

WestminsterResearch

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch>

**Syrian Diasporic Radio: Self-Mediation in Disjunctured
Temporalities and Localities**

Ibrahim, Monica

This is a PhD thesis awarded by the University of Westminster.

© Ms Monica Ibrahim, 2022.

The WestminsterResearch online digital archive at the University of Westminster aims to make the research output of the University available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the authors and/or copyright owners.

Syrian Diasporic Radio: Self-Mediation in Disjunctured Temporalities and Localities

Monica Ibrahim

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis submitted for examination: 30 September 2022

Abstract

This study provides a qualitative reading of the diasporic radio discourses that emerged following the Syrian uprisings in 2011. It explores radio discourse as a contested and relational site of power. The research addresses the following key questions: How were the transformations in social processes in a post-revolutionary society represented in the discursive practice of the Syrian diasporic media? To what extent was Syrian diasporic radio able to enact an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation in a post-revolutionary context? and How does the structural power of political economy shape the sustainability of the Syrian diasporic media as a field?

This study contributes to theoretical debates on the mediated practices of self-representation, agency and transnational imagination. It also grounds these debates in the overarching power of the political economy through conceptualising the Syrian diasporic media as a field with different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984). This research shifts the dominant academic focus from the study of the practices of journalism to examining the discourses of the diasporic radios as a site for the empirical. To explore the dynamics of discourse production, I employ Critical Discourse Analysis to study 23 episodes from 11 programmes broadcast on two digital diasporic radios: Rozana and SouriaLi. I also embed Carvalho's (2008) reinterpretation of CDA to integrate the agency of the social actors (the diasporic interlocutors) and the impact of the changing temporal rhythms on the dynamics of text production as part of the analytical framework. Using empirical evidence from the research, the study demonstrates how the mediation of a collective Syrianness in the diasporic radios is increasingly challenged by the contrasting realities in different localities within the Syrian context between home and the diaspora, resulting in spatial asymmetries to sites of representation (Couldry, 2008). It also elucidates the ways in which the governmentality (Foucault, 1977) of diasporic radio funding shapes the dynamics of discourse production. The study warrants a revision of the universality of discursive frames such as "oppositional media" (Badran, 2020) and challenges the previously held assumption about the emerging mediascape as a "de facto local media" (Tatomir et al., 2020).

List of Tables

Table 1: Research Study and Objective

Table 2: Levels of Discourse as Relational Sites of Power

Table 3: Overview of the studied Radio Programmes and Episodes

Table 4: List of entities providing support to radio Rozana

Table 5: A overview conceptualising the relationship between the temporal rhythms and media use in Syrian contention

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
List of Tables	3
Table of Contents	4
Acknowledgements	8
Declaration	9
Introduction	10
Context	10
Situating the Research	11
Situating the Interlocutors	13
Situating the Media	14
Operational Definitions	15
Chapters Outline	16
Chapter I - Literature Review	21
Topography of the Syrian Mediascape between Different Temporalities and Localities	22
Introduction- Examining the Syrian Mediascape through the Mediation Opportunity Structure	22
Radio and Syrian Contention: a Literature Review	26
The Political Control over Radio in Syria: a Historical Context	26
The History of Arab Public Broadcasting	27
Voice of the People? Radio in Syria under Ba'ath's rule	29
A Repertoire of Symbolic Domination: Censorship and Propaganda in the Syrian Public Discourse	30
The Dynamics of Media Censorship in Ba'ath's Syria	31
Emerging Syrian media Challenging the Regime's Censorship	32
Contention and Digital Media Use: A Diachronic Timeline in the Syrian Context	34
Syrian Citizen Journalism and the Rise of Information Fetishism	34
Syrian Diasporic Media: A 'De Facto' local media?	37
The architecture of Media Assistance	40
Studying Diasporic Media	42
Epistemological Challenges to Studying Diaspora Media	42
Conclusion	44

Chapter II- Theoretical Framework	46
Introduction	46
(Self)mediation	47
Mediation Opportunity Structure	48
Discursive Practices of Self-Mediation as Spaces of Power	49
Ideology, Identity and Commodification - A Marxist Perspective	51
Ideological Articulation of Identity	51
Ideological Fetishisation of Identity in the Discourse	53
Transnational Imagination: Representation of the Diasporic Identity	53
Mediated Production of Translocality	55
Translocal Reproduction of the collective identity	57
Examining the Positions of Enunciation: Diasporic Interlocutors as Collective Identity Brokers	58
Subjectivity, Recognition and Habitus in the Discursive Practice	61
Examining Subjectivity in a Post-Subjective World	61
Recognition in Self-representational practices	62
Habitus as a catalyst/byproduct of agency in the construction of the self	64
Affect in Discourse	65
Time and Space in Discourse	66
Field Theory and the Study of Diasporic Media	68
Research Questions and Objectives	70
Table 1: Research Questions and Objectives	71
Conclusion	72
Chapter III- Methodology and Research Design	73
Introduction	73
Outline of the Empirical Component	74
Studying the Dynamics of Discourse Production: a Theoretical Overview	75
Critical Discourse Analysis as an Analytical Framework of Enquiry: A Literature Review	77
Operationalising CDA for this research	81
Challenges and Mitigations in the Operationalisation of CDA	84
Case Studies and Sampling	85
Case Study I: Radio Rozana	89
Case Study II: Radio Souriali	98
Conclusion	102

Chapter IV	102
Keywords in Syrian Diasporic Media: Representing Transformations in the Social Space	103
Introduction	103
Discourse as a Site for Symbolic Contention	104
Revolution	105
Freedom	106
Red Lines	108
Positioning the Revolution as an Ideological Affiliation	109
Operationalising the diasporic media's ideological affiliation to the revolution	111
Professional Ideologies in a Polarised Mediascape	115
Revolutionary Freedom in a Post-Revolutionary Setting	116
Freedom and the Censorship of new political actors	120
Pushing against The Red Lines: Resisting the Social and Cultural Taboos	123
Conclusion	127
Chapter V	129
The Digital Mediation of the Collective Syrianness: Agency, Temporality and Translocality	129
Introduction	129
The Assimilation of the Collective Syrianness through Self-mediation	130
Temporality, Translocality and the Articulation of Shared Commonalities	133
The Role of the Interlocutors Mediating the Collective Syrianness: Affect, Advocacy and Liminality	135
Translocal Mediation of the Collective Syrianness	137
From Affect and Advocacy to Consciousness-raising Fetishism: Syrian Diasporic Journalism in a Post-revolutionary Context	140
Mediating the Collective Syrianness as Sanitised Identity	146
Political fear and uncertainty	151
Funding Considerations	154
Conclusion	156
Chapter VI	157
The Syrian Diasporic Media as a Field: The Economic, Cultural and Social Capital	157
Introduction	157
The Cultural Capital: De-professionalisation of Syrian Journalism	159

The Economic Capital: The Political Economy of Media Assistance	162
Social Capital: Access to Community and Spatial Transformation	164
Information/Consciousness-raising Fetishism and the Economic Capital	166
De-professionalisation and Economic Precarity	168
Cultural Capital as a Socially Contingent Habitus	172
Former Professional Dispositions	174
The Social Capital and the Failure to Realise a Spatial Transformation	176
Conclusion	181
Chapter VII: Conclusion and Discussion	185
Introduction	183
Mediating the Revolution as a Liminal Event	183
Theoretical Contributions	184
Empirical Findings	185
Notes on the Engagement with the Method	189
Notes on data Analysis and Translation	191
Possible reasons for the demise of the Syrian diasporic media as a field	192
Physical and Symbolic Issues of Access	192
Funding Issues and Political Economy	193
Opportunities for Future Research	194
Bibliography	199

Acknowledgements

To mum, my beating heart.

To my little sister, my sunshine.

To the family and friends whose love kept me going.

To years of perpetual precarity, learning and growth.

Infinite gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Tarik Sabry, whose wisdom, knowledge and understanding were integral to this work. Many thanks to Dr Roza Tsagarousianou for her support and insights. I am humbled by the trust of the selection committee at CAMRI, who awarded me the funding essential to completing this research.

To Dr Shakuntala Banaji, my mentor, who inspired my path.

Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Introduction

Context

Yassin al-Haj Saleh said in an interview (Naprushkina, 2020) for *Al Jumhuriya* newspaper that the Syrian popular uprisings in 2011 were at heart a struggle for Syrians to regain control over the means of self-representation against the power of those who “produce absence” of the ordinary voices in the public discourse. He further explains, “our struggle against them [these powers] is about representing ourselves—speaking for ourselves as people who have the “right to have rights,” as Hannah Arendt put it—and about a recognised presence” (Ibid). Before 2011, the individual Syrian narratives had been studied as epiphenomenal to the regime’s institutional discourses, given the latter’s total domination over the means of public expression (Pearlman, 2016). The Syrian regime has systemically isolated Syrians from the rest of the world by erasing the voices of ordinary citizens from the public discourse (Saleh, 2017). Nevertheless, the Syrian uprisings provided a liminal latitude to challenge this “hierarchy of systems of expression” (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) and allowed previously subjugated social/political actors to articulate their individual narratives in the public sphere on a large scale for the first time in decades. Accordingly, Syrians utilised the newly-found avenues of freedom to narrate their own stories, revisit their past and outline their future aspirations for change (Dollet, 2015). Shortly after the uprisings in Syria in 2011, a dynamic media scene sprung across the lines of the political divide, providing an alternative discourse on the unfolding violence by challenging the state’s propaganda and disinformation (De Angelis, 2011; Marrouch, 2014; De Angelis et al., 2014; Dollet, 2015; Issa, 2016). The emergence of this media scene is largely credited to the initial individual efforts of media activists and citizen journalists who risked their lives to report on the Syrian crisis, enabled by basic digital affordances and minimal journalistic skills (Wall & el Zahed, 2014). The financial support of international media assistance organisations has been instrumental (Marrouch, 2014) in professionalising and institutionalising (De Angelis et al., 2014) some of these efforts over the last decade. Given the recent emergence of this mediascape at home and in the diaspora, there have been sporadic efforts to map it out quantitatively (Issa, 2016), accounting for its conditions of emergence in a tightly controlled media environment (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). This work has paved the way for a more qualitative reading of the practices of Syrian journalists within these diasporic outlets (Badran, 2020; Badran & Smets, 2021; Arafat, 2021; Al-Ghazzi,

2021). None of these studies, however, examined the texts of Syrian diasporic radios as the focus of the empirical analysis. Thus, this research project will probe the texts of these diasporic media outlets as artefacts of the agential power of the interlocutors and the political economy that shapes the communicative environment.

Situating the Research

It is important to outline the scope of this research study within the broader academic work done across the fields of cultural and media studies. Specific to the mediation of this wave of contention across different localities, diasporic radios initially attempted a hybrid approach to broadcasting via means of digital and FM transmission (Dollet, 2015). Thus, this research provides an opportunity to address an often understudied area of research on the relationship between traditional and digital media in contentious settings (Mattoni & Treré, 2014). Apart from initial mapping studies (Marrouch, 2014; Dollet, 2015), the Syrian contention birthed many diasporic digital radios that remain largely unstudied from a qualitative perspective. This focus on the digital diasporic radios takes into account the interplay between different actors, technologies and practices within the emerging Syrian mediascape. Most of the research conducted to study the Syrian digital media practices after the 2011 uprisings are concerned with the development of what has been categorically described as citizen journalism (Al-Ghazzi, 2014). Some studies looked at the journalistic practices of local media activists (Wall & el Zahed, 2018), while most focused on the role of Syrian citizen journalists as intermediaries in a global media news environment (Anden-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). Within that particular field aiming to conceptualise Syrian citizen journalism, the focus has been predominantly on the dynamics of witnessing and war reporting (Creech, 2018; Feinstein & Starr, 2015). As the crisis protracted, individual efforts to cover the Syrian crisis have started to professionalise and institutionalise (De Angelis et al., 2014). Therefore, new research focused on this emerging type of Syrian journalism as a form of activism (Al-Ghazzi, 2021: on affective proximity of Syrian journalists; Arafat, 2021 on diasporic activism and advocacy journalism). I note an important distinction in the academic work charting this emerging Syrian media scene between a focus on the local mediascape (Wall & el Zahed, 2014: Syria, the pop-up news ecology; Badran & De Angelis, 2016: on the emerging Kurdish media scene) and the diasporic one (Badran, 2020; Badran & Smets, 2021; Arafat, 2021). These debates on Syrian diasporic journalism cover the creative practices and the multiple subjectivities of the

media practitioners involved in the emerging mediascape. Nevertheless, four main elements are missing from the current research on Syrian diasporic media. First, an element pertaining to the new temporality of the Syrian contention: a post-revolutionary setting. Most of the previous research addresses activists' media use in the initial stages of uprisings and mobilisation. However, the change in the geopolitical circumstances poses new realities that shape the practice of diasporic journalism in the present that has not yet been addressed in previous research. Second, this study foregrounds the diasporic notion in this context from a spatial perspective, integrating the study of the locale as a key part of the analysis. Initially, the Syrian media that emerged in the diaspora was perceived as a "de facto" local media with a temporary headquarters in exile, with its return to the homeland contingent on the fall of Al-Assad's regime (Tatomir et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the changing geopolitical realities and the restitution of Al-Assad's power in Syria have indefinitely affixed the diasporic condition of the emerging media. The study of this diasporic condition is particularly relevant in a post-revolutionary setting (Boutieri, 2021), as the contrast between different locales shapes the access to sites of representation (Couldry, 2008). The third missing element from previous research is the need to ground debates on diasporic practices of journalism into an underlying structural modality, in this case, the political economy. There are different funding modalities for the Syrian diasporic media, including private funding and advertising; however, the scope of this research will cover the space of media outlets funded by international donor entities (especially Western non-governmental organisations and media development agencies). This funding modality is part of a long-established tradition in the global media development industry (Cook, 2016: on the financing of media outlets in repressive regimes; Brownlee, 2017: media aid architecture in Syria before the 2011 uprisings). Finally, the last and most important missing aspect in the literature is a study of the discourses and texts of these diasporic outlets. Therefore, this research aims to provide a critical qualitative reading of the communicative environment of the Syrian diasporic media through the study of its discourses. Introducing these four new aspects challenges the normative reading of diaspora media as localised ethico-political disruptions that happen independently from broader transformational contexts of ideology and capital in global media and journalism (Badran & Smets, 2021). This research's novel approaches to studying the Syrian diasporic media pledge theoretical contributions to the field of media and diasporic studies and the study of media in contention. The interdisciplinary nature of this research builds on Bourdieu's (1984; 1986) work in cultural sociology to understand

the individual/collective transformations on the one hand (habitus) within the structural on the other hand (field theory) (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007). I also appropriate concepts from anthropology, such as liminality (Turner, 1969, 1974), to situate the diasporic media practices within a spatio-temporal dimension. Therefore, the study of temporality in this research happens on two intertwined tracks covering the practices of self-mediation in the Syrian context at the individual level in tandem with the underlying structural modality they are embedded in. The first track studies the way the temporary condition of liminality triggered by the conjunction of political events has allowed previously subjugated voices to interject the symbolic order historically dominated by the regime. The second focuses on how the short-term nature of the grant funding provided by the media assistance organisations (Sakr, 2016) is endemic to the precarity of the structural modality of the political economy that this Syrian diasporic media field is largely reliant on (Badran, 2020). Hence, this research makes an argument that the episodic nature of the funding on the structural level shapes the liminal condition of the self-mediated practices that emerged as a temporary interjection to reconfigure the symbolic order (Chouliaraki, 2010). This funding presented both opportunities for empowerment and disempowerment for the self-mediation of Syrian voices as it initially leveraged them into more professionalised and institutionalised settings beyond the makeshift individual efforts of citizen journalists and media activists. Nonetheless, the intermittent nature of funding coupled with other geopolitical factors has been detrimental to the efforts aiming to propel this temporary liminal state of empowerment into permanence.

Situating the Interlocutors

The discourse under study in this research foregrounds the reflections of the interlocutors on their own practice, accounting for their multiple positionalities as activists and journalists (Badran, 2021; Al-Ghazzi, 2021). Thus, this analytical exercise also challenges the normative, Western-centred operational definitions of the general notions and concepts in journalism that often overlook the nuanced contexts of alternative media practices around the world (Atton, 2001; Badran & Smets, 2021). Challenging the centrality of the Global North definitions in journalism expands our horizons to the diverse settings in which much of contemporary journalism is produced, including diasporic media, the focus of this study (Badran & Smets, 2021). Accordingly, recent trends in mainstream journalism studies acknowledge the increasing impossibility of attaining absolute impartiality and objectivity in news reporting (Dahlberg, 2005; Deuze, 2005;

Fischer, 2016). Laws and Chojicka (2020) build on the work of Fischer (2016) to argue that “the actual difference between “objective” news reporting and advocacy journalism is the fact that the former conceals its positionality, while the latter is open and honest about it” (p. 1266). These findings stand in contrast with the Western journalistic model promoted by media assistance organisations that entails “a detached, disinterested observer role; a nonpartisan intermediary position between citizens and elected officials” (Miller, 2009, p. 15). Notably, the Syrian diasporic media scene was propelled by a significant political event, the Syrian uprisings that erupted against the rule of Al-Assad’s regime (Badran, 2021). Thus, the strategies employed to articulate, re-imagine and negotiate this event in the discourse by the diasporic journalists are not only a subject of enquiry but also an integral part of the analytical framework (Carvalho, 2008). Previous research studying the multiple subjectivities of Syrian journalists recognises the challenges of managing social and professional roles within broader conditions of political and economic precarity in the diaspora (Arafat, 2021; Badran, 2021). This work informs the study of the discourse of the Syrian diasporic radios and how the diasporic interlocutors’ positionality shapes the articulation of the collective Syrianness in a post-revolutionary context.

Situating the Media

This research aims to offer a multidimensional understanding of the different elements of the communicative environment of the Syrian diasporic media. First, I examine the representation of the social transformations in Syria in the discursive practice of the radio. Second, this research utilises the depth of the scholarship on social and political movements to understand the role of media in articulating a collective identity in a post-revolutionary society (Cammaerts, 2012; Mattoni & Treré, 2014; Boutieri, 2021). Finally, I provide a reading of the Syrian diasporic media as a field in its own right shaped by the broader power of the political economy. To achieve this multidimensional understanding of the communicative environment, it is important to revisit the study of the relationship between media and contention, which requires a particular focus on the different “spatio-temporal interdependencies” (Tilly, 2008) demarcating social/political movements. This helps us distinguish the various media roles in contention through different temporal rhythms and locales (chapter 1). Media has been a constitutive part of the repertoire of contentious action in the Arab uprisings that started in 2011 (Castells, 2012; Zayani, 2015). Consequently, most academic studies focused on the relationship between media and contention

in the early cycles of mobilisation and uprisings (Mattoni & Treré, 2014). Nevertheless, much less research has been done to study the media that survived the initial ‘protest cycle’ (Tarrow, 1989) and became integral to a national/transnational repertoire of collective action (McAdam & Sewell, 2001). Hence, the temporal focus of this research is on the post-revolutionary context and the way it shapes the mediation modalities and the journalism practices of the Syrian diasporic media. It is important to note that the identity of such media has been contextualised in previous research as fundamentally contentious and oppositional from the onset, given its ties to an intrinsically political moment of upheaval (Badan, 2020). Nevertheless, contextualising this media in a new temporality (the post-revolutionary context) is an opportunity for a critical revision of the categorical labels denoting the emerging field based on a study of its texts vis-a-vis the current focus on its conditions of emergence. To summarise, I situate my study of the Syrian diasporic media within a post-revolutionary/protracted crisis temporal framework that represents where this media has to adapt to ensure survivability/sustainability. Given the instrumental role of temporality in developing the relationship between activists and the media they use, I have elected to embed it as an integral part of the empirical framework guiding the analysis based on Carvalho’s (2008) reinterpretation of the Critical Discourse Analysis.

Operational Definitions

Initially, the information environment that emerged in Syria and the diaspora after the 2011 uprisings was dubbed a ‘pop-up news’ ecology, given the swift and disruptive conditions of its emergence (De Angelis, 2011; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Thus, the study of the local practices of conflict reporting was (problematically) categorised as citizen journalism (Al Ghazzi, 2014), while the work of Syrian diasporic activists was seen in the light of cultural brokerage, mediating between the protests and the global mainstream media (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). As the violence intensified, scores of local media activists and citizen journalists fled Syria to neighbouring countries or Europe, where they started or joined the plethora of diasporic outlets that emerged in exile. The financial support of international media assistance organisations advanced the diaspora media’s efforts toward institutionalisation and professionalisation (Badran, 2021) to create what Radio SouriaLi’s cofounder called “a virtual Syria” (Al Boz, 2018) unbound by the regime’s control. This diasporic mediascape has been hailed as “defacto local media” since it possesses all the attributes of the local media apart from its “temporary headquarters” in the

diaspora (Tatomir et al., 2020). Given how this transnational media scene was propelled by a wave of political contention and a “social media insurgency” (Mattoni & Treré, 2014), it has been previously labelled as oppositional media (Badran, 2020). While this discursive frame is useful for understanding the conditions of the emergence of the nascent media scene, it stops short of emphasising the impact of its diasporic condition on the discursive practice. Similarly, the notion of “advocacy journalism, at the intersection of journalism studies and the use of media in contention, was also employed as a discursive frame to describe the digital practices of Syrian diasporic journalists (Arafat, 2021). However, the post-revolutionary temporality dawning on the latest wave of Syrian contention and the fragmentation of the political commonality amid changing geopolitical circumstances postulate a revision of the discursive labels denoting the diasporic media. Thus, I elect to study the Syrian media that emerged in exile under the broader umbrella of diaspora media, foregrounding the spatial aspect in a new temporality as its most defining attribute. Oyeleye (2017) describes the practice of diaspora journalism as the news, and information-gathering work that collectively organised or networked diasporic individuals engage in as a form of self-expression in relation to a broader social, political or cultural interest at home or in the host country (Oyeleye, 2017). The practice of diaspora journalism (Badran, 2020) in the Syrian context is particularly transformative as it establishes the foundation of a new, alternative public sphere (Saleh, 2017) that never really existed under the totalitarian rule of Al-Assad’s regime for over 60 years. I engage in the study of diaspora media and journalism from a discursive approach (see Al-Ghazzi, 2014), where I explore the dynamics of discourse production, the strategies of mediation and the broader powers of political economy they are embedded in.

Chapters Outline

This research aims to integrate two approaches to media research: textual analysis and the political economy of production (Couldry & Hepp, 2013), accounting for the traditional debates between cultural studies and political economy scholars about the role of structures in the media’s broader cultural uses (Garnham, 1995; Grossberg, 1995; Morley, 1998). This integration between the textual analysis approach and the political economy is embedded in this research’s methodology as I pursue an avenue of studying the texts of the Syrian diasporic media as artefacts of the political economy shaping the communicative environment. Thus, the analysis chapters provide a balance between focusing on the textual in its own right (chapter 4), the dynamics between the textual and

the structural (chapter 5) and finally, a broader look into the different structural powers and the way they shape the discourse production (chapter 6).

In **chapter 1**, I employ Cammaerts' (2012) mediation opportunity structure to provide a nuanced view of the literature on the interconnected Syrian mediascape across different temporalities and localities. The mapping accounts for the different **actors**: state media, emerging media actors and the global mainstream media as integral players with overlapping power dynamics in the Syrian media environment. The censorship and propaganda of the state-controlled media were inadvertently essential in propelling the alternative media scene that challenged the regime's control over the means of symbolic production and its enforced media blackout on the uprisings. Meanwhile, the relationship between the emerging Syrian media actors and the global mainstream media had empowering and disempowering aspects to the mediation of the political movement. On the one hand, global mainstream media served as an intermediary, amplifying Syrian voices to the world (Wall & el Zahed, 2014) in a loop where media activists were brokers between the protest and the mainstream media (Anden-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). On the other hand, I argue that this relationship has inadvertently created an information fetishism, capitalising on the precarious labour of Syrian citizen journalists to meet the rising demand for information about the crisis amid a regime-enforced media blackout. I also present a diachronic timeline of the different discursive frames denoting the self-mediated practices in the different temporal rhythms of the Syrian contention. Conflict reporting (Creech, 2017) and flesh witnessing (Chouliaraki & Al-Ghazzi, 2022) were discursive frames denoting the media practices that recorded the eruption of the main 'transformative event' (McAdam & Sewell, 2001), the Syrian uprisings. Citizen journalism was then used as an all-encompassing term (Al-Ghazzi, 2021), denoting the practices of media activists reporting on the Syrian crisis (Wall & el Zahed, 2014; Anden-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013) during the "protest cycles" (Tarrow, 1989). As these individual efforts started to professionalise and institutionalise (De Angelis et al., 2014), more studies looked at these practices as part of an emerging media scene (Issa, 2016; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Within this emerging media scene, this research focuses on studying the Syrian diasporic radios in a post-revolutionary context by providing a critical qualitative reading of their texts and messages.

In **chapter 2**, I outline the theories and concepts used to build a multidisciplinary framework for studying the Syrian diasporic media. I chose self-mediation (Chouliariaki, 2010; Cammaerts, 2012; 2015) as the theoretical terrain to study the mediation practices within the Syrian diasporic media. In the previous chapter, I outlined that self-mediation in contention operates within an ecosystem of actors and practices representing the mediation opportunity structure (Cammaerts, 2012) of the Syrian uprisings. Thus, I study the self-mediated discourses of the Syrian diasporic media as the site for articulating an imagined (Anderson, 1983; Tsagarousianou, 2017) collective identity (Hall, 1989). I employ a Marxist approach to understanding the articulation of identity in the discourse, capitalising on notions of ideology (Althusser, 1971) and fetishism (Billig, 1999). I argue that the different workings of power culminate in an ideological fetishisation of the collective identity in the discursive practice. Thus, I articulate the workings of power on two levels in this research, an individual level encompassing the agential power of the interlocutors leading the position of enunciation in the diasporic media and a structural one shaped by the power of the political economy where the dynamics of discourse production are embedded. This agential power galvanises an imagination that empowers the circulation of cultural repertoires between distant localities (Appadurai, 1991). I account for the absence of a unitary concept of a ‘nation’ in the Syrian context (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018) at the time of the production of the media artefacts in the diasporic outlets by employing translocality (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008) instead of transnationalism to conceptualise the circulation of a cultural repertoire between different localities. Furthermore, I outline two important aspects of the agential power of the interlocutors, an evolution in the social dispositions caused by the temporal shift, recorded through Bourdieu’s notion of habitus (1984) and the integration of affect (Wetherell, 2013; Al-Ghazzi, 2021) as a critical part of studying self-mediated discourses in a highly emotive and subjective/political context. Finally, I study the discursive practice as an artefact of the political economy shaping the communicative environment by employing Bourdieu’s (1984) field theory to examine the different forms of powers, economic, cultural and social capital, shaping the Syrian diasporic media as a field.

In **chapter 3**, I outline the empirical component of this study that ascribes to a more decentralised approach to media research, integrating the analysis of the media texts with the political economy of production (Couldry & Hepp, 2013). Since the research aims to provide a critical qualitative

reading of the texts of the Syrian diasporic radios and the networks of power they are embedded in, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a qualitative method is adopted to analyse the different elements of the radios' communicative environment: text, practices and processes of production. The way I operationalise CDA for this study mirrors the three dimensions of discourse conceptualised by Norman Fairclough (1989) with an added emphasis on two additional aspects in the analysis of media texts, temporality and the agency of social actors (Carvalho, 2008). The temporal rhythm of media production is an integral part of the analytical framework as this study is set in a new temporality where diasporic media grapples with the reconfigurations of a post-revolutionary setting. Equally, the agential power of the interlocutors in a highly emotive, political context (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) needs to be accounted for in the dynamics of discourse production. On the *first* level of textual analysis, I explore the power of the social transformations in a post-revolutionary context on the representation of certain keywords (Williams, 1976) [revolution, freedom and red lines] in the discursive practice of the diasporic radios. The *second* level of analysis concerns the different discursive strategies employed to mediate the collective Syrianness in the diasporic radios. Through CDA, I examine the multiple subjectivities that inform the practices of the Syrian diasporic journalists in mediating shared (imagined) commonality under the pressure of contrasting realities in different localities (at home and in the diaspora). Finally, I connect the textual and the discursive levels of analysis to examine how the economic capital (donor funding), cultural capital (the labour of the Syrian diasporic journalists), and the social capital (access to the Syrian community) shape the diasporic media as a field (Bourdieu, 1984). The three dimensions of inquiry ultimately provide a comprehensive analytical view of the self-mediated practices in the Syrian diasporic radios.

In chapter 4, I present a lateral view of the representation of certain keywords (Williams, 1976) in the Syrian diasporic media: Revolution, freedom and red lines. In this first level of textual analysis, I explore the discourse as a site of symbolic contention, where I study the representations of these keywords as artefacts of broader social transformations catalysed by the 2011 Syrian uprisings. I provide a critical reading of the way the Syrian diasporic media ascribes to the revolution as an ideological marker of identity from social, political and professional perspectives. I also examine the representation of the transformations in freedom of expression as a social process and the challenges facing diasporic media outlets as they operate outside the traditional

institutions of power through various digital affordances. This provides an ample opportunity to study an often unexplored area of research articulating the relationship between traditional and digital media in social/political contention (Mattoni & Treré, 2014; Cammaerts, 2015). Finally, I study the diasporic radios' cultural positioning in relation to deep-rooted taboos, also known as red lines, that limit the work of journalists.

In chapter 5, I study the discourse as a site for the agential power of the diasporic interlocutors, employing different strategies in the mediation of the collective Syrianness. I explore how the Syrian revolution, as a liminal event, triggered states of activism and journalism, allowing previously subjugated voices to configure the symbolic order (Turner, 1969; 1974; Yang, 2000; Papacharissi, 2015). I foreground the contrast in the “registers of the collective life” (Touraine, 2001) between different localities in the Syrian context, whether at home or in the diaspora. This contrast elucidates the spatial asymmetries in accessing sites of mediation (Couldry, 2008). This contrast is particularly evident in a “post-revolutionary” temporality as the restitution of the regime’s power signalled a “protracted state of liminality” (Matar & Helmi, 2020) in the Syrian symbolic contention. I also examine the ways in which diasporic interlocutors manipulate elements of the sociopolitical context (Papacharissi, 2015) to mediate a politically sanitised identity in the discursive practice of diasporic radio.

In chapter 6, I examine the Syrian diasporic media as a field in its own right, interacting with other fields in the social space. The chapter aims to study the broader power of the political economy in shaping the dynamics of discourse production. Therefore, I extend the use of Bourdieu’s field theory (1984; 1986), traditionally used for the study of mainstream journalism (Benson, 2006) or alternative media (Atton, 2001), to the study of diaspora media. This analytical exercise requires a reconfiguration of the conventional understanding of the different forms of capital shaping the field, namely the cultural, economic and social capital. Nonetheless, the amalgamation of the dynamics of production and representation within diaspora media (Georgiou, 2007) complicates the study of the different forms of capital on separate individual and institutional levels, given the expedited conditions of the emergence of the Syrian diasporic media field (Wall & el Zahed, 2014; De Angelis, 2011). In this context, I define the field’s economic capital as funding from international donor entities and media assistance organisations. The

cultural capital is represented in the non-professional practices and the social dispositions of the activists-turned-journalists working within the field. Finally, I address the social capital of the Syrian diasporic media as trust (Williams, 2012) and access (Rodríguez, 2011) to the local community. The purpose of studying the dynamics between these exogenous and endogenous forms of power (Benson, 2006) is to appraise their impact on the overall sustainability of the Syrian diasporic media as a field.

In chapter 7, I discuss the theoretical contributions of this research and the empirical findings.

Chapter I - Literature Review

Topography of the Syrian Mediascape between Different Temporalities and Localities

Introduction- Examining the Syrian Mediascape through the Mediation Opportunity Structure

In this chapter, I outline a topography of Syrian media between different temporalities (before and after 2011) and localities (at home or in the diaspora). The literature studying the development of the emerging Syrian media scene has, at times, presented an amalgamated view of the mediascape despite differences concerning diasporic/local affiliation, political/ideological association, and type of content presented. In chapter 2, I will delve into the details of the theories and the concepts used in this research. Nonetheless, I use Cammaerts' (2012) mediation opportunity structure in this chapter to map out the topography of the different actors and practices in the Syrian mediascape accounting for the aforementioned nuances. I reconfigure Cammaerts' original conception to integrate aspects of temporality and locality, essential to formulate our understanding of the development of the emerging Syrian media scene. Cammaerts' (2012) framework presents three overlapping approaches to understanding media use in contention, media representation, self-mediation and resisting through technology. In later work, Cammaerts (2015) conceptualises "movement media" as an all-encompassing term for the activists' self-mediated practices in social/political movements. The following literature review builds on these notions to map out the interconnectedness between the actors and the practices in the Syrian mediascape while outlining the parameters of the diasporic media under study. In terms of practices, the rise of the new Syrian news and information environment following the 2011 uprisings was characterised by being sudden, uncoordinated and capillary (De Angelis, 2011; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). From a theoretical perspective, I choose to conceptualise the practices of digital contention emanating from the Syrian crisis within the frame of self-mediation as they are carried out by subjects who are an integral part of the political movement they are mediating. In the decade following the initial uprisings, individual media actors started to professionalise and institutionalise (Trombetta & pinto, 2018; Badran, 2021), and the scholarship has used overlapping discursive frames to describe the evolution of such practices. The largest frame that was used to

categorise these practices during the initial phases of mobilisation and uprisings was citizen journalism (Wall & el Zahed, 2014; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). Al-Ghazzi (2014) problematises the amalgamation of such digital practices under the discursive frame of citizen journalism as he contends that the definition “circumscribes the critical imagination” (p. 449). Instead, he invites us to critically consider the aims and the actors leading the positions of enunciation before making this categorical generalisation. As the crisis protracted and the majority of media actors moved to work from exile (Dollet, 2015; Issa, 2016), the networked media practices of the Syrian diasporic media were seen through the lens of advocacy journalism (Arafat, 2021) and oppositional media (Badran, 2020). These categorical frames predicate a political commonality where media actors promote a specific (an alternative) ideology or what Cammaerts (2012) calls ‘counter-discourses’. Nevertheless, the changing geopolitical reality in Syria has caused a dissolution of this political commonality, with the last wave of Syrian contention largely concluding in favour of Al-Assad’s regime (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). Thus, the temporal context where this research is taking place is situated in a post-revolutionary setting, which postulates a need for a critical revision of the categorical frames denoting the media practices of the outlets that emerged in relation to a former temporality. This conversation on the intrinsically political nature of the context at hand invites us to take a closer look at the actors involved in the Syrian uprisings’ mediation opportunity structure.

The conditions of the emergence of the new Syrian mediascape were rather sudden, similar to the nature of the uprisings themselves; this prompted the label “pop-up news ecology” (Wall & el Zahed, 2014) to describe the nascent news environment. Despite the lack of a political (Tarrow, 1989) or social environment (De Angelis, 2011) to support their emergence, the new media outlets emerged against a more powerful and institutionalised media actor, the state-controlled mass media. For decades preceding the upheaval, regime-controlled mass media dominated the Syrian public sphere, dictating the terms of permitted discourse (Wedeen, 1999). Following the uprisings, this state-controlled media continued to dominate the public discourse inside Syria (Melki, 2016), propagandising the regime. Therefore, the analysis of the emerging mediascape needs to be understood in relation to this national mainstream media that controls the institutions of power and the social and political environments traditionally conducive to the development of media organisations (De Angelis, 2011; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Given the highly contrasting ideological

and political views between the state-controlled mainstream media and the emerging media actors, any interaction between them within Cammaerts' (2012) mediation opportunity structure is unrealistic. The other key actor essential to understanding the Syrian information environment is the global mainstream media which played a crucial role as an intermediary, highlighting the emerging Syrian media voices, enabling them to challenge the regime's enforced media blackout during the conflict. In previous research, Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013) articulate the relationship dynamics between the Syrian diasporic media actors as brokers liaising between the political movement and the global mainstream media (also see Al-Ghazzi, 2014; Chouliaraki & Al-Ghazzi, 2022; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). However, global mainstream media's role as an intermediary between emerging Syrian voices and the world is ideologically and politically implicated, which I will elaborate on later in this chapter. Finally, the emerging media actors in the Syrian mediascape are diffused across the political divide (Issa, 2016) yet fundamentally oppositional to Al-Assad's regime. The ideological positioning of these emerging Syrian media actors is complicated by the shifting political positions of the parties involved in the conflict and the internationalisation of the crisis (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). However, some mapping studies have been conducted to provide a preliminary reading of the political positioning of the emerging media outlets, yielding four main categories: pro-regime media, pro-opposition media, independent media and Kurdish media (Issa, 2016; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). The Kurdish media context, governed by complex geopolitical imperatives, is largely seen as epiphenomenal to the rest of the Syrian context and is outside this research's scope (Badran & De Angelis, 2016). Meanwhile, various political groups involved in the Syrian conflict have established and funded their own media outlets that advance their narratives and interests, whether on the side of the regime or the opposition (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Meanwhile, the media funded by international media assistance (donor media) is primarily considered independent with no explicit political association (Issa, 2016; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Denoting the donor-funded media as independent is merely a declaration of the lack of an explicit political affiliation, which does not necessarily equate with the lack of an ideological position. Therefore, the ideological positioning of the independent, donor-funded media will be accounted for in this research by studying its texts and messages.

This mapping is radically shaped by fast-changing temporal rhythms in the Syrian contention and extends over two contrasting localities at home or in the diaspora. Later in this chapter, I integrate

the different temporal phases of the Syrian contention in understanding the discursive frames used to describe the plethora of the self-mediated practices of media activists. From the spatial aspect, the Syrian mediascape, for the best part of the last decade, has been governed by the non-unitary state of the country, where various political powers control different regions inside the country (Issa, 2016). These political forces have, in turn, sought to control/co-opt/direct the media outlets based within their jurisdiction (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Outside Syria, the diasporic media scene cannot be studied as a homogenous category, given the disparities in the political contexts where different groups of Syrians are based in exile. Previous work has highlighted the impact of the increased securitisation of the Syrian presence in Turkey and how it shapes the diasporic media scene by succession (Badran, 2020; Badran & Smets, 2021). Much less focus has been afforded to the Syrian diasporic media based out of Europe, perhaps due to the proximity of the diasporic media scene based in Turkey to the context at home and the sheer volume of exilic media activity based across the Turkish border. A final note on the spatial aspect: Despite the physical distance separating different localities and contrasting registers of collective life (Touraine, 2001); the emerging Syrian mediascape remains connected through its conditions of emergence against a moment of political upheaval (Badran, 2021). An example of such interconnectedness in the internal structure of one of the digital radios under study, Rozana Radio, which is legally registered in Turkey and France and has an editorial team based in Gaziantep (a border city in Turkey) with a string of correspondents inside Syria. Some have argued that these transnational structures give the Syrian diasporic media scene the pejoratives of a “defacto” local media temporarily based in exile (Tatomir et al., 2020). However, the analysis carried out in this research will test this hypothesis, particularly in relation to the Syrian media outlets (especially the digital radios) based in Europe amid changing geopolitical realities in Syria. Throughout this chapter, I will present a more detailed elaboration of the different elements of the topography of the Syrian mediascape through the lens of Cammaerts’ (2012) mediation opportunity structure. I start with a historical context of radio broadcasting in Syria situated within a larger historical view of public broadcasting in the Arab World. Moreover, I examine the regime’s repertoire of symbolic domination through mass media by means of propaganda and censorship. This symbolic domination inadvertently gave rise to the emerging media scene in 2011 amid the regime’s enforced media blackout and relentless disinformation. Later in this chapter, I provide an overview

of the alternative Syrian media scene that emerged at home and in the diaspora after 2011, focusing on the digital diaspora radios, the focus of this study.

Radio and Syrian Contention: a Literature Review

Radio is seen as an important nodal point in networks of contention, facilitating activists' self-representation processes and offering an alternative to mainstream media narratives (Baily et al., 2008). Cammaerts (2015) and Mattoni and Treré (2014) contend that there is an increasing focus on digital technologies as a platform for "movement media" at the expense of the study of the role of traditional media in contention. In the same vein, previous research on the mediation of Syrian contention has addressed the role of digital media as a site of self-representational practices of activists and citizen journalists (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Wall & el Zahed, 2014; Al-Ghazzi, 2014). Hence, this research focuses on previously unexplored territory, the emergence of a vibrant Syrian radio community that developed out of the 2011 uprisings. There have been some efforts to map this emerging Syrian radio scene (Marrouch, 2014, Dollet, 2015), yet none of this work provided a qualitative reading of the texts or the dynamics of discourse production within these radios. The emerging Syrian radios were initially established to counter the regime's historical propaganda in the national public sphere, but due to security reasons, most radios were forced into exile (Dollet, 2015). FM broadcasting inside Syria was hindered by many security and structural challenges (war-stricken infrastructure resulting in power cuts); therefore, these radios turned to digital broadcasting as a more feasible and affordable alternative (Overton & Dathan, 2019). The proliferation of radio culture in the Arab World has been historically credited to its ability to transcend physical (print, circulation) and social (illiteracy) barriers; an appreciation of oral culture in the region, and the wide availability of shortwave (FM/AM) receivers (Wood, 1979).

The Political Control over Radio in Syria: a Historical Context

To understand the historical aspect of the Syrian radio's role in social and political construction, I will draw on Lisa Wedeen's (1999) seminal work to understand radio broadcasting as part of the Syrian regime's propaganda apparatus. Wedeen's book, *Ambiguities of Domination* (1999), builds on the Foucauldian approach to power yet addresses the gap in the study of the notion of self-

discipline in a carceral society. Evidently, she uses personality cult as an interpretive frame to analyse how semiotics help create dominance, not only by maintaining political power but also by generating such power. She offers an Althusserian (materialist) approach to the regime's use of rhetoric and symbols to reproduce domination through public dissimulation. In her book, she describes the regime's utter control over the means of symbolic reproduction by subjugating all avenues of public expression, namely mass media. National radio, in particular, she notes, is instrumentalised by the regime to reproduce specific tropes of the national identity by narrowing the gap between the ruler and the ruled. Nonetheless, the regime has allowed a limited space for controlled opposition to the government through public broadcasting, such as the heavily orchestrated complaint segments on radio programmes, which Wedeen described as means of *Tanfīs* (Arabic for letting air out). These controlled spaces for opposition serve as "safety valves", allowing people to vent frustrations and displace tensions that otherwise might find expression in political action. Notably, public radio has occasionally served as a site of "licensed critique" (1999, p. 90), where the regime in power engineers spaces of manufactured emancipation. Similarly, some limited criticism was allowed in television series *musalsalaat* and satirical magazines such as *al-Domari* (De Angelis, 2014). The regime's absolute control over the means of public expression was briefly interspersed by what was characterised as the "Damascus Spring" (2000-2001) at the beginning of Bashar Al-Assad's hereditary rule succeeding his father, Hafiz (Wieland, 2012). This period brought some limited social and political changes before the tides quickly shifted as the regime cracked down on the nascent avenues of civic engagement.

The History of Arab Public Broadcasting

In theory, radio broadcasting has the capacity to overcome the barriers of isolation and illiteracy as it is the most economical electronic medium to broadcast and receive information (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Cammaerts (2015) contends that "radio broadcasting has a long legacy of regulation and restrictions enforced through a system of licensing which tends to impede access to the airwaves for oppositional forces and social movements" (p. 450). The history of radio broadcasting in the Arab World went through a journey from being used as an anti-hegemonic tool of political resistance to becoming an integral part of the political establishment. Fanon (1965) describes the re-appropriation of radio broadcasting as a tool of resistance by the anti-colonial movement in Algeria, "bringing to all Algeria the great message of the Revolution" (p. 82).

Nonetheless, national broadcasting services in the Arab World went on to become under the ‘state-broadcasting model’ whereby national broadcasting entities were fully owned and run by the government as well as being wholly financed from the centralised budget to reflect the official narrative of the regime in power (Ayish, 2010). In the advent of the proliferation of commercial media in the Arab World, state broadcasters in the age of globalisation have been committed to the long-held tradition of indigenous cultural development and community learning (Ibid). This was reflected in the range of cultural and educational programme formats they offered, such as local news coverage, talk shows, folkloric performing arts, religious programs, educational content, and health awareness campaigns (Arab States Broadcasting Union, 2009). Regardless of their righteous vision, this content mix has been impeded by poor production, protocol-defined features and bureaucracy of the national state broadcasters (Ayish, 2003). Over time, radio broadcasting in the Arab World has gained an infamous reputation for being monolithic, dull, and protocol-oriented (Ayish, 2010). More importantly, the complete reliance on state funding and political direction has created a lack of financial and editorial independence that, in turn, transformed broadcasting institutions into state mouthpieces instead of addressing community grassroots concerns (Boyd, 1999). However, liberalisation policies and the rise of Satellite TV in the 90s have increased the pressure on public broadcasters across the Arab World to rethink their modus operandi (Lynch, 2006; Ayish, 2008). These structural transformations in the Arab media ecosystem may have prompted some broadcasting content revision without speculating about their potential power to challenge deep-rooted authoritarianism in the Arab World that proved to be eventually inconsequential (Zayani, 2015). To reappropriate Wickham’s (2013) words, this transformational paradigm brought about a change in the media regime without an actual regime change (p. 154). Nonetheless, these changes paved the way for the rise of privately-owned media actors, which signalled an end to the absolute monopoly of Arab broadcasting institutions over the national public spheres. Arab regimes initially resisted the notion of privately-owned radio broadcasters due to the inherited paternalistic political traditions favouring government control over radio broadcasting (Ayish, 2010). Nevertheless, the inevitable rise of privatisation in the broadcasting sector did not necessarily equate with democratisation or create a truly pluralistic public sphere, as private broadcasting services were owned by key state figures as commercial enterprises rather than as political adversaries (Sakr, 2001). Media scholar Fackson Banda (Myers, 2014) contends that “broadcasting liberalisation is supposed to achieve pluralism of views,

information and opinion. In practice, it has offered more access and a stronger voice to the rich and powerful and is serving commercial interests more than rural and marginalised groups” (p. 28). Still, the rise of privately-owned players in Arab radio broadcasting has pushed the state-owned ones to diversify their programme offerings by appropriating innovative formats initially associated with private broadcasters. The talk show format was one of the most successful genres appropriated by state broadcasters from their private rivals (Ayish, 2010).

Voice of the People? Radio in Syria under Ba'ath's rule

Historically, Radio in Syria was the site for the manifestations of Pan-Arab relations, especially after the Ba'ath party in Syria ascended to power in 1963. In 1970, Radio Damascus established an hour-long broadcast called “Palestine Broadcast”, which aired across the Arab World and was operated by Palestinians in exile that formed a symbolic resistance to the Israeli occupation (Browne, 1975). Concurrently, Syria hosted the programming of “The voice of the Palestinian Revolution”, where a transmitter was placed in the Northern part of the country (where many Palestinian refugees resided) and was operated by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) (Ibid). However, the broadcasting of the latter was soon terminated due to the Syrian regime's rapprochement efforts with Jordan to reduce Syria's isolation from the rest of the Arab World (Dawisha, 1980). As Hafiz Al-Assad assumed power, radio broadcasting became even more tightly controlled by the regime, dictating the public discourse during many vital political episodes (Dawisha 1980). Thereafter, radio airwaves remained under a tight state monopoly with two main FM channels: Radio Damascus and Voice of the People [*Sawt al-Sha'ab*]. In 2007, the first private radio channel emerged: Al-Madina, yet, the state retained its monopoly on information circulation as private radios could only apply for an “entertainment” content license, hence, were not allowed to broadcast news (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). The closest external competitor to the monopoly of state radio broadcasting in Syria was the Lebanese one (Bothwell, 2018). A relatively small country in size and population, Lebanon, in the 90s, had almost a hundred radio stations (Kraidy, 2005). There is a number of reasons why the Syrian audience turned to Lebanese radio stations, including most obviously a shared language (and a closely similar dialect); shared borders often related to a tumultuous history and finally, a migrant labour population from Syria working on Lebanese lands (Chalcraft, 2008). An additional player that has also posed as a rival to the domination of state broadcasters: foreign radio services in the region (BBC Arabic Radio and, in

2002, Sawa Radio), seeking to offer an alternative discourse to the official state-sponsored narrative disseminated by public radios (Boyd, 1993, 1997; Tomlinson, 2007). Those were significantly tougher rivals to co-opt as they were not licensed by the authorities nor subject to national media regulators, which eventually pushed state radio services further onto the defensive (Lynch, 2006). Since the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, state-controlled radio channels have continued to dominate due to the regime's control over the FM airwaves, among other reasons¹ (Melki, 2016). Nonetheless, the uprisings in Syria birthed a dynamic radio broadcasting scene with community, digital and diasporic radios (Dollet, 2015).

A Repertoire of Symbolic Domination: Censorship and Propaganda in the Syrian Public Discourse

The regime instrumentalised state-controlled media prior to the 2011 uprisings to cultivate a cult of personality for the president and define the limits of permitted discourse (Wedeen, 1999). Thus, the state had absolute control over the Syrian information environment, the symbolic means of social/political construction, and avenues of civic engagement. This state media apparatus reigned in the public discourse since Ba'ath ascended to power in 1963 and was the sole actor that dictated the terms of that cultural temporality (Badran, 2020). Historically, mass media were and are still the strongest tool in the regime's repertoire to enforce obedience, induce complicity, isolate Syrians from one another, and set guidelines for public speech and behaviour (Wedeen, 1999). In Baath's Syria, state-owned media functioned as mouthpieces primarily geared toward "guiding public opinion" and "consolidating the gains of Arab nationalism" (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Given their strategic importance to the regime's propaganda, media outlets were under the state's tight control, not only in rhetoric but also ownership-wise. Under this monolithic ownership, different print and broadcast outlets in Syria offered homogenous iterations of the same state-controlled narrative (Ibid). Nonetheless, the 2011 uprisings caused a radical disruption in the regime's control over the means of symbolic reproduction and emerging media actors embarked on a quest to provide "counter-discourses" (Cammaerts, 2012) alternative to the regime's relentless propaganda. However, it is important to note that "the development of the [new] media field is the product of the oppressive pre-2011 context and the ongoing conflict" (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018).

¹ [According to a 2016 audience survey](#)

Thus, understanding the repertoire of symbolic domination employed by the regime gives us more informed insights into the conditions of the emergence of the Syrian alternative media scene.

The Dynamics of Media Censorship in Ba'ath's Syria

Syria has an extensive history of employing intricate censorship mechanisms, whether through external censoring actors or by reinforcing structural frameworks to ensure that self-censorship is closely followed and maintained (Wedeen, 1999). On a structural level, Samir Kassir (2000) notes that the state's media licence monopoly is the most obvious framework of censorship employed to limit freedom of expression for any emerging media actors in the Arab World. He contends that "the real problem is in radio and TV where journalists are given very little room for manoeuvre, and where the allocation of broadcasting licences mirrors the distribution of power" (Kassir, 2000, pp.144-145). On an editorial level, the Syrian regime forces content censorship through different means, including a blanket ban on certain types of content. Before 2011, private radios were only granted an entertainment licence in a bid to control the type of content broadcast on the AM/FM waves. Currently, legislative decrees in Syria (especially number 108) leave the door open for authorities to crack down on media outlets in the name of protecting "national unity" and "national security" (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). The implementation of censorship laws in Syria is characterised by its arbitrariness as it varies according to the judgments of individual censors and their personal predilections, as well as the context of broader historical events (Wedeen, 1999). Nonetheless, Syrian journalists and writers have attempted to subtly push against state-mandated censorship through various semiotic strategies. Before 2011, some media outlets gained popularity as they adopted a covertly critical narrative while manoeuvring these 'red lines' of censorship, such as the satirical newspaper *al Doumari* of the cartoonist Ali Ferzat. In his struggle against state-mandated censorship, Ferzat contends, "to survive and get around censorship, my caricatures had to be speechless and rely instead on symbols. That gave them an international aspect I did not intend in the first place. So I managed to get the voice of people inside Syria to the outside, through channels of common human interest" (Halasa, 2012). This relays Andrei Plesu's (1995) conception of how censorship could incentivise intellectuals (emerging journalists in our case) to encode their messages in between the state-mandated "red lines". He notes, "the existence of censorship led to the elaboration of ingenious subtexts, allusions, and camouflage techniques practised with great virtuosity and assimilated promptly by the mass of readers" (Plesu, 1995, p. 3). Lisa Wedeen's

analytical work attests to the historical use of semiotics and various discursive strategies to covertly encode messages that could be perceived as pushing against the red lines, “people are habituated to provide publicly acceptable responses but not necessarily through outright lies. They use their imaginations to invent modes of evasion; they find ways of both speaking truth and yet reiterating the regime's idealised presentation of itself” (1999, p. 103). In the Syrian context, the social and political critique was encoded through satirical content, which has proved an ideal vehicle for manoeuvring the red tapes imposed on the public discourse (Halasa, 2012). Evidently, satire is open to interpretation and engages the audience in the process of decoding the covert messages embedded in the comedic anecdotes (ibid). Similarly, the target audience of those encoded messages has also developed the necessary skills to decipher these communications by “overcoming their own internal censors” (Wedeen, 1999) to ultimately “read between the lines” (Darnton, 1996). Nonetheless, any effort to push against censorship is not without a grave risk that most journalists in Syria are familiar with. Samir Kassir (2000) addresses the risks journalists take to push against censorship as “totally dependent on individual journalists' willingness to pay the price of maintaining professional standards and personal conscience. There is no professional body to protect them, media owners are unwilling to defend their own freedom” (p. 145).

Emerging Syrian media Challenging the Regime's Censorship

In this section, I outline the ways in which the emerging media actors have challenged the regime's censorship in terms of ownership, information access and audience participation. Primarily, they managed to diffuse the regime's monolithic ownership over the means of symbolic reproduction, particularly outlets legally registered abroad and broadcasting digitally inside Syria that are theoretically no longer subject to the regime's restrictive legislation and licencing hurdles. However, the state's extensive digital surveillance (Al Khatib & Xynou, 2015) is a constant challenge to this digital media's democratisation efforts. Moreover, the new media outlets have also challenged the regime's enforced ban on information access about the unfolding violence (Reporters without Borders, 2013). A plethora of citizen journalists and media activists across Syria have worked with newly-formed media outlets locally and in the diaspora to relay an alternative narrative to the uprisings in Syria, challenging the regime's disinformation (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Albeit extremely dangerous, media enthusiasts and citizen journalists have aided the emerging media outlet in breaking the regime's

unilateral domination over the information environment (Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Another prominent aspect of the regime's media censorship was the erasure of ordinary citizens' voices from the public narrative (Pearlman, 2016). In contrast with the regime's staunch attempt to manufacture audience participation in the state-owned media (Wedeen, 1999), the digital nature of the emerging media outlets after the 2011 uprisings has allowed for a more significant opportunity for audience participation, whether through call-in during programmes to contribute to the discussion or through social media channels (De Angelis et al., 2014). This is a departure from previous practices before 2011, where media outlets under the regime's control vet callers to ensure they abide by the state's official narrative (Wedeen, 1999). Nevertheless, the emerging media scene inside Syria that developed away from the control of the regime in rebel-held areas is still under some forms of social censorship due to the prevalence of social and cultural taboos. In a speech at a media development conference in Luxembourg, Lina Chawaf, Radio Rozana's² executive director, described the forms of social censorship that the emerging mediascape ought to navigate, "in Syria, you have the censorship from the government and the censorship from the society... after 2011... the censorship of the society never changed, it stayed the same. While we [diasporic outlets] were not under the censorship of the government, we are still under the censorship of the society". Some of the new political actors and armed groups controlling different regions inside Syria have also been implicated in eroding the margin of newly founded freedom of expression gained after the 2011 uprisings (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Perhaps the most glaring case is of Radio Fresh³ and its founder Raed Fares, a local activist from Kafr Nabl who established a community radio for the benefit of his region before his tragic demise in 2018. Fares' community radio differs from the ones under study by this research as it worked almost entirely inside Syria and primarily covers domestic affairs relevant to those living in the local community. The radio was "a relic from a time of hope in the Syrian revolution" (Bulos, 2020). Fares and his community radio had to find alternative ways to play music on radio fresh as the de facto groups controlling the region espoused austere beliefs that considered music as sacrilege. So, to challenge the imposed "ban on music", Fares' radio played background sounds instead of music, including farmyard noises and bongs from London's Big Ben clock and endless ticking sounds (Ibid). Fares told BBC,

² Radio Rozana is a Syrian digital diasporic radio, founded in 2013 and registered in France and Turkey.

³ This section includes contextual information taken from episode 4, of the data sample, broadcast on Radio Rozana on 1 February 2016.

"[the armed groups] tried to force us to stop playing music on air. So we started to play animals in the background as a kind of sarcastic gesture against them." Radio Fresh eventually stopped broadcasting in 2020 as the regime forces advanced towards Kafrnabel, the town where the radio premises were based (Bulos, 2020). These creative ways of manoeuvring censorship were not always fruitful; many outlets had to resort to self-censorship to avoid social repercussions and security threats. In chapter 3, I delve into the details of another case of censorship by social actors involving Rising for Freedom, a diasporic magazine registered in Canada with a field office inside Syria. The magazine faced a violent social backlash for publishing what was perceived as 'blasphemous' content. Finally, I have examined the Syrian state's repertoire of symbolic domination that inadvertently gave rise to new media actors after the 2011 uprisings that challenged the regime's enforced media blackout on the Syrian uprisings.

Contention and Digital Media Use: A Diachronic Timeline in the Syrian Context

Cammaerts' (2012) mediation opportunity structure denotes three types of activists' media use in contention: media representation, self-mediation and resistance through technology. In the Syrian crisis, the activists' media use amalgamates the categories above under the umbrella of self-mediation. Citizen journalists and media activists, enabled by an array of digital affordances, have been able to resist the regime's enforced media blackout and relay their protests in global mainstream media (Salama, 2012; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Based on this conception, I present a diachronic timeline of the different discursive frames used in the literature to denote the contentious Syrian media practices. This timeline mirrors Mattoni and Treré's (2014) conception of three overlapping temporalities in contention; the transformative event (McAdam & Sewell, 2001), protest cycles (Tarrow, 1989) and cultural epochs of contention (McAdam & Sewell, 2001). In this outline, I also highlight the dynamics between the emerging media actors and the more dominant actors in the global news structure.

Syrian Citizen Journalism and the Rise of Information Fetishism

Citizen journalism is seen as an epiphenomenal genre of traditional journalism; hence, its study almost exclusively happens compared to mainstream media and news production (Wall, 2018). Some scholars define citizen journalism as only occurring outside the traditional boundaries of mainstream media and journalism (Kim & Lowrey, 2015) due to its characterising attributes that

are thought to stand in contrast to the traditional values of professional journalism, namely objectivity and balance (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016). Wall (2018) argues that the control that professional journalists exercise over defining the boundaries and scope of work of citizen journalists often limits the true potential of the genre. Citizen journalism can provide alternative societal frames of reference and a more personal and culturally-nuanced account of events, especially in contrast with the reporting of international correspondents who might not even speak the local language or be attuned to the local specificities (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016). The literature on alternative or citizen-led media acknowledges its politically critical nature that rejects the traditional ideology of objectivity and replaces it with oppositional practices of counter-discourse (Atton, 2001; Rodríguez, 2014; Fuchs, 2010). Atton (2001) contends that citizen journalism has the “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 1991) to construct alternative social and political realities that opposes mainstream conventions and system of representation, hence it is often connoted as “alternative media” when it is operating out of an organisational setting away from the control of the mainstream establishments. This, in turn, primes citizen journalism/alternative media to become an avenue to challenge the “hierarchy of systems of expression” (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) by providing counter-discourses to resist the hegemony of the mainstream media representations (Cammaerts, 2015).

The Syrian uprisings (the transformative event, McAdam & Sewell 2001) have marked the symbolic end of the regime’s absolute control over the Syrian information environment with means of digital technologies facilitating a “social media insurgency” (Mattoni & Treré, 2014) that spread across Syria (Salama, 2012). The emergence of such parallel or alternative digital information environment was rather sudden, capillary and uncoordinated (De Angelis, 2011), and the sporadic mediated practices of flesh witnessing (Chouliaraki & Al-Ghazzi, 2022) were characterised in the literature as “crisis” reporting (Anden-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013a) or “war” reporting (Creech, 2017). Nevertheless, the enforced media blackout in Syria meant that the local media activists were bearing the costs of witnessing (Creech, 2017) as the main on-the-ground actors in this parallel information environment. The individual nodes of the networked reporting (Deuze, 2005) in Syria began to galvanise as the crisis protracted for the following years after the initial revolt (Wall & el Zahed, 2014). As media activists began to formalise their work and establish relationship dynamics with global mainstream media, the literature used the discursive frame of “citizen journalism” as

an umbrella term to denote the plethora of their digital media practices. However, Al-Ghazzi (2014) cautions that the wide range of user-generated digital content emanating from the Syrian crisis is being categorically simplified as citizen journalism without further consideration of the actors involved or understanding their political motivations. He warns that the digital tools at the disposal of peaceful protestors and activists working for a democratic change are equally co-opted by other actors involved in the conflict. He also points out the potential limitations of prescribing the Syrian activists' digital participation using the citizen journalism frame as it "circumscribes the critical imagination" (Al-Ghazzi, 2014, p. 449), restricting a more comprehensive view of the Syrian contention's mediation opportunity structure (Cammaerts, 2012) in terms of the content produced, the actors creating it and their motivations.

The literature presents a complicated relationship between the emerging Syrian media actors (citizen journalists and media activists) and the global mainstream media, the latter being essential to the representation of the Syrian contention to an international audience. Cammaerts (2012) builds on the work of Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) to conceptualise three aspects main aspects where movement media is dependent on mainstream media "to mobilise political support, to increase the legitimization and validation of their demands and to enable them to widen the scope of conflict beyond the likeminded" (p. 120). Similarly, I focus on three aspects of the relationship dynamics between Syrian citizen journalism and mainstream global media: recognition, verification and labour. In terms of recognition, mainstream global media are thought to provide legitimacy and credibility to the contentious movement (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). Therefore, citizen journalists mediate the Syrian uprisings in a digital format suitable for distribution to international mainstream media (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). As for verification, international mainstream media heavily relied on user-generated content as the primary source of information on the unfolding crisis in Syria (Issa, 2016). However, international media had limited ways of immediately verifying such content, inadvertently becoming "spectators" to what was happening just like their audience (De Angelis, 2011, p. 16) without being able to determine the purpose of the content produced, whether it is for civic or violent intentions (Al-Ghazzi, 2014). Conversely, there have been numerous instances where user-generated content coming out of Syria has been misrepresented by international media (Al Ghazzi, 2017). Therefore, the exchange between the global media and the Syrian citizen journalists has

been strained at times by a lack of credibility in the information circulated. Finally, the labour relations between these media actors mirror the unequal power they both wield. Notably, the limited on-the-ground access meant that international mainstream media primarily relied on the labour of precarious citizen journalists who faced daily insurmountable dangers and threats of violence. At the beginning of the 2011 uprisings in Syria and for the ensuing decade of violence, the Syrian regime enforced a total media blackout that initially rendered information about this conflict scarce (Reporters without Borders, 2013). I argue that this scarcity created an information fetishism in the Syrian media environment, where information is the most valuable asset in news production, masking the often precarious and perilous labour relations involved in its production. This scarcity stands in contrast with an increasing appeal for such information globally as mainstream media is fuelling the demand for news from hard-to-reach conflict areas inside Syria. Scores of citizen journalists and media activists have stepped in to bridge this information gap and defy the media blackout, despite grave risks, by providing coverage of the unfolding violence. Al-Ghazzi (2021) describes Syrian journalists' eagerness to expose and document the regime's systemic violence as a self-ascribed "duty to report". This duty to report was inadvertently an added impetus to the rise of this information fetishism as the Syrian information environment was characterised by its abundance of news and information following the uprisings (De Angelis, 2011). Thus, this information fetishism is a byproduct of the market dynamics that define labour relations between citizen journalists and media activists (suppliers), providing crucial news and information (commodity) to the mainstream global media (consumers). Nevertheless, as the crisis in Syria protracted, scores of citizen journalists and media activists fled the raging violence to neighbouring countries or across the world, where they started and joined many diasporic media outlets (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018).

Syrian Diasporic Media: A 'De Facto' local media?

In this section, I will then outline the conditions of the emergence of the Syrian diasporic radios, the focus of this research, and situate them within the aforementioned temporal rhythms. I also make a case for the vitality of studying this type of media engagement within the present temporality, a post-revolutionary setting, unexplored in previous research on the Syrian context. In the previous section, I focused on the discursive frames used to denote activists' media use during the initial uprisings and protests cycles (Tarrow, 1989; McAdam & Sewell, 2001). This

section follows the development of a vibrant Syrian media scene at home and in the diaspora, capitalising on the newly acquired skills of citizen journalists and media activists. The emerging Syrian media slowly transitioned from a model of networked journalism (Deuze, 2005) toward more professionalism and institutionalisation (De Angelis, Della Ratta and Badran, 2014). Worth noting that most of the impromptu outlets that emerged with the outburst of the 2011 uprisings have not been able to progress into more organised settings and have halted their activities (Tatomir et al., 2020). The efforts to map the emerging Syrian media scene have mainly looked at the political divide between the different affiliations of the nascent outlets (Issa, 2016; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). The fragmentation of the political opposition and the internationalisation of the Syrian crisis (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) postulates a multiplicity of political actors and voices in this alternative public sphere. In a quantitative study, Issa (2016) finds that more than 70% of the 196 new Syrian outlets (print, broadcast and digital) are politically affiliated, whether pro-regime or pro-opposition. For this research, I focus on “independent” media outlets emerging post-2011 broadcasting from outside Syria. I define independent outlets as those that operate outside the nexus of state supervision and commercial forces. Moreover, I am specifically looking at media outlets with no political affiliations to state or non-state actors in Syria. Instead, the research will focus on outlets whose values align with the ethics of independent journalism (Tatomir et al., 2020). I plan on not taking such self-assigned labels at face value by juxtaposing each media outlet’s content against the backdrop of their declared ethos.

Other work has looked at the Syrian media beyond the geographical scope to study outlets set up in the diaspora (Tatomir et al., 2020; Badran, 2020; Badran & Smets, 2021). The authors of the International Media Support briefing paper (Tatomir et al., 2020) make a specific argument about the relationship of the diasporic media outlets to the local media scene that I will further investigate in this research. They argue that Syrian diasporic media constitutes a “defacto local media with temporary headquarters abroad” (p. 5). They base their argument on a number of attributes qualifying diasporic media outlets to act as de facto local media as they are a) set up and managed by Syrians, b) focus on contemporary Syrian affairs and c) have a network of correspondents on the ground to report from inside the country. They also argue that this emerging media sector has significant growth potential given the affordances of digital technologies in terms of access and the vital need for local news and information provided by these outlets in contrast to the regime’s

propaganda. In this research, I challenge these claims and the overemphasised emancipatory outlook on the emerging diasporic media scene. Namely, the digital affordances and how they enable the alternative media's access to the community (Rodríguez, 2000) in this context are simply overstated. Issues of internet access in Syria due to war-stricken infrastructure, power cuts and prohibitively high service fees are some of the structural hurdles facing diasporic media's access to the local community inside Syria (Overton & Dathan, 2019). Additionally, due to its control over the telecommunications infrastructure, the regime conducts widespread digital surveillance and content censorship to filter out oppositional or contentious material (Al Khatib & Xynou, 2015). It is possible that these claims of access were contingent on the opposition expanding their rule over more regions in Syria, where diasporic media based in exile could pursue their "offshore" broadcasting and circulation in these areas (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Nevertheless, the geopolitical conditions transpired in favour of the regime, which regained its political control over most opposition-held areas in Syria. Hence, there is a need to revisit the initial hypotheses on the diasporic media's access to the community inside Syria in a post-revolutionary context with adversarial geopolitical conditions. Therefore, this research provides an ample opportunity to understand the barriers to community access from a qualitative perspective by studying the content of these diasporic media.

Finally, the mapping of the emerging Syrian media scene in previous studies (Issa, 2016; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018) tends to blur the lines between the types of content provided by the different outlets. The political nature of the event that propelled this emerging media scene, the Syrian uprisings, has overshadowed the traditional distinctions between the different types of outlets: news, entertainment and social programming. De Angelis, Della Ratta and Badran (2014) were the first to distinguish the different types of content presented by the outlets within the emerging Syrian media scene. They argue that 'social programming' emerges as a prominent category within nascent radios that addresses civil society issues such as freedom and democracy in 'street language' thanks to their conversational and interactive nature, allowing greater audience participation. Social programming also includes 'humanitarian content', which provides vital information disseminated by activists for community service (De Angelis et al., 2014). Hence, this research focuses on studying the broadcast of the Syrian diasporic media as part of the emerging media scene. The literature currently lacks a qualitative study of these nascent radios focusing on

the content of their broadcasting. Despite the affinity of their conditions of emergence, this research divests from the amalgamated nature of ‘oppositional media’ (Badran, 2020), denoting the different outlets within the emerging mediascape. I argue that the ‘social programming’ nature of the content broadcast on the diasporic radios under study challenges the universality of the ‘oppositional’ frame. I recognise that the diasporic radios also emerged against this moment of political upheaval; however, the analytical focus on the content rather than the conditions of emergence calls for a more tailored frame. I argue that the diasporic condition denoting the location of broadcasting and the interlocutors is the most prominent pejorative of this type of media (social programming radios); hence, the focus of this research is the Syrian diasporic media.

The architecture of Media Assistance

The architecture of media assistance is rather complicated; for this research, I will provide a brief overview of the basic structure of the cycle of media assistance relevant to the case studies of this research. I will revisit the debate on media assistance in chapter 6, where I examine the ways in which the political economy shapes the dynamics of discourse production in the emerging Syrian media. One of the biggest debates in the literature on media development is the purpose of media assistance as a “soft power” between public diplomacy and covert propaganda (Nye, 1991, 2008; Malone, 1988; Miller, 2009; Seib, 2009, Bakir et al. 2018; Freedman 2020). However, the scope of this research moves past what media assistance is, to what it actually does, focusing specifically on how it shapes the dynamics of discourse production. One of the most notable examples of media assistance-funded radios in the Middle East is Radio Sawa, sponsored by the U.S. Agency for Global Media and the U.S. Congress and provides a mix of news, music and social programming (Kassman, 2007). Theoretically, Radio Sawa is in a different category from the media endeavours studied by this project as it was part of a “wide-scale public diplomacy plan to improve America’s image in the Middle East and win the hearts and minds of the Arab people” (el-Nawawy, 2007, p. 183). Conversely, the type of grant-funded media, the focus of this research, receives funding from multiple sources of international media assistance in the form of covering the costs of publishing, broadcasting and/or providing training and capacity-building efforts for its cadres (De Angelis et al., 2014). The support of international media assistance to the emerging Syrian media scene has been hailed as instrumental in galvanising an independent Syrian media sector (Issa, 2016; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018), providing an alternative to the regime’s propaganda on the one hand as

well as the sectarian narratives promoted by politically affiliated media on the other hand. Media assistance emerged as a pillar for democracy and development in the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information in 1948, branching into two interlinked streams: media for development (communicating a message) and media development (supporting media per se) (Cook, 2016). It has also been linked to good governance and a healthy democratic transition based on the assumption that the more citizens are empowered to make informed choices, the better the media serve democracy (Sakr, 2004; Wilson et al., 2007). While the funding has been essential to its emergence, the independent media scene's overreliance on media assistance has been detrimental to its overall sustainability. Problems such as donor dependency and shifting donor priorities have arisen from the reliance on aid money as a primary source of funding/income (Badran, 2020). These existential threats directly impede the professional and organisational development of these emerging media outlets, including their capacity for expanding operations or attracting talented calibres (Badran & Smets, 2021). For this research, I will focus on the diasporic media reliant on grants and donor funds. In France, where the case studies of this research (Souriali and Rozana radios) are registered, these emerging media outlets receive financial support from entities working in media development, including government agencies and other independent civil society organisations. Hereafter, I will refer to these funding entities as 'media assistance organisations' and the support provided to the media outlets as 'media assistance. (Miller, 2009). For instance: CFI (*Agence française de développement medias*), the French Agency for Media Development, is a public limited company and a subsidiary of France Medias Monde, which promotes media development around the world. 85% of CFI's budget comes from taxpayers' money, which falls under the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs mandate. CFI was founded in 1989 by the Ministry of Cooperation with the mission to distribute overseas television stations with French television programmes. It supports some diaspora-led media projects aimed at Syrians at home and in the diaspora and is listed as a partner for Souriali and Rozana Radios, the case studies of this research. The governmentality of the media assistance organisations over the emerging media outlets comes into question, given the centrality of the funding to the daily activities of these projects. Hence, this study's techno-economic focus aims to consider the political economy of the communicative environment and the ways it shapes the dynamics of discourse production.

Studying Diasporic Media

Now that I have defined the parameters of the diasporic media outlets, the focus of this research, I turn to the literature to operationalise the theoretical and methodological components of this study. Diaspora media has been traditionally outlined in the literature as outlets set up by diaspora groups, targeting a diasporic audience and providing a specific type of content focusing on persevering culture and creating a community away from the homeland (Georgiou, 2007; Karim, 2003; Ogunyemi, 2017). Echchaibi (2002) argues that diaspora media have an instrumental role in redefining the identity and challenging the boundaries of a diasporic community. Nevertheless, there is a distinct category within diaspora media outlined in the literature as exilic or oppositional media (Cook, 2016; Balasundaram, 2019; Burrows, 2000). The main attribute of exile media is that it is set up and run by nationals based abroad and aims to provide content typically censored due to limits on freedom of expression in the homeland (Badran & Smets, 2021). Exile media is seen as a form of transnational activism by its practitioners where the lines between the personal and the professional are brought into question as their work is at the intersection of media and political engagement (Shumow, 2014; Sariaslan, 2020; Skjerdal, 2010). Al-Ghazzi's (2021) work most recently challenged the centrality of this normative view in the study of diasporic journalistic practices and modes of representation, acknowledging the coalescence between the personal and the professional in the journalistic work of exiled media practitioners. This, in turn, opens up the space to recognise journalistic practices that break the mould of conventionality in a highly emotive, subjective/political context (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). Thus, the political engagement of this type of media with issues in the homeland denotes exilic media within the broader category of diasporic media (Shumow, 2014). However, I elect to refer to the media under study as diaspora media rather than oppositional or exilic media (Badran, 2020) as the conceptual starting point of this research problematises the normative labelling of these outlets as political or oppositional primarily based on their conditions of emergence against a moment of upheaval. Instead, this research provides an opportunity to better understand the identity of the digital radios under study by presenting a critical qualitative reading of their texts and discourses.

Epistemological Challenges to Studying Diaspora Media

Myria Georgiou (2007) outlines three main epistemological challenges to studying diasporic media and audiences. The **first** challenge is revisiting the analytical categories used to study media and

diaspora. More specifically, she problematises the centrality of the ‘nation-state’ in the study of diasporic representation and participation. She argues that much of the research on transnational media and audiences has reproduced the centrality of the nation-state as a key category for analysis, overshadowing the relevance of transnational experiences. Alternatively, she proposes the notion of cosmopolitanism that “emphasises the imagined and real interconnection between places and people through communications and transportation systems” (Georgiou, 2007, p.12) in lieu of the classic understandings of nationalism based on geography and borders. This research is the first in this context to investigate the diasporic condition of the emerging Syrian media scene and the effect of disjunctured localities on the practice of diasporic journalism. Many exilic media outlets established outside Syria started as a de facto alternative to a state-controlled national media scene as they the prerogatives of local media: field offices inside of Syria, broadcasting targeting Syrians at home or in the diaspora (Tatomir et al., 2020). The central premise of this defacto local media status based temporarily in exile was reliant on the imminent fall of the Syrian regime, which would allow these outlets to return to the country and carry on their work at home (Ibid). As the regime gradually regained its power, these outlets faced an existential threat as their access to the national audience was virtually cut off due to practical challenges, including war-struck internet infrastructure in Syria (Overton and Dathan, 2019) and state digital surveillance (Al Khatib & Xynou, 2015). Thus, questions of access to the local community (Rodríguez, 2011), the ability to engineer a spatial transformation (Lefebvre, 1990) and sustainability amid contrasting registers of realities (Touraine, 2001) are all addressed in the analysis chapters. The **second** conceptual challenge outlined by Georgiou (2007) focuses on the assumed divide between media production, text (representation) and consumption as separate categories in the study of diasporic studies. The Syrian diasporic media scene presents a pertinent case on the amalgamation between these categories, which only complicates the study of the dynamics of discourse production independently from the agential power of the interlocutors. Therefore, chapter 5 focuses on exploring how the multiple subjectivities of the diasporic journalists shape the mediation of the collective Syrianness in the diasporic radios. Whereas in chapter 6, I argue that the crux of the social and professional roles assumed by the diasporic journalists is rooted in broader structures of the political economy of the Syrian diasporic media field. Finally, the **third** challenge that Georgiou (2007) outlines is a methodological one, whereby traditional methods of ethnographic enquiry in studying diaspora media place less emphasis on the power of dominant structures. This,

in turn, undermines our understanding of the power of these broader contexts on the everyday life practices of the diasporas under study (Georgiou, 2007). I address this research gap in the study of diaspora media by conceptualising the Syrian diasporic media as a field and site for the interplay between cultural, economic and social forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a topography of the Syrian mediascape through the lens of Cammaerts' (2012) mediation opportunity structure. The outline contextualises the practices of the diasporic radios within the broader Syrian mediascape with its different actors and spatio-temporal interdependencies (Tilly, 2008). I argue that the discursive frames used to categorise the practices of the emerging Syrian media in the diaspora need a critical revision in light of the new temporality dawning on the current wave of contention. Therefore, this research attempts to analyse the role of the diasporic media in a post-revolutionary context amid transformative geopolitical circumstances that contrast its conditions of emergence. In the same vein, I critically examine the universality of the discursive frames such as "oppositional" or "advocacy" journalism (Badran, 2020; Arafat, 2021), denoting the media practices within these diasporic outlets in light of the fragmentation of the political commonality that initially propelled them. From a spatial perspective, the exilic condition of the Syrian media was thought to be only temporary pending the regime's removal (Tatomir et al., 2020); however, the restitution of Al-Assad's power has indefinitely affixed this diasporic condition to the emerging media. In mapping the topography of the mediascape, I also examine the power relations between the emerging media actors and the existing ones in the Syrian communicative environment, namely, the state-controlled media in Syria and the global mainstream media. First, I examine the regime's control over the mass media in Syria through a repertoire of symbolic domination (propaganda and censorship) and its potential impact on emerging media. The literature shows that the emerging media actors have managed to push against the regime's symbolic domination in terms of ownership, access to information and audience engagement. Conversely, I also argue that the relationship dynamics between the emerging Syrian media actors and the global mainstream media have created an information fetishism in the Syrian communicative environment fueled by the rising demand for news of the unfolding violence amid the regime's media blackout and disinformation. Finally, I outline the literature, highlighting several conceptual challenges in the study of diaspora media and the ways

in which I plan to address these challenges through the theoretical framework (chapter 2) and the methodology (chapter 3).

Chapter II- Theoretical Framework

Introduction

On the sidelines of the conflict in Syria, a community of diasporic activists and journalists who fled the conflict have established hundreds of media outlets across the political spectrum (Issa, 2016). Emerging Syrian media in the diaspora has become an avenue for civic engagement and challenging the regime's control over the means of symbolic reproduction (Dollet, 2015). In less than a decade, it has also become a vital part of the information environment and constitutive of the social/political movement itself (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Wall & el Zahed, 2014; Badran, 2021). Hence, the case for studying the Syrian diasporic media as a discursive site for social construction. This chapter has three main objectives: to position the scholarly debates about the theoretical notions of inquiry, elucidate the rationale for the conceptual choices, and provide a point of departure for the empirical component and the data analysis process. In this theoretical outline, I elaborate on the conceptual choices I made to explore the discursive practice of the Syrian diasporic media. The theories and concepts in this outline reflect this research's approach to media analysis combining textual analysis with the political economy of production. Therefore, I focus on the dynamics of discourse production, foregrounding the role of the diasporic interlocutors. These choices also reflect the overlap between the identities of the media outlets under study that ascribe to the categories of diasporic (Georgiou, 2007) and contentious media (Mattoni & Treré, 2014). To encompass this overlap on a theoretical level, I choose self-mediation (Chouliaraki, 2010; Cammaerts, 2012; 2015) as a conceptual terrain to study the discursive practices of the Syrian diasporic media. Self-mediation encompasses self-representational discourses (Thumim, 2009), the site of articulation of the collective diasporic identity. At the intersection of the study of diasporic and contentious media lie questions of collective identity; thus, I explore the central role of imagination (Anderson, 1984; Tsagarousianou, 2017) in the circulation of cultural repertoires (Hall, 1984) and the reproduction of collective identity on a translocal level. Then, I present an outline with a constructionist Marxist view of identity encompassing notions of ideology (Althusser, 1971; Žižek, 1994) and fetishism (Billig, 1999). I also outline the role of the diasporic interlocutors as identity brokers shaping the dynamics of discourse production. Therefore, I examine the ways in which they articulate their subjectivity (Butler, 2003) in self-

representational practices and how it shapes processes of recognition (Ricoeur, 2005; 2006; Stevenson, 2007). I also appropriate Bourdieu's work to study the individual/collective transformations in the discourse and the structures they are embedded in (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007). I use Bourdieu's notion of habitus to record the transformations in the construction of the self on the individual/collective level (1984). Meanwhile, I address this research's approach to studying the political economy of media production by extending Bourdieu's (1984) field theory to the study of the Syrian diasporic media as a field, encompassing different forms of capital, economic, cultural and social.

(Self)mediation

Different strands of scholarship (Glasgow University Media Group, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the Westminster School) have explored the different ways in which media discourses shape the production and transformation of social representations (Carvalho, 2008). These efforts evolved to match the academic inquiry seeking to understand "the broader consequences of media and communications for everyday life and across social space, yet were aware of the acute methodological difficulties of isolating and identifying such effects within the complex weave of contemporary experience" (Couldry & Hepp, 2013, p. 192). The literature on mediation has developed to provide a double articulation of the concept (Silverstone, 1994), a technological and ideological one (Livingstone, 2007, building on the work of Gramsci, 1972). Cammaerts (2012) explains the usefulness of such double articulation as it "enables us to consider media and the production of content in conjunction with technology as well as communication strategies and media practices of citizens and activists. In doing so, mediation processes challenge and complicate the analytical distinctions between public/private and producer/user by introducing processes of self-mediation and co-production" (p. 119). Mediation has been previously used to conceptualise the relationship between activism, media and communications in the context of contention (Martín-Barbero, 1993; Cammaerts, 2012; 2015). In later work, Cammaerts (2015) argues that self-mediation in contention is not "merely the result of a lack of mainstream media resonance, but is on the contrary as a set of self-mediation practices constitutive of social movements". Building on the double articulation of mediation (Livingstone, 2007), Cammaerts (2015) refers to the double articulation of self-mediation: the first is inward-looking (Rucht, 2004), where media is constitutive of building a collective identity or what Foucault (1997) calls "the

cultivation of the self” (p. 234); the other is “directed outwardly at a variety of publics” (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 456). The second articulation of self-mediation alludes to the media’s interaction with other fields in the social space, which will be elaborated on later in this chapter. In this research, I expand the use of self-mediation as a theoretical terrain within which I choose to conceptualise the practices of the Syrian diasporic media under study. Discourse and representations are the building blocks of this theoretical field I will explore in the coming sections. Building on the conceptual challenges to studying diasporic media outlined in chapter 1, mediation allows us to link different elements by studying the texts and the self-representational practices of the Syrian diasporic journalists and the networks of power they are embedded in.

Mediation Opportunity Structure

Cammaerts’s (2012) conception of the mediation opportunity structure allows us to understand the potentials and restrictions mediation provides for a given political/social movement. He argues that “media and communication practices that constitute protest and resistance in their own right... are not merely relevant to the symbolic and discursive realms in which social movements operate, but that they are also instrumental and material to realising their immediate goals” (p. 118). Applying Cammaerts’ (2012) mediation opportunity structure to the Syrian context, I chose self-mediation as a discursive frame to describe the emergence of the diasporic media actors in the information environment in an extension to what Cammaerts (2015) calls “movement media”. While Syrian media activists and citizen journalists engaged with existing media actors, especially mainstream global media (Wall & el Zahed, 2014; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013); self-mediation provided an opportunity to divest from the overreliance on “mainstream media to reinforce and disseminate movement frames to the public at large” (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 455). In theory, self-mediation through movement media provided Syrian media activists and citizen journalists a degree of agency to directly connect with a national audience for a chance to increase support for the political/social movement (Cammaerts, 2012; 2015). New forms of self-mediation through digital means imply new ways of sociality and public connection (Thumim, 2009) to reconfigure what Arendt (1958, 1990) calls “space of appearance” (a symbolic deliberative space of “speech and action”). Nevertheless, Chouliaraki (2010) contends that self-mediation’s path to creating democratisation in the “hierarchy of systems of expression” (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) is not always productive. She explains that while self-mediation validates what is considered

peripheral forms of civic engagement (Bennett & Entman, 2001); “it restricts the scope of public action, insofar as it does not directly engage with traditional modes of civic action, such as voting” (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 229). This empirical component of this research will outline the constraints of self-mediation in an “ultra-saturated media and communication environment” (Cammaerts, 2012, p. 119), where the Syrian information environment is characterised by over-information (De Angelis, 2011; Virilio, 2001).

Chouliaraki (2010) argues that the study of the processes cannot be achieved without closely examining the specificity of its technological contexts of emergence and the particularity of its discursive articulations embedded in political and economic conditions. She contends that “the discursive constitution of public selves reflects the ethico-political tensions that historically define the social and cultural contexts of self-mediation in the first place” (2010, p. 230). This outline indicates two aspects of self-mediation: a social one as a performative system of significations of the self and a technomaterial where these practices are embedded in (and reproduce) networks of power (Chouliaraki, 2017). A significant body of work has examined the mediated reproduction of the “self” post-2011 in the Syrian context (Chouliaraki, 2017; Literat, 2017; Risam, 2018; De Leeuw & Rydin, 2007; Godin & Doná, 2016). Nonetheless, the scholarship thus far has addressed this process of self-mediation as ethico-political artefacts arising from an engagement between identity narratives and the political realities of violence and displacement. Herein lies the contribution of this research as it presents an alternative reading to practices of self-mediation as techno-economic artefacts with a particular focus on the “affordances of technologies of self-mediation” (Cammaerts, 2015), an aspect usually overlooked in the study of self-mediation.

Discursive Practices of Self-Mediation as Spaces of Power

Chouliaraki (2010) argues that “self-mediation is a textual process par excellence... it inevitably employs configurations of semiotic systems, from language to image (still or moving) to sound, in new technologised or hypermediated textualities... textualities do not simply represent pre-existing selves, individual or collective, but constitute such selves in the very process of representing them” (p. 230). Evidently, I examine the discursive practice as a space of power as Foucault (1972) proclaims that discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). For that, I define the parameters of the discourse as a form of symbolic power reproduced

through text and talk that has the potential to construct alternative social realities (Bourdieu, 1991). Different discourse theories have placed a central emphasis on the role of language and discourses in the construction of identities (Bamberg et al., 2011). In Fairclough's (1995) quest to provide a more critical approach to the study of linguistics, he explains that language is a social practice that articulates a dialectical relationship between discourse and various social structures (political, social, and economic). Therefore, "discourse is shaped by structures, but also contributes to shaping and reshaping them. Discourses are integral to cumulatively build narratives through language and other social semiotic vehicles to make them so banal and ubiquitous (Purvis & Hunt, 1993; Van Dijk, 2006). The (Western) Marxist tradition aims to uncover the workings of power that social and political discourses tend to conceal or naturalise by reproducing the ideologies embedded in their consenting function (Shapiro, 1992). Foucault's (1971) work has paid particular attention to the conditions of discourse production that he believed largely controlled the dynamics of meaning-making. Stephen Gill (1995) describes discourse as "a set of ideas and practices with particular conditions of existence, which are more or less institutionalised, but which may only be partially understood by those that they encompass" (p. 401). Similarly, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) view discourse as an ideological instrument that shapes and reflects society and culture by reproducing and perpetuating power relations and social hierarchies, all while remaining mundane and banal even to the people who use it (Breeze, 2011). Torfing (2005, p. 23) explains the power of the ideological articulation of identity in the discourse.

Discourse theory puts power and power struggles at the top of the agenda... power is conceived in terms of the political acts of inclusion and exclusion that shape social meanings and identities and conditions of construction of antagonisms and political frontiers. The construction of discourse always involves both inclusion and exclusion of identity and this means that discourse and power are linked with each other.

This research explores the discourses of the Syrian diasporic media as artefacts of exogenous and endogenous powers (Benson, 2006). Namely, I examine the power of social transformation in the reconfiguration of representational practices, the agential power of the interlocutors in articulating

the collective self in the discourse and finally, the broader power of the political economy that controls the communicative environment. In chapter 3, I supplement this theoretical inquiry into the role of power with a corresponding methodology, Critical Discourse Analysis, centred on unmasking the role of power in discourse production. The following section explores the ideological approach to identity articulation in the discourse from a Marxist perspective.

Ideology, Identity and Commodification - A Marxist Perspective

In this section, I conceptualise the triangulation of identity, ideology and commodification from a Marxist standpoint; to understand how identity is fetishised as an ideological commodity in an increasingly globalised world. Additionally, I explore the limitations of such a theoretical path and ways to mitigate them. First, I employ Karl Marx's theorisation of ideology to analyse the articulations of identities. Marx's interpretative frame, largely underutilised in studying the dynamics of identity formation, foregrounds the notion of ideology and fetishism as praxes to study identity formation for a diasporic group (Hagge, 2005).

Ideological Articulation of Identity

Ideology, as long viewed in the Western Marxist tradition [Gramsci (1971), Althusser (1971) and the Frankfurt school], is the embodiment of the hierarchical system of domination. Marx and Engels (1970) originally argued that ideologies are socially constructed constellations of false consciousness, defined by the conditions where they emerged (Sloterdijk, 1987). Nevertheless, the main point of their argument is not merely a constructionist one about the social origins of truth (Billig, 1999), but rather, their concern was the unmasking of the social construction of untruths. Antonio Gramsci (1972) explains in the *Prison Notebooks* that ideologies serve as strategic tools controlled by dominant groups in society to shape individuals' and subordinated groups' perceptions of the world to eventually dictate their actions within the processes of social struggle (Hall, 1988). Marx's view of ideology in social processes also embodies "relations of domination and subjugation" (Shapiro, 1992, p. 1). Fredric Jameson (1997) later argues that this conception of ideology underwent some considerable revisions during the era of the cold war to accommodate major socio-economic events as well as the emergence of Freud's psychoanalytic theory that highlighted the role of the unconscious mind, all of which has shaped the articulation of social ideology. The contemporary, poststructuralist approaches to ideology (Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek)

turn to language to analyse different aspects of dialogic practices and subjectivity (Norval, 2013). Nonetheless, Žižek (1994) criticised Marx's and Engels' initial idea that unmasking the truth is only through the subtraction of the ideology's untruth, "the starting point of the critique of ideology has to be a full acknowledgement of the fact that it is easily possible to lie in the guise of truth" (p. 34). Van Dijk (2006) articulates the role of ideology in the discursive articulation of identity, "ideologies consist of social representations that define the social identity of a group, that is, its shared beliefs about its fundamental conditions and ways of existence and reproduction" (p. 116). Hence, I define ideologies in this research as constructed beliefs governed by a dominant social order and diffused through the discursive practice to guide the social construction of identities (Lash, 2002).

Fetishism

In Marx's critique of capitalism, he contends that the value of a commodity is derived from the labour and the social relations (order) which have produced it (Billig, 1999). The value of the commodity is understood in comparison to other commodities, namely money, to deliberately mask the expended labour involved in the dynamics of production. Marx turns to "fetishism", evoking the irrational (Billig, 1999) to explain the misrecognition of the social relations of labour (Davidson, 2007). In Marx's words, fetishisation signifies that "the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race" (1976, p. 165). Billig (1999) contends that this transforms the perception of the social relations between people involved in the production-consumption process into economic relations among objects (commodity/money). This way, commodity fetishism masks the fact that capitalism produces a society divided into capitalists (consumers) and workers (ibid). Nonetheless, Billig (1999) argues that Marx's analysis of fetishised commodities is limited as it overlooks the extent to which commodities and the social order attached to them "are not merely socially produced but also consumed" (p. 326). The overlapping boundaries between producers/consumers add a layer of complexity to the work of researchers to investigate the role of the workers as agents in the reproduction of the cycle of commodity fetishism. Similarly, Janet Sturgeon (2012) presents yet another credible critique of Marx's claim that by removing the veil of fetishism, the truth about the social relations of production would "plainly" (Marx, 1977, p. 169) emerge. Various scholars also support that

critique, pointing out that unveiling the illusion would not naturally reveal the plain truth but would bring forth layers of complex narratives, texts or representations (Taussig, 1980, p. 9; Mitchell, 1992; Castree, 2001). Hence, this research's empirical component aims to discern the discourses and ideological representations of the Syrian identity to unveil the social relations and power dynamics that shape them.

Ideological Fetishisation of Identity in the Discourse

To borrow from cultural anthropology, identity is viewed as a metaphor or a stereotyped image reflecting complex and fluid practices of social identification, representing “relations” rather than “things” (Beek, 2001; Comaroff, 1996, p. 165). However, identities do not reflect an identical image of the social relations they indicate; instead, they emulate a narrow set of those relations, and their metaphorical character is forgotten (Herzfeld, 1992). Gradually, an identity becomes detached from the individuals and collectives they signify as they take on a life of their own, coming to be seen as possessing agency in their own right (Beek, 2001). This transforms identity into a force that explains rather than what needs to be explained (Handler, 1994). Just as the fetishism of commodities creates an illusion of objectivity and commensurability of relations between things, obscuring their fundamentally social origin and character (Beek, 2001), the fetishism of identities postulates “an identity of identities” (Billig, 1995). This works by presenting some composites of a given identity as its natural, familiar and essential properties, voiding it from complex historical, political and social facets that have fundamentally shaped such identity (ibid). To that end, Taussig (1980) argues that this “familiarity which persuades us that our cultural form is not historical, not social, not human, but natural—thing-like and physical” (p. 3). Beek (2001) further argues that the rise of identity fetishism is a product of modernity, which in turn, is intrinsically connected to capitalism and the international state system.

Transnational Imagination: Representation of the Diasporic Identity

To study the symbolic circulation of cultures and ideas on a transnational scale, the theoretical starting point of this section emulates Tsagarousianou's (2017) appropriation of Anderson's (1983) notion to conceptualise diasporas as “imagined communities”. Anderson's titular idea elucidates the process whereby members of the same nation who might not have previously come in contact

with one another ascribe to a shared cultural repertoire of symbols and signs, which eventually contributes to the rise of a collective sense of nationalism. In essence, imagination is central to the circulation of ideological and cultural repertoires within the members of a community (Georgiou, 2006), sustaining and re-creating a shared commonality among its members. Scaling the notion of imagined communities on a transnational level postulates a transnational imagination where diasporic cultural practices constitute “ways of “imagination,” of “institution” of spaces that often extend beyond the boundaries of place, and of senses of belonging that straddle the local v global divide and, in the process, redefine locality and the global.” (Fazal & Tsagarousianou, 2002, p. 16). Tsagarousianou (2017) argues that not all displaced groups can be uncritically categorised as diasporas (Mandaville, 2001) “because they share a common ethnic ancestry and identity. It is their readiness and willingness to engage themselves with the building of a transnational imagination and connections that constitutes the ‘threshold’ from ethnic to diasporic identification” (p. 59). Hall (1989) also argues that this “imaginative re-discovery” or “imaginative re-unification” empowers social/political movements by drawing up on commonalities from a shared history (p. 70). The notions of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are helpful in this context to describe how this transnational imagination enables the circulation of cultural repertoires between different localities (Appadurai, 1991; Shapiro & Alker, 1996; Sassen, 1996). Deterritorialisation describes the process of the symbolic movement of identities, meanings and representations beyond the spatial limitation of borders (Kaplan, 1987). It is seen as a proliferation of translocalised cultural experiences through mediatisation, migration and commodification in the advent of global modernity (Hernández, 2002; 2006). Giddens (1984) compares this deterritorialisation to the “weighing of anchors” in relation to social relations as they transcend the realm of territorial borders; in his own words: “the very tissue of the spatial experience alters, conjoining proximity and distance in ways that have few close parallels in prior ages” (p. 140). While deterritorialisation is inserted in the dialectic character of globalisation, it does not suggest that cultural productions are primordial in nature within national borders isolated from exogenous influences (Hernández, 2006). Mediation is essential for the process of deterritorialisation as it catalyses the symbolic reproduction of identities and cultures in an intensely globalised context (Hernández, 2006). Furthermore, Arjun Appadurai (1991) (who wrote extensively on this notion) argues that deterritorialisation does not discount local cultural interactions but rather creates new markets for cultural productions that thrive on the need of the deterritorialised population for

contact with its homeland. This, in theory, permits diaspora groups to attain a translocal outreach for the circulation of their ideas and symbolic productions beyond the confinement of their homeland's national borders (Heyman & Campbell, 2009). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986) argue that deterritorialisation enables imagination "to express another potential community, to force the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" (p. 17). In contrast, the recalibration of the travelling cultural repertoires across spatial realms is known as reterritorialisation. García Canclini (1990) defines reterritorialisation as "certain relative, partial territorial relocation of old and new symbolic productions" (p. 288). The Marxist view of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation is that they constitute both sides of the same coin of the cultural global cultural economy and that their succession is an essential trait of the capitalist society (Robertson, 1992). Therefore, the dynamics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of cultural repertoires between different localities are sustained by a transnational imagination and embedded in a global cultural economy.

Mediated Production of Translocality

The previous debate on the circulation of cultural repertoires paves the way to exploring corresponding notions of geography/spatiality, the realm in which these symbols travel. Therborn (2000) argues that "discourses of globalisation mean a spatialisation of the social" (p. 154); having tackled the social perspective on the circulation of cultural repertoires in the previous section, I turn to understand the spatial aspect. First, I examine the development of the scholarship's view of the notion of locality in an increasingly globalised world (Hodgson, 1974; Abu-Lughod, 1989; Braudel, 1981, 1984; Curtin, 1984; Wallerstein, 1974; Wolf, 1982). Historically, the main drivers of cultural interactions between different localities have been trade movement, warfare/colonialism and diffusion of world religions (Therborn, 2000); hence, merchants, missionaries and soldiers/settlers were seen as agents of cultural circulation (Appadurai, 1991). Then, Anderson (1983) argues that the rise of 'print capitalism' has paved the way for large-scale production and dissemination of constructed primordialism. With the advent of globalisation and the proliferation of means of symbolic reproduction, cultural transactions between different social groups have increased exponentially between distant localities. Appadurai (1991) asks, "what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalised, deterritorialised world?" (p. 196). In global communications, the local has been studied almost exclusively in relation to the global and

is rarely analysed as a dynamic site for meaning-making (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008). Case in point, Marshall McLuhan (1989) views the world as a global village where different cultural nodes are connected in one extended central nervous system. Nevertheless, Appadurai (1991) argues that the ‘global village’ theory overestimates the communitarian implications of the new communicative order. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer a counterview to McLuhan’s theory by proposing a rhizomic/schizophrenic approach to the representation of the systems of knowledge, where cultural products are largely characterised by hybridisation. Hence, it is useful to envision localities in this context beyond the traditional sense of self-contained areas with demarcated borders (Tsagarousianou, 2016) and more as articulated dynamics in networks of social relations and understandings (Massey, 1994). So far, the theories reviewed in this section: imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), and global village (McLuhan, 1989), all have in common the idea of the nation-state at the heart of the centre-to-periphery understanding of the circulation of cultural repertoire. In the advent of such a “globalised, deterritorialised world”, however, as Appadurai (1991, p. 196) ponders, the idea of nation-states is increasingly challenged as the centre of cultural circulation. In fact, Alain Touraine (2001) contends, “we are witnessing the end of the close correspondence between all the registers of collective life – the economic, the social, the political and the cultural – that were once unified within the framework of the nation (p. 103). Therefore, there was a need to conceptualise a new theoretical framework that recalibrates the focus on the interconnectedness between different locales beyond the confinement of national borders (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, translocality emerged to remedy the shortcoming of transnationalism (Englert, 2018), whose ‘primary concern still rests on the transgression of and exchange beyond national borders’ (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 3). The literature offers different approaches to translocality, Galtung’s (1971) centre-periphery, where the global is at the heart of the dynamics between different locales and Geertz’s (1973) local-to-local networked model with a particular focus on periphery-to-periphery interaction (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008). The latter offers a “counterhegemonic inclusion of local-to-local, South-to-South relations”, which is more pertinent for the context of this research “particularly in terms of helping to craft a more rigorous, deliberate, and productive dialogue between the details of local culture and the political economy of commercial communication structures, thus facilitating a more integrated approach to media products, media audiences, and media institutions” (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008, p. 344). This last remark situates the study of the mediated production of translocality into a broader political

economy structure that will be revisited as part of this theoretical framework using Bourdieu's field theory to understand how different forms of capital shape the dynamics of discourse production in Syrian diasporic media. The geopolitical situation in Syria following the 2011 uprisings has resulted in a non-unitary state context where different regions in the country were under the political control of different actors (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Hence, translocalism is more pertinent than transnationalism in studying the circulation of ideas and symbols across different localities in the Syrian context that extends beyond the national borders.

Translocal Reproduction of the collective identity

In this section, I build on the previous understanding of the role of imagination in the discursive circulation of cultural repertoires on a translocal level. Contemporary research on displacement and forced migration have explored changes in the uprooted groups' collective identity (Anthias, 2002). The notion of cultural identity employed by Stuart Hall (1989) is an important example from the literature elucidating how the 'collective' is being imagined at the centre of the discursive articulations of the diasporic identity. Hall's (1989) work *Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation* foregrounds the notion of a collective cultural identity articulated in the mediated productions of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. He describes this collective identity as a process of circulating symbolic repertoires and shared references, deep-rooted and shaped by the historical background of a given displaced group, "happening within, not outside representation" (1989, p. 68). Nonetheless, he outlines the material effects of these representations of collectiveness on the dynamics of community formation for the displaced group in exile beyond the symbolic realm. Hall argues that this cultural identity is based on a historical commonality (a shared past) that provides a shared framework of reference despite the divisions of the present. Nonetheless, Appadurai (1991) problematises the notion of a communal past as a departure point of the shared collective identity: "the past is now not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory. It has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios, a kind of temporal central casting, to which recourse can be had as appropriate" (p. 4). So, how does the scholarship address the different identity markers in the mediation of the collective? Anderson (1983) argues that the nation is imagined as a "deep horizontal comradeship" (p. 16) despite prevailing social inequalities and exploitation. Meanwhile, Hall (1989) describes a different but related view of this cultural identity that is marked by the differences as much as it is by the commonalities. Before the 2011 uprisings,

the Syrian regime tightly controlled the articulations of the collective identity in the discursive practice as an exercise of cultural power and to reproduce symbolic/political domination (Wedeen, 1999). Nevertheless, the uprisings are thought to have imprinted a new identity on Syrian people and cities to replace the regime's forced iterations of shared collectiveness (Saleh, 2017). However, these new forms of collectiveness stood in contrast with an increasing social/political polarisation (De Angelis, 2011) and vast waves of displacement. Consequently, the articulations of the collective Syrianness in the discourse are challenged by the contrasting "registers of collective life" (Touraine, 2001, p. 103) forced by the conditions of war and displacement in Syria and the diaspora, respectively. To use Hall's (1989) words, this research aims to answer the question of whether the Syrian diasporic media is able to "impose an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation"? (p. 70). In conclusion, I have highlighted the ways in which cultural repertoires travel, transcending spatial and temporal dimensions to galvanise and sustain an imagined community for displaced groups in exile. Nonetheless, the positioning of these cultural repertoires does not happen in isolation from the dynamics of dominant powers, including the workings of the global cultural economy and the dominant regimes of representations. Consequently, I will capitalise on this understanding of imagination as a key pillar in the articulation of the collective identity and its transnational circulation. This theoretical outline highlights the role of transnational imagination as a key component of the agential power (Appadurai, 1996) of the subjects involved in the processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. This, in turn, will help me contextualise the circulation of a translocal cultural repertoire in the discursive practice of Syrian diasporic radios. In displacement, the position of enunciation determines the agential power in shaping the mediation of the collective identity. Therefore, the next section will address how the interlocutors' subjectivity is articulated and negotiated in the discourse on collective identity.

Examining the Positions of Enunciation: Diasporic Interlocutors as Collective Identity Brokers

In the previous section, I outlined the role of imagination in the circulation of cultural repertoires across different localities, galvanising a collective identity by articulating shared commonalities. This imagination is an exercise of agency (Appadurai, 1991) as the representations of the collective identity are positioned by different powers that shape the communicative environment. Based on

the previously outlined constructionist approach to identity (Bamberg et al., 2011) that centres on the role of power, the following outline aims to unmask the different powers shaping the dynamics of production of the mediated representations of the collective identity. First, I address the agential power of the interlocutors in shaping the dynamics of discourse production. In his essay “Exodus”, Anderson (1994) emphasises the role of the “narrator”, who controls the nature and the flow of symbolic elements about the homeland. The conception outlined above by Hall (1989) offers a view of the collective cultural identity beyond being simply a fixed point of reference for a displaced group; rather, it is positioned through representations, with integral politics to such positioning. Hall (1989) engages with the work of Foucault to highlight the role of power in regimes of representation. In this case, he highlights an agential power (among others) of the interlocutors to shape the mediation of the collective identity. This process of articulation engages the interlocutors’ own beliefs, values and practices, “which often has the effect of empowering certain ways of seeing, being, and acting while disempowering or constraining others.” (Lawson, 2011, p. 43). In turn, this falls in line with the Marxist approach to identity introduced earlier in this chapter, which recognises the importance of power and the significance of human agency in communicative practices (Hardt, 1999). Nevertheless, this agential power is, in turn, embedded in broader structures in the social field where the media operates. Hardt (1999) operationalises his decentralised standpoint to studying communicative practices by viewing journalists as “news workers...[acting as] reified objects in the discourse of commerce and industry and identifying the workplace as a site of economic interests focused on issues of production and profitability rather than public service or social significance” (p. 182). He argues that placing journalists’ work within wider power structures helps us better articulate their position in a hierarchy of discourses and unmask the boundaries of their work. Thus, this critical view of the role of media in social and political construction requires probing the role of the interlocutors as agents of power in the dynamics of discourse production. I use Bourdieu’s field theory (1984) to understand the dialectical relationship between the interlocutors’ power and the broader structures they are embedded in. For this research, I understand the role of the interlocutors in diasporic media to be crucial in articulating and reframing the identity of the displaced group through a) establishing the terms of public discussion, b) retelling the past and c) representing the homeland to a wider (global) audience (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Wall and el Zahed, 2014; Matar, 2015). In chapter 3, I also operationalise the role of language in the discursive strategies of identity articulation by

integrating it into the analytical framework. While discursive approaches to identity analysis might seem at a disadvantage as they do not always result in generalisable results from an anthropological perspective, they offer a nuanced overview of the different powers and the broader structures of the communicative environment where they are shaped (Bamberg et al., 2011). This constructionist framework will explore how the identity (-ies) *a*) is articulated in discourse, *b*) negotiated within wider social/political contexts and *c*) is emerging in contrast to multiple subjectivities and positionalities. In the next section, I highlight the centrality of imagination as an essential component in the formation of identity in the discourse through the circulation of cultural repertoires on a translocal level.

In Al-Assad's Syria, means of symbolic production are tightly controlled by the State and media outlets serve as mouthpieces, galvanising the regime's interests and boosting the ruler's "personality cult" (Wedeen, 1999). Thus, the uprisings have interrupted the regime's domination over the avenues of public expression, and emerging media actors provided alternative narratives to the regime's propaganda. The emerging Syrian media scene that thrived in the years following the 2011 uprisings was largely driven by media activists and citizen journalists who had little to no formal journalistic training but had access to mobile phones that allowed them to relay an alternative narrative of what was happening in Syria and challenge the regime's enforced media blackout (Salama, 2012; De Angelis, 2011, Wall and el Zahed, 2014). These media actors ushering in a new Syrian cultural temporality (Sabry, 2015) also act as articulators of a past that remained largely in the shadows due to the state's monopoly over the public narrative (Pearlman, 2016). Thus, I account for the agential power of storytelling and the positionality of the interlocutors in my analysis of the dynamics of discourse production in the diasporic media. Nevertheless, this position of enunciation is complicated by a coalescence between the social and professional roles assumed by the Syrian diasporic journalists in the outlets under study. While the study of the multiple subjectivities of the Syrian journalists has recently gained traction (Al-Ghazzi, 2021; Arafat, 2021; Badran, 2021), this research contributes to this emerging body of work by also focusing on how these positionalities shape the mediation of the collective Syrianness.

Subjectivity, Recognition and Habitus in the Discursive Practice

To study the practices of self-mediation, it is essential to lay a theoretical foundation to constructing the “self” in the discourse. In this section, I will account for the different aspects of this construction of the self in the discourse, namely: a) agency, b) self-differentiation and c) positioning oneself against the backdrop of a certain spatio-temporal continuity (Bamberg et al., 2011). Thus, I employ Judith Butler’s (2003) work to examine subjectivity in a post-subjective world and Paul Ricoeur’s (2005; 2006) discursive approach to recognition. Then, I employ Bourdieu’s notion of habitus as a lens to understand the changes in the interlocutors’ dispositions that is secondary to a spatio-temporal disjuncture in a highly emotive context.

Examining Subjectivity in a Post-Subjective World

The theoretical foundation of self-representation has its roots in the philosophical tradition embodied by Judith Butler’s work (2003), *Giving an Account to Oneself*. The work of Butler helps us understand the dynamics of recognition in the processes of identity construction. At the heart of their work lies the question, “does the postulation of a subject who is not self-grounding, that is, whose conditions of emergence can never fully be accounted for, undermine the possibility of responsibility and, in particular, of giving an account of oneself?” (Butler, 2003, p. 19). Butler’s account at hand engages directly with the nuances of human realities trying to situate the responsibility of representation in a post-subjective world. Their main hypotheses on accounts of the “post-subjective” world are that the *subject* is both an effect of a) a discourse [addressivity] b) and of differential relation to others [dependency]. They argue that subjectivity is constructed and reproduced within the discourse and in entanglement with differential power relations to others [dependency], or what they call “fundamental sociality” (p. 33). In the centre of these differential power relations to others lies the concept of *recognition*, the case for which was initially established by Hagel and further developed by Butler (2003). Effectively, the concept of recognition is a fundamental part of the process of representation: The idea of recognising oneself and being recognised (Melucci, 1996; Tilly, 2008). Consequently, the way the subject is narrated shapes how it is imagined and reflects on the nature of the interlocutor (Bonini Baldini, 2019). Hence, the represented accounts of oneself are not mere reflections of the subject but rather a constructed discursive narrative [addressivity] that may or may not accurately describe the

conditions of the subject's emergence (Hall, 1989). In other words, "an account of the self always aims at and is dependent on the addressee" (Bonini Baldini, 2019, p. 331). This paradox situates the self as a constructed narrative directed at the self and the other; therefore, the subject is not entirely present independently from a narrative directed to an addressee (Ibid).

"We all write and speak from a particular place and time", Hall (1989, p. 68) contends; thus, I understand that constructing the self in the discourse has "spatio-temporal interdependencies" (Tilly, 2008, p. 134) that need to be accounted for when designing the analytical framework of this research. Shapiro (1992) situates the understanding of the self and subjectivity into spatial terms, "what is understood about the self at a given time is a matter of local practice, where "local" partakes of temporality as well as spatiality" (p. 3). He also outlines the temporal perspective in the dynamics of the construction of the self, "a given historical period has forces at work producing interpretations and overcoming rival ones. The present is not a product of accumulated wisdom or other dynamics reaching into a distant past. It comes about as one possible emergence from interpretive agnostics. It is the arbitrary result of modernity's configuration of self-producing forces" (1992, p. 3). Perhaps the most relevant aspect of his argument is the way imagination works in this spatio-temporal continuum to "recover authenticity in the past or transcend an inadequate future" (1992, p. 4). He gives two possible ways in which this imagination works to reproduce "the self" through either imagining a harmony between the self and the order (Butler (2003) referred to this order as 'structure of address') or projecting a future with shared communicative competence. This framework of projecting/constructing subjectivity within temporal and spatial realms through imagination is pertinent to the context of this research. Hence, diasporic media is a site for articulating the self in the discourse, bridging disjunctured temporalities and localities. Nevertheless, the analysis will uncover the extent to which the 'order' (Shapiro, 1992); or 'the structure of address' (Butler, 2003) or the 'hierarchy of systems of expression' (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) shape the dynamics of the construction of the self within the discourse.

Recognition in Self-representational practices

In media representations, recognition is seen as a relevant dialogic concept (Honneth, 2014; Benhabib, 2018; Fraser, 2005; Ricoeur, 2005, 2006) to the study of narrative discourse. Ricoeur

(2005) establishes a relationship between recognition and narrative identity, “the self-designation of the speaking subject is produced in interlocutory situations where the reflexivity is combined with otherness. The speech pronounced by someone is a speech act addressed to someone else” (p. 96). The act of retelling one’s life stories has a far bigger impact beyond recalling past events, as this process has a defining effect on the dynamics of identity construction (McAdams et al., 2006). Narrative identity is a defining component in the construction of agency and self-differentiation and adds a spatio-temporal dimension to the sense of self (Bamberg et al., 2011). Therefore, the process of articulating one’s own identity into a narrative suggests that there are multiple possibilities for its discursive representation (Strawson, 2004). In John Comer’s (1995) discussion of documentary filmmaking, he asserts that representation involves choices, or what he described as strategies of representation, about what aspects of the self to represent and how to represent them. While representation is intrinsically political, this political aspect seems to manifest itself more explicitly in the work of self-representation (Perkins, 2000; Thumim, 2007). Some scholars argue that a great deal of self-reflexivity (Dronter, 2006) is involved in the self-representation of identity, or what is considered an agentive self (Hull & Katz, 2006). Chouliaraki (2010) builds on Fraser’s (1997) work to articulate a dialectic relationship between voice and recognition in the realm of self-representation, whereby “this emphasis on voice and on making oneself audible and visible further throws into relief the centrality of recognition, the collective ‘mirroring back’ of specific claims to identity in the space of appearance, as a constitutive dimension of radical or subversive forms of citizenship” (p. 229). Digital technologies have reshaped the hierarchies of voice and agency in mediated democracies (Couldry, 2008), and the emergence of citizen-led media outside the traditional mainstream media establishment has helped represent voices that were previously alienated and contributed to the development of critical citizens (Atton, 2001). Chouliaraki (2010) views voice in this context as a byproduct of the performative view of publicness, whereby speaking out “in the knowledge that you will have the ear of the community” (Stevenson, 2007, p. 256) is a “sovereign act of citizenship in itself” (p. 228). Finally, Stevenson (2007) advocates for the democratic potential of self-representational practices in fostering new forms of collective identity. Through the empirical component of this research, I aim to uncover how recognition can cultivate networked forms of collective identity in the Syrian context through the discursive practice of diasporic media.

Habitus as a catalyst/byproduct of agency in the construction of the self

In centring on the role of the interlocutors in this process of articulating the self in the discourse, we learned that subjectivity is dynamic and relational. While the work of Bourdieu allows us to study the changes in the individual as well as the structural (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007), theorising the notion of habitus for social analysis has been overshadowed by the hyper emphasis on his other work focusing on the mesolevel (Lizardo, 2004). Bourdieu (1984, 1991) articulates the notion of habitus embodied in “durable, transposable dispositions” to record individual and collective transformations in the social space (Baczko & Dorronsoro, 2021, p. 53). Sallaz and Zavisca (2007) provide a triple articulation for Bourdieu’s habitus, first as a disposition “less a set of conscious strategies and preferences than an embodied sense of the world and one’s place within it... Second, because it is internalised in individuals through early socialisation in the family or primary group, habitus is durable (although never immutable). Third, habitus is transposable, in that people carry their dispositions with them as they enter new settings” (p. 25). Bourdieu’s habitus was initially conceptualised to account for moments of upheaval and disjuncture as it encompasses “how past socialisations shaped the dispositions to act and the interpretation of situations” (Baczko & Dorronsoro, 2021, p. 202). This habitus is historically contingent on the social fields and the education formative of the identity of the social agents (Vandevoordt, 2015). The notion of habitus is a theoretical intervention bridging the underpinnings of the objectivist and subjectivist epistemologies whereby “social structures inculcate mental structures into individuals; these mental structures, in turn, reproduce or (under certain conditions) change social structures” (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007, p. 23). Consequently, this habitus acts as both a catalyst and a byproduct of agency as “the habitus is itself a generative dynamic structure that adapts and accommodates itself to another dynamic mesolevel structure composed primarily of other actors, situated practices and durable institutions (fields)” (Lizardo, 2004, p. 376). In this research, I will utilise Bourdieu’s work on the concept of habitus to understand the transformations in the agency of the diasporic interlocutors in articulating the self in the discourse. Accounting for the changes in the interlocutors’ positionality is integral to the study of diasporic journalism in the Syrian context, where social and professional roles often coalesce (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). This debate on the changing social predispositions of the interlocutors requires a closer look at the drivers of change in the discourses, which I narrow down to two main aspects: the involvement of an emotional element

in the dynamics of discourse production and the disjuncture in the spatial and temporal aspects of the communicative environment.

Affect in Discourse

The study of affect in discourse has been a contentious field where research employing critical discourse analysis methods has routinely evaded any engagement with affect or emotions as “extra-discursive” (Sedgwick, 2003; Massumi, 2002). Nonetheless, Wetherell (2013) makes an argument for the integration of the study of affect in the analysis of discourse as it yields a more nuanced understanding of “multiple modes of engagement and to understand the working of power through patterns of assemblage” (p. 349). She builds on Connolly’s (2002) work to argue that social and political events, like works of art or films, can mediate a contradicting range of feelings and senses of identification that can only be captured in the discourse through a focus on affect. It is important to note that this research focuses on a moment of liminality, a suspension in structure and embracing in-betweenness (Turner, 1967); hence the study of affect in discourse is particularly relevant to recording the transitive states. Thus, there is a case to integrate the study of the “immanent, obtuse and erratic” (Stewart, 2007, p. 1) in the discourse in addition to “the usual focus on semantic meaning and symbolic signification” (Wetherell, 2013, p. 352). Integrating the study of affect into the discourse analysis allows us to record the aftermath of social/political events as liminal moments of becoming (Massumi, 2002). These liminal events where hierarchies of systems of expression (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) are temporarily suspended, allowing previously subjugated voices a chance to configure sites of representation (Papacharissi, 2015). Therefore, self-representational discourses carry an affective aspect as “it abandons the normativity of the public sphere model, redressing its overreliance on the linguistic rationalism of its actors as they strive for consensus with a new emphasis on the affective and playful dimensions of public communication, including satire and parody, but also on the ethics of witnessing and the politics of care” (p. 229). In the study of journalism, the reliability and objectivity of diasporic (exiled) journalists are often questioned (Skjerdal, 2010) due to their proximity and emotional involvement in the context they are reporting on. Nonetheless, Omar Al-Ghazzi (2021) uses the notion of affective proximity to integrate the study of affect into the analysis of the journalistic practices of Syrian journalists covering the uprisings and the subsequent decade of violence. He explains that affective proximity is “what locals navigate to reconcile their emotional and embodied

entanglement within events in their country and community and a journalism profession that has traditionally been conceived as predicated on distance” (p. 3). Al-Ghazzi’s articulation of the study of journalism in an intrinsically subjective and emotive context paves the way for this research to explore the effect of such a relationship on the (self)mediation of collectiveness in the discursive practice of diaspora media. Based on this theoretical outline, I argue that affect is part of the interlocutors’ agential power that shapes their discursive strategies of representation, particularly in such a liminal context. Such work is particularly needed to address a gap in the existing research studying the interplay between affect and journalism in a post-revolutionary temporality and a protracted (exile) diasporic condition.

Time and Space in Discourse

Shapiro (1992) situates the power of discourses within a spatio-temporal continuum as he contends that “all discourse is spatially situated” and that the temporal practices “give shape and definitions to various historical epochs and thereby contribute to meanings of written, oral statements circulating within them” (p. 4). Nevertheless, he contends that the spatial aspect resembles a silent force difficult to draw into the discursive processes. Henri Lefebvre’s (1990) conceptualisation of space into a social product, eventually into a ‘social space’, valorises the politics of space in the politics of discourse (Shapiro, 1992). In the context of the Syrian contention, time (McAdam & Sewell, 2011) and space (Sewell, 2001) are two important praxes in studying the discourses of the contentious media that emerged out of the political uprisings in 2011. Studying the articulations of discourse in the Syrian context is characterised by a disjuncture in the spatio-temporal rhythm. The 2011 uprisings have marked a significant disruption to this spatio-temporal continuum due to vast waves of displacement and radical changes in geopolitical conditions. I borrow the notion of liminality from anthropology (Turner, 1967, building on the work of Gennep, 1960) to explore the potential the Syrian diasporic media has to reconfigure the “hierarchy of systems of expression” (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) in a context of spatio-temporal disjuncture. Liminality refers to the temporary state of transition, ambiguity and in-betweenness that follows the detachment of an individual or a group from a fixed point in the social structure (Turner, 1969). In Turner’s (1974) own words, “liminality as a phase in social life in which this confrontation between ‘activity which has no structure’ and its ‘structured results’ produces in men their highest pitch of self-consciousness” (p. 225). Revolutions and social and political movements are intrinsically liminal

(and trigger liminal states in individuals and groups), given the disruption they cause to the social and political structures (Matar & Helmi, 2020). Liminality also presents a potential for empowerment and disempowerment of marginalised actors as the temporary suspension of the structure of power offers a latitude to challenge the symbolic order that ends with the restitution of the power structure (Papacharissi, 2015). From a spatial perspective, the liminal event (the Syrian uprisings) has triggered waves of displacement that forced emerging media actors to operate from exile. There was a belief that this condition of the exile of the emerging Syrian media was temporary until the fall of Al-Assad's regime (Tatomir et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the changes in the geopolitical conditions have rendered the diasporic state (the spatial aspect) rather indefinite (the temporal aspect). While the liminal state had ended on a temporal level, the diasporic condition of the interlocutors of the new Syrian media persists even after the restitution of Al-Assad's political power. The analysis will elucidate the extent to which this diasporic condition enables the emerging actors to challenge the regime's domination in a post-revolutionary context. Relevant to this research that studies self-mediation in a liminal context, Papacharissi (2015) argues that "individuals participating in liminal forms of news storytelling engage in a variety of practices that both reproduce and forget past conventions of news production and consumption" (p. 33). Therefore, I utilise Bourdieu's (1984) previously elaborated notion of habitus to understand the afterlife of the diasporic interlocutors' (media) predispositions in their quest to configure the symbolic order. To summarise, the uprisings as a liminal event provided an opportunity for previously subjugated actors to interject into the hierarchy of systems of expression (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) through self-representational practices allowing them to redefine the parameters of the collective identity through the plurality of individual narratives/voices. In the previous sections, I have focused on the different elements of the communicative environment of the self-mediated practices: the discourse as a site for identity articulations and the agency of the interlocutors in the dynamics of discourse production. Henceforth, I turn to the study of the structure by integrating these elements into broader networks of power using Bourdieu's work to study the Syrian diasporic media as a field. This integration allows the research to also pivot to studying the political economy side of media production, informed by the textual analysis.

Field Theory and the Study of Diasporic Media

Practices of self-mediation are often embedded in and shaped by large-scale financial, political, societal and technological contexts (Chouliaraki, 2010). In Couldry's (2006) words, media, in general, is best understood "less as a readily demarcated site of analysis and more as a force field within a complex space of social practice" (p. 31). That, in turn, requires a more decentralised approach to media research to understand its role in maintaining and reproducing institutions of power in a society. Nevertheless, diasporic media practices are often studied as embedded in local disruptions and independent from broader development in media and journalism (Badran & Smets, 2021). This research takes a critical approach that places the study of diasporic self-mediated practices within dominant power structures. Hanno Hardt (1999) outlines the path for a critical communication inquiry that should be based on

theoretical constructs that propose that facts cannot be separated from the domain of values, that the relationship of meaning and language to culture is central to constituting reality, that the interpretive nature of culture and communication precludes a fixed or final truth, that the relations between representation and reality are political, that thought is mediated by historically grounded power relations, and that traditional "mass communication research" practices may be oblivious to their role in the reproduction of privilege and oppression in society. (p. 180)

Thus, I integrate two approaches to media research in this study: textual analysis and the political economy of production (Couldry & Hepp, 2013). Bourdieu (1991) foregrounds media's ability as a soft power to construct alternate realities; hence, his ideas transcended the field of cultural sociology and recently gained traction in journalism studies (Vandevoordt, 2015). Since the self-mediated practices under study in this research operate within a broader discursive frame of diasporic journalism (Badran, 2021; Badran & Smets, 2021), the theoretical framework needs to account for the structural networks of power they operate in. Earlier in this chapter, I used Bourdieu's (1984) notion of habitus to conceptualise the change in the diasporic interlocutors' dispositions and how it shapes the discourse articulation process. Here, I extend the use of Bourdieu's work to cover the "mezzo-level" encompassing the organisational level and the

professional environment (Benson, 2006) of this emerging mediascape. Field theory (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986) has been previously appropriated to the study of journalism (Benson, 2006) and alternative media (Atton, 2001). For this research, I expand the use of field theory to cover the practices of diasporic media in the Syrian context. The aim is to provide a reading of the different powers shaping the diasporic media as a field, interacting with other fields in the social space. Sallaz and Zavisca (2007) argue that “field is a mesolevel concept denoting the local social world in which actors are embedded and toward which they orient their actions” (p. 24). They also articulate a dialectic relationship between different elements of Bourdieu’s work, the previously discussed notion of habitus, field theory and the different forms of capital, noting that they depict “an airtight system in which structures produce individuals who in turn reproduce structures. Whereas Bourdieu did document a great deal of reproduction of inequality in his empirical work, he also argued that his theory can account for change” (p. 25). Of the different forms of capital that Bourdieu’s work conceived, this research focuses on the social (Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 2000), cultural (Anheier et al., 1995) and economic capital that delimit the Syrian diasporic media as a field. The primary goal of conceptualising the Syrian diasporic media as a field is to unmask the power dynamics exerted by the different forms of capital as “even relatively stable fields can be destabilised by exposing the symbolic violence supporting existing power relations— for Bourdieu; this is a central task of sociological inquiry” (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007, p. 27). The elements of field theory: economic, cultural and social forms of capital are accumulated on two different hierarchical planes: individual and institutional (Benson, 2006). However, the traditional understanding of these planes needs reconfiguration to suit the context of diaspora media, where different powers intersect (which will be addressed comprehensively in chapter 6). In tandem with employing field theory to understand the ways in which broader structures of power shape the dynamics of discourse production, I employ Foucault’s notion of governmentality (1977). His conception helps us understand the broader consequences of the power exercised by the media assistance organisations on the different forms of capital within the Syrian diasporic media field. In his book, *The Subject and Power*, Foucault (1982) expands the traditional understanding of what a ‘government’ constitutes, “this word must be allowed the very broad meaning it had in the sixteenth century. ‘Government’ did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed ... To govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others” (p. 341).

This puts in perspective my conception of media assistance organisations as the governing body exercising a certain degree of control over the ‘subjects’ or the grant-funded media outlets. Therefore, chapter 6 provides a reading of the dynamics of this power between the governing entity and the subject by analysing the discourses of the digital radios as an artefact of such power.

Research Questions and Objectives

Based on the literature review outlined in chapter 1 and the theoretical framework highlighted in this chapter, I present an overview of this research’s objectives and the questions the analysis chapters will address.

Research Questions (RQ)	Research Objectives
RQ1 How were the transformations in social processes in a post-revolutionary society represented in the discursive practice of the Syrian diasporic media?	- Present an overview of the representation of key social processes: <i>revolution</i>, <i>freedom</i> and <i>red lines</i> in the discursive practice of the Syrian diasporic media - Explore the different ways in which the new media outlets reconfigure the terms of discourse. - Provide an alternative reading of the normative, Western-centred operational definitions of general notions and concepts in diasporic journalism
RQ2 To what extent is the diasporic media able to enact an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation in a post-revolutionary context?	- Explore the diasporic digital radios as a site for the assimilation and articulation of the collective identity. - Study the role of diasporic journalists as identity brokers. - Examine the forms of collective Syrianness emerging in the discursive practice of the diasporic radios.
RQ 3 How does the structural power of the political economy shape the sustainability of the Syrian diasporic media as a field?	- Examine the discourse as an artefact of the broader power of the political economy. - Appraise the extent of the governmentality (Foucault, 1977) of the funding model in shaping the communicative environment of the Syrian diasporic media field. - Study the interconnectedness between issues of de-professionalisation in the practice of journalism and the habitus mismatch (Benson, 2016) between the media producers/audience; and the way it impacts the overall sustainability of the field.

Table 1: Research Questions and Objectives

Conclusion

The mediation of the collective Syrianness in the discourses of the diasporic media, the focus of this research, is at the intersection between the practices of self-mediation and diasporic journalism. Therefore, I elucidate how self-mediation (Chouliaraki, 2010; Cammaerts, 2015) is a pertinent theoretical framework that allows us to study the articulations of self-representational discourses and the networks of power they are embedded in. For the purpose of this research, I denote two types of powers shaping the dynamics of discourse production, the power of the interlocutors' agency as identity brokers and the power of broader structures of political economy. To account for the agential power of the interlocutors, I embed the notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) to explore the changes in the construction of the self and the collective and the processes of recognition in moments of upheaval. I have also integrated the notions of imagination (Anderson, 1983; Tsagarousianou, 2017) and affect (Wetherell, 2013; Al-Ghazzi, 2021) as artefacts of the agential power of the interlocutors (Carvalho, 2008) in the articulation of the discourse. However, such agency is also shaped by a spatio-temporal disjuncture in the Syrian context. Therefore, I borrow the notion of liminality from anthropology (Turner, 1967; 1969) to weave in the perspective of the spatio-temporal discontinuity on the dynamics of discourse production. This research pursues a more decentralised approach to the study of media, integrating textual analysis with the study of the political economy of production (Couldry, 2006; Couldry & Hepp, 2013). Evidently, I employ Bourdieu's field theory (1984) encompassing different forms of economic, social and cultural capital to study the political economy of media production. In the next chapter, I build on this theoretical outline to develop the empirical component, which will help address this research's questions and objectives.

Chapter III- Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and explores the methodological procedures devised to meet the objectives of this study. In chapter 2, I highlight the discourses of the Syrian diasporic radios as a site for self-mediation practices, the focus of the empirical component. To answer this research's questions, I outline different theoretical and practical approaches to discourse analysis with a special emphasis on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the most pertinent interpretive method for this study as opposed to other analytical routes. I discern CDA's roots in critical linguistics and its goals to unmask the work of ideology and power in discourses. The current literature on the Syrian diasporic media either provides a descriptive mapping of the emerging field (Marrouch, 2014; Dollet, 2015; Issa, 2016) or focuses on the practices of diasporic journalism within these outlets at the heart of the empirical. This study embarks on a novel endeavour where I emphasise the text of the emerging radios as a site for interacting with the different powers that shape the discursive practice. Therefore, it charts the territory for studying the texts of the Syrian digital media platforms in the diaspora as artefacts of the agential power of the interlocutors and the broader political economy of production. I argue that CDA, as a "multidisciplinary enterprise" (van Dijk, 2002, p. 108), is particularly relevant to operationalise the empirical component of this research. Namely, its different levels of analysis allow for the study of the distinct discursive elements of the communicative environment and the broader structures they are embedded in. I employ a reconfigured version of Norman Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model of CDA to engage with the text of the Syrian diasporic radios as a site for the manifestation of the creative self-representational practices and the articulations of identity. In addition to Fairclough's (1989) conventional three levels of analysis, I integrate two additional aspects to these dimensions to suit the particular Syrian context at hand. These aspects, as conceptualised by Carvalho (2008), focus on the temporality of the production of the media texts and the agency of the social actors involved in articulating the discourse. In this chapter, I also highlight the empirical procedures and how I operationalise CDA for this research, including an overview of the case studies: SouriaLi and Rozana radios, as well as a breakdown of the sampled episodes as units of analysis.

Outline of the Empirical Component

At the conception phase of this research in 2017, there was limited academic interest in the study of the Syrian diasporic media due to its novelty as it disruptively emerged shortly after the 2011 upsprings in Syria (Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Nonetheless, there was some initial mapping work done to charter the nascent media scene at home and in the diaspora (Marrouch, 2014: on Syrian radio startups; Dollet, 2015 on emerging Syrian radios; Issa, 2016 on new independent media in Syria; Badran & De Angelis, 2016, mapping the nascent Kurdish media scene). Eventually, the rising momentum of this Syrian alternative media scene garnered more traction, and further studies transcended the initial mapping phase and delved more into studying this emerging form of diasporic journalism. Notably, the more recent studies primarily focused on the journalistic *practices* of the interlocutors as a central element in the diasporic media production (Badran, 2020 on the survival strategies of Syrian media in Turkey; Badran & Smets, 2021 on the precarity of Syrian diasporic journalists in Turkey and Arafat, 2021 on innovative practices of Syrian advocacy journalism). However, the study of the *discourses* of the Syrian diasporic media is yet to be addressed at the heart of the empirical focus. As previously elaborated in chapter 1, the study of diasporic media is peculiar as it blurs the lines between the dynamics of production, representation and consumption (Georgiou, 2007). In chapter 2, I made the argument for employing ‘self-mediation’ as a theoretical terrain to study the practices of media within the emerging diasporic radios where the interlocutors are an integral part of the events and news they are reporting on. Al-Ghazzi (2021) argues that the social and professional roles coalesce as they report in a highly emotive and intrinsically subjective/political context. However, the empirical component of this research aims to address a gap in diasporic media research, whereby diaspora media is often studied in relation to the local political context where it emerged, independent from broader development and trends in media and journalism (Badran & Smets, 2021; Al-Ghazzi, 2021). Hence, the ideal analytical model would combine the realities of the local context, the multiple positionalities of the interlocutors and the broader contexts of power (the political economy) where the former factors are embedded. Therefore, I study the texts of this diasporic media as artefacts of the agential power of the interlocutors and the political economy of media production. Thus, I operationalise CDA on three distinct levels to study different aspects of the communicative environment: the textuality (chapter 4), practices (chapter 5) and the field (chapter 6) of the Syrian diasporic media. An earlier iteration of this methodology included an ethnographic component that

had to be reconsidered, given *a*) the restrictions on travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic and *b*) the abrupt termination of the broadcast of radio SouriaLi (one of the case studies). Noteworthy, other ethnographic work in this context has been done during the development phases of this research (Badran, 2020; Badran & Smets, 2021; Badran, 2021). Such work, however, only focused on the practices of diasporic journalism within these outlets and did not address ‘radio’ as a medium. Finally, this research examining the discourses and messages of the Syrian diaspora media has further potential for expansion to study the ways in which this media serves as a catalyst for community formation on a transnational level⁴. Moreover, situating the dynamics of text production into a structural modality of political economy allows this research to engage in further debates (chapter 7) regarding the overarching international media development that propels this kind of contentious media in non-democratic or conflict settings (Cook, 2016; Brownlee, 2017).

Studying the Dynamics of Discourse Production: a Theoretical Overview

As the text is the central element of self-mediated practices (Chouliaraki, 2010), this section will provide a theoretical overview of the various analytical paths to the study of media texts. The aim is to juxtapose different schools of thought and practice in the study of media messages and discourses to determine the most pertinent for the context of this research. The work of F. R. Leavis and his followers in the 1930s has historically highlighted the centrality of language and literary text in reflecting a society's traditional values and tenets. For Leavis, the literary critic became a portal to understanding a text's relationship to the wider society and history where it was developed (Thornham et al., 2009). Language has a central role in the construction of the discourse and the articulations of identity (Bamberg et al., 2011). Michael Halliday (1989) makes a distinction between the different functions of language as *a*) a referential function (referring to objects in the world to identify them), *b*) a textual function (organising texts and discourses to form narratives), and *c*) a communicative/interactive function (used as means of interpersonal communication). Moreover, Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's (1974) definition of semiotics, the study of signs and the way they make meaning, particularly valorises the social function of the language. For Saussure, meaning-making relies on language, a representational system of signs dictated by cultural and linguistic rules embedded in a larger social context. This conception, in turn, grounds

⁴ See: Georgiou, M. (2001). Crossing the boundaries of the ethnic home: Media consumption and ethnic identity construction in the public space: The case of the Cypriot Community Centre in North London. *Gazette (Leiden, Netherlands)*, 63(4), 311-329.

the study of Halliday's (1989) various functions of the language in broader social and cultural contexts, as pointed out by Saussure (1974). In his essay, *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, Barthes (1975) distinguishes between 'the work' and 'the text'. He used the term *work* to refer to the artefact, whereas *text* refers to the process of meaning-making and decoding the artefact. Notably, the *work* becomes a *text* the minute the audience interacts with said work and engages in a decoding process. Similar to the previously elaborated dynamics between Barthes' (1975) conceptions of *work* and *text*, the study of the relationship between language and meaning-making postulates the integration of the social, cultural, political and historical perspectives. Fiske (1989) mirrors Barthes' interpretation on the level of TV broadcasting: "programmes are produced, distributed, and defined by the industry: texts are the product of their readers. So, a programme becomes a text at the moment of reading, that is, when its interaction with one of its many audiences activates some of the meanings that it is capable of provoking" (p. 14). Stuart Hall (1997) revolutionised the study of meaning-making through the conception of the "encoding/decoding" model whereby the "communicative process" is a set of practices through which meanings are socially produced within a specific institutional structure. In fact, the development of the 'cultural studies' strand within media studies pioneered by Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams has transformed the way media texts are studied to be seen as messages bearing more complex meanings (Thornham et al., 2009). Gradually, scholars have moved away from the linear model of understanding the effects of mass media (see Schramm & Roberts, 1973; McCombs & Shaw, 1972 and Katz et al., 1973) within the framework of agenda-setting or the user-gratification approach (Perloff, 1989). Contemporary approaches to discourse analysis transcend "text-internal readings, where readers are theorised as decoders of fixed meanings, to more dynamic models, where meanings are negotiated by actively participating readers" (Meinhof, 1994, p. 212). As part of the movement to decentralise media research from conventional text-centrism, discourse analysis approaches encompassed special attention to the conditions of production of media texts with an analytical focus on the forms and structures of newspapers and TV shows (Thornham et al., 2009). To correspond to this paradigm shift, there is a growing trend whereby discourse analysis approaches favour qualitative methods of analysis that integrate broader social, cultural and political contexts and the localisation of meaning to the traditional quantitative ones (Jensen & Jankowsk991; Wodak & Busch, 2004). Therefore, qualitative paradigms are able to probe media discourses through the study of linguistics, semantics, rhetoric

and speech and how they are embedded in elements of the social context and the spatio-temporal setting (van Dijk, 2000). Therefore, it is important to review the different theoretical paths to discourse analysis in order to situate this research's empirical component in a grounded conceptual framework. Potter et al. (1990) identify four historical approaches to discourse analysis. The first has a psychological outlook and views 'discourse as a process' (Potter et al., 1990, p. 206; van Dijk & Kintch, 1983). The second approach is grounded in speech act theory and concerns how discourse is organised (Coulthard & Montgomery, 1981; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). The third follows a rather unorthodox path compared to its predecessors as it explores the realms of social philosophy and cultural analysis (most notably the post-structuralist work of Foucault 1971; 1972). The last strand of discourse analysis that Potter et al. refer to is situated within the field of sociology of science, primarily focusing on scientific discourse (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Mulkay et al., 1983). The Western Marxist tradition is particularly concerned with uncovering the workings of power and ideology embedded in the discourse and enabling its hegemonic capacity (Shapiro, 1992). Specific to the context of this research, a discourse analysis approach would effectively allow us to study the media texts in their own right as innovative self-representational artefacts and also uncover the different dynamics of encoding messages and embedding meanings in the discursive practice. Moreover, a critical approach to discourse analysis allows for an added systemic approach to exploring the repertoires of text and talk and situating them within wider contexts and dominant structures. Therefore, this research will adopt a critical approach to discourse analysis to examine the media texts of the Syrian diasporic media outlets as both: an essential element of the communicative environment and a byproduct of the conditions of production.

Critical Discourse Analysis as an Analytical Framework of Enquiry: A Literature Review

Building on the previous overview of the different approaches to discourse analysis and the study of media messages, I employ Critical Discourse Analysis Critical (CDA) as an analytical framework of inquiry to examine the discursive practices of the Syrian diasporic media outlets. In this section, I explore the historical and conceptual aspects of CDA in relation to this research. CDA emerged as an analytical framework used to probe the processes of discourse production with theoretical foundations in critical linguistics (Teo, 2000). This method stands out from the other descriptive discourse analysis methods for studying media discourses as it explores how

discursive practices are socially shaped and highlights their social effects (Fairclough, 1995). It has roots in “classical rhetoric, text linguistics, and sociolinguistics, as well as in applied linguistics and pragmatics” (Wodak & Busch, 2004, p. 50). The foundation for this framework came to being in the late ’70s through the work of the linguist Michael Halliday (1974) and then later explicitly referred to as *Critical Discourse Analysis* by Norman Fairclough. CDA as a method has evolved, been refined and further adapted to discourse variations through the work of sociologists and linguists alike over the years. Ruth Breeze (2011) provides a comprehensive historical overview of the different schools within the thought and practice of CDA. She identifies an initial British approach embodied by Fairclough (1985, 1989) and Fowler (1991) and a later, more developed form developed by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999). There is also a “sociocognitive model” consolidated by van Dijk (1991) and a historical discourse school led by Wodak (Wodak et al., 1990; Wodak, 1996; 2007). Moreover, Wodak (2011) refers to a French school of CDA that can be traced back to Pêcheux (1982), who was influenced by Bakhtin. Additionally, Breeze (2011) identifies a Duisburg school (Jäger, 1999) in CDA that studies the language employed by the media from a Foucauldian perspective, along with another approach coined by Maas (1989) which probes the ideological discourses inscribed in texts. Therefore, CDA as an analytical framework has evolved to encapsulate **two main dimensions**: “to explain existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggle” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 2) and “to answer questions about the relationships between language and society” (Rogers, 2005, p. 365). Hence, those two dimensions imply an interest in the workings of ideology and power in society; and a particular focus on how language contributes to, perpetuates and reveals these workings (Breeze, 2011). Notably, CDA takes a particular interest in the relationship between language (text, discourse) and power (ideology, inequality, dominance) (Weiss & Wodak, 2002). CDA’s interest in ideology can be traced back to its Marxist origins, which probed how structures of oppression were perpetuated in a society through ideological means (Breeze, 2011). According to Gramsci (1972), this internalised ideological hegemony involved aspects of symbolic coercion and consent implicated by the use of language. Particularly relevant to the context of this research is Lisa Wedeen’s study (1999) of how symbols and signs cultivate a cult of personality for Syria’s Al-Assad through public dissimulation. Similarly, Luke (2002) views CDA as an essential tool for the analysis of the role of language in social construction, “CDA involves a principled and transparent shunting backwards and forth between the microanalysis of texts using varied tools of linguistic, semiotic

and literary analysis, and the macroanalysis of social formations, institutions and power relations that these texts index and construct” (p.100).

CDA, as Billig (2002) describes it, has become “an intellectual orthodoxy” (p. 44), an established discipline with a corresponding analytical framework, cannon, conventionalised assumptions, and even its own power structures. Critical discourse theorists whose work is rooted in the Marxist tradition use CDA to go beyond simply observing and describing the states of affairs but also critically appraise and evaluate the different aspects of society (Ibid). CDA has been employed in the literature to deconstruct different discourses and unveil ideologically driven discrimination based on social markers: race, gender, class and ethnicity through exposing the use of language and semiosis in the service of power (Martin, 2004). Given its close association with notions of power and ideology, CDA has often been employed to study gender issues (Lazar, 2005; McGannon & Spence, 2012), issues of racism (Wodak & Matouschek, 1993), media discourses, political discourses (van Dijk, 1997), or dimensions of identity research (Wodak & Busch, 2004; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). CDA’s deconstruction process is meant for a transformative end goal, as highlighted by Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard (1996, p. 3):

Discourse is a major instrument of power and control and Critical discourse analysts [...] feel that it is indeed part of their professional role to investigate, reveal and clarify how power and discriminatory value are inscribed in and mediated through the linguistic system. CDA is essentially political in intent, with its practitioners acting upon the world in order to transform it and thereby help create a world where people are not discriminated against because of sex, colour, creed, age or social class.

Insofar, Critical Discourse analysts draw a distinction between their work and this of “non-critical” linguists as they move beyond the mere description of the states of affairs and the interpretation of the social functions of a language to an explanation of how and why language does what it does, and what is behind it (Fairclough, 1989). CDA constitutes a “sustainable counter-tradition in linguistics” (Luke, 2002, p. 97) as it explicitly advocates for an analysis of the social functions of

a language from a political perspective focusing primarily on ideology and power. In Fairclough's words, "critical implies showing connections and causes that are hidden" (1992, p. 9); this includes the unveiling of the ideological articulations of discourse that conceal the power struggles that are taking place in the social world (Breeze, 2011). Furthermore, CDA as an analytical paradigm is intrinsically multidisciplinary as it borrows extensively from linguists and non-linguistic theorists to analyse the social functions of a language from a critical perspective. From sociology, it borrows the concepts of economic and cultural capitals (which will be elaborated on in chapter 6) and systems of meaning (Bourdieu, 1984), as well as Habermas' understanding of the instrumental role of communication in the reproduction of modern societies (Breeze, 2011). This multidisciplinary nature of CDA allows for a nuanced examination of the intricate levels of discourse and the embedded social and ideological powers shaping it.

Specifically pertinent for this research is Carvalho's (2008) revisiting of CDA as an analytical framework to embed two crucial aspects: temporality and the agency of social actors in employing certain strategies in the process of discourse production. There are two approaches to temporality relevant to the context of this research, an overarching temporality in Syrian contention and the corresponding development of activists' media use and the temporal rhythm of the development of this research project. In chapter 1, I provided a diachronic timeline of the development of the media practices in the Syrian contention, situating the research in a post-revolutionary context. Therefore, the incorporation of temporality as a key element of the analytical framework allows for juxtaposing different temporal rhythms and the corresponding powers that shaped them. Meanwhile, the temporal rhythm of the research project itself has been interrupted by the abrupt termination of radio SouriaLi's broadcasting in February 2020. This discontinuation rendered the study of the discourse dynamics in a concluded temporality of the once-thriving radio SouriaLi akin to archival research. The second aspect of Carvalho's (2008) approach to CDA is integrating the agency of social actors and the way they employ certain strategies in discourse production. To operationalise this aspect, I focus on the role of the Syrian diasporic journalists as identity brokers, leading the position of enunciation in the discursive practice by a) establishing the terms of public discussion, b) retelling the past and c) translating current issues from the homeland or the diaspora (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). The diasporic journalists' multiple subjectivities complicate their position of enunciation at the intersection of their activism and journalism (Al-

Ghazzi, 2021). In Al-Ghazzi's words (2021), the integration of the "positionality of Syrian media practitioners and how to make sense of their media practices, embodied experiences, and relation to global news networks, and how all this relates to the conception of journalism at large." (p. 2). Hence, the study of the agency of the interlocutors not only reflects on the dynamics of discourse production but also situates the practices of Syrian diasporic journalism within wider debates on global journalism and rising trends of de-professionalisation (these debates will be revisited in chapter 6). Finally, the empirical component of this research embarks on a multimodal exploratory journey to examine the discursive practices of the Syrian diasporic radios. The framework of analysis will discern these discursive practices on three levels: a) as meaningful practices, highlighting the **textualities** embedded in the practices of self-mediation; b) as sociocultural artefacts raising important questions of agency and identity and c) as a byproduct of **techno-economic** affordances, foregrounding the broader social, political and economic networks wherein such discourses circulate (Chouliaraki, 2017; Koliska & Roberts, 2015).

Operationalising CDA for this research

From CDA's different schools of practice, I employ Fairclough's model that distinguishes three interlinked dimensions (levels) of discourse in different mediated productions. Each level looks at a distinct element of the communicative environment: *text, practice and form*, requiring corresponding theoretical concepts to approach its analysis. Fairclough (1989) describes the three-dimensional approach to discourse as "a three-dimensional framework where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice." (p. 2). The use of CDA as an analytical framework of inquiry corresponds to the objectives of this study, grounding the textual analysis into broader structures of power. In chapter 4, I approach the discourses of the digital diasporic radios as a space of symbolic contention where different social and political powers shape the dynamics of media production. Thus, I record the transformative processes of some essential keywords (Williams, 1976) in the Syrian diasporic media, including revolution, freedom and red lines. On this level of analysis, CDA allows the researcher to study media texts in their own right and the power of social transformations on the dynamics of discourse production.

Chapter 5 explores the (self)mediation of the collective Syrianness in disjunctured temporalities and localities. I examine the discourses of self-mediation as artefacts of the agential power of the interlocutors, where they employ different strategies in articulating the collective Syrianness. Thus, identities are explored as the site of the power of agency, affect and imagination of the interlocutors where CDA is used to highlight the different strategies of discourse articulation. In chapter 6, I study the discourse as an artefact of the political economy shaping the communicative environment of the Syrian diasporic media. I employ CDA to record the ways in which the governmentality (Foucault, 1977) of the international media assistance organisations “constitute knowledge and power relations” (Phillips, 2008, p. 4) in the dynamics of discourse production. Namely, I conceptualise the Syrian diasporic media as a field in its own right, with economic, cultural and social forms of capital interacting with other fields of power in the social space (Benson, 2006). Additionally, I integrate Carvalho’s (2008) reworked model of CDA that suggests embedding a temporal perspective and a view of the positionality of the social actors (the interlocutors) in the analysis of media texts. First, the focus on the temporal rhythms is operationalised in the analysis as I examine the relationship between the diasporic media and the Syrian transnational wave of contention (McAdam & Sewell, 2001; Mattoni & Treré, 2014; Tilly, 2008). To integrate the agency of the social actors, I account for the interplay between the social and the political roles of the Syrian activists turned journalists (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) and how it shapes their self-mediated practices. I build on the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) to examine the personal disadjustment (Baczko & Dorronsoro, 2021) of Syrian journalists following the structural transformation of the public sphere after the 2011 uprisings. The study of the habitus in itself involves a temporal juxtaposition by default where I contrast the development of the Syrian diaspora journalists’ professional positionality (after 2011) against their culturally ascribed upbringing and formation under the grip of the regime’s mass propaganda apparatus (for the decades preceding the 2011 uprisings). In the table below, I outline the different level of discourse as relational sites of power and the corresponding analytical approach within CDA (Fairclough, 1989)

Dimensions of Discourse	Analytical Approach (Fairclough, 1989)	Power Shaping the Discourse
Textuality I examine the media texts in their own right. The object of analysis is a transcribed and translated (from Arabic to English) version of selected radio episodes broadcast on Souriali and Rozana radios.	Description Textual Analysis, recording linguistics and semiotic variations	The power of the social transformations in the representation of certain keywords (Williams, 1976) in the media texts.
Strategies of articulation I highlight the different discourse strategies employed by diasporic interlocutors, such as different editorial decisions.	Interpretation Mapping and contrasting discourse strategies.	Discourse as a site of the agential power of the interlocutors: Examining the different mediation strategies of the collective Syrianness in disjunctured localities and temporalities.
The process of discourse production I probe the power of the political economy in shaping different aspects of the communicative environment, including the funding model, the labour relations and organisational hierarchies.	Explanation Embedding the reading of the text and the discourse strategies into a structural modality (the political economy)	Discourse as an artefact of the broader power of the political economy and the governmentality (Foucault, 1977) of the media assistance organisations.

Table 2: Levels of Discourse as Relational Sites of Power

Challenges and Mitigations in the Operationalisation of CDA

The status of CDA as a well-established institutionalised discipline has to an extent, hindered the reflexivity within the realm of this analytical paradigm (Billig, 2002). The most notable criticisms aimed at CDA relate to the instrumentalisation of theory and an inability to set an objective standpoint for research (underlying premises) as they seem at times rather inconsistent, biased and personal (Breeze, 2011). Hammersley (1997) problematises CDA scholars' claim to offer a critical understanding of society and its workings, given how unstable the epistemological underpinning of their work is and their resulting methodological repercussions by succession. Similarly, such epistemological underpinnings influenced by a certain political standpoint have been characterised as simply based on decisionism (Habermas, 1976; Macintyre, 1981; Breeze, 2011). Hence, Hammersley (1997) specifically refutes CDA's claims of "interpretive power" and "emancipatory force" given the instability of the political perspective that defines its research underpinnings. Nonetheless, the central tenet of critical research has a quintessential political function to unmask injustices and inequalities perpetuated by power and dominance in society (Breeze, 2011). Hence, CDA's political underpinnings are dependent to a considerable extent on the researcher's viewpoint and outlook on the social phenomena under study. As previously elaborated, this could potentially influence the logic of analysis as there is no fixed matrix for the ways a researcher could read and decode the workings of power and ideology in a specific social setting. Therefore, I declare my own positionality as a researcher in this section before embarking on this analytical quest to provide a transparent epistemology for the knowledge presented in this research. In the tradition of social constructivism, it is important to acknowledge that "there is no possibility of achieving absolute or universal knowledge since there is no context-free, neutral base for truth-claims" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 175). Thus, perspective-free research is practically unattainable as all knowledge is ideological, "produced from a particular perspective, for a particular purpose, and serves particular interests" (Laws & Chojnicka, 2020, p. 1262). Back at the inception phase of this research project in 2016/7, the academic interest did not seem to have matched the expansion and the rising momentum of the Syrian diasporic media scene, apart from a few appraisal and mapping reports commissioned by Western think tanks (Dollet, 2015; Issa, 2016). As a researcher, I felt motivated to pursue this novel analytical endeavour in an emerging field of study, equipped with previous research work in the broader field and cultural proximity to

the Syrian context. During previous research I had conducted on the mainstream media representations of Syrian refugees in Europe, I identified a gap in the literature where an analysis of the self-representational practices and the voices of Syrian refugees in their self-organised media is lacking. Moreover, I spent my childhood and most of my adult life in the Middle East region, with shared social and cultural underpinnings with the Syrian context I am studying. Evidently, I engage this shared language and culture repertoires through the analytical framework to help decode the different elements of the communicative environment, including the textuality, the ways in which discourses are being articulated and the economic/political powers that shape the field of the Syrian diasporic media. Additionally, I fully understand that the lack of a standardised matrix for the research analysis means that the interpretations offered by this study would be subject to debate and alternative readings for the text under study. However, this study is exploratory in nature, as it is the first of a kind to centre the media texts of the Syrian diasporic radios at the heart of the empirical to explore the dynamics of discourse production and the broader powers they are embedded in. Thus, more research is needed to build an interdisciplinary body of work on the subject matter, corroborating the findings of this study by examining the dynamics of meaning-making and the broader role of media in transnational community formation and democratic transition (see Georgiou, 2007). Furthermore, I understand that some scholars view CDA as limited to unmasking the inequitable state of affairs in the text without presenting accounts of alternative forms of the social organisation other than by implication (Kress, 1996). However, I argue that this research ascribes to a limited body of work that situates the independent media of the Syrian transnational wave of contention into the broader conversation on media assistance and Western international development. The rise and demise of this burgeoning independent media scene is a study of the determining power of the economic capital on the mediation efforts of social and political movements (Mattoni & Treré, 2014). So while it stops short of offering alternative funding modalities, it offers comprehensive insights into the implications of the overreliance on the grant-based funding model for oppositional media (see more: Cook, 2016).

Case Studies and Sampling

For the **case studies**, I have chosen two diasporic digital radios registered in France and broadcasting in the Arabic language, targeting Syrians at home or in the diaspora: Radio *SouriaLi*, and Radio *Rozana*. Rozana and Souriali have been established in the diaspora by Syrians fleeing

the violence in their country. The outlets belong to a once-flourishing media scene that emerged after the 2011 uprisings in Syria and challenged the regime's control over the means of public expression. Both radios mainly broadcast online on their respective websites and mobile apps and have a sizeable audience base and a lively community on social media networks: Rozana has more than 1 million followers on Facebook, while SouriaLi has 460,000. They have also maximised their digital presence to foster audience interaction through comments and messages on social media platforms, or, in some instances, the audience can call in through Viber and Whatsapp. SouriaLi and Rozana have been dubbed as some of the strongest media projects within the emerging mediascape (Marrouch, 2014). These digital radios are deemed "independent," meaning that their editorial has no direct political association with any national, religious or other institutional entities. This, in fact, represents an opportunity and a challenge for this research: While I chose media outlets that are supposedly free from the influence of a specific political agenda, I believe that only the empirical work could reveal the complexities of the depoliticised narratives of these digital radios. One of the most important factors in my choice of case studies was the funding modality adopted by both outlets. SouriaLi and Rozana primarily depend on international donor funding from governmental and non-governmental entities working on media development and democratic transition. Most of these funding entities are Western-based (in Europe or the U.S.). This funding model is not uncommon for emerging outlets in transitional or non-democratic settings where they rely on short-to-medium-term grants to operate (Cook, 2016; Brownlee, 2017). Within these diasporic radios, the **programmes** I selected in the initial mapping are in one of two formats: *storytelling*, where a presenter tackles a certain topic in a long monologue or a talk show format, where 1-to 2 presenters are engaged in thematic discussion with one or more guests. The topics of the chosen programmes are at the intersection of the practice of transitional media and journalism and the broader social, political and economic structures. The rationale for choosing "social" weekly programmes rather than news bulletins is that the talk show format allows for an in-depth analysis of the multiple views and competing discourses that emerge in the discussion between the presenters and the guests. The caveat in using the term 'social' programming is that the analysis in chapter 5 reveals a tension in the apolitical discourse fronted by these diasporic outlets, so the idea that social programming is not inherently embedded in politics in the Syrian context is contested. Nonetheless, these discussions provide valuable insights into the conditions of production and the different elements of the communicative environment,

including the economic and social powers shaping the discourse. Thus, the choice of episodes is guided by an overarching theme, encompassing the diasporic media practitioners' reflections and experiences concerning their practice. The dataset I am analysing will consist of 23 episodes belonging to 11 different programmes across both radio stations. The episodes in the data set will be each given a number from 1-23; the episodes 1-5 and 6-13 are broadcast on Radio Rozana, while 14-23 are on SouriaLi, except for episode 6, which is a complimentary interview with Rozana's director for context.

Programme name	Number of episodes
Radio Rozana	
Syrian Talk (<i>Hakye Sourî</i>)	Five episodes
SiaMedia	Two episodes
Social It! (<i>Soshalha</i>)	Two episodes
Focus	Two episodes
Street Echo (<i>Sada Al Share'e</i>)	One episode
Radio SouriaLi	
What do you think/ From one story to the other (<i>Shu Qawlak/ Min sira la sira</i>)	Five episodes
A conversation with SouriaLi (<i>Hiwar SouriaLi</i>)	One episode
Canvas	One episode
Constructive Gossip (<i>Shelli Bana'a</i>)	One episode
Misconception	One episode
Give/Take (<i>Akhd wa Ata'a</i>)	One episode

Table 3: Overview of the studied Radio Programmes and Episodes

The overarching theme guiding the choice of the programmes and episodes in the sample is: **Personal and professional reflections and experiences of the Syrian diasporic journalists within the diasporic media scene.** This theme is an interpretation of the theoretical approach of this research to explore the dynamics of identity articulations and self-representational practices in the Syrian diasporic media. I opted for a thematic approach in choosing the episodes in the sample instead of a chronological one, for instance, as it is more encompassing and matches the different levels of discourse analysis by providing a lateral view of the key notions under study instead of a vertical one. Moreover, the thematic approach also provides insights into the different temporal rhythms that this diasporic media scene has weathered. As elaborated earlier in this chapter, I integrate the notion of temporality as part of CDA's analytical framework based on Carvalho's (2008) conception. The choice of episodes is based on studying the digital repository of both radio stations from the beginning of broadcasting (Souriali in 2012 and Rozana in 2013) until the end of 2020. I longlisted any episodes containing a keyword from a standardised checklist I devised and applied to both case studies. The keywords included the following terms, whether in the title or the short synopsis describing the episode online: media *I'elam*, journalism *Sahafa*, journalists *Sohafeyoun(-yin)*, radio and broadcasting *I'dhaea*. I then filtered this longlist to primarily focus on the practice of diasporic media, producing a final list of 23 episodes from both SouriaLi and Rozana radios. Additionally, the complimentary episode (number 6, originally broadcast on France24 TV channel) added to the sample provides a significant contextual value to this overarching theme as it emphasises the views and perceptions of radio Rozana's executive director on the practice of diasporic journalism upon the outlet's first inception in 2013.

The main challenge in operationalising this theme for the sample was separating the *diasporic* media and journalism practices from the *local* ones. The media scene that emerged out of the 2011 uprisings in Syria sought to challenge the regime's domination over the means of symbolic production. Such endeavour comes with substantial risks of violence and retaliation from Al-Assad's forces as well as other undemocratic political actors that were active in Syria in the decade after the initial uprisings. Amid a substantial wave of Syrian displacement, many journalists and activists fled the raging violence to other countries of asylum, establishing their own media outlets targeting Syrians at home or in exile. Thus, "the Syrian alternative and independent media organisations and institutions retain all of the prerogatives of local media: they have been set up

and are run by Syrians, they are focused on relevant topics and target a Syrian audience at home and in the diaspora. They rely on reporters' networks in Syria, and they are de-facto local media with temporary headquarters abroad" (Tatomir et al., 2020, p. 4). Nevertheless, there was an overarching assumption that this state of exile was only conditional upon the regime's falling, which was perceived to be imminent (as stated by one of the diasporic journalists in episode 19 broadcast on radio SouriaLi). However, Al-Assad's regime survived this wave of domestic and transnational contention and regained its control over most of the local territories, which effectively ingrained the diasporic status of these emerging media outlets. Finally, the data analysis focuses on diasporic media practices as a distinct category and as part of an imagined collective discourse, mediating this wave of political contention.

Case Study I: Radio Rozana

Rozana Media Foundation (previously Radio Rozana Association) is a non-profit organisation registered in France and Turkey, set up by Syrian media practitioners. According to the official website, the foundation is "an independent, non-sectarian, and non-partisan media channel that addresses Syrian issues from different viewpoints and with the highest professional and ethical standards". The radio has reported 8 million listeners⁵, has a network of around 30-50 freelance correspondents reporting from inside Syria as well as Turkey and France. Rozana FM currently broadcasts online through the main website, Facebook page, and mobile application. It is also being broadcast on FM waves (98.5) in parts of Syria and Turkey. The name 'Rozana', according to the radio's executive director, Lina Chawaf, is Arabic for the skylight on the roof that brings light to the house, which corresponds to the radio's mission, bringing hope. Rozana's editorial team consists of 19 members, where the gender balance is nine women to 10 men, with the top two executive positions occupied by women: Executive director (Lina Chawaf) and the position of editor-in-chief. Chawaf undertook different executive roles on the board of Rozana FM: She first served as editor-in-chief (2013) and then as executive director of the radio. Before 2011, she worked as a journalist, co-founding 'Radio Arabesque', one of the few private radio stations operating in Syria back then, with an entertainment licence granted by the state. As this research focuses on the political economy of the emerging Syrian media scene, I outline below a breakdown

⁵ As of February 2021, source: <https://cfi.fr/en/actualites/lina-chawaf-la-voix-de-la-syrie-libre>

of entities providing support to Rozana as listed on the radio's official website. The agencies that support Rozana media include aid organisations, government-affiliated (media) development agencies and a number of international NGOs. All the declared agencies providing support to Rozana are Western-based, largely European, apart from UNICEF [UN agency] and Open Society Foundation [US-based]. Nonetheless, the type of support each entity extends to Rozana has not been specified, but it largely comes in the form of funding to carry out broadcasting operations, logistical support, training, and capacity building.

Entity	Country/Region
European Union	Europe
Open Society Foundation	United States
UNICEF	UN/Worldwide
Media in Cooperation and Transition A non-profit organisation that implements media development projects in crisis regions	Germany
International Media Support IMS An international non-profit organisation, headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark. Founded in 2001.	Denmark
DanChurchAid - DCA	Denmark
Hivos	Netherlands
France Medias Monde/ CFI - Agence Française The umbrella entity for many major media in France, including France 24, Monte Carlo Doualiya and TV5Monde.	France
RSF - Reporters Without Borders	France
Norwegian Institute of Journalism	Norway
Radio Netherlands Worldwide	Netherlands

Table (4): Breakdown of entities providing support to radio Rozana as listed on their official website

Below is an overview of radio Rozana's programmes examined for the analysis and a breakdown of the episodes included in the sample.

Programme I: Syrian Talk / *Hakye Souri*

‘Syrian Talk’ is a talk show produced jointly between Rozana FM and Huna Amsterdam, the Arabic language programme of Radio Netherlands Worldwide. Episodes of ‘Syrian Talk’ are usually half an hour long, and the programme broadcasts weekly every Saturday at 2 p.m. Damascus time (GMT+2) [the show was previously broadcast every Friday at 1 p.m.] from either Paris or Gaziantep (South-Eastern Turkey). The show broadcasts online across Rozana FM’s website, mobile application, and FM waves (98.5). The programme’s first broadcast was on February 5th, 2014 and continues to release new episodes monthly up until the publishing of this research in April 2022. By the end of April 2021, the frequency of the show’s broadcasting had changed to once a month instead of its usual weekly broadcasting. I chose this programme specifically as it meets the ‘talk show’ format previously outlined in the research procedure and is presented by Rozana’s director, which offers a window into her professional reflections as both a presenter and a manager of this diasporic radio.

Episode 1. Hala Kodmani: The surge of Opposition media Outlets feels like a Frenzy

Paris: (19 April 2015) **Kodmani** is a diasporic Syrian journalist who worked with a number of French mainstream media outlets. The discussion centres on the emerging media scene and its multiplicity of voices.

Episode 2. Sakhr Idris: The Media always has an agenda, but some agendas could be positive

Paris: (11 August 2015) **Idris** is a Syrian journalist who worked with a number of Arab news cable networks and resided in Istanbul. Chawaf calls him ‘a troublemaker’, as he is known for being a fierce critic of the Syrian opposition in the diaspora. The discussion addresses the shortcomings of the opposition media and its failure to galvanise a favourable discourse on the Syrian revolution within the international community.

Episode 3. Adrien Sleiman: ‘I did not choose America because it is the Land of Freedom’

Gaziantep: (13 May 2019) **Sleiman** is a diasporic TV journalist who worked in broadcasting in Syria and Washington, DC. The episode explored the dynamics of media production, including editorial procedures, agendas and impartiality in relation to the emerging media scene.

Episode 4. *Raed Fares*: Female Voices on Radio Fresh Pose a Challenge

Gaziantep: (1 February 2016) **Fares** is an activist and a media entrepreneur who co-founded Radio Fresh, a community radio based in Kafr Nabl, Syria. The episode addresses the challenges to the nascent community radio in Syria, including censorship and social and cultural pressures that shape daily editorial decisions.

Episode 5. *Ammar Abdel Rabou*: President Macron asked me if Syrians had any hope left (17 December 2017) **Abdel Rabou** is a French-Syrian photojournalist residing in France. The episode provides a comparative view of the media work in Syria between two temporalities: before and after 2011.

Episode 6. Interview with *Lina Chawaf*, France24

(16 July 2013) An interview with Rozana's executive director, broadcast on the TV station France24 Arabic shortly following the inception of Rozana back in 2013. Although the episode is not part of Rozana's broadcasting, it is an important addition to the sample as it provides a comparative perspective to juxtapose the radio's current state of affairs with its launch blueprints. It also highlights Chawaf's perspective as a diasporic journalist herself, managing a diasporic radio. In this interview, Chawaf responds to questions regarding the funding, impartiality and political affiliations of Rozana FM. She also talks about training and building the capacity of Syrian journalists.

Programme II: SiaMedia

Siamedia is a talk show broadcast on radio Rozana every week (every Sunday at 16:15 Damascus time) between January and November of 2017. At the beginning of each episode, the show's audio prompt announces: "We are journalists and not political experts; however, we believe that it is way too dangerous to leave politics solely at the hands of politicians. So, we try to make sense of the political events to present it to you."

Episode 7. Syrian Media: Institutions without Freedom and Freedom without Institutions (16 July 2017)

This episode explores the current state of media and journalism in Syria and the diaspora. Some of the themes addressed in the discussion are the rise of citizen journalism, media activism and the need for strong media institutions to support the future of Syrian journalism.

With Guest:

- *Ali Eid, head of the Syrian Journalists Association, residing in France.*

Episode 8. Is there any media freedom left? (27 August 2017)

The episode was dedicated to discussing press freedom in the wake of the backlash that Rising for Freedom magazine and Abwab Newspaper have faced. I will briefly explore both cases as they were instrumental to understanding press freedom in the realm of the Syrian diasporic media and the structural limitations to such freedom. I have used secondary sources and other episodes broadcast on radio Rozana to complement the details of the cases as told by the guests.

With Guests:

- *Ossama Nassar, deputy editor in chief, Rising for Freedom Magazine*
- *Ibrahim Al-Hussein, Head of the Centre for Press Freedoms at the Syrian Journalists Association*
- *Walaa Kharmanda, former editor, Abwab Newspaper*

The case of Rising for Freedom Magazine (Tala'na A'al Houriya)

Rising for Freedom is a bimonthly magazine, (formerly) printed and circulated in some opposition-controlled regions in Syria and the diaspora. While registered as a charity in Canada, the magazine had a field office inside Syria, precisely in Douma, Eastern Ghouta. The case of Rising for Freedom is similar to many Syrian diasporic outlets registered abroad to manage the financial and legal aspects (Badran & Smets, 2021) while maintaining a level of operation inside the Syrian territories, whether it is FM broadcasting or magazine/newspaper circulation. Eastern Ghouta is of particular significance in relation to the last decade of the crisis in Syria, as it was the site for the contestation of power between multiple factions. Early on during the unrest, it was overtaken by an Islamist rebel group, Jaysh Al-Islam, before the regime forces recaptured the region in 2018. In February 2017, Rising for Freedom published an opinion article by the writer Shawkat Gharzzedine, featuring a commentary on a video of a wounded child screaming for his father's

help. The article drew criticism, especially from the supporters of the Islamist group controlling the region, as it was seen as “blasphemous”. I was not able to review the actual article in question as it was removed from the magazine’s archive with no readily available copy on search engines. The week following the publishing of the article, the magazine issued a clarification, explaining that it intended no offence, and called for those opposing the article to send in their opinions for publishing. However, the following period witnessed a significant escalation as the magazine’s local office was surrounded by a mob who raided and vandalised the office building shared with other Syrian civil society organisations. In an attempt to diffuse the situation, the magazine’s editor-in-chief publicly resigned and claimed full responsibility for the decision to publish the article in question. Nevertheless, three local courts affiliated with the group controlling the region have ordered a total ban on the magazine’s circulation and ordered the closure of its premises in Duma. Moreover, the editor-in-chief and the article’s writer were sentenced to two years in absentia later in 2017. Despite previous intimidation and obstruction to the work of journalists in rebel-held areas in Syria after the 2011 uprisings (Reporters without Borders, 2013), this violent backlash against Rising for Freedom has been particularly poignant and sent a shockwave across the whole emerging media scene. Evidently, the incident involving the legal intervention to censor the magazine by permanently banning it set a dangerous precedent reminiscing of the violent media censorship that the regime enforced. Furthermore, the blowback from publishing the article affected the whole civil society working in the rebel-held area. The de facto authority controlling Douma back then had also ordered the closure of Rising for Freedom premises as well as other civil society offices of organisations working on child rights and documenting human rights violations. The magazine had gone out of circulation online and offline before it made a comeback in 2019 (archive). Finally, the incident remains significant in magnitude and scale for the emerging media scene and the civil society working in Syria.

The case of Abwab Newspaper in Germany

Abwab newspaper is another Syrian diasporic media outlet based in Germany. It claims to be the first European online newspaper in Arabic for refugees⁶. The troubles started in late July 2017 when the German publisher decided to terminate the employment of the Syrian editor-in-chief,

⁶ A [DW article](#) indicates Abwab newspaper used to run a print version when it was first launched.

who co-founded the newspaper, following a disagreement between both parties⁷. As explained by Walaa Kharmanda (former editor) during episode 8 in the data set, the disagreement emerged as there were “anonymous” calls from members of the audience for the newspaper to translate its Arabic content to German due to “security concerns” about the nature of the published material. Kharmanda stated that the idea appealed to the German publisher, who reportedly said that these concerns emerged as the staff is largely Arab and that it would not have been an issue if they were “Brazilians or something”. Kharmanda adds that this problem emerged simultaneously with the growing anti-refugee sentiment in Germany and Europe at large. The staff at Abwab have rejected the calls to translate the Arabic content into German, and the underlying accusations that any Arabic content might be supporting terrorism (directly or indirectly) and hence should be subject to surveillance or monitoring. Kharmanda sees the forced attempts to translate the content into German as yielding to these baseless accusations and effectively submitting to a form of editorial censorship.

Programme III: Social It!

A weekly show highlighting the reactions on social media to chosen topics, episodes usually run under 10 minutes each. The programme's first episode aired on September 5th, 2014, under a different programme name. The name was later changed to “Social it!” to reflect the nature of the commentary presented during the show, drawn from different social media platforms. The last episode of the programme was broadcast in May 2017.

Episode 9. “We have to fully accept freedom” (13 March 2017)

This episode highlights the reactions on social media to the fallout of Rising for Freedom magazine’s editorial crisis. The episode starts with a more abstract view of what freedom means for Syrians working in the emerging media scene and how it translates in practice, especially in case of crises. The commentary features input from

- *Osama Nassar: deputy editor in chief, Rising for Freedom Magazine*
- *Islam Abu Shukayr: Writer*
- *Zeina Erhaim: diasporic journalist and media practitioner*

⁷ According to a [statement](#) by the former editor in chief and a number of supporting editors of Abwab

Episode 10. Journalism is a paid profession like any other job (17 January 2017)

This episode highlights the reactions on social media to a staff strike by Rozana's own team members in early 2017. The episode features input from journalists and media practitioners working in Syrian media at home and in the diaspora (especially Turkey), including

- *Wael Moussa: editor at Rising for Freedom Magazine*
- *Zeina Erhaim: journalist and media practitioner*
- *Two journalists working at a media outlet established after 2011*

Below I present a timeline of Rozana staff's strike, that along with the analysis of the episode, is essential to understand better the practices of diasporic journalism and the larger economic context they are embedded in. The following timeline describes the actions and reactions of the striking staff and Rozana's management in early 2017. On January 10th, 14 members of the Gaziantep office of radio Rozana announced their strike on Facebook as a response to the executive director's decision to 'unjustly terminate' all staff of the regional office after they had made several demands "to improve their working conditions". The striking staff posted on Facebook that their initial demands before termination entailed having a "legal employment contract" to protect their employment rights. The following day, the striking employees held a press conference to explain the situation and outline their demands. They explained that the administration had decided to change the currency of the salaries they receive to be in Turkish Lira, which was plummeting record lows against the US Dollar due to political instability in Turkey then. This, in turn, would have effectively resulted in a decreased value of the staff salaries who initially protested the measure internally, only to be met with threats of dismissal from management, according to their public statements. In fact, some staff claimed that the administration pressured them by advertising their jobs' terms of reference online as vacancies; this was when they decided to go public with their strike action. They added that Rozana's Gaziantep office makes up 60% of the organisation's total staff members and produces roughly 70% of the total content published by the outlet. In going public with their strike, staff hoped that their industrial action would bring more awareness of workers' rights within the emerging Syrian media scene. On January 12th, Rozana's administration issued a statement addressing the strike where it explained that the decision to "decrease" staff salaries comes in light of financial challenges faced by the radio and other diasporic Syrian outlets alike as a result of lack of funding from donor entities. The administration

stated that it chose to decrease salaries in lieu of more drastic measures such as downsizing to cope with the funding cuts and keep the broadcasting afloat.

Note on the choice of both episodes from “Social It!”

In my quest to explore the communicative environment to get more comprehensive insights into the discursive practice, I thought to highlight two pivotal crisis moments in the recent history of the emerging Syrian mediascape. Such crises test the principal foundations and the different elements of the communicative environment, including media ethics, freedom of expression and red lines. Episode 11 covers a crisis within the same media outlet I am examining, featuring the staff’s strike. Effectively, it revealed valuable insights regarding the inner administrative, financial and structural workings of radio Rozana as well as the emerging media landscape at large. This broader context significantly impacts the produced content, as previously discussed in the literature chapter. While episode 11 focuses on an inward structural issue, episode 10 addresses a more audience-facing and content-related matter regarding the controversial opinion piece published by Rising for Freedom magazine and the fallout of such an incident that rippled across the entire civil society working inside Syria. The juxtaposition of both episodes is deliberate in examining the differences and similarities in the ways the crises were retold and renegotiated in the discursive practice of Syrian diaspora radios.

Programme IV: Focus

Episode 11. What should Syrian Journalists Write about?

22 June 2016 - A number of diasporic Syrian journalists express feelings of frustration and helplessness towards the protracted crisis in Syria. Thus, they reflect on their personal and professional experiences in light of the political impasse and the deteriorating situation in the homeland.

Episode 12. Syrian radios: Outliers or Real Change?

12 November 2016 - The new Syrian radio stations are the main topic of discussion for this episode where the guest, diasporic journalist Hala Kodmani, describes the alternative media scene in Syria and the diaspora as unique given the conditions that propelled its emergence.

Programme V: Street Echo

Episode 13: What are the Red Lines journalists need to consider in their coverage?

17 November 2020 - This episode stands out in the sample as it is in a video format where the presenter is speaking from a provisional recording studio, and both guests are joining on video via Skype. It starts with a quick survey of bystanders about their perceptions of what topics constitute a ‘red line’ that the media should not address or cover. The discussion on red lines tackled their nature and the actors involved in enforcing them. Notably, guests discussed the way these red lines evolved by means of digital media vs mainstream media.

With guests,

Pascale Sauma - Journalist

Safwan Kassam - Researcher in sociology

Mona Farag - Academic specialised in media studies

Case Study II: Radio Souriali

The case study of radio SouriaLi is particularly pertinent to the analytical enquiry of this research: highlighting the trajectory of the rise and the demise of the Syrian diasporic media scene. As per the co-founder Caroline Ayyub, Souriali’s name is a nod to the notion of citizenship “Syria is mine”, as in Syria is for all Syrians but also a play on the word *surreal*, describing the Syrian crisis. Thus, a “Syria for all” is the antidote to the surrealism of the violence unfolding in the country. Incidentally, Souriali’s audio slogan is “*By the way, this is not a radio*”, to indicate that this is more of a public forum and an avenue of expression for all Syrians, in contrast with the traditional view of the Syrian radio as a mouthpiece for the regime’s propaganda. The radio launched in October 2012 with an online website and a number of social media channels. Less than two weeks after the launch of its digital broadcasting, access to radio Souriali’s website was blocked inside Syria, and the word “SouriaLi” itself was banned from the results on search engines. At the start of this project in 2018, SouriaLi radio was active with a fully functioning website, daily and weekly programming, and a lively social media presence. In late 2019, much of SouriaLi’s programming concluded, and its social media presence became more sporadic until it eventually stopped in February 2020. Moreover, the website where the radio can be accessed went offline and was

replaced with a digital repository of the radio's audio archive on the multimedia platform "Soundcloud". The dissolution of radio SouriaLi's broadcasting was previously unannounced to its audience on any social media channels or during the last episodes uploaded to the digital repository. Radio SouriaLi has an audio archive publicly accessible on Soundcloud. The platform allows creators to upload, store and share audio clips. SouriaLi's Soundcloud account has roughly 4,000 followers and 5,037 uploaded tracks (the last uploaded was in February 2020). SouriaLi also has backup digital repositories on apple podcast and Youtube.

Rozana and SouriaLi radios are signatories to the Ethical Charter for Syrian Media, along with 32 Syrian media outlets, most of which have been newly founded since 2011. This ethical code, signed by Rozana in June 2015, is orchestrated by a Syrian non-profit concerned with media development "for peaceful transition". The need for this consensual agreement stems from the accelerated growth of the Syrian media scene in the last decade, at home and in the diaspora. Hence, the eight provisions of the ethical code came as a result of multiple rounds of deliberations between different media outlets (digital, press and radio). The provisions mandate professional journalistic standards of objectivity and impartiality, safeguarding the confidentiality of news sources and fact-checking information. The ethical code also upholds international human rights declarations and pledges to refrain from publishing/broadcasting statements that would constitute hate speech or incite violence. Signatories also commit not to be influenced by any political party or authority and to respect the lines between news, opinion and ads.

Below is an overview of radio Souriali's programmes examined for the purpose of the analysis and a breakdown of the episodes included in the sample.

Programme I: What do you think/ From one story to another (*Shu Qawlak/ Min sira la sira*)

Episode 14: Syrian Journalism with Mohamed Dibo

13 May 2013 - Dibo is the founder of Syria Untold, a renowned independent website publishing news and opinions about Syria in Arabic and English. The episode addresses many challenges concerning the future of the emerging mediascape, including funding, misinformation and propaganda.

Episode 15: Free Press with Hazem AlMazony

14 May 2016 - The episode discusses the limits to the hard-won freedom of expression and the different regulations to journalism work in post-2011 Syria and the diaspora.

Episode 16: Hate Speech in Media with Zeina Erhaim

20 December 2018 - Erhaim is an award-winning Syrian diasporic journalist and media trainer. In the episode, she addresses the rising rate of hate speech, political bias and misinformation in news coverage within the emerging Syrian media landscape.

Episode 17: Free Press with Avene Shaykhoun

(Date missing) - Shaykhoun discusses the different ways of protecting journalists and upholding press freedom amid the rising violence in Syria.

Episode 18: The Last Word

20 February 2020 - This is the last episode of the programme and seemingly the last ever episode broadcast on radio SouriaLi⁸. Different diasporic journalists, including SouriaLi's co-founder, Iyad Kallas, reflect on the radio's journey and the emerging media's attempts to realise social and political change. He also addresses the fragmentation of the political commonality between different groups within the Syrian opposition, which impacted the strategic directions of their affiliated media outlets.

Programme II: A conversation with SouriaLi (*Hiwar SouriaLi*)

Episode 19 - A conversation with Naji ElJarf

13 February 2015 - In this episode, AlJarf argues that different structural factors, including funding and the protracted political crisis, have adversely affected the emerging media scene.

Programme III: Canvas

Episode 20: Journalism between Satire and Constructive Criticism

⁸ The episode is the last to be uploaded on Souriali's digital channels before the broadcasting abruptly concluded.

21 April 2015 - The episode features an important dialogue between the presenters Riham and George about the changing role of media in social construction post-2011. They also discuss the with journalist Malath Al-Zo'bi

Programme IV: Constructive Gossip (*Shelli Bana'a*)

A weekly satire show presented by Batoul Mohamed.

Episode 21: The Radio

10 September 2014 - In its first-ever episode, the programme looks inwardly and addresses its own medium. Batoul Mohamed hosts an unnamed journalist to satirically discuss the history of radio in Syria and the way the regime instrumentalised it for systemic misinformation and propaganda. The pair also delves into the dynamics of funding required to establish diasporic radios within the emerging media scene.

Programme V: Misconception

Episode 22: The Relationship between Media and Politics

27 September 2013 - A satire show format that addresses the legacies of political propaganda and conspiracy in the Syrian media. The episode discusses the different ways in which propaganda was institutionalised in all aspects of life in Syria.

Programme VI: Give/Take (*Akhd wa Ata'a*)

Episode 23: Controlled criticism in Syrian state media: Fake transparency or a genuine attempt to listen to opposing views?

25 January 2015 - This episode is entirely dedicated to discussing the different dynamics of propaganda in the media. The presenter and the audience's inputs highlight the way the regime's propaganda has evolved as many outlets provide alternative narratives on the Syrian conflict, defying the regime's previously enforced control on the means of symbolic production.

Conclusion

The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a primary framework of analysis helps the researcher integrate the theoretical notions of power and ideology into the study of the Syrian diasporic media outlets. Unlike previous studies that centre on the interlocutors of these diasporic outlets as the focus of their enquiry (Arafat, 2021; Badran, 2021; Badran & Smets, 2021), I valorise the media texts and discourses as a site for the interplay of the broader social, political and economic powers that shape the diasporic media practices. Using the three-dimension model of CDA (Fairclough, 1989), the analysis progresses over the corresponding three levels, where I examine the textuality, the practices and the form of the media outlets under study. Nevertheless, CDA is reconfigured for this research to accommodate the particularity of the Syrian context and the pop-up news ecology (Wall & el Zahed, 2014) that emerged to mediate this wave of contentious movement. I follow Carvalho's (2008) conception to integrate two additional aspects to this critical approach to discourse analysis. The first examines the various temporal rhythms where the discourses were produced, and the other focuses on the agency of the interlocutors leading the position of enunciation. The latter requires embedding the multiple positionalities of Syrian activists turned journalists (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) as an integral of the analysis of the media texts and practices under study rather than being just the focus of such analysis. Evidently, I have chosen two diasporic Syrian media outlets as case studies: Rozana and SouriaLi radios, broadcasting in the Arabic language and providing diverse programming targeting Syrians at home and in the diaspora. The funding model adopted by both radios, based on grants from Western donor entities, is also the subject of analysis in chapter 6, where I investigate the power of such economic capital in reconfiguring the diasporic media scene.

Chapter IV

Keywords in Syrian Diasporic Media: Representing Transformations in the Social Space

Introduction

This chapter offers an appraisal of the Syrian diasporic media as a site of symbolic contention shaped by the transformation of social processes in the homeland. The Syrian diasporic media was largely regarded as de facto local media with a temporary headquarters in exile, contingent on the fall of Al-Assad's regime (Tatomir et al., 2020). Thus, I explore the ideological, political and cultural positioning of the digital radios under study within the Syrian social space. I also study the ways in which diasporic actors have appropriated the emerging media as a tool in this symbolic contention to push against the limits of the permissible discourse and challenge the hierarchy of systems of expression in Syria (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010). Since this study is the first to engage with the texts of the Syrian diasporic media, it is essential to set the scene by exploring the textual composition of the different episodes and programmes broadcast on Rozana and SouriaLi radios. The guiding principle for this analytical exercise is Raymond Williams' book (1976), *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, from where the chapter title is derived. This 'keywords approach' is also inspired by Omar Al-Ghazzi's (2022) work recording the broader transformation in Syrian media, culture and politics. Williams' (1976) framework allows us to juxtapose the study of the representation of these social transformations vis-a-vis the way they shape the positioning of the diasporic media in the Syrian context. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is carefully curated in this chapter as an analytical framework "to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures relations and process to investigate how much practices, event and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relation of power and struggles over power" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 132). The focus on the representation of keywords in the first level of CDA corresponds to Fairclough's (1992) view on the way the change in language use in the discourse mirrors wider social and cultural transformations. Hence, this analysis aims to match the discursive practice of the Syrian diasporic media to the social practice of symbolic contention (ibid). The focus on the representation of social processes in the radio programmes

requires an intertextual approach (Porter, 1986) to horizontally examine the framing of these social processes in a specific text in rapport with other texts in the radio programmes. The aim is to provide “a larger mosaic” (Orr, 2010) matching the texts (the discursive practice) in the Syrian diaspora radios to corresponding social practices and elucidate “how the connections are mediated by the nature of the discourse practice” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 269). I also foreground the temporal aspect in studying the representation of the social transformations and how they shape the emerging media per Carvalho’s (2008) reinterpretation of CDA. While Weeden’s (1999) work provides an overview of how state media discourse controls various social processes in a ‘former’ temporality, this chapter studies the representations of the social transformations as artefacts of a new temporality shaping the discursive practice of the Syrian diasporic media.

Discourse as a Site for Symbolic Contention

Media use in contentious movements constitutes an act of resistance in its own right (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) but also aims to achieve the movement’s goals in social/political construction (Cammaerts, 2012). In an interview for *Al Jumhuriya*, Yassin Al Haj Saleh (Naprushkina, 2020) conceptualises a dialectical relationship between the Syrian uprisings and the realm of symbolic contention.

The connection between words and the Syrian revolution is quite basic. The revolution was about appropriating politics; that is, owning talk about public issues and gathering and protesting publicly. Building on this, I think it is quite fair to say our struggle was essentially about words: using them, interpreting them, and protesting with them. Both the revolution and the words have been crushed during nine Trojan years, during which Syria has been reduced to a battlefield of inhuman powers, while Syrians are pushed back to silence and absence; dispersed, impoverished, “subalternised,” and denied a say in their fate.

Saleh articulates the Syrian uprisings as a liminal latitude that allowed previously subjugated voices to temporarily interject the symbolic order as an extension of their contention against a more dominant political power. Similarly, Raymond Williams (1976) argues that the change in the

representation of social processes is catalysed by moments of upheaval. Thus, the symbolic battle for the “words”, as Saleh explains, mirrors Raymond’s (1976) conception of the difference between the value of the same words among different groups in society, “when we come to say ‘we just don’t speak the same language’ we mean something more general: that we have different immediate values or different kinds of valuation, or that we are aware, often intangibly, of different formations and distributions of energy and interest” (p. 11). Therefore, this symbolic contention has ideological, political and cultural implications for the positioning of the discursive practice of the diasporic media in the social space. I examine the representation of three keywords recurrent in the discursive practice, mirroring major social transformations in the Syrian social space: revolution, freedom and red lines. Firstly, I examine the framing of the word revolution, as the heart of the political commonality that propelled the emerging media scene (Badran, 2021). I argue that the representation of the word revolution is related to a broader signification of the ideological positioning of the emerging digital radios. Second, I examine the semantics of the word ‘freedom’ as it emerged prominently throughout the radio episodes. The representation of the word freedom in the text offers an insight into the political positioning of the emerging diasporic media vis-a-vis the traditional institutions of power and the legacies of authoritarian rule (Heydemann, 2013). It also outlines the intricate power dynamics between the emerging media and the new political actors in Syria. Finally, the transformation of the keyword “red lines” mirrors the cultural positioning of the diasporic radios in relation to deep-rooted cultural taboos limiting the work of media in social construction. I also study the ideological, political and cultural positioning of the Syrian diasporic media in this chapter in contrast to the different actors in the Syrian mediascape (as outlined in chapter 1), where the discourse represents a site for symbolic contention between different powers in an attempt to redefine the terms of the public discourse.

Revolution

The radio episodes depict the Syrian revolution as the main event triggering a decade of contention (Tarrow, 1989). It was also a moment of “social disjuncture and cultural anxiety, where the integrative connection between local cultural practices and beliefs (i.e., religion, ritual, common sense) and the social registers of identity (e.g., social status, political participation, conspicuous consumption) becomes compromised” (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008, p. 343). The Syrian uprisings erupted despite the lack of a political environment (Tarrow, 1989) to support its prospects due to

the regime's absolute control over the avenues of civic engagement prior to 2011. The eruption of the uprisings with daring dreams and few political prospects resonates with Marx's (1843) words: "the world has long since dreamed of something of which it needs only to become conscious for it to possess it in reality". Similarly, the information environment that emerged out of this contention was rather sudden and capillary in the absence of a "social environment" (De Angelis, 2011) to support this abundant production of user-generated content. However, media use was certainly constitutive of the initial stages of mobilisation and the wave of transnational contention that ensued after (Salama, 2012). Movement media allowed activists to maintain a conversation with multiple audiences who aligned with the uprisings' objectives (Melucci, 1996; Mattoni & Treré, 2014). It was also instrumental in representing the revolution as a formative ideology constituting a new collective Syrian identity (Cammaerts, 2015; Livingstone, 2007). Nevertheless, the process of representing the revolution as a central ideology of the contentious media was rather complicated as "ideologies cannot be expressed by high-speed information which favours the superficial immediate over the narrative, compressing the complexities of time and history (Harris & Taylor, 2008, p. 182). Therefore, I focus on the relationship between this ideological positioning and the different representational strategies (Cammaerts, 2012; Benford & Snow, 2000) in this chapter and the next.

Freedom

In the last decade, the notion of freedom has been a newly found realm of discovery for Syrians, whether at home or in the diaspora. Before 2011, freedom of expression was entirely lacking in the public discourse and any attempt to pursue it was swiftly sanctioned. The Syrian regime had absolute control over every avenue of the public discourse, enforced through a monopoly over the means of symbolic production (Wedeen, 1999). Notably, the regime tightly controlled mass media, including radio, television and print publications. Even the digital space was heavily censored: For instance, Facebook was banned in Syria from 2007 to 2011, inaccessible to the larger public without the use of a proxy (VPN) (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Moreover, individual Syrian voices were suppressed through mass surveillance of every aspect of Syrian daily life (Wedeen, 1999). Accordingly, the defining trait of the scholarly work on Syria before 2011 was the limited access to ordinary citizens' views and perceptions due to the reluctance of research subjects to express themselves freely, even anonymously (Pearlman, 2016). However, as the uprisings started in 2011,

the previously unuttered word ‘freedom’ suddenly emerged in the realm of the thinkable, making rounds on the streets with protestors calling for freedom using slogans such as “*Suriyya bada huriyyah* (Syria wants freedom)” (Ismail, 2011, p. 544). During the early days of the popular uprisings, ‘freedom’ was imagined as antithetical to the regime’s domination as protestors chanted “*Allah, Souriya, Houriya w Bas*” (God, Syria, Freedom, and that is enough), openly defying an infamous the Baathist slogan: “*Allah, Souriya, Bashar w Bas*” (God, Syria, Bashar and that is enough) (Zeno, 2017). This endeavour to fully seize the hard-fought freedom has been dubbed “the renaissance of freedom of expression” in Syria (Charaf, 2014), whereby Syrians have challenged the single narrative previously dictated by the regime by reclaiming the discursive means of self-expression. This freedom has paved the way for the emergence of innovative forms of digital contention and self-expression (Zayani, 2015) and birthed a dynamic media and civil society scene in Syria and the diaspora. The transformation of this freedom as a social process powered a Syrian journey of rediscovering the different social and political boundaries to discourse and direct action. Accordingly, I explore the different representational strategies employed by the Syrian diasporic journalists in the radio episodes to articulate the transformations of this hard-won freedom. Namely, I study the textual articulations of the word ‘freedom’ in relation to various institutional limitations and censorship mechanisms in post-revolutionary Syria. To examine the role of institutional powers in regulating media freedom, we need to contextualise the conditions of the emergence of the Syrian diasporic media. Before 2011, all institutions of power were concentrated in the hands of the regime (Wedeen, 1999; Badran, 2020). Similar to the lack of the “political environment” (Tarrow, 1989) to support the Syrian uprisings, the alternative mediascape emerged with no existing “social environment” to support it (De Angelis, 2011) due to this power concentration at the hands of the regime. Wall and el Zahed (2014) contend that the emerging Syrian mediascape defies the traditional evolutionary model of “institutional media”, where organisations develop in tandem with supporting laws and social and political backing, taking as long as centuries to form fully. This sudden and disruptive development trajectory of the emerging Syrian media scene was dubbed a “pop-up news” environment (Wall & el Zahed, 2014, p. 720). Effectively, the impulsive actualisation of freedom in this alternative mediascape inadvertently resulted in some negative dynamics, including misinformation, extreme polarisation, echo chambers and rampant discourses of hate and inciting violence (De Angelis, 2011). In this chapter, I explore the dynamics of operating outside the traditional institutions of power and the freedom

of the diasporic media to shape the Syrian social space. The analysis shows that emerging political actors that challenged the regime's power after the uprisings have, in turn, instrumentalised these institutional powers to limit media freedom through censorship.

Red Lines

There is limited literature theorising the notion of red lines in Arab media, given their predominant ability to shape the public discourse. Red lines are largely considered common knowledge among media practitioners working in countries with significant restrictions on freedom of expression as they constitute the limits to the field of the thinkable and the spoken in the media (Benchenna & Marchetti, 2020). In authoritarian countries, the state acts as a custodian of the permissible public discourse and enshrines some of these red lines into national legislation (Hidass, 2016). Specific to Arab media, Samir Kassir (2000) views those red lines as a powerful restrictive tool to the space of press freedom in addition to the already complex legal framework that media outlets have to navigate. In his essay *Red Lines and Media Blues*, he encapsulates the **role** of those red lines in limiting freedom of speech as

Informal weapons [that] are more powerful: the intimidation and manipulation of journalists and publishers determine the news agenda. Journalists learn to avoid certain subjects or resort to a form of 'code' based on understatement and allusion to avoid crossing the tacit 'red lines'. Practical experience makes it clear that the lines are subject to change or, more accurately, displacement that can widen the area of public discussion (Kassir, 2000, p.143)

While the nature of red lines differs from one country to the other, they usually include limits on criticism of the head of state, national security, human rights and religion. As outlined in chapter 1, the limits of the public discourse mandated by the state often allow for controlled spaces of opposition to low-ranking government officials and ministers that routinely take the blame for larger systemic problems (Wedeen, 1999). Moreover, the red lines are largely reproduced through public dissimulation (ibid), which translates into self-censorship within different forms of public expression. Specific to the Syrian context, Lisa Wedeen's study of the Syrian public discourse in

state media pre-2011 yields a comprehensive understanding of the **nature** of these red lines in the public domain.

Syrian writers and actors generally understand that behind the rhetoric of the law lie prohibitions and limits not to be transgressed. Comedians cannot poke fun at religion or make references to sex. Criticisms directed at the regime must be directed only at state institutions, without naming names. Any reference to 'Alawis, or to any minority, is taboo. Under no circumstances can the president's name, or that of any other high official, be mentioned in jest. Tolerated political parodies tend both to operate within these specified guidelines and to probe the boundaries between publicly tolerated expression and the privately lived experiences of political power.” (1999, p. 88)

Under Ba'ath's rule, there were a number of sociocultural and political limits to the discourse of the media, also known as taboos. The 2011 uprisings have caused a radical discontinuity in the Syrian cultural rhythm (Geertz, 1973), opening up the way for new forms of democratic participation and cultural creativity but also for the return of various types of fundamentalisms and nationalisms endemic to the political violence and the social rupture (Blankson & Murphy, 2007; Kraidy & Murphy, 2008). Similarly, the uprisings have galvanised the rise of new actors in the political realm contesting the power of the regime. These political actors who initially managed to capture different regions inside Syria also tried to enforce their own cultural and social ideologies as red lines on the media operating within their jurisdiction (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). This chapter highlights the ways in which the diasporic media resists and adapts to the changing nature of the red lines mandated by the new political actors in Syria.

Positioning the Revolution as an Ideological Affiliation

For this research, I examine the Syrian revolution as a state of liminality that allows a temporary intervention in hegemonic structures, granting previously subjugated social actors the opportunity to reconfigure power relations (Boutieri, 2021). The Syrian uprisings in 2011 are thought to have profoundly reconfigured the collective social and political Syrian identities and imprinted a new form of Syrianness on the people and cities across the country to replace the former identity

enforced by the regime through public dissimulation (Saleh, 2017; Wedeen, 1999). Consequently, I study the word “revolution” in the radio programmes as an identity marker, “an inward-looking signifier to mark who one is, and what political community they belong to” (Al-Ghazzi, 2021, p. 8). The opposition to Al-Assad’s regime is no longer seen as a political stance but rather as an identity marker describing a certain political community (Ibid). This identity marker, I argue, postulates an ideological positioning of the media outlets ascribing to it. Diasporic journalist Hala Kodmani’s statement in episode 1 broadcast on radio Rozana explains that the Syrian revolution represents a symbolic centre of the emerging mediascape holding the different subjectivities of the journalists and activists involved in it. She outlines a timeline of the development of the Syrian citizen journalism that emerged after the 2011 political uprisings and how it mushroomed from individual, uncoordinated efforts sharing news and information (De Angelis, 2011) to self-organised media working on reshaping the Syrian narrative in the global fora.

Hala Kodmani: The opposition media scene that emerged on the sidelines of the revolution is unique. The evolution of this **revolutionary media**, or alternative media or new media as I would prefer to call it, presents a precedent in the practice of journalism in Syria and the Arab World because of its distinct conditions of emergence. At the beginning [of the uprisings], young activists tried to convey the **reality** of what was happening in Syria to **the rest of the world**, so they produced video content and juggled between their activist and journalist roles. Their work was instrumental as it challenged the regime’s enforced media blackout and its orchestrated propaganda... So the [new] media evolved from the initial efforts of these activists documenting the uprisings to them gaining some hands-on journalistic training, all the while **maintaining the political and revolutionary objective that propelled this movement**. Eventually, these media activists from different backgrounds started to professionalise and organise their work into new media outlets, including newspapers, magazines, radio and websites across the political spectrum. We are witnessing a frenzy of media opposing the regime. However, this flourishing scene needs time to accumulate professional journalism experience.

(Episode 1 of the programme *Syrian Talk* broadcast on radio Rozana, 19 April 2015)

In the statement, Kodmani articulates the revolution as the main event that triggered the liminal states of activism and journalism among Syrian media practitioners. Hence, emerging Syrian

journalists act as intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984) with an interpretive role (Zelizer, 1993), relaying “the reality” about the revolution to “the rest of the world”. Kodmani outlines the evolution of the individual efforts to challenge the regime’s propaganda and how they developed into a more networked reporting, galvanising a narrative where the revolution is represented at its ideological centre. The discourse is seen here as an extended site of contention where Syrian journalists attempt to represent and articulate the revolution through their connection to external actors (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Therefore, it mirrors the political space of contention where “different media actors with different forms of organisation, adopting various formats and different ideological frames” as per the typical architecture of Cammaerts’ (2012, p. 120) mediation opportunity structure. In this space of contention, the word *revolution* has been entirely missing from the discourse of the state-controlled Syrian media on the unfolding violence in the last decade (episode 1, radio Rozana, April 2015). Instead, this revolution is being designated as *terrorism, sabotage and conspiracy* (episode 22, radio SouriaLi, September 2013; episode 23, radio SouriaLi, January 2015). Thus, the state-owned media is pushing against this symbolic contention with counter-discourses aiming to contest the ideological positioning of the Syrian revolution. The regime’s symbolic othering aimed to position those who ideologically ascribe to the revolution initially as “*mundassun* (foreign infiltrators)” and then “radical Islamic terrorists” later (Sinatora, 2019, p. 5). The latter recently conflated with an international media narrative that fixated on frames of radicalism and violence (ibid). Hence, journalists in the radio episodes place particular importance on the articulation of the word revolution as a discursive frame denoting the Syrian uprisings. In episode 2, broadcast on radio Rozana, diasporic journalist Sakhr Idris contends that the main reason for the conflation of the discursive frames in representing the revolution is the lack of a robust narrative ideologically positioning the uprisings in opposition media.

Shakr Idris: I was shocked to learn that some Africans or Europeans who do not know much about the Syrian revolution ... just think of it as a ‘conflict’; I insisted that it is, in fact, a revolution, a revolution.

Presenter: They call it a ‘conflict’ or a ‘civil war’.

Sakhr Idris: Absolutely, they just call it ‘conflict’ or ‘civil war’; so I made a point of calling it a revolution in the speech I gave because they told me they did

not know much about what is happening in Syria except that it is in a civil war. The media fell short here; this was the coalition's⁹ responsibility.

(Episode 2 of the programme Syrian Talk broadcast on radio Rozana, 11 August 2015)

Operationalising the diasporic media's ideological affiliation to the revolution

Activists and citizen journalists ascribe to the revolution as an identity signifier rather than an explicit political affiliation (Al-Ghazzi, 2021; Sinatora, 2019). Nonetheless, this signification entails an ideological positioning whereby “it is used by [a] group to distance themselves from the government and to avoid identifying themselves automatically with any forms of official political opposition” (Sinatora, 2019, p. 6). In Kodmani’s earlier statement (episode 1, radio Rozana, 19 April 2019), she presumes that the ideological articulation carried by the individual activists in their reporting on the revolution would also be at the centre of their discursive practice in more networked media settings (or movement media as Cammarets (2012; 2015) articulates it). In this section, I explore the ways in which the diasporic media outlets under study operationalise their ideological affiliation to the revolution. I argue that the media outlets under study associate with the revolution as a social ideology, whereas their professional ideology is guided by the governmentality of the media assistance organisations that predicate the promotion of democratic values of good governance as a basis for the practice of journalism (Miller, 2009). First, radio Rozana’s director, Lina Chawaf, expresses a rather intricate view of the radio’s ideological and political stances vis-a-vis the Syrian revolution that propelled its emergence.

Presenter: Is it possible for a Syrian media outlet to remain neutral amid a revolution or a power struggle between two parties? In other words, how do you operationalise your neutral position? Do you equally cover the regime's views, the opposition or the popular uprisings against Al-Assad? Do you stand in the middle between those opposing powers?

Lina Chawaf: Rozana stands by the civilians who mobilised the 2011 revolution, not the warring groups currently fighting for power. So Rozana is in the middle but closer to the people on the ground, who still suffer the consequences of the ongoing power struggle. So to answer your question, Rozana does not really stand in the middle; it is closer to the (Syrian) people and revolution than the regime, but not at all from a political perspective.

(Episode 6, Supplemental interview, France24, 16 July 2013)

⁹ The Syrian political opposition

In this statement, Chawaf articulates a distinction between Rozana's affiliation with the revolution as an identity marker (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) and its association with the revolution as a political stance. She contends that radio Rozana is only ideologically affiliated with the revolution from a social perspective ("with the people") while distancing the outlet from any political association with it. This conception problematises the universality of the 'oppositional media' (Badran, 2020) as a discursive frame denoting the practices of Syrian media in the diaspora. Despite its conditions of emergence against a moment of political upheaval, Chawaf's statement confirms that radio Rozana would not engage in transnational contention. This assertion poses an even more profound dilemma in studying these diasporic outlets as 'movement media' actively engaged in promoting counter-discourses and movement frames for the advancement of the social/political movement (Cammaerts, 2015). In chapter 5, I explore the tension between this stance on Rozana's declared lack of involvement in politics and the discourse of the radio programmes mediating an intrinsically political moment of upheaval in Syrian history. In this chapter, however, I focus on the ideological positioning of the Syrian diasporic radios and the factors shaping it. Moving from the social ideology to the professional one, Lugo-Ocando (2020) argues that media assistance is constitutive of the professional ideology of grant-funded journalism in transitional and conflict settings in the Global South. In the mapping of the Syrian mediascape propelled by the 2011 uprisings (see chapter 1), media actors were labelled across the political divide: pro-regime, pro-opposition or independent media (Issa, 2016). The outlets funded by the international media assistance organisations were largely regarded in the literature as independent (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018; Issa, 2016). Denoting the grant-funded media as independent is indicative of the lack of explicit political affiliations. Yet, in episode 15, broadcast on radio Souriali, journalist Hazem AlMazony proclaims that even the new media described as 'independent' within a politically polarised emerging Syrian mediascape is still ideologically inclined from a professional perspective due to the governmentality of their funding model.

Hazem AlMazony: In my opinion, even after the revolution, we still do not have a free press as most [outlets] adopt a favourable agenda to cater to the funding they receive. Many factors restrict the work of (emerging) media activists and practitioners, such as funding and agendas; both affect press freedom the most. Hence, the mediascape is generally biased, but there is a difference between a professional media with some biases and another that is just a mouthpiece for a certain entity... After the uprisings, we realised that the notion of a 'free press' could not be fully materialised; the best we could hope for is professional journalism that abides by international codes and ethics. Such press, however, is

not entirely independent either as funding entities stipulate specific agendas to be endorsed, including ‘democracy’, for instance. I realise that promoting democracy is [valuable and desirable] in principle, but it is still an agenda, after all. Effectively, this means that [democracy] as an agenda controls what the media outlet adopting it can publish... Therefore, there are some restrictions.

(Episode 15 of the programme *From One Story to Another*, broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 14 May 2016)

AlMazony's statement seconds the media mapping reflected in the literature where he views the politically-funded and affiliated outlets within the emerging mediascape as an extension of the legacy of propaganda, instrumentalised for political gains by the entities controlling them. On the other hand, he distinguishes another type of emerging media that aspires to professionalisation and is funded by international media assistance organisations. In a politically polarised media environment (De Angelis, 2011), emerging diasporic radios turned to funding from media assistance organisations as a more ethical alternative to other sources of income (Sakr, 2016) and given the fact they are unable to generate revenue through traditional means of advertising because of the conditions of war and exile. In his statement, AlMazony warns that these grant-funded outlets are, too, compelled to encode a professional ideology (or what he calls “an agenda”) within their editorial lines. He argues that this professional ideology hinders the grant-funded media's editorial independence as it is bound to promote certain ideals or values, such as democracy, as he mentioned. De Angelis et al. (2014) distinguish a new type of independent radios emerging in the Syrian mediascape focused on social programming, debating civil society issues in “street language”. AlMazony's statement postulates the question of whether such social programming coupled with a deliberate disengagement in politics (Chawaf's previous statement) could be the result of the ideological positioning mandated by the governmentality of media assistance organisations. Miller (2009) contends that funding entities often seek to promote a Western style of journalism that favours “a detached, disinterested observer role; a nonpartisan intermediary position between citizens and elected officials” (p. 15). This logic is embedded in broader development theories on the role of media in promoting democracy and good governance in transitional or post-conflict settings (Berger, 2010; Higgins, 2014; Badran, 2020). However, the basis of this logic is the almost casual assumption about the relationship between western media/journalism and the advancement of democratic self-governance (Miller, 2009), disregarding the specificities of the local sociocultural and political contexts. Democracy in the episodes is coded as an ‘ideology’; this does not necessarily cast it in an unfavourable light but acknowledges

its influence as a professional ideology on the editorial content of the diasporic media outlets. However, this postulation alludes to a broader question: To what extent the diasporic media's discourses are primarily focused on civil society issues (De Angelis et al., 2014) relevant in the Syrian social space amid the restitution of Al-Assad's power? In chapter 6, I explore the articulation between this ideological positioning of the diasporic radios and their social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Specifically, I examine how the ideological inclination of the grant-funded diasporic radios and their relationship dynamics with media assistance organisations is perceived as detrimental to establishing trust with their target audience.

Professional Ideologies in a Polarised Mediascape

Previously, I have explored the ideological positioning of the Syrian diasporic media from a social and professional perspective. I further interrogate the professional ideology of the Syrian diasporic media and its contingency on the premise of disengaging from politics. The digital radios under study present social programming based on the Syrian revolution as a (social) ideology but abstain from engaging in politics despite its conditions of emergence against a monumental political event (Badran, 2020). This declared political abstinence distinguished the diasporic media from other politically affiliated media (Issa, 2016) that saturated the Syrian mediascape. However, the operationalisation of such professional ideology has been rather challenging, per the statement of diasporic journalist Zeina Erhaim who describes the dilemma facing independent media outlets in an increasingly polarised information environment (De Angelis, 2011).

Zeina Erhaim: All parties involved in the conflict have affiliated media outlets that promote [favourable] narratives and [spew propaganda] when needed. It is all very similar to the regime's propaganda... Those trying to stay independent, countering this propaganda and laying the groundwork for a truly alternative media scene... are targeted with harassment and intimidation... and were exiled from Syria early on in the conflict... There is an assumption that media practitioners should fully dedicate their work to the opposition of the Syrian regime; otherwise, they would be accused of being complicit and sellouts.... So it is not easy to maintain a distance from all [the ideological and political] forces. For instance, [an outlet] once covered a friendly football game between two teams of people who are differently abled in Damascus but received backlash for such coverage because it was seen as favourable for the regime as it shines a light on a positive development taking place in Damascus. So it is not an easy task to remain objective and impartial, but it is essential. Nonetheless, emerging media outlets joined forces to establish a standard code of ethics to ensure objective and professional coverage. I believe that

many of the emerging Syrian media outlets have the potential to grow into established media organisations. However, the biggest hurdle in the path to professionalisation is the growing ideological influence pushing for the politicisation of the nascent media scene.

(Episode 16 of the programme *From One Story to Another* broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 20 December 2018)

This particular episode was broadcast in 2018, as the regime forces slowly but steadily regained control over most of the rebel-held areas in Syria (Bulos, 2018). The restitution of the regime's power signals the dissolution of the initial demand binding the Syrian opposition calling for the removal of Al-Assad. The statement describes the difficulties facing the independent Syrian media (including the grant-funded digital radios in our case) with their social programming to reconfigure their role in a post-revolutionary society. Erhaim argues that this transition is complicated by the expectation that journalists and media practitioners affiliated with the Syrian revolution fully encode their political stance, opposing the Syrian regime, in all aspects of their editorial content. Given the shrinking grounds of contention against the regime in Syria, the media discourse is seen as an alternative realm of contention, a symbolic one. The statement highlights the extent to which the emerging media outlets' political neutrality has been deemed complacency and an abandonment of the revolution. Both Erhaim and Chawaf (episode 6, France 24, July 2013) contend that the survivability of the emerging Syrian media in a post-revolutionary society is through adopting "the revolution" as a social ideology with no political or professional connotations. Lastly, Erhaim contends that such survival can only be guaranteed through the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the emerging media scene. I will revisit this debate in chapter 6, where I explore the dynamics between the institutionalisation of the emerging media, its engagement in politics and the governmentality of the media assistance organisations. Meanwhile, the next section explores the challenges facing the Syrian diasporic media in operationalising the hard-won freedom of expression it gained after the 2011 uprisings outside the traditional institutions of power.

Revolutionary Freedom in a Post-Revolutionary Setting

In this section, I will examine freedom of expression as a social process, mediatised with the start of the Syrian uprisings and enabling the flourishing of an emerging media scene to challenge the regime's domination over the means of symbolic production (Charaf, 2014). The role of journalism

has been reclaimed from being instrumentalised as a tool to propagandise for the state and redirected towards informing and educating Syrian citizens (Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Accordingly, the period following the 2011 uprisings in Syria was marked by an initial euphoric rush of freedom, or a “frenzy” as one of the diasporic journalists called it (episode 1, radio Rozana, April 2015), where hundreds of media outlets emerged across the lines of the political divide (Issa, 2016). Nonetheless, diasporic journalists in the radio episodes discuss how such uncoordinated freedom of expression (De Angelis, 2011) clashed with other institutional and social legacies of authoritarian rule (Heydemann, 2013) in Syria. In the radio episodes, diasporic journalists described the infusion of freedom in the public discourse as the central element of the reconfiguration of the Syrian media landscape following the 2011 uprisings. Press freedom emerged as the top subject of discussion in the examined programmes in episodes 3, 7, 8, 9, 14 and 17 across both radios, Souriali and Rozana. However, the radio episodes I studied are marked by competing discourses on freedom, whereby journalists celebrate how instrumental it was in reviving their practice but also how they struggle with operationalising it on a transnational level without the traditional support of various institutions of power. Hence, this discursive tension presents a perspective on freedom as a rubric, conditional on different temporal and spatial settings. Episode 8, broadcast on radio Rozana, was entirely dedicated to discussing how the revolutionary aspirations for freedom of expression clashed with various social and political institutions of power in Syria. Diasporic journalist Walaa Kharmanda argues that exploring the terms of such freedom cannot be determined outside the institutional framework of legislative powers.

Walaa Kharmanda: Perhaps it is a lot easier to discuss the idea of freedom [in theory], but when it comes to defining it in laws and regulations, things become a lot trickier. It is too general, and trying to work out the specificities takes much work because a lot rests on how we define freedom of expression, including press freedom.

(Episode 8 of the programme *Siamedia* broadcast on radio Rozana, 27 August 2017)

The word freedom in the text emerges in relation to a number of institutional and regulatory powers necessary for its operationalisation. In its long reign over Syria, the Ba’ath party has established a firm grip on the country's different institutions of public life. The state security apparatus entirely subsumed various aspects of civic participation and public expression. For instance, publishing

houses, public broadcasters, television stations and newspapers have been directly controlled by the state or privately outsourced to businessmen tightly associated with Ba'ath's inner circle (Wedeen, 1999). Saleh (2017) explains that "the ideology of this [ruling] class is 'Development and Modernization,' and it simultaneously denies the necessity for political reform while giving a 'modern' appearance to the regime's elite" (p. 9). Notably, the regime fronted a number of media organisations that relayed different iterations of the state's official narrative (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Thus, the institutionalisation of public expression and civic participation was essential to the consolidation of power amassed by the regime to ensure total public dissimulation (Wedeen, 1999). Nonetheless, the 2011 uprisings have disrupted the regime's stronghold on some avenues of public life by making them accessible to Syrians for the first time in over six decades. Consequently, Syrian journalists had to reconfigure the blueprint of operationalising their newly-found freedom outside the institutional setting co-opted by the regime. In episode 8, Ali Eid, head of the Association for Syrian Journalists, describes the importance of the institutionalisation efforts for the emerging media scene to counterpower the regime's propaganda and transform the social space.

Presenter: What kind of change did the new revolutionary media bring about?

Ali Eid: The revolution has created some margins of freedom for the emerging media; this stands in contrast with the lack of freedom that the state-controlled Syrian media suffered from before 2011. However, the emerging media scene is disjointed because it lacks the organisational structure that the state-controlled media had before the revolution. Media freedom requires an institutional framework to regulate it on an operational level. Professional journalism requires an organisational structure to thrive... Currently, most of the emerging Syrian media outlets function just as platforms for sharing news; I have not seen any potential so far for institutionalisation. Despite all the funding these outlets receive from donor organisations or political parties, they have failed to lay the groundwork for a single established media organisation. So, these media outlets need to establish an institutional framework that regulates their work and allows them to monitor their progress. This emerging media scene was born in a time of uncertainty, which affected its strategic priorities. However, it is time to set some frameworks to ensure the practice of professional journalism within this emerging media field. I am not suggesting that these organisational codes dictate what journalists can or cannot cover, but they should be implemented to achieve professional conduct.

(Episode 7 of the programme *Siamedia* broadcast on radio Rozana, 16 July 2017)

Eid's statement foregrounds a postulation that the development of the emerging media scene can only be achieved through institutionalisation (in accordance with Zeina Erhaim's previous statement in episode 16). He contends that the networked model adopted by the new media outlets

can only counter the regime's propaganda once it reaches a certain level of institutionalism, providing it with enough power to transform the social space. His statement mirrors Castells' (2000) conception that "political institutions are not the site of power any longer. The real power is the power of instrumental flows, and cultural codes, embedded in networks" (p. 24). Evidently, the case for the emerging Syrian mediascape corresponds to Castells' (1996, 2009) conception of how digital communications fostered the rise of a network society. The initial capillary efforts were constituted of individual nodes spread across Syria, providing news and information on the unfolding violence (De Angelis, 2011). Despite concerted efforts to create a collaborative media environment, many of the media ventures within this digital information environment in the first years of the uprisings have tended to be the work of individuals (Ramsay & Riegert, 2012). Eventually, the network's nodes began to galvanise through the processes of mass self-communication (Wall & el Zahed, 2014), which is "self-generated," "self-directed", and even "self-selected" (Castells, 2009, p. 70). The emerging media scene sought to "counterpower" (Ibid, p. 431) the institutional domination of the regime. However, its quest to create an alternative information environment outside the traditional framework failed to reach an inadequate level of institutionalisation to transform the social space. There have been many attempts to institutionalise the emerging media scene through collaborative regulatory frameworks to substitute for the lack of national legislative powers. These frameworks aim to regulate freedom of expression in the emerging media sphere, creating an alternative to the formal institutional ecosystem traditionally supporting the practice of journalism. These attempts were mainly established in the diaspora encompassing a coalition of independent (ideologically aligned) media outlets to substitute the traditional authority of the institutions of power to implement standardised codes of ethics and mechanisms for accountability. Among these initiatives are the Ethical Charter for Syrian Media (see chapter 3) and the Association for Syrian Journalists. Moreover, media assistance organisations funding the emerging outlets trialled a number of collaborative initiatives to coordinate resource sharing between different Syrian radios (Dollet, 2015). However, these initiatives remain non-binding and self-implemented without the centralised authority of a national or legislative institution. Finally, I address Eid's last remark, "I am not suggesting that these organisational codes dictate what journalists can or cannot cover". Notably, such attempts to regulate the work of the emerging mediascape through relegating the watchdog powers to an external entity remain a challenge between the need to institutionalise freedom to reclaim the role

of journalism in social construction on the one hand and fears of arbitrary censorship and crackdown on the other hand. These debates will be addressed in a later section on the red lines limiting the freedom of the Syrian diasporic media.

Freedom and the Censorship of new political actors

The emerging media scene that developed outside the Syrian regime's control has mainly thrived in exile due to the targeted violence against journalists in Syria (Dollet, 2015; Reporters Without Borders, 2013). However, the primary aspiration for this diasporic media was to reach and represent all Syrians at home and in the diaspora, acting as a de facto local media (Tatomir et al., 2020). Evidently, the exilic condition of these media outlets was seen as temporary and contingent upon the fall of the regime (ibid). The analysis shows that in addition to the regime's attempts to control the Syrian information environment, new political actors are also implicated in limiting the freedom of the emerging media. Thus, this section answers the question, how do the emerging political actors in Syria contend with the space of freedom gained by the diasporic media outlets? On radio Rozana, episodes 8 and 9 focused on a significant instance for the diasporic media scene operating in Syria. This case is particularly pertinent for the research as the magazine was one of many Syrian media outlets registered in the diaspora, operating online but maintaining a limited presence inside rebel-held areas in Syria (see chapter 3). In 2017, the city of Duma was under the control of an armed group called Jaysh Al-Islam, where Rising for Freedom magazine's office was based. Despite the significant challenges of working under the rule of the de facto authority of Jaysh Al-Islam, Rising for Freedom circulated print copies of the magazine in the city and the surrounding region. In February 2017, the magazine faced a violent backlash due to a published opinion article deemed "blasphemous". Violent protestors raided and vandalised the office building of Rising for Freedom magazine. The fallout of the incident escalated as the local court under the de facto authorities' jurisdiction ordered a ban on the magazine's circulation and the closure of its field office in Duma. Moreover, a number of the magazine staff were sentenced to prison in absentia. The incident sent shockwaves across the emerging Syrian media scene as it was the first incident where a total ban had been imposed on a media outlet in a region outside the regime's control. Statements from episode 8, broadcast on radio Rozana by Ibrahim Alhussein, a manager at the Association for Syrian Journalists in Germany, and Ossama Nassar, former deputy of the editor-in-chief of the magazine, highlight pertinent points that I will address in this section.

Ibrahim Al-Hussein: [...] Regarding Rising for Freedom magazine, I am wondering who gave the right to the de facto group controlling the region to shut down the offices of a media outlet? What kind of legitimacy or jurisdiction does this de facto group have to authorise such action? There should always be specific [media] laws and judicial independence that can act as arbitrary to hold media outlets accountable and prevent any political interference or religious bias....However, abiding by press regulations and codes of ethics promulgated by the de facto authorities gives legitimacy to their control over the liberated regions, which I am personally uncomfortable with because these groups have committed several violations that the media is trying to hold them accountable for in the first place...

(Episode 8 of the programme *Siamedia* broadcast on radio Rozana, 27 August 2017)

Ossama Nassar: It is a political matter, after all, and the article in question was used as an excuse to dismantle the independent civil [society's] work that does not recognise the authority of the de facto group... Banning media outlets has now become a thing of the past (obsolete) as new [digital] outlets do not necessarily need to go through a licencing process and cannot technically be tracked. During the trial [the blasphemy charges against Rising for Freedom magazine], I asked the (judges) how are you banning the magazine when it is not even registered within your jurisdiction? ...

(Episode 8 of the programme *Siamedia* broadcast on radio Rozana, 27 August 2017)

The statements from the episodes articulate two important points in relation to the dynamics between the new political actors in Syria and the freedom of the emerging diasporic media. First, new political actors have sought to enforce censorship on emerging media outlets. This debate is ideal for testing the assumption made in the literature about the Syrian diasporic media being a defacto local media (Tatomir et al., 2020) and the extent to which these recent censorship attempts would curtail the efforts of diasporic media to access the local community (Rodríguez, 2011) inside Syria. Many Syrian diasporic media outlets are based and registered abroad due to the obvious legislative challenges of operating inside Syria (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). Yet, they remain largely reliant on a network of correspondents based inside Syria and a target audience living in opposition-held areas in the country (Tatomir et al., 2020). Even with its local distribution and the presence of its office inside Syria, Rising for Freedom magazine, from a legal perspective, is registered as a charity in Canada to be able to manage the financial and logistical aspects. In fact, it is not uncommon among emerging media outlets to register in different jurisdictions as a legal fallback measure and to facilitate the receipt of funding from multiple sources (Badran & Smets,

2021). Media licencing and registration issues in rebel-held areas are particularly arbitrary due to “chaotic power structures and lack of governance” (Issa, 2016, p. 15). As Badran (2020) explains: “being a recognised legal entity provides the media actors, both as individuals and as organisations, some protection from the ambiguous and arbitrary activation and application of regulations” (p. 82). Yet, the legal framework of operation of the diasporic media scene in Syria cannot be seen “through a black and white prism” as it operates in a complex and fluid environment where a number of geopolitical factors and powers affect its role (Issa, 2016, p. 21). In the last decade, Syria was primarily regarded as a politically non-unitary state (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018), which rendered the attempts to formalise the emerging media scene impractical. Hence, media outlets seeking to reach audiences inside Syria, especially in rebel-held areas, had to register abroad legally, whether in Turkey or Europe, while maintaining an on-the-ground presence inside the country (Ibid). Al-Hussein’s statement from episode 8 broadcast on radio Rozana suggests that this local presence in opposition-ruled areas is relatively informal. The lack of a clear legal framework regulating the work of diaspora media in this context gives grounds to political actors to exercise arbitrary censorship, limiting the margin of freedom these media outlets are allowed. He also contends that any formal cooperation between these diasporic media and the de facto authority of the armed groups could inadvertently provide legitimacy to the paramilitary rule of these groups. Similarly, the magazine’s former deputy editor-in-chief perceives the censorship of media freedom as a show of power by these armed groups in opposition-controlled areas in Syria to intimidate civil actors and settle political scores. In other words, independent diasporic media operating in rebel-held areas of Syria represents a symbolic resistance to the de facto rule of the armed factions who, in turn, seek to censor contentious media discourse. Noteworthy, the violent backlash faced by Rising for Freedom magazine was not only due to the lack of regulatory frameworks. The incident also had a social component where the content published by the magazine was seen as offensive to the religious beliefs of the local audience. The public backlash was then mobilised by the de facto political authority to issue the first total ban on a media outlet in a rebel-held area in Syria. Therefore, informal social pressures also shape and sometimes limit media freedom as they dictate the ‘red lines’ that journalists cannot cross, whereby any attempts to challenge society’s informal taboos are met with severe repercussions for press freedom. In the following section, I will explore the ways in which informal social pressures and cultural considerations shape the limits of public discourse and affect the margins of freedom of the Syrian

diasporic media. The second point elucidated by Nassar in episode 8 pertains to the traditional/digital modes of engagement pursued by the diasporic media to reach their audience inside Syria. In the first few years following the uprisings, diasporic media outlets pursued a hybrid approach to operation encompassing digital and traditional platforms. This hybrid approach enabled the diasporic media to reach different groups in Syria and abroad. Namely, traditional means of publishing/broadcasting were essential in reaching the Syrian audience in rebel-held areas, whose internet access is interrupted by the conditions of violence and infrastructure deficits (Overton & Dathan, 2019). Notably, magazines and newspapers would be produced and printed in nearby Turkey and shipped to print circulation across the border in rebel-held areas in Syria (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018; Badran, 2020), with the published material available online for digital consumption. Similarly, diasporic radios have pursued attempts at FM broadcasting inside Syria to improve access to the local community (Rodríguez, 2011). Several factors contributed to the demise of the diasporic media's reliance on traditional platforms as the crisis protracted, including financial and logistical challenges (Dollet, 2015). For instance, in episode 18, broadcast on radio Souriali, diasporic journalist Iyad Kallas describes a blow to SouriaLi's access inside Syria as the radio could not continue its FM broadcasting in the country (episode 18, radio Souriali, February 2020). Nonetheless, the analysis in this section focusing on the crackdown on Rising for Freedom magazine showcases an often-understudied correlation in the study of the emerging Syrian media. I argue that the censorship of the new political actors has contributed to the diasporic media's resolve to digital broadcasting/publishing to avoid a potential crackdown. In chapter 6, I address the relationship between access to the local community and the broader sustainability of the Syrian diasporic media as a field. Future research is needed to study the implications of the diasporic media's sole reliance on digital affordances and the patterns of audience engagement. In the next section, I explore the social and cultural taboos mobilised by the new political actors in Syria to enforce censorship over the emerging diasporic media.

Pushing against The Red Lines: Resisting the Social and Cultural Taboos

Building on the previous analysis of the institutional challenges facing the operationalisation of media freedom, I present a more vertical look at how the legacies of social and cultural taboos shape the discursive practice of the Syrian diasporic radios. The nature of the red lines, as outlined in the literature, extends to different political and social topics and symbols (Wedeen, 1999; Kassir,

2000). Before the 2011 uprisings, the state was the main actor policing the public discourse and enforcing these red lines as it controlled various institutions of power. I argue that the new political actors in the Syrian context have, in turn, sought to control the limits of the public discourse through certain social and cultural ideologies (taboos). These taboos of social and cultural nature are deliberately ambiguous to allow those controlling the limits of the public discourse to manipulate them as they see fit (episode 8, radio Rozana, 27 August 2017). However, the studied episodes showcase evidence that the diasporic radios are actively attempting to reconfigure the terms of the public discourse amid an ever-changing nature of the cultural red lines. This debate highlights the cultural positioning of the emerging diasporic media vis-a-vis dominant cultural hegemonies controlling the Syrian public discourse. I highlight different statements from episode 13, broadcast on radio Rozana, dedicated to discussing the different aspects of the so-called 'red lines' and how they shape Syrian journalists' work with a special focus on diaspora media. Firstly, Mona Farag's statement outlines how political institutions of power (legislation) under the auspices of the state play a central role in invoking and upholding red lines.

Mona Farag: ... In Syria, for instance, some [red lines] are enshrined in the national codes and press-related legislations while others are rooted in the collective culture, costumes and heritage of the society. The latter is always considered a grey area and is often dependent on the form of media, the age of the target audience and the nature of the topic in question.

Presenter: So the society and the ruling regimes can control what journalists can and cannot publish?

Mona Farag: of course.

(Episode 13 of the programme *Street Echo* broadcast on Radio Rozana, 17 November 2020)

The statement denotes two types of red lines, state-mandated (political) red lines protected in legislation and another sociocultural type derived from dominant collective ideologies. The diasporic media, the focus of this study, have managed to challenge the political red lines imposed by Al-Assad's regime. Nonetheless, it is still struggling to push against the legacy of the deep-rooted ideological red lines that continue to limit their freedom of expression. Notably, pushing against the legacy of social and cultural taboos requires the nascent media scene to navigate various complex historical and sociocultural frameworks. These enshrined social and cultural taboos have persisted in the new Syrian public sphere even after the disruption of the regime's domination over the means of public expression. Instead of the regime being the main figure controlling the limits

of the permissible discourse, new political actors assumed the role of enacting these limits. In the same episode, Safwan Kassam articulates how the different political actors weaponise social and cultural taboos as red lines to curtail the work of journalists and media practitioners.

Presenter: To what extent do societies, or some groups in the society, help create their own taboos?

Safwan: ... A taboo is a byproduct of the powers of politics, religion and economic conditions with added societal sensitivities towards certain topics. Nowadays, the media is preemptively creating taboos about certain topics not to aggravate their target audience.... Our media is under [political] control, so those controlling the media instrumentalise such taboos to sanction any attempts to digress from the official narrative....

(Episode 13 of the programme *Street Echo* broadcast on Radio Rozana, 17 November 2020)

The statement highlights the ability of political actors to instrumentalise social and cultural taboos to sanction ideologically contentious media discourses. It also relates to an earlier statement by Osama Nassar, Rising for Freedom's former deputy editor-in-chief (Episode 8, radio Rozana, August 2017). He perceived the backlash against the magazine as politically motivated due to the outlet's ideological differences with the armed group ruling the region where it is based. Episode 13 addresses another instance of social backlash faced by radio Rozana for trespassing a red line and engaging in a conversation about a topic deemed controversial. Journalist Pascale Sauma shares her view on the incident.

Presenter: Last week, a published piece on radio Rozana stirred many controversies. Some audience members are calling for a "code of conduct" to **morally** guide the work of emerging journalists.

Pascale Sauma: *laughs* Yes, they would love to morally police the work of journalists ... Media ethics are important, but this is another attempt to weaponise them against journalists. This new or alternative media has brought along change and redefined outdated concepts. I believe that digital media and open information sources have rendered the notion of 'red lines' somehow obsolete. So, **the more topics the new media addresses, the more taboos it unmasks**, given how narrow the topics mainstream media used to address. In Syria and across the Arab World, mainstream media is generally a mouthpiece for the ruling regime, so there was no space for freedom of expression to discuss new topics and exchange ideas. Following the Arab Spring, many emerging media outlets such as radio Rozana and others represented the new winds of change and broke the mould by addressing new topics. I cannot believe that with all the openness afforded by social media platforms, we are still debating whether media outlets should be allowed to discuss feminist topics or topics of sexual nature.

(Episode 13 of the programme *Street Echo* broadcast on Radio Rozana, 17 November 2020)

Before 2011, social and political institutions of power were under the regime's total control and co-opted to enforce censorship on the media through mechanisms such as weaponising licensing and press legislation (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). In contrast, I have outlined in the previous section that the diasporic media's attempts to institutionalise media freedom through collaborative frameworks of accountability outside the traditional establishments of power (Atton, 2001). Nevertheless, the previous statement highlights a fear that these collaborative frameworks could potentially be, in turn, instrumentalised to re-introduce some form of censorship on the emerging media as per the regime's historical practices (outlined in chapter 1). I focus on a particular part of the statement where Sauma explains how the new media has redefined the way journalism is practised and perceived. On the one hand, the power of digital affordances galvanises a new form of media not bound by the agenda-setting practices of the regime-controlled mainstream media. On the other hand, these digital affordances have also allowed for a greater media literacy on the audience's part, where they can access information beyond the scope of the traditional media's agenda setting. Sauma points at a transitional phase, or what I call in the theoretical framework (chapter 2) a liminal habitus, a transitive period or a state of in-betweenness where personal and collective habitus transformation takes place (Turner, 1969; 1974; Bourdieu, 1984). This liminal state allows previously subjugated voices (the new media and the audiences) to push against the limits of the public discourse, reconfiguring the hierarchy of systems of expression (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010). As the discussion progresses, the presenter and guest in episode 13, broadcast on radio Rozana, address the limitations of the new form of media enabled through digital affordances.

Presenter: But Pascale, allow me to present the other point of view: some people believe that “Syrian” media outlets such as Rozana should cater to the needs of that Syrian audience, including respecting the limits of the public discourse set by such a society¹⁰. What do you think?

Pascale Sauma: This is a classical debate. Who sets the agenda, the audience or the media outlet? I believe the media has a formative role in society by raising awareness and providing information on contemporary issues. Also, let me ask you this, who gets to decide what the ‘Syrian society’ wants? Now that Syrians are scattered across the globe, are they all looking for the same media content?

¹⁰ media should account for the sensitive topics considered off-limits for the society they're addressing

This is a lazy assumption, stereotyping ‘what the Syrian society wants’ without considering the nuances. Who says that young Syrians in this day and age are still interested in the same outdated topics and media takes?

(Episode 13 of the programme *Street Echo* broadcast on Radio Rozana, 17 November 2020)

The presenter posits whether the new (digital) media should keep some aspects of the traditional media’s approach to the audience to avoid controversies. He evokes the word “respect” when talking about the emerging Syrian radio in reference to the historical paternalistic role of public broadcasting at the hands of government control (Ayish, 2010). The presenter’s statement postulates that the new media’s attempts to push against the limits of the public discourse could be potentially sanctionable similar to the regime’s crackdown on symbolic transgression¹¹ (Wedeen, 1999). This, in turn, transforms the new media into a symbolic “site for social struggle” (McCurdy, 2010, p. 44), where it tries to consolidate the cultural gains of the Syrian uprisings. In response, Sauma asks, “who sets the agenda, the audience or the media outlet?” both actors were previously subjugated under the regime’s symbolic domination that controlled the terms of the public discourse. In the liminal conditions, however, this cultural/social struggle is an opportunity for empowerment or disempowerment for these actors to reconfigure the hierarchy of the symbolic order (Papacharissi, 2015; Yang, 2000). Thus, this multiplicity of voices could eventually lead to the democratisation of the public discourse or the restitution of the domination of the more dominant actors. While the emerging diasporic media have created unprecedented spaces for the manifestation of liberated transnational imaginaries (Tsagarousianou, 2004), it is still resisting cultural ideologies instrumentalised by political actors to reconstitute the hierarchy of the symbolic order.

Conclusion

This chapter presents a lateral view of the representation of certain keywords in the Syrian diasporic media: Revolution, freedom and red lines. These representations, I argue, are the artefacts of broader social transformations catalysed by a political moment of upheaval, the Syrian uprisings. I highlight the revolution as a discursive frame of identity that the diasporic radios under study ascribe to as an ideology. In this chapter, I propose three perspectives to the study of the

¹¹ For examples on the regime’s crackdown on symbolic contention see chapter 1

revolution as an ideological affiliation: social, political and professional. While the diasporic radios under study are affiliated with the revolution from a social perspective, they remain ideologically aligned with the media assistance organisations providing its funding. This professional ideology predicated a disengagement in politics, which contrasts with this emerging media's conditions of emergence. This contradiction also problematises the universality of "oppositional media" (Badran, 2020) as a discursive frame denoting the work of Syrian diasporic media. Evidently, the survivability of the digital diasporic radios' from a funding perspective is contingent on their adherence to this professional ideology forming the core of their social programming. In chapter 6, I further elaborate on the ways in which the governmentality of the funding entities shapes the communicative environment of the Syrian diasporic media. I also explore the transformation of freedom as a social process by studying its representation in the discursive practice. Operating outside the traditional institutions of power is the most persistent hurdle facing the diasporic media in their quest to enact the freedom of expression it gained from the uprisings. Namely, diasporic media were forced to pursue digital affordances to evade legislative hurdles and censorship inside Syria. Consequently, the diasporic media's attempt to realise a transformation in the Syrian social space was complicated by its inability to pursue traditional channels of media to access the local community, whose digital connectivity is interrupted due to conditions of violence. Finally, I present an overview of the social and cultural ideologies shaping the limits of the media discourse, also known as the red lines. I argue that emerging political actors in Syria have, in turn, instrumentalised these cultural ideologies to censor the diasporic media and reconstitute the hierarchy of the symbolic order. In the next chapter, I explore the agential power of diasporic interlocutors in mediating collective Syrianness in the discursive practice.

Chapter V

The Digital Mediation of the Collective Syrianness: Agency, Temporality and Translocality

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the agential power of the diasporic interlocutors in mediating the collective Syrianness. To study the discursive strategies employed to articulate the collective Syrianness, I use the notion of mediation (Silverstone, 1994) as a theoretical framework pertinent to understanding the role of contentious media in reproducing translocality. Mediation as a lens was rather underused in the study of the triangulation between media, communication and contention (Cammaerts, 2012), particularly in the Syrian context. This research ascribes to a canon studying media and social/political movements with a new perspective focusing on the role of contentious media in the articulation of a collective identity on a translocal level. To explore the mediation of the collective Syrianness, I study how certain national events are being recalled, how individual/collective stories are being articulated, and the chosen angles to address some social/political topics. I notably account for competing discourses on the shared identity endemic to the profound rupture in the Syrian social and political commonalities in the decade that followed the initial uprisings. I also outline how the disjunctured translocal realities have shaped the positionality of the diasporic interlocutors through a triangulation of affect, advocacy and liminality. This chapter will address one of the main research questions outlined in chapter 2: To what extent the diasporic media can enact an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation in a post-revolutionary context? From an empirical perspective, I discern the different layers of discourse articulations, whereby I look beyond the textual composition and more into the recurrent discursive patterns in the text using Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Based on Carvalho's (2008) reinterpretation of CDA, I embed two additional aspects to this second level of analysis: the agency of the social actors (the diasporic interlocutors) involved in the discourse articulation and a prism of temporality encompassing the fast-changing temporal rhythms of the diasporic media production. To fulfil these analytical aspects, I explore how the interlocutors of the diasporic Syrian media, as identity brokers, articulate the emerging forms of shared Syrianness in the discursive practice with a focus on the spatio-temporal dimension (Tilly, 2008). This chapter accounts for the different temporal rhymes in the

development of the relationship between the Syrian activists turned journalists and the media that they use (Mattoni & Treré, 2014; Carvalho, 2008). Worth noting that the academic study of the relationship between media and contentious movements has been primarily focused on the initial phases of mobilisation and protest (Mattoni & Treré, 2014) or what Lievrouw (2011) calls “mediated mobilisation”. Nonetheless, the overemphasised emancipatory powers pinned on digital technologies for facilitating the Arab uprisings are currently in question a decade after the initial wave of protests (Gao, 2018). This chapter also emphasises the study of the locale as an essential element of the analytical framework to understand the mediation of the collective identity. Notably, the diasporic nature of the digital radios under study means that its interlocutors (the social actors) have to engage with the contrasting “registers of collective life” (Touraine, 2001, p. 103) imposed by the conditions of war and displacement in Syria and the diaspora respectively. Consequently, this translocal contrast has resulted in spatial asymmetries to sites of representation that I will juxtapose in the analysis. To summarise, I define the methodological parameters of this chapter as exploring the mediation of the collective Syrianness in the discourses of the diasporic radios (as a site for identity articulations), accounting for spatio-temporal interdependencies (different localities and temporal rhythms) and the agency of the social actors (diasporic journalists) involved in the discourse production.

The Assimilation of the Collective Syrianness through Self-mediation

In his book *The Impossible Revolution: The making of the Syrian Tragedy*, Yassin al-Haj Saleh (2017) argues that the Syrian crisis obliterated the lines between personal and public lived experiences and realities. He contends that the Syrian revolution has significantly reconfigured the premise of the collective Syrian identity. Hence, I study the emerging articulations of collective Syrianness against the background of this temporal conjunction as an essential commonality at the heart of the shared identity. Nevertheless, this coalescence of individual narratives into a broader collective narrative needs to be contextualised in tandem with the extreme polarisation across the political and ideological divides reflected in the Syrian information environment that emerged following the uprisings (De Angelis, 2011). Before 2011, individual narratives of ordinary citizens in Syria were treated as epiphenomenal to the regime’s institutional discourses (Pearlman, 2016). However, as the uprisings started and means of symbolic production were publicly reclaimed (at least in the diaspora), the focus has shifted to exploring individual narratives previously

overshadowed due to censorship and reluctance to share because of political fear (Pearlman, 2016). The shift to focusing on the hyper-personal accounts as a lens to explore the shared “Syrian” narrative has sometimes ignored the asymmetries in the ability of some of these individual narratives to access sites of representation. Despite the analytical appeal to explore the previously untapped individual Syrian narratives, I argue that the peripheral approach to studying the collective identity is not unproblematic in this context, mainly due to the contrasting realities of the different locales at home or in the diaspora. Alain Touraine (2001) argues that the increasing fragmentation of the nation-state framework has caused a disarticulation between the individual and the collective narratives. Evidently, the last decade in Syria was primarily marked by a profound social rupture due to raging violence and mass displacement. Thus, this rupture in the social fabric transcended the geographical realm into the symbolic one as polarisation soared in the space of the emerging Syrian public sphere (De Angelis, 2011). The non-unitary state of the country, as well as the mass exodus, have created various ‘registers of collective life’ (Touraine, 2001, p. 103) where Syrians ascribe to conflicting fragments of a shared identity based on their locality, whether at home or in exile. To that effect, Fares Helou, a renowned Syrian actor turned activist encapsulates the struggle to articulate this fragmented collective Syrianness as polarising individual identities collide. In an interview with the online platform ‘Syria Untold’ he explained:

There is no doubt that we Syrians have experienced the existential question—Who are we today?—especially after our social rupture and scattering across all corners of the globe. In our search for the answer, we found that all the existing descriptions for our new situation fall short. You cannot, for example, simply call yourself a Syrian. This will not distinguish you from the fighter, who is also Syrian. And it is insufficient to call yourself a revolutionary because the unjust parties to the conflict have seized this term and emptied it of its meaning. You also cannot call yourself a dissident, because this means that your battle with the ruling authority includes your recognition of it even as it is condemned and sought after by the international judiciary. And you cannot refer to

yourself as a Syrian refugee, as this may lump you with the many refugees who are simply searching for a chance at life, without clarifying your [political] stance. (Youssef, 2021)

Therefore, the digital sphere presented an alternative public avenue for the symbolic articulation, representation and assimilation of the collective Syrian identity. To avoid technologically deterministic assumptions about the Syrian identity articulation in the digital space, it is important to first examine the power of digital storytelling in the context of the emerging diaspora radio in shaping/representing the collective Syrianness. Nick Couldry (2008) provides a pertinent theoretical framework exploring digital storytelling through the lens of mediation (Silverstone, 1994), the term “describes the concrete act of communication by means of a medium in a specific social context” (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 114). Mediation, as a framework, helps us understand how asymmetrical the digital representation of the collective identity is, based on existing social relations and different locales. Notably, digital storytelling has considerably democratised media resources (Couldry, 2008) in the Syrian context, challenging the regime’s previous control over the means of symbolic production. However, the disproportionate access of different groups of Syrians to this digital space is often overlooked when studying the emerging forms of collective identity. On the one hand, individual Syrian narratives previously silenced took to the digital space, mainly in the diaspora or in areas held by the opposition, to offer personal accounts and challenge the regime’s propaganda. On the other hand, the individual experiences of millions of Syrians still living under the rule of Al-Assad’s authority in regime-controlled areas in Syria are withheld from the digital sphere due to reasons related to security (censorship, surveillance) and infrastructure (deteriorating economic situation, prohibitively high internet fees and a damaged digital infrastructure due to violence) (Trombetta & Pinto, 2015; Al-Khatib & Xynou, 2015; Overton & Dathan, 2019). More recently, the regime has re-established control over the majority of the country’s territory, reinstating a rule of fear and imposing a *de facto* embargo on civic participation. This geopolitical change effectively renders the majority of individual ‘Syrian voices’ inaccessible, similar to how they were pre-2011. Hence, the theoretical starting point for this chapter acknowledges the asymmetrical digital representation of the individual Syrian narratives, which, in turn, affects the articulation of the collective Syrianness in the discursive practice. Consequently, I study the discourses of the digital diasporic radios as a site for the

competing narratives on collective Syrianness articulated by diasporic media practitioners. I focus on the friction in the discourse as I believe that studying discourses as a site of contention has been rather deprioritised by previous constructivist studies of Syrian identity.

Temporality, Translocality and the Articulation of Shared Commonalities

The dynamics of collective identity construction develop in positioning shared commonalities against the backdrop of a certain spatio-temporal continuity (Bamberg et al., 2011). Similarly, media use in relation to social movements capitalises on these “temporal and spatial interdependencies” (Tilly, 2008) to articulate collective identity discourses. I will first address the aspect of temporality in the context of contentious movements (Tarrow, 1989 on cycles of contention; McAdam & Sewell, 2001 on temporality in social movements and revolutions and Koopmans, 2004 on waves of contention). Karl Marx pioneered the use of progressive temporality in the study of contention by historicising the rise of the labour movement (McAdam & Sewell, 2001). Notably, Mattoni & Treré (2014) piece together a diachronic approach of three folds from the literature to understand the evolving relationship between media and social movements where they follow the development of contentious movements in three specific temporalities. The **first** is referred to as the transformative event, “a brief spatially concentrated, and relatively chaotic sequences of action [that] can have durable, spatially extended, and profoundly structural effects” (McAdam & Sewell, 2001, p. 98). The **second** temporality is related to what Sydney Tarrow (1989) calls the ‘protest cycle’ in his book *Democracy and Disorder* to describe a sequence of stages that characterise periods of generalised social unrest (McAdam & Sewell, 2001). Finally, the **last** temporality is addressed as “cultural epochs of contention” (ibid, p.112), whereby some new forms of contention become a fixture of the political and cultural repertoires of collective action (Tilly, 1993). The latest wave of Syrian contention encompasses those three temporal rhythms in which mediation has played a key role. The study of media use in social/political movements has primarily focused on the initial stages of uprisings and mobilisation (Mattoni and Treré, 2014); this trend is especially apparent in the Syrian context as the scholarship focused on the rise of citizen journalism (Salama, 2012; Wall & el Zahed, 2014), digital contention (Al-Ghazzi, 2014) and the politics of witnessing (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013) in relation to the main transformative event, the revolution, and the subsequent years of protests and fighting. However, much less focus was afforded to studying the use of media in a post-revolutionary setting and the

way it reconfigures the repertoire of collective action, identity and memory. Thus, this research studies the mediation of the collective Syrianness in the last temporality of Mattoni and Treré's (2014) diachronic approach, the "cultural epoch of contention" (McAdam & Sewell, 2001, p. 112). The notion is relevant to understanding the parameters of transnational contention (digital mediation) in the protracted Syrian crisis.

In conjunction with the study of temporality in contentious movements, I also emphasise the role of contrasting localities in the context of mediating the Syrian contention/collectiveness. The role of the locality as a central identity marker has been relegated in the advent of globalisation and digital technologies (Tsagarousianou, 2016) as people become increasingly 'disembedded' from 'concrete space and time' (Lash & Urry, 1994, p. 13). Nevertheless, locality remains an essential component of the process of symbolic and physical identification (Tsagarousianou, 2016). Couldry (2008) builds on the geographer Henri Lefebvre's work to illustrate how social and cultural change involves spatial intervention (access) or transformation of the 'social space'. In Lefebvre's (1990) words, "the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent to which they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself" (p. 129). The Syrian revolution as a geopolitical event has caused a "social disjuncture and cultural anxiety" (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008) that transcended the national borders resulting in a spatial disconnection due to waves of vast displacement. The militarisation of the Syrian conflict has resulted in a de facto non-unitary nation-state¹² where different groups claim control of specific regions inside the country (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). The absence of such a unitary 'nation' as a categorical frame against which the collective identity is being articulated makes *translocality*, as opposed to transnationalism (Englert, 2018), a more pertinent framework for understanding the increasing disjuncture in the locality and the way it shapes different iterations of the emerging of Syrianness in the discursive practice. Translocality as a notion emerged to counter the perceived limitations of transnationalism (Englert, 2018), whose 'primary concern still rests on the transgression of and exchange beyond national borders' (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 3). Thus, the work of the Syrian 'translocal' media extends to two contrasting localities, one at home in Syria under dire conditions of war and violence and another diasporic one where the exiled are dealing with challenges of displacement, assimilation and

¹² The regime forces have managed to recapture most of the areas outside of its control by the time of publication of the research.

survivor's guilt (Pearlman, 2016). Consequently, the integration of these digital diasporic radios is specific to the conditions of each locale (at home or in the diaspora), resulting in spatial asymmetries in accessing sites of representation (Couldry, 2008). The contrast between the lived experiences in both localities has also complicated the attempts of the diasporic journalists to mediate a collective Syrianness based on shared social/political commonalities. To engage in this social/cultural disjuncture, the interlocutors employ different versions of the shared collectiveness, an 'imagined' and 'encountered' one (Brah, 1996, p. 209).

The Role of the Interlocutors Mediating the Collective Syrianness: Affect, Advocacy and Liminality

Within this process of mediating the collective Syrianness, I examine the role of diasporic journalists as interlocutors, shaping the discursive practice of digital radios in a translocal setting. Diasporic media functions as a communication link essential for the formation of collective identities within waves of transnational contention (Mattoni & Treré, 2014) as it maintains a recognition loop encompassing the acts of recognising and being recognised (Melucci, 1996). This act of mutual recognition is essential in the process of collective identity formation as it fosters a constant conversation and information exchange between activists and their multiple audiences (Tilly, 2008). Anden-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013) articulate the Syrian diaspora activists' role in mediating the uprisings to the world as a process of "cultural brokerage" (p. 2187). They argue that a key cornerstone of this transnational wave of contention is advocating for a common Syrian cause to reach relevant audiences and stakeholders globally. Given the centrality of politics to their practice of journalism, diasporic interlocutors often struggle to define the parameters of their professional role at the intersection of journalism and political engagement (Sariaslan, 2020; Shumow, 2014). In this case, discursive frames as "advocacy journalism" (Arafat, 2021) or "affective journalism" (Jukes, 2017) could be applied to the context at hand, given the intersection between emotion and activism in the practice of journalism in these diasporic radios. Namely, the work of the diasporic media practitioners in relaying the Syrian Revolution is at the centre of this triangulation of affect, advocacy and journalism. Additionally, mediation affords the social actors involved in the production or consumption of the discourse a degree of agency to employ strategies of encoding or meaning-making respectively (Cammaerts, 2012; Thumim, 2009). As this research explores the dynamics of discourse production, I explore the discursive strategies of affect and

advocacy employed by the interlocutors in the Syrian diasporic radios. To that extent, I define the Syrian diasporic journalists as *identity brokers* mediating a shared political *commonality* to the world through their “connections to external actors” (Wall & el Zahed, 2014).

As media activists and citizen journalists started to move towards professionalisation through their self-organised media outside Syria, the scholarship has taken a more inward look to study the political coalescence between their activism and journalism as well as their diasporic condition (Al-Ghazzi, 2021; Arafat, 2021; Badran, 2021). This research goes further by exploring how the multiple positionalities and the diasporic condition shape the mediation of the collective Syrianness. Particularly relevant from the existing research is Omar Al-Ghazzi’s use of “affective proximity” to articulate the intricate and often blurry relationship between Syrian journalists and the stories they are covering. He argues that “affective proximity is what locals navigate to reconcile their emotional and embodied entanglement within events in their country and community and a journalism profession that has traditionally been conceived as predicated on distance” (p. 2). For this chapter, I situate the study of affect and emotion in journalism in a diasporic context complicated by contrasting translocal considerations outlined in the previous section. Thus, this affective proximity serves as the “imagined space” where exiled journalists are still fully immersed in the events unfolding in the homeland despite their diasporic condition (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). In chapter 4, I outlined the way the Syrian diasporic radios ascribe to the Syrian revolution as a social identity. Al-Ghazzi (2021) argues that: the word revolution in itself “highlights the affective proximity of Syrian activists and critical journalists to what they wanted to happen in their country, as they were telling its story.” (p. 4). Hence, the act of narration through these emerging media outlets becomes a “revolutionary practice” as the interlocutors control how to articulate their own narratives, defying the boundaries of the state’s control over the means of symbolic reproduction (Pearlman, 2016, p. 22). Nevertheless, the dissolution of the Syrian revolution as a political commonality, central to the interlocutors’ social and professional identities, posits an important question about the future of the practice of journalism within the Syrian diasporic radios under study.

I employ the trope of liminality from the study of anthropology to examine the social actors’ agency (affect, imagination and advocacy) in the dynamics of discourse production (the mediation

of the collective Syrianness). Liminality refers to the social process of transition where subjects are in a state of ambiguity whilst reconfiguring relations of power and hierarchies of meaning-making (Turner, 1967). According to Papacharissi (2015), “the very function of liminality is to abandon structure so as to permit activity that will result in the birthing of a new structure, and therein lie both potential empowerment and disempowerment” (p. 32). She also argues that liminality is a temporary state “set into motion as an initiated action attempts to undo social structures or conventions and ends as the initiated action is (re)integrated into social structure” (p. 33). For the purpose of this research, I study the Syrian revolution as the main event that triggered liminal condition (Matar & Helmi, 2020), allowing for the reconfiguration of the “hierarchy of systems of expression” (Thumim & Chouliaraki, 2010) by creating new avenues for digital contention (Zayani, 2015). Therefore, I examine the Syrian diasporic radios as liminal spaces encompassing the liminality of their interlocutors. A spatio-temporal dimension (Tilly, 2008) is embedded in such liminality as the diasporic radios struggle to cope with the fast-changing temporal rhythms and the realities of contrasting localities.

Translocal Mediation of the Collective Syrianness

As outlined, the articulation of a collective identity juxtaposes social and political commonalities against a spatio-temporal flow. This collective identity is marked in the discourse of the radio programmes through the amalgamation of individual and collective narratives in light of the Syrian revolution as a shared commonality. Nevertheless, this collective Syrianness is being articulated against two competing and overlapping temporalities: the rule of Al-Assad’s regime and the Syrian revolution. In the more recent episodes in the studied sample of radio programmes, there has been an increasing focus on the duality between two Syrian locales: at home or in the diaspora. Nonetheless, the diasporic interlocutors articulate an imagined collective Syrianness that unites all Syrians despite this disjuncture between different temporalities and localities. To showcase, I bring in focus episode 18, broadcast on radio *Souriali*, as it presents a remarkable overview of the mediation of the collective Syrianness, with a notable coalescence between individual and collective narratives, through different temporalities and contrasting localities (home and in the diaspora). Incidentally, this episode of the programme *From One Story to another* also marked the abrupt end of radio SouriaLi’s broadcasting in February 2020. Therein, Iyad Kallas, a co-founder of SouriaLi, reflects on his experience working as part of the Syrian diasporic media scene.

Iyad Kallas: We have to situate the conversation about [new] media within the context of all the events happening in Syria. **We** have been going through many great ordeals **since the beginning of the revolution in 2011** until the present day. Evidently, **we** are going through three main struggles: first is a struggle for ideals, including citizenship and democracy, that is essentially all about dignity and personal rights. All of these ideals have effectively mobilised the 2011 uprisings. Sadly, **we are** losing this battle as it is becoming increasingly ineffective to demand personal rights and freedoms in a country ruled by a regime responsible for the death and displacement of millions of its citizens... This tragedy is still a lived reality in places like Idlib and the surrounding areas in Syria. The second struggle is the mere act of **survival**: **We are** forced to survive under the shadow of war or the deteriorating economic situation. Even for those who left Syria, including refugees who live in camps in very dire conditions or those who live in countries that provide basic services, they equally struggle to adapt to the new life imposed on them. The latter may look easier, but it is still a struggle. The third struggle is where **we** hold on to hope: Do we let go of the version of Syria **we** were working for and just move on? The [new] media survived and shaped all three struggles.

(Episode 18 of the programme *From One Story to Another* broadcast on radio Souriali, 20 February 2020)

Kallas designates the “Syrian revolution” as the genesis of this collective Syrianness and employs a number of linguistic devices, including using the third pronoun to amalgamate individual and collective narratives in the discourse. Nevertheless, his iteration of the collective Syrianness acknowledges the impact of different localities and the burden of fast-changing temporal rhythms imposed by the swift geopolitical transformations. Extreme political polarisation (De Angelis, 2011), the internationalisation of the conflict and the restitution of Al-Assad’s power (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) have eventually fragmented the Syrian revolution as an imagined space of social/political commonality on a symbolic level. The collapse of this symbolic commonality was, in turn, exacerbated by the contrasting versions of realities experienced by those still in Syria versus those in the diaspora. While political polarisation, violence and displacement have been markers of the divide between Syrians in the last decade, articulating a collective Syrianness against the background of the revolution as a *liminal condition* obfuscate these social markers of divide and blurs the lines between the personal and the public. This obfuscation eventually creates a sense of equality and commonality in the discourse (Papacharissi, 2015). Nevertheless, the changes in the geopolitical dynamics and the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation inside Syria have forced those at home to prioritise their safety and basic needs (episode 23, radio Souriali, 25 January 2015) over previously anticipated hopes for freedom and dignity. Hence, the commonality

created in liminality was as temporary as the state of liminality itself (Papacharissi, 2015). Kallas later contends in episode 18 that the dissolution of this political commonality complicated the work of radio SouriaLi and casts doubts on the future of the diasporic media scene.

Iyad: I will talk about the initiatives and small entities founded by and for Syrians: Their decline is caused by several factors, whether internal or external. Some internal factors include the challenges to staying and delivering, the burden of collective fatigue and the inability to envision the way forward or prioritise given the different directions we are being pulled into. While the external factors include the loss of a collective vision as **our partners** still inside Syria no longer share the same objectives as us. The general political climate has also contributed to the decline, whereby **removing the current regime is no longer a common goal**. This is an addition to the waning public support for the currently fragmented uprisings as the radical groups have overtaken the contentious movement.

(Episode 18 of the programme *From One Story to Another* broadcast on radio Souriali, 20 February 2020)

Similarly, Rama Jarmakani, a Syrian journalist living in Germany, reflects on her own diasporic condition and what it means to write about other Syrians living under a different reality back home.

Rama Jarmakani: Since I have lived in Germany for a year and a half now, sometimes it feels disingenuous to write about things in Syria that I am not going through myself. It is difficult to portray the **reality of fear and death** [in Syria] while I am safe from all these horrors. So I turn to write on the problems facing Syrian refugees, including myself, in Germany, including discrimination and racism...

(Episode 11 of the programme *Focus* broadcast on radio Rozana, 22 June 2016)

Both statements outline the extent of the contrasting duality of the lived realities between Syrians at home or in the diaspora on the attempts of diasporic journalists to mediate an amalgamated iteration of the collective Syrianness. The disintegration of the liminal condition, the Syrian revolution, and the restitution of the former power structures signalled the end of the perceived commonality and equality reproduced in the discursive practice. Notably, new identity markers emerge around this line of divide centrally focused on the notions of victimhood or survivorhood. On an individual level, Al-Khatib reflects on her own diasporic condition and how it has changed her professional positionality as she transitioned from writing about Syrians at home to focusing on those in the diaspora who share the same struggles and challenges as she does. On an

organisational level, diasporic media is presently at an impasse when articulating a collective Syrianness, given the loss of political commonality or the “collective vision” as stated in the text. Consequently, diasporic media need to reconfigure new modalities of mediation based on the new defining identity markers of its constituents between victims (at home) and survivors (in the diaspora). As the statements show, the attempts by the diasporic outlets under study to engage with an increasingly polarised audience while tackling competing structural priorities have proved particularly challenging. Both of Kallas’ statements in episode 18 refer to three competing priorities diasporic outlets have to address. Firstly, a priority to explore the newly-found freedom and serve as a shared avenue of public expression for Syrians. A second duty comprised of addressing the urgent needs of Syrians at home for critical information and news to help them cope with the unfolding violence. Hence, radio programming covering topics such as press freedom (episodes 8,14,15), hate speech (episode 14), and red lines (episodes 4 and 13) stand in dissonance with a part of the audience still inside Syria for whom the avenues of the newly-found freedom are out of reach. Finally, these diasporic outlets were thought to have a role in mediating the revolution as a marker of the collective Syrian identity to a global audience. In Kallas’ words: “some media outlets were more successful than others in getting their voice out to the world” (episode 18, radio SouriaLi, February 2020). Hence, the increased tension between the different mediation priorities put a strain on the emerging media outlets’ resources, editorial direction and, more importantly, their *raison d’être*.

From Affect and Advocacy to Consciousness-raising Fetishism: Syrian Diasporic Journalism in a Post-revolutionary Context

The practices of journalism in the Syrian diasporic media are often denoted as activist/oppositional media (Badran, 2020; Matar & Helmi, 2020) and advocacy journalism (Arafat, 2021). The common denominator between both categorical frames is that the practice of journalism is related to a social/political cause that involves a degree of affect (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). Activists’ media use in contemporary contentious movements is increasingly becoming the most defining aspect of their cause, synonymous with their movement itself (Lievrouw, 2011, Cammaerts, 2012). While the use of media has been momentous for the Syrian uprisings, the recent geopolitical developments have forced the political subjects involved in activism to reconfigure the modes and objectives of their contentious engagement (see Saleh, 2017). This section contributes to the emerging body of work

addressing the multiple subjectivities of the Syrian diasporic journalists with a new perspective focusing on the different approaches to mediation in a post-revolutionary setting. To address the repercussions of the disjuncture in temporalities and localities on the future of Syrian diasporic journalism, I use the notion of liminality to understand this transitory state of in-betweenness. Diasporic journalists and media practitioners across most of the episodes in the dataset (particularly episodes 1, 2, 4, 11, 18 and 19) articulate their personal, political and professional identities interchangeably. To elaborate, diasporic journalist Rama Jarmakani, in episode 11, elucidates the articulation between advocacy (political) and affect (personal) on the one hand and the practice of Syrian diasporic journalism (professional) on the other hand.

Presenter: Most Syrian journalists reached a stage where they cannot express how they feel or convey the objectives of the Syrian uprisings to Western public opinion. Rama, do you sometimes feel that there is no point in your work or that your work is useless and words fail to describe the current situation?

Rama Jarmakani: There are two things to consider when discussing our work as journalists. **We** are Syrian citizens first and foremost, so **we** are personally experiencing everything we are reporting on. **We** are not discussing foreign affairs: Iraqi or Lebanese, that we are not part of. **We** belong to this Syrian reality where citizens suffer from constant defeats, poverty and fear, which, in turn, affects our work significantly. Second, **we** are also journalists, and this is **our** job. If we allow our feelings of defeat and uselessness to interrupt **our** work, then what alternative job can we turn to? **Journalism is all I can do professionally; if I quit, I am not sure what other career I can pursue [...]**

(Episode 11 of the programme *Focus* broadcast on Rozana Radio, 22 June 2016)

The liminality of the Syrian diasporic media is triggered by a main transformative event, the Syrian revolution. Such liminality has encompassed not only the social space but the subjects involved in the discourse production. Jarmakani's statement establishes Syrian diasporic journalists as liminal subjects, oscillating between a social/political positionality as activists and a professional one as journalists. Liminality "affords the opportunity for actors engaging and making meaning out of the story to approach the event on equal footing, and to feel their own place in the story" (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 33). These liminal states of activism (combining affect and advocacy) and journalism were triggered by a disruptive event, the Syrian revolution, that challenged the hierarchy of symbolic domination formerly enforced by the regime. Nonetheless, the text outlines that these liminal states are causational, where one is a byproduct of the other as diasporic media practitioners

articulate their positionality as *Syrians* or *activists* as the initial driver for their professional pursuit of journalism. Consequently, diasporic journalists describe their urge and duty to report as essentially an act of “bearing witness” (della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 170), integral to their identity as Syrians (Al-Ghazzi, 2021), where they are “forced into journalism”, as stated in the text. Therefore the statement addresses the future of the diasporic journalists’ professional aspirations in light of the collapse of the adjacent liminal state of activism. Al-Jarmakani contends: “Journalism is all I can do professionally” (episode 11, radio Rozana, June 2016), indicating that her professional identity as a journalist may, in fact, outlive her political aspirations.

These debates pose important questions about the ability of diasporic journalism to survive in light of the fragmentation of the adjacent liminal state of activism. Can diasporic journalists repurpose their skills in journalism to transcend advocacy for the Syrian cause? To elaborate, I highlight statements from an episode of the programme *Focus* broadcast on radio Rozana. The episode addresses a published article by Hanadi AlKhatib, a Syrian journalist expressing her frustration at the seeming “futility” of her work reporting on the Syrian crisis. During the episode, other diasporic journalists also articulate the challenges they are facing as their personal feelings of hopelessness interfere with their professional work as journalists and their advocacy for the Syrian cause.

The presenter (reads an excerpt of AlKhatib’s article): “When I introduce myself to people I meet as a Syrian journalist, **all I can think of is how worthless my work is** for a world that does not need journalists. So perhaps, I should change directions and maybe just write about fashion and make-up. I am a Syrian journalist from a country of death where I talk to whining members of the opposition who just arrived from attending conferences abroad and would not stop complaining about how Syrians can only agree to disagree.”

(Episode 11 of the programme *Focus* broadcast on radio Rozana, 22 June 2016)

The dissolution of the political commonality calling for removing Al-Assad’s regime as the main objective of the latest wave of Syrian contention left the professional identity of the diasporic outlets and their interlocutors as “oppositional media” (Badran, 2020) in crisis. The statement outlines how this fragmentation of the Syrian political aspirations, coupled with the cumulative burden of witnessing violence (Moghnieh, 2017; Chouliaraki & Al-Ghazzi, 2022), has effectively resulted in feelings of hopelessness and despair among the community of diasporic journalists. Al-

Khatib initially contends that her despair ultimately surmounts her activism and advocacy for the Syrian cause leading her to consider shifting her journalistic focus to writing about “fashion or make-up”. Diasporic journalists hoped their advocacy would mobilise political action from the international community. Nevertheless, changing geopolitical interests meant that the main goal of the revolution, removing Al-Assad’s regime, was increasingly unattained; instead, the country descended into destitution. This impasse casts serious doubts within the community of diasporic journalists on whether mediation had been the right vehicle for political action (Gao, 2018). So how does diasporic (contentious) journalism survive in a post-revolutionary setting in light of the fragmentation of the common goal of advocacy and the general feelings of despair among Syrian journalists? The discussion delves into more detail about how the community of diasporic journalists address these feelings of burnout and despair and their potential impact on the future of their practice of journalism.

Presenter: ... This article echoes the thoughts of many (Syrian) journalists now having to deal with a myriad of bad news affecting them negatively. Do you think Syrian journalists were **forced into journalism**? If a Syrian journalist does not cover news of Syria, what is the alternative? Do you think it would be inappropriate for a Syrian journalist to choose not to report on their country during these times?

Hanadi Al-Khatib: ... Any Syrian journalist needs to report on what is currently happening in the country; we **cannot separate ourselves from the situation**. it is normal to feel helpless when you cannot tell the world what is happening in your country. **How do I keep reminding the global public opinion about the violence in Syria** when it seems that it has completely forgotten about it?

[...]

Presenter: You are right; we are dealing with a rising trend of journalists close to quitting, according to the surveys we have conducted [at radio Rozana]. They have all reached a point where they cannot cover or analyse the news from Syria anymore.

(Episode 11 of the programme *Focus* broadcast on radio Rozana, 22 June 2016)

Despite her provocative proposition in the published article for Syrian journalists to write about a different topic due to the futility of reporting on the current political developments, Al-Khatib reconsiders and affirms that they should persist in mediating the Syrian crisis. In chapter 2, I argue that the abundance in the Syrian information environment in terms of user-generated content, the byproduct of the perilous labour of citizen journalists and media activists, has propelled an information fetishism sustained by the rising demand of global mainstream media for news about the Syrian conflict. As the crisis protracted, scores of citizen journalists and media activists joined

their self-organised media, which in turn, became involved in ‘cultural brokerage’ (Anden-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013), relaying news and information from Syria to the global mainstream media (Wall & el Zahed, 2014) through an array of digital affordances (Papacharissi, 2015). This mediation eventually metamorphosed into what Gao (2018) calls a “consciousness-raising fetishism”. Such fetishism is endemic to the latest wave of Arab contention as it was thought to facilitate political action confounded by the overemphasised emancipatory powers pinned on the digital technologies that helped mobilise it (Zayani, 2015). I argue that the notion of consciousness-raising fetishism is pertinent to describing the liminal states of activism and journalism amid the restitution of the hegemonic structures of (symbolic) power. “How do I keep reminding the global public opinion of the violence in Syria when it seems that it has completely forgotten about it?” Al-Khatib wonders, assuming a link between her work in journalism (providing the knowledge) and its ability to mobilise international support (action). However, Gao (2018) argues, based on Marx and Žižek’s work, that there is an inherent disconnection between knowledge and action, resulting in “consciousness-raising for the sake of consciousness-raising [that] only fetishises information” (p. 506). In turn, Al-Khatib’s statement exemplifies how this consciousness-raising fetishism is a byproduct of affect and advocacy in the practice of Syrian diasporic journalism in a post-revolutionary setting.

Liminality offer “both potential empowerment and disempowerment” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 32). Initially, the liminal condition has allowed previously subjugated diasporic Syrian journalists to challenge the regime’s domination over the means of symbolic reproduction. Nevertheless, the relationship of “brokering” between the diasporic journalists mediating the Syrian crisis and the global news environment may have had inadvertent disempowering effects. Chouliaraki and Al-Ghazzi (2022) argue that these “appeals to attention and action” conforming to normative journalistic assumptions of objectivity “strategically co-opt the affective dimension of flesh witnessing – its focus on child innocence, heroic martyrdom or the data aesthetics of destruction – and selectively minimises its urgency by downplaying or effacing the bodies of non-western witnesses” (p. 649). The saturation of the Syrian information environment with news that conforms to the outlined logic of flesh witnessing corresponds to what Virilio (2001) describes as “over-information”, denoting the abundance of information production, circulation and passive consumption. Thus, this over-information contributes to the aforementioned consciousness-raising fetishism that has an inhibiting rather than emancipatory effect, delinking knowledge from action

(Virilio, 2000). Gao (2018) argues that “information sharing-based activism can also create the opposite intended effect-inaction.” (p. 507). In turn, the instrumentalisation of the emerging mediascape to exclusively cover and document the violence against Syrians as part of the activists’ bearing witness/advocacy duties may have inadvertently contributed to the casualisation of the Syrian death, as per the statement of radio SouriaLi’s presenter in episode 18.

Presenter: ... Some people claim that the abundance of news ... depicting the scale of death and violence in Syria, as well as content about Syrians dying while crossing the sea to seek asylum [in Europe], has inadvertently harmed the Syrian plight. It has rendered the death of Syrians a daily occurrence and turned missing persons and martyrs into mere numbers. I believe these claims are valid to an extent, but they are sometimes instrumentalised to cover how the events in Syria are no longer seen as newsworthy.

(Episode 18 of the programme *One Story to Another* broadcast on SouriaLi Radio, 20 February 2020)

Despite the restitution of the previous structures of power in Syria, diasporic journalists struggle to transcend the liminal stage of activism/advocacy into different forms of journalism in post-revolutionary Syria. In episode 16 of the programme *From One Story to the Another*, diasporic journalist Zeina Erhaim argues that the emerging Syrian mediascape is unable to break free from its bearing witness duties where journalists, as activists, feel increasingly obligated to only report on the unfolding violence in a bid to mobilise international support.

Presenter: Can you tell us more about the ways in which the media helped spark and maintain the revolution over the past years?

Zeina Erhaim: ... At the beginning, we, as media activists, thought that documenting its course [the revolution] would eventually support it by getting the international community involved. Therefore, there was abundant user-generated content, filmed mainly on mobile phones for the purpose of documenting [the events]. However, after the chemical massacre, something changed. Syrians realised that no matter how much content they produce and disseminate through media, the international community would not intervene to prevent a similar tragedy as they initially thought it would. Afterwards, the activists’ media use shifted, and more media practitioners became [politically] affiliated with parties or groups. This could be because they have realised that all their efforts to produce content for the common good were futile. The reason could also be because these journalists need to secure a living as they can no longer work independently. However, overall, media activism played a central role in providing access to a conflict zone previously out of reach for global mainstream media.

(Episode 16 from the programme *From One Story to Another* broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 20 December 2018)

While the revolution was an opportunity for the emancipation of the liminal subjects, the reinstitution of the hierarchy of domination (Matar & Helmi, 2020) has paved the way for an open-ended form of consciousness-raising fetishism residual from the disempowerment caused by the failure of the liminal states to co-exist. From a professional perspective, many Syrian diasporic journalists view the main goal of their work in journalism as documenting the events in Syria in a bid to raise awareness and mobilise international support for the Syrian plight. However, the conflict in Syria protracted and the initial activist grit was squandered by the fragmentation of the political commonality and feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Erhaim's statement outlines two approaches to the future of Syrian journalism in a post-revolutionary context. The first engages with the overabundance in mediating the crisis and how it creates a loop of consciousness-raising fetishism that overvalued the capacity of such mediation in rallying international support for the Syrian plight. In the second scenario, she fears the political polarisation would overpower the journalists' advocacy for a common Syrian cause and force them to switch ideological positions, which would instrumentalise their work for political mobilisation. In her view, this ideological shift in the practice of journalism is rooted in broader economic structures of precarity experienced by Syrian journalists as the crisis protracted. Hence, chapter 6 addresses broader debates on labour relations, job security and employment within the Syrian diasporic media scene.

Mediating the Collective Syrianness as Sanitised Identity

Building on the previous debates about the agency of the diasporic interlocutors between affect, advocacy and liminality, I explore the discursive strategies employed in articulating a collective Syrianness based on this triangulation. Namely, I examine the digital diasporic radios, Rozana and SouriaLi, as sites for the articulation of the collective identity, with a particular focus on the post-revolutionary setting. Badran (2020) views the identity of the Syrian exilic media scene as intrinsically oppositional based on Fuchs' (2010) emphasis on the critical aspect of alternative media. While the digital space has offered an alternative to the traditional means of transnational contention (Brinkerhoff, 2006), it is still governed by what Cammaerts (2012) calls the "mediation opportunity structure" controlling the dynamics between different actors in the Syrian mediascape. Papacharissi (2015) argues that storytelling is, in part, an exercise of power facilitated by the manipulation of the sociocultural context and various technological affordances. Hence, the Syrian diasporic journalists, the focus of this study, are the heart of this mediascape, exercising a degree

of agential power in the dynamics of discourse production. Badran (2020) highlights the strategies and tactics of survival employed by the Syrian diasporic oppositional media as an “agentic dimension of resistance” (p. 71) to navigate the power of different political and economic actors. This section challenges the emancipatory outlook on these strategies as ‘survival’ tactics and investigates potentially detrimental dynamics of sanitisation and how they are rooted in broader political and economic powers that denote the discourse production in the Syrian diasporic media. Badran’s (2020) view of the censorship mechanisms employed by the Syrian diaspora media is limited to its interaction with a more powerful political actor, the host country in Turkey. He argues that outlets pursue a survival tactic involving self-censorship regarding the political coverage of issues concerning the host country due to the increased securitisation of the Syrian presence in Turkey. Nonetheless, I argue that these censorship dynamics are not only limited to the diasporic interlocutor’s interactions with a single political actor but also to societal pressures and funding considerations. Hence, this research problematises these diasporic radios’ broader engagement in political coverage (or the lack thereof) given the mediascape’s conditions of emergence against the background of a seismic political event. This section explores the question: In what ways do the diasporic interlocutors employ their agential power to represent elements of the sociocultural context through their subjective storytelling?

In a previous section of this chapter, I addressed the ways in which the collective Syrianness is being imagined and articulated in the discursive practice of the digital diasporic radios. So far, my analysis has focused on the aspects of the shared identity that have emerged in the discourses of the digital diasporic radios. Conversely, I explore the eliminated aspects of this collective Syrianness by highlighting the omitted discourses in the diasporic productions. In this section, I study how the collective Syrianness is adapted to mechanisms created by the media logic of these diasporic radios (Hjarvard, 2008; Reestorff, 2014). More specifically, I study how the articulation of the shared identity is shaped by wider political considerations and the governmentality of the donor entities providing funding for these diasporic outlets. Thus, I explore how different historical, national and current events are being reconfigured to suit the new broadcast medium (the media logic). I note a recurrent discursive strategy in the examined radio programmes in the form of a lack of overt engagement in the larger political context surrounding the current events in Syria. This disengagement in politics stands in contrast with the centrality of the Syrian

revolution, as a political event, to the discourse of the diasporic radios. From the onset, Lina Chawaf, radio Rozana's director, told France24 in an interview back in 2013, upon the radio's inception, that political affairs would not be at the heart of Rozana's editorial content. In her view, the public is "no longer interested in politics" (episode 6, France24, July 2013), only two years after the significant political uprisings that swept the country. She insists that the collective focus has shifted away from politics into more humanitarian and rescue work to support Syrians at home who are struggling to cope with the rising rates of violence; hence, this is where the diasporic media's focus should also be.

Presenter: Let's say humanitarian news and rescue work would be at the front and centre of Rozana's coverage. Don't you see how this relates to the larger political context and the ensuing violence sweeping the country? How do you address the former without engaging with the latter?

Lina Chawaf: People in Syria are no longer interested in politics as they are preoccupied with securing their basic needs. Politics is no longer a priority for them as they struggle to secure food and shelter for themselves and their children. That is why we are focusing on humanitarian issues to address people's current priorities in Syria. I am not saying we are not entirely avoiding politics, but it is just not our primary focus. Our main focus is responding to people's needs as they try to cope with the current challenging conditions in Syria. That is because people are also fed up and disenchanted with politics and just need to focus on securing their daily basic needs.

(Episode 6, Supplemental Episode, France24, 16 July 2013)

Chawaf's conception of what constitutes the collective Syrian preferences in news and media consumption is particularly important as she commands one of the few remaining Syrian diasporic radios that emerged after 2011. Therefore, the way she 'imagines' the shared or collective national priorities of Syrians at home or in the diaspora affects the focus of the news agenda and the editorial line set by radio Rozana to correspond to this audience's perceived priorities. Throughout the aforementioned interview, Chawaf repeats the assertion that the current national aspirations are unrelated to politics despite the presenter challenging her on the impracticality of separating the humanitarian situation from the political one in the Syrian context (as shown in the previous excerpt). However, the editorial content of radio Rozana that I have been routinely reviewing for this research over the past four years stands in contrast to her assertion that the radio remains largely unengaged in political discussions or even focuses on politics as a peripheral priority. For instance, the top headlines in the news section are almost always related to political developments

at home or in the diaspora. Similarly, the radio's talk shows are either centred around intrinsically political topics, or the discussion organically extends to the latest political development in Syria. To underscore the tension between the articulated discourse on politics and the underlying one, I focus on episode 2 of the programme *Syrian Talk* broadcast on radio Rozana and presented by Lina Chawaf herself. The episode features a discussion with journalist Sakhr Idris, who critically appraises the Syrian political opposition's performance, including opposition-affiliated media and figures. Below, I present a sample of the questions asked by Chawaf to steer the discussion. The questions are centred around the way the political opposition is being seen and evaluated by the media and the potential implications of such dynamics in the course of the Syrian revolution.

Lina Chawaf (presenter): How do you respond to those who argue that Sakhr Idris criticises the (political) opposition more fiercely than the regime?

....

Sakhr, you fiercely criticise the opposition ... Do you think this affects the course of the revolution?

...

Before the break, we talked about the Syrian National Coalition and the opposition. You explained your view that the Syrian political opposition is not up to par. Then why haven't you joined the revolution's media despite your long career in journalism?

(Episode 2 of the programme *Syrian Talk* broadcast on radio Rozana, 11 August 2015)

These questions and many more are of an undeniable political nature and confirm the political character of the discussion taking place throughout the episode. Nonetheless, in episode 3, Chawaf seems to reiterate her original conception of the apolitical editorial direction of the show *Syrian Talk* in a discussion with journalist Adrien Sleiman about his career in journalism.

Lina Chawaf (presenter): "I will ask you a question, but please do not look at it from a political perspective because **our show does not engage in politics.**"

(Episode 3 of the programme *Syrian Talk* broadcast on radio Rozana, 13 May 2019)

In the same episode where Rozana's director rejects the political nature of her show, she is also reluctant to call the 2011 uprisings 'a revolution', despite using the term in a previous episode where she contends: "Rozana is indeed part of the Syrian revolution that started to reclaim the

Syrian citizen's dignity and freedom... So Rozana is within the context of that" (Episode 6, France24, 16 July 2013).

Lina Chawaf: In 2011, when these events started in Syria... I do not want to put a label on them... However, some people call them: revolution, crisis or simply events.
(Episode 3 of the programme *Syrian Talk* broadcast on radio Rozana, 13 May 2019)

The competing discourses emerging in the text stand in contrast with the initial assertion that radio Rozana is unengaged in political coverage or discussions due to the lack of interest on the audience's part. Different elements of the discourse production process or the communicative environment present a clearer image of the improbability of separating the discourse of the diasporic media scene from the unfolding political conflict. The choice of discussion topics for the talk shows on radio Rozana could not possibly exempt it from the turmoil of the current political affairs. For instance, the discussions across different programmes broadcast on the radio or in the sample included topics such as press freedom, red lines in journalism, opposition media and the future of the diasporic media scene. Moreover, most of the guests chosen to address these topics were either involved in activism, working in opposition or independent journalism, political writers and figures and so on. Thus, it is inconceivable to expect the discursive practice to remain politically sanitised, given the nature of the discussion topics and the affiliations of the guests involved.

I record other strategies employed on the discursive level to bypass direct engagement in politics. Outlining these strategies of articulation aims to elucidate the tension between the emerging and the underlying discourses in the radio episodes. Notably, I examine how some national, historical and current events are being recalled and articulated, focusing on how they are being framed. I note a selective omission of certain actors and stakeholders involved in some national incidents or crises mentioned in the episodes. Case in point, episode 8 of the programme Siamedia broadcast on radio Rozana addressed the violent backlash against *Rising for Freedom* magazine following the publication of an article deemed blasphemous and the ramification of such an incident on press freedom of the emerging mediascape. Throughout the episode, the guests and the presenter repeatedly used the term "de facto authority" to refer to the armed group controlling Eastern Ghouta back in 2017. The actual name of the group in question, Jaysh al-Islam, was completely

missing from the entire episode despite being publicly implicated as the main actor in the *Rising for Freedom* incident as per the coverage of other Syrian and regional media outlets. The careful wording in the different iterations above constitutes a disclaimer by the interlocutors indicating their desire to steer clear from further political discussions or dissociate themselves from any potential affiliation. The data also offers illuminating insights that show that these discourse strategies may have been shaped by more structural factors, namely political fear/uncertainty and funding considerations.

Political fear and uncertainty

The notion of *fear* has been a staple in the study of the collective Syrian identity over the past decades. Political scientist Robin Corey (2004) defines political fear as “people’s felt apprehension of some harm to their collective wellbeing ... or the intimidation wielded over men and women by governments or groups” (p. 2). Through extensive interviews with displaced Syrians, Wendy Pearlman’s work (2016) assembles a timeline of the conflict in Syria that reads as a quadrilateral continuum made of various individual narratives. Each portion of the quadrilateral is characterised by one or more forms of political fear. She explains the continuum’s progression as it shifts from durable authoritarianism to popular uprising, then militarisation with different fighting factions, eventually leading to a protracted crisis. She describes fear as a pillar of the state’s coercive authority that metamorphosed into a normalised way of life for Syrians over the past decades. Nonetheless, the protracted crisis has created a state of ‘nebulous fear’, especially among those who fled the violence at home and resettled elsewhere. This feeling of apprehension results from the uncertainty emanating from the loss of a once [relatively] stable world with no alternative permanence to replace it (Pearlman, 2016, p. 29). Evidently, these fears have transcended the individual realm unto the professional one to significantly shape the articulation of the collective Syrianness in the discourse of the diasporic radios. While not explicitly articulated in the discourse, fear of violence, backlash and retaliation might be the implicit reason Syrian media outlets refrain from naming actors involved in transgression. There are three separate incidents from the radio programmes that highlight the extent of political fear and uncertainty in the dynamics of discourse production in the Syrian diasporic media. First, the violent backlash faced by the magazine *Rising for Freedom* (registered in Canada with a field office inside Syria) for publishing an article deemed blasphemous; a self-censorship incident by an unnamed diasporic radio based in Turkey due to

political uncertainty and finally, Abwab magazine based in Germany facing a crisis in management due to the increased securitisation of the Syrian presence in host countries.

Syrian media outlets in the diaspora have been under pressure due to the increased securitisation of the Syrian presence in countries of asylum (Badran, 2020). The instability of the political climate and the unfavourable public sentiment towards refugees in host countries have driven many media outlets to make editorial decisions to exclude political topics that could be deemed controversial or divisive. Notably, Syrian media outlets broadcasting from neighbouring Turkey are particularly susceptible to the vicissitude of the general political climate and volatile public opinion (Badran, 2020; Badran & Smets, 2021). Accordingly, the discussion in episode 21 addressed an incident where the editorial team of an unnamed Syrian diasporic radio in Turkey had been ordered by its editor-in-chief to forgo the commemoration of ‘Martyr’s Day’, *eid alshuhada*. The day is a national holiday commemorating the Syrian and Lebanese nationalists executed in Damascus and Beirut on 6 May 1916 by the Ottoman wāli of Greater Syria. The decision to skip the commemoration was seen by the diasporic journalists as an attempt to appease the political leadership in Turkey by avoiding any sensitivities that may arise from calling for the remembrance of this historical tragedy.

Anonymous Presenter: I worked for a bit with one of the radio stations that backs the Syrian revolution and is all about freedom and democracy. Then comes along the editor-in-chief ... and orders the editorial crew not to mention anything about the 6th of May because we are based in Turkey.

Batoul Ahmed: Why not?

Anonymous Presenter: Because on the 6th of May, Jamal Pasha [ottoman ruler], “the butcher”, executed Syrian and Lebanese nationalists, so it is the commemoration of ‘Martyrs’ Day’, a Syrian national holiday that does not have anything to do with Ba’ath Party or Hafez/Bashar Al-Assad or even Erdoğan¹³. Do you realise how much they love Erdoğan? It is okay. I understand that many thanks go to Erdoğan (for hosting Syrian refugees), but this is a Syrian national day that you cannot possibly forgo just because you are based in Turkey.

(Episode 21 of the programme *Constructive Gossip* broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 10 September 2014)

The interlocutor articulates an important nexus between the act of commemorating the day on the diasporic radio and what it stands for in celebration and remembrance of a moment of historical

¹³ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey’s prime minister

contention. Commemorating moments of contention and political resistance “enables symbols and discourses embedded in them to be culturally transmitted on a long-term basis, feeding the struggle and contributing to the construction of a collective memory of protest” (Cammaerts, 2012, p. 126). In this context, the act of sanitising the political aspects of the collective Syrianness by the diasporic outlets ushers a curtailment of the collective memory and identity under the scrutiny of geopolitical pressures. It also defies the identity and purpose of protest media emanating from the Syrian Revolution as a moment of political contention meant to galvanise ‘epistemic communities’ (Lipschutz, 2005), preserving the repertoire of collective action. Similarly, in Germany, the shifting tide of public opinion towards refugees in Europe has driven Syrian diasporic outlets to exercise more caution with their broadcast/published content, especially any material that could potentially raise any security concerns. The ‘Abwab’ magazine case¹⁴ (episode 8, radio Rozana, August 2017) showcases the far-reaching extent of the increased securitisation of the Syrian presence in Europe. A former editor explains that the publisher asked the magazine’s editorial team to translate the published Arabic content due to unsubstantiated ‘security concerns’ raised by some members of the public in Germany. The request was rejected by the editor-in-chief, who considered it a form of arbitrary censorship solely based on the national identity of the Syrian editorial crew. What ensued was that the editor-in-chief was forcibly eliminated from the management of the magazine by the publisher. Therefore, the changing public perceptions of the presence of Syrian refugees in Europe is a cause of uncertainty that could potentially define the diasporic media’s dynamics of discourse production, leading it to reconfigure its engagement with any content of a political nature that could be deemed controversial. Asked to discuss the reasons for Abwab magazine’s tension with the German publisher, a former editor in episode 8 of the programme *Siamedia* describes the situation as

Walaa Kahrmanda: “... Sometimes press freedom is affected by public and social perceptions on some topics. This is what happened with Abwab magazine; the issue was mainly related to the wider public perceptions of refugees and the rising hostile attitudes against them due to some unfair portrayals of refugees as Arab or Muslim marching on [to Europe].”

(Episode 8 of the programme *Siamedia* broadcast on Radio Rozana, 27 August 2017)

¹⁴ The case study was discussed in more details in Chapter 3

Funding Considerations

Similarly, it emerges in the text that some funding considerations may be implicated in the diasporic media outlet's tendency to politically sanitise their content. The diasporic outlets receiving support from international media assistance organisations are under particular scrutiny to uphold their politically independent and neutral status as a funding stipulation. In chapter 6, I will further examine how the political economy of the diasporic media outlets constitutes an integral part of its communicative environment, shaping different aspects of discourse production. In this section, I outline how evidence from the studied episodes suggests that the desire to maintain political neutrality may have led the producers of the diasporic outlets to opt for soft news (social, entertainment, cultural news) in a bid to avoid directly engaging with the political context of the unfolding violence in Syria. Episode 21, broadcast on radio SouriaLi, is the first dispatch of a satirical show using comedy to deliver scathing criticism for the kind of “apolitical” content presented by the diasporic funding-dependent Syrian radios:

Presenter 2 (anonymous): I will tell you about this other radio I worked with that has a reputation for being “yay, the radio of the lady”.

Presenter 1: What do you mean by ‘the radio of the lady.’

Presenter 2 (anonymous): A lady secured the funding, so it automatically became her radio. Anyway, the radio broadcasts a morning show that only discusses soft news and light-hearted content like a labneh dish [traditional strained yoghurt breakfast dish] that entertains the regular Syrian citizen while suffering under constant shelling. Look, I am not against discussing soft news but not to the point of discussing what kind of hamper to take for a picnic.

(Episode 21 of the programme *Constructive Gossip* broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 10 September 2014)

On the other hand, attempts to sanitise the political aspects of the current and historical events have been a longstanding tradition of the state-controlled Syrian media (Wedeen, 1999, p. 45). Nonetheless, the regime-controlled media and diasporic media have different rationales for pursuing a politically sanitised discourse. Episode 23, broadcast on Radio SouriaLi (25 January 2015), covered how the Syrian state media, after 2011, had increased the space for controlled criticism through government-owned channels to cope with the exponential scale of events and the rise of competing media sources that offer alternative narratives. The idea was to provide a controlled space via state media to channel grievances about the deteriorating economic conditions and offer low-ranking officials and ministers as suitable figures to absorb the public anger. This strategy shields senior regime figures and the rest of the security apparatus from any potential

backlash as the country plunges into what seems to be an endless cycle of violence and militarisation. Thus, the topics of permitted criticism act as a strategic distraction to command the public focus on the economy and issues of service provisions while altogether avoiding the complex and violent political transformations that the country is going through. Episode 23, broadcast on radio SouriaLi, addressed the topic of this controlled criticism in the Syrian state media post-2011 and whether it constitutes "Fake transparency or a genuine attempt to listen to opposing views?".

Audience member: Four years ago, Syrians did not have a problem with the price of gas cylinders, power cuts or inflation. The [2011] uprisings had clear and specific demands: dignity and freedom. However, state media ignored and belittled these demands and posed the famous question: "this is the freedom you were after?". As the situation got so complicated and the economy deteriorated to a catastrophic extent, state media is now open to listening to people's complaints about the economic situation. So, the question is: why were people denied voicing their demand for freedom, but now they are allowed to voice their demands for price cuts for gas, power and bread?

(Episode 23 of the programme *Give/Take* broadcast on SouriaLi Radio, 25 January 2015)

The text echoes how the Syrians' demands for freedom and dignity were not permitted in the public discourse of the state media in 2011 due to their political nature. Instead, the regime-controlled media have strategically voided these demands of their political nature by fronting subsidiary but equally legitimate and vital calls for better living conditions. Thus, state media had a stake in sanitising the political aspect of the collective uprisings by trading the portrayals of the initial political demands for social and economic ones. Finally, the forced attempt to limit the political discussions on the diasporic radios for reasons related to fear, uncertainty or funding presents an existential oxymoron as these outlets are, in fact, the outcome of a major political disruption that started in 2011. By deliberately disassociating from the local political context in Syria, these diasporic radios are struggling to stay relevant and build a rapport with a local audience whose lived reality is directly affected by the broader political transformations, as well as a diasporic audience who is eager to stay up to date on the latest political news from the homeland. Lamentably, this inclination to evade political entanglement by presenting little or no context is an inadvertent entrapment for the independent diasporic radios in the regime's media propaganda playbook, though for entirely different motives.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a reading of the mediation of the collective Syrianness through the discourses of the diasporic radios and how they are shaped by the agency of the interlocutors and different spatio-temporal interdependencies (Tilly, 2008). This articulation of the collective identity was initially imagined against a shared political commonality, the Syrian revolution obfuscating markers of divide and polarisation. As the crisis protracted, various geopolitical factors, increased militarisation, and mass displacement led to the dissolution of this commonality resulting in contrasting translocal realities where new iterations of the collectiveness emerged against identity markers of victimhood or survivorhood. The diasporic interlocutors were then forced to reckon with the repercussions of these contrasting realities on their practice of journalism in a new temporality: a post-revolutionary context. In this new setting, the triangulation of advocacy, affect and activism that propelled the practice of diasporic journalism has metamorphosed into consciousness-raising fetishism where the symbolic (diasporic) realm is the last remaining site of contention. In this symbolic realm of contention, the diasporic interlocutors exercise their agential power to manipulate elements of the sociopolitical context to adapt to various pressures of political fear, uncertainty and funding considerations. These attempts to circumvent the political element involved a number of discursive strategies of framing or selective omission employed in the radio programmes. Consequently, the articulation of the collective Syrianness in the discursive practice of the diasporic radios is politically sanitised. Finally, the magnitude of the contrasting translocal realities and the curtailment of a meaningful engagement in politics forces the Syrian diasporic media to reconfigure their *raison d'être* and modes of engagement (mediation) in a post-revolutionary setting. In the following chapter, I ground these debates on discourse production in broader structures of political economy shaping the communicative environment of the Syrian diasporic radios.

Chapter VI

The Syrian Diasporic Media as a Field: The Economic, Cultural and Social Capital

Introduction

Pierre Bourdieu's work has been widely used in cultural sociology, yet it recently gained popularity within media and journalism studies (Vandevoordt, 2015). Employing field theory as a framework of analysis requires an examination of the relational power dynamics within the same field and between different fields of social practice. While Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) field theory has been traditionally used as a theoretical framework in the study of mainstream media and journalism (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Benson, 2006; Willig, 2013; Ryfe, 2017), Chris Atton (2001) pioneered the study of alternative media as a field in its own right. Field theory allows for the juxtaposition of "culturally rich, but often economically starved, alternative or literary journalism ... and culturally poor but economically rich market journalism..." (Benson, 2006, p. 190). Similarly, I employ Bourdieu's theoretical framework to contextualise power relations within the emerging Syrian diasporic media field. Typically, the elemental powers within Bourdieu's journalistic field are *economic*, *cultural* and *social* capitals, accumulated on two intertwining hierarchical planes: *institutional and individual*. However, the amalgamation of the dynamics of production, representation and consumption within diasporic media (Georgiou, 2007) requires a significant reconfiguration of the traditional understanding of the different elements of field theory. In chapters 4 and 5, the analytical enquiry focused on strategies of textual representation and discourse articulation; in this chapter, the analysis addresses how the opposition between the broader forms of power: economic, cultural and social capital, shapes the field of the Syrian diasporic media. For this research, I will define **economic** capital as the funding and other sources of financial support that constitute a revenue stream for emerging diasporic outlets. Whereas the **cultural** capital will encompass the journalistic calibres and the social dispositions of the labour force, maintaining the media production cycle. Defining the **social** capital of the Syrian diasporic media field is difficult due to its emerging nature and hence the inability to study the development of its relationship with different social actors over an extended period of time. However, this

provides an opportunity to map out this facet of the emerging field by appraising its engagement dynamics with the audience on the one hand and the funding entities on the other hand. Generally, the process of accumulating different types of capital by the social actors in any given field is meant for an emancipatory end goal, including achieving a certain degree of autonomy and independence from the power of structural factors (Schudson, 2005; Vandevoordt, 2015). Due to conditions of violence and displacement particular to the Syrian context, journalists have to navigate several adversarial pressures while simultaneously building the economic, cultural and social capitals of the diasporic media field. These contentious conditions of emergence have forced the radios under study and many more diasporic media projects to rely on funding from international donor bodies and media assistance organisations as a more ethically acceptable financing modality compared to other alternatives (Badran, 2020). However, the inability of this diasporic media field to diversify its revenue streams due to the unfolding conflict in Syria has inevitably created a donor dependency (Cook, 2016). This pathway to accumulating economic capital to emancipate these radios to provide counter-narratives to the regime's propaganda through donor funding might have been inadvertently detrimental to the sustainability of the diasporic media field. Thus, the study of the cultural and social forms of capital will inevitably be linked to the economic one as the dominant power force in the field of journalism, as per Bourdieu's original conception (Benson, 2006). For several reasons, it is also operationally challenging to explore the different forms of the capital of the Syrian diasporic media field on separate hierarchical planes (individual and institutional). Notably, the emergence of the alternative information environment in Syria and the diaspora was characterised by its sudden nature in contrast to the evolutionary model of traditional media ecosystems where institutions and regulatory frameworks take decades to develop (De Angelis, 2011; Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Hence the organisational aspect of the Syrian diasporic media scene resembles a model of networked individualism (Deuze, 2005), where the organisational and the individual are often amalgamated. Traditionally, cases of diasporic media are studied as particular encounters embedded in localised political disruptions and independent from broader developments and trends within contemporary journalism (Badran & Smets, 2021). In contrast, the conceptualisation of the Syrian diasporic media as a field situates its study within wider social, political, economic and cultural contexts. Therefore, I explore the ways in which **the professional capacities, team structures and audience outreach are shaped by the governmentality of the international donor entities** who

provide this emerging field with its sole source of economic capital. I take on board previous research (Badran, 2020) that maps the survival tactics and strategies employed by Syrian journalists to navigate structural political and financial powers to ensure the sustainability of their diasporic media ventures. However, this chapter offers a more inward look at how these structural powers shape the dynamics of discourse production. In this chapter, I argue that the governmentality (Foucault, 1977) of the international donor entities shapes both the cultural and social capitals of the emerging outlets. Evidently, funding issues (economic capital) are deeply intertwined with how the journalistic labour (cultural capital) is managed and the organisational structures are set. Additionally, evidence from the data points to a crucial dynamic addressed for the first time in this research between the economic capital (grant funding) of the social capital of the Syrian diasporic media field (audience engagement inside Syria and abroad). From a methodological perspective, the analysis progresses to its third level in this chapter per Fairclough's (1989) dimensional approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This dimension of analysis focuses on situating the discourses on diasporic journalism within wider political, economic, social and cultural structures that shape the communicative environment. Thus, I examine these discourses as artefacts of the political economy that demarcate the emerging media field. Integrating Carvalho's (2008) reconfiguration of CDA, I particularly examine how the multiple subjectivities (the agency) of the diasporic journalists (the social actors) shape the dynamics of discourse production. I explore how the cultural capital of the diasporic media field is affected by the coalescence between these actors' social and professional roles. I also account for the different temporal rhythms when examining the field's economic capital, as dwindling funding due to shifting donors' geopolitical interests had been determined as an existential threat to the sustainability of this diasporic media field (Badran, 2020).

The Cultural Capital: De-professionalisation of Syrian Journalism

On the individual level, cultural capital within the field of journalism traditionally refers to the valued competencies and dispositions (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007) that "news workers" (Hardt, 1999) bring from their social environment into their professional one. Traditionally, citizen journalists and media activists shift between their social and professional roles as they are involved in self-representation and self-education within their communities (Rodríguez, 2011; Atton, 2001). Effectively, they capitalise on experiential predispositions accumulated from their surrounding

social fields, including education and valued personal connections to individuals or institutions of power (Vandevoordt, 2015). In chapters 1 and 2, I have established that this research addresses the Syrian diasporic media outlets as avenues of self-mediation where activism and the practice of citizen journalism are at the heart of more emerging types of professional journalism. Similarly, I establish in chapter 5 that the coalescence between the personal and professional identities of the Syrian diasporic media practitioners is integral to the study of the practice of journalism within these outlets. Therefore, I propose an approach to studying the cultural capital in the field of the Syrian diasporic media accounting for the multiple positionalities and subjectivities of its journalists. This approach is a key contribution to the study of diasporic media, as the dominant debates in journalism studies heavily focus on the experiences and expectations embedded in the global North and elite newsrooms (Badran & Smets, 2021). Thus, this novel approach to studying cultural capital acknowledges the blurred lines in the dynamics of the production/representation within diasporic media (Georgiou, 2007) as well as engages with the social/professional roles inherent to the context of the Syrian media that emerged in relation to a certain political temporality (Al- Ghazzi, 2021). In the introduction of this chapter, I outlined the operational challenges to studying the different forms of capital within this emerging field on two independent tracks: the individual and the institutional. Nonetheless, I study the interconnectedness in the process of accumulating the cultural capital on both hierarchical planes. Vertically, I account for the hierarchical structure existing within the emerging radios that separate management from staff (this is particularly important as we address radio Rozana's staff strike, which was the main topic of episode 10). Horizontally, I will demonstrate, using examples from the research, how individual social dispositions and non-professional practices shape the field's cultural capital.

Central to the coalescence of the social and professional roles in the practice of Syrian journalism is an affective or an emotive aspect (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) which impacts the discourse production as outlined in chapter 5. In this chapter, I uncover another aspect of this coalescence, which is the de-professionalisation of Syrian journalism. I ground this aspect in broader debates on the political economy of contemporary journalism. Namely, radical transformations in the global media landscape driven by a combination of economic pressures and increased digitalisation of media work have led to the demotion of most of the journalism workforce into precariat 'information workers' (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016, p. 33). This increased commercialisation and digitalisation

factored into the advancement of an “ideology of non-professionalisation”, whereby “everybody can be a journalist” even if they do not ascribe to the “professional journalistic workforce” (Splichal, 2015, pp. 31-859). The proliferation of citizen journalism within global mainstream media institutions has redefined the practice of journalism and accelerated this trend of de-professionalisation (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016). Contrary to some conceptions of citizen journalists as “accidental” bystanders (Harrison, 2020, p. 245) who happen to be at the “right place at the right time” (Rodríguez, 2014, p. 205), the participation of Syrian citizen journalists in covering the crisis is rather deliberative and proactive. With the advent of the Arab Spring, there has been an epistemological shift in the study of the role of citizen journalists from defining “who” they are to focusing on “what they do” (Wall, 2018). However, the Syrian context further problematises an already complicated relationship between citizen and professional journalism, given its conditions of emergence and its development trajectory. At the beginning of the crisis, international mainstream media outlets had virtually no access on the ground to report on the ongoing violence (Salama, 2012). In the absence of independent media in Syria that could provide unbiased coverage of the events, the conditions were prime for Syrian citizen journalists to consolidate an alternative media environment to fill the information void (Episode 7, Radio Rozana, July 2017). Atton (2001) argues that the core of alternative media is a rejection of hegemonic ideologies of commercial interest in a bid to replace them with creative or contentious practices aimed at community empowerment (Rodríguez, 2011). However, the “social environment” traditionally conducive to the emergence and flourishing of citizen journalism (De Angelis, 2011; Wall, 2018) is noticeably missing in this context, given the regime’s historical control over the avenues of civic engagement prior to 2011 (Wedeen, 1999). Therefore, the efforts to professionalise and institutionalise the practices of Syrian citizen journalism within the emerging independent media environment (see chapter 1) are governed by the “knowledge power” (Badran, 2020) of the media assistance organisations that provide training and capacity-building in journalism as a form of non-material support (Miller, 2009) to the grant-funded media (including the radios under study). Consequently, the institutional aspect of the cultural capital of the Syrian diasporic media field is partly shaped by the governmentality of the donor entities, replacing hegemonic ideologies of commercial interest (Atton, 2008) with an alternative professional ideology (see chapter 4). Naturally, the impact of such governmentality transcends the institutional cultural capital to the individual one outlined in the previous section. In light of this

conceptualisation of the cultural capital, I examine the ways in which the governmentality of the media assistance organisations configures the communicative environment, namely professional capacities, labour relations and organisational structures within the Syrian diasporic radios.

The Economic Capital: The Political Economy of Media Assistance

In the Bourdieusian tradition, economic capital refers to “money or assets that can be turned into money” (Benson, 2006, p. 189). Earlier in this chapter, I established that the emerging Syrian media outlets primarily relied on the financial support of media assistance organisations as a more ethical funding model compared to its commercial alternatives (Badran, 2020). However, conditions of war and displacement have made it challenging for Syrian media outlets to diversify their sources of funding beyond the support of media assistance organisations (ibid). Western media assistance in the Middle East has a contentious history prior to the Arab Spring, especially with foreign governments and NGOs’ ineffective intervention in the Iraqi media ecosystem (Sakr, 2006). Additionally, the basis of international media assistance has often been criticised as it relies on unchallenged assumptions about the relationship between the Western model of journalism and democratic self-governance (Miller, 2009). Nonetheless, the eruption of the Arab uprisings facilitated by digital technologies was almost a vindication of Western media support in the decade that preceded the political contention (Myers et al., 2017). However, the unfavourable political fate of this mediated contention (Lievrouw, 2011) problematises the overstated emancipatory power of digital media technologies in achieving democratic governance (Gao, 2018). The last decade has witnessed the rise (and demise) of a flourishing Syrian diasporic media scene; whereby the number of alternative media outlets emerging after the uprisings has dropped drastically from an initially reported number of 600 in 2015 (Bahlol, 2016) to only a dozen operating today. Case in point, radio SouriaLi, one of the diasporic outlets under study, dubbed as one of the “strongest Syrian media projects” post-2011 (Marrouch, 2014, p.22), stopped broadcasting abruptly in early 2020. This brief period of prosperity that the field has witnessed was cut short by dwindling funding due to shifting foreign policy interests on the part of international donors and an increased securitisation of the Syrian presence in the diaspora (Badran, 2020). Previous research that integrated the study of the funding aspect of diaspora media by exploring issues of the economic precarity of exiled journalists (Badran & Smets, 2021) and the corresponding survival tactics (Badran, 2020). However, this research broadens the focus to address the funding modality of these

transnational outlets as a structural element shaping the dynamics of discourse production and the sustainability of the Syrian diasporic media field at large. This chapter's main hypothesis, building on previous work conceptualising traditional journalism as a field (Benson, 2006), is that this economic capital is constitutive of other forms of capital within the field of the Syrian diasporic media. To understand the power of this economic capital in shaping the nascent media field, I employ Foucault's understanding of 'governmentality' (1977) to study how the requirements of the funding provided by international donors shape the interaction between activists and the media they use. Sustainability (Sakr, 2016) and adaptability (Singer, 2011) have long been some of the most significant existential challenges facing oppositional media in different contexts (Cook, 2016). In the realm of media start-ups, the criteria for judging the sustainability and adaptability of non-profit endeavours (such as the diasporic radios under study) have been traditionally confined to their versatility, longevity and ability to diversify their funding sources (Cook & Sirkkunen, 2013). However, this research aims to extend Sakr's (2016) view on the sustainability of oppositional media as long-term sociocultural interventions beyond the individual outlets' own survivability.

In the radio programmes broadcast on SouriaLi and Rozana radios, funding from international donor entities emerges as a central theme when discussing the practice of diasporic journalism. The funding model that most Syrian diasporic radios rely on is grant-based, supported by media assistance INGOs¹⁵. This funding usually covers operational costs, training and technical support, but due to numerous challenges, these diasporic outlets have failed to significantly diversify their sources of funding (Badran, 2020). This, in turn, created a "donor dependency" that constitutes an existential vulnerability threatening the sustainability of these emerging radios (Tatomir et al., 2020). It is difficult to estimate the exact figures of global media assistance annually from donor countries as it is intertwined with general allocations to funding supporting democracy and good governance (Deane, 2013). The closest estimates from a report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2015 suggest that \$441 million of its Official Development Assistance was spent on media support in 2012 from member governments of the OECD. Another comprehensive study by the Center for International Media Assistance in 2019 outlines the extent to which the "support for independent media tends to be even more politically

¹⁵ International Non-Governmental Organisations

sensitive than support for elections and/or political parties; it has a slim chance of making it into official consensus documents on strategic aid priorities” (p. 4). Consequently, the lack of publicly available information on the conditions of such a funding model, its stipulations, and the broadcasting requirements cast shadows on the researchers' ability to study the emerging media's political economy rigorously. Given the centrality of the funding dynamics of these diasporic outlets and the lack of adequate contextual information to substantiate generalised analytical claims, I propose an alternative (albeit unconventional) way to contextualise the study of the political economy aspect of Rozana and Souriali Radios. Namely, I study the discourses on the practice of diasporic journalism as artefacts of the political economy that shapes the communicative environment of these transnational radios. The aim is to eventually build an understanding of how the structural power of the economic capital shapes the dynamics of discourse production and influences other forms of capital within the field of Syrian diasporic media. Badran (2020) presents a topography of the media assistance landscape in the Syrian context: International donor entities (often related to States or governments), international media assistance organisations as implementing partners and finally, Syrian beneficiaries (local or diasporic media outlets). This outline demarcating the hierarchy of actors lays the foundation for the analysis presented in this chapter, exploring the effects of their power relations on the dynamics of discourse production. I build on findings from chapter 5, elucidating how the funding of the diasporic media shapes the mediation of the collective Syrianness, privileging discourses of a politically sanitised identity.

Social Capital: Access to Community and Spatial Transformation

In this section, I examine the institutional elements that constitute the social capital of the Syrian diasporic media field and how they relate to other forms of economic and cultural capital. Bourdieu's (1986) conception of social capital is fundamentally about **access** to non-material resources and the broader powers that shape this (unequal) access. Similarly, Couldry's (2008) understanding of mediation looks at the asymmetries in access to sites of representation due to existing social relations and contrasting locales. Alternative media as a field emerged as a grassroots participatory space geared towards community empowerment outside the traditionally ideological establishments (Atton, 2008). Hence, access to the community (Rodríguez, 2011) and the ability of the alternative media to reconfigure the social space (Lefebvre, 1990) are essential

elements to building the social capital of the Syrian alternative media field. In rejecting authority, alternative media turns to community members as both producers and consumers of news (Atton, 2008). To ensure access to the community, alternative media must establish pathways to trust and credibility as essential elements of their social capital (Bourdieu 1984, 1986). However, Bourdieu's conception is often critiqued for the operational difficulties of measuring such trust as a benchmark of social capital (Gary, 2016; Higgins Joyce & Harlow, 2020). There is not enough research articulating the relationship between the new diasporic mediascape as a standalone category and its audience inside or outside Syria. This lack of research complicates any attempts to measure the social capital of these diasporic radios in quantifiable terms. This study aims to qualitatively understand the diasporic journalists' perceptions of such trust (or the lack thereof) and its effects on accessing the local community and the social space to build the diasporic media field's social capital. From a social capital perspective, there is a substantive tie between audience engagement and media trust (Williams, 2012). Therefore, I explore the diasporic interlocutors' views on audience engagement and reach as benchmarks for trust in their emerging media field. There have been limited attempts to conduct audience research to understand the patterns of mass media use among Syrians at home and in the diaspora following the 2011 uprisings (Melki & Farah, 2014; Melki, 2016; Operations and Policy, 2021). The findings of these studies confirm that different groups within the broader Syrian audience believe that most of the available sources of news and information are opinionated or have a certain agenda/bias (Melki, 2016; FPU, 2020). Moreover, the results point to a significant divide in the patterns of media use among the local and the diasporic audience groups, whereby Syrians at home (especially in government-controlled areas) still primarily rely on state television as the main source of news and information (Melki & Farah, 2014; Melki, 2016) despite the emergence of dozens of new media outlets across the political divide following the 2011 uprisings. The research is inconclusive on the reasons for the proliferation of state-run television across different regions in Syria but speculates either an ideological alignment with the source of news or fear of divulging opposition by seeking alternative sources of information. Meanwhile, more digital sources of information have made a breakthrough with the Syrian audience in the diaspora for a plethora of reasons, among which are accessibility and affordability (Operations and Policy Centre, 2021). In the realm of radio broadcasting, Sham FM, the government-affiliated radio station, is the incontestable top radio channel that is listened to in or outside the regime-controlled areas (Melki, 2016). In contrast, only

3% of the Melki (2016) audience sample listened to radio Rozana in areas outside the regime's control. At the height of the broadcasting period of the oppositional diasporic media, a Syrian audience survey (Melki & Farah, 2014) revealed that while the lack of trust is detrimental to the new radios' reach inside Syria, it is not the only crux in building the diaspora radios' social capital. Even among the audience group that reports trust in oppositional radio stations, such group does not necessarily tune in to said radio stations; which suggests a discrepancy "between trusting and actually consuming a specific news outlet that may indicate that content, availability and audience preferences may be mismatched in some locations." (Melki & Farah, 2014, p. 2).

Information/Consciousness-raising Fetishism and the Economic Capital

Media assistance organisations often refute the political character of aid money, arguing that their intervention is a "supra-political, even altruistic technology transfer ... means of establishing democracy..." (Miller, 2009, p. 1). Nonetheless, Syrian diasporic journalists are not unambivalent about the political nature of their chosen funding modality. The rise of the diasporic media scene was closely related to a moment of "political genesis" after the 2011 uprisings, whereby the crisis was internationalised in the following years with different stakeholders pursuing clashing interests in the Syrian conflict (Badran, 2020; Al-Ghazzi, 2021). Therefore, it is anticipated that the changing geopolitical stance of these international stakeholders would affect donors' funding priorities (Badran & Smets, 2021), as mentioned in the final episodes of the programme from *one story to another* broadcast on radio SouriaLi.

Presenter: [...] The Syrian [humanitarian] crisis has initially captured the international community's focus and received dedicated funding and attention. However, this focus increasingly declined over time... as audiences became desensitised. Nonetheless, some [Syrian activists] all over the world are still trying [to get the word out about the Syrian plight] with minimal resources and high hopes.
(Episode 18 from the programme *From One story to Another* broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 20 February 2020)

The statement alludes to the perception held by many Syrian diasporic journalists that their advocacy journalism: relaying news and information about the unfolding crisis, would stir the international community to take a stance to end the Syrian plight. The information and consciousness-raising fetishism at the heart of the Syrian communicative environment (as

explained in chapters 1 and 5) are thought to fuel the donors' interest in funding emerging Syrian media projects, hence increasing the media outlets' economic capital from an institutional perspective. However, this episodic focus on Syria sustained by certain geopolitical interests has significantly declined over time, effectively undermining the civil society projects that relied on this funding as a lifeline to conduct their operations. I address the intersection between the economic and cultural capital in three overlapping aspects, the professionalisation of journalistic calibres, the dynamics of labour relations and the social dispositions of the diasporic journalists. From a labour relations perspective, the institutional economic capital is also the individuals' where the diasporic journalists' income is entirely dependent on the single source of funding provided by the international donors with no prospect of revenue diversification. Hence, the episodic nature of funding affects the individual and institutional economic capital, albeit differently. This aspect is addressed in episode 10, broadcast on radio Rozana, which covers a staff strike that emerged from a disagreement with the management regarding some financial decisions. More on the relationship between the economic capital and the labour relations within the Syrian diasporic media; prior, I bring in focus a statement from episode 7 underscoring the repercussions of this information fetishism on the overall de-professionalisation of the emerging media sector (including the Syrian diasporic media as a field). Ali Eid, head of the Syrian Journalists Association, problematises the relationship between citizen and professional journalism in the context of the popular uprisings across the Arab World. His statement recognises the importance of the role of citizen journalism in a specific temporality related to a moment of social/political upheaval but warns of systemic de-professionalisation of journalism in the long run.

Ali Eid: Information technologies have redefined the concepts of media and journalism and their roles in social construction. Social media created alternative avenues to broadcast popular uprisings around the world. For instance, citizen journalists stepped in to fill an information gap created by the absence of free and independent media to cover the events in Syria... However, it is essential to understand that citizen and professional journalists have very different roles and that the coalescence between their roles is persistent and quite damaging. The former shares news, while the latter has the ability to inform policies. Citizen journalists are media activists who share news and information using social media; sometimes, they mistakenly categorise their work as 'professional' with no access to means of verification of the information they are sharing. We are amid significant [social and political] changes across ...the Arab World, which impacts our

understanding of journalism's role; however, we need to differentiate between the different practices of journalism...

(Episode 7 of programme *Siamedia*, broadcast on radio Rozana, 16 July 2017)

The statement acknowledges the transformative role of digital affordances in galvanising the emergence of Syrian citizen journalism. However, Eid argues that citizen journalism, in this case, is a transitive phase or a liminal, transitional state of journalistic practice between amateurism and professionalism. Hence, he laments the failure of the new Syrian media outlets to professionalise the calibres that propelled their emergence. Instead, Eid contends that this transitional state of practising journalism made permanent is detrimental to the overall sustainability of the alternative Syrian media. The grant-funded diasporic media tend to mainly focus on social programming (De Angelis et al., 2014) rather than reporting hard news. Consequently, they were the site for the emergence of creative forms of journalism that blends sociocultural and political content, including satire with programmes such as *Misconception* and *Constructive Gossip* on radio SouriaLi among others. This emancipatory outlook on the de-professionalisation of Syrian journalism is challenged by the economic precarity of the media practitioners working within the diasporic radios.

De-professionalisation and Economic Precarity

Nevertheless, the casualisation of the working conditions of these incoming journalists made this hybrid form of activism/journalism particularly precarious. This overdependence on media activists in more organised settings of the diaspora media emphasised the movement away from professional production towards celebrating amateurism (Russell, 2016) and away from hierarchical structures and organisations toward networked individualism (Deuze, 2015; Badran, 2021). This dynamic masks precarious labour relations as most citizen journalists and media activists initially worked on a voluntary basis (without pay or remuneration) at the start of the uprisings. There have been concerted efforts to capitalise on the emerging media scene's cultural capital and formalise citizen journalists' labour to grow the field's economic capital. Simultaneously, many international donor entities and media assistance organisations have conducted training and capacity-building efforts to professionalise the journalistic calibres within this emerging mediascape. The financial support of international donors to this new Syrian mediascape has signalled a departure from these voluntary efforts as the emerging media sector

began to institutionalise (Wall & el Zahed, 2014), and citizen journalists and activists started to join its workforce formally. Nevertheless, the formalisation of these citizen journalists' working conditions faced many organisational and social challenges. On the one hand, the rise of these media outlets is driven by a political commonality (as elaborated in chapter 5), where their work is viewed as a symbolic resistance against the tyrannical rule of political actors in Syria after 2011 (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). On the other hand, the crisis protracted for years following the initial popular revolt, which made the voluntary basis at the heart of this information exchange increasingly impractical (as stated in episode 19 broadcast on radio SouriaLi). The coalescence between the professional and social roles of media activists and citizen journalists complicated their integration into the newly formed media ecosystem as salaried employees (their professionalisation). The previously voluntary basis of the reporting done by citizen journalists was seen as an essential cornerstone of their social role as activists with a duty to report and a guarantee for objectivity and integrity of their work (as referred to in episode 10, broadcast on radio Rozana). Hence, the formalisation of their working conditions was seen as at odds with this social role rather than an inherent remuneration for their perilous labour, where they provided a valued commodity (information). Episode 10 of the programme *Social It!* broadcast on radio Rozana is entirely dedicated to highlighting the reactions of the community of diasporic Syrian journalists to the strike of radio Rozana's staff over a dispute with the management over their working conditions. The strike is of particular significance as it marks the first incident of industrial action within the alternative media field that emerged outside the Al-Assad regime's control after 2011. The first statement below is by the diasporic journalist Zeina Erhaim who supports the formalisation of Syrian journalists' work and calls for protected labour rights guaranteed by the outlets they work with. The second statement is by Wael Moussa, an editor working with Rising for Freedom magazine, a media outlet registered as a charity in Canada that was circulating in rebel-held areas in Syria until 2017. In his statement, he articulates a nexus between the funding model that the diasporic media outlets are reliant on and the de-professionalisation of emerging Syrian journalism.

Zeina Erhaim: I do not understand why a journalist's own salary would be weaponised against them when they go on a strike and used to question their integrity and objectivity. These accusations sometimes come from an audience that does not even follow these [striking] journalists' work! Rozana's striking journalists have

been receiving very damaging comments online, such as “How much did you get paid to report on this?”; “Why didn’t you strike when your outlet published blasphemous content, and why are you now protesting over money?”. As if a journalist should only work for free. People need to understand that journalism is a paid profession, like any other job where an individual has a certain set of tasks like reporting, writing and translating that should be compensated and that this compensation does not change their work. A journalist should have a competitive market salary like all other professions and protected labour rights, including a raise when relevant. This is not to deny that some people are actually getting paid to promote propaganda in the media, but that is not the case for all Syrian journalists... So, I support the protection of journalists’ financial, legal and symbolic rights everywhere.

(episode 10 of the programme *Social it!* broadcast on radio Rozana, 13 March 2017)

Wael Moussa: The challenges facing the staff at radio Rozana are endemic to a more significant problem with the Syrian civil society in general and especially in Turkey... Some organisations deliberately mislead their staff into believing that their work is geared primarily toward the greater good of the Syrian people to blur the lines between volunteering and employment. This is a deliberate attempt to prevent their staff from demanding the employment rights they are entitled to... Moreover, these outlets are still entirely reliant on donor funding to support their work without further attempts to diversify their sources of income to ensure sustainability. This reliance on donor funding and the lack of strategic financial planning eventually led to the instrumentalisation of these organisations for short-term change and rendered them unable to actively participate in rebuilding a future for Syria.

(episode 10 of the programme *Social it!* broadcast on radio Rozana, 13 March 2017)

The interchangeable perceptions of the roles of these diasporic journalists between activism and professionalism are at the heart of their socioeconomic precarity (Al-Ghazzi, 2014; Badran & Smets, 2021). There is evidence from the episodes (particularly episode 10, broadcast on radio Rozana and episodes 14 and 17, broadcast on radio SouriaLi) to point out the power imbalance between the managers and staff working in these ventures. Chouliaraki (2010) warns that self-mediation projects tend to capitalise on unpaid labour and describes citizen journalists involved in these projects as “voluntarily co-opted in projects of power that may have a therapeutic value in ‘giving voice’ to the ordinary, yet ultimately reproduce local asymmetries and global inequalities” (p. 3). This power inequality within the alternative media is endemic to the traditional academic fetishisation that celebrates this non-mainstream media powered by non-professional journalists

as emancipatory avenues rather than focusing on the conditions of its production (Atton, 2008). The challenges facing the formalisation of the employment conditions of the Syrian journalists working in diaspora media have their roots in the funding model that propelled these endeavours of public expression. This further addresses important questions around ownership and management and how they are related to the sustainability of the nascent projects within the Syrian diasporic media field. Generally, the organisational structure of alternative media outlets does not strictly follow the traditional frameworks of management but “depends entirely on what it is responding to” (Atton & Hamilton, 2008, p. 9). In part 3 of his book *Democracy at Work: A Cure for Capitalism*, Wolff (2012) describes different modes of management of collaborative enterprises and outlines a particular form of worker self-directed enterprise (WSDE). In WSDE, workers collectively determine the mode, conditions and type of production within their enterprises and, by succession, can make deliberative decisions on managing external pressures related to their job security (Sakr, 2016). Turner (2010) problematises the optimistic argument about the democratisation of self-mediated projects, given how often they are co-opted by more financially established actors wielding a stronger economic power. Similarly, alternative media outlets part of the Syrian diasporic media field were thought to pursue more democratic, participative and deliberative management modes given their conditions of emergence and declared values. However, the statements above from episode 10, broadcast on radio Rozana, elucidate a divide between *management* and *staff* within the emerging diasporic outlet. Whereby the management makes executive decisions about the distribution of the field’s economic capital without deliberations with the staff “whose income is directly affected” by such decisions (Sakr, 2016, p. 50). This unequal power was revealed by the dynamics of radio Rozana’s staff strike in early 2017. The details of the strike were abundantly documented online by the striking staff and discussed in detail in episode 10, broadcast on radio Rozana. According to Rozana’s staff, the radio’s management team is based in Paris and manages financial and organisational matters, while another editorial team is based in Gaziantep, which claims to produce over 60% of the radio’s editorial content. The friction started when the management team in Paris decided to switch the currency of the salary paid to Gaziantep’s team to be in Turkish Lira instead of US Dollars. The Turkish Lira back in 2017 plummeted in value due to some adverse economic conditions, which meant the salaries would significantly decrease. In a public statement, the staff involved in the strike claimed they initially tried to negotiate with the management, which effectively threatened

to terminate their jobs if they escalated, eventually pushing the staff to go public with their strike action (Arfa, 2017). In its first public statement about the strike, Rozana's management contends that these financial decisions were only taken to mitigate the dwindling funding from donor entities. Nonetheless, some of Rozana's staff have explained on Facebook that they had proposed alternative mitigation measures only to be rejected by the management. Evidently, the decisions related to the field's economic capital are concentrated in the hands of the management that determines the distribution of such capital on institutional and individual levels.

Cultural Capital as a Socially Contingent Habitus

Traditionally, within the field of journalism, the heteronomous external power of the economic capital shapes the autonomous internal forms of capital, including the cultural and the social ones (Benson, 2006). The dominant trait of the cultural capital within this field of Syrian diasporic media is the vocational transition from media activism to a form of professional journalism without former education or training. In practice, individuals from different professional backgrounds have joined this emerging media field regardless of their former credentials (episode 2, radio Rozana, August 2015). Consequently, these media activists repurposed some aspects of the social and professional dispositions (cultural capital) they had from previous jobs for their current work in the new media field. Most notably, knowledge of a second language was not prominent among Syrians before the 2011 uprisings. Diasporic journalist Sakhr Idris says Al-Assad's regime has systematically discouraged Syrians from learning foreign languages. He contends that the English language skills he acquired against the tide have greatly benefitted his career in journalism (episode 2, radio Rozana, August 2015). Thus, the few journalists with English language skills acquired in Syria prior to 2011 who have joined the diasporic media field were better primed to communicate directly with international donors and navigate the bureaucracies of grant funding. In this section, I argue that the conditions of the economic capital have contributed to creating a stratified internal hierarchy between team members of the diasporic outlets based on their individual cultural capital. The satirical show *Constructive Gossip* broadcast on radio SouriaLi addresses, in its first episode, the intricacies of managing donor relations and how it shapes the dynamics of discourse production.

Anonymous presenter: I was working for a bit in one of those revolutionary radios in Turkey when the director frantically informed the staff that a representative of the funding entity that supports the media outlet was visiting the premise the following day. He ordered everyone to be on their best behaviour, not miss work and clean their offices. I thought he would next ask everyone to wear their best outfits and trim their nails and facial hair *laughing*. During the visit, the director lined everyone up to greet the representative, who briefly chatted with the staff and repeated the words “good, good, good” in his American accent. Anyway, the director was so happy the radio was granted the funding and gave everyone the following day off.

(Episode 21 of the programme *Constructive Gossip*, broadcast on radio Souriali, 10 September 2014)

Anonymous Presenter: During a training workshop held by one of the emerging radios based in Europe, some team members were swimming at the hotel where the workshop took place. I took the chance to chat with the radio’s programmes’ director and set up an introductory meeting with one of my (journalist) friends.

Batoul Ahmed: That friend is me.

Anonymous Presenter: Correct. The purpose of the meeting was to propose Batoul’s idea for a show to be broadcast on that radio. The programme director liked the idea and asked me to follow up with her via email. The thing is, we kept exchanging emails endlessly.

Batoul Ahmed: Yeah, we sent her a description of the show

Anonymous Presenter: *interrupts* Batoul, it is called a ‘brief’; you have to say it ‘brief’ in English, Ok? Since it is a Europe-based radio.

Batoul Ahmed: we sent the radio’s management everything that needed to be sent.

Anonymous Presenter: and so on... Until we ran out of Gmail capacity because we used almost 4GB¹⁶ emailing this radio back and forth. We even sent them a pilot episode for feedback, but they suddenly stopped responding.

(Episode 21 of the programme *Constructive Gossip*, broadcast on radio Souriali, 10 September 2014)

These statements depict the intersection between the individual and the institutional forms of cultural capital on the one hand and the economic capital on the other. Consequently, the governmentality of the media assistance informs the internal hierarchy of the Syrian diasporic media outlets. English language skills are perceived as a valuable form of individual cultural capital that can further mark the divide between management and staff within these social spaces. Miller (2009) describes the personnel working with international media assistance organisations

¹⁶ gigabyte

as a “transnational epistemic community”. As a result, Syrian journalists with English language skills, seen here as a form of cultural capital, are primed to liaise directly with international funding entities, which is perceived to increase the economic capital of their respective outlets. The second statement from episode 21 cited above outlines another asset seen as a valuable form of cultural capital. The communication with media assistance organisations is based on a certain “epistemic” (Miller, 2009) premise that their beneficiaries are expected to be familiar with. Case in point, the anonymous presenter jokingly reprimands Batoul Ahmed for not knowing the correct term to use, referring to a “brief”, when pitching her idea to the managers of a grant-funded Syrian radio based in Europe. This argument aligns with Chouliaraki’s (2010) warning that self-mediated projects could potentially be a site for disempowerment rather than emancipation as they “ultimately reproduce local asymmetries and global inequalities”. (p. 3)

Former Professional Dispositions

The other side of the equation when addressing the field’s cultural capital is the former professional capacity (calibre) of the journalists powering this emerging field. In an earlier section, I discussed how the concerted efforts of Syrian citizen journalism had propelled more organised forms of media outlets. Traditionally, alternative media has systematically rejected the notion of expertise as a symbol of authority in favour of non-professional calibres in journalism (Atton, 2008). This expertise is often akin to certain social dispositions and hegemonic ideologies relayed by mainstream media. Despite progressive efforts towards professionalisation and institutionalisation, the emerging Syrian mediascape, including the diasporic one under study, has not been successful in capitalising on existing journalistic calibres who opposed Al-Assad’s regime well before the 2011 uprisings. Notwithstanding, these journalists are suspected of carrying ideological traces of a different temporality residual from their work within the state-controlled institutions. The amateur type of journalism celebrated within the Syrian diaspora media also stands in contrast to the traditional perception of institutional knowledge held by veteran opposition journalists who have years and even decades of journalistic experience (Atton, 2008). Additionally, these new endeavours of self-mediation depart from the traditional use of the “linguistic rationalism” native to professional journalism into more “affective and playful dimensions of public communication, including satire and parody, but also on the ethics of witnessing and politics of care” (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 228). Moreover, the financial aspect needed to remunerate and retain the experience of

professional journalistic calibres was also missing as other established mainstream media outlets offered competitive salaries to attract established Syrian oppositional journalists (Episode 2, radio Rozana, August 2015). Ali Eid, head of the Syrian Journalists Association, articulates the nexus between the two powers of the emerging diasporic media field, highlighting how the economic power subsumes the cultural one as it limits the field's access to the established calibres, which could help expedite its growth.

Ali Eid: Professional journalists who opposed Al-Assad's regime were lost in the transition from working inside the state-controlled media institutions to not finding their place in this emerging revolutionary media. The blueprint of this emerging media scene does not allow for the integration of experienced calibres due to the lack of institutionalism or professionalism [in the traditional sense]. These emerging media supported by either international [donor] organisations or other sources of funding cannot be considered professional media organisations in their own right; they are more like digital platforms. That is not to belittle the progress achieved by these platforms, as some of them have managed to reach a large audience. However, they still have a long way to go before they can assimilate experienced journalistic calibres.

(Episode 7 of the programme *Siamedia* broadcast on Radio Rozana, 16 July 2017)

The statement offers a number of insights into the possible factors that led to the exclusion of the existing professional Syrian calibres from the emerging media scene. First, the organisational structure of the new outlets is developed horizontally, only enough to manage administrative and bureaucratic functions related to the foreign funding stipulations. Nonetheless, Eid contends in the same episode that these outlets neglected a vertical expansion in professional media-related aspects, including attracting and retaining journalistic calibres and catering content that genuinely appeals to the Syrian audience at home or in exile. Second, the social identity of the emerging media scene comprising of young and non-professional activists naturally was not inclusive of the social dispositions of the established journalists who worked in the regime's media establishments but defected to join the popular uprisings. As a result, the emerging media scene did not necessarily birth news organisations or entities of traditional journalism because it capitalised on the skills of non-professional media activists instead of an existing body of experienced journalists who joined the ranks of the revolution. Instead, media assistance NGOs expend significant resources in

training and vetting new calibres to join these emerging media outlets in a bid to replicate a model of ‘international journalism’ or reproduce a certain form of glocalised media cultures (Miller, 2009). Consequently, the activist’s role, as a form of cultural capital, is being fetishised as a prerequisite to joining the emerging media scene, which is effectively endemic to the systemic de-professionalisation of the emerging media scene.

The Social Capital and the Failure to Realise a Spatial Transformation

Couldry (2008) uses Henri Lefebvre’s (1990) conception of ‘social spaces’ to explain how embedding digital storytelling in social and cultural processes involves a spatial transformation. Nevertheless, the social relations and the asymmetrical powers between the producers of the diasporic media outlets and the funding entities powering the broadcasting of the digital radios have adversely affected their ability to engineer a spatial intervention, especially among a national audience. International donor bodies working in media development recognise the deficiency of their own support that will “run out in time” (Sakr, 2016) as they acknowledge that “good journalism alone is not enough” (Knight Foundation, 2011). Therefore, non-profit media ventures relying on grant funding are expected to establish a strong rapport with their target audience as a fallback measure to ensure sustainability (Knight Foundation, 2011). They are also expected to exhibit a “sophisticated understanding of who they want to reach”, utilising the pertinent means to engage and retain such an audience (ibid). Establishing a strong rapport with the local audience is existential for oppositional media as it constitutes a form of solidarity and social capital from the public and the wider civil society against adverse political conditions (Abdulla, 2014). Nevertheless, audience engagement is not only a benchmark to ensure the success or sustainability of the media venture (Sakr, 2016). It is also an integral part of a broader effort to provide Syrians with an alternative public forum for civic participation (Syria Untold, 2013) outside the control of Al-Assad’s regime (episode 6, France 24, July 2013). Episode 12 of the programme *Focus* broadcast on radio Rozana was entirely dedicated to addressing the emergence of new broadcast radios and the social reception for this type of media. In the episode, diasporic journalist Hala Kodmani argues that these new radios have failed to cultivate an audience base in Syria and beyond.

Hala Kodmani: ... These new broadcast radios that started after the revolution... are unique to the Syrian context and are different from other Arab media ventures...

it is hard to say that they had a role in social and political change or in helping the audience cultivate a new awareness, given how complex the Syrian conflict has gotten... While these broadcast radios achieved great strides in creativity and professionalism... the bigger problem remains that they have not managed to establish a rapport with the Syrian audience or cultivate a culture of listening to the radio, a problem that existed for years beforehand. These new radios have been launched with no strategies to engage with the Syrian audience, especially those still at home. In my opinion, this is the biggest pitfall where funding could have been better utilised to engage with the audience these radios were aimed for in the first place.

(Episode 12 of the programme *Focus* broadcast on radio Rozana, 12 November 2016)

Kodmani's statement highlights a gap in the new broadcast radio's mode of engagement with the audience inside Syria. As highlighted earlier, audience engagement is crucial to the sustainability of the emerging oppositional media (Sakr, 2016). Thus, diasporic journalists are expected to capitalise on digital means to reach and engage their targeted audience (Batsell, 2015). Generally, the digital nature of diaspora outlets transcending national borders is thought to advance their accessibility (Higgins Joyce & Harlow, 2020). Nonetheless, the Syrian context complicates the emancipatory power of digital technologies in helping diaspora media reach their key demographic inside Syria. The regime's control over the telecommunications infrastructure inside Syria results in sweeping digital surveillance, filtering out any oppositional content or tools that can facilitate the reach of such content (Al-Khatib & Xynou, 2015). Additionally, issues of digital access inside Syria resulting from poor/damaged infrastructures (Overton & Dathan, 2019) and prohibitively high internet services fees amid a deteriorating economic situation (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018) have rendered information technologies an obstacle rather than an opportunity for broadcasting. Nevertheless, the diasporic radios' attempts to pursue traditional means of reaching the local audience inside Syria have been equally challenging. SouriaLi's co-founder admits that his radio lost an essential lifeline as they could not continue FM broadcasting inside Syria (episode 18, radio SouriaLi, February 2020). In addition to structural barriers to access that curtails audience engagement, there is further evidence in the data to point at some funding stipulations that impacted the audience reach. In episode 7 of the programme *Siamedia* broadcast on radio Rozana, Ali Eid traces the challenges faced by donor-funded media in developing a robust social capital due to their inability to establish a rapport with the audience.

Presenter: The Syrian media that emerged after 2011 suffers from a lack of reach and audience engagement. Apart from some news websites, no one watches the TV channels... or listens to the new radios...

Ali Eid: There are two possible reasons for this ... the present [new] mediascape is marked by an absence of established media institutions ... this is related to the second reason pertaining to questions around the affiliation of these [new] media outlets, who is funding and managing them? What are the journalistic credentials of the teams running them? Therefore, there is a lack of trust on the audience's part in these media outlets. This all contributes to the lack of reach and audience engagement but is mainly due to funding issues and the type of control the funding entities, whether [political] parties, international donor organisations or foreign States, could be exercising over this media as they are all trying to promote their respective agendas...

(episode 7 of programme *Siamedia*, broadcast on radio Rozana, 16 July 2017)

Eid's statement articulates a relationship between the absence of the social capital of the new Syrian media and the funding modality it has adopted. The notion of trust is a central element in Bourdieu's conception of social capital (1986). In the new Syrian information environment, the rise of misinformation, polarisation and hate speech (De Angelis, 2011) due to the conflict makes it difficult for 'independent' media outlets to break through the digital echo chambers and gain the audience's trust. Many emerging media outlets turned to international media assistance as a more ethically acceptable funding modality (Badran, 2020) in lieu of other business models relying on private investors (Sakr, 2016). Nonetheless, this reliance on Western donors for financial and logistical support may have cast doubts about these outlets' editorial independence within their target audience in Syria (Ayoub, 2016). This lack of trust in the editorial independence of the diasporic media outlets has been detrimental to its efforts to build the social capital necessary to fulfil its duty as an alternative avenue to challenge the regime's domination over the means of symbolic production. Further to issues of trust, evidence from the data implicates the donor funding in the disjunction between the Syrian diasporic journalists and their target audience over the type of content these outlets are providing. For this, I focus on some statements from the first-ever episode of the satire programme *Constructive Gossip - Shelli Bana'a* that dives into the dynamics of the new Syrian radios that emerged after the 2011 uprisings in contrast with the regime-controlled broadcasting.

Batoul Ahmed (presenter): The postmodern radios that emerged after the revolution are no better. Let me tell you, radio SouriaLi, run by Salvador Dali, has persevered to convince me to host a programme. After so many deliberations, all the radio's management could provide me with was just a zoom microphone and a small salary; this is the extent of what their funding could offer. Anyway, these new radios had the potential to achieve a breakthrough and broadcast in the liberated areas inside Syria. Instead, they were too busy setting up useless organisational structures with offices, managers, employees and branding, all in vain because no one recognises their radios or listens to them. After all, what is left of these radios is their catchy slogans "all for one and one for all", "the revolution is my life", and "funding secured, and we are going to treat you to a broadcasting". The truth is, when you listen to the broadcasting programme they are providing, you find it repulsive.

(Episode 21 of the programme *Constructive Gossip* broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 10 September 2014)

The statement points to two cruxes in the way the power of the economic capital shapes the emerging media field. First, there is a disjuncture between the content these radios are presenting, and the actual information needs of the Syrian audience, whether at home or in the diaspora. In the same episode of the programme *Constructive Gossip*, another radio presenter poked fun at the attempts of diasporic radios to mainly broadcast entertainment content in areas in Syria most affected by violence (episode 21, radio Souriali, September 2014). Second, the statement touches base on the competing priorities of the emerging diasporic media field. Nascent media outlets have concerted their limited resources to establish organisational and administrative structures, which were essential for the sustainability of their economic capital as mandated by international donors and media assistance NGOs (Badran, 2020). Focusing on developing the organisational aspect of the emerging media projects may have hampered the diasporic journalists' ability to focus their limited resources on core media functions, including content development and audience outreach. Mhaissen (2017) describes her experience running a Syrian humanitarian NGO and the sustainability conundrum amid intermittent funding, "how can we spend money for the organisational sustainability- to develop further our hierarchies, our office, our image- when we can educate one more child with it? Really, pay for office furniture when children are freezing cold? Yes, true, we need to be sustainable, but our conscious will never be clear." Similarly, in episode 18, Souriali's last ever broadcast episode, Iyad Kallas, the radio's co-founder, reflected on his overall experience managing this diasporic media outlet. In his final statement, Kallas argues

that funding entities stipulate a specific type of organisational structure for the media projects they are funding, which has proved detrimental to the overall sustainability of the emerging media field. His full statement (cited in chapter 5) clearly cites “competing priorities” and “limited resources” as reasons for the demise of the Syrian diasporic media field.

Iyad Kallas: [...] Some media outlets failed to thrive due to surrounding issues, namely funding policies. Donor entities prefer supporting bigger organisations... over grassroots one that runs on a voluntary basis. The lack of funding for the latter has hampered their ability to survive for a more extended period of time as the crisis protracted...At some point, we wanted to work with donor agencies as partners toward a common goal, to serve the common good and foster freedom of expression in Syria and beyond. Nonetheless, some donor entities did not share the same vision and had their own agendas. Therefore, it was difficult [for us] to work with funding entities that do not share the same vision.

(episode 18 of the programme from *One Story to Another* broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 20 February 2020)

Competing priorities between vertical and horizontal expansion have put an additional strain on the diasporic media field’s already limited resources and posed an existential challenge to the mediascape’s sustainability. Sakr (2016) challenges the traditional understanding of sustainability when studying oppositional media, which posits a narrow view of profitability or longevity as benchmarks. Instead, she offers a more lateral view of these media ventures as incubators for sustainable practices of good journalism and ethical media management frameworks. Applying this view to the Syrian context at hand, the journalistic calibres that this diasporic mediascape has propelled may, in fact, outlive the ephemeral media ventures that did not stand the traditional test of longevity or sustainability due to reasons of funding or other structural powers (Sakr, 2016). Previous studies (Badran, 2020) have tackled tactics and strategies of ‘adaptability’ (Singer, 2011) of the Syrian diasporic outlets in the face of mounting economic and political pressures. However, this research addresses the sustainability of the Syrian diasporic media as a ‘field’ beyond the survivability of its individual outlets. Evidently, radio SouriaLi dubbed one of the “strongest Syrian media projects” emerging after 2011 (Marrouch, 2014, p. 22), faced an abrupt closure in February 2020. Thus, the debate this research addresses perceive sustainability beyond the traditional understanding of survivability or adaptability of the media outlets. A statement from episode 20 offers further insights into the future outlook for the field of Syrian diasporic media.

Presenter: These endeavours [media outlets] are still at the beginning of the road. They need a lot of support from the audience, funding entities and critics to help them grow. These projects also need cumulative experience to establish new revolutionary frameworks of operations to capitalise on the freedom the digital space has afforded. We still have a long way ahead; this is just a stepping stone.
(episode 20 of the programme Canvas broadcast on radio SouriaLi, 21 April 2015)

The “cumulative experience” is a recurrent theme in the reflections of the Syrian diasporic journalists on the future of their alternative media projects. Activists involved in alternative media in contentious movements are seen as ‘autodidacts’ learning journalism by doing (Atton, 2015, p. 3). Hence, the journalistic experience gained from working within these diasporic outlets is seen as foundational for an alternative Syrian public sphere capitalising on the newly-found freedom. In this context, sustainability is seen from a sociocultural perspective where alternative media outlets broker long-term social change beyond their own survivability (Sakr, 2016). This sociocultural intervention is designed to redefine concepts of Syrian media and journalism as part of what Sabry (2012) dubs: a ‘new’ Arab cultural temporality ushered by popular uprisings. This digital culture of contention (Zayani, 2015) has created new political subjectivities as a product of liberated political imaginaries (Matar & Helmi, 2020). While this diasporic media field has not been entirely successful in engineering a spatial/social transformation in Syria, it established new modes of civic engagement and creative journalism practices previously sanctioned by the totalitarian regime.

Conclusion

Studying the Syrian diasporic media as a field allows us to examine the power dynamics between its cultural, economic and social forms of capital. In this chapter, I argue that the governmentality of the media assistance organisations, represented in the economic capital, has been largely formative of organisational structure and the modes of audience engagement of the Syrian diasporic media. Despite being perceived as a more ethically acceptable funding modality, the episodic nature of grant funding has affected the overall sustainability of the emerging media field. I have also examined the intersection between the economic and the cultural forms of capital in these overlapping aspects, professionalising the journalistic calibres within the emerging outlets, controlling the internal labour relations and finally privileging certain social dispositions as valued

assets of cultural capital. Consequently, the overreliance on citizen journalists' social dispositions as activists (de-professionalised journalistic labour) has potentially complicated the formalisation of their working conditions within the nascent organisational structures mandated by the governmentality of the donor entities. The Syrian diasporic media outlets have focused on developing their economic capital by expanding their organisational structures to correspond to the expectations of international donor entities. These expended efforts were inadvertently detrimental to the field as they came at the expense of building social capital with its audience inside and outside Syria. For alternative media, social capital is equally fundamental to fulfilling its role in community empowerment through trust and access. Finally, the sustainability of the field transcends the survivability of the individual diasporic outlets from a sociocultural perspective as it introduces new ways of citizen engagement and creative journalism practices.

Chapter VII: Conclusion and Discussion

Introduction

The last five years where I developed this work on the Syrian diasporic media that emerged out of the political uprisings were quite momentous for the mediascape under study. From the research's conception phase to publishing, major geopolitical transformations have radically redefined the situation in Syria. This latest wave of Syrian contention has largely concluded with the restitution of Al-Assad's power (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) and the fragmentation of the political opposition leading to a protracted humanitarian crisis. These political changes and other structural factors have rattled the emerging mediascape and forced the contentious media under study to reconfigure its *raison d'être* and modes of engagement in a post-revolutionary context. These external transformational forces were largely detrimental to the diasporic media scene, as only a handful of the Syrian media in exile are still operational to date. Case in point, Radio SouriaLi, dubbed one of the strongest Syrian media projects in the diaspora (Marrouch, 2014), abruptly ended its broadcasting in February 2020 during the development of this research. This research provides a reading of the exogenous and endogenous powers shaping the dynamics of discourse production in the diasporic radios. These powers are each mirrored in the different levels of analysis whereby I examine the power of the transformations in the social space (chapter 4), the agential power of the interlocutors leading the positions of enunciation (chapter 5) and the media assistance organisations financially supporting the diasporic media (chapter 6). In the following discussion, I provide a summary of the theoretical contributions and the findings, offering a possible outlook on future research studying this context. First, I offer a reflection on the use of "mediation" as a theoretical lens to conceptualise the relationship between the revolution as a "liminal event" (Turner, 1969; Matar & Helmi, 2020) and the emerging Syrian media.

Mediating the Revolution as a Liminal Event

The word revolution in this research transcends its literal signification, describing a transformative event that ushered in a new cultural temporality (Sabry, 2012). Al-Ghazzi (2021) views the revolution as an identity marker denoting a political community with shared aspirations.

Throughout this research, I chart a diachronic timeline of the mediatised transformation of the Syrian revolution as a discursive frame in the digital diasporic radios. First, I explore how the revolution acts as a liminal event (chapter 4), embodying crisis, violence and transition (Boland, 2013); “a state of suspended in-between-ness—becoming a visual depiction of the temporary upending of social order” (Boutieri, 2021, p. 61). Then, in chapters 5 & 6, I examine the revolution as protracted liminality (Matar & Helmi, 2020) or what Saleh (2017) calls a “state of nature”. Failure to propel this temporary liminal state into permanence (Boutieri, 2021) forced those involved in the uprisings into a perpetual “state of nature” (Saleh, 2017), whereby they are in a constant state of an existential fight against an increasingly powerful enemy (the regime forces), which leaves very little room for positive or democratic aspirations. Saleh (2017) explains that this state of nature in the public discourse is governed by a “logic of necessity... the necessity to fight” (p. 6) that discounts aspirations for justice, democracy or arts as luxuries in the face of the mounting violence. By extension, the emerging Syrian media scene is perceived as an alternative (proxy) site for contention where the protracted state of liminality manifests as a symbolic resistance against the restitution of Al-Assad’s political power. These frames offer an intertextual view of the framing of the word revolution in the radio programmes' different episodes.

Theoretical Contributions

This research makes a number of novel theoretical postulations outlined in chapter 2 and operationalised throughout the analysis chapters. First, I applied a reconfigured version of Cammaerts’ (2012) mediation opportunity structure to study the topography of the Syrian mediascape outlining the power dynamics between different actors and digital practices. Nevertheless, I have introduced a spatio-temporal aspect (Tilly, 2008) to Cammaerts’ (2012) original conception to accommodate the disjuncture in temporalities and localities essential to understanding the Syrian context. This reconfiguration is also mirrored in the methodology where I account for the temporal aspect as an integral part of the analytical framework (per Carvalho’s (2008) initial conception). I chose to contextualise the study of the Syrian diasporic at the intersection between contentious media and diasporic journalism, using self-mediation as a theoretical framework for the study of its discursive practices. Self-mediation has been previously used in exploring movement media (Cammaerts, 2015); however, this research extends its use to study the discursive practices in diasporic media, given the highly emotive and political nature of

the latter in this context (Al-Ghazzi, 2021). The double articulation of self-mediation (Cammaerts, 2015, building on Livingstone's (2007) double articulation of mediation) has allowed us to examine the interlocutors' ideological positioning in the textuality (chapters 4 and 5) as well as the dynamics of exogenous factors on discourse production (chapter 6). Therefore, I argue that the discursive practice of self-mediation within the Syrian diasporic media is contingent on the agency of the interlocutors and the political economy of production. Thus, I foregrounded the study of imagination (Anderson, 1983; Tsagarousianou, 2017) and affect (Wetherell, 2013; Al-Ghazzi, 2021) as artefacts of such agential power of the interlocutors, shaping the mediation of collectiveness in the discursive practice. I also appropriated Bourdieu's (1977; 1984; 1986) work from cultural sociology to the study of media in a diasporic context on two parallel tracks: exploring the individual and the collective transformations on the one hand and the institutional/structural on the other hand (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007). The notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) has helped contextualise the afterlife of the diasporic interlocutors' predispositions in their quest to reconfigure the symbolic order (Chouliaraki & Thumim, 2010). On an institutional level, I have extended the use of Bourdieu's (1984) field theory to understand the "mesolevel" (Benson, 2006; Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007) within which diasporic media operates and interacts with other fields in the social space.

Empirical Findings

In this research, I present an alternative view of the Syrian diasporic media as a field in its own right, subject to a number of exogenous and endogenous powers shaping the dynamics of discourse production. These powers are, in turn, reconfigured by the fast-changing temporal rhythms as a new temporality dawned on the Syrian contention, a post-revolutionary setting. Moreover, the temporary state of the diasporic condition of the outlets under study was made permanent due to the restitution of Al-Assad's power in Syria, effectively eviscerating any hopes of relocating this exilic media back to Syria (Tatomir et al., 2020). In chapter 4, I explore how the social transformations in the Syrian context were represented in the discursive practice of the diasporic radios. The transformation of the Syrian revolution as a social process has redefined the way the diasporic media ideologically ascribe to it. In the analysis, I outline this ideological affiliation from social, political and professional perspectives. The diasporic radios under study ascribe to the revolution as an ideological identity marker (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) from a social rather than a political

perspective. This falls in line with the nature of their social programming focusing on discussing issues of civil society (such as freedom and democracy) (De Angelis et al., 2014) but stands in contrast with the conditions of emergence of these radios against a temporality of political contention. This declared abstention from transnational political engagement challenges the universality of “oppositional media” (Badran, 2020) used to denote the work of the Syrian media operating in exile. However, it reveals a nuance that the grant-funded media’s professional ideology is informed by the governmentality (Foucault, 1977) of the media assistance organisations that favours a detached, politically neutral type of journalism (Miller, 2009) only possible through such social programming. The new Syrian mediascape initially emerged to challenge the regime’s control over the means of symbolic production. Due to the conditions of violence, media outlets had to adopt what was initially thought as a “temporary” diasporic location to be able to pursue the freedom of expression it aimed for, emancipated by the power of digital affordances, away from the censorship and the crackdown of the regime. These conditions of emergence position the diasporic media outside the traditional institutions of power that are conducive to the development of media institutions (Wall & el Zahed, 2014). Consequently, diasporic media outlets struggled to operationalise such freedom on a transnational level as new political actors in rebel-held areas, where the diasporic media operate locally, instrumentalise the institutional powers (the power of legislation) to censor any discourse that seems contentious. As a result, many Syrian diasporic media outlets could not pursue a hybrid approach to mediation through traditional and digital means. This resolve to digital affordances in the face of censorship signals the gradual exclusion of the diasporic media from the local social space in Syria (Silverstone, 2004; Couldry, 2008), which eventually compromises its ability to effectuate a transformation in social and political construction. This finding also contributes to an often understudied area of research to understand the relationship between traditional and digital media in social/political contention (Mattoni & Treré, 2014; Cammaerts, 2015). These challenges in accessing the social space inside Syria further complicate the diasporic media’s ability to push against the cultural taboos that limit the media discourse, also known as the red lines. Finally, the regime’s absolute control over the means of symbolic production was challenged by the plurality of voices in the new Syrian mediascape (see chapter 1). However, this multiplicity of voices did not necessarily translate into a more democratised symbolic order of expression as new political actors in Syria have emulated the regime’s censorial practices, curtailing the freedom afforded to

the diasporic media to operate inside Syria.

In chapter 5, I focus on the agential power of the diasporic interlocutors by discerning the discourse strategies on the mediation of the collective Syrianness. I define this agency within the parameters of imagination (Hall, 1989; Tsagarousianou, 2016), affect (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) and advocacy in the practice of diasporic journalism. The analysis shows that the diasporic interlocutors are increasingly struggling to enact an imaginary coherence on the Syrian experiences of fragmentation and dispersal due to contrasting registers of collective life (Touraine, 2001). The fragmentation of the political commonality and the increasing contrast between the translocal realities in Syria and the diaspora have prompted new iterations of the collective Syrianness centred around markers of divide designating victims (in Syria) and survivors (in the diaspora). The switch from the initial focus on transnationalism to translocality (Englert, 2018) as a framework for understanding the diasporic media practices is guided by insights from the data analysis that showed that the non-unitary state in Syria had a significant impact on the mediation of the collective Syrianness in the discursive practice. Despite their affective proximity (Al-Ghazzi, 2021) to the reality of the events in Syria, the diasporic condition of the interlocutors has reconfigured their journalistic practices amid the loss of physical and symbolic access to the local social space. Consequently, the elements of the interlocutors' agential power, imagination, advocacy, and affect metamorphosed into a loop of consciousness-raising fetishism (Gao, 2018) in a post-revolutionary temporality. This consciousness-raising fetishism is a byproduct of what Saleh (2017) calls "the state of nature," where the discourse is seen as a site of symbolic contention governed by the "logic of necessity" (p. 6). Given the nature of the social programming of the diasporic radios under study, this contention emerges in the discourse as social, not political, given the mediation of the collective Syrianness in the diasporic radios as a politically sanitised identity. Notably, the interlocutors deliberately manipulate elements of the discourse articulation to disengage from the political nature of the contentious events in Syria. Despite this declared abstention from addressing political affairs, I note a tension in the discourse where different editorial elements (the choice of guests and topics) are inherently political. Building on the findings from chapter 4, I argue that this tension in the discourse can be traced to the conditions of international funding. These radios are limited by the focus on "social programming" (De Angelis et al., 2014) as an umbrella term to avoid engaging in politics despite the contentious nature of the

content. The attempt to politically sanitise the discourse on the radio is an inadvertent entrapment in the regime's media propaganda playbook, though for entirely different motives. Effectively, diasporic media outlets were unable to successfully engineer a transformation in the Syrian social space (Lefebvre, 1990) due to issues of access to the local community and a habitus mismatch between the audience and the interlocutors caused by the contrasting registers of the collective life (Touraine, 2001) experienced by both groups respectively. This, in turn, challenges the previous conception of this diasporic media scene as a 'de facto' local media (Tatomir et al., 2020), given the geopolitical changes that transformed its salient features and affixed its diasporic condition.

I ground the previous findings about the power of social transformations (chapter 4) and the agential power of the interlocutors (chapter 5) in the broader structures of the political economy to explore the way it shapes the dynamics of discourse production. In chapter 6, I appropriate Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) field theory to conceptualise the Syrian diasporic media as a field in its own right interacting with other fields in the social space. Extending Bourdieu's conception to the study of the Syrian diasporic media requires a reconfiguration of the traditional understanding of the different forms of capital, economic, cultural and social. I argue that the funding of the Syrian diasporic radios represented an opportunity for empowerment and disempowerment, endemic to its liminal state of emergence. Notably, the power of the economic capital (donor funding) has leveraged the self-mediated practices of diasporic journalists to enable them to effectuate a transformation in the Syrian social space. Nonetheless, the nature of this economic capital has been detrimental to the overall sustainability of the field due to the temporary or episodic conditions of the funding. The dynamics between the governmentality of the media assistance organisations and the cultural capital have impacted the organisational structures and the labour relations within the field. The non-professional credentials of the journalists working in these outlets were celebrated (Wall and el Zahed, 2014) as the building block of this field. Nonetheless, these same credentials have complicated the formalisation of the working conditions of the activists-turned-journalists. Moreover, the conditions of the funding have created a hierarchy within the field, privileging individuals with certain social dispositions (English language skills) in management positions. The Syrian diasporic media field has been unable to diversify its funding sources due to the exogenous conditions of war (Badran, 2020); and endogenous factors related to its cultural and social forms of capital. Evidence from the data shows how the governmentality (1977) of the donor entities has

impacted the field's social capital by potentially causing a habitus mismatch (Benson, 2016) between the local audience and the content broadcast on these diasporic radios. This mismatch is a byproduct of the governmentality of the funding that stipulates an objective and detached style of journalism (Miller, 2009) that stands in contrast with the activism of the interlocutors leading the discursive practice. In an attempt to operationalise this political neutrality, the diasporic radios resort to focusing on “social programming” (De Angelis et al., 2014) to ensure their financial survivability.

Notes on the Engagement with the Method

This study combines a textual dimension of media analysis focusing on the discourses of the Syrian diasporic media with a contextual one exploring the ways in which different powers such as the agency of the interlocutors, the political economy and spatio-temporal dimensions shape the dynamics of discourse production. Moreover, the methodology makes a unique contribution to understanding the Syrian diasporic media by integrating the study of the different temporal rhythms as an essential part of the analytical framework (Carvalho, 2008; Mattoni & Treré, 2014). Thus, the context of the rise and demise of the Syrian diasporic media provided an ample opportunity for the realisation of Carvalho's (2008) analytical framework (a reinterpretation of CDA) to encompass “all the moments in the life of a particular news text as well as the wider picture of the media discourse produced on a given topic” (p. 163). Therefore, I have followed the different stages of the emergence and development of discourse production across different temporalities. In the case of SouriaLi radio, I engaged with the discourse from the inception of broadcasting in 2012 till the end of it in 2020. As for Rozana Radio, I have recorded the changes in the context and the agency of the interlocutors through the discourse (particularly in chapter 5). From a theoretical perspective, the empirical design with CDA's different levels of analysis mirrors the constructionist framework to identity I outlined in chapter 2. Through this, I explore the ways in which the collective identity *a*) is being imagined in the discourse, *b*) mediated in communicative practices, *c*) emerging in the form of subjectivity and a sense of self, *d*) negotiated within changing social/political contexts (see Bamberg et al., 2011).

I have fulfilled the methodological decisions outlined in chapter 3 by following the three dimensions of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989). This research provides a comprehensive view

of the Syrian diasporic media covering textuality, discourse and a broader view of the emerging mediascape as a field. The different programmes and episodes broadcast on Rozana and SouriaLi radios provide a generous tapestry of the Syrian context's social, cultural and political transformations. Juxtaposing episodes with a common theme but different features (formats, guests, topics) yielded what Geertz (1995) describes as “language of significant contrast” (p. 20), generating an interpretive analysis rather than a functionalist one. What emerged in the analysis is a study in disjuncture, a Syrian diasporic media field disjunctured across different temporalities and localities. In chapter 4, I examine the representation of the transformation of some key social processes in the discursive practice of the Syrian radio marking a departure from a temporality of symbolic domination (Wedeen, 1999) and ushering in a new Arab cultural temporality (Sabry, 2012) mobilised by liberated transnational imaginations (Tsagarousianou, 2004). In chapter 5, I examine the way changing temporalities shape the mediation of the collective Syrianness with the dissolution of the political commonality and the fate of the practice of diasporic journalism in a post-revolutionary context. In chapter 6, I examine how the different temporal rhymes shape the political economy of the Syrian diasporic media as a field, highlighting the effect of the dwindling funding as the initial phase of protest and mobilisation (McAdam & Sewell, 2001) elapsed. I also provide a future outlook on the field's sustainability beyond its individual outlets' survivability by appraising it as a sociocultural intervention fostering new types of civic engagement and creative journalism.

The most significant challenge in operationalising the research design is the universality of the use of the discursive frame: “emerging Syrian media” in the episodes to denote the different actors in the mediascape that emerged after the 2011 uprisings. This section addresses how I navigated this overlap between the diasporic media and the broader emerging Syrian media scene. Generally, this Syrian mediascape emerged to counter the regime’s propaganda and offer alternative narratives about the uprisings. Despite the common conditions of emergence, the most significant marker of difference between the hundreds of outlets that sprung out of the uprisings is their political and ideological affiliation (Issa, 2016). On this political spectrum, the outlets funded by international media assistance organisations, the focus of this study, are perceived as politically independent. In the literature, the local and diasporic media in the Syrian context are amalgamated, whereby the diasporic media is seen as an extension of the local one or “a de facto local media” (Tatomir et al.,

2020) under the premise that exilic condition is only temporary contingent on the removal of the regime. Nonetheless, the restitution of Al-Assad's power affixed this diasporic condition of the emerging media indefinitely. Conversely, local media outlets operating inside Syria were forced to shut down as the regime forces recaptured most of the rebel-held areas (case in point radio Fresh, see chapter 1). The gradual dissolution of the emerging local media scene has resulted in the discursive frame "emerging Syrian media" being increasingly used in radio episodes to refer to the new Syrian media outlets operating in exile. This discursive reconfiguration through the data analysis offers an alternative mapping of the emerging Syrian media in light of the existential transformations weathered by the mediascape in the last five years.

Notes on data Analysis and Translation

The discourses under study featured the views and perceptions of Syrian diasporic journalists broadcast on Rozana and SouriaLi radios. Throughout the episodes, the interlocutors' use of the self-referential pronoun "we" is an important marker addressed in the analysis. First, it is a marker of the assimilation between the personal and the collective in the discursive practice (Saleh, 2017). Second, it is a marker of a shared collectiveness, where the "revolution" is seen as an identity marker or "an inward-looking signifier to mark who one is, and what political community they belong to" (Al-Ghazzi, 2021, p. 8). Consequently, I argue that the Syrian uprisings are articulated in the discursive practice as a liminal event (Matar & Helmi, 2020) that galvanises a political commonality obfuscating social markers of divide and creating an imagined commonality (Tsagarousianou, 2016; 2017) and a sense of equality in the discourse (Papacharissi, 2015). The analysis in chapter 5 shows that this commonality was fractured due to the contrasting registers of the collective life (Touraine, 2001) experienced by the diasporic journalists and their main target audience inside Syria (Tatomir et al., 2020). Consequently, the contrasting realities of different localities in the Syrian context had an adversarial effect on the overall sustainability of the Syrian diasporic media field (chapter 6).

This research followed a cultural translation theory, where speech as text was interpreted from Arabic to English, considering that "by becoming cultural, translation opens up the problem of its intrinsic political meaning" (Burden et al. 2009, p. 196). In other words, applying a cultural approach to translation postulates an understanding that certain terms represent a political language

embedded in the culture of the original text. The practicalities of the translation process in this research were manageable, given my native skills in the Arabic language and prior familiarity with the Syrian dialect. Nevertheless, some cultural references meant for a Syrian audience required additional contextual research before incorporating into the translation. Venuti (1986) outlines two approaches to translation comprising either bringing the reader closer to the interlocutors or vice-versa. The vantage point of this research lies in foregrounding the interlocutors' agency and practices in the dynamics of discourse production, hence, bringing the interlocutors closer to the reader.

Possible reasons for the demise of the Syrian diasporic media as a field

There is a theoretical perspective to understanding the withering of the Syrian diasporic media field in less than a decade from its sudden inception. The clues lie in its very conditions of emergence propelled by a liminal event, the Syrian uprisings, that has afforded previously subjugated actors the opportunity to challenge the authoritarian hierarchies of symbolic domination (Wedeen, 1999). Turner (1967) argues that liminality is a “part of a formulaic social order,” followed by a seemingly inevitable “institutional redress” (Boutieri, 2021, p. 71). Similarly, Thomassen (2012) contends that “political revolutions will somehow end as the extraordinary moment is channelled back into an ordered and structured social situation where power can no longer be fundamentally questioned” (p. 693). From a temporal perspective, this post-revolutionary state transfigured the practice of diasporic journalism as a part of what McAdam and Sewell (2001) call a “cultural epoch of contention” (p.112), where it became a fixture of the political and cultural repertoires of collective action (Tilly, 1993) against the longstanding “non-participatory political system” in Syria (Zayani, 2015, p. 4). In chapters 4 and 5, I outlined the centrality of the Syrian revolution as an identity marker for the diasporic media. Hence, the dissolution of this social/political commonality left this emerging field grappling with its *raison d'être*. This struggle for sustainability (chapter 6) has been marked by several structural challenges outlined in the analysis chapters and summarised below.

Physical and Symbolic Issues of Access

The power of the different locales and the contrasting registers of reality (Touraine, 2001) appeared consistently throughout the analysis, further problematising the normative notions of the

accessibility of transnational media (Higgins Joyce & Harlow, 2020) and the emancipatory powers of digital technologies (Gao, 2018). This research registers issues pertaining to the physical and symbolic access of the Syrian diasporic media to their audience inside Syria. Diasporic activists-turned-journalists have capitalised on the power of digital affordances to engineer a sociocultural intervention in the symbolic order. Nonetheless, structural factors of digital surveillance and war-stricken internet infrastructure have hindered the outlets' physical access to their audience inside Syria (Trombetta & Pinto, 2015; Al-Khatib & Xynou, 2015; Overton & Dathan, 2019). In chapter 6, I discuss how the diasporic media's symbolic access to key communities is complicated by their funding model. Benson (2016) contends that non-profit media is more attuned to the demands of the funders rather than the audience, where the success metrics are not only "eyeballs but also social impact". Nevertheless, the lack of harmonised production-reception dynamics in the Syrian diasporic media has led to a case of habitus mismatch between the interlocutor of these outlets and their audience inside Syria. The analysis shows that this habitus mismatch has affected the trust (Williams, 2012) in these outlets and their overall sustainability/survivability (Sakr, 2016).

Funding Issues and Political Economy

This research situates the study of the Syrian diasporic media as an emerging field (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986) within wider debates on international media assistance. The role of media in international development and the wider aid industry is seen through many paradigms in relation to development theory (Melkote, 2003; Miller, 2009; Manyozo, 2012; Noske-Turner, 2017). This research contrasts two of these paradigms, building on Manyozo's (2012) approaches to media development and media for development. Media for development is the practice of "development journalism" (ibid, p. 54), whereby a blend between news and awareness-raising is strategically employed to educate an audience on development-related topics. Whereas media development is the structural intervention designed to build the capacity of media policies, calibres and infrastructures to foster democracy and good governance. In the Syrian context, the emergence of dozens of outlets with the support of this international media assistance was thought to deliver a balance between both paradigms where a Syrian alternative mediascape could potentially foster a post-conflict society into a democratic transition. However, the changing geopolitical stances have affected international donors' priorities, eventually altering this emerging mediascape's initial course of action. Badran (2020) makes a subtle reference to the tactical shift from the "media

development” paradigm and the “media for development” one due to changing priorities of international donor entities. The findings of this research posit the argument that the international media assistance in the Syrian context was primarily geared toward a ‘media for development’ pathway where nascent media projects served as a sociocultural intervention to supplement the political foreign policy of donor countries towards the Syrian conflict. The diasporic digital radios under study started as alternative avenues for public expression with set goals for social construction. The co-founders of both Rozana and SouriaLi radios have repeatedly described their outlets as social radios, actively participating in advocacy and social change (episode 6, France 24, July 2013; episode 18, radio SouriaLi, February 2018). The funding model of these diasporic radios relying on international media assistance organisations stipulates a role for these media outlets beyond the typical newswork and more into social construction in a transitional setting (Miller, 2009; Lugo-Ocando, 2020). These digital media outlets’ funding prioritises their social function as avenues for advocacy and social change, or what De Angelis et al. (2014) call “social programming”, beyond their basic function as news media. Nonetheless, some Syrian diasporic journalists feel the funding entities have instrumentalised their media projects to achieve short-term change, depriving them of the chance to develop into media organisations of their own rights (episode 10, Rozana radio, March 2017). To that effect, SouriaLi radio’s co-founder, Iyad Kallas, contends that the competing priorities imposed by the funding entities on this emerging mediascape have significantly contributed to the demise of many outlets (episode 18, SouriaLi radio, February 2020).

Opportunities for Future Research

Issues of access and lack of audience trust, and engagement coupled with the volatility of the political economy aspect posit broader questions about the *raison d’être* of these grant-funded diasporic radios in a post-revolutionary setting. Therefore, I reiterate Chouliaraki’s postulation (2010): Were these media outlets mere “projects of power that may have a therapeutic value in ‘giving voice’ to the ordinary, yet ultimately reproduce local asymmetries and global inequalities”? (p. 3). Given the political nature of the funding entities involved in supporting the Syrian diasporic media scene, there is an argument to be made that these media projects may have been instrumentalised as tools of soft power in the conduct of international relations (Miller, 2009). Thus the question remains: Was the labour of the diasporic interlocutors instrumentalised by the

governmentality of the donor entities to engineer a sociocultural intervention? These important questions broaden the scope of this area of research and pave the way for further studies on the Syrian diasporic media as a field. In this research, I studied Syrian diasporic media as liminal spaces of empowerment and disempowerment (Papacharissi, 2015), providing an alternative space for articulating new forms of collective Syrianness without overestimating the agential power of such liminality (Matar & Helmi, 2020). Nonetheless, this space of liminality was shaped by the power of the violent social and geopolitical transformations as well as the volatility of the funding modality it ascribes to. While the Syrian diasporic media field has struggled to engineer a spatial/social transformation in Syria, it established new modes of civic engagement and creative journalism practices previously sanctioned by the totalitarian regime. This research set a precedent in exploring the text of the Syrian diasporic radio and conceptualising it as a field within the social space. The findings address different elements of the radio's communicative environment and conceptualise the relationship dynamics between its conditions of emergence, political economy and the agential power of its interlocutors, all under the overarching umbrella of fast-changing temporal rhythms (Carvalho, 2008) and the contrasting realities between different localities at home and in the diaspora.

Temporality	Geopolitical Reality	Condition of Liminality	Mediation Opportunity
Temporality of mobilisation and uprisings (Tarrow, 1989; McAdam & Sewell, 2001)	The eruption of the Syrian uprisings in 2011	The Syrian revolution as a transformative event triggering a liminal condition (Matar, 2015) encompassing opportunities for empowerment and disempowerment	The rise of citizen journalism: Practices of flesh witnessing (Chouliaraki and Al-Ghazzi, 2022) and War reporting (Creech, 2017) Rise of information fetishism sustained by the increasing demand from global mainstream media for news of the Syrian crisis (chapter 1)
Temporality of Hope	The call for removing Al-Assad's regime was internationally-backed and the opposition (rebels) captured control of more areas in Syria	Manifestation of the empowering opportunity of the liminal state where previously subjugated voices are allowed to reconfigure the symbolic order of expression (Turner, 1969; 1974)	Creative practices in journalism as a form of transnational civic engagement (Zayani, 2015). The rise of "social programming" in emerging Syrian radios addressing civil society issues such as freedom and democracy (De Angelis et al., 2014).
Post-revolutionary Temporality	The regime forces recaptured control over the majority of Syria amid changing political stances of international allies	The restitution of the regime's power signalled the return of the symbolic order. New political actors in Syria have emulated the regime's practices of media censorship (chapter 4). The diasporic condition of the Syrian media in exile has been indefinitely affixed as the regime's power is reinstated, shattering any hopes of operating inside Syria (chapter 5).	The contrasting realities of different localities in the Syrian context have adversely impacted the diasporic media's ability to engineer a transformation in the social space inside Syria (Chapter 5) In light of the loss of physical and symbolic access to the audience in Syria, the practice of diasporic journalism in the emerging radios materialised into consciousness-raising fetishism (chapter 5) Changing geopolitical interests have adversely affected the funding (the economic capital) of the Syrian diasporic media (chapter 6)

Table 5: A overview conceptualising the relationship between the temporal rhythms and media use in Syrian contention

Bibliography

- Ainsworth, S., & Hardy, C. (2004). Critical discourse analysis and identity: Why bother? *Critical discourse studies*, 1(2), 225-259.
- Al-Khatib, H. & Xynou, M. (2015, February 13). Syria's digital civil war. *Open Democracy*.
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opensecurity/syrias-digital-civil-war/>
- Alboz, D. (2018, April 4). “Radio Soryali” yataai “ Sawtan Horan lman layth ladyah sawt” [“Sorayali Radio” gives “Free voice for those who don’t have a voice”]. *Infomigrants*. <https://bit.ly/3KTxP1J>
- Al-Ghazzi, O. (2014). “Citizen Journalism” in the Syrian uprising: Problematizing Western narratives in a local context. *Communication Theory*, 24(4), 435-454.
- Al-Ghazzi, O. (2017). On the afterlife of false Syria reporting. In Z. Harb (Ed.), *Reporting the Middle East: The practice of news in the twenty-first century* (pp.12–32). Bloomsbury Publishing .
- Al-Ghazzi, O. (2021). ‘Forced to report’: Affective proximity and the perils of local reporting on Syria. *Journalism*, 23(10), 1160-1177.
- Al-Ghazzi, O. (2022). Keywords in Contemporary Syrian Media, Culture and Politics . *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*(15) , 341–345.
- Al-Jabri, A. M. (1991). *Naqd al-’aql al-’Arabi 1: Takwin - ’aql al-’Arabi* [The formation of Arab reason]. Arabu Cultural Centre, Beirut.
- Alo, M.A., & Orimogunje, A. (2013). Discourse strategies and ideology in selected radio lead news of Osun State Broadcasting Corporation, Nigeria. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 19(2), 111-123.
- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New Left Books
- Amnesty International. (2013). *Shooting the messenger: Journalists targeted by all sides in Syria*.
https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/syria_shooting_the_messenger.pdf

- Andén-Papadopoulos, K., & Pantti, M. (2013). The media work of Syrian diaspora activists: Brokering between the protest and mainstream media. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 2185-2206.
- Anderson, B. (1994). Exodus. *Critical inquiry*, 20(2), 314-327.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.
- Anheier, H. K., Gerhards, J., & Romo, F. P. (1995). Forms of capital and social structure in cultural fields: Examining Bourdieu's social topography. *American journal of sociology*, 100(4), 859-903.
- Anthias, F. (2002). Where do I belong? Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality. *Ethnicities*, 2(4), 491-514.
- Appadurai, A. (1991). Global ethnoscares: Notes and queries for a transnational anthropology. In R.G. Fox (Ed.), *Recapturing anthropology: Working in the present* (pp. 191–210). School for American Research Press.
- Arab State Broadcasting Union. (2009). *Annual report on the situation of Arab satellite broadcasting in and outside the Arab region for the years 2007 and 2008*.
- Arafa, H. (2017, May 3). Ma Ba'ad edrab Rozana - la khair fe al-ofok! [After the Rozana strike, there is no good on the horizon!]. *Syria Untold*. <https://bit.ly/3D48Qqy>
- Arafat, R. (2021). Examining diaspora journalists' digital networks and role perceptions: A case study of Syrian post-Conflict advocacy journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 22(16), 2174-2196.
- Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Arendt, H. (1994). *Essays in understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*. Schocken Books
- Atton, C. (2001). *Alternative media*. London. Sage.

- Atton, C. (2008). Alternative media theory and journalism practice. In M. Boler (Ed.), *Digital media and democracy: Tactics in Hard Times* (pp. 213-227). MIT Press
- Atton, C., & Hamilton, J. F. (2008). *Alternative journalism*. Sage.
- Atton, C. (2015). Citizen journalism. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of communication* (pp. 1-5). John Wiley & Sons.
- Ayish, M. (2008). *The new Arab public sphere*. Frank & Timme Publishers.
- Ayish, M. (2010). Arab state broadcasting systems in transition the promise of the public service broadcasting model. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 3(1), 9-25.
- Ayoub, C. (2016, September 4). The growth of the Syrian media and responsible voices. *Atlantic Council*.
<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/the-growth-of-the-syrian-media-and-responsible-voices/>
- Baczko, A., & Dorronsoro, G. (2022). Thinking about civil wars with and beyond Bourdieu: State, capital and habitus in critical contexts. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 22(2), 199-221.
- Badran, Y. (2020). Strategies and (survival) tactics: The case of Syrian oppositional media in Turkey. *Journal of Alternative & Community Media*, 5(1), 69-85.
- Badran, Y. (2021). Understanding emerging media: Voice, agency, and precarity in the post-2011 Arab mediasphere. *Media and Communication*, 9(4), 264-274.
- Badran, Y., & Smets, K. (2021). Anatomy of a precarious newsroom: precarity and agency in Syrian exiled journalism in Turkey. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(8), 1377-1394.
- Badran, Y., & De Angelis, E. (2016). 'Independent' Kurdish media in Syria: Conflicting identities in the transition. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 9(3), 334-351.
- Bahlol, A. (2016, December 28). Syrian alternative media: In search of an audience. *Al Jumhuriya*.
<https://aljumhuriya.net/en/2016/12/28/syrian-alternative-media-in-search-of-an-audience/>

- Bailey, O. G., Cammaerts, B., & Carpentier, N. (2008). *Understanding alternative media* (2nd ed). Open University Press.
- Bailey, O., Georgiou, M., & Harindranath, R. (Eds.), (2007). *Transnational lives and the media: Re-imagining diasporas*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bamberg, M., De Fina, A., & Schiffrin, D. (2011). Discourse and identity construction. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 177–199). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Barthes, R., & Duisit, L. (1975). An introduction to the structural analysis of narrative. *New literary History*, 6(2), 237-272.
- Beck, U. (1997). *The reinvention of politics: Rethinking modernity in the global social order*. Polity Press
- Beck, U. (2000). The cosmopolitan perspective: Sociology of the second age of modernity. *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(1), 79–105.
- Beek, M.V., (2000). Beyond identity fetishism: “Communal” conflict in Ladakh and the limits of autonomy. *Cultural Anthropology*, 15(4), 525-569.
- Benchenna, A., & Marchetti, D. (2020). Writing between the ‘red lines’: Morocco’s digital media landscape. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(4), 664–681.
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 611-639.
- Benhabib, S. (2018). *The claims of culture: Equality and diversity in the global era*. Princeton University Press.
- Bennett, W. L., & Entman, R. M. (Eds.). (2000). *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, R. (2006). News media as a “journalistic field”: What Bourdieu adds to new institutionalism, and vice versa. *Political Communication*, 23(2), 187-202.

- Benson R. (2016). Institutional forms of media ownership and their modes of power. In Eide M., Sjøvaag H., Larsen L. O. (Eds.), *Journalism re-examined: Digital challenges and professional orientations* (pp. 29–47). Intellect.
- Berger, A. A. (2000). *Media and communication research methods: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Berger, G. (2010). ‘Problematizing “media development” as a bandwagon gets rolling’. *International Communication Gazette*, 72(7), 547–565.
- Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I., & Moore, K. (2016). *Press coverage of the refugee and migrant crisis in the EU: A content analysis of five European countries*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <http://www.unhcr.org/56bb369c9.html>
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. Sage.
- Billig, M. (1999). Commodity fetishism and repression: Reflections on Marx, Freud and the psychology of consumer capitalism. *Theory & Psychology*, 9(3), 313-329.
- Billig, M. (2003). Critical discourse and analysis. In G. Weiss & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Critical discourse analysis: Theory and interdisciplinarity* (pp.35-46). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blankson, I., & Murphy, P. D. (Eds.). (2007). *Negotiating democracy: Media transformation in emerging democracies*. State University of New York Press.
- Boland, T. (2013). Towards an anthropology of critique: The modern experience of liminality and crisis. *Anthropological Theory*, 13(3), 222-239.
- Bonini Baldini, S. (2019). Narrative capability: Self-recognition and mutual recognition in refugees' storytelling. *Journal of Information Policy*, 9, 132-147.
- Bothwell, B. (2018). State, song, and shabāb in Syria's prewar Radioscape. *Asian Music*, 49(1), 80-119.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education* (pp. 487-511). Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1979).

- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Sage.
- Boutieri, C. (2021). The democratic grotesque: Distortion, liminality, and dissensus in post-revolutionary Tunisia. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 39(2), 59-77.
- Boyd, D. A. (1997). International radio broadcasting in Arabic: A survey of broadcasters and audiences. *Gazette (Leiden, Netherlands)*, 59(6), 445-472.
- Boyd, D. A. (1999). *Broadcasting in the Arab world: A survey of radio and television in the Middle East* (3rd ed.). Iowa State University Press.
- Bozdag, C., Hepp, A., & Suna, L. (2012). Diasporic media as the ‘focus’ of communicative networking among migrants. In I. Rigoni & E. Saitta, (Eds.), *Mediating Cultural Diversity in a Globalized Public Space* (pp. 96-115). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities*. Routledge.
- Breeze, R. (2011). Critical discourse analysis and its critics. *Pragmatics*, 21(4), 493-525.
- Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2006). Digital diaspora and conflict prevention: The case of Somalinet.com. *Review of International Studies*, 32(1), 25–47.
- Broad, G. M. (2011). [Review of the book *Why voice matters—Culture and politics after neoliberalism* by N. Couldry]. *Journal of Communication*, 61(6), 24-27.
- Brownlee, B. J. (2017). Media development in Syria: The Janus-faced nature of foreign aid assistance. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(10), 2276-2294.
- Buden, B., Nowotny, S., Simon, S., Bery, A., & Cronin, M. (2009). Cultural translation: An introduction to the problem, and responses. *Translation Studies*, 2(2), 196–219.

- Bulos, N. (2020, February 28). War claims a revolutionary radio station in Syria. *Los Angeles Times*
<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-02-28/war-claims-a-revolutionary-radio-station-in-syria>
- Burrows, S. (2000). *French exile journalism and European politics, 1792-1814*. Royal Historical Society.
- Butler, J. (2003). *Giving an account of oneself: A critique of ethical violence*. Uitgeverij Van Gorcum.
- Caldas-Coulthard, C. R. & Coulthard M. (1996). *Text and Practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis*. Routledge.
- Cammaerts, B. (2012). Protest logics and the mediation opportunity structure. *European Journal of Communication*, 27(2), 117–134.
- Cammaerts, B. (2015). Movement media as technologies of self-mediation. In C. Atton (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to alternative and community media* (pp. 445-456). Routledge.
- Carlson, M. (2015). When news sites go native: Redefining the advertising–editorial divide in response to native advertising. *Journalism*, 16(7), 849-865.
- Carvalho, A. (2008). Media(ted) discourse and society: Rethinking the framework of critical discourse analysis. *Journalism studies*, 9(2), 161-177.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society, Volume I of the Information age: Economy, society and culture*. Blackwell
- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford University Press.
- Cauhapé-Cazaux, E. D., & Kalathil, S. (2015, March). *Official development assistance for media: Figures and findings*. CIMA & OECD. <https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CIMA-Official-Development-Assistance.pdf>
- Charaf, I. (2014). *Freedom of expression and access to information in Syria Today*. IFLA.
<https://www.ifla.org/publications/freedom-of-expression-and-access-to-information-in-syria-today/>

- Chouliaraki, L. (2010). Self-mediation: New media and citizenship. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7(4), 227-232.
- Chouliaraki, L. (2017). Symbolic bordering: The self-representation of migrants and refugees in digital news. *Popular Communication*, 15(2), 78-94.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Al-Ghazzi, O. (2022). Beyond verification: Flesh witnessing and the significance of embodiment in conflict news. *Journalism*, 23(3), 649-667.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Zaborowski, R. (2017). Voice and community in the 2015 refugee crisis: A content analysis of news coverage in eight European countries. *International Communication Gazette*, 79(6-7), 613-635.
- Coddington, M. (2015). The wall becomes a curtain: Revisiting journalism's news-business boundary. In M. Carlson & S.C. Lewis (Eds.), *Boundaries of journalism*. (pp. 79-94). Routledge.
- Coleman, S. (2005). New mediation and direct representation: Reconceptualizing representation in the digital age. *New Media & Society*, 7(2), 177-198.
- Comaroff, J.L. (1995). Ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of difference in an age of Revolution. In J.L. Comaroff & P.C. Stern (Eds.), *Perspectives on nationalism and war* (pp. 243-276). Gordon and Breach Science Publishers.
- Cook, C. (2016). Fragile Finance: The revenue models of oppositional news outlets in repressive regimes. *International Communication Gazette*, 78(6), 514-535.
- Cook, C., & Sirkkunen, E. (2013). What's in a niche? Exploring the business model of online journalism. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 10(4), 63-82.
- Corner, J. (1995). *Television form and public address*. Edward Arnold.
- Cottle, S. (2000). *Ethnic minorities and the media*. Open University Press
- Couldry, N. (2006). *Listening beyond the echoes: Media, ethics, and agency in an uncertain world*. Routledge.

- Couldry, N. (2008a). Media and the problem of voice. In N. Carpentier & B. De Cleen (Eds.), *Participation and media production: Critical reflections on content creation* (pp. 15-26). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Couldry, N. (2008b). Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling. *New Media & Society*, 10(3), 373-391.
- Couldry, N. (2010). Media ethics: Towards a framework for media producers and media consumers. In S.J.A Ward & H. Wasserman (Eds.), *Media ethics beyond borders: A global perspective* (pp. 59-72). Routledge
- Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2013). Conceptualizing mediatization: Contexts, traditions, arguments. *Communication theory*, 23(3), 191-202.
- Couldry, N., Livingstone, S., & Markham, T. (2016). *Media consumption and public engagement: Beyond the presumption of attention*. Springer.
- Coulthard, M., & Montgomery, M. (1981). The structure of monologue. *Studies in discourse analysis*, 31-39.
- Crawley, H. & Skleparis, D. (2018). Refugees, migrants, neither, both: Categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(1), 48-64.
- Creech, B. (2018). Bearing the cost to witness: The political economy of risk in contemporary conflict and war reporting. *Media, Culture & Society*, 40(4), 567-583.
- Darnton, R. (1996). *The forbidden best-sellers of pre-revolutionary France*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- De Angelis, E. (2011). The state of disarray of a networked revolution the Syrian uprising's information environment. *Sociologica*, 3, 1 -24.
- De Angelis, E. (2014, February 03). Against the odds: Syria's flourishing mediascape. *Al Jazeera*.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/8/30/against-the-odds-syrias-flourishing-mediascape>
- De Block, L. (2008). The place to be? Making media with young refugees. In J. Hart (Ed.), *Years of Conflict: Adolescence, political violence and displacement* (pp. 277-284) Berghahn Books.

- De Leeuw, S., & Rydin, I. (2007). Migrant children's digital stories: Identity formation and self-representation through media production. *European journal of cultural studies*, 10(4), 447-464.
- Dean, J. (2005). Communicative capitalism: Circulation and the foreclosure of politics. *Cultural Politics*, 1(1), 51-74.
- Deane, J. (2013, October). *Fragile states: the role of media and communication*, Policy briefing # 10. BBC Media Action.
http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/policybriefing/fragile_states_policy_briefing.pdf
- Deleuze, G., Guattari, F., & Brinkley, R. (1983). What is a minor literature? *Mississippi Review*, 11(3), 13-33.
- Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.
- Dewey, J. (1971). *John Dewey: The early works, 1882-1898 Vol. 4.* (J. A. Boydston, Ed.) Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dollet, S. (2015). *The new Syrian radio stations: Appraisal, challenges and outlook*. CFI, l'agence Française de coopération medias http://www.cfi.fr/sites/default/files/study_on_the_New-Syrian_radios_stations.pdf
- Echchaibi, N. (2002). (Be)longing media: Minority radio between cultural retention and renewal. *Javnost-The Public*, 9(1), 37-50.
- El-Nawawy, M. (2007). US public diplomacy and the news credibility of radio Sawa and television Al Hurra in the Arab world. In P. Seib (Ed.), *New media and the new Middle East* (pp. 119-137). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Elias, N., & Lemish, D. (2008). Media uses in immigrant families: Torn between 'inward' and 'outward' paths of integration. *International Communication Gazette*, 70(1), 21-40.
- Englert, B. (2018). Looking through two lenses: reflections on transnational and translocal dimensions in Marseille-based popular music relating to the Comoros. *Identities*, 25(5), 542-557.

- Fairclough, N. (1985). Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis. *Journal of pragmatics*, 9(6), 739-763.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Intertextuality in critical discourse analysis. *Linguistics and Education*, 4(3-4), 269-293.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. E. Arnold.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press.
- Fazal, S., & Tsagarousianou, R. (2002). Diasporic communication: Transnational cultural practices and communicative spaces. *Javnost-The Public*, 9(1), 5-18.
- Feinstein, A., & Starr, S. (2015). Civil war in Syria: The psychological effects on journalists. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 7(1), 57–64.
- Fiske, J. (1989). *Television culture*. Routledge
- Foucault, M. (1971). Orders of discourse. *Social Science Information*, 10(2), 7-30.
- Foucault, M. (2014). *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. (A. I. Davidson, Ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fraser, N. (2005). Reframing global justice. *New Left Review*, 36-69.
- Fraser, N. (2020). From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a 'post-socialist' age. In S. Seidman, J. C. Alexander (Eds.), *The new social theory reader* (2nd ed., pp. 188-196). Routledge.
- Fuchs, C. (2010). Alternative media as critical media. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13(2), 173-192.
- Galtung, J. (1971). A structural theory of imperialism. *Journal of Peace Research*, 8(2), 81–117.
- Gamson, W. A., & Wolfsfeld, G. (1993). Movements and media as interacting systems. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 528(1), 114-125.

- Gao, L. (2018). The ironies of mediated communication, the fetishisation of information and the shrinking of political action. *Ephemera*, 18(3), 505-526.
- Garnham, N. (1995). Political economy and cultural studies: Reconciliation or divorce? *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12(1), 62-71.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- Geertz, C. (1995). *After the fact: Two countries, four decades, one anthropologist*. Harvard University Press.
- Georgiou, M. (2001). Crossing the boundaries of the ethnic home: Media consumption and ethnic identity construction in the public space: The case of the Cypriot community centre in North London. *Gazette (Leiden, Netherlands)*, 63(4), 311-329.
- Georgiou, M. (2006). *Diaspora, identity and the media: Diasporic transnationalism and mediated spatialities*. Hampton Press.
- Georgiou, M., & Zaborowski, R. (2017). *Media coverage of the "refugee crisis": A cross-European perspective*. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/1680706b00>
- Giannakopoulos, G. (2016). Depicting the pain of others: Photographic representations of refugees in the Aegean Shores. *Journal of Greek Media & Culture*, 2(1), 103-113.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society*. University of California Press.
- Gilbert, G. N. & Mulkay, M. (1984). *Opening Pandora's box: A sociological analysis of scientists' discourse*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, R. (1993). Ideology, gender and popular radio: A discourse analytic approach. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 6(3), 323-339.
- Gill, S. (1995). Globalisation, market civilisation, and disciplinary neoliberalism. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 24(3), 399-423.
- Godin, M., & Doná, G. (2016). "Refugee voices," new social media and politics of representation: Young Congolese in the diaspora and beyond. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 32(1), 60-71.

- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. International Publishers.
- Greiner, C., & Sakdapolrak, P. (2013). Translocality: Concepts, applications and emerging research perspectives. *Geography Compass*, 7(5), 373-384.
- Grossberg, L. (1995). Cultural studies versus political economy: Is anyone else bored with this debate? *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12(1), 72–81.
- Halasa, M. (2012, June 19). Creative dissent in Syria. *Index on Censorship*.
<https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2012/06/ali-ferzat-syria-creative-dissent/>
- Hall, S. (1989). Cultural identity and cinematic representation. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, (36), 68-81.
- Hall, S. (1991). The local and the global: Globalization and ethnicity. In A. D. King (Ed.), *Culture, globalisation and the world system: Contemporary conditions for the representation of identity* (pp. 19–40). Macmillan.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs 'Identity'? In, P.D.Gay& S. Hall (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1-17). Sage.
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation Vol. 2: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage Publications; Open University Press.
- Hallett, L. (2015). *The space between: Defining the place for community radio* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Westminster Communication and Media Research Institute).
<https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/item/q321y/the-space-between-defining-the-place-for-community-radio>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1989). *Spoken and written language*. Oxford University Press.
- Hansen, R. (2014). State controls: Borders, refugees, and citizenship. In G. Loescher et al. (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies* (pp. 253-264). Oxford University Press.

- Hardt, H. (1999). Shifting paradigms: Decentering the discourse of mass communication research. *Mass Communication and Society*, 2(3-4), 175-183.
- Harrison, J. (2010). User-generated content and gatekeeping at the BBC hub. *Journalism Studies*, 11(2), 243–256.
- Hepp, A., Bozdag, C. & Suna, L. (2012). ‘Mediatized migrants: Media cultures and communicative networking in the diaspora’. In L. Fortunati, R. Pertierra & J. Vincent (Eds.), *Migrations, diaspora, and information technology in global societies* (pp. 172-188). Routledge.
- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon Books
- Hernández, G.M., (2006). The deterritorialization of cultural heritage in a globalized modernity. *Transfer: Journal of Contemporary Culture*, 1, 90–107.
- Heydemann, S. (2013). Tracking the "Arab spring": Syria and the future of authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(4), 59-73.
- Heyman, J. M., & Campbell, H. (2009). The anthropology of global flows: A critical reading of appadurai's disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. *Anthropological Theory*, 9(2), 131-148.
- Hidass, A. (2016). Quand “l’exception” confirme la règle. L’encadrement juridique de la liberté de la presse écrite au Maroc. *L’Année du Maghreb*, (15), 29–44.
- Higgins Joyce, V. D. M., & Harlow, S. (2020). Seeking transnational, digital-native news from Latin America: An audience analysis through the lens of social capital. *Journalism Studies*, 21(9), 1200-1219.
- Higgins, D. (2014). The western way: Democracy and the media assistance model. *Global Media Journal: German Edition*, 4(2), 1–15.

- Hjarvard, S. (2004). From bricks to bytes: The mediatization of a global toy industry. In I. Bondjeberg & P. Golding (Eds.), *European culture and the media* (pp. 43–63). Intellect Books.
- Hjarvard, S. (2007, May 23–28). 'Changing media, Changing language. The mediatization of society and the spread of english and medialects'. In 57th ICA Conference, San Francisco, CA.
- Honneth, A. (2007). *Disrespect: The normative foundations of critical theory*. Polity Press.
- Honneth, A. (2012). *The I in we: Studies in the theory of recognition*. Polity Press
- Hope, J. (2008). "One day we had to run": The development of the refugee identity in children's literature and its function in education. *Children's Literature in Education*, 39(4), 295-304.
- Hopper, K. M., & Huxford, J. E. (2015). Gathering emotion: Examining newspaper journalists' engagement in emotional labor. *Journal of Media Practice*, 16(1), 25-41.
- Hutchby, I. (2013). *Confrontation talk: Arguments, asymmetries, and power on talk radio*. Routledge.
- International Journalism Festival. (2022, April 13). *The development and future of Syria's emerging media* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3x4Tn6_0JI
- Ismail, S. (2011). The Syrian uprising: Imagining and performing the nation. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11(3), 538-549.
- Jameson, F. (1997). Culture and finance capital. *Critical Inquiry*, 24(1), 246-265.
- Jamshidi, M. (2013). *The future of the Arab spring: Civic entrepreneurship in politics, art, and technology startups*. Elsevier.
- Jankowski, N. W., & Jensen, K. B. (Eds.). (2002). *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*. Routledge.
- Jørgensen, M. W., & Phillips, L. J.. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. Sage Publications.
- Jukes, S. (2017). *Affective journalism—uncovering the affective dimension of practice in the coverage of traumatic news* (Doctoral dissertation, Goldsmiths, University of London).
<https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/20635/>

- Karim, K. H. (1998). *From ethnic media to global media: Transnational communication networks among diasporic communities*. University of Oxford. Transnational Communities Programme.
- Karim, K. H. (Ed.). (2003). *The media of diaspora*. Routledge.
- Kassir, S. (2000). Red lines and media blues. *Index on Censorship*, 29(5), 139-145.
- Kassman, L. (2007). Voice of America versus radio Sawa in the Middle East: A personal perspective. *Arab Media & Society*, 2, 1-12.
- Khayati, K., & Dahlstedt, M. (2014). Diaspora formation among Kurds in Sweden: Transborder citizenship and politics of belonging. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 4(2), 57-64.
- Koopmans, R. (2004). Protest in time and space. The evolution of waves of contention. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 19-46). Blackwell.
- Kotisova, J. (2019). The elephant in the newsroom: Current research on journalism and emotion. *Sociology Compass*, 13(5), e12677.
- Kraidy, M. M. (2005). *Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalisation*. Temple University Press.
- Kraidy, M. M., & Murphy, P. D. (2008). Shifting Geertz: Toward a theory of translocalism in global communication studies. *Communication Theory*, 18(3), 335-355.
- Kress, G. (1996). Representational resources and the production of subjectivity. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthrad & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis* (pp.15-31). Routledge
- Lash, S. (2002). *Critique of information*. Sage Publications.
- Lash, S. & J. Urry. (1994). *Economies of signs and space*. Sage
- Laws, N., & Chojnicka, J. (2020). “A future to believe in”: Introducing varieties of advocacy journalism. The examples; sustainability; and the Sanders campaign. *Journalism Studies*, 21(9), 1261-1283.

- Lawson, S. (2011). Articulation, antagonism, and intercalation in Western military imaginaries. *Security Dialogue*, 42(1), 39-56.
- Lazar, M. M. (2005). Politicizing gender in discourse: Feminist critical discourse analysis as political perspective and praxis. *Feminist critical Discourse Analysis*, 1-28.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Blackwell.
- Lievrouw, L. (2011). *Alternative and activist new media*. Polity Press.
- Lipschutz, R. D. (2005). Networks of knowledge and practice: Global civil society and global communications. In W. De Jong , M. Shaw,& N. Stammers (Eds.), *Global activism, Global media* (pp.17-33). Pluto Press.
- Literat, I. (2017). Refugee selfies and the (self-) representation of disenfranchised social groups. *Media Fields Journal*, 12, 1-9.
- Livingstone, S. (2007). On the material and the symbolic: Silverstone's double articulation of research traditions in new media studies. *New Media & Society*, 9(1), 16-24.
- Lizardo, O. (2004). The cognitive origins of Bourdieu's habitus. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 34(4), 375-401.
- Lugo-Ocando, J. (2020). *Foreign aid and journalism in the global south: A mouthpiece for truth*. Lexington Books.
- Luke, A. (2002). Beyond science and ideology critique: Developments in critical discourse analysis. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 22, 96-100.
- Martin, J. R. (2004). Positive discourse analysis: Solidarity and change. *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 49, 179-202.
- Martín-Barbero, J. (1993). *Communication, culture and hegemony: From the media to mediations*. SAGE Publications Limited.
- Marx, K. (1915). *Capital: A critique of political econmy*, Vol. I: *The process of capitalist production*. Charles H. Kerr & Company.

- Marx, K. (1970). *Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843)* (J. O'Malley, Ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Matar, D., & Helmi, K. (2020). Liminality, gendering, and Syrian alternative media spaces. In S. Maltaby, B. O'Loughin, & K. Parry (Eds.), *Spaces of War, War of Spaces* (pp.155-175), Bloomsbury Academic. .
- McAdam, D., & Sewell, W. H. (2001). It's about time: Temporality in the study of contentious politics. In R. Aminzade, J. Goldstone, D. McAdam, E. Perry, W. Sewell, S. Tarrow, et al. (Eds.), *Silence and voice in the study of contentious politics* (pp.89-125). Cambridge University Press.
- McAdams, D., Josselson, R., & Lieblich, A. (2006). *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative*. American Psychological Association.
- McCurdy, P. (2010). Breaking the spiral of silence: Unpacking the “media debate” within global justice movements. A case study of Dissent! and the 2005 Gleneagles G8 summit. *Interface*, 2(2), 42-67.
- McGannon, K. R., & Spence, J. C. (2012). Exploring news media representations of women's exercise and subjectivity through critical discourse analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 4(1), 32-50.
- McLellan, M. (2011, October 18). Getting local: How nonprofit news ventures seek sustainability. *Knight Foundation*. <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/getting-local-how-nonprofit-news-ventures-sus/>
- McQuail, D. (1997). *Audience analysis*. Sage publications.
- Melki, J. (2016). *Syria Audience Research 2016*. Free Press Unlimited, Media in Cooperation & Transition, and Global Forum for Media Development.
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ecbde016a831b2551433606/t/5eff258e8603197f2e8c9558/1593779610890/FPU_GMDF_MiCT_audience_research_syria_2016.pdf
- Melki, J. & Farah, M. (2014). *Syria Audience Research*. Media in Cooperation and Transition g GmbH & German Federal Foreign

Office. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ecbde016a831b2551433606/t/5efe17ae2845322eabd3371e/1593710511481/syrienstudie_20140814.pdf

Melkote, S. R. (2003). Theories of Development Communication. In B. Mody (Ed.), *International and Development Communication: A 21st Century Perspective* (pp. 129-146). SAGE.

Melucci, A. (1996). *Challenging codes: Collective action in the information age*. Cambridge University Press.

Miller, J. (2009). NGOs and “modernization” and “democratization” of media: Situating media assistance. *Global Media and Communication*, 5(1), 9–33.

Miller, M. M., & Riechert, B. P. (2001). The spiral of opportunity and frame resonance: Mapping the issue cycle in news and public discourse. In S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, & A. E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world* (pp. 107-122). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Moghnieh, L. (2017). ‘The violence we live in’: Reading and experiencing violence in the field. *Contemporary Levant*, 2(1), 24-36.

Morini, C., Carls, K., & Armano, E. (2014). Precarious passion or passionate precariousness? Narratives from co-research in journalism and editing. *Recherches Sociologiques et Anthropologiques*, 45(45-2), 61-83.

Morley, D. (1998). So-called cultural studies: Dead ends and reinvented wheels. *Cultural Studies*, 12(4), 467–497.

Mosselson, J. (2006). Roots and routes: A re-imagining of refugee identity constructions and the implications for schooling. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 9(1), 20-29.

Muhaisen, R. (2017, January 5). Things that keep me awake at night. *Al Jumhuriya*. <https://aljumhuriya.net/en/2017/01/05/things-that-keep-me-awake-at-night/>

- Mulkay, M., Potter, J., & Yearley, S. (1983). Why an analysis of scientific discourse is needed. In K.D. Knorr, & M.J. Mulkay (Eds.), *Science observed: Perspectives on the social study of science* (pp.171-204). Sage.
- Musarò, P. (2017). Mare Nostrum: The visual politics of a military-humanitarian operation in the Mediterranean Sea. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(1), 11-28.
- Myers, M. (2014). *Africa's media boom: The role of international aid*. CIMA & National Endowment for Democracy. <https://www.cima.ned.org/resource/africas-media-boom-the-role-of-international-aid/>.
- Myers, M., Harford, N., & Bartholomew, K. (2017, September). *Media assistance: Review of the recent literature and other donors' approaches*. Imedia Associates. https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Media_Assistance_Donor_and_Lit_Review%202017.pdf
- Naprushkina, M. (2020, June 25). Surviving monstrosities: An interview with Yassin al-Haj Saleh. *Al Jumhuriya*. <https://aljumhuriya.net/en/2020/06/25/surviving-monstrosities-interview-yassin-al-haj-saleh/>
- Norval, A., (2013). Poststructuralist conceptions of ideology. In M.Freeden, & M. Stears (Eds), *The Oxford handbook of political ideologies*, (pp.155-174). Oxford University Press.
- Nye, J. S. (1991). *Bound to lead: The changing nature of American power*. Basic Books.
- Nye, J. S. (2008). Public diplomacy and soft power. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 616(1), 94-109.
- Nyers, P. (1999). Emergency or emerging identities? Refugees and transformations in world order. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 28(1), 1-26.
- Ogunyemi, O. (Ed.). (2017). *Media, diaspora and conflict*. Springer.

- Operations & Policy Center (2021, December). *Syrian Podcasts: Understanding Audiences and Exploring the Potential for Expansion*. OPC Center. <https://opc.center/syrian-podcasts-anderstanding-audiences-and-exploring-the-potential-for-expansion/>
- Orr, M. (2003). *Intertextuality: Debates and contexts*. Polity Press
- Overton, L., & Dathan, J. (2019, December 17). “*Syria in 2020: The Deadly Legacy of Explosive Violence and Its Impact on Infrastructure and Health*,”. AOAV (Action on Armed Violence).
<https://bit.ly/3vJ4gZr>
- Oyeleye, A. (2017). “Diaspora Journalism and Conflicts in Transnational Media Circuits.” In O. Ogunyemi (Ed.), *Media Diaspora and Conflict* (pp.19-36). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2015). Toward new journalism(s): Affective news, hybridity and liminal spaces. *Journalism Studies*, 16(1), 27-40.
- Parks, T. (2008). The rise and fall of donor funding for advocacy NGOs: Understanding the impact. *Development in Practice*, 18(2), 213-222.
- Pearlman, W. (2016). Narratives of fear in Syria. *Perspectives on Politics*, 14(1), 21-37.
- Perkins, T. (2000). Who (and what) is it for? In C. Gledhill & L. Williams (Eds.), *Reinventing film studies* (pp. 76-96). Arnold.
- Perloff, R. (1989). A cognitive psychology of mass communication. *Journalism Quarterly*, 66(4), 1026-1027.
- Pfoser, A. & De Jong, S. (2017, November 20). We are all displaced. *Open Democracy*.
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/alena-pfoser-sara-de-jong/we-are-all-displaced>
- Plesu, A. (1995). Intellectual life under dictatorship. *Representations*, 49, 61-71. Porter, J. E. (1986). Intertextuality and the discourse community. *Rhetoric review*, 5(1), 34-47.
- Potter, J., Wetherell, M., Gill, R., & Edwards, D. (1990). Discourse: Noun, verb or social practice? *Philosophical Psychology*, 3(2-3), 205-217.

- Purvis, T., & Hunt, A. (1993). Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology... *The British Journal of Sociology*, 44(3), 473-499.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster Paperbacks.
- Ricoeur, P. (2005). *The course of recognition*. Harvard University Press
- Ricoeur, P. (2006). Capabilities and rights. In S. Deneulin, M. Nebel, & N. Sagovsky, (Eds.), *Transforming unjust structures the capability approach. Library of ethics and applied philosophy*, vol 19 (pp. 17-26). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Riker, W. H. (1986). *The art of political manipulation*. Yale University Press
- Risam, R. (2018). Now you see them: Self-representation and the refugee selfie. *Popular Communication*, 16(1), 58-71.
- Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization: Social theory and global culture*. Sage.
- Rodríguez, C. (2011). *Citizens' media against armed conflict: Disrupting violence in Colombia*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Rodríguez, C. (2014). A Latin American Approach to Citizen Journalism. In S. Allan & E. Thorsen (Eds.), *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives* (Vol. 2, pp. 199–210). Peter Lang.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Sage Publications.
- Rucht, D. (2004). 'The Quadruple "A": Media Strategies of Protest Movements Since the 1960s'. In W. van de Donk, B. D. Loader, P. G. Nixon, and D. Rucht (Eds.), *Cyberprotest: New Media, citizens, and social movements* (pp.29-56). Routledge.
- Safran, W. (1991). Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1(1), 83-99.
- Sakr, S. (2001). *Satellite realms: Transnational technologies, globalization and the Middle East*. IB Tauris.
- Sakr, N. (2004). Media Development and democratisation in the Arab Middle East. *Global Dialogue*, 6(1/2), 98-7-.

- Sakr, N. (2016). Survival or sustainability? Contributions of innovatively managed news ventures to the future of Egyptian journalism. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 13(1), 45-59.
- Salama, V. (2012). Covering Syria. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 17(4), 516-526.
- Saleh, Y. A. H. (2017). *The impossible revolution: Making sense of the Syrian tragedy*. Hurst Publishers
- Sallaz, J. J., & Zavisca, J. (2007). Bourdieu in American sociology, 1980-2004. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 21-41.
- Sariaslan, K. Z. (2020). *This is not journalism: Mapping new definitions of journalism in German exile* (ZMO Working Papers, 25). <https://d-nb.info/1214607330/34>
- Sassen, S. (1996). *Losing control, sovereignty in the age of globalisation*. Columbia University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2006). *Territory, authority, rights*. Princeton University Press.
- Schudson, M. (2005). Autonomy from what? In R. Benson & E. Neveu (Eds.), *Bourdieu and the journalistic field* (pp.214-223). Polity Press.
- Seib, P. (2009). Public diplomacy and journalism: Parallels, ethical issues, and practical concerns. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(5), 772-786.
- Shapiro, M. J. (1992). *Reading the postmodern polity: Political theory as textual practice*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Shapiro, M. J., & Alker, H. R. (1996). *Challenging boundaries: Global flows, territorial identities*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Shumow, M. (2014). Media production in a transnational setting: Three models of immigrant journalism. *Journalism*, 15(8), 1076-1093.
- Sinatora, F. L. (2019). *Language, identity, and syrian political activism on social media*. Routledge.
- Singer, J. (2011). Journalism in a network. In M. Deuze (Ed.), *Managing media work* (pp. 103– 109). Sage.
- Skjerdal, T. S. (2010). How reliable are journalists in exile? *British Journalism Review*, 21(3), 46-51.

- Splichal, S. (2015). Journalism and journalists. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., pp.857–861).
- Splichal, S., & Dahlgren, P. (2016). Journalism between de-professionalisation and democratisation. *European Journal of Communication*, 31(1), 5-18.
- Stevenson, N. (2007). Cultural citizenship: Questions of consumerism, consumption and policy. In T. Edwards (Ed.), *Cultural theory: Classical and contemporary positions* (pp. 225-273). Sage.
- Stewart, K. (2007). *Ordinary Affects*. Duke University Press.
- Strawson, G. (2004). Against narrativity. *Ratio*, 17(4), 428-452.
- Sullivan, J. L. (2019). *Media audiences: Effects, users, institutions, and power* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Syria legalises private newspapers. (2001, September 28). *Committee to Protect Journalists*.
<https://cpj.org/2001/09/syria-legalizes-private-newspapers/>
- Syrian Creativity: Radio SouriaLi broadcasts over the internet (2013, June 7). *Syria Untold*.
<https://syriauntold.com/2013/06/07/syrian-creativity-radio-souriali-broadcasts-over-the-internet/>
- Tarrow, S. (1989). *Democracy and disorder: Politics and protest in Italy, 1965-1975*. Oxford University Press.
- Tatomir, B., De Angelis, E., & Sadouskaya-Komlach, M. (2020, November). *Briefing Paper: Syrian independent exile media*. International Media Support. <https://www.mediasupport.org/publication/syrian-independent-exile-media>
- Teo, P. (2000). Racism in the news: A critical discourse analysis of news reporting in two Australian newspapers. *Discourse & Society*, 11(1), 7-49.
- Therborn, G. (2000). Globalizations: Dimensions, historical waves, regional effects, normative governance. *International Sociology*, 15(2), 151-179.

- Thomassen, B. (2012). Notes towards an anthropology of political revolutions. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54(3), 679-706.
- Thornham, S., Bassett, C., & Marris, P. (Eds.). (2009). *Media studies: A reader*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Thumim, N. (2007). *Mediating self-representations: Tensions surrounding ordinary participation in public sector projects* (Publication No. U511466) [Doctoral dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science]
- Thumim, N. (2009). 'Everyone has a story to tell': Mediation and self-representation in two UK institutions. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(6), 617-638.
- Thumim, N., & Chouliaraki, L. (2010). BBC and new media: Legitimization strategies of a public service broadcaster in a corporate market environment. In L. Chouliaraki & M. Morsing (Eds), *Media, organisations, identity* (pp. 47–69). Palgrave.
- Tilly, C. (1993). Contentious repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834. *Social Science History*, 17(2), 253-280.
- Tilly, C. (2008). *Contentious performances*. Cambridge University Press
- Torring, J. (2005). Discourse theory: Achievements, arguments, and challenges. In D. Howarth & J. Torring (Eds.), *Discourse theory in European politics* (pp. 1-32). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Touraine, A. (2001). *Beyond neoliberalism*. Polity.
- Trombetta, L., & Pinto, C. (2018). *Syria*. Media Landscapes. Retrieved September 6, 2022, from <https://medialandscapes.org/country/syria>.
- Tsagarousianou, R. (2001). 'A Space where one feels at home' Media consumption practices among London's South Asian and Greek Cypriot communities. In R. King & N. Wood (Eds.), *Media and migration: Constructions of mobility and difference* (pp.158-172). Routledge.
- Tsagarousianou, R. (2016). European Muslim diasporic geographies: Media use and the production of translocality. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 9(1), 62-86.

- Tsagarousianou, R. (2017). Rethinking the concept of diaspora: mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world. *Westminster papers in communication and culture*, 1(1).
- Turner, G. (2010). *Ordinary people and the media: The demotic turn*. Sage Publications.
- Turner, V. (1967). *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. (1974). *Dramas, fields and metaphors: Symbolic action in human society*. Cornell University Press.
- Valassopoulos, A., Sabry, T., Rooney, C., Westmoreland, M., Iskandar, A., & Salti, R. (2012). Arab cultural studies – Thinking aloud: Theorizing and planning for the future of a discipline. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 16(2-3), 117–134.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). What is political discourse analysis. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*, 11(1), 11-52.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2000). New(s) racism: A discourse analytical approach. In S.Cottle (Ed.), *Ethnic minorities and the media* (pp.33-49). Open University Press.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Tannen, D. Schiffrin, & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 352-371). Blackwell.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2002). Media contents the interdisciplinary study of news as discourse. In N. W Jankowski & K. B. Jensen (Eds.), *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research* (pp. 122-134). Routledge.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2005). Discourse analysis as ideology analysis. In C. Schäffner & A. Wenden (Eds.), *Language & peace* (pp. 41-58). Routledge.
- Van Dijk, T. A., & Kintsch, W. (1983). *Strategies of discourse comprehension*. Academic Press.
- Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage*. Routledge.

- Vandevoordt, R. (2017). Why journalists covered Syria the way they did: On the role of economic, social and cultural capital. *Journalism*, 18(5), 609-625.
- Venuti, L. (1986). The translator's invisibility. *Criticism*, 28(2), 179-212.
- Villa, D. (1999). *Politics, philosophy, terror: Essays on the thought of Hannah Arendt*. Princeton University Press.
- Virilio, P. (2000). *The information bomb* (Vol. 10). Verso.
- Volkan, V. D. (2017). *Immigrants and refugees: Trauma, perennial mourning, prejudice, and border psychology*. Karnac Books.
- Waisbord, S. (2019). The vulnerabilities of journalism. *Journalism*, 20(1), 210-213.
- Wall, M., & El Zahed, S. (2014). Syrian citizen journalism: A pop-up news ecology in an authoritarian space. *Digital Journalism*, 3(5), 720-736.
- Weaver, D., & Elliott, S. N. (1985). Who sets the agenda for the media? A study of local agenda-building. *Journalism Quarterly*, 62(1), 87-94.
- Webster, J. G., & Phalen, P. (1997). *The mass audience: Rediscovering the dominant model*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wedeer, L. (1999). *Ambiguities of domination: Politics, rhetoric, and symbols in contemporary Syria*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Weiss, G., & Wodak, R. (Eds.). (2007). *Critical discourse analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wetherell, M. (2013). Affect and discourse—What's the problem? From affect as excess to affective/discursive practice. *Subjectivity*, 6(4), 349-368.
- Wieland, C. (2012). *Syria: A decade of lost chances: Repression and revolution from damascus spring to Arab spring*. Cune Press.

- Williams, A. E. (2012). Trust or bust?: Questioning the relationship between media trust and news attention. *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media*, 56(1), 116-131.
- Williams, R. (1976). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. Fontana.
- Wilmott, A. C. (2017). The politics of photography: Visual depictions of Syrian refugees in U.K. online media. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 24(2), 67-82.
- Wilson, M., & Warnock, K. (2007). *At the heart of change: The role of communication in sustainable development*. Panos.
- Wodak, R., & Busch, B. (2004). Approaches to media texts. In J. D. Downing et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of media studies* (pp.105-122). Sage Publications.
- Wodak, R., & Matouschek, B. (1993). 'We are dealing with people whose origins one can clearly tell just by looking': Critical discourse analysis and the study of neo-racism in contemporary Austria. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 225-248.
- Wolff, R. (2012). *Democracy at work: A cure for capitalism*. Haymarket Books.
- Wood, R. E. (1979). Language choice in transnational radio broadcasting. *Journal of Communication*, 29(2), 112-23.
- Woolley, J. T. (2000). Using media-based data in studies of politics. *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(1), 156-173.
- Yang, G. (2000). The liminal effects of social movements: Red guards and the transformation of identity. *Sociological Forum*, 15(3), 379-406.
- Youssef, D. (2021, December 16). Fares Helou: Resistance through art. *Syria Untold*.
<https://syriauntold.com/2021/12/16/fares-al-helou-resistance-through-art/>
- Zayani, M. (2015). *Networked publics and digital contention: The politics of everyday life in Tunisia*. Oxford University Press.

Zeno, B. (2017). Displacement and Identity: Exploring Syrian Refugees' Lived Experiences. *Refugees and Migration Movements in the Middle East, POMEPS Studies 25*, 70-74.

Žižek, S., (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso.

Žižek, S. (Ed.). (1994). *Mapping ideology*. Verso.