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Comparative analysis of civil society, media and conflict

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Executive Summary

This paper explores how Egyptian, Kenyan, Serbian and South African civil society organisations (CSOs) use communication and relationships with media to engage in democratic contestation. Individual interviews were conducted with 91 CSO members who participated in the various democratisation conflicts listed in MeCoDEM's research design. Qualitative analysis was then used to look at how the activists perceived the importance of the media, their efforts to get media coverage, their perceptions of the quality of media coverage of the conflict, and the importance of social media in their activism around these conflicts. Finally, this paper covers the interviewees' perceptions of democracy and how the conflicts relate to their country's democratic dispensations.

- The study found that key sources of conflict identified by the interviewees included group identity (e.g. religious and ethnic identity) and contestations around notions of citizenship.

- Interviewees also identified the distribution and control of power was another key source of conflict - Egyptian, Serbian and South African activists all placed significant importance on networked civil society. Thus, communications among members and with the outside world was key to redistributing power.

- However, Kenya's CSOs saw their power as stemming from the ability to build healthy relationships between different groups of people, and so the primary communication activities centred on citizen education.

- Egyptian, Kenyan and Serbian activists viewed regular elections as a key marker of democracy, and the media was correct to focus on such issues. But South African activists suggested that the media focussed too much attention on elections, and not enough given to local participatory mechanisms of listening to citizens.

Across all four countries regular elections, the existence of civil society, and its representation in the media, were not necessarily seen as enough to guarantee stable democracies. While the media provided some space and coverage of civil society activities, CSOs in all countries felt that the media often played a detrimental role in democracy, either by superficial coverage, or by flagrantly highlighting conflict in a way that increased polarisation. Therefore, CSO activities – including their communication activities - could be seen as contesting identity and citizenship, contesting the state, *and* contesting the media.

Introduction

This paper explores how Egyptian, Kenyan, Serbian and South African civil society organisations use communication and relationships with media to engage in democratic contestation. The communications practices of civil society organisations (CSOs), the representation of civil society groups in the media and the way they use the media to achieve their goals are the central points of research interest in this paper. This research is part of a bigger project, which looks at the same conflict through various small studies and includes content analysis of media coverage of each conflict, interviews with journalists about how they covered the conflict, interviews with civil society role players, interviews with government and government communicators, and a twitter analysis of selected conflicts.

In each country different conflict cases were examined, focusing on the role played by civil society actors and particularly the communication and media practices of CSOs connected with the various conflicts. In section 2 the paper will explore how to define CSOs, but for now the variety of organisations covered included: groups of activists in informal groups; local, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), religious groupings involved in or tackling conflict, lobby groups, as well as 'uncivil society' groups that may have been violent or opposed to democracy. While each country study explored three or four cases of civil society conflict, this paper does not focus on the individual conflicts, but rather on country-level communication practices and perceptions of the media.

However, in order to situate the paper, the next sub-sections present a brief introduction to the country conflicts covered, for which we chose relevant CSOs to interview. Table 1 gives an overview of the cases, categorised thematically.

Table 1. An overview of the conflict cases

Country	Distribution and control of power	Citizenship (rights, minorities, identity)	Elections	Transitional justice
EGYPT		Maspero incident (2011)	Presidential election 2012, 2014	Christian-Muslim violence (2013)
KENYA		Somali community	Elections 2007, 2013	Kenyatta/ICC
SERBIA	Ombudsman (2015)	Pride Parade (2010)	Election 2008 (issues: EU, Kosovo)	Milošević/The Haag (2001)
SOUTH AFRICA	Service delivery protests (Balfour 2009, 2010; Zamdela 2012-13)	Xenophobic violence		
	State of the Nation Address (2015)			

Structure of the paper

While the paper examines civil society actors' definition of the sources of conflict, and their perceptions of democracy, the bulk of the paper focuses on the communications practices of civil society organisations – including their own communications, engagements through various nano-media and on social media, and efforts to communicate through the mainstream media. The paper begins by providing background on the conflict cases, then moves on to examine the key academic debates around civil society and democratisation, and the mediatisation of civil society conflicts. It then presents the interview methodology used to explore civil society practices in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa, and how the interviews were analysed to find similarities and differences across countries.

The findings chapter specifies: 1) the key sources of conflict as perceived by the interviewees in the countries and how the conflicts are similar or disparate across countries; 2) common and divergent communication practices civil society organisations use to communicate internally; 3) shared and differing communication practices used by civil society to attract support from the public and other political role-players. Also under the findings section, the paper details how civil society organisations in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa perceive the relevance and role of the media, what practices they deploy for engaging with the media, their perceptions of media coverage, and the implications of media coverage in either supporting or limiting democracy.

The findings are further explored in the conclusion which examinies how communication and media are critical to civil society organising and contesting space in emerging democracies. While across the countries there are examples of political and social contestation, in all four countries there were also contestations about identity and citizenship – mostly channeled through ethnic and/or religious conflicts.

The common notion that media is central to the 'democratic public sphere' and deliberative democratic debate is questioned. This study establishes what the mitigating factors are, for example, in contexts where the mainstream media are repressed or state-owned, and how commercial imperatives of mainstream media impact on their ability to provide an outlet for civil society organisations to engage with the state.

The key research questions of this comparative analysis are as follows:

- What types of political activism and protest are involved in democratisation conflicts?
- What nano-media do CSOs use to communicate, both internally and with the outside world?
- How do activist groups use traditional media to mobilise support and influence public debate and policy outcomes?
- What is the use, influence and impact of ICTs in facilitating political activism and protest in democratisation conflicts?
- What is the impact of mediated activism on the dynamic of democratisation conflicts in the four emerging democracies?

Background to the conflict cases

The cases discussed in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa overlap and contrast with each other. For example, all the countries had some elements of ethnic and/or religious conflict, and all the countries experienced conflict around the politics of political parties –

focussing on election conflict in Egypt, Kenya and Serbia, and in South Africa, focussing on the conflict and contestation around the President's yearly State of the Nation address. However, the cases are also unique in the local specificities of the source of conflict, as will be discussed throughout this section.

Egypt

The conflict cases are intertwined with each other. In the aftermath of the deposal of Mubarak in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the state was in limbo (Korotayev and Zinkina, 2011) and protests were taking place widely. The executive and legislative authorities at the time, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), were facing an array of opposition of different forces. In order to try to reduce the opposition, consultation reportedly took place between the Muslim Brotherhood and SCAF. There was much uncertainty with respect to relations between the Islamist forces and SCAF in that period. The Muslim Brothers pulled out from the street protests, to give way to the political process managed by SCAF.

Maspero Demonstrations 2011

The 2011 Maspero clashes happened during the gap between the January Egyptian revolution and the November Parliamentary Elections. The conflict, triggered by a communal attack against a church, came only days before the parliamentary elections[1] (Ramzy 2015) and may have been an attempt to cut down street protests by the military rulers. On the other hand, a discourse of Copts causing mayhem and instability fed into the discourse of the Islamists – their traditional rivals (Guirguis 2012). In this respect, the Maspero incident further increased the schisms between the communal groups, and the Coptic groups and the state, weakening social cohesion further and increasing communal divides (Christiansen 2013).

Presidential Elections of 2012 and 2014

The two presidential elections in 2012 and 2014 are crucial turning points in post-revolution Egypt and together reflect the uncertain outcome of the political transformations taking place there. In 2012, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, Mohammed Morsi, won the first democratic election in Egypt with less than 52 per cent of the vote, with a turnout of only 46 per cent and 52 per cent in the first and second rounds respectively (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a). Amid 'manipulation of the political process, growing repression, and desire to remain above the law' (Elgindy 2012, p. 89), Morsi was ousted in 2013, and a new election in May 2014 confirmed General El-Sisi as

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[1] Held from 28 November 2011 to 11 January 2012.

president with an overwhelming majority of 97 per cent, even though only 48 per cent of Egyptians turned out to vote (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a).

Christian-Muslim Violence 2013

Between the two elections, Christian-Muslim violence increased. Although direct state violence against Copts is a very rare event, with the Egyptian state typically presenting itself as the protector of the Coptic community (Guirguis 2012), the rapid upswing of protests against Morsi with Copts as vocal critics was interpreted as a sectarian move by Copts – even though mainstream Muslims were also anti- the Muslim Brotherhood (Christiansen 2013). Amid conflict and power struggles between different political factions, the Copts were attacked by Islamic activists, with an essential focus of the conflict on whether or not the Copts should be entitled to citizen rights and able to voice political views without being stigmatised (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a).

Media role

The (state) media played a significant role in stoking sectarian strife and characterising clashes between the army and protestors as communal clashes between Muslims and Copts (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a). Meanwhile, social media activists played an important role providing counter narratives to the events using videos that they captured at the scene. The videos presented a very different reality to the one claiming the Copts were the initiators of the attack. However, different videos have been used differently by different parties to validate their own claims, as violence dominated the scenes in Maspero (alhaqiqa4, 2011) (see: AlHaqiqa YouTube account 2011).

Kenya

The Kenya conflict cases focus on various types of ethnic violence, especially violence by and against the Somali ethnic group, violent conflict following the 2007 national elections and in the 2013 elections how conflict was limited, and the International Criminal Court investigation into the 2007 post-election ethnic conflict. Inequalities and injustices have been at the core of the socio-political conflicts in Kenya since the colonial era (Syagga 2006). While they entrenched social stratification, the conditions created also became the seeds of resistance to the colonial state (Simatei 2005). In post-independent Kenya, equal and equitable resource allocation has been a protracted challenge (Bigsten 1977), especially after the failure of the *Majimbo* system[2] adopted at independence which envisioned strong

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[2] Political devolution of power to the country's regions

regional governance with devolved powers and fiscal plans to safeguard regional autonomy (Cheeseman 2008).

Somali conflict

The Somali ethnic group is part of the Hamitic-Cushitic ethnic groups[3] found in the Horn of Africa region, largely spread across the borders of Kenya to the North Eastern region, mainland Somalia, and parts of Ethiopia (De Waal 2004). They speak the Somali language and profess the Islamic faith. Generally, Kenyan-Somalis and the North Eastern part of Kenya have been largely marginalised economically and politically; the best summary of this being the reference to the region as 'the other Kenya'. Marginalisation, inequalities and disparities in Kenya are attributable to the colonial economic model, disparate spread of missionary work, and the varying establishments of self-help activities (Cooksey et al., 1994). But much of the marginalisation in Kenya today has roots in the migratory and settlement patterns of Kenya's various communities and the resource endowments of the regions settled in (Schilling et al., 2012) so that the settlement of the pastoralist Somalis in the semi-arid parts of Kenya is probably a big factor in their marginalisation too. At independence, the North Eastern, Coast and Rift Valley regions emerged as quite underdeveloped, trailing other regions in education, infrastructure and agricultural development (Ochieng, 1995, p. 89). The long history of conflict between Kenya and Somalia and between Kenya and the residents of North Eastern Province of Kenya[4] has created a distorted image of Somalis[5] as 'enemies' of the Kenyan state. That image, real or imagined, has informed the inhuman treatment of Somalis in the hands of Kenyan authorities (Otunnu, 1992). The Somali situation in Kenya today revolves around issues of Islamic radicalisation, and fears over links to the Al-Shaabab (Botha 2014); the delicate situation with Somali-regugees (Jaji 2014); a booming business empire (de Waal 2015); and the persistent issue of marginalisation of North Eastern Kenya. Following the Westgate[6] attack, the government cracked down on Somali dominated neighbourhoods of Kileleshwa, South B but mostly Eastleigh and South C; Somalis were taken to Kasarani Stadium for a mass identification programme to establish the Kenyan and non-Kenyan Somalis living in Kenya illegally (Botha 2014).

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[3] Are believed to have migrated from the Arabian Peninsula.
[4] Formerly the Northern Frontier District under colonial rule.
[5] The Kenyan-Somalis and Somali refugees.
[6] Between September 21st and 24th, 2013, the upmarket shopping mall in Nairobi's Westlands area, the Westgate, was under siege from a terrorist attack by the Al-Shaabab. Up to 67 people died while other 175 were seriously wounded, and the Kenyan security agencies claimed to have killed up to four of the gunmen.

Election conflict 2007 and 2013

The 2007/8 post-election violence in Kenya was caused by, among other factors, inequalities perceived ethno-geographically (Schilling et al., 2012; Waki Commission, 2008). While the Somalis and the larger North Eastern region remained relatively calm during the skirmishes, past experiences indicate that they have bigger grievances with the Kenyan government[7]. The violence left 1,400 dead (Cheeseman 2008), and the media, most notably vernacular radio stations, were accused of having incited ethnic hatred. At the same time, the mainstream media were accused of abandoning impartiality, deliberately covering up evidence of vote rigging (Ismail and Deane 2008). During the 2013 elections, the media played a very different role. As part of a broader "peace narrative" (Cheeseman et al. 2014), the media avoided content that might trigger further conflict, and mostly adopted the government's position that it was illegitimate to make public speech which was likely to inspire instability or threaten national unity (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a). The two elections reflect the dilemmas of free speech and competitive elections in volatile, divided societies.

The Kenyatta ICC Trial 2014

The ICC preliminary investigation and later attempt to prosecute those involved in the 2007 election violence were vigorously opposed by the governments of Mwai Kibaki (2007-2013) and later Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-) (Mueller 2014). These governments invested considerable energy in challenging the legitimacy of ICC proceedings against President Kenyatta and his running-mate, William Ruto (*ibid.*). While initially, the Kenyan media supported the ICC proceedings, as the government started demonising critical civil society and media as 'sell outs' and traitors, more criticism was directed at the ICC (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a). However, counter-currents can also be observed with the rise of social media like twitter (Ogola 2015): a new Nairobi based "Twitterati" utilised social media to criticise Kenyatta and Ruto and defend their prosecution.

Media role

The largely commericialised media in Kenya have played a key role in the Kenyan conflicts, inciting prejudice against Somalis, inciting violence in the 2007 elections and working to quell violence in the 2013 elections, and switching positions on the ICC trial of those involved in the 2007 election violence. However, as in Egypt, social media is allowing for the rise of alternative voices that contest mainstream media narratives.

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[7] Their war has largely been with the central government over legitimacy; and the pastoral conflicts informed by their nomadic culture, where they raid their neighbours for livestock.

Serbia

Following the Yugoslavian war which broke up Yugoslavia into separate states and after the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, Serbian civil society is recognised as playing a role in consolidating democracy in the country (Kostovicova 2006a). However, there has also been much contestation between on one hand, liberal notions of civil society, and on the other, 'uncivil' society (Kostovicova 2006a). This contestation has played out in the conflicts under study in this paper, with tensions over whether to integrate into a cosmopolitan and liberal Europe, or to instead favour nationalism (*ibid.*)

The Pride Parade of October 2010

The public debate over the Pride Parade held in September and October 2010 in Belgrade was marked by contestation between those pushing a tolerance agenda and those using the 'demonisation of sexual minorities' to push a nationalist agenda (Gould and Moe 2015; Stakić 2011). The Pride Parade was marked by violent and militant opposition from nationalist groups and the Serbian Orthodox Church (Gould and Moe 2015; Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a). This reaction from Serbian right-wing extremists, (in contrast to support for the parade from most political parties) highlighted the role that civil society can sometimes play in opposing democracy (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a).

The 2008 Election

Unfolding from March to May during Serbia's 2008 election campaigning, both Kosovo's declaration of independence and the proposed Serbian integration into the European Union (Dzihic and Wieser 2011; Jou 2010) created conflict. The conflict involved a broad range of political actors ranging from civil society groups to political parties. It marked a critical juncture in Serbia's political development and paved the way for a more consistent pro-EU policy (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a).

The Milošević ICTY Trial

Surrounding the arrest of Milošević and his secretive extradition to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, a heated debate over issues of transitional justice dominated the public agenda for months (April – July 2001) (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a). The trial itself resulted in a heightened 'defensive nationalism' among some Serbs with some arguing the ICTY was trying to "establish collective guilt" and shame the whole nation (Steflja 2010). But even before the trial, Serbians were divided about whether Milošević should be tried at all, and if so, inside or outside the country (Gordy 2014),

with pro-European, cosmopolitan groups in favour of the ICTY trial, while nationalist groups – including the police and armed forces – opposed the trial (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a).

Role of the media

Even after the fall of Milošević's regime, the Serbian media remained strongly nationalistic (Erjavec and Volčič 2007). However, over the period of the conflicts analysed in this study, the media increasingly adopted certain types of religious language, as well as the language of Western media, vis à vis the war on terrorism and crime discourse, and "appropriated them into a Serbian national political context" (*ibid.*, p. 81). This use of borrowed discourses alongside ongoing nationalist discourse has fed, for example, into the conflict around Kosovo, debates in the 2008 elections and the Milošević trial. Nationalistic discourses implying that there is a Western conspiracy against Serbia have also fed into homophobic discourses and conflict around the pride parade (Stakić 2011).

South Africa

The 27-28 April 1994 elections in South Africa heralded the end of apartheid, and the introduction of universal franchise. However, this new period – often called 'the new South Africa' - has by no means seen the end of contestation in society. Much of the protest centres on the lack of economic transformation, despite the political transition, and the ongoing levels of inequality in one of the most unequal societies in the world. A related issue is the capture of the public sector by a new wave of black elites against whom accusations of corruption have become the norm.

Community protests

From about 2000 onwards, various communities[8] started to contest the form that the roll-out of public services took (neo-liberal, cost-recovery and privatisation) (Ballard et al. 2006). From 2005 onwards, there was an upswing in what is termed 'service delivery protests'[9], tackling inter alia, poor access to water and electricity, limited roll-out of housing projects, lack of actual participation in local politics despite policy to that effect, and corruption and nepotism at local council level (Akinboade et al. 2013; Alexander 2010; Atkinson, 2007; Booysen 2007; Burger 2009). This can be generically described as challenging ongoing inequality in one of the most unequal societies in the world.

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[8] Community protests were initially united under regional banners such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) in Gauteng, and the Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC) in the Western Cape (Madlingozi 2007).
[9] These protests were no longer organised under umbrella regional organisations, but remained at the level of individual ward in local municipal government.

Xenophobia

From the early 2000s onwards, the country also saw an upswing in xenophobic violence, culminating in two waves of extreme violence in 2008 and 2015. These waves of violence have also been articulated as responses to ongoing poverty and inequality, with foreign nationals, for example, accused of competing for low-paying jobs (Dodson 2010). At the same time, the violence could also be seen as defining who is truly South African and who has the right to access public services and who is excluded (Neocosmos 2010).

The 2015 State of the Nation Address

At the same time as the local-level forms of contestation, at national level various accusations of corruption rocked the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), amid which a new political party - the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) - managed to secure seats in the country's parliament (Schulz-Herzenberg 2014). One key corruption scandal was around the upgrades to the President's home (Beresford 2015), leading to the EFF disrupting the 2015 State of the Nation address with demands that the President 'pay back the money' (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015a).

Role of the media

The South African media has played a significant role in terms of building negative perceptions of community protests, and criminalising and delegitimising protestors (Pointer 2015). Regarding xenophobia, media have been argued to be complicit in discourses encouraging xenophobia (e.g. Danso and McDonald 2001; Dodson 2010), expressing some anti-immigrant discourses. Even when the media does well in covering the xenophobic conflicts by expressing concerns, it fails to cover the causal factors underpinning such violence (Hickel 2014). Media was at the centre of the 2015 SONA conflict, with operatives within the government having jammed communication within parliament, therefore acting to suppress media coverage (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar 2015b). This suppression activity was thus thoroughly critiqued by independent media voices.

Research interest and conceptual background

The analysis for this research is based on some key assumptions in the literature around the role of media and civil society in democratisation conflicts. These assumptions centre on a significant role envisaged for media and civil society in deepening democracy in transitional contexts. Civil society, seen as a dense network of civil associations, is said to promote the stability and effectiveness of the democratic polity through both the effects of association on citizens' "habits of the heart" and the ability of associations to mobilise citizens

on behalf of public causes (Putnam 2001). Civil society is often credited with resisting authoritarianism by creating voluntary associations that democratise society from below by pushing for change (Foley and Edwards 1996).

This section of the paper explores definitions of civil society, in order to set the tone for how civil society organisations were identified in this research. After defining civil society, we then move on to examine how the media represents civil society – particularly civil society in protest – with the aim of setting the tone for how the civil society organisations interviewed in this study understand media coverage of their activities.

Defining civil society

There has been widespread assumption of the global relevance of civil society in strengthening development and democracy (e.g. Booth and Richard 1998). Lewis (2001, p. 11) suggests that civil society is also relevant in non-Western contexts, in that local meanings "created around the concept of civil society … has become part of an increasingly universal negotiation between citizens, states and market around the world".

A different strand of civil society thinking which has also been influential in some parts of the world in recent decades, influenced by Antonio Gramsci, argues that civil society is the arena, separate from state and market, in which ideological hegemony is contested, implying that civil society contains a wide range of organisations which both challenge and uphold the existing order (Lewis 2001). However, "the values civil society actors promote are not always democratic" (Spasić 2003 p. 450), and civil society structures do not automatically lead to democratic imaginaries. In some countries, "criminal organizations build their networks of support in the poor communities in exchange for patronage and forced protection" (Castells 2008 p. 84), and civil society may also be violent or supporting repressive agendas (Glasius 2010). This leads us to consider whether the emerging concept of 'uncivil' society is useful in thinking about manifestations of civil society that challenge liberal democratic values.

Glasius (2010) argues that violence is usually singled out as a characteristic of 'uncivil' society, but that exclusivist or dogmatic ideologies and general rule-breaking also count; and that academic debates centre on whether the use of the category is too western-centric and whether uncivil society should be considered as part of a wider category of civil society. John Keane (2013 p.135) has argued that "all known forms of civil society are plagued by endogenous sources of incivility", but nonetheless distinguishes between a civil and an un-civil society, differentiated by a tipping point in the use of violence:

A highly developed civil society can and normally does contain within itself violent tendencies, that is, patterns of incivility or behaviour prone to violence that can and

do threaten to accumulate synergetically to the point where the occasional violence of some against some within a civil society degenerates into the constant violence of all against all of an uncivil society (Keane 2013, p.136*).*

Similarly,

[v]iolence or non-violent physical resistance has been one way of acting politically for those not granted the authority to speak. Such violence – by contrast with the legitimate violence of the state (Max Weber) – lies at the edge of legitimate politics; it is often not given the name of politics and called 'terrorism' (Couldry 2015, p.120)*.*

Definitional issues also revolve around the scope of civil society — does it include organisations and associations which are not always voluntary, such as churches or religious sects, and does it include political parties and trade unions, or should the term be confined to voluntary activist movements? The main conceptual issue is the supposed link between civil society and democracy, whether civil society is viewed as "the cornerstone of democracy" (e.g. Castells 2008, p.78), with civil society seen as providing "the impetus for establishing elections, as well as the leadership and resources for political parties contesting these elections" (Holm et al. 1996, p.43).

A definitional concern when looking at civil society organisations centres on delineating civil society groups in terms of whether they participate in social or political activism. However, there is a continuum between these forms of activism, and groups may act differently at different times. One would normally associate political activism with party politics, and civil society groups befitting the 'political activist' tag would be those aligned to political parties or political causes, such as challenging the form of government or demanding human rights (Guobin Yang, 2009) In the same vein, groups identified as 'social activists' would probably be 'non-aligned' to party politics, and focusing on/advocating a range of causes that may include equal access to housing and water, the environment, LGBTI rights, access to medicine, minority rights, etc. (*ibid.*). The distinction between the two types of activism is generally based on where activism is targeted, with political activism conceptualised as activity targeting the state and political reform (*ibid.*), whereas social activism might seek to change society.

So, for example, in gender-focussed activist groups, those seeking policy change from government in terms of the role of women in society can be seen as political activists, while those challenging the roles of men and women in society might be regarded as social activists. However, it is possible that one civil society group may take on society and the state. So, for example, the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa targeted the state

with demands for medicine, but also multinational pharmaceutical companies to make anti-retrovirals affordable to South Africans. In terms of more conservative civil society groupings, as in Serbia, anti-LGBTI activists might demand that the state legally reserves marriage for heterosexual relationships, while at the same time encouraging homophobia in society (Stakić 2011).

In Kenya, the notion of political parties is very different to Western ideas of political parties because:

> Leaders and politicians have shifted from party to party and in the process made strange bedfellow alliances with each other. Even those who are in opposition now have been in each other's governments and cabinets at one time or another (Mueller, 2008, p. 200).

Therefore, it is difficult to conceive of activism in Kenya as being embedded in parties (political activism), and with political parties in a constant state of flux it is difficult for civil society to build a momentum of political activism (Bodewes, 2010; Orvis, 2003) On the other hand, one finds initiatives in the slums aimed at environmental clean-up and tackling government's non-provision of services (Wamucii, 2011), which while being usually defined as social activism, could easily spin into political activism if organised to challenge the government to provide services. The difficulties in defining activism also become clear when one considers "religious activism" (Silberman et al., 2005) in Kenya, where for example the increasing sacralisation of conflict has led to the rise of Al-Shabaab, which sees itself as part of a "larger, millenarian struggle between Islam and infidelity" (Vidino et al., 2010, p. 221).

Under Mubarak in Egypt, prior to the 2011 revolution, CSOs had to register with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Licence applications were turned down for vague reasons, and the state had a say over board membership and decision making; thus the state exerted powerful control over CSO activities (Altan-Olcay and Icduygu, 2012). Furthermore, CSOs in Egypt were dominated by older men of a higher socio-economic status, regardless of the segment at which their work was targeted (*ibid*). Hence, "CSOs were seen as more successful in rallying support for 'apolitical' values than for 'politically sensitive ones'" (*ibid*., p.172), filling a void created by the state's retreat from welfare provisioning. Arguably then, activism in Egypt was usually social activism, but with the 2005 rise of Kefaya[10], its discourse on democratisation and call for Mubarak to resign (Lim, 2012) arguably the terrain shifted and activism became more political. However, this is rather simplistic, given that oppositional movements in Egypt have been, and continue to be, polarised based on religious affiliation

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[10] A largely youth movement that challenged Mubarak's presidency (Shehata 2011).

— whether Islamist or liberal secular (*ibid.*). Even in the 2011 Tahir Square uprising, where these religious differences were overcome temporarily, it is difficult to characterise the protagonists of the revolt, with some arguing that the revolt was about "bread, freedom, and social justice", while others argued that it was about "human dignity" (Baker, 2015). Baker (2015) also argues that it is difficult to separate out the extent to which the sought after changes are simply national regime change, or a contestation of globalisation and the political alliances between national governments and the multinationals who supply weapons.

In Serbia there "has been a partial transfer of personnel and influence from civil society to the state apparatus: some individuals have moved from civic organizations to positions of power, mostly at the level deputy ministers, advisors, or in local and regional bodies" (Spasić 2003, p.454). This means that former political activists have become embedded in the state, and their challenges, therefore, can be seen as political. Nevertheless, as in Western countries, young people in Serbia have "turned away from mainstream politics" to create "new arenas and innovative ways of expressing their views, political claims and particular identities" (Vukelic and Stanojevic, 2012, p. 388). Particularly, young people have become interested in 'lifestyle politics' and neighbourhood politics of squatting and reclaiming "devastated public spaces, usually followed by negotiations with local authorities in order to reconstruct places, revitalise neighbourhoods, and make a long term contribution to sustainable development of the local community" (Šešić et al., 2015, p. 195). In respect of gay rights in Serbia, which can be regarded as 'lifestyle politics', in fact the LGBTI movement was able to link itself to pro-EU activism and the pro-democracy cause in the 2008 elections (Gould and Moe, 2015), showing how 'social activism' and 'political activism' can intersect.

Like Serbia, South Africa also experienced a situation in which former activists were incorporated into the state in 1994, and this saw a temporary demobilisation of society immediately after the end of apartheid (Marais, 2011; Seekings, 2000). However, as early as 2000 civil society started organising again to resist the privatisation of public services, through organisations such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC). These social movements undertook social activism around provision of services to poor communities, while at the same time undertaking political activism challenging global neo-liberal policies imposed by the popularly elected African National Congress (ANC) (Reddy, 2010). In addition there has been a proliferation of so-called 'service delivery protests', where impoverished communities across the country rise up to protest against inter alia lack of housing, water, electricity and sanitation provision, poorly performing local systems of participatory governance, corruption and nepotism at local

government level, etc. (Alexander, 2010a; 2010b; Bond and Mottiar, 2013; Booysen, 2007b; Kunene, 2014; Piper and Nadvi, 2010; Tapela, 2012 and others). What is interesting to note, at least in the South African case, is that while several of the issue-based organisations focus their activism around predominantly 'social issues', there are also political undertones to the content of their activities. Some of them maintain organic albeit informal links to political parties, rendering it somewhat difficult to allocate an unproblematic tag to the scope of their activism.

In Serbia, civil society organisations are largely disconnected from the grassroots, and civil activism is primarily a middle-class activity, with organisations having a weak potential "to shift balance of social and political power and thus contribute to strengthening government accountability and rule of law" (Vuković 2015, p.657). Nevertheless, the post-Milošević era has seen the rise of 'illiberal civil society' with a host of "illiberal ideologies, including anti-Semitism, exclusive nationalism, xenophobia and racism" (Kostovicova 2006, p.31). Such elements of civil society may be "much less democratic, and more dangerous, than the government" (Spasić 2003, p.457). Some protest movements have the potential to trigger "political polarization, and thus rapid vacating of the uncommitted or moderate centre… [pushing regime elites] towards more exclusive and repressive policies" (Vladisavljević 2014, p.5).

This comparative analysis of media and civil society in democratisation conflicts therefore acknowledges that definitional concerns are bound to influence the assessment of civil society in the context of each transitional society. Not all civil society actors are activists, and some civil society actors (e.g. the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa) don't threaten the fundamental paradigm and could thus be integrated within the general consensus (Robins and von Lieres 2004). This paper seeks to identify the nature of civil society in each of the transitional societies studied and uses the conceptualisations presented above to identify different types of civil society actors in each society and within each case study – whether they may be pushing for social change and/or political change, and whether they may be civil or 'uncivil' in their actions. As the paper will discuss in the next section, the nature of civil society is also linked to media coverage as the mainstream media will always cover protests because of who orchestrates these protests, but the way the media covers protest may influence how civil society organisations are perceived.

The role of media in democracies and the mediatisation of conflict

The focus on the media's relationship with civil society in democratisation conflicts rests on the notion that contemporary conflicts are increasingly mediatised events (Cottle 2006). Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993, p.116) argue that gaining standing in the media is

"often a necessary condition before targets of influence will grant a movement recognition and deal with its claims and demands". Media coverage of political and social activism and conflict impacts 1) how civil society groups are viewed within the public sphere and 2) communications strategies these groups devise in order to maximise visibility and influence.

These assumptions about the media and civil society should not be taken for granted. Particularly in transitional contexts the ability for civil society organisations to connect with the interests of a diverse and often polarised, unequal or conflictual citizenry can be questioned, while the media's ability to articulate the broad range of what constitutes the public interest is often hampered by social, political or economic interests.

Because certain conventional 'news values' inform the way news is selected (Barnett 2003; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999) and produced, democratisation conflicts are likely to be framed as 'events' with emphasis on the spectacle, and 'official' sources such as spokespersons are likely to be given prominence. This assumption will be further explored in this study, with a particular focus on how activists view their representation in the media and what strategies activists use to influence media agendas. The focus on media use for activism is however complicated by the difficulty of drawing clear delineations between political and social activism, because there is a continuum between these forms of activism.

The post-industrial West has witnessed a refocusing of political engagement outside of the parliamentary and political party system, giving birth to the emergence of 'new politics' (Dahlgren and Gurevitch 2005). The assumption is that activists rely on mainstream media to reach audiences that may be of strategic importance to their cause, even if these may not be their primary support base, but that they also use new digital and mobile technologies to mobilise for activism and communicate with their constituencies.

Methodology

Description of sample

Interviewees were selected based on their involvement in the conflicts presented in sections 1 and 2 of this paper and were sampled using the snowball technique (Priest 2009 p. 101). This comprised starting with known individuals in activist organisations, and allowing them to suggest further interviewees within or outside their organisations. The sample includes activists and organisers from key organisations involved in the conflicts, as well as others (such as religious leaders) working on the ground during the democratisation case studies in each of the four countries. In most instances, more than one respondent was chosen from each key organisation, to allow for a range of opinions and a degree of triangulation.

In most cases we attempted to interview activists whose organisations were covered in the media sample that was content-analysed in previous parts of the MeCoDEM study. Depending on saturation and local circumstances, activists and civil society members from additional organisations were also included, but only those who were involved in some way in the conflicts under study. Within the country interview samples, preferably all three conflict cases under study would have been covered. Moreover, we aimed at achieving a balance between activists from different types of organisations and who were involved in different ways; taking care to interview both junior and senior/ more experienced activists, men and women, those from formal NGOs and those from community organisations or 'social movements'.

The dataset consists of material collected in 91 interviews which were conducted in the four countries: 19 interviews in Egypt, 24 interviews in Kenya, 20 interviews in Serbia and 28 interviews in South Africa. In total, the sample builds on 110.5 hours of interview conversation (40 hours, 39 minutes in Egypt; 20 hours, 44 minutes in Kenya; 18 hours, 15 minutes in Serbia; and 30 hours, 52 minutes in South Africa). The average length was one hour and 12 minutes per interview (two hours, eight minutes in Egypt; 49 minutes in Kenya; 54 minutes in Serbia; and 66 minutes in South Africa).

Techniques of data collection and data analysis

Interviews

The research for work package 5 ('Civil society, political activism and communications in democratisation conflicts') relied predominantly on extended qualitative, semi-structured interviews. This type of interview is designed to explore an interviewee's point of view in detail; they are lengthy and have a degree of flexibility and open-endedness, and involve fewer respondents than surveys (Priest 2009, p. 223). The goal of the interviews was to gain an insider's perspective on media processes in activist and civil society organisations. Interviews are often used when participant observation or ethnographic methods are not feasible (*ibid.*, p. 101). In this instance, while ethnographic methods were considered, limited time to gain access to organisations was a primary reason for focusing on interviews instead.

Qualitative interviews usually begin with an interview schedule or guide to ensure that all topics are covered, but makes allowance for probing topics that had not been anticipated or need further questioning (Priest 2009, p. 101). The interview guide starts with a basic checklist of information (Bertrand and Hughes 2005, p. 79) that could be analysed to get an overview of the demographics of participants, their position within organisations, etc. All interviewees completed a questionnaire to provide key demographic data in order to collect a

general picture of the interviewees' personal and professional backgrounds. Data was also collected on interviewees' personal involvement in each conflict case, the structure of their organisation and strategies for mobilisation, internal and external communication, relationship with and views of mainstream media, and values and objectives.

The interview guide for work package 5 covered three main areas:

1. The types of political activism involved in the country conflict cases
2. The use an influence of ICTs in facilitating political activism and protest in the country conflict cases
3. The perceived impact of mediated activism on democratisation conflicts

Interviews began with an innovative reconstruction technique (Flick 2002; Flick et al. 2007; Reich 2009, 2006) to explore an interviewee's own involvement in the selected democratisation conflicts. At the start of the interview activists were shown a copy of a newspaper item covering the conflict, and asked to use this to recall and reconstruct the processes involved in the emergence of the conflict, as well as media coverage of the conflict. The aim of the reconstruction was to foster "retrospective introspection" (Flick 2002, p. 120) and to take the interviewees back in time to remember particular circumstances while also being guided to refer to specific factors. Thereby we aimed to achieve descriptive and in-depth narratives and insights that transcend the possibility of socially desired responses from the activists.

Data analysis and ethics

During the data gathering process, several mechanisms were put in place to ensure that data was collected consistently and that the research instrument was applied validly. We adhered to ethical standards as per the guidelines of the overall MeCoDEM project, and interviewees were given the option to remain anonymous. Data was encrypted and files were labelled to ensure anonymity of the interviewees.

In addition, the interview guide included a brief description of how interviewers should approach each question. This was intended to explain what type of information the question was meant to elicit. A detailed interview manual was provided to each country team and interviewers within the team. This documentation was provided in English and country team leaders arranged for research documents to be accurately translated into local languages where required. The research instruments were all tested in four pilot interviews, one conducted in each country. Amendments to phrasing and sequence of questions was made based on the findings of the pilot interviews. For work package 5 we used the existing

transcription and translation manual that was developed during work package 4 ('Journalistic ethics and work practices in conflict societies'). This ensured consistency across countries.

An NVivo coding template was provided to each country team who entered their data and carried out basic coding of the interviews. An integrated dataset was then developed incorporating data from all four countries. A final analysis was carried out on this dataset and the findings are detailed below.

Findings

In reporting on the findings of this research, we first examine how civil society organisations articulated the causes of conflict and where they targeted their activism. The paper then looks at the internal and external communication tools and techniques used by civil society organisations to mobilise members and society at large. The extent to which civil society organisations involved in the case study conflicts are mediatised is then examined, particularly looking at the perceived importance of gaining media coverage, how civil society organisations engage the media and perceptions of the quality of media coverage, as well as the significance of social media in gaining a voice. Finally, we discuss perceptions of conflict situations and how the media portrayal such conflict impacts on understandings of democracy in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa.

Perceived causes of conflict and target of activism

In terms of who civil society organisations directed their activism at, the countries showed quite some overlap, though with different emphasis – with every country mentioning politicians, government officials and the police as problematic (see Table 2). This suggests that regardless of the particular forms of recent democratisation in the country, the form of governance and the manner for dealing with conflicts (through armed officials) is still strongly a place of contestation.

Table 2. Targets of activism

Egypt	Christian-Muslim violence	Islamists, Muslim Brotherhood
	Maspero democratisation	Supreme Council of Armed Forces, the state, military police, Muslim Brotherhood, Prime Minister
	Presidential elections	Muslim Brotherhood
Kenya	ICC	Government, national and regional politics in the African Union, coalition government, poor electoral commission, ICC as part of the 'colonial structures that impede the south', European Union, the EU Parliament, the UN Security Council
	Somali community	National Police Service Commission, the presidency and executive, police, courts not applying rule of law
	Elections	Electoral body, government, opposition party, media, citizens, civil society organisations, everybody - young and old, men and women, politicians
Serbia	2008 Elections	Globalisation - NATO, USA, EU, politicians, opposition party
	Milošević ICTY Trial	UN Security Council, the Hague Tribunal, political opponents of Milošević, state security, foreign governments, foreign-funded NGOs
	Ombudsman 2015	Media, Ministry of the Interior, Prime Minister, police, government, politicians
	Pride Parade	Political parties, violent groups acting against the parade, LGBT activists forcing deviant practices on others, hooligans attacking gay rights activists, the state, the police, consumerism, Dveri, European Union
South Africa	Community protests	Politicians, African National Congress, government, police minister, provincial government, provincial commissioner of police, local government/ municipalities/ 'City', councillors, local water and sanitation department, police, Eskom, capitalism, unsafe environment
	Xenophobia	Gang members, political parties, senior politicians, youth, government departments, SA small business associations that are threatened by foreign businesses, courts/ judges/ magistrates
	SONA 2015	Securocrats, parliament security agency, parliament presiding officer

South African activists involved in community protest, also known as 'service delivery protests', were primarily targeting their activism at various levels of government, and felt the police were opponents. The key reason given for conflicts was that the government was failing to communicate effectively about programmes to help the poor, failing to listen to communities in a participatory way about citizen needs and preferences, providing services that were too costly, and not adequately delivering services such as water, electricity and housing. With regard to xenophobic violence the inability of poor communities to find voice

and access services was similarly mentioned as a key factor. Due to the nature of government failures, provincial and national government were mentioned but most of the comments about the identity of the main opponent and who was to blame were directed at local government.

Kenyan activists – although also targeting politicians and criticising the police – were primarily either seeking to influence international bodies such as the International Criminal Court or change attitudes – particularly towards different ethnic and religious groups – at local level through civic education campaigns to overcome the fragmentation in Kenyan society, and to inform people about the constitution. When targeting international bodies, activism was diversely focussed; for example:

> There were a number of activities like lobbying the European Union, the EU Parliament, the UN Security Council and other bodies, to take some... and of course the African Union and inter-governmental bodies within Africa concerned with issues of peace, security and justice. So we had a number of activities trying to see that justice is done for the atrocities that were done. (Kenya Interview 009)

Like Kenya, Serbian activists also looked to international bodies as a target of their campaigns, including the International Criminal Court, NATO and undue or unwelcome influence of the EU. For example, activists against the Gay Pride parade identified LGBTI rights as a harmful western influence. On the other hand, regarding the 2008 elections, Europe was identified as positive by some parties, and political parties who opposed European integration were identified as opponents.

In Kenya and Serbia, ethnic division was often mentioned as a cause of conflict, while in Kenya and Egypt religious differences were seen as a key cause of conflict. In Egypt, while again the state was a target of activism, the primary problem was identified as religious fundamentalism and other key opponents were seen to be the Armed Forces and the Military Police, though quite a few respondents focussed on ascribing blame to individuals. For example, when asked who was to blame for conflicts Egyptian Interviewee 003 replied:

> The responsibility is a big one and there is no one party to hold it alone. Inside SCAF [Supreme Council of Armed Forces], the direct responsibility is with Marshal Tantawy as its head, then Sami Anan, then Hamdy Badeen, Ibrahim El Damaty, General Ismail Etman and General Emara who justified it after, Marshal or President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, whatever his position now. … The responsibility is big one and the idea of dividing it is hard. … Of course, the responsibility is clearly on SCAF.

Both Kenya and Serbia also specifically blamed the media for ongoing democratisation conflicts. In Serbia, for example anti-LGBTI activists identified the media as pro-LGBTI, and activists who supported the ombudsman identified the media as playing a particular role in trying to bring the ombudsman down. In Kenya, while the literature previously revealed the role of the media in propelling the 2007 election violence (Mäkinen and Kuira 2008, p.331), in the 2013 elections, the newspapers were accused of not allowing fruitful debate to take place, as they tried to focus on consensus and keeping the peace.

South African activists were the only ones that identified gangs and corporations (such as Eskom – the national electricity provider, Johannesburg Water – a company privatising public water provision, and Servcom – a financial institution taking over defaulted mortgages) as opponents, although both South Africans and Serbians identified globalisation/ the global capitalist economic system as a problem. In both instances, global economic systems were identified as a hindrance to democracy.

From this section of the analysis it is clear that across societies there is not one source of conflict, no single reason for citizen action, but conflict happens at all levels of society from the global level down to local level. From the Serbian examples, it is also clear that civil society is not automatically pro-democracy, nor pro-extending human rights to all. Some civil society organisations actively seek to limit the rights of others based on religion, ethnicity or other distinguishing characteristics such as sexuality.

Internal and external communication for mobilisation

Internal mobilisation

In terms of organising membership, activists in all countries identified landlines and cell phones as key communication tools; they also all indicated that email (including email mailing lists) were an important way of communicating with membership (Table 3).

Table 3. Internal mobilisation tools

Egypt	Christian-Muslim violence	Emails, SMS, private Facebook groups, petitions
	Maspero democratisation	Church podiums, Viber (app), WhatsApp, SMS, emails, telephones, door-to-door, bulk SMS system, Forum on Religious Liberties, distributing printed papers to those who did not access social media
	Presidential elections	Workshops, church podiums, email, SMS, Facebook
Kenya	ICC	Questionnaires, phone calls, stakeholder meetings, mobile phones
	Somali community	Memorandums of understanding, petitions, stakeholder meetings, mobile phones, emails, bulk messaging service
	Elections	Questionnaires, memorandums of understanding, petitions, phone calls, stakeholder meetings, people's forums, mobile phones, emails
Serbia	2008 Elections	Local government structures, meetings, telephone, email, email newsletter
	Milošević ICTY Trial	Meetings, telephone, email, petitions
	Ombudsman 2015	Mailing list, newsletter, meetings, petitions
	Pride Parade	Mailing list, newsletter, meetings, petitions
South Africa	Community protests	Landlines, handwritten letters, pamphlets, regular meetings, membership cards, cell phones: SMS and 'please calls', loud hailer, messenger apps: WhatsApp & Blackberry Messenger, email including mailing lists, outside resourced person acting as go-between/messenger, software for sending free SMS, workshops
	Xenophobia	Workshops, website, specialised publications, pamphlets, media, film making, social media: Twitter & Facebook, networking with other organisations
	SONA 2015	Social media: Twitter & Facebook, public meetings, publications and newsletter, getting media attention for legal action and protests

In Serbia, newsletters and meeting minutes were delivered by electronic mailing lists. Kenya, Egypt and South Africa all used cell phone short messaging services (SMS) to communicate with their members, including bulk SMS services in Kenya and South Africa,

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and free 'please call me' SMSs in South Africa. In Serbia, Kenya and South Africa, holding regular scheduled meetings on a date agreed at the previous meeting was a key way to keep communication going, while in all four countries training workshops were also commonly used to organise members.

In Egypt and South Africa messenger services such as WhatsApp, Viber and Blackberry Messenger was also a popular internal communication tool. Both South African and Egyptian organisations were also either using or developing specific applications (apps) for communicating in their networks. For example, a South African NGO working with migrant and refugee communities to deal with, among other things, xenophbic violence, stated that they were in 'the final stage of setting up a mobile-based communication system with the broader refugee and migrant community' (South African Interview 015).

Although many organisations across all countries were using communication technologies, they were also aware of their limits, and often used less technological methods of communication, such as handwritten and hand-delivered letters in Egypt, Kenya and South Africa. For example, one South African activists explained how they used written letters to mobilise new members:

> Now the way that we did, it was quite basic, we just wrote, hand writing letters and just put stamps and we'll go to a settlement and at that particular settlement we'll identify the settlement executive committee, then we will just give them the letter and request to have a meeting with the executive committee (South African Interview 005)

Kenyan activists also commonly used Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), questionnaires, and like Egypt and Serbia, petitions to communicate with and rally members. In Kenya and Egypt, it was common for civil society organisations to connect with other existing structures, such as churches, on the ground. Kenyan and Egyptian organisations also used the hierarchy of the organisation as a channel for communication. For example, in Kenya:

> We have the national office which is the headquarters for the secretariat, and we have regional offices and regional coordinators and field officers and of course they have resources that they can reach out to. Like lets in Rift Valley, we split the region into two: North Rift and South Rift. …So the County Coordinating Committee is responsible for channelling information from the grassroots to the regional office, and off course there is feedback. And then the regional office channels the information to the head office (Kenya Interview 014)

South Africans used a huge variety of communication tools, with – specifically among community-based organisations – walking up and down in a settlement with a loud hailer being a popular tool to call people to meetings. It was also common to use a middle-class activist as a go-between 'switchboard' when communication involved sending messages from one community to another in resource-constrained circumstances. Resource constraints were frequently mentioned by South African community activists as limiting their ability to communicate with each other; a few Kenyan activists also mentioned similar concerns.

From these country case studies a clear range of tactics are used across countries – but it stands out that technological tools interact with face-to-face and printed communications in unique ways. Neither type of communication stands up to keeping people connected on its own connected, but both types of communication have value.

External mobilisation

When it comes to communication strategies to mobilise people outside organisational membership, there is an explosion of creativity across a wide range of mediums in all four countries in the study (Table 4). While most organisations in the study created websites to communicate their causes, activists in all four countries also produced special publications (such as factual reports, case digests, and newsletters), sent out media briefings and held media briefing events, created videos, and distributed pamphlets and/or leaflets.

Table 4. Communication tools for external mobilisation

Egypt	Christian-Muslim violence	Church sermons, media statements, occupying public spaces, framing messages
	Maspero democratisation	Video on websites, television, pamphlets, sit-ins, demonstrations, issuing statements, social media, flags, music, microphones, published reports, word of mouth, mobile phones
	Presidential elections	Infographics, social media
Kenya	ICC	Published reports, print media, social media, music, art, caravans, public meetings, calls for national prayers, SMS, safari.com website, media briefings, petitions, emails, trained media personalities, training manuals
	Somali community	Published reports, publicised hotline, working with freelance journalists, personalised contact, newspaper pull-outs, radio, public forums, SMS including free SMS, television, meetings, phone calls, journalists, training manuals, calls for national prayers, rallies, safari.com website, road shows
	Elections	Published reports, publicised hotline, working with freelance journalists, personalised contact, newspaper pull-outs, radio, public forums, SMS including free SMS, word of mouth and door-to-door, theatre, media, church and mosque sermons, music, social media, posters, leaflets, football matches, art, calls for national prayers, safari.com website, press conferences, public dialogue, training manuals, film showings, People's Daily newspaper, workshops, emails, community meetings
Serbia	2008 Elections	Website, public events, media appearances, protest, door-to-door, direct mailing, telephone calls, television, comics, videos, street campaigns, public opinion polls, questionnaires, brochures, petitions
	Milošević ICTY Trial	Website, specialised publications, books, media, t-shirts, educational programmes, marches, flags
	Ombudsman 2015	Petitions, open letters, public actions, social media
	Pride Parade	Public lectures, brochures, media campaign, press releases, press conferences, Op-Eds, TV programmes, banners, speeches, songs,

		posters, public debates, social media, workshops, special publications, website, stands at public events
South Africa	Community protests	Regular meetings, loud hailer, protest marches and direct action, pamphlets, posters, placards, banners, petitions and memos, word-of-mouth, door-to-door, community newspapers and community radio, pirate radio, social media: Facebook, Twitter, blogging, email, websites, networking with other organisations, phoning talk shows, press releases and media attention, films, photography, training paralegals, workshops, special publications: newsletters, reports, briefings, infographics etc., hanging washing and underwear in public spaces, t-shirts
	Xenophobia	Workshops, website, specialised publications, pamphlets, media, film making, social media: Twitter and Facebook, networking with other organisations
	SONA 2015	Social media: Twitter and Facebook, public meetings, publications and newsletters, getting media attention for legal action and protests

Although all organisations in all countries used press statements, some South African civil society organisations did not feel confident making statements on their own, and referred to press releases made through individual academics who supported them:

But when it comes to <Steven Marshall>, now and then I know when you do press statement also at a Western Cape level, we will call him and just say "Hey, <Steven>, this is the press statement that we want to issue - can you just check it and okay it as an academic person and as a friend of <CFG> ... he was trusted and I think then he would check that press statement and edit and bring it back and said: "No okay, there's some changes there that I've made or I've edited somewhere there and there," then we relook to it again. Then if it's okay then we will publish and he will just approve and it will be published to the entire network of <CFG>. And sometimes of course, when we are being criticised at a particular level, you know, then he will offer his services to respond to whatever maybe ... whatever critic that was made against <CFG> and he will write a response statement to whatever has been issued, then before he published that he will quickly then post to us, <CFG> Western Cape so that we go through it and if we are happy with that then he will publish that and it

comes as a response from <CFG> Western Cape. Sometime then when we've got memos from the City of Cape Town and we will share also that with him, and we'll say that's fine, they want us to respond, then yes, he will respond to that … (South Africa Interview 005)

Activists in South Africa, Kenya and Serbia explained that press conferences and media releases were not always effective: in Serbia and Kenya, activists reported resorting to payment to achieve media coverage. A small pro- Milošević organisation in Serbia reported that they were not big enough to organise large rallies, and despite holding multiple press conferences and giving written media statements achieved no coverage (Serbia Interview 015). Similarly, a South African activist reported that they would announce their marches and activities via press releases but received no coverage (South Africa Interview 010).

Going door-to-door was another strategy used across all four countries. For example, a Kenya activist explained that in order to support those who had experienced post-election violence in 2007, they went door-to-door to talk to the whole community and neighbours in order to mobilise them to attend a meeting (Kenya Interview 022).

In all four countries music and songs were commonly used to mobilise support, as was television coverage. For example, CDs were produced in South Africa. In Kenya, an activist explained how in the run up to the 2013 election music and other youth talents were seen as a key organising tool (Kenya Interview 004). One Egyptian activist explained how the songs used changed over time, especially with regards to putting a stop to religious chants and switching to social demands instead (Egypt Interview 001).

In South Africa, Serbia and Egypt protest marches and occupying spaces were commonly used. Some of these actions were planned, but others were spontaneous in response to specific events, such as in Egypt where responses to a Muslim attack on a Coptic church were quickly organised (Egypt Interview 002). On the other hand, in Serbia years of organising went into gaining permission to hold a Gay Pride parade in 2010, as an activist described:

The final wave started with official meetings with the police, somewhere in July, I think. In the beginning those meetings, and there were a total of ten or twelve of them in the process... In the beginning those meetings happened with two, three or four people from the police, mostly in the offices of the Ministry at the Palace of Serbia. The moment when, I think it was the end of August, it happened that their side was not composed of only three or four men, but that we were taken to a big conference room, I think with twenty generals of various police departments, from all

of them I think, intervention unit, foreigner unit, traffic police etc., office for protection of persons, it was clear to us that the cut was made at the top and that the parade would happen, so somewhere, an announcement and a press conference were organised, where we announced the date to be somewhere at the start of September (Serbia Interview 017)

Egyptians and South Africans also produced infographics to share information. Serbian and Egyptian activists used flags to attract external supporters, while Kenyans and South Africans held public meetings and used community radio, petitions, posters, press releases and newspaper coverage.

Religious sermons were commonly used to rally support in Egypt and Kenya, although this was not necessarily without contention. For example, an Egyptian activist explained how they blocked a priest from preaching at a protest so as to ensure that the protest involved people from different religious backgrounds (Egypt Interview 001).

Organisational t-shirts, banners and newspaper Op-Eds were used in Serbia and South Africa. A South Africa activist described the importance of his organisation's t-shirts as they became iconic: resistance to the privatisation of public services came to be identified with those wearing them (South Africa Interview 018).

Other than these over-lapping activities, each country had its own strategies for building external support. For example, in Egypt one activist explained how a sit-in grew, by asking the few who were there to phone others and get them to participate (Egypt Interview 003). At sit-ins, creating an open mic in a public space was a common technique to give people voice and build common purpose. Egyptian activists also mentioned the importance of framing their messages, with a particular focus on eloquence (Egypt Interview 004).

In Kenya activists called for public prayers, created 'caravans' (groups of people who travel around the country picking up followers as they go), held rallies, created hotline numbers or free SMS services for people to contact in case of trouble, developed newspaper pull-outs, and created drama productions and art. A particular strategy for working with communities that had been violent towards each other was to host football matches to allow tribal 'fighting' in a fun and constructive way (Kenya Interview 005). But most interventions in Kenya involved building up trust over time, and then developing action from there, for example with regards to alleviating violence between communities, organisations hold meetings with each community culminating in a joint meeting between the conflicted communities (Kenya Interview 006).

Serbian civil society organisations held public events, speeches and public debates, created comics, held opinion polls, ran educational programmes, and conducted street campaigns. South African activists involved in community protests used loud hailers in their neighbourhoods, placards at protests, developed pirate radio stations, called in to talk radio shows, took and shared photographs (including on social media), and made graffiti and murals that lasted many years. One South African activist vividly described how her community protested by doing washing in a government building and hanging laundry – including underwear – in public places to protest their lack of water (South Africa Interview 004).

It is clear that communication is a central function of how civil society organisations operate across countries. The different types of communication are not limited to mainstream and social media, but are creative – sometimes artistic, and connected to local circumstances and local cultures.

Mediatisation

Importance of the media

Different interviewees across countries viewed the importance of the media differently, with some activists saying that it was an essential part of modern politics, while others said that the media did not speak to the audiences they were trying to reach, so was considered marginal. A South African activist said that most people in poor communities did not buy newspapers and so they was irrelevant to building a community organisation (South Africa Interview 005). A South African NGO worker agreed that media coverage was not that useful due to the juniorisation of newsrooms and the inaccurate coverage.

However, most activists found media coverage useful. For example, in Serbia, even though media coverage of an anti-LGBTI group was mostly unfavourable, the activist reflected:

We, as an organisation, cherished media coverage of any of our political activities. In that sense, even negative coverage is still coverage (Serbia interview 12)

Where organisations desire to provide information to the broad public or mobilise citizens, media coverage is considered important. However, if the focus is on movement building with people on the ground, media coverage may not serve to strengthen connections and media coverage is considered of lesser importance.

Procedures for getting media attention

Civil society organisations in all countries captured media attention by building relationships with specific journalists and phoned those journalists when activities were taking place or when they wanted to comment on an issue. For example, an Egyptian activist described their relationship with the media as follows:

> We also gained the trust of many of them and we even became friends. Some of them used to work with us in the radio, they became editor in chiefs. They are also aware of the fact that the information we provide is accurate and we are not kidding (Egypt interview 010)

Nevertheless, even with these relationships being built, activists in all countries reported that it did not necessarily guarantee media coverage. Some indicated that they did not have to contact the media at all, because the media was watching them. A South African activist explained how when an issue was 'hot', such as during xenophobic violence, it was not necessary to contact the media because the media wanted the stories (South Africa interview 014).

Using press releases and media statements was common in all the countries studied, with email typically used to send bulk messages to journalists and editors. However, the coverage received from press statements might mean that journalists did not actually attend events, but only used the press statement and telephonic interviews to write the story. A South African activist said their coverage declined when they started using press releases instead of contacting individual journalists directly (South Africa interview 005). Regarding these statements, South African and Egyptian activists mentioned a specific focus on framing messages in order to attract media attention, sometimes framing messages in ways that did not properly draw attention to the issues, for example, a South Africa NGO worker described how they framed things in episodic ways, when they would rather have focussed on systemic issues (South Africa interview 016).

In Egypt and South Africa the media sometimes contacted organisations because of social media updates they made. In Egypt, such updates were particularly picked up from Facebook, while South African activists reported that their tweets were often picked up. Press conferences were sometimes held in Serbia and South Africa, with one South African activist explained that the venue of a press conference was important; if press conferences were held in poor areas, journalists did not attend, whereas they would attend if press conferences were held near the city centre (South Africa interview 006).

Organisations in South Africa and Serbia reported writing Op-Eds for newspapers. A Serbian LGBTI activist explained that they wrote for a daily newspaper once a week, dealing with issues of interest to the LGBTI community (Serbia interview 001). Serbian activists also reported producing video materials for airing on television, with only a modicum of success since they either had to pay for coverage in peak times or accept a non-peak airing schedule (Serbia interview 003). In Egypt and South Africa, some organisations created and shared infographics with the media in order to attract coverage.

Particular styles of protest were used in all four countries to attract media attention. Some Egyptian protestors reported using drama techniques, while South African activists said direct action was essential – a march on its own was not enough, roads had to be blockaded and/or tyres had to be burnt. Another South African activist explained how they attended government events to make their opposition clear and to draw media attention to themselves rather than the government event journalists were planning to cover (South Africa interview 018).

Both Serbia and Kenyan civil society organisation reported that while their activities were occasionally covered for free, they often had to pay for coverage. The most effective strategies were often the ones that used a combination of techniques. A South African activist reporting on his organisation's actions around the President's State of the Nation address described:

How we did it, a lot of use of social media. As I said, you know, we tweeted, we kind of became a dominant voice in the narrative and on the night through social media, we released a very strong statement the next day I think that framed it. We wrote a couple of Op-Eds, three or four, and through the public gathering, it gave a sort of different angle to the story which is kind of citizens organising to defend democracy outside or parliament and then the court action was just another… firstly it was another action that can be reported on but secondly by making everyone put things into affidavits, the benefit of court action is that you get at least an official story that has to hold some kind of weight and if it doesn't, it falls about very quickly. So it brought new facts to the light – oh, versions of facts (South Africa interview 008)

Attracting media attention involved a range of techniques in all four countries. However, the most newsworthy typically involved actions being taken, with announcements being sent to the media before the action took place. Across all countries, some civil society organisations reported tremendous difficulty in getting media attention – particularly problematic were Kenya and Serbia where coverage had to be paid for, and South Africa

where only organisations that resorted to the destruction of property or similar actions achieved media coverage.

Perceived quality of media coverage

According to civil society organisations in all four countries in the study, media provided superficial coverage, lacking in context and favouring elites. South African activists said coverage was episodic, focussing on actions, but not analysing or covering underlying issues that led to protest. A Serbian civil society organisation argued that some outlets focussed on insignificant matters and blew them up as a way to avoid talking about the central issue (Serbia interview 10). Kenyan and South African activists indicated that they did not feel that the media gave voice to community issues, but instead focussed titillating stories about famous people or the conflicts between elite politicians.

Egyptian and South African civil society organisations felt that the media was biased, often focussing on issues that served their particular agenda, while ignoring key points. Some Serbian activists specifically argued that the media was biased towards the state, simply acting 'as a lubricant for the state's position' (Serbia interview 001). However, nationalist Serbian activists argued that one newspaper:

spread lies about Serbian patriots and the Serbian people as a whole. It is NATO's propaganda based in Serbia and it is therefore not unusual that you find articles that speak about Serbian patriots in a negative context (Serbia interview 016)

Civil society organisations in Serbia, South Africa and Egypt indicated that the media often contained factual inaccuracies and vilified individuals or groups using incorrect information. An Egyptian activist described how a journalist had changed the wording of his statement to be more inflammatory and refused to correct it. When the activist then withdrew the statement the journalist said she would not deal with him again (Egypt interview 002). A South African activist was surprised that the media portrayed her as if she was involved in xenophobic attacks when instead she had been helping foreign nationals to escape the violence (South Africa interview 004). A Serbian activist involved in The Hague trial of Milošević complained that the media harassed her "beyond extreme levels" (Serbia interview 011). With respect to conflict around the Serbian Ombudsman, activists also argued that the media deliberately aimed to vilify him (Serbia interview 018).

The inaccuracies reported by the media could be extremely damaging for the persons involved. For example, in Kenya media mixed up people who were victims of violence with witnesses in court cases, leading to victims being chased and trailed (Kenya interview 016).

Serbian and South African activists also said that the media often quoted activists out of context for particular effect. A Serbian activist described how the media cut up what was said into 'a few meaningless sentences and it appears to the viewers that I am dumb and stupid' (Serbia interview 008).

In Kenya and Serbia, the media was accused of fuelling conflicts and being biased due to either ownership by government or a politician. A Serbian activist argued that the media stirred emotions between identified sides to "blur out any kind of rationality to the greatest extent possible" (Serbia interview 002). Kenyan and Serbian activists also said that the media focussed on titillation, not human rights. Kenyan activists also said the media vilified refugees and made them appear to be the source of problems, for example suggesting that refugees created insecurity in the country to incite hatred (Kenya interview 017).

South African activists claimed that they had to do dramatic things to draw attention to their issues, and that the media frequently portrayed the poor either as victims, or as criminals – even when they had wide support; the media was not portraying the strong ones who were fighting for change in a positive light. Activists reported that the media frequently did not report on events in their communities, especially ignoring police violence, even when police shot a boy and people were hospitalised (South Africa interview 21).

Activists also complained that while there was much coverage of government corruption, the media did not do enough to counter it. The media was accused of not following up on problems with the criminal justice system such as police arresting activists at protests but then later dropping the charges. Community organisations also reported that journalists stand with the police at a distance from an event and do not talk to protestors. Activists indicated that NGO organisations were able to gain more favourable coverage than community organisations but even then there were problems, such as the media conflating migrants with refugees.

In Serbia, civil society organisations argued that the media covered every banal conflict as if it was the apocalypse and in the case of the ombudsman conflict, created a trial by the media. Some organisations also accused the media of being pro-European, while others suggested that media coverage has disintegrated into tabloidism, stirring up emotion and obscuring rationality.

Both Kenyan and Egyptian civil society organisations reported media black outs on some issues. For example, an Egyptian Coptic organisation indicated that only Coptic media covered their issues, while public media:

does not interact with us on any level, even when we talk about the details of a certain case. For example, the latest updates on the videos that we presented in the case were the creation a committee from Egyptian TV to examine the videos. This committee reached a conclusion that stated the validity of these videos and that they had not been tampered with. This in turn strengthened our situation in the case, yet this was not covered (Egypt interview 012)

Across countries, few activists were happy with the media coverage they received, so even when they overcame barriers to getting any coverage at all, the issues they were fighting about were generally not conveyed to newspaper audiences. This is not surprising given that other studies have found that while protest movements typically need media to achieve protest goals, "such coverage may not be forthcoming unless protesters engage in dramatic and even violent action. However, those very actions that attract media attention are often central features of stories that delegitimise the protesters" (Boyle et al. 2012, p.4). In unequal societies where the legacies of both past and present neoliberal policy choices combine to limit the choices for full citizenship for many, protest action by the marginalised is often framed by the (mainstream) media as irrational and illegitimate, and the voices which dominate these frames are 'legitimate' voices of the elites within 'official' circles.

Importance and role of social media

Social media had a role to play in all four countries. For example, in a Serbian organisation defending the ombudsman from a media attack, the strategy was to point out instances where journalists were not professional and violated ethical codes to boost the information available to the public via social media. However, even though many South African organisations used social media and the internet, some reported that they barely used their social media accounts because internet access was expensive and poor citizens did not have money to purchase data.

In the study, Egyptians most commonly emphasised social media and news channels as a tool for internal mobilisation. In particular many organisations had a Facebook page with a restricted membership and organisations were not afraid to announce their activities on channels such as Al Jazeera. One Egyptian interviewee said 'social media was the most important thing… this brought the people' (Egypt Interview 001). Many Egyptian civil society organisations also used Facebook to publish information that would otherwise have been difficult to disseminate, to post event invitations and announcements in order to gain participants, or to collect donations towards a specific cause or activity. Facebook was also used as a space for discussing concerns and establishing a variety of opinions on an issue. However, while social media was often reported as building organisations, the relationship

was not always straightforward. For example, one Egyptian activist reported that social media helped both to build and to demolish the organisation, as internal disagreements were aired on their Facebook page that had 70,000 'likes' (Egypt interview 003).

Several South African activists also reflected on the limitations of social media for political organising, in terms of reach and types of information people respond to on social media: people respond to posts on new haircuts or shoes, but not to those on politically important topics. Where South African activists were using social media, they felt it was a useful way to acquire support and ideas for tackling problems, as activists from other communities would connect and share their experiences and suggestions; this also built important relationships (South Africa interview 009). In South Africa, civil society organisations also use a petition app – amandla.mobi – developed for civil society to build support around specific campaigns of public interest (South Africa interview 021). The petitions are circulated on social media and signatures collected by clicking on a link from a social media site.

Serbian activists also reported running campaigns on social media as a key way to build support, to share accurate information and to highlight services such as hotlines that people could call for help.

In Kenya, while civil society organisations reported using social media to share information that the mainstream media was not reporting, some organisations did not see it as hugely important due to limited numbers of Kenyans using social media; social media did not have enough reach (Kenya interview 001). While other Kenyan civil society organisations were more positive, indicating that it creates a space for dialogue between different members of society – particularly young people, one activist felt that had social media been available during the 2007 election violence, it could have aggravated problems further as it would have been more difficult to contain statements inciting violence (Kenya interview 007). Another activist argued that, due to the lack of controls, social media could be a space for spreading hate speech and misinformation (Kenya interview 010). However, even when social media was full of violent speech, it did not necessarily lead to violence: one activist suggested that though violent speech happened during the 2013 elections, with Kenyan social media "basically on fire", it did not spill over into physical violence (Kenya interview 013). Instead, in Kenya, Twitter was seen as a key way to spread news instantly, in a way that mainstream media could not (Kenya interview 025).

Activists in all four countries indicated that social media was useful for making contact with journalists. Civil society organisations indicated that journalists often followed them on

social media, so that when they released reports or invitations via social media, journalists would contact them for comments.

Across countries, social media was increasing in importance but among civil society organisations in Kenya and South Africa there was still a lot of scepticism about the reach of this medium. While the impact of social media was clear in the Egyptian example, civil society organisations in other countries had not yet achieved such broad impact using social media. Activists in Kenya, South Africa and Serbia felt that it could be a useful tool in building specific campaigns, but very few activists in those countries were social media champions.

Perceptions of democracy

Civil society organisations in all four countries reported that corruption was a limit on democracy, but corruption was cited by relatively few activists in each country.

One Egyptian activist mentioned corruption with frustration:

> We see the corrupt current growing and growing. Who would think that a revolution emerges and then another one two years later, and the entire people is on the street, and the result is more corruption?! Who would think that an environment with coexistence between everyone is near? This is very hard (Egypt interview 004)

In Kenya some activists argued that corruption and election rigging go hand-in-hand, while a South African activist linked corruption not just to financial irregularities, but the pervasive ill treatment of women in politics – including in civil society organisations – with trading of power for sex being "endemic" (South Africa interview 021).

In Kenya and South Africa activists said police brutality was common, for example, one South African activist reported that police had repeatedly killed activists. In Egypt, it was the military – not the police – who were seen as a hindrance to democracy, and an Egyptian activist reported that the military council takes advantage of tools such as social media, by placing people in particular conflicts in order to cast doubt on what was otherwise being reported (Egypt interview 013).

In Kenya and South Africa, poor communities had difficulty accessing the legal system and, while both countries had good constitutions, legislation was not being properly implemented which had a negative impact on democracy. A Kenyan activist argued that despite the country's progressive constitution, political role players were "still grappling with implementation", and until laws were translated into practice elections would always have the potential to spill over into violence (Kenya interview 002).

A key limit on democracy in Egypt, Kenya and Serbia was that religious differences were expressed violently and the perpetrators of violence were not held to account. However, a Kenyan activist did not see an end to such polarisation due to the language against terrorism, which suggests that torture or hanging those accused of being part of Al-Shabaab is acceptable (Kenya interview 013).

Egyptian activists said that Copts have no rights in the country as Egypt is not a secular state. But one activist in Egypt argued that the polarisation and division has decreased, while dissatisfaction with government had increased (Egypt interview 009). Regardless of this, more than in any other country under study, Egyptian activists pointed to the dangers of being part of a civil society organisation stating that one could be attacked despite not having spoken out, or accused of being a collaborator simply for accepting international funding (Egypt interview 013).

By contrast, one Kenyan activist argued that while there were 'teething problems' with democracy, people were now able to be more expressive and discuss problems (Kenya interview 009). However some Kenyan activists did not consider elections to be credible and said there was a lack of transparency and accountability in government. Kenyan civil society organisations also considered fragmentation and ethnic differences damaging to democracy in Kenya.

Activists felt that the poor enforcement of socio-economic rights and poverty hindered democracy in South Africa, as did poor labour standards. One activist argued that for as long as people were without access to public services such as running water and sanitation, democracy would be skewed and unwholesome (South Africa interview 022). Many South African activists felt that the poor were ignored, with politicians living in luxury and forgetting the disadvantaged. Many activists also suggested that the conception of democracy at community level was substantially different to the kind of democracy espoused by the media, in that the media focussed on elections and voting, whereas communities sought a much more participatory democracy, with "meaningful engagement within in government and community-based organisations, before they can do whatever policies, or even doing the budget" (South Africa interview 009).

In Serbia, activists and civil society organisations suggested there was still a level of authoritarianism in the country, with weak institutions not able to safeguard democracy. Others argued that Serbia was democratic as the internet showed a wide range of perspectives being shared on many issues. Some Serbian organisations suggested that a western model of democracy was being imposed from the outside and that voters were easy to manipulate through the media. Several respondents felt that the media was not

independent enough, and still seemed like a "regime media in some communist state where only certain things are reported on", as only positive information was available rather than stories on corruption and the misuse of public functions (Serbia interview 007).

In Kenya, Serbia and South Africa, some activists felt that their country had achieved democracy, but still had a number of problems to resolve. However, in all four countries some activists argued that democracy had not really been achieved as many citizens were still voiceless or could not sufficiently access their rights. The activists who were unhappy with the state of democracy often linked this to media coverage, where they felt that those actively engaged in tackling democratic problems were given no coverage or negative coverage. This lack of coverage or negative coverage meant that the political lives of activists and civil society organisations were often not given a meaningful place in contributing to enhanced democracy in the four countries in the study.

Discussion

The democratic contestations in this study show marked similarities with the literature on civil society organisations: in all country organisations saw themselves playing a key role in challenging their respective governments to do better. Our discussion explores the shape of civil society in the case studies in relation to three areas: citizenship and collective identities; the control and distribution of power; and electoral conflicts.

Citizenship and collective identities

Across Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa, the relationship between civil society and the media raises overlapping concerns. Ethnic or religious tension was a feature of the chosen case studies in all four countries, with identity significantly linked to perceptions about the meaning of citizenship and to broad political-geographic entities. For example, in Serbia religious identity was often entangled with ideas about what it means to be Serbian and whether or not a European identity can be ascribed to Serbians. In Egypt the Coptic religion held that it was an ancient Egyptian tradition in conflict with the current predominance of Islam in the country. Kenya was marked by ethnic and religious conflict, with a huge rage of ethnicities determining civil society's access to resources, and with Islamic Kenyans and Somali migrants being seen as a source of terrorism. Xenophobia in South Africa saw South Africans pitting themselves again Africans from elsewhere in the continent, with some parts of civil society asserting an African identity in response to xenophobia, while others underscored their South African specificity; this conflict was linked to who has the rights and ability to access housing, education and other services. Despite the marks of identity politics, in the South African xenophobic conflict, identity politics was not identified as a key

hindrance to democracy – even xenophobic violence was largely attributed to poverty and access to public services such as housing, water, electricity, education and health care.

Nevertheless, such ethnic and religious conflicts point to civil societies in new democracies grappling with notions of a national identity or even a continental identity, with some parts of civil society wanting to draw geographic identity borders rather narrowly, while others wanting national identities to be more inclusive. This offers a markedly different view on civil society to that which is commonly held regarding western democracies: civil society is not just about citizens challenging the state (political activism) or challenging a particular issue (such as environmental issues or gender issues), but is an activism of belonging, exploring who is in and who is out, who is fully a citizen, a member of the nation, and who can be discredited? These conflicts can be viewed as being not so much about democracy but instead how far citizenship or nationhood extends.

In all four countries, contestation around identity led to violence, or what we previously called 'uncivil society'. Violence in terms of killing those with different ethnic and/or religious backgrounds featured in Egypt, South Africa and Kenya; civil society organisations in all three countries tended to see themselves as limiting such violence and alleviating tension. In Serbia, violence was marginally less serious, with thuggery but not killing being witnessed around the LGBTI protests. Property destruction was another feature of 'uncivil society' in Egypt and South Africa. For example, in Egypt, Copt Churches were burned and Copts were killed, whereas burning in South Africa tended to be more symbolic – burning tyres (and where buildings in South Africa were burned by protestors, they tended to be public buildings perceived to provide inferior service). The burnings of churches in Egypt were seen as part of a range of repressions against Copts, but in South Africa, the discourse around burning tended to focus on its communicative aspect – it was used as a language to tell outsiders how fed up and angry a particular community was.

The media's role in alleviating or inflaming ethnic and religious conflict was a specific concern of the civil society organisations interviewed in this study. In Kenya and Egypt the media's failings with regard to democracy were particularly marked in terms of 'identity politics', where religious and ethnic conflict were seen as a primary obstacle to stability. In these countries, activists felt that the media could do more to build dialogue and create societies in which there was increased room for difference. For example, Egyptian activists reflected on the need for a secular state, while Kenyan activists felt that the media should broker a message that focussed on citizen rights for all, regardless of ethnic or religious identity.

The media picture in Serbia was not quite as clear-cut with both nationalist and eurocentric civil society organisations pointing to media bias, albeit in different media organisations. LGBTI groups felt that although the media was initially resistant to affirming messages about rights, once the government conceded to the Pride Parade, the media was open to regular Op-Eds from the LGBTI community. On the other hand, nationalist groups tended to see the media as importing eurocentric ideas, such as LGBTI rights, and the ICTY tribunal of Slobodan Milošević.

Control and distribution of power

Despite the actions of 'uncivil society', the power to be violent was not only distributed among civil society organisations. Governments endorsed – particularly through the police or military forces – violence around protests, the criminalisation of protestors, and through inaction, allowed xenophobic violence in South Africa and violence against Copts in Egypt.

In terms of the power to bring about positive change, the perceived leverage point was viewed differently in the four countries. While in Serbia, South Africa and Egypt, civil society directed significant energy into contesting the state, state power, and the form of governance institutions, in Kenya civil society instead saw its role as building citizen awareness of their rights. In this sense Serbian, South African and Egyptian activism can be seen to fit into the western model of political activism – contesting the state. Although activism in Kenya is citizenship-oriented, it is not so much ths as educating citizens into an idealised role and rights, under the assumption of an idealised state and governance system.

Since the locus of power is conceived differently in Kenya to the other countries, the presumed point of leverage in Kenya is through building a share citizenship, thus affirming that the power to live peacefully lies with ordinary people. Therefore, while Serbia, South Africa and Egypt were rich in protest cultures, civil society in Kenya instead devoted significant energy to educational events and unity building (e.g. workshops, themed caravans of people travelling cross-country to share specific messages). Kenyan organisations also tended to be more formal. Limited resources outside formal structures meant that broad communication tended to happen by spreading messages to key persons via SMS, who then passed on messages locally within their own networks by word of mouth.

Despite the different conceptions of power, Egypt, Serbia and South Africa all placed significant importance on networked civil society with civil society organisations as hubs of activity around which citizens could gather, and thus claim considerable power for their activities. In civil society organisations, therefore, communication was a key way to sustain themselves as hubs of power. As such, there were common internal communication activities

across countries, all designed to maintain close connections between core members, so as to strengthen and claim power.

Unsurprisingly, meetings were a common communication tool of all civil society organisations in this study. In Egypt, a significant proportion of communication was taking place in open or closed Facebook groups, but for those who were not connected to the internet, pamphleteering was another common communication tool, as were messaging services such as Viber. Serbian organisations tended to communicate outside meetings through emails or email mailing lists. Internal communication across civil society organisations in South Africa was hugely varied, depending on the level of formality, access to resources, and geographic spread: more formal, well-resourced organisations tended to use email mailing lists, messaging services such as WhatsApp and BBM, and formal printed publications such as pamphlets, newsletters, inforgraphics and reports; however, community-based organisations tended to have poor internet access and limited resources so word of mouth, going door-to-door and walking among houses with a loud hailer to call people to meetings was much more common. Despite the variations, civil society organisations tended to use as many internal communication tools as they could access if they were perceived to be useful in sustaining their support base.

The power of civil society organisations also depended on their ability to attract new supporters and external communication was essential to maintaining power in the organisation. Through external communication, civil society builds their organisations, attracts members and gains supporters. Communication is therefore a key to redistributing power from governments to civil society in all countries in this study. Civil society organisations were immensely creative in putting various communication tools to good use, in order to influence the public discourses around key issues. The huge variety of methods used to communicate, included both mainstream media contact and self-made communication in various mediums.

Common communication techniques/ mediums used across all countries included organisational websites, specific publications, music and songs, social media, and consensus-building public events such as workshops, debates and dialogues. Egyptian civil society was the most celebratory of the potential of social media. In Kenya, Serbia and South Africa while activists used social media, sometimes to good effect, there were not as many social media activist champions as there were in Egypt. Activists in Kenya, Serbia and South Africa agreed social media had some positive political spin-offs but Kenyan activists were cautious in terms of the potential for spreading hate speech via social media, and South African activists were sceptical of the reach of social media into poor communities.

Traditional methods of building solidarity remained at the forefront of organisation-building across all four countries. In Serbia, Egypt and South Africa activists occupied public spaces (public squares and buildings in all three countries, as well as public roads in South Africa), and within these occupied spaces creativity thrived with, for example, open mic sessions in Egypt and public clothes washing in South Africa. Individual countries also had a large range of activities that were locally specific, for example football matches and drama productions in Kenya, integration of messages into religious sermons in Egypt, graffiti and pirate radio in South Africa, and comics and opinion polls in Serbia. Communication strategies are integral to the function of civil society organisations and how political impact is strategised as it is the backbone of political engagement and contestation. All the activists interviewed had put in significant work and paid substantial attention to communication strategies, sometimes through their own efforts and sometimes incorporating mainstream media strategies.

Although the mainstream media was considered an important role player in the way it distributes power to political actors in society, some activists felt that it was far more important to concentrate communication efforts on organising and strengthening local connections (as in community organisations in South Africa) or on building local consensus (such as the dialogues hosted in Kenya to work out ethnic differences). Therefore, within countries there was a spectrum of importance placed on the media, with some civil society organisations primarily measuring their success in terms of media attention received, while others saw it as a distraction from the key issue of communicating with stakeholders.

Nevertheless in all four countries, civil society organisations indicated that the media was not an effective tool for redistributing power in society. The media were seen as not doing enough to cover issues raised by civil society. Instead, civil society organisations felt that the mainstream media focussed on dynamics between ruling elites, and only provided superficial coverage of conflict that did not fall neatly into the political party conception of politics. Furthermore, in Serbia, South Africa and Egypt activists argued that the media had deliberately distorted what they had said for dramatic effect or to vilify certain activists, rather than portraying civil society organisations as key role players in the political environment.

In South Africa, both NGOs and community based organisations indicated that although poverty was a key issue in the country if the media covered poor people's issues at all, it was in terms of action they had taken with no analysis of why action had taken place. The lack of visibility of poor people in the media contributed to the many other forms of silencing that experienced by the poor. Kenyan activists felt that the media was frivolous and focussed on trivia, such as the social lives of the elite, rather than on issues of national

importance and so did not play a significant role in improving the power relations between government elites and citizens. Serbian civil society organisations felt that media coverage had disintegrated into tabloidism, stirring up emotion with no analysis, and therefore inflaming tensions rather than alleviating them. In Egypt, civil society activists felt that the media was deliberately inciting conflict by editing to create controversy, instead of building understanding. Across all four countries, activists were highly critical of the media's role in building and shaping democracy and challenging power relations, particularly in terms of not doing enough to raise alternative voices and focussing instead on the activities and voices of elites.

Serbia and Kenya had particular problems in that civil society organisations were sometimes required to pay for media attention, even if the information was of general public interest. In South Africa, while NGOs felt able to get media coverage with newsworthy information, community-based organisations experienced significant difficulty in attracting media attention, with many reporting that they deliberately escalated violence to gain media coverage. Media in Egypt seemed particularly partisan with, for example, Copt-aligned newspapers providing coverage for Coptic organisations while other media houses totally ignored them. Kenyan organisations also reported media blackouts in the 2013 elections – since media was blamed for the violence after the 2007 elections, the media appeared reluctant to report on ethnic violence in 2013, in case it incited a further spread of violence.

Electoral conflicts

While electoral conflicts were a key aspect of case studies in Egypt, Kenya and Serbia, the unequal distribution of wealth and services in South Africa was seen as the key driver of conflict and it was felt that the media did not do enough to examine this source of conflict. In addition, activists remarked that the South African media had a liberal, election-based notion of democracy, whereas most activists were more interested in building local, participatory, direct democracy. In South Africa, then, elections were almost a distraction to the work of building locally rooted democracy.

By contrast, in Kenya, regular elections and an inclusive constitution were seen as significant steps towards building democracy, although there was a tension between devolving and decentralising power to local levels, and building a national identity. Civil society organisations in Kenya devoted significant energy to communicating in order to maintain peaceful relationships between different groups in Kenyan society, and to ensure that elections took place without violence. Civil society organisations felt that the media was not doing enough to strike a balance in election coverage – having in 2007 been partly responsible for inciting violence, in the 2013 elections the media virtually shut down debate

for fear of inflaming ethnic tensions. Because of the failing of the mainstream media in 2013, citizens used social media to debate issues and while this space was described as "hot", the heat did not spill over into significant violence. Instead social media was a space to air tensions without the need to act violently.

On all sides of Serbian civil society, the elections were seen as key political moments for civil society to either build consensus around particular positions (pro-European democracy or not) or to simply encourage others to vote. Some civil society organisations played significant roles in terms of encouraging people across the spectrum to vote. The media was perceived positively by several pro-European civil society organisations in terms of the 2008 elections for covering debates between nationalists and the pro-European lobby, with the pro-European lobby ultimately achieving a decisive victory. However, nationalists felt that the coverage was biased and the media had become prone to European influence.

There was significant polarisation in Egypt and the elections were not seen as a panacea for democracy however, the autocratic, military state suspicious of civil society meant that Egyptians were least likely, of those included in the study, to see the fruits of democracy.

Conclusion

Alongside regular elections, the existence of civil society, and its representation in the media, were not necessarily seen as enough to guarantee stable democracies. Civil society organisations in all four countries in the study are lively and vibrant, deploying a range of tactics and communication techniques to contest political space at national and local levels. While in all countries, the media provided some space and coverage of civil society activities, organisations in all countries felt that the media often played a detrimental role in supporting democracy, either by superficial coverage of key issues, or by flagrantly highlighting conflict in a way that increased polarisation. In all the countries in the study, civil society organisations indicated that media attention was focussed far more on elites than it was on examining the important work civil society organisations were doing to create peaceful and equitable societies.

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