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Reporting the Syria conflict on television (2011-2014):

How the use of user-generated content (UGC) has shaped BBC

World News TV coverage and affected journalistic practices

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which user-generated content (UGC) has been used by BBC journalists to cover the conflict in Syria, and how journalistic working practices have altered. The data collection methods included a content analysis of news reports about Syria which aired on BBC World News TV from 2011 to 2014, staff interviews and newsroom observations. Syria has been a challenging story to report as often news organisations have had very little, if any, presence in the country, forcing journalists to rely on UGC produced inside the country to depict events. Results show the task of sourcing UGC and putting it through a verification process involved a steep learning curve for many BBC journalists during the Arab uprisings and remains a complex process. Journalists and producers had to adapt to new ways of locating content, particularly on digital platforms, developing new skills to enable them to carry out 'social media newsgathering'. In doing so they harnessed expertise from across the BBC, including BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring. These changes have happened as the BBC has created more digital news products. However, there were systematic failings in the ways that BBC News passed on information about the UGC used in its news reports to its audiences, particularly verification warnings and the crediting of content. While journalists have become more social media and technology savvy, UGC is still not fully understood by BBC newsrooms, though it is regularly used to cover breaking stories and news. This thesis contributes to a body of literature examining how UGC is used by news outlets and also revisits established theories to consider the extent to which journalists continue to be information gatekeepers or 'gatewatchers' when audiences have access to news on numerous social, mobile and digital platforms.

__Introduction__

Nearly five years ago, Syrian schoolchildren in Der'aa in the south-west of Syria were arrested for painting graffiti on to a wall. It was thought they had been inspired by scenes of protests and uprisings they had seen in the media, from Bahrain to Tunisia. Who would have thought that the subsequent protests in relation to the arrests would be followed by major demonstrations across the country, orchestrated activism, civil unrest, violence and, ultimately, the fleeing of more than half of Syria's population from the places they called home? At least 250,000 people have been killed since that day in March 2011. Yet many of the events of the past five years have happened behind closed doors, with major restrictions in place for journalists trying to portray what is happening in Syria. This means that, at times, news organisations have had to turn to those witnessing events inside the country's borders, using content they have captured and posted onto social media platforms, to tell the story of the uprising and conflict.

This research examines journalistic practices related to newsgathering carried out by BBC News staff covering the conflict in Syria. Using a mixed methods approach - which includes in-depth interviews, newsroom ethnography and a content analysis of BBC World News Television reports - it aims to identify how user-generated content (UGC) has been used by the BBC to depict events happening in Syria since the uprisings began in 2011. Drawing on the data gathered, the research also aims to outline the ways in which the role of the journalist has changed during the research period in order to process and use this content. The two overarching research questions being asked in this research are:

Q1. How have BBC News journalists used UGC to cover the Syria conflict?

Q2: In what ways has the role of the BBC journalist changed to utilise UGC in news output?

Thesis structure

The thesis has been divided into seven chapters, over and above this Introduction. Chapter 1 outlines the key literature related to the research. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework in which the research is situated, drawing on literature to explain the theories of gatekeeping and gatewatching as outlined by Lewin (1947) and Bruns (2003, 2005, 2011). The Methodology chapter (Chapter 3) provides details of the main methods of data collection: qualitative and quantitative content analysis, in-depth interviews and a newsroom ethnography. Results from the content analysis of news reports which were broadcast on BBC World News Television are provided in Chapter 4. This chapter is divided into two parts, with the findings from the quantitative content analysis forming the first part. The second part is an in-depth document content analysis, which draws on information from documents found on the BBC's internal database system (ENPS). ENPS is a database used by BBC News which stores information about news programmes, contributors, UGC clips and the verification process undertaken by journalists checking content. The system is also used by different outlets across BBC journalism to develop 'running orders', from which live programmes go to air.

Findings from the qualitative interviews and newsroom observations which took place at the UGC Hub, where UGC is checked and processed, and BBC Arabic, which was at the forefront of newsgathering throughout the Arab uprisings, are laid out in Chapter 5. These observations took place during 2013 and 2014. The Discussion chapter (Chapter 6) critically analyses and discusses the main findings from this research and sets them within the context of other field studies, as well as providing some key recommendations for BBC News and the wider industry. The Conclusions chapter (Chapter 7) provides a closing summary of the main findings, as well as discussing the implications of these findings for the research field and recommendations for further study.

This Introduction seeks to outline the key issues considered when undertaking this research. The conflict in Syria is a complex and fragmented war, with many different elements affecting what happens in the country on the ground. An understanding of events which happened prior to the uprisings across the Arab world in 2011, as well as developments since then, will help us understand the value

of and need for this research. Therefore, part of this Introduction provides both historical and contemporary accounts, which aim to add context to the evolving conflict in Syria, in terms of access, the media landscape and humanitarian matters.

In addition, this chapter will also depict structural details relevant to BBC News. An explanation of the way the world's biggest broadcaster is organised and run - and a 'potted history' of developments within the News division - will hopefully help aid understanding of the research which seeks, among other things, to examine the BBC's handling of UGC related to the conflict in Syria at what is a time of change within the journalistic landscape.

Contextualising the research

The events that led to the wave of uprisings across parts of the Middle East, known as the Arab Spring, have been well documented. What began with the immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia in December 2010, spread across the region and led to revolts and the fall of the Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan Governments, as well as demonstrations in Bahrain and Yemen. While the background to each uprising, and subsequent downfall of the respective regimes, played out differently in each country, what they do have in common is that the initial events lasted a relatively short period of time. In Egypt the main activity which toppled President Mubarak lasted 18 days, in Tunisia the initial period of unrest went on for around a month.

Protests in Syria began in Der'aa in March 2011 after schoolchildren, thought to have been copying what they had seen happening in other countries that had witnessed the Arab uprisings, daubed graffiti onto a wall. These children were arrested by Syrian police and, when their families protested at their incarceration, they were shot dead (BBC 2013c). This sparked a serious of further protests and then violent unrest across Syria, and the situation remains unresolved more than four years later. This is not like the 'quick fix' conflicts that happened in other countries. A rebel uprising began, an opposition in exile was briefly established and many civilians are still caught up in the crossfire. That crossfire was originally between government forces and those opposed to President Bashar al-Assad, but now involves many different and fragmented groups, including those affiliated to

radicalised Islamist organisations and jihadists from Islamic State (IS), who have gained control of large areas across both Syria and Iraq. A full timeline of events in Syria since 2011 appears in Appendix 1.

The timescales and series of events are very different to those in Cairo's Tahrir Square and Libya's Green Square, but Syria is also different from a journalistic perspective. For a large part of the conflict there have been attempts to impose a long term media blackout, with most foreign journalists banned from entering the country. The timing of the beginning of the Syria conflict, in March 2011, also meant that many organisations were initially stretched with regards to deployment to the country, as they were covering the Arab uprisings in other parts of the Middle East. Arguably, this may have hampered initial coverage (BBC Trust 2012). Since then, some foreign press - including staff from the BBC - have been allowed visas, but they have been strictly controlled in terms of what they can film and how they move around the country. Other journalists have smuggled themselves into the country in a bid to report events. Often this means their safety is compromised and time reporting in the region is limited, as is what they can show. The high profile death of Sunday Times journalist Marie Colvin in February 2012, in Homs, highlights the dangers that professional correspondents, as well as the 'man on the street' citizen journalists, face in trying to get information about events happening in Syria. Paul Conroy, the photographer working with Colvin at the time of her death, described what he saw as "the next Rwanda, the next Srebrenica" (BBC 2012).

Sadly, journalists and those who help facilitate their movements in Syria remain at risk while trying to report in the country. There have been a number of high profile beheadings of western journalists such as James Foley, Steven Sotloff and others, by groups affiliated with Islamic State. Syrian journalists have also been captured or killed, allegedly by Syrian government forces and those working with 'the regime', as well as militant groups. These developments suggest that, until the regime falls, there will be major restrictions on the movements of journalists in and out of Syria, and those who try to disseminate news of unrest from within the country to the rest of the world will be risking their own lives in the course of doing so.

From the start of the violence in March 2011, for a period of around six months, the BBC was not able to send journalists into Syria officially. There was a

BBC Arabic journalist based in Damascus, but her movements and reporting were seriously restricted. International correspondent Lyse Doucet was the first BBC journalist to be given a visa to enter Syria. Since then, the few reporters officially reporting have had restrictions imposed on them. More details of the situation are detailed in the Literature Review. Lack of reporter presence in the country means that events, including widespread violence, have been challenging to report accurately – that is with objectively verifiable 'facts'. For this reason, news organisations have had to rely heavily on content generated inside the country and forwarded on by citizens on the ground to find out what is going on inside Syria. This includes accessing content from their own audiences. In this respect, some consumers have become producers or, as Bruns refers to them, 'produsers', both users and producers (Bruns 2003).

In other breaking news situations where media outlets have had to rely on so called citizen journalism initially, it has been in tandem with scrambling crews and reporters to the location, e.g. the Boxing Day tsunami in South East Asia in 2004 and July 7 bombings in London in 2007 (Allan and Thorsen 2009). Syria is different in that, for the majority of the time, media organisations are relying on eyewitnesses as the newsgatherers and are reporting on a country where they have no official presence. In this respect, I believe the Syria situation is unique and is a research topic worthy of further analysis and investigation.

Situating the research

This thesis outlines, among other things, the ways in which journalists have overcome challenges associated with covering events in Syria when it has been impossible to access the country safely. The findings show that journalists often relied on content from eyewitnesses and activists. However, it is also important to highlight that this research has been undertaken as the situation in Syria has continued to evolve. What started out with protests in 2011 became a fragmented and bloody civil war, and is now not only a complex conflict involving jihadist groups, ethnic fighters and Syrian and Kurdish armies, but also an international crisis affecting neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. It has, in turn, become a geo-political battle involving diplomatic efforts from the UK, US and

Russia, with foreign powers also carrying out airstrikes in Syria and arming rebel groups. Keeping abreast of these developments is certainly challenging from both a journalistic perspective and that of a researcher.

Researching this thesis meant trying to chart what is an ongoing conflict both in the Middle East and on the global stage, alongside the associated journalistic developments, and this has also been demanding. As with many wars, there have been varying developments on the ground, but the media's responses to these events have also changed throughout the lifetime of the conflict. Aspects of reporting about Syria which were hugely important four years ago may seem less relevant when compared to events happening at the time of writing.

For example, the long term use of UGC, arguably seen as a game changer in international newsrooms in 2011, has now in many respects been accepted as a source of content to illustrate events in hard to reach places, with certain caveats. The findings illustrated here are based on a content analysis from 2011 to 2014 and changes in journalistic practices which are documented up to 2015. The thesis also depicts changes in the offerings made available by the BBC during this time period – with a greater focus on mobile, social and digital platforms and content than there had been in the past. With the crisis ongoing, there will undoubtedly be other diplomatic developments and military responses and, in turn, journalistic practices will most likely continue to evolve. This thesis picks out the most relevant findings from what has been a period of great unrest for the people of Syria, as well as those covering events happening in the country. However, as this remains a conflict in motion, it is impossible to say that there will not be further changes to the media landscape and that these are concrete findings for the future. That is not to say that the research topic has not yielded important conclusions, which will continue to be relevant to both academics and media practitioners alike beyond the research period.

Socio-political history of Syria

When Bashar al-Assad took power after the death of his father in 2000, it was hoped that this would change the way the country was run - including its dealings with the press and media - as he was viewed as a reformist with modern ideas. Traditionally, Syria's government had ruled over the media with an iron fist in terms

of control over ownership and regulation (Salama 2012). Emergency laws which control published content, from surveys to books and advertising, had been in place for the best part of 50 years. President Assad did initially come across as being in favour of modernisation when he sanctioned the release of hundreds of political prisoners and allowed dissidents to speak openly, as well as easing media restrictions. As a former member of organisations such as the Syria Computer Society, President Assad initially seemed keen to bring the country into the modern age. The internet was introduced in Syria in 2000 and, though mainly used by young people for gaming and web surfing, political discussion by political groups were generally tolerated, as were gatherings which saw these group meetings in person.

However, within the first year of Assad being in power, this initial progress - referred to now as the 'Damascus Spring' - had stopped. It is argued that the government chose the position of 'liberalised authoritarianism', giving the impression of freedom while retaining overall control (BBC 2015g). The Press Law, introduced in 2001, was aimed at printed media such as newspapers, magazines and other periodicals. It banned writing on a wide variety of topics, including reports that touch on what authorities consider to be "national security" or "national unity" (Freedom House 2007, 2012).

While the internet was somewhat restricted from 2003 as a result of the Iraq war and fears over cyber security, there has now been a large uptake in the use of the internet in Syria – a massive 4,900 percent increase in seven years, compared to the global growth rate of 249 percent (OpenNet 2009). There are now an estimated 4.5 million internet users in Syria and 67,235 broadband users (MVF 2015). Syria's youth has come to experience the wider virtual public space afforded by the internet and its social media websites and seem eager to transfer the freedoms of cyberspace to the real political sphere (Kilo 2011). While it could be argued that Syria saw an internet 'boom', the extent of mobile phone use in Syria is considered relatively low, at 50% in 2011 (MVF 2015). Only two telecoms companies (Syria MTN and Syriatel) currently operate in the country. However, as phones have increasingly been used to capture, upload and send video and other content since the start of the uprisings, this suggests usage, particularly of 3G services, is on the up. This, however, has had a knock on effect, with the government being accused of switching off 3G networks and blocking websites such as Facebook and YouTube from mobile

and broadband users during the conflict. In fact, Facebook and other social media sites were blocked for several years in Syria and only made 'legal' in early 2011, though people did use proxy servers to get around this problem (Starr 2012).

<u>Response to the protests</u>

Following a month of protests triggered by the Der'aa killings, President Assad announced in April 2011 that he was lifting the 1963 Emergency Law; he declared that there would be new legislation to dilute the monopoly of the Baath party in the political system, a new modern press and media law, and a law which would regulate demonstrations, whereby protesters would be protected by police. Outside observers have described these as conciliatory measures (Salama 2012). In August 2011, a new law was approved which aimed to stop 'any monopoly in the media sector' and urged responsible freedom of expression, yet failed to further clarify what was 'reasonable'. The new legislation stated that an attack on a journalist would be treated as an attack on a Syrian government official, yet citizen journalists and foreign media have died during the uprising, reportedly at the hands of the regime, making this law "ridiculous and schizophrenic...borders on the absurd" (Reporters without Borders 2011).

The new law also contained several anti-press clauses, including barring the media from publishing content that affects 'national unity and national security,' or inciting sectarian strife or hate crimes. Again, it has been argued that there are no clear examples of such content. It also forbids the publication of any information about the armed forces and holds editors in chief, journalists and spokespeople accountable for such content, meaning they could face prison or fines of up to one million Syrian pounds ($21,000). Despite these measures and the fact the media landscape in Syria is now varied, some state owned or privately owned pro-government outlets run as they always did. The unrest, however, has sparked a large number of different publications and opposition outlets across many platforms, so varied that in modern Syria "it is difficult to speak of a single media environment" (BBC Monitoring 2014:1). The following section seeks to give a brief guide to the media operation in Syria, at a time when the country is considered one of the most

dangerous places in the world to be a journalist (Committee to Protect Journalists 2015).

Media in Syria in context

> Though Syria still has one of the most regulated internet and telecoms sectors in the Middle East, demonstrators could take shaky footage on camera phones, once an expensive gimmick but now cheap and ubiquitous, and upload it for free onto video sharing sites. (Noueihed and Warren 2012:45)

While the Syrian government said that it wanted to have a free and independent media in 2006, contracts to operate newspapers were awarded to companies run by those connected to the regime. For example, Baladna Arabic and Baladna English editions were owned by the United Group, run by Majed Souliman, whose father was Syria's Head of Internal Security in the early 2000s (Starr 2012). Syrian state television is considered to be the mouthpiece of the government and the Arabic newspaper Tishreen is also state-run. Following the uprisings in 2011, many legacy news publications closed. Some were axed due to lack of revenue; others came under pressure to report certain angles and were seen as either too soft or 'part of the opposition', such as Forward magazine. (Starr 2012).

In 2015 there are a variety of different outlets, from the state owned newspapers and broadcasters to the private sector - which is generally pro government - as well as a new media environment, which sees rebel-run FM radio stations, weekly newspapers and websites used to disseminate information. Television remains the most popular medium in Syria, with more than 20 Syrian TV channels in the country and abroad, and some of these are now private channels with an opposition voice, such as Orient News, Suriya ah-Ghad TV and Dayr-al-Zur TV (BBC Monitoring 2014). Much opposition content is also broadcast by radio – there are at least 12 stations broadcasting in areas considered to be 'rebel-held'. These stations are available via the FM frequency and via mobile apps, while some are broadcast from abroad, allowing opposition groups to disseminate information and present their interpretation of events outside of the conflict zone.

The BBC Monitoring report into the Syrian media environment was last updated in 2014. It outlines that within Syria there are now three main papers: Al-

Ba'ath, which is the Ba'ath party publication, Al'Thawarah, a government paper which translates as 'The Revolution', and the aforementioned Tishreen. In addition, there are now a number of websites and weekly handouts created by those in opposition, but the risks to journalists in distributing or writing such material is considered high, therefore there are few solid circulation figures. BBC Monitoring outlines, however, that Tilina Alhurriya is printed once a fortnight and has a print run of several thousand. The outlet is affiliated to the 'Local Co-ordinating Committees' (LCCs), media action teams that are run in each major town and city in Syria, with the aim planning and organising events on the ground within their own communities. In 2015 there were 14 LCC's across the country. In addition, Syria Hurriayt -which was Syria's first opposition paper - had a website with an English section until it ceased publication in May 2013, and Inab Biladi (www.enab-baladi.org) is a weekly Sunday newspaper published since 2011 from Darayya town, south of Damascus, by local activists (BBC Monitoring 2014).

While publicising content opposing the Syrian government can carry great risk, the crackdown on journalists is not a new phenomenon. Eight journalists and 'cyber-dissidents' were imprisoned in 2006 and dozens of people who had spoken out or were suspected of opposition to the government were detained. This shows that legislative crackdowns are not simply the result of the recent protests in the country. However, the rise of violence in the country has led to a further tightening of laws and scores more journalists have been captured and held. Therefore - based on reports from BBC Monitoring and the Committee to Protect Journalists, which rates Syria as the number three on its Global Impunity Index - it seems that, despite announcements of changes in the law to make the media more accessible, the reality is that the Syrian government has not changed its approach. Testimonies suggest that the government still wishes to control media coverage, both from its own media and from non-state media, citizen and foreign journalists, with many being arrested should they speak out (Committee to Protect Journalists 2015).

Newspaper and radio are important for the opposition voice, but Syrian activists have also harnessed social media to criticise the regime and rally protesters (Noueihed 2012). Since the first protests in 2011, the opposition has become heavily reliant on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and video-sharing sites such as YouTube, as a way to put across the variety of different viewpoints. BBC

Monitoring's 2014 guide speaks of a new "virtual ownership" of the media, thanks to Syrians' access to these platforms (2014:6). Some of the most widely distributed content is seen online, despite internet penetration in Syria being just 22.5% of the population in June 2012 (BBC Monitoring 2014:30). Opposition outlets such as Shaam News Network, Ugarit and the Shabha news agency run YouTube accounts, their own websites and usually Facebook pages, ensuring that all their moderated content can be seen on any platform.

There continues to be much debate about whether there has been a 'Twitter Revolution'. Sullivan (2009) argues that the moment came in Iran in 2009, following the elections; Morozov (2012) strongly disputes this, putting forward that we are blinded by 'cyber utopianism', and that the crackdown by various regimes and monitoring of activists suggests that the usage of the internet does not always bring freedom. While this discussion is ongoing, what is clear is that protest movements seen elsewhere in the Middle East quickly took hold in Syria, not long after the initial 'Arab Spring' and, while the internet didn't necessarily *create* the uprisings, it was certainly a way of articulating what was happening.

2011 onwards: humanitarian cost

> As the situation has continued to degenerate, increasing numbers have also been killed by anti-government armed groups, and there has been a proliferation of serious crimes including war crimes, and – most probably – crimes against humanity, by both sides. Cities, towns and villages have been, and are continuing to be, devastated by aerial attacks, shelling, tank fire, bomb attacks and street-to-street fighting
> (UNHCR 2013:online)

Protests on the streets and virtual dissent during 2011 coincided with the rise of rebel forces against Assad's regime, and later led to the formation of the opposition in exile, which the UN now recognises in the form of the Syria National Council (SNC). However, the SNC have no official presence in Syria. While other leaders caught up in the Arab uprisings were willing to change laws or to step down eventually, President Assad has made it clear that he plans to remain in power, leading to fighting. The conflict in Syria is ongoing and at present President Assad remains in power. He rarely speaks out, but in an interview with the BBC's Jeremy

Bowen he would not be drawn on claims he has used barrel bombs as well as other tactics to kill his own people (Bowen 2015).

Bloody violence in the country from both sides has led to more than 250,000 deaths and over a million people injured (OCHA 2015), with Syria engaged in a civil war. More than 11 million of the Syrian population have been forced from their homes. The uprising and subsequent war have also had a major impact on Syria's neighbours, where tensions are growing. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan are now hosting refugee camps. 4.1 million Syrians had fled abroad as of September 2015, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA 2015). Within Lebanon alone, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates there will be at least 1.8 million registered Syrian refugees by December 2015 (UNHCR 2015). The UNHCR has now called for a display of international solidarity and support for Lebanon, which has received more Syrian refugees than any other country in the world. Within Syria itself, more than 7.6 million people are displaced, risking torture or death at the hands of government forces or jihadists; some communities have been specifically targeted because of their religion, sect or background (Human Rights Council 2015). There are 12.2 million people inside the country in need of humanitarian assistance as the conflict continues into a fifth year, yet these harrowing numbers do not take into consideration the number of Syrians risking their lives trying to get to Europe, nor those who are not registered as refugees and lack documentation (UNHCR 2015).

> With no end in sight, the Syrian conflict has continued to intensify. Civilians, Syrians of all backgrounds, have been the subject of crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as other serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of their human rights. These transgressions are massive in extent and scope…Civilians are suffering the unimaginable, as the world stands witness.
> (Human Rights Council 2015:1)

Currently, in 2015, reports of sectarian violence and testimonies from those smuggled out of the country suggest that the humanitarian cost of this conflict is far greater than anything else the Middle East has seen in recent times. Only by verifying what social media and citizen journalists on the ground tell us or show us via UGC can we hope to fully understand what is happening in Syria.

Rise of Islamic State

There are thought to be more than 1,000 different armed opposition groups operating across Syria (BBC 2013b) and some of these groups have formed alliances. For example, more than 30 groups - including the Free Syrian Army (FSA) - now operate under the Supreme Military Council, while the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front (SILF) is a loose alliance which was formed in September 2012 between around 20 rebel groups (BBC 2013b). Other groups have become fragmented and broken off from their original organisations. For example, Liwa al-Haqq, Ansar al-Sham and the Kurdish Islamic Front have come together under the umbrella of Islamic Front. This particular group does not include the likes of the Al-Nusra Front of Islamic State, which was established as part of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), a militant umbrella group that includes al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) (BBC 2013b). However, they are all jihadist groups and have close links and common origins.

Violence and fighting which began in Syria is now spilling over the border into Iraq in the form of bomb attacks, killings and torture by jihadists from Islamic State, which now claims a caliphate across a wider region of both countries. Although it was established in the early 2000s, the group in its current form first came to light in April 2013, when the head of the ISI, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced that his group and Al-Nusra would merge, creating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), also known as Islamic State (IS). This move, however, was rejected by Al-Nusra's leader, Abu Mohammed al-Julani, who promised allegiance to al-Qaeda's overall leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri (BBC 2015b). Since then, Al-Nusra and IS have operated as separate entities but both are considered to be foreign terrorist organisations (US Department of State 2015).

As well as fighting against Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian Army, many of the opposition and rebel/terrorist groups detailed here have ended up fighting each other when they have not shared a similar agenda. For example, in 2013, members of the Islamic State killed a prominent member of Ahrār ash-Shām and have clashed with those from Ahfad al-Rasoul in Raqqa, where Islamic State has a major stronghold. These tensions between some rebel groups have resulted in ethnic and sectarian conflict, with Islamic State targeting Shia and Alawite civilians in particular, although across the country all civilians are in danger (BBC 2013b).

Noueihed and Warren (2012) suggested the evolving and escalating situation with opposition groups as one reason why - other than sending observers in, as it did in 2012 and 2013 after the alleged chemical attacks in Ghouta - the UN may have been keen to avoid intervention in the country, "particularly given what had happened in Iraq and Lebanon" (Noueihed and Warren 2012:235).

The Kurdish and Syrian forces, once fighting the FSA and opposition groups, are now fighting Islamic State. Islamic State is a terrorist organisation which - unlike other rebel groups, including jihadist affiliations - is well organised and well-funded. It has a slick social media strategy, using techniques from gaming, Hollywood films and mainstream news channels to illustrate their videos, with the aim of attracting young radicalised people from the western world to join them (see Veilleux-Lepage 2014, Rose 2014). Among its digital tactics, Islamic State uses quick updates on Twitter, offering posts and imagery well as targeted hashtags, aiming to radicalize and spread its message. Berger (2014) outlines that Islamic State's approach to social media is sophisticated and differs greatly from the previous digital endeavors used by radical groups. Islamic State has also developed an Arabic language app called 'Dawn of Glad Tidings', which subscribers register with in order to get updates about advances made by the group. The app is based on having active users in its audience rather than passive consumers (Ryan 2014), and posting activity tends to increase during offensives, such as the 2014 battle for Baghdad.

Video footage by Islamic State itself is now being used by media outlets, whether it be to depict the violence they spread or to showcase their control in particular areas of Syria (see Sommerville 2015). While this thesis does not seek to explore the specific use of extremist footage in news reporting, an understanding of the socio-political situation and the presence of such an organisation within Syria and Iraq is important, given the risks journalists are taking in reporting their content and Islamic State's own way of using social media as a place to publicise its activities.

As well as violence involving fragmented groups within Syria, the diplomatic situation and military offensive from outside sources remain a concern. In September 2015, Russian and US forces participated in airstrikes across Syria. There were, at this time, allegations from the US that Russia's forces were aiming for rebel groups and not necessarily striking Islamic State targets (BBC 2015d).

Given the current situation, it is also evident that until the regime falls, or there is a course of action from the international community in tackling Islamic State, there will be major restrictions on the movements of journalists in and out of Syria. In turn, those who try to disseminate news of unrest from within the country to the rest of the world will be risking the lives while doing so. Certainly, the humanitarian cost of this conflict is far greater than anything else the Middle East has seen in recent times. There has also been a cost to journalism, in terms of many missing and dead journalists. Therefore, other than international journalists taking major risks to get into Syria, the only way for news organisations to understand what is happening in the country is to rely on what social media and citizen journalists on the ground tell them. This also poses editorial risks, as some content may be fed by those wishing to publicise a certain angle or agenda in relation to the conflict. This raises issues of balance, which will be discussed. Those who engage in eyewitness reporting, including activists, operate under constant threat and fear for their safety (Human Rights Council 2015).

Understanding UGC at the BBC

One of the first instances in which the BBC was forced to rely on UGC or content which was the product of 'citizen journalism' (Allan and Thorsen 2009, 2014) was on Boxing Day December 2004, when a tsunami hit many countries in South East Asia. Correspondents were unable to get to the site and instead mainly used eyewitness testimony to cover the event. This, in some cases, included footage captured by holidaymakers on their cameras and mobile phones as the tsunami took hold. As Allan and Thorsen (2009) outline, this scenario saw journalists travelling to airports, not to go out and engage in parachute journalism, but to collect eyewitness footage from holidaymakers who had been caught up in the disaster and were flying home.

Partly in response to this, BBC News set up a small team within the Interactive online division to look at ways to process audience content. This was tested just six months later with the 7/7 bombings in London. The BBC's reaction to those events has arguably shaped the way the corporation has dealt with content found across social media ever since. From this small pilot grew the BBC UGC Hub.

Facebook and Twitter were yet to be launched to the public, so at the Hub the focus was on getting content from audiences rather than looking to third party providers, as well as moderating comments placed on online news stories. In terms of using third party providers as a PR tool, at this stage BBC content was usually only published on the BBC news website rather than being placed anywhere else. Fast forward to 2015 and the BBC has a major social media presence across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the video sharing website YouTube. These sites are used as places to disseminate news content in tandem with making it available on TV, radio, online and via the BBC News app, which provides news alerts on smartphones. A more detailed outline of the development and remit of the UGC Hub and the processes involved in checking the accuracy of UGC will follow in the Literature Review (Chapter 1) and the results chapters, (Chapters 4 and 5), but this brief overview seeks to give a sense of the speed at which the environment in which journalists using UGC and social media has evolved.

Justification for this research

The conflict in Syria has resulted in media organisations such as the BBC relying on the eyewitnesses as the news-gatherers while reporting on a country where they have had no official presence since 2011. I believe the situation in Syria in 2015 remains unique and is a warranted research topic. My own experience as a media practitioner working within BBC World News also suggests that, throughout the research period, there was an increased reliance on social media content and UGC from activists and eyewitnesses as a source of information and footage related to events in Syria. A study of how content made available by those previously considered as passive consumers of media content is also a useful measure of the dramatic changes and challenges in the ever evolving world of journalism.

There has been some examination of content from social media sites and audience-captured content being used by news outlets to cover the Arab uprisings (Harkin et al 2012, Aday et al 2013, Hänska-Ahy 2014). The footage, however, has generally been used in addition to traditional news-gathering techniques by journalists (Van Leuven et al 2014). Indeed, when carrying out research into the relationship between producers and the audience at BBC Persian and Arabic,

Hänska-Ahy and Shapour acknowledged there was "somewhat of an empirical and theoretical blindspot" (2012:3). Claire Wardle, who has authored a number of reports about the BBC's use of UGC herself, acknowledges the limitations of her initial research, stating that by the time the 2008 study was published the findings were, to a certain extent, already outdated (Wardle and Williams 2008).

Wardle's newer pieces of collaborative research (Wardle et al 2014) are based on content analyses, but unlike this research do they not have the benefit of the insider perspective and access to internal documents - fuller details of which are explained within the Methodology chapter. This examination of the importance of UGC for TV news and UGC's impact on journalistic practice uses mixed methods, with good access to BBC archives, and shines a light on how newsgathering is undertaken in the 21st century at the world's biggest newsgathering organisation. An assessment of how journalistic practices and coping strategies have evolved could have implications for how broadcast news and UGC are approached by media outlets in the future. On an organisational level, the findings could help inform the development of policies on the use of social media and UGC in the news at the BBC in the future.

The research goals of this thesis have been to understand and examine how reliant BBC News has been on UGC in its reports and how the processes for getting it 'on air' - including liaising with content creators - have changed newsroom roles and practices. For the BBC, these changes have come about while attempting to maintain accuracy, with trust being one of the BBC's core values. The findings also highlight the major issue of failures to give warnings or make caveats about the use of UGC, a concern which is echoed in Edward Mortimer's findings in the BBC Trust Report on the impartiality of the BBC's coverage of the Arab Uprisings (2012). While Mortimer found that the BBC's coverage of events in the Middle East was "remarkable given the challenges involved and was generally impartial" (2012:6), he also highlighted the need to make caveats or advisories to the audience about social media content used in broadcasts, particularly in Syria, given the lack of presence in the country. This research, too, suggests that the process for verifying such content could be better explained to audiences. An examination of the importance of UGC for TV news and an assessment of how it can impact on news-gathering could have far reaching implications for how broadcast news is approached in the future.

This Introduction has sought to give an overview of the main objectives of the thesis and the data collection methods used to carry out the research. The thesis focuses on the use of UGC in TV news reports and the changing journalistic practices of journalists working with and processing this content. This chapter has situated the research questions in the wider context in relation to changes within news reporting, geo-political developments in Syria and the threats to security across the Middle East. Situated within the field of production studies and newsroom ethnography, this research aims to provide recommendations for future strategy related to UGC and social media newsgathering, and for further research in a field where news consumption and use of different social media platforms to disseminate content are continually evolving. To understand the current position, however, it is important to outline the developments related to using UGC and the roles of journalists working with this content across the industry. This and other themes will be addressed in the following chapter, the Literature Review.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter outlines some of the main literature linking this thesis to the wider world of academic research. It aims to give the reader an overview of the research field as it relates to this study, taking in key works from journalism, sociology and media and communications studies. While there will be additional literature published about the research topics of UGC, production studies and journalism routines which have not been included here, this chapter looks to give an insight into what is already known about the topics and, moreover, how this thesis fills any current literature gaps.

The first section outlines key literature relating to the BBC and other media outlets, expanding on what has been detailed in the Introduction in relation to the use of social media and UGC at the BBC, together with developments since the UGC Hub was first formally established in 2005. It considers literature pertaining to journalism roles and routines and the challenges faced by news production staff as they undertake their work. The second section explores literature relating to the broadcasting of the events which took place across the Middle East in 2011. This thesis refers to these events as 'Arab uprisings', though they are also commonly known as 'the Arab Spring'. This section considers the ongoing conflict in Syria in particular. It also looks at important works relating to the BBC and the Arab uprisings, drawing on content analyses as well as qualitative studies.

The final section discusses the concepts and terminologies used in studies relevant to this thesis, analysing what is written about the concepts of citizen journalism, UGC and networked journalism, among others, before outlining which terms have been used in this research and the justification for this.

Section 1: Life at the BBC

BBC guidelines state that any non-professional content submitted to the BBC should be verified before it is put to air (BBC 2014f). That job rests with a team within the BBC newsroom known as the UGC Hub. The Hub harvests content posted

online and processes text, videos and photographs submitted to the BBC from audience members. The staff also have a role in moderating comments on BBC stories posted online, and finding voices to go 'on air' relating to specific news stories, which are selected on a daily basis. As was detailed in the Introduction, this division of the newsroom was initially set up as a pilot project after the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, as part of the Interactive division (see Belair-Gagnon 2015). The Hub arguably had its watershed moment in 2005 when the 7/7 bombings took place in London. Media correspondent Torin Douglas proposed this moment marked the "first time such material had been deemed more newsworthy than the professionals" (Douglas 2006:online). While the point about content being "more newsworthy" may be debatable, the 2005 attacks were different from previous events in a number of ways. While there have been many occasions when eyewitness footage has been used as part of news reporting, frequently this has been in tandem with professional newsgathering. Due to the physical constraints of actually getting to the bomb sites across London, filming by BBC crews was severely restricted and, by contrast, the volume of UGC coming into the BBC was immense. Within six hours of the attack the BBC had received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 videos, 4,000 SMS and 20,000 e-mails (Sambrook 2005). The following night a package featuring only audience material was aired on the BBC's evening news bulletin, marking the start of a collaboration with the audience. There has been an increased interest in researching content from non-traditional sources since then, echoing Gillmor's prediction that journalists' relationships with the audience would evolve to become more like a conversation (Gillmor 2006).

As the UK's national broadcaster, and with a global presence across all platforms, it is not surprising that the BBC has been the subject of much scholarly research. A great deal has been written about the BBC's use of UGC, but this has often related to its online platform and blogs (Barkho 2011, 2007, Fornaciari 2012, Hermida and Thurman 2008). Considerably less study has been carried out in relation to how UGC is used by television news.

Since 2005 the Hub has significantly expanded. In 2013 it employed 29 staff, although this number has changed as parts of the newsroom have moved and evolved. For example, since July 2015 staff from the UGC Hub have been embedded with the World News TV team and BBC News Channel. While its original focus was

to moderate online content, the scope of the Hub's remit has also changed and the Hub itself has become further integrated into the newsgathering process (Harrison 2010). New BBC guidelines introduced in 2011 included advice on working with UGC and social media platforms for the first time, suggesting the BBC understands that the media ecology it is operating in is evolving and that it must adapt to succeed (Bakhurst 2011). This next section outlines what research has been undertaken in relation to the BBC and UGC, taking into consideration how this content is processed and perceived.

UGC at the BBC

Arguably the most comprehensive study of UGC in relation to the BBC is Wardle and Williams' 2008 work, 'ugc@thebbc'. The research used mixed methods including 115 BBC staff interviews, participant observation and content analyses across radio, TV and online platforms, as well as audience studies to understand how UGC was used by the BBC and their journalists and how audiences perceived it (Wardle and Williams 2008). The study covered all elements of UGC, and the authors broke these down into different types of 'Audience Material', highlighting that "the complexities are sometimes lost because of the reliance of the catch-all term 'UGC'" (2008:10). They categorised the material using the following typology: The category of Audience Content incorporated the sub-categories of Audience Footage, Audience Experiences and Audience Stories (Wardle and Williams 2008:11). Audience Footage referred to photographs and videos which were relevant to breaking news, Audience Experiences included case studies and contributions in relation to news stories, and Audience Stories included information or 'tip offs' about certain stories that either the BBC was not aware of, or were not previously on the news agenda. The category of Audience Content and the associated sub-categories are of particular interest as these are elements which will be measured in this research project using content analysis.

The other types of Audience Material included Audience Comments, such as those added at the end of stories on the BBC website, or comments made in response to a 'call to action' on the website or from a presenter or programme. An example of a call to action would be a request for contributions to a 'Have Your Say' debate on

radio or on TV. Other categories included those that involved a greater level of interaction with the public, such as Collaborative Content. The Video Nations project, which saw BBC journalists provide training to the audience who then produced an end product, would be an example of this. 'Networked Journalism' was classified as another type of material, and related to collaboration with the audience to improve programmes. However, Wardle and Williams said this category was included mainly because it was "used by senior executives to describe initiatives at the BBC which explicitly attempt to tap into expert communities within the audience" (2008:11). Network journalism as a concept itself, arguably coined by Jeff Jarvis (2006), will be discussed later. The final category was Non-News content, which included a whole range of non-journalistic content. This ranged from the 'snow pictures' which were sent in by the audience and uploaded as a gallery on BBC online, to recommendations for a particular town's facilities which would feature on a local BBC website.

Wardle followed up the 2008 research in 2014 with an industry-wide project looking at how UGC was used by global news organisations. The aim of the project was to "provide the first comprehensive report about the use of user-generated content (UGC) among broadcast news channels…to understand how much UGC is used on air and online by those channels" (Wardle et al 2014:1). This study into broadcasters' use of UGC spanned eight 24-hour news channels and looked at TV and online coverage. The first stage of the work, a content analysis, highlighted red flags in terms of the absence of credited UGC; only 16 percent of UGC included in the study had actively been given a credit by the newsrooms. The researchers found this was an industry-wide issue, though some broadcasters could be considered worse offenders than others: "Fifty-three percent of the content broadcast by CNN International was credited, compared with 15 percent by euronews, and 1 percent of Al Jazeera English's content" (Wardle et al 2014:80). The results showed BBC World only credited 9% of UGC used in its TV broadcasts – compared to 49% used online. The authors called for an improvement in crediting practices, warning "it will not be long before an uploader takes a news organisation to court for using content without permission or for failing to attribute due credit" (Wardle et al 2014:3).

In terms of usage, the study found that UGC was used by newsrooms every day. In many cases this enabled journalists to cover stories which could not

otherwise be told. That said, UGC was usually only used when other images were not available; for example, in the initial period after a breaking news event, or when access was restricted to the area where events were happening, as continues to be the case in Syria. The research also found failings across the board in terms of telling the audience when UGC was included in broadcasts and methods of labelling varied. This finding was separate to that of crediting those who had captured the footage. The authors called for an improvement in both these practices (Wardle et al 2014).

Journalistic roles

Measuring how journalistic roles have changed as UGC has been incorporated into newsroom work, and newsroom attitudes to this content, are explored by a number of studies (Belair-Gagnon 2015, Wardle and Williams 2008, Williams 2010, Harrison 2010). While it is clear new technology has affected the pace and ease of accessing news material, leading to a vast increase in the amount of content submitted to the BBC, the general consensus was that UGC itself had not "changed the reliance on traditional journalism practices" (Wardle 2008:22). In fact, most journalists involved in Wardle and William's research considered UGC as "no more than grist to the editorial mill, another source of raw material among many to be processed by them into journalistic news output" (2008:42).

A study by Valerie Belair-Gagnon (2015) focused on the way that the BBC used social media in its crisis reporting and how this reportage informed journalistic practices and norms in crisis reporting. Fieldwork for this research involved observations and interviews with 50 BBC staff in 2011. Examples of crisis reporting from 2005 to 2011, including the death of Osama Bin Laden, the Saffron revolution in Myanmar and Iran election protests in 2009, served as illustrative tools to depict changing journalistic practices. Results indicated the "emergence of new structures within the newsroom and the new generation of tech-savvy journalists defining social media in BBC journalism" (Belair-Gagnon 2015:6). The data collection took place before BBC divisions moved from Television Centre and other locations to work together at New Broadcasting House in Central London, and this move has altered some of those aforementioned structures. It is hoped this research project can build

on the findings of Belair-Gagnon's work, though Belair-Gagnon herself notes that the Syria conflict is of as much interest now as it was during her fieldwork in 2011.

Working with UGC is not without its pitfalls, not least because of the large volume of content which comes in to the BBC every day which members of the UGC Hub then have to check and moderate. Indeed, former Global News director Peter Horrocks admitted that while there was a lot of 'chaff' for the staff to wade through, it was often worth it to get the few 'gold nuggets' of information that could lead BBC journalists to cover a new story, or investigate a new slant on an existing one (Horrocks 2008). For some staff, however, there were concerns that they were moderating content and little else, and senior BBC managers also warned of the risk of treating content, particularly audience comment, as representative of the whole audience. By contrast, Harrison's participant observations found that UGC was "being absorbed into established newsroom routines" (2010: 244), and this happened without it having an impact on news selection by BBC journalists.

In terms of journalistic practice, Belair Gagnon's research also looked at the structures and staffing within BBC News, and highlighted the benefits gained from the "centralisation of social media in the UGC Hub" (2015:91). The research also looked at the ways in which day-to-day journalistic roles had changed and found that in terms of checking and using social media, "sets of questions asked in lateral and technical checks are specific to social media uses…these practices are not new, what is new is the combination of those practices in social media contexts" (2015:40). Overall Belair-Gagnon concluded that BBC journalists used social media in two ways: firstly, as a newsgathering tool, and then also as a means for audiences to participate in news production.

Other studies suggest that in the years since the UGC Hub was established the BBC has "wholeheartedly embraced" this type of content (Williams 2010:4). Williams drew on newsroom ethnographies from the 1960s and 1970s to illustrate the importance of institutional practices, concluding that "audience material is firmly embedded within the long standing routines of traditional journalism practice" (2010:85). However, similarly to the theories of Tuchman (1978) and Gans (1980), Williams also stated that he found journalists retained a sense of autonomy when selecting the news, so even if they did incorporate audience content it would be the content they selected themselves on merit. In summary, while audience content was

important, in terms of news production "journalists have remained journalists and audiences are still audiences" (Williams 2010:96). Drawing on the literature outlined here, final decisions still appear to be made by the editor in a 21st century newsroom. However, the literature also suggests that certain ways of working with outside content are likely to change, and indeed have done since 2005. The research being undertaken as part of this thesis starts from the position that journalists' goalposts have moved, and "the journalist's role as gatekeeper will be eroded by some forms of audience material" (Wardle and Williams 2008:43). Harrison also came to a similar conclusion after her 2010 research findings suggested that gatekeeping barriers within the BBC had evolved, allowing UGC to spark new stories. Harrison was cautious not to overstate UGC's impact on gatekeeping practices, however, as this content was usually very heavily moderated to stay in line with the BBC values of trust, accuracy and impartiality (Harrison 2010). Similarly, at times in her research, Belair-Gagnon pointed to "increasing 'collaboration' between journalists and 'ordinary' citizen witnessing in news production" (2015:46.) However, in her concluding remarks about media logic in the period after the 7/7 attacks in London, she acknowledged that journalists remained gatekeepers, although, as Harrison highlighted, there has to be more transparency in terms of accuracy and impartiality. A fuller discussion and reference to literature related to the theory of gatekeeping follows in the Theory chapter (Chapter 2).

Having consulted representative literature on the subject, it is clear that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to UGC. This is further demonstrated in the different ways this content has been categorised by those studying it and how it is used by the BBC. Harrison devised four categories of UGC, taking into consideration how news producers related to the audience:

1.   UGC as a form of unsolicited news story
2.   UGC as a form of solicited content for specific extant news stories
3.   UGC as a form of expeditious content for specific items and features
4.   UGC as a form of audience watchdog content

Harrison (2010:244)

Harrison decided on these classifications of UGC but also related them back to her newsroom observations, stating that BBC staff defined UGC as "where the audience does it for the BBC", while citizen journalism was defined as "where the audience does it for themselves" (2010:255). Of these 'types', UGC as a form of unsolicited news story is perhaps the most relevant to this research. Harrison believed it encompassed visual material and eyewitness accounts which would be submitted to the BBC in a breaking news scenario, "where the audience is pro-active and participatory and the BBC and news journalists are reactive" (2010:245). However, it could also be argued that Harrison's second category is relevant as, when a story breaks, there are frequently calls to action from BBC journalists and requests for content to be sent in. Indeed, over the lifetime of the Arab uprisings, this research proposes that the type of content being 'sent in' has become less accidental and more organised. Also, journalists are more likely to be soliciting and harvesting content from online sites than relying on their audience to come to them. Harrison also acknowledged other classifications, such as Wardle and Williams' five different types of audience material, which were explored earlier. This variety only adds to the debate about whether there is a need to establish a clearer definition of what audience content actually is. The issues surrounding this type of content and how it is understood will be discussed later in relation to terminologies used in this research.

Do Assad's troops wear trainers?

As content is increasingly posted to social media sites rather than submitted to the BBC directly, it has become even more challenging for journalists to contact the content creators and comb through UGC footage to ensure the content is accurate and real. The reality is that, unlike traditional content which is generated by BBC staff or received via wire services, journalists cannot always be certain of the origin of UGC, and verification is now a major issue for all news outlets, not just broadcasters.

As the role of the UGC Hub has evolved, the way its journalists go about verifying content has "become much more forensic in nature" (Murray 2011:online), and the BBC introduced social media guidelines in 2011 in a bid to help staff understand the steps content should go through before it is transmitted on air (BBC

2011a). However, the events of 2011 referred to as the Arab uprisings were unprecedented in terms of the volume and type of content they produced, particularly in Syria, where there was no journalistic presence for a considerable period. In this respect UGC Hub staff experienced a steep learning curve during the Arab uprisings in 2011 and beyond. Alex Murray, a broadcast journalist at the BBC, has documented the processes journalists go through in a bid to find out of content is what it claims to be (Murray 2011). Searching for the original source of the upload is crucial, but Murray and his colleagues working within the UGC Hub readily acknowledged that drawing on the expertise within the building, specifically colleagues in BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring, to analyse accents and language played a massive part in verifying UGC for BBC use. Now anything from the clothes people are wearing, to significant buildings, the weather and flowers on the landscape are used to deduce whether content is a truthful portrayal of events (see Murray 2011, Barot 2014, Browne 2014). One instance which former UGC Hub editor Trushar Barot used to highlight this expertise was a video of a man allegedly being buried alive (Belam 2013, Turner 2012). This incident was also brought up during data collection in this research as an example of where the verification process worked effectively. The video allegedly showed Assad's troops shovelling dirt over a man with only his head visible poking out of the ground. The clip stopped abruptly after the man's face was covered. The 'soldiers' were wearing trainers, which sparked questions about military footwear and whether this was an indication the video was not authentic (Turner 2012). In fact, soldiers in the Syrian army often wear trainers as army issued boots are notoriously uncomfortable, something a non-Syrian would not necessarily know. What made the BBC exercise caution were the audio levels on the video, which seemed to be the same for the solider as the man being buried under dirt in the ground, whereas journalists expected the victim's audio levels to be lower and less clear. Therefore, the BBC did not use the footage (Browne 2012).

An interesting development during the lifetime of the uprisings in the Middle East, which go beyond the 2011 period usually referred to as the Arab Spring, is that the type of UGC submitted to and encountered by the BBC altered. Rather than a single long shot it was common to see sequences edited together (Murray 2011, Silverman 2014), or for sequences to include signposting such as dates or filming of

key landmarks (Hänska-Ahy and Shapour 2012). These changes in practice were thought to be an attempt to make the content easier to verify. While this could be an example of content creators on the ground becoming more sophisticated and recognising the needs of mainstream media outlets, it could also be an indication of them trying to push a certain narrative.

While the BBC has developed a verification process to deal with UGC, there is no guarantee that all content will go through the UGC Hub. In fact, certain outlets, such as the BBC World News 'World Have Your Say' television programme, actively sought out contributors and video content which other programmes had not used. This can have an impact on what checks and balances are done, and the Arab uprisings - as previously mentioned - were considered unprecedented in terms of the content coming in versus journalists on the ground who could supply footage. When examining BBC Arabic's and BBC Persian's approaches to UGC, Hänska-Ahy and Shapour found that early in 2009, "nascent verification and processing practices were only partially integrated into established routines" (2012:10). In contrast, by 2011, staff attitudes towards UGC in these departments had improved. This finding echoes those of earlier studies on journalistic roles at the BBC in relation to UGC and the verification process (Wardle and Williams 2008, Williams 2010, Harrison 2010). As the role of the UGC Hub has altered from monitoring incoming content to harvesting footage posted on social media, becoming "semi-conventional newsgathering with a Web 2.0 twist" (Turner 2012:10), the risks associated with using this content have increased. Mistakes regarding verification have happened, highlighting the difficulties for journalists working in a digital age, who are often covering events in places they only access through the virtual sphere (see Buttry 2014, Browne 2014).

For example, in May 2012 the BBC News website illustrated the massacre in Houla with a photograph of rows of wrapped-up bodies. The picture had circulated on Twitter and the BBC put it online, with the caveat it could not be independently verified (Figure 1.1). However, it quickly emerged that the picture was not from the Houla massacre, as those who had posted it suggested, but was from Iraq in 2003 (Furness 2012).

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Syria massacre in Houla condemned as outrage grows

This image - which cannot be independently verified - is believed to show the bodies of children in Houla awaiting burial

(Figure 1.1: Screenshot of BBC News online as featured in Silverman 2012)

The shot was taken by professional photographer Marco Di Lauro, who got in touch with the BBC. Following the incident, the BBC's Social Media editor Chris Hamilton admitted, "the extent of the checks and the consideration of whether to publish should have been better. It was a mistake - rectified by the removal of the image as soon as it was spotted - and we apologise for it" (Hamilton 2012:online). The BBC also resolved to tighten its verification process. This incident further highlights the risks associated with using the content and the need to be cautious.

Another more widespread hoax, which highlighted the challenges in finding out what was happening in the real world via the virtual world, was the case of the blog 'A Gay Girl In Damascus'. The 'Gay Girl' blog was believed to be written by Amina Abdallah Araf al Omari, who claimed to be a 35-year-old half American, half Syrian lesbian living in Damascus. The blog's contents were taken up by mainstream media as an authentic voice. It was only following a blog post on 6 June 2011, purported to be from Amina's cousin, claiming she had been captured, that doubts crept in. Through a "collaborative investigation and verification process facilitated by online networks" (Bennett 2011:191), it was later revealed that the blog author

was in fact Tim McMaster, a 40-year-old American studying at Edinburgh University. The fact that this blog was cited globally and used across all platforms could be considered a failure by media outlets in terms of their verification processes, but it is also a good illustration of the problems journalists dealing with content of this nature encounter every day. Undoubtedly a reporter on the ground would be preferable to dealing with contacts you cannot meet face-to-face, but the 'Gay Girl' hoax is "emblematic of the more fundamental challenges facing journalists reporting the Arab Spring" (Bennett 2011:193). Bennett also suggested that journalists would have to use a networked approach in the future when working with such content. Here he echoes the discourse of Shirky, proposing that "this is what the future of investigation looks like in an age when people publish and share first, then gather, filter and verify" (Bennett 2011:192). The literature and these examples only serve to highlight the pressure that is on journalists in breaking news environments, where there is demand for instant updates and in some cases an approach which is 'tweet first, verify later' (see Bruno 2011).

Another illustration of the risks and dangers associated with using such content is the high profile case of the Syria Hero Boy video (McPherson 2014). In this situation, a viral video showing a young boy rescuing a girl as they came under fire in a Syrian town was posted to YouTube. It was used by many news outlets, but it later transpired that the video was the work of a Scandinavian film maker creating a fictional portrayal of life in Syria. On this occasion the BBC did not use the content (see Hamilton 2014).

Overall, the literature and case studies outlined here demonstrate that journalists have challenges every day in terms of determining what content depicts and what they should show. Past treatments and usage of content also serve as warnings to journalists who may encounter people in the virtual sphere wishing to push a certain narrative. In some cases, mistakes have led to media outlets reviewing their verification policies, with the Guardian newspaper stating, after the 'Gay Girl' blog incident, that it would "redouble its efforts in establishing not just methods of verification, but of signalling to the reader the level of verification we think we can reasonably claim" (Elliott 2011:online).

Labels and warnings

The issues of appropriate labelling and caveats for UGC have prompted much debate in newsrooms and across academia. In the BBC Trust's report into the Arab uprisings, author Edward Mortimer suggested more caveats should be made when showing UGC footage and the verification process should be better explained to viewers (BBC Trust 2012). A two-week content analysis of mobile phone footage used by UK news broadcasters noted crediting was unusual (Hadland et al 2013), while Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan (2011) found a lack of attribution of content used by the BBC. Such findings can "only fuel concerns and debate around the authenticity and integrity of the material used" (Hadland et al 2013:23).

As of 2015 even UGC which has come from official sources, such as the news agencies Reuters and Associated Press (AP) and 'social media news agency' Storyful, may be subjected to the same BBC checks as a clip which a UGC Hub journalist has found on YouTube. This is partly because different agencies provide information and vet content in different ways. Reuters, for example, doesn't include source information in the same way as AP (Wardle et al 2014). AP will always verify content before distributing it, but will not include details of the uploader, which prevents accurate crediting of content. These additional checks can mean that it will take longer to verify UGC footage. This in itself can be problematic when the demand from news outlets for useable content is high. Staff involved in this research reported feeling pressure from editors to verify content quickly which, given the nature of the footage, was not always possible.

Wardle et al's 2014 research into the use of UGC by TV and online news channels found there was a major reliance on agency content report events, particularly those in Syria. The content analysis carried out by Wardle and the other researchers found BBC World used 254 pieces of UGC over the research period – an average of 12.11 each day (Wardle et al 2014:21). The study also recorded that the main types of stories where UGC was used were conflict or war stories, which made up 44% of the total clips on TV across all channels. In terms of specific stories, results showed Syria was the story that used UGC the most on TV. A total of 842 items relating to Syria were used across the news channels being studied, which may

have been down to journalists' limited access into the country, which was discussed in the Introduction to this thesis.

> Throughout our sampling period, all channels used content from activist groups to report the Syrian conflict. Indeed, for some news organizations Syria was the only story that included any type of UGC, and our interviews emphasized the news organizations' total reliance on content from Syria because of the difficulties in using their own correspondents. (Wardle et al 2014:21)

Given the demands of newsrooms, but also the risks associated with unverified content for the UGC Hub, "if it says it comes from the social media sphere, we question it until we are happy that the claims being made stack up" (Murray 2011:online). This is a further indication of how seriously the BBC is taking the verification process and how crucial agency and eyewitness content is to covering events, not just those related to the Arab uprisings, but conflicts generally; from fighting in Ukraine to bombing attacks in Afghanistan.

This section has reviewed some of the main studies related to UGC and events during the Arab uprisings, how it is used and perceived at the BBC, as well as some of the challenges encountered when using this content, and the steps taken to ensure it is fit to be broadcast. As documented earlier, some of the greatest lessons learned by journalists were as a result of content uncovered during the initial period of the Arab uprisings. The next section aims to highlight research into content which emerged during this period and how it was used and processed, particularly by the BBC, but also by other outlets.

Section 2: Understanding the Arab uprisings

The uprisings which began in the Middle East in 2011 have unsurprisingly garnered great attention. There has been huge debate about the extent to which social media platforms played a role in inciting protests in various countries, and this discourse has been examined in scholarly research (see Castells 2012, Howard et al 2011, Khondker 2011, Tufekci 2011). With the idea of a 'Facebook Revolution' and a 'Twitter Revolution' bounced around by scholars; some hailing the concept and others disregarding it, it is perhaps no surprise that there has been interest in studying

how the Arab uprisings have been depicted by the media. For example, Fornaciari (2012) used framing theory and content analysis of online content to examine the way in which Al Jazeera English (AJE) and the BBC framed the protests in Egypt. The debate has also prompted study into how social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been used as sources of information or content for activists, citizen journalists and professional journalists (Hermida, Lewis and Zamith 2013, Goodman 2012), as well as examinations of how old and new media have worked in partnership with each other (Robertson 2013).

The aim of this research was not to discuss whether social media platforms were responsible for sparking the revolutions. Rather this thesis investigated, among other things, how available UGC was used by the BBC to report what was going on in Syria - a country which was largely shut off from the western media. This next section looks at what research has been carried out into the way that BBC TV News has covered the Arab uprisings and the Syria conflict in particular.

The BBC and the Arab uprisings

It is clear that UGC has played a key role in helping the BBC cover crises and conflicts in recent years, from the Asia tsunami to the Mumbai attacks and, of course, the London 7/7 bombings, where mobile phone footage dominated broadcasts in the first hours (Belair-Gagnon 2015). While, as Harrison (2010) has argued, there are those who may be reluctant to use this additional news source, for reasons as varied as concerns over credibility to preferring to have their own boots on the ground, it is clear that the existence of UGC and the use of social media platforms to distribute this content cannot be ignored. In fact, Hänska-Ahy and Shapour (2012) believed the turning point in acknowledging the importance of UGC, certainly at BBC Arabic and Persian, actually came during the Iran elections in 2009, rather than 2011. The authors found there was a shift in how UGC was perceived and treated by journalists in the two-year period between these events. Staff reported feeling "uneasy about how best to use UGC" when the Iran crisis happened (2012:6). By contrast, "Everyone the authors interviewed in 2011 seemed far happier, more confident and at ease about using UGC than journalists interviewed 16 months earlier in 2010" (2012:7).

Their research also revealed that the original way of processing UGC at BBC Arabic and BBC Persian in 2009 was chaotic and "lacked a systematic approach" (2012:11). By 2011 workflows had improved and UGC was used as a main source to cover the Arab uprisings. Interviews also indicated that some journalists believed these changing practices had the potential to shape the news agenda. This is in sharp contrast to the findings of Harrison (2010), who reported that the content did not have an impact on news selection (2010:244). According to Hänska-Ahy and Shapour, journalists also claimed "output has changed markedly, and UGC has become far more prominent within that" (2012:12). The finding is one hypothesis for this research project, which looked specifically at Syria.

In addition to scholars researching how the BBC has utilised UGC, the corporation itself commissioned studies, notably the BBC Trust Report, on the impartiality of the BBC's coverage of the Arab uprisings (BBC Trust 2012). As previously mentioned, this work remarked on the importance of caveats when airing this content. The review by Edward Mortimer was accompanied by a content analysis study carried out by Loughborough University (BBC Trust 2012a), focusing on BBC news output across TV, radio and online. The research sample consisted of 44 days of coverage across November 2011, December 2011 and January 2012, though 28 of those days were agreed with the BBC Trust retrospectively as they included significant events. The sample also included two hours of rolling news coverage from the BBC News Channel and BBC World News on the day Libya's President Gaddafi died. The results suggested that while the use of UGC had "increased substantially" since the Iranian protests of 2009, only a "small minority" of reports from the sample contained UGC material. For example, of the coded material, only 30 clips were clearly identified as mobile phone footage out of a sample of 985 news items (2012a:55). However, the authors contended that most UGC clips were probably generated that way.

> It was used primarily in conflict situations where journalists struggled to access events and sources. The most frequent uses of UGC were moving images shot using low quality cameras such as those found on many mobile phones. Where it was not clear that these images had been recorded on a phone as opposed to some other low quality device it was coded as "Other/not clear". It is most likely that, given their ubiquity, the vast majority of images came from mobile phones.
> (BBC Trust 2012a:55)

Interestingly, the content analysis findings echoed Mortimer's own concerns about the BBC (BBC Trust 2012), highlighting the verification process, as there were no caveats about authenticity or representativeness in 74% of the sample. This figure surprised researchers, who "expected that when it [UGC] was used it would be accompanied by caveats either about authenticity or representativeness or both. This occurred only in a minority of cases" (2012a:55).

Similarly, Robertson (2013) compared television coverage of the Arab uprisings by four different outlets, including the BBC, and found that only a small proportion of their on-air content was made up of UGC clips. For example, when coding BBC World News, there were 395 items in the sample yet only 11 were considered content which had come from social media platforms (2.7%) and four news items were coded as having social media as a theme in the story - just 1% of the overall sample. By comparison, in Al Jazeera English's sample (617 items), there were 24 'social media items' or clips (3.8%) and four news pieces where social media was a theme in the news story (2%) (2013: 338). However, that still adds up to less than 4% of all news items featured on the channel in January 2011.

Overall Robertson's work indicated that "social media do not play the prominent role in global television discourse one might expect, that their prominence and deployment vary from one channel to another" (2013:325). However, while social media content might not have been used on air in Robertson's sample, that is not to say that this content did not play a part in some of the journalistic processes related to covering the Arab uprisings, either providing intelligence on which reports were based, or as a prompt for journalists to follow a lead elsewhere.

Robertson's (2013) finding that less than four percent of on air items included UGC or social media is similar to Hadland et al's finding for mobile footage in general (2013). It would be expected that most UGC from the Arab uprisings would probably be mobile footage, though interviews carried out for this research suggested that some activists got and/or gained access to more sophisticated portable broadcast equipment, such as 'Bgan' (Broadband Global Area Network) terminals. These terminals connect a laptop computer to satellite internet services and are frequently used in remote locations. They have been used by activists to upload their content, which is shot using flipcams and other small video cameras rather than smartphones.

By contrast Wardle et al's findings in 2014, when they researched use of UGC by global news channels, showed Syria was a story where UGC was used extensively, almost every day that they looked at over a three-week period. In fact, 40% of all the UGC analysed as part of the research related to the Syria conflict, "And for some organizations, it was the only story for which they integrated UGC" (2014:13).

Issues of labelling

There were some similarities in the findings of Wardle et al (2014) and Robertson (2013), particularly in relation to differences in the ways that news channels labelled UGC that they used. Robertson reported that the BBC only 'explicitly' acknowledged amateur footage as a source five times in the sampled items, even though coverage of the Arab uprisings, in particular events in Egypt and Tunisia, formed 15% of the coverage (65 items) within that sample. In contrast CNN "clearly stated the origin of material" (2013:331). The way the topic of social media, in particular its use by those involved in the uprisings, was approached by the channels also varied. For example, in Robertson's research sample of 140 programmes broadcast from January 2011, while the BBC referred to the fact the internet had been switched off by Egyptian authorities, the BBC presenters made no 'on air' references to the use of Twitter, or comments made on Twitter at all. CNN, however, dedicated a period of time to discussing how activists in Egypt had made use of Twitter and the use of proxy servers to bypass the blocking of the internet by the authorities (Robertson 2013).

Wardle et al (2014) reported similar failings: on average, across networks, 72% of the UGC broadcast on television had no label or description. The study went on to include recommendations that, within the industry, the following main areas needed to be tackled: workflow, verification rights clearance, crediting, labelling and responsibilities. In terms of labelling there needed to be a minimum standard: "Newsrooms know that for reasons of transparency it is important to label UGC, but they are not sure how to do this appropriately and consistently" (Wardle et al 2014:6).

Looking to Syria

One issue which arose in a number of studies into the use of UGC in news, and in relation to the Arab uprisings in particular, was a lack of, or inconsistency in, labelling and crediting of footage when it was used. Harkin et al (2012) looked at how Al Jazeera Arabic and BBC Arabic used UGC and social media in their coverage of Syria across three key dates at the start of the uprising. Results showed that at the time of the study neither channel mentioned whether any of the UGC shown on air was from a credible source. "The common on air explanation of 'this footage cannot be verified,' was absent in all of the content evaluated for this study" (2012:31). Harkin et al found similar results from their comparative work on AJE and the BBC.

> Of the 64 pieces of UGC (of varying format and length) used in the programs surveyed, the majority (nearly 75%) provided no information for the audience about the source of the images, either through the presence of an on air logo for the source or through on air announcements by presenters.
> Harkin et al (2012:31)

Harkin et al evaluated the procedures for dealing with UGC at both outlets, and suggested the lack of announcements was at odds with both channels' editorial guidelines. The researcher argued that "UGC best practice in use at the network level at both the BBC and Al Jazeera might not be in place in the Arab newsrooms of those networks" (2012:34). However, the research also revealed that both channels set up 'Syria desks' and established improved processes to deal with UGC after the initial study was carried out. Indeed, the article suggested signposting by activists and those providing footage had become more common, which may have helped this process. This particular theme was found across the literature, including from content analyses on TV news use of UGC as well as qualitative research (Hänska-Ahy and Shapour 2012) and practitioner testimony (Barot 2014, Murray 2011). These studies also depicted a steep learning curve for journalistic staff in relation to checking and using UGC footage from the Middle East.

Harkin et al's comparative study of the two Arabic outlets, overviewing their policies versus those of their English channels is significant. It was, however, only focused on three key dates from March to July 2011, whereas this thesis focused on

content broadcast across the conflict, with the aim of finding out whether the use of UGC by BBC TV News had altered throughout the duration of the conflict. Looking to the future, based on Harkin et al's method, a further study taking in the verification processes, editorial policies and a longer term content analysis of BBC and Al Jazeera output across both their English and Arabic channels, would undoubtedly yield interesting results, as early indicators suggest that they are not always singing from the same hymn sheet. In fact Wardle et al's full research report, which included interviews as well as a content analysis, suggested that in terms of challenges for journalists, verifying UGC was considered one of the most pressing issues "particularly in the pressured context of breaking news" (2015:9). Verification was a theme throughout all of the interviews the team carried out; journalists were not always sure of the processes and were also worried that the use of warnings or caveats would frustrate the audience and undermine trust, "as it suggests that verification checks have been completed inadequately, and fails to communicate the checks and internal newsroom conversations that have taken place in deciding whether or not use content" (2014:60).

It has been widely documented that at the beginning of the Arab uprisings many journalists were dispatched to Egypt and Libya, and Mair (2011) proposed this focus may be one reason why broadcasters were slow to pick up the Syria story. With Syria largely closed off to international journalists, covering the conflict from the outside has been at the best challenging and at worst impossible. Therefore, journalists across all platforms - TV, print radio and online - have been at a significant disadvantage in covering events going on inside the country. This research focused on TV news and included an examination of how UGC from Syria was presented to the audience, in terms of giving context, caveats and/or details of how the footage was verified. However, an understanding of how footage, usually obtained from online platforms, is processed by BBC staff for use across all platforms is useful. If processes have changed over the period of the conflict, this could also mark a change in terms of journalistic roles within newsrooms and also the level of engagement journalists have with activists producing the content. The latter is an element which has already generated scholarly interest and will be discussed later.

<u>Referencing 'video'</u>

Aday et al (2013) carried out content analysis of articles from newspapers and three wire services across 18 months of the Syria conflict. The study was described by the authors as "the first systematic, empirical analysis of the use of online videos from Syria media" (2013:2). This research is relevant as, while written articles were coded rather than content analysis of actual broadcast footage undertaken, it helps highlight the importance of video to journalists across all platforms. The sample comprised 359 articles from 1 January 2011 to 31 August 2012 which contained 'Syria' in the headline and 'video' in the text, with fields such as the video source and framing (non-violent and violent) coded for each article. Coders found that YouTube was the most mentioned site, referred to in 29.2% of the articles. In nearly half the cases (47.9%) no source was given for video at all. A total of 33.7% of the articles mentioned activists or rebels, these were catalogued as 'nonspecific sources', which meant only 18.5% of the articles gave "a definitive group or individual as a source of the first video they mentioned" (2013:25). Given many activist groups such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Local Co-ordinating Committees (LCCs) - not to mention mainstream outlets and Syria's own state broadcaster - have channels on YouTube, a reference to the website alone could be problematic in terms of sourcing and verification of content.

In terms of categorising content, Aday et al suggested certain patterns emerged, with more violent scenes in August 2012, which coincided with UN envoy Kofi Annan stepping down and an increase in reported deaths (2013:23). In fact, the study highlighted that in August 2012 there were twice as many articles describing videos of a violent frame with hostages as there were throughout the rest of the research period combined. The research concluded that the increase was "consistent with the gradual abandonment of nonviolence as a tactic and an intensification of fighting and other violent tactics" (2013:23). The fact that the rise coincided with the start of the civil war suggests this hypothesis is correct, but the authors also quantified that the frame change might have been a result of a change in tactics by those posting the footage, some of whom became more reliable over time. This echoes the findings of Hänska-Ahy and Shapour (2012) who, as mentioned earlier, reported that activists became more sophisticated at posting content; however, as

previously discussed, there is always a risk of activists wanting to push certain narratives and suppress others. Aday et al's work has certain limitations given that it is a textual analysis of written articles describing video, rather than the footage itself. It doesn't tell us anything about how video was incorporated into broadcast or TV coverage of events inside Syria, but does inform us about the use of video as a source of information.

Engaging with activists

The ability to engage with activists and tap into their expertise has been harnessed by journalists attempting to cover the Syria conflict in a way which differs from their coverage of other countries in which Arab uprisings took place. Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantii (2013) used qualitative interviews across three countries to investigate how the Syrian diaspora related to mainstream media, and concluded they had three roles. These included linking the outside world to activists inside Syria, bridging the gap between social media and traditional media, and working alongside journalists in a bid to give context to mainstream media coverage, thus helping audiences understand the conflict more in-depth. The large number of Syrian contributors to the BBC and other outlets who are living in exile, such as members of the Syrian National Council (SNC), is impossible to ignore. Indeed, research as part of this study identified that these individuals have played a key part in coverage, whether it be helping establish contacts within Syria or verifying footage collated by the UGC Hub.

Often these were individuals who had fled from Syria and who wanted to highlight the plight of those back home, who themselves could not speak out, to outsiders. These individuals may fit into Zuckerman's description of 'bridgebloggers', that is those who "seek to mediate between...cultures and languages...connecting these disparate spheres of conversation and argument together" (2008:47). Citing Iraqi blogger Salem Pax as the first major 'bridgeblogger', Zuckerman explained that these individuals were not writing for those inside the country, but rather their contributions targeted an international audience. While blogs do not feature heavily in this research, an understanding of how journalists engage with activists inside and outside of Syria is helpful. Often

these relationships not only dictate the content which is used in news programming, but can also have an impact on future programming through the snowball effect of gaining new contacts via existing ones. This is an element which has proved crucial to the BBC's teams as they continue to cover Syria without a continuous presence in the country.

This section has examined the existing literature and research into the use of UGC in relation to the Arab uprisings by TV news, with a particular focus on the BBC and research related to the Syria conflict. It has also reflected on the debates surrounding the Arab uprisings and social media's role, as well as the importance of working with credible content and sources. Until now, the term UGC has been used throughout this literature review, but in order to outline exactly what is researched in this project. The next section looks at the concepts and terminologies used throughout academic research and examines scholars' differing interpretations of them.

Section 3: Terminologies and Concepts

Citizen journalism (Rosen 2008), user-generated content, (Wardle and Williams 2008) participatory journalism (Nip 2010, Singer et al 2011), or networked journalism? (Beckett 2010). For those attempting to study the ever-changing media landscape, these terms have often been used interchangeably. Moreover, the same phrase can mean different things to different individuals, making for a confusing research field. What they do have in common is that they are all terms of expression used to describe new forms of participation by ordinary people in journalism, or in the case of UGC, the end product of a certain level of participation. To understand how citizen journalism, UGC and all the other 'types' of participatory journalism have affected the newsgathering process and how stories are covered, it is important to understand what each of the terms means. This section examines literature and debates the ways in which each 'type' of journalism is defined, both by academics and by professional journalists. The intention is to provide a greater understanding of the terms which have been used in this particular research project.

Definitions: Citizen journalism

> When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, that's citizen journalism" (Rosen 2008:online)

Certainly one element of citizen journalism is individuals engaging with each other, often without intervention from professional journalists. This idea is echoed by Gillmor, who referred to citizen journalism as people being entirely responsible for gathering content and producing and publishing news production (2006). However, having spoken with many working in mainstream media, this description does not fit into what their idea of citizen journalism is. As a concept citizen journalism is arguably more complex than Rosen sets out. There is not a 'one size fits all' ideology or any set boundaries, (Lasica 2003). As Outing suggests, it has "many potential variations...from dipping a toe into the waters of participatory journalism to embracing citizen reporting with your organisation's full involvement" (Outing in Allan and Thorsen 2009:260)

Goode (2009) believed that citizen journalism could refer to a whole variety of online activities that involved 'ordinary' users taking part in journalistic practices. He highlighted however that, alongside the process of content creation (for example, eyewitness footage and commentary, which we might most readily associate with the term), this included acts that don't contribute to the news process directly, such as tagging and sharing videos and photos on social media sites.

In other breaking news situations 'citizen journalism' has been employed in addition to scrambling news crews to the location, for example, following the 2010 Christchurch earthquake, or the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy (Allan and Thorsen 2014). In Syria however, media organisations are frequently relying on their audience to be newsgatherers and the situation is ongoing, not 'breaking'.

Citizen witnessing

In relation to citizen journalism, Stuart Allan has proposed that "there is no singular, essential definition awaiting discovery" (Allan and Thorsen 2009:17), though he contends that it is frequently linked to crisis reporting, such as during the 2004 Asia tsunami, but also more recently the Iran 2009 election protests and, of

course, the Arab uprisings. Here, citizen journalism can be understood as everyday people rather than professionals bearing witness to events. Allan has since introduced the concept of "citizen witnessing" (2013:208), a term which has not been used widely in academia and, when it has, its rightful definition has prompted great debate. While Allan referred to its use across online platforms, he also argued that citizen witnessing in terms of covering crisis events existed long before the web – with the filming of Rodney King's death and the footage of the shooting of JFK being prime examples. In exploring the concept of citizen witnessing as separate from citizen journalism Allan draws on the work of Frosh and Pinchevski (2009), who wrote about "the witnessing performed in, by and through the media. It is about the systematic and ongoing reporting of the experience and realities of distant others to mass audiences" (2009:1). While they were predominantly talking about media witnessing, Allan illustrated the citizen concept using the example of Sohaib Athar, who Tweeted about helicopters flying late at night near his home in Abbottabad, Pakistan, only to later discover that he had in fact "live blogged" the raid in which Osama bin Laden was killed (Allan 2013:2).

Much has been written about citizen journalism as a concept, and also the concept of user-generated content. In fact Wardle and Williams (2008) found that BBC staff at times used the terms interchangeably, so it is important to understand the broader concepts. In attempting to understand citizen journalism and other associated terms, some academics have considered that different degrees of input by journalists apply in each case. To illustrate these 'types' of journalism, it is helpful to consult Nip (2010) who established five models of audience participation: traditional journalism, public journalism, interactive journalism, participatory journalism and citizen journalism. The model of participatory journalism is of particular relevance here.

Nip distinguished participatory journalism as separate from citizen journalism because, in the former, the audience plays a role in newsmaking framed by journalists. By contrast, in citizen journalism Nip perceived that people were entirely responsible for gathering news content and producing and publishing it without professional help. However Nip also acknowledged that UGC often replaced both participatory and citizen journalism.

User-Generated Content

The term user-generated content (or UGC) is sometimes, confusingly, used interchangeably with citizen journalism, social media or participatory media. Back in 2008, Wardle and Williams found the term problematic, as they believed it referred to such a variety of media material. They therefore defined five types of UGC, which have been outlined in this literature review already. In the case of the BBC, the broadcaster studied in this research, UGC is defined as media content "produced by our audiences as opposed to content made by the BBC, independent production companies or individual contributors commissioned by the BBC" (BBC 2013:online). This includes video and images, but the BBC extends this definition to also incorporate mobile text messages, blogs, message boards, emails and audio submissions sent in. To help contributors understand, their website states that, "UGC, as referred to in these FAQs and covered by the BBC's Terms of Use, includes any content produced by our audiences/users which is submitted to or shared with the BBC either directly or indirectly" (BBC 2013:online).

Wardle et al's 2014 work highlights researchers' frustration that, six years on from the first study into UGC at the BBC, there are still no set definitions for the different types of UGC being used by journalists. The term is perceived as an unpopular 'catchall' for all sorts of content: from texts to online comments, activist videos and now even Tweets. For their industry wide study in 2014 Wardle et al defined UGC "as photographs and videos captured by people who are not professional journalists and who are unrelated to news organisations" (2014:15). They also went on to state that the definition was not extended to comments integrated into coverage. In this sense, the 2014 definition is much narrower than that which referred to audience material and was used by Wardle and Williams in 2008, which, as previously mentioned, had "a typology of five different types of UGC" (2014:15). The 2014 definition is also more closely aligned with the focus of this piece of research.

In determining different levels of engagement with professionals, Nip also highlighted seven different models of "citizen connect" (2010:136), some examples of which are interpreted below:

1.   Professional incorporation: journalists sought out audience comments from those who would not be accessible publicly and brought them into their reporting.

2.   Professional co-option: where journalists followed up citizen content such as existing blogs and used them as sources.

3.   Citizen response: Comment boxes, such as those moderated by the BBC are considered a form of citizen response.

4.   Guided professional reporting: readers sent in story suggestions but journalists were responsible for doing the work.

5.   Guided citizen reporting: citizens produced the work, but journalists acted as guide. The BBC's Video Nation Project would be an example of this.

6.   Citizen submission: solicited content by asking eyewitnesses to get in touch with footage, or if they had a story. Nip uses MSNBC's First Person as an example.

7.   Citizen journalism: this model does not involve professional input into content, and Nip uses this term over UGC because of its connections to public life. It could include community websites, blogs, etc.

In all of these cases, with the exception of citizen journalism which has been discussed already, different degrees of professional input applied. The level of input dictated the mode or category Nip thought content fell into, although there is undoubtedly some crossover. For example, individuals arguably submit comments on their own initiative, yet Nip also featured the model of 'citizen submission' which would incorporate soliciting content by asking eyewitnesses to get in touch, something the BBC does frequently. By applying the same criteria, content from sites such as Korea's OHMYNEWS! would be considered under the umbrella of 'citizen submission' because the site has editors - entries are solicited and might have journalistic input. If we take Nip literally, it means the 2010 England riots footage - which audience members sent into a news outlet of their own accord - could be in the same category as footage or comment solicited for the BBC's Have Your Say programme, or online postings asking 'Have you got a good story?'.

Overall, when depicting different levels of connection between citizens and journalists, Nip operated from a viewpoint that audience members participating in

newsmaking were doing so partly as a democratic gesture. This would be consistent with the goal of public journalism. Public or civic journalism was a movement which emerged following the 1992 US elections, which had the lowest turnout since 1921 (Rosen 1999). US TV networks and newspapers wanted to reach out to the public - their viewers and readers - to "find a way of doing journalism that helps reconnect people to public life" (Rosen 1999:73). The theory was that, by involving citizens in various initiatives, a journalist could become a "conductor of social debate and a broker of social consensus" (Bardoel in Tumber 1999:388). Drawing on Nip then, it could be argued that public journalism is the predecessor of these other categories of journalism which had the aim of "enhancing democracy" (2010:136).

Networked journalism

When examining the debate about audience engagement with journalism, as well as wider issues related to an online society and democracy, we must consider the concept of networked journalism. Beckett and Mansell saw networked journalism as something different from Gillmor's ideology of citizen journalism, a conversation which has been discussed already. For Beckett (2008, 2010), digital and online production are key to the process of networked journalism, which is itself strongly collaborative. And, while the journalist retains some traditional roles such as reporting, analysing and disseminating content networked journalism results in greater interaction between audiences and newsmakers, with the journalist "becoming more of a facilitator of on and offline news production for media institutions" (Beckett and Mansell 2008:92).

This 'bottom up' approach, where non-journalists contribute, is closely linked to the idea of horizontal communication across society, highlighted by the likes of Shirky (2010). Applying the horizontal communication concept, networked journalism can be understood as an element in an emerging conversation, which marks out the importance of collaboration using non-traditional outlets. It could also be considered a move away from the centralised practices employed in traditional newsrooms. Therefore, perhaps networked journalism could be best categorised as "where the public help inform and direct professional journalists...a way for journalism to meet the challenges of the digital era" (Sambrook 2010:43). Jeff Jarvis

also acknowledged that journalism had evolved to become more collaborative, with "professionals and amateurs working together to get the real story, linking to each other across brands and old boundaries to share facts, questions, answers, ideas, perspectives" (Jarvis 2006:online). In fact, Jarvis went on to say that what he and journalism scholar Jay Rosen previously considered to be citizen journalism may actually be better referred to as networked journalism which "recognizes the complex relationships that will make news. And it focuses on the process more than the product" (Jarvis 2006:online).

Will the real citizen content please stand up?

Having drawn on the literature, it appears any scholarly discussion about what can and cannot be perceived as citizen journalism throws up disagreements, and that is before the roles and opinions of professional journalists are considered. But if we are to take Rosen's idea literally, then Twitter Feeds from the London Riots (Vis 2013), blogs on newspaper websites (Hermida and Thurman 2008), internet updates about the 1994 Northridge earthquake (Wall 2012) and alerts following the Wenchuan earthquake (Nip in Allan and Thorsen 2009) could all be considered citizen journalism. Then there is the 'accidental journalism', which happens when someone unwittingly captures a moment, such as the previously mentioned live blogging of the raid that killed Osama Bin Laden (Allan 2013), or the footage captured by the individuals caught up in the Asia tsunami in 2004, who filmed the waves coming in on their mobile phones. Allan suggested the latter event was "the decisive moment when citizen journalism became a prominent feature on the journalism landscape" (Allan and Thorsen 2009:18). Arguably, 2004 could be considered the watershed moment for such content, and it is also the year the UGC Hub was created within BBC Interactive. However, the practice of using audience material, whether it be 'letters to the editor' or eyewitness footage, is not new. In fact Charles and Stewart believed the term 'citizen journalism' was first used in the New York Times offices in 1976 (2011:83).

However, the above does not explain what citizen journalism is, or what a citizen journalist does. In fact it is feasible that, like the media ecology itself, the phenomenon of citizen journalism is ever evolving. This means that the boundaries

between the different 'types' of journalism are becoming blurred; Kperogi's research into CNN's iReport site suggests that the distinction between citizen journalism and mainstream media itself is becoming harder to define (2011). Understanding the debate around using different terms in relation to media coverage is crucial, and Deuze suggests that these different 'types' of journalism should be studied in their own right and also as "pathways towards future configurations for cultural convergent models of journalism" (Deuze in Allan and Thorsen 2009:261). Omar Al-Ghazzi (2013) proposed that theory related to citizen journalism and its actual definition needed to be reviewed if it was to be applied to the Arab world. He argued that the idea of citizenship was used in a different context in the Arab world and that there was ambiguity as to what actual acts of journalism entailed compared to in the West, where journalism was widely held to be closely linked to democracy. He said: "citizen journalism is conceived without an exploration of personal agency and without a clear understanding of what acts within it are part of journalism" (2013:5).

Incorporating old ideas and new content

> There is an argument that in this digital age, where journalists cannot be first with the news, but have to be accurate, collaboration with citizen journalists rather than trying to compete with them is the only option. (Doucet 2012)

Regardless of what you call the content or the process, the media landscape has undoubtedly become more collaborative and interactive. Audience participation at all levels is now a consideration for journalists. As Scott, Millard and Leonard (2014) suggest, "The process of producing news has changed significantly due to the advent of the Web, which has enabled the increasing involvement of citizens in news production" (2014:1). Their research found that online news systems were "complex and interdependent" (2014:1) and may involve citizens, but this varied depending on outlets and on circumstances. In terms of events where news crews cannot capture what is going on, developments in the media ecology mean newsrooms have access to more content and, arguably, more information. It is then for the journalist to make sense of it all.

As previously stated, engaging with the audience is not new. This section has sought to confirm that new technologies have shaped the media landscape, thus

allowing the public to capture content that can be taken, shaped and used by journalists. The benefit of being able to engage with citizens has been highlighted, and as Allan and Thorsen (2009, 2013) and Belair-Gagnon (2015) argued, it is often most apparent in relation to crisis events, or the aftermath of events happening where there is limited or no journalistic presence. The relationship between journalists and citizens has changed in some ways from being 'bottom up' to horizontal, a 'many to many' approach rather than the traditional 'one to many' ideology.

Journalism still has an end product, but journalism has been depicted here as a collaborative and continually evolving affair on a variety of interactive platforms. Journalists undoubtedly still have a role to play, but they have extra tools which help them reach sources and vice versa. There is an argument put forward, however, again by Beckett and Mansell (2008), that this change means journalists have different practicalities to consider and are no longer the gatekeepers of what news people access and when. Rather, they curate and moderate conversations.

This research focused on what is categorised by Nip as being closer to participatory journalism and citizen submission. The submission of footage to the BBC in the wake of the 7/7 bombings, which Jon Silverman describes as "adding more to the understanding of the event" (Silverman in Charles and Stewart 2011:55), is an example of 'citizen submission'. However, because this research included some works that were solicited rather than submitted, and included footage captured and uploaded by potential activists, this term is problematic. While the term, 'citizen generated content' better describes the footage being coded and researched in some respects, again this raises more questions.

This research focused on the use of non-professional content used by the BBC to cover events in Syria from 2011 to 2014. As the war continues, it has become apparent that often some of those sharing content are doing so along political lines. Many are activists, with a certain narrative they wish to portray, and the risks associated with this have already been discussed. With this in mind, it would be understandable if journalists and academics alike were uncomfortable with the term 'citizen generated content'. Indeed, much of the discontent around the term 'citizen journalism' initially was that it suggested journalists themselves were not citizens (Allan 2013).

This research does not seek to identify who those submitting the content are, in terms of their political affiliation. Also, given the records kept by the BBC and the restrictions resulting from data protection rules, it would be impossible to say with certainty which clips used were examples of 'activist generated content'. However, this does not alter the fact that the term 'citizen generated content' is still not an entirely accurate portrayal of content being used on air. As this research focused on content that was created by non-professionals, and curated or sent into BBC staff, based on previous research, UGC remains the most flexible term to use. The definition set out most recently by Wardle et al (2014), which excludes comments but includes still images and video, is the most accurate description for the content which has been analysed in this study. UGC is indeed a catch-all as previously suggested, but the content is certainly 'generated' by someone who 'used' a device either to capture or upload content. Realistically, "no one has managed to create an alternative that adequately describes the phenomenon" (Wardle et al 2014:15).

This section has examined some of the concepts and terminologies which have prompted great debate, both in academia and in newsrooms, about how content from non-professional sources should be described. Drawing on relevant pieces of literature and research, it also considered whether different levels of engagement with amateur content producers or media platforms could be depicted as different 'types' of journalism. It is hoped that reflecting on the different arguments, together with highlighting how these terms will be used throughout this study, will allow for greater understanding of the processes which will be measured and help explain how they fit alongside other scholarly work.

This chapter has outlined the main works relating to journalism practice, social media research and production studies which are relevant to this research. The thesis focused on how BBC World News TV used UGC to cover events in Syria from 2011 onwards. It also researched the ways in which journalistic practices changed as a result of this usage. This research sets itself within the field of newsroom studies, taking in a number of different data collection methods which are examined in Chapter 3 (Methodology). Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical framework within which the research was situated, again drawing on literature to explain the approaches to the theories of 'gatewatching', 'gatekeeping' and also the sociology of news.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The primary theories considered in this thesis are gatekeeping theory, the more recently conceived theory of gatewatching and the sociology of news. In considering the theoretical underpinnings of this research, this section seeks to outline both the theory of gatekeeping and the process of gatekeeping that journalists actually apply in newsrooms. As the research considers the roles of journalists, journalism routines and newsroom hierarchies, the thesis also examines the sociology of news and the concept of news as a social construction. This chapter proposes that the role of the journalist, arguably the gatekeeper of certain news information, remains relevant (Singer 2009). In a rapidly evolving media landscape, newsgathering has changed and this thesis proposes that the relationship between journalists, their sources and their audiences are a key part of that evolution. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider theory linked to this approach.

Newspapers have gone online, and circulation of their printed editions is dropping in the UK, other parts of Europe and elsewhere. In some places this is resulting in job losses. Despite this, journalists are still telling stories, albeit in different and often interactive ways. This can be seen in the online efforts by publications such as the Guardian newspaper, which now sees itself as 'digital first' (see Thurman and Walters 2013). Likewise, while people might discover news via Twitter and Facebook, often the original source is an article by a journalist. According to Petrovic et al (2013), Twitter is no replacement for a newswire service, nor is it always quicker. Their study concluded that, "while Twitter can break news before newswires in limited cases, for major events there is little evidence that it can replace newswire providers" (Petrovic et al 2013:4).

In a breaking news situation some stories may seem to 'break' on social media (see Browne 2014), and that may well be where people find out about stories, but this may be due to news outlets and others sharing information on these platforms. Even when a story seems to emerge on social media, it will attract more interest once picked up by news outlets' social media threads, be they legacy or new media platforms (see Hong 2012). Indeed, it is understood that, even when the audience does find out details of news via social media, they frequently return to

trusted outlets such as the BBC - and traditional platforms such as radio and television - to get more in-depth information and analysis. For example, in 2013, 10% of the Guardian's online web traffic was generated through clicks from social media, with Twitter being central to these efforts (see Macmillan 2013). Journalism may be changing, but at this point it could be argued that the role of the journalist is still relevant and journalists are still needed to bring expertise and context when stories are pushed onto social media platforms. Therefore, gatekeeping and the newer idea of gatewatching as a theoretical framework work well for this research, as these theories could also be said to relate to several different evolving concepts.

Outlining the theories

This chapter is broadly divided into four sections. The first section gives an outline of the basic principles of gatekeeping theory and the relevance and importance of it as a theory. It then draws on literature to depict the process or act of gatekeeping, and the decision making associated with it, as outlined by Shoemaker and Reese (1996, 2014) in terms of hierarchies of influence, and Shoemaker and Vos (2009) in their five levels of analysis. The chapter uses section two to look at how the sociology of news theory fits into the framework of this research and complements the other theories. Understanding the foundations of the sociology of news literature is important as this research examines journalistic routines and practices in an evolving media environment, with ever-changing sources, techniques and responsibilities. This section also looks at other concepts linked to the sociology of news, which are important to newswork such as transparency, verification and newsroom structures.

In the third section of the chapter we explore how gatekeeping theory has evolved historically, and the debate about whether there it is distinctly different from the newer theory of gatewatching (Bruns 2003, 2005, 2008 & 2011). Gatewatching is a theory which has been devised in response to the development of new communication technologies and networks, which in turn have resulted in once-passive consumers taking on a role as active producers (Lotan et al 2011, Strömbäck et al 2013). This development has arguably had an impact on the way that news is

both produced and disseminated in the modern media landscape, and this particular issue was examined within the Literature Review in Chapter 1.

Given these changes in the media ecology, this theory chapter then has a fourth section which considers how relevant and effective gatekeeping theory, which was devised in the mid-20th century, actually is. This consideration is important, not just for this research project, but for other studies investigating content created by individuals operating in a 21st century networked society, with a shared space for both journalists and non-journalists. The chapter will conclude by exploring the challenges and dilemmas faced by journalism scholars in using the sociology of news, gatekeeping, or an evolved version of the theory such as gatewatching or 'networked gatekeeping' (Ernste 2014, Barzilai-Nahon 2008), in relation to information control research and other studies within a rapidly changing industry.

While this chapter does not seek to provide all the answers to what is an ongoing debate throughout both journalism studies and wider communications research about the validity of gatekeeping theory in modern times, it hopes to give a broad overview of the benefits and limits of it and other related newer theories.

Section 1: Introducing Gatekeeping

Theories are sets of statements, views or hypotheses which at a certain level are interrelated and logically consistent (Shoemaker, Tankard and Lasorsa 2003). At the most basic level, gatekeeping, when applied to communication studies, can be defined as "the process of culling and crafting countless pieces of information into the number of messages that reach people each day" (Shoemaker and Vos 2009:1). It determines what information is selected and therefore also what the nature of the news and its content will be. Therefore, gatekeeping theory within the news 'domain' describes the processes and patterns decision makers or 'gatekeepers' go through. In the case of Shoemaker and Vos' 2009 work on gatekeeping, the theory considers concepts on five levels of analysis, illustrating that theory is rarely straightforward as it can be very hard to predict decisions or acts involving people.

Gatekeeping as a theory and gatekeepers themselves within the domain of communication are important because some theorists are of the view that decisions

made over time may dictate what will become a person's social reality. In such cases, cumulative decisions by gatekeepers about inclusion or exclusion of content can result in a particular view of the world being given to readers/viewers/listeners in one place that is wildly different to the view broadcast to people elsewhere. The process of gatekeeping is also important because the messages that manage to get through the gates are considered to be the most important, at least by the journalist or journalists selecting them.

The development of gatekeeping theory

> Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have.
> (Lippmann 1922:63)

The above quote refers to the decision-making processes undertaken by journalists, in this case at a newspaper, which have come to be referred to as 'gatekeeping'. One of the earliest gatekeeping models was set out in 1947 by Kurt Lewin (Figure 2.1). Rather than referring to journalism, it related to decisions about what food was brought into the home. In Lewin's theoretical model, there were two different channels that a product could potentially go through: a Buying or 'Grocery' channel and a Garden channel. The respective channels were divided into individual sections and each section had a 'gate' at the end. Lewin was quick to outline that just because a product made it through one 'gate', for example cost effectiveness, this did not mean it would eventually get onto the dinner table. This was because numerous other factors, such as ease of transportation and choice of storage, would impact on the final decision as to whether the food got eaten. The people deciding if a food product made it through the buying or gardening channel were the gatekeepers (see Lewin 1947). While Lewin initially focused on food habits and social change, his later work stated that the theory could be related to the world of communication, and apply to "the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group, for movement of goods, and the social locomotion of individuals in many organizations" (Lewin 1951:187).
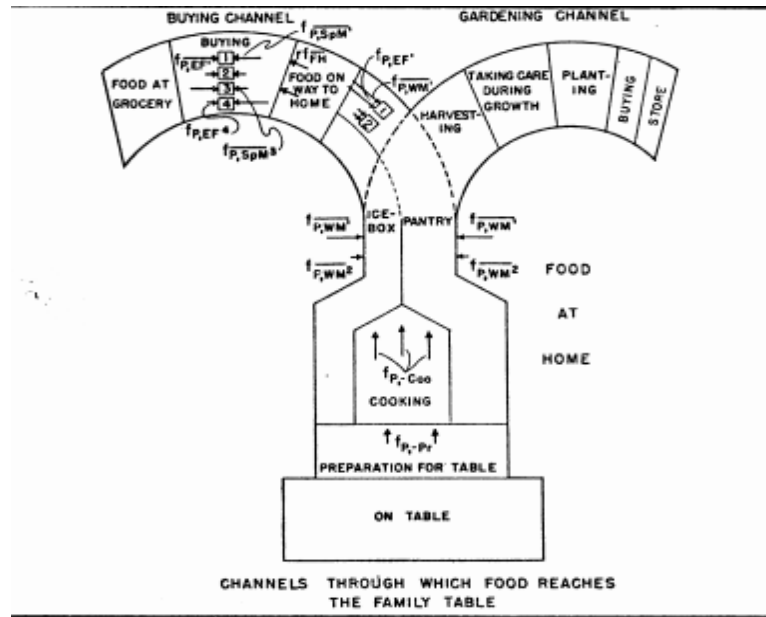
(Figure 2.1: Lewin's gatekeeping model 1947:149)

McQuail defined gatekeeping as "the process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions whether or not to admit a particular news story to pass through the 'gates' of a news medium into the news channels" (1994:213). Traditionally, in a newsroom environment, the journalist has taken on the role of gatekeeper, deciding what the news is and what the audience should encounter (Gans 1980). The gatekeeping model outlined by Lewin for food was adopted by scholars Warren Breed and David Manning White among others to showcase the influences on content in a research-based model for journalism. The theory is applied to a newspaper office in White's 1950 seminal work, which depicted the decision making processes undertaken by subeditor 'Mr Gates' at a mid-west US newspaper. This key piece of gatekeeping literature involved the research subject - in this case Mr Gates - detailing the selection criteria he put agency wire copy through before determining whether it would pass through his 'gate' and into the paper. Though this was just one individual at one newspaper, and reasons for rejection varied depending on the time of day, other stories and space, the study and its associated findings are very important in terms of understanding the sociology of news. Hence, it is one of the most cited 20th century works illustrating the gatekeeping model.

White's research highlighted the importance of the role of the individual journalist, their subjectivity and the process of thinking about the 'news value' each item possesses; that is, the elements which make events and stories newsworthy and whether that information should be refined to make it available for the audience (see also Gans 1980 for the importance of sources for journalists). White's study was carried out more than 60 years ago, yet despite the passage of time and the fact newsrooms have altered significantly since then in terms of technology, platforms and personnel, the decision-making process of what to include in or exclude from a news bulletin or product is still undertaken by news professionals every day. White's research and the work by Gans give us clearer insight into the 'black box' of journalistic decision making (Shoemaker 1997). By contrast Breed's (1955) work highlights that organisational structures and social control could have an impact on editorial decision making. For example news staff might be expected to follow a certain policy put in place by their publishers (Reese and Ballinger 2001). The fact that these works are still drawn on by those carrying out more recent research suggests that their gatekeeping models are still relevant to journalism scholarship today, albeit with some evolution along the way.

'Levels' of gatekeeping and newroom structures

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) and Shoemaker and Reese (2014) stated that gatekeeping decisions as to whether a story is used could be influenced at a number of levels: individual, organisational or societal. Journalistic routines also have an effect on this selection. In all, Shoemaker and Vos set down five levels of theoretical analysis which could impact on whether a story is allowed through the 'gates', and moreover the way it might be told. These ranged from the micro level of the individual to the macro level of states and even continents. Shoemaker and Vos divided these levels into individual, routine/practical level, organisational, social institutional level and a social systems level. This breakdown helps simplify what can be a complex theory, but in terms of gatekeeping scholarship, "there are no hard and fast rules about breaking the continuum into levels; scholars use as many levels as they think will help build theory, and they define those levels for their own research" (Shoemaker and Vos 2009:32).

In terms of this thesis, given that the data collection methods included newsroom observations and in-depth interviews, an individual level of analysis was to be of particular interest, as it involved looking at people's experiences and attitudes. However, as previously mentioned, gatekeepers do not always work in isolation. Moreover, this research also considers developments on a macro level; for example, changes in the way news and UGC is disseminated globally and the impact this may have on certain journalistic routines. Therefore, other 'levels' in the hierarchy set out above became more relevant to this research as analysis of the data collected was carried out. This is another reason that the sociology of news theory is also being applied within this research framework, by using examples of how people made editorial decisions at both an organisational and individual levels in terms of journalistic practices.

Shoemaker and Vos (2009), related the theory of gatekeeping to an actual newsgathering process which journalists still undertake on a daily basis. Using a metaphor such as White's Mr Gates to depict gatekeeping means researchers can identify and study "processes other than selection, such as how content is shaped, structured, positioned and timed" (Shoemaker and Vos 2009:11). Shoemaker and Vos' contribution was in part based on the earlier of work of Shoemaker and Reese (1996) which was later updated and which focused on 'hierarchies of influence'. They developed a model which suggested how influence at one level may interact with that at another. This model links to the sociology of news theory and is important for this thesis which examines how editorial decisions can be influenced by multiple factors simultaneously.

As well as depicting products going through a channel from source to audience, gatekeeping models outlined here can also involve products being changed throughout the process. In Lewin's 1947 food channel model, for example, potatoes could be baked or fried before being presented at the dinner table. Likewise, news stories may be trimmed or amended from the first raw content encountered, to make them more digestible and understandable to an audience. The next section expands on the basic gatekeeping process outlined by Lewin and expanded on by others, to consider other elements which could potentially influence the decision-making process.

Gatekeeping may have been introduced in the form of a metaphor by White, but as mentioned above with regard to different levels of analysis, gatekeeping is not always a process involving just one individual making choices based on personal values. When researching the gatekeeping process, some studies have proposed different models that look more at the mechanics than subjectivity. For example, Gieber (1956) and Breed (1955) approached gatekeeping as a process which could take place at an organisational level; unlike in White's model, each person is but a cog in the machine and their individual views are not considered (see also Westley and MacLean 1957).

McNelly believed that an international news item would have to go through an obstacle course filled with "reportorial error or bias, editorial selection and processing, translation, transmission difficulties and possible suppression or censorship" (1959:23), before being seen by an audience. This example of gatekeeping would also involve multiple stakeholders. In this model, at each stage of the news process there is a gatekeeper - whether it be the reporter on the ground, a wire editor in the newsroom or a copyeditor in the edit suite - making choices about content. The multiple stakeholders model may still see individuals acting as gatekeepers, but the end product seen by the audience may also be shaped by the content being passed from one gatekeeper to another, with someone else further down the production line most likely having the final say. Bass (1969) elaborated on this gatekeeping at an individual level, and separated people into roles either of 'newsgatherer' or 'news processor', with the view that the individual values did not have an impact on the process; decisions were based more on the role that individual played within the organisation. So newsgatherers collect the details and report the story using raw content, then a news processor finesses this content to make it suitable for the organisation's audience. Here it is the job that dictates how people will perform rather than personal values. The forces that drive this process and the distribution of power among these gatekeepers can of course play a part in this process, and will be discussed as part of the next section.

<u>Analysing the process of gatekeeping</u>

There are many steps to the gatekeeping process. By the time a reporter picks up the phone or goes to an interview, they may already have an idea of the story they plan to write. If they are at their desk when they get an email from a public relations company, or at a photocall or interview in relation to the story, some decisions may have already been made about inclusion or exclusion. The initial source of information and the way it is distributed may vary depending on whether it is an off-diary or on-diary story. In most situations the newsgatherer, usually a reporter, chooses what pieces of that information they will include to build the bricks of a story or news item. The information may come to that newsgatherer in a number of different ways, such as via Tweets, a Facebook update, just by browsing online or a news alert to their phone.

Sigal (1973) categorised these sources into different types of channels - routine, informal or enterprise, with press releases via public relations firms being an example of a routine channel. Having accessed the information from any of the channels, the decision as to whether these details make it into a final news product, in all likelihood, will not be dictated by the newsgatherer's actions alone. As some of the gatekeeping models illustrated earlier suggest, while decisions may be made by individuals, the process does not always involve just one stakeholder. It is also important to consider that some gatekeepers may be more powerful than others (a newsroom editor versus a wire producer who collates agency copy, for example).

The power dynamics in a newsroom, organisational structures (Breed 1955) and hierarchies of influence (Reese 2007) can also impact on what content is finally viewed by an audience. Many journalists will be able to recall a great story they had which ended up on the cutting room floor or in the wastepaper basket. Reasons for this could be as varied as the stories themselves, but a bigger, usually unforeseen, event superseding the story – such as breaking news of a death, or developments in a conflict - would be a good example. Alternatively, the rejection of a story could be down to the fact that a more powerful decision maker or gatekeeper, such as an editor, decides they don't like the story as it stands, or they don't fully recognise its value based on previous content. As with the channels through which information can come to a newsgatherer, the criteria for selecting an item for actual publication

can also change and evolve. These latter points are closely related to the sociology of news and news routines which take in issues about news production, verification and transparency, This approach complements gatekeeping and gatewatching and this chapter will help identify how the theories are connected and can be used to more accurately depict newsgathering and news work in the 21st century.

Evolution of gatekeeping theory

The original gatekeeping models were established when media messages largely travelled 'one way', from organisations to individuals. Yet, despite changes outlined here which allow audiences to become involved in the newsgathering process, the theory and act of gatekeeping are still considered relevant by many media scholars. For example, Domingo et al's cross-national study into journalistic work practices at European and U.S. newspapers found the gatekeeping role was " maintained and enforced by professional routines and conventions that are said to guarantee the quality and neutrality of institutional journalism" (2008:326). Indeed, the study found participatory involvement was minimal across the eight European newspapers sampled. The core gatekeeping role remained intact and remained a monopoly, even for online papers. Likewise, research by Jane Singer (2010) indicated that UK print journalists still exercised great control over the incorporation of 'civic content', thereby retaining their traditional gatekeeping role even in entirely new formats. Singer also backed the idea of ethical gatekeepers having some responsibility for ensuring the longevity of democracy (2008).

However, there is a clear acknowledgement within academia and within the industry itself that the process of newsgathering is evolving. Due to the accessibility of online platforms we now have a media ecology and a public who share a virtual space, frequently resulting in a 'multi-layered journalism' (Robinson 2006), where the top-down hierarchy has changed to a horizontal approach (Shirky 2010). It is unsurprising then that some academics are calling for a 'reconceptualisation' of journalism (Hermida 2012, 2013), and a rethink on gatekeeping in particular. The initial model developed by Lewin dates back over 60 years, long before there were TVs in every home, way before the 'CNN moment' of the first Iraq War in 1991, when 24-hour news came into its own, and decades before people used smartphones

to access news and create and share their own media, whether it be videos, text or photos. So, while the food model initially set out by Lewin still rings true in some respects - we still make decisions about the food we buy, only now we can order shopping online for home delivery and don't have to worry about transport - the choice of channels and ways to disseminate information have altered dramatically. Moreover, while the likes of White's Mr Gates may still make decisions on what to include or exclude, that responsibility in some respects has been further extended to the general public, not just those within the sphere of journalism. Notwithstanding the digital divide, which is an issue for both developed and developing countries (see Nielsen 2013), most individuals now have the potential to create content and decide where they would like to place it for others to read, watch or listen to. Indeed, despite stating that the gatekeeping model remained relevant in newspaper offices, Singer later admitted that "Journalists who have long defined themselves largely as society's gatekeepers now find that the role is broadly shared with members of an increasingly active audience" (Singer 2011:2). This brings the idea of gatekeeping into dispute to a certain extent, as different approaches are taken when dealing with news stories that involve participatory journalism.

Certainly, with the internet and social media sites readily available globally, the audience does have the choice to bypass traditional outlets. Lasorsa et al (2012) and also Sambrook (2010) argued that this resulted in a decreased gatekeeping role for the individual journalist as "those who were once reported upon can now report themselves" (Sambrook 2010:33).

One hypothesis of this research is that the core values assigned by journalists, including accuracy and fairness, remain important within the news cycle. The gatekeeping role is arguably altering (Bardoel and Deuze 2001, Burns 2010). Hierarchies of influence still remain, but the readers and viewers may now form part of that model in a way they did not before. The road to content creation and dissemination is no longer linear. As Kovach and Rosenstiel outline:

> The role of the press in this new age becomes working to answer the question, 'where is the good stuff?' Verification and synthesis become the backbone of the new gatekeeper role of the journalism, that of the sensemaker. (2001:48)

The gatekeeping models set out by White and others have now evolved, and journalists can find themselves frequently working in a virtual world where

journalistic content shares space with content created by the public. Here the 'gates' of traditional outlets compete against other 'gates' of information (Allan 2013). Often instead of making news and selecting it from traditional 'official' sources such as wire, the role of journalists is now also to keep abreast of the information which passes through virtual news gates, as the audience or users themselves do. In this respect journalists do not only engage in gatekeeping but also in monitoring, by gatewatching – a new form of newsgathering.

This section has sought to provide a comprehensive overview of the development of gatekeeping theory and the concepts associated with it. Gatekeeping is a useful metaphor to depict the processes through which journalists make editorial decisions about what content they will use in their reporting and relay to audiences. However, this theory alone does not fully illustrate the complexity of the situation; news items are not simply selected but constructed. For this we will look at the sociology of news literature and how it relates to journalistic practices. This is a theory which complements gatekeeping and the links between the two will be examined to help explain why the theory forms part of the theoretical framework of this research.

Section 2: Sociology of news

This study looks at how journalists have used UGC to cover crisis events, with Syria as the main case study. Part of the work looks at how journalists make editorial decisions about content found in digital spaces and, moreover, how they find that content. However, the research is also concerned with the evolution in journalistic practices, newsroom structures and relationships between journalists and their audiences. These can also influence content creation in a variety of ways. Therefore, gatekeeping theory is complemented by theory relating to the sociology of news production and news routines. Drawing on this theory, there are also other concepts which are relevant for this study: verification, transparency and newsroom hierarchies.

This section aims to explain this theory and the core literature, linking it to other 'subfields' related to the sociology of journalism and news newswork. It explains the importance of the theory in terms of the social organisation of newsrooms and outlines the ways in which it complements the older and newer concepts of gatekeeping.

When they report the news, journalists are not entirely reflecting reality, rather they shape and filter news items from the information they receive (see Rogers et al 1993). This ideology is echoed in the sociological approach to news production. Given that the 'news agenda' is frequently dictated and filtered by one or more stakeholders in an organisation, the social construction of news cannot happen without the decision-making process of gatekeeping taking place alongside it. Put simply, someone has to decide what the news is before it can in any way be deemed newsworthy for an audience.

The ideology of journalists creating a certain version of social reality when selecting the news is very closely linked to the concept of media sociology; that is that reporters and journalists do not just 'discover' news, their role also involves a degree of construction of news. There can be different approaches to this from a theoretical perspective, depending on what the focus of production is. One of the main theorists to apply this approach to newsroom studies is Schudson (1989, 2000), who organises the field in terms of three traditions: political-economy, sociological, and cultural approaches. The importance of media sociology and its links to gatekeeping theory are key to understanding the approach of this research, which examines, among other things, how journalistic routines are evolving.

Media sociology and gatekeeping

In 'The Sociology of News Production' (1989), Schudson stated that gatekeeping was 'handy' as a metaphor to depict the role of the journalist, but added that he believed it overly simplified the process of selecting news. He argued that rather than arriving in a prefabricated form, news was constructed from information which journalists had access to, and this information could potentially come from numerous sources. The journalists then took this information and, based on certain

criteria, shaped the message sent out to the public. Schudson believed that the gatekeeping model didn't fully describe this complex process, "nor the feedback loops in which generators of information for the press anticipate the criteria of the gatekeepers in their efforts to get through the gate, like teenagers trying to figure out how best to talk and look to get admitted to X-rated movies" (1989:265-266).

Schudson proposed that it was not merely a process of selection, but also a process of constructing news items. He put forward his three alternative approaches to studying news production, which he believed were more useful in researching and depicting the realities of media production within a news organisation. The three approaches are: political economy, mainstream sociology and the anthropological approach which "emphasizes the constraining force of broad cultural symbols regardless of the details of organizational and occupational routines" (1989:266). These approaches will now be discussed briefly to highlight understanding and also to consider how they work in relation to this research context alongside gatekeeping theory.

The first approach to news production considered by Schudson was that of political economy, whereby the news that is produced is linked to the economic structure of that particular news organisation. This perspective proposes that issues such as the funding model, whether it be commercial or state, have an impact on content, as do factors such as advertising and associated revenue. The suggestions by Peter Oborne in February 2015, that the Telegraph newspaper had limited its coverage of HSBC due to the bank being a major advertiser, would be a good example of where this perspective would be considered useful (Oborne 2015). It is useful because it also focuses on the connections between institutions, a topic which Schudson discussed in much more depth in 'The News Media as Political Institutions' (2002), though he stopped short of supporting a new institutionalist theory of news (see Ryfe 2006).

However, in terms of overall production studies related to journalistic roles and routines, and moreover day to day practices, this perspective "does not attend to fine-grained questions but looks at the big picture" (Schudson 1989:268). If a researcher wants to focus on micro-level news routines, starting from the economic perspective, the macro-level position is not ideal, something Schudson as a sociologist himself acknowledged and critiqued in his 2003 work The Sociology of

News. While it is important to understand the structure of the overall news organisation, to a large extent it would not be effective to use this approach in this research, given that the roles and routines of BBC reporters and journalists are subjects which have been studied and analysed.

The second approach related to production studies is that of mainstream sociology. Schudson defined this perspective as the study of social organisation and in the case of the newsroom, "it takes as the central problem the journalists' professed autonomy and decision making power and tries to understand how journalists' efforts on the job are constrained by organizational and occupational routines" (1989:266).

This perspective looks at the social organisation of newswork, and this includes issues such as how journalists become aware of stories and how they engage with sources within the organisation as well as outside it. Studying the decision making processes carried out by gatekeepers within a newsroom fits with this approach. Schudson himself advised that "the story of journalism, on a day-to-day basis, is the story of the interaction of reporters and officials" (1989:271). Given that Schudson was focusing on American newsrooms in the 1980s when he first outlined these approaches, interactions might include those between reporters and officials, governments and elite sources, but today this perspective could equally be extended to include reporters' interactions with audience members and activists, be that through digital engagement or using them as sources in the more traditional sense, in terms of inclusion in stories. Therefore, it could be argued that one of the best ways to explain the workings of a news organisation on a micro-level is by looking at decisions made within newsrooms, focusing on individual roles as well as routines which are established across the whole organisation and even, in some cases, across the whole industry. In terms of a study of journalistic practices within a newsroom, Schudson's sociological perspective works well. Schudson proposed these perspectives as an alternative to the gatekeeping model, but in fact this particular sociological approach complements gatekeeping theory and, if applied in a research setting, could potentially lead to interesting results.

Schudson's model is also closely linked to Shoemaker and Reese's "hierarchy of influences" which was mentioned earlier in relation to gatekeeping. The model highlights the "multiple forces that impinge on media simultaneously and

suggests how influence at one level may interact with that at another" (Shoemaker and Reese 20141). Personal bias, political affiliation and organisational culture could all be factors that affect decision making and the organisation of newswork. This media sociology model ties into Schudson's ideology that editorial decisions could be affected by economic, organisational or social elements.

Relationships between journalists and sources and subsequent possible hierarchy models may become more complex (Reese 2007) as audiences become more involved in news work in terms of producing UGC, sharing content online and engaging with journalists though 'participatory journalism' (Singer et al 2011, Domingo and Paterson 2011). However, as was depicted in the gatekeeping section, such developments do not yield the theory and models redundant. Like gatekeeping the sociology of news "does not operate along a set of fixed conditions" (McElroy 2013:12). It can evolve and develop.

The final perspective to consider when approaching newsroom research is Schudson's 'culturological' or anthropological approach, which "emphasizes the constraining force of broad cultural symbol systems regardless of the details of organizational and occupational routines" (1989:266).

The BBC is the UK's public service broadcaster, which is expected to be a symbol of British life and reflect great British journalism as well as truth and accuracy. The BBC and its associated values could be considered to represent a cultural given: "a given symbolic system, within which and in relation to which reporters and officials go about their duties" (Schudson 1989:275). In this respect the culturological perspective could be considered relevant to this study, as journalists interviewed as part of this research were very much aware that they were working for the world's biggest broadcaster, which had certain editorial values it had to adhere to. These include as truth, accuracy and impartiality, which are key values laid down in the BBC's editorial guidelines (BBC 2015). However, unlike the political economic perspective, this approach considers news production in relation to ideas and symbols. This involves thinking about cultural rather than social lines of explanation.

Given that this research is predominantly concerned with journalistic routines and the way that news organisations operate and evolve and verify content, an anthropological account, based on Schudson's conceptualisation, is therefore not ideal. Likewise, Schudson himself admitted this approach, while interesting from a

cultural perspective, has certain limitations in that it doesn't allow for researchers to get up close and personal with the subject. In terms of this research project, it is important to be aware of the inferred importance of and symbolism of the BBC as the UK's public service broadcaster. Indeed, the symbolism of the organisation may well impact on the way it is perceived compared with other news companies, and also the way people expect news information to be delivered to them, as well as how journalists working for the organisation do their jobs.

Engaging with sources

As the research carried out in this thesis demonstrates, developments in the news landscape mean newsmakers are now expected to engage and participate with their audiences in new and continually evolving ways. There is also an argument that the audiences themselves have become more active, using technology to produce their own content and engage with journalists on a level they did not previously (Lotan et al 2011, Strömbäck et al 2013). However, access to more information, more sources and new voices is both a two-way process and, potentially, a double-edged sword. An increase in available content can potentially improve news output, in particular when covering hard to access places. But in turn, this new input of content and the use of new platforms may mean that there needs to be a new strategy or set of rules in place for journalists engaging in dialogue with their audiences and contributors. This is particularly important if the 'conversation' is in a public setting, such as via a Tweet or in the comments section underneath an online article (see Shirky 2010). What was once private may now become public and retain a digital footprint, which might not be desirable should exchanges become heated. The increase in participation with non-journalists and their associated content also increases the need to verify content. As was apparent when analysing the literature in Chapter 1, this can mean more work for journalists and an increasing number of tasks associated with newsgathering which did not exist previously (see Bennett 2013). The need for verification, transparency, and challenges related to journalistic routines and processes are also explored in this research. It is for these reasons that the sociology of news is a helpful theoretical framework to apply to this study.

Looking at the role of journalists

The role of journalists is not just to inform or shape public opinion. Also, depending on the content available and of course the type of society, the messages from different outlets may be strikingly different or very similar. A view held by many media theorists is that when there is a general consensus across all media this is the point at which public opinion is influenced most greatly, as is outlined in Noelle-Neumann's ideas on a consonance version of reality (1981). However, in terms of broadcast and/or published content, Shoemaker and Vos have argued that only some of the similarities can be put down to the same content being available to journalists from different outlets. Part of gatekeeping theory is to "synthesize explanations for both discrepancies and commonalities into a systematic whole" (2009:3). In trying to understand the influence of journalists on media messages encountered by individuals and society in general, the literature has shown that there are the elements closely related media sociology or sociology of news (Schudson 1989, Reese 2007) which can be ascribed to gatekeeping theory.

This section has given an outline of media sociology, and the way that it complements gatekeeping theory. Part of this explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of this research has also drawn on the literature to explain gatekeeping and the associated decision making processes in greater detail, and, moreover, how certain factors can influence how newsworthy particular stories are. This in turn may explain why certain events and messages are depicted in particular ways by the media and become news items (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, Shoemaker 1997, also Schudson 2003).

Having explained gatekeeping and the sociology of news and associated frameworks we are now introduced in much more detail to the newer theory of gatewatching.

Section 3: Introducing Gatewatching

This section provides an overview of the main characteristics which can be applied to the theory and the overall act of gatewatching, as laid out by media theorist Axel Bruns. Bruns depicts gatewatching as follows:

> News users engaged in organising and curating the flood of available news stories and newsworthy information which is now available from a multitude of channels have no ability to keep – to control – the gates of any of these channels, of course; however, what they are able to do is participate in a distributed and loosely organised effort to watch – to keep track of – what information passes through these channels:
> (Bruns 2011:121)

Bruns coined the term when talking about collaborative news efforts, particularly in relation to online journalism (see Bruns 2003, 2005, 2008 & 2011). The theory draws on the sociology of journalism, and to a certain extent production studies. Bruns argued that for many 21st century journalists, having a shared space with their audience means journalists are no longer just selecting 'what news should be told', but spend more time amplifying what is already out there. They are also giving context to content audiences are finding and sharing amongst themselves, and helping users make sense of it in an accurate manner. For journalists, access to so many sources beyond traditional 'official' ones means their job has become "less similar to that of the traditional journalist than it is to that of the specialist librarian, who constantly surveys what information becomes available" (2003:7). Bruns suggested that the use of near real-time social media platforms had accelerated the news cycle beyond what was previously known in the era of 24-hour news channels, with mainstream media having less ownership of the news. In turn, this evolution continues to change journalists' roles within the newsroom environment, so that at times they are curating existing news which the audience may well know about already, rather than selecting what stories to introduce to the wider public.

As a result of changes in the way journalists and the wider public access information and then disseminate news, journalists must harness online, social and mobile technology. In some cases this means telling stories using different sources and platforms that are new to them. We don't need to go back to the time of Mr Gates to see just how quickly communications technology has evolved, and with it,

arguably, so have journalists. As a result of this evolution in technology and changes in newsgathering, traditional news outlets now frequently monitor social media outlets, and Bruns proposed that 'gatewatchers' from these organisations are now embarking on ad-hoc collaborative sense-making processes (see Bruns and Highfield 2012). This is demonstrated by news channels referring to Twitter feeds and social media platforms as sources of information, a topic that has been popular in scholarly research (Harkin et al 2012, Hermida, Lewis and Zamith 2014) and is in turn reflected in the Literature Review (Chapter 1).

There have even been some breaking news scenarios where information has been disseminated and located more quickly on social networking sites than via traditional news wires, though these are limited (see Petrovic et al 2012). For example, news of the police officer shooting Michael Brown in Ferguson Missouri in July 2014, and the re-election campaign of President Barack Obama were announced via Twitter rather than through the traditional news cycle of press releases and mainstream news outlets (Pew 2012). In this sense it could be argued that the public communication taking place on social media sites is a good example of Hermida's 'ambient journalism' – a system which is "enabling citizens to maintain a mental model of news and events around them" (Hermida 2010:1). In seeking to continue to do their jobs effectively, journalists must tap into this communication, or else there will undoubtedly be key news announcements they will miss. Official confirmation of events in 140 characters potentially demonstrates a direct and, arguably, more informal communication between organisations and the public, as well as more channels for journalists to examine. It is also important to note that Twitter is just one platform used by the public and journalists alike. Facebook, YouTube Snapchat, WhatsApp and many more are used in day to day news curation and dissemination.

Guarding the gates: information and channels

Instead of choosing what information goes through the gates and informs the public, Bruns argued that journalists must monitor information coming in and out of the gates, including that created and shared by individuals who are not necessarily journalists. The online sphere is the key place where gatewatching takes place. This means that when people come to them with potential stories (rather than 'letters to

the editor') the correspondence is more likely to be electronic, whether it be an email, a Tweet or a Facebook message to the official account of an organisation. Depending on the news organisation or the journalist themselves, the potential to access information and have such exchanges with the audience may be greater than in the pre online era. This was seen, for example, with audience content submitted to the BBC following the 7/7 London bombings, when access to email and mobile phone cameras led to a flood of content being submitted to the BBC in a way and on a scale not previously seen (Sambrook 2010).

The sharing nature of social networking sites also means that, while journalists may create news, there are many more channels and ways for this information to be disseminated. The New York Times website, Guardian feeds and BBC Twitter handles are good examples of long-running journalistic outlets which have evolved. Twitter itself is a platform that has generated much scholarly attention (Vis 2013, Lasorsa et al 2012), in recognition that media consumption is changing as are the areas in which journalists find and disseminate news. The 21st century news producer will in all likelihood find themselves in a journalistic space with a huge range of communication channels, and access to many sources of information that were not previously as readily available.

As the number of different communication channels increases, there are also changes in the ways people consume their news, whether it be via smartphone apps, live streaming or 'second screen' viewing. For example, the 2015 Digital News Report indicated that a move to online video, new visual formats and social media coincided, in many countries, with a fall in audiences for traditional TV bulletins. The trend is most pronounced amongst the under 35s, and only 46% of UK under 45s now watch a scheduled TV bulletin, compared with 56% in 2013 (Newman, Levy and Nielson 2015:9, see also Pennington 2013). A change in the way people consume their news can therefore result in news organisations having to create new products to continue to connect with their audiences. This is something that the BBC has done and these developments feature in this research. For any news organisation with a digital presence, there is a need to develop a media strategy to ensure that the organisation is visible across a variety of different social media platforms and that the content continues to be up to date, accurate, available and accessible to the largest possible number of people. Overall, to undertake gatewatching, today's

journalist must be a news producer, a forensic librarian (Murray 2011), a detective (Browne 2014) and a digital savvy 'techie' (Belair-Gagnon 2015).

This is not just a case of journalists monitoring the gates of information while providing their own content, in some respects they need to be able to navigate different gates that are only just opening, or in some cases visualise those that have not yet even been built. The next section will look as how gatewatching has evolved in tandem with changing newsroom routines and responsibilities

Gatewatching as a developing theory

Bruns (2008) proposed that, as a theory, gatewatching was ideal to understand the news flow across the World Wide Web, particularly across social media platforms. Indeed, Bruns claimed gatewatching developed as the number of news sources increased and traditional media became less relied upon. Allan and other media theorists have put forward the hypothesis that mainstream media is no longer the sole place in which people look for the news or get updates on a breaking story. Evidence of this is that, "practically every major breaking news story of 2010 and 2011 has been propelled in significant ways by its coverage in social media spaces - from storms, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and similar natural disasters to protests, riots, uprisings and other forms of popular unrest" (Allan 2013:127). That is not to say that stories always break on these platforms, though the assertion of Reported.ly's Malachy Browne was that Twitter broke the story of the Boston Bombing, as well as that of the landing of the jet in the Hudson River (Browne 2014, also Silverman 2014). Neither does the development of gatewatching mean that legacy media are not important when giving context in relation to breaking news.

While this thesis does not seek to use theory related to the public sphere as part of its theoretical underpinning, the concept of a networked and shared space for journalists and audiences, and connections between the two, are certainly a part of this research. Therefore, it is important to highlight the view put forward by Bruns in terms of gatewatching in relation to the public sphere. Bruns said that, "far from the society-wide public sphere envisaged at the height of the mass media age, the current media environment is characterised by a succession of overlapping ad-hoc publics" (2011:132). Bruns believed journalism had become a mass participation activity.

What is certain, and has been examined as part of this research, is that social media platforms are key in journalists' working lives, whether they are being used as a newsgathering tool to collate content or as a method of engaging with audiences through news outlets' social media accounts. Some of the literature suggests that gatekeeping as a process has transformed within the industry and, as such, it is important to acknowledge calls from the likes of Hermida (2012, 2013) that the journalists' traditional gatekeeping model needs to be reconceptualised, particularly taking into account these new platforms. Coddington and Holton suggested that this could involve "recasting it as an interpretative role that uses verification, analysis and content to regulate information, as gatekeeping's main concern shifts from the quantity of information to its quality" (2013:5).

A critique of Bruns

Bruns called for an evolution from 'gatekeeping' to 'gatewatching' as journalists started incorporating news media platforms which are open to the public. Bruns himself was clear that it was crucial to understand gatekeeping and gatewatching as separate processes (see Bruns 2008). Within academia some are critical of Bruns' theory, suggesting it cannot be an umbrella theory for all media. Milberry (2006) stated that gatewatching was too weak a theory to be applied to the contemporary news sphere, and in a review of Bruns' work wrote that it relied upon too many ideas from other researchers:

> [Bruns] relies solely upon a book written by Herbert Gans in 1980, which proffers a multiperspectival model of the news, a two-tier system comprising mainstream and alternative news producers. The application of this model to a virtual environment is interesting, but it is a somewhat soft premise for an entire book. Bruns brings everything back to this (rather limited) model…In fact, Bruns' over-reliance on other people's ideas is the key drawback of the book.
> Milberry (2006:772)

Another criticism is that Bruns does not cover the influence of individual background on decision making when depicting the gatewatching model, something that was a key consideration within gatekeeping (see Shoemaker and Reese 2014, Kim 2012). Many theorists and academics continue to back the gatekeeper model and see it as remaining relevant for journalists carrying out their work (see Hermida

and Thurman 2008, Domingo et al 2008, Graham 2013). In fact, as a theoretical framework, gatekeeping has been considered in a number of high-profile studies in recent years (see McElroy 2013, Lotan et al 2011, Strömbäck et al 2013).

Some literature proposes that, while gatewatching may work for western societies, it is too weak a theory in the Middle East context, where gatekeepers can extend to families, public relations companies, authoritarian regimes, governments, etc. (see Zayani 2008). This is particularly the case in conflict zones (Ali and Fahmy 2013). However, Almaghlooth (2013) argued that gatewatching could potentially work in relation to digital news forms in the region, as new media spheres allow for more open debate (see Lynch 2006). Indeed, that hypothesis is supported by the research on the Arab uprisings as illustrated in Chapter 1. However, Almaghlooth concluded overall that gatewatching could not be effectively applied to the contemporary news sphere within the Arab World, particular in Saudi Arabia, the focus of his doctoral research, as "Saudis live in a different society and environment, which heavily affects the production of news" (2013:91)

A final point to highlight in relation to Bruns is that he proposed that gatewatching could 'supplant' gatekeeping in digital forms and, as illustrated above, that could potentially work in terms of journalists working in the new media ecology, taking an 'open source' approach to disseminating and curating news information online. However, theorists such as Shoemaker and Vos (2009) did not believe this would lead to the death of gatekeeping, which they argued could also be applied to the online world, as "internet has empowered rather than weakened the gatekeeping model by introducing new vehicles" (Almaghlooth 2013:91). In this scenario audiences are the new gatekeepers, as opposed to journalists, and gatekeeping for these researchers remains a key tenet of their journalism studies.

Section 4: Applying theory to the 21ˢᵗ century newsroom

This research proposes that BBC journalists are now involved in a significant 'sentry' or 'curator' role, which might involve being gatekeepers on an organisational level in relation to what is included in their own news products and within their own organisation's news agenda. However, gatekeeping theory remains

relevant, particularly considering that this study is concerned with editorial decision-making as well as journalistic routines and roles which are linked to the sociology and social construction of news. That said, gatewatching is also useful as a theory to illustrate the current state of the news media. It is a continually evolving ecology involving digital, online and social spaces. More 'gates' such as social media, digital platforms and ICTs such as mobile apps, need to be 'watched' by journalists who are deciding what news to deliver to their audiences. Gatewatching is also helpful in terms of thinking about audiences, which again ties to sourcing and the sociology of news, newsroom structures and hierarchies. Audiences are having conversations with journalists and have much more choice about the content they consume. But it is an evolving concept which is shaped by the behaviours of both journalists and audiences and in some ways mirrors the work of journalists themselves who are creating and disseminating news alongside new, additional duties.

Gatewatching is a helpful theory for researchers keen to explore changes in the way journalists filter information and engage with their audience in multimedia spaces. It is seen as an evolution or departure from what some journalists and Bruns himself considered to be the rather linear process of traditional gatekeeping. A very similar concept has been introduced by some researchers and refers to 'networked gatekeeping', which is understood here to be gatekeeping within the framework of the digital sphere, in particular in relation to social media networks (McElroy 2013, Robinson 2006, Ernste 2014). Ernste in particular called for a reconceptualisation of gatekeeping; his thesis on 'networked gatekeeping theory' in a new media environment drew greatly on social network analysis of Twitter and how the microblogging site plays a role in the process of gatekeeping of news. Here, like Shoemaker and Vos (2009), he differentiated between the theory and the actual process linked to gatekeeping. For the purposes of this research, networked gatekeeping will not be expanded upon as a theory, given that it is so closely linked to ideas supported by gatewatching, but it is interesting to observe that even within academia there are differences in looking at how theories around new media are developing.

One thing to note when considering gatekeeping and the idea of gatewatching, is that the former theory can exist alone. However, to comprehend gatewatching and 'networked gatekeeping' there is a need to understand the basic

concept of gatekeeping theory; gatewatchers must know how to be gatekeepers to do their jobs. That is not to say that gatewatching cannot become well established as a theory as the media landscape evolves, but there is undoubtedly overlap on both theoretical and practical levels in terms of gatekeeping, gatewatching and networked gatekeeping. All involve some level of participation and engagement by media practitioners. In the case of the latter two terms, both have been used when speaking about newsgathering and news consumption in relation to new media environments. They are also particularly relevant when talking about scenarios incorporating social media or social networking sites and online spaces, which are no longer the preserve of journalists but are in fact open to all.

Outlining theoretical frameworks

This chapter gives an overview of the processes linked to the complementary theories of gatekeeping and the sociology of news. Drawing on key literature related to editorial decision making, newsroom structures and routines, this chapter has sought to give the reader an indication of how the gatekeeping theory has evolved over time, and it can be applied on an individual, organisational and societal level which fits with a focus on newsroom hierarchies and news routines depicted by Schudson (1989). The chapter has also sought to outline how the actual decision-making processes journalists undertake are frequently based on a variety of different criteria as a need to verify, to be transparent and access to sources in digital spaces. These are aspects which journalists may or may not be conscious of when undertaking newswork.

In considering the relevance of this theory in a multimedia age, we were introduced to the newer theory of gatewatching, primarily set out by media theorist Axel Bruns (2003, 2005, 2008 & 2011). Bruns' view remains that journalists share digital spaces with non-journalists and therefore they are no longer the only people delivering information or news at either an individual, organisational or societal level. Some theorists have elaborated on gatewatching, particularly in relation to social networking sites which are frequently used for the dissemination of news. Arguably, both gatekeeping and gatewatching in relation to today's journalism are closely linked to audiences, sourcing and sharing information. This fits with the

sociology of news approach, the main aspects of which have been outline in this chapter.

Having considered the relevance of the main theories and newsroom processes as they apply to this research, this chapter concludes overall that, while gatewatching is of importance, gatekeeping and sociology of news remains hugely relevant when depicting the behaviour of 21st century journalists. In their everyday newsroom routines and practices journalists still engage in acts of newsgathering and gatekeeping, certainly in relation to their own news products. These decisions are also affected by different newsroom structures and hierarchies, which can influence decisions. News organisations may no longer be the sole supplier of news to the public, but it is important to remember that they remain a hugely trusted source of facts and analysis (Bakhurst 2011). This is the case in particular for public service organisations such as the BBC, which has key responsibilities to its audience that have been outlined both in the Introduction and in Literature Review (Chapter 1).

While journalists may not be gatekeepers for all news, they do retain control over how they disseminate their news to the public, at least in the first instance, at the point of broadcast or publication. Having now explored the ways in which academic theory will be applied in this research, it is useful to revisit the research questions. The two overarching research questions being asked in this research are:

Q1. How have BBC News journalists used UGC to cover the Syria conflict?

Q2: In what ways has the role of the BBC journalist changed to utilise UGC in news output?

The next chapter will outline how this research has been approached in terms of methodology. It also outlines and discusses the different data collection techniques used throughout; namely interviews, ethnography and qualitative and quantitative content analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including interviews, participant observation and content and document analysis. This chapter begins by giving a full outline of the overall research project and its aims. Section one draws on literature to explain and justify the reasons for undertaking the interviews and how possible problems associated with this method were overcome. Section two relates the qualitative data collection methods to the overarching research methodology, which in this case is a phenomenological approach. This perspective is discussed critically in relation to this specific study. This section also looks at the ethical considerations which must be taken on board when carrying out research of this nature, particularly given the position of the researcher as a member of BBC staff, where the BBC is the organisation being examined as part of this thesis. Section three examines the way qualitative newsroom observations were approached for this study. Sections four and five of this chapter focus on the quantitative content analysis and the associated document analysis which were carried out as part of the data collection.

The research assessed how the use of UGC and social media platforms affected BBC World News TV coverage of the conflict in Syria. It also looked at how the use of UGC affected journalistic practices when covering the uprisings in that country, which started with protests over the arrest and torture of children in Der'aa in March 2011. The study included quantitative and qualitative content analysis of news reports broadcast on BBC World News Television, the international television channel run by the BBC. It is funded commercially via on-air advertising and mainly broadcasts outside of the UK, with the exception of set hours such as the overnight (midnight to 0500 hours) service which also airs in the UK. Some of the packages analysed had also transmitted on domestic channels in the UK, but the main focus for the research was those which were aired internationally. The period of content analysis ran from March 2011 to March 2014. Initially, the first six months of the conflict was selected for analysis as, up until September 2011, international journalists - particularly westerners - could not legally enter Syria, and newsrooms had to rely on information coming out of the country, often in the form of videos and

photos posted on social media platforms or sent into the BBC. However, as the conflict continued, a longer period of analysis of how the events in Syria were depicted by the BBC was thought to be more helpful, in terms of aiding understanding of changing practices.

Research overview

By using interviews, newsroom observations and content analysis, this research aimed to triangulate the data to get as full a picture as possible of how newsrooms operate and how journalistic practices are potentially altering. This examination related not just to the roles and responsibilities of producers, but also the news products they were involved in creating. For example, in an interview a person may make a claim about how they treat content or how their role is changing, but if evidence of their claims is not apparent following newsroom observations or doesn't translate into on-air content, then this could potentially be an interesting finding, which may warrant further investigation.

In order to examine the ways in which journalism roles and practices have evolved since the start of the conflict in Syria, data collection included in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews with people from within the BBC. Interviewees included correspondents who had to rely on this content to report on Syria, as well as office-based staff, such as members of the UGC Hub, who checked and verified the content to ensure it could be used on air. In addition, the research also incorporated findings from newsroom observations carried out at the UGC Hub and also within different departments across BBC Arabic, including their Interactivity, live programming and social news online teams. This method was introduced as an information gathering tool following a series of interviews, after which the opportunity rose to go and observe BBC Arabic staff at work. This made it possible to compare the testimony of interviewees to what was observed when these journalists were engaged in day-to-day routines in a newsroom environment.

The hypothesis of this research was that, over the lifetime of the conflict, the way journalists accessed UGC and engaged with activists altered, as did the way the BBC newsroom was structured. This was backed up by pilot interview findings and was another reason to extend the data collection period up to March 2014 (the three-

year anniversary), rather than just the first six months of the conflict. Focusing solely on practices and events during 2011 might not have elicited accurate information from interviewees asked to think back several years.

Data collection methods

In terms of data collection, this study used both quantitative and qualitative methods, in this case interviews, newsroom ethnography and quantitative and qualitative content analysis. While there are undoubtedly benefits to using mixed methods (see Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, Johnson and Turner 2003), such an approach will not guarantee resolution of all methodological difficulties and, moreover, "it is important to have the ability to weigh up the practical nature and methodological limitations of methods" (May 1997:108). The next section details each of the different collection methods in turn, beginning with qualitative interviews. It considers the benefits of, and gives a justification for, each method, drawing on key literature and previous research which has used these techniques. It also focuses on the recruitment of interviewees, how data was processed, coded and stored, and discusses ethical issues which were taken on board – both while carrying out the research and afterwards - when analysing the data and results.

Section 1: Qualitative data collection: interviews

Although labour intensive, undertaking a number of qualitative in-depth interviews elicited more detailed information than a quantitative study alone. In considering whom to target, this research used a non-probability sample – i.e. given the finite number of BBC staff that deal with UGC, these participants were targeted specifically. While there were a number of set questions posed to all respondents, there were different lines of questioning for individuals from different BBC departments. Therefore the interviews were semi-structured, enabling the focus to go beyond the initial questions and get further details or clarification where and when required (Hoinville and Jowell 1978). This style of interview is thought to be particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences (see

McNamara 2009). As the research was looking for factual detail as well as getting respondents' perspectives on the challenges of dealing with UGC, qualitative interviews were a good way to get these factual elements but also to probe into the meaning around a subject (Kvale 1996).

Potential respondents were contacted through various gatekeepers within the BBC. These included heads of departments such as Andrew Roy, then editor of World News, and Chris Hamilton, formerly the social media editor in charge of the UGC Hub. Other interviewees were contacted personally via email. Some were selected as I knew they had experience relevant to the study, others were recommended by fellow members of staff. Interviewees included TV producers, staff working at the UGC Hub and journalists from interactive programmes covering television and radio.

Pilot interviews

Prior to carrying out the full interviews, a number of pilot sessions were carried out with BBC staff from different departments. These pilot interviews were semi-structured in nature and, to put the respondents at ease, they were first asked to give a brief history of their employment at the BBC and talk about what their job involved. This information, in some cases, determined the line of questioning, relating it to their particular roles and expertise. All interviews (pilot or otherwise) were recorded on a digital voice recorder and later transcribed in MS Word and uploaded into NVivo. In addition, notes were taken down in shorthand during the course of the interviews. This format worked in most cases. However, one interview did not record properly and on another the sound quality was poor. Despite this, it was still possible to draw information from these sources by using the accompanying notes.

As well as questions on working with the BBC and the use of UGC in the newsroom, at the end of the pilot interviews respondents were asked whether they felt that any of the questions asked should be omitted, or whether any additional questions should be introduced. This mode of piloting made it possible to revise the questions in order to gain optimum feedback from respondents. "…to take account of

any criticisms and problems [and]…provides a means of catching and solving unforeseen problems" (May 1997:93).

After conducting the interviews, it was apparent that the respondents had very different perceptions of the benefits of involving UGC in journalism. Interviewing people with very different views was to a certain extent beneficial, as it provided the opportunity to look at the range of viewpoints that journalists within one organisation have. Piloting the interviews also allowed for reflection on the line of research and avoided presuppositions about how easy the method was to comprehend. Following comments from the completed pilots some questions were revised, taking into account the different roles and responsibilities the journalists have within the BBC and their level of involvement in covering events in Syria. For example, one interviewee was very experienced at getting guests on air from Syria and developing a rapport with activists but had very little to do with accessing footage. Another respondent was hugely experienced in terms of working at the UGC Hub but had not been tasked with getting content from Syria to a great extent. The data generated during the pilot interviews was extremely valuable, and therefore, information derived from these pilots has been included in the overall research analysis and findings.

As previously outlined, initially the research was going to focus on journalists' experiences in covering the first six months of the conflict in Syria. However, in the interviews, many respondents gave detailed accounts of their experiences in dealing with content, activists and coverage of Syria outside this period of time. This, and the fact that the crisis was ongoing, with major developments still taking place in the country, were deciding factors in extending the time period to be researched. Certain questions included in the pilots were therefore omitted from the final interviews as they were no longer relevant. For example, respondents were no longer asked to focus on a set period during the Syria conflict, as many interviewees had interesting information and experiences from different time periods. Also, questions were broadened to explore their experiences with technologies which were not widely used by the BBC back in 2011, such as WhatsApp, live streaming and online verification applications.

In order to encourage a positive response, as well as targeting a specific group, respondents were assured anonymity and strict confidentiality with regard to

the data collected, unless the interviewee was particularly keen to be identified. This was done by coding interview responses during transcription and when doing analysis using a database such as NVivo. Ensuring anonymity was important as, to a certain extent, some might consider the work to be sensitive given it relates to experiences in covering war and dramatic events, and potentially viewing traumatic footage. This and further ethical considerations will now be examined.

Visible researcher and the insider: outsider perspective

Before undertaking a further discussion of the research methods, it is important to make clear that, as a researcher, my own experience and the nature of my employment as a senior producer at the BBC, could potentially have had an impact on the interview process and, more importantly, the analysis of the data. Firstly, there was always a strong chance of me being familiar with some of the interviewees, albeit only through work. This could arguably impact on interviewees' responses and reactions to certain questions. There are many ethical debates and guidelines regarding interviewing people with whom you have a pre-existing relationship (see McConnell et al 2009, Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2010), including concerns about whether a researcher should engage in data collection and whether connections will have an effect on the analysis of data at a later stage. I am of the view that any potential pitfalls were outweighed by the amount of rich data it was possible to gather as a result of my unprecedented access to BBC journalists across the organisation. This was also one reason why the research included a quantitative as well as a qualitative element, though again the interpretation of the data is down to the individual researcher, despite co-coding with a researcher who had no links to the BBC.

Another important element in relation to carrying out this part of the research is the issue a researcher must face in identifying the position from which they are carrying out the ethnography – whether it be an insider or outsider perspective. This is particularly the case when the researcher has a connection to the research field, the respondents or the topic. Therefore it was important to examine the possible implications of these links and what efforts were to be made to overcome any associated challenges for this particular research project. This meant I had to make

clear the identity that I, as a researcher, would be taking on while carrying out the ethnography. As Burgess (1984) outlined, there are four possible options. These are as follows: the complete participant, who works covertly; the participant-as-observer, who is open about their observations and takes part in activities; the observer-as-participant, who will only probe where necessary; and finally the 'complete observer', who doesn't interfere (see also Waddington 2004).

In determining my position, as I am a BBC member of staff, it was impossible to categorise myself as a covert participant, and definitely not as an outsider. While I hadn't worked with the UGC Hub or BBC Arabic teams directly, some of the staff were known to me and I had a background understanding of at least some elements of their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, from an ethnographic point of view, I was an insider. With this in mind, when carrying out the research, it was important to ensure I maintained a certain amount of distance to allow for a satisfactory level of observation and analysis. This was a fine balance to achieve; being close enough to develop a rapport, but avoiding 'going native' and losing the ability to think critically about the data (see Waddington 2004, Brewer 2000, Walsh 2012). When considering Burgess' perspective and options I categorised myself as an observer-as-participant, as I largely shadowed staff while gathering data, rather than undertaking an active job, and I mainly asked questions for clarification.

There are undoubtedly issues which must be considered when a researcher is part of the organisation or community being studied (Naaeke et al 2011). Attempts to maintain distance alone may not be enough, as an insider researcher is still taking what Geertz (1973) referred to as an 'emic perspective' – that is a point of view of an insider within the community under scrutiny. This could potentially result in findings being biased or skewed (Naaeke et al 2011). In order to minimise the risk of this, it was important to examine the ways in which a researcher's position and own identity could impact on the data findings, as I have discussed already. Engaging in self-reflection at each stage of the research is considered to be a key element in participant observation (see Waddington 2004, Brewer, 2000).

Another way I reflected was by listening back to the pilot interviews, to analyse how questions were phrased and how I interacted with the interviewees before carrying out any more interviews. Given that I had background knowledge, I sometimes felt the pilot interviewees were subjected to certain leading questions and,

at times, I interrupted or finished interviewees' sentences. By realising this early on I was able to modify my questions and responses before carrying out the main interviews.

In conclusion then, while there are criticisms of doing 'ethnography at home', there are benefits to having an insider knowledge of the locality or the people you will be researching. These perceived benefits can range from being able to gain access more easily, to developing a rapport more quickly and being able to ask more probing questions thanks to a shared understanding of the culture or practices (O'Reilly 2009). What is certain is that, regardless of whether a researcher is taking the emic or etic perspective, this form of data collection can be "complicated, messy, personal and subjective" (O'Reilly 2009:4).

Section 2: Research approaches

While a background understanding could be considered useful in terms of getting the most out of interviews, this had to be considered when selecting a methodology. As this data collection involved collecting information based on the interviewees' experiences, this was arguably a phenomenological approach, the aim of which was "to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation" (Lester 1999:1). Husserl's view was that 'pure' phenomenological research should start from a perspective which has no hypotheses or preconceptions (Husserl 1970). In this respect my researcher position could be considered problematic by some, but I remain of the view that in this situation, while it was not fully possible to 'bracket' my own experience, it was possible to minimise influence on collection and analysis - while benefiting from background understand - by using the coping mechanisms previously discussed.

Despite Husserl's views on coming to research without a personal view or hypotheses, more recent academics - particularly those with a feminist and/or humanist perspective - have said that it is impossible to be without some biases (Lester 1999). Therefore, it is thought that the best option for a researcher with links to the subject and respondents is to explain to them clearly from the outset what the aims of the data collection methods are, and also what the researcher's intentions are,

as has been done in this chapter. Once data has been collected, it is paramount to outline very clearly how research findings are being interpreted at each point during the analysis stage. In this respect the researcher will be a 'visible researcher' (Hycner 1985). That is, they will adopt the stance of an interested and subjective actor rather than an impartial interviewer as, given their own industry experience, it will not be entirely possible to detach themselves from the process (see also Plummer 1983, Stanley and Wise 1993).

Therefore, in terms of carrying out the research, I went over the interview structure with respondents in advance and made all decisions regarding interpretation and analysis of findings clear when writing up, in order to avoid further issues or potential conflicts of interest.

Ethical considerations

As the qualitative research involved dealing with human subjects, an ethical approval form was submitted to City University's ethics committee detailing how subjects would be treated, as well as the scope of the research and how information would be kept and stored. The form was completed and the research formally approved prior to the interviews taking place. In the case of this research, all electronic information relating to the study were be saved on password protected USB sticks and cloud systems such as Dropbox, with paper content kept in a locked drawer on City University premises. In order to carry out research within the BBC, written permission and approval was sought from various 'gatekeepers' across the organisation. Appropriate information sheets and consent forms were also read and completed by respondents in advance of any research being carried out (App. 2). Both the interviewer and the interviewee kept a copy of these documents and respondents were assured that, should they change their mind about being included in the interview process at any time, they could opt out. There was also a 'cooling off period' after the interviews had taken place. Above all, as previously mentioned, interviewees were assured that they would have a certain level of anonymity should any direct quotes be used in the final thesis. Interviewee responses were then coded and, given that it might be possible to identify a respondent based on their job title alone due to the small size of some teams, names and job titles were removed if

appropriate. If relevant, however, the department within which they worked would be included in the research findings.

Justifying the data collection methods

Carrying out interviews meant it was possible to get individual perspectives from staff on how their jobs may have changed and the type of content they have been dealing with since the start of the Syria conflict in March 2011. As previously mentioned this links into the methodology of phenomenology, which was also laid down as a philosophical movement by Edmund Husserl during the 20th century (Husserl 1970). Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience and in particular the importance of how things are viewed or personally interpreted (see also Moustakas, 1994, Creswell 1994). This approach works well in relation to in-depth interviews where the aim is to get significant insight into people's views and motivations through intense engagement with them.

It is also important to highlight that phenomenology, given that it charts people's experiences, can also work with other with qualitative approaches such as ethnography (Lester 1999, also Finders 1992). This research also involves carrying out newsroom observations, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Given that the aim of phenomenological research is to reflect the experience of the actors involved, such in-depth interviews can generate a lot of data and involve lots of notes – either during the interview process or afterwards, during transcription. With this in mind, the aim was to focus each interview and draw on the respondent's specific experience as much as possible. It was hoped that, by narrowing down the focus of the research, it would be possible to generate more rich data and go deeper with each interview, while mitigating the issue of a large amount of data to wade through, piece together and analyse. The issue of 'messy data' (Lester 1999) is commonly associated with phenomenology.

Section 3: Qualitative data collection: newsroom observations

Newsroom observations are a form of ethnography, a field of study concerned with finding or uncovering meaning, usually in the practices undertaken by a particular group. This method usually involves, "studying people within their own cultural environment through intensive fieldwork; they emphasize the subject's frames of reference and understandings of the world" (Singer 2009:191).

The opportunity arose to carry out a newsroom ethnography, in addition to the interviews, on receipt of an invitation from BBC editors to observe their staff at work. It was thought the additional information that could potentially be gathered during this period would further inform the research into the journalistic practices interviewees had spoken about and, as such, would complement the interview findings (see Agar 1996). Such observations have always been a useful way of studying organisations, with Gans (1979) and Tuchman (1978) being seminal works consulted both by those preparing to undertake such a study and by those keen to learn more about journalistic practices. In recent years, ethnographies have also been increasingly popular when studying the sociology of news and evolution of newswork (see Wardle and Williams 2010, Anderson 2011, Robinson 2011, Harrison 2010). Indeed Cottle (2007) wrote of the early 2000s being a 'golden age' in news ethnography, and lists a host of media scholars who have selected this method in recent years to find out more about the way news operations work. For him, ethnography is seen as advantageous and relevant because of the rich data that can be gathered from 'behind the scenes' and thus inform our knowledge about journalistic roles and routines.

Singer (2009) suggested that for journalism scholars, particularly former journalists, ethnography was a particularly attractive data collection method if they were undertaking newsroom studies. However, undertaking production studies in a similar environment to that in which a scholar was once employed may have pitfalls as their "own experiences are likely to color perceptions of what their research subjects are experiencing" (2009:193). In such a scenario it is important for researchers to be mindful of their own biases, and remember that "ethnographic research is not journalism" (ibid:193).

With this in mind it is also important to be transparent when carrying out ethnography (Singer 2009). Openly explaining the process around collating information during the observations - and later when analysing the findings - is considered a good way to mitigate any potential problems related to background knowledge of the ethnographic field of study or research participants. Indeed, prior knowledge may help researchers to probe the data and find meaning and significance in it, rather than just relaying events as they happen (see Lareau and Schultz 1996). This level of interpretation, which goes beyond the "what" into the "why" in terms of analysis, is referred to by scholars as giving "thick description" (Geertz 1973). In a successful newsroom ethnography then, analysis of research data will be descriptive and it will also involve a significant amount of critical analysis and contextualisation of the data (see Lindlof and Taylor 2002, Singer 2009).

One reason that the observations were included alongside interviews and a content analysis was to ensure the data could be subject to some form of triangulation (Denzin 1978). Therefore, one source would not wholly be relied upon for data collection. This did not negate the need to maintain balance when carrying out the observations, but it was intended that incorporating other information found in fieldwork and using multiple methods would minimise the risk of the researcher's position impacting on the overall research findings (see also Jorgensen 1989).

Access and carrying out research

When I spent time observing staff across BBC News, it often involved me being assigned a journalist to work beside. This in turn involved 'shadowing' or 'trailing', a common practice within newsrooms when learning roles. Journalists will spend several days 'learning the ropes' by working alongside someone already well-established in the position. As well as observing they will 'learn by doing', so that they become familiar with what the job entails. This was particularly the case when working within the UGC Hub, where the editor had permitted access, for research purposes, to ENPS. ENPS is the database where BBC journalists' 'running orders' (the files and codes for transmitting TV and radio programmes 'to air') are organised and stored, along with other broadcast information (Figure 3.1). I was given access to

the Hub's folder related to 'Key UGC' within ENPS, which was updated daily. I was also added into the UGC Hub email feed.
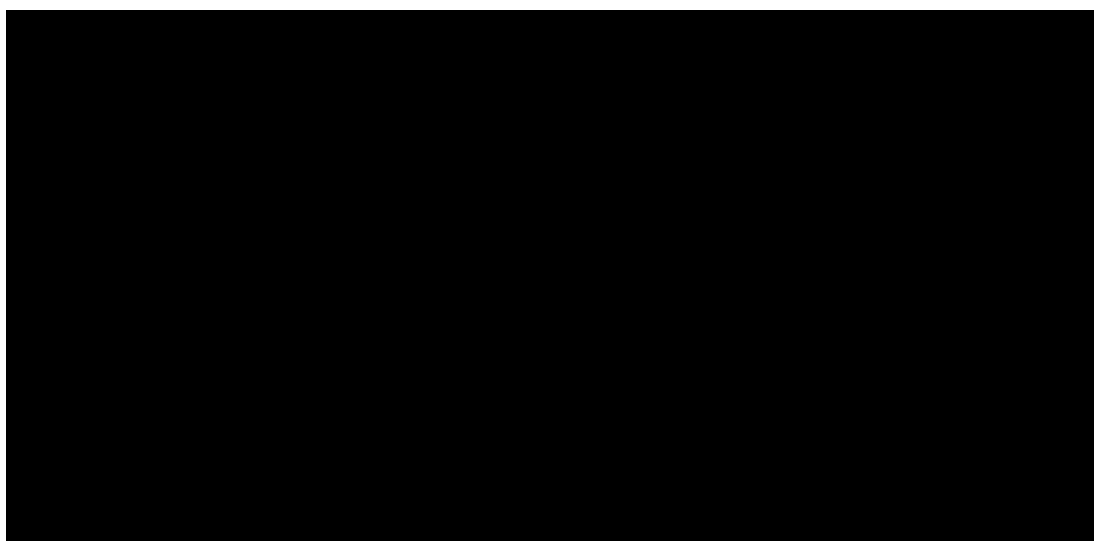
(Figure 3.1: Screen grab of the ENPS database system used by BBC to create running orders)

To minimise intrusion during these periods of ethnography, I decided not to audio record the sessions, but to take handwritten notes and then ask questions where appropriate. This ties into Burgess' approach of participant as observer which was discussed in the Theory chapter (Chapter 2). This format again would be similar to the 'shadowing' practice BBC staff undertake. It was hoped that by carrying out the ethnography in a similar vein, journalists I encountered would be willing to engage further, feeling more comfortable with the process and feeling less like they were being observed (see Bernard 1995).

In all cases, I typed up notes shortly afterwards, while the experience was still fresh. This allowed me to revisit the topic again during interviews and later observations, and to clarify points as well as seek additional information on issues of particular interest. The benefit of carrying out a long-term observation, particularly at the UGC Hub, was that a rapport developed with certain journalists and, as a result, they were more likely to volunteer information about their roles, changes in the way that teams worked, changes in structure and new developments as they applied to the departments. For example, BBC Arabic had recently started a project with BBC Newsgathering and the UGC Hub, in a bid to streamline content being verified from Syria before it was used by BBC outlets. It was only through sitting in on meetings with various staff that I became aware of this pilot project, and was later able to

follow up on it during observations and interviews with key staff. This was one benefit of carrying out interviews simultaneously to other aspects of newsroom ethnography - the ability to triangulate information and therefore get the most out of each data collection method, and in some cases reinforce and confirm research evidence (see Merriam 1998, Agar 1996).

Explaining processes

At the UGC Hub the period of observation involved sitting with a senior broadcast journalist from the team at their desk, learning about the full curation and verification processes clips go through, from initially being sent in or identified by staff on social media sites, through to making it to air. It was hoped that receiving a clear explanation of the fact-checking processes each clip is put through could help explain why many pieces of UGC from Syria cannot be used. As a data collection method, it could also be potentially useful as a way to identify how much social media is used as a tool in newsgathering. The observations were also a useful way to help further comprehend the processes used by the UGC Hub, as well as the importance of each step to ensure balance, accuracy and impartiality - key aspirations for BBC News as a whole.

Not only did the participant observation aid understanding of the journalistic processes and practices associated with citizen-submitted content and social media platforms, but it also helped to shape questions for qualitative interviews with journalists across different departments of the BBC carried out later in the research process, particularly interviews with those dealing with such content on a daily basis.

Limitations

I believe that no method other than newsroom observation could give a researcher access to such rich data from BBC employees, allowing the time to develop a rapport with the respondents. Long-term newsroom observation also allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the varied roles individual journalists have in relation to the newsgathering process, and the techniques involved in actually 'doing the job'. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that this form of research is

without its problems. In particular, as has been outlined to a certain extent already in the previous chapter, my own position and indeed the research environment bring up a number of practical and ethical issues that required close examination throughout the data collection process. What is clear is that in order to carry out ethnography effectively it is important to be mindful of this relationship between "the researcher, the researched and the context of the research" (Mabweazara 2013:97).

One common criticism of participant observation is that people being monitored are likely to react to the researcher being present by engaging in untypical or extreme forms of behaviour. However, Waddington (2004) suggested that unusual behaviour usually petered out the longer a researcher remained in the research setting. To combat this problem, on the first day of each observation, the main editor would advise that I would be working with the team and organise introductions to the staff. As the days went on it was possible to develop a rapport with staff, many of whom were not known previously. In fact, some interested individuals asked more about the research and what it involved. This allowed the opportunity to provide them with more detail about the project, and also to determine how the notes from the observations would fit in with the other data collection methods. In some cases, a number of those who were being observed had been interviewed; in other cases, the interviews would be done later, which afforded the opportunity to put respondents' minds at ease. As some of the observations were carried out on a slightly ad-hoc basis, given the other data collection methods, it was important to keep in touch with the journalists who had been involved in the observations. This was often as simple as chatting informally when our paths crossed in the building, but also involved me sending them emails requesting they keep me up to date with any developments within their teams. This informal gathering of information meant it was important to write up details soon afterwards and also consult emails when it came to analysing the research in order to avoid omitting data which could potentially be useful to the research findings.

Section 4: Data collection: content analysis

The research involved quantitative content analysis of BBC news reports related to Syria and an additional analysis of documents associated with these reports and the processing of UGC which may have been used in these reports. The results of this data collection, while valid in their own right, were useful background information which could also be used for probing interviewees. This section differentiates between qualitative and quantitative content analysis and discusses the limitations of both methods. It also outlines how this particular piece of research was carried out and discusses the categories used in the content analysis codebook with further expansion on the document analysis, which was done separately. When explaining what these data collection methods involved it is helpful to draw on theory, in particular the work of Weber:

> A central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into much fewer content categories. Each category may consist of one, several, or many words. Words, phrases, or other units of text classified in the same category are presumed to have similar meanings" (Weber 1990:12)

Quantitative content analysis is grounded in basic rules of social science. Indeed, while content analysis frequently refers to written text, in actual fact this data collection method can be used in relation to anything that can be 'read' (David and Sutton 2011), such as pictures and video. This data collection method was selected to complement the qualitative data collection methods of interviews and newsroom observations which also formed part of this research. It was hoped that a mixed method approach would help give a fuller picture of how journalists cope with citizen-submitted content and how they work on a day-to-day basis. As such, content analysis will be considered here as a method used to 'read' and code a large amount of TV news content. The items coded were TV news reports broadcast by BBC World News in relation to the Syria conflict.

Content analysis preparation

Prior to undertaking any content analysis, it is important to be clear what will units actually be analysed. Within these news reports it was decided that each clip (or

piece) of UGC used would be categorised as one unit. For example, in a two-minute 'package', there may be a 30-second sequence that has three different pieces of mobile phone footage or footage from YouTube. Each of these different pieces or clips was considered as one unit to be analysed. In determining the unit which should be selected for analysis, however, it was also thought necessary to get a sense of the scope of the BBC's reporting of the Syria conflict. To do this a basic search was carried out using Jupiter, the BBC video database which stores archived news packages as well as those not yet broadcast. (Figure 3.2)
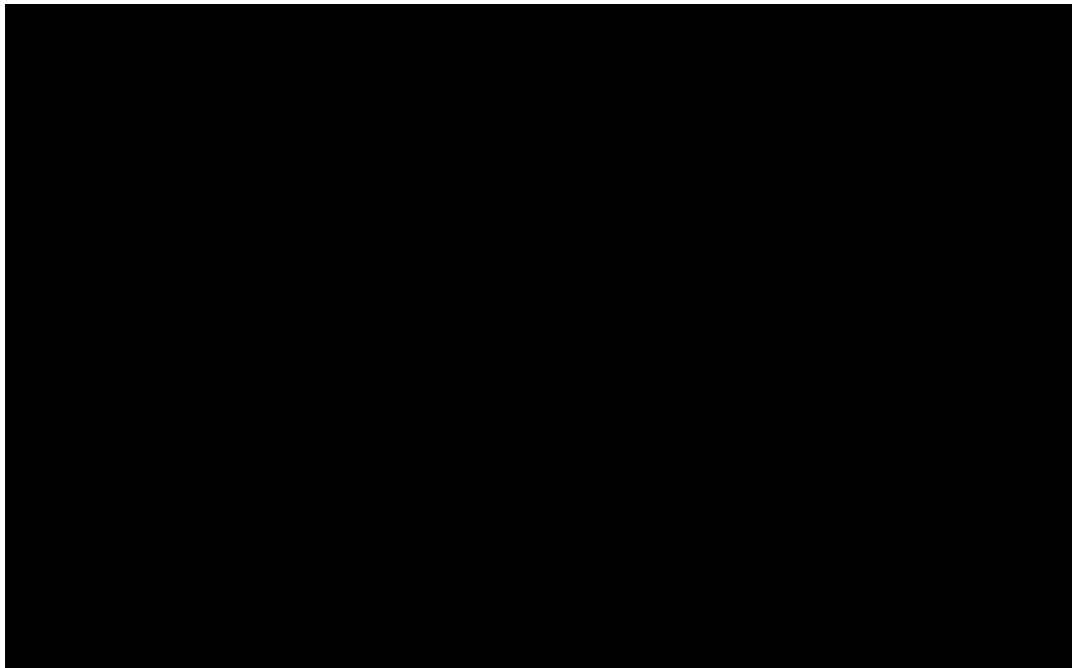
(Figure 3.2: screengrab of Jupiter the BBC's TV transmission and archive system)

This exercise involved using the search facility to bring up only full news reports, hereafter described as 'packages', which aired on BBC World News TV and were created by either BBC World News or the production team for the domestic BBC News at Six and BBC News at Ten programme. The key term 'Syria' was used, and the search range included titles and descriptions for packages created from 15 March 2011 to 15 March 2014 - a period of three years. It later emerged that this search did not cover all reports on the topic, as a different term might have been used in the name or report description, such as 'Damascus' or 'Assad'.

However, given the ad-hoc way in which some of the other packages were named - either by towns or under certain groups, such as 'FSA, Damascus' - it was not possible to fully gauge the scope of how many different terms had been used.

The search did, however, take in any packages that had 'Syria' written in the description portion of ENPS. In total 1436 news packages came up in the 'Syria' search and these were arranged by date. Given that this included descriptions, it was thought to be a fairly representative sample, and so other search terms were not used beyond this one.

Each package had a separate description, and basic information such as date of publication, time codes and overall length. It was also possible to get rights information about the individual packages by clicking on an icon in Jupiter. This gave a breakdown of the source of the content which was used in the news package in the form of a timeline, though all this information was not always available, as will be reported in more detail later.

In addition to the metadata available in Jupiter, further information was available on each package by looking at ENPS. Using the dates of news packages it was possible to correlate these with each day's running orders for BBC World News and to look at the relevant cues (the script that was used by a TV presenter to introduce a news package, if that report was used on BBC World News television). It was also possible to access details of what the 'astons' were. 'Astons' originally referred to particular captions created by a branded broadcasting company, Aston Broadcast Systems. However, the term is now used within the BBC to describe any name straps or clip description captions that appear on the screen during transmission.

This additional information, in some cases, helped paint a picture of how news producers described or referred to certain non BBC or non-agency content, unverified footage or 'amateur footage'. That said, it was later discovered that many packages containing this content have no warnings or descriptions referring to the source of the type of footage.

The packages which were coded were found via the search carried out in Jupiter. Given the nature of news, and the fact that the six and ten o'clock news programmes might have their own versions of a news report on any given day, it was decided that every fifth package would be coded. On any one day it would be rare for more than five Syria packages to be produced, and it was thought that a 20% sample would be representative of the reports produced over the three-year period of the

conflict focused on in this research. It also avoided the risk of coding two very similar versions of the same package.

Devising the codebook

Basic information available in Jupiter was imported into the codebook for each package that had been selected for coding. This information included the BBC package name, date of publication and length of the report in seconds (for ease of comparison). Jupiter also listed whether a report was published by World News or the six or ten o'clock news bulletins as, detailed in Figure 3.3.

(Figure 3.3: Copy of the codebook created in Excel)

In addition, a number of other fields were devised and added into the codebook in order to further code the information for analysis later. Table 3.1 lists all the fields which were selected and into which data was coded.

Codebook Field	Description of field coded
Field 1	Package name
Field 2	Date item published
Field 3	Outlet
Field 4	Duration of package
Field 5	Does package open with UGC?
Field 6	Is the clip UGC? Y/N

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Field 7	UGC overall length (seconds)
Field 8	Shot list
Field 9	Individual UGC clip duration
Field 10	Is originator of clip evident? Y/N
Field 11	Audience made aware of originator? Y/N
Field 12	Where content obtained from?
Field 13	Are audience made aware of this?
Field 14	How is this depicted? Cue (1), aston (2), script (3), logo (4)
Field 15	Clip description (e.g. amateur footage)
Field 16	How is this depicted? Cue (1), aston (2), script (3), logo (4)
Field 17	Verification warning? Y/N
Field 18	Verification wording
Field 19	Verification format cue (1), aston (2), script (3), logo (4)
Field 20	Running orders
Field 21	Is there a Jupiter description?
Field 22	Number of 'Key UGC' files that day
Field 23	Additional notes

(Table 3.1: Full list of fields in content analysis codebook)

The codebook included a field related to the use of UGC clips in each news report. If a piece of footage which was used in a report was thought to be from a member of the public or a non-professional source, then it would be categorised as UGC. The term UGC was used as the description for ease of comparison, as was discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 1). The codebook also included a field indicating whether the report started with a UGC clip. Then, for the remainder of the package, individual shots were categorised as to whether they appeared to be UGC. While the timesheet provided in Jupiter was used as a starting point, it transpired in some cases that the timings were in fact not entirely accurate. For example, the first 30 seconds of a package might be UGC - and may be labelled as such - but in fact this could be a sequence of three different shots (say 0-7 seconds, 7-12 seconds and then 12-30 seconds). These 'clips' may not be from the same source, or even showing the same place. Therefore, it was necessary to recode the timings so that each individual clip that made up a bigger sequence within the package was recorded. This was a time-consuming exercise but it was felt that, to give an accurate idea of the proportion of UGC used, each clip needed to be counted and categorised individually.

Having established whether a clip looked like UGC or not, each individual clip was coded to identify whether it was clear who had recorded the content, whether this information was relayed to the audience and where the video had been obtained from, e.g. Shaam News Network or YouTube.

If the codebook recorded that who had captured the content was relayed to the audience, the codebook also recorded the way in which this was done, e.g. through a cue, a script, an aston or a logo. These are explained as follows:

1: Cue: This referred to the introduction to a news package, and the information was gathered by including scripts from the World News running order in which the package first ran.

2: Aston: These are name or credit tabs which appear onscreen, usually at the bottom of the screen, to describe a person speaking or to credit content. Astons do not automatically appear in the archive of the report on Jupiter, so this information again was gathered by consulting the running orders for BBC World News on the day the package first aired.

3: Script: This refers to the voiceover or 'track' used in a package. This information was gathered by watching and coding the news reports.

4: Logo: This refers to a logo which was burnt or watermarked onto footage, something separate to credit astons. Wardle et al (2014) found that such logos were usually put on by someone other than a news organisation and as such the content was 'credited' as being UGC. In the case of this data collection, logo information was gathered by watching and coding the news reports and identifying watermarked logos on a piece of footage.

The same criteria were also used to determine whether there was a description of the clip, e.g. amateur footage, whether this was relayed to the audience and, if so, in what format. Finally, each clip was coded to determine whether there were any verification warnings in relation to it, whether the warnings were made obvious to viewers and what format the warnings took, whether it be in the script, or via an aston.

<u>**Sourcing**</u>

Two different fields were included in order to determine the possible source and/or the author of the content. The first was Field 10 in the codebook - 'Is originator of clip evident? Y/N'; the second was Field 12 in the codebook – 'Where content obtained from?' However, if the data gathered showed a clip was obtained from YouTube this did not tell the researcher anything about the author, their background, or who to attribute content to. This in itself was very problematic, as a credit of 'YouTube' was used frequently, as is reported in the results. However, in terms of understanding sourcing practices this category was useful, as it aided understanding of where journalists found content which was later used. A more detailed discussion of the categories used in the codebook follows in the Results Chapters (Chapters 4 and 5), but the basic breakdown comprised:

- **Media Group:** This included local media groups such as Arbeen Media Bureau, Murters Zamalaka and Douma Media Group. These groups had an anti-regime viewpoint.

- **Rebel or Opposition Group:** This included Aleppo Media Centre and Shahba Press. Militant groups such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Ahrār ash-Shām - an Islamic Rebel Group - also came under this category.

- **Arabic media agencies:** Douma City, Shaam News Network and Ugarit News outlets.

- **YouTube:** This was used as a sourcing category only when another category could not be identified and rights information stated YouTube in its source description.

- **Western media agencies:** These included EVN, Reuters and APTN. Similar to YouTube, this category was used as a last resort.

- **Other:** This referred to content which didn't fit into one of the other categories and included agency footage where the Jupiter shotlist advised what the content, was but not it source, e.g. UGC, AmVid etc.

- **Unknown:** This category was used when source information was not relayed in the news package or in the rights information, nor could it be gleaned from viewing or analysing footage.

It was usually Field 10 (Originator) that would provide information about the content's author, although certain groups would put a logo onto the footage, giving a sense of where the material came from. However, depending on how that group was categorised (e.g. Rebel Group, Unknown, Western Media Agency), that attribution might later say something about the type of content and potentially the content authors. For example, some content was categorised as being from one of the rebel groups but was labelled as being 'extremist fighters' in the clip description and by an aston. It later transpired to be a clip from Islamic State. The challenges around this are discussed more in the following Results and Discussion Chapters (Chapter 4 and 6).

Additional information on the overall package which was entered into the codebook included which World News TV bulletin the package first ran on, whether there were any Key UGC files from that date available in ENPS and, if so, how many. There was also a field to add miscellaneous data, such as indicating that parts of the same video were used throughout, or that time codes on the timeline for each individual shot were not available or were logged incorrectly. For example, putting all footage from Reuters in as one clip when it might in fact be several different shots from different feeds.

<u>Intercoder reliability</u>

Intercoder reliability was carried out as "it is important to check that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent" (Weber 1990:12). The process is also a good way of ensuring that the classification process generates valid variables and, as is required for doctoral-level research, that the conditions for research can be replicated. Only by eliminating any sense of ambiguity in terms of coding is this possible.

With this in mind, a fellow researcher coded 10% of the 'text' selected for this study. As a result of this, two further categories were added to the codebook. The first category related to the type of 'voice' used in news packages and the other made it clear whether each news clip was being categorised from the outset as UGC.

Cohen's kappa was used to calculate intercoder reliability, as it was for two coders, rather than Fleiss' kappa which is for multiple coders. The calculation was also given for Scott's pi (Table 3.2). In the coding of the TV news reports, the kappa coefficient was 0.913. According to Neuendorf, "Coefficients of .90 or greater are nearly always acceptable, .80 or greater is acceptable in most situations, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices" (Neuendorf 2002:145). Therefore, the kappa values obtained in this research suggest excellent reliability.

Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	N Agreements	N Disagreements	N Cases	N Decisions
96.2%	0.913	0.913	25	1	26	52

(Table 3.2: Results of intercoder reliability for content analysis of BBC TV news packages)

Section 5: Document analysis

Content analysis is essentially a way of describing (or explaining) and quantifying phenomena (Krippendorff 2012). In addition to accessing the cues and package aston information in ENPS, it was also possible to look at the 'Key UGC' files relating to Syria that were kept on each date. These files or operational notes related to pieces of video which had been examined by staff from the UGC Hub. Having embarked on the quantitative content analysis, it quickly became apparent these files contained a huge amount of information pertaining to news packages, and not all of it could entered into the codebook. There was a risk that, by excluding or condensing certain data - such as background information relating to how the 'best UGC' files had been verified and who had looked at them - key themes, trends or patterns in terms of newswork would be missed, and as such the analysis would be incomplete. Weber in particular suggested that when carrying out content analysis, "where possible the entire text should be analysed. This preserved the semantic coherence of texts as units" (1994:43).

As a result, it was decided that the content analysis would also include another element, a deeper analysis of the 'Key UGC' files and documents associated with the UGC. This document analysis allowed the researcher to make "an account of accounts of events" as depicted in television news (Fields 1988:191).

> Qualitative content analysis defines itself within this framework as an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification.
> (Mayring 2000:online)

In many instances the clips referred to in the 'Key UGC' files had been through some kind of verification process. Sometimes a description of that process and a link to where it had come from - for example a YouTube URL - was included in the file. While it would be impossible to fully correlate whether the 'Key UGC' clips being described in the ENPS files were the same ones that appeared in that day's packages, this information gives a sense of the work done by journalists using this content, as well as insight into the verification process which would not be possible otherwise. Given that a number of the available packages were edited overnight and first broadcast at 5am, it was decided that for these early packages (i.e. those published before 12pm), it would be better to refer back to the previous day's Key UGC files. Therefore, in some cases the UGC files researched in tandem with the Jupiter package might not be from the same day.

Qualitative content analysis, like quantitative analysis, required that units "be standardized and countable regardless of the questions one is trying to answer" (Fields 1988:184). So, in terms of data collection, while the document analysis still involved looking at a large amount of data and counting units, it also included seeking out further thematic information on that data over and above counting and looking at the presence or absence of certain fields. Quantitative content analysis usually produces results which can be displayed numerically, whereas this process involved looking at themes and more of the detail that came with those numbers.

Fields, who carried out qualitative content analysis into television news, pointed out that that thematic approaches used in his research relied "on an understanding of the specific structure of whatever content is being examined and on one's theoretical goals" (1988:184). The same can be said for this research. In order to carry out the research, it was important to understand where the content being

analysed was coming from, and how further information would add value in addition to the existing quantitative content analysis.

The document analysis involved looking at data associated with the individual news reports which were broadcast on BBC World News TV throughout the same research period and that were coded quantitatively. The data collection process itself involved examining information collated by the UGC Hub at the BBC about key pieces of footage which were made available to BBC outlets, over and above counting the UGC clips used on air.

This information included an analysis of Key UGC files relating to Syria that were kept for each day. These files are stored in the ENPS system in a dedicated folder and are essentially 'operational notes' which include details about pieces of video that had been examined by staff from the UGC Hub. The data was stored separately from Jupiter in most cases, but was collected at the same time as the larger quantitative content analysis of broadcast news reports was carried out. When coding each news package, the number of Key UGC files from that day were also noted and copies were made of them in an Excel document. As discussed earlier, given that a number of the packages analysed were from overnight and first broadcast at 5am, it was decided that for these early packages (i.e. those published before 12pm), it would be better to refer back to the previous day's Key UGC files. Therefore, in some cases the UGC files gathered in tandem with the Jupiter package data might not be from the same day. There were also some days when there would be no Key UGC files in ENPS.

Despite being collected at the same time as the data in the broadcasted reports, the content of the Key UGC files was examined separately. By carrying out this research in addition to the quantitative content analysis and by looking for emerging themes in the data, it was possible to explain certain phenomena related to the news reports which aired, as well as the journalistic practices which surrounded such content. Therefore, overall it was hoped the research would show that "the structure of the coverage is grounded in the social processes of doing newswork" (Fields 1988:191, see also Epstein 1974, Tuchman 1978).

Of course, the key to carrying out content analysis is to reduce the amount of information that needs to be analysed, while retaining useful and interesting data. So it was important to focus on the research questions and think what certain

information added, and only look at relevant units for analysis. It was therefore prudent to remember the advice of Elo and Kyngä: "Successful content analysis requires that the researcher can analyse and simplify the data and form categories that reflect the subject of study in a reliable manner" (2008:112).

The other important thing to highlight is that the document analysis was carried out *after* the quantitative content analysis had been completed and the relevant news reports viewed. This meant that the researcher already had a base understanding of the most common clip descriptions, themes and sources. This made it easier to understand the labelling and processes detailed in the 'Key UGC' files. It also meant, at times, it was possible to identify specific clips used and triangulate the details seen on screen with what was found in particular running orders and what had been written down by BBC staff about certain footage.

Other Limitations

One weakness of this method of data collection was that the document analysis depended on interpretation by an analyst and was therefore "the product of that person's bias, filters or prejudices" (Stonbely 2013;online). This is an issue which has already been touched on in relation to phenomenology and the qualitative interviews. That said, Weber outlined that "there is no simple *right* way to do content analysis. Instead investigators must judge what methods are most appropriate for their substantive problems" (1990:10). Therefore, for the content analysis, document analysis and related interviewing, any personal judgements or background knowledge had to be considered when analysing results, and it was important as a researcher to be clear about my position throughout the research process.

The quantitative aspect is the "single characteristic on which all the definitions [of the method] agree" and is the only thing that allows the analyst to make claims about the relative occurrence of various indicators in a text (Berelson 1952:203 cited in Stonbely 2013).

In terms of the limitations of content analysis and document analysis, in some respects it depends on the interpretation by the analyst. Concerns related to this can be mitigated to a certain extent by undertaking intercoder reliability, as has been discussed, though this can have problems itself. For example, in this particular

situation, the primary researcher and the researcher carrying out the intercoder reliability were trained in content analysis at the same institution. Therefore, there was a likelihood they would code in a similar way. However, as long as any issues were noted down, there is nothing to suggest that coding was an unreliable method (see Stonbely 2013, Hall 1980).

In some respects, carrying out the content analysis was the most challenging part of this research, partly due to the restrictions on me as a researcher. The data collection and subsequent coding had to be done in the main news areas on BBC premises, on computers which had Jupiter installed on them. When the content analysis actually began, it was clear that while there was a lot of copyright information about video clips available in Jupiter, sometimes the timings of these clips did not correlate with what was seen on screen. In cases such as this, the time codes given for individual news reports were adjusted with more accurate time codes, though the original data for each package was kept as a separate Excel sheet. This 'recoding' was a time consuming process.

Also, there were some cases where content was catalogued as one type of footage according to the codebook but, after watching it, it was clear it should actually come under another category. For example, information in Jupiter stated that part of a package from 12 February 2014 included a clip which had come from Reuters, but it in fact had a Shaam News Network logo on it. Therefore, while it may have come via Reuters, it was not their original content, which could potentially have skewed the results. In other cases content was just labelled as 'unknown' in the copyright section, so it was unclear whether it was UGC or agency footage. In others still, the content said UGC when it was from Syrian TV, a state-owned station, and this discrepancy was identified by looking at the logo watermarked onto the footage, if there was one. In such conflicting cases, the content was coded depending on what could be derived from looking at the content. Therefore a clip that said 'Reuters' on the copyright log, but showed a Douma City logo, would be coded as 'Douma City', with the caveat it came 'via Reuters' in terms of where it was obtained from. These discrepancies are another reason why the document analysis of the 'Key UGC' files was carried out after the quantitative content analysis. A fuller discussion around the challenges of coding different categories, in particular the rebel groups, follows in the results chapters.

This chapter has sought to outline the key aspects of the proposed study by highlighting some of the existing literature and giving a brief overview of the methodology. It detailed the plan to use three data collection methods, and highlighted potential ethical issues surrounding both the research content and the respondents. The next chapter looks at findings which emerged as a result of the data collection and analysis processes.

Chapter 4: Content Analysis

Part 1: Quantitative results

This section outlines the results from the quantitative content analysis that formed part of this research project. As previously outlined in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), this research involved coding individual news reports - known as packages - which were broadcast on BBC World News Television. The timeframe for these reports spanned a period of three years, from Sunday 20 March 2011, to Monday 17 March 2014. Every fifth package was analysed and the data was recorded using a previously devised codebook. As well as counting the quantity of UGC used in news reports, each separate UGC clip was coded for a number of other criteria. These variables included: where the content was obtained from; whether the audience was aware of the content source and if so how they were informed; how content was described on air; how the descriptions were relayed to the audience; whether verification warnings were used.

This chapter details the main findings derived from the content analysis exercise. The detailed and complex research yielded a large amount of data and this section gives a general outline of that data. The chapter concludes with an overall results summary which introduces particular themes, or trends, which are expanded on in the discussion.

Method

In order to ensure that all coded detail was accurate, a visual basic automation programme was run through the codebook. The programme - which was developed specifically for this piece of research by a software developer - went through each row of data within the Excel spreadsheet, collating the various attributes which were measured. These values were then outputted into several separate spreadsheets in order to make it easier to create the tables. As well as collating the information, the programme performed some basic checks on the consistency of the data to ensure there were no errors. For example, if a clip had been identified as being UGC, then

subsequent columns would be expected to have a certain range of values in them - they should not be empty. If they were empty this would be an error, which the programme would flag up.

In addition, the programme was also used to help check the validity of the data. This meant that where a column in the codebook required a specific range of answers, if there was something different written in these cells it would be highlighted. For example, some cells were expected to have a 'Yes' (Y) or 'No' (N) answer and others had numerical values, while other cells might have a range of text categories such as 'Unknown', 'Rebel Group' or 'Shaam News'. If something outside of these values was found in a cell, or indeed the cell was empty, this would be flagged up.

Having run the programme, there were a number of instances where certain values had been overlooked during the manual coding process. In particular, cells relating to three news packages which were analysed at the start of the research process had empty cells where there should have been a value, or in some cases they didn't have the correct data in them – e.g. data had been entered as 'Yes' instead of 'Y'. In one case a package had missed coding points, in that a clip had been coded as UGC but didn't have any other variables coded. As a result of running this programme it was possible to go back and recode the relevant packages. Overall, a total of 273 news packages were analysed using this data collection method. As outlined in Table 4.1, more than half (166) of the packages were created by World News, 62 packages were published onto the Jupiter system by BBC News at Ten, and 45 were published onto Jupiter by BBC News at Six.

Outlet/Channel	Number of packages
BBC News at Ten Packages	62
BBC News at Six Packages	45
World Packages	166
Total	**273**

(Table 4.1: Breakdown of news packages analysed as part of content analysis)

Drawing on the content analysis carried out, the research shows that 122 (41.3%) of the 273 news packages opened with user generated content (UGC). The average overall percentage of UGC used when considering whole packages was 21.7%.

These average percentages were calculated based on a sample of news reports broadcast over a three-year period. In order to give a more detailed depiction of the presence and use of UGC in news reports during this time frame, the sample was broken down further. This meant that research could move beyond the initial findings and, as a result, that the average percentage of UGC used in news packages could be viewed month by month (Figure 4.1).
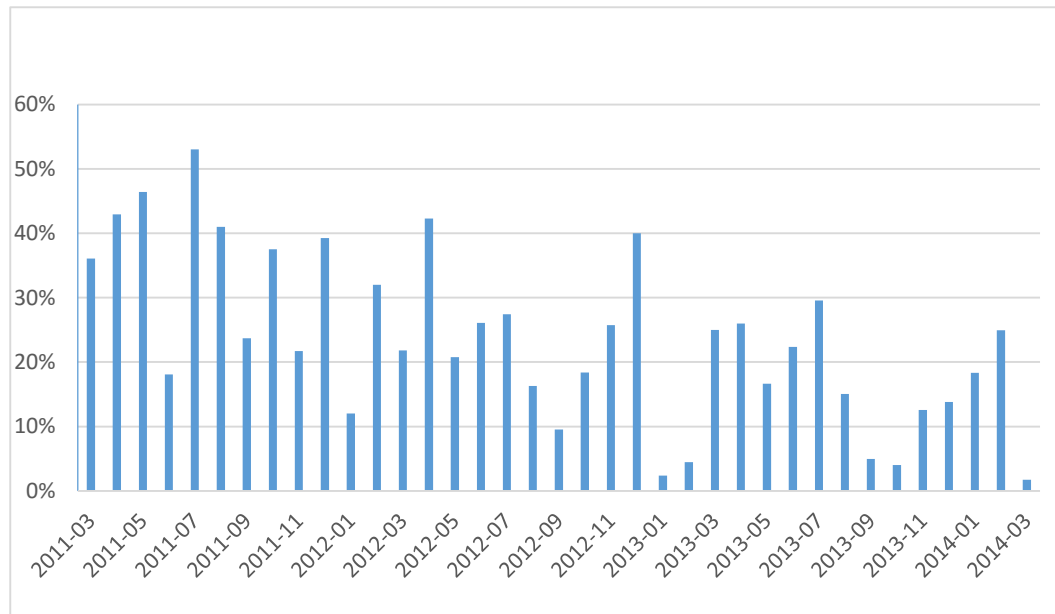
(Figure 4.1: Average % of UGC used in BBC News TV packages covering the Syria conflict which were broadcast on BBC World News Television between March 2011 and March 2014)

While there were some spikes in usage month to month, the overall timeline shows a downward trend in the use of UGC by the BBC in the coded news packages covering Syria, over the three-year period March 2011 to March 2014.

From the start of the conflict in March 2011, the graph saw an initial increase in the average amount (%) of UGC being used in news packages, rising in the first three months from 36.6% in March 2011, to 42.9% in April 2011 and to 46.6% in May 2011. Journalists were ejected from the country in the first months of the violence (Starr 2012), following which other western journalists could not legally enter Syria, and this led to a reliance on UGC. This, coupled with an increase in protests in the first months of the Syria conflict (which people recorded), might explain the initial increase. At this time, President Assad also announced certain laws would be passed to curb further protests, though by May 2011 the situation had escalated and tanks were deployed to Deraa, Baniyas, Homs and suburbs of

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Damascus. This again was content onlookers and activists were seemingly keen to capture. This and other elements are critically analysed and reflected upon in the Discussion chapter (Chapter 6). However, overall the data suggests that journalists used less UGC as the conflict went on.

The results illustrated in Figure 4.1 indicate that the biggest spike in UGC used throughout the whole three-year period came in July 2011, with the average percentage of UGC used in news packages broadcast in that month being 53.05%. This was the only month that saw a figure greater than 50%. This period was during the first few months of the conflict when Arab uprisings in other countries had died down. Also, western journalists at this stage were still unable to legally enter Syria and so, with the exception of a BBC Arabic journalist who was very restricted in her movements, journalists were largely relying on content coming out of the country (BBC Trust 2012a).

Overall there was a gradual decline in the use of footage, with the exception of a few months in the first year: October 2011 (37.5%), December 2011 (39.2%) and April 2012 (42.3%). Interestingly, high levels of UGC didn't necessarily equate to a large amount of overall output. While December 2011 had a high percentage of UGC as a monthly average, only five news packages were coded from that period. Of these, only one package - Paul Wood's reports from 7th December 2011 - was dispatched in the field with original BBC content from Syria in it, and even that included five UGC clips.

The remaining news packages coded in December, which referred to events in Syria specifically, mainly contained agency footage and UGC clips, as well as some footage reused from Wood's report to illustrate certain points. These were compiled by journalists in Lebanon, Jerusalem and London respectively.

After April 2012 the gradual drop in use of UGC continued, and by December 2012 the average percentage was 40%. Thereafter, in the last 15 months sampled up to March 2014, no month had a UGC average of more than 30%, again highlighting the overall reduction in the use of UGC as the conflict continued. A discussion of possible reasons for this and the overall implications of this development follows in the later Discussion chapter.

Varying percentages

While 21.7% was the overall UGC average, drawing on all 273 reports, there was also considerable variation in the percentage of UGC when looking at the sample, as Figure 4.2 illustrates.
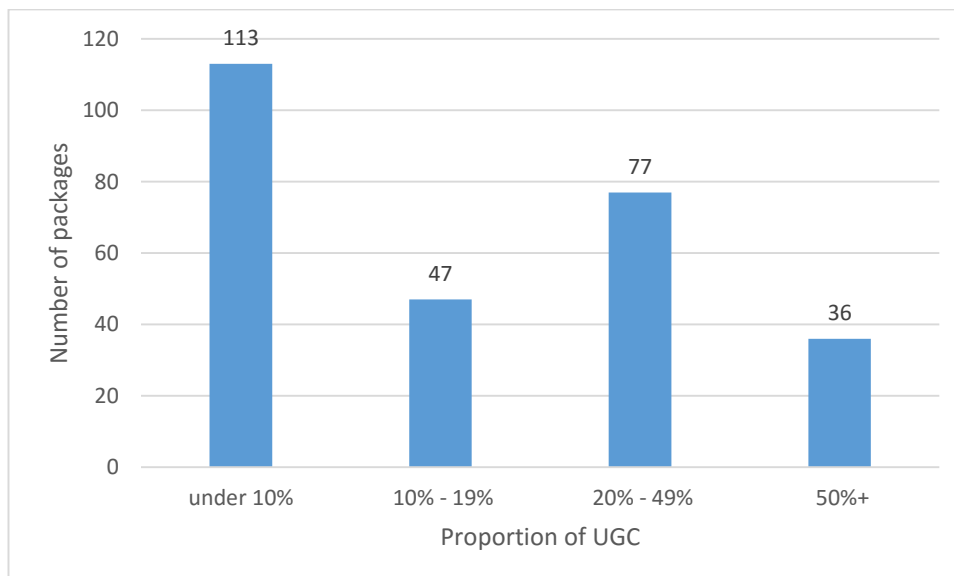
(Figure 4.2: Breakdown of proportion of UGC coded in BBC TV News reports about Syria which broadcast on BBC World News Television between March 2011 and March 2014 by percentage. n=273)

Of these packages, 113 had UGC footage which amounted to less than 10% of the overall news package content. Forty seven news packages contained UGC which made up 10-19% of the report, 77 packages featured UGC which amounted to between 20% and 49% of the overall report. In addition, of the 273 packages examined for UGC, 36 had content where the total percentage of UGC within the reports amounted to more than 50%. This suggests that while UGC was useful to depict events that could not be shown otherwise, it was frequently used in tandem with other non-UGC content, such as Syria State TV footage, agency footage and, where possible, original BBC footage. Indeed, when packages which contained original BBC content aired, the audience would be told explicitly. Ian Pannell's report from 16 April 2012, which saw him filming with the Free Syrian Army in Idlib in Northern Syria, is a good example of this. In fact, the cue into the package made it clear that Pannell had dispatched from there, stating, "Access for journalists in Syria is restricted, but our correspondent Ian Pannell and cameraman Darren

Conway sent this report from inside Idlib Province." (BBC internal document, 16 April 2012).

Given the value of this content, the footage would frequently be used in other reports over the following days, to depict events on the ground. Pannell's report and also Jeremy Bowen's coverage of the battle for the Christian city of Maaloula (which first aired on 11th September 2013) are both good examples of this, as clips from their packages were used in other BBC reports in the days and months that followed, to illustrate the violence happening inside Syria.

Verification

While audiences were very occasionally informed that content used in a news package was UGC, and may have learned where UGC clips were sourced or obtained from, this is not the same as actually stating that the content is believed to be true or accurate. One of the main challenges for journalists with little or no access to a region where news events are taking place is that they must rely on footage from other sources. In situations such as the conflict in Syria, those sources may not be traditional news agencies to whom organisations pay a subscription fee each year, and may not in fact be journalists at all. With this in mind, steps may need to be taken to ensure content is what it purports to be. Therefore, UGC clips appearing in news packages were also coded to see whether they contained a verification warning, and Figure 4.3 details the findings. The difficulty was, only if it was an official source (or a BBC crew themselves) that captured the footage, could BBC journalists be certain the content was real or an accurate portrayal of events. Although, as is discussed in Discussion chapter (Chapter 6), certain sources were more trusted than others.
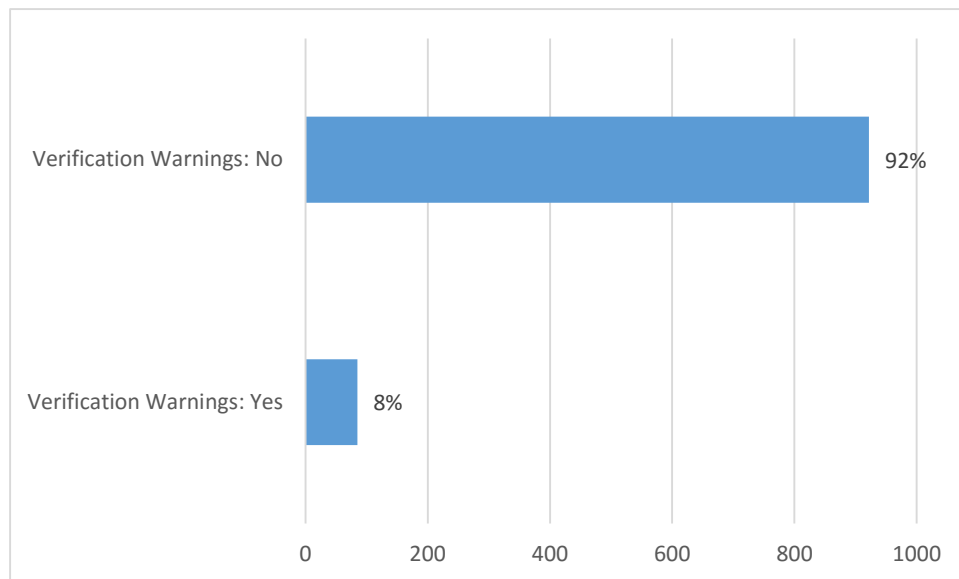
(Figure 4.3: percentage of UGC clips used in BBC News TV reports about Syria which aired on BBC World News TV between March 2011 and March 2014 which carried a verification warning. n=1007)

Despite UGC being used in news packages throughout the three years analysed, verification warnings were only in place for 85 (8%) of the clips which were coded. This meant that the remaining 922 clips (92%) which were coded for this research did not have a verification warning, despite coming from a non-BBC source.

In some cases, there were details in Jupiter stating whether the content was UGC, and in the package the timeline content would be coded in red on Jupiter. However, there would not necessarily be detail about whether a piece had been verified within that information. There are of course exceptions to this and, in the rights information in Jupiter for certain clips, there might be details - as in the case of the Jupiter files relating to a package which aired on 21 December 2013, shown in Figure 4.4.
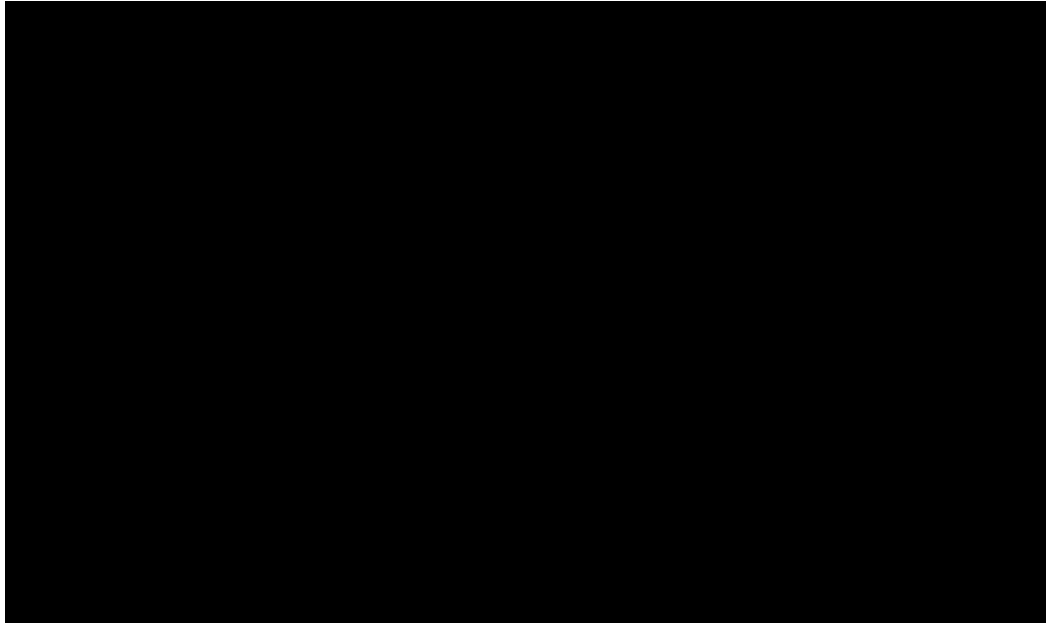
(Figure 4.4: Screengrab from Jupiter of news package on Syria conflict which aired on 21 December 2013. The timeline shows a red line and an 'R' in the copyright box. The copyright information and restrictions state this footage has not been independently verified, but this did not result in an on air warning for this particular clip.)

As well as the red 'R' restriction which suggests the content should have a warning, within the copyright information one particular video clip which runs from 00:00:40:06 to 00:00:58:22 is labelled 'AMVID VIA The Associated Press' and further states:

> 'APTN HAVE NOT INDEPENDENTLY VERIFIED THE CONTENT OF THIS
> VIDEO OBTAINED FROM A SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITE. IF YOU WISH TO
> USE IT CONTACT THE UGC HUB ON XXXX'
> (BBC internal document, 21 December 2013)

While this is not directly ordering whoever was using the footage to use a warning, the advisory instruction would strongly suggest that some kind of caveat should have been used. Further investigation reveals that the clip to which the written warning information referred was UGC from the Local Co-ordinating Committee in Ankhel, which is a pro-regime change media organisation, and fits under the 'Media' category. This is identifiable by the watermarked logo, but the verification procedure (as will be discussed in the next chapter) involved much more than just identifying a source, hence the advisory would have been put in place.

Interestingly, it was not the piece of UGC which had an in-house advisory that got an 'on air' warning. In this particular report, the script referred to 'these unverified pictures' when another UGC clip, one from Shahba Press, was on screen at 0:26s (Figure 4.5). This underlines that even when verification advisories are suggested, they might get ignored or a warning put in place elsewhere.
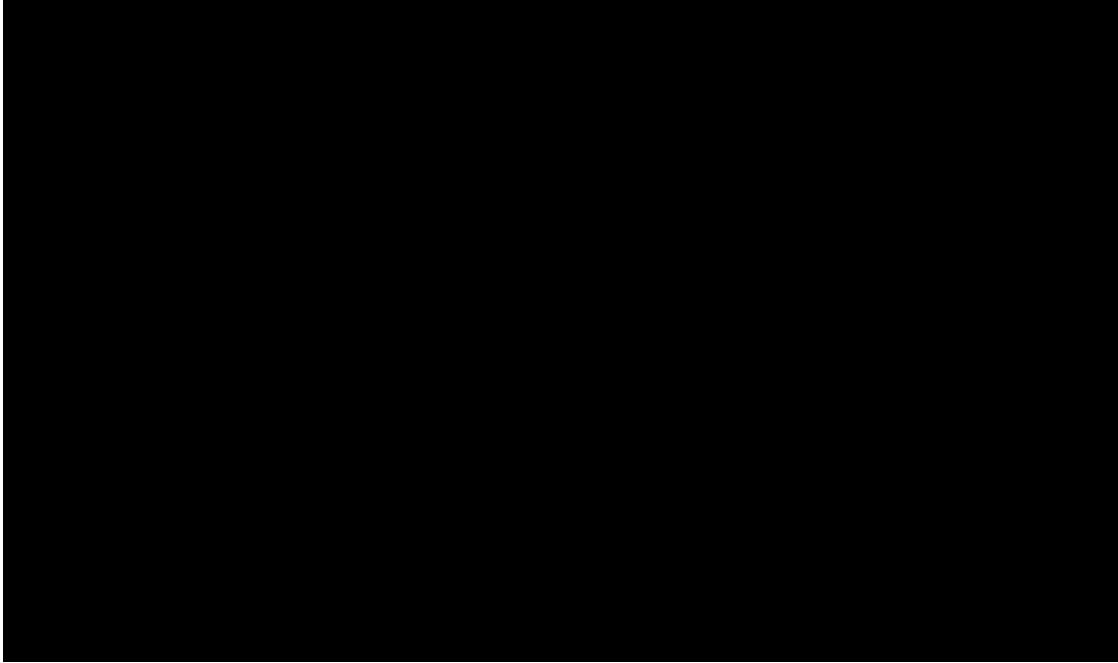
(Figure 4.5: Screengrab of Jupiter showing news report using footage with Shahba Press logo. Rights information says this content is 'Not Unknown' but the logo meant it was coded as 'Media'. The footage didn't contain any advisories, but a verbal on air warning was given when it aired in a news report)

This is perhaps typical of the few packages where warnings were used – they didn't always correlate with what those verifying the content suggested, and their use was nowhere near as rigorous as the actual process of checking the footage. This finding is expanded upon in the second half of this results chapter, which focuses on a more qualitative analysis of the BBC World News TV coverage of the Syria conflict.

Audience awareness

While it was possible to use metadata and copyright information in order to code where a piece of UGC had been sourced from, this information was not always

passed on to the audience. The next section examined whether, once a piece was categorised as UGC, the audience were made aware of its source.
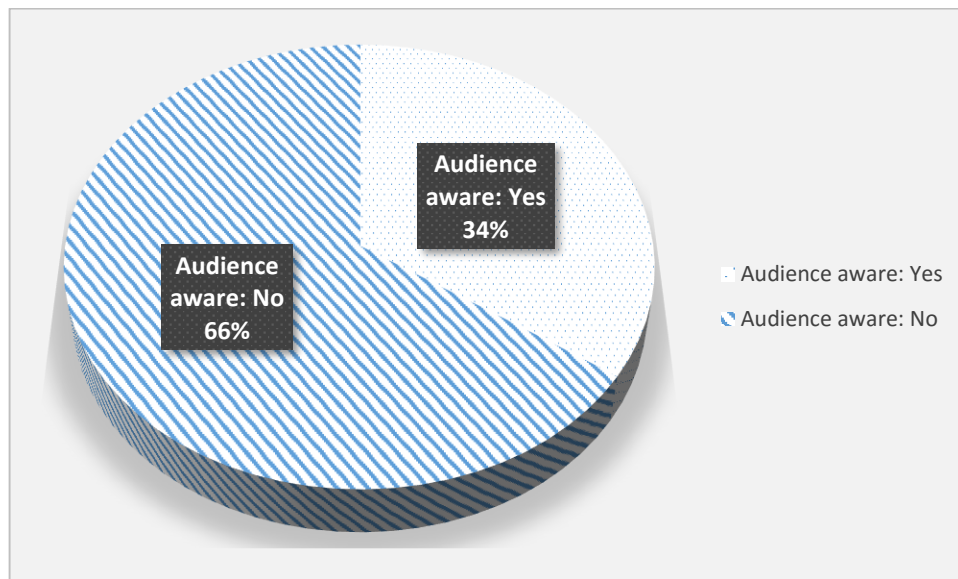
(Figure 4.6: Proportion of UGC clips included BBC News TV reports on Syria conflict which aired on BBC World News TV between March 2011 and March 2014, where the audience was made aware of source of UGC. n=1007)

Figure 4.6 highlights that in two thirds of cases (66%) the audience was not informed of where content had been obtained or sourced from. This is not the same being told whether content was UGC, which was a further category that was coded and will be explored later on in this chapter. The BBC and other media outlets frequently used newswire services and agency footage from the likes of Reuters, without either a credit or citing it as a source. This finding raises interesting questions about whether content sources should be given if that information is available, and if the content comes from a non-traditional outlet. This is tackled in the Discussion chapter.

<u>Crediting content</u>

The research also posed the question, "If the audience is made aware of the source of the content, how was this depicted?" The way in which audiences were told where UGC had been obtained from, or to whom it was 'credited', were broken down into four formats: via cue, aston, script or logo. A breakdown and explanation of these formats was outlined in the Methodology chapter, but in brief:

1: Cue: This referred to the introduction to a news package.

2: Aston: These are name or credit tabs which appear onscreen.

3: Script: This refers to the voiceover or 'track' used in a package.

4: Logo: This refers to a logo which was burnt or watermarked onto footage, something separate to credit astons. As was the case with the previous 'content source' question, each time a different logo appeared in a package a screengrab was taken of it in a bid to identify the source if it was not immediately obvious. For example, 'Douma City' and 'Shaam News Network' have English lettering and easily identifiable logos, but other unknown logos would still be put under this same 'logo' category. The results of this coding are detailed in Figure 4.7:
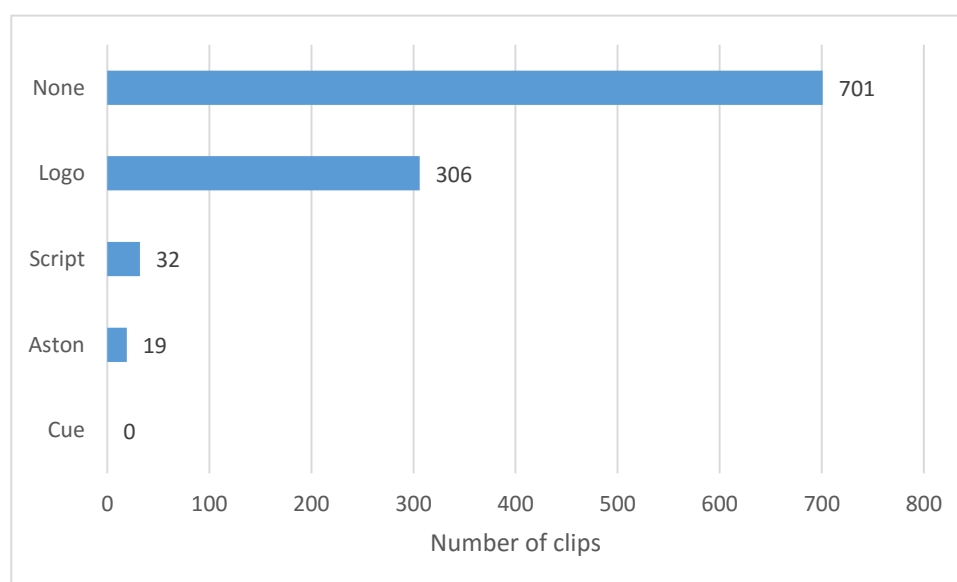
(Figure 4.7: Format in which audience were given source detail of UGC clips within BBC TV news packages on Syria which aired on BBC World News TV between March 2011 and March 2014. n=1007)

The content analysis found that the vast majority of clips which were coded as UGC (701) did not credit a source on air. Where there was some form of source depiction, logos were present in most cases (306) although, given that the BBC did not put them in place, there is an argument that while they may have informed the audience of where UGC clips were obtained from if the audience recognised the symbol, it was not a direct example of crediting content. This issue is highlighted by Wardle et al in their 2014 work, which found broadcasters often used logos as a default way of crediting, though for the audience this may not go far enough. Voiceover scripts referred to content sources in 32 cases and only 19 clips had their

sources identified via astons. Overall, having consulted scripts found in respective running orders which included in the reports, none of the content was credited or referred to in cues used to introduce news packages. This might be because packages could be used elsewhere, such as online, and were generally expected to be self-contained.

Sources of content

The ways in which UGC comes into the hands of producers at the BBC can vary greatly. Staff interviewed as part of this research stated that - in an ideal world - all UGC would go through the dedicated Hub, but that in reality footage could be processed elsewhere, and research findings suggest information is not always universally catalogued. However, by looking at shotlists and other metadata which accompanied the coded news packages, it was in some cases possible to discern where content had been obtained from. This section focuses on where content was obtained from and also whether audience members were made aware of this content source. In some cases this information was not apparent just by viewing the footage, but also by consulting shotlists which were included in the codebook.

If the source was apparent just by viewing the content then this was catalogued; if the source was indicated via the rights list which gives 'restrictions' and source information shot by shot in Jupiter, and thus not readily available to audiences, this was also marked. There was a large variation in sources (App.3) and these were broken down into sub-categories.

Explaining sub-categories

As an illustration of sub-categories, the package by Caroline Hawley - which was broadcast on Sunday 31 July 2011 - had one UGC clip at one minute and seven seconds (1.07.16) into the package, and the shotlist which contained rights details suggested this clip was from 'Ugarit News via APTN' (see Table 4.2).

SYRIA/HAWLEY/1800/31/7   Sun Jul 31 18:00:00 BST 2011

00:00:00:00   00:00:11:00   SHAMS Amvid Via APTN   A   Care:
Usage Restrictions Not Known

00:00:11:00   00:00:22:19   SHAMS Amvid Via APTN   A   Care: Usage Restrictions Not Known
00:00:22:20   00:00:30:15   SHAMS Amvid Via Reuters   A   Care: Usage Restrictions Not Known
00:00:30:20   00:00:59:15   SHAMS Amvid Via Reuters   A   Care: Usage Restrictions Not Known
00:00:40:20   00:00:59:15   SHAMS Amvid Via Reuters   A   Care: Usage Restrictions Not Known
00:00:59:00   00:01:07:08   SHAMS Amvid Via Reuters   A   Care: Usage Restrictions Not Known
00:01:07:16   00:01:22:08   Ugarit News Via APTN   A   Care: Usage Restrictions Not Known
00:01:22:09   00:01:32:08   SHAMS Amvid Via APTN   A   Care: Usage Restrictions Not Known

(Table 4.2: Shotlist from SYRIA/HAWLEY/1800/31/7 package exported from Jupiter into Excel)

The shotlist was used as the primary source of information for finding out where content had been obtained from, although if there was additional information detailed in Jupiter this would be included in the notes exported to Excel. Therefore, when it came to narrowing down the content for analysis for the 1:07:16 clip, the content source was coded as 'Ugarit News'. Another package, by Jim Muir from 3rd March 2012, had a clip which appeared at 00.36.12 seconds and was labelled in the rights shotlist as coming from 'YouTube'. However, upon watching the report it was apparent that the clip had a Ugarit News logo (Table 4.3), and, therefore, the clip would be coded 'Ugarit'. This shows that sources could be more clearly determined by viewing content for confirmation.

00:00:00:00   00:00:07:04   syrian tv   A   Limited news use under fair dealing. Check with senior news editor before use. No live use
00:00:07:05   00:00:21:15   G   NO RESTRICTION
00:00:21:16   00:00:36:11   Am Vid via YouTube   A   CARE: Usage restrictions not identified. syria/youtube syria/hospital/0822/6/2
00:00:36:12   00:00:36:18   Youtube   A   Usage restrictions not known--check reuse
00:00:36:19   00:00:37:02   Youtube   A   Usage restrictions not known--check reuse
00:01:00:16   00:01:01:14   G   NO RESTRICTION
00:01:01:15   00:01:10:23   Don't Know   A   This video just uploaded shows the French journalist, Edith Bouvier, who was hit yesterday in Homs alongside Marie Colvin and French cameraman Remi Ochlik.
00:01:10:24   00:01:14:05   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:14:06   00:01:16:22   G   NO RESTRICTION
00:01:16:23   00:01:23:14   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:10:24   00:01:14:05   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:14:06   00:01:16:22   G   NO RESTRICTION
00:01:16:23   00:01:23:14   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:10:24   00:01:14:05   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:14:06   00:01:16:22   G   NO RESTRICTION
00:01:16:23   00:01:23:14   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:23:15   00:01:26:20   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:26:21   00:01:37:19   Various   A   careful: restrictions not identified
00:01:16:23   00:01:23:14   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:23:15   00:01:26:20   EVN A   care: usage restrictions not identified
00:01:26:21   00:01:37:19   Various   A   careful: restrictions not identified

(Table 4.3 Shotlist from SYRIA/MUIR.1206/2/3 package exported from Jupiter into in Excel)

In some cases, determining the source involved looking at watermarked logos on the footage. Each time a different logo appeared in a package a screengrab was taken, in a bid to identify the source if it was not immediately obvious. For example, footage broadcast by the 'Douma City' outlets had English lettering and easily identified logos (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4.).
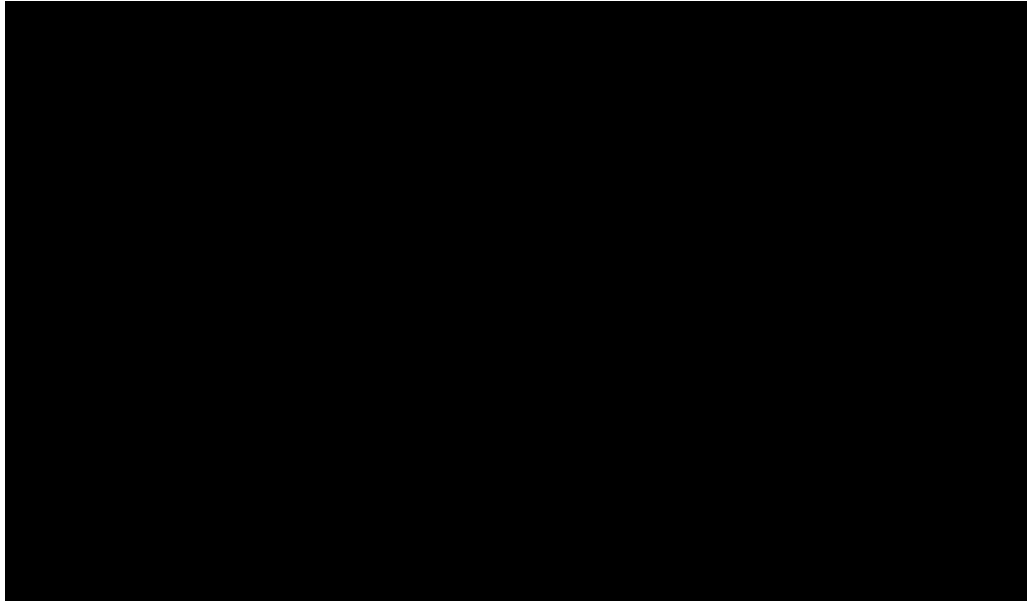
(Figure 4.8 BBC news package footage with Douma City logo watermarked was categorised as 'Arabic Media Agency')

Where it was not possible to name the source logo at the time, it was put into a 'general' category and researched afterwards. When it came to analysis, a large number of the logos were written in Arabic but were known to be organisations or groups such as social media channels or Local Co-ordinating Committees (LCCS). Others were thought to be rebel groups based on the style of the logo or translation of the Arabic writing used, for example the Free Syrian Army, Nusra Front and Islamic State (Figure 4.9).
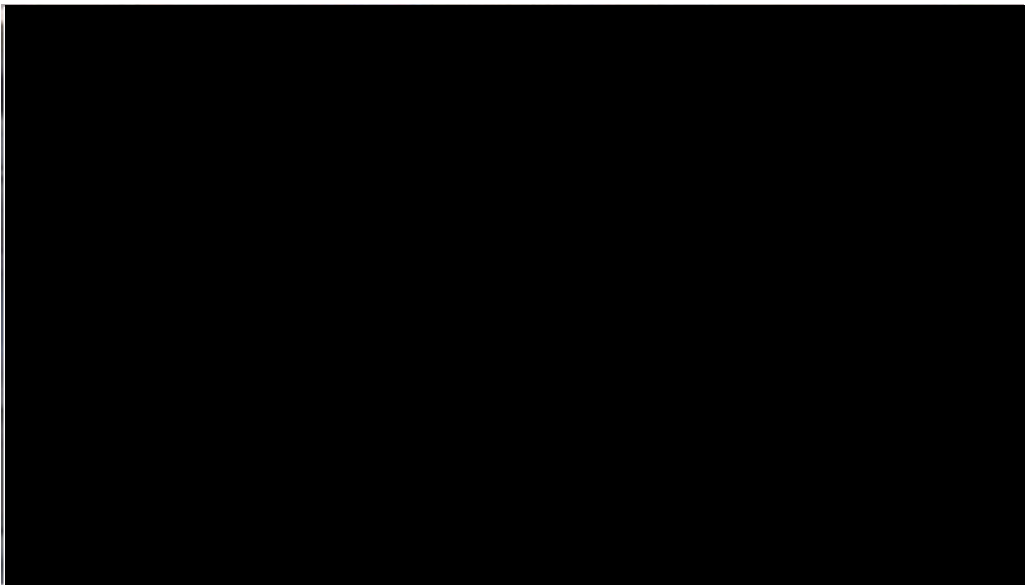
(Figure 4.9. Islamic State logo watermarked on BBC package was categorised as 'Rebel')

Where it was not immediately clear what the source was, it was recorded as 'Unknown'. A more detailed breakdown of the categories used in the codebook follows, expanding on what was outlined in the Methodology chapter.

Category breakdown

- **Media Group:** These included local media groups such as Arbeen Media Bureau, Murters Zamalaka and Douma Media Group (Figure 4.10). In some cases, these groups would have an agenda, perhaps giving an anti-Assad or anti-regime viewpoint, but they were not known to be directly affiliated to any organisation. Some of the Local Co-ordinating Committees which operated nationwide would also be placed in this category.
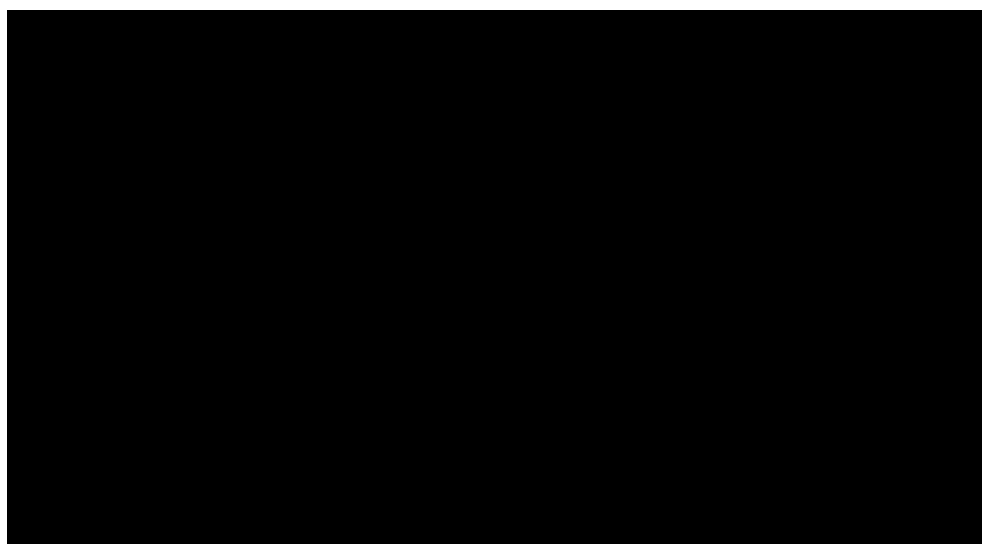
(Figure 4.10: Douma Media Centre logo watermarked on BBC footage categorised as 'Media')

- **Rebel or Opposition Group:** This included Aleppo Media Centre, an organisation that later transpired to be affiliated to the rebels in the Syria conflict and was considered to be 'pro revolution'. Social media channels such as Shahba Press, which was initially considered an opposition group but was later linked to rebel fighters, was also included in this group (see Figure 4.11).
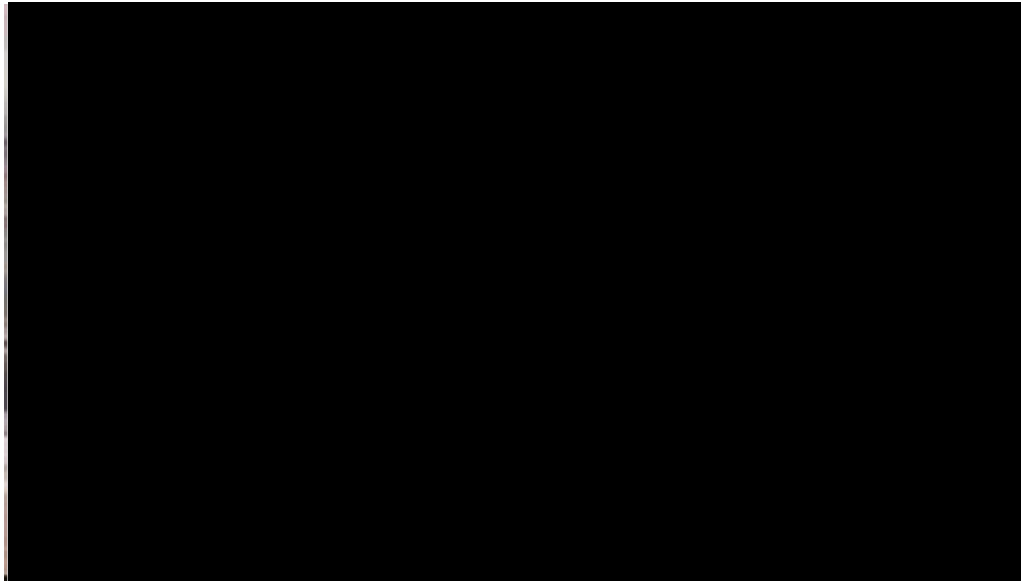
(Figure 4.11: Shahba Press logo watermarked on BBC footage was categorised as 'Rebel')

However, numerous other organisations which had a more militant perspective also came under this category. These included the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrār ash-Shām, an Islamic Rebel Group (Figure 4.12) and what was initially the Nusra Front, but during the course of the Syria conflict emerged as Islamic State (IS).
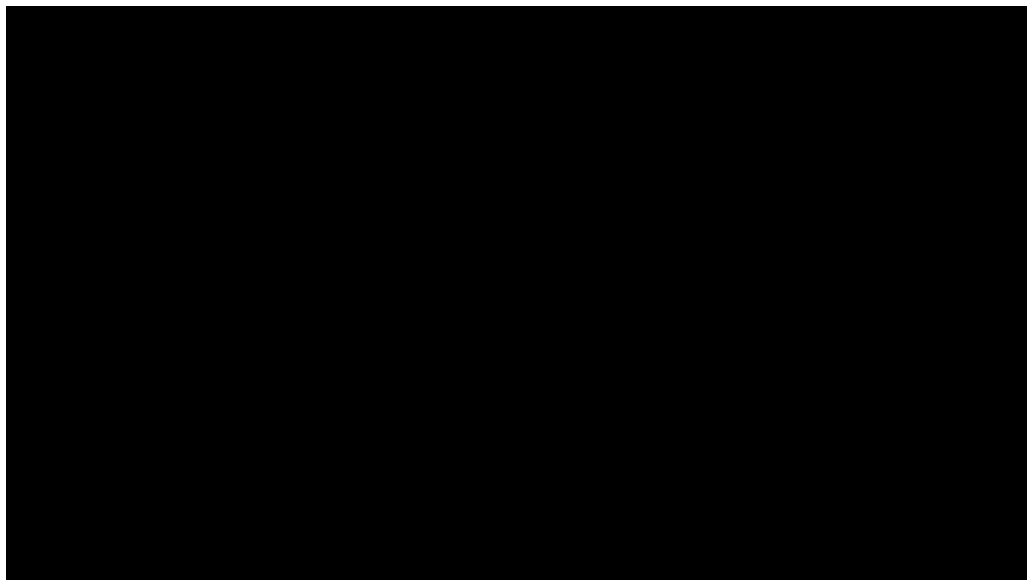
(Figure 4.12: The watermarked logo on BBC TV footage was identified as being from Islamic rebel group Ahrār ash-Shām, and was categorised as 'Rebel' in the codebook field)

- **Arabic media agencies:** 'Douma City', 'Shaam News Network' and 'Ugarit News' outlets had English lettering and easily identified logos, and were put into a category in their own right, namely 'Arabic media agencies'.

- **YouTube:** This was used as a sourcing category only when another category could not be identified and rights information stated YouTube in its source description.

- **Western media agencies:** These included EVN, Reuters and APTN. Similar to YouTube, this category was used as a last resort when the content could not be categorised as anything else. This stance was taken because, frequently, footage that stated it came via agencies in the rights details would have logos which suggested it was not original agency footage.

- **Other:** This referred to content which didn't fit into one of the other categories, and included agency footage where the Jupiter shotlist advised what the content was but not source e.g. UGC, AmVid etc.

- **Unknown:** An 'Unknown' category was included and was used when source information was not relayed in the news package or in the rights information, nor could it be gleaned from viewing or analysing footage. In some cases the shotlist actually stated 'Unknown' in terms of copyright.

Content source results

The results of this stage of coding and analysis are captured in Figure 4.13.
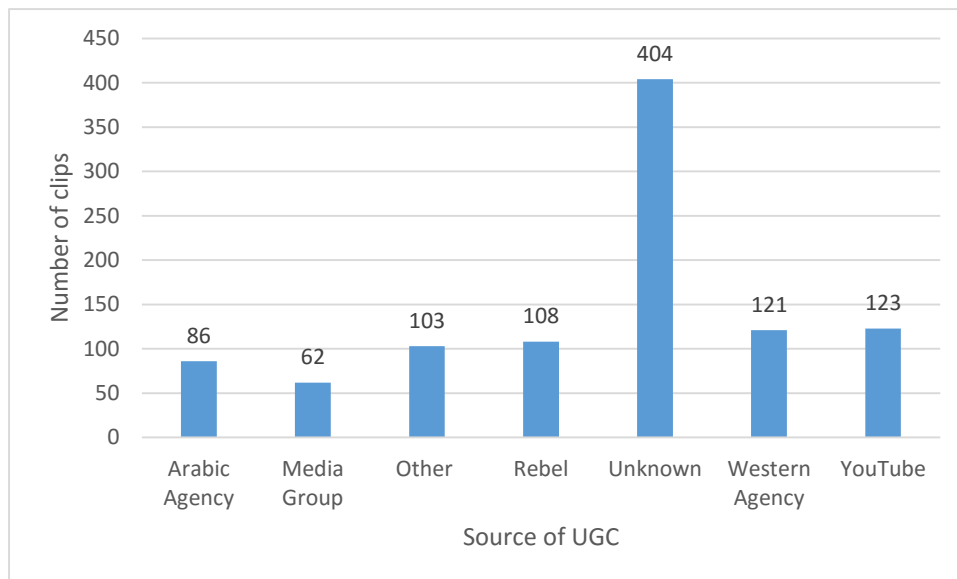
(Figure 4.13: Breakdown of source of UGC, where BBC obtained footage from for use in reports relating to the Syria conflict broadcast March 2011-2014 n=1007)

In this case most UGC clips (404) came from sources deemed to be 'Unknown'. YouTube itself was the next most popular 'source', with 123 items. While YouTube is a UGC and video sharing platform it has been included as a source, as the coding sheet makes it very clear this field pertains to where content may have been obtained from. As well as learning that content came from YouTube by watching the news reports, YouTube was frequently cited in rights information as a source. There were 123 Western Media agencies, though as previously mentioned this was used as a last resort. In many cases that this source was deduced based on the rights from Jupiter rather than it being highlighted to the audience or gauged from logos.

Rebel groups were perceived as the source for 108 clips and included 15 instances where Islamic State (IS) or Nusra Front clips were used, seven Free Syrian Army (FSA) clips and seven instances where clips were identified as Aleppo Media Centre footage, via the logo watermarked on it (Figure 4.14).
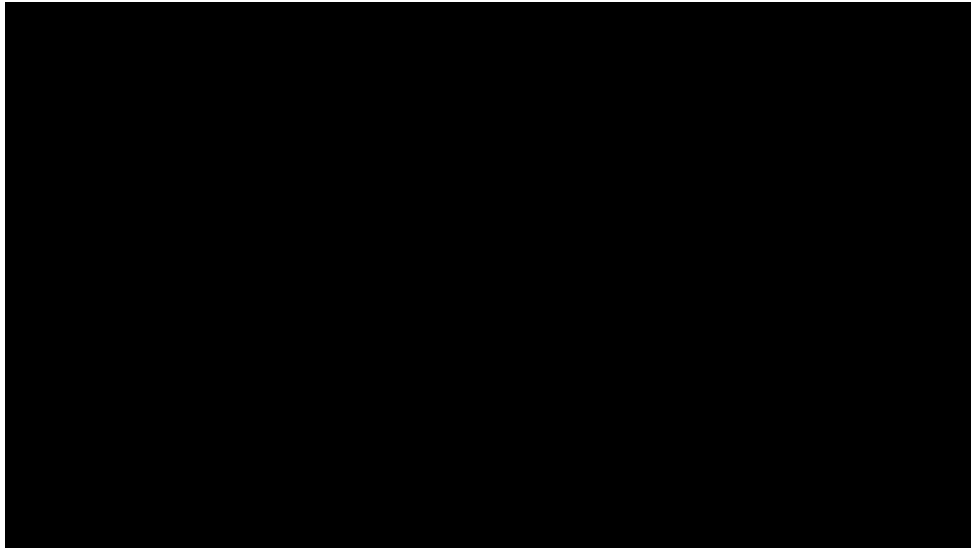
(Figure 4.14: Aleppo Media Centre (AMC) footage was identified by watermarked logo and was coded as 'Rebel', as AMC is affiliated to rebel fighters and has a 'pro-revolution' stance)

There are undoubtedly other activist and/or rebel media channels, but these were the most easily identifiable.

The next most popular category was 'Other', which referred to agency content or content that didn't fit into any other category, such as media group, rebel group or one of the key Arabic agency outlets – Shaam News Network, Ugarit News and Douma City. This category had 103 items, and included footage with logos which could not be identified. In preparation for data collection, Google Images was used to become familiar with the key logos of the most common media outlets and rebel groups. For other logos, Syrians working for the BBC and staff from BBC Arabic provided advice and guidance prior to analysis. If outlets' logos could not be identified following that discussion they were put into 'Other', as they clearly had a known source but it was not possible to identify the group or organisation. Figure 4.15 is an example of such footage, where Syrians working in the UK could not identify the logo easily.
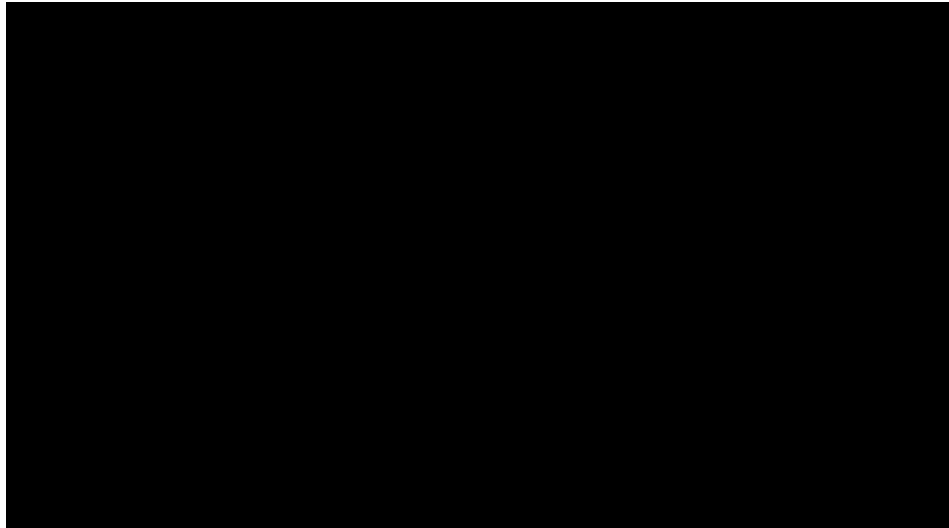
(Figure 4.15: Screengrab of footage from package from 21 August 2013. It was not possible to identify the logo, which did not feature in any other UGC coded in this study. Details in Jupiter record it as 'Unverified UGC via the internet')

One of the most challenging issues around identifying the source of the content of UGC used in news reports was the need to have a working knowledge of the vast array of local media, social media and rebel media outlets. The other difficulty was that both social groups and militant organisations became not only more organised, but also more fragmented as the conflicted continued. Therefore, outlets creating or distributing content also changed over time, and content that might be considered to come from a 'Media source' at one point in the conflict might be classified in this study as a 'Rebel source' some months later. For example, certain groups which publicised contented on social media were later found to be affiliated to the FSA or other opposition fighters. A more detailed discussion about the classification of content and the issues around changing media groups is provided in the Discussion chapter.

Chapter 4: Document Analysis

In addition to carrying out a quantitative content analysis as part of this thesis, the research included a more in-depth analysis of documents associated with relevant individual news reports which were broadcast on BBC World News Television throughout the same research period. As was outlined in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), this involved analysis of 'Key UGC files' relating to Syria that were kept for each day. These files were stored in the ENPS system in a dedicated folder and were essentially 'operational notes' containing details about pieces of video which had been examined by staff from the UGC Hub. The data was collected at the same time as the larger quantitative content analysis, but the Key UGC file data analysed in this section was analysed afterwards, which enabled the researcher to have an understanding of the themes and possible patterns which emerged when dealing with these reports and the associated video content.

Analysing the data

Analysing the data involved examining the Key UGC files, and focused in particular on dates when there were more than seven clips recorded in that day's folder. The figure of seven was chosen because, when the full list of clips processed each day was analysed, seven was the most common number other than zero, which suggested no clips had been logged in Key UGC files that day. In total, the sample took in documents from 36 different dates in the three-year period March 2011 to March 2014, although given a change in the way that UGC data was regularly archived from mid-2013, the last Key UGC file to be analysed and presented in this section was in December 2013. This document analysis gives an insight into those practices and reveals more about how video from Syria was catalogued and processed, and the work done by various BBC outlets to enable this UGC to be used. Notes were made about the Key UGC files manually and these were coded thematically with the results analysed, using a mixture of Excel and NVivo. Details about the verification processes, the involvement of other departments and whether language or pictures were mentioned were among the aspects noted in the research.

Importantly, as was outlined in the Methodology chapter, due to there not being a formal BBC database of footage used in TV output, it was not possible to fully correlate whether the Key UGC clips being described in the files were the same as ones that appeared in that day's packages. In that respect this part of the chapter provides details of the main themes connected to the overall content analysis, rather than a comprehensive outline of the footage used, as was the case in the quantitative section.

Categorical differences

There was a large amount of information in the Key UGC files, which included detailed visual descriptions of video clips, sources and indicators as to whether the video had been through some sort of verification process, as well as what that might be. Some files also included a link to where the footage had been located, for example a Local Coordinating Committee's Facebook page or YouTube URL. These details help us understand more about journalistic roles and routines in terms of accessing and verifying UGC, an area of significant interest to both scholars and practitioners. The way that the files were arranged and written was not always uniform. There were variations in how UGC clips were catalogued within the Key UGC files, which might indicate differences in how they were actually analysed and processed. Figure 4.16 is an excerpt from a file related to a UGC clip from 27 April 2011, which was detailed within the Key UGC files folder in ENPS.

BBC Newswire: NWR RAWPIX
Source: YouTube/Facebook
Location: Syria – Unconfirmed
Date/Time: 27.4.2011 Restrictions/Credits: None
Story info: Unconfirmed comments and video added to social networks this morning says that Syrian army tanks are being driven to Deraa.
(Figure 4.16: Excerpt from Key UGC files, 27 April 2011)

The key information relayed in this portion of the file included source details, information about the location and date of the footage, and whether the source is known or unknown, tying into the quantitative content analysis results. Interestingly, some files included details of restrictions on using content and relevant credits. In the case identified here there were none, but often there might be if an outlet such as

Shaam News is identified. Shaam News was coded in the quantitative section of this content analysis as one of the most popular of the named content sources in its category, alongside Ugarit and Douma City News outlets, though the category itself was the second least used.

To provide context, some story information was often given in the file. There would usually also be detail relating to verification, which would largely be a blanket disclaimer such as: "Caution: This video is not verified and as such as we have not spoken to the person who filmed it. Please use cautionary wording in any cues describing it." (Key UGC files, 10 June 2011). A more detailed analysis and discussion around the verification aspect of this work will follow later.

These basic elements formed a part of most clip files analysed, highlighting the main focus for journalists in terms of gathering information. Beyond these basic details, however, there were significant differences in the level of information available about each UGC clip, depending on a variety of factors. For example, the files might also detail what the particular video clip was called if it had been stored in Jupiter, as well as where it had been found online and potentially a URL. In the case detailed above, footage was found on Facebook embedded with a link to YouTube, but this information would not always be included. This may be a reflection of the different workloads journalists had, or different roles journalists were undertaking while cataloguing this content.

Other information was logged in the file for the guidance of producers rather than for broadcast, and gives us an insight into the working practices of journalists and how they share information with their colleagues. This was detailed explicitly with the line "Text below this line is for guidance only" (Key UGC files, 5 May 2011). While certain content within the files was not included with the aim of it being relayed to the audience, the BBC Trust and other research now suggests that a greater level of transparency regarding verification and sourcing processes, and passing some information about them beyond the newsroom, could be beneficial (see Mortimer 2012, Wardle et al 2014). For example, one file from 27 April 2011 stated that the UGC video included unconfirmed quotes from Facebook Group 'Syrian Days of Rage', with the guidance: "Here is an amateur video that shows troops of soldiers going to Deraa to intensify the siege over the city. This is not verified as explicitly true." In this respect this additional information could be beneficial, as it

informs journalists undertaking newsgathering using the UGC about the nature and context of the footage, especially if they did not have a direct connection to the staff processing this content. Another clip from the same day featured detail about the voiceovers used in the video and also a translation, which provided further context:

> The chanting in the first clip says: Both the people and the army seek unity. Then they chant: "God, Syria and nothing else but Freedom." The first banner reads: "We will sacrifice our blood and soul for the city of Deraa." The second banner reads: "The Baath Party is the cause of our problems."
> (Key UGC files, 27 April 2011)

The file relating to this clip also stated that the voiceover mentioned Babr Amr. It also included a hyperlink to the YouTube video which suggests the footage may have been taken the day before, 26 April 2011. Interestingly the video also opened with date signs (Figures 4.18 and 4.19).
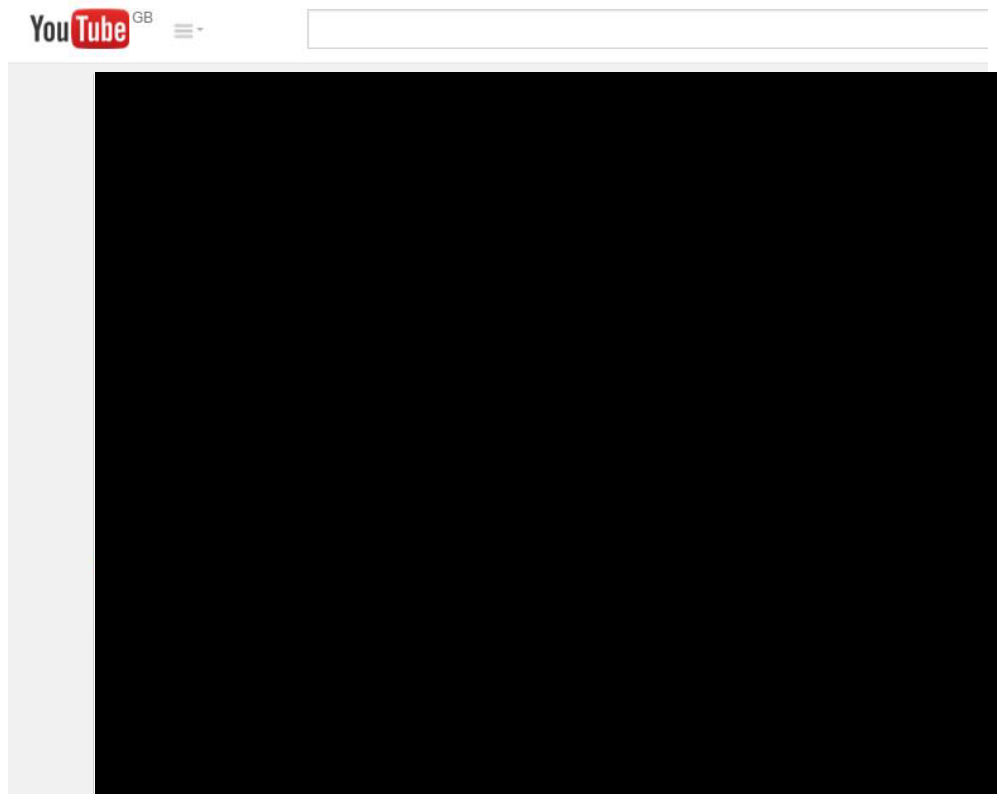
(Figure 4.17: Screengrab of YouTube video uploaded 26 April 2011)
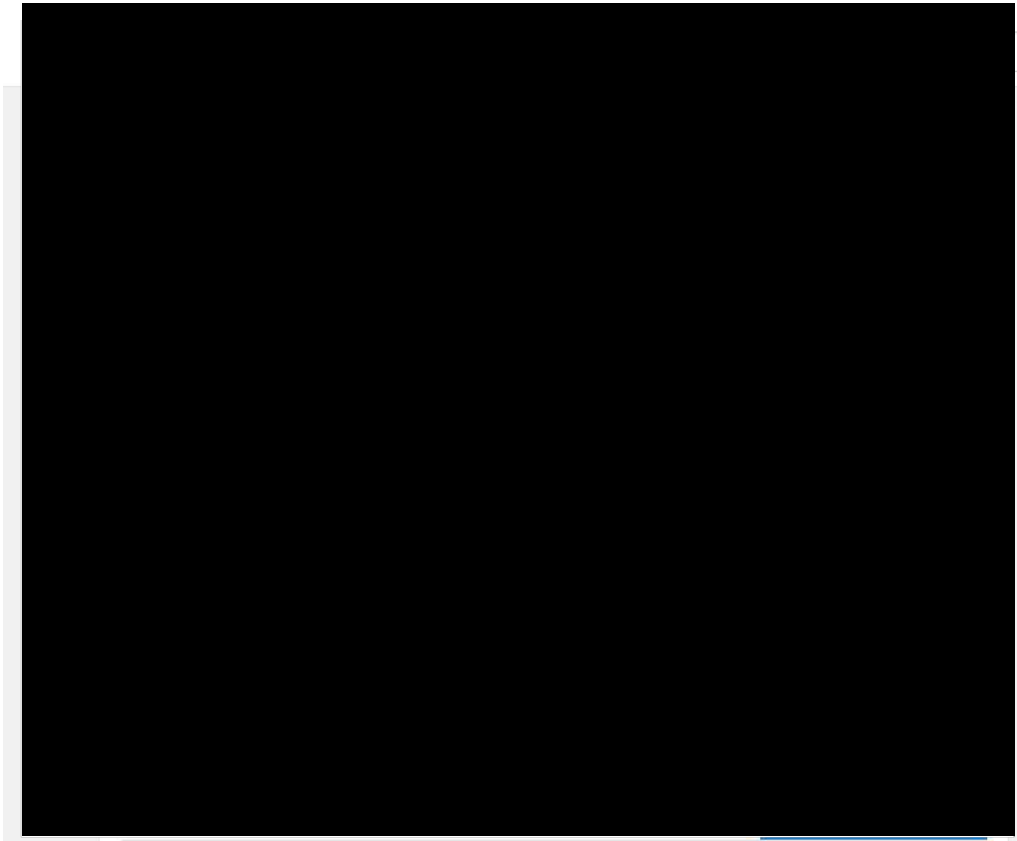
(Figure 4.18: Screengrab of YouTube video uploaded 26 April 2011)

As the examples shown here indicate, while some of the detail given in the Key UGC files was structured and set information was given on many occasions, files still varied widely in terms of the information that was provided about clips. Indeed, while there is now a set verification process in place in relation to checking UGC, including that which comes in on agency feeds, the files analysed here indicate that verification and cataloguing processes of some footage and other relevant details were not set in stone, and at times could be slightly ad-hoc. Arguably, this was particularly the case in relation to clips examined during the first weeks and months, when journalists were working in what was largely unchartered territory in terms of the skills needed and the amount of UGC which was available to process. This hypothesis echoes the findings of the qualitative interviews and newsroom observations which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Delving for more detail

The information gleaned from videos and detailed in the Key UGC files folder in ENPS seemed to alter as the conflict went on, telling us more about

journalistic routines. For example, before more dynamic relationships with both BBC Monitoring and BBC Arabic were established - which resulted in a new attachment system and a Syria specialist working in BBC Monitoring - the content studied here suggests BBC staff informally drew on the expertise of Arabic speakers. For example, one YouTube Clip from 29 April 2011 was accompanied by the following two-part note:

> Notes on audio verification from Middle Eastern Monitoring -
>
> This clip was filmed in Dayr az-Zawr in eastern Syria, the man on the mic says "today whoever beats us we will break his head" and then he says "All security elements must leave within 30 seconds" they break into cheering, "God is great", "One, one, the Syrian people are one", "No traitor", "we are going to paradise martyrs in our millions" and "Allah, Syria and Freedom alone."
>
> UGC hub note – I have run the page through Google translate. The title says day of age or anger and today's date.
> (Key UGC files, 29 April 2011)

While the clip above was sent to someone in BBC Monitoring, many other clips featured testimony from Arabic speakers from other parts of the newsroom who did not have direct links to UGC. In this and many other cases, the Arabic speakers' role was to discern and then provide an audio description of what was being said in a video. This would be noted down and recorded in the relevant Key UGC File by the UGC Hub. However, based on the files analysed in this study, there were many instances where Arabic speakers did not provide any further detail in relation to what the video content actually showed. This might be because they didn't have time to do any more research, given they were trying to do their own jobs as well as assist colleagues, or in other cases because they didn't have enough background knowledge to provide further detail.

Verification processes

As has been proposed throughout this thesis, and, the process of checking and verifying UGC before it went to air was crucial. This was a task that BBC journalists learned the importance of throughout the process of covering the Syria conflict, as well as other key events throughout the Arab Spring (and even earlier, such as the Iran election protests in 2009). By examining the documents related to this process in

more detail, it was possible to gain a further understanding of what the work entails and the multiple stakeholders involved – highlighting the 'hierarchies of influence' involved in decision making about UGC and other footage (Reese 2007). However, as is indicated in the main content analysis, details of these processes were rarely translated to the audiences in the forms of on air warnings or caveats

The topic of verification and the risks and issues associated with it are expanded upon in the results chapter in relation to the newsroom ethnography and qualitative interviews (Chapter 5). However, as has already been established in this chapter, new relationships and workflows were recognised between the UGC Hub, BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring. While these were initially informal exchanges, a more structured workflow was set up later on. These findings are complemented by the sociology of news approach adopted for this research, which highlights the issues of verification, transparency and evolving newsroom roles as key areas to be examined when researching the role of the journalist (Schudson 1989).

Evidence of these informal workflows was seen in some of the Key UGC files analysed. Repeated references to staff from other departments indicate they were called upon to help look at content. In providing a translation of videos and an understanding of the locality, BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring were both key stakeholders in the verification process. In the first instance this was done on an ad-hoc basis and there was no clear line of communication – some of the text was cut and pasted directly from emails. In other files, a BBC Arabic producer wrote directly about what he believed the content to show. While this contribution was highly valued, the speed and arguably the quality of the translation, description and insight into what a video showed would entirely depend on who was contactable within BBC Monitoring or BBC Arabic, and on their experience. This modification of newsroom routines ties into both the sociology of news and the gatewatching approaches, the implications of which are discussed in the next chapter.

For example, one producer could translate what was being said in video dialogue but was unable to confirm the location of a video, while someone who was Syrian and had visited the country relatively recently would be in a position to provide more detail and content. For example, BBC Monitoring assessed one video in May 2011 and stated in the Key UGC files that they believed the shooting to be

genuine and the location to be Barzeh, Damascus. However, they also provided more detail and views on what it depicted.

> The riot police is believed to be Shabiha, dressed in riot police uniforms. Note that they're wearing civilian clothes under their gear. The date is believed to be around Good Friday, 22 April and it was uploaded to youtube on 3 May.
> (Key UGC files, 3 May 2011)

As a result, the verification process in the initial months of the Syrian conflict, while important, was carried out in a largely unstructured manner with no proper framework outside of the UGC Hub to streamline what was already a difficult process. Verification also came through multiple channels, with staff from BBC Arabic also doing their own verification for content going onto their own outlets. This was highlighted in another example where a BBC Arabic journalist made notes on a video which was processed on 10 June 2011. The note relating to the clip in the Key UGC files folder states that:

> "It looks quite clear that it is the Jisr al-Shughour area. The person heard commenting in the video is saying that the video was taken on the 8th of June 2011, and that families and children are currently staying in the nearby jungle due to the 'catastrophe' happening in the town".
> (Key UGC files, 10 June 2011)

Content found 'in the field'

While Arabic-speaking journalists within the BBC's newsrooms were crucial in terms of checking dialogue and content, much of the video which was initially spotted or sent in for checking actually came from BBC journalists working in the field, particularly in neighbouring countries. Their expertise in working in the region was useful in looking at footage. As shown in this example below from May 2011, it was not always clear how such journalists had come to the conclusions that the content was credible. This is not to say that these journalists were incorrect in their interpretation, but unlike those detailing the content they had checked via the Key UGC files in ENPS, there was not as much detail as to why the content was thought to be accurate. This was another reason to carry out the analysis after the main content analysis and qualitative data collection, as these themes allowed the researcher to give context to the documents being analysed.

> This video has been assessed by the BBC bureau XXXX, who believe it to be credible. It appears to be from Wednesday 4 May and showing tanks in Palmyra, Syria. The video has not been verified as such, as we have not been able to contact the people who shot the original footage. Please use appropriate cautionary wording in any cues describing the footage.
> (Key UGC files, 6 May 2011)

Other pieces of UGC were looked at by BBC journalists in the field, in addition to BBC teams in London, in order to 'brainstorm'; and multiple people checked the content before making it available to outlets, such as the following notes relating to a clip from 10 June 2011. The notes contained analysis about local accents which could only be provided by a knowledgeable Arabic speaker from the region:

> The video purports to show the army heading to Jisr al-Shughour. The Arabic audio is in a northern rural Syrian accent. One of them is saying: "We have never seen this amount of army in our life, man". The other said sarcastically: "What are they going to Golan, man." The woman was murmuring about God forbid what will happen next. Then one man said: "There are police coming up at the roundabout, so hide your camera."
> (Key UGC Files, 10 June 2011)

Another video from the same week which the UGC team cleared for use also had evidence in the detailed notes which suggested a joined up approach was used in relation to video coming in from Syria: one individual was not solely responsible for checking content, it was a group effort from multiple teams across the BBC as these Key UGC file notes suggest.

> The XXX team on the ground have verified this -- showed to XXX reporter, verified accents, showed it to Syrians who've come across the border to verify the accents, got a translation. Verified they are Syrian uniforms. No idea of date.
> (Key UGC files, 9 June 2011)

This cataloguing of where content was used within the BBC once verified was in no way uniform, but it would undoubtedly be useful for journalists working with this content in the future. Indeed, as the results of the qualitative interviews and newsroom observations show, it has taken nearly three years for a more streamlined workflow - with regards to keeping a database of previously verified content - to be created, and even then this is not a pan-BBC system. It has been run as a pilot, mainly in BBC Arabic in collaboration with the UGC Hub.

One element, which was used as a coping mechanism during the start of the Arab uprisings and further developed during the first year of the Syria conflict, was the creation of an unofficial checklist. The list highlighted some of the investigations UGC Hub staff would do to ensure content could be used (see Murray 2011). Some of these were 'common sense' approaches and the answers to these are included in some Key UGC files, such as what the weather shows, time of the video upload and whether it was possible to speak to the person who posted the video, if it was found online. Given that by 2013 the BBC had also taken a 'more relaxed' approach to seeking copyright approval for video posted on YouTube if it was from Syria, something which will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter, this in some ways made the verification process even more challenging.

Verification during chemical attacks

The BBC introduced an attachment system in mid-2013, whereby a member of staff from BBC Arabic would spend three months on an attachment at the UGC Hub, learning verification and social media skills while imparting their language expertise and knowledge of Arabic affairs. This modification to newsroom routines indicates that the BBC is aware that there are many more ways in which shared knowledge (and shared experience) of verification, Arabic language and Middle Eastern affairs could benefit the whole organisation, and lead to ease of access to UGC which has already been through the checking process. Indeed, the Key UGC file notes for 21 August 2013, which was the night of the chemical attacks in Ghouta in Damascus, were completed by the BBC Arabic journalist who was on shift, highlighting the importance of that attachment role.

> I have had a look at this video. I'm confident it is from Syria. The accents and outside location match previous videos I have had a look at from Damascus. The video and pictures support each other. Today's date and locations (Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta) are referenced in the video title and cross-referenced by the commentary. The reports of the chemical attack are corroborated by Syrian activists and by the local co-ordination committees.
> (Key UGC Files, 21 August 2013)

In total 11 clips were verified overnight, with the attachment producer named throughout in the documents dating from that night which were analysed in this

research. This, and findings from the newsroom ethnography, suggest this role was and continues to be hugely valuable.

Following the chemical attacks, the UGC team worked scrupulously through all the footage. Picture editors and producers from the main newsroom, BBC Arabic and Monitoring worked carefully with them on the images to choose sequences for television and the website. Writing about events later, Mary Hockaday, then head of the BBC's multimedia newsroom, said that "close collaboration meant that we could advise editorial teams across TV, radio and online and explain the verification process to the audience too." (BBC Internal Document 2013).

The new workflow also resulted in a number of collaborations between different departments, with the World Affairs Unit, BBC Arabic, BBC Monitoring, News Online and the UGC Hub working with diplomatic correspondent Bridget Kendall to produce reports for television, as well as an online feature tracking the story of the Wednesday attack through the individual videos. (Kendall 2013).

The attachment role was created as part of the 'Arabic Change' project within BBC Arabic, which saw the department restructured and different teams responsible for social news and interactive TV programming being created. The initiative also resulted in the appointment of a dedicated social media editor who oversaw operations for the whole of BBC Arabic. This led to a more cohesive way of thinking when verifying content from events in Syria, as well as a more structured relationship with departments such as BBC Monitoring, where a specialist in Syria UGC/social media was appointed in 2013. This was prior to the chemical attacks.

Warnings

Another important finding, that became apparent while examining content as part of this research, was the inclusion of caveats about how credible content should be used. These were put on nearly all Key UGC file notes within ENPS. While there was some variation in the wording in the files analysed, a disclaimer such as, "This video has not been verified as such, as we have not been able to speak to the person who took it or uploaded it" (Key UGC files, 5 May 2011) was common. Moreover, the wording suggested an understanding that the people filming the footage may not

be the same as those making it available via social media outlets or on video sharing sites, which raises interesting questions about copyright.

Some advisories went further than this, such as one from 27 July 2011, a time when UGC usage within BBC news reports was at its peak. This operational note stated: "Caution: This video is not verified as such as we have not spoken to the person who filmed it. Please use cautionary wording in any cues and scripts describing it." (Key UGC files, 27 July 2011). The change in wording to also include the explicit suggestion to journalists in charge of news output that they include caveats in introductions and in the package scripts themselves, rather than a blanket disclaimer which assumes an understanding of the need to provide warning, is perhaps an indication of the learning curve UGC Hub staff and other journalists went through, in terms of learning to work with this footage and the risks involved in it.

Later on in the conflict, particularly after the chemical attacks in August 2013, there appears to have been a further change in the advice regarding verification warnings provided by the UGC Hub and BBC Newswire, as this example from 28 August 2013 shows:

> Caution: We are confident this footage is genuine, but because of its nature and source, we cannot be certain. Any use MUST include cautionary wording in cues/scripts/astons/captions, such as: "The BBC has not been able to fully authenticate this footage, but based on additional checks made on it, it is believed to be genuine."
> (Key UGC files, 28 August 2013)

The research also included an examination of scripts and cues used by the BBC. Findings suggest that there was a systematic failure in applying the warnings given by the UGC and Newswire service in the form of 'on air' caveats. Warnings might have been provided but they were rarely included in news packages: they were used for just 8% of the clips coded during data collection for this research. As the UK's national broadcaster and a global news outlet, the BBC is considered a trusted source and arguably has a duty of care to its audiences, as laid down in its charter. Perhaps indicating the source of content, or being transparent about what the organisation itself knows about events in a country where access is challenging, is as important as being able to include the video itself on air.

Limitations

While this piece of research can identify certain themes by drawing on the notes within ENPS, it is not possible to directly correlate whether each of the videos, which were processed by the UGC Hub, translated into on air content. One reason for this was the issue of sourcing. In the Key UGC files set information would be given, but URLs for video from sites such as YouTube were not always included. Moreover, where these links were included, sometimes when an attempt was made to access the video, the links were found to be no longer active (Figure 4.19).
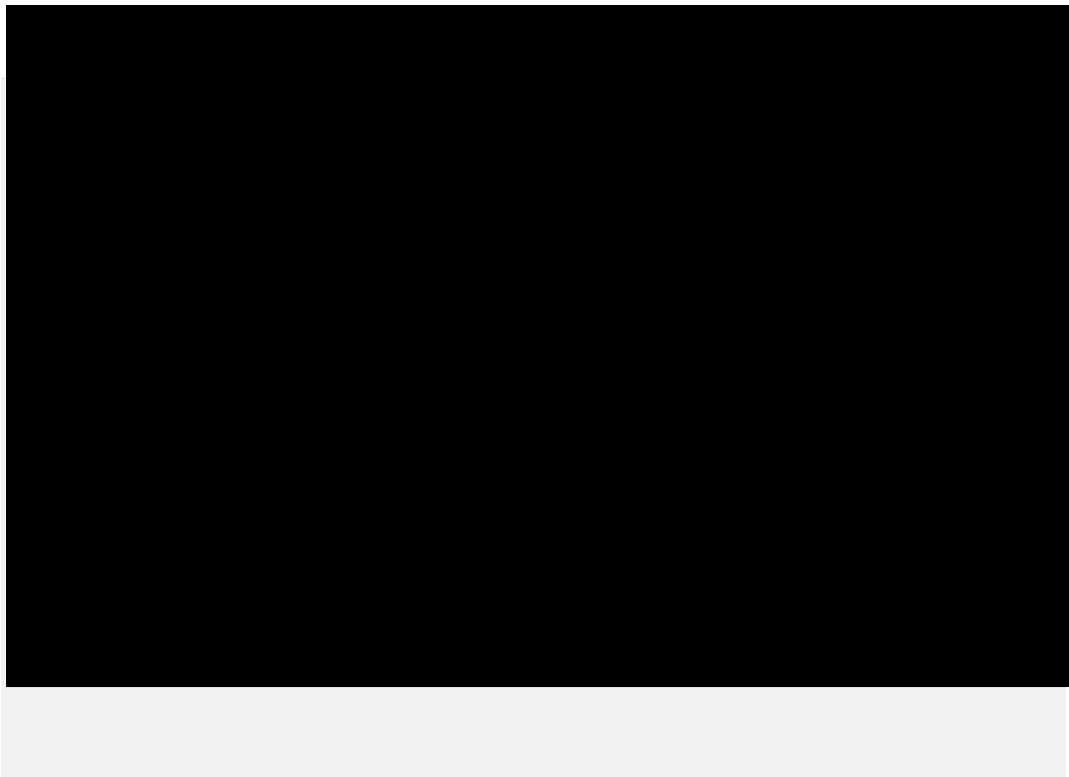
(Figure 4.19: One of the video URLs logged in Key UGC files is no longer active)

Another challenge in determining the themes around this these documents was that from mid-2013, fewer and fewer entries were made in ENPS in relation to Key UGC files. This was evident following the data collection but was also discussed in interviews with staff. The reason for this change in logging may have been because more details were being put into the copyright information relating to clips, which were used in news packages and archives in Jupiter (senior story producer, October 2013). The main issue with this type of archiving was it meant

that only clips which were used in news packages were recorded. There was not a definitive list of UGC clips which had been verified available on a daily basis within ENPS.

The issues highlighted here suggest that while the UGC Hub might have verified or looked at a lot of UGC content related to Syria, this did not necessarily result in a high level of on-air content that day. Given that one in five packages was coded during the sample period, this meant some consecutive days were focused on during peak coverage of the conflict in July 2011, but even then there did not appear to be a pattern where a large number of UGC Clips being processed led to more clips being used in the next day's coded reports.

Indeed, when investigating the number of UGC clips detailed in ENPS on the same day as a video was coded, there appeared to be no relationship at all between the proportion of UGC in any one package and the number of clips in the Key UGC files folder. For example, a news report by Bridget Kendall, which aired on 10 June 2011, was two minutes and 28 seconds long and featured 35 seconds of UGC; yet eight clips were listed in Key UGC files as having been looked at that day by the UGC Hub, as well as other teams and departments such as BBC Arabic. Likewise, Jonathan Head's package on Syria which aired on 9 March 2012 only featured 19 seconds of UGC, but there were 17 different clips listed in Key UGC files in ENPS that day which had been examined and verified to a certain extent.

Discussion

The document analysis has sought to give an overview of the coping strategies and techniques used by BBC journalists to verify and catalogue UGC content throughout the Syria conflict. The analysis focused on dates when a large number of videos were logged using operational notes within the ENPS server, under the Key UGC files folder. Having already looked at issues of verification and transparency, in terms of UGC shown on air via the content analysis and codebook, this deeper study of associated documents allowed the researcher to draw out information relating to workflows, adoption of new techniques and modifications to certain processes. For example, stakeholders at different levels throughout the organisation became involved in both verification and decision-making processes

associated with UGC clips, telling us more about newsroom relationships and routines.

Results show that Arabic speakers from across the BBC were called upon to help advise on what voiceovers on video from Syria were saying. This was somewhat ad-hoc, however, and did not form a set process; different people were named, though some people more than others. Later, key stakeholders such as staff from BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring became involved in the verification process, though it was much later again before content would be sent along more formal channels. By mid-2013, this dynamic, inter-departmental relationship resulted in an attachment system, created through the Arabic Change programme. Furthermore, as will be discussed in the following chapter and the Discussion chapter, it resulted in changes to journalistic practices and structures across the BBC which links to the 'hierarchies of influence' approach proposed in the sociology of news/media sociology theory adopted for this research. The existing expertise of staff the experience and preferences of editors and the timescales available for programmes are all aspects which could impact on the decision-making of newsroom staff working with UGC and striving to cover events in hard to reach areas where there is no journalistic coverage.

Chapter 5: Qualitative interviews and newsroom ethnography results

This chapter will focus on the results derived from data collected during qualitative interviews with BBC staff and the periods of observation across BBC newsrooms that formed part of this research project. Acquiring new skills, particularly in relation to verification is a key theme which emerged from the research and is detailed in this chapter. Other important findings relate to new workflows and evolving relationships with departments and contributors. The findings are significant as they give insight into the complex workings of a major news organisation to which scholars are rarely given unprecedented access. The verification findings in particular, when linked to those outlined in the content analysis chapter, are significant as journalists learn how to navigate UGC and multiple sources in the digital age. The data collection methods are fully outlined in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3) but, to recap briefly, the interviewees included correspondents, TV producers, UGC Hub staff and journalists from interactive programmes covering television and radio.

The periods of newsroom observation took place within the UGC Hub and BBC Arabic at different points throughout 2013 and 2014. As the interviews were carried out both before and after the newsroom observations, it was possible to question some respondents on topics which arose during the observation periods. The structure of the fieldwork also meant it was possible to get more information about working practices from individuals who had not taken part in the interviews, but were seen undertaking working roles during the periods of observation. In this respect the qualitative research methods used have influenced each other, but have also allowed for a triangulation of findings.

The results detailed in this chapter are divided into several sections in order to highlight key themes and findings. The first three sections focus on newsroom work and challenges. Section one looks at how journalists learnt to deal with the influx of UGC and the skills needed to identify this content. This 'learning curve' had a direct impact on the way that journalists processed UGC and other footage, and research

findings suggest that as the role of the UGC Hub has evolved, the way its journalists go about verifying content has "become much more forensic in nature" (news producer, sourcing content and guests, October 2013). Therefore, section two aims to explore the challenges and changes in the verification process undertaken by staff during the time period being researched.

Section three examines how BBC staff's working practices and newsroom workflows developed during the research period. The remaining two sections predominantly look at news routines and relationships with outside forces and stakeholders which can influence editorial decision making. It could also be argued that to a certain extent they can affect journalists' access to resources. Section four examines relationships between journalists and contributors and journalists in the field. It also explores the use of certain video content which depicted events in Syria during the time period which was researched. Section five considers challenges related to issues of balance and duty of care to staff and contributors for the BBC as a public service broadcaster.

Section 1: Starting out with a steep learning curve

The current conflict in Syria began in March 2011 and, for the first six months, foreign journalists were unable to enter the country. As a result, UGC showing events on the ground, eyewitness testimony and contributor voices associated with this period were vital tools in telling the story.

It is acknowledged in the BBC Trust's reports into coverage of the Arab uprisings that the BBC initially did not cover the story of Syria as well as it might have, had other high profile uprisings not been taking place in the same period (BBC Trust 2012, 2013). This meant the initial protests did not get much coverage on BBC News and, with the exception of BBC Arabic journalist Lina Sinjab who was based in Damascus, the BBC did not have a presence in the country and did not deploy anyone further. Sinjab became the Damascus correspondent in 2008, initially reporting mainly for World Service outlets and BBC Arabic. She grew up in Damascus and reported across the county during the regime's crackdown, including from the flashpoint city of Homs. However, at times she was restricted in what she

could report on and was subjected to a travel ban by Syrian authorities in 2012, meaning she could not leave the country and frequently risked detention. This meant that when reporting for certain BBC outlets, Sinjab often only depicted events, as opposed to providing in-depth analysis. If she could appear on air it would usually be via phone, and very occasionally via webcam from home (Figure 5.1). This move may have been connected to safety concerns, though respondents didn't all say this categorically. Lina Sinjab herself wrote in 2013 about her passport - which had been taken from her by Syrian authorities a year previously - being returned and her decision to leave Syria (BBC 2013f). She was based in London as the World Service Middle East Editor, and in mid-2015 moved to Beirut where she continues to work for the BBC.

Violence in Syria escalated throughout 2011 and it became clear that the conflict was not going to be a short-lived event, similar to that of Egypt; borders were closed and BBC journalists, alongside other western journalists, were still unable to legally enter Syria. Respondents said they were then forced to rely on information and footage coming out of the country to tell the story.

(Figure 5.1: Lina Sinjab appeared on BBC World News TV and other outlets, but this was mostly via phone, and very occasionally via webcam. She could only describe events rather than provide analysis)

It was in situations such as this that Lina Sinjab was able to supply off-air expertise and information, including lists of potential contacts. She also highlighted video she had spotted online or footage she had been sent directly, to teams in

London. Respondent said she often helped with the verification process given she had already checked the footage herself. In this way she played a hugely important role in helping piece together what was happening across Syria, although she could not always work freely as a correspondent. These actions were in fact praised in the BBC Trust's aforementioned report into coverage of Syria (BBC Trust 2012).

Most interviewees said that compared to previous crisis and conflict events such as the protests following the Iran elections in 2009, the Arab uprisings of 2011 were unprecedented in terms of the volume of content they produced - mainly UGC of protests and violence. Syria was very much an extension of that. All of those interviewed believed that they had experienced a steep learning curve in developing new practices to ensure that non-BBC content could go to air. Even if they were not directly involved in the verification process, respondents said they still felt they needed to learn how to use the content appropriately in terms of attribution, crediting and labelling, as well as warnings and caveats. This issue will be explored in more detail later. With previous stories, staff had processed UGC to be used alongside BBC material. In this respect Syria was unique, as UGC was frequently the only footage available and the impetus - as with all UGC - was on journalists to check that the content was accurate and representative of what was happening.

> In my personal opinion the Arab Spring shaped UGC, it made UGC a force of to be reckoned with and it made the rest of the newsroom realise how incredible it can be and what a great tool it is, rather than an occasional added extra. And I think people realised how useful social media was because we couldn't get anyone in there [into Syria]. When it is going off in three or four cities in three or four countries you cannot send people in and you have people there using social media and they knew the power of it, probably before their own governments did, and certainly before the BBC did.
> (Former UGC producer and researcher, December 2013)

Journalists spoke about devising a type of 'checklist' related to protest videos, based on their experience during the Arab uprisings. This list then enabled journalists to go through certain processes, in a bid to try and determine whether a piece of UGC was indeed what it claimed to be. This process could apply to stills, but the content which would most frequently need to be checked would be video. For example, searching for the original source of the upload was one crucial tactic. As the scope of the work done by the UGC Hub became wider, as is indicated in the interview findings, this research suggests that the way its journalists perform their

jobs also became much more forensic in nature. Journalists have had to become "part detective, part librarian" (senior story producer, working with UGC). In some cases this has involved learning new skills, particularly around UGC and accessing and utilising social media platforms. These findings are also backed up by the literature detailed in Chapter 1, which relates to changes in journalists' roles and routines (see also Murray 2011).

> I was sort of following my own path if you know what I mean. It wasn't a prelaid one. And I think that's what a lot of people covering the Arab Spring did, a lot of journalists, because the whole social media aspect to it was new. The Skype/Twitter aspects, that's something I guess couldn't have been done in previous wars, five years before, because it wasn't there.
> (Story producer, sourcing content and guests, June 2013)

A more detailed examination of the technical skills adapted by journalists, particularly around verifying content, will be carried out later in the chapter.

New social media skills

As well as traditional newsgathering techniques, journalists reported that they found themselves actively searching across social media platforms for information on events in Syria, and this searching extended to finding contributors and eyewitnesses. In this respect, BBC producers were encouraged by management to further harness social media and became more proficient at using it to uncover information, especially as, at times, it was a quicker medium to use to contact people. Also, parts of the audience were already active on platforms such as Twitter. This meant some journalists felt they had to develop new skills, while others merely updated and honed their existing skills. Staff said that adopting social media as a newsgathering tool was encouraged by editors, and this happened at the same time as social media references were being used on air regularly for the first time, either as a way for the audience to get in contact with BBC journalists as part of a 'call to action', or in relation to how certain stories were being reported on these platforms. Journalists covering Syria in particular found themselves using these platforms as newsgathering tools to find actual content which could be used, rather than just as a way to find information.

> I needed to find an opposition voice in Damascus. I had a Twitter contact in another city, Latakia, and I said 'I would love to have you, but I need a Syrian female voice from Damascus, do you know of anyone?' And my contact said yes, and passed me on to this lady. I vetted her as usual and then she came on air. So I keep those relationships going because they pass me on to people.
> (Senior producer for interactive programming, October 2013)

As well as working with individuals, journalists tracked Local Co-ordinating Committees (LCCs) set up across Syria, who regularly posted regional updates about the conflict on Facebook. These updates often included Arabic and English descriptions of video with embedded links to the footage on YouTube. The interviews carried out during this research confirmed producers also began sourcing Skype addresses, as well as joining Skype conversations with activist groups and eyewitnesses to garner information. They catalogued valuable on-air contributors and off-air contacts, often going back to them later if their information had been of value or proved to be true.

> With the chemical attack, my colleague from Arabic was working with Newsnight and wanted someone from Douma talking about the attacks…
> I contacted the LCCS and two of them came back to me. And eventually we got someone who claimed he was there when the attacks happened and was injured. Then we managed via Skype to speak to a doctor who was allegedly there. You can never be 100% sure but from the description it was very authentic…you just need to dig down into Facebook and find these groups and pages. It's an essential tool, and the way it is used at Monitoring and Arabic right now is crucial to newsgathering. At UGC it's also crucial for communication in a way it is not used elsewhere. It's a way to speak to audiences, rather than just gather information.
> (Former producer, BBC Monitoring and BBC Arabic, December 2013)

Skype in itself is arguably not a social media platform, though much has been written about why it should or should not be classified as such (see Middleton 2012, Foremski 2013). Regardless, in this situation it was certainly being used by BBC journalists to keep in touch with people and also to share information in an organised way, similar to a social networking site or a provider such as WhatsApp (Evans 2012). In this respect, journalists working in UGC and newsgathering believed Skype was a useful 'social networking tool' (former UGC producer, December 2013) to get information and contact potential contributors as they tried to cover a challenging story with limited in-country resources.

> You got to know certain people who were very useful and well connected, who had other contacts, and then they would pass on good Skype addresses. So part of what I did, on a practical level, was set myself up a Skype account on my mobile phone, which I didn't have before. I was a total newcomer to all of that. And we also I guess had to be careful as to whether what they were saying was true. What was their motivation for saying it? Who were they? Where were they coming from?
> (News producer, sourcing guests and content, June 2013)

Examples of verifying information or content from Skype or other sources could include asking contributors about the weather, or what they could see from a location if they had filmed or captured something, then correlating their response and content with Google Maps, picture reversal software and weather reports. In this respect traditional newsgathering techniques and 'common sense' approaches were applied to a social media setting on a scale not previously seen at the BBC.

> In 2012, there was a particular video of a Syrian soldier burying a rebel alive. Initially it was sent to the UGC and they had a story online about this video, but they passed the video onto Monitoring to have a look at. So I took a look and wrote down a lot of details. The main thing was about their footwear, they were not wearing boots, they were wearing sneakers. And I also wrote something about the accents, and also the fact the video ended before we see the man fully being buried alive. And then another friend who watched it added that the voice of the man being buried seemed like a voiceover, it was not his natural voice. So we wrote all these details up, and said we cannot confirm or refute the veracity of this video, it cannot be verified. Then we sent that back to the UGC, and the BBC had the story up online and they pulled it.
> (Former producer, BBC Monitoring and BBC Arabic, December 2013)

As journalists became more adept at using social media platforms, so too did the contributors and those uploading footage which the BBC frequently sought to use. Interviews and periods of observation revealed that, while some content continued to be sent into the BBC directly, from mid-2011 onwards BBC journalists were increasingly harvesting visual content directly from social media platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube.

> We used to rely heavily on information coming in to us and now we're going out a lot more and hunting, using social media a lot more – Facebook and Facebook groups as well. There is a lot of technology now that makes our life a lot easier than it used to.
> (Senior producer, gathering and verifying UGC, October 2013)

One journalist argued that activists - keen to get their footage seen globally - would be much more likely to turn to social media than to contact separate outlets.

This was something that had also been seen (in their opinion) in Iran in 2009, when the government switched off the internet across the country at the height of the protests (Hänska-Ahy and Shapour, 2013). Once that blackout had been lifted there was a change in the way people filming - activists or not - used their content.

> If someone [in Syria] is going to get their content seen, they will smuggle it to an FSA commander and they'll decide where it goes, probably YouTube. They won't come onto the BBC website, see a post and send us their clip.
> (Senior story producer, curating and verifying content, October 2013)

For many journalists learning to process the information was something they did 'on the job'. There was an acknowledgement from some respondents that they were unsure about what needed 'to be done' in relation to using and verifying UGC from Arab countries where there had been unrest, and Syria in particular. Therefore, some interviewees said that it was possible that some content went to air without being checked as thoroughly as it could have been, and definitely not as rigorously as it would be at the time of writing this report. Indeed, while certain 'checklists' were introduced (see Murray 2011), these were initially somewhat ad-hoc; a formal process was not in place and verification relied mainly on individuals' expertise and ability to spot 'real' content from Syria, as well as their contacts within the rest of the BBC who could help them.

> We put 'unverified' on YouTube pictures because YouTube pictures were just all over the place and still are. And it was very confusing for a journalist to pick out what was what. It started off just as a small stream and now it's hundreds and hundreds of sources posting stuff. And then obviously there were caveats, 'We tried to verify this, but we weren't able to get hold of anyone else in the area,' or 'we asked for the government's comments on this, and they said 'no'.
> (Former news producer, sourcing guests and content, June 2013)

My interviews confirmed that staff felt there was a lack of a 'joined up' approach and that initial methods of using, cataloguing and checking UGC were, at times, chaotic. This was down to both the demand for content and the large volume that was available. Results suggest that it was partially in response to this that new coping mechanisms were introduced within the UGC Hub, which interviewees said were aimed at streamlining the workflow. This in turn, it was hoped, would help staff processing UGC from Syria do so more easily.

Learning to understand content

The BBC introduced new social media guidelines in 2011 and these remain under review, with the guidance last updated in March 2015 (Hamilton 2015). The guidelines acknowledged that staff were regularly processing non-BBC content, such as the video sharing website YouTube and other social media platforms. These guidelines were aimed at helping all staff, not just those dealing with UGC on a daily basis, to understand the steps both content and potential contributors should be put through before being transmitted on air. This is further evidence that journalistic practices have altered, and this research argues that these changes in practice have been accompanied by an increased reliance on content from non-traditional sources; in the case of Syria, this particularly relates to UGC from non-professional groups used since the start of the conflict.

Section 2: Verification and the evolution of processes

Several interviewees confirmed that the BBC decided to amend its copyright policy (BBC 2013), which previously stated that a producer should always speak to the uploader of content. This was specifically in relation to Syria and would not be the case in most other circumstances. UGC Hub staff in particular said they found it near impossible to speak to the people who had either filmed or uploaded any Syria videos, and so managers and editors relaxed the requirement to get permission to use the content.

> Where our verification process has had to evolve with the Arab Spring and Syria, is that in the past we had rigid rules where we wouldn't use video unless we had spoken to the original source and got their permission and done a credibility check based on having a conversation with them. Now, because by its very nature it was almost impossible to get hold of the original source of these videos, we basically relaxed that rule in terms of needing copyright clearance permission to use these videos. Because we took it as granted, the risk of the person who took the video challenging us for copyright, was miniscule, though not non-existent.
> (Former news editor, managing UGC, Oct 2013)

This in turn had an impact on the verification and checking process which was carried out by staff.

> The verification process is different if you can get in touch with the person, then you can verify by asking certain questions. Where you get footage from Syria and you have to verify it is a totally different procedure. Because when you verify from conflict zones you cannot actually contact the person who filmed it. This is where you have the need for expertise in terms of language and how to verify landscape, accents etc.
> (UGC producer, December 2013)

Part of the verification process involved using the previously mentioned UGC 'checklist', resulting in a journalist-led review of content and an analysis of what it purports to show. This meant that over and above the signposting of content, Arabic speakers and those with a knowledge of Syria within the BBC played a massive part in verifying UGC for BBC use.

> I've done lots of verification of Syria content. Some is easy because I am from Damascus, there are certain neighbourhoods I know in the city so I can immediately see where it's happening. With other areas, I can see things about a similar landscape and know roughly geographically where it is. And I have knowledge of accents, whether an accent is spoken in this area or not which helps.
> (Former producer for Monitoring and BBC Arabic, December 2013)

In addition to analysing accents and language, journalists said they would also focus on other elements; the clothes people were wearing, significant buildings, the weather and even flowers on the landscape. These were all used to deduce whether content was showing what it claimed to. However, as the conflict went on and journalists continued to rely on UGC to tell the story, they also faced the challenges of having more content to look through. As such the checklist would not be used in isolation. One journalist talked of analysing multiple videos taken of the same event before being sure the content was real.

> With Syria, it's almost hard to think back to the times when it was just about protests on the streets and then maybe guards coming and shooting into the crowds, and we'd have video of that. If we didn't have a whole sequence or a long shot, if we just had someone shooting we would never have gone with that. Maybe different people will record it from different angles and it's meant to be a peaceful protest and then you have someone coming and shooting into the crowd. If you're able to do the jigsaw puzzle, to put it together in a way that we could go with the story. That happened a lot at the start where we would have that.

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Interviewees said that they would look at pieces of information other than videos in order to decide whether content could or should be verified. However, this information was only ever used as background and details would not be shared with the audience.

Issues of verification - inside the office - technology available

This section looks at the use of technology to verify content and how this has changed. Interviewees were clear that, as well as there being a greater need for social media skills to seek out information and content, there was also a need to be more savvy about how to verify content or at least check it as much as was possible, given the limitations in contacting authors of video footage, an issue which has already been explored in this chapter.

Most verification was done by the UGC Hub, though BBC Arabic went through their own procedures and, as referred to earlier, correspondents in the field may have used their own contacts to harvest and check content. What the two newsroom-based departments - the UGC HUB and BBC Arabic - had in common was that they would use computer software as well as traditional 'common sense techniques' to check footage. This could have been as simple as a YouTube search by upload date to see if content had been posted before, or checking metadata on stills and corroborating that with what was known about events on the ground, to check that they matched up. The UGC Hub would also regularly trial different types of software and feedback as to how useful they were in helping journalists with the verification process. This technology would be used, alongside the expertise of the BBC staff across the newsroom, to check the veracity of content.

> Now there are more social media tools, things such as Geofeedia which is like an interactive map. It picks up if people are Tweeting, using Instagram or Facebook and have their location switched on, it picks up what they are saying, what they are producing. So we can make a map of it – and we probably get better content, we get more instant and better quality content by going out and finding stuff and seeking out content (Former producer and researcher within UGC, December 2013)

However, despite the best efforts of journalists, working in a newsroom can be challenging and there are often time pressures, which mean that mistakes can and do happen. The picture found on Twitter which was used by BBC to highlight the Houla massacre, which later transpired to have been taken by a Getty photographer in Iraq ten years previously, is just one example (Hamilton 2012). Incidents like this in some ways highlight the demand for breaking news, challenges in contacting UGC providers and difficulties in determining whether content not from a BBC crew can ever truly be 100% verified. As mentioned in the Literature Review (Chapter 1), this was one incident which led to a tightening up of practices, a move which is further indicative of the research findings which suggest UGC staff are conscious of the risks associated with using this content, but this understanding may not always extend to the wider newsroom.

In addition to more technological aids being used to help verify content, they could be used to provide outlets with more information and context about the footage itself.

> There is a lot less of 'we've been sent it, cannot verify it but we'll use it anyway', which used to happen a lot, particularly on the [BBC] News Channel. It used to be that we would say 'it's unverified', now we can say to outlets that it's been verified as much as we can, we know it's yesterday but we cannot tell you who sent it. There are a lot less things left unanswered now.
> (Former social news producer, working with UGC, October 2013)

While more detail might have been available in relation to some of the UGC clips processed, the content analysis and interviews suggest that this did not always translate into on-air depictions, something that will be expanded on in the next section.

Issues around signposting content or giving warnings

As verification is crucial in terms of ensuring the veracity of content, the UGC Hub advises that UGC footage which is used on air should be accompanied by a caveat or 'warning' about whether the content has been fully verified. In most cases the content cannot be 100% verified, but the content analysis carried out for this research suggests that these warnings rarely got used on air. If there was a warning, it was a blanket disclaimer. The findings indicate that for journalists checking the

footage on a daily basis, this blanket disclaimer could be frustrating as it didn't acknowledge the work that had gone into analysing the footage or what the journalists were basing their judgment on when broadcasting this content. In particular there was frustration that this information was not translated to the audience.

> Often we'll say 'this can't be verified', but actually, we've spent hours and hours standing it up. We don't have 100% thumbs up like we would if we had a reporter there, but we're pretty sure otherwise. Increasingly in the Syria story, articulating how much we know about a video is a really intrinsic part of the journalism, so it's part of the story."
> (Social media producer, curating and verifying content, October 2013)

Journalists also said they felt that, overall, more could be done to outline what the verification process involved and then relay this to the audience. For example, a Bridget Kendall report (Figure 5.2) detailed how footage of the Ghouta chemical attacks was checked and used on air by BBC outlets to depict events which happened in August 2013 (BBC 2013e).
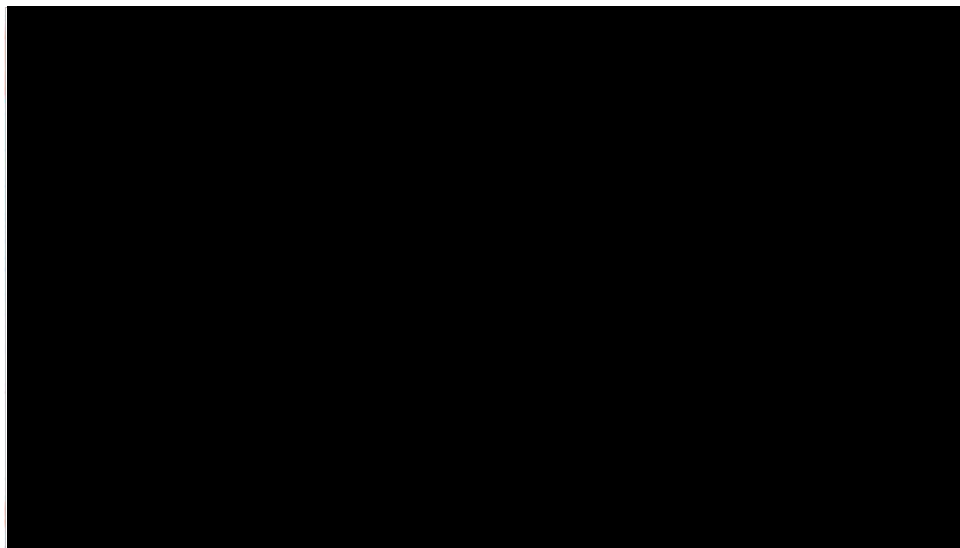
(Figure 5.2: UGC clips verified by the UGC producer from BBC Arabic were the main source of coverage of the August 2013 chemical attacks. They featured in Bridget Kendall's report detailing what was found out about the attacks by analysing the videos)

The perceived reliance on UGC during the conflict also brought associated risks, not least the fact that content and intelligence could not be always fully verified, despite producers' best efforts corroborating information from contacts with other information and sources. Indeed, as the conflict became increasingly fragmented, activists would continue to produce content, but interviewees said that those creating the footage on both sides could be doing so for political ends. This

meant exaggerations and hoaxes were commonplace, and as a broadcaster the BBC had to be vigilant and selective when using UGC.

> There were three videos which were posted on YouTube allegedly showing Syrian rebels firing chemical rockets. Basically, it was saying that the rebels were the ones behind the chemical attack that happened in August [2013]. The videos were shot in the night so you cannot see the landscape, the faces of the people or what they are wearing. You can just hear their voices and see they are firing rockets and they are saying that these are chemical rockets that are being fired. So on the verification front, there was a conflict between what the description said was the location and what they were saying in the video. Taking into consideration all these details we couldn't verify the location or the time, and the fact it has been uploaded to YouTube three months after the chemical attack it is really suspicious. So we advised 'don't run this, don't use it'. Because it could be anyone putting it on YouTube.
> (Former producer for Monitoring and BBC Arabic, December 2013)

Section 3: Changing workflows

While there have been some pan-BBC changes, the findings from this research document extensive structural and organisational changes within the UGC Hub itself. The interviews and observations in particular highlight various changes to UGC roles in response to the way content related to Syria was accessed, and also the moves which acknowledged the need to engage with eyewitnesses, particularly activists, in areas where English was not widely spoken.

Changes in rotas

One of the first staffing decisions made in response to events in Syria was the creation of a dedicated 'Syria desk'. Similar temporary measures had been used in the past; during the first weeks of the Arab uprisings and also in response to protests following the Iran elections in 2009. The desk allowed members of the UGC team to sit alongside BBC Arabic staff and newsgathering specialists in the first few weeks of the Syria uprising. This allowed the free-flowing exchange of information and meant content could be processed quickly for on-air use. In addition, the UGC Hub developed new ways for its staff to work as a team. Interviewees recalled that in

the early days of the Syria conflict a small group of producers, perhaps three or four, would work consistently across the story. As the Hub saw staff working different shifts and on different patterns it was hugely important to keep across the material which was being used in BBC broadcasts.

> It meant we knew if a video had appeared yesterday, or appeared to be of the same incident we had seen on another video, a day or two earlier. And so to do that we had to just basically break down our rota a little bit and figure out a new way of working that would allow us some producer consistency so that at least there were consistent handovers as well.
> (Former news editor, working with UGC, Oct 2013)

This new arrangement meant certain staff within the UGC Hub would be assigned set tasks. At what editors considered the 'peak' of events in Syria, in early 2012, nearly all UGC resources were focused on the story. On average, six members of staff would be dedicated to it on any one shift. This was a vast change compared to the previous set up where each person would usually be assigned one story to cover for the duration of the shift, save for any breaking news. The new set up could mean, for example, that one producer could spend their shift solely on one task, be it looking at YouTube video footage relating to Syria; identifying Facebook groups and posts relevant to the conflict; looking at what direct content the BBC were getting from inside Syria or from other parts of the world from ex-pat Syrians; or liaising with BBC Arabic and other departments. This development, however, had its own challenges, not least the fact that certain producers could end up working on Syria non-stop for a number of weeks. More findings around issues with staff processing this content will be explored later in the chapter.

Syria was a very challenging story to cover, not least because of the nature of content staff encountered or because of the day-to-day routines associated with the conflict. Amid concerns that staff would continually be focused on the one story, rotas were again amended and, in early to mid-2012, bigger teams were dedicated to covering Syria as it became apparent that the conflict was not going to be short-lived. Rotas also became more fluid and there was a greater rotation of responsibilities. It was understood from observations and speaking to staff that this was done, in part, to vary the stories staff covered and limit the amount of sensitive or challenging content they were subjected to. Editors interviewed said they believed this fluidity also meant it was easier to react if there was breaking news in relation to

Syria, as well as other stories; it also meant the journalists working in the UGC Hub would be multi-skilled, in the sense that they could be assigned a different role at any point.

> We tended to have temporary workflows and structures that we put in place, and I think one of the things that we as a team have become much better at, is the fluidity of our work patterns and rotas. Two, three years ago we had quite sort of fixed roles in terms of what each producer would do on any given day. And now we have much more fluidity across the team in terms of who does what and when, and it depends much more on the news agenda of the day.
> (Former news editor, managing UGC, Oct 2013)

Previously, UGC staff might have been given one task, such as finding a case study, updating and moderating comments on the BBC news website or verifying content related to breaking news or certain requests from news programmes. Given the demands on the UGC Hub in relation to processing Syria content, staff still needed the skills to do these roles, but all staff were trained in verification and had some understanding of sourcing voices and contributors. This meant in a breaking news situation or when demand for content was high, all staff would be able to 'muck in' and there would not be a reliance on one person to process UGC for all BBC news outlets. This ethos remains today and, as changes in the newsroom organisation continue, some non-UGC staff are being trained in certain aspects of basic verification.

Creation of 'Live and Social' role

In addition to amending rotas within the UGC Hub, a new role was created which involved one UGC producer working each day, on shift, with the main newsgathering team in New Broadcasting House. Information collected through interviews and newsroom observations suggests that this role was not created as a direct result of events related to the Syria conflict. However, appointing someone to this post made accessing relevant new information, contributors and UGC easier for the newsgathering division, who were in a position to speak directly to a member of staff from UGC about the important stories of the day. The role, known as the 'Live and Social' shift, was formally introduced in 2014 after UGC moved into what aimed to be an integrated newsroom, with different departments working side by side. The

job involved the UGC staffer scouting social media for potential stories and working with newsgathering, if there was breaking news, by searching for UGC and social media content relevant to the story. The role also involved acting as a liaison between main newsgathering and the UGC Hub, as well as taking specific requests for particular programmes across domestic and international outlets. Those who carried out the job said they believed the role ensured a constant point of contact between departments throughout the day, but it also meant that BBC journalists developed a greater understanding of the role of the UGC Hub and the risks and responsibilities associated with using UGC.

> They [Live and Social producers] are in the centre of the newsroom and they are interacting with all the teams, so in terms of UGC, it's good because we are tucked away in a corner. They are good for bringing awareness because sometimes people don't know what we do. Their job is to keep across social media and filter content.
> (UGC producer, October 2013)

The UGC Hub and BBC Newswire send out alerts about key pieces of UGC each day, which the Live and Social producer will make the newsgathering team aware of. These alerts also include advice and caveats around how footage should be used and where details about verification or sourcing should be included. A further discussion about the issues staff encountered around verification process and associated warnings will be detailed later in this chapter.

Developing rapport with other departments

Journalists spoke about becoming more proficient in using social media to track down footage and contributors, but those interviewed were also very quick to highlight the importance of drawing on the expertise within the BBC when checking or verifying content. This finding was also apparent when consulting the internal documents available in ENPS as part of the qualitative content analysis component of this research; further information on how this part of the study was carried out is detailed in the methodology chapter. Producers referred specifically to working in tandem with colleagues in BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring. They said that these journalists played a crucial role in helping ensure suitable content was aired, especially at the start of the Arab uprisings and events in Syria in particular.

> I think that being in the new building has helped a lot with that because you can just walk up to someone at Arabic and ask for help. We send content to Monitoring and they do help, depending on what is happening and how busy they are.
> (UGC producer, October 2013)

One hurdle for UGC producers was the language barrier, in that it meant Arabic speakers from across the BBC - but particularly within BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring - would often be called upon to translate video. This included staff working overseas, such as Lina Sinjab in Damascus, but the main points of contact on a regular basis would be staff based in London.

> We were working closely with BBC Arabic and developed what turned out to be a vital new relationship with BBC Monitoring, who we had never really engaged with much before. But we quickly discovered that they had some really specialist producers who not only spoke Arabic but were from a lot of the countries affected, whether it was Tunisia or Egypt or Syria or Libya. And we realised that in-country experience and expertise and familiarity was vital in a lot of the verification aspects we were looking at.
> (Former UGC editor, managing UGC, Oct 2013)

In addition to taking advice from those with in-country experience when checking footage, BBC journalists also looked to BBC Monitoring when sourcing eyewitnesses and potential contributors. BBC Monitoring staff had spent years documenting the working media of countries around the globe. Many staff had direct links with Syria, which meant they were able to pass on knowledge as well as contacts to news producers. In 2013, BBC Monitoring also appointed its first specialist in Syria UGC/social media, a direct response to the challenges the BBC faced when covering the conflict using this type of content. Observations suggest that the creation of this role was also in response to the changing remit of Monitoring as, for the first time, it was funded by the BBC, rather than via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (BBC 2010). In addition, a BBC Monitoring staffer now sits within newsgathering at New Broadcasting House, in a similar capacity to the Live and Social producer - being a go-between for the two departments and also offering insight and advice.

The increased engagement and dependency on staff from BBC Monitoring and BBC Arabic highlighted a gap in skills within the main newsroom and the UGC

Hub, in particular language skills. As well as translating audio descriptions or handwritten signs which accompanied footage, Arabic and BBC Monitoring staff also frequently advised on what video actually showed; giving their opinion on the accuracy of the content, drawing on their expertise in the region as well as their language skills.

In response to what was arguably a pull on resources, respondents reported that an attachment role was created within the UGC Hub, allowing a BBC Arabic journalist to come and spend three months learning verification and UGC skills while lending their language skills and knowledge of the region to the UGC Hub team. The plan had originally been to have it as a swap scheme, but the need for trained staff within the UGC Hub meant that the resources weren't available to move staff from the department.

All change at BBC Arabic

The attachment was launched in 2013 as part of the Arabic Change project, which involved a major restructuring of BBC Arabic's social media teams as well as the implementation of a service-wide social media strategy. More detail on the size and scope of Arabic Change project is in the thesis Introduction, but among the main developments was the appointment of an overall social media editor for BBC Arabic. Other measures taken as part of the project included streamlining of content, with a reduction in the number of official Twitter accounts and programme Facebook Pages. Staff at BBC Arabic interviewed for this research said that, as they became more aware of the importance of social media as a newsgathering tool, there was an increased use on these platforms for calls to action for BBC Arabic programmes on television. Within online teams, there were also changes, as staff updated official BBC webpages to include options to upload video more quickly via smartphone apps and other devices.

> There was a need for some transformation within BBC Arabic. We did a full analysis of the market, of BBC Arabic's performance, what are competitors are doing, what are the main findings of this strategic review which are relevant to BBC Arabic in relation to social media. And we started to devise a social media strategy for BBC Arabic because they didn't have one. There was housekeeping around ownership of social

media details, restoring identities. There was also a lot of branding and naming conventions and storing data.
(Social media editor, managing resources, July 2014)

In relation to the attachment scheme, UGC Hub members involved in this research said that they welcomed a staff member with expertise in Arabic affairs coming to the team. The attachment 'proved itself' when the Ghouta chemical attacks took place in August 2013 and the BBC had to cover the events with no reporters near the area affected. The UGC Hub producer on overnight shift was the first BBC Arabic staffer to take part. He and other BBC producers turned to social media and their established contacts to determine what was going on. This meant that by the time correspondents came in for the morning shift, at least 11 UGC clips had been verified and were used with correspondent inserts across many different news reports online and on television. "That was a moment for UGC that proved the point of having someone from Arabic there. It worked out very well on that day. A horrific story but great in terms of newsgathering." (UGC story producer, October 2013)

In 2015, this 'rolling' attachment scheme continued, indicating the value in sharing expertise in the newsroom. Eight staff from BBC Arabic have been through the programme and, overall, interviewees reported it was a positive experience.

> We get a lot sent into us and then it's not only verifying where it is, but also that it is what it says it is. We get content that says it's a chemical attack in Syria and it's from Iraq, or it's activists with their own ends. With the Arabic attachment the people on that have been brilliant, they know how to do things and they can identify things much quicker than we can because they speak Arabic but they have been working on the story much longer than us at UGC.
> (Former UGC producer and researcher, December 2013)

The end goal of the attachment scheme was that after a set period with the UGC Hub, producers returned to their home departments with new skills in relation to UGC verification and social media, which they could apply to a number of BBC Arabic programmes and products across different platforms.

> It's an interesting networking opportunity and a chance to get to know the wider BBC, getting to know verification methods and the best practices around it. It widens the synergy of the journalists. So they come back with a different perspective. So when a producer came back [from attachment] we thought it was a good idea to spread the information, and even I know that the College of Journalism have started to devise a new

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verification course and they have spoken to many people, including the people within BBC Arabic who worked at the UGC Hub.
(Social media editor, July 2014)

Impact of using UGC on other departmental relationships and structures

Journalists reported that in trying to source content from Syria, they found themselves liaising with language services and also newsgathering, and this in turn resulted in more content being shared around departments. BBC staff said that when they did find good content, they might try to share that with other outlets and departments, such as passing on contact details for activists from BBC World News TV to the BBC News Channel, or from an interactive TV programme to the sister radio show. By sharing content it was hoped in some ways to avoid duplication of effort.

> Sometimes the UGC Hub will send the footage to more than one person, so to BBC Monitoring Middle East team, or BBC Arabic footage, and they asked 'we have this footage, these are the checks we have done, do you have anything to add?' and they would probably add in someone like Lina Sinjab so they are aware of the Syrian story. It's mostly people who have something to add who would help in the verification.
> (Former Monitoring producer, December 2013)

However, while the UGC Hub was said to be the main source for content, some programmes and producers said they went out and found their own voices and footage, citing that deadlines and time constraints meant that going to other outlets or departments would take too long, particularly when working on a rolling news outlet. One major issue that arises from the workflows for departments not being fully aligned is that there is not a BBC-wide database of verified content and contributors. Individual producers and even programme teams may have had a list, but these were not widely shared or made available, so producers were not aware of content used on a day-to-day basis. Findings suggest that, while some content was shared, there was a lack of communication between departments, and that caused problems.

> Let's say the three of us are working on the same file but nobody knows that the other two are working on it, so that means duplication of effort. The other issue is what happens if BBC Arabic say we can use it and the UGC Hub say, "don't use it, we're not happy". Then you have two different standards.
> (Social media editor, managing resources, July 2014)

Key UGC Files were kept by the UGC Hub in ENPS, as was detailed in the previous content analysis results chapter (Chapter 4), but findings indicate these files did not always include external links to YouTube and that the footage itself may not have been kept. The file might only contain a list of content which had been processed by the UGC Hub and the list was not accessible to everyone. Moreover, in terms of usage, it was up to individual outlets to come back and state whether they had used the footage or contributors, and UGC Hub staff said that this did not always happen. This meant that if a list was kept which detailed the channels and services where a certain clip was used, it would not be possible to say that list was exhaustive.

The issue of there being no full and centralised record of 'verified' content which aired on BBC services was seen a major problem, particularly by those in BBC Arabic and the UGC Hub who had devised many of the strategies for checking content. Some of this content included violence, which could be disturbing for producers to curate and viewers to see on air. Over and above the issue of duplication of effort, there are questions about the duty of care the BBC has to its staff, duty to the audience as a public service broadcaster in keeping them informed about events and duty to warn viewers about content which could potentially be distressing.

These concerns have since led to the piloting of a database of Syria content – linking up newsgathering, UGC Hub and BBC Arabic. This project has been led by BBC Arabic in the first instance. While this is merely a trial it is hoped that, if it is rolled out, footage can be catalogued in a searchable database which includes details about how footage has been verified, relevant links and records of its use. At this stage it is not clear whether this database would also store video files, so they would not be deleted. Also, previously used footage pre-2014 is not being catalogued, which again raises questions about what the BBC should be doing, given the nature of some of the content.

> I hope that in the future there will be one single database that will be around verified UGC content that you can search and you can find out, what is this video that was verified before? The tricky bit for that is that sometimes the same video has been uploaded by more than one person, maybe [stored] metadata and keywords can be part of that [database].
> (Social media editor, managing resources, July 2014)

Section 4: Relationships outside the newsroom

In addition to taking advice from those with in-country experience when checking footage and exchanging ideas with other departments, BBC journalists also looked to external organisations when sourcing eyewitnesses and potential contributors. This section explores these relationships and how they assisted journalists in reporting events in Syria, verifying content and learning about different groups operating inside the country

Developing rapport with activists

BBC journalists reported they were frequently in contact with the aforementioned Local Co-ordinating Committees (LCCs) across Syria, as well as other groups such as Shaam News Network and Ugarit News. Many conversations began with BBC journalists tracing the owners of YouTube accounts who had uploaded content, in some cases via interaction on Facebook. Events depicted by these groups would be triangulated with reports from agencies and other sources and interactions; journalists would usually not rely solely on such content. LCC footage went through the same checks and balances as any other any piece of UGC. That said, LCCs had become well established online and their content had frequently proven to be accurate.

BBC staff said they didn't just approach activist groups, they also approached individuals who gave good information over time. Their details would be put together in a comprehensive contact list which staff, particularly those working in television, would refer back to and update regularly. This meant that certain voices would be put on air again and again, and confidence in using these people would build up over time. As a result, certain groups' footage, contributors and intelligence sources were used more regularly throughout the conflict.

> Some of them are activists but some of them are people who just want to share the situation they are in. They are a good source for verifying stuff as well – we can ask people what they have seen, can they see smoke from where they are, what have they heard? People are good for directing you to other people – they are a network on the ground which we cannot be- it's an invisible network and the more tools we have the more we can

bring more social media platforms together. And that means we can be more sophisticated and that makes our jobs easier.
(Former UGC producer and researcher, December 2013)

For example, one key contact was Homs-based activist Abu Rami, who appeared on BBC World News TV several times including in June 2012 (see Figure 5.3, YouTube 2012). He also featured in BBC online articles and was widely quoted by other news outlets.
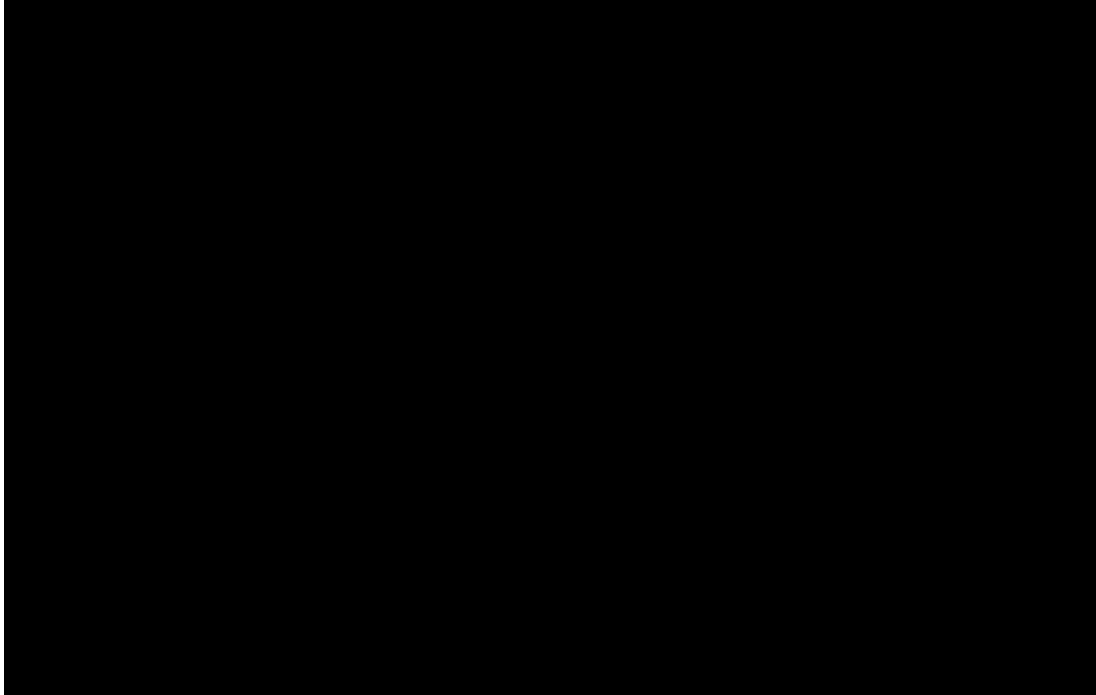
(Figure 5.3: Activist Abu Rami appeared on World News TV throughout June 2012)

However, by building up links and a rapport with contributors, producers were able to work with individuals to create other content beyond on-air commentary. This included online pieces such as the Damascus diary (BBC 2013h).

When I was at UGC we wanted to know how life was in Damascus and we translated it to English [from Arabic]. When I went back to Arabic, there was a similar editorial need to hear from people, preferably ladies, so we can diversify our voices, in the heart of Damascus who have different views on Bashar. It was challenging because you want two women, and our audiences and those that call in are male dominated... So you build a rapport with them and they did a diary for us every week.
(UGC story producer, October 2013).

The research findings from this project suggest that throughout the Arab uprisings the type of content submitted to and encountered by the BBC also altered.

Journalists covering Syria reported that, rather than a long video clip being posted online, it was common to see sequences edited together so that they were easier to identify. Video may also include signposting such as date stamps or in-video commentary.

> They used donuting [shooting around a subject] - so in Hama you would see a big protest round the clock tower and then you'd find a wider shot of it. Then you would be able to see that there was a big protest around the clock tower, but it wasn't a big protest in the square...so you got the perspective. There was also one example, as well, of duplicating sounds on audio. I think one of the picture editors spotted that exactly the same gunshot happened repeatedly because it was the same sound wave...Or you'll get a piece of footage where the original was done without commentary, but they had added in their own commentary about where it was and when it was at a later date.
> (Social media producer, curating and verifying content, June 2013)

This finding echoes the work of Hänska-Ahy and Shapour (2013), who cited the filming of key landmarks as an approach taken by activists to show where they were.

Staff also revealed that activist groups became more organised by cataloguing content posted on their Facebook pages. The LCCs provided both English and Arabic descriptions of the videos they uploaded. However, as the conflict in Syria went on, journalists said they became conscious that some of those sharing content were doing so along political lines and that activists might arrange content in a certain way to push a particular narrative. It was for the journalist, using the skills they have learned, to try and make sense of it and ensure, where possible, there was a level of balance.

Findings from the period of participation suggest that the UGC Hub was all too aware of the risks associated with using UGC. However, the findings from the content analysis, detailed in Chapter 4, suggest that this awareness did not always extend to the teams responsible for producing news reports and outputting this content, especially as there were only warnings for 8% of reports which contained UGC. This discrepancy - between what was understood as important at the UGC Hub and what was important within the wider newsroom - shows the tension between different departments dealing with this content. While no one likes to be wrong it seems that for some departments, warnings and labelling on UGC are not always priorities. When something goes wrong, however, the whole of the newsroom

is likely to take notice. The high-profile hoax of the blog 'Gay Girl in Damascus' - where a US-Syrian lesbian blogger turned out to be an American man writing out of Edinburgh University - is "emblematic of the more fundamental challenges facing journalists reporting the Arab Spring" (Bennett 2011: 193).

Some video content sent in by activists, once checked, would be made available to all BBC outlets. This footage might be broadcast on its own or incorporated into packages. In some cases it might be converted into stills to illustrate online stories – such as the screengrab below which activists claimed showed the inside of the Abu Bakr al-Saddiq mosque in Herak (Figure 5.4).
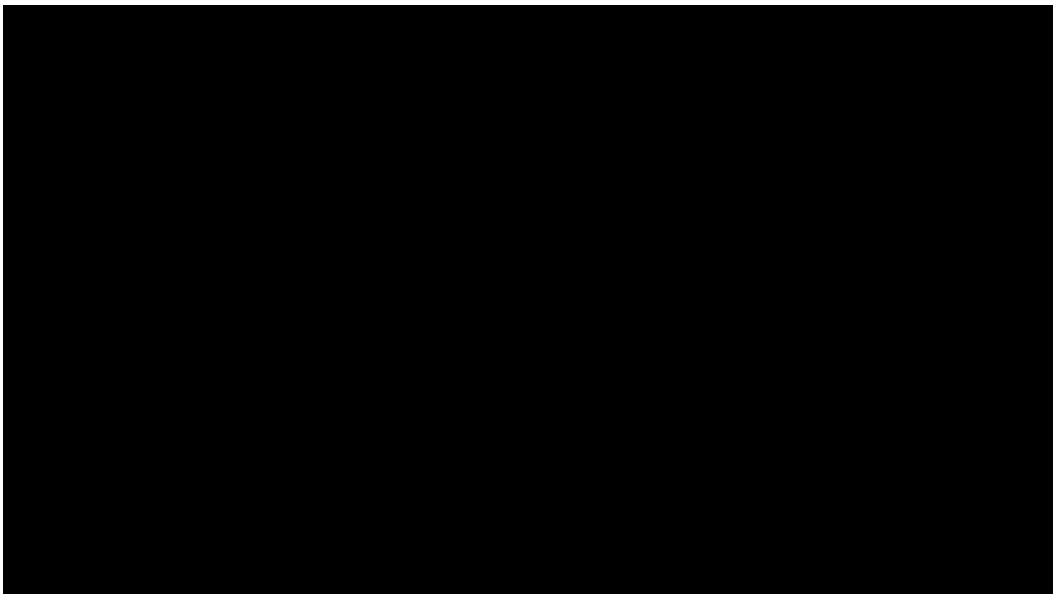
(Figure 5.4: A screengrab of video, which activists claimed was from a mosque in Herak in Syria, was used to illustrate a BBC online story in March 2012)

Having to rely on intelligence and content from activists inevitably has some pitfalls, and journalists from the UGC Hub stated that any non-BBC content - including social media footage from Syria which was sourced from agencies such as Storyful and Reuters - went through a verification process. Meanwhile, intelligence about developments on the ground was vetted and corroborated with other sources. However, research involving journalists working in other parts of the BBC, as previously mentioned, suggested that, at times, they would 'go their own way' and not involve the UGC Hub. This again raises issues about tensions between departments, as well as concerns about both the cataloguing of content used, and maintaining standards in terms of content and verification procedures around footage which the BBC does not own.

Engagement 'in the field'

The reliance on engagement with activists extended beyond the newsrooms into the field. Foreign correspondents tasked with covering Syria, either from the bordering countries or when they got access to Syria itself, said they had to rely on individuals, not just to gather content but also for their safety.

Paul Wood (BBC 2014a, 2014b) and Ian Pannell are just some of the correspondents who have engaged activists, armies, rebel fighters and even jihadist groups, as they and their cameramen attempt to cover events in a country which is now hugely dangerous and becoming increasingly 'unreportable' in the eyes of some journalists (Frontline 2013). Sometimes this has involved meeting and travelling with them, at other times using their content to illustrate events.

Correspondents, particularly those who were experienced in working in conflict zones, spoke about working with teams of activists that they built up close ties with over a number of years. These individuals worked day in and out with BBC teams, picking up content and intelligence and passing it on to the BBC crews. Much information about content and events on the ground was located via Skype and Facebook, and helped shape correspondents' reports.

For example, Ian Pannell's May 2013 report on the violence in al-Bayda and Baniyas included chunks of unverified footage, shot by opposition activists, which allegedly showed the mass slaughter of families (Pannell 2013). Much of this was sourced in the field. Another report from Taftanaz in northern Syria, by Pannell and cameraman Darren Conway, featured an interview with media activist Ibrahim, whose video is also used (BBC 2013g). The content was corroborated by the BBC team who went to the locations where the footage was filmed from. Such reports highlight the importance of these relationships, but also raise questions about the importance of alerting the audience to the source of some of the content and the relationships BBC journalists have with these individuals, as well as issuing warnings and caveats, something that will be discussed later in the chapter.

One thing that staff - both in London and deployed in the field - did seem to be united about in relation to using content, intelligence and eyewitness testimony, was their reliance on certain groups to pass on information. Producers across all departments involved in the research stated that some contributors became trusted

sources over time. As a result, a rapport built up between journalists and activists both in the country and within the Syrian diaspora.

> We were lucky to be able to form our own team out there. They were great because they were also very plugged in, in terms of accessing material. In terms of trust these are people I have known a very long term, and we also entrust our lives to these guys – they organise the trips, they make contact with rebel groups, work out locations, routes, crossing points. Those trips took weeks to plan and so it builds up a level of friendship and trust which you couldn't ever have remotely in London, so they were perfectly placed as native Arabic speakers familiar with the region as well as sometimes knowing the people filming the material.
> (Foreign correspondent, May 2015)

Engaging with the Syrian Diaspora

Often relationships between individuals and BBC departments developed after BBC Arabic staff contacted people they trusted inside Syria. Conversations would snowball, resulting in journalists from across the BBC speaking with other 'trusted' individuals, including activists. In other situations, members of the Syrian diaspora in the UK helped locate individual activists via phone, email and social media. The research identified that the expertise of the Syrian diaspora was harnessed by BBC journalists to assist with on-air and off-air issues. As well as groups such as the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, individual members of the Syrian community became go-to sources for information, with many becoming trusted on air contributors. Off screen, producers continued to engage with Syrians abroad, whether they were helping establish contacts within Syria or 'standing up' reports of events unfolding inside the country in a way not previously seen. One reporter spoke about a Syrian editor from an Arab TV channel who came into the BBC's London office late at night at short notice.

> He wasn't a rebel on the ground but he was 'Mr Connected' and he used to be someone I could call at whatever hour and say, 'can you sort me out with contacts' in Northern Syria, southern Turkey, where there had been this incident happening. And he would have people on the ground that he would give me, or he would come in himself and give an expert interview to kind of balance things out. He was opposition obviously but he was good.
> (Former news producer, sourcing guests and content, June 2013)

The interviewee recalled that, as well as going on air to speak to BBC TV News, the Syrian editor stayed on and helped BBC producers to verify their content when there was no one else available. There are obvious problems in relying on such individuals, such as the fact that they may exaggerate reports of deaths or violence in a bid to highlight their cause. Like the UGC posted by activists, my research observations and interviews indicated that any claims made by members of the Syrian diaspora were checked and attributed, or 'stood up', before they went on air.

> There were shots we used in other pieces that were from people we had actually met in Syria. There was a piece we did on Aleppo last February or March on the civil defence forces and we met the guys and followed them around and they had all this footage. So it is UGC but it becomes something more than that – it increases the veracity of it.
> (Foreign correspondent, June 2015)

Section 5: Balance and duty of care

As a public service broadcaster, the BBC is bound by a charter that its journalism will be accurate and impartial. However, the report by the BBC Trust in 2012 questioned the impartiality of reporting, in particular in relation to Syria as a result of restricted access to the country. This access meant that at times content was skewed towards that produced or uploaded by activists, particularly those from opposition groups. This raises questions about balance in reporting of events.

Staff interviewed for this research stated that they did try to engage with Syrians from a variety of different backgrounds and, at the beginning of the conflict, there was an active effort by journalists to get pro-Assad voices on air as well as contributors from other groups, in order to have more balanced coverage of events and give a variety of different viewpoints. In fact, one journalist proposed that when contacting people in Syria became a concern due to fears about security, it was initially pro-government and Assad supporters who were still contactable. However, research findings suggest that as the conflict continued and became more complex and dangerous, civilians and government officials were increasingly unwilling to speak or were uncontactable.

> I cannot remember how many countless times I have tried to get the Syrian foreign ministry or a government spokesman on the programme. Many, many times. And maybe once or twice in the earlier days we got a government advisor on, but often when you approach people who are pro-government online they respond and say, 'I'm not coming on because you're biased'.
> (Interactive programmes editor, sourcing contributors, June 2013)

As a result, opposition activists keen to engage with the media became the 'go to' voices of the conflict and would appear on air more regularly than other contributors. This also meant that BBC producers developed relationships with those activists. This brings up major issues for the BBC in terms of impartiality, as opposing viewpoints to those given by those supporting regime change and/or protests were less frequently heard. The 2012 BBC Trust report, which involved some content analysis of reports, warned of the dangers of one-sided reporting by the BBC across its channels. Interviewees charged with finding eyewitnesses and voices out of Syria said that viewpoints given on air by contributors were 'held to task' by the news presenter interviewing them, in a bid to maintain some level of balance. Moreover, the first major speech by President Assad following protests and violence back in 2011 was carried in its entirety, some 90 minutes of coverage (see BBC 2011e).

Staff also identified that, at key points throughout the conflict, the BBC had aired contributions from Syrian officials such as the government spokeswoman Reem Haddad and had carried out sit-down interviews with President Assad (Bowen 2015). But, in terms of day-to-day reporting of the conflict, producers said they would overwhelmingly illustrate the story of Syria with eyewitness testimony from whomever was available and willing to speak, certainly throughout 2011 and 2012. Invariably, these people portrayed a certain narrative and were more likely to be media activists supporting regime change or opposition voices.

Coping with trauma and distress

As BBC producers learned how to process UGC and cope with the large influx of content found on the internet, journalists - particularly at the UGC Hub - developed a level of expertise in checking and verifying content. However, this meant that certain producers could end up working on Syria non-stop for a number of

weeks. While some interviewees said they enjoyed the forensic process around checking content, others said there was a fatigue around consistently having to process footage from one story. This was over and above the fact that some of the content, certainly when protests turned violent, could potentially be very distressing to watch. This had risks associated with it.

> There's been stuff that's been burned into the inside of my eyelids for a few days. You feel like at times you have been desensitised, and then you see something beyond it. I found I got more involved in the story because of that. People were talking about 'alleged attacks' [in August 2013] and I was saying 'they aren't alleged; I've seen a child choking.' We might not know who did it, but it happened. Because the UGC stuff is so grainy we are not seeing it roundly packaged, we're seeing what is being filmed raw.
> (Former UGC producer and researcher, December 2013)

Dealing with that content was, in some respects, a huge challenge; not just for the individual producers viewing and processing it but for the UGC team and the BBC as a whole. Picture producers, story producers and editors might also be subjected to viewing this content, even if they were not verifying it. For some, the main difficulty was in processing the emotions linked to viewing UGC later on, rather than the actual roles and responsibilities they had as journalists checking and viewing the footage.

> I think, personally, it has changed my approach to dealing with traumatic events as it were, as in I think we all learnt a lot about our personal limits…I think one thing that has been touched on in recent times, and I think we have all learned actually, is what used to be considered the foreign correspondent sort of experience doesn't necessarily involve having to go into the field anymore. We don't get the physical experience, which in a way is quite easy to cope with because you can say 'Physically I felt this,' and point to physical indicators of your experience. You can say, 'I was shot at'. Whereas from our perspective we have had to learn how to deal with the sort of the experience I have of listening to people dying today. But it's very difficult to deal with it in a personal/professional context. And we've all learnt how to process that and when to step away.
> (Senior producer, sourcing and verifying content, Oct 2013)

The BBC, as a newsgathering organisation, has a duty of care to its contributors, including activists sending in content or appearing on any of the BBC's platforms, according to editorial guidelines. Likewise, there is a duty of care to staff as they do their jobs. The BBC has acknowledged that dealing with UGC, or

indeed any violent footage, can be distressing. The corporation has adopted the Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) method of traumatic stress support as it recognises issues around trauma are not just applicable to correspondents and crews working in war zones (BBC Academy:online). Interviewees identified that many office-based staff are now TRiM trained, so as to be able to look out for signs of distress or colleagues having difficulties coping after dealing with potentially traumatising events, whether that be witnessing events first hand or from content online. Moreover, all UGC Hub staff and others who may come into contact with distressing content, or have had to deal with traumatic situations or content, are offered counselling. These offers of support were given more frequently following events in Libya and Egypt in 2011. Respondents also said that there were situations where they or colleagues had stated they did not want to cover a certain story or undertake a role that involved looking at such images and footage.

Safety concerns

Findings suggest that, as the dangers inside Syria grew, so did the reliance on certain groups and individuals. As a result, the BBC employed new coping strategies to maintain engagement amid concerns about the security of communication with contributors. Interviews and observations confirmed that, over and above the BBC's policy, journalists themselves felt they had a 'duty of care' to contributors, regardless of the viewpoint they had. This concern for safety, by producers for the contributors themselves, could potentially explain why later BBC coverage predominantly featured voices of media activists. Strategies to protect sources and contributors were constantly evolving and guidelines on the best method of approach could change daily. Today BBC policies remain under review, but the following section outlines key changes which have been put in place since the start of the conflict in 2011.

Some producers stated that, amid security concerns, staff were given guidelines as to phrases to use when contacting people in Syria by telephone, so as not to arouse suspicion. For example, opening a phone call with "This is Ben in London," not "This is Ben from the BBC," (news producer, June 2013).

> One thing we have done is to keep an up-to-date Twitter list and Skype
> list. Say something happens in Aleppo. We go to our list and see when

they were last online and we can drop them a line and ask if they can tell us any more, can they send us any pictures? It's also a case of being careful, them not telling us too much and getting in trouble. They've got more savvy and equally we've got more careful. You let them drive it – you don't say 'BBC' because it will get people into trouble. There is an element of anonymity, it's not using full names and it is an awareness of the dangers both from journalists and from the people on the ground. If they get scared they won't talk, so there has to be an element of trust.
(Former social news producer, working with UGC, October 2013)

Respondents said there were concerns that landlines and even satellite phones could be tracked from early on in the conflict. A ban on routinely calling satellite phones was imposed at the UGC Hub amid fears about the safety of those using them. This was not a blanket BBC ban though, as correspondents were still using such devices when 'in the field' and interview producers also contacted potential 'guests' via phone. However, it was recognised there could be risks involved; some attribute the death of the Times war correspondent Marie Colvin in Babr Amr to her phone being tracked (Rayner and Spencer 2012). As a result, there was increased reliance on the 'Voice over Internet Protocol' (VoIP) service provided by Skype, which is now the preferred medium for contacting people inside Syria. Producers said they also used anonymous Gmail and Skype accounts to contact people not associated with the government, in a bid to ensure anonymous contributors wouldn't be linked to the organisation and that these addresses didn't have any references to the BBC. Where individuals did appear on air via Skype, this would usually be in an 'audio only' capacity, again due to safety and security concerns. One producer who worked on interactive programming on radio and television said that he only knew a handful of instances where a Skype guest was seen 'in vision'; even then their face was lit in silhouette or obscured by a scarf, as was illustrated earlier with the example of activist Abu Rami who was a key contact in Homs.

This chapter has aimed to outline the key findings from interviews carried out with BBC staff, as well as extended periods of newsroom observation with UGC Hub staff and various teams across BBC Arabic. The findings suggest that journalists experienced a steep learning curve in terms of developing skills to process the high volume of UGC being uploaded to online sites in relation to the Syria conflict. They also faced challenges in terms of becoming more technically savvy and more proficient in the use of social media. While some staff had experience with UGC

from uprisings in other Arab countries such as Egypt, this footage was frequently used to complement journalists' work on the ground. Learning how to deal with UGC from Syria was largely done 'on the job', in order to meet demands for quick turnaround of footage that could be used by BBC outlets. There were risks for both the BBC and contributors in using this content, not least because, initially, set procedures were not fully in place to allow staff to verify UGC in a vigorous way. Respondents also suggested that this process was rarely explained to the audience, which may have led to confusion over the use and labelling of UGC in BBC broadcasts. These issues and other findings recorded throughout the research period will now be discussed in relation to the broader research questions, which seek to examine how UGC has been used by BBC News and how this use has impacted on BBC journalists' roles and practices.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter critically discusses and analyses findings from this thesis and relates them to recent developments within the context of the research field. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first is a synthesis of what has been learned throughout the research period, giving a critical perspective on the results. The second section looks at how the overall research is congruent with existing literature in this field. The third section focuses on how the study's findings relate to the theoretical framework and practitioner issues which emerged during this research. The final section considers and reflects on how the thesis extends previous scholarship and conceptual understanding in this area. To aid overall understanding of this study an introductory section gives a brief overview of the research model and its aims.

Introduction: Carrying out the research

This research project looked at the work of the BBC and how UGC was used by the organisation when covering the Syria conflict. It also focused on the impact this usage had on the way journalists did their jobs and the process whereby this content was eventually put 'on air'. The overall research questions, outlined at the start of the thesis, were:

Q1: How have BBC News journalists used UGC to cover the Syria conflict?

Q2: In what ways has the role of the BBC journalist changed to utilise UGC content in news output?

This study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. In order to examine how the BBC used UGC, a content analysis of news reports which aired on BBC World News Television was carried out, and 273 individual reports relating to Syria were selected for analysis. These packages dated from March 2011 to March 2014 and were coded for their use of UGC, how content was labelled and sourced, and a number of other criteria. This helped to paint a picture of how such

content had been used by the BBC since the start of the conflict. A full breakdown of the data collection methods is detailed in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

This content analysis of television reports was complemented by a further analysis of internal BBC documents relating to the use and processing of UGC clips by BBC journalists. The data provided greater insight into the ways that UGC was used and labelled, and also helped contribute to knowledge about BBC newsroom routines, particularly at the UGC Hub. This has helped in understanding changing journalistic roles and responsibilities of staff working with UGC.

In addition, a total of 20 interviews were carried out with staff from departments across BBC News; including the UGC Hub, BBC World News Television and BBC Arabic. Following an invitation from senior editors, the data collection methods were extended to include a newsroom ethnography. This was carried out at the UGC Hub and across a number of departments within BBC Arabic. These periods of observation allowed for additional information to be gathered about journalistic roles and routines, and helped contribute to understanding how UGC was used by journalists, as well as BBC outlets. It also allowed for further examination and discussion with staff beyond the interviews about whether journalistic work had changed during the lifetime of the conflict in Syria.

The research was carried out by a member of BBC staff. Having reflected on both the research and the findings, the benefits of being able to access BBC content, engage in informal conversations with staff and double check findings far outweighed the disadvantages of being close to the research topic. As new findings and developments were uncovered during the course of the research, the level of access made available to the researcher ensured that the research presented here is as up to date and relevant as possible. Unprecedented access also means that the scope of the discussion chapter extends beyond the use of UGC and journalism practices to look at the changes in news products in response to both the UGC and social media phenomena. Without insider knowledge of the structure and workings of the BBC, access to this type of information would be hard to come by.

Research aims and context

The research aimed to contribute to knowledge of production studies within the field of journalism and paint a picture of how roles and responsibilities within the BBC have changed during the Syria conflict. Syria was a country that, at the start of the conflict in March 2011, could not be easily accessed by western journalists. Now, five years later, it remains one of the most dangerous places in the world from which to report. One major threat in the country, which has gained momentum since the start of the uprising, is the presence of Islamic State, the jihadist group which joined the civil war and rebellion against President Assad. Though it has existed since the early 2000s, the group first appeared in Syria as the Al-Nusra Front (BBC 2015). In 2013, under leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) was established. Now commonly referred to as IS or Islamic State, the organisation has support from many other jihadist groups, including offshoots of the rival al-Qaeda network. It is known for its mass killings and high profile beheadings, particularly of westerners such as journalists James Foley and Stephen Sotloff, and aid workers Peter Haines and Alan Henning.

This background is outlined in more detail in the Introduction chapter, but it is important to consider the context when discussing the findings from this research, as these developments have affected journalists' access to information and their ability to report events inside Syria. For example, compared to other terrorist or activist groups, Islamic State is seen as having a very strong social media and communications strategy. The group has a large following and presence on Twitter, and its propaganda materials such as online magazine Dabiq have been translated into western languages such as French, German and English (see Veilleux-Lepage 2014). Some of its content, particularly videos, have a cinematic quality which makes them visually appealing. In a cruel irony, in a similar way to the BBC, Islamic State also has its audience at the heart of its content creation plans. As Veilleux-LePage outlined:

> In order to frame its message, IS has developed a range of exceptionally professional and sophisticated communication and social media initiatives that are exceptionally easy to access and highly attractive to their audiences.
> (Veilleux-Lepage 2014:7)

As well as violence involving fragmented groups within Syria, the diplomatic situation and military offensive from outside sources remains volatile. In September 2015 both Russian and US airstrikes took place in the country, with allegations from the US that Russia's forces were not striking Islamic State strongholds, but targeting other rebel groups and strengthening Islamic State's position (BBC 2015d).

As a result of the ongoing violence and unrest, including the rise of Islamic State, news organisations have been forced at times to rely solely on content created by those inside Syria, many of whom are not journalists but media activists, with a specific narrative or viewpoint regarding Syria which they wish to publicise. Therefore, the research also examined how UGC was used by the BBC - in particular BBC World News TV - to tell the story of events in Syria. This took in periods when journalists were unable to legally enter the country and also when they were restricted in their movement if they were deployed there.

In a changing media ecology, where journalists are now engaging with 'the people formerly known as the audience,' (Rosen 2008), this research depicts BBC journalists undertaking continually evolving roles, which at times involved using content which had editorial risks associated with it. The study also highlighted an evolution in the use of UGC by BBC News, the findings of which will hopefully inform both scholars and journalists about best practice when dealing with such footage, and also promote debate about how to cover events in what, at times, could be considered a journalistic black hole.

Section 1: What was learned?

Use of UGC

The content analysis results from this research indicate that, up to March 2014, UGC was used regularly by the BBC to help tell the story of events in Syria when no access was possible by correspondents, or when those deployed in the region were unable to cover events due to safety concerns. The content analysis was carried out in order to answer the question, 'How have BBC TV News journalists used UGC to cover the Syria conflict?'

The overall finding that there was an initial increase in the average percentage of UGC being used in news packages during the research period. Average usage rose in the first three months from 36.6% in March 2011, to 42.9% in April 2011 and to 46.6% in May 2011. The biggest spike in UGC used throughout the whole three-year period came in July 2011, with the average percentage of UGC used in news packages broadcast in that month being 53.05%.

Despite this high usage of UGC, these clips were not always accompanied by a clip description or a verification warning. In fact, of the 273 news reports coded, only 8% of the UGC clips which featured in these reports came with some form of verification warning. Results from the qualitative content analysis, interviews and newsroom ethnography highlighted that UGC which was processed via the UGC Hub did come with information about providing verification caveats. These findings suggest there were major failings in translating this guidance into on-air warnings for the audience.

Overall, the quantitative content analysis showed a gradual downward trend in the use of UGC from March 2011 to March 2014. This shows that while UGC was critical to telling the story of events in Syria, once BBC journalists were able to get some - albeit limited - access into the country, this UGC complemented journalists' own reporting. However, UGC was still processed and used to illustrate events happening in difficult to reach places, as well as informing background knowledge of events. In this respect the content was useful to journalists as a source of intelligence, even if the footage was not seen on air.

In other conflict stories which were covered during the lifetime of this research project, UGC has also featured heavily; from footage showing fighting in Ukraine throughout 2014 to the alleged torture of children by Islamic State militants (Sommerville 2015). UGC will be used by the BBC if there is no other way to tell the story, and ideally this content will have been checked and verified as far as possible. Eyewitness footage which came from the Tunisia beach attacks in June 2015 and was used by the BBC in their reports in the following days was another example of this. The problem, however, is how and when this UGC can be checked, highlighting that, "the work of verification is perhaps most difficult in the very situations when providing accurate information is of utmost importance" (Silverman 2014:8).

One of the BBC's core values is that "Audiences are at the heart of everything we do" (BBC 2015). This research found that UGC became a key tool to tell the story of the conflict in Syria, and journalists had to respond to this phenomenon with new working strategies and skillsets. The change in audiences' use of social media platforms during the uprisings in the Middle East and elsewhere led to journalists needing to become more social media savvy. They also developed a clearer understanding of the power, the reach and the limitations of these platforms, both as places to disseminate information as well as gather it. The research findings also illustrate that journalists no longer just report events to the audience, they also actively engage with them and the associated content they produce.

A greater dialogue has developed between BBC News journalists, their audiences and other content providers such as activists. Moreover, journalists have become more conscious about audience behaviour online and their interest in using social media to find out information, as well as sharing content or 'talking back' to journalists about their reporting.

Role of the journalist

This research also investigated the ways in which the role of the BBC journalist changed to utilise UGC content in news output. The research findings suggest the changes to newsroom work for journalists using this content are many and varied. The ways in which the roles and responsibilities of journalists altered in part depended on the role that a person had to start with. Other elements that might affect a person's use of UGC and changes in their role might include the department, their existing skillset and the remit of the programme or platform they worked for. But at the core, social media platforms have become important newsgathering sources for most journalists, whether it be to gather information about an incident in Syria or elsewhere, or to find eyewitnesses or footage. This means journalists have had to become more flexible and adaptable in digital spaces, perhaps having a greater presence on certain social media platforms, as well as becoming more proficient in understanding user behaviour, including the actions of activists. They must also question the motivation for people uploading this content, as well as considering how

it should be used in any broadcasts. As Steve Buttry, who contributed to the Verification Handbook, outlined:

> Our job is not to parrot sources and the material they provide, but to challenge them, triangulate what they provide with other credible sources and verify what is true, weeding from our work (before we publish, map or broadcast) what is false or not adequately verified.
> (Buttry 2014:17)

With regard to UGC specifically, journalists had to quickly adapt and learn how to treat this content and refer to more knowledgeable colleagues - in areas such as BBC Arabic and BBC Monitoring - when trying to find UGC and then qualify whether it could be used. Within BBC News roles also changed, as journalists became more accustomed to using UGC in broadcasts, with or without the necessary caveats. Other journalistic roles changed significantly, as they engaged in the delicate process of verification on a level not previously seen at the BBC, where understanding and being able to use digital tools such as Topsy, FotoForensics and TinEye) became more important. Here, as well as asking basic journalistic questions, journalists have had to examine content in a much more forensic way - looking at metadata and other technical elements - rather than just focusing on what the footage shows from a storytelling perspective.

Verification failings

A significant finding of this study, backed up by the content analysis results, was that the BBC systematically failed to advise its audience about the inclusion of UGC in its reports. That lack of advice included failure to use verification warnings when this content was used in reports throughout the three-year period being investigated. In fact, only 8% of the reports coded during this research had any kind of warning on them. That finding is similar to results reported in other literature, such as Juliette Harkin's study in 2012 that was previously mentioned in the Literature Review (Chapter 1). That content analysis of BBC Arabic and Al Jazeera Arabic broadcasts found that neither outlet explained whether sources or content had been vetted; "The common on air explanation of 'this footage cannot be verified,' was absent in all the content evaluated for this study" (Harkin et al 2012:31).

The fact that there were few warnings used in the news reports analysed in this study was surprising, given the perceived care that the BBC takes over its content as detailed in its Charter and Editorial Guidelines (BBC 2015). The results also contradicted the findings from the BBC Trust's updated report on the Arab Spring (BBC Trust 2013) to a certain degree. The report from August 2013 stated that, following a review of the way content had been labelled, "the BBC has adopted new wording for all user-generated footage where independent verification has not been possible" (BBC Trust 2013:2). While the warnings may have been provided 'in-house' from the UGC Hub to other BBC outlets, the reality is that, based on the results encountered in this content analysis research, they were not making it to air.

This particular finding is significant for media scholars interested in the field of UGC, but is also problematic, particularly for media practitioners and their audiences. One risk is that if something is not labelled, the viewer may assume that the content is the BBC's own footage. This links into the concepts of accuracy and transparency which were touched on as part of the sociology of news in the theory chapter. Moreover, when considering newsroom and journalistic routines, the failure to include warnings further highlights that journalists rather than audiences fully understand what the complexities of working with UGC, agency footage and BBC footage involve. It is up to the journalist to ensure the audience is informed. Therefore it is a recommendation of this research that journalists' duties should extend to labelling content when it is not from a traditional agency with whom a subscription model has been agreed, such as Reuters. However, this in itself poses challenges, as Reuters is among the agencies which now has a social media feed, and some UGC will be part of that subscription model. While interviewees said such content would be checked by the UGC Hub, this does not mean it will automatically get credited on air, again highlighting variations in the findings from the different data collection methods used in this research.

Given that journalists have been working with UGC in various guises for ten years at the UGC Hub, warnings would be expected to be second nature to those dealing with this content 'at the coal face'. Many of the internal ENPS documents scrutinised for this research did contain some kind of caveat, such as, "this content could not be independently verified", meaning that, while checks were made, it could not categorically be said the content was what it claimed to be. One development

throughout the conflict, as outlined in Barot 2013, is that the ENPS alert for Syrian videos on which the UGC Hub made checks was amended to state:

> Caution: We are confident this footage is genuine, but because of its nature and source, we cannot be certain. Any use MUST include cautionary wording in cues/scripts/captions, such as: 'The BBC has not been able to fully authenticate this footage, but based on additional checks made on it, it is believed to be genuine'.
> (Barot 2013:online)

Interviews confirmed this more detailed disclaimer was seen as more positive by journalists engaged in checking content, compared to a blanket caveat, as it made clearer the work they had undertaken. But they also reported that outlets aired content without any kind of warning, which respondents described as 'annoying'. Therefore, findings suggest the issue of lack of verification detail in on-air content did not come from lack of information via the UGC Hub. It may have been down to those creating the news reports, the gatekeepers of what detail is finally broadcast, failing to include such warnings in their coverage. There could be a number of reasons for this, and one explanation for the lack of warnings that emerged during the interviews was fatigue around UGC. Producers said they thought warnings were very repetitive and made BBC coverage look 'unreliable' or unofficial (senior story producer, June 2013).

Verification analysis

Results from this research showed that, in other situations, a blanket disclaimer might be used at the start of a BBC report in a script. This would be instead of a specific 'Syria disclaimer' for each clip. The disclaimer would be inserted once in a report, highlighting that UGC was used in the piece. There would be no other mention of the use of UGC, regardless of the number of clips used in the report. Moreover, UGC may or may not be labelled as 'unverified footage', which is different to identifying the content as UGC. Labelling 'unverified' content says more about the checking and verification process which has been undertaken by staff, and therefore the veracity of UGC. Sometimes the term, "this content cannot be independently verified", would be used, indicating to the audience that the BBC was not 100% sure whether the content was an accurate portrayal of events, or checks had

been done as much as was possible but journalists had to inform the audience the content was not being reported as fact.

In other scenarios, scripts did not use a warning or the term 'unverified', but instead alluded to the fact that footage was not original BBC content and it wasn't 100% clear what it showed. For example, Jeremy Bowen's report into the chemical attacks in August 2013 coded in the content analysis referred to 'videos posted on the internet', but at no time used the term 'unverified' in labels or in scripts. A report by Ian Pannell into a massacre in Baniyas also didn't use the term 'unverified' but talked about 'activist video', which 'appears to show' when referring to UGC (Pannell 2013). All these reports used big chunks of UGC as part of their coverage but didn't use warnings which would likely would have been sent out by the UGC Hub. Again, this highlights the problems first outlined in the Literature Review (Chapter 1). Practices varied from journalist to journalist when it came to crediting or labelling UGC. This research makes a significant contribution to the research field and goes further than some existing literature by questioning the journalists about those decisions. This revealed tensions between what journalists should do, or thought they did, and the actual use of warnings on air.

Overall, the use of warnings about the veracity of content was rare in the research sample, and the inclusion of such information was influenced by an individuals' own perspective, personal knowledge and experience. This seemed to be particularly the case with journalists writing scripts and gathering the footage for a news report. One correspondent said he didn't feel the need to include warnings, because for every piece of video he had used in a report, he had seen probably 'at least three others' (interview June 2015) which showed the same thing, and these had been scrutinised by him and his connections. He didn't put 'unverified' on content, as he believed that with his knowledge of the region and connections he had done enough checking, and was satisfied that the content accurately portrayed events on the ground.

Source, check and stay on top of technology

While not all journalists engage in verification checks - or are not seen to be undertaking that role - these findings and the literature highlight another key issue,

which became apparent during the course of the research. The issue is in part linked to the results which have already been discussed. There were discrepancies between what was seen in observations and what interviewees claimed took place during the verification process undertaken by the UGC Hub. Some interviewees reported that the Hub was the centralised point for UGC and all footage should be processed through them. However, as Wardle et al outlined in 2008, in such a large organisation there is no 'catch-all strategy' for harnessing UGC, and other interviewees contradicted these claims. Moreover, observations suggested some people would find content themselves and go through their own process, without alerting other outlets. This included, but was not limited to, staff who had become proficient at checking content due to spending time within the UGC Hub, and those who had a working knowledge as a result of their own experience in covering the Syria conflict for outlets where there was a large demand for UGC. For example, it was a team from BBC Trending (a new service dubbed 'The BBC bureau on the Internet' (BBC 2015b)), rather than the UGC Hub, which uncovered that the Syria Hero Boy video posted online (McPherson 2014) was in fact a fictional film posing as UGC. However, the UGC team had been going through a process of verifying that particular content, which other outlets had already aired, before it was revealed it was the creation of a Norwegian filmmaker. The UGC Hub then advised outlets it should not be run (see Hamilton 2014).

Therefore, while the UGC Hub is a very important department, rich in skills and aspiring to provide a centralised service, it is unrealistic to expect every piece of footage to be routed through them. This is due, not least, to outlets' deadlines and limited resources - there is only so much one team can have demanded of it.

UGC in London vs UGC in the field

The research findings also uncovered interesting views on UGC and its use from journalists covering events in Syria, when they are deployed to work outside of the newsroom, usually as a foreign correspondent or producer. For journalists working 'on the ground' after 2011 - either in Syria's neighbouring countries, on the borders, or within Syria itself - the work was less about going through processes or being aware of where to use verification warnings, and was more concerned about

working with trusted teams to ensure their content was accurate, while simultaneously working in a newsgathering capacity. As one foreign correspondent outlined, in his view, different UGC had different values:

> All UGC is not equal and I think that is key for me. There are different layers. There's UGC that is filmed by people we know, UGC that's filmed properly and professionally by networks of people who we can meet or have met. Versus UGC found online, or from an activist website where you don't know who filmed it or why.
> (Foreign correspondent, May 2015)

In this respect, some journalists - be they producers or correspondents - felt they didn't always need to give verification warnings, so confident were they that the footage used had been checked and was accurate, or at least congruent with what they had seen and heard themselves and what their teams had picked out.

> They were great because they were also very plugged in, in terms of accessing material. Again with the Al-Bayda [attack] there were questions over it and they were instrumental in being able to verify locations that otherwise we wouldn't have been able to do and I'm not sure anyone in London could have done – they were quite a specialised group of people who probably watched the vast majority of videos on a daily basis, it's the line of work they are in.
> (Foreign correspondent, May 2015)

Therefore, while the research findings from the results sections in Chapters 4 and 5 indicated that the UGC Hub played a major role in checking and verifying UGC, there were always going to be journalists who didn't go through this process. Journalists, whether working in the field or in the newsroom, formed their own circles of contacts. In the field these were more likely to be people on the ground, often activists working with links across Syria. In some cases these contacts became trusted over time and provided content both inside and outside of Syria which would be used in news reports. Therefore, when a finished package recorded in the field was fed to a centralised point, it would be unlikely that individual clips which featured in that report would be sent in to be verified. Journalists engaging with these activists and trusted sources in the field acted as curators of existing content, and were still picking and choosing what to use without putting it through the established process in place within the newsroom environment.

For those covering events in Syria remotely, Skype conversations, LCC newsletters and social media contacts were frequently used to gain information and

to access footage. For correspondents working in London, they would often write a 'track' or voiceover to go with footage selected by a producer working in the newsroom, with easy access to pictures coming in from agency services and the UGC Hub. If this was for a major outlet such as the BBC News at Ten, copyright information about footage used in the report would be stored. Reporters said this often meant a reliance on UGC found on social media and agency footage, and while it would be hoped this content would go through checks, they did not have the same connection to the content creator as they would have had they got it via contacts or a trusted group.

> I am pretty sure I did a piece in London on the Al Houla massacre and I have never been there and I didn't know who filmed it and couldn't verify any of it so I was completely reliant. So I have sympathy with those who don't have the luxury of those networks.
> (Foreign correspondent, May 2015)

From a cataloguing perspective, the self-selection and quasi-verification processes around UGC collected in the field and then entered into the BBC's systems are challenging, not least because of the number of platforms and channels UGC can be used by within BBC News, from Language Services to online, domestic and international TV news. The BBC, as an international broadcaster, may be realising this for itself now with the piloting of the UGC database being carried out at BBC Arabic, discussed in the Chapter 5 results and in the Conclusions chapter. In 2015, a certain amount of overnight staff were trained in 'basic verification' while on shift, in addition to the BBC Academy (formerly the College of Journalism), giving an option for journalists to register - with managerial approval - for a specific verification course. This is just one of a number of courses linked to social media and citizen journalism that the BBC has run since 2011. The introduction of such a course may to some be seen as a dilution of the specialist skills the UGC Hub team poses, but it is being sold as an opportunity to share knowledge and to allow UGC Hub staff to focus on the key material best served by their expertise. This hypothesis was echoed in Harrison's ethnography (2010), which proposed that UGC was not always taken seriously as a type of footage, but became more accepted as it was used more frequently. This may also be why, since 2015, UGC staff have been embedded on the daytime shift from 8am to 5pm at the News Channel, World and within newsgathering, as part of newsroom restructuring.

Overall, the content analysis, document analysis, qualitative interviews and observations outlined that the need to use UGC created challenges and resulted in major structural and editorial changes within the BBC. Examples of this were seen during periods of newsroom observation, particularly at the UGC Hub, where people on the team were appointed specific roles depending on the rota of the day. However, at the same time, the department had to remain flexible enough to transfer staff to another role should breaking news happen and there be a demand for a certain type of content or contributor.

Section 2: Links to literature

These content analysis findings and subsequent concerns around footage use are also congruent with the results of, and subsequent discussion on, the large-scale content analysis carried out by Wardle et al (2014) across multiple TV channels that use UGC. Part of their focus was on verification practices and associated risks. For them "…the amount of UGC being broadcast on air and integrated online was not necessarily surprising. What did surprise us was the amount of UGC that was not labelled or credited. UGC was treated like any other footage" (Wardle et al 2014:120). Similar to this study, they were alerted to a lack of crediting, lack of advice for the audience as to what UGC was, and also an absence of labelling of UGC in broadcasts. This finding suggest journalists they felt warnings undermined trust and "suggests that verification checks have been completely inadequate" (Wardle et al 2014:60). In relation to crediting, Aday et al (2013) noted that often content was sourced as being from YouTube; this was also problematic as it didn't say anything about the uploader of the content, and so this crediting information might not be used.

All newsrooms evolve, but the situations presented when dealing with UGC from the Arab uprisings particular situation meant that staff had to adapt even more quickly; those journalists at the front line in engaging with UGC also became more savvy and developed new skillsets to carry out what has been dubbed 'social media newsgathering' (Hughes 2011). This could involve going onto various platforms to

find content, particularly in breaking news scenarios. In this respect, two aspects related to using UGC are worthy of discussion: firstly, the task of going out and finding content with the help of social media technology and, secondly, verifying that with different tools.

> Verification is critical to the success of what the UGC team produces. Technology has moved on considerably since 2005, bringing an exponential rise in the use of social networks and the power of mobile phones. These changes offer great benefits in our newsgathering processes, particularly on breaking news; they also bring great challenges.
> (Barot 2014:36)

Journalists spoke about trialling different software in order to do both tasks, something that is backed up by former UGC assistant editor Trushar Barot's overview of the 'new' newsgathering process across social media, in which he lists some of the different online tools used by journalists harvesting content (Barot 2013). Indeed, particular software packages - such as Geofeedia, Topsy, NewsWhip and Banjo - were named by multiple interviewees as 'go to' tools when trying to source content.

Overall, dealing with UGC was rarely straightforward, whether it be sourcing or verifying. Journalists initially had concerns about using UGC and this was followed by a change in approach which saw producers then 'harvesting content' online rather than relying on audiences sending it in. Therefore, this "rapidly changing user behaviour has meant the team has had to be agile and constantly rethink the way it works, as well as test and adopt new tools to help us" (Barot 2013:online). This hypothesis could extend to the way the BBC actually structures itself and trains its staff in using UGC.

This development, outlined in the research results and echoed in Barot's blog, is also congruent with Hänska-Ahy and Shapour's (2013) research which showed journalists became more comfortable dealing with UGC over time; something journalists involved in this study found out for themselves over the period they were processing content from Syria. In this respect, the research findings contribute to the field of journalism studies which earmarks UGC and the associated challenges for journalists working with the footage as a major concern and issue for future consideration (see also Wardle et al 2014, McPherson 2014, Silverman et al 2014).

UGC was regularly included in news broadcasts and, arguably, the reliance on this content to cover events in Syria has continued throughout the conflict. Though overall usage in TV reports pertaining to Syria declined during the time period being researched, this type of content has remained crucial to telling the story of other international news events. For example, the death of Eric Garner, the rebel fighting in Donetsk, and the Canadian Parliament shooting in 2014 are stories which would have been much more challenging to tell without the available UGC. These developments, alongside the evolution of social media from consumer platforms into newsgathering tools, have also influenced the verification processes journalists undertake. As technology evolves, so too will the skillsets needed by journalists to undertake these important checks and balances. The research findings showed that journalists have become more savvy and developed new skillsets to engage in what is now dubbed 'social media' newsgathering. Arguably, journalists will need to continue to hone these skills, as activists and other media literate 'produsers' (Bruns 2003) find new and more creative ways to showcase content on different platforms and disseminate their footage in different ways.

Duty of care

A duty of care to the audience in terms of ensuring accurate credit, labelling and verification warnings were given with regards to UGC was a key theme throughout this research. However, the research findings also highlighted the needs of and duty of care to BBC journalists who, if consistently put on the story, might get fatigue around processing UGC from Syria, or indeed any place where events which are captured by eyewitnesses could be perceived as distressing. Respondents spoke about seeking support from the organisation if they felt upset by traumatic footage or images they had viewed in the course of their work. This is congruent with literature from the fields of conflict reporting and also psychology, which identifies that a person viewing eyewitness footage is as at risk of being deeply unsettled by what they see as someone witnessing events in the field is. Feinstein et al (2014) surveyed journalists working with UGC and live footage from three news organisations and found that "frequency rather than duration of exposure per shift, or duration

employed on UGC material, emerged as the more robust predictor of depression, anxiety, PTSD type symptoms and heavy alcohol intake" (Feinstein et al 2014:4).

With content such as that being published by the likes of Islamic State being circulated on social media, including such images as beheadings, respondents said they felt there was a greater risk of coming into contact with such footage as people shared content or sent it in to the BBC. This might be done without a graphic content warning by people trying to be helpful, but it could inadvertently distress journalists. Mechanisms put in place at the UGC Hub to safeguard journalists' health are further detailed in the research results chapters, and they include but are not limited to: appointing Trauma risk management (TRiM) trained producers onto teams who can identify triggers and signs of PTSD; having sharing sessions to talk about content that might have been disturbing; and rotating staff to reduce the frequency with which they are in a role that might involve looking at a specific type of footage. A further consideration of organisation-wide approaches which could be put in place will be given in the Conclusions chapter.

Section 3: Theorising the findings

This thesis considered both gatekeeping (White 1947, Shoemaker and Vos 2009) and gatewatching (Bruns 2003) as relevant theoretical approaches to this research, which focused on journalistic practices and issues arising when using UGC within news output. The sociology of news, which looked in particular at hierarchies of influence, journalism routines and workflows from a societal perspective, was also applied to the research framework. This approach (Schudson 1989, Reese 2007), also took into consideration issues of accuracy, transparency and verification. While the Theory chapter (Chapter 3) gave an overview of these theories and the implications of applying them to this research, the findings do prompt the need for reflection, particularly in relation to those existing theorisations around collaborative working and the responsibilities of the producer in terms of gatekeeping and gatewatching.

Journalists may interact with the audience, but this does not necessarily translate into collaborative reporting and, even if the public is encouraged to participate in the newsgathering process by sending in content, this will be subjected

to checks, as the BBC has editorial standards to maintain in relation to its journalism. Regardless of where content has come from, if it is included in BBC news material, audiences have a reasonable expectation that this UGC will help contribute to an accurate portrayal of events. Therefore, while journalists embraced new techniques and coping mechanisms for accessing and processing UGC, they must still continue to work towards the same journalistic objectives of truth, accuracy and impartiality which they would apply to their own original reporting or when using agency footage. The phenomenon of UGC and accessing this content via social media platforms has not eradicated the need for producers to engage in a certain amount of 'journalistic sensemaking', while also developing skillsets relevant for journalism in the digital age (see also Murray 2011).

In relation to applying a theoretical framework, this research found journalists were engaging in gatewatching, in terms of informing decisions about newsgathering. This 'gatewatching' refers to the online activities journalists participated in, often in tandem with their audience and also in anticipation of 'the people formerly known as the audience' (Rosen 2008) being in a mode to share content. This scenario could extend to sharing breaking news content or even stories journalists wouldn't have known about otherwise, with the US Airways plane crashing in the Hudson River remaining a pertinent example (Beaumont 2009). Bruns' concept and theory of gatewatching is very closely linked to the activities undertaken in this particular scenario, which sees journalists making decisions about newsgathering based on what they encounter within a new media environment. However, as will be argued later, while gatewatching informs the editorial decision-making process about what to *cover*, gatekeeping more accurately describes the process of deciding what is *included* when producing news content. And there are tensions between the two theoretical frameworks when it comes to deciding *how* to cover events.

Therefore, drawing on the research findings, there is rarely the 'full collaboration' between the producer and the public that Wardle and Williams depicted as a category in their research in 2008. For some journalists, as Wardle et al (2014) found in later studies, social media was merely another platform to look at and UGC was essentially another news source. Therefore the inclusion of UGC and content sourced from social media platforms was not a true indicator that journalists

were being fully collaborative with the public, though there are certain stories and certain projects which do see this happen. For example, the Annual BBC Schools Report initiative (now in its 10th year) sees journalists working with school pupils aged 13 to 16 to gain a sense of what they would like to see in the news, while also teaching them skills around media production news values. Another example is a weekly programme on BBC Arabic where audiences film their own reports, which then air on the channel. Belair-Gagnon identified an earlier example of this 'collaboration' in the 2008 Digital Storytelling initiative. Run by BBC Wales, it saw participants given computers enabled with video editing software set up in their home. They were then able to synchronise recorded spoken narratives with scans of personal photographs to make their own 'mini-movies'. The 'mini-movies' were then aired on the BBC Wales website in a dedicated Digital Stories section (Belair-Gagnon 2015, BBC Wales Online).

Overall, in terms of their production roles - which can involve creating packages, reports and other content to be consumed on TV, online or other mediums - journalists still make the decisions about what UGC, if any, they wish to use. At times there is a divide between what is known by journalists and what is translated to the audience about content, suggesting that the news producer is retaining the role of 'gatekeeper' of news. They are choosing what content to show their audience and how to label it, if indeed the UGC is labelled at all; in many cases these research findings show that these details were notably absent from news reports which included UGC. These decisions are made by journalists in their day-to-day practices, despite the fact that those acting as watchdogs for the organisation as a whole argue that audiences should be made aware of the nature of content, based on the suggested warnings which accompany UGC. For example, in 2012 the BBC Trust found 74% of UGC clips used in TV news did not have a warning attached to them. A follow-up report a year later advised that when warnings were being used the wording needed to change to make the details clearer to the audience (BBC Trust 2012, 2013).

Tensions related to theory

From a theoretical perspective, there are tensions between scholars about whether journalists engage in gatewatching or gatekeeping. This research found that

depending on the role a journalist carried out or the tasks they undertook, they might act in a way which could be explained by either process. What was clear was that they continued to navigate a path and engage in certain news routines which would be influenced by forces beyond that of the individual, be they societal, powers within the newsroom (Reese 2007), or outside policy (Breed 1955). These issues are important as newsroom structures and routines help define the roles and practices of staff.

The activities undertaken by news staff would dictate which theory (gatewatching or gatekeeping) would be more relevant, and in certain contexts, both approaches would apply. So, for example, if we were to take a breaking news situation such as the Tunisia beach attack in June 2015, a person might have uploaded a video to their personal Twitter, Instagram or YouTube account related to events on the ground. If this video was shared by people and eventually picked up by a journalist, this would not be gatewatching, as it involves the same newsgathering processes as it would in the offline world of looking for sources and information.

However, if, for example, the day after the beach attack, a news team were monitoring what was being said online about the story and made decisions about their own coverage based on how popular the story was, that would be categorised as gatewatching. This might include looking at whether hashtags were trending or how often the story had been shared from BBC sources. Gatewatching here is understood as being the result of digital engagement with the audience, which has contributed to the decision making of the journalists creating content that day.

However, when the final news report tackling a story airs, even it if does contain audience material such as eyewitness footage or other UGC, the process of selecting which content to use would be better described as gatekeeping. So, a journalist on any one story might find themselves flipping between gatewatching and gatekeeping processes during the course of their working day, depending on their assignments. As journalistic routines and responsibilities evolve, the theoretical framework with which newsroom work is approached must also be reconsidered. While the sociology of news literature highlights that journalists socially construct news (Schudson 1989), changing routines suggest that journalists in a digital age have a different, and arguable evolving relationship both with their sources and audiences. Newsgathering in itself is also changing. Based on the research findings

from this study, journalists are monitoring information flows in both directions – information going to the active and engaged audience and also information stemming from them.

Alternating between gatewatching and gatekeeping, when described in a practical sense, might not sound unusual to media practitioners who are used to working in a multi-skilled way that might see them engaging with different stakeholders at different times, depending on the nature of their work. For journalism scholars, however, there is some tension between the theories of gatewatching and gatekeeping, as was outlined in the Theory chapter (Chapter 2).

Both approaches are still relevant and a mixed or 'variegated' framework that blends elements of both theories, and can then be applied depending on the nature of the news work being undertaken, works well. While it may seem complex from a theoretical perspective, a fusion of the monitoring and decision-making tasks ascribed to gatewatching and gatekeeping demonstrates the diverse and evolving tasks journalists engage in when providing and creating content, particularly when audiences have the power and skills to create their own content, to talk back and to choose what they consume and share. A blended concept is easily understood within the modern media landscape and complements the evolving media sociology approach where journalists undertake any number of different responsibilities and roles - including gatekeeper, digital forensic detective and storyteller - when making journalistic decisions.

For the moment, news audiences are largely seen as consumers before they are viewed as contributors by BBC staff and journalists from other newsgathering organisations. And, with more and more sources of information available offline and online, in most circumstances journalists will use new and established routines and skills to gatewatch, but eventually gatekeep, the information they wish to disseminate within their own news products. In this respect, what people share might inform journalistic decisions about what would be of interest to the audience, but it won't necessarily influence what is included in any news reports. Gatekeeping, media sociology and gatewatching in themselves are evolving just as journalists' responsibilities are deemed to have altered in response to UGC and changing media behaviours. This can be seen in changing newsroom roles, structures and influences,

ranging from editors, to work of competitors to available content within restricted timescales.

Section 4: Extending understanding of journalism roles

The research unveiled that social media platforms were used by BBC producers as a tool both to curate and disseminate information. They were found to be a crucial weapon in the journalists' arsenal – to the extent that news guidelines were developed in relation to the BBC staff use of UGC, as inclusion of this content still needed to adhere to core values and editorial standards. This development suggests UGC and social media are now intrinsically linked to newsgathering and journalistic practice.

Belair-Gagnon believed that, when used as a journalistic tool at the BBC, social media "fostered a more collaborative form of journalism at the public broadcaster, with more personal accounts from afar" (2015:116). While this research found that content discovered on social media sites was included in the news more frequently, and journalists were more engaged and aware of their audience, this 'collaboration' did not extend to situations where the audiences had an editorial role in determining what content journalists worked with or ran in their TV bulletins (see Singer et al 2011). Belair-Gagnon's research also depicted senior BBC managers highlighting the "blurred boundaries and new possible social networks created for journalists reporting crises" (2015:2).

While they do not directly drive the news agenda in terms of providing content, having considered the research findings and other relevant literature, it is fair to say that audience behaviour may impact on how journalists approach certain stories. For example, journalists check what articles are the most popular online, what has most clicks and how long people are staying on stories. This in turn might affect what journalists consider covering in news programmes on television. This was seen in morning World News meetings at New Broadcasting House, where discussions about how to treat long running stories such as the Greek debt crisis were directly related to how successful the story was online. They would also identify

what viewpoints and voices still needed to be heard. So, collaboration is a reality in terms of access to and availability of some content.

While the responsibilities of the journalists using UGC varied depending on the nature of a journalist's role, there can be little doubt that this footage has become increasingly important for news organisations in recent years. While the content analysis confirmed that less UGC content was used in BBC TV news reports as the conflict in Syria went on, this content was still used in some ways. For example, to inform reportage and as a form of intelligence to allow journalists to cover the story, even if it was not used on screen. In this respect, the public were being informative, but were not collaborative. In fact, while social media has led to more collaborative working, journalists continue to use their editorial judgement when sourcing material and engaging in newsgathering. It is just that there are more sources to look at.

Contribution to knowledge

This research aimed to provide an outline of what has been learned about newsroom structures and workflows during the course of research period, and documents changes within BBC News, in relation to journalistic roles, as UGC has become a more prominent feature within newsgathering operations. This thesis overall contributes to a greater understanding of journalistic practices through a mixed methods research approach including a newsroom ethnography over a period of months which is triangulated with content analysis and document analysis. Newsroom ethnography is a data collection technique that Cottle (2000, 2007) has argued was well overdue and believed would add value. This study, and the researcher's background understanding, enable researchers to get a much needed in-depth insight into the workings of a newsroom and the diverse responsibilities of journalists. Moreover, for researchers, this work contributes to refining scholarly understandings of the role of the journalist as we enter a period where news is more 'social', i.e. found and disseminated on social media platforms.

The work done here also expands on existing literature related to the use of UGC in news output, an issue which is an important consideration for academics who are interested in studying newsroom organisations and their work, particularly in relation to breaking news. The thesis also revisits established theories to consider

the extent to which journalists continue to be information gatekeepers or 'gatewatchers' when audiences have access to news on numerous social, mobile and digital platforms.

This chapter has focused on critically analysing and discussing the research findings while looking at how they fit into the existing research landscape as well as evolving journalistic practices. The results and subsequent discussion, particularly around the issue of verification risks and practices, demonstrates the contribution this research makes within the field of production studies and newsroom ethnography. Many of the research findings are significant for journalism scholars studying the field of UGC and social media, areas which are of increasing interest to academics as well as media practitioners. A final full consideration of the issues outlined here, the limitations of the research and recommendations is provided in the Conclusions chapter (Chapter 7).

Chapter 7: Conclusions

This concluding chapter examines the main findings and emerging themes of this research. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section draws on the Research Results and Discussion chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) and makes recommendations for journalism practice. These will be relevant to practitioners such as newsroom leaders and journalists, who should be aware of the risks and compliance issues related to using UGC in the future. The second section looks at recommendations for scholars and those interested in academic research related to newsroom studies, ethnography and industry projects concerning journalistic roles and responsibilities. The final section reflects on the limitations of the research and the position of the researcher while giving recommendations for potential future studies.

Section 1: Practitioner recommendations

Looking to policy

The research questions asked how journalists had used UGC content to cover events in Syria since the first protests in Der'aa in March 2011 up to March 2014. In terms of the use of UGC, the findings about lack of verification warnings suggest that there have been systematic failures by BBC News, both in advising the audience whether UGC has been checked and in labelling this content, if it was used in news reports, to distinguish it as separate to original BBC content or standard agency footage.

One key recommendation from this research for those implementing policy at BBC News is that there need to be stronger and clearer rules about how to refer to UGC used on air; disclaimers and advisories may be sent out by certain departments, but this research found that these guidelines are rarely taken on board. Just 8% of the UGC clips sampled were accompanied by a verification warning. Alongside results demonstrating these warning failures, the research findings suggest that the actual

verification process needs tightening up and should be more stringent. This would both avoid duplication of effort and also be a move towards ensuring that all content is checked to a more exacting standard.

Moreover, while the UGC Hub is a very important department, rich in skills and aspiring to provide a centralised service, it is unrealistic to expect every piece of footage to be routed through them. This is due, not least, to outlets' deadlines and limited resources - there is only so much one team can have demanded of it. It is hoped that a new database or workstream effort, can be realised.

While a pan-BBC database of 'verified' UGC has not yet been established, there are efforts going on within BBC Arabic to trial such a venture. Since 2014, a pilot - involving the BBC Arabic social media editor liaising with UGC and newsgathering - has been taking place, the details of which are in the research findings. The creation of a set checklist of Arabic teams and a list of staff who are able to verify UGC, and their range of expertise, are just two of the developments within this trial. If the above steps were taken at a newsroom level it would hopefully mean that, at the very least, BBC staff working with UGC would know if others were engaged in similar work, avoiding duplication of effort to some degree.

Before this can be rolled out, however, BBC News as whole must understand the importance and relevance of these processes and why they are so crucial to the future of news. They are also hugely important in relation to maintaining the public's trust in BBC journalism. Such steps are not just part of informing the audience about the use of content, but are also a way of maintaining the BBC's values of truth and accuracy - two mainstays of BBC journalism (BBC 2015). Ideally, a pan-BBC UGC database would not just be used to check UGC or have a list of the processes, but also - where possible - detail how and where UGC was used by BBC outlets. Further discussions need to be had, but if copies of the footage used by news outlets could also be kept this would be useful, as some video footage is routinely used as 'library' footage. Moreover, content from conflict zones could potentially be considered to be depicting war crimes and should be preserved with this in mind, something Wardle et al 2014 outlined in their study looking at the importance of labelling and crediting UGC.

Changing workflows

The need for newsroom staff to work together has already been realised to a certain degree at the BBC, with the previously mentioned involvement of the Arabic and Monitoring services. The reality, however, is that more could be done to highlight to journalists not directly working with UGC - rather in output, news production or newsgathering - that they should have some understanding of the verification processes and the importance of informing the audience, making it clear "verification is a team sport" (Buttry 2014:16).

Since mid-2015, the BBC has moved towards being run in a different way as a 24/7 newsroom, with news online, BBC TV News and radio linking up more closely and being centrally managed. As a result of this, members of staff from the UGC Hub are now embedded on the day shift teams, including one producer with BBC World News TV and one with the BBC News Channel. In addition, the Live and Social producer continues to work within the daily newsgathering team. It is hoped that, by integrating staff in this way, best practice can be shared and non-UGC staff can understand the importance of this content, learn how to use it effectively and identify the risks associated with such footage.

Educating staff about UGC risks and compliance

Overall, there needs to be clearer guidance for BBC News staff about the importance of warnings in relation to using UGC in output. This could, perhaps, be done through the introduction of a mandatory course to ensure that journalists are aware of the risks associated with using this content, while also explaining why warnings are important. This would be over and above the existing BBC Academy verification course for staff involved in the checking process. Such a course would be related to the risks and compliance issues associated with using UGC. Online courses for BBC staff working with children and involving data protection are mandatory; a UGC awareness course could be rolled out in the same way for anyone involved in creating output which might include UGC or similar footage. This would ensure staff could not plead ignorance about the need to use warnings when including UGC in news output. There are existing courses about social media and the

web, but these don't extend to UGC. Those that do extend to UGC are not targeted at all staff.

Currently, if verification warnings have been used, their presence seems to be dependent on the journalist organising the script or sourcing footage to produce a news package. In this respect, I believe the most effective way to ensure that warnings are used is for the BBC to adopt a blanket policy on applying UGC warnings. This policy should make journalists aware that details about verification must be translated to the audience when UGC is used by the BBC, with further explanation of the processes of verification if need be. As will be discussed shortly, it is also important to signpost the use of UGC to the audience, though warnings about verification and advisories about labelling UGC are two different issues, something that was reflected in the research results.

Changing journalistic roles and skills

The research questions also sought to identify the ways in which the roles of BBC journalists changed as UGC was utilised in news reports during the lifetime of the conflict in Syria. The findings from the interviews and newsroom ethnography confirmed that decisions made early on in the conflict by editors - on team structures, use of content and rotas - had a direct impact on staff. This, in turn, affected their roles. While this research confirms that there have been many changes and amendments to the working practices around UGC - particularly at the UGC Hub - the research results also highlight a need for a clearer overall guide to the use of UGC, over and above the previously mentioned verification warnings. The research findings here could help inform practice in terms of labelling of content, shared access to footage and sourcing, which, as Wardle et al (2014) outline, is different to crediting for the benefit of the audience. A BBC-wide policy would take in issues of verification warnings as well as labelling content when it is used and should be adopted by all platforms using UGC. Any advice on practices should also extend to copyright. While the findings suggest the current policy has been relaxed in relation to UGC coming from Syria, this seems to be an informal arrangement; officially, the online policy remains that journalists cannot use content without permission from the

copyright holder (BBC 2014f). Moreover, the findings suggest that there is a greater need to educate individuals about the restrictions when using online content, particularly from social media platforms. Journalists cannot just use content which they have found on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter; this is a copyright infringement, which could lead to organisations being sued by the individuals who took the photo or filmed the footage. Yet the research suggests this does still occur in newsrooms (see Wardle et al 2014). Put bluntly, in order to clearly explain the use of UGC to the audience, journalists themselves need to have a clear understanding of *how* UGC is and should be used.

Implications for duty of care of staff

The development of the above initiatives, as well as the testimony of respondents throughout this research, indicates that UGC is a crucial resource for telling stories in hard to reach places, and that best practice regarding verification, labelling and crediting should be a major consideration for media outlets when using this content. The findings and developments within the wider media ecology also point to the importance of recognising the potential risks of processing and broadcasting this UGC, not just for audiences but also for the journalists involved in the editorial process. Following on from points raised in the Research Results and Discussion chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), a recommendation from this research would be that any news staff, not just those processing UGC or tasked with sourcing material, be made aware of the multiple resources the BBC has at hand to help tackle issues of trauma related to eyewitness content. For example, the BBC, as a leading broadcaster, has produced educational material related to this topic on its BBC Academy website, as well as having counselling available. Therefore, promoting this content and these services to all newsroom staff, making them aware that help is widely available, would be a good strategy; it would fit into the duty of care to employees that any company should subscribe to.

Furthermore, Feinstein et al (2014) indicated that tactics such as reducing the frequency at which staff were exposed to distressing UGC footage (as opposed to the duration of the footage) could help minimise upset and stress linked to PTSD. This strategy has already been put in place at the UGC Hub and is detailed within the

Results and Discussion chapters. However, it is a recommendation of this research that Feinstein et al's findings and the need for 'duty of care' should also be considered by managers of other newsroom staff when appointing journalists to work on certain stories. For example, a week of covering the bombardment of Syrian cities such as Raqqa, Aleppo and Hama by Russian airstrikes, or the migrant crisis - two stories which used UGC frequently - may allow a news producer to build up knowledge and expertise of what content is used on a daily basis. However, managers of staff - even those not directly working with UGC - should be made acutely aware that being put continually into such a role, particularly if there are distressing images, could take its toll on the wellbeing of staff. The impact that viewing graphic UGC has on journalists is a topic that should continue to be researched as its use becomes more widespread, and this should be a concern for all journalists.

Section 2: Recommendations for scholars

While there have been other BBC newsroom studies (Harrison 2010, Belair-Gagnon 2015, Bennett 2013) this research enables academics and practitioners alike to get a closer insight into news production routines in the 21st century. This is an age when producers are as likely to Tweet contributors and eyewitnesses as ring them up (Newman 2009, Hermida 2012, Qu 2013). This study aimed to furnish both journalism scholars and working journalists with an understanding of the evolving roles and responsibilities of staff within the biggest news broadcasting organisation in the world - the BBC. The research is relevant for both industry and academia, and this section includes recommendations for scholars as the study aims to bridge a gap between two spheres which are not always aligned in terms of best practice and learning outcomes.

Content found on social media sites is already the subject of many studies, but there is frequently a focus on Twitter (Hermida et al 2014, Vis 2013) to the extent that this research field could be considered to be overweight. Scholars looking to study how content is harnessed by journalists and travels across social media might want to look at other platforms and also potentially other delivery systems

such as chat apps. For those undertaking newsroom ethnographies or newsroom studies in the forms of interviews, the media landscape is changing and the different tools used for newsgathering and delivery are harder to pigeonhole. Different platforms will be favoured by different outlets and individual journalists may have their own preferences for sites and platforms they use when tracking news stories. This was demonstrated in the interview and newsroom observation findings.

Scholars should come to a consensus about use of the term 'UGC' in a research context. As outlined in the literature review and in the section relating to terminologies and concepts, UGC is used as a catch-all term for most content that has not come to news organisations from professional journalists. However, as Wardle and Williams (2008) and many others after them have outlined (Allan and Thorsen 2009, Hermida 2010), this term doesn't satisfactorily identify the wide range of content which falls under this label. Eyewitness videos from conflict zones is very different from pictures of the snow or comments, on an online story versus viral cat videos. In order to be clearer about the use of UGC in newsgathering and reflect the diverse range of content it covers. It would be in the interests of scholars to reclassify content and suitable terms to describe it.

As outlined in the findings relation to theory in this thesis, conceptualisations of gatekeeping and Bruns' gatewatching (2003) are complex and may vary from journalist to journalist, task to task and organisation to organisation. Moreover, the behaviours of journalists do not always take into consideration the evolving media landscape in which social media content and eyewitness testimony form part of the news, and scanning these platforms is now an integrated part of journalism routines (Domingo and Paterson 2011, Singer et al 2011). Therefore in considering newsroom roles and the sociology of news itself, the acts of the gatekeeping and gatewatching should perhaps be reconceptualised in the same way that Coddington and Holton (2013) suggested the traditional journalism model needed to be re-examined.

Section 3: Limitations and suggestions for further research

This thesis contributes to the existing literature by focusing on UGC and social media usage in relation to crisis events in the Middle East, particularly in Syria. The findings complement studies carried out by Harkin et al (2012) and the BBC Trust (2012, 2012a) on practices around verification. They highlight the unique situation Syria poses in relation to newsgathering practices, whereby journalists were forced to try and report events inside the country while not having a presence there for large parts of the research period. It also charts the use of UGC by the organisation when covering the conflict in Syria. However, the scope of the research is, in some respects, narrow. Therefore, it is appropriate to recognise some of the limitations of this study and suggest where more work can be done.

For various reasons outlined throughout the thesis, the research was restricted to focusing on journalists working within the BBC, and the content analysis sample only looked at BBC news reports which aired on BBC World News TV. As the BBC is the world's biggest broadcaster - with a presence on TV, radio and online, as well as social and mobile platforms - there is certainly more than enough material available from the different services and departments within the organisation to base any research on. However, in terms of looking at the wider journalistic framework, a comparative study focusing on how different outlets have used UGC - for example, BBC World News TV and Al Jazeera English TV - might elicit interesting results. Indeed, research by Harkin et al (2012) and Barkho (2007, 2011) into both outlets have been included in the literature in this thesis. As the conflict in Syria continues and evolves, with international involvement by Russia, the US and the UK, this is a story that may still be relevant for researchers to investigate.

The time period for BBC news reports which were coded in the content analysis spanned three years, 2011-2014. In that time and since there have been very interesting developments in terms of content used by the BBC to depict conflicts in general – not least the prevalence of video created and circulated by Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. While some of this content was catalogued as UGC by the BBC prior to the formal establishment of the group in its current form in 2014, Islamic State footage - described by one interviewee as 'cinematic propaganda' - cannot be said to

fit into the mould of UGC as was defined in this study in the Literature Review (Chapter 1) and Methodology chapter (Chapter 3). Footage which later transpired to be of Islamic State al Al-Nusra Front fighters was labelled by BBC News as 'extremist fighters' and 'rebel footage'. This has happened in a media landscape where there are more than 1,000 Syrian opposition groups, making it a complex subject to understand and navigate when reporting (BBC 2013b). As a result, such content was only really labelled as 'Islamic State' footage from 2014 onwards, when it became apparent that footage containing the flag logo was in fact from that organisation. Islamic State footage is not agency footage, but it is very different from some of the wobbly mobile footage seen from the likes of Ugarit and Shaam News Network, which is also shared on social media (Quilliam Foundation 2014, Winter 2015). This also raises questions as to whether content from Islamic State can be categorised as coming from an 'official' source, even if that source is a terrorist organisation. A fuller discussion of the classification of Islamic State footage is beyond the remit of this research, but a study specifically looking at how Islamic State and associated content has been accessed, used and labelled by media outlets would be interesting.

The data collection methods used in this research were quantitative content analysis of reports broadcast on BBC World News TV, an additional document analysis, in-depth interviews with BBC News staff and periods of observation within the UGC Hub and parts of BBC Arabic. A broader BBC study or, as previously suggested, a comparative study, might yield interesting results. At the time of writing (2015), the BBC is currently preparing to negotiate the next licence fee settlement with the UK government in 2016, and this thesis also details the many new services and programmes being launched in a bid to strengthen the BBC's digital offerings both commercially and elsewhere. While decisions on programming and products can change rapidly, a study with more focus on how the BBC uses social media platforms - both in its own programming and also as a way to disseminate news - would be interesting, as this study only briefly touched on the topic.

The quantitative content analysis carried out in this research took in 20% of the packaged content aired on BBC World News TV relating to Syria within the research period. As was detailed in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), these reports were selected using the search term 'Syria' in Jupiter, the main database for

broadcast material used and created by the BBC. I believe 20% to be a representative sample of the available data, but further investigation during data collection suggested not all reports would be saved using the term 'Syria'; terms such as 'Kobane' or 'Damascus were also used. Therefore, a study which took in wider search terms might be relevant, though I would suggest that the case study might relate to a specific time period or a specific incident. For example, studying coverage of the December 2014 battle for Kobane between Islamic State and Kurdish forces would be interesting, and would result in cleaner data than a longer-term content analysis using multiple search terms, which could yield unwieldy results.

Changing media marketplace

In a fast-paced environment such as a newsroom, researching practices and processes which might change daily has been a challenge, and these practices will continue to develop as the conflict in Syria continues. There are also new processes and mechanisms being employed by journalists responsible for covering other stories which are beyond the scope of this research. These processes should be investigated as using UGC remains a key way to illustrate events. There are also new digital news products being launched every month by media organisations: for example, BBC's Newstream, YouTube Newswire and CNN on Snapchat Discover. These developments highlight that journalistic practices are continually evolving as is the marketplace. These include new social tools and platforms to disseminate news organisations' own content, and UGC, will most likely be a key part of this evolution. It is hoped that the findings and conclusions of this thesis will provide useful insight and relevant recommendations, for academics and media practitioners alike, beyond the research period.

Researcher reflections

This thesis outlines ways in which newsrooms and individual journalists have overcome challenges associated with covering events in Syria when it has been impossible to access the country safely. This was important work to do, as the situation in Syria has continued to evolve and has become increasingly more

complex, involving fragmented jihadist groups as well as international intervention in the form of outside powers arming different factions and carrying out airstrikes. International journalists have had to continue to report events happening inside of the country in spite of these many developments and in the face of many challenges linked to logistics, ethics and accuracy of content. Overall, there has been sparse access to the country. Understanding the evolution of journalistic practices and the strategies and processes used to report helps shape our understanding of newsgathering, in a space where social media and UGC are sometimes the only sources of footage and intelligence available to help chart developments in an 'unreportable' place such as Syria.

This has meant researching an ongoing conflict in tandem with studying the methods used by BBC News to covering this moving story. During the time period researched there have been many changes in management, structures, teams and the deployment and embedding of individual journalists in relation to UGC. Journalists' skills have also developed and changed as they have had to become more digitally and social media literate. In some cases they have had to learn how to use different platforms. At other times they have had to become proficient at navigating new technologies and tools in order to cover the conflict effectively, while still undertaking 'journalistic sensemaking'. While nothing beats 'boots on the ground', the findings suggest that the BBC has tried to keep abreast of developments in Syria by using voices and sources which have become more trusted over time, as well as adopting innovative tools to help make the verification process more effective and more streamlined.

The final point to outline here in terms of limitations is the role of the researcher. I carried out this study while working at the BBC as a senior producer for BBC World News TV, and I continue to be a member of BBC staff. The main issues and coping mechanisms around this aspect of the research have been covered in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), but as a 'visible researcher' with a role within the company, it is important to be clear about my position and how it could potentially relate to the research findings. Another researcher might have interpreted the data collected differently, which was one of the reasons to engage in a mixed methods approach in which all content was not based on qualitative interpretation. However,

it is always important to state that all researchers come to the table with different approaches.

Concluding summary

What is clear is that UGC and eyewitness footage are now used by news organisations to depict events across the globe. This thesis has sought to demonstrate how this content has been used, in particular by BBC News to depict the conflict in Syria - a country which remains, for many journalists, simply too dangerous to report from. The research findings have identified both the numerous risks and the many benefits of using UGC, which has become an easily available source of information as citizens, journalists and activists are armed with the power of a smartphone. This enables them, at times, to capture moments that journalistic crews cannot. What this content does not do in isolation, however, is provide the analysis, context and storytelling power possible when UGC is incorporated into a journalistic product in the form of a news report.

The research has also outlined the ways in which journalistic roles and processes have changed throughout the lifetime of the conflict, as journalists have learned more about how to source, verify and distribute UGC using new tools and newsgathering techniques. There are now more sources, or 'gates', of information, but these sources often need more checking than traditional sources, such as agencies. This means that journalists have had to develop more skills and understanding about the technical aspects of checking content, as well as understanding the digital and social media landscapes. This is the case even if their work is still predominantly broadcast on 'legacy' media such as television. Structures have altered within the BBC; new roles have been created and teams have been merged to share ideas and best practice.

Ultimately, for journalists covering events in Syria, the work undertaken in relation to UGC and social media newsgathering may be more lengthy, challenging and complicated to process than that of their counterparts reporting other stories. The lessons learned from that process, however, can benefit all journalists across the

BBC and other international newsrooms. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations from this research can help build on those foundations.

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Appendix 1: Timeline of events in Syria from 2011 onwards

2011 March - Security forces shoot dead protestors in southern city of Deraa demanding release of political prisoners, triggering violent unrest that steadily spread nationwide over the following months.

2011 April - President Assad announces conciliatory measures, releasing dozens of political prisoners, dismissing government, lifting 48-year-old state of emergency.

2011 May - Army tanks enter Deraa, Baniyas, Homs and suburbs of Damascus in an effort to crush anti-regime protests. US and European Union tighten sanctions. President Assad announces amnesty for political prisoners.

2011 June - The government says 120 members of the security forces were killed by "armed gangs" in the northwestern town of Jisr al-Shughour. Troops besiege the town, more than 10,000 people flee to Turkey. President Assad pledges to start "national dialogue" on reform.

2011 June - The IAEA nuclear watchdog decides to report Syria to the UN Security Council over its alleged covert nuclear programme reactor programme. The structure housing the alleged reactor was destroyed in an Israeli air raid in 2007.

2011 July - President Assad sacks the governor of the northern province of Hama after mass demonstration there, eventually sending in troops to restore order at the cost of scores of lives.

2011 October - New Syrian National Council says it has forged a common front of internal and exiled opposition activists.

2011 November - Arab League votes to suspend Syria, accusing it of failing to implement an Arab peace plan, and imposes sanctions.

2011 December - Twin suicide bombs outside security buildings in Damascus kill 44, the first in a series of large blasts in the capital that continue into the following summer.

2012 February - Government steps up the bombardment of Homs and other cities.

2012 March - UN Security Council endorses non-binding peace plan drafted by UN envoy Kofi Annan. China and Russia agree to support the plan after an earlier, tougher draft is modified.

2012 May - France, UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Canada and Australia expel senior Syrian diplomats in protest at killing of more than a hundred civilians in Houla, near Homs.

2012 June - Turkey changes rules of engagement after Syria shoots down a Turkish plane, declaring that if Syrian troops approach Turkey's borders they will be seen as a military threat.

2012 July - Free Syria Army blows up three security chiefs in Damascus and seizes Aleppo in the north.**2012** August - Prime Minister Riad Hijab defects, US President Obama warns that use of chemical weapons would tilt the US towards intervention.

2012 October - Syria-Turkish tension rises when Syrian mortar fire on a Turkish border town kills five civilians. Turkey returns fire and intercepts a Syrian plane allegedly carrying arms from Russia.

2012 November - National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces formed in Qatar, excludes Islamist militias. Arab League stops short of full recognition.

2012 December - US, Britain, France, Turkey and Gulf states formally recognise opposition National Coalition as "legitimate representative" of Syrian people.

2013 January - Syria accuses Israeli jets of attacking a military research centre near Damascus, but denies reports that lorries carrying weapons bound for Lebanon were hit. Unverified reports say Israel had targeted an Iranian commander charged with moving weapons of mass destruction to Lebanon.

2013 March - Syrian warplanes bomb the northern city of Raqqa after rebels seize control. US and Britain pledge non-military aid to rebels.

2013 June - Government and allied Lebanese Hezbollah forces recapture strategically-important town of Qusair between Homs and Lebanese border. Rebel commanders complain that arms supplies taper off over international concerns about Islamists in the opposition camp.

2013 July - Saudi-backed Ahmed Jarba becomes leader of opposition National Coalition, defeating Qatar-backed rival.

2013 August – Alleged chemical attack in the Ghouta area of Damascus. UGC shows victim gasping for breath. Nearly 300 people are reported to have been killed.

2013 September - UN weapons inspectors conclude that chemical weapons were used in an attack on the Ghouta area of Damascus in August that killed about 300 people, but do not explicitly allocate responsibility for the attack.

2013 October - President Assad allows international inspectors to begin destroying Syria's chemical weapons on the basis of a US-Russian agreement.

2013 December - US and Britain suspend "non-lethal" support for rebels in northern Syria after reports Islamist rebels seize some bases of Western-backed Free Syrian Army.

2014 January-February - UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva fail, largely because Syrian authorities refuse to discuss a transitional government.

2014 March - Syrian Army and Hezbollah forces recapture Yabroud, the last rebel stronghold near the Lebanese border.

2014 May - Hundreds of rebels are evacuated from their last stronghold in the central city of Homs. The withdrawal marks the end of three years of resistance in the city.

2014 June - UN announces removal of Syria's chemical weapons material complete.

2014 June - Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militants declare "caliphate" in territory from Aleppo to eastern Iraqi province of Diyala.

2014 August - Tabqa airbase, near the northern city of Raqqa, falls to Islamic State militants, who now control entire Raqqa province.

2014 September - United States and five Arab countries launch air strikes against Islamic State around Aleppo and Raqqa.

2015 January - Kurdish forces push Islamic State out of Kobane on Turkish border after four months of fighting.

2015 March -Opposition offensives push back government forces. New Jaish al-Fatah (Army of Conquest) Islamist rebel alliance, backed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, captures provincial capital of Idlib.

2015 May - Islamic State fighters seize the ancient city of Palmyra in central Syria, raising concerns that they might destroy the pre-Islamic World Heritage site. They also capture last border crossing to Iraq. Jaish al-Fatah takes control of Idlib Province, putting pressure on government's coastal stronghold of Latakia.

2015 June - Islamic State and Kurdish fighters intensify fighting between Raqqa and Turkish border. Kurds take Ain Issa and border town of Tal Abyad, Islamic State attacks Kobane and seizes part of Hassakeh, the main city in north-eastern Syria.

2015 September - Russia carries out first air strikes in Syria, saying it targets the Islamic State group. But West and Syrian opposition say it overwhelmingly targets anti-Assad rebels instead.

Information sourced from BBC. (2015g). *Syria Profile – Timeline*. BBC News online, 4 October 2015. Available http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14703995 (Accessed 5 October 2015).

Appendix 2: Consent form

Consent Form

Title of Study: **Reporting Atrocities on Television: how citizen generated content has shaped BBC TV news coverage of the Syria conflict.**

Please initial box

.	I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records. I understand this will involve: • being interviewed by the researcher • allow the interview to be videotaped/audiotaped • make myself available for a further interview should that be required	
.	This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s): as part of PhD research project. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation. I understand that should I wish to be anonymous during this research, coding will be put in place to protect my identity from being made public. Otherwise I understand that I have given approval for my name and/or the name of my workplace to be used in the final report of the project, and future publications.	
.	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.	
.	I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.	
.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

Appendix 3: List of sources of UGC clips used in BBC World News TV packages which broadcast March 2011 to March 2014.

UNKNOWN

SHAAM NEWS NETWORK

FACEBOOK

YOUTUBE

CITIZEN (VOICE OVER)

REBEL GROUP

PICTURES FROM YOUTUBE

INTERNET

REBEL GROUP TV

ACTIVISTS

UGARIT NEWS

DPN

SYRIA NEWS

AGENCY

INTERNET FOOTAGE

PICTURES TAKEN BY OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME AND SENT OUT ON THE INTERNET

DETAILED INFROMATION ON UGC VERIFICATION AND SOURCE

SYRIA IS FREE

UGARIT NEWS/YOU TUBE

SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITE

AMATEUR VIDEO VIA SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITE VIA REUTERS

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

FOOTAGE POSTED ON THE INTERNET BY OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS

UGARIT NEWS VIA REUTERS

DOUMA CITY

PANORAMA FOOTAGE FROM BBC

YOUTUBE VIA REUTERS

AMVID FROM YOUTUBE

AMATUER VIDEO VIA REUTERS

BAMBUSER

UNKNOWN VIA REUTERS

UNKNOWN VIA APTN

UGARIT NEWS VIA YOUTUBE

SECRETLY FILMED\ACTIVIST VIDEO

MOBILE PHONE

OMAWI NEWS

UGC VIA REUTERS

APTN

UNKNOWN VIA AP

UNKNOWN VIA EVN

YOUTUBE

UNKNOWN VA EVN

RAQQA MEDIA CENTRE VIA YOUTUBE

RAQQA MEDIA CENTRE VIA AP

HMC SYRIA

ISLAMIC STATE

IDF VIA YOUTUBE

UGC TEAM, UNKNOWN

UNKNOWN VIA UGC

ERBIS CITY VIA OPCW

ISIS VIA UGC

SHAHBA PRESS

SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES/SHAHBA PRESS

AMC

Appendix 4: List of descriptions used for UGC clips used in BBC World News TV packages which broadcast March 2011 to March 2014.

AMATEUR FOOTAGE

MOBILE PHONE

AMATEUR VIDEO

SHAKY VIDEO AND MOBILE PHONE FOOTAGE

PICTURES FROM YOUTUBE

UNVERIFIED INTERNET FOOTAGE

UNVERIFIED FOOTAGE

AMATEUR FILMING

UNVERIFIED PICTURES

LIBRARY PICTURES

THESE PICTURES CANNOT BE INDEPENDENTLY VERIFIED

UNVERIFIED VIDEO

MADE BY ACTIVISTS

PICTURES TAKEN BY OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME AND SENT OUT ON THE INTERNET

INTERNET PICTURES

SECRETLY FILMED ACTIVIST VIDEO

ACTIVIST FOOTAGE

PICTURES FROM YOUTUBE

UNVERIFIABLE AMATEUR VIDEO

INTERNET VIDEO

UNVERIFIED FOOTAGE POSTED ON THE INTERNET

AMATEUR VIDEO FOOTAGE

NUSRA FRONT VIDEO

REBEL VIDEOS

VIDEOS POSTED ON THE INTERNET

MOBILE PHONE FOOTAGE

EXTREMIST FIGHTERS

MODERATE REBELS

JIHADIST VIDEO

ACTIVIST VIDEO