competitive ethos, professional ideologies, source dependencies and cultural practices of the news media” (Cottle, 2007: 1). This study has yielded insights into some of these very issues, but the study is not fully responsive to the challenges put forward by such ethnographic studies, which have called for a careful consideration of power in the newsroom (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1). It is perhaps too easy within the relatively safe conditions created by the Networked News Lab to see the potential for greater intersubjectivity in newsrooms through praxis and Silverstone’s understanding of moral obligations. Political intimidation, corruption, hierarchical organizational structures, pressure from sales: there are many sources of power within news, and within the newsroom, that remain unaccounted for by assembling a group of journalists in the relatively pristine environment of a participatory workshop. That said, such influences would have worked against the objectives of this study as well. The moral aspirations of journalists may have remained rather more latent in the relatively stifling environment of the newsroom. So whilst a study more embedded in ethnographic research may have

brought greater emphasis on the limits of praxis and moral autonomy, it is possible that it would also have given inadequate attention to their possibilities.

7.3.4 Validity and generalizability in this study

My research took an action research approach, using participatory workshops, interviews, participant observation, and news articles as sources of data. As in any study, there are epistemological limitations arising from such choices. This section briefly reflects on these limitations in terms of the validity and generalizability of the results.

As recounted in Chapter 4, the empirical work for this study did not achieve the interlinking spirals of planning, acting, observing and reflecting that characterize an ideal implementation of action research (Copeland & Hill, 2010; Grundy, 1982; McNiff, 2013). That said, I managed to preserve the study's adherence to many of the fundamental principles of action research and praxis, which provided validity to the research in a number of ways.

The first is that the need to keep the journalists involved as co-researchers prompted the shift in the study away from a technology focus, and towards the issues of identity-based politics now visible in my analysis. This relates to the unique forms of construct and catalytic validity that can be found in what Lather describes as openly value-laden research (Lather, 1986). The resistance of the journalists to participate on the terms I initially prescribed for the study was, in a sense, a strong disconfirmation of the study's initial emphasis on technology – which could be considered a form of catalytic validity by Lather's standards (as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.6). Indeed, my subsequent efforts to understand and cater to the journalists' personal motivations for participation in the Networked News Lab was highly influential in shaping the notion of “moral intent” that became a centrepiece of the conceptual framework. This process of reshaping the methodological approach and conceptual framework to keep participants involved can be viewed as a source of catalytic validity as well, if one takes the renewed enthusiasm in the latter stages of the study as a tacit endorsement of the revised research design, which abandoned the emphasis on technology and instead privileged the stated ambitions of the participating journalists.

The action-oriented and dialogical approach to this study also provided opportunities for triangulation and face validity. In spite of the need to revise and improvise the research design, I was able to gather diverse kinds of data in different settings and through different methods that provide an important source of triangulation. I was also able to observe a coherence in the statements, actions and even in the texts of the participating journalists that provides some protection against the risk of “consensus collusion” (Reason, 1994: 10) in such a small, purposive sample, and in participatory workshops where participants may feel unable to dissent, or may merely end up reinforcing internalized codes of ethics rather than becoming more open to reflection. Moreover, the dataset for this study also contains comments from 84 individuals who were not members of the Networked News Lab, which provides another important source of triangulation.

Face validity was provided to an extent in the numerous interactions I had with journalists as we worked together on journalistic projects and events and also through the dialogic workshops. Participating journalists were able to analyze and interpret data from interviews (workshop, 23/04/13), to participate in analysis of coverage of *Operation Linda Nchi* (workshop, 03/08/13), and to participate in an analysis of the coverage of protests (workshop, 05/08/13). Participants at those workshops were able to contest my interpretation, which I often offered after first allowing participants to give their views, and they were also able in some cases to shape the terms of the analysis itself – an important principle in democratizing the research process (Tandon, 1988).

The dialogic and participatory approach was also well suited for an exploration of intersubjectivity – a topic that has attracted recent attention for the methodological challenges that it presents (Cornish & Gillespie, 2010). The approach built trust and mutual understanding over time amongst the participants and between the participants and the researcher, allowing for more candid and personal conversations than might have otherwise been possible. Furthermore, the social dynamic created amongst the participants of the Networked News Lab, and commented on by them, was itself a source of insight into how a politics of belonging shapes mediation, though the insular nature of these conversations relates also to one of the study’s weaknesses, which is its susceptibility to tautological conclusions.

The risk of a tautology in this study relates to the potential for the normative values of the conceptual framework to exert power over the findings – to exert a form of persuasion over the researcher and participants. This risk is heightened in the case of this study, which was unable to achieve successive cycles of action and reflection and to widen participation in a cohesive manner. Ideally, the study would have succeeded in facilitating the participants to produce stories and reflect on them in multiple rounds, allowing the journalists to consider the challenges posed to their discursive strategies in Chapter 6, and perhaps even to respond in future efforts. Without these cycles of action and reflection, it was difficult for the study to formulate a revised, or more applied, set of normative standards for journalistic practice in Kenya. That said, the study was able to triangulate the responses of the core participants with data collected from dozens of other respondents and other forms of observation over a relatively long period of time, and the conceptual framework and research questions were designed explicitly to maximize the scope for critique. Finally, that the study ultimately furnished a critique of the underlying normative values of the conceptual framework suggests that the risks of tautology were mitigated to some degree.

It is also important to underscore that in the case of praxis-based action research, all of these risks to validity play out in the decisions the researcher makes about facilitation and are enmeshed with the researcher's positionality. I have argued that this presented a certain "proper distance" challenge for me as a researcher and facilitator, and that I was mindful throughout the study of trying to find the right balance to provide an environment that challenges participants to rethink their (often) unspoken assumptions, without pushing them too far in a direction that could be seen as determined by the conceptual framework. And these choices faced the added complication of considering how my own positionality – as a former Western journalist with a penchant for political coverage, a coordinator of a funded project, amongst other personal characteristics – might have affected those choices and the participants' response to them. There are no methods that are immune to this influence, but I hope that I have demonstrated an effort to remain sufficiently responsive to these concerns in the decisions I made as a researcher.

The methodological approach in this study, in short, was well suited for generating evocative insights to answer the research questions. The methodological experimentation of the study itself makes a valuable contribution and offers lessons for others wishing to take a praxis-based approach to media and morality.

Whilst the generalizability of the results of this study are limited for the reasons detailed above, additional research would help to further substantiate my conclusions and would provide the opportunity to refine the overall analysis in some of the areas highlighted in Sections 7.3.1, 7.3.2, and 7.3.3 of this chapter.

7.3.5 Issues for further research

Owing to the methodological approach (action research with a small group of journalists), and to the paucity of empirical research on the specific focus of the thesis on news production, morality and the politics of belonging, this study was exploratory. However, the analysis has provided many openings to explore issues through further research.

To begin with, the analysis in this thesis is suggestive of how a politics of belonging may be inflected by different sociocultural and historical configurations with important implications for journalism. The nativism and xenophobia confronted by Somali Kenyans is unique from the “tribalism” that confronts Kikuyus, for example. There is reason also to suspect that gender, class, religion and aspects of social identities are meaningful to the strategies of journalists for moral agency. Further research exploring these themes, perhaps in comparative contexts, would be useful.

Whilst this thesis has provided meaningful reflection on how to adapt and interpret Silverstone’s normative concepts in a context of news production, the research has not been able to determine whether the obligations of truthfulness, hospitality and proper distance *per se* are appropriate or best suited for addressing the challenge of journalism in a politics of belonging. It has not proposed a new set of normative standards for guiding journalistic practice. This was partly due to the incomplete nature of the praxis. That said, even in an ideally implemented action research project, with a cycle of double-loop learning, there remains the difficulty of speaking back to the normative framework that guides it. There is a

risk that privileging the view of participants, as an approach to critique, will result in an overly optimistic view of their choices. As others have said, it is the struggle with this sometimes messy relationship that is productive (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). What my analysis does begin to elucidate, however, is the journalistic direction in which Silverstone's obligations might steer a group of journalists in this setting. For future research endeavours, one possible approach to the question of formulating new normative standards would be to use different normative frameworks in comparable settings through a praxis-based approach to see if and where the different normative frameworks steer each reflection. Ubuntu, the mediapolis, Couldry's news ethics (Couldry, 2012): a series of "labs" could draw from these different normative frameworks, each facilitating a distinct praxis amongst participating journalists, and each potentially steering those participants in distinct journalistic directions.

This study was also not designed to examine the perspectives of the audience. A study that examined audience reception from a moral standpoint in the politics of belonging could put to the test some of the assumptions that the journalists have been shown in this study to make about the public. Indeed, such a study might also usefully interrogate the nature of moral agency amongst the consumers of news, following a holistic approach to understanding how moral subjectivities are constituted. These studies, as suggested above in Section 7.2.3, could look at how other moral microcosms of content production – social movements, on-line groups, professional groups and other associations – might support other varieties of moral agency.

Finally, future research could usefully delve further into newsroom relationships as an avenue for moral agency. Building on this thesis' conceptual framework, but with methods more akin to newsroom ethnography, as described above in Section 7.3.3, future research could explore editorial meetings and other decisions through the lens of truthfulness, the ethnic composition of newsroom staff as a question of hospitality, and the debates in newsrooms over norms such as "objectivity" as issues of proper distance.

7.3.6 Lessons on praxis for practitioners

This thesis has also provided an opportunity to reflect on the role of praxis in fostering a normative framework for journalism that is both theoretically driven and immanent to the profession with the aim of contributing insight into how a reflexive understanding of mediation might be instilled amongst professional journalists.

I am not the first to suggest such a direction. Other scholars have previously proposed the possibility of using praxis as a basis for journalism education (Banda, 2009; Wasserman, 2005). Wasserman calls for a praxis that better unifies media transformation with post-apartheid social progress in South Africa, whilst Banda, for his part, equates his notion of praxis directly with a need to challenge Western notions of journalism. What the experience of this study suggests is that couching a praxis within an understanding of a politics of belonging could be a useful way of critically orienting students of journalism and communication towards both these goals.

Media houses themselves, however, could perhaps make the most influential use of praxis. In Kenya, the major media outlets all offer training in-house to journalists. Whilst such an initiative would have to contend with numerous obstacles to institutional change beyond the scope of this thesis, media houses could – theoretically – integrate praxis into their training in such a way that feeds back into editorial policies, informing even the kind of codified editorial guidelines that scholars such as Wright (Wright, 2013) consider indispensable for media ethics. An integral approach to praxis, morality and ethics of this nature could provide the basis for transformative learning and a dynamic media institution. Whilst facing their own challenges, such institutionally backed approaches to praxis would have some advantages over externally facilitated projects, which are well suited, as in the case of this study, for generating insight, but at the sacrifice of influence over newsroom policies and practices.

For practitioners in such institutional settings who might be interested in facilitating a praxis with journalists that is informed by notions of morality and the politics of belonging, Appendix VII lays out a hypothetical process for doing so. Though obvious to those with experience in such methods, it should be noted

that the actual implementation of such a praxis would be highly contingent on context, and ideally driven by the participants themselves. As such, the outline in Appendix VII should not be interpreted as a template, but merely as an idealized scenario intended to stimulate more contextually specific planning.

7.4 Conclusions

This thesis has asked how journalists in Kenya experience and respond to the social challenges presented by a politics of belonging – a term that is used here to refer to the confluence of ethnic identity, autochthony and competitive politics. I have argued that these challenges are about the making of social boundaries, and that they can therefore be productively understood from a moral perspective. Action research – a tradition of study that seeks to understand the social world through an active effort to change it – guided the effort to answer the questions posed in this thesis.

The analysis shows that the Kenyan journalists who participated in the research experienced the politics of belonging as a complex set of social pressures exerted in their professional relationships with colleagues, sources and the public, and that they deployed strategies to evade or subvert these pressures. It also shows that these journalists faced a similarly complicated set of discursive calculations in producing news texts, confronting them with trade-offs and dilemmas in their effort to counter divisive political narratives in news reports.

This study contributes empirically by shedding light on this process, and it makes a theoretical contribution through an effort to conceptualize this production process using the constructs of journalistic autonomy and moral agency. These constructs proved to be helpful in highlighting the social nature of journalists' struggles to bring morality to the news text within a politics of belonging. This was achieved by building on previous efforts to understand the moral nature of the news genre (Ignatieff, 1985; Tester, 2001), its practices (Couldry, 2012; Wright, 2013) its discourses (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006, 2010a) and its technologies (Ashuri, 2012; Wiesslitz & Ashuri, 2011).

The thesis also offers methodological insights and lessons for those who might wish to foster change in African journalism. The thesis is a contribution to a

tradition of action-oriented research and activist-oriented enquiry in media and communications, particularly through my effort to experiment with methods to expand action research into the discursive practices of journalists. My approach to and conceptualization of praxis could be useful for institutions that are interested in formulating approaches to journalism that are potentially more in harmony with post-colonial realities and that can better support social progress where it has been hampered by social divisions.

8 Bibliography

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Appendix I: List of Networked News Lab advisors

The following Individuals assisted in identifying participants for the Networked News Lab, and provided general guidance.

Name	Description
Parselelo Kantai	East and Horn of Africa Editor for the Africa Report and contributor to Africa Confidential and the Financial Times.
Tom Maliti	A former correspondent for the Associated Press and former chair of the Kwani Trust, Tom is a regular contributor to the Open Society Institute's International Justice Monitor.
Muiru Ngugi	Associate Director at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Nairobi.
Charles Obbo	Charles was formerly the Opinion Editor of the Daily Nation and now editor of Mail & Guardian Africa.
Jane Thuo	Director of the Association of Media Women in Kenya and lecturer at the University of Nairobi and Daystar University.
Rasna Warah	Author and columnist for the Daily Nation.

Appendix II: Confidentiality waivers

Networked News Lab

Waiver of confidentiality

You are being asked to waive your right to confidentiality for all comments made during your participation with the Networked News Lab between June 2012 and February 2015.

These include comments that may have been recorded and transcribed from a number of workshops in which you may have participated, or comments made in your conversations with researcher, Nicholas Benequista, and recorded in his hand-written notes.

By signing this form, you agree to have such comments published and attributed to you under your real name, and not a pseudonym. You also attest that you have been given the opportunity to review the material that has been published about you, and that you have either given the researcher specific instructions about what material you would like to exclude from publication, or have given authorization for all the material to be published.

With this waiver, the researcher has the right to publish these comments in his thesis for a PhD at the London School of Economics and Political Science and in any and all future publications.

You understand that some of the comments may be of a sensitive nature owing to the research's focus on the role of ethnic identity in Kenyan journalism.

Name

Abdi Latif Dahir

Date

June 12, 2016

Signature



**Networked
News
Lab**

Waiver of confidentiality

You are being asked to waive your right to confidentiality for all comments made during your participation with the Networked News Lab between June 2012 and February 2015.

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By signing this form, you agree to have such comments published and attributed to you under your real name, and not a pseudonym. You also attest that you have been given the opportunity to review the material that has been published about you, and that you have either given the researcher specific instructions about what material you would like to exclude from publication, or have given authorization for all the material to be published.

With this waiver, the researcher has the right to publish these comments in his thesis for a PhD at the London School of Economics and Political Science and in any and all future publications.

You understand that some of the comments may be of a sensitive nature owing to the research's focus on the role of ethnic identity in Kenyan journalism.


Name

Bertha Kang'ong'oi

Date

23 June 2016

Signature



Appendix III: Field note, workshop and interview guide

Date	Participant type	Method	Recorded by
31/01/11	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
24/02/11	Media development practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
01/03/11	Media development practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
31/03/11	Various	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
06/04/11	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
23/05/11	Researcher(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
25/05/11	Editor(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
25/05/11	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
01/06/11	Media development practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
20/07/11	Media development practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
07/02/12	Bloggers(s)	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
07/04/12	Various	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
17/04/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
20/04/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
20/04/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
07/05/12	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes

07/06/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
08/06/12	Media development practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
26/06/12	Bloggers(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
27/06/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
27/06/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
29/06/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
30/06/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
07/07/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
11/07/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
11/07/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
11/07/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
25/07/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
25/07/12	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
26/07/12	Journalist(s)	Other	Email
23/11/12	Media development practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
28/11/12	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
29/11/12	Media development practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
02/12/12	Journalist(s)	Participant observation	Jottings
10/12/12	Journalist(s)	Workshop	Transcript
12/12/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
12/12/12	Journalist(s)	Other	Text message
13/12/12	Journalist(s)	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
13/12/12	Bloggers(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes

16/12/12	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
19/12/12	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
08/01/13	Journalist(s)	Workshop	Transcript
09/01/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
09/01/13	Journalist(s)	Participant observation	Jottings
10/01/13	Activist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
18/01/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
18/01/13	Journalist(s)	Other	Twitter
22/01/13	Various	Workshop	Transcript
23/01/13	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
24/01/13	Media development practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
30/01/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
31/01/13	Other	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
04/02/13	Journalist(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
05/02/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
05/02/13	Various	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
06/02/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
08/02/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
09/02/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
13/02/13	Activist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
15/02/13	Journalist(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
21/02/13	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Jottings
24/02/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes

26/02/13	Media development practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
01/03/13	Various	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
01/03/13	Journalist(s)	Other	Blog
19/03/13	Editor(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
20/03/13	Editor(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
21/03/13	Various	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
22/03/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
26/03/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
26/03/13	Editor(s)	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
26/03/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
27/03/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
28/03/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
03/04/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
04/04/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
04/04/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
05/04/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
10/04/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
11/04/13	Media development practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes

11/04/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
12/04/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
13/04/13	Journalist(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
15/04/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
16/04/13	Bloggers(s)	Other	Twitter
17/04/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
17/04/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
18/04/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
19/04/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
22/04/13	Various	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
23/04/13	Journalist(s)	Workshop	Transcript
24/04/13	Journalist(s)	Other	Email
30/04/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
30/04/13	Various	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
09/05/13	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
09/05/13	Journalist(s)	Other	Blog
14/05/13	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
15/05/13	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
15/05/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes

16/05/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
17/05/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
20/05/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
20/05/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
22/05/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
22/05/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
22/05/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
30/05/13	Editor(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
04/06/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
05/06/13	Researcher(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
10/06/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
13/06/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
28/06/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
02/07/13	Editor(s)	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
12/07/13	Various	Public meeting	Handwritten notes
23/07/13	Activist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
23/07/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes

31/07/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Transcript
01/08/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
01/08/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
01/08/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
02/08/13	Journalist(s)	Semi-structured interview	Handwritten notes
03/08/13	Journalist(s)	Workshop	Transcript
05/08/13	Various	Workshop	Transcript
11/09/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
03/10/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
03/10/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
09/10/13	Researcher(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
17/10/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
17/10/13	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
22/11/13	Journalist(s)	Participant observation	Jottings
03/12/13	Various	Participant observation	Jottings
05/12/13	Media development practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
05/12/13	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
18/12/13	Various	Public meeting	Jottings
07/01/14	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
21/01/14	ICT4D practitioner(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
28/01/14	Various	Public meeting	Handwritten notes

27/06/14	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
21/07/14	Journalist(s)	Other	Twitter
10/11/14	Other civil society practitioner(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
11/02/15	Researcher(s)	Participant observation	Handwritten notes
11/02/15	Researcher(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes
12/02/15	Journalist(s)	Workshop	Transcript
16/02/15	Journalist(s)	Unstructured interview	Handwritten notes

Appendix IV: News stories examined at workshops 5 & 6

Workshop on Operational Linda Nchi

Amin, A. (2011, November 3). Pain of Being a Kenyan Somali. *Daily Nation*. Nairobi. Available at: included in Annex VI of this thesis.

Barasa, L. (2011, October 11). Inside the Al-Shabaab Network in Kenya. *Daily Nation*. Nairobi. Available at:
<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Inside+Al+Shabaab+network+in+Kenya+/-/1056/1264136/-/ytb3alz/-/index.html>

Leftie, P. (2011, October 20) Kenyan Forces Capture Ras Kamboni. *Daily Nation*. Nairobi. Available at:
<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Kenyan+forces+capture+Shabaabs+Ras+Kamboni+/-/1056/1259020/-/twr94pz/-/index.html>

Mohammed, H. (2011, October 20) Army Takes Ras Kamboni. *Citizen TV*. Nairobi. Available at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK_U1aWTllo

Workshop on protest

Michungu, K. (2013, 14 May) Protesters use pigs to express their displeasure at MPs. *Nation TV*. Nairobi. Video no longer available on YouTube owing to complaints against NTV of copy-right infringement.

Machoke, A. (2011, May 31) The Unga Revolution. *Nation TV*. Nairobi. Video no longer available on YouTube owing to complaints against NTV of copy-right infringement.

Appendix V: News text on Kenya's IDPs

1 **Kenya's Displaced Left in Limbo**

2 By Bertha Kang'ong'oi

3 As published in the Mail & Guardian

4 20 September 2013

5

6 She sits across the room in the small shanty, gazing above our heads, perhaps at the ceiling, or at the
7 glossy picture of Jesus hanging behind us, in a flowing white gown, the Lord's Prayer flowing across
8 his frock. Or maybe she is looking at the president's red and white campaign flag fixed to the wall, next
9 to Jesus.

10 Even when Martha Gathoni (19) looks straight at us, she seems to stare through us. It has been way too
11 long for her, this hoping and waiting, with promise after promise from government officials, priests,
12 nongovernmental organisation workers, and other Good Samaritans.

13 They arrive at the camp with smiles and assurances, and then disappear, never to be seen again.

14 "Everybody has been trying to take advantage of us," reflects Gathoni. "People show up, take down our
15 names and listen to our stories, promise to help - and then we never see them again."

16 As the International Criminal Court at The Hague begins the trials of the alleged instigators of the
17 violence that claimed 1113 lives after Kenya's 2007 presidential elections, many of those who were
18 forced to flee their neighbourhoods and villages are still waiting. President Uhuru Kenyatta and his
19 deputy, William Ruto, are among the three men indicted, creating an unprecedented situation at the
20 ICC and a cause célèbre within the country.

21 But while eyes turn to the televised proceedings, it seems as though the nation's attention is drawn
22 further from the more than 7000 families still stuck in deplorable camps.

23 It has been five years since Gathoni's father died. The family was still at a temporary camp, near the
24 shores of Lake Nakuru, to where hundreds of families like hers fled the violence, perpetuated by gangs
25 of youth armed with machetes and other ad hoc weapons.

26 Gathoni breaks down when she talks of her father's death. To her, his death marks the beginning of all
27 the pain that she has had to endure. It should have been a sanctuary, a new beginning. He led his family
28 safely away from the violence, but a heart attack took his life after they arrived at a temporary shelter.

29 As the new head of the family, Gathoni's mother has wagered everything on the government's promise
30 to resettle each of the families on just under a hectare of land a short distance away in a town called

31 Subukia, though a lawsuit over the ownership of that land could jeopardise the deal. Gathoni's mother
32 is so fearful of losing the plot to squatters, she stays there to protect it. Guarding her plot means she
33 can't return to her own work as a mechanic. She does odd jobs around Subukia, but it's a pitiable
34 income.

35 Perhaps unbeknown to Gathoni and to the thousands of displaced families at the time, former President
36 Mwai Kibaki, after forming a coalition government, had set up a special committee to look into the
37 issue of internally displaced people (IDPs), and to resettle them in 2008. Billions of shillings were set
38 aside and, if all had gone as planned, Gathoni and family would already be resettled, either back to
39 their farm in Keringet, or in an alternative location.

40 But all that political theatre seems quite distant from the reality here in Nakuru.

41 After the death of their father, Gathoni's sister quickly recognised that continuing with school was near
42 impossible. She got married - at just 13.

43 "We do not even know who she married, or where they live," confesses Gathoni. "We've heard that she
44 has two children now."

45 That first committee commissioned by the president accomplished little. Money started to go missing.
46 Some provincial administrators were reportedly cooking numbers and inventing ghost IDPs.
47 IDPs, real or imaginary, first received a payment of 10000 Kenyan shilling (Ksh) (R1123) per
48 household to help them to "rebuild" their lives. In a wise move, 966 families at the Nakuru showground
49 camp pooled the money and bought an 11-hectare plot of land, enough for each family to construct a
50 simple shelter, better than the inhuman conditions of the showground, but far from the land of promise.

51 The area, a few kilometres from Nakuru, is known as Pipeline, but they call it "New Canaan".

52 Gathoni's family is one of the 966. She had just completed primary school and was offered a
53 scholarship to a nearby high school. But by the end of that first year in high school, it was clear that the
54 organisation that had promised to pay her fees would not honour its word. She was kicked out of school.
55 She attempted suicide.

56 "I really wanted to become a surgeon," she says through her tears. "If only I could get just one more
57 chance to go back to high school and graduate."

58 The reality is that, two years after she was kicked out of high school, she got pregnant and delivered a
59 baby boy. There is no father in sight. Gathoni alone cares for her now one-year-old son and two other
60 children, a boy, eight, and a girl, six, whom a family friend bequeathed to Gathoni's family on her death
61 bed.

62 Five years since the violence that scarred the Rift Valley, two committees set up by the former

63 president have each been disbanded and, a monumental Ksh6.1-billion later, Gathoni still has little that
64 she can count on. Different arms of government point the blame at one another, and such is the lack of
65 transparency, even the auditor general cannot confidently say where much of the money has ended up.
66 In the end, only about 24% of the people displaced in the 2007-2008 post-election violence have been
67 settled, according to official 2011 records.

68 The new government, championed by Uhuru Kenyatta of the National Alliance party (TNA) and
69 William Ruto of the United Republican Party (URP), the grouping that won the March general election,
70 received unreserved support from the IDP community, especially in the Rift Valley. One of the
71 promises of the "jubilee coalition", as the TNA and URP merger is known, was to settle all the IDPs
72 affected by the post-election violence within the first 100 days in office.

73 It's been more than 100 days. But in calculated timing, just a few days ago and before the trial of Ruto
74 began at The Hague, he and the president visited an IDP camp in Naivasha and pledged even more
75 money - Ksh400 000 per unsettled household.

76 It's hard to tell exactly why, after five years and billions of shillings allocated and disbursed to IDPs,
77 the last of the IDPs has not been resettled. It's even harder to tell where the buck should stop. Money
78 has been misappropriated, that's a fact, though only a few small-time administrators have faced
79 investigation, and it is not clear what has come of the charges raised.

80 A report, done in April last year by a parliamentary committee, was not able to account fully for all the
81 money. The one thing that was clear was that there was gross misappropriation of funds in the whole
82 IDP resettlement scheme, from the very beginning of the exercise in 2008.

83 While Gathoni waits for "those in Nairobi" to deliver on the promise of giving her some part of her life
84 back, she makes about Ksh100 a day from doing manual jobs on nearby farms. All she can afford is to
85 buy enough food for herself and the three children to eat one day at a time.

Appendix VI: News text on Operation Linda Nchi

1 **Reporting from the Cannon's Mouth: Kenyan Media's Coverage of the War in**

2 **Somalia**

3 By Abdi Latif Dahir

4 Unedited submission to the Networked News Lab

5 23 July 2013

6 **Kenya's** incursion into Somalia was historic. This was the first time the country ventured into
7 war since its independence from Great Britain in 1963. Kenya, in the words of columnist Charles
8 Onyango-Obbo, lost its "political virginity" and became "a true Great Lakes nation." Somalia
9 and its interminable problems, long a thorn on the side of Kenya's government though much
10 less a concern to ordinary citizens, burst into the national psyche through the broadcasts and
11 pages of the national media – and in another historic turn, through social media.

12 Social media has changed news in many ways. It has given ordinary citizens immediate access
13 to once-privileged sources, like Military spokesman Major Emmanuel Chirchir, whose Twitter
14 account, @majorechirchir, now has more than 40,000 followers. It has also made it easier for
15 citizens to dissect and critique the press, which is what this essay does.

16 Chirchir had posted graphic photos of a man he claimed to be a Kenyan. The man was allegedly
17 stoned to death by al-Shabaab in Somalia on charges of espionage. "Dead after being stoned...
18 Recruit Kenyan kill them if you differ on opinion," the Major wrote on his Twitter handle,
19 @majorechirchir, in reference to the photos.

20 Kenyan newspapers printed the story under wide headlines, and television stations carried it
21 with urgency, but a young Somali-American freelance journalist in St. Paul, Minnesota –
22 Mukhtar Ibrahim – listened to his "sceptic's voice" and started to dig online. He quickly
23 discovered that the photos were not taken in 2012 in Kismayo, which lies 500 kilometres
24 southwest of Somalia's capital Mogadishu, but were actually taken in 2009 in Afgooye, just 30
25 kilometres northwest of Mogadishu. The photos, which were attributed to the Associated
26 Press, were actually published by Britain's *Daily Mail* on December 15, 2009.

27 The Kenyan media took up the conflict as a matter of national responsibility, giving it extensive
28 coverage. Then two weeks into the war, the Kenyan Army invited journalists from various
29 media houses to join them on the battlefield in Somalia, and off they went, giddy, unsure,

30 bundled in helmets and flack jackets.

31 To give credit where it is due, the Kenyan media got it right in some cases. Analytical pieces in
32 newspapers like *The East African* newspaper highlighted some of the underlying reasons for the
33 war. The media fraternity was also mindful of the stakes for Somalis in Kenya, highlighting how
34 their businesses were being affected by the war, and warning that citizens should not be
35 victimized on account of their ethnicity. Larry Madowo, in a piece published in the *Daily Nation*
36 newspaper, termed the negative profiling of Somalis and Muslims as “idiotic.” Abdinasir Amin ,
37 a medical researcher, was also given space in the same paper to describe the “pain of being a
38 Kenyan Somali.” Amin eloquently challenged those who would question the national loyalty of
39 Somali Kenyans, arguing that terms such as the “enemy within” and the “fifth column” were
40 unhelpful and irresponsible at a time of war.

41 The media also performed its watchdog role in some instances, most prominently among them
42 the sinking of the *MV Nawal* in the Indian Ocean. The media revealed that the Kenyan Navy had
43 mistaken the crew of the boat to be members of al-Shabaab, and that in the assault four
44 innocent fishermen were killed by the Navy, while five others were forced to swim for six hours
45 until they landed on the shores of Ishakani off the Kiunga coastline.

46 Unfortunately, not all of the coverage rose to these standards.

47 The embedded journalists’ coverage from the frontline cities of Ras Kamboni and Afmadow was
48 disappointing, to say the least. It was a far cry from the high expectations of the public. The
49 dispatches were intellectually vapid, while explanatory journalism, which is crucial in a time of
50 war, was lacking. Kenyan journalists failed to depict the bigger narrative, or to examine the
51 political and socio-economic endgame of the military incursion.

52 Even senior reporters who were embedded, with whom I later spoke, displayed a shocking lack
53 of knowledge about Somalia, its history and its people. The simply could not hold an intellectual
54 conversation on the country.

55 This parochialism was also showcased in the daily snippets published by the *Nation’s* two
56 reporters, who were in the frontline in Somalia for 20 days. The two were incapable of offering
57 their readers anything beyond their immediate surroundings, and flaunted their lack of
58 knowledge as though it were humorous, as in this snippet:

59 “Apparently, Ras Kamboni, Ras Aliyoos and the other ‘Ras’ in Somalia, have nothing to do with
60 Rastafarians. Instead they mean protruding gulf.”

61 In another instance, an article claimed that the cameramen in the crew had learnt the Somali

62 word *firi* to mean *gentleman* from one of the locals. The word, as all Somali speakers would
63 know, is a verb that means ‘to look’ and is neither a noun nor means ‘gentleman.’ Gentleman in
64 Somali is *mudane*. As it turns out, the reporters didn’t have an accompanying translator, which
65 raises questions about the veracity of other dispatches.

66 But more importantly, senior editors back home got many things wrong. Newspaper articles,
67 for instance, couldn’t correctly distinguish between “Somalia” the country and “Somali” the
68 people.

69 During the first few days of the war, the media carried a story of ten towns that the Kenya
70 Defence Forces were eyeing for a possible assault. The reports listed Baidoa and Baydhabo as
71 two of the ten towns whose activities were being monitored, claiming that they hosted al
72 Shabaab bases. The irony here is that the two towns are the same; the only difference being
73 that Baidoa is the English rendering of the Somali name Baydhabo. It appears news editors
74 simply picked the town names from the Twitter account of Major Emmanuel Chirchir, the
75 spokesperson for the Kenyan military.

76 Another error appeared on the front page of the *Daily Nation* of November 12, 2011. The paper
77 carried a map of Somalia to illustrate some of the strategic towns in the military offensive. The
78 map put the town of Afgooye next to Baardheere. Baardheere is the capital of the Gedo region
79 and is located next to the Kenya-Somalia border. Afgooye on the other hand is located 30
80 kilometres outside Mogadishu, and is nowhere near Baardheere, as the map suggested.

81 Furthermore, the Kenyan media’s picture of Somalia and Somalis was skewed and ill-informed
82 at its best, and dismal at its worst. In television clips and news articles, Somalis were portrayed
83 as a hopeless, hapless and helpless lot ravished by famine, drought and terror. Somalia, on the
84 other hand, came out as that distant exotic nation that has long, beautiful beaches, where
85 pirates rivalling Jack Sparrow roam the high seas, and where ordinary folks have suffered under
86 the menacing rule of warlords and hard-line Islamists for over 20 years.

87 “There was little to hope for before Kenya military entered Somalia”, one lead-in a local
88 newspaper even read, simplifying - in one fell swoop - a complicated, multi-layered story of a
89 country that has been warring itself for over two decades.

90 And then there was the tone of the coverage, which veered at times towards chest-thumping
91 jingoism. *The Standard* newspaper’s headline on November 4, 2011, for example, read: “Spirits
92 High as Navy Kills 18 Shabaab.” Was it not sufficient to *report* the killing of the insurgents? We
93 risk dehumanizing ourselves when we celebrate the death of an enemy.

94 Of course, journalists, like any citizens, are stakeholders in the country's national security. The
95 Kenyan military's incursion into Somalia affects us all, and is as much about protecting our
96 borders and sovereignty as it is about eliminating a regional and international threat. There
97 should be no doubt that al-Shabaab's threat needs to be dealt with, and promptly.
98 However, as members of the press, we have a more complicated task at hand. Ours is to follow
99 the old-age wisdom of objectivity and fairness, and to hold the executive accountable. We
100 should be the voice of reason at this time of chaos, and stand as impartial witnesses to history.
101 Unlike any other moment, journalists should demonstrate sensitivity and deep understanding
102 of regional politics, and should guide the nation in a soul-searching dialogue.

103 But how can we do this if we can't master the basics of accuracy and verification – if our
104 research is limited to a Google search, if even that.

105 In Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Foreign Correspondent*, an American reporter is sent to Europe to
106 cover the growing threat of a war and the rising power of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany in the
107 late 1930s. After chasing spies, pursuing assassins, and crashing into the ocean after being shot
108 by a German destroyer, the movie climaxes with a radio announcer introducing the reporter,
109 Huntley Haverstock, on radio. "We have as a guest tonight, one of the soldiers of the press,"
110 the radio presenter says, adding that Haverstock is "one of the little army of historians who are
111 writing history from beside the cannon's mouth."

112 As the army of historians writing history from beside the cannon's mouth, our reportage, at this
113 critical time, should reverberate long after the guns have fallen silent.

114 **No Longer at Ease: *Can journalism help Kenya understand Somalia any***
115 ***better?***

116 By Abdi Latif Dahir
117 Unedited blog submission to the Networked News Lab
118 21 April 2014

119 ANY TRAVELER FROM NAIROBI'S Jomo Kenyatta International Airport can tell you about the
120 inherent frustrations that come with departing for Somalia. The early morning flights; the
121 confusion at the check-in counters; the dozens of refugees heading back home, baffled by
122 the stream of formalities; the weary-eyed immigration officers who keep stopping travellers
123 immediately they identify the distinct boarding passes of the planes that fly there.

124 The same feeling of exasperation also subsists when one travels from Somalia to Kenya.

125 While a flight from Nairobi to Mogadishu takes just over an hour, the journey back is always
126 an unpleasant ride that takes five or six hours, if not more. First, there's the security check in

127 Wajir that is mandatory for all the flights coming from Somalia. After flying to Nairobi for
128 another hour, you go through another security check at Jomo Kenyatta airport, which unduly
129 takes another hour or so, before you start heading to immigration again.

130 Somalia, of course, is a nation at a crossroads. More than two decades after the ousting of
131 the dictator Mohamed Siad Barre and the unfolding of a bloody civil war, the country is
132 trying hard to turn a new leaf. Over the last four years, the war has started receding; the
133 businesses are booming; and the country's nascent government is slowly taking control.

134 However, with prolonged war comes implacable insulation. As Somalia opens itself to the
135 world, it faces a polarized world that barely understands it. Some people define the country
136 by the image of glassy-eyed children dying of hunger; others associate it with the photos of
137 pregnant mothers carrying jerry cans of water. And in this age of terrorism, many more have
138 come to couple it with the gruesome acts of Al-Shabaab and the deadly attacks they have
139 carried, from the Presidential Palace in Mogadishu, to the Westgate Mall in Nairobi and just
140 last month, at the Garissa University College.

141 This negative association is more evident in Kenya, especially after the country's Defense
142 Forces invaded Somalia in October 2011, with the aim of deterring and defeating Al
143 Shabaab. The paradox here is that Kenya and Somalia share a lengthy border of almost 700
144 kilometers. Kenya is also host to hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees who reside in
145 Dadaab Camp, arguably the world's biggest. And since 2011, legions of Kenyan labor
146 workers, engineers, humanitarian workers and teachers are effectively helping rebuild
147 Somalia.

148 Yet, the conversation in the public sphere, abetted by lackluster journalistic practices, has
149 been one of outright ignorance or unworldly naiveté. As a journalist experiencing this over
150 the last few years, I have come to view this as part of an ingrained system of thought and
151 practice, of how people across the two borders view each other. In the end, Kenya and
152 Somalia come off as two countries divided by war, and united by rickety planes, a long
153 border and a visceral fear of the unknown.

154 That's why on Thursday, April 16, I gave a talk at PAWA254, a collaborative space for
155 creatives and journalists, about "The Role of Journalism in Exploring the Somali Story." The
156 basic objective of the talk was to try and answer the question: can *good* journalism help
157 Kenyans understand Somalia better?

158 My talk focused on not only humanizing the Somali experience, but also looking at how

159 media narratives have been appropriated to give readers and audiences the right picture of
160 a country that has been at war for two decades. The presentation was also based on the
161 premise that journalism wields an important role, and if it isn't done well, then it has the
162 negative power of spreading wrong accounts or reinforcing misconstrued experiences.

163 IN RETROSPECT, IT is hard starting a constructive conversation regarding the war in Somalia
164 and its effects on the region. As a Kenyan growing up in Somalia in the late 90's and early
165 2000's, I remember watching television and recoiling at how the stories were almost always
166 defined by the imagery on the ground. The negative stories always outweighed the positive
167 ones, and there was an almost 100 percent consensus amongst media outlets on how to
168 portray Somalia and Somalis. This type of journalism still exists today – and one can see an
169 overwhelming number of reports focusing on attacks and explosions, regardless of the positive changes
170 taking place across Somalia.

171 [Using examples](#) of my own work, I talked about ways in which I have been able to make sure
172 that my reporting is different. At the talk, I highlighted how journalists can listen to their
173 own voice beyond the deafening salvo of shots, and how they can pay attention to the [small](#)
174 [details](#) so that they are able to convey the big issues with clarity. I also underlined the
175 importance of peace journalism, and how the choice of the stories we report and what we
176 report can [influence public thinking](#) – either positively or negatively.

177 Beyond the confines of traditional media publications, I also showcased how journalists can
178 use new media to amplify a given story. I used [my work on Instagram](#), and how I utilized
179 photography to show – instead of tell – my followers about what's happening in Somalia.
180 (During the session, PAWA254 exhibited some of those photos.) This first-hand connection, I
181 explained, even helps reporters connect with and better understand the people whom they
182 are covering on a day-to-day basis.

183 The final part of my talk focused on Kenyan media's coverage of the war in Somalia –
184 specifically since 2011. The media industry, noted as [the most trusted institution in Kenya](#),
185 didn't deliver in its duties. The media's performance was to say the least lackluster, and the
186 error was, after all, one of omission rather than commission.

187 Much of that part referenced what I discussed in an article [titled](#) "Reporting from the
188 Cannon's Mouth for the *Networked News Lab*. As I wrote back then,
189 "The embedded journalists' coverage from the frontline cities of Ras Kamboni and Afmadow
190 was disappointing, to say the least. It was a far cry from the high expectations of the public.
191 The dispatches were intellectually vapid, while explanatory journalism, which is crucial in a

192 time of war, was lacking. Kenyan journalists failed to depict the bigger narrative, or to
193 examine the political and socio-economic endgame of the military incursion.

194 IF ANYTHING, THE question and answer segment brought to fore how much issues relating
195 to Somalia are not critically discussed amongst the Kenyan public. Queries from participants
196 were related to how they can demand and get a better and more nuanced coverage from
197 local media outlets related to the coverage of Somalia.

198 In the post-Garissa attack, the audience also asked about how journalism can create
199 harmony amongst the larger Kenyan population and the ethnic Somali community, whom
200 are being blamed for carrying out these attacks. Many in the audience denounced the
201 maltreatment and profiling meted out to Somalis in Kenya.

202 The discussion also opened up an avenue to deliberate on the historical, political and
203 economic reasons behind the collapse of Somalia's central government. A Somali journalist
204 present also pointed out the overflowing weaknesses in Somali journalism, and how the lack
205 of serious Somali journalism might be an impediment to creating a two-way conversation
206 that can foster harmony and understanding between Kenya and Somalia.

207 In the end, the overarching notion at the talk was the media's capability to shape stories and
208 public opinions – for better or for worse. Unlike the security agencies, the media is usually
209 not equipped with the task of stopping terrorist activities and explosions. But, at the least,
210 we can and have to contribute to shaping the public opinion, besides directing not only the
211 debate that ensues when these national tragedies take place, but also the conversation that
212 takes place beforehand.

213 Only then will journalists, to paraphrase the publisher Henry Luce, get as close as possible to
214 the heart of the story. And for Kenyans and Somalis, they will have become the best
215 companion in the journey to understanding.

216 **Pain of Being a Kenyan Somali**

217 By Abdinasir Amin
218 Published in the Daily Nation
219 3 November 2011

220 Ethnic stereotypes are not necessarily a bad thing — it is one thing to be stereotyped as liking the good
221 life, dressing well, wearing the latest Armani suit and scent, driving the latest BMW, having a penchant
222 for speaking the Queen's English, or indulging in kuku porno.

223 This is the stuff of bar-room banter, oiling the wheels of social discourse. I have no quarrel with that. I
224 can see the coy smile on my friend Oti's lips.

225 I doubt Shtan would take offence at the ingokho joke as well (I will stop it, I swear). The message is
226 usually “come on, don’t take yourself too seriously. Lighten up”.

227 But it is different to be stereotyped as being guilty of all manner of ills, from spitting on the side walk,
228 being “Osama’s buddy”, speaking in a harsh incomprehensible language (a silly hand-me-down from
229 that colonialist Richard Burton), sitting around all day eating miraa with a kikoi tied around your torso,
230 and having huge amounts of “unexplained” money.

231 I would rather be guilty of eating too much ingokho any time. The gurgling noises Marete makes as he
232 imitates my Somali speech, then asking me “what did I say in Somali? and my witty rejoinder “my aunt is
233 a cow” — that also I can take. It is good fun, we all laugh and that is it.

234 However, there is nothing to lighten up about being “Osama’s buddy”. At the height of the hunt for
235 Osama bin Laden, a lecturer in an oral examination had the cheek to ask me if I knew the Al-Qaeda
236 leader.

237 For those who have been through the University of Nairobi’s medical school, oral examinations are
238 traumatic.

239 There are usually three categories of students; those whose performance is outstanding and the
240 examiners are trying to make up their minds whether to give them a distinction or not; those who are in
241 the middle and the oral examination is just a confirmation that you are indeed C material — a middling;
242 the third, and most-dreaded category and every med- schooler’s nightmare is those who are borderline
243 and are a whisker away from failure.

244 For this hapless lot, the oral examination is either a kiss of death or life — one mark helps you proceed
245 to the next class and the lack of that one mark can consign you to another year with your juniors or a
246 supplementary examination (a “sup”) — something to be avoided at all costs by any self-respecting,
247 “trans-nighting” (means zero sleep) med- schooler.

248 The elephant in the room

249 I recently wrote an article for the Daily Nation’s sister publication The EastAfrican on being a Kenyan
250 Somali at a time of war.

251 The article was in a very jocular tone and touched on issues of identity and negative ethnic profiling of
252 Kenyan Somalis at such a difficult time in our country’s history.

253 I have since talked to a number of people and have been in a number of situations to gauge different
254 points of view and experiences.

255 For many Kenyan Somalis, the elephant in the room is that of questioned loyalty.

256 This is not something new among minority communities whose kin or co-religionists are seen as

257 aggressors against the mainstream society they reside in.

258 When the US was at war with Japan following the attacks on Pearl Harbour, the loyalty of Japanese
259 Americans was questioned and many of them had a very rough time to the point that some were
260 incarcerated in concentration camps.

261 Similarly, the loyalty of Kenyan Somalis is questioned by many. It does not help that such terms as the
262 “enemy within”, the “fifth column”, and, worse still, analogies of odious reptiles are used with abandon.
263 Reptilian analogies — with long anaconda-like tails buried hundreds of miles away in Somalia and heads
264 in “little Mogadishu” (Eastleigh) — are particularly unnerving.

265 As Edward Said observed in his seminal work *Orientalism and Covering Islam*, the leap from
266 dehumanising a people to committing all manner of crimes against them is a very short one. Once you
267 have dehumanised someone, anything goes.

268 Just think of the term “cockroach” and how it was effectively used to dehumanise the Tutsis in Rwanda.
269 We all know what happened next.

270 Idi Amin’s Uganda

271 Many Kenyan Somalis draw parallels between the fate of Asians in Idi Amin’s Uganda — where the Asian
272 community was blamed for all manner of ills and eventually ended up being booted out of their homes
273 and their businesses — and the increasingly strident tone against Somalis in Kenya, whether Kenyan
274 Somali, Somali Somalis, or Somalis from the Diaspora who have come to invest in Kenya.

275 One businessman wondered aloud: “Why aren’t our brothers and sisters allowed to invest in Kenya like
276 other human beings?

277 Does money have colour, creed, or religion? Many people come to Kenya to invest — white, black,
278 Indian — but when it comes to Somali investments, they and even us Kenyan Somalis are looked at with
279 a lot of ill will and suspicion.

280 “Our brothers from the Diaspora work very hard in North America and Europe, toiling three different
281 jobs, sleeping little, slaving for years and saving every dollar they can.

282 “Obviously, they cannot invest in a lawless country like Somalia. The closest to home for them is Nairobi,
283 and when they invest in Kenya, they are not appreciated as advancing our economy. Instead, they are
284 called pirates and whatnot. Why? Isn’t this intolerance?”

285 Calm before the storm

286 The common theme among many is that of anxiety — the calm before the storm. There are terms in the
287 English language and in popular parlance which are reassuring, if not benign, to many Kenyans.

288 To most Kenyan Somalis, however, they have a completely different meaning. “Security” and

289 “operation” are terrible words to the eyes and ears of a Kenyan Somali. They are akin to shouting “Fire!”
290 in a crowded cinema hall.

291 There was a comical moment during last Friday’s sermon when the very wise and affable Hon Billow
292 Kerrow — a man after my own heart — had to explain what he meant by “security” in many languages.
293 He had stood up to make a number of announcements at Jamia Mosque and one of the announcements
294 was the need for all worshippers coming to the mosque to cooperate with guards who had been
295 stationed at the main entrances to the mosque to ensure enhanced “security”.

296 He started in Kiswahili and English, then quickly, realising the negative connotations of the word
297 “security” for most Somalis, switched to Somali and explained that it simply meant “...checking for
298 anything suspicious so none of us is in trouble since we are living in tense times”.

299 The sigh of relief was palpable. The roots of such mistrust of the terms “security” and “operation” are
300 buried deep in the annals of history — history that many Kenyans are unaware of, at least until recently
301 through the auspices of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

302 Things have been made worse by the war on terrorism and recent events, such as the stone-throwing
303 antics between Muslim youth and other Kenyans in front of Jamia Mosque following the arrest of
304 Jamaican Islamic preacher Sheikh Faisal.

305 For me, the words “security operation” conjure up many unpleasant images burnt into a child’s mind
306 forever.

307 Four images from the Wagalla Massacre of 1984 suffice to make the point about the negative
308 connotations of “security operation” for the Kenyan Somali.

309 Men stripped of dignity

310 At the height of that infamous security operation, I was in primary school in Tarbaj village, 48 kilometres
311 North of Wajir town, Wajir County.

312 First, I see images of grown men in Tarbaj in broad daylight, stripped of all dignity, of all their clothing, in
313 front of women and children, being whipped and herded like animals to the centre of the town.

314 The naked men beg for mercy as the nyahunyos cut into their flesh in the blistering sun. By dusk, the
315 askaris would congregate at the nearby dam, the only source of water, to cook and clean, having
316 successfully rounded up many men from the nearby towns and “dropped them off” in Wagalla — a
317 euphemism for teaching them a lesson.

318 The askaris gave us ugali, fruit jam, and army-issue biscuits. After all, we were students, and the old man
319 said education was the key to Kenya’s future.

320 The second image is my mother recounting how a much-loved uncle was whisked away from our

321 “restaurant” and bundled into the back of an army truck, never to be seen again.

322 The third image is that of my old, hypertensive, and diabetic father contemplating dangerously lowering
323 himself to the bottom of the family well to hide from the marauding askaris.

324 Luckily for him, he was very light skinned — he claimed that he was an Arab, a descendant of one of the
325 Arab families in Wajir town. They bought that canard and left him alone.

326 The fourth is that of another uncle wheezing and unable to breathe. He was one of those who were
327 imprisoned in Wagalla without food or water for days in the scorching sun.

328 He was beaten many times on the chest with rifle butts, was taken for dead, thrown into the back of a
329 tip truck together with the dead, and thrown into some bush in Dhela, Wajir County.

330 He crawled out of the mass of bodies and was brought back to Wajir by good Samaritans.

331 There are similar stories from many Kenyan Somalis on so-called “security operations” — the Bulla
332 Karatasi Massacre of 1980 in Garissa County, arbitrary arrests and beatings on baseless charges of being
333 shifta sympathisers, communal punishment for a son or relative gone shifta by torching the family house
334 or entire neighbourhoods, arresting all known relatives and being asked to “produce your bad apple plus
335 his gun”.

336 Similar extrajudicial killings have occurred in Malka Mari, Takaba, and other places in Mandera County,
337 and they are well documented, thanks to Ahmed Issack Hassan and other unsung heroes and heroines,
338 such as the indefatigable Annalena Tonneli, a Catholic nun.

339 In taking a straw poll — nothing scientific here — there are those who say they have not been affected
340 in any way by the current state of war.

341 Abdi and his friend, both of whom work in peace building and conflict resolution, say “everything is
342 normal; we have not seen anything unusual, nothing untoward has happened to us or our relatives”.

343 Others speak of a general anxiety and unease. They are waiting and watching, particularly on the soon
344 to-come security operations in Eastleigh and South C.

345 There are worries that, as has happened before, gold and other valuables for sale in Garissa Lodge and
346 other malls in Eastleigh will be confiscated, never to be returned.

347 Some women have started wearing the niqab, the all-covering face-cloth. One such woman remarks: “I
348 don’t want people staring at me like I am a criminal, at least now they can’t see me. I feel safer this
349 way.”

350 Cambara, a Bachelor of Commerce graduate from India, is amazed at the vitriol on social media sites
351 such as Facebook.

352 She cannot believe how former friends, some of whom she has personally helped in kind and financially

353 as struggling students in India, have joined the fray and started calling her and all Somalis “skinny, smelly
354 wariyahes”.

355 She says “this is simply unbelievable. Ordinary people, people I considered friends, have taken leave of
356 their senses and are calling me names. This is crazy. I have done nothing but I feel besieged”.

357 I have personally witnessed two incidents of ethnic profiling. I went to the environs of Kenyatta Avenue
358 last week to condole with a friend of mine who had lost his mother.

359 Smack in the middle of the CBD, a young Somali man was being led away by what appeared to be
360 plainclothes policemen. His poor, mournful sister was trudging along.

361 A lethal lunchbox

362 Everyone was gawking at him and some watchmen by the ATM at Barclays Plaza (where I was) were
363 snickering behind me “hawa watu, hii wariyahe hii”.

364 The poor chap stood no chance. The following day, as I crossed the road opposite my workplace, I swear
365 three fellow Kenyans were staring at my lunch-box like it was the most lethal of weapons.

366 I nearly ditched the damned thing but thought (wisely in retrospect) that pandemonium would have
367 ensued.

368 Clearly, these observations are indicative and not generalisable to all and sundry — what is clear is that
369 there is a lot of anxiety and we need measures to reassure citizens who have done no wrong and who
370 are going about their daily business that all will be well and that they will not be treated unfairly
371 because of their ethnicity.

372 Let justice be our shield and defender.

Appendix VII: A hypothetical process for facilitating journalistic praxis

Recommendations for how a praxis-based approach to understanding and fostering moral agency might be more fully developed are discussed in this section. Based on the lessons learnt from this study, I suggest a hypothetical scenario to encourage journalists to reflect on how their practices mediate a politics of belonging.

To begin with, the composition of the core group of participants would ideally be split between men and women, and would maximize ethnic, religious and political diversity in the group. I would also secure a more official endorsement from their editors and managers – not only as a means of ensuring their participation, but of securing the participation of those very supervisors as the project expanded participation.

I would use the first one-on-one encounters with each of these individuals to record their personal backgrounds and the values they pursue in their work. In a similar manner to the first workshop, I would ask them to present the story behind a story that they consider amongst their best. I would, however, also ask them at the end of the interview to explicitly consider how their personal background and the values they pursue in their work might be related. And I would ask them how their work differs from other work in mainstream journalism.

Prior to bringing the participants together for their first participatory workshop, I would again host a social event to encourage rapport and informal introductions. In the first collective workshop with participants, I would give a short presentation on each participant, summarizing my interpretation of how their personal background and professional values are linked. This would not only save time, but would provide a valuable opportunity for face validity, giving the participants the opportunity to challenge my interpretation of their background and professional values, and encouraging the participants to discuss where they saw similarities and differences amongst themselves. I would dedicate the rest of

that first workshop to a participatory analysis of news texts guided by the obligations of the mediapolis and notions of trust.

Such an analysis would have a more methodical, and less ad hoc, approach to the process, deriving a structured set of probing questions and prompts from Silverstone's framework, and taking note of the questions or observations that were made during the workshop that did not conform to the semi-structured questions and prompts. Whilst such a structured approach would sacrifice some the natural and spontaneous feel of the interaction, and perhaps along with it some rapport, in exchange for greater rigour in the interpretive aspects of speaking back to the normative framework. Based on the analysis that emerges, the participants would be asked to consider how to produce a news report or show that would challenge the negative aspects of coverage that they identified.

At this stage, it would be important to transparently frame the purpose of the action research within a politics of belonging and to encourage the participants to consider how news experiments could be selected that would be best suited for exploring the challenges of covering identity politics in the news. I would encourage the group to consider using its own diversity to explore the different ways that the politics of belonging is experienced by journalists from different backgrounds. Selecting projects that suit the research versus projects that suit the interests of the journalist, however, is not always a perfect match; I have learned that acquiescing to the reporter's interests in these cases is not only vital for preserving their participation, but also often beneficial to the research.

The next workshop would invite the participants back to present their stories, and to conduct an analysis of the texts they had produced using a version of the semi-structured questions and prompts modified to incorporate the issues and concerns raised in the previous workshop. They would be invited, in this manner, to present the strategies they employed for "moral agency." Such a workshop could involve a few additional participants – editors or civil society representatives – depending on whether the journalists felt their presence would be helpful. The final reflection on that workshop would be aimed at facilitating some double-loop learning, asking what would they do differently in retrospect, and then inviting them to consider another project in which they could do just that.

In the initial formulation of this thesis, I had envisioned five rounds of this nature, but this is ambitious, even in the course of a year. Encouraging the participants to each produce two rounds of stories in this manner would be challenging, but a feasible task. This second round of stories could be divided into whatever thematic groups they naturally exhibit and used as an input into a series of two to three larger events that follow the example of the workshop conducted with journalists and activists on media and protest. Unlike the workshop on media and protest, however, this event would provide an opportunity to share the lessons that the journalists had learnt with a wider group, furnishing further face validity to the emergent findings, but also an opportunity to consider different perspectives by conducting yet another round of participatory analysis on the pieces produced by the participating journalists and one other for a point of comparison.

This would take the project into slightly uncharted territory. Following the workshops on Linda Nchi and on media and protest, several initiatives emerged. For instance, Abdi and I began work on a training course for editors and journalists, and I was invited by activist groups to work with them further on their communication strategies. Depending on the institutional context of the work, time and resources, there is certainly scope to broaden the action research at moments when new connections are formed.

Regardless of how further cycles of action and reflection are managed, one vital addition to the methodological approach conducted for this thesis would be follow-up with the participating journalists in the months following the conclusion of the study to ask them whether they had continued to implement the lessons they learnt, and to continue to collect their reports and articles for evidence of this influence. A further step could include a series of focus groups with audience members to allow for a consideration of whether the journalist's assumptions about their readers and viewers proved correct.

The options are limitless, but the basic approach described here would help to resolve some of the weaknesses remarked upon above. This kind of praxis might be implemented by a researcher, but also by an institution dedicated to building the capacity of professional journalists, such as Internews or the Media Council of Kenya. There are, however, other institutions that could implement a similar,

if slightly modified, approach, including universities (and other training institutions) and media houses.