The British Academy

Journal of the British Academy, **10(s1)**, 79–108
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.079
Posted 15 March 2022

Citizens' everyday media practices and peace activism in ethnically polarised societies

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Abstract: In many regions of the world, increasing use of media technologies for activism is shifting dynamics of peace and conflicts, particularly in fragile societies. However, there has been an extensive focus on the practical use of these media platforms, ignoring the social processes by which the latter becomes significant for different people. This article examines how citizens' everyday media practices are helping shape the dynamics of peace and conflict in fragile societies. The study used mixed methods, administering 241 cross-sectional survey questionnaires to members of the public and 18 structured interviews to peacebuilding organisations in the counties of Nairobi and Nakuru, Kenya. This study finds that citizen media practices are influencing (peace) activism because they help shape patterns of information use and engagement in actions furthering or undermining peace. Therefore, the article argues that while the increasing use of media technologies for activism may expand opportunities for accessing information and engagement, there are specific ways in which they can undermine peace, that is, help shape the dynamics of salient social processes.

Keywords: Vernacularism, media practices, social processes, peacebuilding, peace activism.

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Introduction

Across many regions of the world, the increasing use of online media platforms is helping shape both the way people can access information and engage in societal processes, and the conditions in which this information can be produced and disseminated (Rid & Hecker 2009: 5; Silver & Johnson 2019: 7; Vincent *et al.* 2017: 46). This widespread access to online media in many societies is enabling 'proliferation of opportunities for public expression for groups with conflicting worldviews and identities' (Waisbord 2018: 4). Besides this, the ease with which individuals and organised groups (co)-create and circulate unregulated contents implicates the functioning of social institutions, particularly in contexts where societies are fragile. McIntyre (2018: 42–3) terms this phenomenon post-truth: a situation whereby 'people seem prone to form beliefs outside the norms of reason and good standards of evidence in favour of accommodating their intuitions or those of their peers'. Thus, what individuals do with available media technologies, especially in an ethnically polarised context matters to the doing (conducting) of politics. Citizen media practices—what individuals do with available media platforms—can be viewed as symbolic markers of embedded social practices as well as expanding options for accessing, (co)-creating and disseminating ideas and content.

They are symbolic markers in the sense that media practices such as hashtags and microblogs can define the 'what', 'who' and 'how' of social causes. For instance, #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have become symbolic markers for campaigns against gender and racial injustices. Furthermore, the enduring media practices in ethnically fragmented societies can practically and symbolically influence 'who speaks and when; what and how they can speak; and the potential outcomes of their speech' (Ferree *et al.* 2004: 19). On the one hand, practically, identity-based media practices such as vernacular radios can influence how political candidates communicate with their constituencies, and in turn, the course of conflict dynamics. While on the other, symbolically, identity-based media practices create structures through which individuals can identify with others' concerns. For instance, the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter media activities make it possible for diverse individuals to co-create communities and strategies with which they 'display for each other the meanings of their social situation' (Alexander 2006: 32). Through these co-created communities and strategies, individuals and organised groups can, in turn, localise or vernacularise their social concerns, such as gender violence or political campaigns, to get intimate participation from members of the public. Thus, the influence of increased online media's use is in how they help shape the dynamics of salient social processes. In this study, such salient processes may include what individuals do with available media platforms (individualised media practices), why individuals forge ties with others' concerns (relatedness), and the outcome of the latter and former processes (localised issues).

For the purpose of this study, citizen media practices are mechanisms with which individuals and organised groups co-create and connect to others' concerns and causes. Hence, these media practices can shift the dynamics of options and level of conflict intensity people may experience. This is because individuals' options to (co)-create social spaces for peace activism are subject to negative media practices such as cyberbullying, hate content and online surveillance. In this study's context, vernacularisation is the use of vernacular as a linguistic strategy for localising political issues to arouse and manipulate cultural symbols and intensify hostilities in volatile situations. Thus, vernacularism in this study is applied in the sense that Hochschild (2016: 135) uses the term 'deep story'—'the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols—it removes judgments, facts and tells us how things feel'. In ethnically polarised societies, intended or unintended, vernacularised social conversations produce 'allusive narratives, in which people's political sense is shaped by their own experiences and by stories they read and hear from friends and acquaintances. These stories substitute memory for history and make others' experiences seem as if it is their own' (Polletta & Callahan 2017: 393–4). Thus, it is the political effect of vernacularism that helps explain the criticism levelled against news media, especially the vernacular radio's live phone-in shows for fanning ethnic hatred and polarisation during the 2007–8 political crisis and in subsequent general elections in Kenya.

A critical focus on media practices that enable individuals to co-create and disseminate personalised stories of negative ethnic stereotypes or cultural chauvinism reveals how such practices become politically significant during an election campaign (Ismail & Deane 2008a: 319; KNCHR 2018: 8). Moreover, vernacularisation also captures citizen media's impact on political campaigns because it helps shape the way people personalise others' stories to intensify antagonism and tensions.

This three-part article examines how the increasing use of online media for activism is helping shape peace and conflict practices, particularly in volatile situations. The study argues that while the increasing use of online media for activism may expand opportunities for accessing information and engagement, there are specific ways in which they can undermine peace—that is, help shape the dynamics of salient social processes. In a socially fragmented society, the opportunities for more people to co-create and disseminate unregulated content may immerse and intensify their everyday experiences of conflicts because of 'persistent contact and pervasive awareness' individuals have with events and issues from their locales (Hampton 2017: 127–32). Thus, these emerging citizen media practices reveal what is changing about the dynamics of peace and conflicts, particularly in conflict prone societies. In this study's view, the influence of online media on peace activism is defined by a dynamic relationship between what individuals do with available media platforms and why individuals forge ties with others' concerns. Hence, the influence of media platforms on activism

is not just about access to available platforms, but also resulting practices that may help shape the dynamics of everyday peace and conflicts.

Three points encapsulate why it matters to examine how citizen media practices are helping shape everyday peace and conflicts in volatile situations. First, online media have become critical sources of information and platforms for social engagement, giving individuals and organised groups 'capacity to act at a symbolic level in order to create discourses, meanings, and interpretations' of their social conditions (Mattoni 2012: 2). The implication for peacebuilders is that citizen-initiated media practices can exacerbate ethnic polarisation. For instance, the increasing phenomenon of online groups disseminating unregulated content has the potential to shape the 'newsworthiness of an issue more than the focus news media place on it', thus affecting levels of engagement (Rid & Hecker 2009: 210).

Second, online media platforms are increasingly being embedded in existing social practices, thus, shifting conditions in which such practices occur. For instance, because 'social division enables one's willingness to believe news confirming their biases' (Tandoc *et al.* 2018: 149), unregulated online media practices can intensify phenomena of false information, hateful content or bullying of opponents. In terms of social trust and the good of the order, polarising media practices pose a challenge to the credibility of public processes and institutions, management and transformation of social conflicts (Vasu *et al.* 2018: 4). Finally, these platforms are vast and allow for diverse modes of interaction, sharing and fluidity in the norms and practices for co-creating and disseminating news and information. The emergence of online media practices such as microblogging and online memes allows for the presentation of content and ideas in ways that are not constrained by established norms and practices. Therefore, it is valid to examine how these emerging media practices are intersecting with everyday peace and conflicts, transforming them, or reinforcing fault-lines of societies.

Thus, the first part of this article discusses and highlights pertinent social communication dynamics underlying everyday peace and conflict in Kenya.

The second part analyses empirical data to draw attention to individuals' practices in information and media use, and motivations for engaging in peace actions. The empirical data responds to questions about the ways in which citizen media practices can influence the dynamics of peace activism in fragile societies. The data analysed reveals that information and activities about peacebuilding are relevant, and most respondents search for and use it. However, the circumstances under which information and activities are sought may range from moments of political crises, such as violence before, during or after elections, and through activation by political campaigns. Therefore, this study shows that the emerging online media practices can help shape peace activism because they influence patterns of access and engagement in actions furthering or undermining peace. In practical terms, online media practices such as

hashtags, microblogs, or digital political and social memes can either enhance public engagement or exacerbate fault-lines of society.

The final part discusses and highlights the contribution of this article to the study of peace activism in ethnically polarised societies.

Background to the case study: Kenya's peace communication context

After the 2007–8 political crisis, Kenya saw a proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICT)-based peace initiatives such as Sisi Ni Amani, UWIANO Platform, Ushahidi,[1] Picha Mtaani, Umati and PeaceTech Lab,[2] which engage citizens in online conflict management and resolution practices. Thus, a critical analysis of these initiatives is needed about how individuals and organised groups engage with them. This study examines PeaceTech Lab Africa's *Kenya Election Violence Prevention and Response Programme* (KEVP),[3] which brought together a loose network of diverse actors—community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations and members of the public. The KEVP aimed to address the risks of political violence in Kenya during the 2017 elections in the counties of Kisumu, Nakuru, Nandi and Nairobi by supporting civil society groups and members of the public to engage in peace-promoting activities. KEVP was a joint initiative between Mercy Corp and PeaceTech Lab. The latter provided an online platform for local leaders to develop targeted peace messaging and for the public to report cases of election-related tension, rumours and early warning messages. By the time of the election in 2017, PeaceTech Lab indicated that the KEVP online platform had 200,000 subscribers[4] signed up from across the four counties.

Methodologically, the case study embeds two units of analysis—the peace activism within the network of civil society groups, and between the civic groups and the members of the public in the counties of Nairobi and Nakuru. The study conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with representatives of local peace organisations. It administered 241 cross-sectional surveys to respondents who directly participated in the KEVP before and during the 2017 general elections. The interviews and survey were simultaneously deployed in person between March and June 2019. During the 2007–8 political crisis, Nairobi and Nakuru counties witnessed widespread tribal clashes, displacement of people, deaths and property destruction (Waki *et al.* 2008: 106–201). The violence in these two counties was concentrated within low-income settlements—in Nairobi, the most affected estates included Kibera, Mathare, Dandora, Kariobangi,

[1] https://www.ushahidi.com/blog/2008/01/27/chronology-of-the-crisis.

[2] https://www.peacetechlab.org/home.

[3] https://www.peacetechlab.org/prevent-election-violence.

[4] https://www.peacetechlab.org/we-build-peace.

while in Nakuru, organised attacks and counter-attacks happened in Kaptembwa, Kwarhoda, Mwariki, Free Area, Githima and Kiti estates (Waki *et al.* 2008). Most humanitarian and conflict mitigation interventions are concentrated in these settlements. Because of simmering inter-ethnic tensions, cases of hate speech, incitement to violence, and the organisation of political gangs are recurrent during the election period (NCIC 2019: 29–32). Respondents (both peace organisations and members of the public) interviewed for this study were recruited from these low-income settlements with deprived social amenities and physical infrastructure. In Nairobi County, the respondents were drawn from the sub-counties of Kibera and Mathare North with a population of 185,777 and 206,564, respectively, while in Nakuru County, the respondents spread across three sub-counties of Nakuru North, East and West, which makes up the Nakuru urban centre with a combined population of 570,674 people (KNBS 2019). Also, most participants in the KEVP were concentrated in these two regions. Because of deprived infrastructure in low-income settlements, PeaceTech's use of online media platforms for conflict management illustrates the role civil society groups play in promoting the uptake of innovative communication interventions and bridging the technology access gap among grassroots groups.

According to the 2019 Kenya National Census, Nairobi's population is 4.39 million people while Nakuru is 2.16 million. Nationally, Nairobi County is the most populous, while Nakuru is third. In terms of access to ICT, of the 1.49 million households in Nairobi County, 53.4 per cent own a radio, 68.7 per cent have a functional TV, and 42.1 per cent have access to the internet. While in Nakuru County, of the 598,237 households, 61.1 per cent own a radio, 40.7 per cent a functional TV, and 20.9 per cent have access to the internet (KNBS 2019: 462–8). Although the state-funded Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) operated regional vernacular stations and programmes from the early 1950s, when Kenya was still a British colony, their programming was restricted to culture and entertainment. In post-independent Kenya, KBC continued with the restricted vernacular broadcasts until the early 2000s when a private broadcaster, Kameme FM Radio targeting Kikuyu, Meru and Embu ethnic groups entered the sector (Ogola 2011: 87). The burgeoning mobile phone sector gave Kameme radio the impetus to incorporate live-phone-in talk shows in its programming (Ogola 2011). Increasingly, these live-phone-in shows became famous for hosting debates with politicians and ethnic elites.

In the run up to the 2005 constitutional referendum and the 2007 general elections, as Ogola (2011: 90) argues, 'political elites used vernacular radio stations for mobilising their bases; and as a way of negotiating for space within the political centre'. However, these live-phone-in shows on vernacular media can also tend towards 'deliberation enclaves' (Sunstein 2019) because of the salience of ethnic identity on diversity of opinions. According to Sunstein (2019: 20), 'deliberation enclaves are influenced by three factors: the level of diversity of opinions (argument pool), participants desire

to maintain their reputation and self-conception (social influence), and validation of opinions (corroboration)'. To some extent, Kenya's social communication context may display these features. During elections, often political elites vernacularise campaigns, resulting in enclaves that insulate their bases from alternative perspectives. Vernacularised campaigns, in turn, can enhance campaigners' reputation because they manipulate and exploit significant ethnic symbols and meanings. Additionally, for participants, vernacularised campaigns may help validate their opinions about alternative candidates and outer groups. Furthermore, the increasing use of mobile phones and the re-emergence of vernacular media, it seems, helped shape communicative practices of many individuals and organised groups, because, nationally, five of the ten most listened to radio stations broadcasted in vernacular languages (MCK 2012: 3). Also, the widespread use of live phone-in shows seems to have altered the long-established media practice of listeners' fans-club (live radio call-in listeners' shows) to forums of political debates (Ismail & Deane 2008b: 4). For instance, monitoring reports singled out live phone-ins shows on vernacular radio stations and the surge in the use of short-text-messaging (SMS) to spread inflammatory and hateful contents during the 2007–8 violence (IRIN 2008; KNCHR 2008). This point is particularly crucial in understanding how emerging media practices are helping shape social communication contexts. By 2017, mobile phone subscriptions had reached 41 million users (CA 2017), up from 12.9 million users in 2008 (CA 2009). According to the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK), the increase in mobile voice and SMS traffic was because these services were being used for campaigns by various groups (CA 2017). In the CAK recent media performance report, talk shows, at 17.3 per cent, are the third most popular genre of local content behind religious (17.7 per cent) and music (38.8 per cent) programmes (CA 2018a: 31). Thus, live phone-in shows in vernacular media programmes, it can be argued, have affected how individuals and organised groups relate, discuss and engage with day-to-day social and political issues. Ogola (2011: 86) attributes the rise of vernacular media platforms to the de-politicisation of media spaces by urban-based Kiswahili-English news media. Moreover, the re-emergence of vernacular media can also be interpreted as a re-establishment of ethnicities to which individuals and organised groups are subjected (Nyamnjoh 2005: 26). Where vernacularised media spaces are used to (re)-create individuals' loyalties to their villages/locales and identities they entangle the users, and breach the boundaries of media and information systems based on the norms of objectivity, fairness, and balance (Nyamnjoh 2005: 27–8). This entanglement can help shed light on the extent to which the online media practices and spaces absorb individuals and organised groups into immanent conflicts and causes for peace (Bräuchler & Budka 2020: 18). Group polarisation, according to Sunstein (2019:19), occurs when 'deliberating group members predictably move towards a more extreme point in the direction indicated pre-deliberation'. Therefore, it is from this sense one can interpret the dilemmas and

immense political pressure the Kenyan news media have been under since the 2007–8 political crisis to propagate (negative) peace rather than take a critical stance on issues of justice for victims of historical injustices (Cheeseman *et al.* 2019: 95; Weighton & McCurdy 2017: 659). Thus, vernacularised media practice may help shape social communication towards group polarisation.

In Kenya during the 2017 general elections, GeoPoll and Portland reporting on the impact of false information found that 49 per cent of respondents regularly referenced online social media for news about the general election (GeoPoll & Portland 2017: 9). In an exposé, *Data, Democracy and Dirty Tricks*, Channel 4 News reveals how the discredited data company, Cambridge Analytica (CA) played a crucial role in influencing both the 2013 and 2017 presidential elections in Kenya. In an interview with a Channel 4 News undercover reporter, CA Chief Executive Officer Alexander Nix, and his Managing Director of Political Global, Mark Turnbull, are recorded explaining how they clandestinely aided Uhuru's The National Alliance, later rebranded Jubilee Party, to target and manipulate voters' fears along tribal lines (CA 2018b; Davis 2018). In conflict-prone contexts, these online media practices become even more critical because of 'group polarisation, which further fragments society' (Sunstein (2019: 20). Tandoc *et al.* (2018: 143) point out that 'if there are political, sectarian, racial or cultural differences, then people will be more vulnerable to fabricated news'. These social conditions can constrain and structure how individuals 'perceive their society and its problems' (Bennett & Entman 2005: 1). It is in this sense that one can interpret Floridi's (2014: vi) assertion that online media are not just tools for interacting with each other but have become forces capable of changing people's self-understanding and modifying how they relate to each other and themselves'. As the Cambridge Analytica cases illustrate, these changes have made it possible for invasive practices such as 'tethering of people to information and each other allowing for more powerful targeting and reach' (Schroeder 2018: 18). Indeed, it is online users' activities and their layered social relationships and sources that allow for their data to be used to construct predictive models to make targeted campaign communications more efficient (Nickerson & Rogers, 2014: 54). Therefore, what individuals do with available media technologies matters to the degree that it can symbolically and practically help shape salient social dynamics.

Citizen media practices and (peace) activism

Data analysed in this section focus upon dynamics helping shape the supply and demand for peace information and communication. To this end, it is crucial to map out, first, data on media and information use patterns to understand how and when specific media practices become significant to everyday peace and conflicts. Second, it

is vital to determine what peacebuilding may mean for different categories of people. Finally, data on the former and latter processes can reveal the emerging character of peacebuilding spaces. For the purpose of data analysis in this section everyday media practice may include texting peace messages or establishing online neighbourhood groups that can lead to 'creation of communities and transmission of values and beliefs' (Powers 1995: 199). The increasing use of media technologies produces media practices (such as hashtags, memes or automated message portals) that can transform the dynamics of how people engage in societal processes. So, data analysed in this section bring into sharp focus the dynamic relationship between the elements that make up communicative practices and its influence on everyday peace and conflicts, particularly in fragile societies.

The relevance of information and activities about peacebuilding

As displayed in Table 1, most respondents (80.5 per cent), have sought information or activities about peacebuilding within their towns and counties. However, 19.5 per cent of the respondents at the time of this study said they had never searched for information or activities about peacebuilding in their locales. Indeed, it is essential to note that the two variables in this question—information and activities—cover a range of actions: in the sense that searching for activities might lead to actual participation. In contrast, information-seeking behaviour might only be limited to individuals' desire to know facts about the peace situation in their localities and not necessarily participate in activism.

Therefore, when prompted further to list places that they sought this information or activities from (Table 2), a sizable number rely upon community social centres (26.1 per cent); followed by local churches and mosques (13.3 per cent) and local administration offices, including chief's office, county government and the police (13.3 per cent). Only 7.9 per cent of the respondents used online media platforms for information on peacebuilding. Both local and national news media emerged as places or channels respondents least depended upon for information and activities about peacebuilding at 0.4 per cent and 1.7 per cent, respectively. However, many parts of Kenya have peace committees comprising government representatives, local leaders

Table 1. Information seeking patterns.

Have you ever sought information and activities about peacebuilding?			
		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Yes	194	80.5
	No	47	19.5
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Table 2. Places/channels through which peace information is sought.

If yes, list the places/channels you sought this information from

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Online (internet/online groups/WhatsApp)	19	7.9
	Local news media (radio/TV)	1	0.4
	Local NGOs/activists	17	7.1
	Local churches/mosques	32	13.3
	Local administration (chiefs/county government or police)	32	13.3
	National news media (radio/TV/newspapers)	4	1.7
	Local groups (social centres/places/groups)	63	26.1
	Peace committees (alliances of CSOs & government)	17	7.1
	No response	56	23.2
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

and local community-based organisations; only 7.1 per cent of respondents reported to have sought information about peacebuilding from these alliances. Furthermore, peace information in this study means a process of organising actions furthering common understanding. It includes activities individuals and organised groups organise to promote dialogue and raise awareness about conflict resolution strategies and individuals' and communities' rights. Therefore, it is vitally important to examine the relationship between peace-information seeking behaviours and entities.

The places where respondents seek information and activities about peace are essential, but timing also seems a relevant determinant. As Table 3 indicates, many respondents (25.7 per cent), are more likely to be prompted by conflicts, violence or crisis in general to search for information on peacebuilding. Similarly, political campaigns (10 per cent), and public events (5.8 per cent), can also activate individuals' interest in peace information. Besides this, a sizable number of respondents said they look for information on peace at any time (24.1 per cent), others during their free time (9.5 per cent). Moreover, it is worth noting that some respondents attributed their need for peace information to places or organisations (9.4 per cent). The latter finding relates to the argument Dodds (2007: 5) makes about how, through speeches and policies, representatives of the state and civil society organisations (CSOs) 'generate specific understanding of places and communities residing in a region'. In Kenya, the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 justified the marginalisation of communities based on higher returns on investment in their regions (GOK 1965: 46). Thus, when some people attribute their peace-information-seeking behaviours to places or organisations, they highlight public discourse's consequences in constructing social orders. Moreover, in

Table 3. Trends in peace-related information-seeking behaviour.

When are you likely to seek information on peacebuilding?

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	During or after conflicts, violence or crisis	62	25.7
	Any time or always	58	24.1
	Others (names of places/offices/organisations)	22	9.1
	During political campaigns (before or during elections)	24	10.0
	During free time/holidays	23	9.5
	During public events (workshops/festivals)	14	5.8
	Living in conflict-prone regions	1	0.4
	No response	37	15.4
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Kenya, some government agencies and CSOs often produce reports mapping regions as potential political violence hot spots, particularly during elections (Wambui 2021).

Most respondents search for information and activities about peacebuilding, and do so through multiple systems of information and communication. There is a further need to determine how peace-related information-seeking behaviour compares with participation in peace actions. As shown in Table 4, 83 per cent of the respondents had participated in peace-promoting actions, while 15.4 per cent did not. As shown in Table 6, a further cross-analysis suggests a significant correlation between respondents who sought peacebuilding information and their participation in peace activism. For instance, a cross-analysis of information-seeking behaviour and participation trends (see Table 6) suggests that there is a significant relationship between respondents who sought information and activities on peace and the likelihood of them engaging in activism ($p<0.611$). Information-seeking behaviour can also be linked to patterns of engagement and the use of available media platforms. As Table 5 indicates, over half of the respondents regularly use online media for peace activism—daily, 18.3 per cent;

Table 4. Trends in individuals engaging in peace activism.

Have you ever participated in activities promoting peace?

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Yes	200	83.0
	No	37	15.4
	No response	4	1.7
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Table 5. Frequency of using online platforms for peace activism.

How often do you use online platforms for peacebuilding posts?			
		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	At least everyday	44	18.3
	At least once a week	54	22.4
	At least twice every week	23	9.5
	At least once in a month	62	25.7
	Cannot remember	40	16.6
	No response	18	7.5
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

twice a week 9.5 per cent; or weekly, 22.4 per cent. However, as illustrated in (Table 2 above), community-based information and communication intermediaries still play a vital role in grassroots peace activism. Indeed, if peace-related information-seeking behaviours are linked to one's engagement in activism, then it is also relevant to make sense of what peacebuilding represents for most participants, which the next section further explores. In the light of this study, the various ways individuals participate in actions either promoting or undermining peace can be interpreted as a negotiation and appropriation of positions, meanings, symbols or practices.

In Table 6, a cross-analysis of two variables, information-seeking behaviours, and participation in activism, sought evidence of correlation tending towards either stronger or weaker links. Here correlation analysis aims to reveal how two or more factors tend to change together—that is, the dynamic relationships between a range of specific factors. In this case, the cross-analyses applied throughout this study aim

Table 6. Link between a search for peace information and activism.

Correlations			
		Information and activities about peacebuilding	*Have you ever participated in activities promoting peace?*
Information and activities about peacebuilding	Pearson correlation	1	0.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)		**0.611**
	N	**241**	**241**
Have you ever participated in activities promoting peace?	Pearson correlation	0.033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.611**	
	N	**241**	**241**

to reveal how increased media technologies' use is correlated with the change people experience in their localities. For instance, the analysis in Table 6 shows that an individuals' information-seeking behaviour is correlated with their participation in peace activism. However, many factors may influence how peace activism is changing, including the increased access to available media technologies, extant social conditions and expanded options for individuals and organisations to co-create social spaces for common causes. Thus, a two-tailed test of how these factors are interconnected—that is, evidence for correlations. Therefore, a probability value or p-value of 0.611 indicates a positive correlation between information-seeking behaviour and participation in peace activism. To interpret empirical data presented in this article, the evidence for correlation helps explain how emerging media practices affect individuals and organisations, for instance, how fake information or cyberbullying can intensify the (in)-security that individuals and organisations experience.

Negotiating ideas and practices of everyday peace

In ethnically polarised contexts, I argue that a serious impediment to peacebuilding is how to communicate the demands of sustainable peace. That is, the consequence of prosecuting perpetrators of serious crimes, reparations for victims, and public truth-telling processes without construing it as ethnic persecution. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the United Nations Secretary-General, officially introduced the concept of peacebuilding into the international security discourse in his report, 'Agenda for Peace', to the 47th Security Council. In this report, he defines peacebuilding as actions of identifying and supporting structures that strengthen peace and promote a sense of confidence and well-being among people (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 212). He underlines structures as necessary conditions for consolidating peace. Before the 'Agenda for Peace' report, Galtung (1976: 297) had argued that 'peace has a structure different from peacekeeping and ad hoc peace-making' interventions. For Galtung (1976: 282), 'peacekeeping is dissociative. It aims to keep antagonists apart under mutual threats of punishment' but does not resolve conditions causing conflicts.

In contrast, peacemaking, Galtung (1976: 290–3) suggests, aims to resolve perceived sources of conflict, and can take different forms, including compromise, where antagonists accept: compatible goals; domination by one group through violence embedded in structures of society; or elimination through direct violence against the rival groups to preserve incompatible goals. Because of the limits of peacekeeping and peacemaking approaches, Galtung (1976: 298) advises that there is a need for establishing alternative structures capable of eradicating causes of wars. To which, Boutros-Ghali (1992: 212) concludes that successful peacekeeping and peacemaking must be anchored in structures that consolidate peace, and people's trust and well-being. In his analysis of practices defining peace, Richmond (2014: 5–6) argues that they can focus narrowly

on actions aimed at ending direct violence and ignoring its underlying causes, or on creating structures within which conflicts are resolved, such as institutions of democracy, law, human rights and development. However, at issue is how people interact with and experience these institutions: access to justice, public resources, and representation, especially in ethnically polarised contexts. As discussed in preceding sections, ethnicity is a salient base of political mobilisation in Kenya, and it extends into how individuals negotiate their dwellings and other social affiliations. As several public inquiries into election-related violence (Akiwumi *et al.* 1999; Kiplagat *et al.* 2013b; Waki *et al.* 2008) show, often, ethnic identities provide means with which elites mobilise support and violence against rival groups (Lynch 2011: 2). Where ethnic tensions dominate social processes, citizens can (re)make peace, as Galtung (1976) suggests, through domination by voting for one-of-their-own, and direct violence against rival groups. Galtung's assertion points to the need for a clear understanding of prevailing notions and peace practices—that is, how various actors, states and non-states define peace. More importantly, it is how peace is negotiated and practiced in the everyday vernacular of people. In this study, as shown in Table 7, there are at least three ways that respondents conceive peacebuilding. First, many of the respondents (55.2 per cent) describe peacebuilding as processes or actions geared towards community relations, understanding, or bringing people together. For instance, many respondents described peacebuilding as: 'a process of building relations in the community'; 'assisting people to eradicate conflict and maintaining unity'; 'a process of understanding the reasons as to why people associate themselves with conflicts'; 'a process of bringing people together and stopping tribalism'; 'a process of resolving injustices in the community in a peaceful way'; 'a process of finding a solution to a conflict'; 'a place where people negotiate about what might help the community and change their attitude' or 'a process of building relationships between our neighbours and us'.

Table 7. Ideas of peacebuilding.

Describe peacebuilding in your own words

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Peacebuilding as a state (harmony/absence of violence, conflicts or war)	46	19.1
	Peacebuilding as a process/action (non-violent approach)	133	55.2
	Peacebuilding as a platform, forum, or structure	51	21.2
	No response	6	2.5
	Others (no idea, not interested)	5	2.1
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Second, some respondents (21.2 per cent) conceive peacebuilding as a platform, a forum or a structure through which individuals can further goals of 'cohesion, reconciliation or harmony' within their local communities. They described peacebuilding as a platform for 'emphasising peace acts by sharing and posting peace information'; 'creating a platform for cohesion and reconciliation for people to live in harmony'; 'a group of people who work to bring unity and love in our community and county'; 'convincing those in conflict to dialogue and maintain peace'.

Third, 19.1 per cent of the respondents view peacebuilding as the absence or presence of harmony, conflicts or war. This category of participants describes peacebuilding with words and phrases such as, 'living peacefully with one's neighbours'; 'peace as calmness between two or more parties who were in a quarrel'; 'togetherness'; 'living without quarrels as brothers and sisters'; 'living in peace and unity with neighbours'; 'having a peaceful community'; 'living together without tension'; 'being in a cool environment away from war'; 'a conducive environment without violence'; or 'means to accept and maintain peace in our villages in all time'.

The following observations can be made from these findings: first, the various ways people describe peacebuilding imply locus of actions—that is, the presumed 'where', 'who' and 'what' of peace activism. So, the finding that many people understand peace as a process of building relations among communities reflects the UN's definition (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 212). Their concerns are about capacities to restore severed social relationships as structures for mitigating ethnic tensions for these respondents. Why does it matter? In this study's context, the increased use of online media for activism is helping shape some elements of communicative practices which are media by which communities reproduce their social integration (McCarthy 1984: xxv). Therefore, if elements of some social interactions are changing because of citizen media practices, it has consequences for emerging structures of peace activism. These findings further underscore the relevance of locus of change for peace interventions—that is, whose peace is disrupted and in what ways.

Second, for people describing peacebuilding as a platform or forum for furthering cohesion, this reflects Galtung's (1976: 292) definition of peacemaking as 'compromise, integration, disintegration or elimination of opponents'. For instance, when Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto created the Jubilee Alliance following Kenya's 2007–8 political crisis, they seemed to trade justice for the victims of the post-election violence against the harmony between their respective communities. In this sense, the Uhuru-Ruto alliance provided a forum through which their supporters could (re)-negotiate the understanding of justice (Lynch 2014: 94). However, since 2018, the Jubilee Alliance's parties started 'decoupling from each other' because President Kenyatta brought the opposition leader, Raila Odinga, into the alliance under the 'Building Bridges Initiative' (Galtung 1976: 292). So, peacebuilding, understood as a platform for promoting reconciliation can also undermine sustainable peace goals,

particularly in contexts where distrust pervades social processes. The final observation is about respondents concerned with the presence or absence of conflicts and wars. Richmond's (2014: 5) suggestion that the definition of 'peace can narrowly focus on ending violence' seems instructive. Furthermore, Galtung's (1969: 170–83) concept of negative peace is relevant in that these people's concerns are about their capacity to prevent direct physical and psychological violence against them.

Why does it matter to ascertain people's idea of peace? For peace communicators, mapping out the varied ways people describe peacebuilding can help determine socially or politically shared schemas about peace and conflicts, and the degree to which they are institutionalised: for instance, how different ways of understanding peace structure individuals' motivations and their engagement levels. This study shows a relationship between how respondents describe peacebuilding on one side and their motivations for engaging in peace actions and the kinds of initiatives they would associate peace with on the other. For instance, in Table 8, the need for peaceful co-existence, expressed by 38.2 per cent of respondents, seems to motivate many respondents' engagement in peace activism. Other respondents are prompted by cases of conflict (13.3 per cent for ethnic clashes or election-related violence) and political campaigns (5.4 per cent for elections or peace campaigns). Besides this, it is worth noting that 5.8 per cent of respondents view peace activism as a civic duty, or desire to bring change in their communities (4.6 per cent). These respondents' views can be contrasted with those who are either moved by personal gain, 8.7 per cent or peer influence, and 5.4 per cent (social groups). For instance, a cross-analysis of the varied ways peace is described and respondents' motivations, as Table 9 shows, suggests that for individuals motivated by the need for peaceful co-existence, peacebuilding is a

Table 8. Motivations for engaging in peace actions.

If yes, what motivated you to participate in peacebuilding activities			
		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Conflicts (post-election/ethnic clashes or violence)	32	13.3
	Political campaigns (elections/peace campaigns)	13	5.4
	Need for peaceful co-existence	92	38.2
	Civic duty (I am a peacebuilder/activist)	14	5.8
	Bring change in the community (development)	11	4.6
	Personal gains or growth	21	8.7
	No response	45	18.7
	Social groups (youth/women/peer)	13	5.4
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Table 9. Cross-tabulation of understanding of peacebuilding and motivations.

*Describe peacebuilding in your own words * If yes, what motivated you Crosstabulation*

			If yes, what motivated you								*Total*
			Conflicts (Post-election/ ethnic clashes/ violence)	Political campaigns (elections/ peace campaigns)	Need for peaceful co-existence	Civic duty (I am peace-builder/ activist)	Bring change in the community (development)	Personal gains or growth	No response	Social groups (youth/ women/peer)	
Describe peacebuilding in your own words	Peacebuilding as a state (harmony or absence of violence/conflicts/war)	Count	5	2	16	4	1	3	10	5	46
		Expected Count	6.1	2.5	17.6	2.7	2.1	4.0	8.6	2.5	46.0
	Peacebuilding as a process/action (nonviolent approach)	Count	21	5	56	4	7	10	25	5	133
		Expected Count	17.7	7.2	50.8	7.7	6.1	11.6	24.8	7.2	133.0
	Peacebuilding as a platform/ forum/structure	Count	5	5	18	5	2	5	8	3	51
		Expected Count	6.8	2.8	19.5	3.0	2.3	4.4	9.5	2.8	51.0
	No response	Count	1	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	6
		Expected Count	0.8	0.3	2.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	1.1	0.3	6.0
	Others (no idea, not interested)	Count	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	5
		Expected Count	0.7	0.3	1.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.9	0.3	5.0
Total		Count	32	13	**92**	14	11	21	45	13	241
		Expected Count	32.0	13.0	**92.0**	14.0	11.0	21.0	45.0	13.0	**241.0**

process of non-violent actions (expected count, 50.8, actual count, 56). Similarly, for respondents prompted by incidents such as post-election violence or ethnic clashes to participate in peace activism for them, peacebuilding is a non-violent action (expected count, 17.7, actual count, 21). However, most respondents, regardless of their motivations, conceive peacebuilding as non-violent actions (expected count, 133, actual count, 133). Similarly, regardless of how respondents described peacebuilding, most are motivated by the need for peaceful co-existence (expected count, 92, actual count, 92).

The broad-gauge of motivations in the preceding section for why individuals engage in peace actions further points to the need for continual testing of different ways people conceive peace and how that might influence their social or political expectations and engagement. Also, a grasp of these motivations can indicate the kinds of actions people are likely to engage in and their effects. Table 10 shows an array of activities with which people experience peacebuilding. For instance, 22.4 per cent of respondents participated in cultural activities such as drama, sports tournaments or concerts; others (17 per cent), took part in community dialogue meetings. Still other groups preferred public demonstrations—peace walks or protests at 11.6 per cent; community clean-ups or tree planting at 5.4 per cent and participation in media campaigns—radio talk shows, distribution of posters or social media groups at 8.7 per cent. Additionally, other participants associated donation of foodstuff (5 per cent), civic education (4.6 per cent) or social groups (5 per cent) with peacebuilding. Therefore, given the numerous ways people engage in peacebuilding, it seems to open options for multiple voices

Table 10. Actions associated with peacebuilding.

List the kind of activities you engaged in

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Capacity building (seminars/workshops on peacebuilding)	11	4.6
	Others	9	3.7
	Cultural activities (sports/drama/tournaments/concerts)	54	22.4
	Public demonstrations (peace walks/rallies/protests)	28	11.6
	Community dialogue/meetings (forums/chiefs' town hall meetings)	41	17.0
	Environmental (community clean-ups/tree planting)	13	5.4
	Media campaigns (radio talk shows/posters/social media groups)	21	8.7
	Social groups (youth or women groups)	12	5.0
	No response	40	16.6
	Humanitarian outreach (food donations)	12	5.0
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

and engagement patterns. In turn, these multiple options for voices and action can indicate the numerous ways peace is performed, with potentially positive or adverse outcomes. In the most extreme cases, if ethnic animosity and tensions define an election campaign's contours, social identities could be constructed as a problem (Edelman 1988: 21–4). For a group's internal harmony, practices such as ethnic cleansing or evictions can become acceptable ways of (re)-making peace in a negative sense.

Spaces for peacebuilding

The competing meanings and numerous ways people engage in peace actions turn attention towards the dynamic relationship between media platforms with which individuals appropriate and negotiate ideas or practices and actions these platforms can enable and constrain. In ethnically polarised societies, it is crucial to understand the dynamics underpinning the causes for which people search for, produce, or circulate information, and their media practices. Therefore, it is vital to determine how the cause for peace defines the contours of individuals' media practices. As Table 11 shows, most respondents (80.1 per cent), have used online media platforms to share peace messages, and only 19.1 per cent have not. In comparison, Table 12 displays aggregated reasons for respondents appropriating online media for peace activism. Many respondents (18.3 per cent) are motivated by the desire to promote peaceful co-existence, particularly during elections, conflicts, or violence (7.5 per cent), while 18.7 per cent are motivated by shared mutual interests. Other participants find online media platforms convenient for creating awareness and advocacy (8.7 per cent), perhaps because it is an efficient means of communication (11.2 per cent). However, at least 10 per cent of the respondents who participated in PeaceTech,[5] the peacebuilding initiative, had no access to this platform. Seemingly, if they reside in settlements defined by poor social services, this category of participants might be excluded from

Table 11. Use of online media for peace activism.

Ever used online media to share peace messages to your friends or neighbours?			
		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Yes	193	80.1
	No	46	19.1
	No response	2	0.8
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

[5] PeaceTech Lab Africa's programme aimed to address the risks of political violence in Kenya during the 2017 elections by supporting civil society groups and members of the public to engage in peace-promoting activities.

Table 12. Motivations for using online media for peace activism.

If yes, explain your answer

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	During political campaigns (elections/conflicts/violence)	18	7.5
	Mobilising, awareness creation & advocacy	21	8.7
	Promote peaceful co-existence	44	18.3
	Straightforward & efficient means of communication	27	11.2
	Networking & sharing mutual interest messages	45	18.7
	Alerts & emergencies	10	4.1
	A platform for discussion & community outreach	18	7.5
	Others (not in online groups/no phone/not active online)	24	10.0
	No response	34	14.1
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

other functions that online media platforms play for those who have access to such service as community outreach (7.5 per cent) or emergency alert system (4.1 per cent).

Equally important is how individuals experience online activism besides the reasons they cite to explain their use. Table 13 shows an array of experiences for most respondents who use online media platforms for peace activism. While 36.1 per cent of participants described their use as good networking platforms, respectively, other groups of users, 23.1 per cent and 7.9 per cent said that online media provided access to diverse sources of information access and voices.

In short, this section's empirical data illustrates that media technologies' effects upon peace activism are a dynamic relationship between elements that make up routine social practices of individuals and organisations and emerging media practices. Routine social practices may include peer-to-peer online sharing of happenings in each other's locales, which can help shape the quality of their interactions because of the likelihood of intensified experiences of issues under consideration. If one agrees with this view, then the task at hand is to account for how citizen media practices apply to the logic of peace and conflicts in societies needing practical solutions. Accounting for these links can explain how and why particular media platforms become embedded in social actions, and reasons that motivate people to innovate and appropriate available media platforms for common causes. In the context of everyday peace, it is an analysis of how increased use of online media is helping shape the way members of the public and organisations interact. Consequently, a critical focus on individuals' and peace organisations' media practices points to a dynamic relationship between various causes for activism and available media technologies. Moreover, it suggests the vital role communicators can play in co-creating social practices strategic to peace activism.

Table 13. Users' experiences of online peacebuilding.

Describe your experience of using online media for peacebuilding		*Frequency*	*Valid percent*
Valid	Good networking platform (wider reach/faster information relay/easy to organise or mobilise)	87	36.1
	Access to diverse voices/interactive/realtime feedback	19	7.9
	It can escalate conflicts, rumours/no privacy	11	4.6
	Access to diverse sources of information (easy access/affordable)	56	23.2
	Not accessible (many languages used)	8	3.3
	Others (Cannot tell, I do not use it. I do not have a smartphone)	18	7.5
	No response	42	17.4
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Discussion and conclusion

This study found that individuals search for peace-related information and engage in activism for varied reasons, including during crises such as violence before, during or after elections and activation by campaigns. A cross-analysis between individuals' information-seeking behaviour and their engagement in activism found a significant relationship. Thus, peace activism can be looked at as a product of a dynamic relationship between reasons for individuals affiliating with groups or movements and appropriated media platforms. This conclusion is in line with Bourdieu's (1998: 19) argument about how 'invisible structures can determine what one sees and does not see'. In Kenya, during elections, political elites often vernacularise campaign messages into cultural fables, songs or sayings to mobilise their bases. Cultural fables or songs, as examples of invisible structures, localise political issues into a logic of everyday peace and conflict among groups. For instance, reports from both the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) and the Commission Investigating Post Election Violence (CIPEV) show how vernacular radio stations enabled individuals to make hateful statements. These reports single out live-call-in shows, music and coded terms as practices that intensified feelings of ethnic hatred and tensions. These vernacularised media practices mobilised everyday vocabulary of such terms as *mado-adoa* (spots), *bunyot* (enemy) and *sangara* (wild grass) against outer groups (KNCHR 2008: 85; Waki *et al.* 2008: 295). In an ethnically polarised society, coded terms are designed to manipulate and exploit significant symbols and elements making up a vernacular, such as sayings, humour and fables. Thus, the KNCHR and CIPEV reports about callers on vernacular radio stations using coded terms show how citizen media

practices matter: they can help shape or entrench inter-ethnic biases and differences. More importantly, these media practices have consequences for the dynamics of media users' experiences, and they can intensify tensions among groups. In this case, polarised ethnic relations supplied reasons for which individuals were mobilised.

Furthermore, ethnic identities in themselves may have numerous meanings and purposes for different groups, but it is the power of these meanings when 'objectified that produce groups' (Bourdieu 1985). Vernacularised political campaigns aim to dissolve meanings of social identities into political causes—to the extent that identities of groups become synonymous with elites' political aims. This is the sense in which one can interpret the claim that ethnicity dominates multiparty politics and alliances across Africa, or multiparty politics has exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions (Anderson & Lochery 2008). Lynch (2014: 93) makes a similar assessment when describing how inter-ethnic relations between Uhuru Kenyatta's Kikuyu community and William Ruto's Kalenjin underlay the formation of their political coalition, the Jubilee Alliance—in the sense that both Kenyatta and Ruto traded the conflict of displaced communities, mainly Kikuyus in the Rift Valley, for an alliance of political expediency. The KNCHR (2008) and Waki (2008) reports about vernacular radio stations and dissemination of hate content illustrate how citizen media practices can impact the everyday logic of conflict and peace. However, within the communicative practice framework, individual media practices are embedded in the prevailing character of peace and conflict. In this case, inter-ethnic political alliances present a specific character of peace in which conflicts between groups change according to their affiliations. Thus, a critical focus on citizen media practices can reveal how they enable people to (re)-produce everyday peace and conflicts practices.

Ethnic-based political alliances produce a specific character of peace and conflict. Hence, in analysing the influence of increased use of online media on activism, it is vital to consider valued ends—what moves individuals to forge ties with others. Data analysed in the preceding section shows that the emerging web of social relations resulting from online activism has consequences for how people access and engage with information. This is because media practices such as cyberbullying, political incitement or false information undermine actions furthering peace goals. In situations where people have 'sustained awareness and constant connection' with false information or political incitement, it can undermine peacebuilders' abilities to influence peace (Hampton 2017). As Tandoc *et al.* (2018) point out, polarised social relations structure individuals' 'willingness to believe information confirming their biases'. Furthermore, the lack of access to available media platforms may undermine how people take part in common causes; however, it is not a sufficient condition for peace activism. Other mechanisms for stifling political dissent include 'prohibitive costs of accessing particular media platforms; lack of prerequisite media technologies or literacy levels' (Mutsvairo & Karam 2018:12). Although these barriers might

undermine social action, in themselves, they are not the causes for which people do not take part in public processes. If 'basic access' is emphasised without considering what individuals do with media platforms, it seems to suggest that people do not have the capacity for common causes—that is, public participation or acting in solidarity with others. Even more critical is how to account for the strategies by which individuals and organised groups relate to ideas or entities. Social action, Weber (2019: 101) argues, can be determined either by 'actions pursued because of external factors (purposive/instrumental rationality), actions pursued because of its intrinsic value (value rationality), actions motivated by emotions (affect), and actions triggered through ingrained habituation (traditions)'. Therefore, conflating enduring social problems with available media platforms or making technologies stand in for the reasons individuals or organised groups join common causes overlook the varied forms of social actions.

This study's empirical data showed that individuals are motivated by varied reasons and purposes to innovate and appropriate media platforms for activism. For instance, some participants are motivated by cases of violence, political crises or political events to search for peace-related information and engage in activism. These emerging patterns of engagement have consequences for peace activism if one follows the suggestion of Tandoc *et al.* (2018) that sectarian differences can make people more vulnerable to false information. This is because peace activism depends on the cooperation of diverse individuals and organised groups. Therefore, by emphasising a link between citizen media practices and everyday peace, this study highlights social processes by which individuals integrate into collective causes. For peacebuilders, this means indexing strategic media practices for activism. According to data analysed in this article, individuals and organised groups access peace-related information through diverse sources. Moreover, individuals' information-seeking behaviours are motivated by numerous factors and are linked to participation trends. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how individuals' acts of accessing and disseminating information relate to causes of furthering and undermining peace. Even more crucial is testing the extent to which emerging citizen-initiated media practices influence social action. In this sense, media practices such as cyberbullying, hate speech or intimidation, if they become part of routine social conduct, have consequences for the character of everyday peace and conflict.

The cited case of political incitement from vernacular radio stations in Kenya during the 2007–8 post-election violence shows how vernacularised election campaigns can corrode social trust, escalate tensions, and intensify hostilities (KNCHR 2008; Waki, *et al.* 2008). Just like vernacular radio stations are singled out for intensifying ethnic tensions, emerging online media practices can enable echo-chamber tendencies—reinforcing biases against outer groups (Benkler *et al.* 2018; Currarini & Mengel 2016: 15). Therefore, citizen practices impact peace activism only to the

degree that what individuals do with available media platforms relates to others' actions. This claim turns attention toward processes by which individuals and organised groups can further or undermine peace goals. This article also emphasises media practices by which individuals forge ties with others' causes. On this account, these media practices either reinforce or breach boundaries of how individuals and organisations (re)-produce their social worlds—social polarisation. In Kenya, often political elites vernacularise election campaigns to reinforce ethnic biases to affect voting patterns (Bratton & Kimenyi 2008). These vernacularised voting patterns also condition how political coalitions form and dissolve because of 'less predictable' inter-ethnic relations (Horowitz 1985: 28). Thus, the question of inter-ethnic distrust turns attention towards practices by which individuals and organised groups (co)-create spaces for negotiating and appropriating ideas and symbols for activism.

In this study's context, citizen media practices provide a basis for assessing these co-created social spaces. Therefore, widespread use of online media platforms raises concerns at two levels. On the one hand, emerging citizen media practices coincide with the problems of polarisation, dissemination of hateful content, false information and violence (Barclay 2018; Laub 2019; Müller & Schwarz 2020; Patton *et al.* 2014). On the other hand, there is a need to create an understanding of how these emerging media practices are helping shape peace activism. This study's finding contribute to these twofold concerns. Data analysed in this study showed that the emerging online media practices impact activism because they shape patterns of access and engagement in actions furthering or undermining peace. Social processes such as collective security, social interactions and public engagement structure how members of the public and peace organisations innovate with available media technologies.

The need for collective security and social interactions motivates and structures the degree to which available media platforms help shape dynamics of social situations. This is because the need for collective security or social interactions as social relations is defined by 'meaningful contents of mutual disposition and the arising comportment among people' (Weber 2019: 103). Thus, the need for collective security and social interaction is the 'meaningful content' that define how individuals and organisations appropriate and innovate with available media technologies. Collective security and social interaction are the basis of engaging in (peace) activism. Hence, the contents of mutual disposition (in this case, collective security) among the Kenyan people can include inter-ethnic political coalitions, peace activism or inter-ethnic conflicts, which set the parameters within which people participate in social processes. In this sense, social spaces, including inter-ethnic coalitions and peace activism are a product of polarised inter-ethnic relations—that is, ethnic tensions dominate most social processes. To capture state power, political elites and their respective communities co-create ideas, practices (coalition parties) and symbols that draw on prevailing ethnic relation structures, resulting in a specific character of peace and conflicts.

Political coalitions and parties can emerge for genuine common causes but also for opportunistic ends. For instance, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission concluded that pervasive inter-ethnic tensions in Kenya result from people's common experiences of access to public resources, perceptions of representation in government and attitudes towards rival groups—that is, negative ethnic and cultural stereotypes (Kiplagat *et al.* 2013a: 58–9). Similarly, peacebuilders can co-create peace ideas, symbols and practices for activism. However, embodied contents of polarised ethnic relations—distrust, exclusion and marginalisation—enable and constrain individuals' social actions. Thus, the fragile character of peace in Kenya is due to institutionalised distrust resulting from politics of exclusion, which impedes robust individuals' self-expression, development and justice. Institutionalised distrust has consequences for symbolic communicative practices as media with which individuals and organised groups (re)-reproduce their social worlds.

In Kenya, polarised ethnic relations have institutionalised ethnic-based political parties and coalitions. These alliances influence solutions to lingering social problems: how people vote; access to justice; public appointments; and resource allocation. For peacebuilders, it is crucial to understand how the dynamic of conflicts influences the character of peace. Lefebvre's (1991: 26–32) concept of social space—as a product of social relations that serves as a thought and action tool—is useful for understanding how people and organisations (co)create ideas and practices, embody them and enact them. In the context of the current study, respondents' description of peacebuilding as an absence of violence can be viewed as 'spatial practices' such as artefacts of government security apparatus or systems of information and communication—that is, community information centres or community media. In conflict-prone regions during elections, heavy police presence may stand in for peace for individuals worried about physical violence and forceful evictions. One interesting result in this study is that traditional information and communication systems such as community centres, chiefs' offices, and places of worship are relevant and intricately linked to the ways individuals search for and access peace-related information. This study considered these information systems as examples of spatial practices because they are products of grassroots social relations—they make visible dominant ideas and practices. More importantly, these results suggest that part of online media's influence is in how it transforms the communicative practices around these information systems.

Second, the various ways people define peace signals practitioners' role in communicating ideas, policies or programmes. Galtung's definition of peace illustrates how prevailing social structures such as ethnic-based political parties can influence the course of interventions to enduring social problems. In this regard, PeaceTech's KEVP can stand in for mechanisms by which diverse individuals and organised groups forge ties with ideas and causes. As such, one can cross-analyse the varied ways respondents described peace being related to their motivations and levels of engagement. Indeed,

this study showed that for individuals motivated by the need for peaceful co-existence, peacebuilding is a process of non-violent actions. Therefore, people's varied ways of describing peacebuilding reveal a complex reality: how peace is represented through everyday activities and interventions is not necessarily how it can be lived and performed by individuals in their locales (Lefebvre 1991: 40). Furthermore, the various ways people understand peace could reflect the dynamic relationship between the mechanisms by which they forge ties with others and their social situations.

In conclusion, how people think about peacebuilding and the mechanisms by which they engage have consequences for everyday peace and conflicts practices. For instance, in the most extreme form, if ethnic tensions define contours of an election campaign, and social identities are seen as a problem, then in order to maintain internal harmony, incitement to violence and evictions of or attacks against rival ethnic groups become excused from public concerns and are not liable to sanctions (Edelman 1988: 12). Therefore, these findings should be of interest to peace communicators because how problems and solutions are defined can either intensify or alleviate social problems. However, in Edelman's (1988: 15) idea, 'diversity of meanings in every social problem stemming from the range of groups' concerns can be a challenge to the communication of solutions. Thus, testing how individuals think about peace in societies prone to violent conflicts is critical when discussing peace communication. Peacebuilders' media practices apply mainly to the different mechanisms by which individuals seek to associate with causes, ideas, or political organisations' (Bennett & Segerberg 2013: 5).

Furthermore, if peacebuilders want to use online media for activism, they need to know how proposed mechanisms of engagement resonate with targeted groups, stimulate a response, and help shape the problems such as 'violent elections'. Thus, it can be concluded that citizen media practices, as mechanisms by which individuals and organised groups forge ties with others' concerns, provide a way of thinking about the dynamic relationships between media technologies and prevailing social conditions (Tandoc *et al.* 2018: 149). This is because in ethnically polarised contexts, citizen-initiated media discourses can have a bearing on on the 'localised doing of peace, safety and security' (Ginty & Firchow 2016: 1). This study therefore shows that citizen-initiated media practices contribute to or undermine actions furthering peace by transforming the dynamics of options and threats that people experience.

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To cite the article: Chiliswa, Z. (2022), 'Citizens' everyday media practices and peace activism in ethnically polarised societies', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 79–108. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.079

Journal of the British Academy (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk