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Reporting from the 'inner circle': afno manche and commitment to community in post-earthquake Nepal

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"We could have been killed that day… so that gave us a new perspective. Till now I am reminded of how I was lucky to survive."

News reporting from areas affected by natural disasters are fraught with difficulties, not to mention dangers, and in recent years, much has been written about the constraints involved in such journalistic endeavours. Both scholars and practitioners, drawing on experiences from sites as varied as Chile, China, Haiti, India, Japan and Nepal, have highlighted issues that challenge reporters in post-disaster situations: among others, threat to physical safety, informational vacuum, destruction of communication and transport systems, and ethical dilemmas (Puente, Pelegrini and Grassau 2013). Considerable debate has also centred around the personal trauma that such intimate encounters with human tragedy inflict on those who bear witness to report (Himelstein and Faithorn, 2002; Buchanan and Keats 2011; Kramp and Weichert 2014; MacDonald, Hodgins and Saliba 2017)

These well-documented difficulties acquire a new and more complex dimension when journalists cover 'their own' disasters; when they are forced to chronicle the state of affairs in their own lifeworld. What happens then? How do reporters function when disasters affect their communities? This chapter considers one such instance, the journalism in the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, when the professional and personal identities of Nepali news media personnel merged into one—and they became journalists who survived.

Disasters in Nepal

Nepal has a history of severe seismological disturbances spanning centuries and is the 11th most earthquake-prone country in the world. Since 1255, 12 major disasters, with magnitudes ranging up to 8.2 on the Richter scale, have occurred in the country, killing tens of thousands and displacing millions. The death toll in the Great Nepal-India Earthquake of 1934 alone stood at more than 8,000. The comparatively weaker tremors of 1980, 1988 and 2011 together killed 849, injured 6,965, and damaged, at a conservative estimate, more than 92,414 buildings.

The 7.8 earthquake that occurred four minutes before noon on 25 April 2015, thus, was the latest in an extending series of disasters in the region. It affected 31 of Nepal's 75 districts, 8.1 million people. Together with the 7.3-magnitude aftershock that followed 17 days later, it killed 8,794 people and injured 22,300. Nearly 500,000 houses were destroyed and another 288,255 partially damaged, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless to face the upcoming Himalayan winter in temporary shelters. The total economic loss stood at US $7 billion—more than one-third of Nepal's GDP.

As aftershocks continued, Nepal's disaster preparedness came under revived scrutiny. One of the most damaged countries in the Asia-Pacific region, with a continuing trend of severe deforestation and forest degradation (UNESCO 2018), Nepal is particularly vulnerable to

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natural disasters: every year, it sees approximately 500 disaster events such as fire, landslides, floods, and epidemic. Despite this, disasters have traditionally been managed on an ad-hoc basis, “attended to as and when they occurred” (Nepal, Khanal and Sharma 2018: 6). The Natural Disaster Relief Act (1982), the establishment of the Disaster Preparedness Network Nepal (1996), and formulation of the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (2009) and the National Disaster Response Framework (2013) were all steps in strengthening the crisis management capabilities in the country through legislation and policymaking. But Nepal’s disaster response was found lacking in the wake of the 2015 earthquake. Although there existed policies to manage disasters, the “framework could not deliver what it seemed to promise”, limited, as it were, by both its “structure” and “response capacity” (Manandhar, Varughese, Howitt and Kelly 2017)

Nepali media and the earthquake

The Nepali news media landscape is characterised by a remarkable number of radio stations. Spread across the country, and particularly serving the rural population, these stations broadcast in a plurality of languages—123 languages are spoken in Nepal, according to the 2011 census—to command substantial reach, higher than other forms of media.

Newspapers are centred in the Kathmandu valley, with low overall print circulation owing to “the difficult geographical terrain, the high recurring costs for both publishers and readers, and the adult literacy rate at only around 60 percent of the population” (Acharya, undated). Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in television and digital and social media penetration in urban areas, but radio enjoys a far greater reach into rural communities across the nation. Compared to the 189 newspapers published daily and 117 television channels predominantly catering to urban audiences, there are 736 FM radio broadcasters, including

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314 community stations. This allows an estimated 98 per cent of the population access to radio (a significant proportion access FM stations via mobile phones).

While the diversity of outlets signals the basis for a robust news media system (a point to note here is that, unlike in many other South Asian countries, radio stations are allowed to broadcast news and news-based programmes in Nepal), it must be remembered that professional media have only had a very short lifespan in the country. Till democratic reform in the late 1990s amidst burgeoning civil war, and the resultant emergence of commercial media houses, journalism was a 'volunteer' career. As such, the profession is still in its nascency in Nepal, facing several training, resourcing and other developmental challenges. Nepali journalism, hence, was ill-equipped to deal with a disaster of the magnitude of the 2015 earthquakes. Compounding this was the fact that, much like every other aspect of Nepali life, the tremors wrought large scale destruction to the journalism infrastructure: a 2016 report by the Federation of Nepali Journalists found that 266 media houses were damaged, and 1,813 journalists directly affected, which included the deaths of three journalists and injuries to 14.

Against this backdrop, this chapter explores the experiences of Nepali journalists as members - in a personal and professional capacity - of disaster-affected communities. We draw on in-depth interviews with 46 journalists, editors and other officials responsible for news dissemination after the earthquake. Interviewees were from the city areas of Kathmandu and Patan, as well as regions worst affected by the earthquake: Sindhupalchok, Nuwakot and Gorkha. Nearly three-quarters of the journalists and editors interviewed were from radio or newspapers, with the remaining from TV, dedicated news websites, or wire services. Our analysis is also informed by 150 interviews with survivors (including journalists) undertaken for our affiliated post-disaster journalism project, Aftershock Nepal (http://www.aftershocknepal.com).

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Afno manche

Nepal has a collectivist culture, founded on the ‘afno manche’ family system, where the needs of the family take priority over external obligations. Afno manche is a Nepali term that translates to one's own people, “those who can be approached whenever need arises” (Bista 1991: 98). Similar to the Chinese guanxi network of social relations (Haaland 2010), afno manche refers to relationships of reciprocity that calls on Nepalese to prioritise the needs of their ‘inner circle’ first.

Most often these inner circles are knit with kinships, but this need not always be the case. Afno manche can be more strategic in nature as well, to include people unconnected by blood or marriage so as to create “informal personalized organization of activities that affect the operation of formal structures of market and bureaucracy” (Subedi 2014: 56). This practice has drawn criticism for encouraging discrimination on the basis of kinship, caste and social relations (Jamil and Dangal 2009), and is often seen as a root cause for the favouritism and nepotism that affect the governmental machinery in Nepal (Subedi 2014). But such relations, whether deliberately cultivated or natural, run deep in the Nepali society, underpinning the human connectivity in communities there. As Bista (1991) put it, the most important asset for anyone in Nepal is not what you know, but who you know.

Subedi (2014) classifies afno manche networks into four groups: family, business, bureaucratic, and political. As mentioned at the outset, a significant element in all these networks is reciprocity: these relationships are confirmed by practices of symbolic reciprocation such as exchange of gifts, information and services. The system is dependent on cultural values such as trust, dependability and loyalty, and unreciprocated requests for help may lead to recalibration in the inner circle. As a university teacher described this obligation:

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“If one is in a difficult situation but does not get help from afno manche, s/he is no more afno manche” (Subedi 2014: 67).

Of the four networks, not surprisingly the family afno manche is generally the strongest and more durable. Driven by emotions and affection, it is made up of immediate family members, followed by closest extended family - often cohabiting. Both maternal and paternal kinfolk are included in this innermost of the inner circle, as are those treated as family—for instance, classmates (Subedi 2014). Then comes the other circles of ‘insiders’ such as friends, neighbours, and people of trust. A Nepali villager exemplified afno manche thus: [O]ur brothers are closer. In case the brothers are not there then friends are closer, and if friends [are not there] then the neighbours… then comes the Ward Chairman” (Anderson 2004: 6).

The family afno manche, thus, is a network bound by an obligation to help—a strategy of survival at its core, where members close ranks to protect each other from hostilities ‘outside’, for the betterment of those within. Anderson (2004: 6) describes it as “relations of concentric circles” with “descending obligation or expectation towards the periphery”. Though family afno manche may not require immediate or direct quid pro quo, it is this promise that holds the relations in place. When this social norm is broken, when expected obligations are not met in situations of need, members could lose their status within the network and afno manche could become tadako manche (faraway person). Communities we argue are made up of a plethora of afno manche networks, or concentric circles to borrow Anderson’s term, that in the case of disasters are mobilised in a spontaneous response to an external threat or event. This is further complicated where the onset of a disaster triggers different responses and needs from an individual’s afno manche networks.

Afno manche and dual trauma

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The afno manche network came under enormous pressure in the post-disaster days of 2015. The scale of destruction caused unusually severe situations of need in a nation familiar with—but not resilient to—disasters, affecting as it did significantly large segments of population across a geographical spread. This, as we evidence in the next section, had a significant impact on the post-disaster journalism from Nepal. Not only were Nepali journalists personally affected by the earthquakes, particularly given the concentration of news organisations in the affected Kathmandu region, but many were also affected through their afno manche in regions of harm.

Compounding this 'primary' shared trauma of familial networks was the 'secondary' trauma brought about by the calls of their profession—which, in times of tragedy, requires their exposure to the suffering of others. Studies so far, mainly from a Western perspective or focused on 'parachute' reporters from outside the disaster community, have found substantial evidence of psychological stress leading to conditions of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among disaster journalists (Weidmann, Fehm and Fydrich 2008, Backholm and Bjorkqvist 2012). To withstand these and function better, seasoned reporters adopt several coping strategies: identifying with their professional values, cultivating a strong sense of purpose, creation of personal networks, acquisition of psychodynamic knowledge, and so forth (Faithorn and Himmelstein 2002). Specific investigations into the experiences of journalists who reported the disasters of their own communities—investigations that focused on their dual trauma as survivors and scribes, specifically—are lacking. But related studies from hazardous situations indicate high levels of mental stress among those who publish from 'within'.

An inquiry into the psychological wellbeing of Iranian journalists, for instance, found they experienced extraordinary levels of danger and emotional distress, owing to their inability to separate their work from their broader (and dangerous) social environment (Feinstein,

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Feinstein, Behari and Pavisian 2016). Another study that looked at Kenyan journalists warned of "significant symptoms of emotional difficulties" and the resultant negative impact on "good journalism", which "depends on healthy journalists" (Feinstein, Wanga and Owen 2015: 1). In a similar vein, a UNESCO-funded study that looked at Mexican journalists found that one in four respondents stopped working on a story because they were too traumatised (Feinstein 2012). Hughes and Marquez-Ramirez (2017) build on this body of work. Providing insights into the journalistically limiting risk-reduction strategies Mexican journalists used (among these, self-censorship and avoidance of on-field reporting) to navigate a situation where their professional identities spilled into personal lives, they write: "For many journalists, then, professional practice has clearly become an exercise in balancing personal and occupational risks with perceived duties to society" (Hughes and Marquez-Ramirez 2017: 515).

Here, it is also worth pointing to the evidence that suggests journalists who report on disasters in their geographic locality bring with them a strong(er) sense of commitment to their community, often stepping outside the bounds of traditional journalism. Usher (2009), after a post-Katrina study, writes of how the role of local journalists at the Times-Picayne in New Orleans were complicated by their personal experiences and their newspaper became an "advocate for the city". Matthews (2017) describes a "sense of mission" among the local journalists in Ishinomaki after the 2011 Japan tsunami, an obligation to "provide information that would enable people living through the disaster to cope", which extended into the recovery phase (Matthews 2017: 469). With this as context, the following section considers the post-disaster experiences of Nepali journalists.

Reporting disasters from within: experiences of Nepali journalists

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Though many Nepali journalists have experience reporting disasters, the 2015 earthquakes challenged their professional obligations unusually. In the case of the floods, landslides, fire, and the other more localised events they cover every year, they were, more often than not, able to retain their professional identity, functioning not as survivors themselves but as reporters reporting on their own community. The magnitude of the 2015 disaster, however, drew into its ambit a larger cross-section of people, including a significant number of national and regional journalists and their near and extended families.

The journalists who survived

The tension between journalists' professional identity and their emotive response to experiencing the disaster as survivors emerged as a recurring theme. Journalists we interviewed revealed a conflict between coping with their (and their family's) trauma and their perceived professional duty to report. A radio journalist from Sindhupalchok, one of the severely affected areas, spoke of the harrowing time immediately after the earthquake when he was searching for his family members. "After two hours, we get together," he said, "and I am happy that my family, all my relatives are very well." The journalist also spoke of the month afterwards, when aftershocks continued and he had to put aside the calls of his profession, to attend to the safety of his family.

> "I lived for a month in a tent. My house had cracks. The kids were very scared and they didn't want to go to the house. The quakes came continuously and I thought, they all thought, they were going to die. I just forgot at the time that I was a reporter."

A magazine editor, who continued working, expanded on this, speaking from personal experience and also drawing from interactions with a team of journalists:

> “So we were reporting at such a time, and you know, families are scared, parents are worried, partners for those who have them are worried. But at the same time, it’s your job as a reporter, as a journalist, to share the story. But you have to ignore some of that... I had to report back, clock in at work, and clock in at home as well. Had to spend those few hours at home. Because this is when my parents were also staying in tents. So you have to go, they aren’t your people, they’re worried, they’re old... they have to take care of parents who are even older.”

An online journalist from Kathmandu remembered the exhaustion he felt in the days after, and the overriding feeling of “numbness” that seemed to have afflicted all survivors:

> “Complete lack of sleep because every five minutes there were aftershocks. Also, everyone had become somewhat numb with the fear of uncertainty. In Nepal there is a term called *satogoye*. It means when someone is in shock or trauma, at that time he becomes numb. So that was the feeling all around. We didn’t know what to do.”

A newspaper columnist based in the Pathan area of Kathmandu spoke of another aspect of survival and post-disaster journalism as he tried to ‘file copy’ from home:

> “Hotels were getting full and then in my case, my sister’s house was in pretty bad [shape], She was living with us and our house became … community house. As I was writing in some of the pieces, your house is not your house anymore. It's a community house, it's a community toilet.”

Another experience shared by interviewees was that there was a loss of manpower at a crucial time from newsrooms in Kathmandu, where many national print and television broadcasters are based. A TV journalist described the situation:

> “[M]ost of the reporters were from outside of Kathmandu, so most areas … those reporters have to go back to their house, and we had to help them. We can’t say them no, you have to stay here and you have to work.”

Many journalists were too affected to work immediately after the earthquake. The disaster also gave some respondents a different outlook. A newspaper journalist in Kathmandu gave voice to this, when he said:

> It’s hard to forget the destruction we saw. We couldn’t live properly and work properly after that. I couldn’t come to my office to write.”

These personal pressures impacted the journalism produced by the survivor-journalists and many were quick to point this out. A freelance journalist based in Kathmandu said:

> “It was very difficult to maintain quality ... We just try to collect the information. We were not able to do work properly. There were psychological problems, family obligations … because life comes first before any other things … also need to stay safe, before writing anything.”

Another journalist, also from Kathmandu, summarised the balancing of the personal and professional thus: “As a journalist I have a responsibility towards society, but as a son I have my responsibility towards my parents.”

Commitment to disaster communities

These personal constraints notwithstanding, journalists demonstrated a firm commitment to their community. Many indicated they were aware of the heightened demand for their services post-disaster—to “do some good” and bring “help” to people in a ‘non-routine’ situation, at a time when “everything is a problem”. In line with Matthews’s finding in the Japanese context, driven by a strong sense of community responsibility, Nepali journalists

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embraced the role of "information-disseminator" (Matthews 2018: 475). In this regard, and similar to what Usher (2009) noted in her US study, they appear to have adopted an interventionist role for themselves that moved well beyond the role of the observer they practiced in routine news events.

A TV journalist from Kathmandu detailed how he took direct action to help people in need: "We talked to different organisations and arranged food and clothing, and I myself went to give it to people." He also described how he once persuaded aid workers to provide additional support to a victim, using the threat of filming them as leverage to make an intervention. "We thought, ah, at least we did something. And that difference was made by the camera probably," he said.

Journalists described how they were the first to reach remote sites and how they helped rescue efforts by providing information directly to government officials. A newspaper journalist from Gorkha said, "I did not wait to break the news, rather I supplied it to DDRC [Disaster Risk Reduction Portal], so that they could help maximum people in need."

A radio editor from Kathmandu spoke of working directly with survivors, helping the information flow by establishing a makeshift information centre with one table and one or two chairs:

> "We didn't think that people would come. After some time we realised, oh, we need some more chairs. People came from the village… so we needed some water also."

One criticism levelled against crisis reporting—in fact, journalism in general—is its gravitation towards accredited sources (Berrington and Jemphrey 2003; Kim and Lee 2008), often at the cost of ill- or mis-representing sections of the afflicted society. An important reason behind this during disasters is firsthand access, or the lack thereof; as also—where

external, ‘parachute’ journalists are involved—an unfamiliarity with cultural contexts and ground realities. Local news media, in some situations, are known to enrich disaster reportage (see Matthews 2017). Given this context, it was interesting to note that for a section of our interviewees, their commitment to the disaster affected community extended beyond their ‘immediate’ afno manche, to include those who would otherwise go unheard.

A Kathmandu-based newspaper journalist reflected on this self-critically, speaking of the Nepali news media’s coverage of the day-to-day issues of survivors:

> “We have covered so many issues in local media because we were not just taking statements of people in the government or [those] involved in the rescue operation. We have covered the voices of so many unheard. Still we are not able to reach people suffering the most in the remote part of the county, particularly the underprivileged community. They are not getting proper space in media. We have not been able to raise their voices in our reporting—I see lapses in giving proper space to these people.”

Going beyond one’s family and committing to the disaster community, for some journalists, appear to have also been cathartic. Journalists indicated that this helped them cope with the psychological stress the disaster placed them under, with some describing their element of pride at their decision to keep working. A newspaper journalist from Kathmandu said:

> “To be frank, I compromised all my personal obligations. I moved out for reporting. Two days after the earthquake I was the first one to go to the Shorpani, near the epicentre in Gorkha district.”

Another journalist, a publisher, described a similar experience and the extremes he went to ensure his journalism continued into the weeks after the disaster. When he could no longer print his own paper, he said, he took up reporting for other news organisations:

> "My family suffered and I suffered a lot of loss. In that situation I didn't care about my family… only my work. I just kept working. I lost being able to print my own paper because of the earthquake, that's why I started freelancing and writing for other publications."

National pride and the 'outsiders'

The Nepali journalists' solidarity to their community members—to their extended afno manche, as it were—seems to have gone hand-in-hand with a heightened sense of national pride. This feeling of 'us' and 'we-ness' was possibly fuelled, at least to an extent, by the antipathy they developed for a section of international journalists, 'outsiders', whose conduct many interviewees saw as self-serving and insensitive.

This chimes with evidence from elsewhere. In their comparative analysis of how Korean and US news outlets covered a 1997 air disaster, for example, Kim and Lee (2008: 88) cite several instances and crisis studies to make the point that nationalism and ethnocentrism colour international news coverage significantly, and the nationality of the players "is an important predicator of the tone of news coverage" (see also Entman 2004). Similarly, several scholars who have looked at humanitarian disasters in non-Western contexts make the convincing case that international news media attention is episodic and superficial when it comes to 'distant suffering', and largely driven by narratives that accentuate the socio-cultural difference between 'us' and 'them' (von Engelhardt and Jansz 2015; Joye 2010).

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It was not surprising, then, that Nepali respondents indicated the need to close ranks against the ’outsiders’. They spoke much about “Nepali resilience“ and their pride in their “local media“, often juxtaposing such comments against the unsavoury practices and “mistakes” that foreign reporters made. In essence, international journalists were seen as exploitative, lacking both empathy and understanding of the local context.

A translator exemplified this viewpoint, narrating how a British journalist tried to coerce victims to show more emotion:

> “Right after the earthquake, on the second or third day, I started working with a news channel. There was a group of British journalists with celebrity status coming over to Kathmandu. I had a bit of a moral crisis, a sort of an ideological war with them because as soon as they came, I heard them saying that there is nothing award-winning here. When I took them to areas where people were cremating the bodies of family members, that British guy asked me to ask the victims … to display some emotions, to ask them to describe the pain, and that they shouldn’t look expressionless. [Here’s] a place which has been so devastated, people are already living in so much trauma, turmoil and crisis… and then a journalist comes and all he needs is an award-winning story.”

Respondents also said international journalists chased the high-profile Mount Everest region, ignoring the lesser-known but more affected areas in other districts. They had the “wrong mindset” to report the earthquake, a reporter said, as they were only interested in the suffering. Another interviewee captured the disdain many felt for the international counterparts, noting that one journalist “had to leave because their princess was giving birth to a baby, and it was more important for them to cover this news”.

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A print journalist, who worked for a Nepali daily as sub-editor-cum-reporter, commented on the lack of knowledge and preparedness that some international reporters exhibited:

> "At the time of the earthquake, they come and say Kathmandu is this, this, this, this. But the people, their reporting, it was not proper and lots of mistakes! If I am going to any country in the world, I look at the country, the map, all the details—the population, parliament, all information… But they come and say, look, this is final. But this is not final, that's the problem. They were making mistakes with the geography, information also—lots of mistakes."

Nepali journalists felt particularly let down by Indian journalists, who were criticised for both hijacking the narrative to present a Delhi-centric view (Gyawali 2015) and their insensitive newsgathering approaches. Some Indian broadcast reporters were seen poking injured people stuck under debris with their microphones to elicit a response, Regmi (2015) notes. He goes on to say: "Their acts of news reporting and visualization went beyond a general practice of a true and ethical journalism" (Regmi 2015: 89).

Our interviewees added to this body of criticism, particularly pointing to the conduct of their Indian counterparts in the recovery phase when India imposed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal. An English newspaper journalist referred to the coverage of the Indian media in the relief phase as "irritating … one of the worst forms" of journalism. Another interviewee expanded: "They come down, they want this case where a woman had been recently widowed or children has died."

Respondents also pointed out that the national interests of the Indian journalists biased the way they reported the economic blockade and its impact on a nation struggling to recover from a disaster. A Kathmandu-based woman journalist captured this sentiment well:

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> "Most of the journalists live in Delhi and they have good relationship with the Indian establishment and the people living in India. So they tried to analyse Nepal through the lens of India … India imposed blockade, disagreeing with some provisions of the Nepali Constitution. Many Indian journalist came to see the problems faced by the Nepalese people because it was post-disaster scenario. But they didn't give enough coverage to the place of India in the blockade so that the earthquake victim could get relief. If they had reservation about the Constitution, they can ask some senior political leaders. But they should speak against blockade that caused serious humanitarian crisis in the country."

Outsider journalists, both Indian and others, also came under criticism for their fleeting reportage and presence in Nepal. As a freelance feature journalist put it, they focussed on "damage, damage" and nothing beyond. "They did not care about the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Nepal," another journalist said. "The Nepalese people had to wait till the country marked the first anniversary for that."

In contrast to this, the majority of the interviewees were complimentary of the way Nepali media performed. As evidenced earlier, they functioned under a particularly difficult situation, facing multiple constraints—but though self-critical and quick to point out their limitations, they took pride in both their professionalism and commitment as well as the coverage they provided in general. A journalist expressed the differences in coverage thus: "Nepali media gave what was happening. International media, particularly Indian media, was provocative." Another interviewee stressed the commitment of her fellow journalists, saying:

> "I would say national media did a clean job. Radio was the most effective tool. Radio stations collapsed but the people were providing the information. Taking shelter under the tent, they were providing information round the clock."

‘Survivor journalism’

The challenges local journalists face in disaster situations are often overlooked. So are the important contributions they make to post-disaster journalism. By analysing the experiences of Nepali national and regional journalists after the 2015 earthquake to understand how they responded to a disaster that engulfed their communities, this chapter has highlighted several important insights for our understanding of this complex relationship.

After the earthquake, Nepali journalists entered a grey area in terms of their professional identity. Such was the scope of the disaster that a significant number of journalists were affected. In fact, everyone we interviewed was a survivor, some more so than others. Their dual status created a clash between their personal and professional selves, an ‘identity dissonance’, that had to be constantly negotiated, placing them under additional stress.

This status also exposed them to dual trauma, arising from two quarters. On the one hand, they had to deal with the distress of being a survivor, either living through the destruction themselves, or being affected through their afno manche. On the other, functioning as they did as news personnel (even as they mentally mediated their personal and professional responsibilities), they were exposed to the secondary trauma that all disaster journalists face when reporting human suffering. Further, the exposure of the Nepali journalists to the disaster was particularly *prolonged:* unlike their international counterparts who had the relief of removing themselves from the situation, Nepali news personnel continued—still continue—to produce ‘survivor journalism’ from their post-disaster community.

It is only natural, then, that all this influenced their journalistic outputs. The quality of their reportage, as interviewees indicated, were compromised by the stress and worries about the well-being of their afno manche, not to mention the logistical, infrastructural, and editorial issues post-earthquake Nepal faced (see Sreedharan and Thorsen 2018). At the same time,

though, Nepali news personnel displayed commendable journalistic resilience, and, echoing earlier studies (Matthews 2016; Usher 2006), a strong, interventionist commitment to their communities. National and regional journalists were, thus, eager to make use of their professional status to do what they could for those in need.

It is also conceivable their personal experiences influenced not just their outputs, but their *outlook* of disaster journalism, including their expectations from the news media in general and the international media in particular. Nepali journalists emphasised the need for empathetic reportage, responsible, and sensitive to their cultural context—one which went beyond the "damage damage" narrative and crossed over into the recovery phase to discuss underlying issues in a sustained manner. Their sharp criticism of the international media and their very evident sense of pride in their own work at the local levels, particularly via community radio stations, could be seen in this context—not only as evidence of their "we-ness" but as insights from insiders on what is required (and missing) in post-disaster journalism.

In this context, it is worthwhile to underline the need for supporting 'survivor journalism'. At a time when 'non-routine' disasters routinely percolate news bulletins, the reportage of own disasters from within is crucial in the rebuilding of post-disaster societies. So far, though, scholarly and professional attention have largely been monopolised by the newswork of international journalists. It is hence important that a shift is brought about to acknowledge the distant suffering of survivor journalists, and to develop survivor journalism.

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