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Global Mediation of Child Soldiers in central and east Africa

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MSc in Global Media and Communications

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potentials for media hospitality, as conceptualized by Roger Silverstone (2007), in the contemporary mediapolis by focusing specifically on the mediation of children in armed conflict. This was researched through in-depth qualitative interviews with individuals who either produced media about the atrocity, or were themselves formerly abducted by armed forces and featured as media subjects. The primary motivation for this project was to see if by that translating Roger Silverstone's premises of *Media and Morality* into the context of the contemporary media landscape, the digitally connected 'new public sphere' (Castells, 2008), it revealed greater potential for media hospitality today.

From the interviews three prominent themes emerged. These are: (1) responsibility of mediapolis participants, (2) agency and perspective in storytelling and (3) the limitations and advantages of new media and technologies.

While I conclude that the contemporary mediapolis does have greater potential for the stranger to speak and be heard on his or her own terms, there still remain obstacles to realizing media hospitality. The mediapolis audience must cultivate an environment in which there is space for more complex mediated representation of suffering. Secondly, access to media and technology is far from universal, which still isolates, and marginalizes some regions. Until this is overcome, these individuals will not have agency over the terms in which they appear in the mediapolis. However, despite these limitations, the accounts of individuals interviewed revealed a great optimism about the capacity of new media and technology to foster a moral and hospitable media environment.

INTRODUCTION

This project is the attempt to respond to what has in many respects been bound to the rhetorical: That is, how do we communicate, mediate, and represent suffering? Further, how do we do so, in a way that is justified by productive global dialogue and action? As the international socio-political landscape increasingly allows the digital transmission of violence, conflict, disaster and those affected, the anxieties surrounding these representations have become increasingly articulated and yet remain debated without resolve. Since the distressing 'fly in the eye' images of emaciated children crudely used during broadcast of the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s, the skepticism surrounding the mediation of suffering continues to intensify (Cohen, 2001).

However, simultaneously the very nature of the media landscape has evolved. Many argue these transformations have in fact altered everyday life so significantly that the very '...materiality of the world is [now] constructed through (principally) electronically communicated public speech and action' (Silverstone, 31, 2007). Still, however, contemporary 'communication theory overlooks transformations of international communication infrastructure as well as the related paradigm changes within the discourse of globalization' (Volkmer, 14, 2003). The trajectory of the debates surrounding the representation of suffering have done little to adjust to an altered global context characterized by growing interconnectedness and increased personal communications via new medias and technologies.

Much of the academic literature, despite acknowledging these new technologies, still operationalizes theories and concepts within a frame of 'The Media', often specifically citing television and mass media broadcasting (Cohen, 2001; Ruby, 1991; Chouliaraki, 2008; Silverstone, 1999, 2007; et al.). While these should by no means be underestimated in their capacity to cultivate viewers' conceptions of the world, and were certainly a logical entry point in early studies of media and society, I believe the 'transformations in the international communication infrastructure' and the 'related paradigm shifts' suggested by Volkmer demand broader consideration.

In short, 'The Media' no longer exists. If ever there was a time that we could speak of mediated messages as stemming from a closed sector of society, that time has passed. The proliferation of new media technology has democratized the information flows and communication exchange, fracturing any previously centralized or organized system of information dissemination. We no longer can speak of 'The Media', but rather: media. Today's media environment, built primarily around the Internet, is comprised of multi-modal

networks (Castells, 90, 2008) which include mass media, but cannot be conceptualized in a way which requires the prefix 'the'. Continuing to try to resolve the questions surrounding the representation of suffering and global deliberation on mass atrocity without adapting the discussions to the particulars of the contemporary media landscape is either shortsighted, or limits the productivity and progress of what is indeed a critical inquiry.

However, before moving forward I believe several acknowledgements need to be made. First, I do not mean to suggest that the representations used in mass media are inconsequential; rather, mass mediated narratives and images must continue to be consumed simultaneously with great scrutiny and doubt (Silverstone, 51, 2007). The point I would like to make is that mass (news) broadcasting, no longer has a stronghold on mediated representations of the world.

Secondly, it must be clearly recognized that this democratized media system is not in fact universally inclusive. While internet penetration is on the rise, there are still vast digital divides between peoples and regions in the world. While this has lead to increased participation in global deliberations for some, it has simultaneously perpetuated the marginalization of others.

Finally, I do not dare to claim that the large, overarching question of how to ethically and effectively represent the other in their suffering can be given a single comprehensive answer; and certainly not within the confines of this study. However, my hope is to take this question which plagues the altruist, the advocate, the politic, and the affected beyond the rhetorical by introducing it into the realm of necessity: global awareness of children being used in armed conflict.

In order to scale the instigating questions of interest into a researchable topic, this study is specifically concerned with Roger Silverstone's concept of 'media hospitality' (Silverstone, 2007) as related to the communicating the issue of children in armed conflict. This particular atrocity has been brought to global awareness across various media and hence offers ample resources to the draw upon for research purposes.

Additionally, the scope of this paper is limited to forced conscription in central and east Africa, primarily, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Northern Uganda. The DRC and Uganda include regions that have been devastated by armed groups who have historically and still abduct youth for armed combat. In some instances these atrocities have extended across the Uganda/DRC border and hence it is more practical to observe conflict in a geographical region rather than isolate the discussion to a specific country. Secondly, Northern Uganda and DRC have become hubs of international non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). Humanitarian, human rights, and international justice tribunals, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), have made the crime of child soldiering 'visible' in these regions which has introduced the atrocity into the consciousness and deliberations of global civil society; and relatively recently, this global awareness was exponentially amplified.

In the nascent stages of this research, youth conscription in the region of focus became intensely more complex and compelling. In March of 2012 a US/Ugandan based NGO, Invisible Children, released a 30 minute documentary, *Kony 2012*, advocating the end to an armed conflict perpetuated by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA)— a rebel group notorious for brutally using child soldiers in central east Africa. The documentary and surrounding campaign provoked intense global debate and discussion on the issues of representing 'distant suffering' (Boltanski, 1999) including race, proximity, voice, and intervention.

While all the interviewees in this research project were involved in advocacy and media production before this global event, *Kony 2012* did amplify many of the issues that this paper will address and hence it was inevitably discussed in interviews[1]. The purpose of this paper is far broader than a focus on *Kony 2012*, but the global event does evidence the international flows of mediated representation and dialogue.

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[1] It should be noted that as the researcher I did not introduce the topic of the *Kony 2012* documentary, but the documentary and Invisible Children were brought into the discussion by *all* interviewees of their own accord.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical Review and Considerations

In his book, *Media and Morality,* Roger Silverstone (2007) articulates a condition of contemporary life which has developed certainly, but which in many ways still lacks proper acknowledgement. That is, much of the human experience of the world is now intimately and inextricably linked to media. He eloquently illustrates how the understanding of both our immediate and distant surroundings is shaped, primarily, by mediated representations. Media is 'both contained by, and are the container of, the everyday' (Silverstone, 20, 2007). He suggests that this quality of human experience in the world has up until very recently been overlooked, and yet requires serious consideration as media is of '...central importance in any discussion to the future of mankind' (Silverstone, 162, 2007). And in this lies the ambiguous gravity of media. We must 'ensure that the public space that the media create is one which works for the human condition and not against it' (Silverstone, 33, 2007). Consequently, the project of his book is to present the challenges, potentials, and necessity for the media as a moral[2] space.

Of central importance to this morality is the notion of hospitality. It is indeed, 'the primary moment of morality' (Silverstone, 139 , 2007), engagement which requires the stranger be heard and listened to 'on his or her own terms' (Silverstone, 137, 2007). Drawing on Jacques Derrida (Silverstone, 24, 2007), Silverstone positions hospitality as 'a precondition for the effective emergence of the mediapolis as a space for connection and compassion in the late modern world' (Silverstone, 24, 2007), a precondition for what he calls 'media justice' (Silverstone, 24, 2007). It is this understanding of hospitality which I position at the core of my investigation. What are the terms by which the stranger feels invited to speak and be heard, specifically in the context of suffering? How are these terms fostered or inhibited in socio-political and technological conditions of our modern world?

This context, the modern era marked by globalization and increasing technology, must remain the conspicuous backdrop to this project. While Roger Silverstone's conception and exploration of media hospitality is groundbreaking and profound, there are limited references to Internet usage and new technologies. I believe that if Silverstone's notion of hospitality is applied to the contemporary media ecosystem new potentials and challenges to hospitality are revealed. The modern media landscape now includes, and is increasingly

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[2] "In the context of the present discussion, then, the morality of the media refers to the generality of orientation and procedure within which the world is constructed by the media and within which the other appears" (Silverstone, 7, 2007)

defined by, online interface, social media, and greater capacity for self-representation. *Media and Morality* was published in 2007, less than three years after Facebook's modest start, two years after YouTube, and nearly the same time as Twitter. I say this not to suggest that these enterprises are in and of themselves vehicles of justice and morality, there were predecessors and alternative means of interface as 'history offers too many precedents of the new technologies which did not live up to their advance billing' (Ruby, 62, 1991). However, these are commonly cited as indicative of the evolution of our media and, indeed, our world. In short: if permitted to operate in the context of today's realities, Silverstone's central premises of *Media and Morality* may be more relevant than even at the time the book was published. If hospitality is 'is the mark of interface we have with the stranger' (Silverstone, 139, 2007) it seems not only logical, but critical that we understand this vital concept within a media system with unprecedented interface.

The notion of hospitality becomes further complicated in the context of what is commonly described as the representation of 'distant suffering' (Boltanski, 1999; Cohen, 2001; Chouliaraki, 2008, et al.). There are of course issues of technological and physical access, media literacy, regulation (Silverstone,162-188, 2007) and cultural divides, all which can inhibit affected individuals from establishing effective voice in the public sphere. However, while I do not underestimate these problems, and will return to them later, there is a greater philosophical tension in mediating or witnessing the pain of others: it must be justified.

This paper will assume Luc Boltanski's presumption that representing others' trauma and affliction is not morally acceptable without presupposing an active public (Boltanski, 184, 1999). In his book *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics*, Boltanski investigates the significance and possibility of this demand on the spectator of suffering. He asks, explicitly: 'On what conditions is the spectacle of distant suffering brought to us by the media morally acceptable' (Boltanski, xv, 1999)? This question has become nearly rhetorical given the complex gravity it poses on both academia and everyday life, and I contend that hospitality is intimately linked to this tension. Chouliaraki articulates, 'If we wish to move towards a 'global village' with cosmopolitan values then we need to examine closely the discourses and practices by which global information flows invite the individual spectator to be a public actor in the contexts of her everyday life' (Chouliaraki, 2, 2008) How can the affected be received so that the spectator becomes the public actor? To move beyond questions of representation, as this paper attempts to do, we must be primarily concerned with the global dialogue that surrounds conflicts and the individuals affected. This assumes that mediated images of violence, conflict, and atrocity serve to instigate deliberation. Consequently, the very 'justification of the distant spectator rests on them having an orientation towards action' (Boltanski, 183, 1999). As I hope to illustrate, action, or effective

communication, is one of the philosophical and real terms under which of the affected other offers their story and face to the public sphere.

Before moving forward critical terminology needs to be clarified. Given the objective of this project and the presumptions it is built upon, I see it as hypocritical to adopt the label of 'distant suffering'. While the literature surrounding it is vital to this investigation, and although it may often be a literal description, it too easily allows us to categorize media into a single genre rather than considering each piece on its own terms. The term 'distant suffering', may have been more relevant in a pre-internet era, when indeed news and humanitarian communications were the almost exclusive sources of this genre. However, as I hope to show, the contemporary media landscape has evolved, and communicating conflict and the mediated appearance of affected individuals has grown in complexity. I will not go so far as to suggest that there has been a complete upheaval of this tradition, indeed 'the two most powerful institutions that have appropriated social suffering' still remain 'the mass media and humanitarian organizations' (Cohen, 168, 2001). However I hope that in this study it emerges that this former duopoly is forever broken. The contemporary media landscape provides new vehicles and voices to communicate suffering, and to describe these representations under the heading 'distant suffering' is reductive (Hall, 235, 1997).

Finally, the commonplace usage of 'distant suffering', in my opinion precarious and limiting. It implies victimhood and, worse, a single understanding of affected individuals. It implies a nonnegotiable label, which biases our approach to any discussion of how we ought to understand individuals in any degree of pain or discomfort: they are immediately helpless, they are immediately distant (either in space or conceptually). Hence, I would hesitate to disclose to any individual I was writing about their circumstance under the heading of 'distant suffering'; and today, that is not only a possibility, but an increasing reality. The affected stranger may no longer be as *distant* and their suffering may not be their defining characteristic. They are not necessarily 'child soldier', but rather, *girl*, *boy*, *man*, or *woman*; potentially immediate, engaged, and speaking for themselves.

Silverstone's work alludes to these possibilities— the emergence of new voices in our mediapolis. He suggests this potential is distinct to the capacities of contemporary social and technological environment (Bugay, 11, 2012c) as 'mediated late modernity can...be seen to have generated the conditions for the sharing of a multiplicity of perspectives and positions which in turn has enabled, at least the opportunity for a new kind of publicness' (Silverstone, 116, 2007). This would suggest that previously absent voices from global dialogue are now increasingly able to participate in civil society deliberation. The victim of conflict, the witness to war, the affected, are no longer doubly victimized by subalternity. However, this potential,

the opportunity for new publicness, is not without skepticism. The topic of subaltern must be addressed for on the other side of this dilemma is the potential for cosmopolitanism and global citizenship which I would argue are necessary for true media hospitality.

In her work on subalternity, Gayatri Spivak defines the subaltern a position 'where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognisable basis of action' (Spivak, 276, 2005). In the context of humanitarian and social crises, this suggests that the individuals affected are not capable of recognized action; rather solution-oriented action or intervention is then necessarily taken on their behalf by dominant social actors, through whom the subaltern were brought into the global consciousness. Spivak contends that 'no act of dissent or resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern subject entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and the conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speak' (Ashcroft, 201, 2007). Even when the voice of the subaltern reaches the global public, it is mediated through the 'transparent intellectual' (Spivak, 275, 1988). Spivak suggests to break subalternity requires 'insertion into the public sphere'3 (Spivak, 483, 2005) by state-generated 'infrastructure' (Spivak, lecture, 2004).

By self-abstraction, the metonymy of the subaltern is fashioned, becoming part of a collective 'citizenship' related to the state (Spivak, 483, 2005). In this way the "one can claim the idea of the state belonging to one" (Spivak, 483, 2005) and thereby the subaltern becomes present in the public sphere (Bugay, 5, 2012c).

While Spivak's impressive work on subalternity articulates with detail the concept and suggests potential resolution, I'd argue the fallacy in Spivak's work is that the notion of subaltern metonymy remains *limited* to the nation-state. This would suggest that marginalized people cannot or do not identify with global civil society, and hence are then unconcerned with accessing a public sphere which hosts international concerns and deliberation.

However, as Manuel Castells suggests, in the context of a globalization, and increasing 'crises of the state' the public sphere is no longer bound to the national but has been translated to the international (Castells, 83, 2008). This 'new public sphere' (Castells, 2008), hosting the deliberations of global civil society as well as the local or domestic, must be conceptualized as available to the subaltern. To limit the subalterns' ability or desire to connect to collective citizenry beyond state boundaries is antiquated and degrading to the rationality and will of the subaltern.

Given the proliferation of new media technologies and globalization in its many manifestations, Spivak's proposed 'solution' to subalternity has unprecedented potential. However relying on infrastructure which transcends specific geographical regions, including new media technologies, in order to access the public sphere, must not be regarded with skepticism. An appeal made to the international community 'does not rely on the success of transparent intellectualism, but rather it becomes one of many aspirational destinations which reside within a rational heterogeneous international community' (Bugay, 10, 2012c). The subaltern, the victim of conflict, the oppressed, must be granted the potential of adopting a cosmopolitan perspective, particularly in the contemporary media landscape, as cosmopolitanism is now largely 'the power of mediation to stretch the concerns of various publics around the world beyond local perspectives' (Chouliaraki, 23, 2008).

This expansion of perspective, a cosmopolitan outlook (Beck, 18, 2002), is not identical across regions and cultures, however globalization has created the conditions for a greater awareness and connectivity across the world. Ulrich Beck in facts defines cosmopolitanism as 'internal globalization' (Beck, 17, 2002). He goes onto say that internalizing globalization '…transforms everyday consciousness and identities significantly. Issues of global concern are becoming part of the everyday local experiences and the moral life-worlds of the people' (Beck, 17, 2002). Either cultivated through physical or mediated experiences, or through increased dependency and connectivity internationally, the idea of global citizenship has unprecedented assumption. This does not necessarily suggest a global homogenization of culture but rather 'What loses any legitimacy is the fundamentally dubious assumption that such responsibilities are absolute within a border, while their absence is equally absolute outside this border' (Beck, 20, 2002). This is particularly significant in the context of mediating others' suffering;

> in the acknowledgement that there are no separate worlds, represents a kind of contextual universalism, one which suggests that non-intervention in a crisis of the other is no longer possible because we are in this new global era intimately connected to each other as never before (Beck, 2004, cited in Silverstone, 17, 2007).

Additionally, this cosmopolitanism ought not be limited to those with the capacity to intervene, but extended as a potential characteristic of those who face crisis. This is a critical aspect of any debate surrounding representation, and yet it is often unacknowledged in the critiques of meditated representations of others' pain and suffering.

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[3] Spivak does not clearly define her understanding of the public sphere, hence here I assume a general meaning of the space in which civil society deliberates and debates, shaping the socio-political environment. (Bugay, 3, 2012c)

Advocacy work and news broadcasting is continuously (and often justifiably) cited as objective and even pornographic when the victims represented are 'distant' (Cohen, 178, 2001). The emaciated child that plagued the humanitarian messaging the late eighties during the Ethiopian famine is the ever-summoned reminder of these failures.

However, the backlash from this reductive and degrading imagery in the late twentieth century has caused such self-consciousness in mediating crises, that media is arguably as egotistical as ever before. In an attempt to demonstrate regret for *past* media practices through retroactive critique, there may now be a failure to understand subjects' perspective and worldview in the *present* and such 'diffidence... can be an inverted form of narcissism' (Sennett, 22, 2012). The heightened self-consciousness of Global North media and communication, particularly humanitarian messaging, is absolutely necessary, but not *necessarily* progressive. It may simultaneously frame the debate so that it exclusively includes the dilemma and opinions of dominant media agents. 'Logic is not the property of Europe' (Spivak, 2004). We must consider the motivations and worldviews of the individuals who are now actively participating in mediating their own afflictions as potentially rational and logical.

If we accept the hypothesis of universal self-abstraction to a global civil society, then the *potential* for hospitality maybe be greater than is recognized. If the subaltern— the marginalized— do in fact identify with a global citizenry above or in addition to national citizen, then, the global audience may be strangers still, but the tensions surrounding representation and mediated dialogue mirror those we grapple with in domestic or even local mediated topics. Distance and nationality is certainly not overcome, but socio-political identity becomes negotiable. It increasingly becomes the prerogative of those who willingly mediate their story and experience to dictate 'proper distance[4]' (Silverstone, 2007).

Determining the reality of this cosmopolitan perspective or imagination (Beck, 18, 2002) ought to require testimonies from the individuals who appear to us in mediated images; 'cosmopolitan sociology is opposed to a universalizing armchair theory' (Beck, 22, 2002). When the former child solider willingly mediates their story, they may appeal to a global audience for the same reason many feel compelled to respond: shared humanity and global responsibility.

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[4] 'Proper distance refers to the importance of understanding the more or less precise degree of proximity required in our mediated interrelationships if we are to create and sustain a sense of the other sufficient not just for reciprocity but for duty of care, obligation and responsibility, as well as understanding' (Silverstone, 27, 2007). It is both the literal and conceptual distance between I the viewer, and the other.

Hence, investigating the potential for a cosmopolitan perspective or assumption of global citizenship is critical for the larger objective of understanding the potential for media hospitality today.

Separate from these conceptual concerns remains the more literal issue of representation. As stated earlier, media hospitality is a much broader topic than representation. However, how individuals are represented, particularly during or post conflict, is certainly a significant aspect of hospitality. The electronic age is dominated by the visual (Cohen, 185, 2001)— humanitarian, advocacy, and crisis messaging is no exception. The critiques of late twentieth century crises messaging still haunt this genre of media. However, today's media landscape offer new potentials and alternate means of mediated representation than previously available. In *Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside*, Jay Ruby (1991) uses the medium of film, and specifically documentary, to thoroughly investigate the evolutions in mediated communication; the ethical and technological dilemmas and potentials.

Both audio (voice) and visual (images) are considered as Ruby details the various actors and processes in producing documentary. The primary focus of the paper is the evolving role of subjects in generating film; the significance of perspective, subject participation, and the sensibility of the filmmaker (Ruby, 51, 1991). To complement his work with Silverstone's language, the study offers a significant look at how documentary practice has evolved so that the subject may be represented on their own terms. He details several forms of 'Documentarians' response... to the crises of representation' (Ruby, 53, 1991) including various grades of shared authority, or even the emergence of subject-generated films.

However, despite these evolutions, he asks if there can ever truly be shared authority. For it to be truly collaborative, he argues, all parties must be equal in all junctures of production (Ruby, 56, 1991) otherwise,

> even with cooperatively produced films, the moral burden of authorship still resides with the filmmaker. While multivocal approach to the documentary does empower subjects, it will not absolve the filmmaker from the ethical and intellectual responsibility for the film (Ruby, 56, 1991).

I see this not only a dilemma of film, but of any mediated representation of suffering and affected individuals. Each medium of representation has its own aesthetic and conceptual choices in authorship and production, and the result of these choices are indicative of media hospitality and greatly affect the responsibility we feel for the other.

Additionally, Ruby positions technology as an obstacle for the non-western subjects to actually overcome. He even goes as far to pose 'Perhaps the very notion of making a documentary film is subversive to the identity of all outside the Western mainstream' (Ruby, 60, 1991). This is another essential element in considering hospitality. Western, or Global North, means of communication certainly dominate, if not monopolize, global mediated dialogue. Although contemporary technologies are now increasingly accessible to much of the world, it is critical to ask if the very introduction of digital technology was, '"…a final assault on culture, language, imagery, relationship between generations, and respect for traditional knowledge"' (Ginsburg, 17, 1989, cited in Ruby, 60, 1991). What are the terms of the affected, marginalized, subaltern in regions where new technology is at best foreign, and in the extreme, unknown? The research conducted recognizes this significant dilemma, and while I cannot adequately address it within this paper, it is a consideration throughout the work.

Although the issue of technological penetration is still a concern today, it should be noted that this article was published in 1991, before globalization was a widely accepted concept, and, more significantly, the internet was publically known and used. In fact, Ruby offers *VCRs* as a technology with 'potential for some real diversity in the production and consumption of images. The technology is relatively inexpensive, very decentralized and almost impossible to control' (Ruby, 62, 1991). Translate what, is in his opinion, constitutes a victory against the 'image empires' (Ruby, 62, 1991)—diversity, decentralization and hard to control— to the internet era. Although his study highlights significant obstacles in representation, the contemporary media landscape may open up new possibilities and potentials for shared authority or subject-generated media, and in turn, the invitation for 'the stranger' to speak and be heard.

Possibly the most significant consequence of the evolved media environment has been the diffusion of responsibility, and the recognition of agency. Silverstone claims all 'principle players in the process of mediation carries some of this responsibility …for the media, and responsibility for the world which the media represent' (Silverstone, 135, 2007). He describes these media players as 'participants' (Silverstone, 107, 2007) which include: producers, subjects, and audiences (Silverstone, 134-135, 2007). He contends, 'any kind of participation involves agency. Those who engage with the media must be understood… to be taking some kind of decision to do so'. This is a significant aspect of Silverstone's work, and an important addition to our understanding of the current media system. Traditionally it has been presumed only 'a few conceive, construct and are empowered to transmit to the many' (Ruby, 61, 1991). However, throughout *Media and Morality,* Silverstone recognizes that responsibility is no longer centralized, but rather,

what is required is both a mutuality of responsibility…notwithstanding differences in power in the structure of things, and a degree of reflexivity by all participants in the communication, notwithstanding the inevitable imperfections of the process' (Silverstone, 34, 2007).

This is both a burden and empowerment. Media hospitality becomes not only a responsibility of producers, but also subjects and audiences. It charges all participants to let the stranger speak, but also that he/she should be heard (Silverstone, 139, 2007). The audience must foster a media environment where this is possible. The subject must exercise agency in their mediation in order that they may speak and be heard.

Conceptual Framework:

This study draws upon recognized theoretical and conceptual work surrounding media, communication, globalization and the mediated representation of conflict-affected others. However the objective is to contextualize these established theories in the immediate media landscape. Therefore this paper will adopt both Silverstone's and Manuel Castells' articulation of our contemporary media system and public sphere.

Silverstone introduces the idea of a mediapolis to describe this space of mediated connection and interface. The mediapolis is,

> The mediated public space where contemporary political life increasingly finds its place, both at national and global levels, and where the materiality of the world is constructed through (principally) electronically communicated public speech and action (Silverstone, 31, 2007).

He conceptualizes it as both similar but distinct from the public sphere first put forth by Jurgen Habermas (Silverstone, 33-34, 2007). It is more complex in that, opposed to Habermas' public sphere, it is not necessarily guided by reason. Silverstone says 'communication is multiple and multiply inflected: there is no rationality in an image, and no singular reason in narrative' (Silverstone, 34, 2007). Further the mediapolis differs from Habermas' public sphere because the ambition and the hope for the mediapolis are of far greater significance[5] (Silverstone, 34, 2007).

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[5] While Silverstone does not give explicit explanation for the latter claim, I think it reasonable to infer that while Habermas's public sphere is primarily concerned with deliberation as a mechanism of 'good' public life, Silverstone's concern is more philosophical. He is concerned with the well being of civil society, but further, his ambitions for the mediapolis are concerned with humanity, both in the abstract and the daily life of the individual. Silverstone's hope is for the present but largely for the potential of a global future.

Paradoxically, however, Silverstone suggests the mediapolis is far more 'modest' than the Habermasian public sphere (Silverstone, 34, 2007). It does not, and in fact rejects, that a single source can fulfill all requirements for effective communication. Rather, it requires a 'mutuality of responsibility between producer and receiver' and, as a result, the 'recognition of cultural difference' (Silverstone, 34, 2007). Opposed to Habermas' public sphere, which has been criticized as homogenous and exclusive, particularly in feminist work (Cammaerts, 2011), for Silverstone 'the mediapolis is both an encompassing global possibility and an expression of the world's empirical diversity' (Silverstone, 34, 2007).

Despite and because of these explicit distinctions between a Habermasian public sphere, I believe the defining features of the mediapolis to resemble those of Manuel Castells' 'new public sphere' (Castells, 2008). Castells builds a new public sphere around assumptions of globalization and an increasing 'crisis of the state' which 'has induced the rise of a global civil society' (Castells, 83, 2008). The 'shift from a public sphere anchored around the national institutions of territorially bound societies to a public sphere constituted around the media system' (Volkmer 1999, et al., cited in Castells, 90, 2008) is the new public sphere. Public deliberations and dialogue, which once happened at the level of the state, have now shifted to the global (Castells, 78, 2008) and develop through digital communications which has created, what he calls, the 'network society' (Castells, 2008). Like Silverstone, Castells acknowledges the limitations of these developments (Silverstone, 11, 2007), but also recognizes the great potential in this new interconnectivity.

If we can conceptualize our current media landscape as this new, digitally connected public sphere, then a more comprehensive understanding of the *immediate* (and possibly, more so, future) mediapolis becomes possible. Castells' empirical description of the current media landscape informs Silverstone's more abstract concept of the mediapolis. Neither is sufficient in and of itself to discuss the potential of media justice. I would argue that Silverstone's work does not fully account for the significance of new media platforms and increasing technological penetration globally. Additionally, however, Castells does not '...question the quality of this new [mediated] sociability... and its capacity to sustain a world which will accept responsibly for this relatively new condition' (Silverstone, 34, 2007).

Therefore I suggest, and hope to demonstrate, Silverstone's mediapolis and Castells new public sphere complement each other so that technological and social developments are considered in any discussion of media and morality. Now that these two concepts have been juxtaposed and described, I will use both 'public sphere' and 'mediapolis' throughout the paper to discuss the space and body of global civil deliberation. And more critically to this investigation, what potential for hospitality this mediated dialogue offers the child soldier.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research paper asks: what do the accounts of individuals involved in the mediation of conflict involving youth combatants reveal about the potential for hospitality in the contemporary media landscape? This was investigated through qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews. This chapter will justify the methodology, the parameters of the research and the process of thematic analysis.

Research Method and Justification:

The purpose of this research project is to understand on what terms the stories of individuals forcibly conscripted into armed combat materialize and circulate within the complex eco-system of the contemporary media landscape— the modern mediapolis. Through interviews, I explore not just *how* child soldiers are represented, but also how they *ought* to be represented, and, arguably of paramount importance, *why?* What are the motivations and means by which these mediated representations are introduced into the public sphere, and, put simply, *so what*? Qualitative interviews provided the 'possibility of enquiring openly about...motives for action or collecting everyday theories and self-interpretations in a differentiated and open way' (Hopf, 203, 2004). For this reason I have concluded that investigating the potentials for media hospitality requires individual qualitative in-depth interviews with mediapolis participants who are responsible for contributing to mediated dialogue concerned with child soldiers. In this way I received 'expert knowledge about the research field in question... and informants' subjective perspective' (Hopf, 203, 2004).

A central premise of this project was that critical analysis of mediated representations of suffering demands novel approach given the contemporary media ecosystem within the context of globalization; it requires that we begin to consider new possibilities for this genre of media rather than exclusively relying on the established devices and rhetoric of academic scrutiny. The objectives and processes of significant media 'participants' must be taken into consideration; neglecting to do so can be gravely reductive. 'Throughout the process of exchange, people may become more aware of their own views and expand their understanding of one another' (Sennett, 19, 2012). For this reason, not only are in-depth qualitative interviews critical to this investigation but more generally, I would argue 'humanizing' research through testimonies and conversation is an invaluable prerequisite to any critical analyses concerned with the issues that are here on trial: morality and justice.

Further, if we are to understand the terms on which the child soldier is presented and described in media, it requires more than what discourse, content, or visual analysis can reveal. These methods can decipher, contextualize, or quantify the tangible or literal but fail to uncover worldviews and motivations; they would be more adept to reading images and text—or, in this case, the representations of child soldiers—rather than researching the capacity of global civil society to extend hospitality.

I would argue that that the perpetual debate which surrounds representations of conflicted affected individuals is insoluble. There is not, and never can be, a concrete 'best practice' or universal style-guide to the narration of suffering. Hence, I believe progress towards a normative ethical framework in which such representations can be generated and consumed, to be greater if the structures and the conceptual paradigms that provoke tensions are exposed through accounts of individuals involved.

These accounts were collected through a combination of 'realism' (Silverman, 136, 2004) and 'narrative' (Silverman, 122, 2004; Hopf, 204, 2004) 'as they unite a high degree of openness and in-directivity with a high level of concreteness' (Hopf, 204, 2004). I used a realist approach in that I treated 'respondents' answers as describing some external reality or internal experience'. However, because many of the interviewees were giving biographical history and personal experience with the subject, some interviews were dominated by 'free impromptu narrative, stimulated by an open question' (Hopf, 206, 2004) which rather than treating as reality I interpreted as 'plausible accounts of the world' (Silverman, 123, 2004).

 This conversation must transcend the visible, the tangible, to consider the implications of these texts, images, and dialogues. It requires asking and listening to those who have been affected. It requires conversations with those who have lent their face and their story to the public sphere. It requires interviews with former child soldiers and other individuals who have contributed to the discourse surrounding them.

Parameters and Procedures of the Research:

*Sample Group***:**

I sought perspectives from 'different members of a social milieu that are considered relevant' (Bauer and Gaskell, 43, 2000) in order to have a broad spectrum of media participants from which to collect data. I intentionally contacted individuals who have fulfilled a wide range of roles in the mediapolis. In the end I conducted in depth interviews with eight individuals who have been involved in media production presenting the atrocity children in armed combat to a public audience.

It is hard to categorize them according to their role as many of them identify themselves in overlapping capacities, or their role in the media production process has evolved. For example, I interviewed one individual who identifies as a journalist, a filmmaker, and is the co-founder of an NGO; another interviewee is a formerly affected individual who has been featured in NGO media, but is now producing fairly advanced online media himself. To summarize the spectrum of individuals I interviewed, I will say my sample group included: filmmakers, journalists, communications personnel from NGOs/non-profits, and individuals who were personally affected by conflict including former child soldiers. Appendix 1 more clearly presents the sample group.

Before beginning interviews I gave all participants the choice of anonymity in the research process, and in the publishing of this report. While some gave written consent to be identified, others asked to remain anonymous which required the organization they are involved with not be identified either. They will be referenced throughout the paper as they are identified in the appendix.

Common to all the interviewees is participation in, to varying degrees, the production of media which has involved children in armed combat. Interviewees were Congolese, Ugandan, American and British. Those who were not from central or east Africa had spent significant time working in the region.

*Conducting Interviews***:**

Given the nature of the study and the region of focus, my research agenda and strategy required flexibility and in turn the in-depth interviews were carried out in several ways. I conducted some via Skype and the rest were done face-to-face. The in-person interviews were conducted in various locations in Uganda, London and California. While I preferred the face-to-face interview, I found no difference between the nature, depth, or success of the two.

All interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes and followed a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guides were perhaps the one of the greatest challenges throughout my research. They included opened ended questions which allowed my respondents to speculate (Berger, 59, 1998). However, this occasionally led the interviews in divergent directions as themes and meanings were often interpreted differently by each individual (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000).

Additionally, because this investigation required a broad spectrum of mediapolis 'participants', the specific role and experience of each interviewee varied greatly which required interview guides unique to each individual. This not only proved time intensive, but it meant having to translate the desired research questions across notably divergent interview guides.

*Self-Reflexivity***:**

It should be explicitly noted that I was previously employed with an organization that is focused on the LRA issue in central and east Africa. I was specifically involved in the communications of the organization which not only meant often personally producing content that dealt with child soldiers, but also working closely with others who did so on a much more significant scale. In short, I have considerable first hand experience with the mediated dialogue about children in armed conflict.

While my experience absolutely inspired me to build this investigation, it may be interpreted as having biased my research and findings. To claim that I approached this topic without bias would understandably be rejected by readers. However, I will say, with certainty, that in concern of projecting previous experience onto this project I have gone to great lengths to prevent myself from doing so. My previous experience was limited in scope and scale, and hence I consider it only a small entry point into the much more comprehensive investigation.

Further, while I had personal relationships with several of the interviewees, not all were aware of my past experience or affiliation. I intentionally contacted participants who were unaware of my previous employment and did not use connections from former colleagues.

Finally on this topic, I believe that while my experience may be assumed to compromise my research and findings, I have found it to be an overwhelming benefit. I came to the subject with a comprehensive understanding of the region of study including various conflicts involving youth combatants, socio-political power structures and nuances which surround the atrocity of forced conscription. I have personally experienced the challenges, potentials and obstacles of balancing affective communication with ethical representations of children in armed conflict.

Potentially the greatest benefit this knowledge and experience was the ability to 'speak the language' of the interviewees who are intimately involved with these conflicts. Without revealing my previous employment, my genuine interest and context-specific vocabulary allowed me to connect with interviewees. As a result, I believe was able to 'establish a relationship of trust and confidence, so-called rapport'. (Bauer and Gaskell, 45, 2000)

In recognition of similar experiences, language, or understandings I shared with interviewees, I followed Richard Sennett's discussion of sympathy and empathy. I was careful not to fall to sympathetic listening leading to an allusion of 'identification with them' (Sennett, 21, 2012) but rather adopted empathy which forces the 'listener to get out side him- or herself' as 'empathy attends to another person on his or her own terms' (Sennett, 22, 2012). This allowed for fruitful and effective information exchange during the interviews.

Analysis:

Despite maintaining specific points of inquiry throughout my interviews, the wide range of actors did nonetheless produce quite distinct conversation; for example, discussions with journalist opposed to formerly abducted individuals were quite different from one another in content and issues raised. This was largely anticipated and built into the guides, but also occurred as a natural progression within the interviews as 'qualitative interviews are always open to the unexpected and the emergent' (Lindlof and Taylor, 172, 2002).

However, as Berger informs us, 'you often wont know what you've found until after you have analyzed your notes from a number of depth interviews and discovered what they reveal' (Berger, 57, 1998). As anticipated, after completing my interviews, transcribing the audio-recordings, and re-reading transcripts prominent themes began to emerge across the

seemingly distinctive interviews. It was for this reason I chose to conduct thematic analysis of the interviews.

Thematic analysis required going through the data to identify 'clusters of linked categories conveying meanings' (Subvista, 2010) amongst the interview transcripts. While my own prior theoretical knowledge and research question informed my interpretation of the transcripts (Schmidt, 254, 2004), the topics chosen for the discussion below emerged quite clearly from the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

There were a number of themes that emerged from the data collected in my research. However there were several prominent motifs that specifically contributed to the question of hospitality. This section will put my interviewees in conversation with one another under these topics: (1) the respective and shared responsibilities of media participants, (2) agency and perspective in storytelling and (3) the contemporary media landscape and new technologies.

Responsibility of Media Participants

Silverstone talks about the 'double responsibility' of the media participant. That is, to again quote, both responsibility 'for the media, and responsibility for the world which the media represent' (Silverstone, 135, 2007); and as both Silverstone and my interviewees suggest, these fall upon all participants of the mediapolis. The concept of responsibility was a significant theme in all interviews and, in fact, was assumed by all participants as a presupposed condition of any involvement with media representing children in armed conflict. I will begin with the first of the responsibilities Silverstone articulates, the responsibility for the media, and move onto the latter— taking global responsibility for the well being others through action-oriented communication.

Responsibility of Producers

Those 'who are responsible for the production and transmission of the images and narratives that inform us about the world' (Silverstone, 135, 2007) are often understood as having the most significant role in ensuring and sustaining media justice. They have the burden and benefit of authorship, regulation, and editorial control. However, according to a journalist

and filmmaker focused on child soldiers in DRC, the image and understanding of child soldiers has suffered in the hands of media producers. She says, 'children who have fought with armed groups have been very over stereotyped and over represented in a very specific way which is … "the young African boy with a gun"' (Anonymous.5, 2012). While 'it is easy to make a story look black and white, but their experience is absolutely not black and white' (Anonymous.5, 2012). She goes on to say that the very identity of the child soldier has been sacrificed to simple, sensational, "short clips of three to five minute spots" (Anonymous.5, 2012).   Another interviewee, a former child soldier in DRC, also noted the issue of simplification and brevity in media dealing with child soldiers, specifically noting 'the problem with new media is that its doing exactly what news does today, its headlines, right? Its headlines and people take headlines instead of learning and actually researching what it is' (Anonymous.1, 2012).

In addition to the issue of communicating information and complexity, there is also the issue of aesthetic. Five of the eight interviewees talked about the capacity of aesthetic to 'manipulate' audiences' response to the subject matter. While this may be out of utility as 'humanitarian organizations are in the business of using knowledge to induce compassion' (Cohen, 169, 2001), the problem is that the individuals being represented often 'lack the sophistication to see the implications of camera angles, lighting, pacing, and so forth' (Ruby, 55, 1991), This can sacrifice the conditions on which the subject wants to be represented, to the aesthetic decisions of the producer.

It is for reasons above that Silverstone contends, 'all forms of mediated representation… always involves a constrained, a limited restricted form of hospitality' (Silverstone, 141, 2012). However, while these concerns were acknowledged, all producers implied that an *awareness* of these informational and aesthetic dilemmas overcome the disjuncture between the terms of the producer and those of the subject. One filmmaker said:

> […] its just always being aware of what you're doing, cause when you're making a film you know… you have intentions for why you do stuff in the film, like everything is intentional usually— so making sure that you're intentions are right and you're not just trying to make like a: 'Oh woe is me I'm an African kid who's been affected by conflict' (Anonymous.2, 2012)

While the sensibility of media producers informing their work is nothing novel, what may offer new potentials for hospitality today is the context and relationships under which the sensibility of producer develops.

Derrida claims, 'hospitality is a culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others' (Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, cited in Silverstone, 139, 207). While the right and ability for outsides to represent others is a serious question, the testimonies of all interviewed media producers suggest a global culture of cosmopolitanism and hospitality. Identifying as 'global citizens' or 'human', all media producers conveyed either implicitly or explicitly that as a member of an increasingly interconnected world, their responsibility extended beyond the representation of child soldiers, to responding to the atrocity itself. The NGO Invisible Children's Communication Director, Noelle Jouglet, illustrated this perspective in claiming a core of objective of their media is,

> to promote that universal idea that people are worth it, that anybody is worth it, not
> only my kind are worth my support. We think that ultimately that makes a better
> planet and a better environment for everybody. Now that we are all so connected I
> think it's impossible to ignore that idea (Jouglet, 2012)

Tine Ustad Figenschou says as a consequence of new media, '…a discourse of global compassion has developed in the intersection of politics, humanitarian organizations, the media, and the audience/citizens' (Höijer, 2004, cited in Figenschou, 235, 2011). Media can never be divorced from the producer. However, mediated representations produced in this unique 'intersection', may indeed have significant affect on the terms which the child soldier— in concept, image, and literal—appears to us in the mediapolis.

Responsibility of Audiences

What this researched revealed about the responsibility of the audience in progress towards media hospitality was possibly one of the most interesting aspects of the project. All NGO media producers acknowledged the need to create media with, what Jouglet called, 'flash and flavor' (Jouglet, 2012). In an oversaturated media environment, to keep international issues such as child soldering from 'being driven deeper in obscurity' (Jouglet, 2012), humanitarian and crisis messaging, ironically, requires getting the public 'in the pipeline on *their own terms* and then you can start to usher them in to a deeper level of understanding' (Jouglet, 2012). This radically challenges the accusation that mediated representations of child soldiers are in fact exclusively the responsibility of media producers. Like all public and/or commercial media, 'in order to obtain production funds, gain access to the monopolistic systems of distribution, and attract the audience they wish' (Ruby, 15, 1991), 'marketing' the atrocity of child soldiers requires audience approval.

However, even as a filmmaker for an NGO with highly stylized work, one interviewee asked: 'where is the limit… will people watch things that aren't flashy, interesting and hip' (Anonymous.5, 2012)? Debating the merits of adopting the aesthetic of mediated suffering to that of pop-culture, is not a principle concern of this paper; what is, however, is if by catering to the terms of *audience*, it detracts from representing subjects on *their* own terms. For this reason, I was interested in trying to understand the terms of victims, and if they differ from those of the audience.

While I had a limited sample in which to investigate this aspect of hospitality, I found that those who were featured as victims of armed groups, were not concerned with aesthetic, but the simplicity of message demanded by the mediapolis. Grace Akallo, formerly abducted by the LRA and co-author of *Girl Soldier*, and two other conflict-affected interviewees said that in their experience they have been disappointed with the information the audience is willing to absorb. For example one observed that 'across the world I think people have this image of Africa and child soldiers—they sorta block what they can understand' (Anonymous.1, 2012). This individual and Akallo attributed this unwillingness to engage with the complexities of international atrocities, to 'short attention spans':

> I always say we live in an ADD world…Everybody's about sound bites, we love sound bites. Nobody—we don't like long, long things because people have a short attention (Anonymous.1, 2012).

As with most international humanitarian crises and social injustice, the atrocity of children being conscripted into forced combat is a historically and presently complex subject. The faces we see and voices we hear are more than symbols of suffering; they are individuals with identity. If we hope to move towards media hospitality, it is my opinion that it is audience of the mediapolis must first evolve. We, as audience and mediapolis participants, must be willing to listen to the stranger— the affected, the child soldier—on this other's own terms; This change requires that consumers first be open to, or even demand, greater nuance and complexity in media communicating topics of such ethical and social gravity as that of others' suffering.

Responsibility of Subjects:

Jay Ruby suggests that, 'until recently, most victims have passively allowed themselves to be transformed into aesthetic creations, news items, and objects of our pity and concern' (Ruby, 52, 1991). However, while Silverstone recognizes subaltern vulnerability to conditions and members of the mediapolis he maintains, 'it does not excuse an equally primary commitment to be responsible for their own appearance and for their own speech' (Silverstone, 134, 2012).

While there are certainly debates to be had about the extent to which a former child soldier in central east Africa can be *equally* responsible for their own appearance, the interviews I conducted indeed revealed them to share some.

Several of the interviewees have been featured in international media advocating for end to child soldiering in central and east Africa. Despite the significant suffering and affliction these individuals experienced over the course of their lives, when ask about their motivations for sharing their story, they focused on the affect their story had on audiences (Anonymous.1 and Anonymous.3).

The former child soldier from DRC said he began to share his story when he moved to Canada as a refugee and realized no one appreciated their conflict-free circumstances,

> so I kinda took it upon myself to start telling my story as a way of encouraging people to stop complaining about their school, about their teachers, about their daily lives…they have it so much better than a majority of people across the world (Anonymous.1, 2012).

He not only told his story on his own terms, but he did so largely for the benefit of others. He said he used his 'difficult story… for positive' (Anonymous.1, 2012), and began sharing it with the international community across a variety of media platforms and in-person speaking engagements. However, I came to find that while individuals featured in media are indeed responsible for fostering and sustaining media hospitality through interface with others, they're terms are primarily related to the second of Silverstone's 'double responsibility': effectively communicating in order to provoke real change in the world and circumstances of others.

Responsibility of all participants to be 'action-oriented': 'effective speech' as action.

Consistent to all interviews was participants' assumption that mediating humanitarian crises, conflicts, atrocities, and in this case using child soldiers, is done so in order that these communications have an affect in the real world and in the lives of individuals. This is, again, what Boltanksi recognizes as the conditions on which the 'spectacle of distant suffering is… morally acceptable' (Boltanksi, xv, 1999); his presumption was indeed confirmed in my interviews by those who were features of these mediated 'spectacles'. Former child soldiers and affected individuals were willing to share their story—to appear in the public sphere— *on condition* that their testimony provoke action.   In short, media hospitality to victims of conflict requires an action-oriented mediapolis.

While the motivations of all interviewees suggested 'them having an orientation towards action' (Boltanski, 182, 1999), I found that the interviewees who had suffered at the hands of armed forces, were the most insistent on this point. Third party producers were slightly more vague about the outcome of their speech, one journalist reflecting, 'I think you usually you do not want to get so much drawn into that because you can lose focus. So you want to do your job which is to get the information out' (Anonymous.4, 2012); or co-founder of Resolution: Possible, Elizabeth Chenery, implying a hesitation to insist upon an audience taking any particular form of action, 'It's more let them have access and then hopefully trust them to use it in a way that makes sense in their own lives. Cause it might mean different things to different people' (Chenery, 2012). However, those who had been featured as subjects in media were more specific about the purpose of their communication.

Akallo said people affected by conflict, and specifically former child soldiers such as herself, should be willing to tell their story despite the emotional consequences it may have individuals who are retelling their experiences. This is a recognized tension in humanitarian messaging and crises reporting. An Ugandan journalist and news editor who covered the LRA conflict during the height of the war, shared his experience of this dilemma while interviewing LRA victims:

> Sometimes as a writer you realize you are pushing your envelope and you are going too far and people are uncomfortable... I think those are tensions that you have to live with and sometimes those are conflicts within you (Anonymous.4, 2012)

However, as a former child soldier who suffered greatly at the hands of the LRA , Akallo exclaimed,

> Let's face it! the same situation is still going on and on... if you don't tell your story another person will go through the same situation and I'm being unfair...I'm being selfish (Akallo, 2012)

Akallo not only establishes effective speech, '...that is speech which can be causally connected to the actions of others whose effect is felt *at a distance*' (Boltanski, 18, 1999), as a required condition of mediating her experience, but that action provoking dialogue is a *responsibility* of both herself as *subject*, and her audience as *spectators*.

In today's digitally connected media environment, victims can more readily share their story with a global public, and global civil society has greater capacity for public diplomacy[6]. Jouglet even compared the capacity of online advocacy and digital deliberation to that of electing state officials,

> sometimes [action] takes clicking a button online…it's like a ballot box, you could say all I have to do is show up and click a box, but you're electing your president. Would you call that 'clicktivism'? No, so that's what we're doing. That's what advocacy is (Jouglet, 2012).

The research revealed media participants realize that speech is, effectively, action given the internet based global communications system; the digital 'space of appearance is… where speech and action converge' (Silverstone, 33,2007). With this comes great responsibility not only to speak, but to act through speech. The failure to do so disregards the terms on which the affected, the child soldier, willingly appears to us in media.

Perspective and Agency of One's Story

If mediating atrocity and affected individuals is done so to provoke global civil society to act, it is through stories, or narrative, that this suffering is made available to the international public. As one of the journalists said, 'I use personal stories, but only as a vehicle to communicate the human experience of being caught up in war. So it's more— means to an end' (Anonymous.4, 2012). It is essential to investigate if in this 'means to an end', hospitality to the affected individual becomes secondary to the wider objective of communicating conflict.

The agency a victim of conflict has over his or her own story is of paramount importance in the discussion of hospitality. When the experience of an individual is shared with global civil society, the individual loses some degree of control over their account. This is why the mediapolis must be a space of compassion and justice. However, before their experience is packaged as a narrative and presented in the public sphere, the victim of conflict must first navigate the initial encounter with media.

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[6] Castells suggests that the digitally connected 'new public sphere' has unprecedented capacity for public diplomacy, or "the projection in the international area of the values and ideas of the public…[which] intervenes in the global space"(Castells, 91, 2008). The recession of State primacy, coupled with contemporary technological conditions allows the global public to shape international socio-political order through public diplomacy. Again, revealing effective (mediated) speech as public action.

Chenery spoke about the tensions specifically surrounding the experience of escaped child soldiers. 'Some are really brave and maybe would chose to tell their story…', but often times,

> people think they don't mind, its just normal, that's what happens when you come out of the bush. You are met by organizations they all know your story, everyone is telling your story, and that's just how it goes. And I don't think it should be like that at all (Chenery, 2012).

Chenery, here articulates a common critique of international humanitarian messaging; that using the story of victims of conflict for larger socio-political purposes compromises their agency.

However, we also must not discount the logic and reason of affected individuals. Grace Akallo spoke about 'coming out of the bush' and being *immediately* met by many local and international journalist (Akallo and McDonnel, 187, 2007) in her book. When asked about this experience, she said she welcomed the opportunity to tell her story, recalling, 'I was just desperate for the war to end, to tell you the truth. I didn't care who I shared my story with, but I just cared whoever could do something' (Akallo, 2012). While media may use individuals' stories as a vehicle for a larger social purpose, these individuals may have their own objectives as well. Marginalized, subaltern, victims of conflict— regardless under what circumstance the stranger appears to us in the public sphere, we must not *assume* their media participation is without awareness and agency.

Furthermore, Akallo shared that for some time after escaping the LRA she *intentionally spoke only to international media*: 'to tell you the truth. I didn't tell my story to the local media at all…. *at all*' (Akallo, 2012). Her reason was two fold; she realized that the potential for intervention in the LRA conflict was more likely to come from outside of Uganda given political circumstances, but primarily, it was a reasoned decision based on her experience during her time in the LRA. Joseph Kony had brutalize the Aboke girls, the group Akallo was a part of, every time they were mentioned on radios. So, 'it was all about protecting my friends', Akallo said, 'cause I was scared that…they would be singled out' by the LRA (Akallo, 2012). Although victims of conflict are vulnerable to pressures and structures of global institutions, ultimately the decision to speak remains the prerogative of the affected.

Grace's account also illuminates the issue of perspective. It is often assumed that those of shared nationality are more justified in telling one another's story. However, Akallo and other interviewees challenged the idea that anyone one person has more or less of a right to tell a story based on nationality. Then who should create awareness about the atrocity of children used in armed combat? And can it ever be done on the terms of the abducted individuals?

These questions were posed in various articulations during the interviews, and as expressed by a former child soldier, the general sentiment was,

> We're so interconnected now that there's no way, ya know, that it can only be that its only Africans who have to talk about Africa, or its, or North Americans who have to talk about North America I think that everybody is one now and people have to find a way to learn from each other. And that's what's important (Anonymous.1, 2012).

He went on to say that from his experience he has learned that a holistic understanding of any conflict situation is best illustrated through the combination of perspectives including,

> people who are living through those experiences and people who are studying those experiences ... I think of the war in Congo, before I went to school I was explaining it from my own perspective, things that I saw in everyday but didn't understand until I was in school and learned about them (Anonymous.1, 2012)

Hence, 'it should not be assumed that any one group has a privileged insight into its own history' or reality (Ruby, 53, 1991). This not only questions the value of perspective, but the concept of hospitality. If there is no hierarchy of perspective what is the value of the other appearing to us on their own terms, and giving first hand accounts of their experience? All interviewees linked the value of perspective to a familiarity with the 'context' of a story. A filmmaker and journalist who has spent the significant time over the last six years in DRC working with child soldiers says this is a fundamental problem of international news reporting,

People drop in for a few days and write a story... I mean its ridiculous. I don't even know how that continues to happen but it does. You miss so much, I mean I miss so much and I feel like I know this context pretty thoroughly. But imagine if I spoke Swahili and grew up there (Anonymous.5, 2012).

Perspective is an essential aspect of hospitality. Who, how, and on what terms stories are told must remain a constant consideration. However, it became clear that apart from more informed knowledge of context, any preexisting hierarchy of perspective is being leveled now that 'anyone can be a source, anyone can be a journalist or a reporter' (Anonymous.5, 2012). With new media technologies, and increasing technological penetration there has been a, 'rupture within mainstream journalism—our media system is absolutely not the same and it will never be the same. The entire model of capturing stories has changed' and one these changes has 'certainly been an increase the range of voices' (Anonymous.4, 2012). Now, the voice of a former child soldier can enter the global public sphere on his or her own terms.

With access to the internet comes access to the global public sphere; and in turn, greater agency and a mediapolis of 'multiply inflected' perspective (Silverstone, 34, 2007).

New Medias and Technology

All interviewees acknowledged that 'this is an unprecedented era of communication. Not just the internet's creation, but we are now even at a next level' (Jouglet, 2012). . When asked about mediated representation of suffering in the contemporary media system, nearly all interviewees immediately referenced the *Kony 2012* documentary. While several faulted it for being oversimplified (anonymous.1), nearly all saw the phenomena (which can be summarized as over one hundred million views on YouTube and international attention in only a matter of days) as a unique advantage of the today's media landscape. Jouglet, as the communications director of Invisible Children, could speak to this most adequately:

> Even if you scale down population for the amount of people that were alive 20 years ago, there is no way that a nonprofit our size, with our amount of money we have, could have reached the percent of the population that we did. It's impossible and it's unprecedented. This media has created a new opportunity... a democratizing opportunity (Jouglet, 2012).

Grace Akallo was primarily in favor of the *Kony 2012* documentary and went so far as to say that she wishes this kind of media and technology developed earlier, '...if social media had been introduced at that time, it [the LRA conflict] could have gotten attention a long time ago'. Now social media and new technologies 'offer great potential for people living in situations to tell their own stories... I mean now at least people are able to tell what is happening either within their own community or the international people are able to know what is going on' (Akallo, 2012). Akallo, and several other of this interviewees, see the increase in media technology as directly related to the ability of people to speak to the international community on their own terms.

Despite the *potentials* new media offers marginalized individuals to engage in the deliberations of global civil society, there remain limitations to media hospitality. Most obvious and debilitating, is lack of access to the digital public sphere. This is particularly problematic in the context of mediating social injustices, as often these mediated deliberations concern those who are furthest removed from them. One interviewee illustrated this irony by recalling her experience in LRA affected communities when the *Kony 2012* campaign launched.

> Being conscious of the uproar that was being caused internationally and yet everyday I was in communities where people had survived LRA violence and they had absolutely no idea and no connection and probably will never and that just really highlighted that separation (Anonymous.5, 2012).

The prospect of media hospitality is greatly compromised in a global media system which can provoke international phenomena about communities who remain entirely isolated from the global public sphere.

Nevertheless, most interviewees suggested people would 'be surprised at how much technology has, has gone across the world' (Anonymous.1, 2012), referencing specific examples of their experience with technology in isolated regions. Akallo expressed her shock to find her brother, who lives in a village in Uganda, on Facebook. A resident of Gulu recalled being recognized by people in a village outside of his town who had seen him on YouTube (Anonymous.3). While each gave anecdotal stories illustrating technological penetration, these of course do not discount the very real digital divides internationally. However, they do suggest that digital platforms and media technology are becoming increasingly accessible; and with that comes greater capacity for self-representation and the terms on which conflict-affected people appear in the mediapolis.

CONCLUSIONS

'Communication theory (in the US as well as in Europe) has rarely discussed the consequences of the paradigm change from 'modernity' to 'globalization'' (Volkmer, 14, 2003). While this continues to change as media becomes more intimately connected to everyday life, there is still a disjuncture between how our global public sphere is conceptualized and how global civil society actually engages in this space. This is not only problematic for the field of communication, but the world which it hopes to understand and contribute to. Roger Silverstone's work is pioneering in that it presupposes a global community, and in turn calls for a normative ethical framework in order to guide the maturation of our mediapolis. However, despite his extraordinary contributions to the media and communication field, Silverstone's work does not fully account for the social and technological transformations that parallel globalization. In fact he maintains,

The mediapolis cannot therefore depend of the internet...and the requirements for media hospitality in a globalizing world are still premised on the continuing

importance of some form of broadcasting; some meaningful and effective exercise of individual and institutional responsibility (Silverstone, 143, 2007).

However, internet based communications are increasingly displacing the role of broadcast in our mediapolis; we are now inextricably linked through 'digital networks' hosted primarily by the internet (Castells, 2008). Until this is recognized within the theoretical framework Silverstone built, the project of creating, sustaining, and recognizing media hospitality will be limited.

Additionally, as the accounts of individuals interviewed in this project reveal, 'meaningful and effective... responsibility' is not only a possibility of internet based communication, but it now almost the exclusive site of it. All interviewees relied on, to some extent, the internet in order to exercise what they understood to be their responsibility as global citizens and media participants. In fact, the contemporary media landscape has arguably *increased* the potential for the mediapolis participants to appear in the public sphere on their own terms. For those who were featured in media as former child soldiers these terms include a deeper understanding of children forced into armed conflict, 'effective speech' (Boltanksi, 18, 1999), and agency over their story. The potential for these may be greater through new media platforms and digital interface then what was ever possible in broadcast. Television and mass broadcast are far from irrelevant, but they are no longer dominant. We must evolve the conversation to include the potentials of new, internet-based media, as they permit the stranger to access the public sphere increasingly on their own terms.

There are of course still significant obstacles for the mediapolis to overcome in progress towards media hospitality. All individuals implied the nature of mediated communication to be primarily dictated by the mediapolis audience. If we hope to move beyond over-simplified and stereotyped understandings of children in armed conflict, the audience must be willing to engage with the suffering other on their terms; and, as this research revealed, the terms of these individuals include a deeper understanding of children in armed conflict. Secondly, many regions remain isolated from the global public sphere because they lack access to communication technologies. This is perhaps the greatest obstacle our mediapolis has yet to address and overcome.

Nonetheless, this project revealed a general optimism about the capacity of new media and technology to foster a moral and hospitable media environment. This potential is most significant for the subaltern, the marginalized, or the conflict-affected as it provides the 'infrastructure' for 'insertion into the public sphere' (Spviak,

2004); it allows 'access to, and participation in, a global system of mediated communication' which Silverstone calls 'a substantive good and a precondition for full membership of society' (Silverstone, 147, 2007). It allows the former child soldier to engage in the deliberations of global civil society; to exercise agency over their own story; to demand that all take responsibility for injustice in their shared world. As the victims of conflict continue to appear to us on their own terms, no longer can we deny the claim this other has on us (Silverstone, 134, 2007), to do so 'is to deny the possibility of morality and ethics. Such a denial would be the ultimate in humanity's self-defeat' (Silverstone, 134, 2007).

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Appendix 1: Table of Interviewees

	Name	Experience in the subject of research	Current Organization Affiliation	Nationality	Date (2012)	Interview
1	Elizabeth Chenery	NGO Communications; co-founder of think tank; significant experience working with LRA affected individuals in Uganda.	Co-Founder of Resolution: Possible; Senior Communications Officer at EveryChild	British	10-July	London, UK
2	Anonymous.1	Formerly abducted child soldier in DRC; public speaking	N/A	Congolese	13-July	Skype
3	Anonymous.2	Filmmaker focused on advocacy for child soldiers and community restoration in central east Africa	N/A	American	23-July	Gulu, Uganda
4	Anonymous.3	Formerly LRA affected; subject of advocacy media; media producer	N/A	Ugandan	23-July	Gulu, Uganda
5	Anonymous.4	International news editor and Journalist; focused on LRA affected individuals and communities during height of conflict	N/A	Ugandan	25-July	Kampala, Uganda
6	Anonymous.5	Filmmaker; Journalist; NGO co-founder; long-term focus on child soldiers in DRC.	N/A	American	25-July	Kampala, Uganda
7	Grace Akallo	Formerly abducted child soldier in LRA; author, speaker, advocate; featured in a range of media; NGO founder	Founder and Executive Director of United Africans for Women and Children Rights	Ugandan	17-August	Skype
8	Noelle Jouglet	Communications director and former production manager for NGO focused on advocacy for LRA affected individuals and communities.	Invisible Children—Communications director	American	20-August	San Diego, California, USA

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