Meeting local needs from a distance: The role of diaspora media outlets as providers of informative humanitarian support across borders

The case of Syria

A Bachelor Thesis in Human Geography

by

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ABSTRACT

In a time shaped by an increased level of globalization and transnationalism, our perception of the immediate ‘local’ and the more distant ‘global’ is becoming more and more challenged by the forging of transnational flows, bonds and networks evolving in a rapid pace across profound distances. The new social, political and economic opportunities deriving from such transnational connections have been harnessed by various sectors of society, out of which media is one of them. With the development of information and communication technology (ICT), transnationalism has opened up new opportunities for media outlets to communicate messages over large distances and across national borders.

In the midst of the Syrian civil war (2011 – present), researchers have witnessed an ongoing transformation of the Syrian media landscape, in which emerging transnational networks between media outlets in diaspora and journalists on the ground in Syria have opened up for new opportunities for Syrian independent media to continue their work amid the conflict. The emergence of Syrian diaspora media outlets (DMOs) working in cooperation with citizen journalists on the ground in Syria has allowed for information flows to cross national borders and transcend geographical distances. By operating through places that are located outside existing legislation, this has created a grey area in which journalists are able to push boundaries and circumvent Syrian state control and censorship of independent media.

While previous studies have focused on Syrian DMOs’ role in the provision of news between their homeland and the international media community, there is a gap in the research on the reverse influence; namely on what role Syrian DMOs can play in providing their homeland citizens with information which they are lacking from inside their country.

Based on an examination of seven independent Syrian DMOs, this study aims to fill the current research gap. The study illuminates the potential of DMOs in a changing and dynamic media environment; particularly by stressing their unique advantage in being able to engage in local issues while operating from a geographical distance. In particular, the study looks closer upon how DMOs are able to work to provide practical and non-political information in the form of informative humanitarian support (IHS) to their homeland citizens. By doing so, the study examines the potential of DMOs in taking on the role as humanitarian actors in the development community.

Key words: Media, diaspora, information, humanitarian support, development
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASML – ‘Association de Soutien aux Médias Libres’ (‘The Association for the Support of Free Media’)

DMO – Diaspora media outlet

ICT – Information and communication technology

IHS – Informative humanitarian support

SDA – Syrian diaspora activist
1. INTRODUCTION

The Syrian civil war is becoming one of the most deadly conflicts in modern history (Media Report 2014). The latest statistics on the number of people killed in the conflict was estimated to 400,000 by the UN special envoy for Syria in April 2016; a number which today is expected to be considerably higher (Al Jazeera 2016c). In June 2017, the UNHCR had registered 5,057,986 Syrian refugees that had been displaced from their homeland (UNHCR 2017). For those Syrians that remain left inside the country, life is becoming increasingly difficult. The conflict has shattered Syria’s economy, and 80 percent of the Syrian population now lives in a state of poverty. The health, education and social support systems have collapsed in large parts of the country, and many Syrians today suffer from poor and inconsistent access to nutrition and health care (Global Forum for Development 2015: 6). In this vulnerable situation, Syrian citizens rely heavily upon information about the development of the conflict (e.g. the status of the fighting, where to seek shelter, how to access humanitarian aid), as well as where to find basic necessities (e.g. food, water and medical treatment) in order to be able to cope with the everyday life struggles that have come with the war, as well as to prepare themselves for upcoming events which may become a threat to their health, security, livelihood, and, in the worst case, survival (Al Jazeera 2016a; Global Forum for Development 2015: 6-7).

Furthermore, the Syrian media landscape has since the 2011 uprisings witnessed an increased regime control and censorship of, as well as violent crackdown on both foreign and domestic independent media that are operating inside the country (Privacy International 2016; Andén-Papadopolous and Pantti 2013: 2186). Hence, while Syrian journalists and media workers are forced into exile, there are few foreign journalists that are able to go back in to replace them (Nakishbandi et al. 2016; Omari 2016; Schilit 2015). As a result, Syria has witnessed drainage of independent media, and Syrian citizens increasingly lack information - other than the regime’s propaganda - about the ongoing situation on the ground – information that can be a determinant factor of their well-being and survival. However, with the rise of new Syrian radio stations, television channels and newspapers – many of which now are working in diaspora– new opportunities have emerged for Syrian exiled citizens to deliver free, independent news to citizens inside Syria that are trapped under the state’s control censorship of information (Al Jazeera 2016a).

This study aims to look closer upon the role of Syrian diaspora media outlets (DMOs) in providing informative humanitarian support (IHS) to their homeland citizens. The study is based on both primary data collected through interviews with representatives of Syrian DMOs and a Franco-Syrian media association, as well as secondary data deriving from online documents, articles, mass media outputs and previous studies that have been conducted in relation to the topic.
2. BACKGROUND

This chapter will provide a brief background to the context of the study. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will provide background information on the Syrian media landscape and the problematics surrounding Syrian citizen’s ability to access information that is not shaped by the regime’s propaganda. The second section will put emphasis on the manner in which Syrian journalism today is under transformation and how media practices are taking on new forms. Together, the two sections aim to provide a basis for a deeper understanding of the research context.

2.1 The Syrian media landscape

This section links the problematics surrounding the Syrian citizen’s ability to access independent news and information to three main factors.

The first factor concerns the Syrian state’s control and censorship of media. With the start of the Syrian uprisings in the spring of 2011, the Syrian government launched an offensive which targeted various sectors of Syrian society, and the media was no exception. After this point, the only source of news in Syria was to be the state’s official stance and narratives provided by Syrian intelligence agents who held a tight grip on the media. News that did not correspond with the official state view was considered ‘fabrication’ or ‘against the state’ by Bashar al-Assad, the president of Syria, who already in June 2011 declared independent media as enemies of the state (Omari 2016: 4).

This situation still holds true today. Private media outlets need to obtain licences from the Prime Minister, who, at any time, can refuse an application on the basis of ‘social security’ or ‘state national interest’, without any clearly defined reasons (Taki 2012: 6). Being the owner and regulator of the national telecommunication infrastructure, the government also maintains tight control over the nation’s telecommunication system, as well as the Syrian citizens’ access to Internet and broadband. The use of censorship technologies that are used to conduct surveillance of citizens, filter websites as well as to cut off live lines, disrupt radio signals and block television channels are widespread (Privacy International 2016). With the government’s control and censorship, the content of radio and television newscasts is easily skewed towards representing news in a narrow and one-sided manner which often aims to reaffirm the regime’s dominating and legitimized view of the military and political development, and which seldom fully corresponds with real events (Dollet 2015a; Al Jazeera 2016b; Alhamad 2016).

The second factor relates to the drainage of independent media inside Syria. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Syria is the most dangerous place in the world to be a journalist (Nakishbandi et al. 2016; Dlewati 2016; Shilit 2015; Doyle 2014; Media Report 2014). Throughout the war, Syrian journalists have been continuously harassed, imprisoned,
tortured and killed for sharing stories which do not correspond with the dominating regime narrative (Nakishbandi et al. 2016; Schilit 2015). As a result of the regime crackdown on independent media, most journalists and media workers have been left with the choice to either work for the state media or to not work at all, forcing the majority of Syrian independent media to exile into neighbourhood countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, leaving few independent news sources left inside Syria (Nakishbandi et al. 2016; Omari 2016; Schilit 2015; Al Jazeera 2016a; Global Forum for Development 2015). AAccording to Free Press Unlimited’s ‘Syria Audience Research’ conducted in 2016, pro-government sources are dominating TV stations, radio programming and newspapers in all regions of Syria, with the exception of Aleppo and Idlib which have enjoyed some influence of opposition sources (Free Press Unlimited 2016: 7). In addition to the state’s control of media, other political and militant groups, e.g. the Islamic State and Hezbollah, are exerting their influence over the media contents of certain media outlets, providing their own narratives of political and military events (Media Report 2014; Al Jazeera 2016b) while at the same time working to silence independent voices (Global Forum for Development 2015: 6).

Moreover, since the start of the Syrian uprisings in 2011, the Syrian government has largely barred foreign media from operating inside Syria; a fact which has contributed to a drainage of foreign independent media working inside Syria (Andén-Papadopolous and Pantti 2013: 2186). Even for those few foreign journalists that are able to make it to the inside, the direct danger of reporting from a warzone, as well as the indirect danger of reporting stories which are opposing the regime’s legitimized view of the war, limits the ability of journalists and media workers to report on the situation on the ground (Media Report 2014; Al Jazeera 2016b).

Lastly, the third factor relates to the lack of means to access news and information inside Syria. As a result of the ongoing conflict, access to information and newscasts is aggravated by the fact that Internet, radio and telecommunication infrastructure has suffered significant damage during the war. Access to electricity is limited or non-existing in many areas. As a result, numerous regions in Syria are unable to access information either through the Internet, television or radio, limiting their ability to cope with the difficult socio-economic, health and security related circumstances on the ground (Issa 2016: 14; Dollet 2015b: 10).

2.2 Journalism under transformation: The rise of the new Syrian media
With the violent events that followed the uprisings in 2011 came urgency by the Syrian civil society to document events on the ground in order to be able to report on killings and human rights abuses. As a result, the Syrian civil society took on the task of filling the gap left by domestic and foreign independent media banned by the Syrian regime, turning themselves into ‘citizen journalists’. With the Syrian civil society taking on this new media task, activism and reporting have become more or less intertwined and the emergence of a robust
community of Syrian activists, professionals and journalists has laid the foundation for a new media landscape to take form (Andén-Papatopolous and Pantti 2013: 2186; Issa 2016: 1-3). In this new landscape, a collaborative network of Syrian activists and media professionals, on the one hand, and citizen journalists on the other hand, has opened up for new possibilities of Syrian media to pursue journalism. By setting up media outlets outside the Syrian borders, Syrian activists and media professionals have – in cooperation with citizen journalists – been able to communicate important information to Syrian citizens through independent newspapers, radio and television channels; providing an alternative way for the Syrian people to gain access to information that is inaccessible inside of Syria. This cross-border journalism has allowed activists and media workers to continue their work in a more safe and anonymous environment, while at the same time retaining important links with journalists on the ground (Al Jazeera 2016a). By operating through places that are located outside existing legislation, this has created a ‘grey area’ in which journalists are able to push boundaries and circumvent media censorship (Taki 2012: 8).

3. TOPIC RELEVANCY AND IMPORTANCE

With the intensification of the Syrian war, the right to information is crucial for the Syrian citizens in order for them to be able to keep track of the situation on the ground and the continuous development of the Syrian conflict. The ability to access information about the military situation, as well as information about food supplies and healthcare centres, is not only a human right, but has become a necessity for the Syrian citizens’ livelihood and survival. Despite this, the majority of the Syrian citizens that are left inside Syria are lacking this right. Syrian citizens’ inability to receive, communicate and impart information is aggravated by the banning of independent media, which are denied the ability to safeguard the citizen’s right to information. As a result, the voices of Syrian citizens are suppressed and their needs therefore remain largely unheard. Lack of information also limits Syrian citizens’ ability to critically analyse surrounding events; something which is crucial in times of conflict and warfare in order for them to be able to ensure themselves safety.

To put it simply, Syrian citizens have been deprived their rights to seek, receive and impart information, and are marginalized by the lack of, and difficulty of accessing, information that is relevant for their daily life, and potentially, survival. This is a violation of human rights, as stated in Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 2015: 40);

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

(Emphasis added.)
While many studies direct their interest towards DMOs’ role in the provision of news between their homeland and the international community, there is little attention directed towards a potential reversed influence; namely the role of DMOs in providing practical information to their homeland citizens that is useful and important for their daily living and survival. As expressed by Ogunyemi (2015), there is a gap in the literature on the production practices and audience consumption of diaspora media; a gap which needs to be filled in order to be able to gain increased understanding of the inherent capabilities, and possibly untapped potential, of diaspora media (Ogunyemi 2015: 3). If Syrian DMOs are able to act as safeguards of the human rights of their homeland citizens, it is important to direct more attention towards them. Moreover, a deeper understanding of how diaspora media work and operate can be seen as crucial in order to be able to increase funding to media outlets that are able to provide IHS as a form of aid or development assistance which helps to strengthen the human rights of their homeland citizens. Such funding can be seen as fundamental in order to be able to harness the potential inherent strengths and qualities of diaspora media. As stated by Brinkerhoff (2008), the potential of diasporas can be tapped only when the foreign aid community allows itself to “recognise diasporas as an active and legitimate actor in the development arena” (Brinkerhoff 2008: 15).

4. AIM AND DELIMITATIONS
This study will look closer upon the potential role that DMOs can play in providing citizens of their homeland with IHS. The study has been conducted through an examination and analysis of the transnational bond between Syrian DMOs located outside of the Syrian borders and media units on the ground inside Syria. By looking at independent radio, television and newspapers that are operating in diaspora, the study focuses on their provision of practical and non-political information. Hence, it does not direct attention to whether the news reporting provided by these media outlets is politically ‘neutral’, nor the extent to which it aligns with a certain ideology. Rather, the study aims to look beyond the ideological nature of the DMOs, and to focus on the more practical role that they, as alternative sources of information, can play for citizens inside Syria.

Due to the relatively small sample size of this research, the findings are difficult to generalize and should therefore not be thought of as a blueprint which necessarily conforms with the work of other DMOs in other contexts. Instead, they should be looked at in the light of the Syrian context, and should – if anything – be seen as evidence of a cross-border communicative pattern practiced by Syrian DMOs and which potentially – however not necessarily - could be found in other, similar contexts. Therefore, the study does not aim towards establishing a confirmed, generalized theory about the roles of DMOs, but rather to look at potential inherent abilities and strengths of these media outlets and to examine the extent of their untapped potential as development actors.
Since the researcher has not been able to do research inside Syria (due to time restrictions and security risks), the researcher has not been able to look at the impact of the work of DMOs on their homeland citizens. Therefore, it is important to stress that this study solely looks at DMOs provision of media services – which can constitute a source of IHS – and not on the real impact of these services on their homeland citizens. In other words, this study is looking at DMOs provision of IHS, however not their audiences reception of IHS (i.e. how or if the services have been received by their homeland citizens).

4.1 Definition of notions
This section is set out to briefly define and clarify the meaning of the main notions being used in this study.

- **Diaspora** is a notion that is used in this study to define a group of people that are living outside the national boundaries of their ‘homeland’, from which they have either migrated, exiled or been displaced.

- **Homeland** is referred to in this study as the ‘country of origin’ or ‘country of ancestry’ of diasporas. The notion of ‘homeland’ in this study hence stands in contrast to diasporas ‘country of residency’; namely the country in which diasporas are resident, but do not originate from.

- **Diaspora media outlet (DMO)** in this study refers to a media outlet (e.g. a radio station, a television channel or a newspaper) which is operating in diaspora (i.e. from outside of the national boundaries of its homeland).

- **Informative humanitarian support (IHS)** refers to the practice of sharing information that is crucial for filling the basic needs of people that are stuck in humanitarian crises. In this study, the notion centres around the kind of humanitarian crises that are caused directly or indirectly by war and/or armed conflict.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Based on the aim of the study, the study is set out to answer the following research questions;

- **Overarching research question**
  - ‘Can Syrian diaspora media outlets (DMOs) play a role in providing Syrian citizens with informative humanitarian support (IHS)?’

In order to answer the overarching research question, three sub-questions have been formulated.
Sub-questions
- ‘What types of practical and non-political information do Syrian DMOs provide to their homeland citizens?
- ‘How is this information provided? What does the cross-border/transnational interaction between Syrian diaspora media outlets and units inside Syria look like?’
- ‘What main challenges do Syrian DMOs face when providing this information?’

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
This chapter will address the theoretical framework surrounding this research. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will address the concept of transnationalism, which will be explained through its linkage to globalization, migration and diaspora. In the second section, Christian Fuchs (2010)’s dimensions of alternative media as critical media will together with Guedes Bailey et al. (2008)’s participatory characteristic of alternative media put emphasis on the way in which alternative media stand in contrast to mainstream capitalist media. Together, the two sections will help to increase the understanding of the context in which DMOs are working, as well as the traits and characteristics of their media practices.

6.1 Transnationalism: Globalization, migration and diaspora
The concept of transnationalism stems from – and often goes hand-in-hand with - the process of globalization. For instance, Nina Glick Schiller et al. (1995) note that transnational processes are increasingly seen as part of a broader phenomenon of globalization, in which social groups are no longer tightly territorialized and spatially bound (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 49-50). Similarly, in relation to its spatial dimension, Tomas Larsson (2001) denotes globalization as “the process of world shrinkage, of distances getting shorter, things moving closer”, and that this process is characterized by “the increasing ease with which somebody on one side of the world can interact, to mutual benefit, with somebody on the other side of the world” (Larsson 2001: 9). David Held et al (1999) extend, as well as add a cross-border component to, Larsson’s definition, characterizing globalization as “a stretching of social, political and economic activities across frontiers such that events, decisions and activities in one region of the world can come to have significance for individuals and communities in distant regions of the globe” (Held et al. 1999: 15).

Linked to the migration aspect of transnationalism, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2010) stresses the way in which the forces of globalization have had impact on transnational mobility. It argues that it is today easier than ever before to be connected to two or more places across national borders; this due to the accelerated development of communication, transport and information networks. As a result, globalization has helped to strengthen the transnational and cross-border ties between migrants. Although there are many
different dimensions of transnationalism, IOM argues that definitions of transnationalism generally centre on “exchanges, connections and practices across borders” (International Organization for Migration 2010: 1-2).

The migration aspect of transnationalism inevitably leads us to the concept of diaspora. As a concept originally applied to people who had been expelled by force from their homeland (Butler 2001: 189), the concept of diaspora has with time come to be used more broadly to define “individuals who have been exiled or displaced to a number of different nation states by a variety of economic, political and social forces” (Brettell 2006: 328-329).

Transnationalism and diaspora are two terms that often are used interchangeably. However, Thomas Faist (2010) argues that although both terms refer to cross-border processes, diaspora has more commonly been used to denote national or religious groups living outside their homeland, whereas transnationalism has been used more narrowly to refer to the durable ties of migrants across countries, as well as more widely to capture the emergence of not only transnational communities, but all sorts of social formations (e.g. transnational networks, groups and organizations) (Faist in Bauböck and Faist 2010: 9).

6.2 Alternative media theory

With transnationalism and the development of information and communication technology (ICT), new opportunities for communicating messages over large distances and across national borders have allowed media outlets to more and more become transnational entities in a changing media landscape. In this changing landscape, media users are becoming producers, consumers are becoming active participants and opportunities for conducting media practices that are ‘alternative’ to the more general mainstream media have arisen. These opportunities have in particular been harnessed by activists, artists and other political and cultural groups that have found this new, alternative media to be an inexpensive and powerful tool to communicate important messages to their audiences (Lievrouw 2011: 1-2).

While there are many different definitions of alternative media, this section will focus on Christian Fuchs (2010)’ notion of alternative media as critical media. He defines alternative media as “mass media that challenge the dominant capitalist forms of media production, media structures, content, distribution, and reception” (Fuchs 2010: 178) and argues that the aim of alternative media is to give voice to the voiceless, media power to the powerless and to transcend the filtering and censorship of information by state or corporate information monopolies (Fuchs 2010: 179).

Table 1 gives an overview of Fuchs’ five dimensions of alternative media that he views as standing in contrast to the characteristics of capitalist mass media. Although Fuchs stresses that all of those criteria not necessarily and exclusively are qualities of alternative media, they emphasize its central aspects: journalists and recipients as actor-oriented, and media
production, organization and distribution as structure-oriented (Fuchs 2010: 178). Since this study is not concerned with either media product structures, or reception practices, this section will solely put emphasis on Fuchs’ other three dimensions of alternative media, namely journalistic production, organizational media structures and distribution structures.

In Fuchs’ five dimensions, the concept of citizen journalism is put forward as one of those aspects that challenge elite journalism; namely journalistic production driven by profit and power interests and that is affected by corporate and political pressures (Fuchs 2010: 178). Citizen journalism refers to the way in which ‘ordinary citizens’ - affected by certain problems - become journalists in order to report on those problems on their own (Fuchs 2010: 178). The concept of citizen journalism can be linked to the participatory characteristic of alternative media as described by Guedes Bailey et al. (2008); namely the participation of ‘non-professionals’ both in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media decision-making (structural participation). They stress the way alternative media see participation both in and through the media as a human right that cuts across entire societies. Moreover, they emphasize the two-way communication of alternative media as standing in contrast to the dominant discourse on media, which is based on one-way communication (Guedes Bailey et al. 2008: 11, 15). Indeed, in alternative media, the capitalist media structure is reversed; the consumers become active producers rather than passive recipients (Fuchs 2010: 178; Lievrouw 2011: 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Potential dimensions of traditional and critical media</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journalistic Production</td>
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<td>Media Product Structures</td>
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<td>Organizational media Structures</td>
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<td>Distribution structures</td>
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<td>Reception practices</td>
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Source: Fuchs (2010: 178)

Another aspect central to Fuch’s notion of alternative media relates to the way in which alternative media can be linked to the organizational structure of grassroots media organizations. These organizations are usually collectively owned, non-hierarchical and with a symmetric power distribution. The division of labour is flexible and the roles of authors, publishers, printers and distributors are usually overlapping (Fuchs 2010: 179). Similarly, Guedes Bailey et al. (2008) emphasize the horizontal structure of alternative media organizations as standing in contrast to the vertical structure of large-scale mainstream media.
organizations (Guedes Bailey et al. 2008: 18). Furthermore, central to grassroots media organizations is that they are not financed by advertisements or commodity sale, but rely on donations, public funding, private resources or no-cost strategies (Fuchs 2010: 179).

Lastly, a third characteristic of alternative media put forward by Fuchs is its *alternative distribution*. Alternative media rely on technologies that allow for cost-efficient reproduction. Strategies such as free access, open content and anti-copyright allow for content to be shared, copied and distributed in an open manner (Fuchs 2010: 179). Distribution through websites, mobile telephones, digital photography, video, audio, blogs, social media and file-sharing systems allow for information to be spread and distributed across a wide range of virtual and geographical spaces (Lievrouw 2011: 2).

7. LITERATURE REVIEW
When it comes to the role media can play in serving the civil society, media workers and journalists are often referred to as ‘watchdogs of democracy’. Media are, however, seldom thought of as development actors or providers of humanitarian assistance. This chapter will try to change this image, by providing a broader perspective of the different roles media can play in meeting the needs of its audiences.

Divided into five sections, the chapter will start by looking at the role of media in preventing humanitarian crises, and after, the role of media as a form of aid in the midst of humanitarian crises. The third section will turn the focus towards diaspora groups and their abilities to promote development and change in their countries of origin, while the fourth section will look closer upon diaspora advocacy through media. Lastly, the fifth section will narrow the focus towards Syria; this by looking a study on the role of Syrian diaspora activists in brokering between protest and mainstream media.

7.1 The role of media in preventing humanitarian crises
In *Development As Freedom*, Amartya Sen underlines the importance of a free press in preventing humanitarian crises. He argues that a free press can work as one of the best early-warning systems for a country that is threatened by famine through its ability to bring out facts which an authoritarian regime often censor out (Sen 1999: 180-181).

In order to illustrate the linkage between a free press and crisis prevention, Sen draws on the Chinese experience of the massive famines of 1958-1961 by comparing it to India’s democratic experience. In the late 1950’s, the Great Leap Forward (GLF) campaign was initiated in China with the aim of transforming the Chinese agrarian economy into a modern society through rapid industrialization. However the GLF’s radical agricultural reforms disrupted the rural citizen’s food entitlement, resulting in mass starvation (Gooch 2017: 140). Although the GLF campaign became a huge failure, the Chinese government refused to admit its ill-suited and dysfunctional policies and instead continued to dogmatically pursue the same
policies for another three years. Throughout these years, the government faced no pressure from the newspapers since the press was controlled by the state. The absence of a free press and news distribution began to mislead the government itself, which was fed by information that was shaped by its own propaganda. The Chinese authorities mistakenly believed that they had 100 million more tons of grain than they actually did. As a consequence, an estimated 30 million people died between 1958 and 1961 as a cause of the massive famines that evolved and escalated during these three years (Sen 1999: 181-182).

In contrast to the Chinese experience, India has – since its independence in 1947- not had a single famine. This is not to say that India has not experienced declines in food production and availability since 1947. Indeed, as a result of the 1973 drought in Maharashtra, food production fell so sharply that India’s per capita food output was half of that in sub-Saharan Africa; a vast region which suffered from substantial famines during this time. Despite this, the people of Maharashtra did not experience any famine. Sen argues that India’s ability to prevent famines lies in the country’s transition to democracy, allowing for uncensored media and free press through the democratic rights of freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Such freedoms allow for open discussion and public scrutiny, which Sen states as important prerequisites for famine prevention; prerequisites which were lacking in China during the years of its massive famines (Sen 1999: 179-180, 186-188).

A similar account of the importance of media in preventing humanitarian crises can be found in the report Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which emphasizes the way in which print media, radio and television serve pivotal roles during disasters. The report illuminates the way in which media has the ability to lower the risk-taking behaviour of a civil society by informing the public about risks. For instance, during public health emergencies - such as the outbreak of an infectious disease - the report states how media can work to lower the risk of people getting infected by such a disease by quickly spreading simple, yet important information to the public (e.g. where to drink water without purifying it) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014: 178-179).

Moreover, the report argues that media outlets today are able to provide immediate and continuous updates on a crisis through media contributions from people who themselves are experiencing the crisis. Such contributions come in the form of informative content provided through pictures and video clips that are uploaded to social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and Twitter). Hence, social media platforms provide a linkage between media outlets and citizens on the ground, allowing information to flow and be spread in a rapid pace, to cross borders and transcend geographical space. The report however states that despite the advent of social media, most people still turn to television and radio to confirm the information they receive from online sources. Therefore, although social media themselves often cannot
constitute sole, credible sources of public information, they are however able to play an important intermediary role in mediating media contents between the civil society and the media outlets; after which the latter will do the work of cross-checking information and verifying sources (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014: 178-179, 210).

7.2 Media as a form of aid in humanitarian crises
A report written by Jeffrey Ghannam for The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) emphasizes the fairly new, yet important, understanding of media as a form of aid in humanitarian crises. According to Jaqueline Dalton, a senior producer of BBC Media Action, “it’s only within the last few years that it was realized that communication is a form of aid” (Ghannam 2016: 2). Dalton argues that humanitarian communications became a development priority during the Ebola Crises. She states that when trusted religious figures began to communicate messages of positive solutions and advocating for behavioural changes, it resulted in better health outcomes in related communities. Dalton argues that people turn to the sources they trust, whether they are religious figures or local media outlets. She underlines that it is the ‘hyper-local’ news and information that is crucial for individuals and communities that are affected by the crises in order for them to make it through another day (Ghannam 2016: 2).

On the other hand, when looking at the crises following the Arab Spring uprisings, one can see that these crises have been documented and covered by a wide range of mainstream media. In this case, however, the voices of the people stuck inside the crises are often buried under the major newscasts of covering war, destruction and the number of people being killed. As a result, their daily struggles remain unnoticed and their needs unheard (Ghannam 2016: 2). Nabil Al Khatib, executive director of Al Arabiya, the Saudi-owned pan-Arab television channel, states that:

“If you try to check how many humanitarian stories there are about Syrians stuck in Syria, you will see very few reports. The [civilians] are not being covered, the fighters are being covered” (Ghannam 2016: 2).

Despite this dismal outlook, Ghannam also puts emphasis on the emergence of new media initiatives aimed towards reaching previously unheard communities in an effort to meet their needs. Such initiatives have, for instance, been used to provide hyper-local and urgent news and information to refugee and migrant communities, through the use of mobile devices. Through such initiatives, vulnerable and marginalized communities are able to receive practical information about where to obtain food, shelter or medical care, how to enrol children in schools as well as where to find a job. The information provided through such initiatives is often produced or delivered by affected communities, and serves as a bridge between available services and humanitarian relief providers. These initiatives often work on
a micro level, compared to traditional mainstream media, through the use of community radios, online videos or steams of information that are crowd-sourced on Facebook or WhatsApp groups (Ghannam 2016: 4).

7.3 Diasporas and development: Humanitarian assistance and human rights promotion

In *Diasporas & Development: Exploring the Potential*, Jennifer Brinkerhoff (2008) argues that diaspora members, in contrast to other development actors, offer unique advantages when it comes to their effort to contribute to their homeland. For instance, she argues that diasporas’ cultural proximity and local knowledge allow them to better understand, and more effectively adapt, foreign approaches and technology to the homeland context (Brinkerhoff 2008: 10-11).

Brinkerhoff puts emphasis on the way in which diasporas represent important opportunities for more formal development organizations, which can make use of their expertise for development programs. She argues that diaspora organizations can act as intermediaries between transnational development actors and local communities; this by their ability to identify the needs and priorities of local communities and by communicating these to donor organizations (Brinkerhoff 2008: 13-14). The intermediary role of diasporas is further stressed by Liesl Riddle (2008) who, by referring to a study on Filipino diaspora associations, states that diaspora associations can act as intermediaries in the way in which they conduct their own needs assessments; this through their own networking and information exchange between local communities and international actors. The ability of diaspora associations to communicate important messages between different stakeholders ultimately provides them with the possibility to influence policies and political decision-making (Riddle in Brinkerhoff 2008: 157).

Indeed, throughout the globe, diaspora organizations have started to receive more and more interest and attention by researchers, policy makers and development practitioners as a result of their increased involvement in the promotion of humanitarian aid, development and human rights in their countries of origin. A report made by Diaspora Action Australia (2014), which includes five case studies of African diaspora organizations in Australia, states that although diaspora organizations should not be seen as smaller versions of international aid and development organizations, they possess unique characteristics and specific strengths which allow them to play an important complementary role in the aid and development space (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 2).

For instance, one of the studies included in the report looks closer at the work of the Oromia Support Group Australia (OSGA); a diaspora human rights advocacy organisation that is based in Australia and which advocates for the human rights of the Oromo people and other minorities in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government has been carrying out increased repression of people from ethnic and political minorities, through extrajudicial execution, arbitrary arrest
and detention, torture and other ill treatment. By documenting human rights abuse, conducting advocacy and campaigning, as well as by mobilising the Oromo community in Australia to raise awareness of these issues, OSGA has been able to work as a watchdog for human rights in Ethiopia while operating from a considerable distance. The study found that many members of OSGA express a moral obligation to use their safe space in Australia to speak out on behalf of those who cannot (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 10). As expressed by one member of OSGA:

“There is no right to speak about what’s going on in the country [Ethiopia], any torture or any injustice. The only way we can speak is if we are out here or anywhere else [other than in Ethiopia]” (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 10).

While diaspora organizations are facing many difficulties in their work, the lack of resources was found to be the overall challenge faced by diaspora organizations as a whole. These organizations are often volunteer-run and rely on donations and collectively harnessed remittances as their sole financial support. As a result, absence of funding limits the potential of diasporas’ advocacy work and development efforts. The report stresses access to funding as the single most important factor that would have the most impact on the effectiveness and scale of the work of diaspora organizations (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 3).

Despite their financial challenges, diaspora organizations possess unique opportunities in the development sphere. The report states that the major advantages of diaspora organizations when it comes to advocacy and awareness-raising work are their often first-hand access to information, community connections and transnational networks. In a world which requires increasingly large people-to-people linkages that stretch across continents and contexts, the report argues that diasporas today should be seen as ‘innovators of the new humanitarian landscape’; this in the way in which their advocacy activities and networks are able to cut across geographical borders (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 2-3).

### 7.4 Diasporas, media and advocacy

In an era shaped by an increased transnationalism, diaspora communities have managed to overcome the obstacle of distance which separates them from their community of origin, or other communities with which they share a common identity. The ability of diaspora communities in a given place to forge and maintain bonds with other groups - settled elsewhere – has enabled socio-spatial networks to form. These networks are able to cross national boundaries through the creation of a space in which social proximities suppress spatial and temporal distances (Bruneau in Bauböck and Faist 2010: 35-37).

Research shows that diaspora groups have started to make use of the emerging socio-spatial networks in order to pursue advocacy work. In a report published by the Migration Policy Institute, Kathleen Newland (2010) argues that diaspora communities, organizations and
individuals are increasingly vocal and influential in their countries of origin. The report shows that distance and isolation are no longer barriers for diasporas to pursue practices of advocacy on issues concerning their homeland. In a time when electronic communication systems are becoming increasingly abundant, diasporas are able to organize themselves across distances and national boundaries. The Internet has provided a transnational platform in which advocates from all around the world are able to communicate issues and promote change, and in which small, dispersed groups are provided a chance to get their voices heard (e.g. through chat rooms, forums and blogs). With the emergence of web sites, online discussion groups and social networks, the potentials of diaspora groups to organize themselves to work towards a common mission have increased (Newland 2010: 3, 10).

Moreover, with the rise of ‘new media’ (i.e. media available on-demand through the Internet), new opportunities have arisen for diasporas’ ability to use media as a tool for carrying out advocacy work in their homeland. Newland states that in the wake of the 2009 coup in Honduras, a number of web sites cropped up which allowed journalists and researchers to share particular information about the situation on the ground - which was not covered by major newspapers or television channels – with those in diaspora. Blogs and comment streams provided an alternative way to circulate information and document human rights abuses. Diaspora members were then able to use this material to call for a condemnation of the ‘transition’ government, including a motion which declared the denouncement of the coup. The motion was passed through electronic voting by the American Anthropological Association, with other members of the diaspora using the Internet to advocate and argue for the constitutional basis of the regime change (Newland 2010: 11-12).

Similarly, in a research report written for the Center for Media & Peace Initiatives, Uchenna Ekwo argues that, in a digital age, diaspora communities – notably migrants, refugees and exiles – have started to make use of the media in promoting transparency, civic engagement and effective democratic governance. He argues that digital technology has made it possible for diaspora communities to compromise efforts by authoritarian regimes to suppress dissident and alternative media in their countries of origin. By the use of online media to spread information and advocate for change, diaspora media are able to constitute alternative sources of information for citizens that are trapped under the rule of authoritarian regimes. He states that the rise of ICT has enhanced the prospect of diaspora media’s capacity to reach more people in minimal time, as well as enabled content creators and consumers to interact in a fashion unimaginable in the past (Ekwo 2011).

7.5 The media work of Syrian diaspora activists
A study made by Kari Andén-Papadopoulos and Mervi Pantti in 2013 on the media work of Syrian diaspora activists (SDAs) is relevant in providing a background to the media work conducted by Syrians in diaspora. The study conceptualizes the work of SDAs as a form of
‘cultural brokerage’ in a transnational setting and identifies three main aspects of such brokerage (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013: 2185).

The first aspect relates to the manner in which SDAs are able to effectively link the voices of the protesters inside Syria with the outside world. The authors illuminate the way in which SDAs play a role in acting as brokers between protesters and professional newsrooms; this by packaging footage and video material produced by local citizen journalists and selling it to pan-Arab and Western news organizations. Furthermore, the authors emphasize that one of the main tasks of SDAs has become that of convincing traditional media about the authenticity of the medial material deriving from citizen journalists and local eyewitnesses (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013: 2185, 2201).

The task of ensuring authenticity can be linked to the second aspect of brokerage, which refers to SDAs’ role in bridging the gap between social media and mainstream media. Due to the massive quantities of medial material produced by citizen journalists and uploaded onto social media channels, news organizations are facing major struggles in how to authenticate the material. Here, SDAs have taken on a role in not only managing the flood of medial material from Syria, but also in maintaining trust between mainstream media and local activists that are documenting from inside of Syria; this by verifying the accuracy and authenticity of the material. SDAs have, for instance, developed different methods for cross-checking the content with multiple dependable sources (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013: 2195, 2201).

Lastly, the third aspect of brokerage surrounds the role of SDAs in collaborating with professional journalists and mainstream news media. By establishing good working relations with journalists in their host countries, who seek their assistance in accessing information and authenticating sources, SDAs are able to facilitate mass media news coverage of the Syrian revolution and core issues related to the conflict. For instance, SDAs have been shown to be able to assist mainstream news media in reaching out to sources on the ground in Syria, as well as in providing clarification regarding specific content; this by, for example, evaluating whether videos of protests or military events represent what they claim to represent (e.g. whether the videos were shot at the location which they are alleged to show or not) (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013: 2197-2199).

7.6 Concluding remarks
This chapter has provided a background on the role of media in development and humanitarian assistance. The chapter has also shown how diaspora groups (communities, organizations, associations and activists) possess great strength in their transnational networks and connections with people inside their homeland, as well as in the way in which they are able to impact their homeland citizens through their own activities and advocacy. The role of
diasporas and their media work have been put forward as bridging, complementary and intermediary in the aid and development sphere.

Although the studies provide an increased understanding of diasporas’ use of media to advocate for change in their homeland, they however do not direct any attention to their potential ability to provide IHS to their homeland citizens. The ambition of this study is to fill this gap in current research.

8. METHODOLOGY
This chapter is set out to illuminate the research methods used when conducting this study, as well as to explain the reason for why these particular methods were used. Starting off by acknowledging the researcher’s positionality and its potential influence on the study, the chapter continues by looking at the study’s research design as well as the process of data collection and data analysis. Lastly, the chapter will present three sections, of which the first will acknowledge some limitations of the generated data, the second elaborate on measures taken to ensure validity and reliability of the study, and the third explain the ethical considerations which have been made throughout the research process.

8.1 Positionality and biases
The researcher is aware of the fact that being a young, white woman born, raised and educated in a Western country may inevitably have had an influence on the type of information that has been revealed and presented to her; information which ultimately has shaped the findings of the research. Moreover, having herself worked with humanitarian support for Syrian refugees, the researcher is aware of the fact that her own standpoint in regards to the Syrian conflict, as well as her personal connections and friendship networks with Syrian citizens, reflect biases which inevitably may have shaped the main focus of the research, as well as the direction which the research has taken (Hammett et al. 2015: 49-50, 147).

The researcher’s choice of methods is grounded in a constructivist research approach, which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are not only produced through social interaction, but that they are continuously being shaped and revised by the social actors that are producing such interaction (Bryman 2012: 33). Looking at the sub-questions to this study’s overarching research question (see Chapter 5) one may notice that they are a mix of ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions; a mix which, as underlined by David Silverman (2013), is a constructionist method for organizing questions in order to be able to understand how interaction is organized (Silverman 2013: 125). Since this study focuses on the cross-border flow of information and the interaction between units inside and outside of Syria by looking at a moving and dynamic process rather than a static reality, the constructivist approach provides a useful perspective to this study by helping to increase the understanding of such interaction.
By using ‘what’ questions, the researcher is able to describe the range of voices that respondents use, while ‘how’ questions help to examine how these voices are articulated in relation to each other, as well as the context in which this interaction happens (Silverman 2013: 240). In this study, the mix of ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions helps to draw linkages between findings from different media outlets, as well as to increase the understanding of the context in which they are operating.

8.2 Design
Due to the way in which the research questions of this study aim to understand the meaning of a process (cross-border interaction) in a particular context (Syria), rather than making broad generalizations in relation to static and causal relationships, this study is built on a qualitative research design (Bryman, 2012: 407-409).

This study has been conducted as an e-research-based desk study, in which the primary data was collected over the Internet, and in which the secondary material is fully based on online sources. Furthermore, the study has been developed as a case study, since it is looking at one particular case in detail, with the objective of developing a comprehensive, in-depth understanding of this case in its natural setting, by recognizing its context and complexity (Punch 2005: 144). Moreover, due to the way in which the study aims to generate a theory out of the data being collected, it is based on a grounded theory with an inductive research approach (Bryman, 2012: 26, 387).

8.3 Data collection

8.3.1 Sampling of research units and participants
The research units and participants in this study were sampled through a purposive sampling method, in which the sampling is based on particular characteristics of the targeted units and participants which are seen as relevant in order for the researcher to be able to collect accurate data (Overton and Van Diermen 2003: 43). In accordance with this method, each of the seven DMOs (research units) included in the sampling of data were chosen on the following three criteria:

1) INDEPENDENCE
   - Being an independent Syrian media outlet (without state/regime influence)
2) GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION
   - Having its base/office/studio/headquarter located outside the Syrian national borders (i.e. in diaspora)
3) TARGET GROUP
   - Having Syrian citizens inside Syria as their sole target group or one of its main target groups
The focus on independent Syrian media outlets is grounded in the way in which the study aims to look at media outlets which act as alternatives to the Syrian state media, while the second criteria was chosen in order to direct the focus of the research on Syrian media outlets that are working in diaspora. Lastly, the third criteria rests upon the way in which the study aims to look at information provided solely to Syrian citizens inside Syria; thereby the importance of restricting the sampling to those media outlets that have Syrian citizens inside Syria as their main, or one of their main, target groups.

Moreover, the research participants were selected on the basis of their professional position within the DMO, with the belief that this position reflects an in-depth knowledge about the work, aim and historical background of the DMO which could allow for a rewarding discussion with the researcher on the research topic. Within the four DMOs sampled as primary sources, the individuals that were sampled for the interviews had the following positions: co-founder and/or editor-in-chief, executive director, programme and editorial director and co-founder. In addition to the four DMO interviews, a fifth interview was conducted with a Franco-Syrian media association (ASML). This association was chosen to be included in the research due to its strong links with the other DMOs, as well as in-depth knowledge of the Syrian media landscape. Here, the interviewee was with the executive director of ASML, chosen on the same ‘position criteria’ as mentioned above.

Furthermore, a snowball sampling technique was used in order to be able to find and select research participants with the particular criteria relevant to the study. Here, the researcher’s first, initial research participants were able guide her in finding other participants which possessed the required position criteria. The new research participants were then able to provide the researcher with further tips, recommendations and contact information necessary in order to reach out to further participants relevant to the study (Overton and Van Diermen in Sheyvens and Storey 2003: 43).

Out of the seven DMOs included in the study, four were interviewed in-person, whereas the data of the other three were collected as secondary data material through various online sources and documents (Table 2).
Table 2. Diaspora media outlets (DMOs) included in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DMOs of which the data was collected through primary sources (interviews)</th>
<th>Enab Baladi</th>
<th>Rozana</th>
<th>SouriaLi</th>
<th>Souriatna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMOs of which the data was collected through secondary sources (online data)</td>
<td>Aleppo Today TV</td>
<td>Hawa SMART</td>
<td>Radio Al-Kul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3.2 Sampling of data

The primary and secondary data of this study was collected through purposive sampling, which was used in order to determine the specific type of data that should be collected (e.g. through asking a number of standard questions in the interviews) (Overton and Van Diermen in Sheyvens and Storey 2003: 43). The researcher conducted theoretical sampling as a purposive sampling technique in order to be able to discover categories, their properties, as well as to draw relationships between them (Bryman 2012: 418-419, 424).

8.3.3 Data generation

The researcher has conducted five semi-structured interviews in relation to this study, out of which four are interviews with representatives of Syrian DMOs, and one is an interview with the executive director of the Franco-Syrian media association ASML. Based on an online, synchronous (i.e. real time) communication-based method, the interviews were conducted through phone calls through the online messaging app Skype (Bryman 2012: 658). An additional sixth follow-up interview with one of the interviewees was made through the end-to-end encrypted messaging app WhatsApp. Moreover, two follow-up email correspondences were made with two of the interviewees in order to ask additional questions and ensure the accuracy of the research findings. The follow-up interview and email correspondences were hence asynchronous (i.e. conducted in non-real time), which means that the respondents received a longer amount of time to answer the interview questions (Bryman 2012: 658). Although the researcher allowed flexibility in the interviews, each interview still followed a few standard questions which were needed to ask in order to be able to answer the study’s research question (Appendix 13.1).
Due to the small sample of primary data, the data deriving from the interviews has been complemented by secondary data in the form of online reports, journal articles, documentaries and news articles; this in order to be able to add stability, validity and reliability to the research findings. The primary and secondary data was collected until the researcher reached a state of ‘theoretical saturation’, when new data no longer served to stress or illuminate the concepts used in the study, and hence no longer contributed to an increased depth of the research findings (Bryman 2010: 568).

8.4 Data analysis
Both the primary and secondary data was analysed through a thematic analysis - which provided an open, flexible and straightforward approach to the study’s relatively broad research question – by searching for keywords in documents and transcripts that were used to develop themes which helped the researcher to link the data from different sources together (Bryman, 2012: 578-579; Green 2016). The study has made use of the framework approach to thematic analysis (Appendix 13.2), as described by Bryman (2012), and which builds on the idea of a construction of a matrix in which the findings can be displayed as ‘themes’ or ‘subthemes’ in manner which allows the researcher to easily compare and relate them to one another. Due to the way in which such matrix contributes to a clear and structured visibility of data, it helps to facilitate for the researcher when drawing linkages between findings from different sources (Bryman 2012: 579).

8.5 Limitations of generated data
This section presents some challenges that the researcher encountered when collecting data; challenges which can be seen as potential limitations of the data generated.

8.5.1 Distance
Since this study was conducted as a desk study-based e-research, the researcher - working from Sweden – established her networks and communications with the research participants – working from various other countries - solely through the Internet. Due to the distance between the researcher and the research participants, the researcher was unable to forge a closer bond of trust between herself and the research participants; something which could be relevant in order to gain more in-depth research data (Scheyvens et al. in Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 146). Moreover, since the interviews were made on telephone calls through the online communication application Skype, the researcher was unable to analyse the body language of research participants, something which can be significant when analysing the details of the data deriving from the interviews (Brockington and Sullivan in Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 72).
8.5.2 Language
Since the researcher was not able to make use of a translator, she was restricted to reach out to English-speaking representatives of DMOs, whereas the majority of Syrian DMOs are using Arabic as their main language. The researcher’s own lack of skills in the Arabic language hence limited her ability to collect data from a greater number of Syrian DMOs. Moreover, although the DMO representatives that were interviewed in this study spoke good English, a couple of them were sometimes unsure about how to express certain things in the English language, in comparison to Arabic. As a result, their answers may not always have reflected the exact meaning which they wanted to convey (Hammett, Twyman and Graham 2015: 55). This is something that the researcher has been taken into account and has adapted to in the data collection as well as data analysis. For example, when unsure about the answer, the researcher has asked follow-up questions to clarify the answer by the respondent, and has even done follow-up interviews through WhatsApp and email correspondences.

8.6 Validity and reliability
Except for the strategy of combining primary and secondary data, other measures have been taken in order to ensure validity and reliability of the research findings.

In terms of the use of mass-media outputs as secondary sources, an inevitable critical issue concerns the authenticity and credibility of such sources. Although mass media outputs usually can be deemed to be genuine, there is always a risk for the information to be false, unrepresentative of real events or skewed by people in the position of power (Bryman, 2012: 553). It is on the basis of such risks that the researcher has critically analysed the secondary sources before making use of this material in the study. When conducting the source criticism, the researcher has continuously worked to cross-check both primary and secondary data with sources that provide different angles and perspectives on the topic in order to be able to determine the accuracy and validity of the data.

To take on these validity and reliability efforts has not only been important in order to ensure the accuracy of the research findings, but it has also been important for this study from a moral perspective. Since the study in itself is concerned with topics surrounding censorship and misinformation, it would be questionable if the researcher herself did not take a critical stance to content deriving from a variety of media sources.

8.7 Ethical considerations
The research participants have been informed about the background of the research; its purpose, aim, process as well as future publication. The researcher has made sure that the research participants have fully understood the details of this information, as well as have obtained their consent before going forward in the research process. Further on, when moving forward with the research, the research participants have been asked about consent for making audio recordings of the interviews, as well as have been informed that the audio recordings
will be used solely for the purpose of this study (Scheyvens et al. in Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 142-143).

Due to the vulnerable position of DMOs and their representatives – many of which are opposition media that are taking a political stance in the Syrian conflict - the researcher has been careful not to reveal sensitive information about the research participants or the DMOs, of which many are living under threat for pursuing their work. All research participants have been asked for consent for using their personal names, as well as the names of the DMOs, in the study; this in order to avoid any potential harm related to their participation in the research (Scheyvens et al. in Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 146-147; Hammet et al. 2015: 99). Although offered anonymity, the research participants interviewed for this research all agreed to participate with their full names (with one working under a nickname), as well as agreed to have the name of their DMO published in the study. However, on request by the research participants, the quotes and related texts from the interviews that were used in the findings have been double-checked with the interviewees before being published in the study; this in order to ensure the accuracy of data as well as to enhance the security of the research participants. The researcher has experienced that this cross-checking has worked to strengthen the trust between the research participants and herself by ensuring their confidentiality (Scheyvens et al. in Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 146).

9. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter, which is divided into three sections, will present the research findings made from both primary and secondary data. Following the order of the study’s sub-questions, the chapter will start by looking at what kind of practical and non-political information that Syrian DMOs are providing to their homeland citizens. Thereafter, the chapter will look at how such information is provided by DMOs in practice, as well as examine the cross-border collaboration between DMOs and units inside Syria. Lastly, the chapter will present the main findings linked to what kind of challenges that DMOs are facing in their work.

9.1 Sub-question 1: What types of practical and non-political information do Syrian DMOs provide to their homeland citizens?

9.1.1 Media services as a form of IHS

Armand Hurault is the executive director at the ‘Association for the Support of Free Media’ (ASML), a Franco-Syrian media association based in France. ASML is working with supporting independent Syrian media, both inside and outside of Syria. Working in partnership with the civil action group SMART (‘Syrian Revolutionary Media Action Team’), ASML aims to identify how independent Syrian media can meet the needs of the Syrian people in terms of practical information, and to make sure that such information reaches the people that need it the most. In order to do so, ASML is committed to support media outlets
that work to provide Syrian citizens with what Hurault, in an interview on the 6th of February 2017, refers to as ‘media services’:

“Basically we [ASML] consider media services to be everything that helps people on a daily basis. It is information about the price of basic necessities, the availability of basic items and information about safety and transportation. We want to provide information about where the checkpoints are, where the snipers are and which roads that are safe” (A. Hurault, Skype communication, February 6, 2017).

Hurault states that media services are about getting the most basic and most needed information to the people in need, and that such information can include everything from warning for air strikes to information about where to find healthcare. He argues that there has been little attention worldwide on the ability of media to provide practical and non-political information that can function as a form of IHS (Hurault 2017).

“I think a lot of focus is directed towards how media can bring information to the people, how media can be the link between the civil society and the people in charge, how media can disrupt the narrative in Syria and internationally, and so on. But no one is really looking at how the media – concretely – can contribute to the people’s daily life. It is an area that is largely uncovered” (Hurault 2017).

The following sub-sections will look closer upon the kind of media services that are provided by Syrian DMOs.

9.1.2 Provision of practical support and advice

Car maintenance advice is perhaps not the typical information that one expects to hear from the airwaves of a Syrian radio station, but that is indeed the kind of information that can be heard in the programs broadcasted by Radio Al-Kul, a dissident oppositional Syrian radio station that is based in Istanbul, the capital of Turkey, and which has grown popular among its Syrian listeners (Cousins 2014). Radio Al-Kul is focusing its content around the everyday life issues of Syrian civilians. In its programs, the station provides practical advice on how to fix a broken car, as well as how to cook meals when supplies are low. With support from private donors, most notably ASML, the radio channel is broadcasting in seven out of Syria’s 14 provinces in an attempt to reach as many Syrians as possible; especially those who are trapped without access to electricity (Seibert 2014).

"Al-Kul means 'everyone' and this is how we think of our radio station. We try to reach everyone. (…) We are trying to get their [the Syrian citizens] voices heard, trying to address their problems and help them face their daily obstacles. We get them to reach out to us and tell us what they need” said Obai Sukar, the former director of Radio Al-Kul, to Al Jazeera (Cousins 2014).
Jaleel Taha, who uses a pseudonym, is the station manager of Radio Al-Kul. In an interview with AP Television published the 5th of April 2013 he stated that the radio station covers subjects which is of relevance for people’s everyday life (e.g. where to find food) rather than political news (AP Television, 5 April 2013):

“They [the Syrian citizens] care about those news more than (...) political news” (AP Television, 5 April 2013).

Similarly, Souriatna - an independent, non-partisan weekly newspaper operating from Turkey – has realised the importance of delivering non-political news. Jawad Muna, who is working under a nickname, is the editor-in-chief of Souriatna. In an interview through Skype on the 28th of February 2017, Muna explains how Souriatna is able to work to provide its readers with news and information which they are in particular need of. He explains that with the help of Souriatnas on-the-ground correspondents and their weekly interviews with its readers in the cities where the newspaper is distributed, Souriatna has been able to make surveys on what topics its readers prefer to read, as well as if there are topics which they believe are missing in the newspaper. Through these surveys, Souriatna has been able to make important changes to its content, so that it better suits the needs and requirements of its readers (J. Muna, Skype communication, February 28, 2017a).

“Before we didn’t have a space for children’s health and women’s health, but now these issues have received a permanent place in our newspaper” says Muna (Muna 2017a).

Indeed, after a survey conducted by Souriatna earlier this year, the newspaper could tell from the findings that the needs of people on the ground were not related to information about politics or conflict, but instead to more basic day-to-day information relevant to peoples’ lives. Now the newspaper allocates nearly 40 percent of its material to non-political news. For instance, Souriatna has been able to provide information which has helped people to make use of organizations that provide financial and food aids on the ground in Syria. By conducting interviews with organizations that provide humanitarian support, and by illuminating their work in the areas in which they are active, Souriatna is able to spread knowledge about who can benefit from these organizations, as well as the requirements for obtaining assistance from them (J. Muna, personal communication, May 13, 2017b).

“In my opinion, and through the opinions of people familiar with the work of these organizations, this kind of information has not only contributed to greater transparency of aid organizations, but has also enabled the organizations to do a more careful and detailed targeting of the areas which are most affected and in most need of assistance” Muna says (Muna 2017b).
Another Syrian DMO operating in Turkey is Hawa SMART, a radio station which is based in the southern Turkish city Gaziantep, located only 50 kilometres away from the Syrian border (Map 1). Much due to its advantageous location – with good communication opportunities between Turkey and Syria – Gaziantep has become a hub for the resettlement of new independent media, many of which comes from Syria (Al Jazeera 2016a). Installed in a discreet residential apartment, the radio station’s location is undetectable to those who do not have knowledge about it. The name of the radio comes from the word ‘Hawa’, which means ‘radio airwaves’ in Arabic, and ‘SMART’ is the name of the group of people that have founded the radio station in collaboration with ASML (Hurault 2014a). Through its daily morning economic program, Hawa SMART provides information on the cost, availability and shortages of basic necessities in different regions. It informs people of things such as where to find food as well as gasoline for fuel. Moreover, through another program called ‘Hakim SMART’, which is committed to the provision of medical advice, the radio station sends out alerts in case of an outbreak of a disease, as well as gives advice on how to avoid contagion (Hurault 2014b; Cousins 2014). Through Hakim SMART, the radio station is also able to help in the guiding of humanitarian relief efforts by indicating in what areas the needs are most urgent (Hurault 2014b).

In contrast to Radio Al-Kul, Souriatna and Hawa SMART – all operating from Turkey – Rozana, an independent, politically and religiously non-affiliated Syrian radio station, stands
out from the others by being based much further away, namely in Paris, France. Lina Chawaf is the editor-in-chief and one of the co-founders of Rozana. She states that, similar to the previously mentioned DMOs, Rozana works to provide information that is relevant to Syrian citizens’ everyday life, such as the prices of different necessities, medical advice and instructions from doctors, as well as some psychological support to people that are suffering from the trauma caused by the war, in particular children (L. Chawaf, personal communication, May 17, 2017c).

Chawaf (2017a) argues that Rozana has become more of a ‘media platform’ rather than solely a radio channel, since much of its work is done online, with the inclusion of its audience’s participation and own opinions (L. Chawaf, Skype communication, March 6, 2017a). In an interview with Alison Meston on UNESCO’s ‘World Radio Day’, Chawaf talks about how Rozana’s listeners are able to contribute to the programming of the channel; this by using Rozana’s online media platform as a space in which they can alert Rozana’s staff members to what type of information that is needed by them [the listeners]. Through such a collaborative relationship with its listeners, Rozana is able to adapt its informative contents to the needs of its audience (Chawaf 2017b). In addition, the radio station has its own correspondents that are going out on the streets to conduct weekly ‘vox pop’s’ inside Syria, and is in that way able to receive input from its audience about issues that should be raised or information that the listeners are in particular need of (Chawaf 2017a).

9.1.3 Security alerts: The provision of life-saving information
Except for the provision of practical guides and advice, Hawa SMART is also working towards the goal of providing Syrian citizens with more urgent information that can help to save lives. Through the creation of radio programs which deliver simple yet effective information about the situation on the ground, the radio is committed to a form of informative ‘emergency management’ (Hurault 2014b). Its program called ‘Kif al-tariqq’ (‘How are the roads’) provides daily updates on travel possibilities and the most dangerous roads within the country. The program provides information on how to get from ‘point A’ to ‘point B’, by sharing information about roadblocks and checkpoints that have been set up by the regime or radical Islamist groups. The program gives information about the positions of snipers, as well as in which areas people should be advised to stay home due to the high security risk associated with travelling and transportation in those areas (Hurault 2014b; Al Jazeera 2016a; Cousins 2014).

Another DMO that is engaged in the provision of potential life-saving information is the Syrian advocacy grassroots media outlet SouriaLi, which uses radio as its main form of

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1 In broadcasting, ‘vox pop’ refers to an interview with members of the public. The name derives from the Latin phrase ‘vox populi’ which means ‘the voice of the people’ (Oxford Dictionaries 2017).
communication for spreading its audio-visual content. Iyad Kallas, SouriaLi’s programme and editorial director and one of its co-founders, states that SouriaLi is working to direct more media coverage towards the civilian citizens:

“What we see on mass media today are the main issues; the regime, ISIS, radicalization, refugees. Nobody speaks about the civil society in Syria. We try to focus on that” (I. Kallas, Skype communication, February 20, 2017a).

Kallas describes how SouriaLi work to spread awareness and alerts about potential life-threatening events, such as airstrikes and bombardment, through the creation of audio awareness sketches. One of many sketches created by SouriaLi is a dramatic sketch that is set out to spread awareness about things that could become a danger to people’s lives, addressed in particular to those who are living in immediate conflict zones. The sketch informs the public about unexploded ordnance (UXB/UXO); namely explosive remnants of war such as bombs, shells and grenades that did not explode when employed and which still poses a risk of detonation. The sketches produced by SouriaLi are sent to all areas in Syria where they are assumed to be needed, without any discrimination of people belonging to areas controlled by a specific political group (Kallas 2017a).

Another DMO, which is broadcasting inside Aleppo while operating from Gaziantep, is Aleppo Today TV; an independent Syrian television channel which claims to be non-political. Citizens living inside Aleppo have argued for Aleppo Today TV to be a vital news source when it comes to the provision of basic information that is relevant for their lives (Tuysuz and Watson 2012). The channel provides information about where to find the nearest hospital or doctors, as well as alerts people to the location of deadly snipers (Al Jazeera 2016a).

“We warn people that ‘in this building there is a sniper’, ‘in this neighbourhood there is a sniper’, ‘don’t go this way’ “ said Aleppo Today’s news director ‘Ahmed’, who asked to not have his full name published, to CNN (CNN 2012).

9.1.4 Delivering of local and hyper-local news
Aleppo Today TV aims to be impartial about the political and military situation inside Syria. Instead, it focuses on providing alerts about what is happening on the ground in Aleppo (Tuysuz and Watson 2012). Khaleel Agha, the director Aleppo Today TV, told Al Jazeera:

“As a channel we are not interested in international news. What we care about is news happening locally in Syria. We focus on the average citizen, those who can't find diesel for heating, those who have no food, those suffering under airstrikes” (Al Jazeera 2016a).

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2 The sketch can be accessed through the following link: https://soundcloud.com/souriali/kid011-230416
Indeed, the delivery of local and hyper-local news has shown to be the main focus of many Syrian DMOs. **Enab Baladi** is an independent, non-profit media organization that was established by a group of citizen journalists in the months after the start of the Syrian uprisings in 2011. Although being a media organization, Enab Baladi is referred to in this study as a DMO, since the study solely focuses on the media output of its printed newspaper. While initially based in Damascus, the capital of Syria, the editorial offices of Enab Baladi are today located in Istanbul and Gaziantep. In an interview on the 15th of February 2017, Amer Doko, the executive director of Enab Baladi, stated that the aim of the newspaper has, since the very beginning, been to inform the Syrian citizens about their current affairs in regards to local events:

“The first issue was basically a response to the Assad regime’s propaganda, and people, activists and citizen journalists wanted to show what was really happening on the ground – contrary to what the Assad regime was portraying” (A. Doko, Skype communication, February 15, 2017).

Through its weekly newspaper, Enab Baladi focuses on providing local news and information relevant to people’s daily life, surrounding both socio-economic issues, as well as military affairs; for instance, whether or not the fighting is continuing in certain areas around them. By conducting their own surveys and investigative reporting on what kind of information is of interest for its readers, Enab Baladi is able to adjust its reporting so that it is able to provide the information that people need in their daily lives (Doko 2017). Similar to Enab Baladi, the Souriatna newspaper is focusing on delivering community news by conducting reports about issues that people living inside Syria are facing, with a particular focus on services, health, education and economics (Muna 2017a).

“For example, last week we made an investigation about how people work, occupations, how they manage to bring money, how they manage to get food… all of those details” said Muna, the editor-in-chief of Souriatna (Muna 2017a).

### 9.2 Sub-question 2: How is the information provided? What does the cross-border collaboration between DMOs and units inside Syria look like?

This section is set out to examine the research findings relating to how DMOs provide their information in practice; in particular with a focus upon their cross-border collaboration with units inside Syria.

**9.2.1 Cross-border collaboration: Communication between DMOs, citizen journalists and on-the-ground correspondents**

Kallas (2017) explains that the cross-border communication between SouriaLi’s staff and Syrians on the ground as crucial in order to be able to deliver useful content based on the needs of its audience.
“Since the majority of our team is operating from outside of Syria, we need to be in touch with Syrians inside Syria when we craft content for them. We think of people inside Syria as partners, because if we only create content that we think is good, it is not going to do any good. We need the content to be good for them, and therefore we need to adapt it to them” (Kallas 2017).

SouriaLi today consists of 27 staff members, dispersed in 13 countries around the planet (see Appendix 13.2), out of which only three members are left inside Syria. In contrast to the other DMO’s mentioned in this study, SouriaLi does not have a base, office or headquarter in a specific geographical location. Instead, it is working from what Kallas describes as a ‘virtual studio’:

“Everybody will record in their own place; sometimes in the kitchen, sometimes in the closet, sometimes under covers. So we just, you know, try to simulate the studio environment. We record and edit everything on our own computers and then send it to the virtual studio” (Kallas 2017).

In the virtual studio, SouriaLi’s staff members are able to network and communicate with one another, as well as to do live streaming if needed. SouriaLi also has its own journalists and media workers inside Syria. Between the media units (inside) and SouriaLi (outside), the information (often in the form of audio-files or texts) is for security reasons encrypted and mediated through only one contact person at SouriaLi. The contact person should have basic knowledge about cyber-security (Kallas 2017b).

“Whenever we do cross-border collaboration we [SouriaLi and citizen journalists/on-the-ground correspondents] always discuss the details; how we will exchange data, how we will exchange information, how we should organize the whole thing, the flow of information, the access to information and the access to services that we provide” (Kallas 2017b).

Radio Al-Kul broadcasts into Syria from the top of a building in a commercial district of Istanbul. According to Sukar, the station’s uncensored and independent news reaches an audience of around 100,000 Syrian citizens through a network of secret transmitters (Jones 2014). Hawa SMART is however the only opposition-driven Syrian radio station that successfully has been able to broadcast through FM across the entire country for 18 hours per day (Map 2) (Hurault 2014a).
In addition to FM broadcasting, Hawa SMART also maintains daily contact with over 100 reporters on the ground, spread out over Syria (Al Jazeera 2016a). The structure of Hawa SMART has been built around experienced journalists, with a long career behind them, in cooperation with a team of citizen journalists in Syria, determined to make their own contributions to the reconstruction of their country (Hurault 2014a).

Findings from Souriatna, Rozana and Aleppo Today TV show that their cross-border communication between the DMOs and citizen journalists on the ground in Syria is largely Internet-based, with news content and sent over Skype, gChat or Facebook (Muna 2017a; Tuysuz and Watson 2012; Chawaf 2017a). Among citizen journalists are both activists and photographers. Through daily contacts with these journalists, who are sending news and information, Souriatna is able to receive the content, work on it in the office in Istanbul, print the finished product in Adana (located closer to the Turkish-Syrian border) and from Adana send copies back into Syria (Muna 2017a). Similarly, with half of its team based in Turkey and the other half constituting a network of reporters scattered on different locations inside Syria, Enab Baladi relies on constant cross-border collaboration between reporters on the ground in Syria and its editorial and management team in Turkey (Doko 2017).

“The reporters are the ones that provide us with all the information from the ground. Our editors in Istanbul and Gaziantep then work on the material and publish it either
online and/or in the weekly newspaper, which is then printed in Turkey and shipped to inside Syria through the Turkish-Syrian border” said Doko (Doko 2017).

9.2.2 Circumventing censorship and reaching the ‘unreachable’: Mixing old technologies with new innovations  
Due to the fact that the majority of the people inside Syria do not have electricity, and even fewer have access to Internet, the audiences of web-based radio stations are small. In an article published the 26th of February 2014 in Mediapart, Hurault – the executive director at ASML – writes that Syrians are rediscovering the virtues of old technologies, such as FM radio (Hurault 2014). The article includes an interview with Ali, the director of Hawa SMART, who states that;

“FM is key. Damascus and Homs are inaccessible, besieged by the regime. Many people are isolated from the world and are without access to any information from the outside world. It is primarily these people that we want to address. To tell them they have not been forgotten. Then, to help them survive” (Hurault 2014).

Sukar, the former director of Radio Al-Kul agrees, and states that the radio as a medium is beneficial when it comes to reaching areas that are difficult to access and that often are lacking access to electricity, since a radio and two batteries is all that is needed in order to tune in to an FM channel. The ability of radio waves to pass checkpoints and cross frontlines is making the radio an efficient tool for reaching those that are isolated by war (Cousins 2014; Hubbard 2014). Zoya, Hawa Smart Radio’s main presenter and director, states that;

“When I am live on the radio, I’m always struck by this. It’s very moving to think that people who live in Damascus, the city that I had to leave, can hear me. Even if I have left them, I can now help them” (Hurault 2014).

Nevertheless, radio stations such as Radio Al-Kul and Hawa SMART today need to be flexible and rely on different broadcasting methods, based on a mix of professionalism and improvisation, in order to reach its audiences. While Radio Al-Kul’s programs are available through online access 24 hours a day, four hours of broadcast content are also sent from Istanbul to activists inside Syria, who rebroadcast it via FM on a daily basis. By doing so, the radio station is able to reach those Syrians who live in areas without electricity and access to Internet (Seibert 2014). Similarly, by collaborating with other media platforms that have antennas and transmitters in Syria, SouriaLi is able to get its content rebroadcasted through partners, enabling it to be spread to audiences that are difficult to reach from outside of Syria. Moreover, in order for its contents to be able to reach such inaccessible areas, SouriaLi has adapted a model called ‘narrowcasting’ (Kallas 2017).
“Narrowcasting is either when we collaborate with local community centers or organisations inside Syria that take the contents and narrowcasts them in a coffee shop, (…) in discussion sessions…. you name it” says Kallas (Kallas 2017).

Within the model of narrowcasting, SouriaLi makes use of the mobile application ‘WhatsApp’, which enables SouriaLi to reach out to people through a form of ‘snowballing’ of content.

“We have a small network of WhatsApp users inside Syria – around 200 people - and they take our contents and forward these to other users on WhatsApp” Kallas explains (Kallas 2017).

Aleppo Today TV is another DMO that is using innovative methods to be able to effectively reach its audience. The television station beams its signals through at least two other countries before it is sent to Syria. By doing so, Aleppo Today TV is able to avoid Syrian government jamming (Tuysuz and Watson 2012).

Another traditional medium that has witnessed a revival in Syria’s transforming media landscape is the printed newspaper. Doko, the executive director of Enab Baladi, stresses the reaching mechanism of the printed hard-copy of Enab Baladi as a key advantage which enables the content of the newspaper to be spread in areas which are difficult to access with other means of communication that are dependent on electricity:

“People that are trapped without electricity and without Internet are in a particular need of knowing about their political, social and economic and military affairs, what’s really happening around them, since they are disconnected from the world. We are sometimes able to provide media reporting from areas which nobody can reach – no foreign journalists, no independent journalists” (Doko 2017).

Similarly, Muna, the editor-in-chief of Souriatna, argues that the benefit of a printed newspaper is its ability to reach people, even in the most faraway places.

“All the areas outside regime control are out of electricity. There are some generators but they are not working all the time. The benefit of a newspaper is that it is a document; it can move from hand to hand and people can keep it. I know some people who keep every issue of Souriatna. And they exchange issues with one another” Muna said (Muna 2017a).

He states that Souriatna conducted a survey among its readers in which it asked how many people that were reading each copy. The findings showed that approximately 50 percent of the people that participated in the survey answered that between 4-6 people read each copy of the
newspaper. Once the newspaper has been distributed, its content can be re-distributed or ‘snowballed’ by hand to reach a multiple number of readers (Muna 2017a).

“Some people say that it’s no future for paper. But in Syria, I think paper make a difference, make an effect” Muna says (Muna 2017a).

9.3 Sub-question 3: What are the main challenges that DMOs are facing when providing this information?
This section will state the findings related to challenges faced by DMOs in their work. The study found funding and security to be the main challenges faced by Syrian DMOs, the section will surround these two particular issues.

9.3.1 Funding
According to a study carried out by Soazig Dollet for Canal France International (CFI), when it comes to the rise of new Syrian media, Syrian radio stations have received more funding than any other project, especially from the US Department of State. This fact led the journalist Hala Kodmani to, in March 2015, declare that radio projects are the most wasteful financially; an opinion which was shared by Souriatna in an article published in its newspaper on the 1st of April 2015 entitled ‘Syrian radio stations: unknown investors and zero auditors’ (Dollet 2015a: 10).

Indeed, Kallas (2017a) argues that when it comes to funding, the issue lies in making the work of DMOs both sustainable and cost-efficient:

“I believe that the amount money being dedicated to media development in Syria is good, but the spending is not efficient at all. And it is absolutely not sustainable. (…) Some media outlets in Turkey had to shut down because their funding was stopped over night” (Kallas 2017a).

A recent report by Antoun Issa for the Middle East Institute, illuminates how NGO representatives and U.S. officials originally envisioned funding of new Syrian media programs to be short-term. The idea was to provide “seed money” for independent Syrian media, in the belief that – with the help of this money as a start-up capital – new Syrian media outlets could, over time, become self-sufficient. However, with the escalation of the Syrian conflict, the ability of new media outlets to thrive as self-sustaining businesses has deteriorated (Issa 2016: 24). The lack of long-term funding has resulted in various Syrian radio stations having been forced to cease their broadcasting. Due to short financial support contracts (often three-four months in length), the radio stations face difficulties in planning ahead and organizing their work for the long-term (Dollet 2015a: 11).

Similar to the radio stations, a lack of long-term funding has shown to be a major handicap for the development of the new Syrian newspapers as well. As a result, many newspapers have
been faced with no other choice than to seek to replace their current backers with alternative sources of funding; this in order to, on the one hand, be able to gain autonomy, as well as to, on the other hand, be resilient in times when aid to the Syrian media is scaled down or ended (Dollet 2015b: 13). Muna (2017a), which sees funding as the main challenge of the work of Souriatna, states that the newspaper depends on funding from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to be able to pursue its work (Muna 2017a). The same holds true for Radio Al-Kul, which is funded by private donations and non-profit organizations (AP Television, 5 April 2013).

9.3.2 Security
Syria has witnessed a proliferation of armed groups, as well as the emergence and subsequent expansion of extremist groups – such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS or DAESH) and Al-Nusra. These groups, armed with their own media, often seek to control the work carried out by independent journalists (Dollet 2016a: 2). Doko (2017) mentions security as one of the biggest challenges facing Enab Baladi in its work:

“Our staff inside the country have been faced with threats by either the Assad regime or extremist groups. In some cases we had to cut our relationship with them [the staff inside Syria] to protect them and save their lives, because reporting the news in a neutral and independent way was not going well with either the regime propaganda or the extremist groups propaganda” (Doko 2017).

Aware of the security risks faced by their correspondents on the ground, many radio stations avoid discussing certain issues in their radio programs. Chamsy Sarkis, head of ASML/SMART, admits that Hawa SMART’s staff members rarely (if ever) address particular issues which are deemed to be too sensitive (Dollet 2016a: 11).

Furthermore, Rozana’s 50 correspondents that are working on the ground in Syria are all working under nicknames in order to protect themselves from threats and censorship from military groups. Such military groups have limited the possibility of Rozana of working inside Syria (Chawaf 2017a).

“We are able to broadcast inside Syria, but not so perfectly. We have some places where we broadcast. Before we had a transmitter in Idlib, but it was taken by Al-Nusra. So, it is not easy to broadcast FM, because the transmitter has to be in the area that you want to broadcast in” says Chawaf (Chawaf 2017a).

In addition to transmitters being seized by various military groups, a major security issue for Syrian media surrounds the systematic and repeated targeting of broadcast centers by regime forces (Alhamad 2016: 17). Due to frequent bombardment by the Syrian army, transmitters are often destroyed. For this reason, some DMOs have positioned their transmitters near the
front lines or close to the Turkish border, assuming that the Syrian army would not be willing to bomb the areas under its control or that of its neighbour (Dollet 2016a: 14). Indeed, since only a few months back, Rozana has started to broadcast from Gaziantep in Turkey, close so the Syrian border, by renting a Turkish FM station. Chawaf (2017a) sees both benefits and disadvantages of working from a distance from Syria. Working from outside Syria, the radio station has gained more freedom to broadcast and publish content. At the same time she states working from a distance from the events happening in Syria as challenging, despite the fact that the radio station has its own correspondents on the ground. However, Chawaf stresses that although the ideal situation would be to work on the ground, in closer contact with Rozana’s correspondents, such a situation is no longer a feasible, nor sustainable, alternative.

“With this situation in Syria, we have to believe that we cannot work from the inside. We have already seen how the local media tried to do something on the ground, but they couldn’t, because they are all under censorship from all the military groups” Chawaf says (Chawaf 2017a).

Both Doko (2017) and Muna (2017a) argue that the issue of security not only poses threats to the security of their staff, but also aggravates the distribution of their newspapers and hinders them from reaching its audience.

“We [Enab Baladi] used to distribute in other parts of the country, but then, for security reasons, we had to restrict our distribution to northern parts of Syria” said Doko (Doko 2017).

10. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
This chapter will bring up the main points of the findings of the study. It will relate the findings to the previous studies mentioned in the literature review, as well as discuss the findings in relation to the theories that were brought up in the theoretical framework.

10.1 Sub-question 1: What practical and non-political information is provided by DMOs to their homeland citizens?

10.1.1 Provision of media services
The findings show that DMOs can play a role in the provision of IHS, while however doing so in many different ways. IHS was found to be provided by DMOs through the delivering of what is referred to in this study as ‘media services’. Media services in turn refer to the work of media which surrounds the delivering of basic and crucial information to the people in need.

The study found that Syrian DMOs are engaging in a wide range of media services which can be divided into three categories;

1) Practical support and advice
2) Security alerts
3) Delivery of local and hyper-local news

Although the media services found in this study are divided into these three categories, the categories very much go hand-in-hand with one another, and some of the DMOs were found to be engaged in more than one of these categories (see Appendix 13.2). These three categories of media services can be linked to Ghannam (2016)’s description of how new media initiatives are able to provide hyper-local information and urgent news to vulnerable and marginalized communities, which then are able to receive practical information about where to obtain food, shelter or medical care, how to enrol children in schools as well as where to find a job (Ghannam 2016: 4). For instance, DMOs such as Hawa SMART and Radio Al-Kul were shown to provide their homeland citizens with information on where to obtain food and recommendations on how to cook meals when supplies are low. Moreover, the study found how Hawa SMART, SouriaLi and Aleppo Today TV are able to provide security alerts to their audiences; advising their listeners and watchers on how to avoid snipers, roadblocks, checkpoints and unexploded ordnance; things that could pose a threat to the lives of their audiences (i.e. their homeland citizens).

The study also found that DMOs such as Hawa SMART and Rozana are able to provide medical advice to Syrian citizens; this, for instance, by sending out alerts in case of an outbreak of a disease, as well as by giving advice on how to avoid contagion. DMOs ability to provide medical advice to their homeland citizens can be linked to the previously mentioned CDC report, emphasizing the way in which traditional media such as newspapers, radios and televisions serve pivotal roles during disasters through their ability to lower the risk-taking behaviour of the civil society by informing the public about risks related to their health and well-being (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014: 178-179).

Furthermore, the study shows how DMOs such as Enab Baladi and Aleppo Today TV are able to provide information and recommendations to their audiences on local and hyper-local; ranging from news on the military situation to more practical socio-economic issues. Similarly, Souriatna and Rozana were shown to provide information on how to be able to find work and how to enrol their children in school; issues that are much in concern for the many Syrian citizens that are internally displaced. The provision of such local and hyper-local information was expressed by Dalton, senior producer of BBC Media Action, as crucial for individuals and communities that are affected by humanitarian crises in order for them to make it through another day (Ghannam 2016: 2).

10.1.2 Creation of needs assessments and bridging humanitarian relief efforts
The study found that DMOs are conducting their own needs assessments in order to be able to adapt their contents to the needs of their audiences. For instance, the study shows that DMOs
conduct their own surveys, vox pops and investigative reporting, through which they collect ideas and opinions of their audiences. By doing so, they are able to receive input on what type of information is needed by their audiences, and adapt their content to that input. Diasporas ability to conduct their own needs assessments was previously mentioned by Riddle (2008) and Brinkerhoff (2008) as an example of how diaspora groups possess a strength in their ability to act as intermediaries between local communities and international development actors; this in their ability to be able to efficiently identify the needs and priorities of local communities and by communicating these needs to donor organizations (Riddle in Brinkerhoff 2008: 157; Brinkerhoff 2008: 13-14). Moreover, DMOs use of social media platforms to incorporate the voices and opinions of their audiences into their work can be linked back to the CDC report, which emphasizes the important role of social media platforms in playing an intermediary role in mediating media contents between the civil society and media outlets (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014: 178-179, 210).

Similarly, the study by Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013) showed how SDAs can play a role as brokers between citizen journalists and professional newsrooms by providing a link between the voices of the civil society and large news organizations (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013: 2185). The findings of this study confirms a close collaborating relationship between citizen journalists and Syrian diaspora media, while however found that such a relationship not only facilitates flows of information but also enables humanitarian relief efforts. Indeed, Ghannam (2016) previously described how the information provided through new media initiatives is often produced or delivered by affected communities, and serves as a bridge between available services and humanitarian relief providers (Ghannam 2016: 4). The ‘affected communities’ described by Ghannam can be seen as describing the DMOs introduced in this study; consisting of members which are either directly or indirectly affected by the humanitarian situation inside Syria. Moreover, their ability to act as a bridge between available services and humanitarian relief providers can be linked to the way in which this study found that DMOs are able to work as a link between aid organizations and people on the ground. For instance, a program broadcasted by Hawa SMART was shown to help in the guiding aid organizations in their humanitarian relief efforts by indicating in what areas the needs are most urgent. Moreover, by conducting interviews with organizations that provide humanitarian support, and by illuminating their work in the areas in which they are active, Souriatna was shown to be able to spread knowledge to Syrian citizens about who can benefit from these aid organizations, as well as the requirements for obtaining assistance from them. Hence, the findings show that DMOs can play an intermediary role in development assistance; through both assisting and bridging the work of aid organizations, as well as to enabling and facilitating citizens on the ground’s ability to access beneficial information regarding the work of such organizations.
10.2 Sub-question 2: How is the information provided? What does the cross-border/transnational interaction between Syrian DMOs and units inside Syria look like?

The findings of the study show that the DMOs included in the study collaborate with citizen journalists and/or the DMO’s own reporters and correspondents that are working on the ground inside Syria, when it comes to the exchange and editing of information and news content, while however using slightly varying methods for doing so.

10.2.1 Alternative distribution: Mixing traditional media with innovative reaching methods

In combination with the use of traditional mediums (radio, television and newspapers) as a strategy to reach audiences in areas that are difficult to access, the findings show how DMOs are using different techniques and innovative methods in order to reach its audiences. The innovative and non-mainstream characteristic of these methods are found to be very similar to the characteristics of alternative media practices as expressed by Fuchs (2010) (section 7.2). For instance, SouriaLi’s use of partners to rebroadcast its programs, narrowcasting to snowball its content, as well as Aleppo Today TV’s use of the ‘two-country beaming strategy’ in order for its content to reach its audience, are innovative distribution methods which align well with Fuch’s definition of ‘alternative distribution’ within the alternative media theory; emphasizing the use of strategies and technologies that allow for content to be shared, copied and distributed in an open manner (Fuchs 2010: 179) across a wide range of virtual and geographical spaces (Lievrouw 2011: 2). DMOs use of online sources, mobile applications and community centers to spread their contents can also be linked to Ghannam (2016), stating that new media initiatives often work on a micro level, compared to traditional mainstream media, through the use of community radios, online videos or streams of information that are crowd-sourced through groups on Facebook or WhatsApp (Ghannam 2016: 4).

Indeed, the study shows that DMOs rely heavily on the Internet in order to communicate informative content, as well as to maintain networks between their staff one the one hand, and correspondents on the ground in Syria on the other. Such findings align well with the report written by Newland (2010) for the Migration Policy Institute, which emphasizes the way Internet has provided a transnational platform through which diasporas are able to organize themselves across distances and national boundaries in order to work towards a common mission, as well as to carry out advocacy work in their countries of origin (Newland 2010: 10).

The study also shows how DMOs make use of the Internet in order to establish their own online media platforms, from which they communicate all their content through audio and video files, as well as discuss the content with their audiences through online forums and discussion groups on social media. Hence, the study show how DMOs are able to make use of online media platforms to include the voices of their audiences through the establishment of a reciprocal, communicative relationship; a relationship which will be discussed in the next
section (10.2.2). Diaspora groups’ use of the Internet in order to not only pursue advocacy practices, as well as organize themselves across large distances, but also to provide a change for dispersed and marginalized groups to get their voices heard, was previously stressed by Newland (2010) in a report published by the Migration Policy Institute (Newland 2010: 3, 10).

Similarly, Ekwo (2011) stated how, in a digital age, diaspora communities have started to make use of digital technology in their own medial attempts to compromise efforts by authoritarian regimes to suppress dissident and alternative media in their homelands. The way in which this study showed how DMOs are finding innovative reaching methods in order to circumvent censorship and to spread their contents to their audiences can be linked to the inherent strength of a free press in preventing humanitarian crises as described by Sen (1999); namely the ability of media to bring attention to facts which an authoritarian government often tends to censor out, and which is of relevance for the livelihood and well-being of the people (Sen 1999: 180-181).

10.2.2 Reliance on a reciprocal, two-way communicative relationship
The study shows how DMOs make use of alternative media practices by relying on a two-way, cross-border communicative relationship with not only citizen journalists and correspondents on the ground, but also with their own audiences inside Syria. Such two-way communication can be seen as similar to one of the main characteristics of alternative media as described by Fuchs (2010) and Guedes Bailey et al. (2008), who emphasized the way in which alternative media stand in contrast to traditional mainstream media, which is based on a linear, one-way communication with their audiences (Fuchs 2010: 178; Guedes Bailey et al. 2008: 11, 15).

Furthermore, the way in which DMOs were found to conduct their own needs assessments in order to adapt their content to their audiences, as well as how they are allowing the voices of their audiences to be heard through their online radios and webpages, indicates a deliberation of DMOs to include their audiences participation in their content production and selection of program topics. Such deliberation was expressed by Kallas (2017a) in relation to the work of SouriaLi;

“Since the majority of our team is operating from outside of Syria, we need to be in touch with Syrians inside Syria when we craft content for them. We think of people inside Syria as partners, because if we only create content that we think is good, it is not going to do any good. We need the content to be good for them, and therefore we need to adapt it to them”.

The reliance on such two-way communication between DMOs and their audiences can also be linked to the participatory characteristic of alternative media as described by Guedes Bailey et al. (2008); namely the participation of ‘non-professionals’ both in the production of media...
output as well as in media decision-making (Guedes Bailey et al. 2008: 11, 15). As further stated by Lievrouw (2011); in alternative media, media users are becoming producers and consumers are becoming active participants; participants who are able to harness the opportunities alternative media offer when it comes to communicating important messages to their audiences (Lievrouw 2011: 1-2). On the basis of these theories, the study’s findings show how DMOs are making use of alternative media practices in order to most efficiently be able to spread their content to their homeland citizens.

10.3 Sub-question 3: What are the main challenges that DMOs are facing when providing this information?

The study found funding and security as the main challenges faced by DMOs. The study found that Syrian DMOs rely on donations, grants and own fundraising efforts as their main source of funding; something which previous studies have outlined as a common characteristic of diaspora groups (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 24; Taki 2012: 3, 11). The reliance on donations, public funding, private resources or no-cost strategies, was also mentioned in the theoretical framework as a typical characteristic of alternative media (Fuchs 2010: 179), which confirms the theoretical assumption that Syrian DMOs are making use of alternative media practices in order to spread their content most efficiently.

The findings show that lack of funding hinders DMOs from pursuing their work and short financial support contracts are posing difficulties for DMOs in planning ahead and organizing their work for the long term. If looking at previous research on this area, this finding is not significant, but rather, it confirms the findings of previous reports, such as the report published by Diaspora Action Australia (2014), stating access to funding as “the single factor that would have the most impact on the effectiveness and scale of diaspora activities”. The report also states how absence of funding limits the potential of diasporas’ advocacy work and development efforts (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 3).

The findings however show that when it comes to funding, it is not specifically the amount of money that is in concern, but rather the cost-effectiveness of the spending of that money (i.e. that the money is being spent in a way that sustains the work of the DMO in the long run). The findings indicate the need of more long-term funding programs in order to make the work of DMOs cost-efficient and sustainable.

Except for the issue of funding, the study found security as another major challenge faced by DMOs. It shows how security issues not only pose a threat to the security of the DMOs’ staff members, but also how they aggravate the distribution of their contents and hinder them from reaching their audiences. The study found that DMOs are hunted by both regime forces and extremist groups who are targeting their transmitters and broadcast centres inside Syria, ultimately forcing the DMOs into censorship. The study also indicated how members of DMOs are subjected to self-censorship due the high security risks associated with addressing
particular issues and topics as independent DMOs; a fact which hinders the DMOs from producing important content, as well as limits the opportunities for their audiences to receive such information.

The issue of security related specifically to Syrian DMOs has not been covered in previous studies. Although the constant threats facing journalists in general is well known, no in-depth studies have so far been made in relation to the Syrian context. However, looking at previous studies of diaspora groups and their advocacy work, the geographical distance has shown to be a fundamental factor which allows DMOs to operate and pursue advocacy from a spatial dimension that was – for security reasons - not possible in their homeland. As expressed by a member of OSGA (the human rights advocacy organisation that is based in Australia and which advocates for the rights of people in Ethiopia):

“There is no right to speak about what’s going on in the country [Ethiopia], any torture or any injustice. The only way we can speak is if we are out here or anywhere else [other than in Ethiopia]” (Diaspora Action Australia 2014: 10).

The research findings further confirms the geographical distance as a crucial factor which allows Syrian DMOs to pursue work which was not possible in their homeland. For instance, Chawaf (2017a) expressed how working inside Syria is no longer possible for Syrian independent media due to threats of censorship from military groups. Instead, aligning with previous research on diaspora advocacy (Newland 2010; Bruneau in Bauböck and Faist 2010; Ekwo 2011), working from across the Syrian borders has opened up a spatial dimension in which Syrian DMOs are able to circumvent censorship in order for them to fully be able to utilise their potential to use media as a way to support their homeland citizens (Tuysuz and Watson 2012). As expressed by, Zoya, Hawa Smart Radio’s main presenter and director:

“Even if I have left them [the homeland citizens], I can now help them” (Hurault 2014).

The limited research on the impact of the security issues faced by Syrian DMOs on their work can be seen as a significant finding in itself; namely that more research needs to be directed towards this area in order to be able to fill the current research gap.

A summary of the main findings of the study can be found in Appendix 13.3.

11. CONCLUSION
This study has provided insight into the role DMOs can play as development actors through their provision of humanitarian relief efforts. These efforts have been found to be expressed in the form of media services; services which can function as a type of IHS for Syrian citizens on the ground.
Through their advantage in operating from outside the geographical boundaries of their homeland, the DMOs included in this study are found to be in a unique position which enables them to circumvent regime censorship and spread their content through cross-border networks and collaborations with citizen journalists, on-the-ground correspondents and media platforms. The findings show how DMOs can be seen as standing out from the more traditional mainstream media in the way in which they are working to provide IHS to their homeland citizens; a form of development assistance which – although having being examined and acknowledged to some extent in some previous studies and research - is not usually associated with the work of media. In particular, DMOs’ two-way communication pattern – with the inclusion and participation of both citizen journalists and their own audiences – can be seen as constituting a specific media strategy which opens up for a possibility of DMOs to possess untapped potential as development actors; potential that, if tapped in a right and useful way, can play a role in humanitarian relief efforts.

However, DMOs ability to take on such a role may depend on whether or not their strengths are fully recognised by the international aid and development community. The next section presents some recommendations by the author which can serve as indications of what steps that could be taken in order to allow the strengths of DMOs to be recognised, as well as their potential to be fully untapped.

11.1. Recommendations

- Development actors and institutions should start to acknowledge the role DMOs can play as potential partners in humanitarian relief efforts
- Donors should consider increasing the funding of DMOs, by investigating what financial means are needed in order to increase the sustainability and cost-efficiency of DMOs
- Development institutions should put more effort into investigate how to enhance the security of DMOs in order to increase the efficiency and sustainability of their work

The author would like to end this study with some suggestions for future research in relation to the work of DMOs and their potential place in the field of aid and development.

11.2 Suggestions for future research

Since the researcher was not able to go inside Syria to extend the research across borders, she was not able to look at this case from the perspective of the DMOs’ audiences, but solely through the perspective of the DMOs. For this reason, the researcher would like to urge future researchers in this field to investigate and evaluate the impact DMOs’ provision of IHS has on their homeland citizens’ security, livelihood and well-being. Such an evaluation can be seen as crucial in order for donors to be able to provide the correct level of financial assistance to DMOs, as well as for the potential of DMOs as development actors to be tapped to the fullest.
Lastly, the researcher argues that more research needs to be directed towards the security challenges that DMOs are facing in order to be able to evaluate how such challenges impact the work of DMOs and their efficiency as development actors, as well as what measures could be taken in order to most efficiently address those challenges.
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13. APPENDICES

Appendix 13.1: Standard questions asked in the interviews

1) What information does your media outlet provide to your listeners/readers/audience?

This question was asked as one of the more fundamental questions needed in order to be able to answer the study's first sub-question regarding the provision of practical and non-political information to its audiences.

2) Do you receive any input from your listeners/readers/audience regarding what information they perceive as particularly needed? If so, how do you receive this information?

The above question was judged by the researcher as an important question to ask the DMOs in order to get clarity on the subjects chosen to be covered in their radio broadcasts, newspaper content and television newscast. This question was particularly important to ask since the researcher was not able to do on-the-ground interviews with the DMOs' listeners/readers/audiences inside Syria.

3) What does your cross-border collaboration with units inside Syria look like?

This question was used in order to be able to answer the study's second sub-question related to the cross-border collaboration aspect. In the interviews, this question was followed up with a number of additional sub-question which related to the particular DMO in question.

4) Which would you say are the main challenges that are facing the work of your media outlet?

Lastly, the fourth question was used in order to be able to answer the study's third sub-question, relating to challenges faced by DMOs.
Appendix 13.2: Findings of the work of DMOs included in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DMO</th>
<th>MEDIUM</th>
<th>GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF DMO</th>
<th>BROADCASTING / DISTRIBUTION PATTERN</th>
<th>TYPE OF PRACTICAL &amp; NON-POLITICAL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY DMO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aleppo Today TV</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Gaziantep, Turkey</td>
<td>Broadcasting inside Syria from Gaziantep through a two-country beaming strategy</td>
<td>Security alerts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enab Baladi</td>
<td>Newspaper (online/print)</td>
<td>Istanbul &amp; Gaziantep, Turkey</td>
<td>Printing in Turkey, distribution inside Syria</td>
<td>Local and hyper-local news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawa SMART</td>
<td>Radio (online/FM)</td>
<td>Gaziantep, Turkey</td>
<td>Broadcasting from Gaziantep through own transmitters inside Syria</td>
<td>Practical support and advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Al-Kul</td>
<td>Radio (online/FM)</td>
<td>Istanbul, Turkey</td>
<td>Broadcasting from Istanbul to Syria through a network of secret transmitters</td>
<td>Practical support and advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rozana</td>
<td>Radio (online/FM)</td>
<td>Paris, France</td>
<td>Broadcasting from the Turkish-Syrian border</td>
<td>Practical support and advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SouriaLi</td>
<td>Radio (online/FM)</td>
<td>No geographical base.</td>
<td>Rebroadcasting through partners inside Syria</td>
<td>Security alerts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souriatna</td>
<td>Newspaper (online/print)</td>
<td>Istanbul &amp; Adana, Turkey</td>
<td>Printing in Turkey, distribution inside Syria</td>
<td>Local and hyper-local news</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SouriaLi’s staff is operating from Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, (Iraqi) Kurdistan, Jordan, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Greece, France, Germany, England, United States of America and Canada (Kallas 2017b).
Appendix 13.3: Summary of main findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
<th>FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overarching research question</strong></td>
<td>Yes. The study found that DMOs are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Can Syrian diaspora media outlets (DMOs) play a role in providing Syrian citizens with informative humanitarian support (IHS)?’</td>
<td>❖ Providing their homeland citizens with media services, which function as a type of IHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ Playing an intermediary role in development assistance, by:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Creating their own needs assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bridging and assisting in the work of aid organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enabling and facilitating their homeland citizen’s access to information about the support programs of aid organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-question 1</strong></td>
<td>The DMOs were shown to provide practical and non-political information through media services, which were shown to come in the form of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘What types of practical and non-political information do Syrian DMOs provide to their homeland citizens?’</td>
<td>❖ Practical support and advice, in the form of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Car maintenance advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Medical advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Psychological support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And information on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The prices of different necessities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How to cook meals when supplies are low</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Where to find gas for fuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aid organizations and how to obtain their support programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ Security alerts, relating to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Safe/unsafe transportation routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The position of snipers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The position of checkpoints and roadblocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The position of unexploded ordnance (UXB/UXO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ Local and hyper-local news, such as information on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Socio-economic affairs (e.g. where to obtain food, where to find doctors and where to find work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Military affairs (e.g. the state of the conflict and in what areas the fighting is continuing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sub-question 2

`How is this information provided? What does the cross-border/transnational interaction between Syrian diaspora media outlets and units inside Syria look like?`

The study found that DMOs are:

- Using *alternative media practices* to communicate and distribute their content, by:
  - Relying on a two-way communicative relationship with
    - 1) *citizen journalists* for communication and content sharing
    - And
    - 2) their *audiences* for distribution and content production
  - Combining the use of traditional media with innovative reaching methods as an *alternative distribution* strategy to spread their content and circumvent censorship.
  - Such strategy include reaching methods such as:
    - Narrowcasting
    - Two-country beaming strategy
    - Rebroadcasting through journalists, transmitters and media platforms inside their homeland

### Sub-question 3

`What main challenges do Syrian DMOs face when providing this information?`

The study found that DMOs are experiencing the main challenges to their work in the areas of:

- Funding
- Security

These challenges were shown to:

- Lower the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of DMOs
- Force DMOs into self-censorship
- Limits the scope of DMOs content distribution