TE KOA KOA

Pacific Journalism Review

PACIFIC CRISES

COVID, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND WEST PAPUA

EDITED BY PHILIP CASS AND DAVID ROBIE

+ Crisis communication and the virus
+ NZ Pacific climate aid – strings attached
+ COVID-19 vaccine online misinformation in Fiji
+ Spreading (dis)trust in Fiji on Facebook
+ The pandemic and Indonesian journalist resilience
+ Papua and the public news framing

PLUS

PHOTOESSAY: Manus to Meanjin: Refugees and Australian 'imperialism'

SPECIAL REPORT: Watchdogs under pressure – Pacific profiles

FRONTLINE: The making of *Ophir* - Bougainville silences

DOUBLE EDITION

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Asian Congress for Media and Communication (ACMC)

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for communication and media academics and practitioners

Recent publication

Social Media in Asia: Changing Paradigms in Communication
Azmawati and Khan, eds.

As part of the advocacy of the Asian Congress for Media and Communication (ACMC) to promote regional studies in global academic discourse, this book contributes to a better understanding of social media within the context of South-east Asian countries, with the addition of Sri Lanka.

Throughout the chapters, the reader will discover that social media has changed the paradigm of communication in the region. For non-Asian readers, it contributes to a better understanding of the context of Asian media.

Get it on AMAZON:
https://www.amazon.com/Social-Media-Rachel-Azman-Azmawati/dp/1443896926

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ACMC aims to advance the scholarly study of media and communication in the Asian and Australian region by encouraging and facilitating the sharing of academic research in the field.

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EDITORIAL: COVID is still with us

IN LAST year's final edition we joked that we would eventually come to use BC to stand for Before COVID and AD for After the Donald. Well, Donald Trump is out of office, but COVID-19 is still with us, laying waste to countries, engendering all sorts of insane conspiracy theories and threatening the lives of journalists trying to cover the pandemic. As founding editor Professor David Robie argues in the introductory article of our Commentary section:

> One of the biggest challenges of all has been an 'infodemic' of misinformation and falsehoods peddled by many through social media postings which have contributed to a serious vaccine hesitancy problem in many countries, particularly where education is limited (Estella, 2020).
>
> Another major challenge has been the personal risk for many journalists covering this pandemic that, according to arguably the most reliable public statistics monitor, the John Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Centre (COVID-19 Dashboard, 2021) case tracker, had infected more than 207 million people and caused more than 4.3 million deaths globally at the time of writing.

As this editorial is being written New Zealand is about to enter our sixth week of Level Four lockdown in Auckland and our colleagues around the world have been facing similar strains of lockdowns, vaccinations and restrictions. We are extremely grateful to our contributors for their patience as this edition has been put together.

This is the first edition of *Pacific Journalism Review* to be produced as an independent venture since David's retirement from Auckland University of Technology. *PJR* was produced through the Pacific Media Centre at AUT, but the sudden closure of the centre after his departure and doubts as to whether it will reopen, means that we have taken a different path.

Different though the path might be, David and the rest of the editorial staff remain deeply committed to the journal as an independent publication and maintaining the standards set by *PJR* since it was founded at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1994. This is our second double edition and as usual we have drawn on articles by writers around New Zealand, Australia, the Pacific and Southeast Asia. We pride ourselves on being 'different' and opening our pages to authors from widely different disciplines and from academics and industry practitioners.

As David said recently: 'We are at a critical crossroads for the future because increasingly the Northern hegemony of global research means journals are becoming oppressively bland. I believe we have a very distinctively different sort of journalism and communication research journal—eclectic and refreshing.'

Figure 1: Frontline in this edition features *Ophir*, an investigative documentary depicting the Bougainville Civil War.

The virtues of being different and eclectic are reflected in our academic standing; we have just been restored by the global journal metrics monitor SCImago to Q2 ranking (bit.ly/3ETs1lm), which is where we were already in 2015, but we had slipped slightly to the top of Q3, even though we believe the journal has steadily improved in spite of many challenges and limited resources.

This edition has been edited by David Robie and Philip Cass in Auckland, with Del Abcede, as usual, taking the strain on the layouts and design. We have been ably assisted by assistant editor Khairiah Rahman, who has been the first port of call for submissions and correspondence. In Sydney, Wendy Bacon edited our *Frontline* section in partnership with Nicole Gooch, who has also been our reviews editor.

Special topics in this edition include **Wendy Bacon** and **Nicole Gooch's** *Frontline* report on *Ophir*, a new documentary depicting the Bougainville Civil War and **Shailendra Singh** and **Folker Hanusch's** 'Watchdogs under Pressure,' a comprehensive research paper on the state of journalism across the Pacific. **Kasun Ubayasiri** contributes a stunning photoessay on migrant stories from Brisbane, 'Manus to Meanjin: A case study of refugee migration, polymorphic borders and Australian 'imperialism.'

In our main themed section we expose the distortions and outright lies about COVID-19 and vaccines spread online in Fiji by fantasists and conspiracy

theorists. In 'Spreading (dis)trust in Fiji? Exploring COVID-19 misinformation on Facebook forums,' **Romitesh Kant** and **Rufino Varea** examine how Facebook pages have been used as sites for disinformation and sometimes hysterical misreporting in the Fiji coronavirus tragedy.

The worldwide pandemic is also the subject of an article, The COVID-19 pandemic: The resilience of Indonesian journalists by **Gilang Desti Parahita,** who examines how Indonesian media workers are coping and reporting on the disease. The article argues that mastering journalism data and collaborative work should be embraced to enhance the resilience of the journalists struggling to cover the pandemic, while faced with industrial and political instability.

Reporting on the continuing struggle for West Papuan rights is the subject of two reports. 'Papua and the public: Perception towards news framing of the 2019 Asrama Papua conflict' by **Annisa Nadia Putri Harsa** and **Lily El Ferawati Rofil**, who examine reports in the news outlets *Kompas* and *Jubi* which display quite different thematic and rhetorical structures. **Ana Nadhya Abrar** looks at a more positive aspect of the media in 'The role of collaborative journalism in West Papua: A *Jubi* and *Tirto* case study', a report on how two news outlets teamed up to report on the conflict.

Elsewhere in this edition of *PJR*, **Amanda Watson** and **Rohan Fox** author a study of internet speeds which argues that slow mobile internet speeds could adversely affect media operations and limit the range of voices that can be heard. Reviewers have already noted that the kind of hard data gathered for the article will be valuable for future scholars. **Lee Duffield** returns with an article on the development of new, independent, online media in Australia that are providing the kind of quality and in-depth journalism conspicuously lacking following years of massive cuts to journalistic staff.

In the Reviews section, the first edited by **Nicole Gooch**, we look at the subject of our *Frontline* section, *Ophir.* **David Robie** reviews *Climate Aotearoa: What's happening and what we can do about it*, arguing that action on climate change is becoming even more urgent. Among other publications, **Alex Wake** reviews *Upheaval: Disrupted Lives* in journalism, a new book edited by Andrew Dodd and Matthew Ricketson, dealing with the devastation caused to the Australian newspaper industry by the wholesale sacking and forcing out of journalists. **Philip Cass** reviews a new book on the Lindy Chamberlain case, *Feral Media*. Belinda Middleweek investigates how the decades' long saga surrounding the disappearance of baby Azaria and claims (finally vindicated) that she was taken by a dingo, became a massive media event in an era when Australian media—especially in rural areas—was facing massive changes.

Elsewhere, **Ena Manuireva** reviews *Toxique: Enquête sur les essais nucléaires français en Polynésie*, an important book based on an examination of hitherto secret French government files regarding three atomic bomb tests in the 1960s

and 1970s. A number of new publications are aimed at educators and journalists and *PJR* veteran **Lee Duffield** gives his largely positive views on Reuters' new guide to reporting COVID-19. Philip Cass is less enamoured with a new guide from UNESCO on writing about migrants and refugees. While extremely useful in presenting an overall view of the issue, it focuses almost entirely on Europe and Africa and ignores the Pacific completely.

Next issue

Our next issue will be out in July 2022 and will have 'media change, adaptation and culture' as its theme. The submission deadline is January 20, 2022. Issue editors will be Dr Philip Cass, Khairiah A. Rahman, Nicole Gooch and Dr David Robie.

This special issue of *Pacific Journalism Review* is linked to the 'Change, Adaptation and Culture: Media and Communication in Pandemic Times' online conference of the Asian Congress for Media and Communication (ACMC) being hosted at Auckland University of Technology on November 25-27. Papers being considered for the July 2021 edition, but which missed out, have been carried forward for the next issue. More information in our Call for Papers on page 320.

DR PHILIP CASS
Editor
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www.pjreview.info

COMMENTARIES

Crisis communication and COVID-19

Covering two Pacific tragedies with storytelling

Commentary: Frontline journalism in the age of COVID-19 has posed particular challenges in dealing with personal risk, tackling an 'infodemic' of misinformation, and providing valuable news that can be used in vulnerable Pacific countries that have struggled with soaring infections and limited health infrastructure and resources. Five Pacific countries or territories have borne the brunt of the coronavirus pandemic—Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste. This article introduces two examples of public health storytelling in crisis communication, one being a pregnant Papua New Guinea woman who walked 25 kilometres to the nearest hospital—and died on reaching her destination; the other a pregnant Fijian nurse who died after battling COVID-19.

Keywords: communication ecology, coronavirus, COVID-19, covid journalism, crisis communication, health journalism, infodemic, journalism, media ecology, pandemic, public health, storytelling, vaccine hesitancy

DAVID ROBIE
Associate Editor, Pacific Journalism Review

FOR JOURNALISTS from all corners of the globe, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has proved a relentless news and current affairs story with multiple challenges. It has not just been a health story to cover, it has actually been an unprecedented existential assignment. Never ending.

One of the biggest challenges of all has been an 'infodemic' of misinformation and falsehoods peddled by many through social media postings which have contributed to a serious vaccine hesitancy problem in many countries, particularly where education is limited (Estella, 2020).

Another major challenge has been the personal risk for many journalists covering this pandemic that, according to arguably the most reliable public statistics monitor, the John Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Centre

(COVID-19 Dashboard, 2021) case tracker, had infected more than 207 million people and caused more than 4.3 million deaths globally at the time of writing.

A United Nations COVID-19 Response webpage cited several journalists on the frontline coverage during lockdowns, including the case of Reuters' chief photographer for the Benelux countries, Yves Herman, and his personal experience reporting almost daily for several months from hospitals, retirement homes, funeral services and morgues while 'wearing full protective gear' (UNRIC Brussels, 2021). Herman notes how this has been one of the rare news assignments that has an impact on almost everybody, including journalists:

> Despite the risks, I felt it was really such an important subject to cover. To my knowledge, it is one of the only stories in the world, except perhaps the Second World War, which affects absolutely everyone. (Herman, cited by UNRIC Brussels, 2021)

Other journalists write of a personal responsibility to connect people with the 'resources they need to stay healthy', especially as in the early stages of the pandemic, COVID-19 was frequently not perceived as a serious global threat (Estella, 2020; Perreault & Perreault, 2021; Robie & Krishnamurthi, 2020). According to researchers Perreault and Perreault (2021), how journalists talk about covering COVID-19 'is informed by the larger conversation outside of the field of journalism'. Their study explores how journalists discursively constructed their media ecological relationships during the pandemic.

> We argue that journalists working during COVID-19 discursively placed themselves in a vulnerable position within the communication ecology, despite their responsibilities to facilitate relationships. Journalists hence found their reporting difficult during the pandemic, in that the pandemic exacerbated weaknesses that have long existed within the ecology. (Perrault & Perrault, 2021)

The researchers noted the difficulties that journalists faced working in COVID-19 conditions, such as interviewing people face-to-face, 'but using online video conferencing software like Zoom could mitigate the challenge' (Perrault & Perrault, 2021). Writing in the introduction to their new book, *COVID-19, Racism and Politicization: Media in the Midst of a Pandemic*, co-authors Kalinga Seneviratne and Sundeep Muppidi write of how the logical thing would be for all humans to 'put aside their differences' and work towards resolving the crises globally in a united manner.

> However, the COVID-19 pandemic has been the perfect storm in which international and domestic politics, misinformation, paranoia and media bias have contributed to an undermining of democratic and community

> values, and heightened fear and distrust among various sections of the population around the world. (Seneviratne & Muppidi, 2021)

One of the agencies working in the Asia-Pacific region towards developing better COVID-19 and climate change reporting expertise through training and journalism collaborations is Internews and its portal Earth Journalism Network (https://earthjournalism.net/). According to its website, 'the root' of its strategy is to improve the health of information environments. As Internews explains, 'healthy information environments are defined by the presence of *good, accurate, evidence-based information*—information that everyone can *access safely*, that consumers know how to *critically assess*, and that is valued by communities and sustained by *business models that work*.' (Our strategy, n.d.) It adds that in healthy information environments, '*governments and businesses are accountable* for keeping it that way'. The five elements of a strategic healthy information environment are teased out by Robie and Krishnamurthi (2020, p. 186). Examples of such strategic articles and initiatives include Abano and Kumar (2021) writing on the climate crisis threatening Pacific Island nations and a call for proposals on 'zoonotic diseases and One Health in the Asia-Pacific region' (Zoonotic diseases, 2021). About 20 grants would be available with an average of US$1,500 being awarded to the successful proposals from both staff and freelance journalists. The network was seeking stories from the region that would engage audiences to better understand:

- the threat of potential spillovers and its causes;
- solutions that address the root causes of these threats;
- local and international efforts to improve ecological and human health, within the One Health framework.

Related to climate, Abano and Kumar note how Pacific countries are pressing for the adoption at COP26 in Glasgow in October of a separate standalone loss and damage finance mechanism so that it can address the financial need from vulnerable nations—such as Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu—to relocate communities. They also cited an explanation of Lavetanalagi Seru, climate justice project officer of the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN), who said:

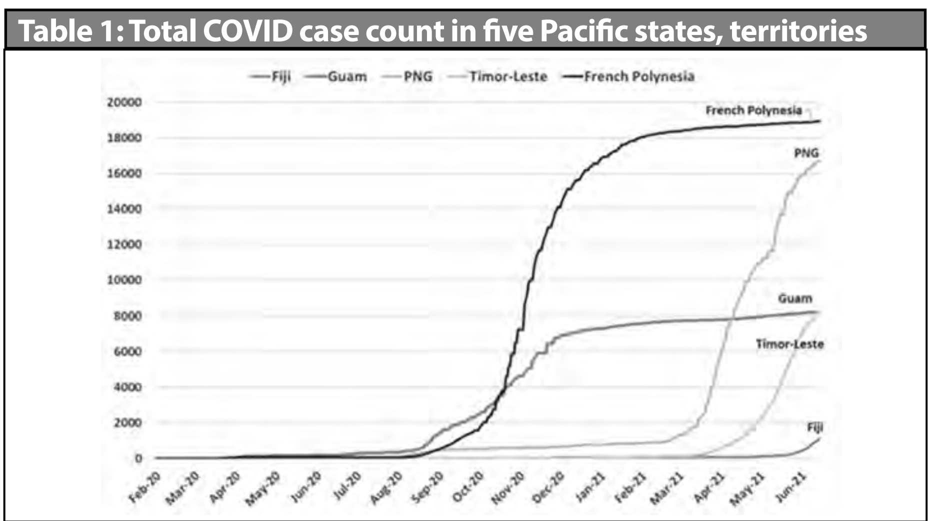
> We should be concerned with all climate impacts, including the slow onset disasters such as sea level rise, ocean acidification, and the warming ocean because we see many of our marine life of fish migrating to cooler waters and these have an effect on people, their security and livelihoods. (Abano & Kumar, 2021)

Howes and Surandiran (2021) observed how for most of last year and until the early months of this year, the Pacific health narrative around COVID-19

was mostly positive. True, there were damaging economic costs from the pandemic, but there were few cases and some countries were COVID-free. The five nations in the region that have borne the brunt of the pandemic are Fiji, French-ruled Polynesia (Mā'ohi Nui), Guam, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. On a population basis, French Polynesia had been the worst affected territory with 28,330 cases and 188 deaths (see Table 1), ahead of Papua New Guinea (17,806 + 192), Guam (9,880 + 144). However, Fiji (39,770 cases + 368 deaths) has now outstripped them all with the exponential spread of the Delta variant since April 2021. Fiji has a strong vaccination programme in spite of a damaging anti-vaccination social media campaign. Assessing the available data, Howes and Suraniran argue:

> The last few months have shown that keeping COVID-19 at bay is not an assured strategy. A low level of vaccinations not only increases pandemic risks but also delays borders reopening. Getting vaccination rates up must be a top priority for the Pacific, especially in Solomon Islands, PNG, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste.

Table 1: Total COVID case count in five Pacific states, territories



Note: The five countries and territories are Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, PNG and Timor-Leste. Sources: Our World in Data for Fiji, Timor-Leste and PNG; World Health Organisation for French Polynesia; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for Guam.

Accurate and compelling storytelling skills by truth-seeking journalists and civil society advocacy communicators are vital for effective crisis communication as outlined by Robie in his *talanoa* journalism model (2014, pp. 332-333; Robie & Marbrook, 2020). Climate justice in the region is explored by Cass (2020). Two examples of tragic stories emerged as communication exemplars during the crisis month of July 2021, one in Papua New Guinea published on the independent

blog of television journalist Scott Waide (Article 1), *My Land My Country*, and the other reported by a student journalist from the University of the South Pacific, Josefa Babitu, who is also editor of the student newspaper *Wansolwara* (Article 2). The PNG article, written by a health worker, outlined the 25 kilometre trek on foot of a pregnant woman to the nearest hospital through bush tracks, rugged roads and across a river before she died at the end of her journey; the Fiji article details the struggle of a pregnant nurse with COVID-19 before she also died.

Impressive statistics for a student journalist

At the time of writing Article 2, Babitu, editor of the University of the South Pacific student journalist newspaper *Wansolwara*, had received at least 5,934 reads of his *Asia Pacific Report* dispatch from Suva and more than 1,300 likes on social media, impressive statistics for a student journalist. This reflected a strong desire of Fijians to read about the experiences of fellow citizens suffering from COVID-19 in the hope that they might learn something. News that you can use. This was especially vital in the prevailing climate of Fiji disinformation, fake news, and a failure of authorities to give timely and practical information.

In their research study of journalists and their processes dealing with the daily challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Perreault and Perreault cite the facilitative role of journalism from the typology identified by Christians et al. (2010). According to this typology, 'journalists conceive of and operate their role given what they perceive their audience needs'. For example, when journalists operate in a storyteller role when mitigating coverage of 'dangerous actors'. The facilitative role draws on an understanding that the journalist is responsible to society and 'perhaps contributes to the public's decision making in a crisis'.

In a 2021 World Press Freedom Day editorial on May 3, *Fiji Times* editor-in-chief Fred Wesley appealed for Pacific understanding of the role of journalists when speaking truth to power. Lamenting that sometimes journalists were misunderstood in Fiji, he warned:

> In the face of the overwhelming COVID-19 pandemic, journalists, now more than ever, face huge challenges … Faced with many obstacles, passion for the job keeps many in this career. Some have been ridiculed, snubbed, and publicly humiliated, sometimes by state officials. (Wesley, 2021)

In spite of the early arrival of vaccines, any end to the devastating impact of the impact on the global media industry, journalism and journalists is set to continue for the immediate future. Writing with empathy and flexibility such as the two exemplar Pacific writers present here in this article is an appealing model for crisis communication in the Asia-Pacific region.

Article 1:

Pregnant PNG teacher Jerolyn walks 25km for her unborn baby – but dies tragically

By Patrick Angrai

Jerolyn Arimbandai was the only woman teacher of a newly established Catholic-run high school in the Middle Ramu district of Papua New Guinea's Madang province.

She was married to Steven Arimbandai, a local from Josephstaal, also a teacher at Josephstaal High School. They had a child and were expecting their second.

On June 27, she decided to move to town in preparation for the second birth. Her decision to move to town was due to the fact that the Josephstaal Health Centre had run out of basic medical supplies four months prior.

IMAGE: *MY LAND MY COUNTRY*

Figure 1: PNG schoolteacher Jerolyn Arimbandai: A tragically fatal journey to hospital in Madang from a remote village.

At eight months pregnant, she walked a 25 kilometre road. I was with the group accompanying her when we left Josephstaal at 7:00 am. We reached Guam at 6:30 pm.

She departed for town at 9:00 pm. I couldn't get on the PMV [public motor vehicle] since it was overloaded with passengers and cocoa bags.

At around 4:00am, they reached Bogia when Arimbandai experienced the onset of labour pain and was brought to Bogia Health Centre.

Her delivery was supervised at Bogia centre and she was diagnosed with post-partum haemorrhage. She was than referred to Madang General Hospital in the hope that they would get there in time for doctors to treat her.

Died at the hospital front gate

She died in front of the Modilon Hospital gate.

Her decision to seek medical assistance elsewhere was due to poor basic government service delivery at Josephstaal.

The people of Josephstaal are still struggling, trying to bring in goods and services. The only government services that are available are health and education.

IMAGE: *MY LAND MY COUNTRY*

Figure 2: Cameraman Vinansius Wavite travelled to Josephstaal with Patrick Angrai in 2020. They documented the difficulties faced by the Villagers.

All other services are closed.

Health and education are the only "flag raisers" of the province and the nation.

The road is yet to be connected from Guam to Josephstaal. The existing road from the Madang-Sogeram road is now covered with tall grass and shrubs.

To get goods and services to Josephstaal is expensive. The three different payments needed are vehicle hire, boat hire and youth to help.

Sogeram Bridge was washed away by floods in 2019 and is yet to be rebuilt.

There is a mention of road construction from Guam to Josephstaal. The social media updates about the road construction and its progress are all lies.

There has been no progress.

The meaning of the death?

The Middle Ramu member of Parliament, Johnny Alonk, represents the people of Middle Ramu and Josephstaal is one of the four areas in the district.

What does Jerolyn Arimbandai's death tell us about millions of kina committed to the so-called shopping list request from the K10 million (NZ$4.1 million) District Services Improvement Programme (DSIP) funds?

Middle Ramu does not have other roads connecting to town. The only road is the Josephstaal road.

Which road is the Middle Ramu MP funding every year while the Josephstaal road continues to deteriorate?

My question to the provincial government: Does this female teacher's death tell you anything about your distribution of funds throughout the entire province?

The people of Josephstaal had so much hope.

Patrick Angrai is a Papua New Guinean health worker. This article was first published on journalist Scott Waide's blog My Land My Country.

Article 2:

Fiji student son tells of his pregnant nurse mum's losing struggle with COVID-19

By Josefa Babitu in Suva

The dream of putting a smile on his mother's face on his graduation day from university has become one that will never happen for Gabriel Gade, after his mother succumbed to the coronavirus that has killed dozens of people in Fiji (COVID-19 Dashboard, 2021).

"My ultimate dream was to make her proud of all her sacrifices, battles in life and the love she gave me over the last 21 years of my life," he told *Asia Pacific Report*.

Figure 4: Fiji nurse Suliana Bulavakarua: Dedicated to saving lives but lost her own from COVID-19.

"My mother had to work all the time to pay off the mortgage, and I could tell that she was exhausted most of the time, but I think it was her love for her children that kept her going every day.

His mother, Suliana Bulavakarua, worked as a registered nurse at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital (CWMH) in the capital Suva, the largest healthcare facility in the country, where his family believes she contracted the virus while pregnant.

After she tested positive for COVID-19 on July 16, she was transported to the COVID-care facility in Suva, leaving behind Gade and his sister at home as their father was working outside of the mainland.

Her children also tested positive for the virus but have since recovered. Gade was vaccinated with the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine while his mother was awaiting the Moderna vaccine that was to be administered to pregnant women.

Her daughter was not eligible for the vaccine as she was age under 18.

Her condition worsened

Bulavakarua's condition got worse on July 18 and she was advised by attending physicians to deliver her baby by caesarean section.

The 44-year-old gave life to a baby girl but the battle with COVID-19 was so intense that it soon ended her life.

"It was late at night on Wednesday [July 21] when my phone rang and I did not answer because it was a new number and it was late as well. However, little

did I know the hospital was calling me to inform us of our mother's passing," says Gade.

"A team from the hospital knocked on our doors on Thursday morning and relayed the news and my sister and I broke into tears. The world suddenly stopped as I lost the one person I owe everything to.

"My mind ran wild but hours later I had to compose myself for my family, especially my sisters who will now grow up without a mother."

The Lau native said the teachings of his mother was something he would hold dear to his heart and would use in the upbringing of his sisters.

"My mother taught me to be generous, loving and to care for people that needed my help.

IMAGE: WANSOLWARA

Figure 5: Gabriel Gade with his mother, Suliana Bulavakarua, and sister at the time of his 21st birthday in 2020

"I remember a night where I would do my assignments on my study table in our living room and during her days off she would sit on the couch, and then she would try to make small talk.

"My mom and I had this relationship where she would always be pressed to do things, like for me to graduate. My mom was always supportive of my endeavours.

"I love you so much mom."

The "fallen hero" is survived by her husband and three children.

Healthcare workers remember fallen hero

The loss of Bulavakarua was not only for the family, but for healthcare workers around the country as they took to social media to express their feelings.

A nurse posted on Facebook that Bulavakarua was the talk of the operating theatre at the hospital she worked in as they all reminisced about her dedication to saving lives in the country.

Fiji's Health Secretary Dr James Fong, in a televised address, announced the passing of the healthcare worker and said she was one of the many who risked their lives to save people from the deadly delta variant of the virus.

"This current crisis is demonstrating the essential, tireless, innovative and too-often undervalued role of health workers and our frontline colleagues in ensuring strong, resilient health systems for everyone, everywhere," he said.

"They work long hours, sacrifice time with their families, and endure the stresses that this pandemic places upon them as individuals, professionals, and upon the entire health system.

"Delivering health services in an environment of constraint resources will often mean providing access to life saving care at the expense of comfort.

Meanwhile, healthcare workers are currently looking after 17,937 people living with the deadly virus in the nation where 195 people have died.

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The weather is never neutral

Then and now

Commentary: Reporting on the weather may seem at first glance to be a very light story, but it can actually be a serious reflection of how we see ourselves and our changing perception of the world. In 1996, the author embarked on a light-hearted survey of 23 daily papers to find what New Zealand newspapers' weather reports said about their attitudes to the world. In the middle of the 2020 COVID lockdown he reran the survey to see what had changed.

Keywords: Australia, Cold War, COVID-19, New Zealand, Pacific, weather reports

JEREMY REES
Radio New Zealand

Introduction

IN 1997, I wrote a column for the then *New Zealand Journalism Review* about the world weather in newspapers (Rees, 1997). It was a minor piece among all the media analysis, but it did have a point. It argued that you can learn a bit about unconscious bias in journalism by looking at some of the niches of the media—like the world weather reports.

For example, during the Cold War, some of the British broadsheets used to list the Western European democratic capitals under 'Europe' and eastern European capitals under 'the World'. (Rees, 1997) Conversely, the communist media would give temperatures in Havana, Moscow, Beijing and Pyongyang and relegate London and New York to the margins. And there was something of the Little England about the *Times* back then, dividing temperatures into just two categories—Britain and everyone else, under the heading 'Abroad' (Rees, 1997).

Locally, my survey of 23 daily papers in New Zealand from June 1996 showed they found space for Australia, but little for the Pacific. Europe featured strongly among weather temperatures—London was the most listed city. That hint of the 'Old Country' for many Pakeha readers seemed to be still strong. But Africa was largely forgotten and Asia, while important, was patchy, my survey found. Southeast Asia and North Asia were included, South Asia much less so. North America, likewise, was important, South America not. I wrote:

> These are the places our newspapers think we are interested in for whatever reasons—perhaps their news value, proximity, size, impact on our economy, cultural links, tourist destinations or historical ties. (Rees, 1997)

The article went on:

> Does all this matter? Probably not, only pedants and bores pore over temperature charts of daily newspapers. But what it does show is that newspapers have a very traditional idea of where in the world we are and what is important to our readers. Give them Europe, Australia, bits of Asia and a desultory look at the Pacific.

Surprising changes

I happened to find the article during New Zealand's first COVID-19 lockdown in March and April 2020, and I wondered what had changed. What does the world weather report tell us about our attitudes now, 24 years on?

I was surprised at the changes—but not necessarily about world temperatures. My survey from 1996 happened to catch newspapers before the tectonic shift of the internet, possibly even at the height of their profitability, as equity firms moved in seeking profits (Ureneck, 2021). The survey occurred two years before Larry Page and Sergey Brin launched Google (Google, 2021), YouTube (Leskin, 2020) was nearly 10 years away and Facebook eight (Philips, 2008).

In 1996, my survey found many newspapers had very different weather pages—the layouts were different, choices on what was important varied. The place of weather has shifted in the media in the 25 years since then. Today, largely due to streamlined production, newspapers' weather pages are almost identical. The Stuff newspapers, including the *Dominion-Post* and *The Press* as well as regional papers, the NZME papers, with *The New Zealand Herald* and its stable of regional papers and the *Otago Daily Times*, all use page-ready weather pages provided by the MetService, New Zealand's State-Owned Enterprise for weather information. There is very little variation. MetService provides the same in-depth local and national weather. The world view is almost identical, with a list of world temperatures.

That means that gone are the eccentricities of weather reporting, like the *Wanganui Chronicle's* delightful listing of its city temperatures while lumping the rest of New Zealand in with the world, as it did back in the 1990s (Rees, 1997).

News websites receive the same service., with a similar feed of temperatures, weather and forecasts. Stuff (2021), *NZ Herald* (2021), Newshub (2021) and Radio New Zealand (2021) carry MetService data. Television New Zealand's OneNews website appears to be the same. (One News, 2021) The focus of these weather pages is local. They list main centres and regional towns, with a short forecast, temperatures and current weather. Each has a link to the MetService site for more information.

The main difference is in weather news, different to weather reports and temperatures; each site covers its own local weather news, often around upcoming weather events, like floods and droughts. Stuff has also launched a global climate change section (Stuff Climate Change, 2021). It is called the 'Forever Project' (Forever Project, 2021).

None of the websites appear to carry world temperatures. That space has largely been taken by giant websites like Accuweather (Accuweather, 2021)—it claims to be 'the world's most trusted name in weather'—or The Weather Channel (Weather Channel, 2021), which is both a global website and a cable channel. Both carry world weather, but also local forecasts using the geo-location of the reader to give local forecasts as well. Today every smartphone has a customisable weather app which can run up-to-the minute weather from Mt Eden to Marrakesh. They use data from around the world, but users can pick the locations they want (Niel, 2021).

The overall result is that world temperatures occupy a minimal space on local websites and are constrained in local newspapers by being so similar.

Having said that, there have been some changes in newspapers' world weather. The most noticeable change is that the Pacific often gets more space. The *Herald on Sunday*, for example, lumps together Australia and the Pacific—Australia with nine entries, the Pacific with five. The most common destinations across New Zealand newspapers are Apia, Nadi, Nuku'alofa and Rarotonga. The most geographically mobile is Honolulu which sits equally as a Pacific entry or a World one. Often noticeably missing is the largest city in the most populous Pacific country—Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea (pop. 9 million). Also frequently missing is Vanuatu's Port Vila, which loses out because of its low alphabetic position means it gets cut for space.

What of television's prime time news shows? Both TVNZ's OneNews and Mediaworks' Newshub at 6pm follow the same system with a five minute weather bulletin at the end of the programme, zeroing in on local weather, but also highlighting weather in Australia and the Pacific (One News, 2021). Presenters cover the temperatures in the Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia and Vanuatu (Newshub, 2021).

Australian weather on TVNZ and in MetService-sourced newspaper accounts tends to focus on the eastern seaboard nearest New Zealand, so Cairns, a tourist destination, gets more play than, generally, Adelaide.

Europe is still marginally the biggest grouping in newspaper lists—or equal top—depending on how many world temperatures can be fitted in (Stuff newspapers vary from around 40 to 50 entries from the MetService list, depending on space). But again, it is noticeable how they skew to Western Europe, a favourite tourist destination and part of the ancestry of many Pakeha. Among the most common are London, Amsterdam, Paris, Dublin, Edinburgh, Madrid and Berlin.

The old eastern capitals of Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Bucharest or Kiev (or Minsk, now that Belarus is in the news), as well as the Scandinavian capitals of Oslo or Stockholm, normally miss out.

Asia has grown in relative size in newspaper world temperature lists, but it remains skewed to Southeast Asian cities like Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, and North Asian cities such as Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul. But two things are noticeably absent. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh remain under-represented despite the growth of New Zealand's Indian population. Delhi makes an appearance, but hardly ever Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai or Dhaka and Islamabad. Equally, you would be hard-pressed to pick up the fact that China is now New Zealand's largest trading partner and the source of many foreign students and tourists. Hong Kong and Beijing are usually listed; Shanghai sometimes and massive cities like Tianjin or Chongqing never. New Zealand has consulates in at least two Chinese cities which are hardly if ever mentioned in newspaper world temperature lists—Chengdu and Guangzhou (MFAT, 2021).

Among the cities where New Zealand maintains a consulate, but which hardly make it into the world weather list, are Addis Ababa, Brasília and Sao Paulo, Ottawa, Brussels, Dili, Manila, Tehran and Hanoi (Embassy Worldwide, 2021).

In North America, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington DC and Vancouver are the weather staples. But the continent's largest metropolis, Mexico City hardly ever makes the list and nor do the eastern cities of Canada. Toronto and Montreal often miss out in our newspaper weather maps.

To round out the list, Africa, the Middle East and South America get a small nod; possibly marginally more than in 1996, though it would be hard to discern significant change. Perhaps because of the rugby links between New Zealand and South Africa, the Republic sometimes gets two mentions—Johannesburg and Cape Town. The great cities of Nigeria, predicted by global financial firm Price Waterhouse Cooper as one of the fastest growing economies through to 2050, are never mentioned (Price, Waterhouse, Cooper, 2021).

So, does any of this matter?

Weather reporting of the world has shifted with the ease of access to global data on smartphones and apps; people can access weather from anywhere without waiting for a newspaper or primetime television broadcast, or even to consult their local news website. Moreover, much of New Zealand's weather data in the media now comes from one main supplier, MetService. But there are still places where newspapers and TV news show how this corner of the media sees the world and what we are thought to be interested in. If that is true, we have a bit more interest in the Pacific and Asia, but a lot of our focus remains on Australia, the west coast of north America and Europe, as it did 20 years ago. It is a small snapshot of what we see as important. As I wrote in 1997: 'The weather is anything but neutral.' It still is.

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Jeremy Rees is the executive editor of Radio New Zealand. In 1997, his biography in the NZ Journalism Review said "he obviously spends too much time reading the weather." He clearly still does.
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Strings attached
New Zealand's climate aid in the South Pacific

Commentary: Throughout New Zealand's history, the nation has maintained a close and privileged relationship with its island neighbours in the South Pacific, exemplified by centuries of trade and migration. As the effects of climate change encroach on South Pacific nations such as the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, New Zealand has implemented an aid programme via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in order to mitigate the effects of the changing climate on these countries economically and socially. However, research depicts an aid programme that may do harm alongside good—by prioritising climate change mitigation over more sustainable and community-centred strategies, New Zealand has created a situation in which these countries become dependent on our solutions to their problems. By researching the controversial record of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies funded by developed nations across the South Pacific, it becomes evident that New Zealand's programme of climate aid in the region is neocolonial and unsustainable.

Keywords: adaptation, climate change, Fiji, foreign aid, global warming, MFAT, mitigation, New Zealand, neocolonialism, non-government organisations, Pacific, sea level rise, sustainability

MATTHEW SCOTT
Newsroom

THE BEACH is vanishing, one day at a time. The sea approaches the coastal village. It will not be negotiated with. With seawater flooding the water table, crops that have fed the islanders for centuries are losing viability. The problem is invisible, under the people's feet. But it demands change (Scott, 2021).

Each year, the cyclones have seemed to get more volatile and less predictable. What used to be a cycle of weathering the storm and rebuilding has become a frenetic game of wits with the elements.

In 2012, 3.8 percent of the total GDP of the Pacific Islands region was spent on the rebuilding efforts needed after natural disasters. In 2016, that number had risen to 15.6 percent.

The effects of climate change are increasing the volatility and unpredictability of tropical cyclones in the Pacific. That number has nowhere to go but up.

This story is playing out all over the Pacific, where economically vulnerable

nations are some of the first to become victims to the encroaching climate crisis. Countries like Kiribati and Tuvalu, which have contributed least to the carbon emissions driving climate change, are on the brink of becoming its first casualties.

The way that climate change looks set to affect these countries will affect generations, both in terms of economic stability and personal safety. New Zealand set out with the visible intention of safeguarding these vulnerable populations through the adoption of a comprehensive aid programme targeting climate change mitigation in the region. However, on closer inspection, we find that the climate aid programme of the New Zealand government is not beyond reproach.

The New Zealand Aid Programme sends 70.7 percent of its assistance to countries in the Pacific (MFAT Annual Report, 2020a, p. 31). This is a higher proportion of foreign aid budget than in any other world region. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) reports their main goals in this area as helping to see:

> 1.1Pacific Island countries make meaningful progress towards achieving the SDGs in areas that New Zealand is supporting
> 1.2 Gender equality and women's empowerment is improved in Pacific countries
> 1.3 Unemployment among young people is reduced
> 1.4 Two-way trade between New Zealand and the Pacific is increased
> 1.5 Mutual benefits from labour mobility are increased
> 1.6 The implementation of PACER Plus supports the Pacific's wider regional and global economic integration. (MFAT Annual Report, 2020a, p. 3)

The extent to which New Zealand ties its own economic fate to countries in the Pacific and seeks to build a close relationship with them reveals a strong bond that goes back to the shared history between New Zealand and the region. As such, the approach of the New Zealand government is inextricably entwined with funding and encouraging processes of climate adaptation and mitigation in the region.

The second set of outcomes established by MFAT focus on building a more stable, secure, resilient and well-governed Pacific. One of the goals set forth in this section is to ensure 'Pacific countries have an increased resilience to natural hazards and the impacts of climate change' (MFAT Annual Report, 2020, p. 32). This proves that New Zealand has an obvious interest in attempting to help nations in the South Pacific ready themselves for the ever-worsening effects of the climate crisis.

However, recent findings from the studies of professor Patrick Nunn of the University of the Sunshine Coast suggest that the most common forms of climate aid to Pacific nations breeds economic dependency and fails to help

them create a sustainable and self-reliant future. On the surface, these climate aid policies seem like a life preserver to New Zealand's drowning neighbours. But when the programme is considered in the long term, does that life preserver come with a dog collar?

Ruined sea walls line the beaches of the South Pacific, a visual reminder to the people of Oceania that the promise of help is sometimes broken.

New Zealand as a member of the South Pacific

New Zealand has long played a custodial role in the Pacific. A shared colonial history and geographical location have created a familial bond between New Zealand and countries such as the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga.

Employment opportunities stimulated immigration to New Zealand after World War Two, when the New Zealand government opened its doors to the Pacific to fill labour shortages. Soon, the industrial areas of New Zealand's cities were centres of the Pacific diaspora. Today, Auckland is the second-largest Pasifika city in the world (behind Port Moresby by Pacific Islander population).

However, there was always a two-faced element to New Zealand's treatment of the Pacific. The New Zealand government welcomed Pacific migrants in on one hand, but then punished them and sent them away with the other. Norman Kirk's Labour government introduced the Dawn Raids in 1973, when crack police squads stormed homes and workplaces looking for overstayers—countless migrants from the Pacific were separated from their families, lives and livelihoods.

Between 2015 and 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided $200 million in climate aid to the Pacific.

Does the same flavour of double-dealing hang over New Zealand's climate aid programme?

'People argue that aid is buying influence,' says Nunn. 'I don't think they are far off the mark.'

The motivations for climate aid in the Pacific are murky when we look at communication within the government bodies responsible. 'The region is also that part of the world where our foreign policy "brand" as a constructive and principled state must most obviously play out,' wrote MFAT in its October 2017 Briefing to an Incoming Minister.

This suggests an ulterior motive to New Zealand's offer of a helping hand. The MFAT website argues that strengthening the national 'brand' is in order to promote New Zealand as a 'safe, sustainable and stable location to operate a business and to invest'. A self-interested approach by the New Zealand government to climate aid in the South Pacific runs counter to the messaging it delivers, talking about a safer and more resilient South Pacific as the main goal.

As a capitalist nation operating on free market values, such self-interest is unsurprising. The aid programme being motivated by New Zealand's ability to

profit or maintain a place of economic supremacy and power in the region fits with the neoliberal system of values New Zealand has adopted in an ongoing process since the economic reforms of Roger Douglas in the late 1980s.

MFAT says in its 2020 annual report that New Zealand is 'committed to Pacific regionalism and continues to support key regional institutions as essential delivery partners for New Zealand investment in the region,' (MFAT, 2020a, p. 144). Is investment the operative word in this declaration?

The behaviour of governmental institutions certainly suggests so when one looks at the short-term nature of New Zealand's climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Where is the money going?

That does not mean that climate aid in the Pacific cannot have altruistic effects. Surely it is the outcome rather than the intention that ultimately matters.

The questions of where the money is actually going still needs to be answered. Nunn and Luetz (2020) cast doubt on whether current modes of climate adaptation can effectively promote long-term solutions for the islands. Nunn has argued:

> It's unhelpful in the sense that it's implicitly encouraged that Pacific Island countries don't build their own culturally-based resilience. It's encouraged that they adopt global solutions that aren't readily transferable to a Pacific Island context. (Nunn, 2020)

One of the more visible examples is the ubiquitous sea wall. Sea walls protect coastal communities from rising sea levels throughout New Zealand, so it seems obvious that they could do the same job for the country's Pacific neighbours. However, developed nations can invest in building walls to stand for the long-term, and with access to the capital and human resources needed to maintain them, they can be expected to be an effective solution to the problems of flooding and rising sea levels for generations. This is not always the case in the developing countries of the South Pacific, as Nunn has noted.

> Usually there's not enough data to inform the optimal design of sea walls. So the sea wall collapses after two years. Then the community struggles to find funds to fix it because they are not part of the cash economy. (Nunn, 2020)

Nunn blames this recurring issue on the short-sightedness of foreign aid programmes from the governments of developed countries in the region. 'You can't uncritically transfer solutions from a developed to a developing country context—however obvious they seem.'

Pacific media journalist professor David Robie regards New Zealand's relation-

ship with the Pacific as neocolonial. 'We build sea walls where they would plant mangroves,' he notes. Mangroves, of course, don't require upkeep, and they are a solution that people in the Pacific have used for centuries (Robie, 2020)

Of course, such solutions might not always fulfil the urgent interventions required during the climate crisis. Mangroves take time to grow and for their roots to sink down into the soil and anchor the plant in place.

The question is, to what extent has the government of countries like New Zealand examined the pros and cons of 'their' solutions and 'our' solutions? As New Zealand seeks to advance its 'brand' in the Pacific, does it give these alternative solutions due consideration, or is there a tendency to fall back on previously used Western strategies by default?

'It would have been better to not have had such a neocolonial approach,' said Robie. 'We could have encouraged the Pacific countries to be a lot more self-reliant.'

Short-term solutions for long-term problems

According to an MFAT *Official Information Act* release on climate change strategy, climate aid consists of 190 different activities across the Pacific. Of these activities, the largest focus is put on agriculture (25 percent), followed by energy generation and supply (20 percent) and disaster risk reduction (12 percent).

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, released in August, 2021 stated that many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes such as rising sea level are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years. According to the report,

> Coastal areas will see continued sea level rise throughout the 21st century, contributing to more frequent and severe coastal flooding in low-lying areas and coastal erosion. Extreme sea level events that previously occurred once in 100 years could happen every year by the end of this century. (IPCC press release, p. 2)

With long-term projections of sea levels rising, are these areas enough to safeguard New Zealand's Pacific whānau long into the future? Nunn has spoken about plans by Japanese foreign aid to divert the mouth of the Nadi River in order to stop the increasingly frequent flooding of Nadi town (Nunn, 2020, personal communication).

> It would be far more useful for the Japanese government to develop a site for the relocation of Nadi town. Somewhere inland, somewhere in the hinterland. Put in utilities and incentivise relocation of key services—because the situation is not going to improve. In 10-15 years, large parts of Nadi town are going to be underwater. (Nunn, 2020)

Similar situations can be seen across the islands of the Pacific. Strategies that focus on capacity building and disaster management are quick and efficient ways to solve the effects of the broader problem—but in effect they may be a case of treating the symptom, rather than the disease. Climate change is an epoch-defining force that is going to irrevocably change life across the globe. The sixth IPCC report put it bluntly that humans are unequivocally the driving force behind climate change.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern characterised allegations that the New Zealand government had not done enough to combat the growing threat of climate change as unjust, saying 'it would be unfair to judge New Zealand based on what essentially were targets that were set some time ago when we are now undertaking an incredibly heavy piece of work to lift our ambition and lift our emissions reductions' (Palmer, 2021).

However, the results of the report are clear—the effect of the anthropogenic carbon emissions have led to increased climate change markers, in New Zealand as well as across the South Pacific. The New Zealand government can fund short-term adaptation to these issues and New Zealanders may feel better about themselves and their Pacific 'brand', but the real solutions lie in establishing humane systems of relocation around the Pacific. Some of this comes in the form of increasing the New Zealand government's quota for climate migrants seeking asylum in New Zealand. For countries that consist of primarily low-lying atolls such as Kiribati, leaving their ancestral homeland will one day sadly be the only option.

Other nations such as Fiji and Samoa have the capacity to weather the storm if development is focused in the right direction—the gradual relocation of population centres inland, away from the risks of increasing flood frequency and rising tides.

In MFAT's 2019-2020 report into the year's proceedings, they outlined sustained goals to focus on the effect of climate change in the Pacific region, giving some examples of climate aid that was developed.

> Achievements in 2019-20 that will increase Pacific countries' resilience to the impacts of climate change included a pilot technology solution to assess water tank levels, and supporting work with Fiji communities to prevent and manage conflicts due to climate change-related internal relocation. (MFAT, 2020a, pp. 32-33)

MFAT have stated in an *Official Information Act* release of July 2019 that three quarters of their investment into climate aid 'will go towards supporting communities to adapt in situ to the effects of climate change, which will enable them to avert and delay relocation'. Here we can see that although MFAT is willing to extinguish the fires of conflict as they arise due to relocation within Fiji, it seems it is unwilling to

help fund the relocation themselves, instead relying on in situ solutions.

This is a short-sighted approach—procrastination on an international scale. The effects of climate change are no longer just theories, or nightmares that may or may not come true. There is a clear road map to a future in which many areas in the Pacific are in peril. It follows that a country like New Zealand—with its Pacific location and developed economy—has a moral duty to make sure that the effect of its aid helps, not just the current members of Pacific whanau, but also the generations to come.

Examining New Zealand's aid

In July, 2019, an inquiry was launched by the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee into Aotearoa's Pacific aid. The committee examined every facet of how the lion's share of the New Zealand government's foreign aid budget is spent. With Pacific aid, this means a discussion of climate change is inevitable. Their findings were released in August 2021.

Overall, the committee paints a picture of a considered approach to foreign aid, with New Zealand making an effort to take responsibility as the most developed economic power in the geopolitical bloc to bring about a world in which people have social mobility and human rights are protected. Much of the report, however, centred around the committee's recommendations as to how MFAT should proceed.

Some of these recommendations shine a light on the potential problems inherent to New Zealand's regime of climate aid. They recommended that the aid programme take steps to 'more deeply engage with local communities, ensuring all voices within those communities are heard, and their viewpoints respected.' This suggests a certain level of overhanded detachment coming from New Zealand's aid programme. They also suggested that MFAT places a heightened emphasis on social inclusion step up efforts to make sure development is centred around locally-owned industry.

The committee also asked for public submissions. Some of these provided perspectives that the committee themselves may have glanced over.

'Pushing New Zealand values into the Pacific—particularly when tied to monetary support—could be viewed as a renewed form of colonialism, submitted one anonymous member of the public. Another raised the point that 'greater engagement is needed with local communities to ascertain both their values and needs, and for aid to be appropriately tailored.'

These criticisms are not definitive proof of missteps on the part of the ministry. However, they are talking points that the ministry themselves seem unwilling to address. When questions of neo-colonialism and unsustainable aid programmes were raised to the ministry, a spokesperson provided answers that glossed over the criticisms.

'Four principles underpin New Zealand's international development cooperation: effectiveness, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability,' said an MFAT spokesperson when asked if there is a risk of breeding economic dependency via New Zealand's forms of aid.

> Their purpose is to guide us and those we work with in our shared aim to contribute to a more peaceful world, in which all people live in dignity and safety, all countries can prosper, and our shared environment is protected. (MFAT, September, 2021)

It sounds admirable, and it places the government approach of New Zealand on the right side of history. But it doesn't answer the specific concerns that have been levelled at the New Zealand Government's aid programme—the fact that deliberately or not, New Zealand may be guilty of building a relationship of dependency with countries in the Pacific.

Are answers like these just a further attempt to bolster the 'brand' that New Zealand is trying to sell to the Pacific, and indeed the rest of the world?

An alternative to mitigation in the South Pacific is opening migration pathways into New Zealand, as suggested by New Zealand's Minister for Pacific Peoples, 'Aupito Tofae Su'a, William Sio, at the Second Pacific Climate Change conference in Wellington in February 2018 (Sio, 2018).

In his analysis of what policies would need to be put in place to allow such migration to happen, independent researcher Philip Cass suggests there are three groups that would play a crucial role (Cass, 2018).

The first of these are legislators and legal experts who 'must work to create a legal framework within which such migration can take place.'

Next are churches—'central to Islander identity and culture… identified as playing a vital role.'

The third player in this arrangement are the New Zealand and Pacific media, who he predicts would have a 'major role in preparing the public for climate change migration, albeit in a way that may require the New Zealand media to adopt a developmental function and operate as a conduit for the necessary social change.' (p. 141)

Sio's work in this area points to the inevitability of widespread climate migration in the Pacific— however, it also underlines the existence of other solutions to climate issues in the area. It follows that New Zealand's climate aid policy is just one of many strategies that could be followed, such as increasing climate migration quotas.

Pouring money into the problem

When New Zealand signed the Paris Agreement in 2016, New Zealand was putting itself forward as one of the countries committed to strengthening the

Table 1: NZ-supported climate projects in the Pacific, 2019

- Solar generation plant in Nauru ($4m)
- Electricity Roadmap to decarbonise the sector in the Marshall Islands ($1m)
- Pacific Climate Change Centre in Samoa ($3.5m)
- Pacific voice amplification to showcase climate action ($4m)
- Climate hazard mapping and risk planning across the Pacific ($5m)
- Increasing renewable energy generation in Niue (from 13 percent to 40 percent currently)

Source: Beehive. govt.nz, August 2019

global response to the burgeoning climate crisis. By signing this agreement, New Zealand made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

John Key pledged to provide up to $200 million in climate aid over the next four years. Most of this would be focused on the Pacific.

The Paris Agreement recognised that the Pacific was indeed one of the world's most vulnerable regions when it comes to the effects of climate change—this is for a multitude of reasons. There are the obvious, such as the fact that countries consisting of low-lying atolls such as Kiribati and the Marshall Islands are the most at risk from rising sea levels, although there are a range of other reasons.

For example, small populations reliant on a narrow array of staple crops and food sources put the people of the Pacific in a particularly precarious position. The effects of colonisation have left these countries socio-economically deprived and in thrall to developed countries like Australia, France, New Zealand, the United States and China.

The reasons why the Pacific is so vulnerable to the crisis are complex and various. It therefore follows that the solutions to the crisis are as well.

Chief among these is shifting from expensive answers to the problem to those that do not cost anything at all. Cashless adaptation could come in the form of education or placing a greater emphasis on indigenous solutions to climate change.

Steering the ship towards cashless adaptation would reduce vulnerable countries' reliance on their wealthier neighbours.

Another solution is the slow relocation of coastal cities into the hinterlands of the countries, such as Fiji's Nadi, where flooding in the central business district is becoming more and more frequent.

Yeo, Blong & McAneney's analysis of flooding frequency in Ba Town, an area 62 kilometres from Nadi, found an inadequate level of planning for flood

management (p. 1013). Although they found levels of flooding have not recently increased with the severity that some state, they acknowledged the planning difficulties inherent to having a city in an area prone to flooding.

They noted cyclones are often the cause of these floods. 'However, floods not associated with tropical cyclones have also occurred with sufficient frequency and severity to warrant greater attention from forecasters and emergency managers.'

The question is, who are these forecasters and emergency managers?

Foreign aid can play a part in encouraging and funding such projects, but at the end of the day, it is the governments of these countries themselves that hold the reins. The city of Nadi will not be moved without the constant efforts of the Fijian government over the course of generations.

In their 2019 paper 'Foreign aid and climate change policy', Kono and Montinola claim that while foreign aid for climate adaptation and mitigation is on the rise, the manner in which it is employed may render it toothless and unable to make changes for the people of the Pacific in the long term, concluding that there has been little to no evidence that foreign climate aid in Pacific nations can be correlated with Pacific governments enacting policies addressing the crisis.

They point out that 'we have little evidence that climate aid actually encourages recipients to adopt climate legislation' (Kono & Montinola, 2019, p. 1).

It is arguable whether the New Zealand government expects foreign aid to affect the policies of recipient governments. However, it is undeniable that solutions to climate change require synchronised action from both suppliers and recipients of this aid.

This must be qualified, however, with the fact that they also pointed out issues with measurement with regard to how scientists are able to track climate aid—while it is a relatively recent phenomenon as a part of the structures of international aid, its rising levels are difficult to measure effectively and accurately.

Kono and Montinola say although 'mitigation and adaptation has risen dramatically in recent years… climate aid measured with Rio markers appears to lack both validity and reliability' (Kono & Montinola, 2019, p. 12). This suggests further developments into the measurement of climate data may be needed before full conclusions on this issue can be drawn.

Wahyuni, Fitrah, Handayani and Robie (2018) make the point that the ability to adapt to flooding and sea level rise must come from the level of local government as well as communities on the ground, claiming 'the ability to adapt to disaster at all levels in society is required not only in affected communities, but also in local governments and even external parties' (p. 32).

If New Zealand's aid programme is focused primarily on the construction of sea walls and other specifically-targeted development projects, it will neglect the opportunity to empower the decision-makers of Pacific nations, allowing the nations themselves to develop an autonomous approach to climate change and reduce reliance on more economically-advantaged nations in the region.

Help comes on New Zealand's terms

In order to plant the seeds for long-term viable responses to climate aid, the approach of the New Zealand government must consider the worldview of people in the Pacific. Nunn sees this as another form of developed countries employing neocolonial tactics in order to build relationships of dependency with countries in need. 'You cannot take your worldviews and impose them on people who have different worldviews and expect those people to accept them,' he said.

On many of the islands of the Pacific, the scientific worldview does not hold automatic precedence over spiritual and mythological views, as it does in the secular West.

Low science literacy and a stronger connection to nature through cultural tradition and ritual such as religion mean that if the sea level rises, people in the Pacific often tend to consider it a divine act. Janif, Nunn, et al. (2016) speak about the importance of preserving local approaches to environmental challenges rather than attempting to supplant them with Western approaches.

> There is no doubt that traditional ecological and environmental knowledge is valued highly by the older generation of rural dwelling Fijians who also consider that storytelling and oral instruction are the most culturally valid methods for communicating this knowledge. (Janif, Nunn, et al., 2016, p. 7)

Practitioners of foreign aid need to show cultural competency if their approach is going to be picked up by the people of the Pacific.

'You've got to understand why your interventions are failing,' said Nunn. 'You go in there and argue on the basis of science. Nobody in rural Pacific Island communities gives a stuff about science. What they understand is God. To ignore that and pretend that it's not important is just going to result in a continuation of failed interventions' (Nunn, 2020).

Understanding is the route to developing a system of long-term and sustainable examples of climate change adaptation and mitigation in the Pacific. 'Empowering Pacific Island communities means understanding them,' said Nunn. 'Not just what their priorities are, but also how they've reached those priorities.'

With crisis comes opportunity

Prior to 2020, climate change was on its way to being a top-priority issue to governments all over the world—particularly those in highly-affected regions like the Pacific. Then 2020 happened. COVID-19 has dominated public talk for months and there are no signs of this changing any time soon. Big ticket issues like social inequality and climate change found themselves on the backburner during the 2020 New Zealand election, and the same could be said in many societies around the world.

The virus has brought global tourism to a standstill and threatened the safety of many already vulnerable indigenous populations. Both impoverished and

tourism-reliant nations in the Pacific have been placed in drastically uncertain financial straits. Although the rates of infection have been fortunately low across the Pacific, apart from Fiji, French Polynesia and Papua New Guinea, countries like Fiji and the Cook Islands have lost one their main sources of income— holidaymakers on the seek for a sun-soaked patch of white-sand beach.

The beaches are there waiting, but the planes haven't begun to land in their pre-COVID numbers yet. With the threat of economic ruin hanging over their heads, Pacific nations' climate change options have been reduced even further. However, from the perspective of analysing the problematic elements of New Zealand's climate aid programme, there is a silver lining.

In April 2020, MFAT reported that almost two-thirds of its development programmes had been affected by COVID-19 in some way. In the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee's Inquiry into New Zealand's aid to the Pacific report, it is said that recovery from this would require a range of responses, including stopping, reassessing and adapting, or re-phasing projects on an individual basis.

Herein lies the opportunity. The effects of the global pandemic have forced aid agencies and foreign departments to re-examine their approaches to foreign aid. Not least of these include New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Affairs, which must analyse the best foot to put forward in the 'new world' called home since the global spread of COVID-19.

It follows that now that reassessment of New Zealand's position in international relations is being forced upon the country by external circumstances, it is also an appropriate time for New Zealand to reconsider its role as an aid donor in the South Pacific—brooking dependence from developing nations.

The committee's report went on to say 'the ministry pointed out that travel restrictions due to COVID-19 mean that it will need to rely more heavily on local staff and expertise to provide aid. The ministry also hopes to move to a more adaptive and locally-empowered model' (MFAT, 2020a).

It may be the virus that forces the hand of the New Zealand government and has the end result of more of the authority placed locally across the Pacific. If New Zealand is indeed guilty of perpetuating a neocolonial system of foreign aid, this could certainly be part of the remedy.

The country is being given a nudge, if not a shove—an impetus to change. New Zealand can resist that or take the opportunity in its own hands.

Now is the time for the people of New Zealand to ask their elected officials for more equitable and sustainable forms of climate assistance in the Pacific.

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Taliban takeover

Charlotte Bellis faces perils outside 'enemy territory'

Commentary: New Zealand-born Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Peter Arnett was one of a handful of journalists allowed to stay in Baghdad as the American offensive against Iraq began in 1991. Reporting first from the rooftop of the Al-Rashid Hotel, he chronicled—literally —the impact of the bombing campaign. But on Day Four he was taken to a bombed-out building in a suburb that was then an infant milk formula factory, but which would later gain notoriety thanks to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh—Abu Ghraib. His report was accurate. In 2003, Arnett was once again in 'enemy territory' and (by his own later admission, unwisely) gave an interview to Iraqi television during the Second Iraq War. In the interview, he stated that the civilian casualties inflicted by the Coalition forces were counterproductive. In August 2021, it was the turn of another New Zealand journalist, Charlotte Bellis reporting for Al Jazeera English, to tell us what she saw. And much of the world has now seen her. The author examines the pitfalls that she may face.

Keywords: Abu Ghraib, Afghanistan, Al Jazeera, credibility, foreign correspondence, gender, human rights, Iraq, New Zealand, Taliban, truth, war correspondence

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I HAD a flashback to another New Zealand foreign correspondent as I watched Al Jazeera journalist Charlotte Bellis reporting on the entry of the Taliban into Kabul (Ellis, 2021). My mind went back 30 years to the bombing of Baghdad when another New Zealand journalist, Peter Arnett, reported nightly amid the thunder and flash of bombs and anti-aircraft fire.

Bellis has not had to face the same pyrotechnics, but Taliban firing their AK-47s into the air can be just as deadly if they alter their aim. However, that was not the comparison that came into my mind. I was reminded of the perils of reporting from 'enemy territory'.

Arnett was one of a handful of journalists allowed to stay in Baghdad as the American offensive against Iraq began in 1991. Reporting first from the rooftop of the Al-Rashid Hotel, he chronicled—quite literally—the impact of the bombing campaign. But on Day Four he was taken to a bombed-out building in a

suburb that would later gain notoriety thanks to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh—Abu Ghraib (Hersh, 2004).

In 1991, the suburb was home to a factory which, according to Iraqi officials, had been the sole source of infant milk formula in Iraq. Arnett toured what remained of the building, parts of which were ankle-deep in white powder, and took some intact sachets for the children at his hotel.

His report that night of the destruction of the baby-milk plant provoked a furious response from the Pentagon, the White House and even Congress. The plant, they stated, had manufactured chemical weapons and, in the words of representative Laurence Coughlin of Pennsylvania, Arnett had become 'the Joseph Goebbels of Saddam Hussein's Hitler-like regime' (Arnett, 2003).

In 1995, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law defected and confirmed that Iraq's biological weapons programme was centred on Al Hakam, 96 kilometres southwest of Baghdad, and at three other facilities, but did not include the baby milk factory (Schwartz, 2015). Arnett's report had been accurate.

In 2003, Arnett was once again in 'enemy territory' and (by his own later admission, unwisely) gave an interview to Iraqi television during the Second Iraq War. In the interview he stated that the civilian casualties inflicted by the Coalition forces were counterproductive and that he had been telling Americans about the determination of the Iraqis to oppose the invasion. Those home truths cost him his job with NBC (Cozens, 2003).

He had done no more than follow the philosophy he established during a Pulitzer Prize-winning period covering the Vietnam War: Report what you see. It may have led to character assassination by those in power, but it also earned enduring accolades from his peers.

Now it is the turn of Charlotte Bellis to tell us what she sees.

And much of the world has now seen her.

She was one of only three women permitted to attend the Taliban's first media conference in Kabul in 20 years on 17 August 2021 and she asked the first question. This female journalist —whose striking blue eyes and blonde hair marked her as a foreign non-believer in spite of the hijab she wore—cut to the chase: 'There is a lot of concern whether women will be able to work, that girls will be still be able to go to school. What assurances can you give to women and girls that their rights will be protected?'

It took real courage for a woman to ask the question, given the Taliban's track record. That part of the media conference was broadcast around the world.

Bellis had already given Al Jazeera viewers insights into the overwhelming of the capital, reporting on rag-tag units' entry into the city and trying to verify reports of human rights abuses in territory already occupied by the Taliban. Her reports from the chaos of Kabul International Airport were made against a backdrop of surging people and gunmen firing their weapons into the air as a form of crowd control.

Figure 1: Charlotte Bellis reporting live from Kabul for Al Jazeera English.

In a sit-down interview after the press conference with Abdul Qahar Balkhi, an articulate fluent English speaker from the Taliban's Cultural Commission, she continued to pursue the issue of human rights. The responses, like the response to her question at the media conference, sounded like the voice of sweet reason and compromise. He even praised New Zealand for providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

It was part of what has been termed the Taliban's charm offensive, which Western commentators and officials have condemned as disingenuous.

Bellis will continue to report what the Taliban say, and that is exactly what she should do. She has demonstrated that she is unafraid in the questions she poses, and the answers she receives will give insights into how Afghanistan's returned rulers will govern, conduct themselves, and control their radical elements (or not).

She will run risks.

She may work for an Arab-owned media network, but she is a New Zealander. Her country had fought against the Taliban, which could see her treated as hostile if revenge-seeking extremists hold power. She will also tread a difficult path in her dealings with a group of men whose core belief places women well out of the public eye and on a different intellectual plane. For now, however, she seems safe and there is a reason (to which I will return).

She may not, however, be safe from the same Western forces that confronted Peter Arnett.

CHARLOTTE BELLIS/FACEBOOK

Figure 2: Charlotte Bellis: reporting with empathy and nuance.

Let me paint a couple of scenarios: The evacuation of refugees suffers a catastrophic failure that is the fault of the United States or its allies, and the Taliban tell Bellis 'where the blame lies'. Or, the Taliban present Bellis with what they claim is evidence of abuses by US or allied troops during their occupation of Afghanistan.

Under either scenario, she would need only to report what she saw and what the Taliban said in order to face the same sort of peril that Arnett faced in the 1991 Gulf War. He, too, was simply reporting what he saw and heard. He was the victim of a default position by politicians and the military in times of conflict: If you've been banged to rights, shoot the messenger.

I am certain that this particular danger will no more stop Bellis than it did Arnett. She has a track record and an employer that should protect her reputation.

She gave an insight into her latest assignment and her approach to her role during an interview with *New Zealand Herald* journalist Kurt Bayer (2021). Here is a short excerpt that shows why the invitation to that media conference was not sheer luck and why she can be relied on to report impartially what she sees.

> It took just 10 days from the first city falling to the capital Kabul succumbing to Taliban control.
>
> Bellis was right in the thick of the action. Years of journalistic legwork was paying off.

> Based in Doha, where political negotiations have been ongoing for the past three years, she's slowly become a familiar face and got to know some of the Taliban's political leadership key players, who are also headquartered in the Qatari capital.
>
> Over time, they'd started to trust each other.
>
> 'The Taliban are painted as a bunch of brutal, medieval terrorists but at the top there are some people who are quite moderate, progressive and rational,' Bellis says.
>
> 'So it's easier to have a relationship with those types of people, who are more relatable and are happy to talk and have a dynamic conversation.'
>
> She would meet them for tea, even have some around to her house, where they would have open discussions.
>
> 'I'd say, "What's the game plan for this? How do you plan for that? In the West, that's not going to fly if you do this, and if you want progress, you won't be able to do that, people won't put up with it."
>
> 'And they would take that and ask what I would suggest. They are actually open to conversations about trying to make Afghanistan better. That's not to say there aren't brutal, medieval killers within the organisation, there are. But it's not blanket.' (Bayer, 2021)

Charlotte Bellis did the groundwork, established contacts, and gained a level of trust over time. That puts her in a far better position to report on the Taliban than many of the remaining Western journalists in Kabul. The interview with Abdul Qahar Balkhi suggests she will also be granted interviews with senior members of the movement.

But don't be surprised to see her labelled the Joseph Goebbels of the Taliban's Hitler-like regime when she simply follows Arnett's dictum of reporting what she sees. And don't be surprised when, like her predecessor, she continues to do just that.

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ARTICLES

COVID-19 vaccine online misinformation in Fiji

Preliminary findings

Abstract: Digital media opens a vast array of avenues for lay people to effectively engage with news, information and debates about important science and health issues. However, they have also become a fertile ground for various stakeholders to spread misinformation and disinformation, stimulate uncivil discussions and engender ill-informed, dangerous public decisions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, antivaccination social media accounts were proliferating online, threatening to further escalate vaccine hesitancy. The pandemic signifies not only a global health crisis, it has also proven to be an infodemic, characterised by many conspiracy theories. Prior research indicates that belief in health-related conspiracies can harm efforts to curtail the spread of a virus. This article presents and examines preliminary research findings on COVID-19 vaccine related misinformation being circulated on Fijian Facebook Forums.

Keywords: COVID-19, disinformation, Facebook, Fiji, misinformation, social media, vaccine, vaccine hesitancy, vaccination

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Introduction

THE SPREAD of coronavirus disease COVID-19 worldwide in 2020 brought the modern world to an extraordinary standstill. The scientific community and world governments have responded by providing unprecedented opportunities for research related to COVID-19 (Lake, 2020). In the early days of the pandemic, researchers noticed the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories, as well as unconfirmed information about COVID-19

(Kouzy et al., 2020; Mian & Khan, 2020). Brennen, Simon, Howard, and Nielsen (2020) noted that significant amounts of misinformation were created by modifying information whereby 'existing and often true information is spun, twisted, recontextualised, or reworked' (p. 1). Numerous conspiracy theories have also abounded which have sought to link COVID-19 to global elites. Although public epidemiological studies and other scientific work have been conducted on COVID-19, a large amount of information has caused the public to be confused as to which sources of information are reliable (Lima, Lopes, & Brito, 2020).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the spread of the virus a 'pandemic' on 11 March 2020. During this global pandemic, many countries implemented blockade measures, and at the time of writing, some countries are still doing so. Approximately 4.5 million people have died globally, and 216 million people were infected (World Health Organisation, 2021). During this period, large amounts of COVID-19 misinformation have circulated. This has resulted in WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus referring to the crisis as an 'infodemic', that is a situation when people face an overload of information that might be true or false, challenging what to believe (Hao & Basu, 2020).

This infodemic has also had an impact on the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines. Rumours and conspiracy theories have been identified as triggers for the general public's COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and acceptance (Freeman et al., 2020). Numerous conspiracy theories have also sought to link the COVID-19 pandemic to a universal plan by global elites. This has been in keeping with the suggestion by Sunstein and Vermeule (2009) that conspiracy theories typically seek to '*explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who attempt to conceal their role (at least until their aims are accomplished)*' (p. 205). Vaccination hesitancy has been based on false claims that the COVID-19 vaccines contain infertility agents or that they can spread an infectious virus such as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) (Aylward & Heymann, 2005; Jegede, 2007). In the past, harmful, and unsubstantiated claims about the effectiveness of vaccines have influenced vaccine hesitancy.

Against this backdrop, social media platforms have become a common source of health information. During a pandemic, people can use social media to raise awareness of diseases, transmission, and prevention mechanisms (M. S. Islam et al., 2020; Lavorgna, Ippolito, Esposito, Tedeschi, & Bonavita, 2017). Public health information on COVID-19 shared on online platforms is often reinforced by rumours and conspiracy theories. These rumours and conspiracy theories are not always based on scientifically accepted evidence (Lavorgna et al., 2017). When searching for health information on online platforms, the use and sharing of misinformation or baseless scientific data is a behaviour that may endanger public health efforts to curb the spread of the actual virus ((Seneviratne & Muppidi,

S, 2021; Waszak, Kasprzycka-Waszak, & Kubanek, 2018). People often share concerns, mistrust, and rumours about vaccines on social media before being detected through traditional surveillance systems, such as event-based surveillance (Fernández-Luque & Bau, 2015). Therefore, monitoring social media data has been identified as one of the best methods for tracking misinformation in real-time and possible ways to dispelling misinformation and improve vaccine acceptance.

A UNESCO Policy Brief provides two typologies for understanding the COVID-19 infodemic/ disinfodemic: First, it identifies nine important themes and four major format types linked with COVID-19 misinformation. Themes include deception, political assaults on journalists, and misrepresenting legitimate independent journalism as 'fake news' (Posetti & Bontcheva, 2020). Disinformation infiltrators and coordinated campaigns use highly emotive narrative structures and memes, forged, fraudulently altered, or decontextualised pictures and videos, fake websites, data sets, and sources (Robie & Krishnamurthi, 2020, p. 181).

Thus, this article examines the dissemination of COVID-19 vaccine-related misinformation and conspiracy theories on Fiji social media. Based on social media data collected over a three-month (April–June 2020) period, this article presents the preliminary findings of the research. It provides a discussion of sources and types of COVID-19 vaccine related misinformation on social media. Additionally, critical thematic narratives that have emerged from the social media data are identified and examined.

Vaccine content on social media

More recently, the widespread increase of COVID-19 and the resultant global pandemic has become a focus of intense social media discourse with Twitter reporting a COVID-19 related tweet every millisecond and the hashtag #coronavirus surging to become the second most used in 2020 (Cinelli et al., 2020; Josephson & Lambe, 2020). Unfortunately, false, and misleading information about COVID-19, potentially dangerous treatments, and eventual vaccination continue to grow on social media platforms. 'Infodemic' was the subject of an early COVID-19 study by Cinelli et al. (2020), who used epidemic modelling to the spread of information on multiple platforms to determine fundamental reproduction numbers for the 'transmissibility' of postings on each platform. Additionally, irrespective of platform, there were no significant differences between the disseminating patterns of information considered questionable compared with reliable ones. There is also growing worry that vaccine-related conversations are not confined to legitimate human accounts. Broniatowski et al. (2018) looked at how accounts belonging to robots (software programmes which create automated material) and trolls (internet accounts that falsify the user's identity and whose goal is to provoke conflict) operate on Twitter.

It is worth noting that the current trends in COVID-19 vaccine discourse

bear a striking similarity to historical trends. Vaccine discourse on social media has had time to evolve, with such trends in discourse often coinciding with real-world public health events (Gunaratne, Coomes, & Haghbayan, 2019). For instance, Gunaratne et al. (2019) demonstrated that anti-vaccine discourse on Twitter experienced a significant surge in 2015, coinciding with the 2014–2015 measles outbreak, publication of the anti-vaccine book *Vaccine Whistleblower* (#cdcwhistleblower), and the release of the film *Vaxxed* (#vaxxed). It also demonstrates that pro and anti-vaccine content may also naturally disseminate into distinct communities, possibly due to self-selection on social media, further enhanced by online algorithms, amalgamating like-minded communities to contrasting online information and content. For example, anti-vaccine content on Twitter largely coalesced into a community centred around #cdcwhistleblower and #vaxxed proponents, while pro-vaccine content primarily centred around the hashtag #vaccineswork (Gunaratne et al., 2019; Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Content appears to transfer between users who share similar sentiments regarding vaccination but rarely across those with differing opinions, suggesting the structure of such platforms may give the illusion of debate, but in practice mainly serves to reinforce previously held opinions rather than the consideration of new ones (Yuan, Schuchard, & Crooks, 2019). Such ideological isolation may limit the ability of public health to promote vaccination on social media (Yuan et al., 2019).

COVID-19 outbreak and vaccination status in Fiji

COVID-19 was first identified in Fiji on 19 March 2020. After containing the spread and avoiding a community outbreak of the deadly virus for almost a year, Fiji reported its first case in early April 2021 and is now confronting the second wave of COVID-19. Since the first case was detected on March 19, 2020, 46,211 positive cases have been reported and 489 deaths as of August 31, 2021. Of these, 99.9 percent of positive cases and 99.5 percent of deaths have been recorded in this second wave outbreak (Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021c). Fijians are suffering from COVID-19's knock-on consequences in a variety of ways, and the epidemiological situation has been rapidly deteriorating; the Greater Suva Area (Lami, Suva, and Nausori) were designated 'Medical containment zones' on Viti Levu by the Fijian Government on 26 April 2021 (Naidu, 2021). Since then, travel to and from these places has been prohibited. COVID-19 is a significant concern for the Fijian Government, and vaccination efforts are seen as one of the best ways to facilitate a return to pre-pandemic lives. As stated by the Fijian Government and Ministry of Health (MoH):

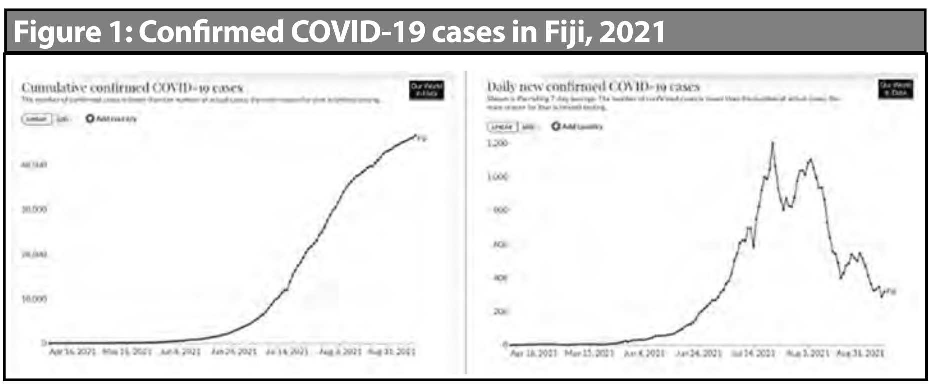
> The health and wellbeing of all Fijians are paramount. The COVID-19 vaccines are crucial for protection against the deadly global pandemic.

> The Vaccine is a worldwide effort to fight against the COVID-19 virus. This is a huge step back to normality for Fiji and its people with hopes that our international borders will open to visitors, restoring the livelihoods for thousands of Fijians, who for eons depended on the tourism sector. (Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021a)

For the protection of all Fijians against the COVID-19 virus, the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for use in Fiji for those aged 18 years and older. More recently, the Moderna vaccines were approved for Fijians with specific medical or health conditions that would prevent them from receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine (Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021b). It is suggested that the vaccination would be given to the priority groups initially; however, with bilateral partners commitments to supply Fiji's vaccination needs coupled with the massive community outbreak, the Fijian Government made doses available to the general population (Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021b).

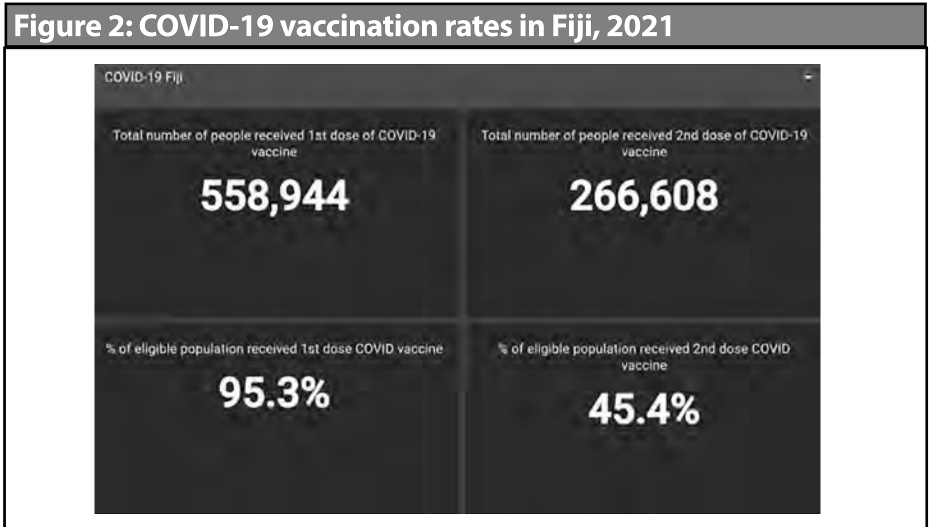
The vaccination campaign began in March 2021, and Fiji became the first country in the Pacific Islands to receive COVID-19 vaccine doses shipped via the COVAX facility. Fiji is expected to receive 100,800 doses of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine as its initial provision under COVAX (World Health Organisation, 2021). In addition to the vaccines from the COVAX facility, the Indian Government provided 100,000 doses on March 29 (Fijian Government, 2021), the Australian Government has delivered 860,000 doses from a commitment to providing around one million vaccines to Fiji (Vacala, 2021), while the New Zealand Government has provided 100,000 doses from the commitment to supplying 500,000 doses (Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021d). As of 1 September 2021, 558,994 first doses have been administered, whereas 266,608 people are fully vaccinated, i.e., have received their second doses (Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021e).

Figure 1: Confirmed COVID-19 cases in Fiji, 2021



Note: Cumulative and daily confirmed COVID-19 statistics as at 31 August 2021. Source: John Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data, https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus/country/fiji

Figure 2: COVID-19 vaccination rates in Fiji, 2021



Note: COVID-19 vaccination rates in Fiji (as at 31 August 2021). Source: Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Vaccine Dashboard, https://tupaia.org/supplychain_fiji/FJ/COVID-19per cent20Fiji?overlay=FJ_COVID_TRACKING_Dose_2_District_Percentage_Vaccinated

Data collection and analyses

This study employed an interpretivist epistemological position as the aim was not to test the hypothesis but rather to understand and generate theory, then explain or prove the hypothesis. Our analysis used a grounded theory approach. We collected and analysed Facebook interactions data without a predefined theory, allowing concepts and ideas to emerge naturally (Ferrante, Shaw, & Scott, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

To achieve the purpose of this study, we sourced the data from two popular and influential Facebook groups that have amassed many members in Fiji: Chat (Fiji)[1] (more than 250,000 members) and Fiji Exposed Forum[2] (more than 72,000 members). The data content was categorised according to its source (i.e., who initiated the post; host generated vs user-generated). The content was then analysed for distinct themes and concepts and their primary functions, including platform reaction features (like, care, angry, humour, love).

Discourse and content analysis has been applied, and posts/discussions regarding misinformation about different aspects of the outbreak between Facebook group members were analysed. We used predetermined themes and other inductive codes to independently extract and analyse the Facebook posts to determine major content themes for this study.

A summary of data collected

A total of 387 Facebook posts were analysed from Chat (Fiji) (67per cent) and Fiji Exposed Forum (33per cent) and were identified according to specific parameters of public interests in these virtual spheres (percentage of total

posts analysed): China and Wuhan (31per cent), 5G (24per cent), Bill Gates and Fiji Index Patient (9per cent), Illuminati (6per cent), New World Order (17per cent), Vaccine (8per cent), Dead Birds (5per cent).

Results and discussion

Theme 1: Fake news from international sources

There had already been many conspiracy theories and mis/disinformation about coronavirus (Kant & Varea, Forthcoming, 2021). With the advent of vaccination programmes in Fiji, false and misleading information about vaccines emerged and began to spread on social media platforms. Much of the misinformation was based on international sources and fed into the familiar global conspiracy narratives relating to vaccines. Anti-vaxxer groups and individuals tried to increase vaccine hesitancy with conspiracy theories ranging from the highly far-fetched to the well-articulated pseudo-scientific claims.

Among the array of conspiracy narratives were claims that the vaccine would damage DNA or permanently alter genes. Numerous videos and images were shared claiming that vaccination turned individuals into genetically modified humans or would even turn one into a monkey. Other false claims included the vaccine allegedly containing chips to monitor the public. False information about significant side effects of vaccines caused many to be fearful of taking the shot. Some fake news claimed that the vaccine has all types of extreme side effects, including miscarriage and infertility. Others contended that one might get the coronavirus from the vaccine itself.

The dissemination of fake news has become extensive and effective, so much so that even government officials and public influencers engage in the proliferation of misinformation to their audiences or followers on social media to suit their agenda or build on social capital (Apuke & Omar, 2021). A study by Chadwick and Vaccari (2019) found that close to half of online users sharing news reported having, at least at some point, shared misinformation. This demonstrates how misinformation and fake news can be very influential/persuasive (especially as a hedonic information system) (Islam, Laato, Talukder, & Sutinen, 2020). In 2020, the scale of responses by independent fact-checkers to online misinformation and fake news rose more than 900 per cent from January to March alone, signalling the online infodemic resurgence (Brennen et al., 2020). Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter responded to flagged posts by independent fact-checkers deemed false by removing them or attaching warnings to the content.

Theme 2: Lack of sufficient and transparent information

Another reason that can lead to vaccine hesitancy is the lack of transparent, accessible, and correct information about vaccine safety and efficacy data.

Figure 3: Collage of international COVID-19 vaccination claims circulated on Chat Fiji. Source: CHAT (FIJI)

There have been doubts about the usefulness and safety of COVID-19 vaccines, which were rapidly up-scaled in research and development due to the situation's urgency.

Another factor is the relatively short timeline in information (i.e., temporal knowledge) about the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines. Since it has been just a few months before its rollout, a significant proportion of people are still hesitant over the vaccines, which they believe may have higher risks in the long-term than if they were to survive COVID-19. A significant reason which might be increasing vaccine hesitancy is anecdotal 'cause-and-effect' rumour. There were even concerns raised that government officials were not being seen to be the first to receive vaccines. Posts abounded calling on government ministers to take the lead, with one such post stating,

> It would have been a good sign if the PM was to be the first to receive the vaccine shots along with his cabinet members instead it's like they are avoiding getting vaccinated.

Additionally, a meme circulated stating that vaccines should be tested on government officials (Figure 4).

Misleading news linking vaccines to specific communities and religions also spread on social media. Some claims posited that the coronavirus vaccines contained animal products or tissue and DNA from an aborted foetus through unpublished or debunked public health journal articles or grey literature, mainly from anti-vaxxers media content (Reuters, 2021).

The data also showed that some individuals believed that their faith would be sufficient to sustain or restore their health and wellbeing. Therefore, there would be absolutely no need for vaccines. Some religious leaders spreading conspiracy theories about vaccines, claimed the vaccines are unnatural and thus ungodly. United States-based churches and evangelical ministries with large online followings—as well as Christian influencers on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube—have been making false claims that vaccines contain microchips that the world governments wished their citizens to have. Additionally, these evangelical influencers are construing associations between vaccine ingredients and demonic or paganistic potions. Insinuations were also made about how coronavirus vaccines and masks contained or herald the 'mark of the beast'. This is a reference to an apocalyptic passage (Chapter 13) from the Book of Revelation that suggests that the Antichrist will test Christians by making them accept a mark on their foreheads or right hand to buy or sell (Eykel, 2021).

Figure 4: Meme calling for vaccines to be tested on government officials.
Source: FIJI EXPOSED FORUM Theme 3: Religious factors

Many spiritually led individuals who have been exposed to threats such as in this health crisis use 'hope' in a deity or higher power to feel a sense of security and protection, thus using this belief as a survival strategy. The development of this level of personal confidence in their spirituality prioritises public health advisories and warnings that should be taken with more seriousness (Kowalczyk et al., 2020). For example, one Facebook post mentioned,

> COVID.19 it is finish in Jesus name (sa oti) …amen

while another stated,

> I'm not scared of coronavirus.. he knows the cure.. Jesus Christ the Lord of this world and everything.

Discussion

Conspiracy theories are a significant part of vaccination hesitancy that can't be overlooked. Considering the COVID-19 epidemic and the uncertainty and vulnerability it caused, conspiracy theories have proliferated. Anti-vaccine conspiracy theories

raise a host of needless fears about the risks of vaccines and lead to an undermining of people's confidence in the Government, which drives down vaccination rates. For the Fijian authorities, disinformation and vaccination reluctance have been a massive issue even before the pandemic.

While vaccination is one of the possible methods of reducing COVID-19 viral transmission, vaccinating everyone is a logistical issue, as is the case with many other diseases. Unfortunately, there were few common problems faced during the large-scale deployment of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Because of Fiji's remoteness and lack of technological development, the immunisation program was implemented without any significant difficulties regarding stakeholders or political concerns. On the other hand, fake news on social media platforms such as Facebook, Viber, TikTok and Instagram were discovered.

Figure 5: Collage of Facebook posts from Chat (Fiji) relating to vaccine misinformation

While basic facts about the virus are widely known, certain false and harmful narratives about the pandemic remain prominent offline and online. Most citizens are aware of simple preventative measures, but rumours and conspiracy theories are still prevalent on social media, including anti-5G narratives that overlap with dangerous anti-vaccine theories. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how social media and online platforms drive public discourse, risk perception, and trust in institutions. While some Pacific Island countries and territories (apart from Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam and Papua New Guina) have mostly avoided severe outbreaks of the virus, they remain vulnerable to spreading false and harmful COVID-19 information on social media platforms. As the region's leaders prepare for vaccine distribution in 2021 and beyond, it is essential to ask why and how COVID-19 misinformation spread on social media in the region, and assess the degree to which this could impact vaccination efforts going forward (Kant, Jorari, & Cain, 2021).

Social media also enabled international conspiracy theories about COVID-19 to be imported, adapted, and reconfigured to fit local events in Fiji. A report by the Asia Foundation found that:

> [T]he public in Fiji benefits from access to a range of authoritative information sources, including official reporting transmitted through traditional

> media and social media platforms. Overt denial of COVID-19 is relatively low (about 6 percent say the virus is a 'hoax'), and high awareness of recommended protective measures. Trust and satisfaction in coverage of COVID-19 by the mainstream media and the government and police are also high. All these factors will support efforts toward a successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. At the same time, public confidence in Fiji has been tested by the proliferation of false and harmful online narratives. About 68 percent of Fijian Facebook users and about 58 percent of messaging application users say they 'frequently' see COVID-19 misinformation on these platforms. (Kant, Jorari, & Cain, 2021, p. 25)

The initial data collected and presented in this article is validated by two perception studies on rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in Fiji conducted by two non-governmental organisations: the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and Dialogue Fiji.

In the first study, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement found that women in Fiji generally accept (84 percent) COVID19 vaccinations. Information on COVID-19 was mostly found on the Fijian Ministry for Health website (74 percent), followed by social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram (73 percent). Social media was also a source of anti-vaccine messaging for many women who participated in this research. They cited vaccine safety concerns, distrust in the government, and misinformation about the vaccination on social media platforms as reasons for their vaccine hesitation. The research also found that religious views did not significantly influence women's vaccination uptake (Fiji Women's Rights Movement, 2021).

In another study on vaccine acceptance in Fiji, the research found that around 79 percent of the participants indicated that they would either get (71 percent) or probably get (8 percent) the vaccine when given the opportunity (Kumar, 2021). The report further found that females usually accepted vaccines at a higher percentage (74.9 percent) than males (68.5 percent). The COVID-19 vaccine had a higher acceptance rate among Indo-Fijians (84.1 percent) than the Rotumans (69.4 percent) and was the lowest in the *iTaukei* (52 percent). Vaccine acceptance was influenced by religion. There was a large discrepancy in the rates of vaccination among religious groups: for example, Muslims (88.6 percent) and Hindus (83.4 percent) were far more likely to be vaccinated than Christians, who were the most vaccine-hesitant (14.8 per cent) and had the lowest levels of acceptability (59.2 percent) (Kumar, 2021).

The influence of extreme religious teachings concerning the preservation of the natural body and the respect over the intent of a grand creator of humankind has been an amplifier of vaccine hesitancy/rejection, especially in ultra-religious societies like Fiji. According to Kant and Varea (2021), there is a widespread conviction in Fiji that religion plays a critical role in preserving health and welfare

and, as a result, the assurance of vaccines to keep one in good health does not measure fairly against their belief in the absolute assurance they would receive from a spiritual being. Christian influencers, including religious leaders, shared conspiracy theories about vaccines via social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube), associating COVID-19 vaccines with demonic potions and the 'mark of the beast', a plausible explanation for the vaccine's low acceptance rates among Christians in Fiji (Kant & Varea, 2021).

Vaccine hesitancy frequently results from a lack of assurance in health care systems, governments, and public health agencies that give competent, expert advice about vaccines and COVID-19. The Dialogue Fiji study found that just over 3 in 4 people had high (52.2 percent) or moderate (24.6 percent) levels of trust in the public health agencies. In contrast, 23.1 percent indicated they had little to no confidence in the agencies that provide COVID-19 vaccine-related information. The World Health Organisation was the most trusted source for COVID-19 vaccine-related information, followed by the Fijian Government (50 percent), mass media (41.6 percent), online health websites (31.2 percent), health care professionals (29.6 percent) and social media (24.1 percent) (Kumar, 2021).

Conclusion

COVID-19 and the crises it precipitated have provided ideal ground for the development of new conspiracy theories. While some of them, like as the link between 5G and the epidemic's spread, have faded over time, others, such as human engineering of the virus in a Wuhan laboratory, phantom illness treatments without scientific basis, and purposefully manipulated vaccinations, have survived to the present day. Our preliminary findings further support the evidence that trust and conspiracy beliefs predict vaccine hesitancy, both generally and for COVID-19 precisely. Concerns about the origin of the virus and conspiracy theories about vaccine development should raise a red signal and warn policymakers and media outlets about the dangers of disseminating disinformation (Robie, 2021). If these conspiracy theories are not addressed by fact-checking and evidence-based scientific knowledge, the repercussions for public health might be more dire.

Government and health authorities should be aware of anti-vaccine campaigns and take necessary actions. Necessary services should be provided in areas with high illiteracy rates or poverty to help those people get vaccinated. Spreading the truth about the harmful effects of not taking the COVID-19 vaccine can help in lowering vaccine hesitancy. A balance needs to be maintained in reporting incidents like deaths or side effects that might not be related to vaccines. Mis/disinformation spread on national media outlets about the virus or vaccine should be condemned. Boosting transparency and the spread of accurate and sufficient information related to the virus and vaccines can help in mitigating

peoples' fears and doubts. Therefore, Government needs to be more upfront in providing the latest information about COVID-19 vaccines. Public health authorities should handle public concerns. A communication helpline should be developed to explain their fears and doubts about vaccines and gain insights into the situation. Religious and opinion leaders can help encourage their followers to get vaccinated. Policymakers and public health officials need to develop targeted health communication strategies for subgroups with high vaccine hesitancy. Only with a collaborative effort from government, policymakers, public health institutions, medical practitioners, scientists, researchers, media, fact-checkers, and the citizens themselves can we survive this pandemic.

Notes

1. Chat (Fiji): https://www.facebook.com/groups/137127366336030
2. Fiji Exposed Forum: https://www.facebook.com/groups/164990380908494

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Spreading (dis)trust in Fiji?
Exploring COVID-19 misinformation on Facebook forums

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant challenges for the health system across the globe and fueled the surge of numerous rumours, hoaxes, and misinformation regarding outcomes, prevention and cure of the virus. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had severe political, economic and societal effects and affected media and communication systems in unprecedented ways. While traditional journalism has tried to adapt to the rapidly evolving situation, alternative news media on the internet have given the events an ideological spin. These voices have been criticised for furthering societal confusion and spreading potentially dangerous 'fake news' or conspiracy theories via social media and other online channels. The impact of the disease and the lack of information associated with it have allowed medical misinformation to rapidly surface and propagate on various social media platforms. Previous studies have highlighted a similar trend during recent public health emergencies, mainly the Ebola and Zika outbreaks. Such a phenomenon is alarming on both individual and public health levels to the extent that governments are realising the gravity and attempting to limit its effects. This article offers a unique perspective because it provides data-driven qualitative insights into Fijian Facebook posts related to infectious disease outbreaks. This study aims to understand public views and opinions on Fijian social media during the height of the pandemic in 2020 and to outline potential implications for health information.

Keywords: case studies, COVID-19, Facebook, fake news, Fiji, internet, misinformation, Pacific studies, social media

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THE IMPACT of the global COVID-19 pandemic and gaps in medical knowledge about the virus have allowed medical misinformation to surface rapidly and propagate on various social media platforms. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), at the time of writing, the pandemic had led to more than 128 million confirmed cases and more than 2.9 million deaths around the world. In the Pacific, Fiji has been one of 11 countries with confirmed

cases of COVID-19 and has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic.

Traditionally, print media, television and radio have been the primary transmitters of public health information from government and clinical agencies to people and play a significant role in risk intensification and mitigation. With the rise of the participatory web and social media (Web 2.0) and a resulting increase in user-generated content, the public potentially plays a more prominent role in all stages of knowledge translation, including information generation, filtering, and amplification.

While misinformation involves inadvertently sharing false information without intent to cause harm, disinformation involves incorrect information knowingly being created and transmitted to cause damage (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). 'Fake news' is the term that has received the most attention; but it is arguably problematic in terms of definitional rigour. Lazer et al. (2018) depict it as fictitious, made-up information that imitates news media content, but this does not capture the complexity of the phenomenon, which can include both satire and information created deliberately to mislead as a means to achieve a political or another goal (Wardle, 2017). The term has taken on various meanings, including a description of any statement that is not liked or agreed with by the reader (Wang, McKee, Torbica, & Stuckler, 2019).

Social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook have been identified as significant online spaces for dissemination of conspiracy beliefs and misinformation on medical and other topics (Bora, Das, Barman, & Borah, 2018; Buchanan & Beckett, 2014; Chaslot, 2017; Li, Bailey, Huynh, & Chan, 2020). There are studies of Twitter that suggest that it is a conduit for similar misinformation and conspiracy theories (Broniatowski, et al., 2018; Kouzy, et al., 2020; Ortiz-Martínez & Jiménez-Arcia, 2017). Although social media misinformation is both pervasive and widespread, its effects are hard to quantify and it is unclear which groups are most susceptible to its influence (Wang, McKee, Torbica, & Stuckler, 2019). As the internet provides immense opportunities for transmission, it also lowers the cost of generating and disseminating information, thus allowing misinformation and sensationalised stories to propagate. This has caused a series of studies of information diffusion (Serrano, Iglesias, & Garijo, 2015), rumour spreading (He, Cai, & Wang, 2015) and consequent behavioural changes (Salathé & Khandelwal, 2011; Wakamiya, Kawai, & Aramaki, 2016).

Social media platforms have been rolling out new initiatives, including advisories (Twitter) and removing certain anti-vaccination content from search results (Pinterest) and recommendation engines (YouTube) (Seyoum, 2019).

This article investigates the diffusion of different kinds of (mis)information shared on and through Facebook during the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak in Fiji in 2020. We thus use the term disinformation as shorthand for unreliable information in several forms—all potentially harmful—including false news,

click-bait, propaganda, conspiracy theories and unverified rumours. We used a set of keywords related to the epidemic and limited the search to posts in Fijian Facebook groups. This article investigates the prevalence of non-reliable information by analysing the posts in Fijian Facebook groups and the domain of URLs included in such posts. To this aim, we specified keywords related to three different controversial topics that trended from February to June of 2020, all related to the novel coronavirus: the apparent correlation between; COVID-19 and religion; the virus and fifth generation (5G) technology and rumours about the artificial origin of the virus.

Fiji's COVID-19 timeline (2020)

COVID-19 emerged in Wuhan, China in early December 2019, was brought to the notice of the authorities in late December/early January 2020 and, after investigation, was declared an emergency in the third week of January 2020. The WHO declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 31, 2020 and finally a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic was confirmed to have reached Oceania on 25 January 2020, with the first confirmed case reported in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia (Australian Department of Health, 2020). It has since spread elsewhere in the region (Australia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Northern Mariana Islands and Papua New Guinea), although many small Pacific Island nations have thus far avoided the outbreak by closing their international borders (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Many other Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) are officially free of COVID-19 due to the strict restrictions imposed to prevent the spreading of COVID-19. Some island nations have declared a state of emergency, lasting months. Air travel and commercial flights have practically ceased (ABC News, 2020). As of August 24 that year, 10 Pacific Islands Countries had yet to report a case: Kiribati, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

In late January 2020, the Fijian Government began preparing for COVID-19, working closely with the World Health Organisation, New Zealand and Australia to build its domestic capacity to identify, trace and contain potential cases and procure additional ventilators medical masks and other critical items (Rabonu, 2020). In early February, Fiji began implementing and gradually tightening restrictions on travellers who had spent time in existing hotspots.

Fiji confirmed its first case of the coronavirus on March 19 and opened 32 fever and testing clinics to contain the spread of the virus. The Ministry of Health deployed contact tracing teams to track and monitor cases. On March 25, Fiji grounded commercial international flights and sealed its borders. The Fijian Government locked down Lautoka and Suva, where cases were confirmed,

banned social gatherings and imposed a nationwide curfew. Between March 19 and April 20, Fiji confirmed six clusters and 18 cases of COVID-19, but community transmission did not occur.

By 19 July 2021, Fiji had recorded 17,514 cases of COVID-19 with 98 deaths (Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021). During the first wave of the outbreak, Fiji recorded 70 cases and two deaths (48 cases part of the border quarantine facilities, including the two deaths). Since July 2020, Fiji has only recorded cases from managed quarantine facilities at the border as repatriation flights continue to bring citizens home (Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021). The Ministry of Health's Fiji Center for Disease Control has conducted 268 227 COVID-19 laboratory tests since local testing began in March 2020, of which 225,366 were between 19 April–19 July 2021, during the second wave of the outbreak (Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2021).

Fiji's digital landscape and its impact

Over the past decade, Fiji has been at the forefront of an ICT revolution in the Pacific fueled by liberalisation of the mobile telecommunications industry, leading to improvements in internet connectivity and low costs for access (Brimacombe, Kant, Finau, Tarai, & Titifanue, 2018).

As at February 2021, Fiji had 634,100 internet users with 1.25 million active mobile phone SIM registrations (138.6 percent of the population). Of these mobile users, 88.7 percent have 3G and 4G internet connections (Kemp, 2021). The proliferation of mobile phones means that the internet, previously limited to the urban centres, has become more widely accessible through mobile broadband, with 3G connectivity in the country since 2008.

Facebook and Facebook Messenger are the most used social media platforms in Fiji with 570,000 and 460,000 active users, followed by LinkedIn (160,000 users), Instagram (140,000 users) and Twitter (14,800 users) (Kemp, 2021). Mobile phones account for 99.3 percent of social media use. Traditional media—especially radio and television—are still the primary information sources for most Fijians while Facebook is the third most popular source of information, surpassing newspapers (Kant, Jorari, & Cain, 2021, p. 16).

Fijians and Pacific Islanders are becoming avid consumers of ICT technologies. In many Pacific Islands, mobile phone technology has become pervasive, especially in urban centres. With the rapid ICT development and innovations taking place, there is enormous potential for exponential increases in the use of social media in the Pacific. Social media has come to play a significant role in developing political discourse and activism within the Pacific region. The rise of alternative forms of information dissemination through social media provides a platform for discussion and dissemination of information relating to issues censored by traditional media (Finau et al., 2014; Tarai et al., 2015; Titifanue et

al., 2015; Titifanue, Kant, & Finau, 2020). Through social media, citizens have also been able to criticise government policies and, to some extent, hold government officials accountable (Cave, 2012; Logan, 2012). Digital technologies also provided a space for Pacific Islanders' voices to be heard in times of natural disasters as witnessed during Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in 2015 and Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016 in Fiji (Finau, et al., 2018; Spyksma, 2017).

While social media in the Pacific is opening spaces for transparency and accountability, it is increasingly being used as a platform to spread rumours, misinformation and fake news. The harmful effects of the use of social media as a tool to spread misinformation were seen during the 2019 measles outbreak in Samoa. Within two months, 5520 cases had been reported and 79 people, mostly children, had died. (Hooper, 2020). Social media are heavily used in Samoa and became the main channel for the anti-vaxxers' opinions and exhortations. Prominent among these were well-known and highly regarded traditional healers. While the Samoan Government attempted to bring the measles outbreak under control by mounting a nationwide vaccination campaign, they had to deal with the undermining influence of the anti-vaccination campaigners on social media (Hooper, 2020).

Method

A case study approach was used that traditionally consists of studying a particular phenomenon in its real-life context. This study was pragmatic in that the methods for data collection could provide answers to the research questions.

Our analysis used a grounded theory approach. We collected and analysed Facebook interaction data without a predefined theory, allowing concepts and ideas to emerge naturally (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A strength of this approach is that it enables the researcher to study human interaction and behaviour within its social context (Schreiber & Stern, 2001). This study shows that the Facebook community serves as the larger social context, and the conversations and interactions on Facebook forums are the studied behaviour.

Social media qualitative research methods can be described in three ways: active analysis, passive analysis, and research self-identification (Franz, Marsh, Chen, & Teo, 2019). Active analysis on Facebook involves the participation of research members in communication with Facebook participants. Passive analysis on Facebook involves studying information patterns observed on Facebook or the interactions between users in existing Facebook groups. Finally, research self-identification is when researchers use Facebook as a research recruitment tool to gather participants for web-based interviews, focus groups, or surveys (Franz, Marsh, Chen, & Teo, 2019). This study is based on passive analysis using data sourced from two popular Facebook groups in Fiji. These Facebook groups were Chat (Fiji), and Fijians for Safe and Prosperous Fiji (formerly Stop

5G Fiji). Chat (Fiji) was chosen due to its popularity, as it had more than 250,000 members when the data was acquired for this research. In contrast, Fijians for Safe and Prosperous Fiji was chosen as it was initially set up as an 'anti-5G' group for Fiji on 6 April 2020, but later changed its name to Fijians for Safe and Prosperous Fiji. It had 14,000 members at the time of the data acquisition for this study. The group is currently known as Current Affairs Fiji.

To find out what types of misinformation were prominent during the pandemic on Fiji's social media, we used the search function within these two Facebook groups, using the terms: Coronavirus, COVID-19/COVID19, Corona, virus, 5G. The number of public interactions was collected for each relevant post and included the online networks' public engagement feature tools such as likes, reactions, comments and shares (Figure 1).

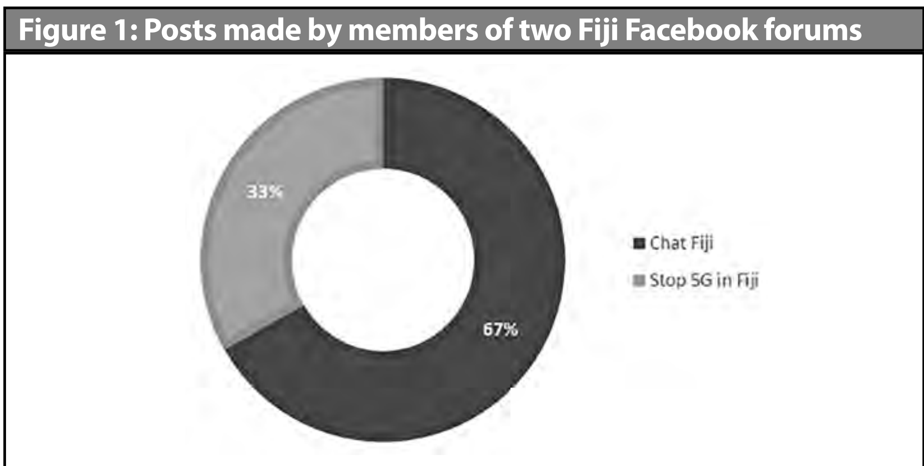
A total of 184 posts was collected from these two groups, with 123 posts from Chat (Fiji) (https://www.facebook.com/groups/LETSTALK11/about) and 61 from Stop 5G in Fiji (https://www.facebook.com/groups/2667187216881576).

The content was categorised according to its source (i.e., who initiated the post; host generated vs user-generated). The content was then analysed for distinct themes and concepts and their primary functions (Figure 2). One researcher began this process by reading through each post on the wall and the post's responses. Each post was copied and pasted into a spreadsheet with the corresponding responses.

Results

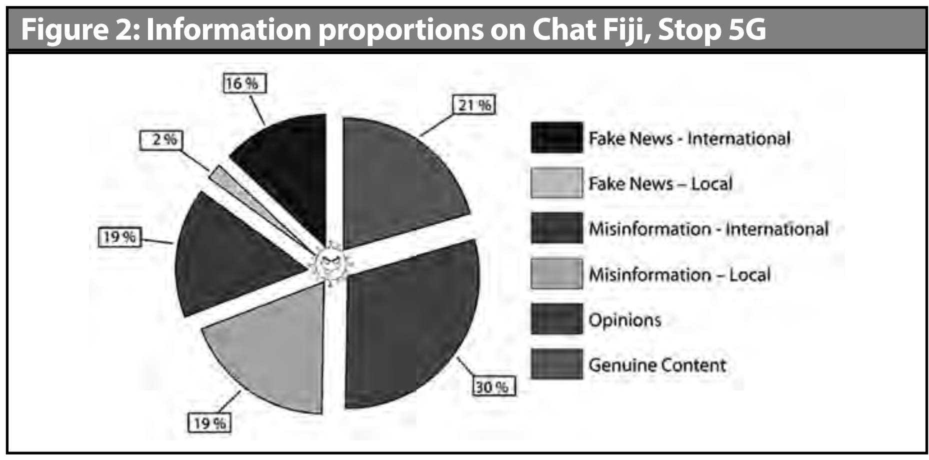
Misinformation took a variety of forms across Fijian social media, especially toward the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. It was found that the content of posts on both Facebook forums that were analysed were made up largely of opinion pieces (30 percent), most of which were genuine content about the issues surrounding the global COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 2). Findings also showed

Figure 1: Posts made by members of two Fiji Facebook forums



Note: Number of posts made by members of two Facebook forums; Chat Fiji and Stop 5G in Fiji

Figure 2: Information proportions on Chat Fiji, Stop 5G



Note: Proportion of information on Chat Fiji and Stop 5G in Fiji, categorised according to local and international fake news and misinformation, personal opinions and genuine content.

that international fake news and misinformation featured strongly on both fora. (16 percent and 19 percent, respectively) to support claims that were in contradiction to public health advisories by the government and trusted health organisations like WHO and the CDC. Local fake new and misinformation formed a minority of the forum content, with little traction (21 percent collectively) and were mainly faith-based opinion pieces. Since the writing of this article, it has been observed that the use of misinformation and conspiracy theories that downplay the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of the vaccination have increased. Many of the prior claims made by online members of the Facebook group forums were strengthened with the widespread use of herbal remedies like *Scaevola taccada* (also known as beach cabbage or sea lettuce) and traditional treatments such as steam therapy for minor COVID-19 symptoms Additionally, some articles have been used to argue the benefits of ivermectin and hydrochloroquine for the treatment of COVID-19 positive patients in Fiji (Figure 3).

The thematic analysis around conspiracy theories focused on local types and sources of information under the following themes and sub-themes: Politicisation of COVID-19; online vilification of COVID-19 patients; creation of the Stop 5G in Fiji Facebook Groups Dead birds, 5G and COVID-19; Prevalence of international conspiracy theories on Fijian Facebook forums; Conspiracy theory about the link between 5G technology and coronavirus; Bill Gates and COVID-19 and the fabrication of coronavirus in a Chinese laboratory.

Local types and sources of misinformation

Politicisation of COVID-19

Misinformation was spread in several ways on Fijian social media, particularly

towards the start of the pandemic. As early as February 2020, SODELPA MP Lynda Tabuya used her personal Facebook page to propagate allegations that the virus might be transported to Fiji by the southeast trade winds and that the government's intention to treat COVID-19 patients at Navua Hospital would put residents at danger (Singh, 2020). Fear and confusion spread fast on social media and messaging apps when the country's first case was detected in March 2020 and lockdowns were established in Lautoka, causing a surge of panic purchasing before authorities could respond (Radio New Zealand, 2020a). Tabuya was prosecuted, but later acquitted, under the *Public Order Act* on March 19 for comments she posted on Facebook encouraging residents to stock up on food.

Figure 3: Facebook post on Chat Fiji by a member sharing an article of the use of ivermectin in Indonesia, Malaysia and India against a variant of COVID-19.

During parliamentary sessions, misinformation and mal-information were used by some opposition party members to discredit the efforts of the Fiji health response by the government and supported right-wing evangelical claims of 'evil' that led to a global pandemic. One opposition member claimed that 'World evil group using China a Communist Dictatorial regime to invent or manufacture COVID-19 as a biological weapon against the West...' adding that what 'Fiji needs the most is Israel' (Nanuqa, 2020). The opposition MP also claimed that 'satanic forces' were involved. Attacking the WHO, the MP alleged that the WHO had sided with China over the poor handling of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Chinese Embassy in Fiji condemned claims made by Bulanauca, saying they were taken from fake social media pages (Radio New Zealand, 2020).

Online vilification of COVID positive patients

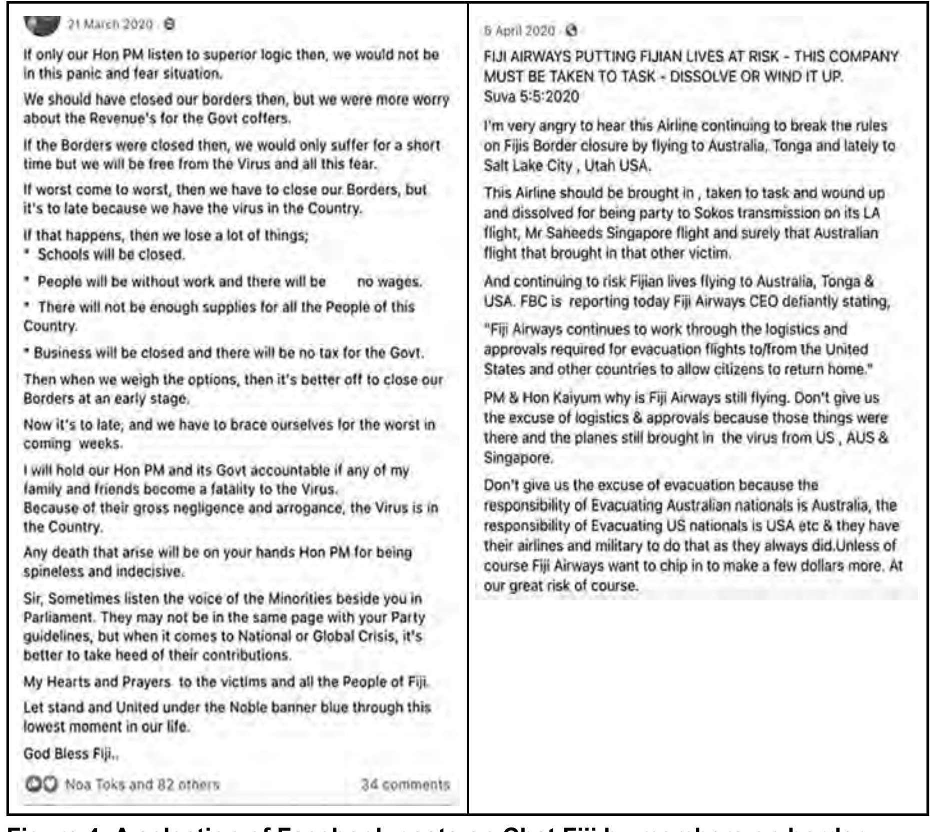
Fear and misinformation on the internet have led to the abuse and vilification of many COVID-19 patients in Fiji. In the 24 hours after the first coronavirus case was confirmed in Fiji, the patient, whose name was widely circulated on social media was subject to widespread vilification. The online social stigma was increased by government officials who said the patient misled the contact tracers by providing incomplete information. During a national press conference on 25 March 2020, the Prime Minister stated that:

> As we know, our first patient was a flight attendant in Lautoka. According to his first statement, he only began showing symptoms a day before he was admitted to hospital. Our subsequent investigations revealed that unfortunately, we weren't given the full story. Witnesses tell us he had been showing symptoms, including coughing, days prior and that he failed to place himself in self-quarantine. So, our contact tracing had to be extended further back to identify even more people he may have contacted and get them into quarantine as well…For anyone out there still asking why we've had to shut down the Lautoka confined area, this case is exactly why. We knew there was a risk that our first patient may have spread the virus to others. That is why we did not hesitate in shutting down movement into and out of the Lautoka confined area. No one in and no one out. If we hadn't done so, this new patient could have traveled to other parts of Fiji, potentially exposing others and vastly complicating our contact tracing efforts. (Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2020)

Personal information and disinformation about these patients swiftly circulated on Facebook and messaging apps, including rumours about their religious beliefs, sexual orientation and social networks (Susu, 2020). The online stigma drew sharp criticism from the Fiji NGO Coalition of Human Rights, which called on national officials, the media and the public to exercise restraint and refrain from violating rights to privacy of COVID patients by publicly releasing personal information:

> The emotional violence and fear that they have already subjected the index patient to is unprecedented—no other country affected by COVID-19 has demonised, humiliated and dehumanised its index patient the way this country has. We cannot talk about respecting the privacy of patients and eliminating violence against women and girls and yet perpetrating violence on the index patient by way of victim-blaming on national television and print media in the same breath. This is hypocritical. These dehumanising acts need to STOP as it has not only deeply affected the index patient, but also his family. (Fiji Women's Rights Movement, 2020)

While Fiji's international borders remained closed, the government allowed reparation of flights into the country. There are multiple anecdotes concerning sightings of supposed repatriated citizens not conforming to quarantine guidelines. This subsequently resulted in increasing anxiety. One such highly publicised case was that of a repatriated Fijian national (Patient 9) who breached self-quarantine orders upon his return from India. Despite testing positive for COVID-19, the patient travelled from Nadi to Suva and then to Labasa via an inter-island ferry, raising concerns and suspicions from people on Facebook (Figure 4). As a result, his family members in Suva contracted the virus and there were concerns of an outbreak on Vanua Levu (Fiji's second largest island). Upon his recovery, he was



21 March 2020

If only our Hon PM listen to superior logic then, we would not be in this panic and fear situation.

We should have closed our borders then, but we were more worry about the Revenue's for the Govt coffers.

If the Borders were closed then, we would only suffer for a short time but we will be free from the Virus and all this fear.

If worst come to worst, then we have to close our Borders, but it's to late because we have the virus in the Country.

If that happens, then we lose a lot of things;
* Schools will be closed.

* People will be without work and there will be no wages.

* There will not be enough supplies for all the People of this Country.

* Business will be closed and there will be no tax for the Govt.

Then when we weigh the options, then it's better off to close our Borders at an early stage.

Now it's to late, and we have to brace ourselves for the worst in coming weeks.

I will hold our Hon PM and its Govt accountable if any of my family and friends become a fatality to the Virus.
Because of their gross negligence and arrogance, the Virus is in the Country.

Any death that arise will be on your hands Hon PM for being spineless and indecisive.

Sir, Sometimes listen the voice of the Minorities beside you in Parliament. They may not be in the same page with your Party guidelines, but when it comes to National or Global Crisis, it's better to take heed of their contributions.

My Hearts and Prayers to the victims and all the People of Fiji.

Let stand and United under the Noble banner blue through this lowest moment in our life.

God Bless Fiji.,

Noa Toks and 82 others 34 comments

5 April 2020

FIJI AIRWAYS PUTTING FIJIAN LIVES AT RISK - THIS COMPANY MUST BE TAKEN TO TASK - DISSOLVE OR WIND IT UP.
Suva 5:5:2020

I'm very angry to hear this Airline continuing to break the rules on Fijis Border closure by flying to Australia, Tonga and lately to Salt Lake City , Utah USA.

This Airline should be brought in , taken to task and wound up and dissolved for being party to Sokos transmission on its LA flight, Mr Saheeds Singapore flight and surely that Australian flight that brought in that other victim.

And continuing to risk Fijian lives flying to Australia, Tonga & USA. FBC is reporting today Fiji Airways CEO defiantly stating,

"Fiji Airways continues to work through the logistics and approvals required for evacuation flights to/from the United States and other countries to allow citizens to return home."

PM & Hon Kaiyum why is Fiji Airways still flying. Don't give us the excuse of logistics & approvals because those things were there and the planes still brought in the virus from US , AUS & Singapore.

Don't give us the excuse of evacuation because the responsibility of Evacuating Australian nationals is Australia, the responsibility of Evacuating US nationals is USA etc & they have their airlines and military to do that as they always did.Unless of course Fiji Airways want to chip in to make a few dollars more. At our great risk of course.

Figure 4: A selection of Facebook posts on Chat Fiji by members on border closure and repatriation flights

charged by the Fiji Police with one count of failing to comply with orders (Radio New Zealand, 2020a).

Creation of the Stop 5G in Fiji Facebook Group: Dead birds, 5G and COVID-19

International conspiracy theories regarding COVID-19 were also imported, modified, and reconstructed to match local circumstances in Fiji thanks to social media. The notion that 5G mobile broadband technology and the COVID-19 virus are somehow related is perhaps the most prominent of these conspiracy theories. Following a global trend of anti-5G sentiments, a new Facebook group, Stop 5G in Fiji, was created in April 2020 to mobilise popular support to convince the Fijian Government to stop the 5G network from being rolled out in Fiji. Over the course of the year, the group changed its name numerous times, most likely to capitalise on current topics and expand its membership, which had surpassed 14,000 by the end of 2020.

Although Fiji has been spared more organised offline anti-5G protests, one case highlights the localisation of the 5G conspiracy theory that garnered

the attention of the Fijian Government. On 6 April 2020, photos and videos of dead mynah birds in Savusavu appeared on both Chat (Fiji) and Stop 5G in Fiji Facebook groups. By Fiji standards, these posts went viral, with hundreds of shares, likes and comments *(Fiji Sun,* 2020). These posts attributed the death of the birds to 5G, which is yet to be introduced to Fiji. As a result of local pictures of dead birds, more posts started appearing on Stop 5G in Fiji group, which were similar to stories of dead birds in the Netherlands, UK, Germany, and Italy. Following the online hysteria caused by the pictures of dead mynah birds, officials from the Department of Environment and Biosecurity Authority of Fiji were sent to Savusavu to investigate this (*Fiji Sun*, 2020). In a statement, the Minister for Agriculture said a post-mortem had concluded that the deaths of the mynah birds were due to blunt trauma, denying that the death of the birds stemmed from COVID-19 and the 5G Network as speculated on Facebook (*The Fiji Times*, 2020). Reuters also fact-checked multiple posts of dead birds in Europe that was circulated via social media as false and misleading, saying the pictures were from 2018 and that there were no links between the death of the birds and 5G or coronavirus (Reuters, 2020).

Prevalence of international conspiracy theories on Fijian Facebook

5G Conspiracy Theory

Meese, Frith, & Wilken (2020) identified two types of conspiracy theory linking 5G and COVID-19. The the first one insinuates that radiation from 5G lowers people's immune systems, making them more vulnerable to the virus. The second and more prominent conspiracy claims that 5G directly causes COVID-19. There are some variations around this conspiracy theory. Among the more notable of them are the erroneous claims that COVID-19 is a made-up pandemic to cover up the deleterious effects of 5G radiation (Hamilton, 2020) and that COVID-19 emerged from Wuhan because it had 'been the guinea-pig city for 5G' (Adams, 2020). Even more fantastic versions of this theory claimed that the pandemic was 'engineered by [. . .] Bill Gates, to depopulate an overcrowded planet' (Sorkin, 2020) (Wilson, 2020).

Both Chat (Fiji) and Fijian for a Safer & Prosperous Fiji carried aspects of these conspiracy theories. One of the first posts to be shared on Chat (Fiji) was an article in early February, claiming that Wuhan in China rolled out 5G networks and links and citing what purported to be an open letter from '180 scientists and physicians' warning of the dangers of 5G technology (including 'flu-like symptoms). Two other links were shared that claimed that 'Wuhan was the province where 5G was rolled out, now the centre of deadly virus'. In their research, Bruns, Harrington, & Hurcombe (2020) reveal that this was the first English-language post outlining the 5G-COVID links that were circulated widely via Facebook. Two of the popular posts that appeared on Chat (Fiji) were:

> China launched its 5G national network, the world's largest, around November 2019. One of the main 5G wireless connections was installed in Wuhan hospital, where all equipment is connected wirelessly. The same city where the outbreak of covid19 started. Some big countries like Italy, Spain, the USA, U.K. etc just recently rolled out 5G mostly on public places like Airports, Hospitals, Cities, Stadiums now have the most numbers of covid19 cases. (Facebook post, February 21, 2020)
>
> They [China] will deny it to safeguard their agenda and interests. Hubei Province in which Wuhan is situated was the testing field for 5G....most other countries affected have 5G... So certainly logic plays an important part here. (Facebook post, March 3, 2020)

Linking Bill Gates with the transmission of coronavirus

Many people believe the theory that Bill Gates is one of the strategists behind COVID-19 and that his intention is to make money from the production and distribution of its vaccine. Some posts emerged in late February and early March claiming that the coronavirus is only the pretext for distributing a deadly vaccine which will be activated by 5G radiation and will lead to a mass depopulation of Earth at the behest of an obscure group that included Bill Gates (and the Gates Foundation). Two YouTube videos accompanied these posts, 'Bill Gates calls for Global Depopulation' and 'Bill Gates—Microchip vaccine implants to fight coronavirus'. These two videos have subsequently been removed from YouTube for violating community standards and spreading fake news.

Further links are made with international organisations (such as the WHO and the UN), multinational technology firms like Huawei and prominent people like Bill Gates and George Soros, who are supposedly its backers. Some posts even link the 5G–Coronavirus conspiracy to the Freemasons and the Illuminati, who are supposedly trying to create a one-world government:

> Another reason why Bill Gates openly supports and fund abortion clinics around the world... To terminate pregnancies and harvest baby body parts. Just so you know, he funds two research labs in Wuhan, the epicentre of the Corona virus pandemic. (Facebook post, March 13, 2020) (Staver, 2020)
>
> One World Order—(Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) setting up public-private partnerships with pharmaceutical companies to promoting certain sorts of corporate farming and the use of biotechnology for health and agriculture. (Facebook post, February 28, 2020)

An analysis of some of the most popular and prominent posts on the Stop 5G in Fiji Facebook Group reveal further exaggeration of the COVID/5G rumours, repeatedly pushed by the pre-existing obsessions of the various international conspiracy groups. Some continued to focus centrally on the supposed ill effects of 5G radiation with popular posts such as this:

> People say no to 5G otherwise will get brain tumour or cancer down the line say a few years from now. This high frequency of 5G once up it will be up 24/7 a week, all day/night and they have to place closer or shorter height like rooftops since its wave frequency abilities is shorter wave compare to 4G or 3G which can operate from a tower with a long distance wave 5G operates better closer to the ground, meaning closer to humans. Meaning humans will be exposed to radiation 27/4 which can cause cancer. (Facebook post, March 23, 2020)

Other posts in the Stop 5G in Fiji Facebook group asserted that COVID-19 was only a cover story to explain the effects of the 5G tests in Wuhan. Three posts (with links from obscure US sites) drew a connection between 5G to a much more convoluted theory involving bioengineering of COVID-19 with 5G activated vaccines (Figure 5):

> The vaccine to cure its devastating impact is the chip they'll implant in your right hand or head- Satan. There is a better Cure-Jesus. Implant Him in your heart and He will surely get you through. (Facebook post, March 31, 2020)

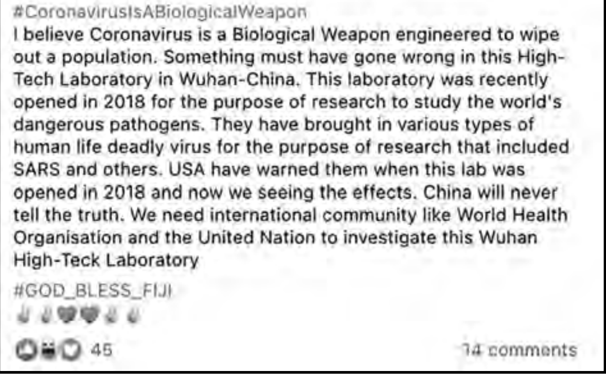


Figure 5: Facebook post on Chat Fiji, March 6, 2020. #CoronavirusIsABiologicalWeapon

Another popular post on the Stop 5G in Fiji group was a video by the notorious conspiracy theorist David Icke, who claimed that COVID-19 was a scam and that the illness was caused by 5G technology. While YouTube eventually took it down, the post was shared more than 103 times, garnering some very intense discussions in the group with some apocalyptic Christian themes (Figure 6) and claims that COVID-19 and 5G were being used to bring about a mass vaccination that would allow the population to be controlled by the Illuminati and the Freemasons.

Other videos by or featuring David Ickes were shared both on Chat (Fiji) and Stop 5G in Fiji's Facebook groups: 'How People Are Controlled With This Pandemic Crisis—David Icke Predicted The Future' and 'All Humans Will be microchipped be the year 2030'.

Anti-China sentiments

The idea that the coronavirus was developed in a laboratory in China is wide-

spread on Facebook. This post is from Chat (Fiji) on February 22, 2020:

> The Chinese lab (conspiracy) theory is there a high-level bio lab in Wuhan; Would anyone really be surprised that a Chinese lab mishandled and mistakenly released the virus? and everyone knows China would not admit to this anyway. The Wuhan disease lab is the focus of suspicion and conspiracy theories about covid-19's origins.

666 is here already. Let's Pray Hard: 6 6 6 The Mark Of The Beast Prophesy Finally Fulfilled... The US Senate has passed the Obama Health Bill into law. The implementation would commence soon. This bill would require all Americans to be implanted with a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip in order to access medical care. The device will be implemented on the forehead or on the arm. This is to fulfill the prophesy in the Book of Revelation 13:15-18 concerning the MARK OF THE BEAST. Are you still doubting the END TIME? Do u know that the special car which was made for Obama is known as the BEAST? Get READY. The rapture is near! Revelations 13 is being played out right before us. Many are still unaware. 1. Why is the chip being implanted exactly where the Bible says it would be. Why On the hand and forehead. Why not anywhere else? 2. Why is being connected to your bank account? Remember the Bible says you won't be able to buy or sell without the mark 6 6 6. And guess what! The chip is connected to your financial details. What breaks my heart the most is that many people in the church will not make it if Jesus comes now? Many are unaware that the ends is near. Don't tell me that its advancement in technology or development. If any area of your life is not in sync with God's word repent and be converted. If you miss heaven you can never miss hell...think about it. Hell is not a pretty place, the worst part is that it is for eternity... He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the church. Please rather than post and forward senseless messages. Send to everyone you know. Do the work of an evangelist. Have you ever wondered what should have happened if we treat the Holy Bible the way we treat our mobile phone? And we really can't live without it. Only 7% percent will re-send this message. Don't be of the 93% who will not share the message. Satan said. "I wonder how humans claim to LOVE GOD and disobey Him, and claim they hate me yet they obey me" Do not send later. Share and send now.

71 14 comments

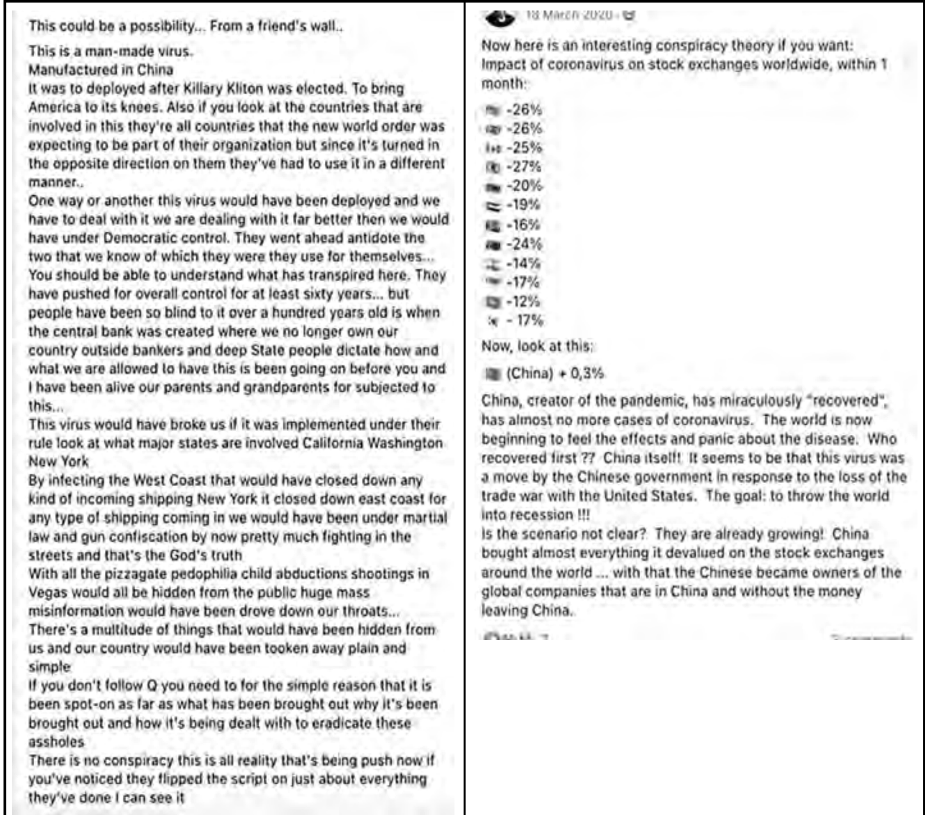
Figure 6: Facebook post on Chat Fiji on April 5, 2020: Satan fulfils his promise!" LORD SAVE US!

There were several Facebook posts on Chat (Fiji) of hate-speech and anti-Chinese views related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the origin of the coronavirus disease. One post suggested the sole responsibility for the outbreak lay with China (Figure 7) and that the country should cover losses and damage suffered by the rest of the world:

> Let China be responsible for the deaths of all who died from covid-19. The responsible Government of China must make up for the loss of many lives around the world.

Discussion

Fijian officials declared the country free of community transmission of COVID-19 on 5 June 2020, after the final verified patient was released. Since that declaration, all COVID cases have been border quarantine cases involving people returning to Fiji. Fiji's COVID 19 responses by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS) have been effective in clarifying misinformation related to the pandemic during the outbreak in 2020. Data showed that many Fijians


This could be a possibility... From a friend's wall..

This is a man-made virus.
Manufactured in China
It was to deployed after Killary Kliton was elected. To bring America to its knees. Also if you look at the countries that are involved in this they're all countries that the new world order was expecting to be part of their organization but since it's turned in the opposite direction on them they've had to use it in a different manner..
One way or another this virus would have been deployed and we have to deal with it we are dealing with it far better then we would have under Democratic control. They went ahead antidote the two that we know of which they were they use for themselves...
You should be able to understand what has transpired here. They have pushed for overall control for at least sixty years... but people have been so blind to it over a hundred years old is when the central bank was created where we no longer own our country outside bankers and deep State people dictate how and what we are allowed to have this is been going on before you and I have been alive our parents and grandparents for subjected to this...
This virus would have broke us if it was implemented under their rule look at what major states are involved California Washington New York
By infecting the West Coast that would have closed down any kind of incoming shipping New York it closed down east coast for any type of shipping coming in we would have been under martial law and gun confiscation by now pretty much fighting in the streets and that's the God's truth
With all the pizzagate pedophilia child abductions shootings in Vegas would all be hidden from the public huge mass misinformation would have been drove down our throats...
There's a multitude of things that would have been hidden from us and our country would have been tooken away plain and simple
If you don't follow Q you need to for the simple reason that it is been spot-on as far as what has been brought out why it's been brought out and how it's being dealt with to eradicate these assholes
There is no conspiracy this is all reality that's being push now if you've noticed they flipped the script on just about everything they've done I can see it

18 March 2020

Now here is an interesting conspiracy theory if you want:
Impact of coronavirus on stock exchanges worldwide, within 1 month:
-26%
-26%
-25%
-27%
-20%
-19%
-16%
-24%
-14%
-17%
-12%
- 17%
Now, look at this:
(China) + 0,3%
China, creator of the pandemic, has miraculously "recovered", has almost no more cases of coronavirus. The world is now beginning to feel the effects and panic about the disease. Who recovered first ?? China itself! It seems to be that this virus was a move by the Chinese government in response to the loss of the trade war with the United States. The goal: to throw the world into recession !!!
Is the scenario not clear? They are already growing! China bought almost everything it devalued on the stock exchanges around the world ... with that the Chinese became owners of the global companies that are in China and without the money leaving China.

Figure 7: A sample of Anti-China Facebook posts on Chat (Fiji)

relied on news and information updates released through the Fiji MOHMS website (Kant, Leanne, & Cain, 2021). Public health messages to promote awareness of COVID-19, as well as preventative measures such as social distance and hand-washing, were part of the Fijian Government's response. Fiji, like many other countries, implemented travel restrictions and a 14-day quarantine period for international visitors. A prohibition on social gatherings, the closure of schools, institutions of religion, nightclubs, theaters, gyms, and swimming pools, as well as a national curfew were implemented in the affected districts.

Apart from demystifying fake news through official channels, authorities in Fiji also charged critics and 'rumor mongers' under the *Public Order Act*. Eight people were detained for 'spreading bogus news or claims to cause public anxiety' regarding COVID-19, including Opposition MP Lynda Tabuya. On March 26, Tabuya was arrested for allegedly violating the POA with Facebook posts about COVID-19. She was held for four days and charged with one count of malicious act contrary to the POA when she appeared in court on March 30. The prosecution dropped the accusations against her on August 17, and the matter was closed.

Three women were arrested on March 26 for their Facebook posts about the virus; Nemani Bainivalu, a former Fiji First Party candidate, was arrested on March 27 and released on bail two days later; and a 24-year-old female radio announcer from Fiji Broadcasting was charged on April 11 with one count of a malicious act for social media posts that called on individuals 'to stone vehicles during curfew hours' (Talei, 2020; *Fiji Sun* Online, 2020; Kumar, 2020; Tadulala, 2020)

Many Christian denominations issued statements to their members to ensure that accurate and reliable information related to the COVID-19 pandemic was being sourced for self-edification. The Methodist Church, the largest denomination in Fiji, joined efforts to ensure responsible public awareness regarding the COVID-19 disease (Boila, 2020). While such attempts by religious bodies played an important part in the national response to misinformation and civil doubts, data shows that social media was still able to spread conspiracy theories and conflate mal-information to cast doubts on medical facts of the COVID-19 disease and its origins.

Research by the Asia Foundation found that despite the presence of misinformation on COVID-19 in Fiji, only 6 percent of the respondents believed it to be a hoax (Kant, Leanne, & Cain, 2021). More than nine out of 10 people felt confidence in official sources of information even though two out of three people regularly came across some sort of misinformation on their social media platform. (Kant, Leanne, & Cain, 2021)

When demand for verified information exceeded supply, such as when the first few domestic cases were detected, speculation and panic escalated, as they had in other countries. Conspiracy theory-focused online communities offered a more subtle and insidious threat. Anti-5G groups are a good example of this, because they often conflated their own claims with stories about COVID-19 vaccinations. Official messages and denials were used by the Fijian government to refute these notions, with varied results. Official sources refuting anti-5G ideas were frequently disregarded by anti-5G activists as merely another element of a larger conspiracy or as confirmation of their views in the government's ineptitude. According to the Asia Foundation research results, around 35 percent of the general community believe that 'avoiding mobile phone towers can keep one safe from COVID-19'. This idea is less widespread among those with higher levels of education (Kant, Leanne, & Cain, 2021).

Following the declaration of Fiji as COVID-free and later as COVID-contained (due to cases detected at the border), there was a noticeable change in discussions on Facebook and the intensity of fake news decreased drastically. The Stop 5G in Fiji group subsequently changed its name several times, most likely to capitalise on other issues.

Conspiracy is inclined to presume that notable public occasions are secretly arranged by influential and spiteful persons or organisations for certain gain (Douglas, et al., 2019). There were many Facebook posts relating the 5G mobile

network to breeding coronavirus. There is also the trend of tweets that this virus is only spread in countries with 5G mobile networks, which brought violence against telecommunication engineers and property. Jolley and Paterson (2020) also attested to the fact that this conspiracy of 5G and COVID-19 would breed anger, violence, and paranoia. Allington, Duffy, Wessely, Dhavan, and Rubin (2020) concluded that social media is one of the carriers of conspiracy beliefs, which can only prevent health-protective behaviours.

Conclusion

This study capitalises on social media, a discursive space in which individuals with or without experience of COVID-19 shared information and their perspectives of the disease. In alignment with our study objective, we have been able to identify and analyse different themes about the pandemic during the initial stages of the outbreak in Fiji in 2020. Social media has become a wider part of people's lives and has a significant impact on decisions in people's lives; it is important to research its influence on people and health during this pandemic. As Fiji is in the throes of a more severe and widespread second wave of the virus coupled with a nation-wide vaccine rollout, some of the conspiracy theories have been reignited on Fijian Facebook forums with serious implications for government efforts at containing the virus. Vaccine hesitancy is on the rise with social media in Fiji aflush with misinformation and fake news.

As the global COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge societies across the globe severely and as access to accurate information both about the virus itself and what lies in store for our communities continues to be limited, the generation of rumors and conspiracy theories with some explanatory value will continue unabated. The social media conversations have focused on four main conspiracy theories:

The relationship of the virus to the 5G network and Bill Gates's alleged role in a global vaccination project aimed at limiting population growth; a cover-up perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party after the virus leapt to human populations based largely on Chinese culinary practices; the release, either accidental or deliberate of the virus from, alternately, a Chinese laboratory or an unspecified military laboratory and its role as a bio-weapon.

This study makes an important contribution by performing a thematic analysis of the opinion of people on social media about COVID-19. It also raises a concern over the number of digital spaces that generate and distribute misinformation that is readily and easily accessible. For example, a good number of Facebook posts conflated conspiracy theories associating technology and laboratories to the novel virus and claimed that COVID-19 was part of a strategy conceived by Bill Gates to make money from selling vaccines.

In conclusion, misinformation fuelled by rumours, stigma and conspiracy

theories can have potentially severe implications on public health if prioritised over scientific guidelines. Governments and other agencies must understand the patterns of COVID-19–related rumours, stigma, and conspiracy theories circulating so that they can develop appropriate risk communication messages.

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The COVID-19 pandemic
Resilience of Indonesian journalists

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the global news industry to adapt to the current crisis. In some Global South countries, challenges have also come from an existing political instability and economic limitations. Indonesia represents a Global South country where its journalists have struggled to maintain the quality of news while many have faced layoffs. This research involved a survey data with 100 respondents, some interviews and observations, which indicated that in the COVID-19 pandemic Indonesian journalists have been severely affected and are not sufficiently equipped or prepared to face any accelerated and sudden changes caused by the coronavirus. However, in some instances, journalists have been able to deploy advanced digital technology and work collaboratively to provide quality information during the pandemic. The article argues that mastering journalism data and collaborative work should be embraced to enhance the resilience of the journalist community.

Keyword: collaboration, COVID-19, data, Global South, health journalism, Indonesia, pandemic, resilience, surveys

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JOURNALISTS are important players in communicating information about health risks to the public, especially in public health emergencies. In such crises, the need for information is so urgent that the demands and expectations placed on journalists increase. However, it is not certain that journalists and media organisations are ready in Indonesia to face a public health emergency. News about health crises is often criticised because it perceived as sensational, incomplete, and inaccurate, leading to misunderstanding, panic or even public neglect. Although several studies have explored how well the media can work to provide quality information during a crisis (McCauley, Minsky & Viswanath, 2013; Ma, 2005), there is limited research showing the resilience of the press in times of global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a global crisis, the media are no longer merely a stage *for* the global crisis, but rather become one of the actors *on* that stage (Cottle, 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic has broadly brought an impact on the economic, social and political sectors, including the media industry. A study of journalism resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic is deemed important considering that COVID-19 has

become a new disruption to journalism and the Indonesian and global press industry. Lewis (2020) states that there is a need to reorient research agendas to be continuously responsive and reflective to cope with current crises and prepare for any future uncertainties.

In Indonesia, journalism is at a challenging stage to be observed in terms of its resilience in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Indonesia has the fourth largest population in the world with 270.6 million. It is also one of the countries with the most serious impact from the COVID-19 pandemic with more than 4.09 million cases of infection and 133,000 deaths (Covid-19 Dashboard, 31 August 2021). When this article was being written, the number of Indonesia's COVID-19 cases peaked in June-July 2021 with the country's second wave and has since peaked again with the positivity rate during the second week of August reaching 19.25 percent (Covid19.go.id, 2021a). From the perspective of Indonesian public policy, economic consideration has strongly driven the government's strategy in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic (Apriliyanti, Utomo, Purwanto, 2021) as COVID-19 would reduce Indonesia's economic growth to between 1 and 4 percent (Suryahadi, Izzati, Suryadarma, 2020). Moreover, in the early phases of COVID-19, Indonesian government officials made several communication mistakes leading to public confusion (Mawardi, 2020).

The Indonesian media industry is greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many print media have discontinued their operations caused by digitisation and worsened by the virus (Supadiyanto, 2020). The year before the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country in 2020, the government blacked out the internet in Papua for seven days during August 2019 in response to the offline and online protest movement #PapuanLivesMatter (Juniarto, 2019).[1] A number of articles in the *Work Creation/Omnibus Law Bill*, which were drafted by the government since the beginning of President Joko Widodo's second administration, have the potential to hinder press freedom.

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, the press and media industry was concentrated on a group of media tycoons and formed an oligarchy (Tapsell, 2015). As part of the countries of the Global South, Indonesia has different characteristics from Northern countries in terms of social history, culture, politics, economy and the tendency of journalism practice and journalism education (Estella, 2020). In 1998, the toppling of Suharto regime marked the beginning of transitional democracy which is characterised by the reorganisation of political economic power from Jakarta (Mietzner, 2010). On the other hand, freedom of speech and the press is merely practised as liberalising the media industry, especially those privately owned in urban-based areas (Lim, 2012), and strengthening the 'freedom' of political interest of media owners rather than serving the public interest (Tapsell, 2015; Armando, 2014).While press freedom understanding is limited to freedom to conduct media business for the oligarchy the notion of protection

of journalists' safety and rights has low priority (Parahita & Ahmad, 2019).

In a situation where the press and media industry strengthens the political oligarchy, press freedom is interpreted in various ways. The COVID-19 pandemic poses a number of challenges for the Indonesian press, from understanding the first signs of the health crisis caused by COVID-19, and demanding the openness of the government. Also, it is for the press to remain independent, ensure accuracy and balance, care for vulnerable groups, as well as protect for journalists (Parahita, 2020). This article examines to what extent the resilience of the Indonesian press is able to face these challenges.

The importance of journalism in times of a public health crisis

In an uncertain and emergency situation such as an infectious disease outbreak, journalists are required to keep working to deliver information needed by the public. The guidelines for risk communication at the time of the outbreak issued by the World Health Organisations (WHO) (2009) stated that the purpose of communication before and during an outbreak is to provide and exchange relevant information to the public, partners and stakeholders. Ideally, decisions that are based on quality information can strengthen efforts to protect public health and safety. Specifically, the main objective of journalists in a public health crisis situation is to help to optimise public health goals while reducing public panic (Parmer et al., 2016; Lubens, 2015; Reynolds & Quinn, 2008; Robie & Krisnamurthi, 2020, Wilkins, 2005). The function of crisis journalism works well and when the press produces qualified news (Dudo et al., 2007).

Crisis journalism might encounter a number of obstacles. Inhibiting factors include the journalists' educational background, limited knowledge of journalists regarding the infectious disease outbreaks, time constraints, obstacles in finding sources, economic pressures, lack of training in the news organisations concerned, and journalists fast turnover with constant deadlines (Lowrey et al., 2006). Lubens (2015) stated that significant barriers to improve the quality of medical and health coverage include a lack of journalistic technical training, limited news production time, and commercial demands that drive the selection of stories and headlines.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, observing the journalism resilience is significant because the crisis has had a structural impact on the national and global press industry. The pandemic reinforces the idea of the importance of changing the financial structure of the media industry from relying on revenue from advertisers to opening up other revenue stream opportunities such as reader fees, donations, including government subsidies (Olsen, Pickard & Westlund, 2020). With the increasing uncertainty due to COVID-19, several concerns related to journalism include the role of experts, the strength of the nation state, and the challenges in covering everyday changes (Kunelius, 2020).

Resilience is the ability of an individual or organisation to adapt to a shocking event, or danger without being completely overtaken by the disaster. Resilience, according to (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007), results from the processes and dynamics that maintain the cognitive, emotional, relational and structural resources that enable organisations to successfully cope with and learn from any unexpected events. At the individual level, the characteristics of resilience include the ability to improvise, adopt different roles, be able to effectively gather knowledge, and interact with others in a sensible manner. At the community level, resilience is built through processes of resistance, recovery and creativity (Weick, 1993).

Science and disaster cognition

With infectious disease outbreaks, journalism is expected to be able to build public awareness about the risks of a public health problem. The role of journalists and media organisations in disaster situations such as public health crises is often unattainable due to a lack of specialist journalist training, limited news production time, and the commercial demands requiring the selection of news and headlines (Lubens, 2015). Ideally, the press during a public health crisis needs to provide information related to prevent the spread of disease outbreaks (Dudo et al., 2007).

Personal safety

The COVID-19 pandemic has put journalists and media organisations in a threatened position as experienced by other members of society. Therefore, both journalists and media organisations in the current pandemic need to strengthen their physical and spiritual protection. The experience of protecting journalists from similar crises in the past has shown the neglect of the organisation on this side. Journalists in Australia interviewed by Hooker, King and Leask (2012) did not know the pandemic planning that had been carried out by their own organisation. The safety of journalists while on duty is the responsibility not only of individual journalists but also organisations, resource people, the state and society in general. In Indonesia, the issue of safety for journalists still becomes a concern due to the weak structural support (Parahita & Ahmad, 2019). Lowrey et. al. (2006) emphasised the importance of individual journalist and organisational level readiness in maintaining the safety and security of journalists before, during and after coverage of infectious disease outbreaks.

Mental health

Apart from physical protection, the challenge of maintaining mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic is strengthening. Working from home (WFH), on one hand, protects journalists from the threat of COVID-19; on the other hand, they are also prone to mental disorders (Bernadas & Ilagan, 2020) as a result of isolation and social distancing, the burden of household work, and mental violence from closest people.

Professionalism and innovative culture

Technology development and open government are associated with increased surveillance of infectious diseases at the global level. Press freedom and widespread internet use in one country has accelerated the spread of public reports about outbreaks from one country to another. In practice, the local media might not necessarily convey infectious disease outbreaks in other countries to local audiences for various reasons.

The first challenge for journalists in public health and science issues today is how to quickly describe the risk of the outbreak. Unfortunately, in the context of COVID-19, journalists and global press media are late in giving early warnings about a possible pandemic due to censorship from the Chinese government, negligence by the government and the global press, as well as the passive resonance from WHO (Fu & Zhu, 2020).

In times of public health crisis, journalists are pressured to confirm that the information is accurate along with demands for rapid information updates (Lubens, 2015). In addition, with an epidemic journalists face a dilemma when reflecting on their response to the deadly influenza outbreak. On the one hand, they must be informants who are independent and neutral to the public, and they are also expected to support public interests and support public health care workers (Hooker, King & Leask, 2012).

The press during a public health crisis needs the government as a source of information in times of emergency but simultaneously monitors and criticizes them. Cornia et al. (2016) stated that the professional culture of journalists in each country's context would shape the journalist-government relationship and the construction of the pandemic reality in a specific way. In the Netherlands, a survey of journalists showed that journalists act as watchdogs in crisis news but they tend to use familiar sources (van der Meer et al., 2017).

Another challenge is that journalists must balance the need to address the humanist aspects of their stories and to protect the patients' dignity while simultaneously describing the severity of an epidemic within a very limited time frame (Lubens, 2015). They are unlikely to explain the complexity (Leask, Hooker & King, 2012; Ward, 2019).

The degree of innovative culture within the editorial room is being tested during the crisis (García-Avilés, 2021). At the very least, Cornia et al. (2016) examined three ways that the 2009 bird flu pandemic was covered in Europe—partisan, watchdog and technocratic. The current COVID-19 pandemic also forces journalists to further hone their skills in digitally producing journalistic reports and competing against disinformation (Luengo & Garcia-Marin, 2020; Tejedor et al., 2020; Perreault & Perreault, 2021, Robie & Krishnamurthi, 2020).

Relational aspect

The COVID-19 pandemic has the worst impact among economically marginal groups and other vulnerable groups such as medical personnel and paramedics, people with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women and children, people with certain illnesses, migrants and refugees who do not speak local languages. In July 2006, 24 individuals from 11 countries met in Bellagio, Italy to discuss current responses and potential responses to an influenza pandemic, which was likely to have a major effect on marginalised groups and to recommend a number of steps to prevent or at least mitigate this effect (Uscher-Pines et al., 2007).

Diversity in economic resources and audience participation

With the slowing economic growth due to COVID-19, the media industry is experiencing an economic crisis. Dawson et al. (2020) noted that while the need for journalists in the press industry in Australia is increasing, the skills required by a journalist have also increased despite getting a disproportionate return on income. The situation has been evolving since 2012 and COVID-19 is only exacerbating the situation. The journalism funding crisis experienced globally prompted Olsen, Pickard and Westlund (2020) to initiate the urgency of communal journalism work and its financing.

Research method

To examine how resilient Indonesian journalists are to the COVID-19 pandemic, an online survey using Survey Monkey was carried out on journalists in Indonesia. Respondents obtained the links through the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), an association of reformist journalists in Indonesia. The survey link was distributed for two weeks between 28 August-12 September 2020. A total of 117 journalists gave a response, but only 100 responses were filled in completely and considered in the findings. The questions were answered with Yes, No, and Unsure. The analysis was carried out with a frequency distribution. Table 1 shows the respondent profiles:

Research was also carried out by closely observing announcements and news releases from the Indonesian Journalists Alliance Indonesia (AJI), and interviewing a number of journalists, such as the chief of employment division of AJI Indonesia Endah Lismartini and chief of programme division AJI D.I. Yogyakarta, Bhekti Suryani. Observations were also made on an online discussion between Communication Science of Gadjah Mada University students and the editorial chief of Narasi TV, Zen Rahmat Sugito, AJI's press release documents uploaded at aji. or .id, and government policies that have an impact on the press /media industry in Indonesia.

Table 1: Respondents' profile in percentage (N=100)	
A. Gender	
Male	80
Female	20
B. Media Organisation	
Print	40
TV/Radio	5
Online	25
Convergent	30
C. Career Period	
Less than 5 years	20
5-10 years	30
10-20 years	40
More than 20 years	10
D. Beat	
Urban	35
Politics	18
Economy and Business	16
Education	7
Social and Culture	17
International	1
Entertainment and Lifestyle	5
E. Location of Media Offices	
DKI Jakarta	33
West Java	15
Yogyakarta Special Province and Central Java	23
East Java	4
Sumatra Island	15
Kalimantan Island	7
Sulawesi Island	3

Results and discussion

Media industry resilience at the expense of the journalists

Journalism has a number of roles in public health crisis situations. However, in severe disaster situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists and media

organisations need to find ways to survive and recover enabling them to continue to function to serve the public. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, media workers remained hopeful to present the latest and quality information to the public, both from a government official statement and complemented from field coverage, academic studies and sources. As early as in March 2020, some Indonesian news outlets produced #medialawancovid (#mediaagainstcovid) to raise COVID-19 concern, awareness and anticipation towards the virus among citizens (Ekarina, 2020).

Indonesia news is to provide a guidance to the community to survive in this incredible plague. At the same time, journalists are a social group prone to be infected with COVID-19. Being observed from the website of AJI Indonesia (www.aji.or.id), during March-July 2020 AJI Indonesia often released alerts to media companies and official institutions to improve their efforts in protecting journalists' health from the COVID-19 threat and be transparent in implementing COVID-19 protocols (Febrina, 2020).

COVID-19 affects all sectors in society including the politics and economy. As seen from Table 2, the respondents seemed to agree that the pandemic dominantly impacts almost all areas being asked including increasingly restricting regulation, mental difficulties, personal safety unpreparedness, changing working pattern, employment crisis, and disinformation spread. COVID-19 has become an apology for the Indonesian government to impose some regulations that weaken the press freedom.

There are two regulations in which AJI Indonesia sees them as a form of repression against press freedom:

1. The Supreme Court issued *Supreme Court Regulation (Perma) Number 5 2020* on Trial Protocols and Security in the Court Environment as stipulated on 27 November 2020. One of the regulations stipulated is that any photographing, audio recording and audio-visual recording must have the permission of the judge or chairman of a panel of judges. This provision is contained in Article 4 paragraph 6, which reads, 'Taking photos, audio recordings and/or audio-visual recordings must have the permission of the judge/chair of the Panel of Judges before the commencement of the trial". The violation of Article 4 paragraph 6 qualifies as an insult to the court.
2. The Chief of the State Police Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia issued an edict Number: Mak /1/I/2021 concerning Compliance with the Prohibition of Activities, Use of Symbols and Attributes and the Termination of Activities of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), signed on 1 January 2021. From an AJI Indonesia perspective, the announcement of the chief of police in Article 2d seems to be excessive and inconsistent with the spirit as a democratic country that respects the right of the people to obtain and disseminate information.

Table 2: Impacts of COVID-19 on Indonesian journalists (N=100)				
Types of Impact	Statements	Yes %	No %	Unsure %
1. Weak freedom of the press and personal safety	Increasing the restricting regulation	71	4	25
	Experiencing more physical threats	16	21	63
	Experiencing more verbal threats	19	33	42
	Experiencing more digital threats	21	42	37
	Increasing the awareness of personal safety unpreparedness	76	3	21
2. Threats to physical and mental health	Being exposed to COVID-19	0	91	9
	Enduring mental challenges like stress/depression	47	19	34
3. Changing working pattern	Increasing challenges to verify information	26	63	11
	Using advanced technology more intensively	73	17	10
	Using more official sources	54	25	21
	Applying safety protocol	64	10	26
4. Employment crisis	Salary deduction	90	10	0
	Paid employment break	5	95	0
	Work termination	2	98	0
	Early retirement	3	97	0
5. Increasing disinformation spread	Increasing disinformation from social media	100	0	0

Although most of the respondents felt that they did not experience any increasing physical and digital threats during work, it did not mean the violence did not occur. The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia recorded that some journalists experienced digital threats like doxing (Ni'matun, 2020a). 2020 was also marked by the ratification of the *Omnibus Law on the Work Creation Act*, as issued by the government and the DPR on 5 October 2020. The law was considered to provide privilege for investors and was detrimental to many parties, including workers. AJI Indonesia recorded that journalists have become the victims of police violence while covering rallies, which have contributed greatly to the increase in the number of cases of violence against journalists in 2020 (Manan, 2020). Magdelene.co and Konde.co, two media outlets that routinely voice the rights of women and minority groups, have also come under digital attack (Manan, 2020).

Working remotely also faces its own challenges; the respondents admitted that they found it difficult to verify information during the pandemic. This situation has been recorded by AJI Indonesia as well. Laziness to verify information becomes a problem when the news is proven to be inaccurate. It emerged when some mass media journalists quoted news from Indonesia's news agency ANTARA, while the news quoted was actually inaccurate—even verging on being a hoax (Ni'matun, 2020b).

The conglomeration and concentration of the Indonesian media industry might enable the industry to be resilient during the pandemic as it can subsidise the platform weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic and could rationalise the number of workers. On the other hand, it does a disservice to journalists. The employment status of the respondents is severely hit by the pandemic. A great number of the respondents admitted that their salary had been cut. The coordinator of Employment Division AJI Indonesia, Endah Lismarini, recorded that many well-established media in Indonesia had made an adjustment related to financial aspects during the crisis by cutting or delaying the salaries or wages, terminating contracts, and offering early retirement to the journalists although the companies had received incentives from the government (personal communication, May 24, 2021).

On July 2020, the Indonesian government announced that it would provide seven incentives for the media industry—abolishing value added tax (VAT) for newsprint, postponing electricity payments, suspending health and employment insurance payments, exempting income tax, and diverting advertising budgets to local media industries (Arigi, 2020). The Fellowship for Behavior Change, which was initiated by the Covid-19 Task Force and the Press Council, was also run from October-December 2020 and will be continued by May-December 2021. The Fellowship involves 26 senior journalists as editors and more than 3030 journalists from various regions. Through his media release, the chairman of the Press Council, Mohammad Nuh, exclaimed that the participants would receive a monthly remuneration allocated from the APBN (National Budget) but they are expected to remain critical in reporting the issues of health protocols and behavior change.

A Press Council commissioner, Agus Sudibyo, on a webinar, 'Relaxing Journalism in the Mid-Pandemic Covid-19', on Saturday, 10 July 2021, gave assurances that the government would not intervene in the editorial process of any news produced by fellow journalists in the programme. The programme is a middle way to support quality journalism, which is rocking financially and to let journalists oversee and remain critical of any governmental mitigation programmes.

While the policies are generally enjoyed by media companies, an improper contract termination has taken place in some firms. AJI Jakarta recorded that online media company Kumparan.com, which is not conglomerated with other companies, fired

some of their journalists and blamed this on the pandemic (AJI Jakarta, 2020). Seeking the alternative of press funding other than advertising is not commonly practised in Indonesian press culture. Before the pandemic, sponsorship required the media to conduct offline events. However, COVID-19 pandemic has ended the trend. According to the coordinator of the employment division, AJI Indonesia, Endah Lismarini,

> [n]ot many media workers have an urge to protest because the advertisers cut their budget to advertise in media. However, AJI Indonesia called on the media companies to be fair and involve their workers in decision making. (Lismarini, personal communication, 2021).

Professional and trade associations provide a stronger bargaining position for journalists to defend their rights. Employment adjustments are getting worse within media companies that do not have trade unions because journalists and other workers have little bargaining leverage (Lismarini, personal communication, 2021). Some of the companies with trade unions even do not discuss the problem and solution with the workers. Thus, the fate of journalists is decided one-sidedly by the management. Since November 2020, until this article was being written, AJI Indonesia has often conducted workshops supported with grants and fellowships to increase the capacity of the journalists in covering issues related to COVID-19, including how to fact-check disinfodemic as reported on its website (www.aji.or.id). With its international networks such as International Federation of Journalist (IFJ), Thomson Foundation, Maverick Indonesia, and Google News Initiative, associations like AJI Indonesia becomes increasingly strategic in crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic when people need to overcome the effect of the plague together.

The tendency of low resilience among Indonesian journalists was reflected from the survey data showing that Indonesian journalists seemed quite ill-prepared to deal with crises caused by COVID-19 in almost every area surveyed (Table 3).

The respondents admitted that they did not have similar experiences in science, environmental and public health issues. This might have been a phenomenon in the Indonesian media industry as not every news platform provides science/health beats (rounds); thus, not all journalists deserve to be called science/crisis journalists. Most of them are unsure and not well-trained in personal safety issues, although their daily work even put them at risk of violence before the pandemic. Interestingly, the percentage of mentally well-managed respondents dominated the responses although only half of them had received mental health support from their organisations. Table 3 also portrays the limited networks relevant with the pandemic for the journalists to adapt, including conducting collaborative projects, extending contact with science and medical communities, and reaching marginalised communities to be portrayed as the resilient communities.

Table 3: Resilience perceptions Indonesian journalists

Resilience Components	Statements	Yes %	No %	Unsure %
1. Cognition about disasters, risks, the science community and the science culture	Having attended the training on risk/ disaster/science journalism	25	50	25
	Having knowledge about similar events in the past (e.g. crisis, disaster, etc.)	30	60	10
2. Personal safety	Attending journalist self-safety training for infectious epidemics	20	45	35
	Getting personal safety equipment support for journalists from the organisation	50	30	20
3. Mental health	Maintaining mental health during a pandemic	80	4	16
	Getting mental health disorder prevention support for journalists from the organisation	40	40	20
4. Professionalism and innovation culture	Applying the verification in reporting	80	10	10
	Balance information from multiple sources	70	20	10
	Being able to conduct fact-checking to fight disinformation/misinformation related to COVID-19	60	30	10
	Mastering new technologies/applications that help journalistic practice	70	20	10
5. Relational aspect	Conducting a collaborative work with journalists from other media companies	30	50	20
	Extending a contact with the science and medical communities for information related to COVID-19	30	50	20
	Reaching marginalised groups to be portrayed as reliant citizens (e.g. senior citizens, women, LGBT, workers, etc	30	50	20
6. Diversity in economic resources and audience participation	Media organisations guarantee journalists' work contracts during the COVID-19 pandemic	40	40	20
	Engaged in organisational efforts to increase the diversity of sources of income for the media	10	80	10
	Engaged in organisational efforts to increase audience participation in the editorial process	10	80	10

Note: Perceptions of Indonesian journalists in performing resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even though the data generally captured the bleak ability of Indonesian journalists to survive in the pandemic, it is only in the professionalism and innovation culture aspect where most of the respondents felt obliged to comply. Their perception is that they have maintained ethical practices such as verification and balanced reporting, conducted fact-checking, and even adapted to new technologies allowing them to do online interviews. A report created by Narasi TV, *62 Menit Operasi Pembakaran Halte Sarinah* (Narasi Newsroom (2020), 62 minutes of burning Sarinah bus stop operation) uploaded on YouTube performed an advanced digital analysis approach to news reporting.[2] Narasi TV is an online-based media initiated by Nadjwa Shihab, a former reporter of Metro TV, a terrestrial Jakarta-based TV channel. The video was uploaded on 28 October 2020, or 20 days after the incident of the Sarinah fire. In an online class of Journalism of the Communication Science Department, Gadjah Mada University, on Friday, 27 November 2021, editorial chief of Narasi TV Zen Rahmat Sugito explained that open source intelligence/investigative (Osint) reporting was feasible because the editorial team had recorded some live and open source CCTV video at the riot and burning incident in Sarinah bus stop and analysed 250 of them. Narasi TV then concluded the arsonists were not a part of the protest. The conclusion rejected accusations that the protesters had conducted a violent rally.

Aside from the use of technology in covering news, collaborative reporting is also on the rise in Yogyakarta (population 423,000). In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, a city about 566 kilometres from the capital of Jakarta, some journalists have worked collaboratively to produce news. The programme coordinator of AJI Yogyakarta, Bhekti Suryani, reported that some news correspondents and local journalists had worked collaboratively to produce news. AJI Yogyakarta has coordinated news related to the topics of local believers and agrarian affairs in Yogyakarta, since late 2020. Both sets of coverage have been supported by external funding. SATUNAMA, a Yogyakarta-based NGO, funded the cost of covering local believers and disability issues which were published in late 2020. The Open Society Foundation through Kurawal Foundation funded the cost of covering agrarian affairs in Yogyakarta, which was still ongoing when this article was being written (Suryani, personal communication, 2021). On agrarian affairs, 15 journalists from more than five news companies were involved.

Agrarian affairs in Yogyakarta is a sensitive issue. As a special region in Indonesia, Yogyakarta is privileged to manage its administration. It is the only province out of 34 in Indonesia that does not elect its governor and vice-governor. Both of the top positions in Yogyakarta are given to the family of its Yogyakarta Sultanate (Keraton Yogyakarta) and Pakualaman Sultanate (Pura Pakualam). However, the regents/mayors of five districts are elected in local elections. *Law No. 13 2012* about Privilege (UU Keistimewaan Yogyakarta) allows the authority of Yogyakarta to regulate and administer the Sultan and Pakualaman Grounds. Nevertheless, the

law causes problems with duality and conflicts over land ownership (Jati, 2014).

In the early period of the pandemic, Suryani, who works for *Harian Jogja,* collaborated with colleagues from *Kompas, Gatra, VOA, Tirto, CNNIndonesia* and *IDNTimes* to cover issues related to COVID-19 policies in Yogyakarta. The topic included comparing the number of COVID-19 cases data between official data and COVID-19 ward, investigating the official method of COVID-19 patients' classification, and criticising the reluctance of the government to apply a local lockdown.

In doing the collaboration, they divided small tasks among themselves, but they took part in the interview together. When the information and data were complete, they agreed on the news angle and narrative. They wrote the articles independently to prevent and avoid 'cloning' journalism. Their individual segments of the reports were published in each channel. For this work, Suryani (2021) testified that they were not funded by any institutions.

> We believe that as journalists, we have to keep on being critical [towards] government and policies. Even though we receive external grants, we make sure that the funding institution does not control our process and results. Beyond that, experience, passion, integrity and idealism in quality journalism have motivated us to conduct a collaborative-investigative work. (Suryani, personal communication, 2021).

The journalists involved in collaborative COVID-19 reporting were inspired by their previous project covering corruption in the auction of disputed land of former cinema Indra in Yogyakarta a year earlier (Suryani, personal communication, 2021). During the pandemic, to cover corruption is more difficult because government officials are more remote, and 'emotional closeness' between local journalists with their sources and 'envelope culture' are not reduced.[3] Suryani cited Indonesialeaks.id to provide an example of how collaborative reporting has been practised at the national level. Indonesialeaks.id is a platform created by journalists from various media that receive documents and information digitally and online. Its breaking news included the Buku Merah case in 2019 (Indonesialeaks, 2019). Another example is the collaborative reportage by *The Jakarta Post*, Vice Indonesia and Tirto.id on sexual harassment in Indonesian campuses during 2019 which drew national attention (Tirto.id).

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the first time Indonesian journalism has experienced a crisis.With the strengthening of the digitisation of information and the media, journalism continues to be forced to adapt. It can be stated that COVID-19 intensifies the pre-existing disruption of the routines of journalists so far. In an Indonesian context, journalists encounter challenges, including a lack of media freedom and personal safety, threats to physical and mental health,

changing working patterns, employment crises, and an increasing disinformation spread. The capacity of Indonesian journalists to be resilient is seen in the aspects of ability to maintain mental health and consistently implement professional ethics. Some media companies were financially affected due to Covid-19 but the Indonesian government has imposed fellowship programmes to assist the media industry to keep producing quality COVID-19 journalism—and the government promises to allow independent and critical reports.

In regard to pandemic reporting, journalists who master advanced technology and have collaborative working relations with their peers—whether through associations or local and international networks—are likely to be able to produce quality news during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data and visual reportage, when done independently, cleverly and carefully attract large numbers of views and influences public opinion. Indonesian journalists who are able to collaborate with their peers and networks find that in-depth and investigative reporting remain feasible for production even during the crisis.

Data and collaborative reporting is something new in Indonesia. However, the COVID-19 pandemic seems to accelerate the idea in which immediate and exclusive news are no longer critical with the 'new normal' of journalism in Indonesia. Technologically advanced, collaborative and inclusive reporting increases the resilience of the Indonesian journalists in remaining critical and productive. In the end, those who benefit the most from public-interest and collaborative journalism is society as a whole.

As Indonesian journalists might tend to respond to questionnaires of professionalism from a sense of idealism, the best way to verify the statistical result is by content analysis of their published reports. Future research may include the quality of COVID-19 journalism produced by the journalists enrolling in government fellowship programmes, and the continuation of technologically advanced as well as collaborative reporting.

Notes

1. George Floyd's killing in the United States reverberated across Indonesia, triggering a groundswell of support for #BlackLivesMatter and also for Papuans in a country that 'often avoids confronting national traumas'. George Perry Floyd Jr was an African-American man murdered by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, who kneeled on his neck for more than nine minutes on 25 May 2020. Derek Chauvin was convicted on three counts of homicide and sentenced to 22.5 years in jail. Three other police officers face trial in 2022. The hashtag #Papuanlivesmatter quickly attracted backing from actors, artists and many of Indonesia's progressive youth. University students organised online seminars with Papuans and human rights activists, 'sparking conversations that would have never happened in the past. And non-Papuans have taken to the streets calling for change, including in a city [Tasikmalaya] better known for its Islamic schools.' (Papuans are largely

Christian, a religious minority in the predominantly Muslim country.) (Pierson, 2020).
2. Sarinah bus shelter here refers to Transjakarta bus stop situated nearby Sarinah Mall in the heart of Special Capital Region of Jakarta. At least two Transjakarta bus shelters in Central Jakarta are damaged and burned during the protest rally against the controversial Job Creation/Omnibus Law on October 8, 2020 (Facilities set ablaze, 2020).
3. Journalists receive money from the news sources when they attend sources' press conference/publish news. The money was put into envelopes (Romano, 2000)

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Papua and the public

News framing of the Asrama Papua 2019 conflict

Abstract: The 2019 Asrama Papua conflict in Surabaya initiated many discourses on racial discrimination and police brutality towards Papuan students in Indonesia. The question arises as to how the public perceive news framing and its effects on public opinion. This question will be answered by examining reports in the newspapers *Kompas* (published in Jakarta) and *Jubi* (Jayapura, Papua) which display quite different thematic and rhetorical structures. As secondary research, this article aims to assess the public opinion on the framing of the incident based on Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality. Through qualitative focus group discussion, this study examines people's perceptions of news media framing and its effect on the shaping of public opinion towards an ethnic minority group. The results show that media framing reinforces a certain idea of public opinion towards minority groups through various factors such as Perspective of Reporting and Depth of Reporting, both of which differ in *Kompas* and *Jubi* as a result of differences in their audiences. Differences were also found in such factors as the thematic structure between lens of sympathy and lens of antagonism. Ultimately, this research suggests that the public possess an awareness of news framing, thus giving them the capability to construct their own critical viewpoints towards media and the incident.

Keywords: Asrama, Indonesia, *Jubi, Kompas*, media, news framing, Papuans, public opinion, racial representation, racism, West Papua

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Introduction

IN 2019, a riot erupted near a Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya. Prompted by allegations about desecration of the Indonesian flag, the incident ignited a riot along with discourses on issues such as justice, racial discrimination and police brutality towards Papuans as an ethnic minority in Indonesia. Similarly, discourses on media framing about Papuans as an ethnic minority also swept the Indonesian news media coverage, raising questions about effects that framing may have on the public.

As the event, also known in Western media as the 2019 Papuan Uprising, had been covered in various online news outlets, a primary study (Putri, 2020) was conducted to analyse the difference of framing between *Kompas* as one of the more mainstream nation-wide news outlets, and *Jubi* as the community-oriented and local media with a focus on reporting on Papuan lives in Indonesia. Within the study, it was found that the ways in which the event had been portrayed varied across media platforms, the factors of which relied on the scale of the publication as well as the targeted audience.

It is the intention of this study to analyse the connections between news framing and the shaping of public opinion. Lippmann (1922) suggested that public opinion was the phenomenon wherein media exposure influenced internally perceived images and public opinion about external events. In fact, news framing and public opinion are found to be closely related (Lecheler & de Vreese , 2012).

This research is the extension of an early research on news framing towards the 2019 Asrama Papua (Papuan student dorm) conflict between national Indonesian media (*Kompas*) and local Papuan media (*Jubi*). The early research found that the news framing by both media was centered around thematic and rhetorical structures, with *Kompas* emphasising conflict-oriented angles while *Jubi* used more sympathetic and human interest angles (Putri, 2020). To validate that research, this study examined people's perceptions about news framing of the conflict by the two media and assessed their views on the role of media in reinforcing stereotypes. The study employed a focus group discussion with members of the public.

Papuans in the media

Media framing about Papuans as an ethnic minority in Indonesia has been the subject of previous studies. Ranging from news reporting articles to media representation, these studies have taken the lens of content or framing analysis. The common findings of the studies suggest that news framing about Papuans appear in the form of a lexical choice through keywords with negative connotations (e.g., rioting, separatist, clash, among others) and limited stories and biased representation (Kirsch, 2010; Murtadho & Ningsih, 2017; Dalimunthe et al., 2020). The 2019 Surabaya conflict prompted many discourses and protests regarding Papuans in the media (Lopez, 2020; Robie, 2020).

In addition to lexical choices, a study by Syabilla (2020) pointed out that discrepancies in constructing news narratives about Papuans in news outlets can be examined through the script structure, of which there are two common structures between the national and international media, problem-oriented and chronological-retelling structure, respectively. Aside from script structure, Widyaningsih and Lestari (2020) highlighted the influence of thematic structure on news framing, stating that news narratives on Papuans were often presented in two

different thematic routes, in which international media used a humanitarian and societal concern angle, while local media often used a conflict-oriented angle. With this idea, studies of news framing should also consider media priming and its effects on public opinion regarding ethnic minorities. Lastly, the framing of Papuans in Indonesia is also affected by limitations of self-representation due to censorship and legal prohibitions that minimise indepth and independent reporting as well as portrayals of Papuans in Indonesia (Mambor & da Costa Sarmento, 2020).

Ethnic minorities

Studies on media framing and public opinion towards ethnic minorities across the globe have focused on the existence of asylum-seekers and immigrants' lives in Western countries. Schemer (2013) found that asylum-seekers in Swiss media were framed through repetitive use of negative keywords and problem-oriented scenarios. Jacobsen et al. (2012) states that the continuous exposure of negative stereotyping in media affects public opinion about Muslims in Denmark. De Coninck et al. (2018) drew a similar conclusion with trust in the media as a factor. Lecheler et al. (2015) suggested that visual aspects in news narratives reinforced the building of a certain mental-image towards reports about ethnic minorities. Limited and biased coverage of ethnic minorities also contributes to the phenomena. Studies show that repetitive news reporting of crime and violence connected to ethnic minorities can build antagonistic images of marginalised groups (Allen & Bruce, 2017; Hannis, 2009).

Public opinion is often reinforced by news media framing, especially through repetition of a certain angle, theme, or the use of keywords. Adisa et al. (2016), who studied news framing of conflict among ethnic group leaders in Nigeria, argued that stereotyped and conflict-oriented frames reinforced and intensified the existing conflict and public views on the conflict. Similarly, Kanaker et al. (2020) claimed that conflict-oriented framing of the Rohingya crisis always highlighted the conflict and distracted people from finding a solution to the conflict.

Media priming and its effects on public opinion is also found in studies about racial representation of African American communities in media, including, but not limited to discourses of police brutality as well as the Black Lives Matter movement. Such studies show that media framing can build a sense of hostility towards African American communities through repetition of negative image-building (Kulaszewics, 2016; Lane et al., 2020). In the same context, a study by Fridkin et al. (2017) showed that there is a tendency for media framing to oscillate between angles of sympathetic reporting which underlines human interest or the contrasting angle of establishing law and order through the perspective of authorities.

Theoretical frameworks

Public opinion is understood to be a result of framing presented in the media to reflect the zeitgeist of the times. This creates a feedback loop and reinforces pre-existing beliefs among the public (Petersen, 2019). As a reflection and contributor to public opinion, news framing may build an image of reality, affecting the views of public on a large scale (Lasswell, 1922; Nwabueze & Okonkwo, 2018).

Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality theory (1965) argues that people's cognition and behaviour are shaped by external and internal stimuli which simultaneously construct their views about the world. They argued that people's opinion about reality are built by 'internalising the external' so that beliefs are shaped by external stimuli. Another way individuals construct their reality is by 'forming objectivity' in which they create a standpoint about a phenomenon (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Lastly, they argue that people express their beliefs and opinions as the results of a negotiation with the two previous stages, in a stage called 'externalising the internal.' Arguably, the construction of reality is driven by how people deal with obtained information and other factors such as the difference between individual and societal framing, and pre-existing beliefs (de Vreese, 2005), as well as inherent themes presented by news narratives (Valkenburg et al., 1999).

Methodology

Drawing from previous studies on media framing and public opinion, this research employed a qualitative approach using focus group discussion to collect data from multiple sources simultaneously (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Purposive sampling was used to choose participants through an online recruitment process which included inquiry on existing patterns of media consumption habits as well as familiarity with *Kompas*, *Jubi* and the 2019 Asrama Papua incident. The participants of the study consisted of two groups of eight people selected from the digital native generation; that is, people born between 1993 and 2001. This selection of participants corresponded to previous studies which suggested that young people were more familiar with—and more critical of—digital media (Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017; Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Conducted in two different sessions, the focus group discussion began with the distribution of a consent form to the participants. They were also briefed about the study aim and given an option to use pseudonyms in the research report. They were given supplementary articles about the Asrama Papua incident (Putri, 2020). These articles included a selection of *Kompas* articles; Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya visited by hundreds of mass organisations; This is the presumed cause; Facts on the clash at the Papuan student dormitory, Presumed to have defamed the national flag and 43 were seized; Khofifah and the governor of Papua rejected from entering the Papuan student dormitory in

Surabaya. The selected *Jubi* articles were Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya visited by officials and mass organisations; Damages done to the Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya are recorded; Parents' visit rejected by students of the Papuan dormitory in Surabaya.

Answers from the discussions were transcribed and analysed through a thematic analysis approach to deduce the perception of the participants towards the differences of framing between *Kompas* and *Jubi*. This analysis was interpreted in the contexts of Social Construction of Reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and with the guidance of notions related to journalism, news framing, and public opinion.

Perceptions of Papuans

In understanding how digital natives constructed social reality about Papuan as a minority group in Indonesia based on news framing, this study assessed their pre-existing beliefs to contextualise their perceptions.

Participants were asked to describe pre-existing perception about Papuans prior to being exposed to the news. This identified that lack of familiarity towards Papuans was one of the major factors contributing to the construction of stereotypical profiling about the minority group. Limited stories about Papuans that they learned at school and lack of media representation reinforced stereotypical and racial profiling of Papuans in Indonesia:

> I just know nothing. This unknown feeling is what causes a lot of people to have these negative stereotypes about Papuan people. (A, 23)
>
> When they live in Jakarta or the neighbouring towns, they become kind of an outcast because of people perceiving them as a minority. And [therefore], some people don't know how to act around them. (L, 20)
>
> When I was in school, what I gathered is that Papua is a part of Indonesia, but very discriminated against. (Y, 23)

Aside from lack of familiarity, limited media exposure about Papuans further eroded their view about the ethnic group and they were most likely to believe the narratives about Papuans in media. Stories constantly referred to Papuans being involved in crime, violence, or political conflicts (Rubawati, 2018):

> There are a lot of conflicts between the state and the people. And historically, there a lot of conflicts between the local citizens and the state [Indonesia] to gain control of Papua [the region]. (S, 23)
>
> … the region of Papua that I know was freed in the 60s. And we freed Irian Jaya and gave them freedom from the Dutch. But now I realise it's becoming more apparent that Papua was annexed by NKRI [Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia] and the residents have become subjects to colonialism. (B, 22)

> This is something that I have heard; words like 'separatists' is one of the few that I heard quite often. Those words really do stick. (H, 23)
>
> I know so little. Aside from when they're in the news. But when they're in the news, it's always negative; the riots, the Asrama conflict. If you don't look for it, you can't really see that it's there. (H, 22)

This study also showed that digital natives have grown to perceive Papuans as foreign and inferior to most Indonesians. However, the ubiquitous presence of alternative sources of information in the digital age provides them with diverse images about the minority groups. Yet, the association of negative characters with the Papuan ethnic group remains substantial. As such, the study participants saw Papuans as primitive, uneducated, uneducated, under-developed and uncivilised:

> Papua is a rich land, but it's heavily exploited. Therefore, the infrastructure is not really developed. And the government also doesn't seem to prioritise their attention towards Papua. (L, 20)
>
> A lot of stereotypes portray their civilisation as primitive. ...there's this sort of attribution to wilderness and being in the jungle … or they speak quite loudly or smell. Those are things we attribute to animals, which is very demeaning. (B, 22)
>
> ...to differentiate their way there [Papua] and our way here in Jakarta is by the accent I guess the way [they are portrayed] in the media is exaggerated more than it's supposed to be. I guess that's their way of differentiating. (I, 23)
>
> I think that stereotype [prone to violence] is basically because we know that there are a lot of tribes in that region that are still prone to violence, tribalism. But that's still a stereotypical thing to say for generalising the past of a culture. (Y, 22)

Negative perceptions about Papuans are also associated with physical characteristics such as darker skin color, curly hair and thick lips that are always seen as negative traits. These physical traits are often associated with other social attributes such as lack of education, low comprehensive skills, and limited financial security, which construct a lower social status. The worst scene is people and authorities tend to use violence in dealing with social frictions involving Papuans. However, these stereotypes brought participants to awareness of internalised racism, especially after they were exposed to stories about the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States:

> What I heard about stereotypes about Papuans, they are outcast? In my own mind right now, I just feel like every time we talk about Papuans; they are less educated. And economically, they earn less than what we can earn. (R, 22)
>
> ... my experience so far has mostly been about their appearance and

> sometimes their intelligence. It reminds me of how whites treated African American back then. How they look at black people as inferior. but that's the stereotype I see; of being stinky or dumb or just less capable. (A, 23)
>
> I really agree with most of the previous comments on internalised racism and the way we see Papuans as not dissimilar to how [white people] see African Americans in the US back in the days. (B, 22)
>
> It's nothing new to hear these sorts of stereotypes about Papuans, especially since they're rather dark skinned, but I guess it's more towards our internalised racism. (S, 24)
>
> There is a perception that Papuans are rude, smelly, that they have no water and electricity. I have also heard that they lack intelligence, I have never heard of positive first impressions on Papuans. (W, 23)

In brief, this discussion provided understanding about digital natives' pre-existing views towards Papuans which showed that people went through the process of internalising the external in responding to negative images about Papuans in media. The negative images about the minority group were constructed due to lack of social contact with the ethnic group, limited news coverage about the group and the constant exposure to internalised racism against Papuans built by social institutions. Such a process of internalising the external corresponds to the theoretical notion of Social Construction of Reality as proposed by (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Visual and textual news framing

In the focus group discussion, all the participants were asked to describe noticeable discrepancies between the articles from *Kompas* and *Jubi*. This process included identifying textual and visual factors of framing and the inherent thematic structure. Analysing their feedback showed the participants paid attention to several aspects, perspective of reporting, script structure, depth of reporting, scale of media institution, angle of reporting (antagonisation vs sympathy), and focal point of reporting (conflict-oriented vs human interest). They perceived *Kompas* as using a limited, surface-level and general approach in its reporting, in contrast to the in-depth and personal narrative provided by *Jubi*:

> I did feel like when I read *Jubi* it's much more personal. They gave us better context to the events while *Kompas* was much more impartial; 'here is what we think happened, this is what we got. (A, 23)
>
> I think externally, *Kompas* did not explore the core of the problem enough. Whereas *Jubi*, seem[ed] to be determined enough that they included several conversations of the residents here [student dormitory]. (H, 23)
>
> *Kompas*' piece would be very neutral. Depicting both sides of the story is the most ethical, journalistic wise. While *Jubi* articles are really personal, up close, in a way kind of dramatised. (H, 22)

> *Kompas* wants to uphold more factual standards, but at the same time there's a narrative that's missing. (V, 22)

Talking further about depth of reporting, participants deemed *Kompas* as being more representative of an Indonesian view as a national media outlet. In contrast, they saw *Jubi* to be more representative of the Papuan students' perspective due to the in-depth narrative. They identified the difference in depth of reporting between the two media in terms of scale and scope of the reportage:

> Ever since the persecution and racist incident that occurred to them ... that context and admission that the incident is of persecution and racism. You don't see that in *Kompas*, only in *Jubi*. So they [*Jubi*] really showed that it was a racist act. (B, 22)
>
> In the second article *Jubi* mentioned that there were several—four students—[who] were injured and I think that's a huge fact. But, they didn't mention that at all in *Kompas*. But *Kompas* did mention that arrests were made.' (A, 23)
>
> ...they also went to the extent of including a trauma column towards the end of the article, why they rejected the Governor's visitation. *Kompas* could have included the other's [Papuan students] perspectives. (H, 23)
>
> There's a specific column of trauma in the last section, they highlight that because they wanted the audience to see that the victims here [Papuan students] are not the ones that need to be blamed. (R, 22)

The participants' could sense that *Kompas* tried to highlight the allegation against Papuans who were reported as desecrating the national flag. Participants also perceived the constant reiteration of the allegation by *Kompas* as a form of justification for the attacks. Some of them even perceived the tone to be accusatory against the students. Contrastingly, they perceive articles by *Jubi* as the counter-perspective in which Papuan students were not framed as a threat, but as victims of racial discrimination, hate crimes and police brutality. Such perceptions validate Putri's (2020) contention that *Kompas* focused on a conflict-oriented lens while *Jubi* wrote from a human-interest angle:

> As if implying that something happened first and then because the Papuans did something they were attacked. In the second folder, there's more focus on the *Kompas* headline regarding the allegation of the flag's desecration. 'Below are the complete facts', but the next line is 'the students have allegedly'... I think this is weird, they say these are the facts, but the number one point is an allegation. (B, 22)
>
> The keyword alleged is not valid to accuse that they broke the flag. It's not clear, but *Kompas*, they also make it seem like it's factual. (I, 22)
>
> *Kompas*, in the allegation part. Because if their standpoint [it] is neutral, I don't think the word allegations are necessary to me, I don't think

it should even be the suitable headline. (H, 23)

Kompas really highlighted the damaged flag and they only just brought up the student arrests in the second one [article] and on the bottom part. ...I think *Kompas* can be seen as subjective in their lexical choices. (L, 20)

...because they think that the Papuans have broken the flag and that would threaten the NKRI value [nationalist sentiment about the unity of the republic]. But it's just ego. And we've been taught to internalise that NKRI is above everything. (Y, 22)

The students saw *Jubi*'s style of news reporting as ideal for diluting existing racial stereotypes of Papuans. They saw its promotion of the Papuan students' perspectives, as well as choosing unbiased keywords, sources, and tags as displaying socially responsible journalism:

Jubi also has these hashtags such as discrimination, horizontal conflict, *ormas* [mass organisations] racism and Papuan Lives Matter. That makes the article feel more personal to their side of the story. (Y, 23)

It's so much more sentimental from *Jubi*'s side. I read the third article and the writing is sentimental. While *Kompas* stayed factual. I guess because they're the bigger media compared to *Jubi*. (A, 23)

…but you can see that *Kompas*'*s* reporters are really playing with the angle. Whereas *Jubi*, they really want to give more perspective of the victims. (AT, 23)

...I guess this is where *Jubi* can elaborate from the subjective, yet positive side. Because the reporters are Papuans, they can relate and understand their [students] position. (H, 23)

These apparent differences in thematic structures are also attributed to the difference in script structures. They identify that *Kompas* maintains the traditional who/what/where/when/why/how in building news stories with more highlight in 'how', showing the narratives of the allegation. In contrast, the participants note that *Jubi*'s narrative-building is dominated by statements and quotations from the students:

Kompas do provide the full package in terms of the 5W1H. They have the chronological story; why it happened, and also when, where, and what. But for *Jubi*, I feel like they focus more on the victims, which is the Papuans and how it shapes this victim's side [of the story]. (R, 22)

I notice that *Jubi* relies more on dialogue and statements from other people. Especially statements about the Papuans, instead of the *ormas* [mass organisations]. I think *Jubi*, in a way, is more one-sided than *Kompas.* But at the same time, *Jubi* also provides more specific statements that would not be available in *Kompas*. (V, 22)

Apart from being sensitive towards the tone, angle and depth of reporting as a way of objectifying reality about Papuan in the news, the participants also examined the visuals used in the news as part of the framing device. They perceived images as signifiers of both perspective and the focal point in reporting that could strengthen the frame built by both media. In their opinion, *Jubi* provided factual images of the Papuan students' lives from the inside, while *Kompas* presented images of the riot:

> *Kompas* is for the general public view of the incident itself, but *Jubi*, through the articles and pictures, invokes sympathy towards the students in the dormitory, as they were discriminated against by the police and people in the region. (I, 23)
>
> *Kompas*' visual style seems like they are trying to distance themselves. Whereas *Jubi*'s were exactly from within the gate. As if these indicate that *Jubi* understands more about their [Papuan students'] position as the intimidated. (H, 23)
>
> *Jubi*, with their use of photo, seems to emphasise that they are more representative of the Papuans [in the incident]. (HR, 23)
>
> I agree that *Jubi* was portrayed as though it was taken from the victim's side, whereas *Kompas*, it's not necessarily neutral but just a reporter's picture of news in general. (AT, 23)
>
> They [*Kompas*] also provide pictures of the police trying to break into the dormitory, pointing their guns towards the dormitory; they want to portray the perspectives that the students can be dangerous and so we have to be careful. (R, 23)

In line with the textual content, *Jubi*'s visual aids were representative of the insider's perspective. This aspect was found to be a contributing factor in setting the narrative of *Jubi*'s article to be a more indepth reporting of the incident which underlines the theme of human interest.

Externalising the internal

As noted earlier, another process that news readers go through in building a social construct of reality about certain images in media is by externalising the internal (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The results show that constant exposure to racially-biased content increases scepticism towards the media. Their critical viewpoint revolves around the societal issues that media write about ethnic minorities, religions and marginalised groups. Even though they still have trust in *Kompas* as a mainstream news outlet in Indonesia, they doubt the accuracy of the news stories. This group of digital natives has diversified media consumption habits and assumes that traditional media plays a lesser role in building public opinion as compared to new media:

> I don’t really trust the media when it’s about ethnic minorities, because usually they’re oppressed, they’re discriminated against. (A, 23)
>
> Unfortunately people got apprehended by the police because of these Papuans and again because of their stereotypes and then the racial discrimination, they must have did it. (I, 22)
>
> Fundamentally, Indonesians have a very mob mentality—especially when it comes to their nationality and patriotism—which can really be dangerous, especially in situations such as these. (H, 22)
>
> ...But then they’re forgetting that these Papuans are also experiencing racist influence because of that ...because the stereotypes had already existed. And the incident just reinforces that. (V, 22)

Despite the scepticism, participants considered that subtle framing could imply negative connotations towards ethnic minorities, reinforcing existing ethnic stereotypes. Existing negative stereotypes towards Papuans may remain apparent in national media like *Kompas*, but indepth coverage by a local publication like *Jubi* appears to be effective in eliminating stereotypical and racial profiling. Moreover, as digital-literate individuals, the participants urged both traditional and new media to be more transparent in reporting on minority groups:

> Most media are still trying to be so politically correct, [so] they hide some truth or some information that could be important for the people to know. (V, 22)
>
> The minority deserve their justice too, sometimes media report an incident wrongly or phrase it in the wrong context so it’s not true to the reality. (L, 20)
>
> Be more transparent and elaborative. Because, yes, the minority needs their justice. And also, for news media, especially, to do more research and [instill] more compassion for what they write. (Y, 22)

Conclusion

Previous literature (Allen & Bruce, 2017; De Coninck et al., 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2012; Lecheler et al., 2015; Schemer, 2013) suggest that media framing affects people’s perceptions about social issues and subsequently builds biased public opinion about minority groups. The findings of this study show that news framing is capable of building social constructions of reality through constant images of selected reality. The discussion of digital natives’ perception towards news framing of the 2019’s Asrama Papua incident offers an example of how media influence their views about a minority group and reinforces racial stereotypes. In fact, the social construction of reality about Papua is forged by a lack of social contact with the ethnic group, limited news coverage about the group and constant exposure to internalised racism against Papuans built by social institutions. Participants were aware that media built biased frames

about minority groups. They paid attention to perspectives of reporting, depth of reporting, scale of media institution, angles of reporting and focal points of reporting to identify the media frames.

Though trust in the media is declining and being replaced with skepticism among digital natives, they find that repetitive media reports contribute to the shaping of public opinion. To deal with repetitive biased media reports, they want media to use a personal and indepth approach to reporting sensitive issues on Papua or other marginalised groups to negate hostility and racial stereotyping. Simultaneously, the sense of distrust breeds a demand for current Indonesian mainstream media to be more transparent and equal in constructing news narratives.

This study has offered a critical analysis of the correlation between news framing and public opinion, highlighting that social constructs of reality should be considered in understanding how they shape their opinion. However, this research only presents the view of a small group through focus group discussion. Further research is needed to measure public perceptions about news framing in a wider scale.

We recommend that media and journalism institutions should devise a more equal approach in reporting incidents regarding ethnic minorities. In-depth representations and sources could be a solution to racial disparities in the media. It is also recommended that further studies diversify the scope of media and participants to truly discern susceptibility to media framing and media literacy in order to construct a more objective and equal journalistic landscape in Indonesia.

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The role of collaborative journalism in WestPapua

A *Jubi* and *Tirto* case study

Abstract: In this article, the author explores the collaboration between *Tirto* and *Jubi* in reporting on the Wamena and Jayapura riots in September 2019 in what has been described as the Papuan Uprising. The collaboration was greatly influenced by the desire of both media to improve the quality of news on human rights violations in West Papua. *Tirto* is an Indonesian online media outlet. Its journalists often criticise various government policies and the Indonesian political world through headlines, news and special articles. *Tirto* won an award as the Most Innovative Cyber Media in the 2017 Adinegoro Journalism Awards organised by the Indonesian Journalists Association. In the following year, *Tirto* became the only media outlet in Indonesia to receive an award from the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN). *Jubi* is a general news media service from West Papua which reports on the West Papuan conflict, especially human rights issues. At the conceptual level, one can expect an accurate and in-depth report resulting from the journalism collaboration between *Tirto* and *Jubi*. However, at the practical level, a question arises about what the collaboration means for the life of West Papuan journalists? Research results using qualitative content analysis and interviews suggest that the collaborative journalism they created was able to restore West Papuan journalists'self-esteem. These findings can contribute to the enhancement of the knowledge in the field of journalism and provide valuable information for West Papuan journalists.

Keywords: collaborative journalism, content analysis, human rights, Indonesia, *Jubi, Tirto*, West Papua, West Papuan journalism

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Introduction

ON 23 September 2019 riots broke out in Wamena, Papua that left 32 civilians dead and 65 injured. Initial reports said the riot in the West Papuan highlands city was provoked when a migrant teacher allegedly called a Papuan high school student a 'monkey'. This was the same racist insult that sparked mass riots across Indonesia after a similar incident occurred in the eastern

Javanese city of Surabaya the previous month (Lamb, Cordell, & Doherty, 2020; Robie, 2020). However, the matter was not quite that straightforward.

During subsequent student solidarity action at the Cenderawasih University Campus complex in Jayapura, 318 students were arrested and four people were reported killed, including one member of the armed forces (Firdaus, 2019)

The highly regarded Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM), , a human rights organisation, based in Jakarta, issued a statement criticising the government's behaviour. The statement warned that the security forces government was still brutally suppressing protests in West Papua. The security forces only carried out the orders of their superiors. The ELSAM Papua press release was titled 'The Wamena and Jayapura tragedy on September 23, 2019. The Jokowi Government must end militarism in the Land of Papua'.

ELSAM Papua expressed sympathy for the Papuans, promoting the declaration that Papuan Lives Matter. The events of September 23 were closely related to the Papua students' dormitory riot in Surabaya. Security forces arrested 42 Papuan students after that event (Abdi, 2019).

The events of September 23 can be categorised as violations of human rights as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), such as right to life, liberty, personal security (Article 3), freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile (Article 9), the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty (Article 11), freedom of opinion and information (Article 19), and the right of peaceful assembly and association (Article 20) (UN, 2020). It also violated a number of rights guaranteed by Indonesian Law No. 39/1999. The issue of human rights in West Papua goes hand in hand with a desire to rearrange the relationship between the state power holders and citizens. In discussing the problem, Wignjosoebroto (2005, p. xiii) said:

> Debate arises as to how much power and authority of a regime may be tolerated, and how broad the freedom of citizens, on the other hand it must always be recognised and must never be seized or violated.

That debate was never finished. He went on to say:

> It is the duty of democrats to ensure that autocrats do not deny the basic rights of the people. Their efforts to do that, not only through advocacy actions to defend those whose rights have been violated. They also need to use more educative ways to make citizens aware of their natural and human rights, which have been denied, and are even deprived of, those who are in power. (2005, p. xvi)

In Wignjosoebroto's opinion, every journalist in West Papua must be as a 'democratic agent', standing up to arbitrary authorities and making people aware of their human rights.

Jubi had been attacked by the Indonesian government, with its website blocked for reporting news about the human rights violations in West Papua (Nopjr, 2019). In this atmosphere, *Tirto* invited the *Jubi* journalists to join them at the beginning of the following month in reporting on the riots. Ultimately, two *Jubi* journalists and one *Tirto* journalist were involved. *Tirto* used this opportunity to raise the morale of *Jubi* journalists whose website had been hacked by the Indonesian government.

Indonesian media cooperation

The press in Indonesia usually works together. The prominent form of co-operation, according to Ana Nadhya Abrar (2011), is co-operation in management and personal editorial collaboration:

> Management cooperation is the cooperation of two newspapers with different editorial politics, working together to produce and market the results of each publication. Personal editorial cooperation is publishing several newspapers and magazines. For example, a group of people who are experts in the field of press editorials publish newspapers and magazines in several places. (pp. 30-31).

From the two cooperation models mentioned above, we can assume, first, that there will be one press media company that has many publications with accumulated models at one parent company. This phenomenon is often called a press conglomerate. The *Jawa Pos* and *Kompas* groups are two examples.

Second, we can also assume the role of individuals in the editorial field of press media is not large. Individuals cannot determine the ups and downs of the press. This is collective work, which is usually strongly influenced by the owners of press media companies. This condition is a challenge for the press in Indonesia facing de-politicisation. In 1991, Dhakidae argued that the condition of the ethics of Indonesian media politics has shifted to business ethics:

> Previously the press media had a political audience. They were very loyal to the newspaper or magazine and chose not to read other newspapers or magazines when the newspaper or magazine they loved was not published. Now, it's easy for readers of a newspaper or magazine to switch to another newspaper or magazine. (Dhakidae, 1991, p. 3)

Kompas's publisher, Jakob Oetama, told the Indonesian Communication Bachelor Association Seminar II in Surabaya:

> Press media companies are no longer just tools of struggle and sources of information, because newspaper founders also take business interests into account. (Kedaulatan Rakyat, 1991)

Nasir (2005, p. 66) argued that media freedom and capital were important during the change in the structure of the Indonesian mass media from the Suharto order to the reformation order in 2004. As a result, readers have entered into a trade relationship with the media and no longer have the right to obtain important and useful information.

According to Prasetyo (2016), some journalistic information in West Papua comes only from security forces and public officials. The practice of journalism consisted mostly of interviews with several people rather than field reporting:

The news seems to be a parade of opinions. When there is an incident, government or military officials say A, then activists say B, and so on.

In contrast to the legitimate journalism practised by West Papuan media, according to Mambor and Sarmento (2020), there were about 18 online media outlets publishing hoaxes and propaganda about West Papua. This undermined news about human rights violations reported by the West Papuan media.

West Papuan journalists face threats when covering news on human rights violations in West Papua. This is the same threat identified by Singh (2020) that occurs across Melanesia. This requires a comprehensive approach to West Papuan journalists, especially who reports the news on human rights violations in West Papua, to make them feel confident in carrying out their professional duties through the cooperation of management and editorial staff from the Indonesian and West Papuan press. Stonbely (2017, p. 14) defines collaborative journalism as a formal or informal arrangement between a number of news organisations to share resources to increase the impact of the stories produced.

She continued:

> In decades past, when profits were large and journalism as a field enjoyed a higher level of prestige, it felt natural for fellow journalists and newsrooms to see each other as competitors. Now, when profits are lean or non-existent, and trust in journalism has eroded, journalists have, in many cases, banded together for the betterment of their organizations, their product, and their audiences. (Stonbely, 2017, p. 17)

Cooperation with *Jubi* journalists was not *Tirto's* first collaboration with other media. Before working with *Jubi*, *Tirto* worked with *Vice* Indonesia, BBC Indonesia and *The Jakarta Post* to report on sexual harassment at the Gadjah Mada University campus (Sarjoko, 2020, p. 5).

Human rights

During decades of Indonesian control, human rights violations in West Papua have not stopped. According to the late Father Neles Tebay, a peace advocate from West Papua, the people of West Papua have experienced human rights violations since 1963. However, the issue of human rights violations in West

Papua had not become a major issue for the major media in Jakarta, although they were raised at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day conference hosted by Indonesia in 2017 (Robie, 2017, 2020; Wardah, 2017).

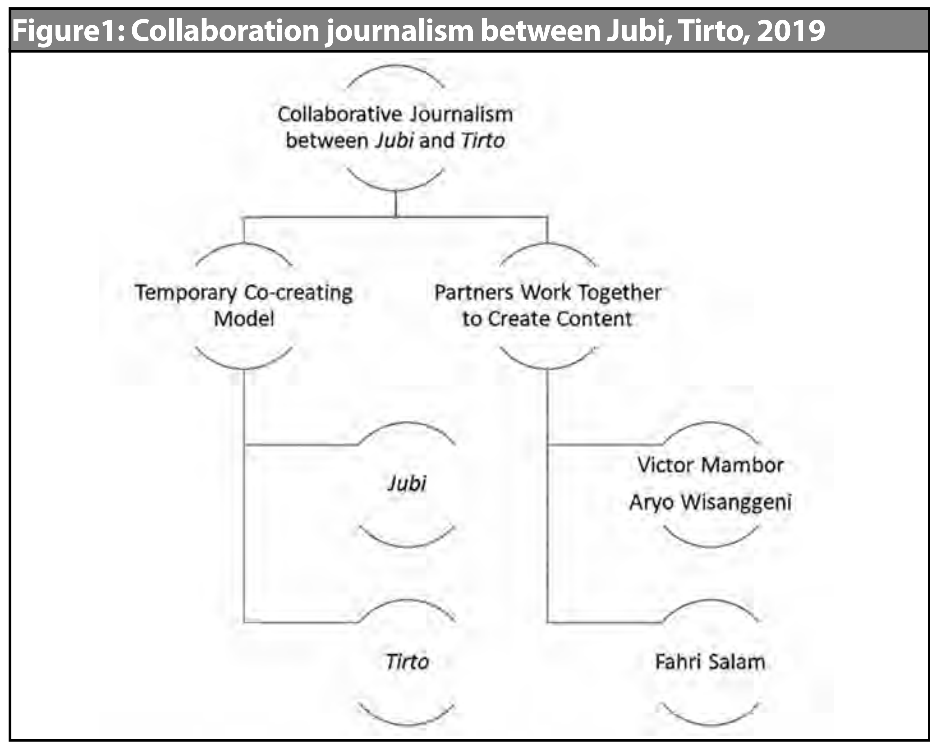
Practically, collaborative journalism has proven to be highly effective in reporting secrets, such as the Panama Papers. Kayser-Bril considers a best practice of collaborative journalism as follows:

> …observers were struck by the collaborative nature of the effort. Hundreds of journalists worked together for months to produce ground-breaking reporting on tax evasion. (2017, p. 59).

The question is what kind of collaborative journalism is appropriate in reporting on the events in Wamena and Jayapura? Is it collaborative in the field of news gathering or news reporting?

Given the volatility of the situation in West Papua, a reasonable approach is collaboration in news gathering. West Papuan journalists and Indonesian journalists gather facts while Indonesian journalists write news. West Papuan journalists understand the field situation they face. They obtain facts and present suitable interviewees for Indonesian journalists to write up.

Figure1: Collaboration journalism between Jubi, Tirto, 2019



Note: Adapted from the collaboration model developed by Sarah Stonbely (2017, p. 21).

Table 1: Classification of news content by 5W + 1H approach

News 1: Why did the Indonesian Government fail to prevent the incident in Wamena?	
What	Fires broke out at several points, including Wouma Market, Jayawijaya Regent's Office, Yapis University, building shops, workshops and logistic shops on Hom-Hom Street, several shops in Potikelek Market, Phike Street, as well as dozens of houses, government offices and the power center of Wamena
Who	There is no information about who burned it. However, there are data on who died: 33 people, 25 of whom were migrants
Where	Wamena, the capital of Jayawijaya regency
When	September 23, 2019
Why	There is no information about why the buildings caught fire. There was only information about Wamena PGRI high school students protesting. They walked from their school to the Jayawijaya Regency Regent's Office.
How	All parts of the building burned down. Some of the residents also burned
News production	The report was made in collaboration with Tirto and Jubi.
News 2: Wamena riot video: At least 11 West Papuans allegedly shot dead	
What	11 The West Papuans allegedly shot dead.
Who	It is not clear who the perpetrators of the shooting were. The victims were: Eles Himan, 25 years-old, a university student; Eliakim Wetapo, 25 years old;) GestanusHisage, 21 years-old; Kelion Tabuni, a university student; Ketron Kogoya, 28 years-old; Manu Meage, (vii) Lawan Hesegem, 28 years-old; Marius Wenda, 18 years-old; Naligi Wenda, security guard at Yudha Supermarket; Nison Lokbere, 19 years-old and Yus Asso, 25-years old
Where	In various places in Wamena, the capital of Jayawijaya Regency
When	September 23, 2019
Why	Because they protested against the words of a PGRI Wamena high school teacher who called Papuan monkeys. However, the incident occurred on 18 September 2019. Why did the riots take place on 23 September 2019?
How	The protest raged violently. The army tried to break the crowd with a warning shot. The police dispelled the crowd with tear gas. However, 42 people were killed; 17 of whom were Papuans and 11 of whom were confirmed as having died of gunshot wounds.
News production	The report was made in collaboration with Tirto and Jubi.

This cooperation model, borrowing the concept of Sarah Stonbely (2017, p. 21) is a 'temporary co-creating model, partners work together to create content'. Such cooperation is one-time cooperation and is limited to only one theme. The

News 3: West Papuan deaths in the Wamena incident	
What	The mass demonstration by students in the regent's front yard ended in chaos when the financial building behind the office complex caught fire. A fire truck that tried to enter the regent's office complex was prevented by the masses, pelted with stones, so that efforts to extinguish the fire so that it would not spread to other offices failed.
Who	At first the protestors were high school students at PGRI Wamena. However, the numbers increased with the arrival of other demonstrators. According to eyewitnesses, this other group burned down the regent's office in Jayawijaya Regency
Where	In various places in Wamena, the capital of Jayawijaya Regency
When	September 23, 2019
Why	Because it is considered rioters were protesting against racism. According to the police, the allegation of racism was a hoax.
How	Victims were shot in different places. Some were shot in the hips, waist, heart, back and buttocks..
News production	The report was made in collaboration with Tirto and Jubi.
News 4: The church of West Papua save the non-West Papuans: 'Everyone is a nayak'	
What	Some churches in Wamena tried to save the non-West Papuans, dismantled the doors of the houses where the people were trapped, and brought them away from the centre of the disturbance.
Who	Rev. Simet Yikwa and Father Allo Dabi
Where	In the Wesaroma Pikhe Baptist Church and in the Office of the Dean of the Central Mountains of Papua
When	September 23, 2019
Why	Because many people, both West Papuans, non-West Papuans and people from outside the city of Wamena wanted to seek safety.
How	They faced the attackers bravely. After that they accompanied the safety seekers to the police station
News production	The report was made in collaboration with Tirto and Jubi.

Note: Classification of the content of the four news stories produced by the collaborative team according to the 5W + 1H rule.

collaboration between the *Jubi* and the *Tirto* was deployed only once for reporting on the riot of September 23 five days after a PGRI (Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia) teacher in Wamena called a student a 'monkey'. When described in a scheme, the collaboration can be seen in Figure 1.

Methodology

The author used four news stories produced as a result of the collaboration between *Tirto* and *Jubi* journalists. Qualitative content analysis was employed to

gather data and assessed according to the principles of who/what/when/where/ why and how. Known as the Five Ws and One H model they are considered the basic six questions in factual information-gathering, and journalism (news writing style) research (Table 1). The key interrogation points are:

1. Who is it about?
2. What happened?
3. When did it happen?
4. Where did it happen?

Facts that matched the above model were used but the data was expanded through interviews with Victor Mambor and Aryo Wisanggeni from *Jubi* and Fahri Salam from *Tirto*, who had reported the articles.

Results and discussion

The collaboration produced four news stories. They were (1) *Mengapa Pemerintah dan Keamanan Indonesia Gagal Cegah Rusuh Wamena? (*'Why did the Indonesian Government fail to prevent the incident in Wamena?) written by Fahri Salam on 23 October 2019; (2) *Video Rusuh Wamena: Sedikitnya 11 Orang Papua Diduga Tewas Ditembak* ('Wamena parched video: At least 11 West Papuans allegedly shot dead', written by Fahri Salam on 24 October 2019, (3) *Kematian Orang Papua dalam Peristiwa Wamena* ('West Papuan deaths in the Wamena incident) written by Fahri Salam on 31 October 2019; and (4) (*Gereja Papua Menyelamatkan Pendatang: 'Setiap Orang adalah Nayak'* ('The church of West Papua saves the non-West Papuans: Everyone is a nayak', written by Fahri Salam on 1 November 2019. Reporter News 2 was successful in interviewing eyewitnesses from the non-West Papuans who had lived in Wamena for the past 40 years. Mambor considered that this tragedy was a mere power play. He said:

> I had witnessed something like this in 1977, when Wamena was still in the forest, then, in 2000 and now with the same problem. The same item, after all. (Mambor, 2020) Whoever wants to cover the news in Wamena, he must have great guts because it is a conflict area. His physique must be strong, because the area in Wamena goes up and down the hill. His strength must be strong against the cold in a long journey. (Mambor, 2020)

Discussion

Are there basic rules about collaboration? According to Wissangeni (2020):

> There are no basic rules. This is just a matter of networking, because basically every media wants to report good quality news. When there is the same network and interests, then the collaboration happens. (Wisanggeni, 2020)

Salam (2020) described the situation for the collaborating journalists in some-

what more nuanced terms:

> The reality at the scene did indeed require collaboration. The complexity of the issue of the Papuan news sources can only be solved by *Jubi* journalists. The security forces, government officials and people in charge of providing information said that most victims were the non-West Papuans. Public opinion was formed, the non-West Papuans became victims. Who is the perpetrator? Public opinion was formed: the perpetrators are the West Papuans. This makes the West Papuans hurt.

Wisanggeni (2020) said he had to explore the facts without causing 'new injuries.' This meant interviewing West Papuans:

However, it is difficult to find information from sources directly from the West Papuans. The situation there is not conducive and there is still tension. It is feared that there will be a clash again. There are journalists who have been evicted because the interviewees did not trust reporters. The resource person was very careful in giving information. Wisanggeni (2020) managed to interview the West Papuans successfully and seemed to open the way for other interviews:

> It turns out that many West Papuans have become heroes, who have saved the non-West Papuans migrants in Wamena. Some were brought to church, honai, silimo, and mission houses. This fact has not been described by other media so far.

Collaborating with *Tirto* helped Wisanggeni regain his professional self-respect and overcome the pain caused by the Indonesian government-hacked the tabloidjubi.com website.

Through the four news stories, readers of *Tirto* discovered that the riots were triggered by hate speech delivered by a non-West Papuan teacher to the West Papuan students. Students in the class were offended. When their reporters pursued this angle they discovered this had happened long before the riots broke out and that it was difficult to pinpoint who actually caused the riot.

What is clear is that the Wamena riots stemmed from the handling of racism against West Papuans that occurred in Surabaya on August 19 that year. It can be said that the Indonesian police were dishonest in handling the racism case in Surabaya. The police were silent when members of a mass organisation surrounded a Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya, pelting Papuan students with stones, making racist expressions and firing tear gas.

This shows that the Indonesian government failed to resolve the racist issue against West Papuans in Surabaya. In this situation, a non-West Papua high school teacher delivered a hate speech to the West Papuan students. This exacerbated the West Papuans' sense of grievance. Presumably, this was used by a third party to create riots in Wamena.

Did *Jubi* reporters find out the facts about this third party? In searching for

the information, they convinced themselves that they themselves were not being used as a tool of the Indonesian government:

> We are not a government tool. Our task is to present the facts obtained in the scene. We found a lot of information about the perpetrators. However, we did not find the verified facts. Meanwhile we only write verified facts. So, the facts which are then presented are verified facts. (Wisanggeni, 2020)

The relationship between journalists and sources was like people protecting each other's existence. Such a relationship, according to Berkowitz (2009, p. 103), is a delicately negotiated relationship. Journalists stake their credibility and confidence in the stories they write. Meanwhile, sources risk their position on the information they convey. It is not surprising that journalists need to be careful in choosing the sources they interview with and sources not giving information to reporters carelessly.

Writing

Wisanggeni said *Jubi* and *Tirto* journalist shared the task of writing the stories:

> Initially, we wrote individually. Then the news draft was shared with each other. Our draft was sent to *Tirto*, and the draft of *Tirto* was sent to us. We checked the accuracy. After that all drafts were sent to the *Tirto*. *Tirto* was the one [which] carried out the gatekeeping process and reported the news. (Wisanggeni, 2020)

This division of tasks caused the interpersonal relations between *Jubi* and *Tirto* journalists to run well. Nobody intervened in the duty of others. Borrowing the opinions of Kishimi and Koga, this is what must be done to maintain smooth interpersonal relations (2017, p. 53).

The relationship between *Jubi* and *Tirto* journalists was maintained because *Jubi* journalists acknowledge *Tirto's* seriousness as an online media outlet that had the integrity to report bad news about West Papua. *Tirto's* credibility was also proven. (Utama, 2020) commented:

> In the midst of a crisis in public trust in online media, in 2016 *Tirto* emerged as a breath of fresh air in the world of online journalism. *Tirto* reports news not only as narrative and opinion-forming, but also brings in-depth data and analysis which is packaged into news texts, articles, infographics, and other journalistic products. The credibility of *Tirto* as an online media has begun to be recognised since it exposed the issue of rape of mining workers in West Papua (Utama, 2020, p. 4).

For Mambor (2020), the collaboration restored his damaged self-esteem because the news about the tragedy had not reached the readers.

What is important now is the sharpening of the themes of human rights

violations that occurred in West Papua as objects of news coverage.

Conclusion

The importance of the collaborative venture was in revealing a number of previously unknown facts about the Wamena riots. These were that the victims of human rights violations in Wamena were not only the non-West Papuans, but also the West Papuans; many West Papuans helped the non-West Papuans during the tragedy and the September 23 riots were a repeat of what had happened before in 1977 and 2000.

Jubi and *Tirto* journalists admit that there is still much that has not been revealed, but what has been uncovered may form a new opinion among the two news outlets' West Papuan and Indonesian readers. They may make *Tirto* readers more critical of the Indonesian government.

On a personal level the collaboration helped revive the sprits of the *Jubi* journalists following the government attack on their website. On both a professional and a personal level it reaffirmed the benefits of co-operation and collaboration between different news organisations, especially when they can benefit from the journalists' expertise in their own area.

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SPECIAL REPORT

Watchdogs under pressure

Pacific Islands journalists' demographic profiles and professional views

Abstract: While global scholarship on journalists' professional views has expanded tremendously over recent decades, the Pacific Islands remains somewhat of a blind spot, with only sporadic research. To address this gap in our knowledge, this study reports the results of a comprehensive survey of 206 Pacific Islands journalists in nine countries, providing a much-needed update of journalists' demographic profiles, role conceptions, ethical views and perceived influences. Our analysis finds that while journalists are now older, more experienced and better educated than 30 years ago, they are still younger and less well-educated than their counterparts in many other parts of the globe. In the digital age, some old challenges persist in relation to their roles: While journalists are committed to holding power to account and aiding in the development of their countries, they continue to face political and economic challenges that make their tasks difficult and sometimes even perilous.

Keywords: Cook Islands, demographic profiles, ethics, Fiji, journalism studies, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Pacific journalists, Papua New Guinea, political influence, Samoa, professionalism, regional studies, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

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SCHOLARSHIP on journalists' demographics, professional views, ethical stances and the perceived influences on their work has experienced considerable growth over the past decade or so. With their origins in countless national case studies, accounts of these journalistic cultures have increasingly become more internationalised, leading to important comparative insights into journalists' lived experiences and perceptions of their work (see, for example, Weaver & Willnat, 2012; Hanitzsch, Hanusch, Ramaprasad & de Beer, 2019a). However, while these studies have undoubtedly extended our understanding of journalistic cultures beyond a simplistic Western-centric view of journalism,

there still remain considerable blind spots in relation to some parts of the world.

One of these blind spots lies in the Pacific Islands, a region that has forever struggled to gain attention in journalism scholarship beyond its immediate neighbours in Australia and New Zealand. The last major study of journalists in the region was conducted in 1992—nearly 30 years ago (Layton, 1995). Another regional study was conducted in 2013 (Tacchi et al., 2013), while other studies have usually focused on major regional powers, such as Fiji or Papua New Guinea (see, for example, Hanusch & Uppal, 2015; Robie, 2003, 2004; Singh, 2015). Much has changed in journalism in the Pacific Islands over the past 30 years, including major national and regional events impinging on media freedom, shifting geo-political priorities, technological developments, including the proliferation of social media, improved training capacities and tighter media legislation, and much more. In the face of these transformations, we have a largely incomplete understanding of how journalists' professional views may be changing with time and trends in the region.

To address this gap, this article presents the findings from the most ambitious attempt to take account of Pacific Island journalism cultures in recent years. Drawing on standardised surveys with 206 journalists across nine Pacific Island countries, our aim is to provide an up-to-date snapshot of journalists' demographic profiles, their role perceptions, ethical views, and perceived influences on their work.

Background

Dating back more than 60 years (Cohen, 1963), studies of journalists' professional views have been a key focus of journalism scholarship, with countless studies conducted first in national contexts in the West (for example, Henningham, 1996; Johnstone et al., 1976; Weischenberg et al., 1998), and also later in the global South (e.g. Ramaprasad, 2001; Herscovitz, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2005). More recently, large-scale comparative analyses have emerged, substantially advancing our understanding of the wide variety of journalistic cultures across the globe, including across non-Western contexts (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a; Weaver, 1998; Weaver & Willnat, 2012).

When it comes to the Pacific Islands, however, it is noticeable that even these broader efforts have so far been unable to include any countries from the region. While Layton's (1998) study was part of Weaver's (1998) foundational *Global Journalist* volume, which reported results of journalist surveys from 21 countries and territories around the world, Weaver & Willnat's (2012) follow-up volume did not report any insights into the region. Similarly, the Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a), perhaps the most ambitious undertaking in the field as yet, which gathered evidence from 67 countries, also did not include the Pacific Islands. This dearth of consistent research on Pacific Islands journalists in recent years has resulted in a substantial gap in our knowledge of how journalistic

culture has evolved over the past 30 years. Before moving to our own analysis of the status quo, however, it is important to review the evidence that does exist in relation to the region's journalists.

While there were early studies by Vusoniwailala (1976) and Waqavonovono (1981), many scholars date the history of scholarly journalist studies in the Pacific back to Phinney's (1985) survey of 42 Papua New Guinean newspaper and radio journalists. Broader cross-regional studies emerged early, beginning with Masterton's (1989) survey of newspaper readers, radio listeners and journalists in the 10 Pacific Island nations. Soon after, Layton (1995) surveyed 164 journalist in eight countries in the region—American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Fiji, Guam, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Western Samoa. More recently, the 2013 'The State of Media and Communication Study' was published (Tacchi, et al., 2013). Jointly undertaken by RMIT University (Australia), the University of Goroka (UoG, Papua New Guinea) and Unitec (New Zealand), it covered 14 countries with 212 individual interviews, around 80 of whom were classified as media managers and professionals. Besides these, empirical work has been undertaken relatively sporadically, predominantly focusing on national contexts. This includes Robie's (1999) survey of 59 Fijian and 65 Papua New Guinean journalists, which was followed up in 2001 with his 908-page Pacific journalism study (Robie, 2003, 2004); Hanusch & Uppal's (2015) survey of 77 Fijian journalists' role perceptions; and Singh's (2015) survey of 72 Fijian journalists.

Broadly, studies have tended to find a relatively young journalistic workforce in most countries, which lacks work experience and qualifications (Robie, 2003, 2004), although the most recent evidence suggests this may be changing, with at least Fijian journalists older, more experienced and better educated than 20 years before (Hanusch & Uppal, 2015; Singh, 2015). Previously, in terms of regional comparisons, Layton (1995) had found Fijian journalists to be younger than their counterparts in PNG or Guam. Across the region, men dominated journalism, but this was more pronounced in Melanesia than Polynesia or Micronesia. Further, educational levels differed significantly, with Fijian journalists far less likely to have been university-educated than their counterparts in PNG or Guam (Layton, 1998).

In relation to role perceptions, Layton (1994, p. 404) argued that a 'Pacific style' of journalism was emerging, which meant journalists supported the critical role of the press, but interwove this with traditional cultural models. Robie later developed a *talanoa* Pacific journalism model (2014, p. 332-333). Being an adversary or providing entertainment were values that scored relatively low, while national unity was high on journalists' agenda. Similarly, Robie (2003, 2004) found the watchdog role to be the most supported by journalists in Fiji and PNG, followed by the role of the educator, defender of truth and nation builder.

Yet, Singh's interviews with Fijian journalists found journalists had 'a flexible attitude about going beyond being a detached observer of events to proactively contributing to efforts to build a better society' (Singh, 2011, p. 273). According to Hanusch and Uppal's (2015) findings, Fijian journalists carefully tread a line between Western journalistic ideals and development journalism goals. This related specifically to the combination of being an objective watchdog with being a supporter of national development and advocating for social change. In his study of how journalism had changed in Fiji since the 2006 coup and the promulgation of the punitive 2010 Media Decree, Singh (2021) found a cornered media weaned on the Anglo-American watchdog tradition under constant pressure to produce development journalism to avoid sanction, resulting in a possible identity crisis within Fiji's national journalist corps.

While all these studies have been incredibly valuable in gathering evidence on Pacific Islands journalist profiles and professional views, the review presented here also demonstrates that there is: a) an urgent need for a more up-to-date understanding of these issues in the Pacific, and b) a need for a cross-regional and comparative approach that can go beyond the dominant powers in the region. Journalism finds itself in a time of major transformations around the globe, in terms of political, economic, technological and societal change and it is thus crucial to better understand how journalists' professional orientations may be changing with the situation.

This is vital in a region where the news media sector is beset by entrenched problems—cultural, political and financial. Due to small advertising markets, limited profit margins, low salaries and high staff turnover rates, a typically young, inexperienced and underqualified journalist corps is usually in the frontlines of news coverage (Singh, 2020). In spite of all the challenges, the Pacific news media are still regarded as a pillar of democracy and good governance, and through this survey, we aim to provide journalism researchers, educators and policy-makers with a better understanding of these issues to make well-informed decisions going forward.

To this end, we draw on the existing body of recent global scholarship in aiming to paint a clearer picture of journalism culture (Hanitzsch, 2007) in the Pacific Islands region and to provide a basis for comparisons beyond it. Thus, we developed the following four research questions to study the trends:

RQ1: What are the demographic profiles of Pacific Islands journalists?

RQ2: What are Pacific Islands journalists' perceptions of their role?

RQ3: What are Pacific Islands journalists' views of controversial reporting practices?

RQ4: What are Pacific Islands journalists' perceptions of influences on their work?

Method

To answer our research questions, we draw on the results of a survey of 206 Pacific Islands journalists in nine regional countries, gathered as part of a study funded by the University of the South Pacific, the United States Embassy in Fiji and the Pacific Media Centre, formerly based at the Auckland University of Technology. All nine countries are members of USP: Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Three of the 12 remaining member countries—Niue, Kiribati and Tokelau—could not be surveyed largely due to logistical challenges. Despite several attempts, we were unsuccessful in obtaining a research permit in Kiribati on time. The surveys were conducted between mid-2016 and mid-2018. Researchers travelled to seven countries to conduct the survey in-person. Resident research assistants conducted the surveys in Nauru and Tuvalu.

To qualify as a journalist, we adopted the approach employed by the seminal studies in the field (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986; Hanitzsch et al., 2019a), defining professional journalists as those who had at least some editorial responsibility for the content they produced, who were involved in producing or editing journalistic content, or who worked in an editorial supervision and coordination role. In accordance with Hanitzsch et al. (2019a), we excluded those who were citizen journalists or bloggers, or who only worked in journalism as a side job. Owing to the relative sizes of the media markets in the studied countries, the number of respondents in each of the nine countries varied considerably. The largest number of respondents came from Fiji (60 respondents; 29.1 percent of the total number of respondents), followed by Tonga (39; 18.9 percent), Samoa (27; 13.1 percent), Solomon Islands (25; 12.1 percent), Vanuatu (20; 9.7 percent), Cook Islands (14; 6.8 percent), Tuvalu (11; 5.3 percent), Nauru (7; 3.4 percent) and Marshall Islands (3; 1.5 percent). Response rates in individual countries ranged between 70 percent (Solomon Islands) and 100 percent (Nauru), with an overall response rate of 79 percent. While we believe our samples are representative for each country, their absolute numbers are relatively low and thus any statistical testing is limited. Hence, we will only refer to those differences among our national samples where they can be meaningfully measured. In terms of job profiles, one-quarter of our respondents (25.6 percent) worked in a management function (editor-in-chief, managing editor, desk head or assignment editor, department head or senior editor), while the remainder were non-management staff (producers, reporters, news writers, subeditors, or trainees).

The questionnaire was based closely on the one used by the global Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a). Beyond gathering information on demographic aspects, such as age, gender, education, employment status and work experience, we focused on role perceptions, ethical views and perceived influences. To account for journalists' role perceptions, we presented journalists with a list of

19 institutional roles and asked them to tell us, on a five-point scale, how important each of these was in their work. Respondents had a choice of five answer options: 'extremely important', 'very important', 'somewhat important', 'little important' and 'unimportant'. To study journalists' views of potentially controversial reporting practices, we asked them: 'Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?' Respondents were given a list of 10 items and were able to choose from one of three answer options: 'always justified', 'justified on occasion' or 'not approve under any circumstances'. Finally, to measure journalists' perceptions of a range of influence on their work, we asked: 'Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work'. The list included 27 items, with respondents asked to pick one of five options: 'extremely influential', 'very influential', 'somewhat influential', 'little influential', or 'not influential'.

Findings

Demographic profiles

Our results suggest a marked change from earlier studies in terms of key demographic aspects. Over the past 30 years, Pacific journalists have become substantially older and much better educated (Table 1).

The median age of nearly 34 years is significantly higher than the median range of 20-29 years found by Layton (1998). Closer inspection reveals important

Table 1: Demographic profile of Pacific Islands journalists

Age (years)	36.69 (Median 34)
Gender (female)	49%
Work experience (years)	9.12 (Median 6)
Full-time employment	93.6%
Highest education level	
Not completed high school	2%
High School	21.8%
Bachelor's degree	44.1%
Master's degree	4%
Doctorate	0.5%
Some undergraduate studies, no degree	27.7%
Specialisation at university	
Journalism	43%
Another communications field	8.6%
Journalism and another communications field	20.5%
Not in these fields	27.8%
Member of a professional association	75%

differences across the nine countries studied here, however. At an average age of 33.4 years, Fijian journalists are the youngest, though even this figure indicates an increase from the average of 27.9 years found by Hanusch & Uppal (2015) and a mean age of 31 found by Singh (2015). One reason for the relatively younger age is the high turnover rate of journalists in the Fijian media (Singh, 2015). The Solomon Islands (34.6 years) and Nauru (34 years) are similar to Fiji, while the oldest age profiles were found in the Cook Islands (42.5 years) and Tonga (40.9 years). Samoa (36 years) and Vanuatu (36.5 years) rank somewhere in the middle. These figures correspond broadly with journalists' work experience. Across the region, journalists have worked in the job for an average of 9.12 years, but work experience is lowest in Fiji (7.81 years), the Solomon Islands (7.04 years) and Nauru (7.14 years). Those who have been the longest in the job come from Vanuatu (12.7 years), the Cook Islands (11.8 years) and Tonga (9.8 years).

In terms of education, past studies (Layton, 1994; Robie, 2003, 2004) found low completion rates in tertiary education, but it appears that now nearly half of all journalists hold a tertiary degree—arguably testament to the success of the University of the South Pacific, as well as the other technical and vocational institutes that teach journalism in the region. This result is consistent with Singh's (2015) findings, which showed that 49 percent of Fiji journalists had some form of tertiary qualification: 18 percent held diplomas; 17 percent degrees; 11 percent certificates; and 3 percent postgraduate qualifications.

What is more, this general growth in tertiary education is accompanied by a substantial focus on journalism. Of those who have studied at university, nearly two-thirds studied journalism, and only one-quarter did not specialise in any communication studies. While still lagging behind their large neighbours in Australia and New Zealand, where tertiary participation rates are around 80-90 percent (Hanusch, 2013; Hollings et al., 2016), it appears that Pacific Islands journalists are also increasingly highly educated, in line with a global trend (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a). Noticeably, however, journalists in Samoa and the Solomon Islands were the most-educated, with 69.2 and 68 percent, respectively, having completed at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent. An interesting picture emerges in Fiji, where nearly half (49.2 percent) have completed a degree, but when all journalists who have had at least some tertiary education, but not necessarily a degree are counted, that figure rises to 86.4 percent, which is on a par with Samoa (88.5 percent) and the Solomon Islands (88 percent). It appears that leaving university without completing a degree is a much more common occurrence for journalists in Fiji than the other countries. For comparison, 46.2 percent of Tongan journalists hold a degree, while 64.1 percent have undertaken some tertiary studies—more in line with the trends in Samoa and the Solomon Islands.

As for gender, the overall figures suggest broad gender parity across the Pacific Islands, but again, there are large discrepancies when we examine individual

countries. Women are actually in a slight majority in Fiji (51.7 percent) confirming Hanusch & Uppal's (2015) findings. They are also in a clear majority in Tuvalu (9 of 11 are women) and Nauru (6 out of 7), as well as in Samoa (61.5 percent, or 16 out of 26). In all other countries, however, women are in a minority. This is most pronounced in the Solomon Islands, where only four of 25 respondents were female (16 percent). In Tonga, women made up 46.2 percent of the workforce, in Vanuatu 47.1 percent (8 out of 17) and in the Cook Islands 42.9 percent (6 out of 14).

Just as in other parts of the globe, however (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a), women are still largely disadvantaged in terms of power within the field. Across the region, only four of 10 journalists in a management position were women. What is more, of the 21 women in our sample who had a managerial role, 17 were either in Tonga (7) or Fiji (10). In general, across our sample women tended to be younger (M=34.6) compared to men (M=38.6), but only slightly less experienced (Women: M=8.65; Men: M=9.25). However, 99 percent of women were in full-time employment, compared with 88 percent of men. We could not find any meaningful differences in educational levels, with men and women similarly likely to have completed a tertiary education and to have specialised in journalism during their studies in the various countries of our sample.

As for other demographic parameters, our results indicate a relatively high commitment to professional associations, with 75 per cent of respondents stating they were a member of an organisation or association that was primarily for people in journalism or the communications field. This compares favourably with journalists in Australia, where the number was just below 50 per cent (Hanusch, 2013), and New Zealand, where at 33 percent it was even lower (Hollings et al., 2016).

Role perceptions

Past studies have noted the difficult situation in which Pacific Islands journalists find themselves. Faced with increased pressure from governments and limitations of media freedom, journalists have tended to display a mix of watchdog ideals and developmental goals (Hanusch & Uppal, 2015, Layton, 1998; Robie, 2004; Singh, 2015). Our results lend some support for this assumption (Table 2).

The most popular roles include the desire to be an adversary of the government, as well as monitoring and scrutinising political leaders. But journalists also want to promote tolerance and cultural diversity, as well as advocate for social change—roles that fall in the realm of development journalism (Kalyango et al., 2017). It is notable, however, that the role 'Support national development' received relatively little support from our respondents. Journalists also take a typically Western, detached standpoint when they say it is important to report things as they are and to be a detached observer. At the same time, three-quarters think it is important to provide entertainment and relaxation, a marked departure from the very low support for this role in the past (Robie, 2003, 2004). In line with journalists around the world, among the least popular statements we found

Table 2: Pacific Islands journalists' role perceptions				
Role perceptions	N	Mean	SD	Very important/ Extremely important (%)
Let people express their views	196	4.56	0.65	92.4
Be an adversary of the government	192	4.4	0.88	86.5
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	194	4.4	0.82	88.2
Provide analysis of current affairs	193	4.39	0.78	88.1
Report things as they are	194	4.37	0.85	85.6
Provide entertainment and relaxation	196	4.21	1.06	76
Advocate for social change	191	4.19	0.98	76.9
Monitor and scrutinise political leaders	191	4.18	1.07	77
Be a detached observer	168	4.13	0.96	80.4
Provide information people need to make political decisions	189	4.09	1.05	75.1
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	191	4.06	0.90	74.8
Monitor and scrutinise business	187	3.9	1.13	66.3
Influence public opinion	184	3.77	1.35	64.1
Motivate people to participate in political activity	185	3.5	1.25	50.8
Convey a positive image of political leadership	188	3.38	1.27	44.6
Support government policy	190	3.32	1.28	41.5
Set the political agenda	172	3.29	1.35	47.7
Support national development	187	3.17	1.37	41.2
Provide news that attracts the largest audience	175	2.93	1.39	33.7

were the so-called collaborative roles, such as supporting government policy or conveying a positive image of political leadership.

To further analyse journalists' role perceptions in a global context, we constructed four indices previously developed by Hanitzsch et al. (2019b). These indices account for 13 of the 19 role perceptions posed to our respondents and will serve to provide a clearer overview of the role dimensions across the different countries in our study. Indices were built by adding up journalists' responses to the individual items in an index and then dividing by the number of items, so as to ensure easier interpretation. The monitorial role was built from four state-

ments, which included 'Provide political information', 'Monitor and scrutinise politics', 'Monitor and scrutinise business' and 'Motivate people to participate in politics'. The collaborative role index is made up of 'Support government policy' and 'Convey a positive image of political leaders', whereas the index representing an interventionist role contains four statements: 'Advocate for social change', 'Influence public opinion', 'Set the political agenda' and 'Support national development'. The accommodative role is based on the indicators 'Provide entertainment and relaxation', 'Provide news that attract largest audience' and 'Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life'. It should be noted that, following Hanitzsch et al. (2019b), these are formative indices that are based on conceptual considerations. Table 3 displays our results.

Very much in line with results from across the globe (Hanitzsch et al., 2019b), and with the role-by-role results presented earlier, we find the monitorial role is also the most supported in the Pacific Islands. This corresponds with what appears to be an almost universal understanding of journalism as holding those in power to account. Conversely, the collaborative role is the least supported, also in line with global trends. There is little to separate our respondents on the accommodative and interventionist roles, indicating at least broadly similar support.

In terms of differences across the countries in our sample, we find little meaningful differences in journalists' support for the monitorial role. As noted earlier, any statistical tests are affected by the relatively small group sizes, which in some cases, such as for the Marshall Islands, Nauru or Tuvalu are impossible. Still, in terms of the collaborative role, we find that Fijian journalists are significantly less supportive of this role than their colleagues in Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Historically, Fijian journalists have been weaned on the Anglo-American media tradition, where the watchdog role is central. Fijian journalists' lack of support for the collaborative role could stem from disillusionment with the government due to the media restrictions endured since the 2006 coup, culminating with the promulgation of the punitive 2010 Media Industry Development Decree, which prescribes hefty fines and jail terms for breaches. It can perhaps be said that this has left some journalists in no mood to 'collaborate' with the government, and that 'collaboration' is not voluntary, but enforced through the media decree (Singh, 2015; 2021).

In relation to the interventionist role, Samoa stands out. Samoan journalists consider this role as roughly similarly important to the monitorial role. In contrast, Fijian and Cook Islands journalists do not consider interventionist roles as similarly important. We find significant differences here between them and their counterparts in Samoa and Tonga. In similar ways, Fijian and Cook Islands journalists are significantly less likely to support the accommodative role than their colleagues in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Table 3: Journalists' role dimensions

Countries	Monitorial			Accommodative			Interventionist			Collaborative		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Marshall Islands	3	3.83	0.88	2	2.33	0.94	2	2.38	1.24	2	3.00	0.00
Cook Islands	10	4.10	0.67	12	3.11	0.91	11	3.09	1.18	14	2.96	0.95
Vanuatu	14	4.00	0.94	15	4.02	0.77	17	3.71	0.99	15	3.57	1.13
Tuvalu	7	3.75	1.02	6	4.06	0.57	5	3.55	1.08	8	4.19	0.70
Samoa	22	4.40	0.80	22	4.50	0.63	18	4.39	0.86	25	3.94	1.16
Nauru	5	3.30	0.74	5	3.80	0.18	6	3.29	0.43	7	3.36	0.48
Solomon Islands	24	4.45	0.60	23	3.90	0.69	23	4.01	0.74	24	3.63	0.84
Tonga	33	4.24	0.66	32	3.97	0.80	31	4.06	0.75	35	3.71	0.99
Fiji	55	4.06	0.75	48	3.34	0.61	42	3.01	0.88	51	2.58	0.96
Total	**173**	**4.15**	**0.77**	**165**	**3.77**	**0.82**	**155**	**3.63**	**1.00**	**181**	**3.34**	**1.10**

Ethical views

Journalism scholarship has for some time been interested in journalists' views of a range of reporting practices, which may be considered controversial by some. In line with previous research (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a; Weaver, 1998; Weaver & Willnat, 2012) we therefore asked our respondents to what extent they felt certain practices might be justifiable. Very little research has engaged with such practices in the Pacific Islands context, making any longitudinal comparison or interpretation difficult. What our results do show, is that there is extremely little cross-country variation, suggesting a relatively homogenous approach to these issues across the region (Table 4).

We can see that the practice of using confidential business or government documents without authorisation is considered the least controversial of the practices presented to our respondents. Only around half of the surveyed journalists said they would not approve of this practice under any circumstances. Obviously, such practices go to the heart of journalism's monitorial role, which, as we have seen, receives widespread support in our sample. It is, however, still considerably more controversial than for the global average reported by Ramaprasad et al. (2019). In their study, only 34.9 percent of journalists globally would not approve of the practice, with 51.9 percent saying it was justified on occasion, and 13.1 per cent saying it was always justified. In contrast, among our respondents, only 8.5 percent said it was always justified, and 39.7 percent said it was justified on occasion. In New Zealand, 93 percent of journalists thought it was acceptable (Hollings et al., 2016). Our findings thus seem to support a key argument put forward by Ramaprasad et al. (2019)—that such investigative techniques tended to be generally more accepted in the Global North, where they were part of journalism's monitorial role. While Pacific Islands journalists also favoured the monitorial role, there are clear practical limits on what they can do and this may lead to greater disavowal of such investigative practices. Put more simply: While they want to monitor those in power, they are not always able to, either due to cultural reasons that respect authority and authority figures, lack of whistleblower protections, punitive media laws, or even the lack of training, experience and qualifications. Younger and less experienced journalists may perhaps be more risk-averse in this context. Such a cohort is also likely to be less cognisant about their public interest responsibilities, as well as less capable of fully accomplishing the more complex forms of journalism that require obtaining and using confidential information.

Indeed, it seems that Pacific Islands journalists are generally more risk-averse than their colleagues elsewhere, because even the second-least controversial practice—using hidden microphones or cameras – was seen to be justifiable by only around 40 percent, compared to 66 percent of the globe (Ramaprasad et al., 2019). The most controversial practices were 'publishing stories with unverified

Table 4: Pacific Islands journalists' views of reporting practices				
Views of reporting practices	N	Would not approve (%)	Justified on occasion (%)	Always justified (%)
Using confidential business or government documents without authorisation	189	51.9	39.7	8.5
Using hidden microphones or cameras	184	59.8	32.6	7.6
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	185	63.8	30.8	5.4
Using re-creations or dramatisations of news by actors	170	65.3	31.2	3.5
Paying people for confidential information	188	68.1	26.6	5.3
Getting employed in an organisation to gain inside information	180	69.4	25.6	5
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	187	75.4	19.3	5.3
Claiming to be somebody else	183	83.6	12	4.4
Accepting money from sources	187	84	10.7	5.3
Publishing stories with unverified content	190	90	6.3	3.7

content', 'accepting money from sources' and 'claiming to be somebody else'. In their rejection of these professional practices, our respondents exhibited considerable similarities to their colleagues in New Zealand (Hollings et al., 2016), as well as to slightly lesser extent in Australia (Hanusch, 2013).

Perceived influences

To examine journalists' perceived influences on their work, we asked them to rate each of 27 items in terms of how influential they thought it was. Following Hanitzsch et al. (2019c), we subsequently developed indices to provide for easier interpretation of the results. Table 5 lists the results for individual items, as well as for the indices. To develop the indices, we applied Hanitzsch et al.'s (2019c) conceptualisation, arriving at five dimensions of influences. The political influences dimensions includes pressures from 'politicians', 'government officials', 'pressure groups' and 'business representatives'. Economic influences are constituted by 'profit expectations', 'advertising considerations' and 'audience research and data.' Organisational influences include perceived pressures from 'managers of the news organisation', 'supervisors and higher editors', 'owners of news organisations' and 'editorial policy'. Procedural influences are

‘information access’, ‘journalism ethics’, ‘media laws and regulation’,’available news-gathering resources’ and ‘time limits.’ Personal networks influences are constituted by ‘friends, acquaintances, family,’ ‘colleagues in other media’ and ‘peers on the staff.’

Our findings confirm previous research which found that those influences which journalists experience most directly tend to be the ones they see as most influential. Hence, journalists feel procedures and organisational influences—such as deadlines, media laws, access to information, resources and editorial policy—have the most impact on their work. This is followed by economic influences which tend to interact with organisational pressures. In contrast to the global average, which saw journalists place political pressures well below personal networks influences (Hanitzsch et al., 2019c), journalists in our sample ranked them as actually more influential. This suggests the more prominent role that political pressures play in Pacific Islands journalism cultures and is in line with other findings discussed earlier.

Comparative results between the countries in our study reveal that in terms of political influences, we can identify significant differences between journalists in Samoa on the one hand and the Cook Islands and Tonga on the other. Samoan journalists (M=3.79) are far more likely to perceive pressure from political sources than those in the Cook Islands (M=2.30) and Tonga (M=2.68). Samoa’s Human Rights Protection Party had been in power for nearly 40 years and Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sai’ilele Malielegaoi, one of the world’s longest-serving leaders for more than two decades until losing the April 2021 election, is a harsh and constant critic of the national media. As for economic influences, we can see that Samoan journalists (M=3.92) also rank these more highly than journalists in the Cook Islands (M=2.71) or Solomon Islands (3.08). For organisational influences, we also find Samoan journalists (M=4.16) perceive them as being significantly more influential than their colleagues in the Cook Islands (2.94). No significant differences could be found for the dimensions of procedural or personal networks influences. Further, it should be noted that the individual differences identified here should not be overestimated. In terms of their relative ranking, journalists in all countries ascribed supreme importance to procedural and organisational influences, followed by economic influences. Small differences existed in terms of whether political or personal networks influences were placed last, but these, particularly given the small group sizes, do not have overly large effects. Even then, a unique challenge of Pacific journalism is the closeness and cohesiveness in relationships in small societies, where people are more likely to be related, known to each other, or connected in some way, sometimes putting journalists in a difficult professional position with regards to criticising people.

Table 5: Pacific journalists' perceived influences on their work

Perceived influences	N	Mean	SD	Very influential/ Extremely influential (%)
Time limits	192	4.36	0.92	82.8
Media laws and regulation	193	4.09	1.09	77.2
Information access	194	3.99	1.05	75.2
Availability of news gathering resources	190	3.97	1.01	70.5
Audience research and data	186	3.9	1.01	66.7
Editorial policy	182	3.77	1.15	67.6
Feedback from the audience	193	3.75	1.10	62.1
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	184	3.64	1.16	60.9
Public relations	197	3.54	1.23	55.8
Religious considerations	184	3.45	1.15	51.1
Personal values and beliefs	180	3.42	1.17	48.9
Managers of your news organisations	179	3.39	1.22	49.2
Owners of your news organisations	181	3.34	1.33	48.1
Competing news organisations	190	3.29	1.32	44.7
Journalism ethics	184	3.27	1.24	44.5
Censorship	184	3.24	1.33	46.2
Business people	192	3.19	1.27	43.2
Profit expectations	177	3.02	1.23	34.4
The military, police and state security	190	3.02	1.34	39.5
Government officials	193	3.01	1.23	38.4
Advertising considerations	181	2.91	1.19	29.8
Relationships with news sources	186	2.82	1.30	30.6
Peers on the staff	184	2.81	1.11	27.7
Pressure groups	191	2.79	1.25	28.8
Politicians	190	2.79	1.27	30
Friends, acquaintances and family	196	2.77	1.27	30.6
Colleagues in other media	195	2.69	1.21	25.6
Procedural influences	174	3.96	0.75	
Organisational influences	*168*	*3.55*	*0.98*	
Economic influences	*170*	*3.29*	*0.94*	
Political influences	*185*	*2.96*	*1.10*	
Personal influences	*179*	*2.80*	*0.95*	

Conclusions

Our overview of the current state of Pacific Islands journalism culture thus points to some key insights, the main one perhaps being that the more things change, the more they stay the same. We found that overall, journalists in the region have become older, more experienced and better educated than they were 30 years ago. In a global contexts, however, they are still considerably younger, less experienced and less well-educated, reinforcing difficulties for journalism's role as a fourth estate across the region, especially in the face of looming crises, such as climate change. What is more, we found some considerable differences, in particular with respect to Fiji, the most populous country in our sample, and a regional power. Here, journalists remain younger than their colleagues in other countries and are also less well-educated, possibly due to the country's well-known coup culture and punitive media laws.

Across the Pacific Islands, journalists exhibit strong support for their role in holding power to account, but this continues to be mixed with views that journalism also needs to play a developmental role for communities. While they want to be watchdogs, the political realities of their work—as shown through their risk-averse views on the acceptability of various reporting practices, as well as perceived influences on their work—make this a difficult exercise. In many Pacific Island nations, governments still severely restrict or at least hinder the press from playing this crucial Fourth Estate role, ensuring a continuing battle for journalists committed to being watchdogs.

In providing the first broader regional snapshot of journalism cultures for 30 years, our study has thus shown that while much has changed in journalism over this time, journalists' professional views remain somewhat similar.

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FRONTLINE

The making of *Ophir* - Bougainville stories and silences

An exploration of the documentary

Abstract: This article focuses on the making of the award-winning film *Ophir* in the context of issues relevant to journalism and documentary production. It explores how a partnership of filmmakers, scholars and Bougainvillean community leaders worked to create a documentary that goes beyond bare facts to create deeper meaning. Based on an interview with one of the filmmakers Olivier Pollet, it discusses issues of archival research, gender, distribution and language. It raises ethical questions about how mining company Rio Tinto used an anthropologist to produce covert corporate intelligence in the 1960s. Through a discussion of the work of independent investigative journalist Antony Loewenstein, it considers how recent Australian aid policy was used to shape public debate about options for Bougainville. It highlights the importance of supporting grassroots storytelling that penetrates distorted mainstream media narratives, especially at a time of shifting geopolitical interests.

Keywords: anthropology, aid, Australia, BCL, Bougainville, decolonisation, documentary, environment, film, foreign policy, empowerment, *Frontline,* gender, geopolitics, independent journalism, Indigenous, land rights, mining, Oceania, *Ophir*, Pacific, Pacific history, Panguna, Papua New Guinea, Rio Tinto, storytelling

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THE lack of coverage by the Australian media of the Pacific region has been well documented (Duffield, 2020; Nash & Bacon, 2003; Watkins, 2019). At the same time, the influence of the foreign affairs establishment

Figure 1: A decade-long war in Bougainville, 'The Crisis', as the period of conflict is known, began in 1988 and cost up to 20,000 lives.

on the framing of media coverage has increased due to strong links between the Australian government, academic and think tank organisations. Within this context, the role of freelance, independent and Pacific journalists and documentary makers in empowering local voices and challenging official narratives is crucial, particularly at a time when there is a new emphasis on strategic power plays in the so-called Indo-Pacific region, while Oceania also faces the challenges of decolonisation and the climate emergency.

In her contribution to *Frontline* in 2020, Belinda Lopez explored how 'interdisciplinary research'—such as anthropology and history—might intersect with journalism as a means to understand and challenge existing gaps in translation, or 'silences' about West Papua in the past and present. She drew on what the Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) describes as the production of silences in the historical narrative. He argues that such silences are about power—they do 'not require a conspiracy, not even a political consensus. Its roots are structural' (Lopez, 2020, p. 201). Lopez was in West Papua in August 2019 when large protests broke out against the oppressive rule of Indonesia. She saw this as an opportunity.

> I realised that I might be able to create a long-form journalism project that could explore the roots of this discontent, not in a paragraph aside but as a framing question about the recent and not-so-recent past. I felt an urgency in doing so, given the media portrayals and censorship of Papuans, community violence and heavy state response to the uprisings. (Lopez, 2020, p. 201)

The result was a radio documentary *#Illridewithyou, West Papua* (2020) and a long form article for ABC Radio National (2020).

In 2004, David Robie reviewed *Mothers of the Land: The birth of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom*, which included accounts by 11 women of their struggle for independence and against the blockade imposed by the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), for *Pacific Journalism Review*. He described the blockade as a 'shocking crime against humanity, a sort of genocide while the rest of the world turned its backs on the suffering Bougainvilleans. During this time, PNGDF forces strafed villages, raped, mutilated and executed both women and men, and rounded up people, forcing them to stay in "care centres" as internal refugees' (Robie, 2004, p. 226). Robie then asked,

> Why did the world community allow this to happen? Contrast the global silence over these atrocities with the saturation media coverage and outrage over the killing and mutilation of four American security men in Fallujah, western Iraq in mid-April, a week before the launching of this book in New Zealand. (p. 226)

In considering the similarities and relationship between history and journalism, Nash also discussed how contemporary journalism can inject fresh meaning into history and expose past silences produced in earlier historical accounts (Nash, 2016, p. 145). These issues are relevant to this edition of *Frontline* in which we explore the research and production of the documentary *Ophir* that was released in 2020.

Ophir is the name sometimes used for Bougainville, the main island of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in eastern Papua New Guinea, in the Solomon Sea. In 2019, almost 98 percent of its citizens voted for independence from PNG after a decade-long war. 'The Crisis', as the period of conflict is known, began in 1988 and cost up to 20,000 lives. The roots of 'The Crisis' go back to the 1960s when Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia (CRA) began to develop infrastructure for a copper and gold mine at Panguna (Cass, 2014; Denoon, 2000). Despite protests and claims of independence, the company seized land from local owners and began to operate the copper and gold mine in Panguna in 1972.

The mine caused a massive environmental and social catastrophe, and eventually sparked the war when the PNGDF intervened to crush uprisings against

Figure 2: Directed by two French filmmakers, Olivier Pollet and Alexandre Berman, *Ophir* is a seven-year collaboration between independent freelance filmmakers, local partners and a scholar whose research has focused on Bougainville.

it. The BCL mine was shut down in 1989 but by then the conflict had morphed into a war for independence.

Ophir has already won several international awards, including the Grand Jury Prize at the FIFO—the International Documentary Film Festival of Oceania, held in Tahiti in 2020—and the Grand Prix Rigoberta Menchù, named after the Nobel Prize laureate at the Montreal First Peoples Festival Présence Autochthone. It screened at Academy Award qualifying festivals DocEdge and the Durban International Film Festival, and will have screened in 80 film festivals in more than 40 countries by the end of the year. As we will see, this project was also inspired by a desire to break through silences and misunderstandings about the history and current situation in Bougainville.

Ophir is a seven-year collaboration between independent freelance filmmakers, local partners in Bougainville and a scholar whose research has focused on Bougainville. It is directed by two French filmmakers, Olivier Pollet and Alexandre Berman. Bougainvillean Nathan Matbob was assistant director and his wife, Theonila Roka Matbob, currently the Minister for Education in Bougainville, was a researcher on the film and part of the core production team. Professor Kristian Lasslett, head of the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences at the University of Ulster, is one of the producers of the film, and the author of *State Crime on the Margins of Empire, Rio Tinto, the war on Bougainville and resistance to mining* (Lasslett, 2014). The film was produced with the support of Ulster University, France Télévision and Centre National Du Cinéma et de L'Image Animée.

This contribution to *Frontline* is based on a dialogue between the editors and co-director Olivier Pollet about the approaches used in the making of *Ophir*. In the context of discussing documentary and other research about Bougainville, we also refer to the work of independent journalist and documentary maker Antony Loewenstein, whose book *Disaster Capitalism: Making a Killing out of Catastrophe* and film of the same name include an investigation into connections between foreign aid and mining in PNG with a strong focus on Bougainville (Loewenstein, 2015; Loewenstein & Neureiter, 2018).

Lopez, Pollet and Loewenstein's contributions is best thought of as bodies of work across different media. *Ophir* includes the French national television hour-long version, *The Panguna Syndrome* (Berman & Pollet, 2017), and *The Colonial Syndrome* (Berman & Pollet, 2020), a multimedia educational website that includes over 30 short films and extended interviews recorded during the period of the film's production, and archival documents shedding light on the history and mechanisms of past and present colonialism in Bougainville.

Pollet began making films in the Pacific 11 years ago. His first documentary film *Canning Paradise* was also based in Oceania. *Canning Paradise* dealt with the consequences of globalisation, that led to the delocalisation of the South Asian fishing industry in PNG in order to exploit the last remaining healthy stocks of fish. It tracked the struggle of local peoples to protect their way of life against the land grabbing and politics that encouraged the forced industrialisation of the country.

From *Canning Paradise* to *Ophir*

We began by asking Pollet if there was any link between the two projects. He explained that relationships he formed during the *Canning Paradise* project led to the local collaboration that is at the core of *Ophir*.

> **Pollet:** This film is very closely linked to my previous works—*Canning Paradise* (2013) that I worked on from 2010 to 2012 and *When we were Hela* (2014)—which was also made in PNG. Although different in its form to *Canning Paradise, Ophir* is almost like an extension of it in many ways.
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> While I was working on the distribution of *Canning Paradise* in 2013, I was invited to show the film at a research training colloquium organised by the State Society and Governance in Melanesia Programme (SSGM) in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. During the colloquium, I attended a session on Bougainville and mining. I was shocked by the content of the seminar. The discussion seemed to assume that Bougainville would find independence through the return of mining and the return of BCL and Rio Tinto to Bougainville. What I was hearing in Canberra was the absolute opposite of what I was hearing from the communities still living with the lasting legacy of the mine. I was also surprised that there was little

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Figure 3: A technique in which the words of Bougainvilleans are juxtaposed with the historical archival material sets up the narrative is used throughout the film.

mention in the session of the many dead or the lasting trauma that came from the Bougainville conflict. I felt I needed to take this further.

During the filming of my two earlier films, I had formed some strong relationships with Bougainvillean students, including Nathan Matbob. Nathan got married to an extraordinary woman from Bougainville named Theonila Roka Matbob who was elected to the Bougainville Parliament and is now the Minister for Education. They live in Makosi village, a place located in the upper tailings area and devastated by the Panguna mine. So I reached out to them to find out what they thought about how people viewed the situation in Bougainville. They told me that none of the villagers really knew about the discussions to reopen the mine. Yet what I had heard at the ANU during my two visits would have given me the impression that everyone was all in favour of the return of the reopening of the mine and that a new *Mining Act* had been developed that would protect the rights of the customary landowners.

The idea for the film originated through this contradiction. So we formed a team with my co-director Alexandre Berman and a core group of Bougainvilleans. This collaboration lies at the heart of the project.

The world needs to know that this land has been redeemed

In its first moments, *Ophir* firmly establishes the deep spiritual connection between the people of Bougainville and their land. A man who has lost his mother,

father and big brother during the Crisis says, 'We have painted this land with blood and we don't know what more we have to tell the world. The world needs to know that this land has been redeemed'. Children are filmed watching an old video about their people's fight for their land. A woman's voice is heard:

> Daughter Bougainville they diagnosed
> Copper and Gold she full
> Skilful as gynaecologist
> Operating pregnant woman
> They extracted her baby
> The birth of world class mine. (Tahun,1998)

The scene shifts to a Bougainville Copper Ltd (BCL) corporate video from the 1970s. A white family is on a plane en route to PNG. They travel by road from Arawa to Panguna. The sound track explains the geographic dimensions of Bougainville but no local people are seen. Then we switch to archival ABC news footage from the 1960s. A reporter directly asks a Bougainvillean man what he will do when his land is taken without permission. He replies, 'We are going to hold our lands—it's better for us. The government will have to kill us to take our lands.' A mine manager says, 'I think they're naturally suspicious because they don't understand our way of life ... it's the problem of the unknown that worries them.' The implicit racism and arrogance of the white man contrasts with the evidence of Bougainvilleans' strength of feeling about their land and their resistance to its occupation.

This technique in which the words of Bougainvilleans are juxtaposed with the historical archival material sets up the narrative and is used throughout the film. It allows the audience to compare the perspective of local people on the ground in both earlier and contemporary times with the perspective of those aligned with corporate and state interests. There is no need for a voiceover. Later in the film, paragraphs from a secret corporate report and other documents appear on the screen. The documents are now available on *The Colonial Syndrome* website (www.colonialsyndrome.org). We asked Pollet about the archival research process.

> **Pollet:** Even before we began filming, we did two years of pure research, collecting all the film and other documentary archives including colonial records so that we would be prepared and have them with us when we were talking with communities all over Bougainville.
>
> The only time that we were pressured while making the film was in having sufficient funds to finance the film archives. This is one of the biggest problems in making documentaries nowadays. While maintaining archives has a real cost, most companies or institutions take no account of whether you are a small independent production or a Hollywood

blockbuster. This results in a situation in which only very big production companies can cover the costs of historical material—and thus tell 'history'. In our case, we were forced to produce a shorter television version of our project, called *The Panguna Syndrome*—solely for the purpose of starting to cover these enormous archival costs, the biggest budget line of the film. *The Panguna Syndrome* ended up being a nominee in 2017 for the Albert Londres Prize, France's most prestigious award for investigative journalism.

In explaining how we gathered the archival material, I need to introduce the role of Professor Kristian Lasslett, whose work informed our research and who became a producer of the project. He is head of the School of Applied Social and Policy Studies at the University of Ulster. Kristian spent more than 15 years collecting records for his doctorate and then for the book *State Crime on the Margins of Empire: Rio Tinto, the War on Bougainville and Resistance to Mining* (Lasslett, 2014). He applies an institutional power framework and rather than seeing the state and corporate actors as independent of each other, explores the social relations between them.

He accessed records filed in a case by 10,000 Bougainvillean plaintiffs against Rio Tinto in the United States in which it was alleged that the mining company was complicit in war crimes and had violated customary international law, including the right to life and health (Lorne, 2013). Although the case was ruled to be outside the scope of US law, the court documents were an invaluable source of information. There was also another court case involving Rio Tinto about insurance in Melbourne. We scanned everything in his boxes so we could share it with local people when we went to Bougainville.

Among those documents was a secret report prepared for CRA by Professor Douglas Oliver. For people who know about the Pacific, Oliver is regarded as something like the godfather of Pacific anthropology. If you ask people about Bougainville, they often refer to *Black Islanders: A Personal Perspective of Bougainville* (Oliver, 1991) which is his personal account of what occurred on Bougainville. In the late 1960s, he was appointed professor of anthropology at both Harvard and the University of Hawai'i.

In *Black Islanders*, Oliver acknowledges his work for the company:

> From 1968 to 1978 I was employed by Bougainville Copper Ltd as a part-time consultant, to advise the company on how to conduct their operations so as to shield Bougainvilleans as much as possible from the harm that inevitably accompanies such mining. During that period, I visited the island once or twice a year. In addition, I organised and supervised a research programme designed to provide the province's leaders with information relevant to their

> planning for the populace's social and economic well-being. The programme was sponsored by the University of Hawai'i and included scholars from that institution, from the Australian National University, from New Zealand's Canterbury University, and from the University of Papua New Guinea. It was financed in large part by Bougainville Copper Ltd, which, however, exercised no control over it. (Oliver, 1968)

> We obtained the original confidential report. There were some later secret ones but unfortunately we still don't have access to them. What we believe the document shows is that anthropology can be used as a weapon of war. In this case an anthropologist turns against the populations he was studying and with whom he was building relationships. The existence of these confidential reports have not been known to many people, including Bougainvilleans themselves.
>
> The secret report recommends strategies that you would not expect to see from a research anthropologist. You can access the full report on *The Colonial Syndrome*. Oliver explains to Rio Tinto that he has had talks with John Crawford about establishing a whole department at ANU that would be sponsored by Rio Tinto. At this stage, we don't know if the talks were as advanced as he asserted or if Crawford was enthusiastic. The irony for me is that our whole project started in the John Crawford room at ANU. But when you attend these research meetings, you do have a feeling that there are strong Australian government, including intelligence, interests influencing the agenda. It used to be called State, Society and Governance in Melanesia programme but is now called the Department of Pacific Affairs.

The way *Ophir*'s directors use the confidential Oliver report provides a good illustration of how different parts of the project work together. In the film, small sections are read from the report juxtaposed with interviews with archival visual images or interviews with Bougainvilleans about the impact of the loss of land. By visiting *The Colonial Syndrome*, those who are interested can get a detailed glimpse into how this distinguished anthropologist conducted his research according to 'terms of reference' set by Rio Tinto. Oliver certainly understood the deep significance of land to Bougainvillean people and recognised that the seeds of resistance existed. He even recommended that a certain amount of organised opposition may advantage Rio Tinto so long as it is 'within bounds' because if not restrained it could be 'catastrophic'. He uses an almost casual tone in his detailed recommendations to CRA for how it can best handle 'external relations' at its planned mine. He recommends that CRA hire 'agents' to conduct its 'Intelligence' operations and that the company should disguise aspects of its 'relationship with the PNG administration'. It seems unlikely that the Bougainvilleans, administration staff, academics and students that he inter-

viewed were aware of the purpose of his research. These days, much university-based research is commissioned by external partners and although the terms of agreements are not public, most researchers declare funding sources. But this is different from covert research. The contents of Oliver's report are disturbingly duplicitous (such as a preference to verbally communicate some of his recommendations). In relation to women, Oliver advises that women who have been 'relieved of their garden work and other chores associated with village life' (in other words excluded from their land) will have 'much mischief-inviting time on their hands unless a substitute activity is provided for them' such as 'sewing classes or English lessons, etc' (Oliver, 1968, p. 60). Otherwise, he warns, they will become 'trouble-centres' (p. 60). Has there been any public discussion of the role of Rio Tinto's use of undercover research and in particular the role of Douglas Oliver? What has been the reaction of anthropologists to the use of the report in the film?

> **Pollet:** I spoke to anthropologists at the RAIO Film Festival (festival.raifilm.org.uk) and will do so again in late October at a conference of 800 anthropologists from around the world. It was explosive for them—the collusion between the world of academic, intelligence, etc. which goes beyond the classic 'funding issue' for research.
>
> We do know as a result of a footnote in Glynn Cochrane's book about the use of anthropology in the mining industry that Oliver regarded his reports as 'highly confidential' and wanted them to remain secret and unpublished. He told Cochrane in 2000 that a complaint had been lodged by the American Anthropologist Association alleging that his failure to make his research public was a breach of ethics but that it was dismissed. This association provision was introduced at the time of the Vietnam War to prevent anthropologists becoming clandestine researchers. (Cochrane, 2017, p. 27)

What are the biggest impressions or experiences that you as filmmakers took away from this project?

> **Pollet:** The feeling of touching history. We had done films before about natural extraction, about exploitation, but in this film we had the feeling that we were touching the DNA of the system of Western nation building as it is imposed on traditional societies.
>
> The process of filming was organic and we didn't want to set any limits. The film was shot over two years following the initial two years of research. We wanted the film to be about 'experience' and we looked for the 'echoes of experiences' in order to shed light on what colonialism means and does both collectively and individually. How it affects identities, views of oneself, beliefs and more, but doing so in a way where we were not making a film about people, but 'with them', so they could

claim that space and freedom of expression both in the film and in the multimedia platform.

There are 19 distinct languages in Bougainville. We shot in four different languages—we wanted people to speak in whatever language they wished: English, Tok Pisin, Nasioi and Avaipa. The transcription and translation took a year—there were thousands of words! Sometimes you would reach a community that all of a sudden started using another language, which meant the people we were working with could not fully understand what was being said.

As we progressed, we realised it wasn't necessarily going to be a film about a mine. The testimonies were taking us in places much deeper than that as they were shedding light on the system behind it, the system of thought that allowed it, and which still prevails nowadays all around Papua New Guinea, decades after its roots and ideologies were planted and grew.

We were disturbed by the horrific losses. Ten percent of the population in terms of scale, 20,000 people. Imagine if it was in our own country. This doesn't take into account the large number of people displaced or sent to concentration camps (then called 'care centres') around the island.

The scale of the environmental damage is also such that it is even hard to capture in pictures. You are in the original Dapera village where you know you are standing above the original village. Before you there are entire valleys that are built of rocks and it looks like an original landscape but it is not. All the mountains you see around you were all formed by the dumping of waste from the mine in the valley. And you are separated by 130 metres of waste rock between the ancestral village under your feet and the new houses built on top, as close as possible where their ancestors lived. It feels surreal. As for the tailings, they were dumped straight into the river, making it rise by 30 metres in some parts. It's very hard to picture it.

People were extremely happy to share their experiences with us. What I found was that the same words that I had read in documents also came from entirely different people. Often we heard the same expressions, repeated dozens of times in interviews with different people. Sometimes we heard people using the same words, almost word for word, in the north of the island and the south of the island, to describe their experience.

What is interesting is that now that the film has been released, we have been contacted by First Nations people in the north of Canada who have told us that portions of the film mirror their experience word for word. I did not expect this. I hope what this means is that we have captured the processes of 'colonialism', yes it happens in Bougainville but it happens in so many places. For instance, our film was selected as part of the main

line-up competing at the biennial RAI Film Festival this year, organised by the Royal Anthropological Institute in England. At the festival I discovered the remarkable first feature length film made in Inuktitut, by a famous Inuit filmmaker Zachiaras Kunuk. The film is titled *One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk* and relates events and dialogues that occurred in Canada in 1964, when the Canadian government was forcing Indigenous populations to settle into towns and accept 'the new way'. There are portions of dialogues that we found were repeated word for word by various communities in Bougainville. One of these communities even re-enacted for us events that also occurred in 1964 on their land. This was extremely surprising for us, to uncover how similar in some ways the colonial experience has been for very distant communities in the world.

Even though you did as much documentary research as a conventional investigative journalist might do, the film has a very poetic feel. Can you comment on that?

Pollet: We could have done the film very differently, very journalistically but poetry allows you to go directly to the heart of experience. There is the saying: a picture speaks more than a thousand words. Poetry for us was similar. It allows you, in a much shorter way, to go to the heart of an issue, without having to explain all the details that led to a feeling, because it speaks for itself—it is reflective, and the words have already been very carefully selected by the author of the work, and in many ways allows audiences to go beyond, much quicker than a simple listing of facts or events and their consequences, in terms of narration. But it was also important to start by researching the records so that we could free ourselves for the interviews as we travelled through Bougainville. People didn't have any access to documents so we had them available during the filming but we also have them published on *The Colonial Syndrome* website. People can watch the film as an introduction and there is more if you want the hardcore investigative experience. As we were filming, we knew something wouldn't make it into the film but we knew it could have relevance. So we used them as short vignettes on *The Colonial Syndrome* for those wanting deeper, more precise accounts as a way of explaining collective experience.

As we started to talk to people, sometimes they brought us more documents that included poetry. One such moment was when we were brought excerpts of poems from a collection called *An Anthology of Crisis Poetry from Bougainville* by Matubuna Tahun. It was brilliant and at the same time surprising—we had already read these poems during our research, as we had managed to get our hands on this book. And we could then also provide the whole collection to villagers who only had excerpts of the book. Before starting filming, we had the intuition that we should somehow use these poems, and this was confirmed by the fact that these poems were indeed very important for some communities.

> People were not reluctant to talk, they were very eager to talk. The problem with media and the portrayal of remote communities is that mainstream media do not have the resources to travel to remote communities. Therefore they only have access to the centres of power—where the towns are, and it is a few men in the towns who then become the voices of history. This is very problematic. It always ends up being the same voices. We wanted to take an open-ended approach and this led to us having a huge amount of material.
>
> There is also the issue of the way you work with communities. You can't just go and show up at their doorstep and expect them to tell their stories. You need to let them know that you are coming and then ask if they are interested in sharing their experiences. You can only do this with the luxury of time; coming back several times is also important. You would get something very different if you were in a rush. You need to build trust and understanding.
>
> One of the most important people that we worked with was Dr Ruth Saovana who was travelling to communities explaining the new *Mining Act* that had been passed by the Bougainville government. We followed Ruth, who was then visiting communities all around Bougainville in order to make them aware of potentially extremely dangerous provisions within the new mining law that people were not aware of, as no one, or very few had read or had access to the law. These provisions basically curtail any opposition to mining by imposing extraordinarily hefty fines and jail terms, even for very minor acts such as not revealing one's name and address to a mining officer (that would be a year in jail). And this becomes even more problematic in a place which traditionally did not have jails before the white people came—for practical reasons—so as not to exclude dangerous individuals from communities and sever the bond that unified everyone, with the fear that they could become even more dangerous when put in isolation. It is parting from traditional systems of compensation who have been around for millennia. The meetings held by Ruth were truly extraordinary. They allow audiences to witness consultations in action—and see how people express their concerns. It draws attention to the effects of the legalisation of dispossession, and how this process can be used against traditional communities. If you interfere with the operations of a bulldozer for instance, it's five years in jail and a US$75,000 fine. People need to know this, but I fear today many are still not aware of it.

At the beginning of the film, the words appear on the screen: 'In the South Pacific lies the land of Ophir, today known as Bougainville Island. This land is primarily owned by women'. There are a number of strong women in the film including Ruth Saovana who are playing a leadership role in their communities. On the other hand, although several women have been elected previously, we

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Figure 4: There are a number of strong women in the film including Dr Ruth Saovana who are playing a leadership role in their communities.

know that there are currently no women in the PNG National Parliament. Could you comment on the issue of gender and how it arose during your filming?

> **Pollet:** Actually, gender was a big challenge during the filming process. When you go to the village, the men are the ones who sometimes prevent the women from talking. But it wasn't always this way. Every single decision involving land in Bougainville was made by women. In the 1960s, women were leaders in the protest against Rio Tinto ... But now there is a power imbalance. There are very few women in Parliament in the whole of PNG. There is a concentration of power in the hands of a few men and it is always a pocket of men who do their deals. The problem is that when people go to Bougainville, they can be persuaded by these same men and are left with the impression that these men represent far more people than they actually do. The men's views then get reported outside Bougainville.
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> But there is change. Theonila Matbob, who was a researcher on the film, got elected aged 29 to Parliament, beating 14 men. She is one of two female cabinet ministers in the Autonomous Government of Bougainville.

One of the strengths is that there is a diverse range of people in the film. Can you explain to us the role of the man who appears at the beginning of the film and again at the end. It seemed to us that his words were very important in creating a key message of the film: 'The foreigner. The problem was created in his own land. And when he came into Bougainville, his problems became the problem of the Bougainville man.'

Pollet: Blaise Iruinu was one of the right-hand men of the Bougainville revolutionary leader Francis Ona. He is a philosopher. His knowledge was not built in Western universities. It was built on observations of what he saw happen on his land. In the 1980s, he looked after the BCL cinema in Panguna and now he is very involved in peacebuilding around Bougainville. He is also at the head of one important Me'ekamui faction, the traditional government that you have in Bougainville. He is well respected and an important intellectual.

This is the first time that he had talked about his experiences and what the war was about. We filmed with him for 16 hours over 4 sessions.

On one occasion, we filmed for three hours and then he said that he would come back because he needed to bring documents, some that he had written himself. He kept them to make sense of what had occurred. He broke down the mechanisms of colonialism, its history from a Bougainvillean perspective. We have published his testimony—almost uncut—on the website (in three parts of 40 minutes each or so) and we are considering turning it into a book. It may sound a little bit dry, but it is important.

His knowledge is from an Indigenous vision of the world built on experience and deductions. In the film he acts as a kind of intermittent narrator, although we did not plan for that. This is why we opened and ended the film with him. At the end, he addresses people outside and says, 'You may not believe everything that I am telling you but this is how I see the world.' If we are to understand the colonial experience and the need for decolonisation, we need to listen to these voices who may not have the biggest credentials or come from 'prestigious' universities elsewhere. They need to emerge and become visible, be read and understood.

Film distribution

It was important for co-directors Pollet and Berman that the film was shown first in the Pacific. It received the top prize—Grand Prix du FIFO, at the Festival International du Film Documentaire Océanien in Tahiti in February 2020. 'This film won unanimous support. Everyone was moved. It describes colonisation in a certain way with very strong emotions. The directors managed to get their hands on very special documentation,' said Eric Babier, chair of the jury as he announced the Grand Jury Prize winner. All members of the jury were from different Pacific Islands, and included Kanaky New Caledonia playwright Pierre Gope, who told Pollet the film spoke on the issue of colonisation and mining in a way rarely seen.

Ophir is also scheduled to be shown in Kanaky New Caledonia at the Ânûû-rû âboro Film Festival in October 2021, on the eve of the country's third and final

referendum on independence within the framework of the Noumea Agreement. However, in the meantime, trying to get the film distributed—and in particular through the islands of Oceania—has been particularly difficult because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Have you had much feedback from people in Bougainville?

Pollet: Yes and no. It has largely been complicated by COVID. Of course, we have sent the film and it is currently largely circulating informally on Bougainville but it's different to what we had envisioned. We wanted to do a film tour in Bougainville although this has been made impossible with the health situation. But it is very much something that we would like to return to, perhaps next year. Even sending the film via USB has been an adventure. I sent copies of the film and archives to people and communities that we had filmed with early last year and the USBs were only delivered a week or so ago! But for us one of the most important things was that people could recognise themselves and their stories in the film. In that respect it has been positive. It was important for us to get the reaction of Ruth Saovana as she had made a big decision in trusting us. She told us in an email that it was very hard for her to put it into words but that the film was both chilling and inspiring. And more importantly that 'it weaved in the spirit of Bougainville, the people and the knowledge that they are trying so very hard to protect against invaders and the greed ripping people and families apart'. Based on this we knew we could release the film and show it.

The film had its Australian premiere at the Human Rights Arts and Film Festival in Melbourne in May. Many Bougainvilleans were there and seemed proud that their stories could finally be shown on screen—and especially in Australia. Unfortunately however, showing it in Australia has been very complicated, with so far only two screenings, in Melbourne and a private one in Sydney, although we have some hopes it will get picked at upcoming festivals. It has not been shown on Australian television, while the film in New Zealand was not only shown at Academy award qualifying festival Doc Edge last year, but it was also picked up and broadcast by Māori Television. It also won many awards in countries all around the region—but Australia seems to be the hardest place to have it screened so far. It's a shame as it is an Australian story in many ways and we would love to engage with Australian audiences.

We are also thinking of ways to provide accessibility to the film and especially *The Colonial Syndrome* stories and archives without the need for an internet connection. We got the idea from Wikipedia, who when they launched also wondered how to make their content available to communities without internet access. The answer is small modems that can be loaded with content, and then downloaded or streamed locally by any device. It's quite simple. It's something we are thinking of,

especially for the archives. And it's something that could also be used for further educational content that could be developed over the years in Bougainville as well.

The future

Although it may be years before another feature documentary film on this scale can be made, assistant director Nathan Matbob remains in Bougainville and can continue to document events. The situation continues to unfold and from that point of view journalism and academic research in other fields that is not dependent on corporate or government funding will be important, especially because of the lack of mainstream coverage in Australia.

A referendum on the future of Bougainville was held in November 2019, after filming was completed but before *Ophir* was released, with nearly 98 percent of Bougainvilleans voting for independence. This was higher than some foreign affairs commentators in Australia had been predicting but not a surprise to those involved with the documentary. The Lowy Institute in Australia for instance predicted a vote of about 75 percent (Dobell, 2019).

So far no one has been held accountable for the enormous amount of environmental damage including a billion tons of tailings that have spread 40 kilometres from the mine causing flooding and contamination. In September 2020, 56 community representatives filed a complaint with the Australian Government against Rio Tinto for environmental and human rights violations caused by its mine. The complaint, filed with the Australian OECD National Contact Point, alleges 'that the massive volume of mine waste pollution left behind by Rio Tinto's Panguna mine is putting communities' lives and livelihoods at risk, poisoning their water sources, flooding their lands and sacred sites and causing a range of health problems'. The complainants argue that Rio Tinto's failure to mitigate the risks involved in breaches of human rights and environmental standards set out in the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, a leading international standard on responsible business conduct (HRLC, 2020a, HRLC,2020b, HRLC,2020c).

In July 2021, Rio Tinto announced that it would fund an assessment of environmental and community impacts. Assisted by a strong Human Rights Centre media release, the announcement received unusually widespread coverage in Australia and New Zealand. ABC Radio National *Breakfast* interviewed MP Theonila Matbob in Bougainville who spoke hopefully of 'the opening up of a new door for up to 14,000 people living in communities' along the Jaba river valley. She described living with the devastating damage as an 'everyday experience' which even with remediation will take years to fix. Asked to respond to reports that some Bougainvilleans want to reopen the Panguna mine for economic reasons, she acknowledged that although there are a few supporters 'aligned with corporate interests' who favour reopening, the community is united in wanting

all the legacy issues of the mine remedied before any decisions about economic recovery can be made. Rio Tinto declined to be interviewed.

Ophir is produced through a partnership of filmmakers, scholars and local people. It adds to the evidence gathered by independent journalists whose work has stood out over the years. These include Ben Bohane (2013, 2019a, 2019b), David Robie (2014, 2015, 2019) and Antony Loewenstein (2018). All of these journalists demonstrate the worth of the need for direct empirical observation as a grounding for journalism research (Nash, 2016).

Bougainville and Disaster Capitalism

Loewenstein's broad ranging international reporting, which is documented on his website (antonyloewenstein.com), is marked by a consistent willingness to penetrate mainstream narratives when he finds that voices have been silenced or accounts favouring government or corporate interests uncritically promoted. His film and written work about Bougainville applies a contrasting journalistic and analytical approach that both contextualises and supports the stance taken in *Ophir*. Loewenstein visited Bougainville twice and stayed long enough for him to successfully negotiate with local people to visit the Panguna mine area. Like Pollet, he found that impressions gained from external media and political events about Bougainville were challenged by his reporting experiences

While *Ophir* conveys the feeling of being 'inside' Bougainville, Loewenstein combines a global analysis of 'disaster capitalism' with field reporting in locations where he investigated the impact of policies on the ground. To develop his global analysis of privatised aid and the domination of corporations, he drew on case studies in Haiti, Afghanistan and Bougainville.

Loewenstein, whose work is influenced by Naomi Klein (Klein, 2007) expands the conventional notion of disaster to include 'companies that entrench a crisis and then sell themselves as the only ones that can resolve it'. He is critical of the notion of 'privatised aid' that is designed to promote corporate and domestic national interests rather than the interests of local communities. Like Klein, Loewenstein 'follows the money'. His research shows that the issue of how funding sources frame research in the Pacific has continued long after Oliver was doing his covert reports in the 1960s.

Loewenstein reports that in 2013, Australia's aid agency AusAID funded a reconciliation meeting that discussed the reopening of Panguna mine. The media narrative that emerged from the meeting reported local positivity about the mine but a PNG blogger who visited Bougainville after the conference found that most people he spoke to preferred agriculture as a path to economic survival. Loewenstein quotes from a Jubilee Australia report published in 2014 that 'details the myriad of voices in Bougainville, largely ignored by the media and local government, who opposed the mine. Dozens of villagers were surveyed

and there was near universal opposition to its reopening' (p. 159). He also draws on the research of Lasslett who interviewed eight managers who had worked for BCL between 1987 and 1992, and they all openly admitted that during the Crisis, the company provided whatever weapons and logistics the PNG military had requested. (Loewenstein, 2015, p. 160).

During his investigation, Loewenstein also revealed that the mining legislation, seen in *Ophir* to cause such angst among local people not previously informed about its potential impact on them, was drafted with the assistance of Australian academic, lawyer and former PNG government adviser Dr Anthony J. Regan with funding from the Australian Government. Regan is now a member of the Department of Pacific Affairs (ANU).[1] Loewenstein writes,

> The think-tank Australian Strategic Policy Institute released a report in 2013 that called for greater Australian aid for Bougainville, claiming civil unrest would occur without it, completely ignoring the complicity of Canberra in the province's troubles during the Crisis. Sending more AusAID money would not make locals forget who backed the polluting mine in the first place. (Loewenstein, 2015, p. 190)

While there will be debate about the political impact of these financial links,[2] discussion of them is in the public interest and it is regrettable that they received little coverage in Australian mainstream media. This is not unusual however. In an interview with the authors about the media coverage of Bougainville, Loewenstein referred to the frequent use of Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) commentators as authoritative experts on international matters on the ABC and other media outlets that fails to make the ASPI's funding sources transparent (Loewenstein, 2021). These sources include the weapons companies Lockheed Martin and Thales, Macquarie Data Centre, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and overseas agencies.

Conclusion

Ophir provides a rare opportunity for audiences outside Bougainville to hear the voices of its people describing their experiences, their losses and their hopes in their own way. Although we meet some individuals in some depth, we also see scores of people discussing issues and ceremonies to grieve and commemorate their dead, many of whom simply 'disappeared'. In stark contrast to brief moments in standard television current affairs of interviewees crumbling into momentary tears before the camera moves away, we bear witness to terrible grief and trauma. At the same time, *The Colonial Syndrome* allows us to visit a website that documents known facts about the losses.

We cannot expect that everybody will welcome the release of *Ophir*. Anthony Regan, for instance, has already written a long essay favouring large scale mining

in Bougainville in which he is scathing about 'outsiders' such as Kristian Lasslett, Jubilee Australia and even Antony Loewenstein. He accuses them of failing to be 'realistic' about the need to reopen large scale mining (Regan, 2017.)

In contemporary times, academia is contested space. The notion of the neutral detached scholar has all but been laid to rest. Most academic researchers have restricted research funding options but nevertheless do make choices. Their research is also based in different intellectual frameworks and designed to fulfil different needs and interests. Some opt to link with government and corporate sources and while not discounting their contribution, funding needs to be transparent and taken into account in assessing their work. Some will be more independent than others.

Lasslett, on the other hand, uses his academic base to provide a research and publishing home for partners. He provides an example of an academic researcher who has joined with creative practitioners and local communities to co-produce a work that has won international acclaim in documentary circles. The work is based on long standing and continuing partnerships.

This partnership has enabled a rare filmic journey into the world of Bougainvilleans. We hope that Ophir achieves the widest possible exposure throughout Oceania so that audiences can hear directly from a diverse range of Bougainvilleans and witness the devastating cultural, environmental and economic impact of the historical and contemporary policies of Rio Tinto and Australian and PNG governments.

Review

'*Ophir*: Bougainville's epic struggle for freedom', review by Catherine Wilson on pages 304-306.

Notes

1. 'Between 2010 and 2014, Regan was paid $968,120 as a 'legal advisor', according to official documents.' (Loewenstein, 2015, p.162).
2. Australian academics paid $500,000 over two years for mining work on Bougainville. (2014) PNGExposed Blog. Retrieved on September 10, 2021, from https://pngexposed.wordpress.com/2014/04/03/australian-academics-paid-500000-over-two-years-for-mining-work-on-bougainville/

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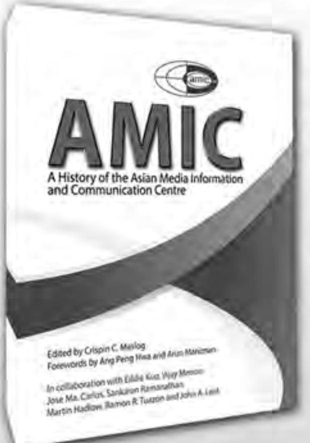

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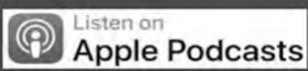

UNTHEMED

Building independent media

Sustaining democratic freedoms

Abstract: This article examines trends in new media journalism, identifying an independent sector which began to emerge with the internet circa 2000. It finds that publications from initially single-person start-ups like *Crikey*, to the large circulation *New Daily*, have proved viable and durable, providing alternatives to mainstream print and broadcast media. They have specialised in politics while publishing also in many other fields, characteristically emphasising user participation in both production and funding and exploiting possibilities of new digital models. This article has case studies of the publications *Independent Australia*, and the New Zealand-based *Asia Pacific Report*, to further explain the independents' motivation and mode of operation. It reviews the media environment in two parts: a first phase from 2000 to 2010 and a second major change after 2010 with smart phones and social media. Conclusions are made that the independent sector stands to play a central role in sustaining democracy.

Keywords: alternative media, *Asia Pacific Report*, Australia, *Crikey*, *Independent Australia*, independents, internet, journalism, media, new media, *New Daily*, New Zealand, smart phone, social media

LEE DUFFIELD
Media editor, Independent Australia

Introduction

THE ADVENT of the internet has enabled experiments in mass media that can evade the expense and complexities of print and broadcast publishing and challenge the corporate domination of media by opening new channels for more voices. This review of developments in new media concentrates on a segment of independent publications which began to appear around 2000 and have persisted as significant contributors to democratic discourse. That sector has dual interests in maintaining recognised or orthodox principles of ethical journalism and in innovative use of digital communication technology to bring more contributors and participants into the journalistic process. Here the independents as an identifiable sector are treated separately from 'many to many' communication which the internet has enabled, or the expansion of corporate media launched by institutions with primary interests not to do with journalism or publishing. The review also does not cover community broad-

casting which commenced two decades before the internet, building up to some 300 radio stations in Australia and laying down much essential groundwork in public participation. The community stations are mostly in the strictly local, micro media category, though there are several metropolitan-wide outlets and shared programming on a national network. (CBAA)

This article follows developments from 2000 to 2020, and also employs case studies of *Independent Australia* and *Asia Pacific Report* to help demonstrate ways that the sector operates and the thinking of its founders, editors and public. The study notes 27 websites being aggregated under the Independents masthead in Australia. These include The Australian Independent Media Network (AIMN), *The Beetoota Advocate*, *The Big Smoke*, Caitlinjohnstone.com, *The Chaser*, Crikey.com.au, EurekaStreet.com.au, Greenleft.org.au, IndependentAustralia.net, Indigenousx.com.au, Innovationaus.com, Insidestory.org.au, MichaelWest.com.au, TheMonthly.com.au, NewMatilda.com, NewPolitics.com.au, NoFibs.com.au, Pearls and Irritations (John Menadue), Quadrant Online, quillette.com, RenewEconomy.com.au, TheSaturdayPaper.com.au, TheShovel.com.au, Spectator.com.au, TrueCrimeWeekly.com, Thewire.org.au and WomensAgenda.com.au . There are others in New Zealand and the South Pacific. For detailed treatment it selects eight prominent examples: the *Asia Pacific Report, Australian Independent Media Network (AIMN)* and MichaelWest.com.au, *Crikey*, *Independent Australia*, *The Monthly*, *New Matilda*, *The Saturday Paper* and *Pearls and Irritations*. These or their immediate predecessors emerged in the early period (all founded 2000 to 2010, except *Pearls and Irritations* 2013 and *The Saturday Paper* 2014) when would-be independent publishers began with weblogs and moved on to partnership or company arrangements. Some found institutional backing such as a university. The *Asia Pacific Report,* launched in 2016, was until late 2020 published out of the Pacific Media Centre at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), changing to independent ownership as a Creative Commons outlet in 2021. *The Monthly* and *The Saturday Paper* are essentially print outlets but have strong online versions and share many of the key characteristics of the other publications listed.

Two large-circulation titles, *The Conversation* (launched 2011) and the *New Daily* (2013) will be added to the discussion. Unlike the earlier ventures they started with advanced production schemes and had large institutional and financial support. Each might be classified with corporate media, except that they offer very comprehensive and differentiated coverage. Their base organisations, respectively universities and industry superannuation funds with associated unions, have a primary, non-commercial interest in broad community engagement.

It will be shown these independents all aim to provide an alternative to so-called mainstream or legacy media, being broadcast, print and their attached digital services. They also stress accessibility for community members

to contribute and participate in acts of citizen or public journalism. Common characteristics of these publications are that leading personalities with business or journalistic credentials organised the start-ups for these publications, perhaps out of a desire to be seen as social entrepreneurs. An example is Michael West (West, 2019) who runs *AIMN*, previously a stockbroker and business editor, billed as a 'journalist covering the rising power of corporations over democracy' (West, 2019a). One other example is Eric Beecher, editor-in-chief of *Crikey*, previously a senior editor at Fairfax and News Corp. (*Crikey*, 2020) Another is David Robie who as a journalism academic, most recently a journalism professor at Auckland University of Technology, launched a suite of products including *Asia Pacific Report*, with the goal of advancing human rights, including media freedoms, and providing an independent Asia-Pacific voice, 'telling the untold stories' (*Asia Pacific Report,* n.d.).

It is a mark of these prime-movers and the publications generally that they are focused on investigative journalism, a field where mainstream publications have pulled back, most often due to cost. The publications also are almost all free of charge, only a few experimenting with revenue pay walls. Preferred sources of income are subscriptions, sponsorships or donations, with marginal help from advertising.

The article takes an historical approach, beginning with the internet coming into full use in 2000, where the Worldwide Web had become available (since 1991), the first website had been launched (The Whitehouse, 1994), and browsers—Microsoft and Netscape—had just arrived (in 1999). (Internet Information, 2019) These developments were an opportunity for independent publishers, which became part of a consolidation of internet-based services generally that was settling in by 2010—only to then be freshly disrupted by new mobile technology and the advent of social media.

What follows is a review of the publishing experience during the first decade, drawing on treatments of the media environment by Beckett (2018), Flew (2012) and Franklin (2014). The second part of the article addresses the changes in that environment since 2010, with the independent publications weathering change and still developing. It concludes that independent media have proven their model works and are able to offer consistent services and relief to consumers confronted with a confusing, crowded and noisy media environment.

Characteristics of new media ventures 2000-2010

The explosive development of information and communication technology since 2000 has been a key contributor to sweeping change in mass media which looks to be ongoing, as part of a more general transformation in many aspects of economic, cultural and social life. Franklin (2014, p. 481) points out the striking feature of the process is the fast pace of change as much as its character.

For mass media it has generated crises of financial viability, and of 'civic adequacy'. He is not optimistic about how numerous, but mostly small operations can surmount such crises. The 'newly emerging participatory, hyperlocal news organisations' he studied in England were 'insufficiently resourced to substitute for the democratic oversight provided by disappearing local papers' (2014, p. 481). Against that was the determination at many levels to provide viable, socially responsible media at a time when the digital communications revolution was getting into its stride.

Such media were typically the 'blogging, citizen journalism and alternative online-only news sites (set up) to present themselves as alternative sources of news journalism in the second half of the 2000s' (Flew, 2012, p. 112-13). By 2012, sites such as *OhMyNews* in South Korea, *Malaysiakini* in Malaysia, or *New Matilda* in Australia, were seen as a developing alternative, with a shared feature of being 'driven by bottom-up citizen journalism and a closer relationship to their reader-contributors.'

Alternatives

To a degree the founders of these new media were pursuing a creative project for individual and professional purposes. Seizing on low production costs with digital media, which also offered a wide cast for audiences, small operators found they could be a self-sufficient alternative, and an actual minor competitor to major media. Impacts of the same technology which produced these publications, specifically the migration of advertising to the internet, were causing large media outlets to contract. The media outlets would shed staff, skipping many of the labour intensive 'social responsibility' functions of news media– disclosure, informed commentary, challenges to authority—creating something of a vacuum. The notion of providing an alternative was also pro-active, to support reform in society, publish a wider range of views than would appear in the hitherto rationed space of news media, and get out much information—not least information concealed by authority or corporations.

'Bottom-up' engagement

The dynamics of digital publishing invited the construction of models using a big range of participants including audience members. It would draw heavily on the many to many characteristic of digital communication media, and potentialities of user generated content (UGC); making a key definer of such publications: marshalling of their team, of professional journalists, web producers, marketers and others, or from outside, regular or occasional freelances and stringers, subscribers, donors and contributors of comments.

Among several journalists or observers of the period (2000-2020), Beckett in *Supermedia* (2008) proposed a scheme of on-going workshops in which

in-house staff would collaborate with many others on the media product. After a decade, Beckett (2018) said that because of the increased productive power of new technologies he still thought that 'individual journalists or acts of journalism can have more impact than ever before':

> I [had] realised [in 2008] that the emergence of new producers such as bloggers and new structures, especially social media, would transform the news media ... It would create more sources and outlets for mainstream journalists, … increase competition and reduce the power of the news media to act as 'gatekeepers' to information. This came at the same time as a financial crisis for journalism as newspaper sales plummeted and advertising revenue switched to the new online platforms such as Facebook and Google. Journalism was simultaneously feeling threatened and empowered. (Beckett, 2018)

Financial viability

The fast-developing architecture of a new media ecology could financially hobble big businesses while providing opportunities for smaller operators. Lower cost production for online or mobile had inherent advantages to do with long tail economics, making a wider range of media content potentially profitable, linked with the overall dispersal, demassification and segmentation of the market for it (Flew, 2012, p. 104). The new outlets would develop a mix of 'crowd funding, crowd sourcing and co-creation, with advertising on mobile devices, sale of newspaper apps, hyperlocal business models, not-for-profit models which secure funding from international non-governmental organisations, private foundations and think tanks, plus public funding, sales and subscription to finance minority-language journalism, or efforts to monetise hyperlinks' (Franklin, 2014, p. 484).

Picard (quoted in Franklin, 2014, p. 484), examined the multiple revenue streams, concluding reservedly, 'they provide reason to believe that workable new business models are appearing'.

Professional journalism

The idea propounded in the 2000s that 'everybody can become a journalist' (Flew, 2013; Duffield & Cokley, 2006) has been demonstrated by partnerships among journalists and others. The protocols of the news publications, like prioritising of facts, accuracy and discipline with word counts, can be taken up easily. Non-journalists might consider that acquiring journalistic skills can help to optimise their communication competency, including with social media. The ethos of journalism, its culture as understood by Zelizer (2004), or occupational ideology as described by Deuze (2005) is evident in the interest displayed by the new media publications in investigative work or promoting right to know,

e.g. critical examination of security legislation. Several byline writers from mainstream media are present, whether head-hunted, made redundant or retired from former publications, often themselves financially and professionally set free in the relatively unrestricted new media setting.

Ownership and policies

The other significant expertise group in the sector is the founder or ownership group. It is common enough for business identities in different fields to want to obtain a media outlet. For example, the Australian mining magnates Lang Hancock (Hancock, 2019) and Peter Wright (Wright, 2019) set up the Perth *Sunday Independent* in 1969, keeping it going for 15 years. Shareholder activist Stephen Mayne founded *Crikey* in *2000*, stating that:

> Stephen campaigns broadly for transparency, good governance and accountability across the media, business and political sectors ...He also … continues to campaign against the gambling industry. (Stephen Mayne, 2020)

The statement is representative of the policy line of most independent online publications favouring broadly liberal principles.

Finding a market

Most of the publications focus on politics, which brings in audience numbers, especially during elections, though other fields—arts, environment, the economy, international affairs, general satire, or some sports issues—are also represented. Finding this political niche has enabled them to keep up with the majors, and actually initiate more people into media use. They can also be seen as transitional between first experiments with stand-alone internet publishing, as by individual bloggers, and the later communications outburst set off with smart phones and social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Delicious, Pinterest or StumbleUpon.

The developing communications environment after 2010

By 2010, major media organisations had started to consolidate, through downsizing, multi-media alliances using joint newsrooms and creatively pushing their online incarnations beyond simply shovelling content onto the new platforms. The independent outlets also found their modus operandi as stand-alone websites. But the year 2010 marked the revolutionary new wave of possibilities with mobile telephones and social media. The mass media world was disrupted all over again.

In that year, the four United States multinational online service or computer and software companies that have dominated cyberspace since

2010—Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple—had experienced their dramatic corporate growth spurt and commenced the first rounds of a battle for market share and hegemony (Big Four Tech Companies, 2020). With smart phones for example, in 2010 the Apple iPad and parallel Android devices appeared, and smartphones for the first time outsold personal computers. The following year saw the emergence of a pattern: Apple became the largest smartphone vendor, selling 18.6 million iPhones, just ahead of Samsung's 17.5-million quarterly. A pro tem sorting-out of platforms and devices was achieved through a confusion of major law suits and negotiations involving the software proprietors and main manufacturers led by Apple, Samsung, HTC and Nokia (Arthur, 2012).

In the arena of social media, Facebook has worked since its inception towards its current dominant position. It achieved this in 2011, when it was valued at US$50 billion. Its key characteristics had by then been settled: users would be forced to opt in (from 2008), could tag friends (2009), would supply their essential biographic information (2010) and could like comments (2010). (History of Facebook: Timeline, 2020) The short format do-it-yourself publisher Twitter, started in 2006, had 200-million active users by 2013, with 400 million tweets posted daily (Hermida, 2013).

These milestone developments from 2010 became main factors in a global transformation for editors and publishers to navigate—the continuous renewal of information and transmitted communications becoming central to virtually all business or personal life. Where would their publications fit amid the intensified shunting, repurposing, quoting, misquoting and aggregating of already-published material, in a 'chaos of useless information' (Keen, 2011)? Through what psychological defences or other devices might individuals or organisations manage the copious flow?

Negative forces would be thriving by 2020, setting themselves against opportunities for human fulfillment: steadily eclipsing early notions of the internet as a home for free expression, by increasing criminality, harassment and hacking; anxiety about security that imposes limits on information transfer in banking; fake news and hoaxes, related to a widespread fascination with elaborate gaming; intensified monetisation of any information business, not least involving tightened licensing of products, more connectivity, with monitoring, frequent updating and incremental price increases by the software companies; and the burgeoning trade in personal data that has become known as surveillance capitalism.

Sometimes paradoxically, bans and controls on the chaotic internet and mobile telephone services are becoming routinised. These will range from system shut-downs by state authorities during periods of crisis (Access Now, 2018) to administrative control, as in China, blocking-off global services including Wikipedia or Twitter. State interventions will occur, whether for democratic containment of crime or malfeasance, as by the European Union (European

Commission, 2020); in a continuing search through courts and parliaments for new conceptions, definitions and protection of intellectual property; or through organised cyber assaults, emanating predominently from China and Russia. The character of ongoing developments, good or bad, is unresolved and the pace unrelenting, generating concern about possible impacts. For example, does constant communication-like engagement using mobile devices foreshadow enduring change in the human animal?

In the sea of consequences and competition for attention, there will be more tests for Franklin's (2014) 'civic adequacy' of journalism. As a further paradox, Beckett would conclude (2018) that well-intentioned journalism might yet survive well, if it deploys new media tools to interact closely with many publics, while also deploying the more traditional strengths:

> The more reliable and accountable news brands have seen a sharp rise in people consuming their content … When there is such an abundance of questionable material out there, people often turn to more trustworthy sources. (Beckett, 2018)

Dealing with obstacles and adversity

The independent outlets have signalled their response to new challenges of the media environment, especially in decrying and publicising state interventions affecting human rights. In Australia these are the federal Acts of Parliament or Regulations described by the journalists' union, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA, 2019) in a comprehensive report, as 'waves of new laws (which) are passed in the name of "national security" but are really designed to intimidate the media, hunt down whistleblowers, and lock-up information.'

Threats can develop into damaging or fatal events. The decades under review have produced many examples from the South Pacific, where the great distances and lack of other resources, render good communication services even more valuable. (Duffield, Hayes & Watson, 2008) The smart-phone revolution bypassing telephone or even electricity supply has created unprecedented opportunities for expanded public communication, including new media (Duffield 2020; Watson 2008a; Watson, 2008b). Against that, since 2000 Pacific countries, notably Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu, have faced periods of tension or active repression against even the largest media outlets—an impediment to setting up independents, for example those wanting to support an opposition movement, or generate development news in communities.

Media control in Fiji travelled beyond raids on newsrooms and maltreatment of journalists, to become formal and ongoing, embodied in the *Media Industry Development Decree*, renewed in 2013 by the then-insurrectionist Bainimarama government; that government later twice-elected though under a pall of criticism

to do with media manipulation (O'Sullivan, 2018). On pain of heavy fines, its regulations outlaw any reportage it regards as being against the 'public interest or public order' (Singh, 2015).

If severely inhibiting, the legislation has not killed debate, which is much sustained by the option of online publishing. Main media will still address biting issues, such as in 2021 continuing criticism of the electoral process, carried by *The Fiji Times* (Rawalai, 2021), responded to through media management (Deo, 2020) and dismissed in ubiquitous government-owned media (*The Fijian Government*, 2021). Small media operations provide some outlets for dissent, like the official opposition employing social media (Fiji Independent News Service, 2021), or the defiant *Truth for Fiji* blog (*Truth for Fiji*, 2021), campaigning against corruption, and against proposed legislation to extend police powers and further militarise the force.

Everywhere, the limited resources of the independents can make them particularly vulnerable to police actions, threats to their cyber security, or vexatious lawsuits. Support of sponsoring organisations can be withdrawn. Events like the COVID-19 pandemic will have a disproportionate impact, where some outlets have reported falling-off of subscriptions or they have been unable to get access to government small business support. The 2021 media bargaining code legislation in Australia, requiring search engines or social media to negotiate payments for product from news producers, saw settlements made among Facebook and Google and the three or four largest media corporations while the smaller organisations were left to catch up in some unbalanced bargaining.

Confidence

Audience support and involvement is the antidote to danger. Grounds for confidence in the sector are highlighted in an article by Wingerei (2019a), monitoring audiences for the independents in Australia:

> Audience growth at michaelwest.com.au (a 67 percent quarterly rise) is part of the broader trend … while the big four—*Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian* and News.com.au – continue to decline in print and battle to get enough subscribers behind their paywalls … The 27 online sites tracked grew their web traffic numbers by 21.74 percent from February to May 2019, a whopping 33.9 percent compound growth over the last six months. West's growth was fuelled also by the Watergate coverage and other stories covering corporatocracy and tax avoidance.
>
> *Crikey* is another one of the outstanding performers with 49 percent monthly growth in visits—to 446,000 in May (despite having a paywall) … *Crikey* will need that kind of growth to help support the addition of a dozen journalists in their new INQ unit (Inquiry Journalism) (Duke, 2019), but they seem to have found the right balance with their subscription

> model and funding from high net worth individuals Cameron O'Reilly and John Fairfax.
>
> May was, of course, an election month, no doubt adding fuel to the numbers for progressive stalwart *Independent Australia.net* who had almost 500,000 visits in May… John Menadue's *Pearls and Irritations* collection of seasoned and diverse commentators also increased its audience by 32 percent… (Wingerei, 2019a)

The *Pearls and Irritations* outlet, started by John Menadueas as a personal blog in 2013, has 4000 subscribers and 6000 daily readers. (*Pearls and Irritations*, 2020) It has carried articles from luminaries of the Canberra circuit, such as journalists Jack Waterford and the late Mungo MacCallum and others, including Robert Fisk from the *The Independent*. Additional figures detailing online readership numbers in February 2019 placed *The New Daily* with one-million viewers at number 19 among a Top 20 news sites, sharing just under 35 percent of audience in that category with international sites (*The Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, BBC, *Huffington Post*, *Buzzfeed*). Established in 2013, *The New Daily* had 446,000 subscribers and more than 2.2 million unique readers a month. Initially funded by Industry Super funds it also attracts advertising which had increased 15 percent in one quarter. The site states it 'proudly aims to improve the financial literacy of all Australians, while keeping them informed on the issues affecting the nation'. Its 17-strong editorial team 'boasts an impressive stable of high-profile commentators' including Quentin Dempster from the ABC and the former *Vogue* editor Kirstie Clements. (*The New Daily*, 2018) *The Conversation* (2019), founded by the CSIRO research institute and four universities in 2011, has succeeded with its research-outreach model, deploying the expertise of university staff (only academics can write for it), with strong institutional funding (from sponsor universities, government, research grants, and reader subscriptions) sustaining 27 editorial staff and more than 70 others and proclaiming journalistic transparency and accountability. It has seven international editions, adding 14.8 million unique users to 5.4 million in Australia. It was the brainchild of a former *Observer* editor, Andrew Jaspan, and Jack Rejtman, a leader in university business development. For the mainly print publications in the sector, figures for the *Saturday Paper* identified in a commercial ratings survey (Nielsen Corporation, 2019) gave it a print readership of 439,000 with 165,000 online. For comparison, the total is slightly below the national *Seniors* publication, (*The Senior*, 2020) and two to three times the individual totals for regional newspapers (e.g. publications in Albury or Wagga Wagga). In a similar comparison *The Monthly*, for the September 2019 quarter was included in a bracket of 12 magazines, although the smallest with 171,000 total readership (most often 30,000 per month), after *GQ* 309,000 and *Marie Claire* 650,000. The *Woman's Day* title *Now to Love* was top with 5,149,000.

New Matilda, founded in 2004, has more than 18,000 registered users, of which it claims 90 percent are in professional or senior business roles. It demonstrates some attitude, for example advertising that it will publish any threats made against it, and while imposing the usual prohibitions on defamation or abuse, also excludes any contributions that do not make sense (*Newmatilda.com,* 2020). *New Matilda* describes itself as a free source of news, analysis and satire, 'predominantly reader-funded (which) remains fiercely independent...' (*Newmatilda.com*, 2020a).

Wingerei found strong linkages between independents and social media:

> Based on SimilarWeb's data, News.com.au gets 5.5 percent of its visitor traffic from social media, in contrast to *The Guardian's* 12.2 percent and *Independent Australia's* almost 20 percent. Overall, independent media gets three to four times more of its visitors referred by social media (mainly Facebook, Twitter and Reddit) than the mainstream news media sites do. (Wingerei, 2019a)

See also the comparative circulations from Austin (2019), measuring independent publications as significant minority players in Alexa ratings.

The sketch of audience performance and general characteristics given here highlights opportune aspects of this media genre: drawing significant numbers, managing financially with a variety of revenue sources and trading substantially on political commentary, where most provide long pieces, 600 to 2000 words, offering a good read. Investigative work is favoured and will be paid for, as with the staff increases at *Crikey*. The business and professional group identified by *New Matilda* might be a significant part of the audience generally. In places satirical writing and cartoons, as with *Independent Australia*, indicate an irreverent desire to rock the boat. The adoption of prominent writers goes with an overall savvy business approach, to find and mobilise all kinds of resources. The publications are commonly the inspiration of a founder, as principal editor, working in an entrepreneurial way to ensure the enterprise keeps going.

Media needs across the South Pacific

A special situation applies in the South Pacific due to the dispersal of small, but diverse populations across the blue continent, demanding ingenuity in forming an audience. Global media corporations provide only sparse services, except for one leading contributor not in the independent category—the public broadcaster RNZ Pacific, (RNZ Pacific). That service from Radio New Zealand provides comprehensive coverage throughout its region, but cannot meet the full demand. Radio Australia substantially withdrew after the Australian Broadcasting Corporation dropped shortwave broadcasts in 2017. The online *Asia*

Pacific Report was launched in 2016 on models common with independents. It was supported by an institution, the Pacific Media Centre (PMC) within the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) with founder and editor Professor David Robie filling the role of an editorial head and social entrepreneur. It took advantage of new information and communication technology to make innovative products and assembled resources from many parts, including its use in journalism teaching, with student producers and the use of contributions from independent media organisations or universities in far flung communities.

The *Asia Pacific Report* goes to major media events like summits of the Pacific Islands Forum, although it is prone to put questions outside the usual frame of announcements. In a small sampling of its coverage it gave special attention to the dogged and proud West Papua independence movement, addressed housing shortages in New Zealand, updated the COVID-19 crisis in Papua New Guinea and assessed the Relocation Trust set up for Fijian villages affected by climate change. Naming issues such as climate change, human rights, social justice and sustainable development, it describes itself as a 'critical conscience of society.' (Robie & Marbrook, 2020; Robie, 2021)

Together with a similar product, *Pacific Scoop*, founded in 2009 (eventually being relaunched as *APR* with more Asia-Pacific content) and the media and rights monitor *Pacific Media Watch* (in collaboration with Reporters Without Borders), *Asia Pacific Report* adopted a goal, to 'effectively challenge mainstream gatekeeping media' (Robie, 2016). The proprietary arrangements changed after Robie's retirement from AUT late in 2020 and the closure of the PMC office there (Ellis, 2021), with *Asia Pacific Report* continuing as a nonprofit joint venture between his publishing company and an independent communications firm, Multimedia Investments Limited, publisher of EveningReport.nz. *APR* has a unique audience of 110,000 (Google Analytics, 2021). Another PMC publication, *Pacific Journalism Review* research journal, also continued independently, now edited by Philip Cass with Robie's support.

Independent Australia

Independent Australia is owned and managed by Dave Donovan on the Queensland Gold Coast, an accountant and business proprietor who discovered a new vocation for journalism and deployed his expertise in both fields to create a viable media outlet. During the publication's first decade, he established the practice of personally checking all items for quality control and probity—'to make sure it was alright'. The enterprise is run by a judicious and opportunistic putting-together of resources: there is multiskilling among the staff of five, attending to production, 'back office' work on subscriptions and donations, video production, and marketing; backed by regular commentators and reader-contributors who pitch stories. Donovan, continuing as overall director, has

handed the managing editor role to Michelle Pini, a journalist with marketing background in Melbourne, the publication now run from the two cities.
Independent Australia invites contributions from writers with established reputations. It also employs cartoonist Mark David, a veteran of mainstream daily newspapers, a kindred spirit who creates the outlet's signature look. *IA* has published a book, *Ashbygate*, about the Parliamentary Speaker Peter Slipper and a run of annual magazines.

As a virtual auteur, who stamped his own mark on the product, Donovan resembles several counterparts in the independent field, as does the publication itself, in its restricted scale of operations, high user participation with over 90 contributors, and liberal policy outlook on freedom and authority. The editorial position is flexible, without abandoning inalienable truths, for instance rejecting racist material on moral grounds. He explained the workings of *IA* in a 2019 interview with this writer (Donovan, 2019), reviewed in March 2021 (Donovan, 2021). Dave Donovan came from a Central Queensland cattle property, studied accountancy and law and worked for investment banks in England, where he began considering journalism instead.

> I never really liked accounting and financial analysis. You'd get paid huge amounts of money but you didn't need to do much work, so I did a lot of reading—*The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times, The Telegraph.* I'd think that it gives you, not a journalism education, but it broadens your experience and understanding of the way the world works: some keys to good journalism. Otherwise, I think your journalism can end up being naïve, a bit shallow, not looking at the undercurrents or context. (Donovan, 2019)

With that classic notion of preparation for journalism, he returned to Australia and took a journalism degree while working with a family firm, Donovan Avocados. Selling that interest, among other undertakings he became media director and vice-chair of the Australian Republican Movement—which led directly to *Independent Australia*:

> I did a lot of freelance work with Fairfax or ABC, and to collate it, found the internet was good for archiving, and I set up a site, also to promote the republic … *Independent Australia* started on 24 June 2010 carrying my own journalism and articles on the republic … It quickly brought in an audience, I guess for both republic topics and my general stories, and we picked up writers like Barry Everingham or Bob Ellis, who I think were sidelined a little by the mainstream media, and Tess Lawrence formerly with the Melbourne *Herald Sun*.
>
> Soon we were getting something like 400,000 'uniques' a month, largely because I think we provided some investigations that got attention, and also there was no-one around really like us … They all tried a 'false

> balance', a little bit of this, and that, whereas we were just trying to pursue the truth. If there was something we believed was true, like climate change was real, then we would say that—and I think people respected it. I ended my executive role with the republican movement around 2011, there was a disassociation, *IA* was able to go pretty much off on its own. (Donovan, 2019)

By 2021, *Independent Australia* had 2500 subscribers and between 150,000 and 200,000 unique users a week, up to 600,000 monthly, with some fluctuations (including a spike in response to the 2019 elections coverage) 'and a lot more hits'. With annual turnover in the range of A$400,000, it was making small profits after 2017, growing at 15 percent a year. That paused with the impact of COVID-19, the operation failing to make any of a projected 17 percent increase. The pandemic had other effects. 'We could not quite 'make' the 30 percent drop in business to qualify for Job Keeper support from the government,' he said. Later he found the negotiations under the media bargaining code legislation (Federal Register of Legislation, 2020) tough going: 'It was really set up for the big corporations. We are getting there slowly but it is out of proportion and in the end it makes us less competitive'. His operation has seen other threats including two lawsuits, though *IA* has never been in court. Investments in more staff, development of multi-media services (e.g. video, podcasting), or stocking up on merchandise have slowed the ongoing expansion.

Subscriptions, which began in 2015, are the main source of income; costing A$50 to A$200 a year they come with e-mail notifications and merchandise. Growing by 500 in most years, 'with some churn', the subscriptions raise about 50 percent of income. Donations solicited on the site provide some 30 percent, syndicated advertising (via Google and Taboola, and Disqus monitoring comments) raises 10 percent, with additional sources including the merchandise or print publishing.

Donovan is yet to draw a salary, an event postponed also by the pandemic. Staff receive industrial award wages, and contributors a piece rate, based on $100 per article, increased depending on readership statistics, which he says is generally accepted as fair. He estimates the value of *IA* would compare well with *Crikey*, getting similar readership when sold in 2005 for $1 million. 'While I don't get paid, any capital that is raised … comes to me', he says. He warns against the pitfalls of overwork starting a small business: 'You have to be careful about doing what I did without a significant amount of resources.' As the chief executive he can set policies, but regrets not having time to write:

> I don't particularly like writing little short opinion pieces. I prefer actually digging out information that people don't know about. That's the way I want *IA* to go, with more news. I think people are getting beyond wanting to use somebody else's opinion these days. (Donovan, 2019)

An exception is his active work presenting the satirical video, *Bloody Idiot of the Week*, which with the cartoons is deployed to lighten up the product. The editorial policy emphasises credibility, through transparency, using the internet to provide a fact-checking capability. Like most of the independents, the publication is weighted towards reporting politics or economics. Donovan identified his stance as a 'reaction to neo-liberalism':

> We believe in human rights, equality, a strong environment and basically a hybrid or mixed economy, with a decent amount of regulation which protects people—because capitalism like anything left to its own devices will go off the rails ... I don't regard us as being particularly leftwing. (Donovan, 2021)

Conclusions

The independent publications have made a persuasive case for community-based journalism, through their persistence over two decades, becoming sustainable operations and building a solid audience base. They have retained conventional journalistic standards such as maintaining fact-based coverage and accountability and apply new technologies adroitly, while depending on active citizen participation in their operations. They provide alternatives to the mainstream, and it might now be argued that the sector can expand to fulfill still more of mass media's obligations towards cultivating democratic life. It would be consistent with the observations of Beckett, that 'individual journalists or acts of journalism can have more impact than ever before'.

Such developments will see the independent sector occupying a place in the plenary zone, a place where all people might go to access trusted media, to obtain properly sourced, essential information and take part in a standing forum on key issues as part of a coherent society. Being able to go there should at least provide relief for individuals from being inundated with surplus information from mobile and online sources. With the help of independent media, there might in fact be much less cause for anxiety that the chaos of the media explosion will become a catalyst for fragmentation and harm to the social order.

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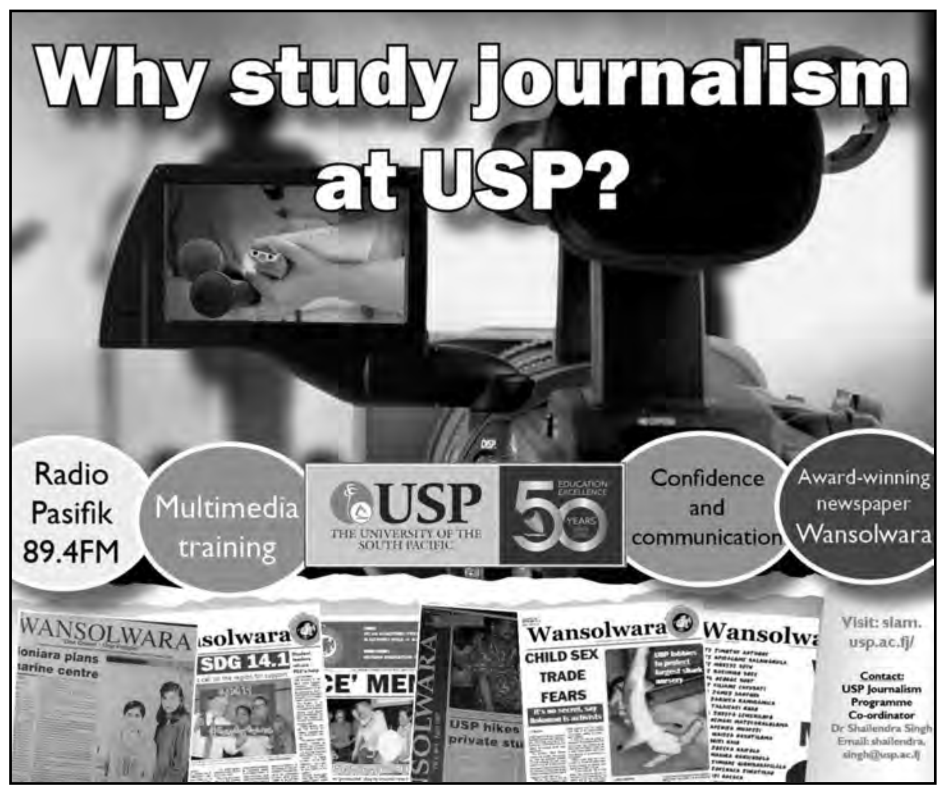

The journalist's 'toolbox' of competencies in the Digital-Global Age

Reflections on the global state of research

Abstract: The different crises that journalism continues to face worldwide make it imperative to talk about the journalist's 'toolbox', a set of competencies that journalists must have in this so-called age of disruption. This article maps the global state of research on journalistic competence, offers ways of conceptualising journalistic competencies and provides the necessary context by which the development of the competency construct can be understood. What are the approaches in studying journalistic competence and what perspectives are dominant, clashing, or need to be challenged? The state of research shows an imbalance in perspectives: Studies on journalistic competencies are concentrated in US, Europe, and the Nordic states. The environments beyond the Western context or the 'Global North', so to speak, continue to be underrepresented, despite a strong research and journalism tradition unique to some of the Global South regions. Secondly, the industry perspective continues to dominate the discourse, although it has been described as hostile to innovation and critical reflection. The article ends with a call not just to further define and theorise journalistic competencies, but also to de-westernise the discourse.

Keywords: digital skills, global journalism, Global South, innovation, journalism, journalism competencies, journalism education, journalism models, Philippines, Western journalism

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IT IS always necessary to talk about journalistic competence, despite the steepening crisis of relevance of journalism (Gibson, 2017; Lepore, 2019) and its financial crisis (Bruno & Nielsen, 2012; Drok, 2019; Fortunati et al., 2009; Price, 2015). In fact, it is this 'double crisis' (Drok, 2019, p.9) that makes it urgent to talk about journalistic competence. The disruptions in technology, news consumption behaviour and media economy, which rippled across journalistic

roles, newsroom practices and ultimately journalism ontology across countries, have called for a re-think of the journalist's 'toolbox', a set of competencies that journalists are expected to have in order to function in the current landscape. This begs the question(s): how are journalistic competencies conceptualised and studied in research and what perspectives are dominating the discourse? Furthermore, what perspectives are marginalised, and which potentially game-changing issues or trends are not well-explored?

In this article, I am mapping the scholarship on journalistic competencies and discussing the context in which these competencies should be understood. The term 'context' refers to the different disruptions that irrevocably changed the way journalism is viewed by its publics, the way it is practiced, and the way it is studied. This discussion is structured along three 'points of rupture': First, how the convergence of technologies altered the form of news, newswork, perception of news values, gateways to news, and news consumption behaviour, Second, how the news media economy and journalists' working conditions were transformed by this convergence of technologies and third how journalistic roles and role performance (and the corresponding scholarship) evolved in the Digital-Global Age.

Conceptualising journalistic competencies

But first, what exactly are competencies? The term competencies is usually used interchangeably with words like 'skill', 'ability', and 'standards', but despite the liberty taken by scholars and practitioners in using different terms for more or less the same concept, there is a need to properly define and conceptualise 'competencies' and 'competence' if we want to further develop (and theorise) this field of research.

Competencies as a concept is broader than 'skill' or 'ability'. It refers to the 'knowledge, skills, and attitudes' (Himma-Kadakas, 2018; Dubois, 1998; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004; Sturgess, 2012) that result in successful practice depending on the context. A competency 'may incorporate a skill, but are more than the skill, they include abilities and behaviours, as well as knowledge that is fundamental to the use of a skill' (Sturgess, 2012). There is a need to stress how Klieme et al. (2008, p. 8) defined competencies: 'context-specific dispositions for achievement that can be acquired through learning'. According to them, the 'defining characteristic' of competencies is that they can be developed through 'learning processes where the individual interacts with his or her environment' Therefore, 'competence constructs' adhere to 'specific areas of demands' in real life (Klieme et al, p. 7).

Indeed, the term 'competencies' appears to be the more inclusive term compared to other terms used interchangeably or loosely, like 'skills' or 'abilities'. It makes sense to look at journalistic competence as a domain of competencies—

knowledge, skills, attitudes, personality traits and what (Weinert, 2001), cited by Klieme et al., 2008, p. 7) labeled as 'meta-competencies', those that 'facilitate the acquisition and use of specific competencies' like knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses and thinking or planning strategies.

For decades, we have seen an accretion of scholarly and professional work on the subject of journalistic competencies. Like many other fields, the body of works can be broadly categorised into three: normative, descriptive-analytical, or a combination of the two. The normative works prescribe competencies or 'must-haves' for journalists (Levin, 2015; Loo, 2013; Marshall, 2013; Nowak, 2009; Poynter Institute, 1998, cited by Clark, 2014) or present standards primarily for evaluation of journalism programmes (see the set of qualifications/standards of accrediting bodies such as the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications or ACEJMC, 2013; European Journalism Training Association or EJTA, 2013; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation or UNESCO, 2013). Other authors prescribe specific competencies as learning goals or where the emphasis should be in journalism education (Harrington, 2012; Hirst, 2010; Hujanen, 2017; Loo, 2013; Mensing, 2010; Nettleton, 2015; Robie, 2019; Rodny-Gumede, 2016).

The descriptive-analytical works (in other fields, descriptive works are distinguished from the analytical, but in this case, most descriptive works are also analytical, or they need to be analytical), meanwhile, identified key competencies through empirical methods such as

1. interviews with professionals (for example, Deuze, 2001; Robie, 2019) and educators (for example, Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018);
2. surveys with professionals and/or educators (for example, Drok, 2019; Finberg & Klinger, 2014; International Center for Journalists, 2019; Opgenhaffen, d'Haenens, & Corten, 2013; Willnat et al., 2013), surveys with students (Nygren & Stigbrand, 2013), and surveys with professionals and students (Curriculum Development-Communication Sciences-Europe, 2010, cited by Claussen, 2010; Drok, 2013);
3. analysis of job postings (Cleary & Cochie, 2011; Marta-Lazo et al., 2018; Massey, 2010; Wenger et al., 2018); and
4. analysis of journalism school curricula (for example, Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018).

The third category undermines the supposed dichotomy between the normative and the descriptive-analytical. Many works explored the normative claims of different populations through empirical methods. These claims include what professionals think journalists in the future must have in terms of skill, which can still be broken into what journalists must have in the future for the journalism industry to thrive financially versus what journalists must have in the future for journalism to realise its normative role in society, which might not serve

the profit motive of the organisation. Some authors compared how different populations perceive the importance of competencies prescribed by accrediting organiSations, such as Drok (2013; 2019) who asked professionals, educators and students to rank EJTA qualifications. Therefore, while there are purely normative works in the form of critical research essays, there are also works that explore normative claims through empirical methods.

There are also works in which the authors proposed theoretical or conceptual frameworks for journalistic competence based on empirical methods such as interviews and document analyses, such as the works of Weischenberg, Altmeppen, & Löffelholz (1994) and Himma-Kadakas (2018).

While many of the studies mentioned above dealt with competency matrices or competency sets, there are those that focused on specific competencies, such as Carpenter, Cepak & Peng's (2017) work on journalistic interviewing competencies and Garyantes and Murphy's (2017) work on United States print journalists' 'cultural competence'.

In studying journalistic competencies, it is crucial to articulate what type of competency is in question. Scholars who studied journalistic roles and role performance, topics that are inextricable from the discussion of journalistic competencies, distinguished among different role concepts in response to the conflation of terms (and even careless use of terms) in literature (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Mellado, 2019). Hanitzsch & Vos' (2017) and Mellado's (2019) typologies inspired the typology of competencies that I drew based on extant literature (see also Estella, 2021):

1. *Normative competencies*: Those deemed necessary for journalists to fulfill the societal role of journalism, depending on the mandate bestowed upon it by structures of power or prevalent professional ideology/ideologies, whatever the case may be.
2. *Institutionalised competencies:* These competencies work on two levels: the organisational level (the competencies that the newsroom or media organisation emphasise in practice and training and are created by how the organisation negotiated normative competencies with environmental constraints) and the individual level (competencies that the journalist believes are necessary based on socialisation with fellow journalists or how he or she internalised the normative competencies).
3. *Performative or practiced competencies:* Those used in actual newsroom practices and may or may not adhere to normative notions of the role of journalism in society, or 'skill performance', as Grugulis & Stoyanova (2011; Himma-Kadakas, 2018) called these set of competencies. In research, these competencies can be identified through ethnography or participant observation in actual news work, supplemented by content/textual analyses of journalistic output, or vice versa.

4. *Perceived performative competencies:* Competencies professionals think they use in practice. These can be identified through surveys and interviews. This also covers studies on competencies in which practitioners were asked to weigh different journalistic competencies used in practice.

Normative, institutionalised and perceived performative competencies function in the cognitive level, meaning that they can be measured or identified through methods like perception surveys. The performative competencies, on the other hand, can be thought of as realised normative and institutionalised competencies—they are normative and/or institutionalised competencies translated into practice, a product of negotiation and internalisation of norms.

Gaps and disbalances in research

There is a strong connection between journalistic roles and journalistic competencies, with the former being the primary determinant of the latter. However, while the scholarship on journalistic roles has developed significantly since the 1940s (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016; 2017; Willnat et al., 2013), the scholarship on journalistic competencies has lagged behind, especially in terms of theory. The deficiency in theorising is apparent in the rare attempts to model journalistic competence. Fewer are the competence constructs that are based on empirical studies, such as Weischenberg, Altmeppen, & Löffelholz's (1994) model of journalistic competence in Germany and Himma-Kadakas' (2018) model of competencies based on her study on online newsrooms in Estonia. This is despite the popularity of the competency sets crafted by international accreditation and training bodies, particularly ACEJMC, EJTA and UNESCO, which were presented to different conferences attended by professionals and academicians (Opiniano, 2018, p.203).

As stated earlier, the literature also suffers from an imbalance of two kinds. First, research on journalistic competence, particularly the large-scale empirical studies, are concentrated in Europe, U.S., and the Nordic countries, which is commonly referred to as the 'Global North,' although the term is contested (Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018; Cleary & Cochie, 2011; Curriculum Development-Communication Sciences-Europe, 2010, cited by Claussen, 2010; Drok 2013; 2019; Finberg & Klinger, 2014; Marta-Lazo et al., 2018; Massey, 2010; Nygren & Stigbrand, 2013; Opgenhaffen et al., 2013; Wenger et al., 2018). The 2019 study of the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), titled 'State of Technology in Global Newsrooms', is an exception. A survey of 4100 respondents from 149 countries, it focused on digital skills and the adoption of new technologies in the newsroom. The oft-cited collaborative projects on journalistic roles, the 'Global Journalist in the 21st Century' surveys (see Willnat et al., 2013) and the 'Worlds of Journalism Study' (see Hanitzsch et al., 2019), focused on journalists' profiles, worldviews

and role perceptions and only touched on journalistic competencies slightly.

However, the lack of large-scale empirical studies does not mean that the Global South is a barren research landscape. In fact, works on journalism practice and journalism education in the Asia-Pacific carry strong themes that assert a specific identity and perspective, part of a conscious attempt to distinguish itself from the approaches of the Global North, and part of an attempt to register itself in the discourse dominated by Global North perspectives. For instance, Robie (2013; 2019) wrote on the 'deliberative paradigm' for Pacific journalism practice as well as the 'Pacific way' of journalism education and media research culture. Robie (2013, p. 92) critiqued Lule's (1987) 'Three Worlds' news model, arguing that such an approach failed to account for structural changes in previously developing countries and the environments that do not neatly fall under any of the three categories specified in the model. He modified the model into the 'Four Worlds news values prism', which included 'independent Pacific post-colonial states' and indigenous minorities (Robie, 2013). In environments such as these, the 'critical deliberative paradigm' of journalism can 'enable the participation of all community stakeholders', including the disenfranchised or marginalised, through 'issue-based reporting' covering 'diverse views about the community good' (Robie, 2013, p. 84). *Pacific Journalism Review* has also become a repository of works on distinct journalism cultures and journalism education in Asia-Pacific countries, as well as works advocating new perspectives or ways of doing journalism specific to the Pacific context (see for example Cho, 2011; Moala, 2005; Opiniano, 2017; 2018).

Journalism guided by a 'critical deliberative paradigm' is a form of development journalism, which continues to thrive in many developing and developed countries with media systems different from those in Europe and the United States (see Estella & Paz, 2019, Loo, 2013; Wong, 2004). Development journalism, which distinguishes itself from the Western paradigm of journalism in terms of journalistic roles and norms, is also understood in different ways. Some authors emphasise its tendency to be 'hijacked' by agents of repression under the pretext of promoting harmony and political stability (Ali & Khan, 1996, p.148; Lent, 1978; Loo, 2013).

However, for other authors, development journalism focuses on grassroots phenomena that mainstream or commercial media may not find newsworthy and should help facilitate change, hence the term 'interventionist, developmental, and educational' journalism (Kalyango et al., 2016, p. 3; Anand, 2014; Richstad, 2000). An interesting form of this is the *talanoa* journalism and media research paradigm in the Asia-Pacific region (Robie, 2014, 2019). According to Robie (2013, p. 12) the journalism and research methodologies guided by the philosophy of talanoa, which means 'frank face-to-face discussion with no hidden agenda', focus on 'public interest, civil society and community empowerment' and 'recognises

and deploys indigenous, diversity and cultural values'. This stands in contrast with the detached observer stance of journalism in many Western democracies.

Indeed, there is a rich body of work on indigenous journalism cultures, research methodologies and perspectives outside the Global North and Western democracies. However, the fact remains that there is still a dearth of research specific to journalistic competencies in many developing countries. The fact that the scholarly discourse on journalistic competence is dominated by voices from the West or the Global North could be the unfortunate outcome of systemic circumstances in developing regions: On the one hand poor scientific infrastructure and appreciation for scientific research, let alone journalism research (see Hanitzsch, 2005, in the case of Indonesia, and Estella & Löffelholz, 2019, in the case of Philippines) and, on the other, obstacles to the professionalisation of journalism obstacles, especially in countries where journalism is still struggling to 'find its footing and position in society' (Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017).

Because journalistic competence is heavily dependent on context and much of extant research was published in Western democracies, some themes in literature simply do not apply to developing regions. For instance, computational journalism, entrepreneurial journalism, and freelancing, topics that are gaining attention in Europe and US, still receive little attention in many countries.

This Western-centric state of research prevents us from having a truly global perspective on journalistic competencies and further entrenches what Nerone (2012, see also Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016) call the 'Liberal hegemonic view' of journalism that originated in Western democracies. This view presupposes the existence of democracy for the healthy practice of journalism and puts a premium on journalistic roles in the domain of political or public affairs, as opposed to the affairs of everyday life or the private sphere (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016). However, as Zelizer (2013) noted, such a paradigm of journalism exists only in the minority of countries and the idea that democracy is the prerequisite for a perfect form of journalism 'has not been supported on the ground'. Under this 'hegemonic model of journalism', other journalism paradigms are treated as the 'other' (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016) or merely a stage toward maturity for emerging democracies, despite the fact that paradigms like development journalism continue to thrive in settings like developed Asian countries (Estella & Paz, 2019).

Second, the industry perspective is still dominant in the discourse on journalistic competencies, especially in the case of empirical studies and even in journalism education. For the most part, the standards or prescribed competencies were identified through surveys or interviews with practitioners. However, this industry-centeredness in empirical research and journalism education can be hostile to innovation and can be a disservice to students who were prepared for a career in an industry shaken by disruptions of different sorts (Folkerts et al., 2013; Hirst, 2010; Mensing, 2010). According to Hirst (2010), the notion

of journalistic professionalism, for the most part consists of socialisation into industry norms and values. Several scholars before him noticed the same trend: Becker et al. (1987, cited by Mensing, 2010), for example, wrote that the goal of journalism education for decades has been 'to produce an individual who can effectively and efficiently function in the occupations of journalism and mass communications'. For Zelizer (2004), professionalism is 'ideological orientation that facilitates the maintenance of journalism's collective boundaries'.

By identifying key competencies almost entirely through industry responses and perspectives, scholars might be contributing to journalists' fierce boundary-keeping, treating journalism as a 'rarefied collection of tacit embodied knowledge' (Harrington, 2012, p.157). This can create an environment hostile to fresh views and change so necessary in an age of disruption. Professionals and even educators (Mellado & Subervi, 2013) can use these disciplinary boundaries, to also 'exclude potential newcomers from being seen as 'proper' journalists' (Harrington, 2012, Deuze, 2005). This 'journalism orthodoxy,' developed in pre-existing news templates and news production methods, is problematic because the disruptions in news media economy and practice, as well as the innovative approaches, are coming from 'outsiders', who, more often than not, are not recognized as 'proper' journalists based on industry or even academic standards (Harrington, 2012). For example, the rise of news aggregation as one of the most important forms of news work in the Digital-Global Age is something unexpected if we are to look into how news publishers spoke of aggregator news in the past decade. News aggregators were described as content-stealers profiting from the hard work of 'real' journalists (Chyi, Lewis, & Zheng, 2016; Fraga, 2012; Isbell, 2010) and were often regarded as a lazy and inferior type of journalism compared with 'shoe leather' journalism (Coddington, 2018).

After discussing the deficiencies in literature, I will now discuss resonant trends in research that should contextualise the transformation of the journalist's toolbox. The structure that I have used could be a guide in discussing how the economy and practice of journalism has called for new normative and performative journalistic competencies.

Point of rupture (1): Journalistic competencies and convergence

The place of technological competencies in the journalist's toolbox expanded and became more elaborate with the internet coming of age, which can be seen by comparing the older analytical frameworks of journalistic competence (see for example Nowak, 2009; Weischenberg et al., 1994) with the new ones (Himma-Kadakas, 2018; Poynter Institute, 1998, updated by Clark, 2014). The research on technological competencies reveals another shift: from technological competencies as a mere subset of journalistic competence to technological competencies as operational competencies by which journalism is done.

The journalist of the Digital-Global Age has a 'technological profile', not just technological competencies, such that many core competencies used even before the convergence of technologies are performed through this technological profile. The electronic journalistic text or news production in news media is no longer just an option and technical skills are no longer limited to computer-assisted reporting or the ability to use a video camera. Furthermore, the convergence of technologies led to the rise of hybrid (mix of traditional and digital platforms) and even purely digital newsrooms (ICFJ, 2019), a development that might even lead to the abolition of old platform divisions such as print versus broadcast versus digital. This lends credence to the calls for a shift to generalist journalist training.

The convergence of technologies allowed the transmutations of the news form—it enabled newsmakers to create layered, media-rich, interactive, hypertextual, and non-linear journalistic texts (Lister et al, 2009; Pavlik, 2001; Pew Research Center, 2008), as seen in online news articles with photos, social media links, polls and videos in a single page. News is disseminated as different forms in different platforms, as evidenced by the findings of the ICFJ 2019 survey: two-thirds of the newsrooms around the world disseminate content in at least four formats. The form of the news offers more opportunities for audience involvement and customisation to engage an audience presumably distracted by a plethora of options online. The rise of social media networks, mobile applications, and content aggregators that function through preference-based 'algorithms offered the public(s) new gateways to news. In one of the Reuters Institute's (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, & Nielsen, 2019) latest cross-national surveys on digital news consumption behaviour, more than half of the global sample get their news not directly from the publisher, but from social media, aggregator services, and search engines. In Asian markets in particular, accessing news directly via publisher websites is at a very low level compared with the rate they are accessing via aggregator services and search engines. This further challenges the already beleaguered role-keeping function of news publishers.

In this kind of environment, the ability to produce texts aimed at greater audience engagement (texts with content that the audiences deem to be relevant) gains currency. As more and more people access their news through their smartphones (Westlund, 2013; Newman et al., 2019), publishers started using strategies for constantly engaging the audience through micro-updates and more intrusive lockscreen notifications. However, this struggle for greater audience engagement also generated practices and forms that some scholars and practitioners found ethically alarming.

In the 2019 ICFJ survey the competencies in 'engaging the audience' and 'data verification' emerged as some of the most important technological skills, congruent with the findings of the other surveys with different populations (see for example Drok, 2013; Drok, 2019; Finberg and Klinger, 2014; Opgenhaffen

et al., 2013). The values of reliability, relevance to the public and connectiveness are overarching themes when describing what journalists need to have in the Digital-Global Age. Newsroom managers, editors, and journalists also use data analytics regularly to monitor audience behaviour, modifying content and dissemination patterns accordingly (ICFJ, 2017; 2019).

Research on news consumption preferences also suggests that journalists in this age of disruption should have the capacity to critique their by-the-book news values. Researchers have noted a rising preference for non-political news or soft news across markets (Newman, 2016; Bird, 2003; Bogart, 1989; Hagen, 1994; Hamilton, 2004; Prior, 2007; Schaudt and Carpenter, 2009; Tewksbury, 2003), probably except in special cases of 'heightened political activity' such as elections (Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, and Walter, 2011, a reality that is problematic if we are to consider the gap between what journalists think is newsworthy and what the audiences perceive as important. For instance, in Germany, Wendelin, Engelmann, and Neubarth (2015) found that internet and social media audiences are less likely than journalists to be interested in stories about politics and 'social significance', supporting Kepplinger and Ehmig's (2006) idea that 'news values' are simply reflections of journalists' characteristics and their 'judgment on the relevance' of phenomena. Therefore, the interpretation of news values, which depends on how the individual journalist internalises institutional norms, is a function of journalistic culture. It is far from unimpeachable.

The journalists' perception of political affairs as the supreme phenomena in the hierarchy of newsworthiness, as I mentioned earlier, marginalises news about the private sphere of identity, emotion, and consumption (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017). The deeply entrenched professional belief that political affairs reportage is the only proper journalism could be one of the contributors to the 'alienation' between audiences and the professional industry (see for example Aldridge and Evetts, 2003; Drok, 2019; Nordenstreng, 1998).

For Drok (2019), this alienation between audiences and the professional industry could be explained by the evolution of the so-called trias journalistica, the three most important values for journalists. The *trias journalistica*—'autonomy', 'objectivity', and 'immediacy'—evolved to 'detachment', 'neutrality', and 'scoop-orientedness', respectively (Drok, 2019, p.10). However, this new form of trias journalistica no longer satisfies the demands of the 21st century environment.

The most recent empirical studies point to a shift in journalists' primary role: from 'speedy news hunters' to 'beacon of reliability' (Drok, 2013, Opgenhaffen et al., 2013, Weaver et al., 2007). This shift, according to Drok (2019), is part of a larger shift from the '20th century mass model' of journalism to the 21st century 'network model'. In the network model, journalism infrastructure is 'interactive' as opposed to the 'disseminative' infrastructure of the mass model. Journalists in the new model are expected to be more 'context-oriented' and 'accountable'

rather than 'scoop-oriented' and 'neutral'. Journalists need to establish the relevance of the practice to the everyday lives of the audiences as well as establish themselves as credible sources of information in the sea of content and online disinformation campaigns (Ong & Cabañes, 2018).

The greater weight of relevance as a value in news work is congruent with the fact that most newsrooms around the world can be considered as small (with 46 or fewer staff) and catering almost exclusively to the hyperlocal (ICFJ, 2019). In other words, disseminating information to the imagined general public—or a 'phantom' public, to borrow Lippman's (2017, originally published 1927) term—is no longer as important as maintaining relevance, something that is easier done through targeting a niche or a specific audience. This bolsters Mensing's (2010) claim that journalism must be 'community-centered' (p. 511).

The need to engage the audience in news work is perhaps most visible in journalism done through and in social media networks. The frame of discourse shifted from viewing social media as a 'challenge to the social function' of professional news work (Domingo, 2008) to exploring ways by which journalism can thrive in social media. Some scholars observed that journalists use networks like Twitter for promoting their own 'brand' of journalism and giving an impression of transparency in news work (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Big news organisations have been employing 'social media managers' or online 'community managers' for about a decade now to boost online audience engagement (Newman, 2009). Social media skills, in fact, are one of the commonly used technological skills of journalists worldwide, 'used more frequently than any other in every aspect of journalism' (ICFJ, 2019). These skills include 'posting stories and comments on social media', 'competitive research', 'finding user-generated content' to enhance stories, data verification, audience engagement, and brand-promotion..

The hyper-acceleration of news work and multiplication of content online (due to the rise of 'algorythm-based aggregation) gave birth to 'prediting' or 'curation' as a distinct form of news work in the Digital-Global Age (Bakker, 2012; Bakker, 2014; Barodel, 1996; Dimitrov, 2014; Miller, 2007). 'Prediting' (Dimitrov, 2014) refers to the role of the journalist as both produce and editor—while the journalist at times uncovers new information through old data-gathering processes like interviewing (production), the journalist also collates and filters content from social media and other sources and redacts the information into a coherent and verified form (editing). By being the 'curator' of content online, news work in the time of the internet strengthened the 'mediator' role of journalism (Barodel, 1996; Dimitrov, 2014).

The process of redaction is at the core of another form of news work distinct to the Digital-Global Age: news aggregation. Although publishers had been vocal with their animosity toward aggregators in the last decade (Chyi et al., 2016), current circumstances call for new ways of looking at it as a legitimate

‘epistemological process’ central to news work (Coddington, 2018). In fact the abundance of information online and the hyper-acceleration of news work gave birth to aggregation as a form of news work, with audiences increasingly reliant on aggregators as a ‘one stop shop’ for news (Chyi & Lee, 2015). Although news aggregation is often viewed as governed by algorythms, it also refers to the human practice ‘by which disparate pieces of information are quickly gathered, validated as accurate representations of reality, and presented to the public as reliable forms of knowledge’ (Coddington, 2015).

Although the convergence of technologies brought with it the expansion of the technological competency matrix, some competencies that are already at the core of the journalist’s toolbox remain supreme, hence the term ‘evergreens’ (Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018, p.53; see also ICFJ, 2019). In some studies, like Finberg and Klinger’s (2014), they were regarded as even more important than the technological competencies (although many of these evergreens are performed within technological work).These include competencies such as ‘Accuracy’, ‘Curiosity’ or ‘Inquisitiveness’, ‘Good news judgment’ or ability to ‘discover newsworthy issues on the basis of in-depth research’, among others (see for example Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018; Drok, 2013; Drok, 2019; Finberg & Klinger, 2014; Loo, 2013).

‘Teamwork’ and ‘collaboration’ with technical experts in media organisations were also some of the increasingly important competencies, given that higher level technological work requires collaboration between journalists and the IT department of their organisation.

The continuing supremacy of the evergreens implies a need to be cautious of the hype about technology, since there is a tendency to reduce the future of journalism to ‘technological visions’ (Creech & Mendelson, 2015). They argue that looking at technological proficiency as a prerequisite for successful practice obfuscates ‘more persistent, systemic critiques of technology and journalism’ and puts emphasis on skills development over critical reflection.

Automated journalism, data journalism and other important questions

On the subject of journalistic technological competencies, there are several questions arising from the state of research (which could act as recommendations for future research). First, to what extent are the more sophisticated technological skills a necessary component of the journalist’s toolbox? The 2019 ICFJ survey showed that despite the remarkable increase in the adoption of technologies in the newsroom, the more sophisticated data-related and technical skills are still unchartered territory. Indeed, journalists still see themselves as journalists first and they ‘value technological work insofar as it supports their journalistic work’ (Royal, 2012, cited by Karlsen & Stavelin, 2014). One of these advanced technical skills is working with ‘AI/robo journalism’ (ICFJ, 2019),

which Clerwall (2014) defined as a branch of ''algorithmic news' (p.519). The research on automated journalism remains sparse, perhaps because automated journalism is still uncommon even in some advanced economies, despite the fact that journalists consider aggregator news and automated content as journalism (van Dalen, 2012). Many scholars from different parts of the globe (whom I interviewed) do not think of automated journalism as a potential game-changer, primarily because it cannot attain the level of human complexity. However, this topic deserves more scholarly attention because even though machine-written news cannot compete with the quality of human work, for 'information which is freely available on the Internet, the bar is set relatively low and automatically generated content can compete' (van Dalen, 2012).

Second, does the technological profile exist in the settings that are not represented in extant literature on journalistic competencies? Or does it exist in a different form or a different extent?

Last, based on literature, data journalism has been described as some sort of 'saviour' of journalism as its way of regaining public trust. Many practitioners believe that it is an important source of revenue by virtue of quality content and that data journalism skills will be an essential component of journalistic competence (ICFJ, 2019; Stalph & Borges-Rey, 2018). Stalph & Borges-Rey (2018) wrote that data journalism might remain a niche format but will find its way into smaller newsrooms because of 'decreasing limitations'. However, they claim its rate of adoption across big news organisations remains low and that one of the possible scenarios is data journalism will ultimately be 'abandoned' by the big newsrooms and outsourced to non-legacy actors. Therefore, its future remains unclear. To what extent then should data journalism skills figure in the journalist's toolbox especially in environments different from Western democracies?

Point of rupture (2): Journalistic competencies and new media economy

The financial crisis brought largely by the erosion of the gate-keeping function of journalism gave rise to works that explore the idea of 'entrepreneurial journalism' and the possibility of including 'entrepreneurial skills' as part of the journalist's toolbox. As people's gateways to content multiplied, the 'golden era' of financial growth for journalism that characterised the second half of the 20th century came to an end (Drok, 2019). Newsrooms are struggling to develop new revenue streams and are diversifying their revenue sources (ICFJ, 2019). Current trends in people's attitudes toward paying for news are not promising (Newman et al., 2019), despite the optimistic view of newsroom managers on paid news as a revenue stream (ICFJ, 2019). With the decline of legacy media and rise of hybrid newsrooms came the layoffs, the emergence of 'low pay or no pay' journalism, the rise in freelancing, and the depression of journalists' wages in many parts of the world (Picard, 2010; Vos & Singer, 2016).

It is in this context that hybrid roles in the newsroom were created, such as that of the editor who functions under both the logic of market imperatives and the logic of journalism (Poutanen, Luoma-Aho, Suhanko, 2016). It is also in this context that scholars started to examine 'entrepreneurial journalism' and entrepreneurship as 'ways of being in the world' (Deuze, 2017, p. 307). However, entrepreneurial journalism, like other emerging fields of study, is still short on theory and conceptualisation, as students and even educators still view entrepreneurial journalism as non-lucrative endeavours or endeavours best left to the business side of media. Furthermore, entrepreneurial skills were among the lowest ranked journalistic competencies among professionals, educators and students (see for example Drok, 2013; 2019). Perhaps these views on entrepreneurial journalism show the need for a shift in how entrepreneurship in journalism is understood: a shift away from the mindset of being media workers to being prospective business owners (Deuze, 2006, cited by Casero-Ripollés, Izquierdo-Castillo, & Doménech-Fabregat, 2016) and a shift from viewing media business ventures as non-lucrative endeavours to 'laboratories of innovation' away from the constraints of commercialised news organisations (Casero- Ripollés et al., 2016, p.289; Paniagua-Rojano, Gómez-Aguilar, & González-Cortés, 2014).

Another competency that becomes crucial in this kind of crisis is the capacity to reflect on the political economy of the media, which was also emphasised by some of the scholars that I interviewed on the subject of journalistic competencies. This capacity to critique the political economy of the media entails an understanding of the labour conditions of journalists, the precarious nature of some media work and the ownership of production (Creech and Mendelson, 2015; Nettleton, 2015). This also provides the necessary context in which the impact of technological upheavals on the practice should be understood.

Point of rupture (3): Journalistic competencies and the evolution of roles

As Drok (2019, p. 123) said, looking for solutions in the 'techno-economic sphere' of journalism is not enough to deal with the double crisis it is facing. There is also a need to rethink the 'central values' of journalism, which are influenced by the journalistic role to which the organisation and journalism as an institution adhere. We can see significant development in research on journalistic roles since the 1940s, punctuated by the massive surveys on role perceptions in the U.S starting 1972 (Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1972; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), in Europe (Donsbach, 1981; Köcher, 1986), followed by the global projects that include countries outside the so-called 'West' (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Weaver et al., 2007; Willnat et al., 2013).

The study of journalistic roles expanded from roles in the political consumption of news to include roles in the domain of everyday life (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017), a development congruent with the increased preference for soft

news or non-political affairs. Second, the set of roles in the domain of political life was expanded to include roles in non-Western settings, where the political system can be far from the democracies of the West. Last, the scholarship has benefitted from works that define the distinctions among different role concepts (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016), such as the difference between role orientation and role performance (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Mellado, 2019).

Insofar that 'perceived roles tend to set the boundaries of journalistic skills, knowledge, and abilities' (Willnat et al., 2013, p.11), the journalist's toolbox requires competencies in understanding established journalistic roles vis-à-vis larger systems (political economy of the media and political systems). This competency becomes very important especially as different forms of journalism continue to operate in different environments and authors write about new forms of journalism. In an age of disruption, however, socialising oneself into these roles and systems is clearly not enough—being equipped with the tools to critique roles, routinised practices and professionalisation will allow a journalist to break outside the inertia of the industry.

Conclusions and recommendations

In studying journalistic competencies, it is imperative to understand competency constructs in the context of the three 'points of rupture': technological, economic, and cultural (roles). Contexts vary across societies, so to prescribe competencies without context is meaningless. Hence, the state of research calls for a global perspective that takes into account non-Western settings that are also witnessing these different disruptions as well as views outside the professional industry. The state of research on journalistic competencies call for 'defining' and 'de-centering'—to borrow Muhlmann's (2008) term—the discourse.

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Digital divide

Mobile internet speeds in the Pacific

Abstract: This article outlines mobile internet speeds experienced by 15 smartphone users in the Pacific region. It presents new quantitative data collected over a six-month-long period. The data were collected in order to provide a comparison of places and to look for trends over time. The research was adjusted for confounding factors like weather and building type. The findings indicate substantial differences between the internet speeds and reliability experienced in Australian cities compared to the readings in Pacific Island locations. Over the six-month-long period, there were no substantial improvements or decreases in internet speeds at any of the included locations. This finding takes into account changes in weather, time of day and surroundings. As expected, clear skies and outdoor settings were positively associated with faster internet speeds, compared to rainy periods and indoor readings in the same geographical areas.

Keywords: Cell phone, communication, internet, Melanesia, mobile phone, Pacific, Pacific studies, phone, smartphone, technology, telecommunications, telephone

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Introduction

INTERNET access is uneven across the Pacific region (UN ESCAP, 2018) but is 'generally still lacking' (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 12) compared to other parts of the world. For those with access to the internet, a common method of going online is to use a mobile telephone, rather than a tablet, laptop or desktop computer (Williams, 2019, p. 5). Mobile telephone access and uptake varies between countries in the Pacific. For instance, the subscriber penetration rate is 84 percent in Fiji but only 17 percent in the Federated States of Micronesia (GSMA, 2019, p. 7).

Infrastructure that enables internet access has improved recently. In 2018, 'Fiji was connected to the Tui-Samoa undersea cable, which in turn connects to the major Southern Cross cable that provides direct links to the US [United States] and New Zealand' (GSMA, 2019, p. 20). The Coral Sea Cable System includes a domestic undersea cable within Solomon Islands and it also links Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea to Sydney, Australia. It was completed

in December 2019. The Kumul Submarine Cable is a domestic cable throughout Papua New Guinea undergoing testing at the time of writing. The Manatua One Polynesia Cable was completed in 2020 and connects Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, and French Polynesia. These cables increase capacity and assertions have been made that they will enable faster internet speeds (GSMA, 2019; Highet, Nique, Watson, & Wilson, 2019; Williams, 2019).

This article examines the mobile internet speeds available to smartphone users in Pacific Island nations. Comparison is made with the speeds experienced by users in urban and rural locations in nearby Australia. The focus of the paper is presenting quantitative data—that is, the internet speeds themselves and statistical analysis thereof, including regressions. The article makes a contribution to the understanding of the experiences of people in the Pacific when they try to communicate or access information using the internet.

The digital divide lens

The 'digital divide' term was coined to refer to a disparity in access to information and communication technologies (Ball et al., 2019, p. 1169; Ragnedda, 2018; Sagrista & Matbob, 2016; van Dijk, 2005, p. 1). This term was defined as 'the gap between those who do and those who do not have access to computers and the internet' (van Dijk, 2005, p. 1). Although some scholars critique 'the arbitrary, binary nature of the concept of a digital divide' (Donner, 2015, p. 50), it is a useful lens through which to view this research. Someone who attempts to use the internet but has access to very low internet speeds cannot be considered to have the same access as a person who experiences fast internet speeds. There is a divide—a 'digital divide'—between these two internet users.

Background and context

Historically, there have long been inequalities in societies, for instance with regard to income levels, location and education. In contemporary times, 'with increasing technological global dependency, the digital divide has become one of the most significant social divides' (Rogerson, 2020). Multiple factors interact in complex ways (Rogerson, 2020), so that 'social inequalities are strongly intertwined with digital inequalities' (Robinson et al., 2020, n.p.). The people of the Pacific region do not enjoy the internet access that is common in many parts of the world (GSMA, 2019). Indeed, as advances are made elsewhere, it could be argued that the gap between the Pacific and other regions is widening (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 13). It is this 'digital divide' that this research seeks to investigate.

Internet accessibility and affordability can be linked to the provision of public infrastructure such as roads and electricity. A limited road network in Papua New Guinea (Curry, Dumu, & Koczberski, 2016, pp. 41-42; World Bank, 2020, pp. 35-38) directly contributes to costs for telecommunication companies (Highet

et al., 2019, p. 22). Electricity is required for internet provision and for consumer devices. Because 'most Pacific Island countries generate electricity from diesel fuel' (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 31), there can be insufficient electricity capacity and high prices (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 31), making it difficult to increase internet access and use. For example, Papua New Guinea has very limited electricity provision (Highet et al., 2019, p. 23; Williams, 2019, p. 3; World Bank, 2020, pp. 33-34) and thus many mobile telephone towers require costly solar systems and backup diesel generators (Highet et al., 2019, p. 22).

Telecommunications services have large fixed costs, so where there is a small population, such as in a Pacific Island nation, there would tend to be limited economies of scale (GSMA, 2019, p. 5). This may lead to poor services, high prices and possibly low speeds on average, for instance if a telecommunication company chooses to install a 2G or 3G network rather than to invest in the latest generation network.

A similar outcome could occur if there is limited competition. According to the GSMA, 'the most favourable market structure for promoting investment and innovation is one with two or three mobile operators' (2019, p. 11). In the Pacific region, there is limited market competition in the mobile telephony sector (GSMA, 2019). Out of 23 countries and territories, 13 have only one active mobile operator (GSMA, 2019, pp. 11-12).

The link to media and journalism

A key component of a functioning democracy is a citizenry that is well-informed and actively engaged in debates about governance, social and economic issues and relevant government policies (ABC International Development, 2014). Thus, it is important that citizens have the means to communicate their views and concerns. To formulate such opinions, citizens should ideally have access to timely information. Internet access can enable such communication and information gathering (Sagrista & Matbob, 2016). In addition, the media has a crucial role to play in this regard (Singh, 2020). If a journalist wishes to interview someone about a development project or natural disaster in their area, fast internet in that location could enable a video call of sufficient quality to be broadcast on television. Slow and unreliable internet would make such an interview impossible. Thus, mobile internet speeds can have an impact upon the functioning of the media and upon the ability for a diverse range of voices to be heard.

Technical terms

Three measures of internet quality that are used in this study are download speed, upload speed and ping speed. Download speeds are relevant 'when information (or "data") is received' (Telstra, n.d.) by a device from the internet, for example,

Table 1: Recommended download speeds for streaming	
Audio	1.5
Standard definition video	3
HD video	4-5
Ultra HD video	15-25
Zoom conferencing	10-25 (download), 3 (upload)

Note: Recommended download speeds required to stream (MB/s) Sources: (AT Services, 2021; Frontier, 2021; Harris, 2019)

when a website is opened or when a video is being watched. Download speeds are measured in megabytes per second (MB/s), or kilobytes per second (KB/s) for slower speeds. A rough sketch of the download speeds required for various activities is presented in Table 1.

Upload speeds apply 'when you send data from your device to somewhere else' (Telstra, n.d.), for example when uploading a video to YouTube or sending audio and video of yourself speaking in a video call. Upload speeds are also measured in megabytes per second (MB/s) or kilobytes per second (KB/s) and are generally lower than download speeds.

Ping speeds measure the time taken for the mobile telephone signal to reach the nearest internet server. Ping speeds are measured in milliseconds (ms), which are a thousandth of a second. Ping speeds are mainly relevant to higher-end internet users who require fast connection speeds and very low latency times, such as for online gaming (nbn co ltd, 2020). Technically, 'ping' is the process while the measurement is the 'latency' but the two terms are often used interchangeably (nbn co ltd, 2020) and in this paper we refer to 'ping speeds'. Because ping speeds capture the travel time of data, they are largely determined by the device's physical distance from the server. Ping speeds can be affected by server congestion, the type of connection and the available bandwidth. Low ping speeds indicate a good quality internet connection.

Technical advances in mobile telephone network and handset types are referred to as technological generations (Watson & Park, 2019). First generation or 1G technology enables analogue mobile telephones, including car telephones. Second generation or 2G service is the first iteration of digital mobile telephone technology. Third generation (3G) is the first technology suitable for using the internet on mobile telephones, while 4G and 5G technologies allow for quicker internet browsing (Watson & Park, 2019).

Methods

This research project aimed to determine the mobile internet speeds experienced by 15 consumers in five Pacific Island nations, with comparison to neighbouring Australia. The aim was to determine differences between experiences

Table 2: Data collection locations, networks and handsets

Country	Location Name	Type of location	Mobile network	Handset type
Australia	Sydney	Large urban centre	Optus	Oppo R15
	Canberra	Large urban centre	Telstra	Samsung S10
	Balranald	Rural town in New South Wales	Telstra	iPhone Xs Max
Federated States of Micronesia	Colonia	Small urban centre in Yap state, and some readings in rural areas on the same island	FSM Telecom	iPhone4
Fiji	Suva	Medium-sized urban centre	Unwired, a subsidiary of Digicel	Samsung A20 and then Samsung A20s
Papua New Guinea	Lae	Large urban centre	Digicel	Samsung J1
	Madang (user 1)	Medium-sized urban centre, and some readings in a rural area of the same province	Digicel	Oppo F7
	Madang (user 2)	Medium-sized urban centre, and some readings in a rural area of the same province	Telikom	Oppo F7
	Mount Hagen	Medium-sized urban centre, and some readings in a rural area of the same province	Digicel	Samsung J2
	Port Moresby	Large urban centre	Telikom	Samsung A30
Samoa	Apia (user1)	Medium-sized urban centre	Digicel	Samsung J8
	Apia (user2)	Medium-sized urban centre	Vodafone Samoa (this is Bluesky at the start of the time period)	Samsung A30
Solomon Islands	Honiara (user 1)	Medium-sized urban centre	bmobile	iPhone
	Honiara (user 2)	Medium-sized urban centre	Our Telekom	Oppo 83
	East Kwaio	Rural area	Our Telekom	Oppo1701

in various locations, as well as monitor for any changes over a period of six months. Time of day patterns, location type and impacts of weather were also taken into account.

To best understand internet speeds, quantitative data were collected. The focus was on the internet speeds experienced by end users rather than the internet speeds advertised by mobile network operators. This research was the first of its kind and encompassed several countries across the Pacific.

Smartphone users were approached and asked if they were willing to be research assistants. An information sheet outlining the research aims and processes was provided to potential research assistants. Table 2 contains details of the locations and telecommunication networks included in the study. Note that the network type accessed may have varied depending upon where the person was located when they undertook data collection. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, there are 2G, 3G and 4G networks available in different places (Highet et al., 2019, p. 19; Watson & Park, 2019). Thus, it is possible that research assistants accessed different network generations as they moved about during the six-month-long period.

Research assistants used the Meteor application on their smartphones to determine and record internet speeds. Meteor is free-of-charge and easy-to-use. It is an 'internet speed test tool' (Google Play, 2020). It generates three figures in about 20 seconds: ping speed, download speed and upload speed. The Meteor application requires a small amount of data and therefore some research assistants were provided with regular, modest contributions towards their mobile telephone credit to enable their participation in the research.

An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was used to test whether there was a ten per cent or higher increase or decrease in internet speeds for each research assistant over the six-month-long period of the study. It was necessary to include some confounding factors into the regression. This narrowed the inference of the regression results. For example, by including weather in the regression, we could be certain that any change in internet speeds found over time was a result of a change in the actual mobile internet speeds available to and experienced by the user, and not simply a result of heavy rainfall at the start of the study.

Data collection took place every Monday for six months, starting on Monday 6 January 2020. Research assistants took readings three times each Monday: morning (between 6am and midday), afternoon (between midday and 7pm) and evening (between 7pm and midnight). Each set of readings was added to one row of a spreadsheet containing data entry columns for each of the following items:

- Date
- Exact time
- Network
- Location description (a free response column)

- Built area description (a drop-down menu listed the following options: outdoors; indoors with bush material roof; indoors with tin roof; inside concrete/brick building; travelling in motor vehicle)
- Ping speed (measured in milliseconds [ms])
- Download speed
- Download speed units (a drop-down menu listed two options: megabytes per second [MB/s] and kilobytes per second [KB/s])
- Upload speed
- Upload speed units (a drop-down menu listed two options: megabytes per second [MB/s] and kilobytes per second [KB/s])
- Weather (a drop-down menu listed the following five options: clear sky; some clouds; mostly cloudy; rain; storm)
- Notes (a column where assistants could mention anything deemed relevant, or otherwise it could be left blank)

Limitations

Research assistants were recruited from amongst the existing professional and personal networks of the authors. Thus, some Pacific Island nations have not been included in the data collected. Overall, the research assistants tended to be based in urban centres and therefore rural areas are insufficiently represented in the data.

The data set is not representative of the overall population, so it cannot be used for wider population inferences. However, as data were collected over time, we can compare the change in speeds for the same users, with the same mobile handsets over the six-month period. Comparisons across locations are indicative only of the research assistants involved in the study. Importantly, this research does not draw conclusions about or attempt to compare the quality of mobile networks operated by different companies. A greater number of research assistants would be required in order to do that.

The weather categories stipulated as options in the spreadsheet provided to research assistants were somewhat amorphous and not discrete. Whether an assistant deemed the day to have 'some clouds' or to be 'mostly cloudy' was subjective. This may have made it difficult for assistants to complete this column of the spreadsheet.

The Meteor application is designed to detect a user's 'true connection speed, whether you're connecting through Wifi or your mobile network' (OpenSignal, 2020). Research assistants were asked to disable the Wifi option in their handset before taking readings from the mobile network. Although Wifi access is not common in the Pacific region, it is possible that on occasion research assistants may have in fact reported on Wifi speeds rather than mobile network speeds. While this is unlikely, it is a possible limitation of the data.

Another possible limitation of the use of Meteor is that it was not designed for use with 2G networks. However, 2G networks are generally not considered suitable for internet use and thus this limitation is minimal, even though there are still 2G networks in existence in some parts of the Pacific Island region.

In the discussion section below, various factors that could influence internet speeds are outlined. This research was not able to adjust for all of these factors and thus regression results suffer from omitted variable bias. A future project may address this issue.

We could not include a variable for 'distance from tower' because we did not know the exact distance from the mobile device to the nearest mobile telephone tower. In future, the distance to the nearest telephone tower at each reading-point would be valuable to record. However, this was not considered feasible for this study. An alternative would be to ask participants to take readings at specific locations. These locations could then be introduced as categorical variables. Another option would be to use a smartphone application to collect exact location details through global positioning system (GPS) technology. However, the distance to the nearest telecommunication tower may be difficult to calculate, as it would require knowledge of the exact location of every tower within range of each research assistant's neighbourhood.

Though we collected consistent data across the Pacific, each location has just one to two mobile telephone users. We would need 30 users in each location to make statistically sound inferences about differences in location and other variables. Even so, we can make statistically sound inferences about changes over time.

Data

This section presents the internet speed data collected. Table 3 presents data collected from different locations in order from highest average download speed to the lowest. Note that in three locations (Madang, Apia and Honiara), data were collected for two networks. Data speeds across locations were generally as expected, with urban areas in Australia the best in terms of speed and consistency.

Figure 1 presents a box plot of download speeds. Port Moresby had considerably higher speeds than the other Pacific locations, with an average speed approximately 70 percent of that in Sydney, but with more variation than elsewhere. Outliers (greater than two standard deviations from the mean) are presented as dots.

The weekly routines and locations of the research assistants were generally consistent throughout the six-month-long period. The research assistants were reliable and dedicated. Many spreadsheets were completed in full. If a research assistant attempted to undertake a Meteor test but did not have any network signal at all, this was noted in the spreadsheet. For our purposes, such tests

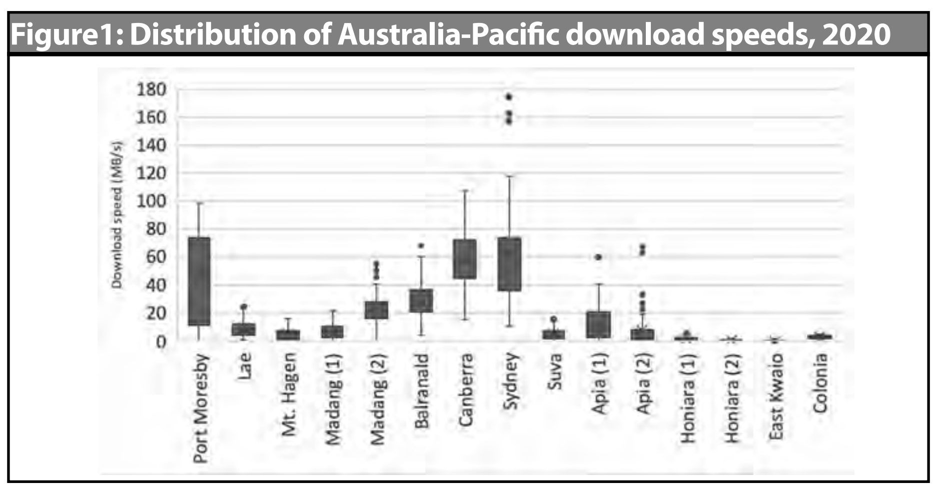

Figure1: Distribution of Australia-Pacific download speeds, 2020

Note: Distribution of download speeds for 15 research assistants in Australia-Pacific locations, January 2020 - June 2020

were recorded as generating download speeds and upload speeds of zero, which reduced the average speed experienced by those users (see Table 3). When network connections were weak, high ping speeds with large numerical values were recorded but when there was no network signal, research assistants generally wrote zero in the ping speed column. This approach does not make sense for our purposes though, as lower ping speeds indicate better connections. Thus, in the case of ping speeds, zero values were replaced with high values (comparable to the highest ping speeds experienced in that location). Outlying values were also replaced with the otherwise highest values.

In rare instances, readings were missed because the research assistant was unwell or attending a funeral. There were some cases when the research assistant was unable to undertake readings because their handset battery was flat or they had no data. There was some limited travel within the person's immediate area or to another part of the same country and during most travel weekly readings continued uninterrupted.

In March to April 2020, the mobile network company Bluesky in Samoa was taken over by Amalgamated Telecom Holdings, branded as Vodafone (Amalgamated Telecom Holdings, 2020). During the transition period, the research assistant noticed unusually slow mobile internet speeds and subsequently saw official wording from the company explaining that the transition had caused disruptions to connectivity.

In April 2020, the Solomon Islands government instructed residents of the capital city Honiara to leave due to the threat of coronavirus (COVID-19) (Cain & McGarry, 2020). One of the two research assistants based in Honiara left and returned to the natal village for eight weeks. At that location, there was no mobile internet access and therefore no readings were undertaken. The Fiji

Table 3: Average speeds accessed by user location, 2020			
User location	Average download speed	Average upload speed	Average ping speed
Sydney	60.6	38.4	29.7
Canberra	59.8	10.4	32.3
Port Moresby	42.5	6.7	76.8
Balranald	28.7	41.5	56.4
Madang (user 2)	23.8	8.8	96.2
Apia (user 1)	12.8	7.5	85.5
Apia (user 2)	8.1	5.4	99.5
Madang (user 1)	7.8	2.5	41.1
Lae	9.9	2.6	21.8
Mount Hagen	4.9	0.4	119.5
Suva	4.8	1.1	238.7
Colonia	2.7	0.5	163.3
Honiara (user 1)	1.3	0.9	272.7
Honiara (user 2)	0.3	0.1	340.6
East Kwaio	0.03	0.01	5182.7

Note: Average speeds accessed by 15 research assistants by user location, sorted from highest to lowest, January 2020 - June 2020.

research assistant's smartphone was lost, which resulted in two weeks during which readings were not completed. The replacement handset was a similar model, using the same network.

The research assistant based in East Kwaio, which is a remote location in Solomon Islands, attempted to use a second mobile network on numerous occasions when the primary network had an outage. This practice was adopted to complete the scheduled Meteor tests for this research and it also reflects the strategy often employed by people in locations where networks are unreliable. On the whole, mobile internet speeds in that location were very poor, across both networks. The data from both networks were combined in the presentation of data from East Kwaio here. Cyclone Harold caused heavy rains in this area in early April 2020 but does not appear to have negatively impacted upon the already low and inconsistent internet speeds of the two networks nominally available in the area.

Regression results

Each user took three readings per week for six months, so changes in speeds over time for these users could be measured. Appendix 1 presents OLS regression

results by location with download speed as the dependent variable.[1] The data and graphs presented in this section of the article are referring to download speed, unless otherwise stated. This is because the data revealed similarities between ping speeds, download speeds and upload speeds in terms of trends. In other words, if there was a fast ping speed at a particular time and location, the download and upload speed were similarly high. As such, download speed is used here as an indicator of overall performance. All variables are dummy variables, except for 'time', which reflects the model's predicted change in speeds (in MB/s) over the course of the six-month research period in question.

Time of day variables were coded as morning (6am-8.59am), mid-morning (9am-11.59pm), lunch (12 noon-1.59pm), afternoon (2pm-5.59pm), evening (6pm-8.59pm) and night (9pm-12 midnight). This variable was coded to separate potential peaks and troughs in network usage during the day. These chunks can be affected by schedules that are common across large groups—that is, meal times, work hours and sleep.

The data indicated no statistically significant change in download speeds over six months for 11 of the 15 users, once variations in the time of day, weather and built area were taken into account. Taking these variables into account, two users (in Suva and Balranald) experienced increases in download speeds of 6 MB/s and 9 MB/s respectively over the six-month period. In Apia, user 1 experienced a drop in download speeds of 14 MB/s over the period, while the regression results showed that user 2 had an increase of around 14 MB/s overall (see Appendix 1). The latter reported lower speeds during the changeover from Bluesky to Vodafone after which a better service became available.

Cloudy and rainy days corresponded to lower speeds for 11 of the 15 users. The speeds for these users were approximately 10 MB/s lower than on clear days. Note that the regression results found little difference in the data speeds across the two cloudy categories: 'some clouds' and 'mostly cloudy'. For this reason, and for simplicity, the data from those two categories have been combined as 'clouds'. There is no 'storm' category appearing in Appendix 1 because the 'storm' option was only selected on three occasions by three different research assistants, so these three rare instances are shown as 'rain'.

There were no discernible patterns of variation in coefficients on the time-of-day across users. Ten of 14 users reported lower speeds while indoors under a tin roof compared to outdoors (the user in Canberra did not take any readings inside a building with a tin roof). Of the eight users who took readings inside a concrete or brick building, around half reported lower speeds once the other factors were taken into account.

Summary of results

This research generated a data set consisting of the mobile internet speeds

experienced by 15 smartphone users in Australia and Pacific nations for a period of six months. The weekly routines and locations of the research assistants were generally consistent throughout the period. In cases of variation from an individual's standard routine, these have been outlined in the 'Data' section above.

Data speeds across locations were generally as expected, with urban areas in Australia the best in terms of speed and consistency. Port Moresby had considerably higher speeds than the other Pacific locations, but far greater variability in the quality of the service. The worst performer was the only rural, Pacific Island location included in the study.

The study set out to determine whether there were any differences over time. The data indicated no statistically significant change in download speeds over six months for 11 of the 15 users, once variations in the time of day, weather and built area were taken into account. The sale of a mobile telephone network may have affected the results in one of the other cases.

Although the coefficients on time-of-day variables were statistically significant in some cases, there were no clear patterns across locations. Cloudy and rainy days corresponded to lower speeds for 11 of the 15 users, compared to days with clear skies. Buildings appeared to interfere with signals, compared to readings taken outdoors.

Discussion

This article takes the digital divide concept as a key lens. The research has shown that in terms of the internet speeds experienced by internet users, a digital divide operates between locations. The research findings were largely as expected, in that urban areas in Australia provided access to the fastest speeds, while the one rural location in a Pacific Island nation included in the study had the slowest and weakest signal. This is the first study of its kind and thus it provides a useful comparison of the actual speeds available to end users in different localities (Table 3 and Figure 1 are particularly relevant in this regard).

It could be argued that inclusion of Australia in this study is unsuitable because it has much higher incomes per capita than the other nations included (UN ESCAP, 2018, pp. 12-13). Countries with high average incomes are likely to present attractive investment prospects for telecommunication companies eager to generate profits. By contrast, if there are typically low income levels in a nation, there may be less investment in telecommunication networks. Nonetheless, the authors feel that the inclusion of Australia provides a useful comparison for the purpose of understanding internet user experiences.

Differences over time were tested for the six-month-long period. It was anticipated that there could have been an improvement in speeds during the period due to the completion of the Coral Sea Cable System, the Kumul Submarine

Cable and the Manatua One Polynesia Cable. However, there were no improvements in relevant places during the timeframe. Future research could provide a comparison to the data collected for this project during the first half of 2020.

Time of day information was collected to ensure that differences in download speeds across peak and non-peak times were taken into account. Though there were some statistically significant differences across times of day in specific locations, these were not consistent across locations. The purpose of collecting this information was to adjust for differences across peak and non-peak times, to gain greater confidence in the coefficient on the 'time' variable, which estimates the movement in average speeds over the six-month period. For example, if an assistant took more early morning recordings (a non-peak time) at the start of the study, and more late morning recordings (a peak time) towards the end of the study this may skew the results.

Cloudy and rainy weather were found to be generally associated with slower internet speeds than were occasions with clear skies. The built area findings were somewhat inconclusive, perhaps due to variation between the routines of the research assistants. Further research would need to be undertaken to determine whether such factors correlate to the available internet speeds. Even so, there is some suggestion from this data set that lower speeds were experienced while indoors compared to outdoors.

In three towns (Madang, Honiara and Apia), data were collected for two different networks. While there were some differences in speeds for users in the same towns, the findings should not be interpreted as indicating that any one mobile network operator is providing faster speeds than another company is. The authors feel that further research with a larger number of smartphone users would be required before such comparisons could be made.

Various factors may affect the end speed experienced by a mobile telephone user. Data speeds could differ and either increase or decrease over time due to a wide range of factors such as technology upgrades, maintenance routines, or damage to infrastructure. Variability in congestion could be due to seasonal factors. Several key factors that may impact upon mobile internet speeds are discussed below.

Network technology and infrastructure

Telecommunication companies use different generations of network technology (see section two of this paper for a definition). The network generation and the quality of technology used for telecommunications infrastructure, including the type of cables and servers, influence data speeds.

Regulatory settings

Government regulatory settings can affect how the telecommunications ecosystem functions and potentially have an impact upon mobile data speeds. In the

Pacific, improvements in terms of internet access have 'been attributed to regulatory policy reforms and other measures' (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 7) but even so the region lags behind other parts of the world (GSMA, 2019) or continues to fall further behind (UN ESCAP, 2018, p. 13).

In many countries such as those included in this study, a key early move was to open up markets (Foster & Horst, 2018, p. 9; Sagrista & Matbob, 2016, p. 26). Governments and independent regulators often attempt to regulate the telecommunication sector, including individual uses (Foster & Horst, 2018, p. 9; Kant, Titifanue, Tarai, & Finau, 2018) and spectrum use by telecommunication companies (GSMA, 2019, p. 4). Businesses and civil society actors can also try to influence policy processes (for example in Fiji: Foster & Horst, 2018, pp. 11-12).

The ability to enforce regulations can vary between countries. For example, in Papua New Guinea, the regulator's 'role is clear, but its enforcement capacity is weak' (World Bank, 2020, p. 47). Logan and Forsyth have argued that the dominance of the company Digicel in the country's mobile market has exacerbated this challenge (2018, p. 19; see also Suwamaru, 2015; Watson & Fox, 2019).

User device

Finally, the quality of the parts and technology embedded in the user's mobile device may affect the download speeds experienced by the user. Handsets with newer technology and high-quality parts will tend to enable higher download speeds. There are also issues of compatibility, with some handsets only able to transfer data using 3G signals, even when 4G signals are available. In addition, age or damage to a device may reduce internet speeds.

Conclusion

The research has provided valuable insights into the mobile internet speeds available to consumers in the Pacific region for the first time. This multi-country research project has enabled comparisons of individual telephone users in various locations. Factors such as the time of day and weather were measured and taken into account when determining changes in speed over the six-month period.

The findings were largely as expected, with Australian readings demonstrating the availability of faster internet than those readings done in Pacific Island nations. Thus, the research has shown a real-life 'digital divide' between those with access to fast internet speeds and those with access to only slow speeds. Although fast speeds were available on occasion in Port Moresby, there were also cases of slow readings in the same city, suggesting inconsistency in terms of service provision. Despite the recent laying of undersea internet cables to Pacific Island nations included in this study, there was little evident improvement in internet speeds in these locations during the period January to June 2020.

Quantitative data have been presented as the focus of this article. In cases in which research assistants varied their usual routine, their experiences were included in the paper to aid in the interpretation of the internet speeds collected. Research assistants were diligent but there were some gaps in the spreadsheets due to factors beyond their control. To further enrich understanding of everyday user experiences, future research could employ qualitative research methods such as individual interviews or group interviews.

The methodology could be employed again in the future, with possible modifications. A future project may adjust for handset type and other additional variables that could possibly interfere with network signals.

The method was effective in determining whether there was a change over time but it was not effective for testing factors such as being in a concrete building, for which more people would be required. Ideally, additional research would include data from a greater number of research assistants over a longer period.

It may be possible to use anonymised data from the Meteor application or a similar smartphone application but this data would only capture mobile internet speeds and would not include other contextual information such as the weather and location description. It may not be collected in a consistent manner at regular intervals.

Although this research was designed before the COVID-19 outbreak impacted upon international travel, it has been fortuitous that the method has enabled the continuation of a research program over a distance.

While this article focuses on quantitative data and uses technical terminology, it has clear relevance for media practitioners and scholars. Slow and unreliable internet speeds in some locations in the Pacific region could make media interviews through video calls unfeasible. Thus, slow mobile internet speeds could have a negative impact upon media operations and may limit the range of voices that can be heard.

Note

1. The Appendix 1 table can be accessed online at: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/pacific-journalism-review/article/view/1168

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‘I want to buy my own block of land’

Representation of urban settlement communities in Papua New Guinea

Abstract: Urban settlements are home to around half the urban population of Papua New Guinea. Since the end of the Second World War, PNG towns and cities have experienced significant growth of urban settlements. Urban dwellings were established on customary and untransformed state lands. With limited support for services from government, informal settlements in the urban landscape have often been perceived from the perspective of their deficiencies. However, residents of urban settlement communities play an important role in urban economies. The purpose of this article is to critically review perceptions of settlements and issues affecting settlement communities in PNG, both in the mainstream media and from within settlement communities. The authors first present a media content analysis of reporting on settlement communities on PNG’s main online media sites. Second, they examine urban market vendors’ personal experiences of the challenges and solutions of living in Kamkumung Settlement in Lae. Drawing on storytelling and photovoice workshops with market vendors at Awagasi market, they argue for the need for media actively to include the voices of settlement residents. The article suggests that, by better understanding the context and personal experience of residents, journalists and the media could make a stronger contribution to sustainable development and urban planning in PNG.

Keywords: content analysis, journalism, market vendors, media representation, news media, Papua New Guinea, photovoice, storytelling, urban settlement

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Introduction

IN A letter to the editor of the daily *National* newspaper in Papua New Guinea, published on 26 April 2021, a reader identifying herself as 'Jennifer' made a scathing critique of settlements in Port Moresby (Get rid of settlements, 2021b). The letter described people who live in settlements as 'land grabbers', and settlements themselves as 'a breeding ground for criminals who create havoc for law-abiding citizens'. Jennifer went further with overt generalisation, describing residents of the settlements as '...making money under the pretext of being poor'. To provide safety and stability in the country, and in particular Port Moresby, Jennifer appealed to the Prime Minister and the governors of all provinces in PNG to pass a law '...to eradicate and prevent settlements from existence in the country'.

Another article in the same newspaper, published on 4 March 2021 (Cops: Remove settlements, 2021a), described how Assistant Police Commissioner Anthony Wagambie Jr 'urged the government to get rid of squatter settlements where people cannot peacefully live together, and to also stop them from living in ethnic groups'. The Assistant Commissioner commented on a prolonged spate of ethnic clashes at the Vadavada settlement in Port Moresby. the country's other major daily newspaper, the *PNG Post-Courier*, also ran coverage of the same ethnic clashes, headlining the reporting, 'One dead, several homes torched after ethnic clash erupts in City settlements' (One dead, several homes torched, 2021). Jennifer's letter to the editor, the editor's choice of heading under which to publish it, and the subsequent articles, highlight kinds of perspectives that commonly inform the way settlements are described and reported on in PNG. In these reports, we do not get a sense of the situation of residents of settlement communities, or of their perspectives on the challenges that were reported.

The discussion around the representation of settlement communities is not a new one. Settlements have been seen and described as hubs of criminal activity lacking law-and-order, and perceptions have been linked to 'unemployment, extreme poverty and crime, characterising settlement populations as maladjusted and undesirable in the urban society' (Goddard, 2001, p. 3). With histories rooted in migration, uncertain access to land, and limited government services, settlements have occupied a challenging space in the urban landscape. In many cases, resident families have resided on a block of land for several generations, and yet are still considered to be living in an 'informal' settlement. The urban population living in settlements in the PNG cities of Port Moresby, Lae and Goroka ranges from 40 to 60 percent (World Bank World Bank Group, 2014). Dominant narratives about settlements frequently focus on the perceived deficits of the settlements, rather than their contributions to society. However, numerous upgrading initiatives are in place that aim to address structural issues within settlements. Moreover, since they comprise around half of the total population

of PNG's cities, settlement residents play an important role in the country's urban economies.

The purpose of this article is to critically review perceptions of settlements and issues affecting settlement communities in PNG, both in the mainstream media and from within settlement communities. We first review media perspectives on urban settlement in PNG through a media content analysis of online publications of four PNG news outlets. Second, we present findings from a storytelling and photovoice project with urban residents of Kamkumung settlement, an urban settlement in Ahi Local Level Government (LLG) in Lae City. Participants of our workshop were market vendors from Awagasi market at Kamkumung, who shared personal experiences around challenges and solutions within their community. In our discussion, we examine representations of settlement communities by the media alongside, and in contrast to, the stories of settlement residents themselves. We draw conclusions regarding the potential of media to further integrate residents' perspectives, so as to challenge common misconceptions of settlement communities and more actively contribute to sustainable urban development.

Background

The emergence of informal settlements in PNG was first seen in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, beginning with the appearance of the first settlement in Port Moresby in 1945 (Numbasa & Koczberski, 2012). However, under the colonial government, migration to urban centres was regulated, with migration policy aiming to limit the movement of indigenous inhabitants into urban areas (Mecartney & Connell, 2017). Such anti-urbanism and restrictions on urban permanent residency (Koczberski, Curry, & Connell, 2001) were not sustainable, however, and could not sufficiently limit movement or the growth of settlements. While both the geographical dimensions and discourses around settlements have since evolved, these colonial sentiments, and the language around rural and urban categorisations, continue to be present today.

After PNG became independent on 16 September 1975, socio-economic value-adding mechanisms from Australia were introduced in order to 'prepare' PNG for statehood. One cruicial initiative was the introduction of PNG's industrialisation programme. Industrialisation processes led to small but consistent social and economic development trends, including increased urbanisation. This urbanisation saw people who lived in villages and engaged in agricultural activities migrate to urban centres and converge into groups, forming informal settlements. Formation of settlements become a common consequence of the urbanisation process (Jones, 2012). In PNG today, this has resulted in a variety of different forms of land tenure, including settlements located on lands officially aquired from customary landowners, 'illegal' settlement on state lands, and settlements established on vacant land

purchased or rented from customary landowners. As a result, there are differences in the structures of urban settlement communities across PNG, and these feature various standards of living, from makeshift homes, to semi-permanent and permanent houses, that are home to the growing urban population.

In the last three decades PNG has seen a stark increase in urban population and informal settlements. According to the World Bank Group (2014), 50 percent of the urban population of Port Moresby and Lae live in settlements, 40-50 percent of town population of Wewak reside in settlements, and in Goroka, 60 percent of the town population call settlements their homes. Due to lack of formal opportunities such as housing and employment, many people move and reside in unplanned settlements at the peripheries of the city (Koczberski & Curry, 2005). Housing prices in urban areas in PNG have become unaffordable to many, including people in employment who are not provided with accommodation subsidies. The housing sector has been described as 'in crisis', with people continuing to expand living spaces for themselves (see Jones, 2012). The expansion of unplanned settlements presents challenges to urban designers and settlers. To people like Jennifer, such settlements represent an eye sore and a menace, and a source of disruption to city centres. The lack of physical and spatial planning of urban informal settlements has contributed to problematic narratives around informal settlements from outsiders.

There are many challenges that settlers face; yet, as Godard (2001) points out, settlements are not a new phenomenon, but evolving fixtures of urban settings, wherein social and economic struggles 'must be understood in the context of [the settlements'] own unique history' (p. 24). Goddard argues that settlement communities should not to be viewed via simplistic dichotomies (p. 20), and that the homogenising of settlements reduces the contributions that those living within them might make. Goddard encourages the reader to understand that the social and economic struggles of settlements 'are not unemployment but the lack of services like piped water, proper access roads, and sanitation' (p. 20). Settlements grew out a dire need for adequate and affordable housing in the urban centres, and the categorical demonising of settlement remains unconstructive. The negative portrayal of settlement from the colonial era onwards does not appropriately capture the lived experiences of settlements in PNG.

The challenges that settlements and settlers had to overcome led to the development of local strategies to create opportunities to address urban problems. Over the years, key agencies (World Bank Group, 2014) and researchers (Goddard, 2001; Kopel, Hukula, Kutan, & Iwong, 2017; Rooney, 2019; World Bank Group, 2014) have written about the resilience, innovation and economic contributions of settlements. They encourage understanding of the social and cultural complexities of settlement communities, and argue for a deeper look at social and structural policies.

The media play an important role in reporting on various communities and the issues pertaining to them. The media industry in Papua New Guinea is one of the most vibrant in the South Pacific region, and has experienced pronounced growth in recent times, including embracing different media and communication platforms and digital technologies (Tacchi, Horst, Papoutsaki, Thomas & Eggins, 2013). Media platforms include print media, television, radio and online media. PNG has two main daily newspapers that are published in English, and both publish a print and an online version: *The National* and *PNG Post-Courier*. The National Broadcasting Corporation provides public radio and television. There are also private and foreign-owned radio and television providers, including the television stations EMTV and TV-WAN. While social media consumption has significantly increased in PNG over the past decade, newspapers remain the most trusted source of information in PNG (PNG citizen perceptions, 2019).

In recent years, the media have been reporting on settlements in PNG and the various events and the initiatives developed by different people to address issues in settlements. Media can directly influence perceptions about key populations. In our study, we have therefore taken a critical look at the media representation of settlements. Our media analysis and our study involving storytelling and photovoice workshops inform different ways to develop advocacy strategies to support fair representation of settlement communities.

Methods

The study employed mixed research methods, including media content analysis and participatory workshops using storytelling and photovoice. In the first research phase, the media content analysis used online newspaper articles from four news sites in PNG: *The National*, *PNG Post-Courier*, EMTV and PNG Loop. The media analysis investigated how settlement communities are represented in the media when specifically mentioned. The search term 'settlement' was used, and articles identified over 2 years from May 2019 to April 2021. Articles that related to meanings of settlement other than the physical location (for example, 'court settlement') were excluded from the analysis. Overall, a total of 72 online newspaper articles were used in the media content analysis (*The National* 45, *PNG Post-Courier* 18, EMTV 4, *PNG Loop* 5). The articles were analysed in terms of the content in relation to the term 'settlement', and categorised by events, commentaries, initiatives and letters. The content of the newspaper articles was then analysed, with a particular focus on the sources quoted and the choice of words used in association with settlements in PNG. The analysis provided an understanding of how informal settlements are represented in print/online media in PNG.

In the second phase of the research, storytelling and photovoice workshops were conducted with market vendors at Awagasi market in Lae, to understand

how they, as settlement residents, would represent themselves and what they wanted their own stories to focus on. Photovoice research is a participatory visual research method that engages participants to document their own experiences (Wang, Yi, Tao, & Carovano, 1998). The photovoice research method followed a procedural approach to data collection. Firstly, the participants shared their personal stories about Awagasi market. Secondly, cameras were given to them to capture images to support their realities of conducting market sales. Thirdly, participants collectively reflected on the photographs. Finally, a discussion of photographs was conducted within a focus group of five with other participants. The storytelling sessions were audio recorded and translated into texts, which in turn were analysed thematically to reveal layers of meanings of lived experiences. Recordings were done in Tok Pisin and later translated into English.

The photovoice method was used with ten participants, five males and five females. All of them were market vendors at Awagasi market. The participants were recruited for the research based on their residence at Kamkumung for more than five years while originally hailing from different parts of PNG. A relational research approach was used to guide the photovoice research, to ensure respect was accorded to each participant. The participants' complex experiences shared through their stories align with the oral culture in PNG. Importantly, this process enabled ten storytellers and photographers from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to interpret their experiences and reflect on existing issues (Musoke, Ekirapa-Kiracho, Ndejjo, & George, 2015). The storytelling and photo voice participants were asked about their views about Awagasi market, their challenges with the market, and how they dealt with the market challenges.

The photovoice research facilitated interactive, cohesive and direct communication that supported reflections among the participants about their individual life stories and their community. These stories were then reviewed in relation to the media content analysis, to compare representation in the media with that from settlement residents. While we acknowledge that methods of analysis for each set of data were different, the open approach to capture narratives from residents was chosen to privilege and represent their voices directly.

Media content analysis

A media content analysis was conducted to understand how settlements are represented in some of the key media outlets in PNG. This analysis was based on using the search term 'settlement' in online media searches. While a comprehensive analysis of media representation across all formats and media outlets was outside the scope of our study, the analysis presented in this section provides an indication of how media engage with topics about settlements in PNG. The analysis reviewed a total of 72 articles published between May 2019 and April 2021. *The National* newspaper featured most of the reporting on the

representation of settlements during this period (45 articles). The articles were categorised into events (14), initiatives (26), commentaries (17) and letters (15). In our analysis, we focused on the content under each of these categories, on the sources quoted, and on the language used.

Events were predominantly related to crimes in settlements, as well as evictions and a disease outbreak. Evictions were conducted by provincial authorities to remove illegal settlements (City authorities clamp down, 2020a), with one reporting the eviction of Nagada settlement as having no issues and proceeding well (Nagada settlement eviction begins, 2021c). In one report, the police removed makeshift houses built by young people abusing alcohol and drugs (Police destroyed makeshift houses, 2020b). Other houses in the settlements remained intact. The report noted the underlying ethnic tensions that emerged as a result of petty theft. Ethnic tensions also emerged within other settlements in Moresby. Violence in the area was reported to have been curbed, with the Assistant Police Commissioner Anthony Wagambie Jr reminding the community to refrain from inciting further issues. Reports mostly contained facts and accounts of events, and the language used to describe settlements was neutral. It was also noted that, in almost half of the articles considered, police were the main or only source of information.

Initiatives took the form of improved infrastructure, including water supply, power supply and training workshops, and initiatives to address violence and alcohol consumption. Articles reported on what government, service providers and businessmen contributed to initiatives in settlements. One such example was 'Hearty meals for days at Siraka settlement' (Nao, 2020) which profiled the MP from Kairuku Hiri providing food to the local community. There was limited inclusion of community voices in the reports—for example, in reports on a blanket ban on alcohol (Moresby South MP moves to ban alcohol, 2020), the introduction of malaria kits (*Kep*, 2019), and another significant initiative called the Settlement to Suburb initiative led by National Capital District (NCD) Governor Powes Pakop (Saraga settlement, 2021). In all cases, MPs highlighted how tax funds were spent in socially-valuable ways, such as supporting settlements with water and sanitation projects. These articles mainly featured the politicians and the 'good' they were doing in the community. With regards to police initiatives, articles discussed how officers were deployed into settlement areas to diffuse growing tensions. Police were quoted appealing to the government to address the social and structural issues in settlements.

In all articles about initiatives, we found no community voices to indicate how communities felt about the initiatives, with the exception of one article. In this article, resident Peter Pikes commented on the installation of water in his community, 'We face problems when it comes to water and people make fun of us. For 6-7 months we struggled to find water.' (Keneqa, 2020). In the same

article, the member for Moresby South Tkatchenko shared similar sentiments to Pikes: 'People need water, no matter where they live. Don't brand our people because they live in settlements.' It was the only article that conveyed empathy for the community and included a community leader's voice.

Commentaries discussed social issues in settlements, including the increase of population and law and order challenges. The commentaries looked at police programs addressing issues related to violence and drug abuse in settlements and schools (Police target settlements, 2019). Police persistently commented on the impact of overcrowding and lack of opportunities available to people in settlements, linking this to the escalating tensions in communities. As in the 'event' category, police again pointed out social issues and strongly recommended the government do something about the situation (Mushrooming settlements, 2019). Alex H Jafa, in *The National*'s online section, also tried to highlight the larger structural issues that impact on people who live in settlements (Jafa, 2019). His article highlighted the lack of basic human rights and linked it into NCD's initiative to create affordable housing. At times, members of parliament demonstrated an understanding of the difficulties that communities in settlements face, and commented on possible solutions, as in the following reported remark by Port Moresby Northeast MP John Kaupa :

> 'What we the leaders have to do is to provide opportunity for the people to get themselves engaged in some form of money-generating activities rather than illegal ways as they struggle to survive in the city'…He [Kaupa] said as the MP responsible for his electorate he has launched the small and medium enterprises program, provide seed capital to people to generate income. (Kil, 2019)

Kaupa went on to say people in settlements 'have talents, dreams to be somebody and they need an enabling factor to utilise these skills and talents to generate and income' (Kil, 2019). Rarely were community voices sought for their opinion. When they did get interviewed, however, they highlighted the challenges with government initiatives aimed at supporting and improving their lives. For example, Saun Dambui, a ward 8 councillor for Madang Urban and a community leader talked about the inadequacy of the COVID awareness protocols supported through the Madang provincial authorities:

> 'Most of the settlements in Madang Urban use drains or dug out wells because they do not have access to clean running water...More needs to be done so most settlements can have access to clean running water in order for people to practice hand-washing.' (Dambui, 2020)

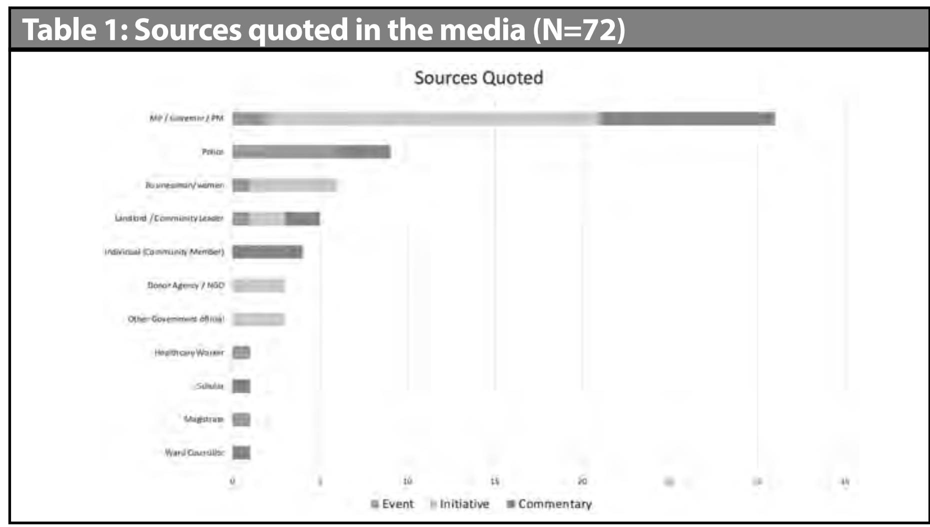
Individuals' voices were mostly captured under **letters**. These included commentaries that pointed towards certain needs in settlements and expressed negative

sentiments with regards to the state and existence of settlements. Some, like Jennifer, gave scathing criticism, others understood that those living in settlements were faced with social and economic pressures that led to social unrest, and those who lived in settlements highlighted their difficulties.

A number of letters containing commentaries captured issues pertaining to settlements in the NCD. Phillzmon (2019) urged the government 'to find the root of the issues and problems that we face every day'. He talked about the growing issue of illegal squatter settlements, and urged the Member responsible to find ways to address the growing social and health concerns in the area. Others living near settlements shared their fear and frustrations resulting from experiences with crime (Bogosia, 2020). Savannah Heights, Waigani went so far as to say that most of the law and order issues are caused by those in the settlements, and that 'leaders should be brave enough to make tough decisions' to get rid of settlements (Wane, 2020). Ultange Wane said that 'eviction should be the only way after notices have been served' to resolve the increasing illegal settlement issues (Wane, 2020).

Words that describe settlements and the descriptions of settlements in the letters include '…breeding ground for criminal activities…an environment conducive for drug trade, especially marijuana. Illegal operation of liquor shops, gambling and prostitution is a common sight in settlements' (Igabi, 2020). In contrast, those who live in settlements presented the challenges they faced. For example, a resident of Morata Settlement raised the concern of water with his local MP, stressing the importance of access to water (Tange, 2020). Bruce, also from Morata, shared similar frustrations at the NCD's lack of attention to water supply (Bruce, 2020). Residents from the settlements acknowledge that life is hard, and that, and while they would like to enjoy the benefits of basic services and living well, those benefits remain out of their reach.

Table 1: Sources quoted in the media (N=72)



WILMA MOLUS

Figure 1: Awagasi Market in Lae City

Across the three categories of events, commentaries and initiatives, a key finding was that the most vocal personalities were from government and the police (see Figure 1). Significantly, community members' voices were minimally heard. In many cases, community members and leaders echoed their voices only behind government agents. Police were the most frequently quoted sources for accounts of events occurring within settlements, such as evictions and crimes, as these tended to be documented through media releases issues by the police.

The media analysis provided a background for the next phase of the study, which sought to capture the voices of people living in a settlement community—in this case, market vendors—to listen to their experiences and suggestions.

Stories by Awagasi market vendors

The study sought to capture residents' perspectives on their experiences of Kamkumung Settlement, with a particular focus on experiences of market vendors at Awagasi Market. The purpose of the storytelling and photovoice workshop was to explore participants' voices so as to understand the existing system and structures that support their livelihoods. Every individual had personal stories about various activities in life that improved their living standards at individual and family levels. The framing questions provided to participants were relevant to their everyday market experiences in regard to who they are, what they do, income-earning opportunities to support families, challenges faced by vendors, solutions to address those challenges, and how networks support each other.

Participants' engagement with the informal market space offered insights

into their daily activities and strategies to maintain their livelihoods. Zaizozai shared his story:

> My name is Zaizozai, I am married with 6 children. I am from Finchhafen in the Morobe Province. I live here in Awagasi, at Martha's block. At the market I help the bulk buai sellers to sell off their remaining buai. [...] The good thing is Awagasi Market provides a space for us to earn a living, it helps us to bring in K1, K2 to buy clothes and food for our homes, and food for our families. A lot of good things come from this market. I save money that I earn from the market for school fees for my children so they can go and get a good job.

Participants shared their various ways of generating income to support their living in the settlement. The Awagasi market is the economic hub of hundreds of settlers in Awagasi and Kamkumung settlements at large. The market provides members of the settlement the opportunity to conduct marketing activities to earn a daily income to meet their basic needs. Many participants also shared how they encouraged young people to engage in vending activities at the market to earn a living.

Challenges were experienced at various levels and due to various influences. Vendors face a number of hindrances that might jeopardise their vending endeavours. Difficulties described by workshop participants included bad weather, disturbances by intoxicated residents, high market competition, ethnic fights, and sale of fake or damaged items. Bad weather, especially rain, was one of the major factors mentioned that can cause havoc on the normal operation of the market. As A'ya'ewa shared:

> When it rains, I don't get a profit as people don't come to buy things, and when this happens, I find it difficult to find food for the house for the evening food, so I have to borrow money or buy food on credit to feed my family. The next day, when the day clears, I sell my second-hand items and I pay off my credit. (A'ya'ewa, photovoice participant Mata Block, 2020)

A'ya'ewa's story demonstrates the pressure that many residents faced, relying on an income on a daily basis. Developing solutions to challenging situations, vendors and residents relied on others for assistance in overcoming those challenges. Bonny shared some of the challenges of resolving conflicts alongside his photo of his buai-table (Figure 2):

> At the marketplace, we face challenges, drunkards come and disturb our marketing. This upsets me and I start arguing with them and a fight might erupt. The market council or the local police come and stop the argument and I often take the matter to the police station to be resolved. If the fight

Figure 2: Bonny's buai-table at Awagasi Market, Lae.

> gets bigger, the committee could shut the market down and this impacts our life. So, to maintain peace, we report the matter to the law, and they deal with it [...] Here at Awagasi, we come from many different provinces and other places, we help each other out with food and other things (Bonny, Photovoice Participant, Mata Block, 2020).

Participants acknowledged the issue of safety and disturbances at the market. They shared various strategies that they use to address safety and security issues. Vendors who hail from various ethnic groups build social networks within the market area and the settlement at large. Social capital works as an avenue whereby vendors establish rapport and connection with residents and other vendors, who would in turn help in many other areas, including providing security, assisting in lending things, and buying items.

Awagasi market also has established local mediation committees to deal with conflicts as they emerge. The mediation committee is made up of community leaders from various ethnic groups residing within Kamkumung settlement, who are appointed by the settlement populace and selected on the basis of cultural, social, economic and religious status. Women leaders within the committee are mostly landowners and church leaders. Any conflict that warrants police action is brought before the committee members. The usual meeting place is the Omili police station everyday Sunday; and the conflicting parties would return on a

set date, and all issues are addressed in the presence of local police. The presence of Omili police station just meters away from the market, in addition to strong community leadership, ensures that criminal elements, offenders, fraudsters and other deviant characters are brought before the police and law and order committee. One woman leader who was a workshop participant said: 'We usually go back and talk to the people from the market to behave properly and do market' (Photovoice Research Participant, Mata Block, 2020). The vendors, residents and customers are fully aware of the process of local conflict resolution methods, and workshop participants shared their individual experiences and hopes for a safe market space and community.

Figure 3: Ruthy's photo at Awagasi market: She dreams of buying her own block of land.

Most vendors further expressed their dreams of owning a portion of land within the settlement area and building houses to sell their local hand-crafted items. Some expressed their dream of owning a trade store, whilst a few expressed their dreams of owning cars and small shelters to sell hand-made items like string bags (bilums), artifacts and clothes. Ruth shared her dream (Figure 3):

> My name is Ruthy, I am from Finchafen, I stay at Awagasi, I am not married. I sell betelnut at Awagasi market. [...] Awagasi market has helped me a lot to buy my clothes and to help with my brother's kids. I want to save up and buy my own block of land, have my own area and so my brother's children can come and help me and also live with me.

Moreover, some expressed hopes of seeing their children succeed in schools and getting good jobs in the future. In the reflection session, vendors shared their views on the process of storytelling and photovoice, and how the processes helped them to develop their dreams: 'I learnt many things from this workshop. I learnt how to take care of ourselves, we learnt good things. And also, we learnt how to bring our dreams into reality' (Photovoice Participant, Mata Block, 2020). Residents working in their own community taking photos generated much interest from their community. One participant said: 'there are

many that doubt us and our abilities, even within our own community. When our stories are out there, people can see our real experiences and that will help us'. The workshop generated a collective agency where vendors' voices were captured so they can be shared within and beyond their community.

Discussion

The media analysis demonstrated that residents' and community voices were mostly absent from the media representation. This could have contributed to the evident lack of empathy and depth in understanding the context and experiences of residents. Furthermore, residents were seldom credited in creating change and supporting initiatives. Instead, media reported on initiatives and interventions from the perspectives of government and police. As Scambary (2013) noted with regards to settlement communities, 'too narrow a focus on problems and their causes can ignore sources of community resilience—the community-driven creative responses and capacities for endurance to such difficult environments' (Scambary 2013, citing Brown 2007, p. 1936). In contrast to this, the storytelling and photovoice processes focused on residents' experiences. This process allowed an in-depth perspective on how residents themselves developed strategies to overcome challenges, as active contributors and decision-makers, which did not fully emerge from the representation in the media. In the following discussion, we contextualise these results further, firstly with regards to perspectives on journalism practices, and then in relation to opportunities for participatory processes in collaboration with settlement residents that might inform urban planning.

Proponents of critical development journalism in the Pacific (Robie, 2013, 2014; Sharp & Papoutsaki, 2008) have over the past two decades outlined a need for journalists to report not only mere facts, but also the causes and processes leading up to events, including the questions of 'What, How and Why' (Robie, 2013, 2014). The approach aligns with the concept of 'deliberative journalism', which allows all relevant community stakeholders—including minorities, the marginalised, the disadvantaged, and even those deemed 'deviant'—to have their voices heard over an issue (Romano, 2010, p. 4). In a more recent analysis, Robie (2019) further argues that such an approach, which he terms '*talanoa journalism*', needs to align with cultural perspectives and understandings, including the Pacific Way, in order to involve grassroots stakeholders, identify local solutions, and better understand and report on local contexts. While our media analysis identified many articles that were supportive of settlements and the development of settlements, the limited representation of community perspectives led to a limited acknowledgement of locally-developed solutions within settlement communities. In such representations, communities and their members remain passive players in the stories that affected their lives.

In contrast, most recent research on settlement and urban markets has focused on understanding residents and market vendors' roles in decision-making processes and their active role in communities. According to the World Bank Group (2014), institutions like urban markets are frequently overlooked in the provision of government services because they exist outside of the official town planning areas, often on customary land, and so are institutionally 'orphaned'. However, market vendors, some of whom are community leaders, have been innovative and resilient in creating opportunities to address infrastructure and security issues and continue generating income despite limited government support. This is in line with a World Bank report containing an account of the role of community leaders in transforming one of Port Moresby's notorious and ethnically diverse markets and gaining its safety status. When the means by which the market achieved its safety status was explored, it was attributed to community leaders, rather than the formal law and order sector (Craig & Porter, 2017). Similar strategies were documented by Awagasi market vendors, who described situations in which community leaders, in collaboration with landlords or as individuals, developed internal conflict-resolution strategies to address issues affecting both the market and settlement. However, such strategies were not reflected in the media coverage. In addition, as noted by Underhill-Sem, Cox, Lacey, and Szamier (2014), in the specific context of the market place, women vendors who are leaders are key market transformers and are willing to act on issues, negotiate and be responsible for distinct political and economic arrangements. In our analysis, women's voices were found to be significantly absent from media representation on settlements.

Urban settlement communities have a long history of marginalisation in PNG. Over the years, and today making up about half the population of urban centres, settlement communities are more diverse than ever, with blurred boundaries between informal and formal. Over time, with development and population boom in the cities, urban settlements have become genuine residences for a mix of different groups of people, including employees of both public and private sectors. Understanding these diverse perspectives might require a 'a more nuanced, reflexive approach to the craft and profession' (Robie 2019, p. 13), such as talanoa journalism or critical development journalism. And to some extent, the media's limitations in reporting fairly and responsibly may lie and be further considered within the domains of journalism education.

Meanwhile, the mainstream media's limitations in representing the voices of settlement residents might be partially covered by the development of social media and community media projects wherein voices of individuals can be heard. For example, realising the impact and importance of the news on social media, the National Capital District Youth Desk and Public Relations Department initiated a five-day training for settlement youth on how to use social media responsibly

'so that their voices can be heard by those in authority' (Workshop helps settlement youth, 2019). Similar to the storytelling and photovoice workshop, such training and engagement opens up a space for people to narrate and create their own stories. Supporting such initiatives builds on local structures and contexts.

Conclusion

In this article we have discussed the representation of settlement communities in PNG through online media representation and through personal stories from market vendors in Kamkumung Settlement Lae. We have highlighted the need for increased representation of voices of residents to be reflected in the media. We have argued that, by better understanding the context and personal experience of residents, journalists and the media could make a stronger contribution to sustainable development and urban planning in PNG, as well as to improving general understanding of the root causes of issues experienced. Demonstrated by research conducted in urban settlements, local solutions are key in creating sustainable solutions for settlement communities. Taking this on board, the media can, if taking a critical development journalism approach, play an important role in supporting settlement communities. Such an approach might feature more strongly in education and training of journalists in the Pacific, in order that they may advocate for those who are underrepresented in the mainstream media.

The study was limited in that it did not involve speaking with journalists, and limited its scope to online searches. Further research could include the involvement of journalists to obtain their perspectives. Collaborative workshops might provide further insights into the different perspectives. This article can inform the further development of such community-based interventions, in order to strengthen settlement residents' voices. For the Kamkumung community, their next step is the organisation of an exhibition to share their stories. It is their hope that those in decision-making positions, and the media, can attend their exhibition and see and hear their stories.

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A meta-analysis of hate speech in Indonesia

The yielding of academic discourse to the discourse of authority

Abstract: This article focuses on academic publications about hate speech within Indonesia's scholarly context. The authors analyse the ongoing discourse on hate speech by conducting a meta-analysis method on 'Garuda', an official website designed as a repository of scholarly publications in Indonesia. By examined 143 scientific articles, this study found that most studies refer to the definition of hate speech from the Circular No. SE/06/X2015 on hate speech issued by the Indonesian National Police. This shows how most Indonesian academics were comfortable with a limited perspective on hate speech. Furthermore, the variety of studies on hate speech comes from law or legal studies and communication or *da'wah* communication. Most Indonesian academics also conducted studies on hate speech with a juridical normative approach, as well as qualitative research. Furthermore, some studies have been done with unclear methods and approaches. Academics ideally should serve the people by being critics of power and government apparatus, for example by continuing to question how hate speech is studied, including in the context of its definition and how it affects the implementation in Indonesia. Hence, the authors urge Indonesian academics to do more studies on hate speech from various backgrounds with more rigorous and various research methods to be able to expand knowledge about hate speech cases in Indonesia.

Keywords: communication, defamation, discourse analysis, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, hate speech, hate speech policy, Indonesia, internet, meta-analysis, social media

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Introduction

INTENSE international debates have been occurring about hate speech around the world (Heinze, 2016). The scope of discussion spans from its relation to freedom of expression and freedom of speech where any regulation and

attempts to limit hate speech are seen as a contradiction with particular notions such as the individual's right to express an opinion (Yong, 2011; Bleich, 2013; Bangstad, 2014; Heinze, 2016) and normative law (Brown, 2015). Furthermore, academic discourse on news media, such as the internet and social media, have also contributed to the escalation of studies on hate speech (Brown, 2017; Pohjonen & Udupa, 2017; Ross, 2018; Cohen-Almagor, 2018).

In Indonesia, hate speech studies have increased since 2015, especially after the national police issued Circular No. SE/06/X2015 on hate speech (hereafter referred to as 'HS Circular'). Such a circular has proven to have a significant influence, especially on academic discourse related to hate speech in Indonesia. At least in the range of April 2015-October 2019, after the issuing of the circular, 41 articles were published in scientific journals in Indonesia, which were identified through 'Garuda' a repository for Indonesian scientific articles (Adiprasetio & Wibowo, 2020). Before the the circular was issued, there was only one article which studied hate speech. Hence, it can be said that the HS Circular issued by the national police has to some extent affected the academic conversations related to hate speech. In 2015, various sides were concerned about the issuance of the HS Circular by the police since the regulation included catchall articles—namely 310 and 311 of the *Criminal Code (KUHP)* regarding defamation (Firdaus, 2015). In Indonesia, this has been colloquially referred to as *pasal karet,* or 'rubber clauses'. Furthermore, some lawyers have called for the revocation of the HS Circular for the following reason:

> [HS Circular] could cause misperceptions in society, particularly because it could be considered as a limitation of the freedom of expression...The forms of hate speech mentioned are the same as those stipulated in the *Criminal Code*, including libel, defamation, unpleasant conduct, provocation, inciting violence and spreading lies...[and] the police did not need to issue such a circular in the first place because regulations on hate speech were found in a number of articles in existing regulations. (*The Jakarta Post*, 2015).

These lawyers warn that the obfuscation of the hate speech definition has the potential to make all forms of violations of the law mentioned above (ie: libel, defamation, unpleasant conduct, provocation, inciting violence and spreading lies) to be categorised as hate speech. In addition, the circular also stated that the police would 'prioritise the function of guidance to conduct counselling or outreach to the community regarding hate speech and the negative impacts that will occur', in which the government definition of hate speech which was formulated arbitrarily and caused various concerns will be used as an authoritative source for information to the wider public (Purnomo, 2020). Furthermore, relating to online communication, Indonesia has a specific law or *undang-undang*

(UU) concerning Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE). This law—*UU No. 11 2008* which was later revised to *Act No. 19, 2016*—regulates online hate speech and defamation where it also refers to articles 310 and 311 of the *Criminal Code (KUHP).* Unclear definition of hate speech in the online context also became a threat to democracy and freedom of expression. More than half of the cases on the violation of ITE Law during 2014-2019 were being categorised as 'hate speech' and 'insults' towards the president (Hamid, 2019).

Furthermore, prevention of hate speech is also repeatedly used as a basis for taking excessive action against the democratic movement such as the enforcement of internet blackouts during protests in Papua after an attack on Papuan student dormitories in Surabaya; the dissolution and arrests of protesters and activists in Jakarta and Bandung that enforced the controversial *Omnibus Law* which allegedly only benefits the oligarchs and various other incidents (Idris, 2019; Nastiti, 2020; Permana & Ferdinan, 2020). Since the enactment of the ITE Law, the police have handled 1,338 cases in 2017, 2,552 cases in 2018, and 3,005 cases until October 2019 which shows an increase in the number of cases that occur each year. The most used articles in the law to report the cases are article 27 paragraph 3 of the ITE Law (Defamation) followed by article 28 paragraph 2 (on hatred). The ITE Law has also been used arbitrarily for the advantage of the government, according to one of the organisations in Indonesia which works to monitor digital rights in Indonesia, SAFEnet, as follows.

> The emergence of public officials and state apparatus as perpetrators of criminalization, shows that the ITE Law has increasingly been wrongly used to silence critical voices of public policy. Criminalisation in the digital world is in line with the increasing repressive acts toward citizens who voiced their aspirations in the middle of the political year and afterwards. (SAFEnet, 2020, p. 21)

Thus far there are no comprehensive meta-analysis studies which systematically examine the ongoing development of academic research related to hate speech in Indonesia. The purpose of this article is to present a referential framework related to the definition of hate speech from the production and reproduction of scientific publications on hate speech in Indonesia after the issuance of the HS Circular. Consequently, this article tries to describe the connection between academic discourse and authoritative discourse from government officials. Within this regard, this article also tries to contextualise how hate speech definitions around the world have always been debatable and there is no single perspective on hate speech that works universally. There is always negotiation in the effort to define and categorise hate speech which involves various disciplines, ranging from applied linguistics, law, discourse analysis, sociology, social psychology to communication studies (Brown, 2015; Paz et al., 2020).

In addition, until now, there have been very limited social science studies using meta-analysis in an Indonesian context. Hence, we argue that there are difficulties in mapping the variety of studies that have been carried out by Indonesian social scientists. This study seeks to fill the gap and enrich the horizons of meta-analysis research in Indonesia.

Method

It can be said that in modern science, advancement will rely on generalizations that can be drawn from previous studies. The achievements and explorations that have been carried out by researchers in particular fields can become the parameters of the development of those fields (Kamhawi & Weaver, 2003). In this context, the reference for the meta-analysis method we use are primarily those in the context of communication research, as a field that sees hate speech as an act of communication (Rains et al., 2020). Meta-analysis generally refers to an approach to summarize the mapping of research quantitatively using various statistical methods There has been considerable attention by American and European scholars to the meta-analysis approach. It has been said that meta-analysis can enrich the study of communication science if it is carried out in various scopes of study (Borenstein et al., 2009; Hunter & Schmidt, 2014).

Early promoters of the meta-analysis approach, Alice H. Eagly and John E. Hunter in the 1990s trained doctoral students who focused on the scope of communication research. Eagly and Hunter and their students compiled several volumes of meta-analyses in a broad field of communications research (Johnson et al., 2008), including persuasion (Allen & Preiss, 1998), interpersonal communication (Gayle et al., 2002) mass communication (Kamhawi & Weaver, 2003) as well as an evolving meta-analytical approach to one of the fast-growing sub-disciplines of communication science—health communication (Noar, 2006). Along with many other outputs, the *Communications Yearbook* in particular welcomes meta-analytic reviews. The International Communications Association annually presents the John E. Hunter Memorial Award for the best meta-analysis in communications (Johnson et al., 2008).

A limited number of systematic reviews of research and/or meta-analysis studies in Indonesia make it very difficult to measure achievements by scholars of communication science in Indonesia (Bajari, 2017). This is inversely proportional to studies in Europe and the United States. Since the first two publications with a meta-analysis approach were published in communication journals in 1984 (Boster & Mongeau, 1984), which appear in journals of the International Communication Association, including the journal *Human Communication Research*, communication scholars in Europe and America are starting to use meta-analysis. In the period of 1984 to 2005, 150 articles were published using the meta-analysis method. There are at least three articles that use a meta-analysis

approach per year in this three-decade period (Rains et al., 2018). Meanwhile, between 2006 and 2015, this figure increased to more than eight meta-analyses per year (Rains et al., 2020).

Most meta-analysis studies in America tend to focus on examining the consistency of the relationship and influence between variables in a particular study area. This is of course due to the attention of American scholars towards quantitative studies in various fields (Kamhawi & Weaver, 2003; Kim et al., 2014; Taipale & Fortunati, 2014). This situation is very different from that in Indonesia, where existing studies in various sciences of communication studies are likely to be dominated by studies using a qualitative approach. One that is highly likely to be adopted by scholars of communication science in Indonesia is to apply a qualitative meta-analysis approach. The qualitative approach to meta-analysis itself has been developed in many branches of science (Paterson et al., 2001), and several parallel approaches were developed in sociology since the 1950s and subsequently developed in the early 1990s (Ritzer, 1990). Furthermore, in recent decades several versions of qualitative meta-analysis have been used in sociology (Zhao, 1991) and anthropology (Kaplan & Mack, 2010).

This article uses a meta-analysis method to analyse 143 scientific articles published in various scientific journals of educational institutions in Indonesia. The data is compiled from the portal garuda.ristekdikti.go.id, which is a platform created by the Ministry of Research and Technology, Indonesia for searching for Indonesian scientific articles (Subroto, 2014). Such a platform is perceived as a place for authoritative scientific publications in Indonesia. The criteria for articles that are included are articles that use hate speech terminology and/or hate speech in the title or its abstract. After the articles were collected, they were categorised or coded according to four broad frameworks: scientific disciplines, references to hate speech, methodology and research methods.

The categorisation process was carried out by two coders to classify articles based on four variables with each category. Scientific discipline is divided into eight categories; Law, Communication and/or Da'wah Communication (propagation of Islamic teaching), Religion, Informatics and/or Computer Science, Language/Linguistics and Non-Communication Social Sciences, while the other three variables of references to hate speech, methodology and research method are categorised as inductive coding based on the findings contained in each article. All data encoded by the two coders were then tested with the intercoder reliability test using Krippendorf's α, which met or exceeded .80 for all variables, and after discussion, complete agreement was reached on low-incidence categories (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2011).

Results and discussion

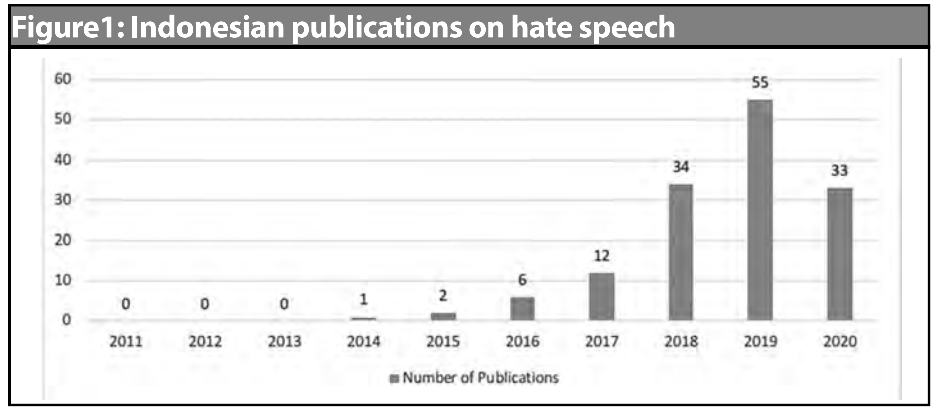
Based on the analysis from all abstracts of publications in the Indonesian language on the Garuda Portal in the past decade, it can be seen that in the period

before 2014, there were no publications that used the term 'hate speech'. Hate speech only entered this forum of academic discourse in 2014 through Ahnaf & Suhadi's article (2014) entitled *Isu-Isu Kunci Ujaran Kebencian (Hate Speech): Implikasinya terhadap Gerakan Sosial Membangun Toleransi (Key Issues of Hate Speech: Implications for Social Movements on Building Tolerance)*, which was published in *Jurnal Harmoni* belonging to the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. The article discusses how to formulate appropriate policies for hate speech regulations in Indonesia. This is important since hate speech presents a challenge for the democratisation process in Indonesia, especially in relation to religious freedom for and tolerance of religious minorities. However, on the other hand, the law enforcement process against hate speech risks restoring the repression that happened in the New Order period, where the categories of SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-Golongan* or Ethnicity, Religion, Race, Inter-Group Relations) were used to suppress political opposition (Ahnaf & Suhadi, 2014). After the national police issued the HS Circular in 2015, scientific publications related to hate speech increased rapidly. In 2015, two articles were published; in 2016, six articles were published; in 2017 the number doubled compared to the previous year, with 12 articles; in 2018 it nearly tripled compared to the previous year, with 34 articles; and in 2019 the number of articles continued to increase again with 55 articles in one year. Only in 2020, has the quantity decreased to 33 articles (Figure 1).

In the same month as the publication of the HS Circular, in October 2015 an article was published discussing the existence and legal position of the circular as a technical reference or guideline for taking action against hate speech (Ryanto, 2015). Two months later, in December, an article was published discussing the handling of HS circular within the framework of human rights (Anam & Hafiz, 2015) in which there is a recommendation for the handling of suspects of hate speech which must first be based on an assessment of context; speakers/actors; intention; messages or content; and procedure or the form of delivering messages. However, in general, Anam and Hafiz (2015) did not problematise the definitions and criteria of hate speech used in the HS Circular.

The problem of defining hate speech was outlined in a case relating to defamation that befell Prita Mulyasari in 2008 when her personal email protesting against the misdiagnosis by Omni International Hospital was spread on social media (Wisnu & Wulandari, 2009). The broadness of the definition of defamation allows legal clauses relating to legal claims of defamation to be misused, as happened to Prita. Therefore, it is also possible that having too broad a definition of hate speech could also lead to the Circular being misused. In a similar case in 2019, the Mimika police in Papua arrested AY, a worker at the gold and copper miner PT Freeport Indonesia, for making a video that police have described as 'hate speech against Indonesia' and distributing it on social media. AY made a

Figure1: Indonesian publications on hate speech



short video of his young son expressing opposition to Indonesia's sovereignty over Papua, and the video was then posted on Facebook (*The Jakarta Post,* 2018). Despite the police not arresting the child, it set a precedent that the hate speech as a category can be used to limit freedom of expression. The problem of hate speech definition was repeated in a third case in 2020 when 'Jerinx' (I Gede Ari Astina, a Balinese musician who is part of the punk-rock band Superman Is Dead) criticised the Indonesian Medical Association (IDI) in terms of handling the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Jerinx called them 'WHO lackeys' and indicated that women and babies were at risk of dying due to the Rapid COVID-19 tests. He was sentenced to one year and two months in prison by a panel of judges at the Denpasar District Court, Bali, over hate speech (Channel News Asia, 2020; *K*umparanNews, 2020).

Increasingly, a broad definition of hate speech does not only target individuals as in the cases of Prita Mulyasari, AY and Jerinx, but also Indonesia's democratic progress. One example is the arrest and persecution of demonstrators in August 2019 in Papua, at a demonstration initially sparked by acts of racism and attacks on student dormitories in Surabaya. In addition to the arrests, the prevention of hate speech was used as the basis for the Indonesian authorities to implement a total internet blackout throughout Papua on 22 August 2019. The blackout continued until 6 September when it was partially lifted for several regions, with the complete lifting of the blackout only occurring on 11 September 2019. Despite broad criticism from human rights activists, reporters, and Papuan civilians realising their daily activities was severely hindered by the blackout, Indonesian authorities defended the decision as necessary to prevent the spread of hate speech that may worsen the protests (Setkab, 2019). Apart from this major event, the police dispersal and violence against Deiyai students in Jayapura city was also based on allegations that students who were conveying their aspirations had committed hate speech. In fact, based on the available testimonies and video evidence, those who pronounced profanities first came

from the police, not from the protesters (Agapa, 2020). In the end, hate speech becomes a political category that is vulnerable to being used by those in power.

From the 20 earliest scientific publications in Bahasa Indonesia that were published after the publication of HS Circular in the 2015-2017 period, 11 articles specifically used the circular as the focus of the research. Almost all articles in that period tried to explain juridical aspects of the circular (e.g., Kusuma & P. Lubis, 2016; Mangantibe, 2016; Sari, 2016). From these examples, it can be seen that there is a tendency to primarily rely on the definition of hate speech from the HS Circular without problematising the classification of hate speech. The first 20 publications related to hate speech after the publication of HS Circular were dominated by studies from law or legal studies with nine articles, or from communication studies with six articles; there was only one article each from non-communication fields and informatics.

Most articles discussed the contextualisation of the HS Circular on the eradication of hate speech. Figure 2 shows that the configuration of the first 20 publications did not change much until the end of 2020. Articles written on the topic of hate speech by the end of 2020 totaled 143. The majority of articles came from the perspective of law or legal studies, amounting to 48 articles or 33.57 percent of total publications. Furthermore, 43 articles or 30.07 percent came from communication science and *da'wah* communication fields, 18 articles or 12.59 percent came from computer science and informatics, 7 articles or 4.90 percent came from religious studies, and 17 articles or 11.89 percent come from the language and linguistics studies. The remaining 10 articles or 6.99 percent came from other non-communication social sciences.

The influence of juridical discourse is evident in the epistemic field of hate speech, which is indicated by the high number of articles produced by legal studies, beyond the disciplines of communication science and *da'wah* communication, language or linguistics, computer science and informatics, social science and religious studies. Even so, studies that exist within the scope of law as the discipline tend to take a normative perspective, with the consequence that the research questions presented are limited to the objectives and legal justifications for how the police and legal system are handling alleged cases of hate speech, but not at the root of the epistemological basis of hate speech. There is no attempt to question and critically analyse the definition of hate speech applied in the Indonesian jurisdiction.

There is insufficient attention from communications scientists and social scientists to explore the communicative and socio-cultural dimensions on hate speech within Indonesian epistemic discourse. This is worrying since the discourse on hate speech that operates in a particular place or country is dependent on the history of those countries, the lived experience of its people, the socio-political situations, and various other factors, including for example how inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations work within a particular context of interaction

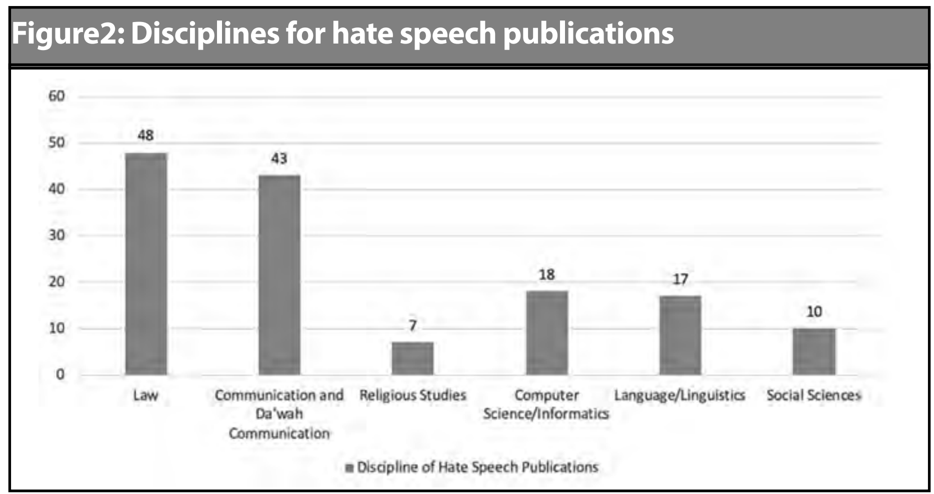


Figure2: Disciplines for hate speech publications

(Baker, 2012; Brown, 2015). The 17 articles from the disciplines of language and linguistics published before the end of 2020 also do not discuss 'expressions' in various conversations related to hate speech, even though expression is related to, for example, differences between hate speech, slander, manipulation, insult, defamation, sarcasm and even irony.

In a period when the actions of people were criminalised by the articles of hate speech that refer to the HS Circular, ITE Law and Criminal Code, Indonesian academics seemed to fail to provide input related to vague definitions of hate speech and irregularities in many hate speech related cases. In-depth, multi-perspective discussions related to hate speech do not get adequate space in the epistemic map of Indonesian science. In fact, there is no article that specifically tries to elaborate on the philosophical and fundamental aspects of hate speech as a definitive category in Indonesian public discourse. This results in the absence of a formulation of definitions and limitations related to hate speech in the context of Indonesian society which is multi-ethnic and has a variety of communicative cultural contexts.

The absence of various discussions regarding the definition of hate speech is also reflected in the reference used for the definition of hate speech which can be seen in Figure 3. A total of 79 articles, or 55.2 percent of the articles used the HS Circular as the main reference for the definition of hate speech. 31 articles, or 21.7 percent used literature sourced from various foreign academics, 21 articles, or 14.7 percent of articles used literature from Indonesian academics. Furthermore, 5 articles, or 3.5 percent used the Council of Europe definition of hate speech, 4 articles, or 2.8 percent used the definition from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 4 articles, or 2.8 percent used the definition from UNESCO, 4 articles, or 2.8 percent used definitions from the *Oxford Dictionary*, 3 articles, or 2.1 percent used definitions from The Indonesian

National Commission of Human Rights (Komnas HAM). Finally, 3 articles or 2.1 percent used articles from the *Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language (KBBI),* 2 articles, or 1.4 percent used the definition from 'fatwa' or religious rules from Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, or MUI) No. 24 of 2017, and one article each used the definition from *Black's Law Dictionary* and the definition from the Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality.

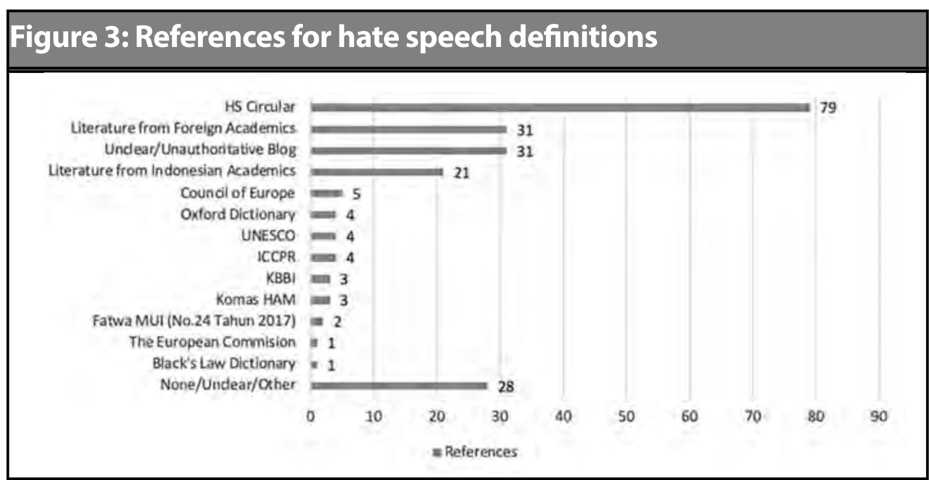
Of the 143 articles, there are 31 articles or 21.7 percent, which use Wikipedia or Unclear/Unauthoritative Blogs as the main reference. In fact, 28 articles, or 19.6 percent did not include the literature as a source for the definition of hate speech that was used as a reference. This means that there are studies on hate speech which rely on unclear references, and even without reference to established literature at all. The data shows that the Indonesian academic study on hate speech is not adequately written with coherent analysis, so that the contribution of the study is limited to only describing a particular case or phenomena without providing much needed detailed, comprehensive, and contextual explanations of various aspects related to the hate speech phenomenon. It can be said that this also causes an absence of comprehensive and integrated solutions to solve the problem of hate speech in Indonesia.

The scope of the articles using the HS Circular as a reference shows how authority has a discursive role in defining the map of academic discourse regarding hate speech. Even literature from foreign writers as well as literature from Indonesian writers occupies a position that is not dominant in the basis of defining hate speech. This definitional problem becomes crucial, although several articles were written with the aim of elaborating the position of the HS Circular and the scope of hate speech, but referentially we can see a problem when text produced by the police is used as an authoritative, unquestioned text and becomes the main reference in academic discourse.

Regarding the methodology, in Figure 4, it can be seen that the majority of articles we encountered used qualitative methods, namely 49 articles, or 34.27 percent of the total. Furthermore, quite a number of articles were written with juridical analysis, as many as 36 articles, or 25.17 percent. There were 17 articles with quantitative methods or 11.89 percent. There are 11 articles or 11.89 percent which use programming language/algorithms for analysis. Articles using mixed method amounted to 2 or 1.40 percent. We also found 3 articles or 7.32 percent containing the description of activities, models or concepts related to Community Service (*Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat,* or PKM), where articles of this type are usually published in journals that specifically discuss Community Service. The remaining 19 articles, or 13.29 percent, were descriptive articles written without a specific and clear methodology.

Meanwhile, if the various research methods described above are categorised in more detail, it can be seen that normative juridical analysis occupies a dominant

Figure 3: References for hate speech definitions



position when compared to other methods comprising 28 articles or 19.6 percent of the total. In the second position is the survey method with 13 articles or 9.1 percent. Furthermore, in third place are 11 articles or 7.7 percent using qualitative descriptive methods. In fourth position are quantitative descriptive analysis with 8 articles or 5.6 percent and in fifth position are articles which are qualitative content analyses with 7 articles or 4.9 percent of all articles related to hate speech, followed by articles using other methods which can be seen in Figure 5.

Limited references related to hate speech create a fundamental problem on the epistemological map of Indonesia in relation to the discourse of conversation, especially in relation to verbal and symbolic violence. The lack of use of references from previous studies and especially from outside Indonesia, shows that studies related to hate speech in Indonesia are ahistorical and not progressive in analysing hate speech. The dominance of the use of the police definition of hate speech shows that the reproduction of knowledge by the authorities can directly influence academic discourse in Indonesia, and not the other way around. Even when the definition put forward by police clearly obscures the boundaries of hate speech and defamation, this is not discussed as a topic of juridical study or communication and socio-cultural analysis. Hate speech itself in academic discourse outside Indonesia has been discussed in depth, through various perspectives. There is an agreement that although we can provide a definition related to hate speech, the effective analysis of hate speech can only be conducted if we carefully consider the various socio-cultural, political and historical aspects that exist within a particular context (Brown, 2015; Baker, 2012). Unfortunately, amid the chaos and suppression of criticism of the Indonesian government under the banner of limiting hate speech, many academics in Indonesia do not try to contradict or resist with a more nuanced and progressive approach related to hate speech discourse and resistant positions. Academics in Indonesia do indeed place hate speech in

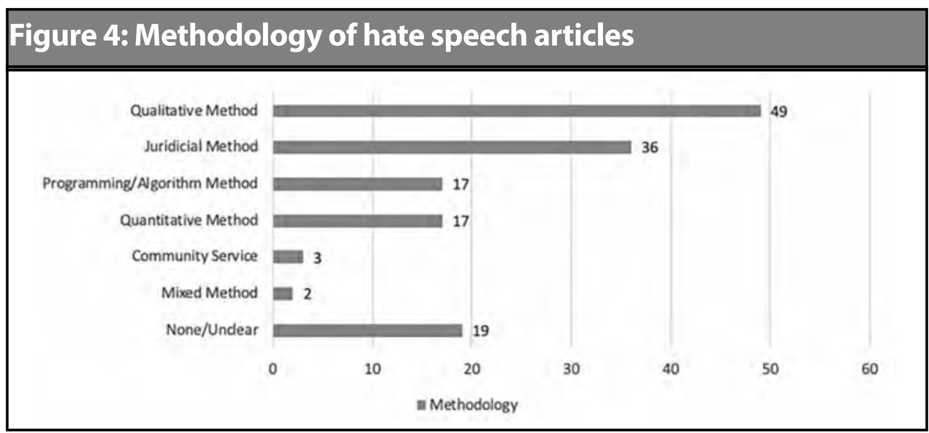


Figure 4: Methodology of hate speech articles

the discourse of research, but what happens is that the definition stipulated by law enforcement appears accepted and reproduced in an uncritical way.

Conclusions

There are ongoing debates on speech around the world (Heinze, 2016). The debates on hate speech are not only part of legal studies but are also related to the concept of various communication practices. In this context, it is necessary to examine how hate speech is also studied academically, and what kind of discourse exists related to hate speech. This study seeks to map the ongoing discourse on hate speech by conducting a meta-analysis of 143 scientific articles in the Indonesian language published in various scientific journals of educational institutions in Indonesia. The data is compiled from the portal http://garuda.ristekdikti.go.id/, which is a platform created by the Ministry of Research and Technology, Indonesia for searching Indonesian scientific articles (Subroto, 2014).

Our analysis shows that in the period before 2014, there were no publications that used the term 'hate speech'. Hate speech only entered the academic discourse in 2014 and began to develop rapidly in 2015 after the national police issued Hate Speech Circular No. SE/06/X2015. Starting from two articles published in 2015, then six articles in 2016, and then 12 articles in the 2017, 34 articles in 2018, 55 articles in 2019, and 33 articles in 2020. Within this context, it turns out that the HS Circular is the main reference of various academic articles that we have analysed. Some other articles use references from foreign and domestic academic sources, but there are also articles that do not use clear references and instead only refer to non-authoritative sites such as Wikipedia. This suggests that academic discourse related to hate speech in Indonesia is limited and strongly influenced by the HS Circular published by the National Police, even at the level of definitions of hate speech. In addition, this suggests limited exposure to peer-reviewed sources within and external to scientific disciplines in the academic

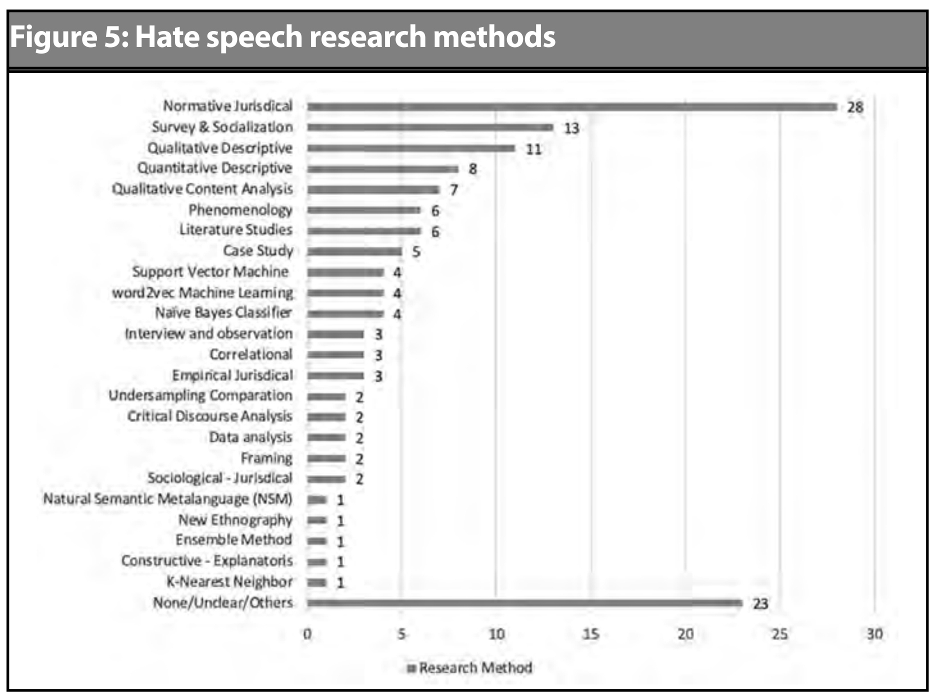


Figure 5: Hate speech research methods

world in Indonesia, and a failure to be able to problematise hate speech more broadly from various perspectives. With definitions of hate speech overlapping with concepts such as defamation, the HS Circular as a catchall source can be used to ensnare political opponents. In this case, articles related to hate speech are often used by authorities to silence critics of the government (SAFEnet, 2020)

Regarding the variants of disciplines that study hate speech, we find that the majority of studies are conducted in the context of the study of law. As to research approaches and methods, the majority of studies on hate speech were conducted with a juridical normative approach, as well as qualitative research. There have been quite a number of studies conducted with unclear approaches which shows that more studies on hate speech from various disciplines using a variety of research methods are urgently needed.

Ideally, in a democratic society, academic discourses should keep an eye on people in power and the government apparatus. Academics should be able to produce and reproduce counter-discourse on hate speech. Without a deep understanding of context, the hate speech circular will continue to ensnare unnecessary victims. Indonesian academics must not only be able to respond to the phenomenon of hate speech in an ontological manner, but further develop an epistemological map of hate speech. This is only possible with serious and in-depth studies of hate speech with methodological rigor and comparison with experiences and analyses that have previously been carried out in other countries.

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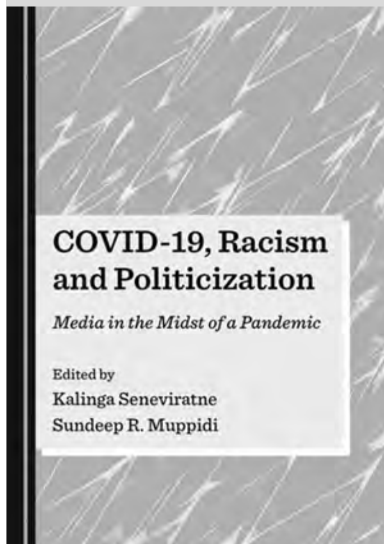
COVID-19, Racism and Politicization:
Media in the Midst of a Pandemic
Edited by Kalinga Seneviratne and Sundeep Muppidi
Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK



This book includes research done in several countries in Asia - and also Australia, New Zealand and the USA - on how the coverage of the rapidly spreading COVID-19 pandemic was covered in the first 6 to 9 months.

It provides an insight into how the media narrative developed in the initial stages of the pandemic, which is still prevalent to a large extent. The book explores how the Western media initially used the pandemic as a propaganda tool to condemn "draconian" measures taken by China. When it spread to the West, particularly the US, a blame game began pointing fingers at China. Chapters on Sri Lanka and New Zealand reflect how initial successes in controlling the virus and a positive media narrative provided thumping victories for the ruling parties in elections in 2020.

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PHOTOESSAY

Manus to Meanjin

A case study of refugee migration, polymorphic borders and Australian 'imperialism'

Abstract: This non-traditional research article argues that the refugee and asylum-seeker protests in Brisbane's Kangaroo Point between April 2, 2020 and April 14, 2021 can be viewed against a backdrop of Australian colonialism—where successive Australian governments have used former colonies in Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea as offshore detention facilities—as a dumping ground for asylum-seeker. Within the same context this article argues that the men's removal to the Kangaroo Point Alternative Place of Detention is a continuation of this colonial policy of incarcerating 'undesirables' on occupied land, in this case on Meanjin—Jagera land identified by the colonial name of Brisbane. This extension of Australian sub-imperial and neo-colonial dominion and the imagining of its boundaries is viewed through the theoretical prism of a polymorphic border, border that shifts and morphs depending on who attempts to cross it. In a departure from orthodox research practice, this article will use visual storytelling drawn from photojournalism praxis alongside more traditional text-based research prose. In doing so, it will use photojournalistic artifacts and the visual politics that surround them, as core dialogical components in the presentation of the article as opposed to using them as mere illustrations or props.

Keywords: asylum seekers, Australia, case studies, human rights journalism, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, photojournalism, polymorphic borders, refugees, research methodologies, storytelling, visual politics, visual storytelling

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Photojournalistic practice, research and the visual turn

THE CONVERSATION on refugee migration, and perhaps more poignantly its mediatisation, has largely focused on the linguistic framing of refugees, and their migration experience, within the wider space of social and political discourse—largely ignoring the visual.

Bleiker et al. (2013) argue this media framing often sidelines visual framing in contemporary research. They argue refugees are routinely dehumanised by representing them in groups devoid of 'recognisable facial features'. They note 'these dehumanising visual patterns reinforce a politics of fear…'. Furthermore, Höijer (2004) maintains that imagery shapes perception in a way that words cannot, 'The compassion that the audience expresses is often directly related to the documentary pictures they have seen…'. She argues, 'pictures, or more precisely our interpretations of pictures, can make indelible impressions on our minds, and as a distant audience we become bearers of inner pictures of human suffering' (p. 520).

Bleiker (2015) states 'images play an increasingly important role in global politics but pose significant and so far, largely unexplored methodological challenges'. He argues that humanities scholarship is increasingly acknowledging the potential of visual elements to generate meaning, so much so that we are now moving away from purely textual analyses and placing greater emphasis on the visual.

This renewed interest in visual methodology is positioned within a wider epistemological shift, from a 'linguistic turn'—the final series of turns in the history of philosophy outlined by the American philosopher Richard Rorty—to a 'visual turn' or what University of Chicago professor of art W.J.T. Mitchell (1995) dubbed a 'pictorial turn', the idea that challenges language as paradigmatic for meaning. He notes:

> …one might identify it with phenomenology's inquiry into imagination and visual experience; or with Derrida's 'grammatology', which de-centers the 'phonocentric' model of language by shifting attention to the visible, material traces of writing; or with the Frankfurt School's investigations of modernity, mass culture, and visual media; or with Michel Foucault's insistence on a history and theory of power/knowledge that exposes the rift between the discursive and the 'visible', the seeable and the sayable, as the crucial faultline in 'scopic regimes' of modernity (1995, pp. 11-13).

Callahan (2015) takes this concept of a 'visual turn' and presents it as a new methodology in international relations discourse. Within a journalistic frame, it is not a stretch to assert therefore that Callahan's assertion can be taken further to argue that vision should be an equal partner in the meaning-making of trans-border reportage.

Such duality of the textual and visual in meaning-making then, suggests the image can not only be studied, analysed and explained though text, but sit alongside text in the academic analysis of reality. It can then be posited, that a theorisation of the journalistic interpretation of the 'reality' of refugee migration need not be presented as a purely textual analysis, as is tradition, but through a composite of textual and visual elements.

Positioned within a wide range of academic studies that explore journalism praxis and research (Bacon, 2006, 2012; Nash, 2013; Lindgren & Phillips 2011; Robie, 2015; Robie & Marbrook, 2020), this article will harness this visual dialogue within a journalistic practice-led research paradigm to explore the nexus between the refugee and asylum-seeker protests in Brisbane's Kangaroo Point and Australia's colonial past and the polymorphic borders of its neo-colonial present.

Refugee migration and Australian immigration detention

The refugee protests in Brisbane began when a group of refugees stepped out onto a balcony overlooking Route 15 to Storey Bridge on 2 April 2020, holding handwritten pleas for freedom. The protest would last from 2 April 2020 to 14 April 2021, ebbing, flowing and morphing from a balcony protest to an around-the-clock-blockade and variously traffic-stopping rallies and night-time vigils. But the root of the protests runs deeper, through two decades of oppressive refugee policies to a bedrock of what Australian historian Humphrey McQueen (2004) calls Australia's sub-imperialist mindset.

Most of the 120 men locked up in the Kangaroo Point Alternative Place of Detention, sought asylum in Australia after the second Rudd government took the hardline position of refusing to settle any asylum seekers coming to Australia by boat. Some missed the deadline by mere days, others were already at sea when the Prime Ministerial edict was issued. With their boats intercepted, the asylum seekers were first sent to the Australian external territory of Christmas Island and from there to Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island. The result was eight agonising years of immigration purgatory.

But the government had good reason to believe the position was both popularly supported and politically advantageous. Markus and Arunachalam note '… while there is majority support for the right to seek asylum, in response to questions on boat arrivals strong negative views outnumber the strong positive by more than two to one' (2018). The Lowy Institute's Munro and Oliver (2019) noted '(i)n 2018, large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into Australia' was seen as a critical threat by 40 percent of Australians, essentially unchanged from the previous time the question had been asked in 2009 when it was 39 percent'. Studies of public attitudes towards people seeking asylum in Australia suggest they are often labelled as 'illegal immigrants', 'queue jumpers', 'bogus' refugees and 'economic migrants' (Gelber, 2003; Every & Augoustinos, 2008; Laughland-Booÿ et al., 2014; McKay et al., 2012).

While media representation is not exclusively responsible for public opinion of refugee migration, a significant number of studies show public perceptions are shaped though media coverage (McKay, 2012). These negative perspectives are mirrored in the media coverage where the portrayal is either overwhelmingly negative (Bleiker et al., 2013, O'Doherty and Lecouteur 2007; Pickering 2001,

Saxton, 2003), or polarised (Lippi, 2020). These narratives while negative, are also rather limiting in contextualising refugee migration both within the reality and complexities of trans-border migration and the wider geo-politics of imagining, nations, sovereignty, 'us' and 'them'.

Within the Australian context this identity formation, the inclusion, exclusion and even the presentation of offshore detention as a solution, can be viewed through what McQueen (2004) calls Australia's sub-imperialism.

Cognisant of this wider framing and the limited depth of analytical reportage of refugee migration in the mainstream media, this article posits a photojournalism-centric visual storytelling methodology, is able to produce a counterhegemonic narrative of refugee migration, situating Australia's treatment of refugees within largely subterranean colonial and neo-colonial thinking that has prevailed throughout much of Australia's history. It also argues the media framing of refugee migration needs to be represented as a transborder issue across multiple polymorphic borders, challenging the Australian government's hegemonic representation of the border as an omnipotent and uniform structure perfectly defining the edges of Australia.

Kangaroo Point protests

On 13 July 2019, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd declared that no asylum seeker arriving by boat would be settled in Australia. From this point on, those people would be referred to as 'transitory persons', and their stay would be considered by the government to be temporary. Who exactly this affected is difficult to ascertain as demographic data on refugees and asylum seekers in Australia's various detention centres is not easily accessible and even at a political level there is often little transparency, with only select data released through avenues such as Senate Estimates hearings. For example, in response to a question from Greens Senator Nick McKim, the Immigration and Border Protection Portfolio noted on 29 March 2017, that

> (B)etween 19 July 2013 and the last boat arrival on 27 July 2014, 79 boats arrived in Australia. There has not been a boat arrival in more than 950 days. Of the individuals on board, 1,596 were transferred to the Nauru Regional Processing Centre, 1,523 were transferred to the Manus Regional Processing Centre and 1,414 were issued with bridging visas in Australia.

The decision to grant bridging visas for some and not others was explained away as the Minister exercising his 'non-delegable personal power'. The process remains opaque, and the resultant statistics are stripped of even the most basic of humanising, demographic information. This bureaucratic dehumanisation is reflected in the lived experiences of the asylum seekers themselves.

An Iranian refugee who was sent from Christmas Island to Manus and from

there to Kangaroo Point said 'the Australian government did everything they could not to refer to us as refugees or asylum seekers. I was "a client" in Christmas Island, "the transferee" on Manus Island, "a resident" after the Supreme Court ruling, and a "detainee" at Kangaroo Point'. The ruling refers to the 2016 PNG Supreme Court decision that declared the detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island, under arrangement with Australia, a breach of the refugees' right to personal liberty under the Papua New Guinea Constitution.

Most of the men in offshore detention were eventually acknowledged as official refugees. But the conservative Liberal governments of Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison continued their Labor predecessor's policy and have refused to settle even those with official refugee status. Instead, they have been offered ongoing limbo or an excruciatingly slow settlement process in the US under a deal to swap Australian refugees with US refugees.

Nonetheless, the Australian government still had responsibility for the detainees, which included provision of medical care. However, lengthy delays in the medical evacuation regime, led to calls for a new framework, paving the way for Independent MP Dr Kerryn Phelps to introduce the Medevac Bill to parliament. On 1 March 2019, Medevac became law authorising doctors to make medical rulings to evacuate refugees and asylum seekers detained on Manus and Nauru to Australia for urgent medical treatment. By the time the Law was repealed on 8 December 2019, 192 detainees had been evacuated under the legislation (Kaldor Centre, 2020). The problem was, the refugees who had been transferred to Australia for medical treatment had not been granted a visa authorising entry, so they were placed in detention—primarily at the Kangaroo Point APoD, and Melbourne's Park Hotel APoD.

And so it was that 120 Medevac refugees were locked in at the Kangaroo Point APoD when Queensland entered a hard COVID lockdown on April 2, 2020.

Offshore detention and Australia's sub-imperialism:

In his provocative analysis of Australia's birth as a nation, *A New Britannia*, McQueen (2004) argues that for much of Australia's history, the colonists who occupied the continent as an outpost of the British Empire have in return, viewed the neighbouring Pacific region though Australia's own version of a 'Monroe Doctrine', exhibiting sub-imperial tendencies first as a group of pre-federation British colonies and later as federated neo-colonialists—where the colonial dominion of the Pacific shifted from Britain to Australia.

Tod Moore's (2015) study of liberal imperialist thought in Australia as expressed though the Imperial Federation League and the friends and associates of Protectionist and later Liberal Party Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, presents an image of an Australia imagining itself as member of federated empire. Thompson's (1972) critique of the Australian Labor Party and Australian imperialism suggest similar sentiments

Figure 1: 'I miss my wife and son. They are in community.'

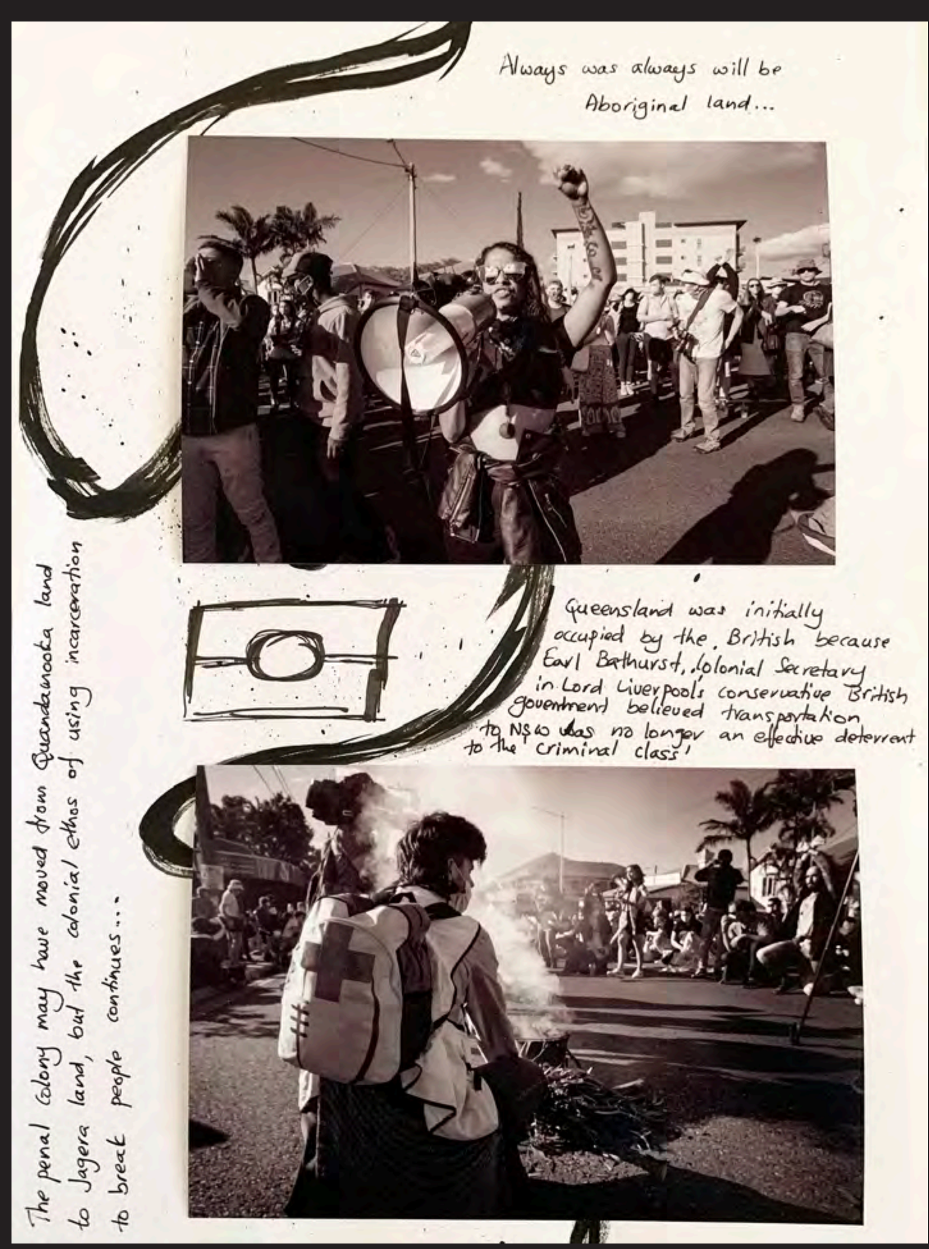

Figure 2: 'Always was always will be Aboriginal land …'

on the other side of the political divide, albeit with some xenophobic reservations. He notes that while the Victorian Labor party organ *The Tocsin* feared imperialism would only benefit a few 'fatmen', Brisbane's *The Worker* and Sydney's *The Australian Worker* feared the implications of access to a cheap 'black' workforce—and warned against the threat of 'black New Guinean labour sullying the purity of white Australia' (Thompson, 1972, p. 27).

Labor's xenophobia against the New Guineans, however, did not temper Australia's or (prior to federation) Queensland's sub-imperial designs on Papua New Guinea. As far back as 1883 Queensland pastoralist Premier Thomas McIlwraith had unilaterally attempted to annex eastern New Guinea to Queensland by raising the British flag in Port Moresby (Jacobs, 1952, p111; McQueen, 2004, p. 15); and by 1919, a now federated Australia formally annexed New Guinea under the Treaty of Versailles. In short, the Australian policy of sub-imperialism centred around securing dominion over New Guinea, while maintaining the ethnic purity of White Australia (O'Brien, 2009).

The Australian colonisation of Nauru runs along similar lines to that of its colonisation of Papua New Guinea, the only difference being New Zealand's sub-imperialism joining forces with Australian and British dominion of the tiny phosphorous-rich Pacific nation.

While Papua New Guinea was granted independence from Australia in 1975 under the Whitlam government, many analysts argue the 'master-servant' relationship continued long after independence (Ritchie, 2013).

Australian foreign aid – official development assistance as a percentage of gross national income—has been steadily declining for decades. Development Policy Institute's Robin Davies (2017) notes that Australia's highest ratio of aid to Gross National Income (GNI) was 0.48 percent under Prime Ministers Holt, McEwen and Gorton. Davies' argues, the much-publicised figure of 0.65 percent under Whitlam is based on inaccurate OECD data. Either way Australian aid as a percentage of GNI has today reached an all-time low—just 0.24 percent under John Howard between 2000-04, and even lower under the Abbot-Turnbull government at 0.22 percent in 2016. Aid further fell to a record low of 0.21 percent under Morrison in 2019-20, and while it marginally recovered in the following financial year, creeping up to 0.22 percent, it is estimated to dip below 0.20 percent in 2022-23.

Despite this downward trajectory of foreign aid, Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Papua New Guinea and the Pacific specifically have remained largely unchanged, with PNG becoming the largest recipient of Australian Aid in 2015-16 (Lowey Institute, 2016). While aid is most welcome and needed in the region, the 'pork barrelling' is seen by some analysts as an extension of Australian neo-colonialism, where aid is provided in exchange for PNG's role in allowing the redirection and detention of people seeking asylum in Australia.

This complex asymmetric partnership with Nauru and Papua New Guinea is central in framing and mediating the political reality of contemporary refugee migration, where Australia continues to use its former colonies in the Pacific, now tethered though the promise of ongoing foreign aid, as a buffer against irregular refugee migration into Australia.

Polymorphic borders

The selective immigration that has long been a hallmark of a white Australian immigration policy may no longer be as aggressive as it used to be, but it is nearly impossible to view Australia's response to irregular migration without reference to a culture of immigration discrimination. The visual representation of such an idea is intrinsically linked with the notion of understanding national borders as polymorphic, in that they not only are porous to some and impervious to others, but also shift and morph depending on who tries to cross.

Parochial political posturing has long tried to embed the notion of a robust and continuous border circling the continent, but the reality is there is no singular line to cross or marker buoy to pass to enter Australia—it remains contextual. A sailor entering Australian waters on luxury yacht can legally land on Queensland's northern beaches and be, for all intents and purposes, in Australia. Yet thanks to a 16 May 2013 legal device that excised virtually all of Australia's shoreline from the mainland for irregular migration purposes—a refugee arrival by boat landing on the same beach will never be considered to have set down in Australia

In their introduction to *Territory, Politics and Governance's* special issue on Polymorphic Borders, Burridge et al. (2017) say contemporary border studies describe state borders to be far more fragmented and chaotic than represented in traditional narrative of state borders whereby they are often defined as 'coherent, monstrous, omnipotent and omniscient', and are fixed and immovable. They write:

> Rather than being either strictly tied to the territorial margins of the states or ubiquitous throughout the entire territory of states, bordering takes on a variety of forms, agents, sites, practices and targets. We propose reconceptualising borders as polymorphic, or taking on a multiplicity of mutually non-exclusive forms at the same time. (2017, p. 239)

Such a concept of borders is particularly relevant in the mediated representation of the refugee crisis—where the men on the balcony physically standing inside a suburban hotel in Brisbane, Australia, are in many ways still positioned outside of Australia, somewhere in limbo between their last location on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea and their next destination which remains as of yet unknown. This reimaging of the nature of borders is also significant in understanding and challenging the 'stronger borders' rhetoric of successive Australian governments.

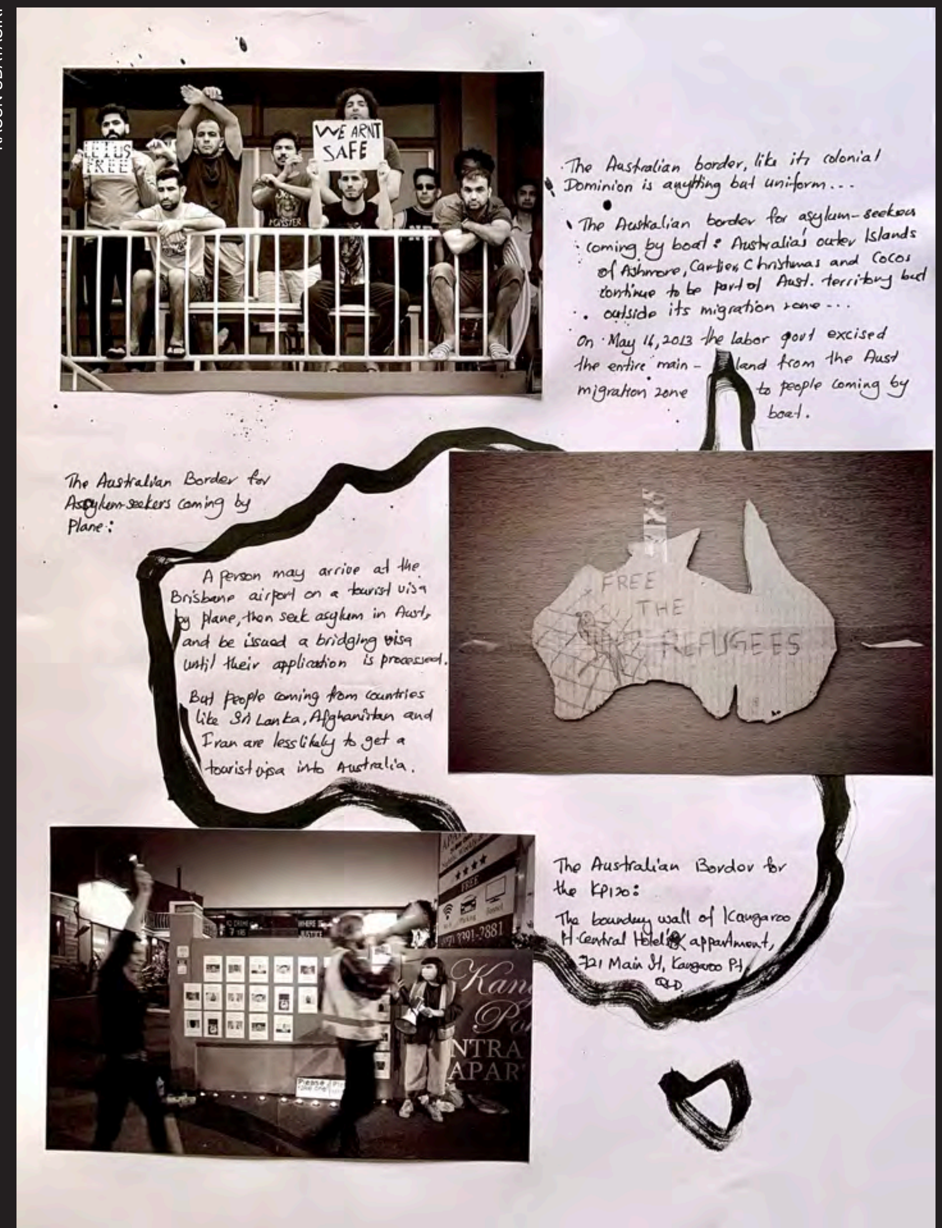

Figure 3: 'The Australian border, like its dominion, is anything but uniform.'

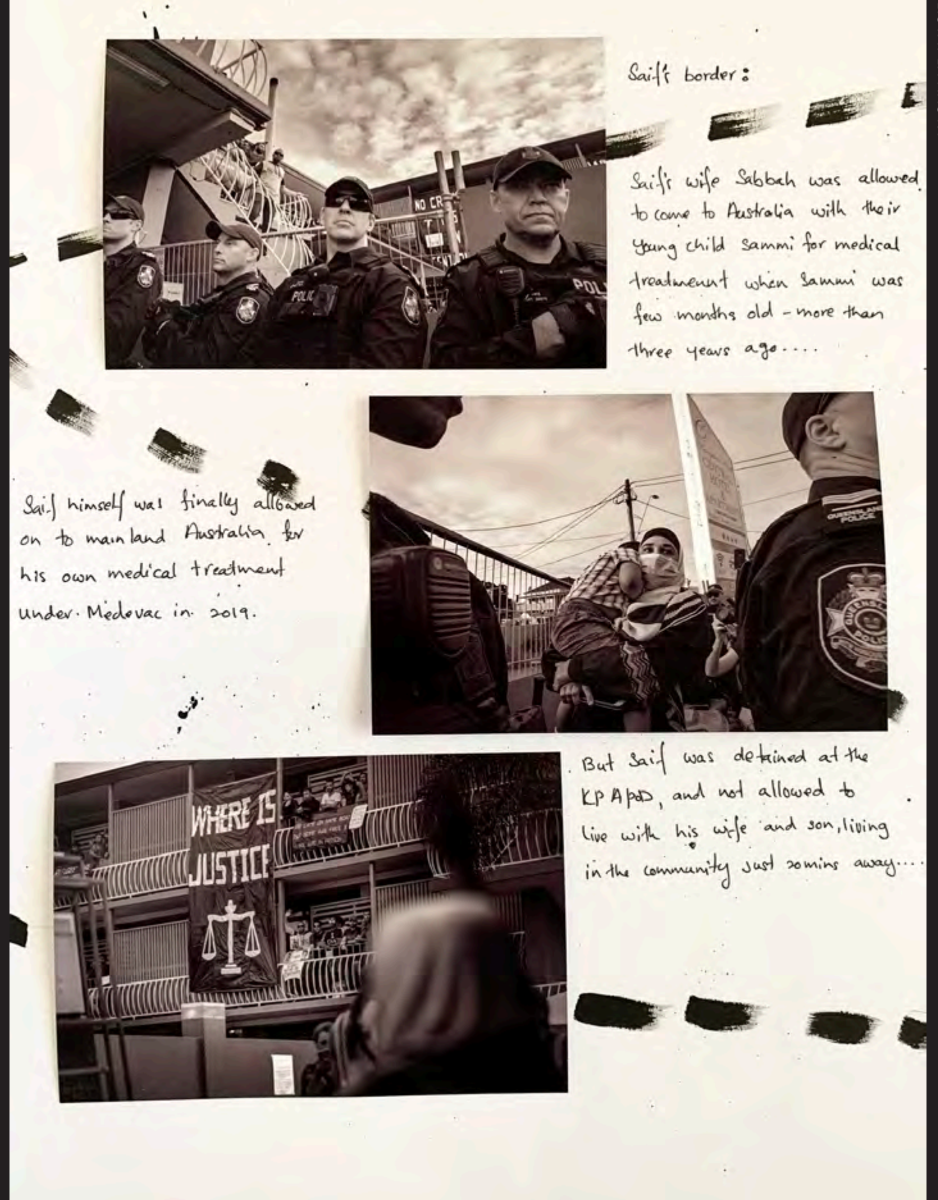

Figure 4: 'Saif's border: where is justice?'

Conclusion

The mediatised representation of the refugee migration reality in Australia can be situated within two interlocking meta-narratives, that of Australia's sub-imperialism and neo-colonialism, and the polymorphic nature of the border that it creates. Such a narrative challenges the political media hegemony of a strong border which is unified and omnipotent, instead of one that is largely contextual and conditional upon who tries to cross it.

The reach of Australia's new colonial dominion and the nature of its polymorphic border within that context is central in understanding the mediated reality of refugee migration in general, and the story of refugees who were detained at the Kangaroo Point Alternative Place of Detention in particular. Such a reading positions Brisbane's refugee protest as a localised border-war wherein the walls and wire of the hotel complex is an extension of the Australian border which is porous for some but impervious to others. The war wages between those with unfettered access, those trapped behind and collaborators escaping their own lockdowns to show solidarity.

The interplay between text and images in allows for a more comprehensive narrative of this reality that negotiates between the micro and macro elements of the narrative where the macro conceptualisation of refugee migration with in Australia's neo-colonial setting can simultaneously incorporate the micro narratives that humanise individual refugees.

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REVIEWS

Truly critical and honest appraisals of *The Guardian's* record as a guardian of power still needed

Abstract: A collection of essays, *Capitalism's Conscience—200 Years of the Guardian*, has been recently published. Edited by Des Freedman, professor of media and communications at Goldsmiths, University of London, the volume notes that *Guardian* editor Kath Viner promised that her newspaper would 'challenge the economic assumptions of the last three decades', 'challenge the powerful' and 'use clarity and imagination to build hope'. Freedman says the book 'seeks to examine these claims' (Freedman, 2021, p. x). The collection of essays, mostly contributed by media academics, is published by Pluto Press, which has published all three *Media Lens* books; most recently, *Propaganda Blitz,* in 2018. Several good reasons for not criticising a book published by one's own publisher can be found in Tolstoy's list, but the academic filtering of truth is a key issue that cries out for honest discussion. This essay by three prominent journalists critiques *Capitalism's Conscience* and concludes there is a pressing need for truly critical and honest appraisals of *The Guardian's* record as a guardian of power.

Keywords: Climate change, liberalism, neoliberalism, power, propaganda, reviews, The Guardian, United Kingdom

Capitalism's Conscience: 200 Years of the Guardian, edited by Des Freedman. London: Pluto Press. 2021, 320 pages. ISBN 9780745343341; 9780745343358

DAVID EDWARDS
Co-editor, Media Lens with
JOHN PILGER
Independent journalist, writer and documentary maker
JONATHAN COOK
Independent writer and journalist

LONG before 'the propaganda model' flew off Edward Herman's keyboard and into *Manufacturing Consent*, the book he co-authored with Noam Chomsky, Leo Tolstoy had captured the essence of non-conspiratorial conformity:

> One man does not assert the truth which he knows, because he feels himself bound to the people with whom he is engaged; another, because the truth might deprive him of the profitable position by which he maintains his family; a third, because he desires to attain reputation and authority, and then use them in the service of

> mankind; a fourth, because he does not wish to destroy old sacred traditions; a fifth, because he has no desire to offend people; a sixth, because the expression of the truth would arouse persecution, and disturb the excellent social activity to which he has devoted himself. (Tolstoy, p.118)

There is nothing special about journalists in this regard—we are all aware, on some level, that in the land of the blind, the one-eyed truth-teller faces various kinds of crucifixion. It is tempting to affect blindness, to protect our 'reputation and authority', that we might use them, of course, 'in the service of mankind'.

Academics are no different. In 2008, Terry Eagleton, formerly professor of English Literature at Manchester University, wrote:

> By and large, academic institutions have shifted from being the accusers of corporate capitalism to being its accomplices. They are intellectual Tescos, churning out a commodity known as graduates rather than greengroceries. (Eagleton, 2008)

In 20 years of working on *Media Lens*, not much has left us disillusioned—we had no great illusions about journalism to begin with—but we have often been dismayed by the response of the 'intellectual Tescos'.

In particular, it has been a thing of wonder for us to see how academics who support us privately, and even in public, treat our work in published articles and books. Typically, our 20 years of detailed media analysis simply cease to exist. After openly supporting us for years, one academic—someone we considered a firm ally—wrote a book on our central theme, propaganda. Our work did receive a handful of mentions, all of them relegated to the footnotes. A different academic told us frankly that he had been advised to drop all mentions of Chomsky from his published articles and books—they would not be well-received.

We would be open to the possibility that our work just doesn't pass muster, but for the fact that academics have a track record, strong as twelve acres of garlic, of filtering out dissident facts and voices. In fact, it's the world's worst-kept secret that they do it to

Capitalism's Conscience

200 Years of the Guardian

Edited by Des Freedman
With essays by Gary Younge / Victoria Brittain / Ghada Karmi / Hannah Hamad / Tom Mills / Natalie Fenton / Mike Berry / Matt Kennard / Mark Curtis / Justin Schlosberg and others

" A lively history and critique
Jonathan Steele

'play the game', to stay 'respectable', to remain part of 'mainstream' debate.

The Guardian— 'More Than A Business'?

Which brings us to the collection of essays, *Capitalism's Conscience—200 Years of the Guardian*, edited by Des Freedman, professor of media and communications at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Freedman notes that *Guardian* editor Kath Viner promised that her newspaper would 'challenge the economic assumptions of the last three decades', 'challenge the powerful' and 'use clarity and imagination to build hope'. His new book, says Freedman, 'seeks to examine these claims' (Freedman, 2021, p. x).

The collection of essays, mostly contributed by media academics, is published by Pluto Press, which has published all three Media Lens books; most recently, *Propaganda Blitz*, in 2018 (we have published several solo books with other publishers). Several good reasons for not criticising a book published by one's own publisher can be found in Tolstoy's list, but the academic filtering of truth is a key issue that cries out for honest discussion.

Despite our three books, 20 years of work focused heavily on the *Guardian*, and despite being mentioned and quoted (once) in the book, we were not told about *Capitalism's Conscience* and were not invited to contribute.

The Guardian's role is so appalling, so horrific that one is immediately surprised to see that the book contains contributions from some very 'mainstream' former and current *Guardian* journalists, given that it purports to tell the unvarnished truth about the paper.

Chapter 3 was written by Gary Younge, formerly *The Guardian's* editor-at-large and still a high-profile contributor. Chapter 4 was written by Victoria Brittain, who worked at *The Guardian* for more than 20 years as a foreign correspondent and then associate foreign editor. Younge and Brittain are the first two names under Freedman's promoting the book's contents on the front cover, which carries an approving comment from *Guardian* columnist and former chief foreign correspondent Jonathan Steele.

Freedman himself has a profile page on *The Guardian's* website, last contributing in 2018. So does the author of Chapter 12, Tom Mills, who last wrote for *The Guardian* in January. We remember Mills from the distant past when he was a frequent poster on the *Media Lens* message board.

If this sounds a bit *Guardian*-friendly, Freedman tweeted the programme for Goldsmith University's related, April 23-24 media conference, 'Liberalism Inc: 200 Years of the Guardian'. Highlights included a keynote speech by former *Guardian* editor, Alan Rusbridger, titled: 'More than a Business: 200 years of a newspaper which put purpose before profit'

On the same day, former *Guardian* comment editor, Becky Gardiner, chaired a discussion on '*The Guardian* and Feminism'.

Particularly given the editor, contributors and publisher, the title of the

book is troubling indeed: *Capitalism's Conscience—200 Years of the Guardian.*

Certainly we have no problem with the claim that *The Guardian* has been around for 200 years! At the very least, however, the title should read: *Capitalism's 'Conscience'?—200 Years of the Guardian.*

Has the looming collapse of the climate, the annihilation of species, the endless and merciless resource wars and mass-murdering sanctions devastating whole countries, not by now persuaded *all of us* that capitalism does not, indeed cannot, have a conscience? After Assange, Corbyn, Iraq, Libya and Syria, does anyone believe the corporate *Guardian* even pretends to act as a 'conscience' for anything? Canadian law professor Joel Bakan explains the bottom-line for *all* corporate executives:

> The law forbids any motivation for their actions, whether to assist workers, improve the environment, or help consumers save money. They can do these things with their own money, as private citizens. As corporate officials, however, stewards of other people's money, they have no legal authority to pursue such goals as ends in themselves—only as means to serve the corporations own interests, which generally means to maximise the wealth of its shareholders. Corporate social responsibility is thus illegal—at least when its genuine. (Bakan, 2004)

If genuine social responsibility is illegal, it makes perfect sense that conscience is a threat to be stifled at every turn. In the 1930s, political analyst Rudolf Rocker wrote:

> It is certainly dangerous for a state when its citizens have a conscience; what it needs is men without conscience… men in whom the feeling of personal responsibility has been replaced by the automatic impulse to act in the interests of the state. (Rocker, 1978)

This is actually a key propaganda function of *The Guardian*. Even the suggestion that capitalism might have a conscience is a dangerous distortion of the truth, as is the suggestion that *The Guardian* might be involved in protecting an ethical dimension of capitalism. In his introduction, Freedman writes:

> *The Guardian* is not a left-wing newspaper. It publishes left-wing columnists, is read by people on the left and has a reputation for identifying with left-wing positions. But it is not a title of the left; it is not affiliated to nor was it borne out of left-wing movements. (Freedman, 2021 p. viii)

One can debate the precise meaning of 'left-wing', but compare Freedman's assertion that *The Guardian* 'publishes left-wing columnists' with John Pilger's response (included, in full, later in this review):

> The spaces allotted to independent journalists (myself included) have vanished. The dissent that was tolerated, even celebrated when I arrived in Fleet Street in the 1960s, has regressed to a metaphoric underground as liberal

> capitalism sheds the last illusions of democracy. This is a seismic shift…

It is indeed a seismic shift that many of us have witnessed in our lifetimes – forget radically left-wing journalists, even independent journalists have disappeared from *The Guardian* and other media. Consider, after all, that superb, self-identifying Tory journalist, Peter Oborne, has recently described how 'The mainstream British press and media is to all intents and purposes barred to me'. Freedman continues:

> It has never been a consistent ally of socialist or anti-imperialist voices and has failed to perform for the left what titles like the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* have done for their constituencies on the right. (p. viii)

Never been 'a consistent ally'? In light of *The Guardian's* relentless and ongoing support for politically undead war criminal Tony Blair, its lethal propagandising for wars of aggression in Iraq, Libya and Syria, its lead role in undermining Jeremy Corbyn's bid for power, its betrayal and demonisation of Assange, and so on… it is much more reasonable to view the *Guardian* as *a bitter enemy* of even mild left positions that has not only *not* performed 'for the left', but has most enthusiastically performed *for* established power.

The suggestion that the paper has 'never been a consistent ally of socialist or anti-imperialist voices' is a classic fudge aiming to appease the left without overly alienating *The Guardian*. In fact, it reminds us strongly of the kind of apologetics that regularly appear *in The Guardian*—the US, we are sometimes told, has not been a 'consistent ally' of democracy around the world, and so on.Freedman continues of *The Guardian*:

> Instead it is the home of a vigorous liberalism that consistently outrages voices to its right and, equally regularly, disappoints its critics on the left. (p. viii)

There is nothing 'vigorous' about the fake, marketised version of 'liberalism' peddled by *The Guardian*. In a 2011 interview, Julian Assange spoke from bitter personal experience:

> There is a point I want to make about perceived moral institutions, such as the *Guardian* and *New York Times*. *The Guardian* has good people in it. It also has a coterie of people at the top who have other interests. … What drives a paper like *The Guardian* or *New York Times* is not their inner moral values. It is simply that they have a market. In the UK, there is a market called 'educated liberals'. Educated liberals want to buy a newspaper like *The Guardian* and therefore an institution arises to fulfil that market. … What is in the newspaper is not a reflection of the values of the people in that institution, it is a reflection of the market demand.

Consider Freedman's version of the truth with *The Guardian's* treatment of Assange himself, of Corbyn, of 'Jesus clown' Russell Brand, of George Galloway, of Hugo Chavez, of Chomsky,

of us, of all dissidents. Rocker nailed a truth that has not changed in 100 years:

> The state welcomes only those forms of cultural activity which help it to maintain its power. It persecutes with implacable hatred any activity which oversteps the limits set by it and calls its existence into question. It is, therefore, as senseless as it is mendacious to speak of a "state culture"; for it is precisely the state which lives in constant warfare with all higher forms of intellectual culture and always tries to avoid the creative will of culture… (Rocker, 1978, p. 85)

In reality, of course, *The Guardian's* ruthless, market-driven propaganda 'consistently outrages' voices to the left exactly as it outrages voices to the right. By now, only someone living in a *Guardian*-inspired fantasy world finds that *The Guardian* 'disappoints' when it attacks dissent and supports even the most cynically brutal wars of aggression.

Whitewashing wars of aggression

Guardian output online and in print is vast, as is the range of issues covered. But an easy way to test for *Guardian* bias is to examine its performance on the US-UK's wars of aggression. This is why we have always focused so much on the *Guardian's* performance on Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen.

Over the last 20 years, we have shown over and over again how *The Guardian*, while supposedly opposing the war on Iraq, in fact hit readers with a propaganda blitz that sought to scare up war fever based on completely absurd, self-evidently fabricated US-UK claims on the supposed existence and threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Balance was not permitted—*The Guardian* simultaneously blanked as non-existent the crucial, highly credible testimony of UN weapons inspectors like Scott Ritter, who insisted his team had left Iraq 'fundamentally disarmed' of '90-95 percent' of its WMD by December 1998, leaving only 'harmless sludge' (Ritter & Pitt, 2002, p. 23, 29). In their 12,366 articles mentioning Iraq in 2003, *The Guardian* and *Observer* mentioned Ritter a total of 17 times. *The Guardian* simply ignored testimony, literally available from all good bookshops, with the power to make a complete nonsense of its own and all other media discussions of the case for war.

Even more shocking, one might think, even after the great catastrophe in Iraq, *The Guardian* relentlessly propagandised for war by the same US-UK alliance on Libya and Syria in 2011 and thereafter. A typical example was supplied by senior *Guardian* columnist, later comment editor, Jonathan Freedland, who wrote an article on Libya entitled: 'Though the risks are very real, the case for intervention remains strong.' A *Guardian* leader quietly celebrated the results:

> But it can now reasonably be said that in narrow military terms it worked, and that politically there was some retrospective justification for its advocates as the crowds poured into the streets of

Figure 1: *Guardian* output online and in print is vast, as is the range of issues covered. But an easy way to test for *Guardian* bias is to examine its performance on the US-UK's wars of aggression.

> Tripoli to welcome the rebel convoys earlier this week.

A flood of similar and worse pro-'intervention' propaganda has issued forth from *The Guardian* on Syria. There has been relentless, laser-like focus on the crimes, real and imagined, of Assad and Putin. The West, we are to believe, has sinned only by its reluctance to be involved at all! An audacious reversal of the truth. Above all, lifting a page from the playbook of the great Iraq WMD scam, the focus has been on highly questionable claims of chemical weapons attacks. Clearly anticipating and agitating for war in April 2013, a *Guardian* editorial observed:

> Yet this week has also been marked by further claims that Syria's Bashar al-Assad has been doing precisely the thing that Mr Bush said so confidently, but so wrongly, was at imminent risk of being done by Saddam Hussein 10 years ago.

The editorial continued:

> … UN member states and security council members also have less basis today for sitting on their hands than they did over Iraq. The UN has been ineffective over Syria, because Russia and China veto UN action. Partly as a consequence, at least 70,000 people have died while the world looks on and wrings its hands. It is not clear in moral terms why those thousands of deaths are not treated as a red line while chemical weapons use is.

How has *Capitalism's Conscience* covered *The Guardian's* complicity in these wars? The answer, which is available to anyone in the age of the word-searchable e-book, is that Libya and Syria are both mentioned once, in passing. The West's attacks on Libya and Syria, much less *The Guardian's* role in them, are not mentioned at all. The Saudi-UK war on Yemen is also unmentioned.

As for Iraq, the greatest foreign policy and mass media disaster of our time gets five mentions in passing in the book's 320 pages. Reference to *The Guardian's* propaganda role in the conflict is limited to one mention of unnamed *Guardian* 'columnists… who had championed the Iraq War in 2003 and even insisted that there were weapons of mass destruction'—a total of 19 words (p. 50).

In other words, *The Guardian's* very real responsibility for promoting catastrophic crimes that have left millions of human beings dead, injured and displaced, has been completely blanked by a collection of dissident writers published by our supposedly most radical publisher reviewing *The Guardian's* performance over the last 200 years. This is outrageous.

The book does find space to note that the paper 'has led the way in innovative design and formats, was the first British title to set up a reader's editor, established editions in the US and Australia and now champions a membership model with some one million people who have either signed up to the scheme or made a one-off contribution' (p. x), and so on. Freedman concludes his introduction:

> *The Guardian* is read by many people on the Left but, as with liberal democracy more generally, it does not serve them consistently or adequately in the pursuit of radical social change. This book is an expression not simply of disappointment but of the conviction that we need a very different sort of media if we are to pursue a very different sort of society. (p. xiv)

If change begins anywhere, it begins with a rejection of the assertion that *The Guardian* 'does not serve' the Left or liberal democracy 'consistently or adequately in the pursuit of radical social change'. In reality, it consistently *attacks* the Left. In his chapter on Corbyn and anti-semitism, Justin Schlosberg is strongly critical of *The Guardian* but observes:

> Perhaps above all, Corbyn's political ascendance coincided with that of Donald Trump in the US and other hard right leaders from Modi in India to Bolsonaro in Brazil. Against this backdrop—and especially in the context of Brexit—it is easy to understand how Corbyn's Labour and those sources defending it came to be perceived by journalists as the left front of populism—tending towards the extreme and intrinsically less credible than their 'moderate' political counterparts. (p. 200)

Guardian hostility to Corbyn was about fear of mild socialism challenging the state-corporate status quo, not fear of populism. Schlosberg concluded:

> Ironically, in defence of its liberal values against the rise of populism, *The Guardian* appeared to disregard or undermine what has always been the very cornerstone of its liberalism: the sanctity of facts. (Freedman, 2021, p. 201)

The idea that 'the sanctity of facts' 'has always been the very cornerstone of its liberalism' will be welcome reading to *The Guardian* editors, but mystifying to anyone who reads the newspaper

with a critical mind. In Chapter 3, Gary Younge claims on Corbyn:

> A range of studies have since shown that… *The Guardian* contained both more diverse opinions and more supportive opinions and coverage than virtually any other mainstream outlet. (Freedman, 2021, p. 52)

That isn't saying much. Remarkably, in support of his claim, Younge cites two studies: one from November 2015, just two months after Corbyn had been elected; the other from July 2016, ten months after Corbyn had been elected. Younge presumably missed the September 2018 study (Media Reform Coalition) cited by the late anthropologist and political commentator David Graeber when he tweeted in December 2019:

> [A]s for the *Guardian*, we will never forget that during the 'Labour #antisemitism controversy', they beat even the *Daily Mail* to include the largest percentage of false statements, pretty much every one, mysteriously, an accidental error to Labour's disadvantage.

Quite an achievement! The book does contain two excellent chapters by Alan MacLeod on *The Guardian's* coverage of Latin America, and by Matt Kennard and Mark Curtis on the paper's coverage of the UK security state. Both are discussed further below.

John Pilger responds

Guardian columnist John Pilger was asked for his thoughts on *Capitalism's Conscience*. He responded:

Liberal journalism, such as *The Guardian's*, was always a loose extension of establishment power. But something has changed since the rise of Blairism. The spaces allotted to independent journalists (myself included) have vanished. The dissent that was tolerated, even celebrated when I arrived in Fleet Street in the 1960s, has regressed to a metaphoric underground as liberal capitalism sheds the last illusions of democracy.

This is a seismic shift, with *The Guardian* and the BBC—far more influential than those on the accredited right—policing the new 'groupthink', as Robert Parry called it, ensuring its politics and hypocrisies, its omissions and fabrications while pursuing the enemies of the new national security state.

Journalism students need to study this urgently if they are to understand that the true source of the contrivance known as 'fake news' is not merely social media, but a liberal 'mainstream' self-anointed with a false respectability that claims to challenge corrupt and warmongering power but, in reality, courts and protects it, and colludes with it.

This is *The Guardian* today. Rid of those journalists it cannot control, the porous borders they once crossed long closed, *The Guardian* more than ever represents the world view of its hero, Blair, the 'mystical' lost leader the newspaper promoted with evangelical fervour and has since done its best to rehabilitate, a man responsible for human carnage beyond the imagination.

To its credit, Des Freedman's anthology includes a scattering of sharp

honesty, especially the chapters by Alan MacLeod, Mark Curtis and Matt Kennard. But the omissions are shocking: notably *The Guardian's* 'nuanced' (a favourite weasel word) support for the dismemberment of nations: from Yugoslavia to Syria, and for its immoral backing of the current MI6/CIA propaganda war against nuclear-armed powers Russia and China.

An example of this is a recent stream of US-sourced 'human rights' propaganda from Taiwan, much of it publicly discredited, that beckons war with China. This has yet to match the output of *The Guardian's* chief Russiaphobe, Luke Harding, who ensures that all evil leads to Vladimir Putin.

We are given scant idea how the people of these hellish places live and think, for they are the modern 'other'. That the Chinese, according to Harvard, Pew and numerous other studies, are the most contented human beings on earth is irrelevant, or to quote Harold Pinter, 'it didn't matter, it was of no interest'.

It was Harding and two others who claimed in *The Guardian* that Trump's campaign manager, Paul Manafort, had held secret talks with Julian Assange at the Ecuadorean embassy. Discredited by the former Ecuadorean consul Fidel Narvaez as 'fake' (and by those like myself who were subjected to the security screening at the embassy), the story was typical of the decade-long smear campaign against Assange.

The campaign was one of the lowest points in British journalism. While collecting the kudos, circulation, profit and book and Hollywood deals for Assange's work, *The Guardian* played a pivotal role. Although Mark Curtis touches on the latter years, young journalists need to know the whole disgraceful saga and its significance in crushing those who challenge power from outside the liberal fence and refuse to join the 'club'.

The principal *Guardian* ringmaster was Alan Rusbridger, who was editor-in-chief for 20 years. (Rusbridger also oversaw *The Observer*, *The Guardian's* sister paper, which during the build-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 ran a rabid pro-war campaign that included fabrications about WMD for which its reporter, David Rose, later personally apologised—unlike his editors).

Rusbridger has lately re-invented himself as a media moralist. 'Only those with the highest professional and ethical standards,' he wrote in 2019, 'will rise above the oceans of mediocrity and malignity and survive.' While Rusbridger rises above the oceans to promote his new book on the ethics of 'proper news', Julian Assange, the truth telling journalist betrayed by *The Guardian*, remains in solitary confinement in Belmarsh prison.

Much of Freedman's anthology is the work of media academics, whose takeover of the training of journalists is relatively recent—well, it's within my own career. Some have done fine work, including Freedman himself. But the question begs: how have they and their colleagues changed the media for the better when so much of it has become an echo chamber of rapacious, mendacious

power? The craft of journalism deserves better (Pilger, 2021).

Jonathan Cook responds

Former *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Cook was also asked to comment on the book:

With a few notable exceptions, the critical horizons of many of the contributors seem sadly limited for a book supposedly critically appraising *The Guardian.* Most rightly argue that the left should not trust the paper to advance its causes, and that throughout its long history the paper has hewn closely to variations of free market liberalism. But the book makes little effort to explain why that is the case, even in its section supposedly dealing directly with this issue: on what the book refers to as 'political economy'. Only one contributor refers to the corporate nature of the media, when dealing with press regulation, and even then there is the implication that *The Guardian* stands outside that system.

The chapter on political economy charts *The Guardian's* efforts to remain profitable and competitive against billionaire-owned rivals, but fails to make clear the impact that necessarily has on the paper's ideological positions. There is no real effort to examine how *The Guardian*, like other corporate media, dare not regularly upset advertisers, given its economic dependency on their money. The book lacks a discussion of the inevitable conflict between *The Guardian's* commercial needs and its professed commitment to the environment.

Nor does the book draw any meaningful conclusions from the fact that in the digital age *The Guardian* has chosen to chase after larger and wealthier liberal US audiences than can be found in the UK. It would seem relevant in considering *The Guardian's* ever-greater focus on cultural issues and fashionable identity politics as an alternative to class politics and labour issues.

Similarly, the book offers no platform for whistleblowers who could have given a harsher insight into how the paper is run, or the obstacles placed in the way of reporters trying to break with *The Guardian's* ideological framing of issues or its top-down editorial approach. Gary Younge provides some clues but his focus is narrow, he enjoyed an unusually independent position within the editorial team, and his continuing relationship with the paper means he is unlikely to speak as freely as he might otherwise.

Matt Kennard and Mark Curtis name some of the national security writers pushed out of the paper in recent years. Were any approached by the book's editor to explain their experiences?

In my own specialist field, Ghada Karmi offers a fine perspective on the general failures in reporting fairly on Israel-Palestine, the role of the lobby and the tendency to prioritise Jewish and Israeli voices over Palestinian ones. But her assumption appears to be that *The Guardian's* failure to offer Palestinians a proper hearing reflects a mix of the following: historical ignorance of the Palestinian case and a

romanticised view of Israel; the greater weight and centrality of the Israel lobby than the Palestinian lobby in UK society; and fears of being accused of antisemitism.

What this account of *The Guardian's* failure misses is Israel's crucial place in advancing Western foreign policy goals in the Middle East. The paper's siding with the West's major geopolitical interests in the Middle East is not a one-off, after all, as Alan MacLeod's chapter on *The Guardian's* even more woeful coverage of Latin American makes clear. There is a pattern of failure here that needs unpacking. Had it been done, it would have been much easier to explain the *Guardian's* leading role in the corporate media's campaign to put Israel—couched in terms of a supposed Labour antisemitism crisis—at the heart of assessing Jeremy Corbyn's suitability for being prime minister.

Again, it would have helped this section to have included a whistleblower, an insider familiar with the limitations of *The Guardian's* Israel-Palestine coverage. I and others—including Nafeez Ahmed, Antony Loewenstein and, more recently, Nathan Robinson—have all been at the sharp end of *The Guardian's* strict policing of its Israel-Palestine coverage. Nowhere are our experiences given a voice in a book claiming to deal with *The Guardian* critically (Cook, 2021).

Conclusion

The rarely discussed truth is that academia plays a crucial role in reinforcing 'mainstream' journalism's filtering of truth, ensuring that discussion extends, as Chomsky says, 'this far and no further'. Media academics consistently exclude the most critical media activists in much the same way as corporate journalists.

It is obvious to us, for example, that John Pilger and Jonathan Cook have long been the UK's most powerful and qualified critics of *The Guardian.* Who can doubt that their inclusion would have massively strengthened *Capitalism's Conscience* and increased sales? Their exclusion invites a simple question: what other priorities were being served?

Did the editor and some of the contributors pull their punches, wittingly or otherwise, in order to seem less 'extreme', more 'reasonable'? Were they hoping not to burn bridges, so that publication in *The Guardian* might remain an option? Perhaps even that the book might be reviewed favourably by the newspaper itself? There is a pressing need for truly critical and honest appraisals of *The Guardian's* record as a guardian of power. This book, barring a couple of welcome exceptions, is not it.

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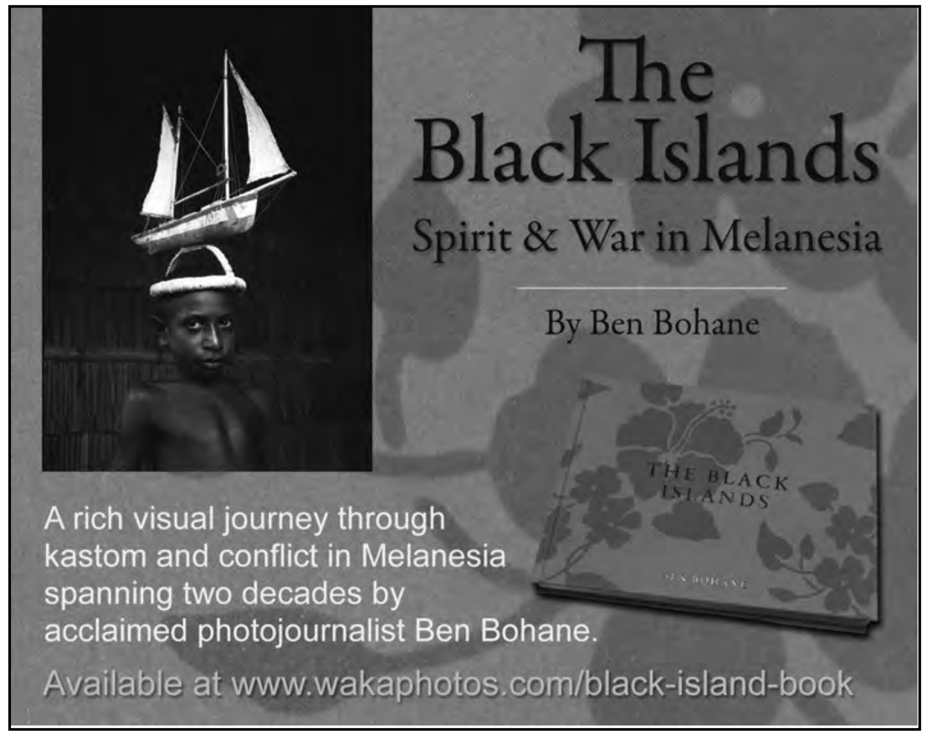

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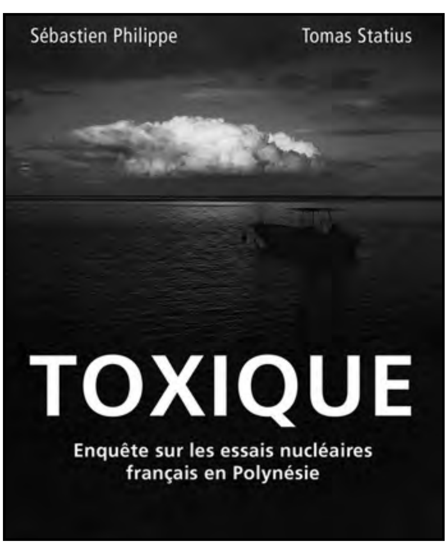
Moruroa: The files, the book and the lies

Toxique: Enquête sur les essais nucléaires français en Polynésie, by Sébastien Philippe and Tomas Statius, and the Moruroa Files microsite. Paris: PUF/Disclose, 2021. 192 pages. ISBN 9782130814849 https://moruroa-files.org/



THE COMBINATION of nuclear expertise (Sebastien Philippe), inquisitive journalism (Tomas Statius) and the investigative approach by *Interprt* (a collective of architects specialising in the forensic analysis of environmental crimes) of around 2000 declassified French government documents in 2013 called the *Moruroa Files*, resulted in the explosive book *Toxic* about what was already known to the Ma'ohi Nui (French Polynesia) people. That since 1966 (55 years ago), the French government has consistently lied about and concealed the deadly consequences of their nuclear tests, which they now seem to acknowledge (French admit nuclear test fall out, 2006), to the health of the populations and their environment.

The book went into great detail to divulge to what extent those lies were maintained by analysing 3 nuclear tests: *Aldébaran*, *Encélade* and *Centaure*.

The population of Mangareva were the first to be subjected to radioactive fallout during the very initial atmospheric nuclear test codenamed *Aldébaran* on 2 July 1966. On 12 June 1971 *Encélade* was the most devastating nuclear test to the 68 people living on Tureia who were not evacuated even though they were at the heart of the exclusion zone established by the military.

A member of the population publicly vented his anger to the elected Tahitian parliamentarians and French representatives on a visit in 2018 by holding a very controversial banner (*Disclose*, 2021a) branding De Gaulle as a war criminal. Equally worrying, the last atmospheric nuclear explosion carried out on 17 July 1974 codenamed *Centaure* was the most powerful blast and showered nearly 110,000 people mostly in the Society archipelago with radioactivity, including Tahiti the main island.

The French authorities could have warned Tahitians about the approaching fallout two days in advance, but they did not. The spread of radioactive contamination in Ma'ohi Nui covers an area as vast as Europe and an estimated back payment compensation would amount to US$850 million with future cancers costing about US$29 million per year, according to Philippe et al. (2021b).

The *Moruroa Files* are the fundamental core that binds the book which revealed that the French Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and its other agencies went to great lengths to keep secret the true level of radioactivity experienced by the Polynesian populations. The book has exposed the woeful arrogance and the haughtiness of unaccountability adopted and displayed by successive French governments up to the present day.

The dismissive attitude over data on radiation levels and sealed lips in the military ranks due to *secret défense d'Etat*, appeared to be a current practice according to the authors. Such military silence gives grounds to Polynesians for believing the shameful findings from the authors.

The computer animated simulations of those nuclear tests extracted from the declassified documents and in particular the *Aldebaran* test, is hard to watch for Mangarevans like me who at the time were witnesses and/or victims. I commend the book for its pursuit for the truth and for publicly exposing it to the world.

Further comments are made here on the Mangarevan population's plight and resilience during and post-nuclear testing era along with debate of the untold danger of nuclear wastes leaks.

An experimental subject

Like in the case of *Centaure*, the Mangarevan population were not warned about the dangers of the detonation of the *Aldébaran* nuclear bomb apart from the fact that something would happen in the sky, as far as my mother recalled it. She also confirmed that it was *business as usual* during and following the day of the test as people carried on with their daily tasks, a statement corroborated by the declassified documents.

The mayor at that time, Tepano Teakarotu, had scant information and gave the population the official and reassuring message from the military that nothing toxic would happen. The military personnel and the French *gendarmerie* (national police) on the island knew about the fallout but feared the level of radioactivity: all were worried (Barillot, 2011).

No radioactive proof shelter was built to protect the populations before the atomic blast but days after, an inflatable tent suddenly appeared by the wharf of Rikitea and the building of some kind of shelter was started.

In theory, the radioactive cloud according to the AEC weather forecasts was planned to go west, but it changed its course and headed directly for the islands of Mangareva. Panic seized the military brass who came to see the first nuclear test but left precipitously the same night of 2 July 1966 without in-

forming the population: Mangarevans did not understand.

Any Mangarevan, especially fishermen or farmers would have informed the AEC that during the cooler weather season (June to September), winds were predominantly blowing southeasterly, a fact that the military weather experts acknowledged in their report three days before the test.

Still, data were intentionally ignored, and the test was carried out.

Could it be because no one wanted to disappoint the French Foreign Minister Billotte and the many elected officials of the Tahitian Parliament who wanted to see this powerful fireball? The outcome of this blatant genocide resulted in the formation of a 'cluster of cancers' (*Disclose*, 2021a), in particular cancers of the thyroids among young children, women and older people: many died.

Women gave birth to deformed babies and the local cemetery is unusually interspersed with small tombs and young deceased.

My parents' experience was to flee Mangareva for Tahiti in order to protect the life of my older sister who showed symptoms of radioactivity contamination.

To date only 454 victims (Polynesians and French) were compensated and 80 percent of the cases submitted were rejected by the organisation CIVEN (French Compensation Committee), making the compensation process at times impossible and largely unsuccessful. It was only in July 2016 that France recognised its first nuclear test victim (France recognises, 2016).

Some of the Mangarevan women interviewed in the book, were my family relatives, friends and I have seen the scars left by thyroid cancer surgery. Today it is not unusual to see in the early hours of the morning, people from all ages queuing by the entrance doors of the small and ill-equipped medical centre in Rikitea.

France still has a lot to answer for.

Untold emergencies

What could have been developed further in the book is the issue of restitution to the Ma'ohi Nui government of Moruroa and Fangataufa. For the process of returning those atolls turned into CEP (Pacific Experimentation Centre) nuclear sites, the French government need to hand over a safe and clean environment for people to live on.

It is however very unlikely that those two atolls would ever be returned because, according to Moetai Brotherson, a Tahitian parliamentarian at the French National Assembly, both sites are showing signs of collapsing and are unsafe. France have invested a huge amount of money (US$100 million) to install a system dubbed Telsite 2 that will monitor Moruroa (Moruroa nuclear site, 2019).

The monitoring of the atoll was begun in the 1980s to help issue warnings to nearby islands in case Moruroa collapsed because of damage caused by the atomic blasts. The collapse of Moruroa is likely to provoke a tsunami that would threaten neighbouring atolls, but the most dangerous effect is the leak

of nuclear wastes into the lagoon and then the sea.

In November 2018, the French National Assembly voted to gift the Polynesians a building that was a former command complex located in the middle of the capital Pape'ete in Tahiti. It would be a memorial site for the shared history of the French nuclear tests for people to remember (France gives Tahiti site, 2018) and by the same token a sign of reconciliation between colonisers and colonised.

What was untold was that the alleged gift was rife with asbestos that would cost millions to the local government to clean and build anew. It also transpired that if the French were to clean the complex, it would decide on the material to be displayed in that memorial centre and that all meetings for the construction of the building would be held in Paris.

Once more, the French want to continue to impose a colonial perspective after 30 years of nuclear testing, numerous ongoing radiation-induced deaths and irreversible environmental damage. This quote by parliamentarian Moetai says it all: 'I am pretty cautious of anything free coming from France —these are very often deadly gifts' (France gives Tahiti site, 2018).

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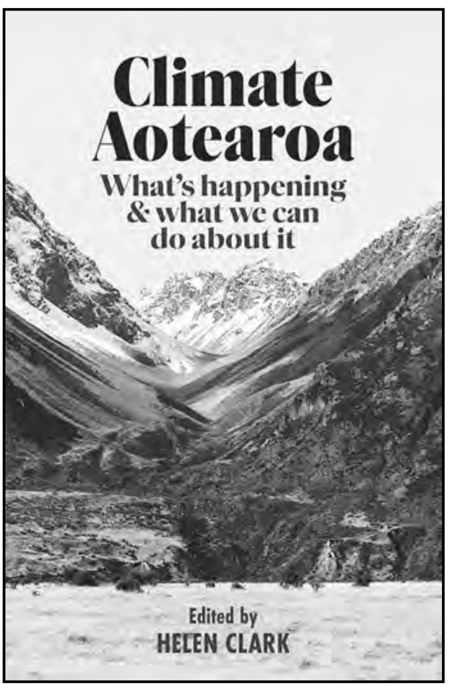
Just like the pandemic, action on climate is urgent

Climate Aotearoa: What's happening and what we can do about it, edited by Helen Clark. Auckland: Allen & Unwin, 2021. 327 pages. ISBN 9781988547633



WHEN the publication of *Climate Aotearoa* was heralded by Radio New Zealand in April 2021 it was featured alongside a striking image and a quote from the collection editor, former prime minister Helen Clark. The illustration by Vinay Ranchhod was a dazzling red lobster in a boiling pot.

> I would liken [the challenge of climate change] to being the lobster in the pot and the pot starts to heat, and by the time it's realised it's being cooked, it's too late to change. Its fate is sealed.
>
> That's in essence the message: you've got time to act, the window is closing. And if you don't, you're going to get over those tipping points from which there's no return. ('Time for action', 2021)

The question is whether this message of urgency is being heeded. Less than two months later, New Zealand's final 419-page Climate Change Commission report was unveiled in Parliament to mixed reactions. The report called on the government to get tough on the way New Zealanders live, move and work to help keep global warming below 1.5degC; it ruled out new or used petrol and diesel-powered vehicle imported or assembled by 2035.

As technocrats and policy makers considered details on what the report recommended that New Zealand should do, environmental and social justice commentator Simon Wilson wrote that there was a fundamental question to answer: 'how do we create a hearts and minds movement for change, particularly on transport?

For this volume, Clark has brought together a dozen contributors—a balanced range of analysts, disability and social advocates, engineers, journalists, researchers and scientists. It is divided

into three parts: The Science, The Issues and The Solutions.

In her four-page introduction, Clark notes how this book is being published while the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions continue to play out around the world, including New Zealand (albeit with a muted community infection profile).

The difference in nature between these two global crises is striking, she writes. For example, warnings of pandemic risk over the years have attracted 'far less publicity than those of the impact of climate change'. Yet the difference is far more stunning.

> When COVID-19 struck, however, its impact was rapid, dramatic and highly visible with far-reaching effects across human health, economies and societies. In the case of climate change, its impacts unfold over time as a slower onset disaster; if not addressed decisively, they will be far-reaching across the full spectrum of biological and non-biological systems. (Clark, p. 10)

In addition, Clark argues that, while effective measures for addressing the impact of COVID-19 have emerged quickly—such as physical distancing, hygiene, mask-wearing, testing and tracing systems, quarantine, treatment and now vaccination, there is no parallel set of measures with immediate and dramatic impact for climate change mitigation—all necessary measures that take time to implement and gain traction.

The sheer scale of 'social and economic carnage wrought by COVID-19' has forced governments to act, some more effectively than others. Although there has been 'staunch advocacy' by many over the climate crisis, there has not been the same sense of urgency.

In this book, the longer-term concerns are set out in perspective, with Haylee Koroi emphasising that the indigenous Māori have been dealing with 'the dynamics of the environment for centuries' while scientist Dr Jim Sallinger reminds New Zealand that apparently 'small' differences in average temperature have a 'huge effect on the environment and the lives of plants and animals'.

In discussing The Science, Dr Rob Bell, Matt McGlone, and Simon Thrush and Andrew Jeffs provide comprehensive updates on what the research says about the impact of sea level rise, the effects of climate change on biodiversity and aquatic environments.

This sets the scene for The Issues section with Rhys Jones and Kera Sherwood-O'Regan canvassing the health impacts of climate change while activists Jason Boberg and Sophie Handford approach the challenges of the wider community from the perspective of people with disabilities and young people respectively.

Then comes The Solutions section which, interestingly for this journal, is written entirely by three journalists, perhaps unusually so given that media is too often more associated with providing problems rather than solutions.

Jamie Morton, the remarkably perceptive science journalist with *The New*

Zealand Herald, argues that individuals can definitely make a difference. He also stresses that news media and scientists ought to avoid doomsday narratives and focus on positive messages. He also says that perhaps most New Zealanders want the government to be bold, 'even if the rest of the world doesn't seem to bother'. (p. 247)

Business journalist Ron Oram, of *Newsroom,* argues that New Zealand needs to draw on its 'proven record of innovation' in agriculture and species protection to contribute to restoring ecosystems to enable sustainably feeding a forecast global population of 10 billion people by 2050.

> We can transform our land use, agriculture and food production so that they benefit our indigenous species and ecosystems. We can turn one cause of the climate crisis into a soluton. (p. 266)

Environmental journalist Adelia Hallett, who edits *Carbon News*, has faith in nature as the only 'technology' proven to be able to actually increase the amount of carbon dioxide being taken out of the atmosphere on the scale needed. She argues for many radical ideas of working with nature, such as a 'blue carbon' approach over mangroves and wetlands. However, she also calls for a fundamental change in our attitude.

> The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us just how fast 'normal' can be swept away … As with the COVID-19 pandemic, change is not optional. We cannot continue life as usual. If we try to party up like there's no tomorrow, we will have to cope with the changes to the physical environment that are probably beyond our imaginations right now. (p. 303)

However, as Helen Clark notes in her introduction, what is reassuring about this book is that it demonstrates that New Zealand possesses a community of scientists, journalists and activists who are passionate and well-informed about climate change. More importantly, they are actively seeking solutions to the crisis.

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Ophir: Bougainville's epic struggle for freedom

Ophir: Decolonize. Revolutionize, directed by Alexandre Berman and Olivier Pollet. Arsam International/Fourth World Films/Ulster University. 2020. 97 minutes. https://www.ophir-film.com/

IN *OPHIR* (2020), a feature length documentary film about the Bougainville civil war (1989-1998), French filmmakers Alexandre Berman and Olivier Pollet analyse the devastating conflict and under-reported repercussions which continue to reverberate in the region today.

Ophir in the Old Testament (Genesis 10; 1 Kings 10:22) is a land of great mineral wealth exploited by King Solomon. In eastern Papua New Guinea, the people of Bougainville also claim Ophir to be the original name of their remote islands. Like the fabled land, Bougainville is endowed with treasure, predominantly copper and gold. In the late 20th century, exploitation of these was at the centre of a powerful story of colonialism, inequality, war and redemption.

In the 1960s, when the islands were under Australian administration, the Panguna copper mine was developed

in Central Bougainville in association with Rio Tinto, the mining multinational. Over the years of its operation, rising anger among indigenous communities about environmental devastation, negative social effects and inequitable profits distribution triggered an armed local uprising in 1989.

The brutal civil war which ensued hit the world headlines and became renowned as a David and Goliath struggle of our times.

Bougainville's affairs have been covered over the years by a small coterie of dedicated journalists in the region. But an important eyewitness account of the conflict was the 1988 documentary film *Bougainville: Our Island, Our Fight* by Australian filmmaker, Wayne Coles-Janess, featuring footage of the jungle war and interviews with the revolutionaries. This

was followed by a focus on the conflict as an eco-uprising in Dom Rotheroe's 2001 film *The Coconut Revolution*.

Ophir was made by French filmmaker Alexandre Berman and French investigative journalist, director and producer, Olivier Pollet, who worked with a local team, including assistant director, Nathan Matbob and filmmaker, Clive Porabou, to create an evocative re-telling of the conflict and its legacy over the past two decades.

In an ABC radio interview last year, Pollet claimed the people of Bougainville were allowed to freely express themselves in the film. For filmmaking, he continued, is about 'listening' (*Ophir*, 2020). The story, without a narrator, is told through a sequence of local voices recounting events from the 1960s, when mining exploration began, through soliloquy, poetry and storytelling.

The film opens with the sound of the sea lapping on Bougainville's shore and islanders speaking of their roles as traditional custodians of the land. Indigenous accounts are interspersed with archival news footage of the time, excerpts from corporate videos and consultants' reports, which unpick the colonial mindset of the era.

Especially revealing are the views of American anthropologist Douglas Oliver. He eerily prophesied resistance to the mine, but recommended some baffling prevention strategies, such as encouraging a passion for consumerism among villagers.

Ophir successfully captures the core of the conflict; the opposing indigenous and Western worldviews about the purpose and rights of land ownership. The Melanesian concept of it as the source of sustenance, social cohesion and wellbeing for this and future generations was opposed to the corporate view of the land's wealth as a commodity to be extracted for immediate profit.

The film's framing of the conflict as one of two opposing parties, of Bougainville freedom fighters against political and economic interference by external state and corporate actors, is true. But the prolonged severity of the war was also due to its fragmentation.

Multiple fronts developed as factions formed, new armed groups broke away from the main BRA (Bougainville Revolutionary Army) and local vendettas complicated hostilities (Regan, 2014).

Significantly, *Ophir* covers what has happened in the war's aftermath, local expectations of the referendum on Independence held in 2019 and how the Panguna mine has, once again, become controversial. Political leaders call for its reopening in order to bankroll Bougainville's ambition to become a nation state. However, responses are divided in mine-affected communities, where past demands for reparations remain unmet and suspicion of power grabbing by outsiders has not dissipated.

The power of Bougainville's story is that it's a struggle with universal resonance, of the oppressed against the powerful, of right against might. *Ophir's* directors also see the conflict through a lens of contemporary issues,

including of global warming and the race for natural resources.

Ophir exposes an important truth: The fight for freedom isn't over. The rebels won the war and secured, with the peace agreement, a degree of autonomy from PNG. However, Bougainville remains financially shackled to the national government and international aid donors for its administrative functioning and post-conflict reconstruction.

As a Bougainville participant in the film says: 'We are still in the colonial era. The design of the system is the application of the seed of dependency planted in the time of colonialism. Borrow for money, borrow for services, become a slave to the master.'

The filmmakers successfully employ the power of journalistic truth-telling through investigative and self-reflexive methods, through local testimonies and exposing influential modes of power and decision-making. Yet they don't shy away from the highly emotive nature of the story.

They are part of a discernible trend of journalists reporting major stories through documentary film. Better production qualities and compelling storytelling of current affairs are contributing to the genre's rising popularity (Del Barco, 2019).

When public trust in the 'truth' is being undermined by 'fake news' and the pitfalls of social media, they are arguably responding to a greater public hunger for more rigorous in-depth reportage and eyewitness experience (Pierce, 2017).

Ophir has been applauded by Pacific Islanders. It premiered at the FIFO International Documentary Film Festival in Tahiti in February, 2020, and was awarded the Grand Jury Prize, one of several international honours.

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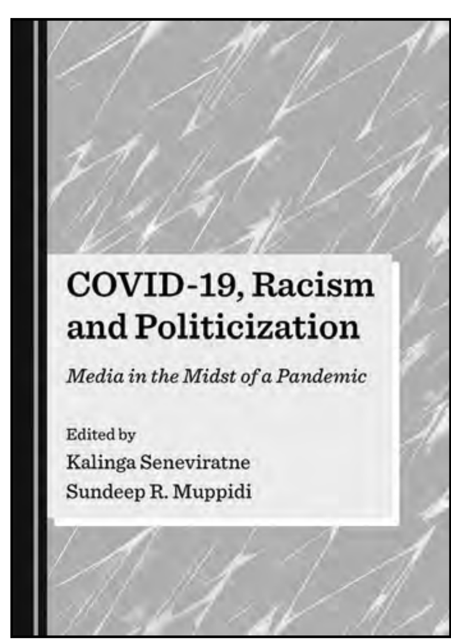
No return to 'normal' when the pandemic has exposed global inequalities

COVID-19, Racism and Politicization: Media in the Midst of a Pandemic, edited by Kalinga Seneviratne and Sundeep R. Muppidi. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2021. 230 pages. ISBN: 9781527570894



WHILE the COVID-19 pandemic's relentless cyclone continues across the globe wreaking havoc on economies and social systems, this book sheds light on the adversarial reporting culture of the media, and how it impacts on racism and politicisation driving the coverage. It explores the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of national and international media, and governments, in the initial coverage of the developing crisis.

With specific chapters written mostly by scholars living in these countries, *COVID-19, Racism and Politicization* examines how the media in Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and the United States have responded to the pandemic, and highlights issues specific to these countries, such as racism, Sinophobia, media bias, stigmatisation of victims and conspiracy theories.

This book explores how the COVID-19 coverage developed over the year 2020, with special focus given to the first six months of the year when the reporting trends were established. The introductory chapter points out that the media deserve scrutiny for their role in the day-to-day coverage that often focused on adversarial issues and not on solutions to help address the biggest global health crisis the world has seen for more than a century.

In chapter 2, co-editor Dr Kalinga Seneviratne, former head of research at the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) takes a comprehensive look at how the

blame game developed in the international media with a heavy dose of Sinophobia, and how between March and June 2020 a global propaganda war developed. He documents how conspiracy theories from both the US and China developed after the virus started spreading in the US and points out some interesting episodes that happened in the US in 2019 that may have vital relevance for the investigation of the origins of the virus.

The attacks on the World Health Organisation (WHO), particularly by the Trump administration, are well documented with a timeline of how WHO worked on investigating the virus in its early stages with information provided from China. The chapter also discusses the racism that underpinned the propaganda war, especially from the West, which led to the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison's controversial call for an 'independent' inquiry into the origins of the pandemic that riled China.

'The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the inadequacies and inequalities of the globalised world. In an information-saturated society, it has also laid bare many political economy issues especially credibility of news, dangers of misinformation, problems of politicisation, lack of media literacy, and misdirected government policy priorities,' argues co-editor Sundeep Muppidi, professor of communications at the University of Hartford in the US. 'This book explores the implications of some of these issues, and the government response, in different societies around the world in the initial periods of the pandemic.'

In chapter 3, Muppidi examines specifically the US media coverage of COVID-19 and he explores the 'othering' of the blame related to failures and non-performances from politicians, governments and media networks themselves.

Yun Xiao and Radika Mittal, writing about a study they have done on the coverage in *The New York Times* during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, argue that unsubstantiated criticism of governance measures, lack of nuance and absence of alternative narratives is indicative of a media ideology that strengthens and embeds the process of 'othering'.

Ankuran Dutta and Anupa Goswani from Gauhati University in Assam, India, analyse the coverage of the COVID-19 crisis in five Indian newspapers using 10 key words. They argue that the Indian media coverage could be seen as what constitutes 'Sinophobia' with some mainstream media even calling it the 'Wuhan Virus'. They trace the historic background to India's anti-China nationalism, and show how it has been reflected in the COVID-19 coverage, especially after India became one of the world's hotspots.

'This Sinophobia hasn't much impacted on the government policy; rather it has tightened its nationalist sentiments promoting Indian vaccines over the Chinese.' They say the Indian media's Sinophobia has abated after the Delta variant hit India.

'The narrative concerning COVID-19 has taken a sharp turn bringing

out the loopholes of the Government's inability to sustain its vigilance against the virus,' he notes, adding, 'considering the global phobia concerning the Delta variant put India in a tight spot and India has to defend itself from its newfound identity of being the primary source of this seemingly untameable variant.'

Zhang Xiaoying from the Beijing Foreign Studies University and Martin Albrow from the University of Wales explain what they call the 'Moral Foundation of the Cooperative Spirit' in chapter 4.

Drawing on Chinese philosophical traditions—Confucianism, Daoism and Mohism—they argue that the 'cooperative spirit' enshrined in these philosophies is reflected in the Chinese media's coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in its early stages. Taking examples from the Chinese media—Xinhua, *China Daily, Global Times* and CGTN—they emphasise that the Chinese media has promoted international cooperation rather than indulge in blame games or politicising the issue. This chapter provides a good insight into Chinese thinking when it comes to journalism.

Chapters on Sri Lanka and New Zealand examine how positive coverage in the local media of the governments' initially successful handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to emphatic election victories for the ruling parties.

David Robie, founding director of Auckland University of Technology's Pacific Media Centre, explains in his chapter how New Zealand's magazine sector was devastated by the pandemic lockdowns and economic downturn, although enterprising buy-outs and start-ups contributed to a recovery. He points out that a year later, in April 2021, Media Minister Kris Faafoi, himself a former journalist, announced a NZ$50 million plan to help the media industry deal with its huge drop in income, because, as he says, Facebook and Google were instrumental in drawing advertising revenue away from local media players.

The chapter from Bangladesh offers a depressing picture of the social issues that came up as the virus spread, such as the stigmatisation and rejection of returning migrant worker who have for years provided for families back home, and how old people were abandoned by their families when they were suspected of having contacted the virus. The chapter gives a clear illustration of how the adversarial reporting culture of the media impacts negatively on the community and its social fabrics.

But, the chapter's author, Shameem Reza, communications lecturer at Dhaka University, says that when the second outbreak started in March 2021, he observed a shift in the media coverage of COVID-19 pandemic.

> Now, the stories are more about harassment and discrimination, such as migrant workers facing hurdles to access vaccine; uncertainty over confirming air tickets and flights for their return; and facing risk of losing jobs and becoming unemployed. Thus, now, the media coverage particularly includes ordinary peoples' suffering.

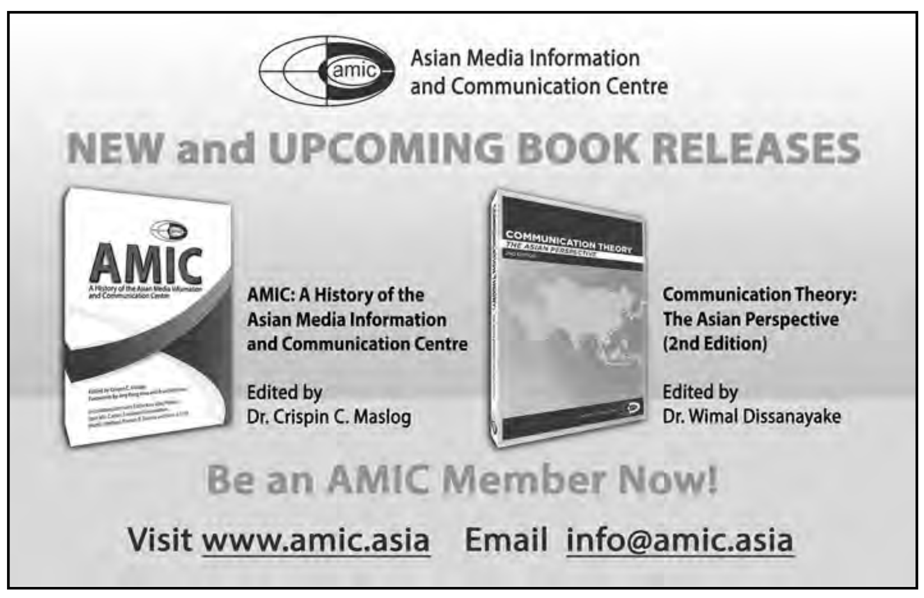
He believes that the initial stigmatisation of victims, had influenced social media coverage of harassment, and 'changed agendas in the public sphere'.

The authors argue in the chapter on the Philippines that the COVID-19 coverage exposed the 'lack of skills and knowledge in reporting on health issues'. Said a senior newspaper editor, 'in the past, whenever there were training opportunities on science or health reporting, we'd send the young reporters to give them the chance to go out of the newsroom. Now we know we should have sent editors and senior reporters.'

In the concluding chapter, Seneviratne and Muppidi discuss various social and economic issues that should be the focus of the coverage as the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic that reflects the inequalities around the world. These include not only vaccine rollouts, but also the vulnerability of migrant labour and their rights, the plight of casual labour in the so-called 'gig economy', priority for investments on health services, the power of Big Tech and many others.

This book is an attempt to raise the voices of the 'Global South' in discussing the media's role in the coverage of the COVID-19 crisis, explain Seneviratne and Muppidi, pointing out that there cannot be a return to the 'normal' when that is full of inequalities that have been exposed by the pandemic.

'There are many issues that the media should be mindful of in reporting the inevitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and beyond.'



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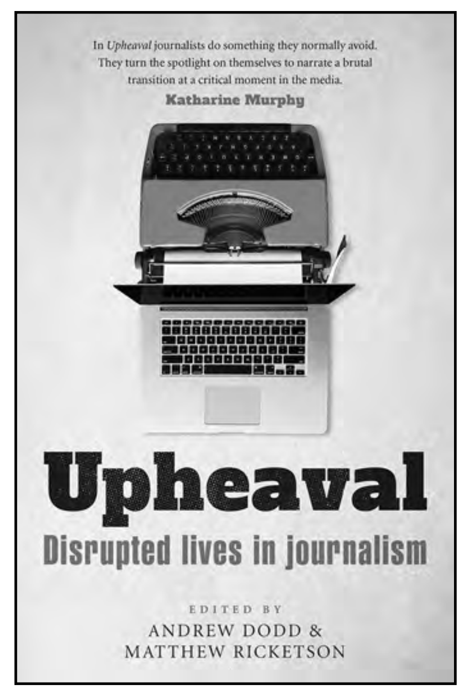
Tears flow as redundancy stories spell end to journalism's heyday

Upheaval: Disrupted Lives in Journalism, edited by Andrew Dodd and Matthew Ricketson. Sydney: UNSW Press. 2021. 368 pages, ISBN 9781742237275



I DOUBT there is anyone who has worked—or currently works—in journalism that would not have tears rolling down their cheeks as they read the stories of redundancy within Australia's faltering news industry in this carefully edited collection.

That's not to say that *Upheaval: Disrupted Lives in Journalism* doesn't also provoke laugh-out-loud moments at memories of newsroom antics or angry agreement about bullying, misogyny and blatant gender discrimination, but there is no getting around the fact that the central point of this book is tell the stories of the human impact of the brutal gutting of Australia's media.

To be honest, *Upheaval* almost needs a mental health warning—particularly the three chapters, 'Should I stay or should I go now?', 'Mate, this gives me absolutely no pleasure, but …' and 'The walk to the lift: last days at work'. These chapters reinforce what we all know—organisations can be calm, considerate and compassionate when telling someone they no longer have a job, or they can be cruel. And, in that, there are very few news organisation in Australia that have been better than others.

Many readers of a particular generation are likely to open this book straight to the index, to check their own name isn't there and then to note the sheer number of journos they know who have been forced out or accepted redundancy. Each story is devastating, even when someone recounts their decision to go voluntarily.

There are three featured interviews with Amanda Meade, David Maher and

Flip Prior that provide some light against the heavy themes of other chapters. But, throughout, there are snippets of personal stories of journalists around Australia discussing their first bylines, errors, the thrill of the chase and what drew them to the profession in the first place:

> The range of impulses and motivations that bring people to journalism is wide from idealising heroic role models to parlaying a love of writing into a career; and from being introduced to media at home, to serendipitous events. Some just knew from an early age that journalism was all they wanted to do, while others strayed into it without even meaning to, and yet others decided to give it a go for want of any clear idea about a career. (p. 27)

It is in many way a survivor's tale—because those who are featured are those who were strong enough to be interviewed, to tell their story, without slinking off into the shadows. There are stories of excellent, award-winning journalists—such as Veronica Ridge and Michael West—who have created successful journalism businesses on the back of the skills learned in a newsroom and others who have used their skills in entirely new ways.

Perhaps the journos who agreed to be interviewed did so because they believe the work of journalism mattered, because it shaped them, as Dodd and Ricketson noted:

> It wasn't always fun, and it wasn't without its frustrations, but it was usually interesting, often exhilarating, and it certainly defined them as people. (p. 277)

Upheaval has a strong sense of cohesion, which is clearly the result of the efforts of editors Dodd and Ricketson—who have overseen 18 chapters themselves—as well as Laurie Zion, Penny O'Donnell, Merryn Sherwood, Brad Buller and Timothy Marjoribanks from their work in the New Beats project. New Beats conducted whole-of-life interviews with 60 journalists who had taken redundancy. Their work was for an academic project that involved the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, the National Library of Australia and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

This is an important book for a number of reasons. Specifically, it captures a particular time in journalism, mostly between the 1980s and 2010s. As Dodd and Ricketson note, many of the interviewees come from the last generation of reporters trained in analogue media:

> They used typewriters and knew about compositing and how to splice audio edits on quarter inch tape. They worked alongside copy kids in highly structured hierarchical newsrooms, where sub-editors wrote headlines and reporters didn't dare take photographs. They saw Saturday editions thick with classified ads and had travel budgets they were encouraged to spend. Some even worked where public relations operatives didn't block their access and politicians hadn't yet been media trained to say nothing. Their stories might just be a testament to journalism's heyday. (p. 277)

If there is a criticism of this book, it is that it could have been much longer and spent more time talking about commercial television and radio. It could have called out the ABC redundancies for being of an entirely different nature to those in commercial entities, which were forced by the decline in advertising revenue and an uptake in social media. There is a clear nexus between the loss of advertising revenue and job losses in newspapers, but a lack of real discussion about the failure of those, particularly in the print industry, to acknowledge the coming tsunami and the tendency of some parts of the media to turn upon the national broadcaster, as if to bring down the ABC would somehow save them.

There is also much more to be said about the loss of journalism to particular communities, especially regional and suburban ones, as well as the loss of senior journalists to guide newcomers. After all, newsrooms were a wonderful training ground, as David Marr recalled:

> They were these crazy universities full of experts on the strangest things, people with real understanding and experience of things that mattered, places where you could ask anybody anything, though you might get your head bitten off it you interrupted someone on deadline. (p. 164)

Pollyanna readers are likely to demand a sequel that proposes a solution to the decline of newsrooms. There is an attempt to do that in several chapters, with some suggestions about the role of the modern university in preparing journalists for life without a newsroom, specifically the idea that young graduates can be part of reinventing journalism. It is certain that a new generation of journalist wants to do things differently, as Antoinette Lattouf noted:

> So many of the successful journos that I know, all the foreign corros have such screwed up personal lives. They're alcoholics, they're into their eighth wife. They have four children (from five marriages). You know, in five different continents. And that was something that really stuck with me. I could easily become a 42-year-old, six-time Walkley-award winning single lady. Or I could marry my husband and carve out a different journalistic career. (pp. 149-150).

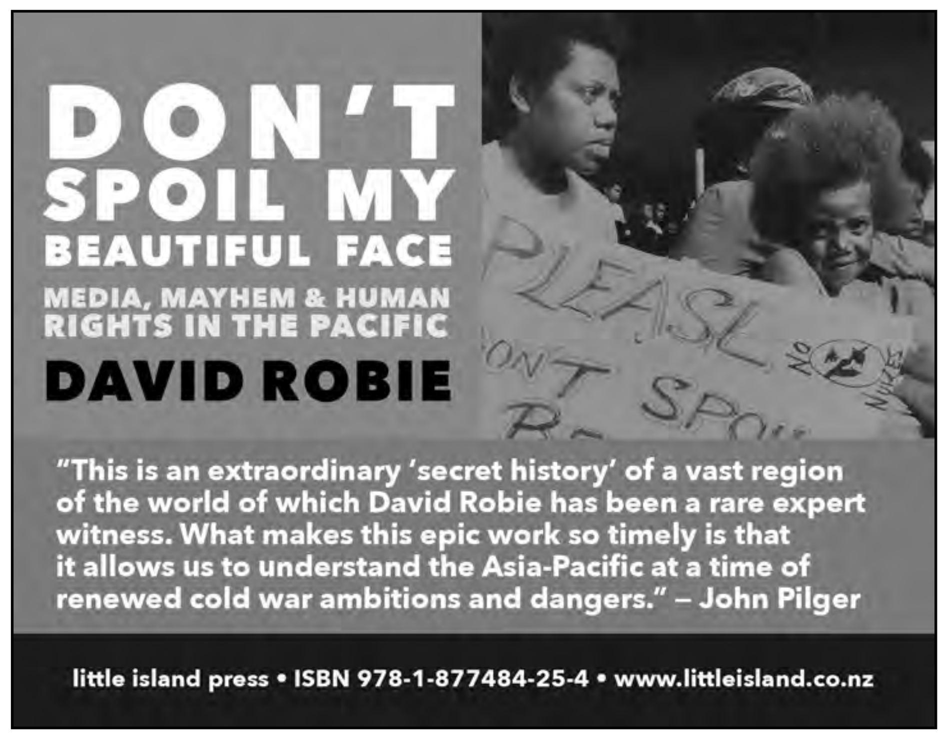
Back in 2013, I wrote in a review of another book that we needed to save journalism, not newspapers (Wake, 2013). Although I loved every moment of my time in newspapers, *Upheaval* does not make me want to go back to the smoke-filled newsroom of my youth. *Upheaval* records some of the very worst bits of newsrooms processes, from deceptive death knocks to hard-as-nails bosses who would ask you to pretty much do anything to get the story. However, it does make me want to continue the fight to save quality journalism. Journalism remains important for every one of us, in every community. As Di Thomas from *The Border Mail* said:

> The power of good journalism remains the power to hold officialdom to account and to address things like mental health issues, institutional child abuse. Those things don't change because of what's happened with resources. That need remains. (p. 273)

We just need the money to do it. Until then, it's going to be a long time until some can write *Revival: How Journalism saved our Democracy*.

Reference

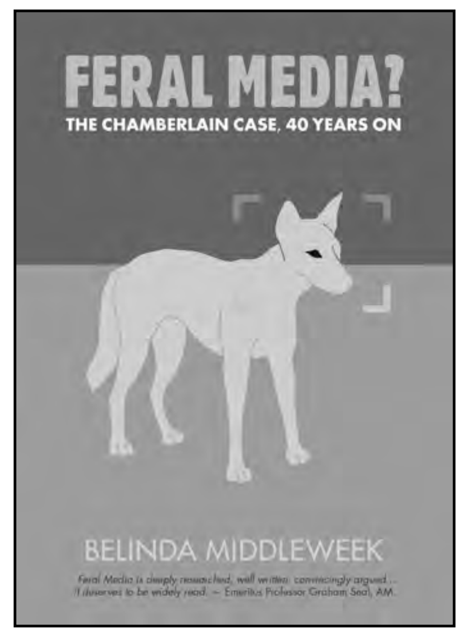
Wake, A. (2013, October 9). Stop press: We need to save journalism, not newspapers, *The Conversation*. Retrieved August 28, 2021, from https://theconversation.com/stop-press-we-need-to-save-journalism-not-newspapers-18833



DR PHILIP CASS is editor of Pacific Journalism Review and a former Queensland journalist.

New book explores never-ending Chamberlain saga

Feral Media: The Chamberlain Case 40 years On, by Belinda Middleweek. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly, 2021. 188 pages. ISBN 9781922454454.



I HAVE only seen the Rock once and that was on a junket with TAA, flying a bunch of journos from a week in Perth back to Townsville via the Alice and Darwin. Our 727 circled in a banking turn over the big red monolith to give us all a good look. I never had the slightest desire to get any closer. Like anybody working and travelling in the North I knew what the bush was like—bloody hot and full of things that can kill you. The desert was even worse.

The only question I ever had about the Azaria Chamberlain case was why on earth the Chamberlains thought it sensible to take very young children on a camping trip to such a potentially hostile environment. As a parent, that always puzzled me.

Belinda Middleweek‘s new book, *Feral Media*, reviews the reporting of the Azaria Chamberlain case, the way audience behaved and the way the decades-long saga became a media sensation that would not go away. The book examines in some detail the way in which the dingo who took the nine weeks-old Azaria became a central figure in the discourse of the trial, a media obsession that has remained stubbornly embedded in the national psyche.

I never really questioned the dingo theory. Even in Townsville, where I was running a farmers' newspaper, we were frequently contacted by people wanting to show us their slides of dingoes quietly opening eskies and wandering off with their booty. Experienced travellers and bushies would tell us time and again that dingoes were cunning, crafty and very quiet.

Reading *Feral Media* I wondered how much of the hostility to Lindy Chamberlain's claim that dingo took

her baby was driven by an utter misunderstanding of how the bush worked by metropolitan journalists. Experience showed that metropolitan journalists' behaviour, expectations and understanding of how the outback worked were often a long way from those of regional and rural journalists.

None of the people, including local police, who were involved in the search for Azaria's body doubted she had been taken by a dingo. And yet somehow this evidence was discounted and what amounted to a witch hunt was launched, a witch hunt in which for decades the media has been deeply implicated.

The author properly points out the very different coverage of the saga by the *Territory News* reporter Frank Alcorta who took an activist role in the case. She argues that 'Frank Alcorta … deserves to be singled out for issuing an ultimatum to the Northern Territory Government that forced Lindy's release from prison in 1986' (p. 132).

It is also worth remembering that the early stages of the Chamberlain saga were the period when the locally owned regional dailies were being sold off to southern and international conglomerates and local television news was being wiped out by the Hawke government's decision to open up the regional markets to metropolitan television. This meant that there was even less chance of any alternative views of Lindy Chamberlain and the disappearance of Azaria being heard outside the cities.

It is also worth questioning whether audiences outside the cities and especially those living in the bush understood the story in quite the same way as their metropolitan cousins. Wherever they were, the role of the audience is central to Middleweek's book. Lindy Chamberlain seems to have taken a carefully nuanced view of the role of the audience in seemingly never-ending saga, blaming them equally for feeding off the media hysteria:

> Why blame the media? It is the public who demand the goods—so if there is no news today—well, spice it up to what the public wants or 'produce' some, and they do, and up go the reaction of demand and money and supply and greed.
>
> None can be blamed alone. All must share—producer, reporter and consumer public (p. 6).

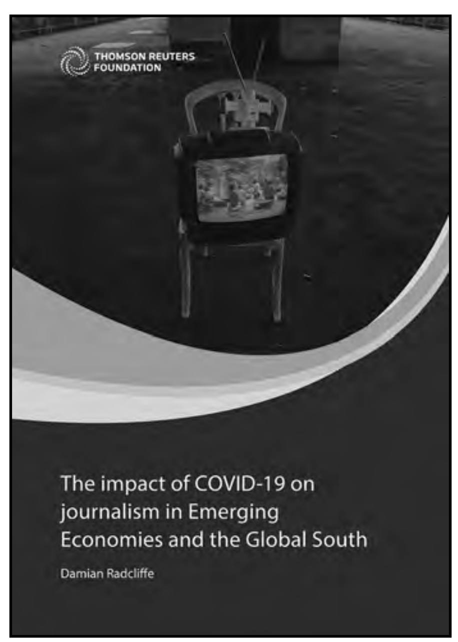
And yet, as Middleweek points out, some members of the audience were on her side, like the ones who contacted the media and offered us evidence of what dingoes were capable of and the ones who circulated pamphlets supporting Lindy Chamberlain and wrote to her in jail:

> What is most interesting about the pamphleteers is the depth of their advocacy—they incited readers to act and speak out as a way of bolstering the pro-Chamberlain movement. The authors appealed to a 'widespread people' and 'thinking public' who were dissatisfied with the court's ruling. They understood how their writings could contribute to the formation of a majority consensus that would eventually see the Chamberlain convictions overturned. (p. 57)

NOTED:
DR LEE DUFFIELD is an independent researcher and journalist.

Destructive pandemic impact on Global South media

The Impact of COVID-19 on Journalism in Emerging Economies and the Global South, by Damian Radcliffe. London: Thomson Reuters Foundation. 2021. 142 pages.



A NEW publication from the Thomson Reuters Foundation reviews the impacts of COVID-19 on journalism in Emerging Economies and the 'Global South'. Working on the premise that media and journalism in these regions already face even greater challenges than in the 'West', this report describes a worsening of the situation through effects of the pandemic.

It shows that factors external to media practice and media organisations are having destructive impacts, but proposes remedies which draw on internal strengths and professionalism in journalistic practice. The work is a qualitative research project obtaining analysis from 56 journalists from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, out of 15,000 journalists who have done courses offered by the foundation, as a backer of innovation and media freedom.

Eight 'expert commentators', most also from journalism, supplement the analysis. It is partly anecdotal, but done systematically by the writer of the report, journalist and professor Damian Radcliffe.

One of several non-governmental organisations that support journalism, and have contributed to the report, is quoted on the dilemma of failing media economics, a 'great recession' for media that has not eased since 2007:

> It is a paradox that, as more people realise, they need high quality factual information to navigate the crisis, the business models that sustain that information are collapsing.

COVID-19 is linked to factors such as a one-year fall of 11.8 percent in global adverting revenue.

Several other 'challenges' listed are familiar but well detailed, all

contributing to a general 'unease and uncertainty': journalists caught up in general economic failure with breakdowns of transport, energy and government services; the grapple with misinformation and fake news; other problems with dependency on digital resources, not least staggering infrastructure—undependable internet in many regions; governments imposing new controls, curfews and the like, to try and run the narrative on the pandemic, and cope with stresses and destabilisation it is causing in society.

The impacts are especially harmful to media freedoms; health and safety crises for journalists whose work exposes them to the dangerous disease, in a climate of wholesale job losses and inadequate access to protective equipment or work practices.

Altogether 462 journalists are reported dead from the virus in the year under review, mostly in the developing regions.

What to do? This report backs innovation, listing options for new media products on digital platforms. It proposes more alliances and collaboration on investigative journalism and research, data and content sharing, and extension of creative commons.

To support such change, it suggests specialised training. It hails with a sense of relief new funding of media from foundations, advanced subscription schemes, and also the social media platforms coming across to paying for the base product. Adequate financing of journalists is listed as essential with special attention in certain areas such as freelancing.

This publication underscores the seriousness of the current word situation, with a 'generation defining pandemic', where ordinary journalistic work, while the pandemic rages, is today most akin to 'war reporting'.

Entire region ignored by UNESCO manual

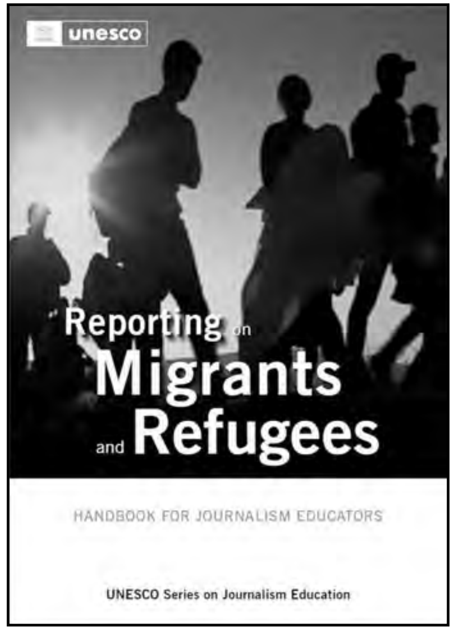
Reporting on Migrants and Refugees: Handbook for Journalism Educators. Paris: UNESCO, 2019. 304 pages. ISBN 9789231004568

WHILE this book will be of immense benefit to anybody teaching about the broader issues of immigration and trying to train journalists and journalism students to write on the topic with more understanding, it is a pity that it so effectively ignores the Pacific.

This book has some excellent ideas and some really useful guidelines on how to report on migrants more sympathetically and with more understanding, but it is very heavily focussed on Africa and Europe—and Europe to a large extent means Germany.

This handbook repeats the prediction that hundreds of millions of people will be forced to seek refuge as a result of climate change. It is undeniable that the numbers of climate change refugees in the Pacific so far are miniscule compared to the horrendous numbers of people, even now, who are fleeing drought and war in Africa and the Middle East and hoping to find sanctuary in Europe.

However, the Pacific has its own



very real issues, ranging from the devastation of climate change that may make population relocation necessary to the forced migration caused by the continuing Indonesian oppression in West Papua.

Compared with the problems facing Europe, our problems may seem trivial. Even the word Pacific appears only once in the main body of the text to explain that it is the one region of the world from which no example has been taken.

The manual at least acknowledges that climate change poses dangers in terms of 'droughts, sea level rise, floods, unreliability in the duration of the rainy season and other factors' it ignores the fact that in our region, but entire nations may disappear because of it (p. 61).

However, the Pacific does not even rate a mention when it comes to climate change:

> The worsening impacts of climate change are expected to displace millions of people internally … across three world regions—sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America. (p. 76)

The Pacific pollutes the least, but in terms of survival of our nation states, cultures and languages, it will suffer the most. There is clearly a need for a handbook on reporting on refugees, migrants and climate change in the Pacific, but it appears that somebody in our region will have to write it.—*DR PHILIP CASS has written a number of articles on climate change for Pacific Journalism Review*

Reporting on Migrants and Refugees may be downloaded from the UNESCO Digital Library for free: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377890

Vol 28, No 1, July 2022

Call for articles and commentaries: Change, Adaptation and Culture

Issue Editors: **Dr Philip Cass, Khairiah A. Rahman, Nicole Gooch and Dr David Robie**

This special issue of *Pacific Journalism Review* is linked to the '**Change, Adaptation and Culture: Media and Communication in Pandemic Times**' online conference of the Asian Congress for Media and Communication (ACMC) being hosted at Auckland University of Technology on November 25-27. https://acmc2021.org/

Some papers with a 30 June 2021 deadline have been considered as chapters for an ACMC book, others may be considered for the forthcoming issue of *Pacific Journalism Review*.

The journal especially seeks papers either delivered virtually at the conference or are addressing the media and communication related themes raised there.

Papers deadline for the journal: January 20, 2022.

Papers can include but are not restricted to:

- Reinventing communication paradigms
- Broadcast media in flux
- Media influence and impact
- Public relations theory and practice
- Social media, digital media and dynamic technologies
- Advertising, adaptations and changing perspectives
- Communication, education challenges and changes
- Love, life, popular culture and the new media
- Democracy and disinformation
- Language, culture and the dynamics of change
- Ethnicity, identity, gender, and the media
- Climate change communication, global crisis and the Asia-Pacific

The above list is a guideline and other related topics will also be considered. The journal has an unthemed section and other papers related to journalism studies, and journalism education, theory and practice will also be considered.

Submissions must be uploaded to the OJS open access website for Pacific Journalism Review *on the Tuwhera indigenous research portal at Auckland University of Technology: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/pacific-journalism-review/*

Refer to the PJR style guide.

Contact editor: PJReview2021@gmail.com

ACMC conference: https://acmc2021.org/

Notes for contributors

Te Koakoa; Pacific Journalism Review, founded at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1994, is a peer-reviewed journal covering media issues and communication in the South Pacific, Asia-Pacific, Australia and New Zealand. It is now published by Asia Pacific Network and has links with the University of the South Pacific. While one objective is research into Pacific journalism theory and practice, the journal is also expanding its interest into new areas of research and inquiry that reflect the broader impact of contemporary media practice and education.

A particular focus will be on the cultural politics of the media, including the following issues—new media and social movements, indigenous cultures in the age of globalisation, the politics of tourism and development, the role of the media and the formation of national identity and the cultural influence of New Zealand as a branch of the global economy within the Pacific region. It also has a special interest in environmental and development studies in the media and communication—and vernacular media in the region.

Main sections:

• *Research:* Academic research and analysis papers (up to 6000 words)
• *Commentary:* Industry insights, developments and practice (1500-3000 words)
• *Frontline*: Reflective journalism research (up to 6000 words)
• *Reviews:* Books, films, online developments, multimedia (800-1500 words).
• *Noted & Books:* 300-350 words.
• *Forum:* Letters, brief commentaries (up to 800 words)

Submission of papers:

Within the editorial scope of the journal, we invite the submission of original papers, commentaries and reviews. Submissions are reviewed by the editor, or editorial committee.Submissions are double blind peer refereed.

Editorial deadline for next issue:

January 20, 2022. Submissions should be filed through the new submissions website on Tuwhera: **ojs.aut.ac.nz/pacific-journalism-review/**
Correspondence should be emailed to the editor,
Dr Philip Cass:
PJReview2021@gmail.com
Pacific Journalism Review

Style: Use *APA (American Psychological Association) Style* for author-date system of referencing. See style guide at **www.pjreview.info**

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Cover: A Bougainvillean woman in a still from* Ophir*, a controversial documentary about the matriarchal society's struggle against mining and for independence.